

What MacDonald 'Accomplished' Here

By Max Shachtman

"A tremendous contribution to the peace of the world." "A titanic blow for peace." "One of the greatest forward steps toward naval limitations that has been taken." "A practical step toward world peace, a long step toward sanity." There are the lyrical extravaganzas with which the American capitalist press greeted the visit of Ramsay MacDonald to Hoover. The reality of imperialist politics is far more prosaic than all this wordy blabber. The MacDonald-Hoover negotiations were not a step toward world peace, or toward world disarmament. They were one of the many preliminary peace-time skirmishes in which each side tried to make the best of its position in preparation for the war between the United and England which is already traced out for the future.

The alleged aims of the conversations were: The reduction of non-capital ships and the achievement of parity by 1936. Neither navy is to undertake the building of new units for the next seven years. The British fleet is to be conceded a certain small cruiser superiority for "policing and trade route protection" purposes which give it no actual combat superiority. Heavy reductions are to be made in both destroyer and submarine fleets, the United States to permit about 200,000 tons of destroyers to become obsolescent by 1936 and Britain about 75,000 bringing them down to virtual parity. A similar decimation is to take place for submarines.

This marks the second big naval defeat of Great Britain. The first was at the 1922 Washington conference where the U. S. broke up the Anglo-Japanese alliance and forced capital ship parity upon England. In that field, the U. S. now has built, under construction, or authorized, 525,850 tons, while England has 556,350 tons. The big disparity between the two competing powers lay for seven years in the cruiser category. At the Washington conference, Britain maintained that it required a minimum of 600,000 tons, and no agreement could be arrived at.

At the Geneva conference in 1927, the American delegate, Gibson, proposed a maximum of 250,000-300,000 tons, which failed to find the agreement of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Bridgeman, who insisted upon a minimum of 450,000 tons, and a total amount of 70 cruisers. On this point the conference collapsed, but American pressure increased and even forced, subsequently, the repudiation of the Anglo-French agreement (as it did the Anglo-Japanese in 1922) by the Conservative government. Under MacDonald, the British demand has finally been scaled down to 339,000 tons, and instead of 70 cruisers, 50 are now "required". This brings about a virtual parity with the U. S. in spite of its 35 cruisers, since "we" have a number of 10,000 ton cruisers equipped with 8-inch guns that have a firing range of thrice the power of the 6-inch guns mounted on most British cruisers.

The United States has achieved a temporary victory over the British lion and the picture presented at the Spithead review in July 1914 of the British fleet as the mightiest in the world can now be relegated to a museum with many other of Britannia's glories. For the time being, England has been forced to submit to the iron arrogance of the United States, MacDonald came to the brooks of Rapidian not as a magnanimous bearer of peace but as a representative of the once most powerful empire in the world that cannot stand the furious pace its bloated American cousin can set, and comes to beg for a respite. It is not the peace-loving English social democrat who has won the belligerent American imperialists to the cause of brotherly love. It is the financial domination of Wall Street that has forced the once haughty naval power down to parity on the seas.

The center of world economic power has shifted in the last decade from Europe (specifically, England) to the United States. The U. S. despite the resistance with which it is met and will be met in the future in an even broader and more belligerent degree, is attempting to put the European capitalist countries on an ever smaller ration in world economy. Its direct, even if unwilling, agent in Europe is Great Britain. It is no accident that the first Labor government, also under MacDonald, put through the Dawes Plan in Germany. England has become the European collection agent for Washington and Wall Street. An examination of the disposition of German reparations under the Young-Morgan Plan will indicate this. The creditors of Germany receive their payments directly as follows: England, about 1-5 of the total; France, about 1-2; Italy, about 1-10; the United States about 1-30; and the rest is divided among Belgium, the British Dominions, etc. But, one of the German payments received by France, Italy, Belgium and other lands, a third or more must be paid immediately by each of them to the U. S. Approximately the same amount must be paid also to England. England, in turn must pay such an enormous sum to the United States that the final disposition of the German payments is approximately as follows: France, 1-5; Belgium, Italy, the Dominions, etc., 1-6 and the United States, about 2-3. England is left to hold the sack, with virtually nothing!

