

Naval Conference Farce

Japanese Delegation Visit Indicates the «Disarmament» Prospects

Mr. Henry Stimson, representing the United States delegation, and Mr. Reijiro Wakatsuki, representing the Japanese delegation, have just enacted another scene in Washington from that merry farce which has had a successful run eleven years since the end of the world war, playing before distinguished diplomatic audiences in Washington, London, Paris, Genoa, Geneva, and other noted international points. It is the comedy called "Disarmament", and the next scene will open in London on January 21, with King George of England himself in the role of curtain-raiser.

"Disarmament": A Farce

That some of the actors have a tragic role to play does not change the character of the piece. It was conceived as a farce and must remain a farce, replete with all sorts of sleight-of-hand tricks, hypnotism acts, the old army game, and if there are no bedroom scenes, there is plenty going on all the time behind the scene itself. The main role is played by the United States as the gay villain, with all the other actors, France, Italy, England and Japan playing the injured, foiled heroes who cannot hope to win. That the entire chorus sings loudly in various keys of their intention to disarm, should not deceive the many million-headed audience, because it is nothing but a part of the play which the actors themselves do not take very seriously.

When MacDonald arrived in the United States a few weeks ago, his meetings with Hoover were generally acclaimed by the capitalist press of both countries as the inauguration of a new epoch, not only in Anglo-Saxon relations, but also for the ideal of peace and disarmament itself. It was widely announced that with these conversations as a beginning, the London Naval Conference would begin (as all those that preceded it began!) to take steps leading to the disarmament of all the great powers, or at the very least the limitation of armaments, so that the sublime spirit of the Kellogg Pact—the abolition of war as an instrument of national policy—might become a reality on earth. The pacifists of every color and shade went into a veritable epileptic frenzy of joy, and praises were showered down upon the modest heads of MacDonald and Hoover as the enlightened statesmen of the century.

Fascinating as all these opium dreams may seem, they are, alas, only opium dreams intended to confuse and confound the minds of the workers. As the conflict between the various imperialist powers becomes keener, and the prospects of a war to decide their antagonism begins to assume more concrete form, it is necessary so to befuddle the workers that their resistance to imperialist war is weakened or muddled with pacifist fantasies. The meeting of the Japanese and American delegations in Washington is but one of the numerous indications of the hypocritical and impossible cry for disarmament, when it is uttered by those whose economic life depends upon increased armaments.

Japan's Demands

On November 25, 1929, the Japanese cabinet approved the proposals of its naval department on the demands to be presented by its delegation to the London conference. Japan demanded nothing less than a ratio of 70% in the 10,000 ton-8 inch gun cruisers of the strongest powers (i. e., Britain and the U. S.), an equal ratio in light cruisers and destroyers; and would stand against the abolition of a single submarine. Japan demanded parity with the largest powers on the basis of 80,000 tons. So far as capital ships and aircraft carriers are concerned—fields where Japan's greatest naval interests do not lie, and where she is not particularly strong—it generously offered to advocate tonnage and gun calibre reductions.

The idea of reducing on capital ships was not distasteful to Washington. But the proposal for parity with itself and England in submarines, and a 10-10-7 ratio in 8 inch cruisers, an advance by Japan over the 5-5-3 ratio of the Washington conference, was immediately frowned upon. It was pointed out that at the tri-partite conference in 1927, Japan had announced its submarine needs to be in the neighborhood of 70,000 tons.

The visit of the Japanese delegation, preliminary to the London meeting, was an attempt to secure the support of the United States for Tokio's demands. The high-minded idealists became fish-market hagglers. The Japanese intimated, unofficially,

that they would not be sticklers on an absolute 70% ratio in cruisers if they would only be supported in their submarine demands, their proposal to reduce the gun calibre on capital ships to 14 inches and to extend a vessel's life to 25 years.

To these proposals, the American experts countered by pointing out that the British have abandoned work on the Singapore base, which is supposed to cut down the defense needs of Japan. But the latter reminded the U. S. that while Singapore might possibly affect battleship ratios, since it is the only dry dock between Malta and Pearl Harbor capable of taking a dreadnaught, it has no bearing on 10,000 ton ships (cruisers) for which there are numerous harbors available. And besides it is not England that Japan fears primarily. The Tokio correspondent of the New York Times (12-20-1929) unwittingly unmasks all the diplomatic pretensions about the "coming epoch of pacific world relations" and indicates where Japan's real concern lies:

Whom Japan Fears

"To put it crudely (Ahem!), Japan is not afraid of England, because the British navy has to cover such a large area and England could not assemble a fleet in the Pacific large enough to defeat Japan. If a state of war unfortunately (What a convenient and diplomatic word is "if!") existed between Japan and America, America could concentrate virtually all her fighting ships in the Pacific and give her Pacific trade to neutral ships, leaving her with a 40 percent superiority on cruisers."

