

The Fight for World Trade Union Unity

By A. LOZOVSKY.

Speech of the Secretary of the Red International of Labor Unions to the Enlarged Executive Committee Meeting of the Communist International.

THE line laid down on the trade union question by the fifth congress of the Communist International has been strikingly confirmed by the course of events. The unity of the trade union movement has become the most popular and the most vital fighting slogan, which appeals to all the masses.

Since the fifth world congress, rather important changes have taken place in the political picture of the world trade union movement, which must be taken into consideration if the future line of our work is to be laid down correctly. The new events in the course of this period have been: (1) The trip of the British delegation to the Soviet Union; (2) the sixth trade union congress of the Soviet Union and the conclusion of a fundamental agreement between the British trade unions and the Soviet unions; (3) the action of the Second International and of the right wing of the Amsterdam International (Brussels, Jan. 1-6, 1925) against the British delegation and the new tendencies in the world trade union movement; (4) the coming to a head of the differences of opinion in the executive bureau of the Amsterdam International on the question of the attitude towards the Russian trade unions (Session of the executive bureau on Feb. 6-9); (5) the endorsement by a large number of reformist trade unions and trades councils in France, Germany, Belgium and other countries of unity and of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee; (6) the decision of the general council of the British trade unions to call a conference of representatives of the All-Russian Central Trade Union Council and of the British General Council of Trade Unions for the discussion of the difficulties which have arisen in consequence of the session of the executive bureau of the Amsterdam International; (7) the conference of representatives of the Soviet trade unions and the British trade unions which begins in London on April 2; (8) the publication of the report of the British delegation upon its trip thru the Soviet Union; (9) the campaign for unity which has been developed in all countries, and into which millions of workers have been drawn; and (10) the evidence of the relations of German and international social-democracy with the profiteers, thru which our often expressed opinion that the enemies of trade union unity are direct agents of the bourgeoisie, is confirmed.

THE most interesting aspects of these events are as follows: (1) That the ideological differences of opinion within the Amsterdam International have come to such a head that they not only paralyze the activity—or putting it better, the inactivity—of this organization, but also compel the individual sections of the Amsterdam International to come in the open against one another;

(2) That the slogan of unity and of the united front are beginning to take on practical organizational forms despite the obstinate sabotage of international social-democracy.

The fight within the Amsterdam International has been going on for a long time already; up to recently, this struggle has been going on horizontally, between the upper strata and the lower strata. The opposition in the Amsterdam International consists of two groups, a crystallized one and an amorphous (loosely knit) one. The former has been organized by the Communist Parties upon the platform of the R. I. L. U. and bears the name: Minority Movement, Opposition Bloc, Fraction, etc. The other section reflects the discontent of the masses, but it does not touch the fundamental kernel of the tactics and politics of the Amsterdam International. The dissatisfaction of the masses grew more intense after the occupation of the Ruhr as a result of the inactivity of the Amsterdam International. It

rose during the whole of 1923 and was most clearly expressed in 1924, when the British trade union movement, as a result of the continuing economic crisis and the lessons of the MacDonald period, went over to the left wing of the Amsterdam International. The entire trade union movement of Great Britain entered the opposition to the traditional policy on a very essential and extremely important question of the world labor movement: whether the united front with the Soviet trade unions should be established, or the hostile acts against the revolutionary trade unions in general and the Soviet Union in particular should be continued.

THE action of the British delegation displeased the reformists to such a degree that the entire international social-democracy and the reformist trade union bureaucracy attacked the British delegation and requested assistance from their colleagues in the labor party and in the right wing of the trade union movement in Great Britain itself, in order to divert the British trade union movement from its "pernicious role." This entire campaign came to an end at the last session of the executive bureau of the Amsterdam International (Feb. 6-8) with the acceptance of the allegedly "compromise resolution" of Steenhuis, against which the British delegation voted. Even the most lenient critics had to admit that this revolution was nothing but a very stupid and clumsy maneuver. Politically, this resolution signifies the victory of the right wing over the left, which was well understood by the general council of the British trade unions, when it decided to hold a conference with the Russian trade unions for a discussion "of the difficulties, which have arisen in consequence of the session of the executive bureau of the Amsterdam International." The state of excitement of the social-democrats over the British trade unions is demonstrated by the unashamed attacks of the Russian mensheviks (in "Sozialistichesky Vestnik" of March 19) upon the report of the British delegation. The mensheviks write in an article headed A Dishonest Book, that this report "is a deliberate concealment of the truth and a leading astray of the reader," etc., etc. That is the tone employed by the Russian mensheviks in speaking of their colleagues of the Second International.

THE leaders of the British trade union movement could not let such attacks go unanswered. In the first number of the monthly International Trade Union Unity, which is published by the labor research department, Purcell writes as follows: "The so-called socialist press of the continental countries cannot serve as a reliable source of information at present . . . It does not give an unprejudiced account of the facts." And later on "Oudegeest, as well as Jouhaux (not to mention the Vorwarts) have shown beyond all doubt that they consider the so-called 'compromise motion' a cunning step which is intended to thwart our 9 months of effort for the establishment of international unity." He calls the methods of the right Amsterdamers "trickery."

