

Plowing the Sands of Capitalist "Peace"

About the London Five Power Conference

By Jay Lovestone

THE road to imperialist wars is strewn with the wreckage of the "achievements" of capitalist peace conferences. Hague, Locarno, Paris, Washington, Geneva and now—the Five Power Naval Limitation Conference in London!

This conference clearly portrays the countless hopeless antagonisms among the imperialist powers and the unsolvable contradictions of world capitalism. United States Rear Admiral Bradley Fiske has well characterized the London Conference as "the greatest game played for the greatest stakes that the world has ever known." This is no exaggeration, in view of the fact that chief imperialist competitors today are the still-ascending American capitalism and the already declining British capitalism.

The New World Situation.

The London Conference is a landmark in world history. Eleven years have passed since the close of the World War. It was almost exactly eleven years ago today that Woodrow Wilson set sail for Europe to serve as the spearhead of American imperialism in its struggle for world domination. Today, American imperialism is again going to Europe, in the persons of such forceful spokesmen of Wall Street as Stimson and Morrow. But today U. S. imperialism goes not to win but to insure its already-won world hegemony. Eleven years ago U. S. imperialism, thru the glib phrases of Wilson, was able to fool millions of European toiling masses with its fraudulent peace talk. Today, U. S. imperialism stands exposed in its feverish war preparations; it has already won and is winning evermore the hatred of the toiling masses the world over.

Eleven years ago America's increasing participation in European affairs signalized the beginning of the stabilization of the badly-shaken, decrepit European capitalism largely thru Wall Street credits. Today, American imperialism's increasing interference in Europe means a sharpening of the antagonisms among the capitalist powers and an intensification, a deepening of the contradictions not only of European capitalism but of all world capitalism, already sharpened by the very stabilization itself. Eleven years ago, Wilson set sail for Paris at a time when Soviet Russia was still very weak and it was hard to tell its tomorrow. Today, Stimson goes to London, when the Soviet Union has grown powerful and is rapidly organizing socialist economy in industry and agriculture.

No one can understand the London Conference unless he views it in the light of this fundamental change in the world situation. But the basic issues which reflected the unbridgeable antagonisms among the leading imperialist powers eleven years ago have not disappeared. On the contrary, the basic contradictions amongst the leading capitalist powers have even multiplied and have become acutely aggravated. It is this situation which regardless of all the hypocritical pacifist fanfares of world peace, makes the London Conference another talk-fest superficially and momentarily blurring but actually emphasizing the irreconcilability of the conflicting interests among the capitalist powers.

Headlong to Another World War

It is significant that the conference will not even dare touch the question of "freedom of the seas." And it is here that we see reflected one of the sharpest antagonisms between British and American imperialism.

Of extraordinary importance, on the eve of the London Conference, is the declaration of the "Socialist" MacDonald Gov-

ernment that in the next war there will be no neutrals. Here we have it. This significant declaration is really a notice served by the British imperialists upon the American imperialists, that in the coming war, Wall Street will not be permitted again to wax rich as a "neutral" and then as a late comer but would be drawn in at the very outset.

The two leading powers at this "peace" conference will be England and the United States. It has been well said that the United States "leads the world in talking about peace and in expending money for armaments." Even the "Socialist" government of England which is so poor when it comes to giving relief to its rising army of unemployed, is spending a thousand dollars a minute for armaments. The burden is terrific. But the competitive system of world capitalism is based on war which is only the highest expression of capitalist competition.

What the Conference is After

It is under such conditions that the London Conference will meet. The conference will not even reduce, let alone abolish, armaments. In reality, the conclave will increase the total amount of naval armaments. Parity between England and the United States in cruiser tonnage and strength is the highest goal set by the super-optimistic bourgeois pacifists. But if parity in cruisers is agreed upon, then it will only mean an increase in armaments. The United States will then go ahead and build up to the limit not only in tonnage but also in murderous efficiency.

