

# The International Communist Conference.

THE Conference of the Communist International, convened in Holland February 10-17, was an event of primary importance in the development of the International. In spite of the enormous difficulty experienced by Communists in moving from one country to another, the Conference met; and in spite of the Dutch police breaking up the meetings before our work was completed, the Conference transacted enough of its business to make it of fundamental value, — particularly in the development of a Communist International functioning actively and unitedly on a world basis, and in initiating the formulation and discussion of problems of party tactics and immediate action decisive for victory in the final struggle.

Organizations represented in the Conference were as follows: Communist Party of Russia, represented by mandate; Communist Party of Germany (Opposition); Communist Party of America; Communist Party of Holland; England: British Socialist Party, Workers' Socialist Federation, and the Shop Steward and Workers' Committees; Communist Group of Switzerland; and the Communist Group of the Socialist movement of Belgium. In all, 16 delegates were officially present; in addition, with a voice but no vote: a member of the Communist Party of Hungary, formerly in the Soviet Government there; a Chinese comrade; a representative of the Communist movement of the Dutch East Indies; and comrades Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter. After the Conference was dispersed there arrived delegates from the Communist Party of Germany (Central Committee), the Communist Party of Austria, the Communist Party of Roumania, and the Left Wing of the Socialist Party of Spain. F. Loriot, of the Left Wing of the French Socialist Party, sent a letter expressing regrets at not being able to come, and describing the French movement, its prospects and its defects, particularly lamenting the faith in "the unity of the party" which prevents the emergence of a Communist Party. The delegates who did come but could not participate in the Conference discussed problems with the Executive of the International sub-Bureau created by the Conference.

## DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE.

1—The Conference adopted a declaration on Soviet Russia calling upon the workers of all countries not to allow peace with Russia to come through capitalist necessity, but to compel peace by means of revolutionary pressure upon the governments, urging three methods of action, mass demonstrations of protest, demonstration strikes, and coercive strikes, — coercive strikes being the decisive move to compel the acquiescence of

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the governments. The declaration repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of action, and authorizes the International sub-Bureau to issue a call for an international General Strike as the situation matures. The declaration, moreover, provides against repeating the fiasco of the July 21 strike initiated by the Socialist Party of Italy, by —

a) Instructing the Bureau to establish connections with each country to measure the sentiment prevailing; and insuring a period of intense preparatory agitation and organization.

b) Providing that the General Strike for Russia shall include political and economic demands in accordance with the revolutionary requirements in each country, thereby making the movement for Soviet Russia an integral part of the immediate revolutionary struggle of the proletariat

c) Avoiding the fundamental mistake of the July 21 strike of working through the bureaucracy of the trades unions, and urging that preparations for a General Strike shall proceed through the branches of the unions, extra-union organizations (such as the Shop Stewards and Workers' Committees of England), and the creation of extra-union organizations, if necessary.

2—The Conference adopted a thesis on Unionism, which I prepared and introduced in the name of the Communist Party of America, and which was adopted unanimously. This thesis constitutes the first authoritative utterance of the International on the Communist conception of unionism (in general, it agrees with a declaration of G. Zinoviev on Unionism); and it indicates, moreover, that the conception of Unionism developed by the Communist Party of America (which has been misrepresented and stupidly attacked equally by the I. W. W. and the Socialist Labor Party) is the identical conception of the Communist International. This is a summary of the thesis:

a) Unions are necessary organizations for the immediate struggle of the workers; in spite of their limitations they can, particularly as industrial unions, become active means of revolutionary struggle and a factor in the Communist reconstruction of society.

b) The trades unions, while means of resisting and often improving the most degrading conditions of Capitalism, are incapable of actually and materially improving the general condition of labor.

c) The trades unions developed during the epoch of small industry, and of intense national economic development (1870-1900); this circum-

stance, combined with the artisan conception of craft skill as a form of property, produced a property and pretty bourgeois ideology and the concept of limiting the struggle within the limits of Capitalism and the nation. The trades unions represented, and still largely represent, the skilled workers in the upper layers of the working class, the "aristocracy of labor."

d) The dominant trades unionism accepts Capitalism; and, under Imperialism, Capitalism seduces the "aristocracy of labor" with a share in the profits of Imperialism, by means of higher wages, labor legislation, and improved conditions generally; the upper layers of the working class using the trades unions to "stabilize" labor in industry and promote Imperialism.

e) Realizing its economic impotence (an impotence produced by nonrevolutionary purposes and an archaic craft form of unionism unable to cope with the concentrated industry of modern Capitalism) the dominant trades unionism turns to parliamentary action in the form of Laborism; and, as Laborism, trades unionism in its dominant expression merges definitely in State Capitalism and Imperialism. The tendency is for Laborism and Socialism to unite.

f) Laborism becomes the final bulwark of defense of Capitalism against the oncoming proletarian revolution. Accordingly, a merciless struggle against Laborism is necessary; but while expressing itself politically as parliamentarism and petty bourgeois democracy, the basis of Laborism is trades unionism; the struggle against trades unionism, therefore, is an indispensable phase of the struggle against Laborism.

g) This struggle against trades unionism must proceed by means of the Communist Party's general agitation to drive the unions to more revolutionary action, the formation of extra-union organizations such as the Shop Stewards, Workers' Committees and economic Workers' Councils, the organization of direct branches of the Communist Party in the shops, mills and mines, and the construction of industrial unions.

h) The agitation for and construction of industrial unions is a factor of the utmost importance in developing Communist consciousness and the final revolutionary struggle. But industrial unionism must recognize its limitations; it must develop the concept and practice, in co-operation with the Communist Party, of the general political strike. Industrial unionism cannot under Capitalism organize all the workers or an overwhelming majority; the concept of organizing, under Capitalism and gradually, workers' control of industry in terms of industrial unions, is an expression, inverted in form, of the concept of parliamentary acquisition of power