In the official organ of the Amsterdam International Oudegeest (the secretary) ridicules the statements of the president and states that the bureau of the Amsterdam International gave no instructions for the writing of such an article. This entire polemic shows that the differences of opinion in the Amsterdam International are much more serious than many people believe.

THE world trade movement was never entirely united, neither ideologically, nor from the point of view of organization. At present the trade unions are differentiated along political, national, religious and racial lines. The largest numbers of workers are organized in the reformist and revolutionary trade unions. But, the problem of unity posed by the fifth congress of the C. I., set the Communists before the question of uniting, not only the revolutionary and reformist unions, but of drawing into the united trade union move-

ment the unorganized workers as well as the members of the catholic, protestant and similar trade union organizations.

The most serious obstacle on this road is the line of tactics of the right wing of the Amsterdam International, which want to choke off the initiative campaign for unity at any price; the methods of sabotage employed to this end are extremely varied. The organizational and political focus of the campaigns against unity is however, the Second International, and this for a very simple reason: Whoever advocates the united front of the bourgeoisie must be against the united front of the workers.

The complexity of the situation, the difficulty of the struggle, old habits and traditions, insufficient flexibility, and the inability to make the necessary organizational changes have also given rise to several deviations in our own ranks. The more openly we speak of those deviations, the sooner will we succeed in overcoming them.

THESE deviations are as follows:

(a) Organizational conservatism; (b) the interpretation of the slogan of unity as a maneuver; (c) unity at any price; (d) the blunting of the struggle against the social-democracy in trade unions; (e) tendencies for the dissolution of the revolutionary trade unions, and even of the R. I. L. U.

The fight against organizational conservatism must be carried on by us in the most decisive manner. If the dissolution of any independent union may be of service in the conquering of a mass organization, this dissolution must take place, for organization is not an end in itself but a means towards an end. Everything depends upon the situation and the ratio of the strength of the Communists and the reformists in the labor movement.

On the other hand comrades are of the opinion that our slogan is only a maneuver. This entirely incorrect point of view must be combated most energetically. We demand a serious, self sacrificing and sincere struggle for the unity of the trade union movement. Every Communist, every party member, must take note of this once and for all.

THE obstinate resistance of the social-democrats to unity has led several adherents of unity to the following considerations: Since social-democracy bitterly opposes any endeavor for unity because of fear of Communist propaganda and agitation, it may happen that the Communist struggle against reformism will be blunted for the sake of the unity of the trade union movement. This is the most dangerous tendency in our campaign for unity. If it should chance to happen that in our struggle for unity the intensity of our Communist criticism against reformism should be blunted, then the unity which we might have attained would be turned against us. We must fight any such tendencies in a most decisive manner.

Further, we should notice that the desire for unity with some comrades takes on the form of stormy impatience. This impatience serves as an explanation also for those tendencies which consider the liquidation of the entire trade union movement as the only right solution. The Communist International was and remains decidedly against any such tendencies. The struggle for unity does not signify liquidation. The liquidation of the R. I. L. U. is proposed as liquidation in order to bring about a united international, it presupposes the liquidation of the Amsterdam International. The situation is similar in the various countries (France, Czecho-Slovakia), where we have a serious mass movement of revolutionary trade unionists.

HEGEL says that truth is concrete. Therefore, there is no such thing as a unity schablonen in accordance with which every country is to carry on its struggle for unity. The methods and forms of the struggle change according to the situation, time and place. Therefore, in this connection

it is possible to group together a number of countries.

(1) Countries with a united revolutionary trade union movement (the Soviet Union), (2) Countries with a unified trade union movement, containing strong revolutionary minorities and where there exist small parallel revolutionary or reactionary trade union organizations (Germany, Great Britain, Italy), (3) Countries where the trade union movement is split, where the reformists are in the majority (Czecho-Slovakia, Holland, etc.)

(4) Countries where the trade union movement is split and where the reformists have a majority due to the police terror of the bourgeois state (Jugo-Slavia, Roumania). (5) Countries where the trade union movement is unified, but where because of the political and police conditions the trade unions are affiliated to no international (Norway, Finland). (6) Countries where in addition to the central organizations independent, reactionary and revolutionary trade unions exist, thus causing the trade unions to be without any international affiliation (United States). (7) Countries where the trade union movement is split and the revolutionary workers have the majority (France). (8) Countries where in addition to the big organizations small syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations exist. In accordance with this we can formulate our tactics for the struggle for unity on broad outlines.

