

Another Futile Attempt

By NATHANIEL BUCHWALD

ONLY those are disappointed who really expected something in the way of disarmament from the gathering at Washington of cunning diplomats representing rapacious imperialistic cliques.

One need not be a confirmed disbeliever in salvation by star chamber diplomacy to realize a priori that the international highbinders who gave us the Versailles Pact cannot, in their very nature, lay the foundations of a lasting peace.

The world has changed considerably and for the worse since the signing of the peace treaty, but the imperialistic appetites of the ruling classes have not; and it is to satisfy these appetites with the minimum expenditure of effort that the imperialists of the great powers have sent their spokesmen to Washington.

WORLD SAFE FOR IMPERIALISM

As has been expected, the question of limiting the armaments of the principal contenders for world dominion is merely incidental to the main purpose of making the world safe for imperialism.

The very first condition for a successful imperialistic policy is the stabilization of the capitalist systems in home countries.

Neither England, nor France, nor even the United States can successfully extend their economic rule beyond their boundaries without first consolidating and strengthening the capitalist structure at home.

Economic colonies, commercial spheres of influence, new fields for investment are practically useless without an adequate system of international trade, and no international trade can be carried on without a stable system of credit and exchange.

The monetary units of the international buyers and sellers must stand for a definite quantity of gold, or they mean nothing.

And since the monetary units of most of the European countries represent little more than so many scraps of paper, the very bottom has been knocked out of international commerce, and consequently out of capitalist production which has ever been a natural production for foreign consumption.

WIN PAUPERS AS DEBTORS

Traced to its initial source, the depreciation of money springs from the disintegration of the productive structures of the defeated countries.

The ravages of war plus the monstrous penalties imposed on them by the Treaty of Vengeance all but depleted the economic life of these countries, with the result, that France and England and Italy have paupers for debtors and starving people for customers.

With Germany eliminated as a factor in international commerce, with Russia placed outside the system of export and import, with Austria turned into an almshouse, the victors have their hands full getting rid of the fruits of their victory.

The very basis of international commerce has been destroyed, the smaller countries move in erratic economic orbits, like so many wandering meteors in the trackless spaces of economic chaos.

England has plenty of factories and raw materials, but no customers, and her factories are idle and her workers starving.

France continues getting in small instalments her pound of flesh from Germany, but German gold is not enough to meet the expenses of collecting it, i. e., the maintenance of a vast military machine, and German coal cannot be used to advantage in bolstering up her industries, since industrial intensification is impossible amidst a devastated, despoiled Europe.

EVERYWHERE WANT AND PRIVATION

The pound of German flesh is producing deadly toxins in the organism of France, and her inner strength wanes as a result of this diet.

Everywhere there is want and privation, whether from inability of people to buy, or of the capitalists to sell; whether from sheer lack of means of subsistence, or from superfluity of marketable commodities.

The breakdown of the system of international finance is but one of the symptoms of the more disastrous breakdown of productive and distributive mechanism of capitalist Europe, and when the allied statesmen speak of stabilizing the financial situation they mean salvaging the hulk of capitalist economy.

Only such a salvaging can stave off the complete collapse of what H. G. Wells calls the "white civilization," that is, the economic order based on gain, greed and exploitation.

WAR BURDEN TOO HEAVY

"But what has all this to do with the Washington conference?" you may ask.

Well, it has a great deal. The Washington conference is, in effect, an attempt on the part of international capitalism to save itself from itself.

Limitation of armaments, which is ostensibly the main purpose of the gathering, is one of the chief needs of the governments of the world.

Excessive armaments—and in the nature of imperialistic capitalism armaments cannot be anything but excessive—is one of the contributory and aggravating causes of the present paralysis of capitalism.

The bullies of the world need armaments, of course, but just at present the burden of taxation can no longer be borne by the beasts of burden known as the "people."

To increase this burden still further will break the back of the beast. To continue it as at present will kill the beast thru exhaustion.

The burden must be lightened. The millions of unemployed, the millions of starving wretches cannot pay the price of the armament race.

When the jobless clamor for bread you cannot very well feed them on higher taxes or more engines of war.

Even France finds it increasingly hard to go on arming, tho jingoism and hate are still in vogue with her people. War taxes, which represent nine-tenths of all taxes, are paid by the masses, by the toiling millions, and if the toiling millions are starving you just

can't get any taxes out of them, no more than you can get them out of the less numerous middle class, who suffer in their own way from the "bad times."