In other words, all the pious declarations of the diplomats of the various imperialist powers, their signature to the Kellogg Pact made with hand on heart pledging themselves never to resort to war again are all dissolved before the realities of imperialist rivalry. The French as well as the English, the Japanese as well as the Americans, understand what should be clear to every worker: The various "disarmament" conferences are not held for the purpose of disarming—a utopian deceptive plan under capitalism—but for the purpose of jockeying for better positions in the face of the inevitably oncoming war.

All of them swear by the hour that they haven't the slightest intention or idea of another war, but, they add, "IF a war SHOULD come", then it is "obviously" necessary to take measures for "proper" national "defense".

It is needless to say that the efforts of the American imperialists to force a reduction of armaments—in proportion to its own—by England, France, Italy and Japan will succeed only in part. That has already been shown by the results of the conversations with the Japanese delegation at Washington. The United States delegation declined to "discuss detailed figures"—in other words to give Japan any concrete assurances of support in advance of the London conference itself. When the associated pirates get together in the House of Lords next month, the United States will take its position without being embarrassed by any previous binding pledges, promises or agreements. It will be in an easier position to dictate terms. It will stand in the center of the conference, manipulating this way and that, playing off the naval "needs" and interests of one power against another, making concessions here in order to gain a point there, squeezing England with the aid of France or France with the aid of Japan, or Italy with the aid of some other combination of buccaneers.

That it will not have smooth sailing is already evident. The conference itself will only heighten the contrast between the "pacific" pledges of the Kellogg Pact and the cold brutality of ruthless naval competition.

The British Viewpoint

The attitude of the British is becoming more clearly defined. The psalm-singing champions of open diplomacy in the labor government, through the First Lord of the Admiralty Alexander, have already announced that none of the conference participants is "prepared to view favorably a scheme for a substantial reduction of battleship strength immediately or at a defined future date." So much for battleship "disarmament." So far as cruisers are concerned, there is little more hope in that field. The well-informed correspondent of the New York World (12-20-1929). John L. Balderston, cables from London: "That Britain will meet this situation (the growing doubts as to the chances of reaching a five-power cruiser agreement) by cutting

down her cruisers program as outlined in the Hoover-MacDonald negotiations, is extremely unlikely and no illusions on this score should be entertained at Washington. There is the strongest authority for this statement."

Indeed, Balderston's inspired warning is borne out by the significant article of Hector C. Bywater, British authority who is close to the "Big Navy" end of the British stick. He points out that the American battlefleet of 18 capital ships is the only completely oil burning fleet in the world. It is the only one in which every pre-Jutland unit has been or is being extensively reconstructed and modernized. It mounts 192 heavy turret guns as against 166 corresponding guns in the British fleet. Its cruiser fleet comprises 23 ships of post-war design as against 15 British post-war design ships. In heavy calibre ordinance, from an 8-inch to a 16-inch, the American navy has a margin of 45 guns over England. In submarine tonnage, there is virtually the same superiority. There are 124 American submarines, armed with 516 torpedo tubes, as against 63 British boats with 383 tubes. Of submarines for long-distance cruising, America has 62, the British Empire 47. The ratio in air power for naval use is now: United States, 10; Great Britain, 1.7.

The French Become Pious!

These articles do not bear favorable augur for the "success" of the conference, particularly since the continental press continues to point out that the United States plans even greater expenditures for military and naval purposes. Even the semi-official Parisian Temps is in a position to comment with consummate Tartuffian hypocrisy, on Hoover's speech "explaining" the increased military and naval "needs" of the U. S.: "These figures merit attention, for it is only necessary to regard what the Americans consider an indispensable minimum for their security to appreciate at full value the spontaneous sacrifices (!) which France has made. And yet there are people in the world (just imagine!) who, even now, are seeking to resurrect the legend that French militarism and imperialism is the last obstacle to disarmament and the consolidation of peace."

Great fellows, these diplomats! They are a real sign of the progress of our civilization. In the old days, when they frankly sailed under the Jolly Roger and made each other walk the plank, they didn't make fools of themselves or anyone else with pretenses about their noble, lofty intentions and aspirations. Nowadays, they gather in very solemn conclave seeking to scuttle each others ships with the utmost of courtesy and soul-stirring oratory. The Jolly Roger has been struck. The pirates now sail the seven seas under the Christian pennant of brotherly love, the limitation of armaments and "peace."

