

The Holland Conference of The Communist International

In November, 1919, Comrade Rutgers came from Russia with a mandate from the Executive Committee of the Third International to organize a sub-bureau at Amsterdam. The members of the Bureau were to be designated by the Executive Committee. The principal tasks of this Bureau were to be:

1. The establishment of a Communist Propaganda Center with a bulletin and publication in three languages.

2. The establishment of relations with the various Communist Parties and groups of Western Europe and America.

3. The organization of an International Communist Conference without delay.

The Communist Party of Germany having also announced a plan for an international Communist Conference, organized the Secretariat of Western Europe and invited the Communist Parties to meet in Germany in the latter half of January, the provisional Bureau at Amsterdam decided to participate in this conference and to prepare resolutions, etc., which were to be sent to Berlin.

In the middle of January the American and English representatives reached Holland. No communications having yet been received from Germany, where a state of siege has been declared, the Provisional Bureau at Amsterdam decided to utilize the presence of the English and American comrades and hasten a conference at Amsterdam. The way for this conference has already been paved by the visits of Dutch comrades to England, Switzerland, Belgium and France.

A courier was sent to the German comrades to ask them to come as quickly as possible. The conference opened on February 3, 1920. Only one delegate representing the opposition in the "Communist Party" was present from Germany at the opening. The other German delegates arrived eight days later. In addition to the delegates of the various Communist groups of England, America and Holland, the conference was attended by two delegates from a Belgian Communist group, by a comrade who had participated in the Hungarian Revolution, by a representative of the revolutionary movement in the Dutch West Indies and by a Chinese comrade. The latter had no credentials. The Swiss delegates could not participate in the regular discussion because they arrived toward the end of the conference.

The first session took place on February the 3rd. After an opening address by Comrade Rutgers, the Bureau of the Congress was named and the order of business was set. The Conference reopened on February 4th. The first point of discussion was an appeal to the workers to support Soviet Russia. The discussion, which was very lively, lasted two days. Two main tendencies

one striving to set afoot a real mass movement in favor of Russia, even if it should net success only to the extent of introducing revolutionary leaven into every great economic strike, — this with the object of convincing masses of every country that their own fate rests indissolubly with the fate of Soviet Russia; the other sought to have the conference order a great International strike without delay. Those who desired the latter had no illusions at all as to the probable success of such an appeal, but they held that it was the primary task of the Communists to educate the masses in the import of unity through international action. After a thorough discussion, in which were pointed out the dangers which might confront Soviet Russia through the lifting of a blockade not brought about by the pressure of the masses, but in accordance with the plans of the capitalist governments. A committee was elected to draw up a resolution combining both tendencies. This resolution was accepted unanimously.

Then the Conference discussed two other questions: The creation of a Communist Bureau for Western Europe and the Americas, and the unification of the different Communist groups existing in several countries. The absence of the comrades of "The Secretariat of Western Europe" established in Germany rendered the situation regarding the first of these questions very delicate. It ended, however, in a decision that a Bureau should be established at Amsterdam for propaganda, the strengthening of bonds between the Communist groups of Europe and America, and securing contact of the Bureau with the latter's work and organization. It is hoped to avoid conflict between the two organizations of the Third International by reserving for the Secretariat, established in Germany, relations with the different countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The motion to establish a bureau was also carried unanimously.

There was not as much unanimity in the discussion of the cases of unity of the Communist groups of each country. The resolution proposed included a strict obligation for the severing of all relations with parties affiliated directly or indirectly with the Social Patriotic International. This brought forward serious objections from the delegates of one of the English Parties (The British Socialist Party). They expressed their apprehension of such a measure which would completely isolate the English Communist Party and prevent it from becoming a live force in the political struggle of the country. This would result from making it impossible for a Communist Party to affiliate with the mass of the "British Labor Party". The delegates of the other English organizations entertained no such fears. They declared that Communist unity in their country could be obtained only by the com-

plete rupture with the "Labor Party."

