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International Press Correspondence

Vol. 3

19th Januar 1923

No 8

Open Letter

To the London and Vienna Internationals and the Amsterdam Trade Union International

On the 13th of this month the Executive of the Communist International had addressed the question to you, as to what you intend to do in order to carry out the decision of the Hague Conference regarding the organization of a general strike in case of a war. The Executive of the Communist International has empowered the undersigned, together with Marcel Cachin, to enter into negotiations with you on the question of a common fight against the danger of war. Owing to the persecutions to which the Communist Party of France is subjected because of its struggle against the occupation of the Ruhr, and owing to his impending arrest, Comrade Marcel Cachin is unable to participate in these negotiations. The undersigned are awaiting your reply to form a joint *Committee of Action* with you, capable of taking up the struggle against the threatening war.

At the Hague, the Russian Trade Union delegation proposed that an international protest strike be called for the end of January. This would have demonstrated to the international bourgeoisie the determination of the proletariat to wage war against the dangers of fresh wars. At the Hague, the Russian trade union delegation predicted that January would surely see the occupation of the Ruhr. Our warnings at the Hague fell on deaf ears. Those present at the conference were satisfied with platonic protests, in the belief that bourgeois diplomacy would find some way out. But as we have seen these last four years, capitalist diplomacy has completely failed to create the simplest conditions for the peaceful development of the world. The occupation of the Ruhr threatens the world with a new and unprecedented wholesale slaughter.

The French plan aims not only at compelling the German capitalists to pay over money, but also to force them to admit French interests to the exploitation of these properties and thereby to add great numbers of cheap workers to the low paid labor army already at the disposal of Entente Imperialism.

But this plan was based on the assumption that the French occupation authorities would be able to supervise the Ruhr Valley, to keep industry going and, by distributing or retaining the coal, to force the German industry into submission. But with the removal of the German Coal Syndicate from Essen to Hamburg, the French plan suffered shipwreck. The French occupation authorities are helpless, and find it impossible to keep the Ruhr industry alive. Every succeeding day makes it more difficult for them to pay out the miners' wages. For this reason it is almost certain that they will reach out beyond the boundaries of the Ruhr valley in order to tighten their pressure upon the German people.

Already we hear of war preparations in Poland. France will set her vassals against Germany. But apart from all this every moment is liable to bring a collision between the French troops and the Ruhr population, in which case the nationalistic spirit in Germany may reach its explosive point. Should it happen

that the French military elements will take advantage of Poincaré's difficulties in order to drive him on towards the Rhine-Scission-Policy, — the policy of dismembering Germany, — it may also well be that the chauvanistic elements in Germany will precipitate a war, in order to profit by the nationalistic craze for the purpose of seizing power by means of a counter-revolution.

Already the governments on either bank of the Rhine do not know what the morrow may bring. On the 31st of January the situation will become more acute, for on that day Germany will not be in a position to pay the sums demanded of her. The possibility then arises that the separate action of the French government may turn into a general inter-Allied action. In that case the German people may be faced with the only alternative: *Complete subjugation and enslavement, — or War.*

The Hague conference has decided that the proletariat would fight the danger of war with all means at its disposal, and that in case of imminent danger a general strike would be called.

The danger of war is here. Only the blind can fail to see it. *It is not only a question of war between France and Germany alone.* Such a war would set the whole East and South East of Europe ablaze. The capture of Memel by Lithuania and the events on the Roumanian-Hungarian frontier demonstrate clearly the acuteness of the present situation, in which all forces tend to render every central European conflict, the starting point for a fresh European catastrophe.

We doubt not but that the leaders of the Amsterdam Trade Union International, as well as those of the Vienna and London Internationals see the situation in the same light as we do. We therefore call upon you to lend reality to the solemn declarations which you have made at the Hague only a month ago, and to take the preparatory measures for the un-delayed organization of the mass strike. We call upon you to meet us without delay, in order to decide upon the necessary steps to be taken.

The parties of the Communist International and the working masses behind the Red Labor Union International will do their duty, as our French comrades have sufficiently demonstrated.

We propose the 31st of January as the day when the international protest mass-strike is to begin.

The duration of the strike must be decided upon by the joint conference of the three political and the two trade union Internationals. We propose that this conference be held on the 21st of January in Berlin. Should you prefer another place, we have no objection whatever. We only ask you to act immediately, so that the undersigned may have ample opportunity to obtain the necessary visas.

Berlin, January 16, 1923.

For the Communist International

Clara Zetkin, Walton Newbold, Karl Radek.

For the Red International of Labor Unions

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P. S. The other delegates, Comrades Dudilleux, Hais and Watkins, could not be reached until now.