On Hooliganism -- (Today and Yesterday)

"In desperation at our growing strength among the Party membership and the left-wing workers and in a frantic attempt to cover up the disastrous effect of the 'new course' in the Party and in the mass organizations, the Party wreckers have advanced to a new stage in the 'enlightenment campaign' they have resorted to the hooligan and gangster methods well known to the trade union bureaucrats and sharply condemned by all honest workers. . .

"Armed with clubs, blackjacks and knives they succeeded in inflicting serious injuries upon D. Benjamin (formerly: Assistant Director of the Workers School) and upon B. Ralph. These comrades had to receive immediate hospital treatment. . .

"In Hartford, Conn., a group broke into a private house and attacked a meeting of over 20 comrades, most of them non-Party workers. . .

"These methods are acts of desperation. . . they help to convince Party comrades and non-Party workers that the Party 'leadership' is absolutely unable to answer any of our political contentions and therefore attempts to find refuge in the worst methods borrowed from the A. F. of L. bureaucracy." Etc., etc., etc.—Revolutionary Age, December 15, 1929.

So, my dear Lovestone, your chickens have come home to roost! Your lamentations and protestations, however, are a bit too late and more than a bit stomach-turning. Permit us to correct one or two little "typographical" errors in your statement quoted above:

The Stalinists did not borrow these hooligan and gangster methods from the

Auto Wage Cuts

Pontiac Workers Seriously Affected

PONTIAC, Mich.—Thousands are out of work in this auto town, and 2,000 families are "living on the city", with winter just well started. "It's hell," is the way one worker in the big General Motors plant put it, "and I hate to think what it will be before spring."

The few workers who have been put back to work following widespread layoffs in auto and body factories are experiencing speed-up, slack time, and cut in wage rates.

Can't Make Room and Board

"I went back to work last Friday at 60 cents an hour—a 30 cent cut on my day rate," a body plant worker told Federated Press. "I got in 24 hours on last pay day. That is \$5.40 short of what it cost me for room and board. I went to work this morning and they sent me home and told me come back tomorrow. Half the crew works tomorrow and half Friday, so I'll be off again Friday, and that will be all for this week. I'll be lucky to make room and board here this winter."

This worker is more fortunate than many, for he is single and without dependents. That he is allowed to work at all he attributes only to his being an "old timer" who has worked for one company six or seven years.

How the lineup looks to a married man may be gathered from an unemployed worker's letter, published in the correspondence columns of the Pontiac Daily Press. "It is not an enviable situation to have one's little children calling for food and be unable to satisfy their hunger," says this writer. "It is not an encouraging outlook to walk the streets day after day, from factory to factory, or even to seek a sewer digging job until one is tempted to end it all—as many do—because he cannot furnish food, clothes, etc., for a family of youngsters. Isn't something radically wrong when millions of people must suffer because they have created too much of this world's goods,—when men starve while farmers cannot sell food at a price to prevent them from going bankrupt?"

Fifty Percent Wage Cuts

Another worker testified that wage cuts on piece work in his plant averaged 50%. "A man who was putting out 20 jobs a day last year will have to put out 45 jobs today to make the same wage," he said. Overtime, which helped out the meager earnings of auto workers last season, will be conspicuously absent this year, the auto workers prophesy. Thirty thousand 1929 Pontiac cars are said to be stored in factories, distributors' and dealers' warehouses around this section, and it is the general opinion that the 1930 model will not be put on the market until most of the are sold.

A. F. of L. bureaucracy alone. They learned them from a master closer at home: from YOU. You were the leader of the Party who directed the gangster and hooligan attacks upon the "Trotskyists" you expelled. You and your poor friend D. Benjamin were the ones who sent knife and blackjack squads down from the district office of the Party in Union Square, New York, to gang up on our comrades for selling the Militant on the streets. You and Benjamin and Levich and Weinstein and Stachel and all the rest of them sent your knife and club men down to our public meetings to break them up at all cost. You and you, precious friends, those of today as well those of yesterday—were the ones who "broke into a private house", with jimmy in one hand and blackjack in the other, and stole private documents so as to "expose" us in the Party press. You protest that the Daily Worker "lies" (we do not know which of you to believe) on your calling police to protect you; but the Daily Worker only copies the infamous calumny on the same subject that you published about our group. If these methods of the Stalinists are acts of desperation, what were your methods against us? If they show the Stalinists "absolutely unable to answer any of our political contentions", what did they show when you applied them to us so recently?

Don't assume such an injured look of piety, Lovestone. Your own infamies of yesterday are too fresh in everyone's mind to inspire a ha'pennyworth of confidence or faith. You are deserving of neither. But we do owe you a charlatans crown. we do owe you a charlatan's crown.