

# Peace (!)

Peace, we are told, has now been made. On 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1919, the representatives of the Allied powers and Germany signed a "Peace treaty", officially terminating the "Great War", which it had claimed would "end all war" and "make the world safe for democracy".

To achieve the great result millions of the working class lie in war graves, millions are maimed, crippled, or disfigured for life, millions more, with constitutions shattered, are wondering what the future holds for them.

Alongside this enormous waste of human life and limb, the destruction of wealth that has taken place seems trivial. Yet here the quantities are staggering. Numberless houses, factories and works, numerous mines, roads, railways and canals, thousands of ships with their cargoes, millions of tons of munitions, and extensive crops, forests, and the like, have been destroyed in this welter of war. And even now we are not at the end of the waste and destruction, for Mr. Bonar Law, speaking at a "Victory Loan" meeting, stated that there were still 23 other wars in progress.

But the "Great War" has ended. And almost immediately, in every country throughout the capitalist world, strikes and struggles between masters and workers blaze up. In the countries of the conquerors and the conquered alike, in neutral States and border zones, over-riding all the artificial divisions of territory and race, the antagonism between the working class and the master class gains greater prominence, with fiercer fights, than ever before. These fights, necessary for immediate purposes as many of them are, provide no solution for the fundamental problem facing the working class.

To the capitalist class a solution is impossible. They cannot abolish the antagonism except by abolishing themselves.

The "League of Nations", claimed by its supporters to be the greatest safeguard of future peace that has resulted from the war, is cynically exposed by the military treaties between England, France, and America, to be a combination of the stronger Powers to enforce methods and conditions suitable to their own interests upon the weaker nations.

What other arrangements or undertakings have been made we do not at present know, but the refusal of China, one of the Allies, to sign the "Peace" Treaty is significant. One reason for China's action that has leaked out is the practical handing over of Chinese territory--the Shantung Peninsular, to Japan. As this action threatens to at least restrain, if not to shut out, American trade in that part of China, because of the important seaports on the Shantung coast, it is raising a pretty quarrel between America and Japan, whose trade rivalry is already intense.

Such portions of the "Peace" Treaty with Germany as have been published further support our case. Large areas are to be taken from Germany and handed over to France, Belgium, Poland, and Denmark. In some cases a plebiscite of the inhabitants of certain areas may be taken later on, but this is entirely within the discretion of the "League", who may withhold such plebiscite if they wish. It is, of course, quite an

accident that so many of these areas contain rich coal and ore deposits. In addition the Allies are to enjoy the "most favoured nation" treatment in commerce, to have unrestricted freedom of transit for their goods, and no Tariff discrimination for five years. While children are starving in Germany over 100,000 milch cows are to be taken by the Allies.

In the *Socialist Standard* for September 1914, in our Manifesto on the War, we stated:

"The Capitalists of Europe have quarrelled over the questions of the control of trade routes and the world's markets, and are endeavouring to exploit the political ignorance and blind passions of the working class of their respective countries in order to induce the said workers to take up arms in what is solely their masters' quarrel."

Alone of all parties in this country we took our stand upon the Socialist position. So-called Socialist parties that supported the war then, are now in many cases pretending to be opposed to such wars and are urging the workers to demonstrate and strike against British soldiers being used against Russian workers. Too ignorant or cowardly in those days to stand for the interests of the working class, they now try to achieve a popularity and reputation by urging soldiers to refuse to fire on Russian workers, while they applauded or were silent when the same soldiers were shooting down German, Austrian, or Hungarian soldiers.

Nay, even when these soldiers were used against workers at home--in Dublin, Hull, Tonypany, and Glasgow--they accepted the right claimed by the capitalists to use such forces for their own interests, without any call for a strike.

In the manifesto mentioned above we said:

"The machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers. These armed forces, therefore, will only be set in motion to further the interests of the class who control them--the master class."

As far as Russia is concerned, there are signs that "intervention" is nearing its end--not because of the demonstrations (those called for 21<sup>st</sup> July were a ghastly failure), but because of a division of interests in the capitalist camp.

While the British and French capitalists who have invested large amounts of capital in developing Russian industry, desire intervention for the purpose of seizing control of the productive forces, either for themselves or in combination with the Russian master class, the other capitalists are quietly but effectively protesting against the scheme. Those who manufacture at home and seek markets abroad, note with anxiety how Japan and America are preparing to take hold of the Russian market. According to some reports, German merchants are already trading in Russia. On the other hand the Bolshevik Government has repeatedly announced its readiness to make "economic" and "industrial" concessions to foreign capitalists in exchange for seeds, machinery, and tools. The acceptance of these "concessions" can have but one result--the running of the main industries of Russia on capitalist lines.

The backward economic conditions of Russia compel the Bolsheviks to make these offers that are in flat contradiction to their theories, and they can no more resist successfully the force of these circumstances than they could avoid signing the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

Hence that section of the capitalist class who wish to open trade with Russia favour the withdrawal of Allied support of all kinds from Kotchak and Dennikin, and the making of a commercial agreement with the Bolshevik Government. Their need for haste is increased by the open campaign of jingoism that arose again after the Armistice and which has been epitomised by Sir Douglas Haig when receiving the Freedom of the City of London on the 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1919. Speaking of his experience of the war he said:

"My message to you, and through you to the Empire, is to urge you, now that the war has given you at once the reason and the opportunity to do so, to set up forthwith the organisation of a strong citizen Army on Territorial lines--an organisation which shall ensure that every able-bodied citizen shall come forward when the next crisis comes, not as a willing, patriotic, but militarily ignorant volunteer, but as a trained man." (*Daily News*, 13. 6. 1919).

Here, even before the "Peace" treaty was signed, was the exposure of the foul lies of the capitalist class that this war was "to end all war".

While competition between capitalist groups for routes, markets, and control of raw material exists, the cause of war remains. The amalgamation of some of these groups into "leagues" or "associations", while it may put off the evil day for a while, only makes the struggle the greater when it does arise. But even if the whole of the greater capitalists of the world were to unite for the control of the globe, there would still remain the greatest of all wars to be fought out--the Class War for the freedom of Mankind.

During the "Great War" the capitalist class on both sides broke down many of the old national and racial barriers that still existed between various sections of slaves under their control. Black chattel slaves fought alongside yellow contract workers. Irish Home Rulers stood by jingo Englishmen, French Syndicalists by Japanese Imperialists.

Clearer than ever before stands out the great fact that there is no hope for real peace in the world until these various sections of workers recognise the common fundamental character of their slavery and set to work to remove it, thus ending the enslavement of the human race by the establishment of Socialism.

As in September 1914, so now we say:

"Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow workers of all lands the expression of our good will and Socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism."

(August 1919)