

THE NEGRO MOVEMENT

The First International Conference of Negro Workers

By V. Chattopadhyaya.

The idea of an international conference of Negro workers was first mooted at the Second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism held in July 1929 at Frankfurt am Main, where among the 400 odd delegates that had come from all parts of the world, there were a number of Negro delegates from Africa and America, besides various non-Negro delegates directly interested in the organisation of the Negro masses for the struggle against imperialism. The reports submitted to that Congress on the conditions of life of the Negro masses under British, French, Belgian, Portuguese and American imperialist exploitation showed clearly (1) that there was a considerable similarity in those conditions in the various African colonies; (2) that the Negro workers in the various colonies were isolated from one another and from the workers of other countries; (3) that the vast Negro masses were completely unorganised; and (4) that they were being politically misled and deceived for the benefit of the capitalists and imperialists by Garveyism, pan-Africanism, national reformism and trade union reformism. It was felt that it was essential to undertake the organisation, particularly the trade union organisation, of the Negro workers, the coordination on an international scale, and the organisation of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Negroes on a class basis as against the racial nationalism that was being preached by black capitalists and agents of imperialism. In order to achieve these ends, a Provisional **International Committee of Negro Workers** was constituted under the chairmanship of **James W. Ford**, National Organiser of the Trade Union Unity League, U.S.A., and it was resolved to convene an international conference on July 1st, 1930, to take place in London, the metropolis of the largest Slave Empire of the world.

But at this critical moment the profits and privileges of the British slave-drivers are being carefully protected by the "Labour" Government and the organisers of the Conference were informed on May 21st that his Majesty's Government would not allow the Conference to be held in London. The facts have been published by Comrade **Glyn Evans** in answer to an editorial note in the I.L.P. organ, the "New Leader", which in all matters relating to the struggles of the colonial peoples has systematically supported the imperialist policy and actions of the MacDonald Government. The meaning of the Home Secretary's refusal "to give any sanction to the proposed Conference or to authorise facilities for the attendance of delegates" is perfectly clear. Not only were no facilities authorised, but steps were taken to prevent Negro workers' delegates from landing and to harass those that were in England. The "Daily Herald" declared in its issue of June 6th that "orders were issued yesterday that all port officials should keep a lookout for Negro delegates who may try to enter this country".

And the mandated delegates of Negro workers' organisations from the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, etc. who arrived in London with passports perfectly in order were followed and harassed by Scotland Yard detectives till their position became intolerable. These Negroes are all British subjects who in their own countries are eternally told how proud they should be to be members of the free and democratic British Commonwealth of Nations!

While the MacDonald Government thus prevented the Negro workers from meeting in London and from denouncing the crimes of British imperialism in Africa, the Colonial Governments did their part by refusing passports to Negro delegates to leave their country. The result was that the South African delegates, representing important militant unions, the delegates from the French and the Belgian Congo, from the Portuguese Angola, and other territories were unable to be present at the Conference.

In spite of these impediments, a more determined effort ought perhaps to have been made to hold the Conference in London and thus to challenge the "Labour" Government to use force in suppressing it. This would have even more clearly exposed its true imperialist character. But the organisers decided to hold the Conference in **Hamburg**, where, after unavoidable delays occasioned by the change in its venue, it was opened on

July 7th. There were delegates, including a woman, from seven important Negro unions in the U.S.A. (miners, railway workers, needle trades, etc.) and delegates from Jamaica, Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and from the former German colony of Cameroon, as well as a white delegate from the South African Negro workers' organisations. Owing to the absence of representation from the French colonies, from East Africa, from the Belgian and Portuguese territories, and from the Latin American countries, it was obvious that this first meeting of Negro workers was more a preparatory Conference, the political importance of which is none the less very considerable. The very fact that such a conference was held, and the clear line of policy and action laid down in the resolutions are bound to have a strong influence upon the development of the struggle.

The agenda of the Conference included all the important aspects of the problem. After messages of solidarity had been personally delivered by the fraternal delegates of the League Against Imperialism and the International Red Aid, and letters and telegrams had been read from the R.I.L.U., from the Red Sports International, from the Proletarian Congress of Labour, Manila, etc., a comprehensive report on the work of the International Committee during the eleven months of its existence was made by James W. Ford, showing the great difficulties met with in getting into touch with the Negro workers in most parts of Africa, as well as the successes achieved by the organisers in the short time at their disposal. The various delegates dealt with the conditions of the Negro workers in their respective countries, special interest attaching to the report made by Small on behalf of the Bathurst Trade Union which had conducted a valiant fight at the end of last year against the Margarine Combine. A very clear and instructive statement was made by George Padmore, of the Negro Trade Union Committee of the R.I.L.U., on the "Economic struggles and tasks of the Negro workers". He summed up the effects of imperialist exploitation on the condition of the Negro masses: pointed out that the mass struggles of the millions of super-exploited Negroes in Africa and America against the imperialist offensive (South Africa, Haiti, the West Indies and the U.S.A.) coincided with the revolt of other colonial peoples (India, Indochina, etc.) and with the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in the capitalist countries; warned the workers against the national repression of the Negro middle class and intelligentsia; drew attention to the increasingly favourable objective conditions for the development of working class leadership, and sketched the outlines of a programme for the revolutionary organisation of the millions of toiling peasants. These facts were incorporated in a resolution that was unanimously adopted.

