

U. S. Imperialism's Slave Rule Aided by Jones' Liberia Plan

Would Rouse Support for Wall Street's Native Puppets

By HARRY HAYWOOD

II.

Will the Liberian-American Plan, fathered by William N. Jones and George Padmore, save Liberia for the Liberian masses? We ended our article yesterday by giving this answer:

"The Liberian-American Plan is designed to bolster up a corrupt and tottering native government, whose interests are bound up with the interests of the foreign slave-drivers. The Plan plays into the hands of the American imperialists. The Plan would tighten the chains of slavery more cruelly upon the Liberian toilers. And by creating illusions about the possible solution of the Negro question in America through Utopian schemes of economic advancement on the African continent, the Plan—in this respect a subtle edition of Garveyism—tends to divert the masses of American Negroes from revolutionary struggle against their oppressors."

The Liberian-American Plan calls, not for support of the Liberian masses in their struggle against the vicious system of colonial plunder, but for support of the corrupt native government of Liberia, which is the local watchdog of foreign imperialism. In the confidential prospectus of his plan, sent out by Jones, this fact is made very clear. The American Negroes are to raise money "to assist the Liberian government in its present financial difficulties." The American Negroes are also to exert pressure on the American government to modify the terms of its loans to Liberia. No question is raised of the right of American imperialism to force these plunderous loans upon Liberia and to demand payment of interest out of the blood and sweat of the native toilers. No question is raised of the right of Harvey Firestone to take for himself the tribal lands, or to turn into serfs on his rubber plantations the former owners of those lands. The sponsors of the plan never for a moment question the right of American imperialism to be slaveholder-in-chief of the Liberian masses.

The Native Government

In Jones' prospectus, Liberia is characterized as the "last stronghold of Negro freedom," whose "integrity and freedom is being menaced by England and France." The League of Nations Plan of Assistance, according to Jones, if carried through, would make Liberia a virtual mandate territory of British and French imperialism.

What is the present status of Liberia? What is the role of the native Barclay government, for which Jones seeks support?

Upon examination, we find that this so-called "Independent Republic of Liberia," this "last stronghold of Negro freedom," is in reality a virtual colony of U. S. imperialism. American imperialism, represented by the Harvey Firestone interests, dominates the main economic and

financial resources of the country. The economic and political grip upon the Liberian people by American finance capital was cinched in 1925, through the robber agreement concluded between the Liberian government and the Harvey Firestone corporation. By the terms of this agreement, Liberia was definitely reduced to the status of vassal state of Wall Street. The Harvey Firestone corporation secured a million acres of rubber-producing land. Land which would yield a crop of 250,000 tons of rubber a year, has been stolen from the natives and leased for the ridiculous price of six cents an acre.

\$5,000,000 At 7 Per Cent

This outrageous robbery was carried through in the name of "developing the economic resources of the country, civilizing the natives" and all the rest of the humanitarian claptrap is calculated to serve as moral justification of imperialist plunder.

But this is not all. The Harvey Firestone corporation, through its agent, the American Finance Corp. of New York City, with the help of the native ruling clique, forced a loan of \$5,000,000 upon Liberia, at 7 per cent interest! As security for this loan, Harvey Firestone demanded and received control of the customs and internal revenue of the country. According to the terms of the agreement, half of this sum was to be expended for construction of railways, roads, improvement of the harbor at Monrovia, and public works. These "improvements" are obviously for the purpose of facilitating imperialist exploitation of the rubber monopoly by Harvey Firestone. The other half of the loan was to be used to pay off "certain outstanding debts," which are none other than the international loan forced upon Liberia by American and British bankers at the instance of Wall Street as early as 1912.

Natives Become Firestone's Slaves

The carrying through of this robber project has been necessarily accompanied by the wholesale expropriation of native tribal lands, which have been turned over to Harvey Firestone. The natives have been forcibly ejected from their lands, have been converted into colonial wage-slaves on the plantations of Harvey Firestone at wages of a few cents a day.

In this imperialist banditry, the Liberian governing classes, represented at present by the Barclay government, have been the main instrument of the Wall Street pirates. A number of uprisings on the part of the natives in resistance to this naked robbery, have been brutally suppressed by the Liberian military constabulary. The role of this native governing clique—as we stated in our first article—has been that of local policeman, slave-driver, land-thief and recruiter of forced labor for American and other interests in Liberia. It is in this manner that American imperialism, operating through a band of corrupt native bourgeois politicians, was able to secure a stranglehold over the resources of the country and reduce the vast majority of its native population to downright colonial slavery.

Plan Meant to Tighten Firstone's Power Over Natives

It is this Liberia, which Jones presents as the "last stronghold of Negro freedom." It is this government, this band of corrupt politicians, these murderers of the Liberian people, which Jones presents as a progressive force. It is these people whom Jones would have the American Negroes support, with their few hard-earned pennies!

Liberia's Slaves Rebel

Jones speaks of a "grave impending emergency" confronting Liberia. We admit the situation is grave—grave for the Wall Street bandits and their native puppets. This "emergency" situation is occasioned by the growing militancy of the masses, rebelling against the imperialist robbers and their native hangers-on. The colonial slaves of Liberia are awakening, driven to desperation by the ravages of the crisis, and the increased exactions of the slave-drivers. They are rising in revolt.

It is this situation which has precipitated a crisis of the Liberian ruling-class, who are now forced to carry out their part of the robber agreement in face of the growing resistance of the masses, who in this situation find it increasingly difficult to meet the demands of Firestone and the bankers, and to carry out its role as overseer for Harvey Firestone. The Barclay government, caught between the upper and nether millstones of rising mass revolt, and the demands of its shlock masters, Wall Street and Firestone, is attempting to maneuver in order to preserve its corrupt rule.

Funds to Crush Resistance

In this, the Barclay government has sought to use the conflict of interests between Wall Street imperialism on the one hand, and British and French imperialism—represented in the League of Nations—on the other. However, the League was unwilling to risk the displeasure of the American government on this matter. Thus the League of Nations Plan of Assistance to Liberia, finally worked out by the League's Liberian Commission, supports the claims of American imperialism and Harvey Firestone.

Now the Barclay government, defeated in this maneuver, turns again to Wall Street and Harvey Firestone. The essence of Mr. Jones' plan is to secure support for the Barclay government of imperialist lackeys, to help it negotiate terms with Wall Street—in other words, to help it bolster up its tottering rule, to help it crush the rising resistance of the Liberian toilers.

It is for this that Mr. Jones and his friends would raise finances among the Negro masses. It is for this that he essays the role of mediator between the Barclay government in its reactionary bargaining with American imperialism and Harvey Firestone. It is for this that he proposes his "committee of prominent Negro citizens" to intercede with President Roosevelt.

(Concluded Monday)