

# Oudegeest versus Swales on Unity By A. Losovsky

EVER since a rapprochement began to develop between the British and the Soviet trade unions, the general secretary of the Amsterdam International, Oudegeest, who lost his sleep and appetite for grief, began to develop stormy journalistic activities. As a result of his efforts the international social democratic press has now been flooded with articles and notes sharply opposing unity of the international trade union movement.

IN an editorial article in the central organ of the Dutch Social Democracy, "Het Volk," of May 8, we read that "among the followers" of the unity slogan a distinction should be made between those misled and those who do the misleading, that the "unity effort is a result of co-operation between the naivety of the ones and the dishonesty of the others," that "trade union unity" (a journal edited by Comrades Purcell, Hicks and Fimmen) is the camp mainly of those misled and that "the editors and contributors of this organ display more zeal than political wisdom" etc., etc., in the same spirit.

WE would not deal with this "dignified" literature had it not been for the fact that it represents a sample of the methods which the second international and the right wing of the Amsterdam International are forced to resort to in the struggle against the "danger" of the restoration of trade union unity.

However, Oudegeest apparently was not content with the anonymous attack upon the Anglo-Russian rapprochement and taking as his excuse an article in the Labor Magazine, the organ of the British Trade Union Congress and labor party, which belittles the significance of the R. I. L. U., he took upon himself nothing less than the job of saving the Russian trade union movement from the Communist Party.

AFTER a vituperous outpouring upon the heads of "Zinoviev, Lozovsky, and the other leaders standing outside the ranks of their own trade union movement" for their systematic and tireless struggle against reformism, Oudegeest treats his readers to the following Dutch concoction:

THE position of the Communist Party in Russia, not only from a political, but from a trade unionist point of view as well, is more difficult than ever! The leaders of the Russian trade union movement will no longer reconcile themselves (!) with a position of subordination to the Communist Party leaders. The further the capitalist system is becoming rehabilitated in Russia, the more clearly do the trade unions realize their true tasks and the importance of independence.

WE would really gladly support our friend (?) Tomsy and his comrades in their struggle (!) for freedom from the violence of the Communist Party, but owing to the position of a number of countries, where the Communist trade unionists have not yet become as independent as our Russian comrades, we are forced to ponder over the question of whether this sort of consideration for the Russian comrades would not prove too costly in the other countries.

WE, who know of the negotiations between Russia and England somewhat more (!) than would appear from the general press accounts, have gathered the definite impression that Tomsy and his followers are ready to tread along the true path. But the fact remains that the Russian trade unions are affiliated to the Red International of Labor Unions, which takes orders (?) from the Communist Party and whose constitution dictates to its adherents in the various countries the destruction (?) of the Amsterdam International as appears also from the above mentioned speech by Lozovsky, and if we wanted to lend assistance to our Russian comrades in their struggle for emancipation, not only by the initiative of the British labor movement, but on our own impulse, our instinct of self preservation dictates us the greatest caution."

IN reading this sort of literary exercise the only conclusion to which one is forced is that this fellow has become hopelessly confused and that what he wants is a long indefinite furlough.

It takes some skill to put into a little article like this, such an infinite mass of crazy nonsense.

Oudegeest, you see, wants to help the Russian unions to free themselves from the leadership of the Communist Party.

Only he forgot that international imperialism has been trying to do this for several years and got its neck broken in doing so. Was not the offensive upon Soviet Russia carried on under the slogan of the "liberation" of the Russian people from the Communist Party and the Soviets?

HAD Oudegeest understood the Soviet trade union movement just a little he would have refrained from this sort of cavalry raids, as his proposal of assistance to "our friend" Tomsy to free himself from the influence of the Communist Party can bring nothing but homeric laughter from the Russian workers.

AS secretary of the International, he ought to get rid of the ridiculous habit of the provincial solicitors to foist his friendship upon strangers, remembering the French saying that the ridiculous is killing.

Is it worth while arguing with Oudegeest fundamentally? Of course not. The man builds his plans on fantastic assumptions and instead of making a clear breast of his opposition to unity, he travels 80,000 miles around himself, offers friendship, promises to free the Russian workers from the influence of the Communist Party, incidentally garnishing his deliberations by attacks upon the Comintern and the R. I. L. U. guilty of disagreeing with his, Oudegeest's views. To argue with such a man is, of course, useless.

WE would finish right there if it were not for the fact that Oudegeest's literary itch drove him forward with an article in the British press against the policy of the general

council of the British Trade Union Congress and in criticism of some articles by Mr. Swales, president of the general council. Oudegeest did not like Swales' articles defending the Anglo-Russian agreement and advocating the erection of an all-inclusive genuine trade union International.

AS a man of wonderful determination, Oudegeest, forgetting his age and good temper, wrote a lengthy letter to the organ of the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain (The New Leader, of May 15) in which he tells Swales the history of the organization of the Red International of Labor Unions and of its wicked attempts to "destroy" the Amsterdam International.

Oudegeest tells that in 1920, the Comintern and the R. I. L. U. issued an appeal from the Reds to the yellows, that this appeal was signed by Lenin, Zinoviev, Tomsy, Lozovsky and others, that the Amsterdam International, tho resenting it, nevertheless decided to seek the affiliation of the Russian unions, etc. Oudegeest also attempts to deny Swales' statement to the effect that the Russian unions were subjected to a trade union blockade, but since he forgets to offer any serious proof his denials sound like pure anti-Communist declarations.

AFTER several more threats at the Comintern and the R. I. L. U., Oudegeest, as the final stunning argument, triumphantly asks Swales:

"At the time when the British Trade Union Congress in 1919, affiliated with our International, its representatives did not ask for any special pourparlers. They attended our congress, examined the rules and proceeded to affiliate. The same course has been taken by all our affiliated countries. It is so far not clear to me why Russia should have to make an exception."

OUGEEST was sure that this last argument would crush, like a sledge hammer, all possible excuses and would make it impossible for any of the leaders of the British trade union movement to defend their point

of view as to the methods of re-establishing international trade union unity. However, the president of the British Trade Union General Council, Comrade Swales, with characteristic British coolness, replied to this sneer of Oudegeest as follows (New Leader of same date):

"No one knows better than Mr. Oudegeest that there is no analogy between the British affiliation and the present position of the unions affiliated to the All-Russian Trade Union Congress. He knows that it is not the affiliation of a country that is involved so much as the amalgamation of the two Internationals."

THIS statement of the president of the Trade Union General Council, the Oudegeests of all countries will do well to remember. This must be especially understood by those of the Amsterdam International leaders who juggle with figures. To them statistics is not a science, but an art by which they try to prove that apart from the Russian unions and some small minorities the R. I. L. U. represents no one. Recently the Chinese unions affiliated to the R. I. L. U.—do you think that the right Amstredamers attach any significance to that? Not at all.

When the trade unions of Palestine and of the free port of Danzig affiliated to the Amsterdam International, that was an event. But China, with only 420,000,000 people, can it ever compare with any European country?

WE shall yet have an occasion to deal with the latest statistical researches of the Amsterdam International in that part which deals with the R. I. L. U. Just now we only want to call attention to the gulf dividing the right wing of the Amsterdam International from the left wing, and again emphasize the statement of the president of the British Trade Union General Council that now it is not the affiliation of a country that is involved so much as the amalgamation of the two Internationals.

MOSCOW, May 26, 1925.

## Another Chapter Added to the Story of the Last War



Big Business of the "Enemy Countries" Gets Together.