And the rich wouldn't finance their wars. That would hardly pay. Wars are very expensive.

CUT OVERHEAD EXPENSES

The diplomatists, therefore, may have been inspired by a sincere desire to attempt a reduction of armaments as a measure of reducing the overhead expenses of imperialism.

But no sooner had they met, than it once more became apparent that the scheme would not work.

Neither of the contenders for dominion in the far East would relinquish the advantages gained during the war, or the ambitions aroused by victory.

France is more than ever bent on dominating Europe, and England will just as leave "have it out" with her dear ally as with any power that threatens her mastery of the world.

Japan feels strong enough, and her appetite is keen enough to gobble up China, and the United States insists on getting no smaller a chunk than Japan.

A reduction of armaments cannot be agreed upon when everyone is everyone else's potential enemy.

DO NOT TALK ANTI-WAR

Not even a suggestion has been made at the conference to "disarm morally," to substitute some other scheme than war for the settlement of the imperialist ambitions of the several powers.

"Security" and "protection" and "safety" are, as ever, measured in terms of warships and armies and airships.

The institution of war is still being taken for granted be every imperialist group, and such being the case, it is obviously to the advantage of each group to be stronger than the other.

There is nothing ludicrous in the sight of "disarmament" delegations haggling for more armaments on behalf of their respective countries.

The rule of the jungle is still the rule of imperialism, and he would be a fool who would permit his fangs to be dulled or his claws to be clipped.

KEY TO CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM

This is indeed the key to the situation, the key to the history of capitalist imperialism.

Every attempt of the national imperialist groups to get together is frustrated by the innate antagonisms of these groups.

Those who fail to see this genetic enmity between one national imperialism and another will go on forever talking pacifism or a league of nations, or world concord, and forever bewail the lack of harmony on earth.

Capitalism as a mode of production may be an international institution; imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism may be international in its characteristics, but capitalism and imperialism in operation cannot by their very nature be international.

The greed for profit of the individual capitalist, multiplied by the number of capitalists of a given country, equals the national greed of that country's imperialism, and each national imperialism moves and acts as a unit.

Nationalism, the national state, is but a form of group imperialism. There can be no more peace and international solidarity between the imperialists of the world than there was between feudal monarchs.

Imperialist crews will make alliances, they will band together to make war upon another imperialist band, but to conclude a lasting peace all around would mean to give up the business of imperialism, which is war for the sake of booty, and this no imperialist will permit.

BASIC TRUTHS EMPHASIZED

The Washington conference has merely emphasized these truths. It has once more merely demonstrated the utter impossibility of attaining anything like a truce between the warring imperialist groups.

It has impressed it even upon the minds of the well wishers of the "white civilization," that international imperialism cannot act in concert even when threatened by common destruction.

It has taught masses of workers not to put their faith in princes of the imperialist world, not to hope for salvation by international agreements among brigands.

The conference has been a farce, a burlesque and a tragedy, but there is a moral to it, and it is in its moral that its value lies.

HARDING AND TAFT

President Harding, following up the recent anti-picket decision of the United States Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice "Bill the Fat," also known as William Howard Taft, has sent another reactionary message to Congress, this time as a Christmas gift to the workers.

Industrial courts, vested with full legal authority to forbid strikes and punish strikers, and a body of law based upon the theory that labor organizations should be closely regulated and supervised lest they take action that shall inconvenience the general public, were among some of his stone-age suggestions.

Taft's recent contribution to the class struggle was the declaration that strikers may have only one picket on duty. "Bill the Fat" must have a poor opinion of the aggressive qualities of the hundreds of heavily armed thugs and cutthroats hired by the employers during every strike.

GO TO THE MASSES!

In response to the great demand, we have issued in pamphlet form the Manifesto of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the workers of all countries. This is the proclamation of the Third Congress on the world situation.

This pamphlet also contains the historic withdrawal statement of the Committee for the Third International of the Socialist Party, in which the comrades now active in the WORKERS' COUNCIL tell why they left the Socialist Party.

The price of this pamphlet is 10c. per copy; six cents per copy in lots of 10 or more. Send all orders to the WORKERS' COUNCIL, 80 E. 11th St., New York City.