Or, regard it from another angle. Sir Leo Chiozza Money, the British bourgeois economist, points out: "We have agreed to pay to the U. S. for two generations, about 38 million pounds a year. This sum we are to collect yearly for 60 years, as to £18,000,000 from Germany and roundly as to £20,000,000 from France, Italy, Greece, Jugo-Slavia, Portugal and Rumania. That is to say, we collect money in Europe and pay it over to America, the income almost exactly equalling out... Agreements... condemn this generation

and the next and the one which succeeds it to pay tribute to the U. S. not our own tribute, but tribute painfully collected by Britain in Europe from nations large and small. Shall we set out the effect of the agreements for the year of 1980, fifty-one years hence, when the names who are now tempted to squabble will long have been forgotten? Here they are:

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| "Agreement by Britain to the U. S. | £38,300,000 |
| "Agreements to pay to Britain: | |
| By France | £14,000,000 |
| By Italy | 4,500,000 |
| By Rumania | 700,000 |
| By Jugo-Slavia | 600,000 |
| By Portugal | 400,000 |
| By Greece | 400,000 |
| By Germany | 18,000,000 |
| | £38,600,000" |

The extent of the financial domination of the United States is graphically depicted by these telling figures. They explain the reason for the unusually bitter fight made by Snowden at the Hague conference and his victory over France, which resulted in an increase of Britain's share of the unconditional German annuities from \$14,292,000 to \$22,867,200. It also becomes clear why, when the New York Federal Reserve Bank raises its discount rate from 5 percent to 6 percent on August 8, the Bank of England must, a few days later, raise its rate from 5 1-2 percent to 6 1-2 percent, the highest in eight years, in an attempt to coax back some of its fugitive gold from Wall Street and prevent a curtailment of credit even though it aggravates the unemployment situation in such badly-hit British industries as coal, steel and cotton.

These dynamics facts, and not the pacific cooings of MacDonald, are the motivating force in England's retreat to parity with the United States. MacDonald knows these painful realities just as well as Baldwin did when he was forced to throw the Anglo-French alliance overboard. He also knows that the retention of England's 50 cruisers is not for the "peaceful" purpose of war, and they are fit for nothing else. All the

mysterious technical "explanations" of naval "experts" and sundry pacifists cannot conceal that.

It has been proved that cruisers, as well as battleships, as a defensive protector of trade vessels and routes are a gigantic fraud. Britain's scores of dreadnaughts plus its 50 cruisers would provide convoys for about three dozen escorts—in case of a war with Japan, let us say—for such routes as Auckland to Panama, Sydney to Wellington, Honolulu to Panama, Hong-kong to Honolulu, Colombo to Aden, Hong-kong to Singapore, for the coastal traffic of East Africa, India, Burma, China, Australia and the intricate systems of the East Indian Archipelago. For adequate protection, literally hundreds upon hundreds of cruisers would be needed. Raiders could make mince-meat out of trading vessels. It would take a force of ten ships, going at 15 knots, twenty-nine weeks for one search of the Indian Ocean alone. A Japanese fleet of 30 modern cruisers, intent upon crippling Pacific and Indian trade, would require a fleet of hundreds of cruisers to force them to remain at their bases.

It is plain that cruisers are meant exclusively for active naval engagements of an offensive character, which have nothing at all to do with the high-sounding purpose of the peaceful protection of trade.

In other words, although—or precisely because—the U. S. is trying to put the European powers on an ever diminishing ration, the latter are driven to ever more desperate resistance, an ever louder clamor for a larger share in world economy, which leads steadily to a sharpening of the antagonisms that make for war. Even in the face of American financial domination, England must carry on a struggle, underneath all the gracious gestures of MacDonald, to retain as much military, naval and political power as possible in store for the coming clash that will decide the supremacy of the world to the accompaniment of 16-in naval guns, aerial bombs and trench fire.

The attitude of France, Italy and Japan and their special role in this struggle, already manifest and sure to come out more openly when the projected Five-Power conference takes place next January, either in London or Geneva, are of special significance. But an analysis of these factors must be reserved for another article.

Three Conferences for Defense of Gastonia

The trial of the seven Gastonia militants has undoubtedly aroused the sympathy of broad sections of the American working class, and one of the best opportunities is at hand to mobilize and organize the sentiment of hundreds of thousands of workers to form a ring of defense around the victims of the frame-up. The official Communist Party, however, has almost totally neglected to approach these sympathetic workers and to draw them into a united front against the jailors. Instead it has followed the narrowest kind of a sectarian policy which has deliberately alienated some of the best elements in the labor movement.

