

# The Peace Conference in Action

**T**HE characters: Lloyd-George, Clemenceau, Uncle Sam, Maupassant's France, Italy, Jugo-Slavia and Japan. The others, the supers, though still on their feet, are a bit shaky.

**JAPAN** (*walking around the table at which sit the rest of the performers; and while walking makes a noise with her slippers, gesticulating strangely, and now and then fixing her robe*):

Mikado, bānzai, and myself, bānzai.  
Slap-grab: Manchuria shall be mine.  
Slap-grab: China shall be mine.  
Slap-grab, slap-grab,  
Grab!

**LLOYD-GEORGE** (*puts something in his silk top-hat, and speaks to himself*): Frightful! Such lack of culture! One can easily see she has come from the Far East: slap-grab, and again grab. Wait, I will show you how to slap and grab! I will build ships and ships, of such quantity and quality that you will be kept in your little island hole under the Rising Sun without a chance of ever getting out. And what a face! What manners! One is liable to become sick at the mere sight of her. (*Again puts something into the silk top-hat.*)

**MAUPASSANT'S FRANCE** (*sits on the lap of Clemenceau, holding a champagne decanter in her hand*):

Do you recall the happy days  
And the magic of my lays?  
My tiny shapely feet  
And milky hands for you to greet.

**CLEMENCEAU**: Gentlemen, members of the Conference! Do you not see how sad is my beautiful France? And do you not divine the reason? It is because she has not Alsace-Lorraine! Oh, ma chere France, you do really need Lorraine, and you are yearning for Alsace. How sad are your beautiful eyes and how pale your face, and in your graceful form a forty-year old dream is abiding: Alsace! Lorraine! True, you are unhappy and your soul mourns, for your sufferings are deep and terrible, they are unlimited. (*Pours some wine.*)

**MAUPASSANT'S FRANCE**:

Do you recall the happy days  
And the magic of my lays?

## A Musical Comedy in One Act By Grisha Korichnev

My tiny shapely feet  
And milky hands for you to greet.

**CLEMENCEAU**: Of course! The legitimate desire of the companion of my ministerial heart could not be expressed more eloquently and with greater pathos than she just has. Is it not convincing? Are you not impressed by artless enthusiasm?

**ALL** (*save Japan*): Oh yes, indeed! It is very, very impressive. We are touched, touched very deeply indeed!

**JAPAN**:

Slap-grab: Manchuria shall be mine.  
Slap-grab: China shall be mine.  
Slap-grab, grab-slap,  
Grab!

**JUGO-SLAVIA** (*sits on a small chair and weeps bitterly*): I... I am so small and yet she abuses me (*pointing to Italy*). Yesterday Uncle Sam made me a present of a little cap and now Italy has taken it away from me. If she does not give it back to me, I will climb this table and scratch her eyes out. Her hat is so big that I could easily hide myself in it. Is it not enough for her? Give me back my little cap! (*Weeps*).

**ITALY**: Oh, you naughty girl! The milk is still on your lips, and here you come with those pretensions. Be glad that I have taken away only your little cap.

**JUGO-SLAVIA**: You Milan witch! (*Throws an ink-well at Italy.*)

(Italy furiously attacks Jugo-Slavia, tears off her clothes, shoes, stockings, etc. Pandemonium breaks loose. Italy and Jugo-Slavia are attacked, now by one party, now by another.)

**MEPHISTO** (*his head appearing through the half-opened door, sings*):

The whole of humanity  
Worships one idol,  
The idol of gold.

While this idol is master  
I'm happy, and everyone dances  
In Satan's grand ball!

(The fighting increases. All faces are convulsed with excitement and fury. Through the back door with a heavy step enters a Russian Bear, leading a small Spartacan by the hand.)

**RUSSIAN BEAR**: Brrrr... Brrrr... Brrrr!

**UNCLE SAM**: What is the matter? Whadaymean, brrrr? Say something human.

**RUSSIAN BEAR**: Long live the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic!

**UNCLE SAM**: Well, my dear fellow, it is dangerous to talk with you. However, if you wish, let us go to an island. There we may have a heart-to-heart talk. Understand this, my dear uncouth fellow, you are a wild animal, and we of the higher breed can not talk to you in a respectable place. Get me?

(Mephisto runs in. Approaches the bear, bows and stands alongside of him. The bear does not notice him. Both sing, in different tunes.)

**RUSSIAN BEAR** (*sings*): Long live the Russian Socialist Federative Republic of Soviets!

**MEPHISTO** (*sings*):

The whole of humanity  
Worships one idol,  
The idol of gold.  
While this idol is master,  
I'm happy, and everyone dances  
In Satan's grand ball!

(The duet does not last long. Mephisto's bass grows weaker and fainter, lost in the bear's roaring. Satan changes now and then to a different costume. His final effort is made in the dress of a Stock Exchange broker. Broker-Mephisto suddenly, with a falsetto shriek, ends his song. His figure, hitherto of considerable size, begins to shrink rapidly and finally vanishes through the ink-well.)

(The bear and the Spartacan begin to dance. A chorus of English miners appears on the stage, surrounds the bear in a ring, and sing: "He's a jolly good fellow.")