What the conference is really aiming at is to secure rationalization in the arming of the imperialist powers. The conferees are after the most efficient, up-to-date infernal war machines at the lowest possible cost. That's why there's not to be any talk about chemical warfare, poison gas, air and sea-planes. The question of submarines will be soft-pedalled. Hence, every imperialist power will be glad to agree to a limitation or even a reduction of the huge and costly capital ships, the giant battleships, the dreadnoughts and superdreadnoughts rendered archaic, in a measure, by modern technique.

But the course even of capitalist rationalization of its armaments is strewn with reefs, harder than coral. On December 18, 1929, Premier Tardieu declared on behalf of French imperialism that "no final decisions would be taken" at the London Conference. The French imperialists frankly insist that the question of armaments must be considered in regard to the special needs of each power and not on "the application of mathematical ratios." France is losing no time in preparing for the coming war. While talking peace, the French capitalists are now building an unbroken line of modern fortifications all the way from Belgium to the Swiss border at the cost of over \$200,000,000. Today, the French imperialists have 57 submarines in commission, the same number as England, and are building forty more as against England's fifteen. The French imperialists, today, even more than at the Washington Conference of 1921, look upon the submarine as their best-suited weapon on their Atlantic Channel Coast and in the Mediterranean. But the British imperialist lion sits firmly on the rock between the Eastern and Western French fleets.

The Italian imperialists are in a somewhat similar position, tho they are less bent on insisting on submarines since they are not as self-sufficient in the matter of food as are the French. Therefore, Italian imperialism may seek to make a

deal here, for the submarine is mainly effective against sea-borne commerce. Thus, when Mussolini talks of the limitation of all armaments, he is really hitting at France. Italian imperialism is insisting on parity with French imperialism. This means increasing the Italian navy.

The Plague of Parity

But again the parity curse comes to plague the conference. French imperialism demands a higher cruiser ratio than that allotted them at the Washington Conference and a submarine strength not equal but superior to the strongest submarine forces today. This means a French navy more than half the size of the British. Italy insists on parity. To grant the proposals of the French and Italian imperialists—even if the French were ready to do so, which they are not—would mean the possibility of a combination of two European naval powers superior to the British navy. This, of course, the British imperialists will never agree to, since the British ruling class finds it absolutely necessary to maintain a navy superior to the combined navies of any two European powers in order to "protect" its far-flung empire. No matter what position the American imperialists take in this clash of capitalist interests, they will be serving to sharpen, the antagonisms in the entire system of the capitalist balance of power relations.

Here enter the Japanese imperialists who, in the Pacific, occupy a role similar to that of the French and Italian imperialists in the Mediterranean. The Japanese imperialists are demanding from the naval "reduction" conference, that their ratio of 10-10-6, fixed for them at the Washington Conference in relation to the American and British navies, shall be advanced to 10-10-7, not only in capital ships but also in 8-inch gun-cruisers and submarines. The Nipponese imperialists have not forgotten that Wall Street has forced at least a temporary dissolution of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The sharpening crises in China, Korea and Manchuria make the Japanese ruling class only more adamant in its demands. The Japanese imperialists, never spending much time on false pacifist phrases, are preparing for the final showdown in the Pacific against U. S. imperialism.

This is what the capitalists call a peace conference! This is what the imperialists call the limitation and reduction of armaments! The sham and fraud of it all was brought into sharp relief by their vigorous opposition to the genuine disarmament proposal made some time ago by the Soviet Union in what is now known as the Litvinoff Plan.

Danger Ahead!

But the imperialists are in reality interested only in devising the best and most economical ways of waging the next war—a war which will most probably be an imperialist attack against the Soviet Union. That explains why the *Review of Reviews* has boldly proclaimed that: "A strong American navy in certain emergencies could always be relied upon by Europe to uphold the principles of law and order."

"The principles of law and order"! It is under this black banner that imperialist reaction has everywhere attacked the workers. It is under this imperialist banner that world capitalism is preparing a new world war at London. Herein is the challenge to the workers of the world.

On the occasion of the London Conference we must redouble our energies in the struggle against the danger of a new world war, in defense of the Soviet Union!

On the occasion of the London Conference we must bring home to the workers of America the great lesson of Lenin—that when war breaks out our slogan must be: Turn the imperialist into a civil war! Overthrow the rule of the capitalists—establish the rule of the workers!