The spurious ultra-"Leftist" policy of the Party has rarely shown its bankruptcy so pitifully as at two of the conferences for relief and defense called in New York, outwardly, as a result of our criticism, as united front conferences, but in actuality as jealously guarded gatherings of a clan. At the first of these, the Youth Conference held on October 13, the only sign of activity displayed by the young Stalinists was their rejection of the credentials presented by Comrades George Clarke and Joe Friedman of the Youth Group of the Communist League, and by Hank Stone, of the Postal Clerks. Harry Yaris, caucus master of ceremonies, explained that the first two could not be seated by informing the delegates that the Communist League was not a "bona-fide organization"! Our comrades, in reply, pointed out that this was the classic argument of the fakers in the unions against Legt wing and progressive organizations, and that the imperative problem of the moment was now to organize an all-inclusive front of those willing to work for the release of the frame-up victims. Apparently, this was of secondary importance to the conference directors, and after a few "brilliant" remarks by a few other young neo-Bolsheviks, the conference voted to refuse our comrades admission. All who voted thus were bound by discipline as members of the Young Communist League, while every single delegate to the conference who was not under this discipline, voted to seat our comrades. That was the sum and substance of the achievements of the conference. Yaris made no report of the past work of the committee, but contented himself with an agitational speech on the need for defending the prisoners. No plans for future work were outlined. The important thing was already accomplished—the unseating of the hated Trotskyists, even though it was done at the cost of driving away every non-Party sympathizer with the defense.

The regular "mass united-front Gastonia conference" held about a week later under Party control was even worse. Nominations for chairman, secretary and committees were made openly by slate. No "outside" nominations were even considered by the chairman or put to vote! Such a notoriously bourgeois institution as an agenda was not presented to the delegates. At least 90% of the delegates were Party members, and the conference itself was composed of about 40 delegates, and this in the strongest district of the city. For three solid hours, the conference was listen to bally-hoo speeches from Robe

swore that the case was not a frame-up, Otto Hall, Eli Keller, Harriet Silverman and similar lights. Throughout the conference, literally not a single delegate spoke from the floor—not one! There being no agenda, nothing could be discussed. A few minutes after midnight, the usual resolution was rushed through before the report of the credentials committee had been presented. All through the evening, the leading thinkers of the Party, Overgaard, Jakira, Weinstein, Wagenknecht and Bloomfield continually conferred in the hall and corridors on what to do with comrades S. M. Rose and James Russell, delegates from the Communist League. The upshot of these conferences was that the credentials committee report, brought in just before the motion to adjourn, recommended that all delegates be seated, although not a single name of a delegate or of an organization was read off! No committee was elected to carry on the work in the future, no plans or proposed, nothing accomplished except the collection of a few dollars. The "mass united front" was a mass meeting, a small, insignificant mass meeting, splendidly controlled, captured and attended almost exclusively by the Party members. That is the sort of victories achieved by the irresponsible faction-mongers of the Party at Gastonia's expense.

In Minneapolis, these is a totally different picture. There the Party and the I. L. D. have virtually disappeared since the expulsion of the best comrades for their support to the Opposition. Despite the numerous urgings of the local Communist League branch, the Party and the I. L. D. have failed to take a single step in the Gastonia defense rather than work together with our comrades. The disgraceful neglect by the Party has finally been overcome by a group of active militants in the labor movement who have sent out a call for a Unity Conference for Gastonia Defense held Tuesday, October 29, at Labor Headquarters. The provisional committee is composed of such well-known workers in the Minneapolis labor movement as: John Brinda, member Upholsterers Union No. 61; I. G. Scott, member of Operative Plasterers' Union No. 65; M. Christenson, member of Electrical Workers Union No. 292; Guy W. Alexander, Fin-Secy. Electrical Workers Union No. 292; David S. Hingsley, member of B. of L. F. & E. Local 704; J. G. Evans, member of B. of L. E. Local 494; Ed. W. Lawrence, member of Electrical Workers Union No. 292; A. S. Sturtevant, member of B. of L. F. & E. Local 704; I. Hoberman, secy Cap-makers Union Local 12; Chas. Pederson, member Electrical Workers Union No. 292; Carl Skoglund, member Railroad Carriers Union Local 299; O. Carlson, organizer, A. C. W. A.; Oscar Coover, member Electrical Workers Union No. 292; C. A. Green, member of B. of L. E. Local 474; Leo Gisslen, secretary of Socialist Party; C. R. Hedlund, Locomotive Engineer; W. R. Hopkins, member of B. of L. E. Local 474; Henry Kook, member of Electrical Workers Union No. 292; A. Roseland, Carpenters Union No. 7. The composition of the committee ensures broad, unified efforts in the Twin Cities.