Patterson, of the American Negro Labour Congress, made an appeal for a more "vigorous struggle against forced labour and poll tax". He warned the Negro workers against the legislative illusions deliberately created by the League of Nations and the International Labour Office and called upon them to resort to direct action to recover their lands, refuse to pay taxes or rent, repudiate indentures, to fight against the "pass" and the "compound" system, to fight against their tribal chiefs who are agents of imperialism etc. Very important at the present moment is the resolution on the "War Danger and its significance to the Negro Masses" presented by Macaulay of the National Democratic Party of Nigeria. After pointing out how black troops have been used for decades as cannon fodder by the imperialist powers and how they have even been employed to crush the revolutionary movement of the workers in the imperialist countries, the resolution shows the growing danger of war and of an imperialist attack on the Soviet Union. It points out that "in case of such an attack it is the task of all Negro toilers to struggle on the side of the Soviet Union against the imperialists".

Special resolutions were passed against lynching, against the white terror in Alabama (U.S.A.), protesting against the MacDonald Government for refusing permission to hold the Conference in London, and against the South African and other Governments for refusal to grant passports.

A new International Committee was elected consisting of James W. Ford (U.S.A.), I. Hawkins (U.S.A.), George Padmore (U.S.A.), G. Reid (West Indies), F. Macaulay (Nigeria), G. Small (Gambia), Albert Nzula (South Africa), Kouyaté (French West Africa). Representatives of Haiti, Liberia and East Africa are to be added.

During the proceedings, a delegation of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Trade Union Opposition) arrived in the hall and were warmly greeted by the Negro delegates, while on

the second day there was a crowded meeting of Hamburg workers who extended an enthusiastic welcome to the Negro delegates a few of whom spoke at the meeting.

The Conference which was marked throughout by enthusiasm lasted, three days and ended fittingly with the singing of the "Internationale". An official invitation was extended to the delegates to proceed to Moscow to attend the Fifth World Congress of the R.I.L.U. as guests. Eleven delegates have already accepted the invitation. Those who were unable to do so have sent the fraternal greetings of their organisations to the Congress.

There is one observation that deserves to be recorded regarding the Negro Conference. There was a marked difference between the Negroes from the United States who are industrial workers with completely proletarian psychology and outlook, and the delegates from Africa who have more of the mentality of the small farmer. The conditions of the problem in Africa necessitate different methods and tactics from those in the U.S.A., and there may be a tendency for the Negro workers from the U.S.A. to look at the African Negro question too much from the American point of view. Nevertheless, it is a gain to the African worker to come into contact with the representatives of the far more advanced Negro proletariat of America. This contact has been achieved by the Conference.

FASCISM

Finnish Fascism and the Finnish Workers in the United States.

By K. E. H. (New York).

While the bourgeois press daily uses columns upon columns for calumniating and distorting the building of Socialism in the Soviet Union, it just cynically registers what takes place in White Finland without uttering a word against the distortion of the "sacred democratic principles" it pretends to defend. And true to its mission the social democratic press pretends to speak for democracy, while in reality expressing satisfaction as to what takes place, finding the moment opportune for launching violent attacks against the Soviet Union on behalf of the „persecuted Kulaks“!

Why is this so, may one ask? Simply because White Finland is owned and controlled by the great imperialist powers. They own the majority stock in all important industries of Finland. They are in the control of Finland's most important natural resources. The United States imperialists have already for years been financing the Finnish white regime, and its preparation for war against the Soviet Union, while the officers of the British military staff have taken care of training the white guards of Finland. And of course when the white bourgeoisie of Finland is beginning to mobilise its forces to carry out its mission as a vassal state of world imperialism by attacking her own working class to make her rear protected, it is but natural that the bourgeois press nods with satisfaction and that the social fascist press renders its support to her master the imperialist rulers of the world.

White Finland has aggressively played its role as lackey of world imperialism. In the alignment of forces against the Soviet Union she has played an active role in the conferences of the buffer States and in the efforts to build an anti-Soviet block of Baltic States under the leadership of the great imperialist powers. The fascisation of Finland accompanied by the present brutal attacks against the working class of Finland must be looked upon as a link in the chain of attacks against the proletarian world revolution and as a preliminary attack against the Soviet Union, and as such it is the duty of the revolutionary workers all over the world to rally to the support and defence of the revolutionary workers of Finland and to the defence of the Soviet Union.

Regardless of their political backwardness and many weaknesses the Finnish workers in America have always been very sensitive to the manoeuvres of the Finnish white bourgeoisie. After the bloody suppression of the 1918 Finnish revolution they responded by sending over one million marks for the establishment of a new left wing press to counteract the dirty betrayal of the social democrats and to fight the