

Stockholm

By LIONEL PETERSEN

The recent statement issued by the organization committee in charge of arrangements for the much-postponed Stockholm Conference brings the question of an International Peace Conference again to the fore.

The outrageous and infinitely stupid action of the Wilson War Administration in refusing passports to the American delegates to the Stockholm Conference has had the effect of establishing that Conference firmly in the hearts of American Socialists. The Socialist press of the country deemed it its "patriotic" duty to picture Stockholm as the "Hope of the World," etc., etc., without the slightest attempt at a real evaluation of the forces gathered, or likely to be gathered there, and the work that might reasonably be expected to be there accomplished. The more the pity. For at no time and on no occasion was calm and critical judgment more necessary in connection with a Socialist enterprise than in connection with the Stockholm Conference.

It is perhaps still too early to pass final judgment upon the first, abortive attempt at Stockholm—which is sharply to be differentiated from the later attempt made by the Russian Socialists at such a conference. But the known facts seem to indicate that it was at least of a very dubious character, and that the eulogies showered upon it by the Socialist press of this country was largely undeserved, to say the least. It is only fair perhaps to say in this connection that the New York *Volkszeitung*, which has made so enviable a record for fidelity to principle during the entire duration of the war, has, after some hesitation, finally taken position *against* the First Stockholm Conference, believing it to be nothing but a gathering of "Social Patriots."

This judgment, and perhaps even a more severe one, seems to be justified by the opinions expressed by some of the most valiant fighters against war and imperialism in the ranks of the European Socialists, as well as by some of the facts attending the calling and the meeting of the Conference. There is, of

course, no doubt of the fact that the Dutch-Scandinavian committee which called the Conference was actuated by the very best of motives. But there seems to be as little doubt of the fact that the German and Austrian governments saw a chance of turning this Conference into an instrument for the bringing about of a "German Peace," and that the German and Austrian "Majority" Socialists were willing to lend a helping hand in this scheme.

This is evidently the opinion of a part of the German "Minority" Socialists, led by the veteran Franz Mehring, who refused to participate in the Conference. In a remarkable letter written by Mehring to Tchcheidze as President of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council, Mehring has the following to say on the subject:

"The most burning task for all of us at the present time is the conquest of peace, and the contemplated international conference at Stockholm is to be devoted to this work. As German Social Democrats we protest most emphatically against the admission into this conference of the "Majority" Social Democrats, that is to say, the Government Socialists grouped around the Party Executive. Our protest is based on considerations of principle as well as expediency. We refuse to participate in any consultation with these elements, and we very urgently ask our Russian comrades to oppose with all their power the admission of these elements to the Conference, in the interests of a Proletarian Peace and the re-birth of a true International. *The "Majority" Socialists will not represent at the Conference either the Socialist movement or the German Proletariat, but only the German Government and its interests.*"

And Fritz Adler, secretary of the Social Democratic delegation in the Austrian Reichsrath, and one of the ablest of the younger generation of thinkers and writers in the international Socialist movement, who offered his life on the altar of fidelity to Socialist principle, said, when speaking in the shadow of death at his trial for the execution of Count Stuergh, the Austrian Premier, that the German and Austrian "Majority" Socialists were going