After the vote on the question of unity, the Conference proceeded to a discussion of theses on Unionism brilliantly presented and defended by the American comrade Louis C. Fraina. Comrade Bowman, one of the leading figures of the Independent Unions of Holland, was present at this session and participated in the discussion. "Handelsblad", the big capitalist daily of Amsterdam, later exploited this fact in its "revelations concerning the secret Communist Conference." It claimed that the General Strike of the Amsterdam transport workers had been manufactured and that other strikes had been planned by "Russian Gold". Alas! these silly accusations were received by "Het Volk", the organ of the Social Democratic Party, in order to detach the independent unions taking part in the strike.

After working painfully for four days, the Conference was compelled to leave the place where these sessions were held and to seek refuge at the home of a comrade. Several delegates noticed that they were being followed regularly by detectives. The position of those who did not have regular passports necessitated this change by means of which it was hoped the police would lose track of them. On Sunday, February 8th, a Swiss comrade arrived. He brought the news that several German delegates expected to reach Holland in a few days. It was decided to adjourn the session and reunite on the 11th. Unfortunately, the change did not succeed in getting the police off the tracks. Several comrades were arrested and searched. Others escaped worse fate by leaving the country secretly. A Belgian delegate was held twenty-four hours and then deported. The lack of experience of our party in reference to illegal action and other circumstances prevented taking certain necessary precautions, which would perhaps have rendered possible a normal ending of the Conference.

Under the above circumstances it was impossible to resume the session. Several German delegates were traced and caught by the Noske regime. The American and Swiss delegates were hounded by their "democratic" governments. For the latter to try valor would mean spending long years in Holland's prisons. None dared to expose himself to this danger constantly confronting him in Amsterdam. The members of the Executive Committee of the Bureau as well as the English and American delegates succeeded in having several conferences with the delegates who arrived from Germany. Among the latter were two delegates of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, a delegate of the Secretariat for Western Europe, and of the Russian Communist Party, and a delegate of the International

Youth. The discussion was confined to the choosing of the Amsterdam Bureau. The comrades in question could not accept the choice in its actual form. There was a long discussion, but they were unable to reach an agreement. They finally adjourned with the following decisions:

1. The Secretariat and Bureau are to continue their propaganda work separately for the next three months. All efforts should be made to avoid conflict between them.

2. In the three months there will be held another International Communist Conference which will dispose, it is to be hoped, of the authority necessary for organizing a Bureau along more clearly defined lines.

Because of the limited composition of the Amsterdam Conference and its premature closing entailed by police activities which prevented the German comrades from participating in it, the theses and resolutions accepted can only be provisional for the Communist International. These theses and resolutions have, however, a relative value in indicating the trend of the development of Communist thought, mainly in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Furthermore, they can and should serve as material for a future international congress.

In spite of all these limitations we cannot hold the results of the Conference useless. On the contrary, we are convinced that they will promote the international mass movement for Soviet Russia as well as strengthen the bonds among the groups of the advance guard and hasten their unification on the general basic principles and tactics laid down by the Conference. And we look upon these as most valuable results.

The Executive Committee.

N. B. Delegates from Spain, Mexico, Finland and Scotland arrived after the Conference. With the latter the members of the Executive Committee had only private discussions. As a result permanent relations were established. The discussions in regard to Spain and Mexico facilitated connections with America and Far East through a Bureau in America.

THE LAW

Judge Weeks, charging the hand-picked jury in the Winitsky case: We are living in this country under a system of jurisprudence the most enlightened, most just and most fair of any country in the world.

Sure! Don't we see it in operation? What's the need of tellin' us?

He also said: The law protects the weak against the strong.

Don't we know that too? Doesn't it always protect the bourgeoisie against the working-class?

Pass this on to a worker—a trusted one.

All communications for Party or Defense go through the established channels.

ALL POWER TO THE WORKERS!

Build the unit in the shop!