

By LUDWIG LORE

In "The Worker."

THE Unity Conference of the three Internationals in Berlin was a signal success. Its task, the creation of an understanding and of a basis for united action, was fulfilled.

The calling of an international congress at which all Communist and Socialist parties are to be represented, was decided upon and April 20th, set for the date of the first unified undertaking—workers' demonstrations all over Europe.

That is no mean achievement—more than most of us dared to hope for, more than it seemed possible to accomplish.

That it was possible was due in no small measure to the influence of the capitalist press which was so blatant in its jubilation over the apparent failure of the unity plan, that it betrayed all too clearly its own fear of the contemplated move.

Above all, however, unity became a fact because it answers a crying need of the times, because conditions in Europe leave the working class no other choice.

They must unite, or allow the powerful flood of capitalist reaction to sweep everything before it. Only a strong, well organized labor movement can hope to ward off further wage reductions and to stem the flood of attacks upon the organizations of the working class.

The Russian Influence

Then there is Soviet Russia. The victorious Allies fully intended to use the Genoa Conference to bring pressure to bear upon the Soviet Republic for its final and complete industrial subjection.

For this move the crafty Lloyd George counted upon the support—or at any rate upon the silent assent—of the "labor parties" and of the right Social-Democrats of the European nations. * * *

In this critical situation there was no choice. Some means must be found of co-ordinating those proletarian groups and Socialist parties that exercise political influence or can bring industrial pressure to bear upon their governments.

The Labor Parties and the Social-Democrats, on the other hand, were in no position to repel the offered hand of friendship.

They feared that the leaders of the Russian revolutionary government might enter into contracts and complete arrangements that would possibly react unfavorably upon industrial conditions in their own countries.

Germany, for instance, cannot count upon industrial rehabilitation for years to come unless the Versailles treaty undergoes radical alteration. For Austria this holds doubly true in regard to the treaty of St. Germaine.

The French and British working classes, again, fear the competition of German and Austrian starvation wages,—that product of mark depreciation, more even than their own capitalist class.

Furthermore, even the farthest right of Social-Democracies has a lively interest in the continued existence of Soviet Russia. Not that they feel its greatness and its promise to the proletariat. * * * But it is invaluable as a scarecrow with which the capitalist class of their own countries can be bluffed into some show of reason. * * *

LABOR AGE

The Berlin Accomplishments

THE unity conference bases its plans of action upon seven points of unification. "No. 1" calls for the election of a committee of nine for the arrangement of an international proletarian congress at which all communist, socialist, syndicalist and labor parties are to be represented.

The outcome of this Congress—let us not give way to extravagant hopes—will be meager enough. The elements to be brought together are fundamentally inimical.

Since the Congress must, above all, emphasize the united will of all these elements to accomplish certain definitely expressed objects, everything will have to be avoided that may create differences of opinion, and all resolutions and motions will have to be so carefully adjusted, balanced, and counter-balanced that they will lose all practical significance and force. * * *

The second point pledges the Executive Committees of the three Internationals to establish amicable relations between the Amsterdam and the Red Trade Union Internationals and to do away, as much as possible, with friction between the two wings.

Only a short time ago Moscow attempted to establish such a labor union united front. * * * The Amsterdamers were by no means opposed to a world congress, provided the Red Trade Union Congress was disregarded, since it "represents nothing and nobody." They were willing to grant spokesmen to the Russian labor unions.

Obstacles

THE same difficulty is experienced in the desire to avoid clashes between the parties. So long as there are so many different elements that cannot be united into an organization whole, so long friction will be unavoidable.

We might possibly conceive of reasonably harmonious relations between the parties of the Third and of the Second and a Half International.

On the other hand, we can see not even the remotest likelihood of united action between communists and the socialists of the Second International.

The general strike that put an end to the Kapp putsch and the recent German railway strike are two examples. In both instances the marriage was dissolved before the honeymoon was over. Experience has shown that these social-democratic parties, once they have whetted their appetites by a taste from the government troughs, become more and more conservative and unsocialistic. The tendency of their development is never toward radicalization. * * *

Points three and four dealing with the fate of indicted revolutionaries in Russia are unimportant, since the Soviet Government has long ago declared that these counter-revolutionary "heroes" shall receive open and public trial, and that they shall be accorded every legal protection.

No death penalty threatens these assassins of the "right," however, richly they may have deserved it. The Bolshevik judge crimes of four years standing with the utmost mildness. They have no desire to emulate Ebert, the Bavarian Hoffman and Noske.

Besides, the political situation at the present time would make it more than foolhardy to undertake to punish acts committed in the first revolutionary period too severely.

Point five calls, as we have mentioned before, for a political demonstration on April 20th, which will certainly call forth a tremendous response—in Europe, altho the slogans and objects are of significance for only a few of the European nations.

The Call for Unity

THERE is something fascinating about the call for a united front. It hypnotizes us and the hope stirs softly within us that the time may come again when there will be only one Socialist party and one International.

But the supporters of neither the Third nor the Second International are thinking of organic unity, of an amalgamation of organizations.

Their sole purpose is a co-ordination of efforts between the various parties and organizations for certain definite aims and demands.

They emphatically declare that there is no conceivable possibility of doing away with existing separate party organizations, that to do this would mean to betray the principles that each party in contrast to other internationals and other parties, upholds and propagates.

The party splits in the various countries did not arise out of personal issues. The leaders did not precipitate disharmony in otherwise united movements.

Revolutionary socialists all over the world were forced by a precipitation of events to realize that the existing Socialist movement had become reformistic and anti-revolutionary. Socialist reformers had defeated the world revolution. The victorious Russian revolution was thrown backward in its development for decades by the weakness and the betrayal of the West European working class.

The Third International and its parties have set out to teach the proletariat of the world anew, to familiarize it with the A B C of revolutionary, of Marxian Socialism, to replace a phantastic romanticism with the hard necessity of preparing for the social revolution. They have only just begun. Nowhere have they even approached completion. * * *

Misinterpretations

AND yet the rôle of a united front has frequently been so interpreted. Here in the United States the same over-enthusiastic elements that frantically preached "armed uprisings" only a few years ago, and prophesized the coming of the social revolution in this country "in a few months" as an absolute certainty, are now rejoicing at the prospect of a united front.

In the last meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Greater New York, for instance, a motion was made demanding the united front for the November campaign.

It was proposed to unite the Workers' Party, the Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, the Farmer-Labor Party, and other working-class bodies upon one ticket to oppose the capitalist enemy.

Under existing conditions this would give the reformistic group the upper hand. * * *

The Communist movement in the United States was shipwrecked in the year of its launching because it slavishly copied European methods and swallowed unthinkingly European ideas.

Let us beware, lest we wreck our movement again by making the same mistake!