(The strains of the International are heard behind the scenes. The merriment and dancing increase. The curtain falls slowly.)

## Debs — and the Struggle Against Reaction

**B**Y unanimous vote the United States Supreme Court has upheld the ten year sentence imposed on Eugene Debs by the Federal Court of Cleveland some months ago. The decision has been hailed with unqualified delight by the bourgeois press, though a few, more voracious than the rest, have cavilled at the fact that the constitutionality of the Espionage Act, under which thousands of men and women are already lying in jail, was not definitely established. Here and there a word has been grudgingly inserted about Debs' personal courage and integrity but unfailingly the writers have answered the call of their class, or, to be more correct, the class that employs them. There is a faint pretense that the confirmation of the sentence was a matter of military necessity or national emergency, but even the most brazen editorials hastily leave this phase of the subject.

The class conscious worker is, however, not deceived by any twist that the cunning of newspaper practice or the trickery of legal phraseology may employ. He recognizes the verdict as an act of war on the working class, he knows that Debs is not sentenced for the protection of the country, in the sense that the term is generally used, but for the protection of the present system of exploitation and robbery. Few if any have had the temerity to hurl the slander of pro-Germanism against Debs. The case is clear cut, for half a century Debs has fearlessly championed the cause of the working class, the class to which he belongs and from which he scorned to rise. In every crisis his voice, his pen and his powerful personality have urged the workers on towards emancipation. Every state in the union has been the scene of his labors, all over the country the people have flocked to hear his voice and never since he first set his face toward the sunlight of the new day has he faltered in his allegiance to the cause of the world's oppressed. It is because of his adherence to this cause that the sentence was first imposed and its imposition is now confirmed.

It is true that in its broad aspect the Debs' case differs little from the thousands of others throughout the country. Every conviction against a Socialist, I.

W. W. or other class conscious worker is backed by the same class tyranny, is an act of war by the capitalists against the workers. But in its more intimate phases the case stands alone. Debs, by his length of service, by his intellectual integrity, and above all by his limitless love, holds an unique position. He is the pulsing heart of the rebel wage slave. He voices the cry of the child worker for sleep, and play and sunshine—for childhood; he voices the dumb longings of the woman toiler for laughter, and love, and beauty—for womanhood; he voices the inarticulate demand of the slave man for leisure, and bread and home—for manhood; he voices the cry of humanity for economic freedom, for life. He is the soul of the American Socialist movement and the inspiration of every other conscious working class organization in the country, and his imprisonment is a gage flung at the feet of the workers.

The imprisonment of every member of our class is such a gage flung with patrician scorn in the path of the "rabble" but it is not to be expected that the workers have yet become sufficiently educated to view it in this light, a thousand incidents distract their attention from the main issue, Debs' case, however, is clearer cut. There can be but one answer to this assault on the workers, we must pick up the gage on the point of the sword of our economic might and hurl it back.

Three score years and ten is man's allotted span, Debs has already passed through sixty-four years of strenuous life and the imposition of a ten year sentence means that he, who loves freedom as it is given to few to love it, shall spend his declining years in a convict's cell unless the workers intervene. A general strike is the only reply to this latest act of bourgeois tyranny. This sentence is a blow struck in the class struggle by the opposing side and it must be replied to by the blow that the workers can make effective—the withdrawal of their economic power. A one day strike, a half hour strike, even a five minute strike will be sufficient to show that the workers mean business. The manifestation of class solidarity will be enough to ensure success. Debs will have secured

his greatest triumph if he can inspire such solidarity and labor will have marched forward many steps.

It may be that behind this act of the Supreme Court there lurks executive pardon for Debs but Debs can take care of that. If the workers of America allow the prison gates to close for one day behind Debs then indeed they are sunk in lethargy. Monarchical England gave MacLean five years only to release him in nine months at the demand of the workers, Imperial Germany gave Liebknecht four years and the workers burst open the prison gates before the term was over, Democratic America decrees ten years to Debs, what do the workers say?

The constitutionality or the unconstitutionality of the law matters not, what does matter is that the application of the law is a class act, an act of aggression by the bourgeois class against the working class in the person of its best loved spokesman. Bourgeois democracy is a fiction for working class consumption. The law, the impartial law, the will of the people's representatives, is invoked to cover a bourgeois offensive in the class struggle. It was so in the case of Mooney, in the case of Haywood, in the case of a thousand nameless ones, but in this case it must be clear to even the dullest worker. Debs is punished for his love and loyalty to his class, for his devotion to the highest ideals of his brothers.

Presidents and diplomats may speak of liberty in ever so idealistic phrases but so long as Debs is imprisoned even the most gullible must see that their words are a sham and a mockery. Bourgeois democracy and idealism is itself tearing away the scales from the eyes of the workers and this latest act is its greatest folly.

The workers must rely on themselves for their own salvation, the first step to the realization of their power lies open through this act. Not only can they free Debs and all his fellows throughout the country but in so acting they move to free themselves from industrial serfdom. The gage is thrown: Eugene V. Debs is to lie in jail for ten years... Take up the challenge workers of America, let the general strike be your answer and let it be swift and sure!