(1) In England the struggle for unity must be conducted on the following lines: (a) further consolidation of the Minority Movement, (b) struggle against groups and guild tendencies, (c) struggle to bring about the affiliation of all trade unions to the Trade Union Council, (d) struggle for the creation of industrial unions on the basis of factory council, (e) transformation of the general council into leading organ, (f) participation of the Trade Council in the national union congresses and development of its role in local organizations, (g) definite support of the left wing in all its endeavors to attain unity, (h) decisive struggle against the right wing, (i) struggle against the influence of imperialism on the working class, (j) struggle against the labor aristocracy in the labor party which is intent on stemming the onward march of the workers.

(2) In Germany the struggle for unity must be on the following lines: the creation and organization of an oppositional of revolutionary minority, intense struggle against the policy of expulsion and an endeavor to reunite the independent unions with the reformist unions. The party's chief endeavor should be in the direction of organizing the revolutionary opposition and the crystallization of a real left wing in the trade unions. The center of the struggle for unity must be in the factories and factory councils. The struggle for the factory councils signifies the struggle for unity.

(3) In Czecho-Slovakia. The struggle in the factories must be our chief aim where unity organs must be created and mixed committees must be established for the conduct of the common struggle. Following on these unity conferences must be convened of the factory councils and the trade unions according to districts and finally the national congress of trade unions must be initiated, to which social-democrats, national socialists and revolutionaries in the trade unions should be invited, including both Czechs and Germans; there exists no danger that at this congress we will be in a minority. What is necessary for an actual and not merely pretended fight for unity is the establishment of fractions in all trade unions in this country as well as in all others, as well as the formation and consolidation of groups sympathizing with us in the reformist and national socialist trade unions.

IN France: (a) The establishment of committees or commissions for unity in the factories and workshops;

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(b) the establishment of committees based on equal representation for the fight against the high cost of living, against fascism, etc.; (c) the convocation of district and industrial conferences under the banner of unity; (d) the convening of a congress of the revolutionary trade unions parallel to the reformist trade union congress and a proposal for the fusion of both congresses on the basis of proportional representation according to the number of members represented; (e) no individual fusions with the reformist trade unions, isolated in districts or trades; (f) a fight against the autonomist aims of the anarcho-syndicalists; (g) the fight for the unity of the trade union movement is to be carried on by the G. G. T. U.; and the party is to offer the latter its fullest assistance. The demagogic slogan of the reformists—entrance of the revolutionary unions into the reformist unions—must be replied to with the slogan of unity from below.

In the United States the fight must be carried on for the consolidation and strengthening of the Trade Union Educational League, and for the creation of the necessary press and the fusion of the independent union with the main trade unions. What is necessary here is an especially vigorous fight against the corrupt bureaucracy furthermore, the establishment of fractions and revolutionary minorities, and active participation in all elections to the local and central organs, to the conferences and congresses. When the bureaucrats expel entire local organizations care must be taken that the organizations do not disintegrate; they must be maintained intact and must fight for the re-admission of all unionists without exception.

Special attention to be paid to the unity of the different races, and where the unions of the whites admit no Negroes, special Negro unions must be established. Since the workers in American never participated in the international trade union movement, the international character of the class struggle should be particularly emphasized, as well as the necessity for the entry of all independent unions into the American Federation of Labor and for the creation of a unified trade union international, etc.

The sabotage of unity organized by the Second International and the right wing of the Amsterdam International can only be broken if we succeed in drawing the masses of workers into the struggle. The focal point of the fight for unity must be the factories. To this end the factory councils should be conquered where they exist and committees or commissions for unity created where non-existent. At the same time mixed commissions can be established for the joint struggle, composed of workers belonging to different unions. On the other hand it is important to establish contact between the factory councils and committees for unity according to district and industry. We must let no conflict, no strike pass without creating a unity organ selected by the working masses. The fight for unity from below in the factories not only does not exclude the simultaneously fight for unity from above, but presupposes it—in the forms corresponding to the specific peculiarities of the country in question.

In Moscow a basic understanding was arrived at between the British and Soviet Russian comrades to create a bloc in the fight for the unity of the international trade union movement. In the negotiations for joint action neither party was blind to the existing differences of opinion, but both realized that if the All-Russian Trade Union Council, affiliated to the R. I. L. U. and the general council of the British trade unions, which is affiliated to the Amsterdam Trade Union Federation, form a bloc, nobody in the world will be able to prevent unity. The representatives of the British trade unions endeavored to induce the Amsterdam International to

enter into negotiations, but in vain. This made necessary a conference of the Russian and British trade unions. This conference, which begins on April 2, must be energetically supported by all Communist parties no matter what its practical results may be. We must realize that the rapprochement of the Soviet and British trade unions is a circumstance of extraordinary historical importance. The move of the British proletariat to the left changes the ratio of forces in the struggle between imperialism and Communism.

Of course, in order to unite the trade union movement, which is now divided along innumerable lines, into a homogenous fighting battalion the slogan: "Convocation of an international unity congress and dissolution of the Amsterdam International and the R. I. L. U. into a unified international" remains in force. The idea of the international unity congress must be spread amongst the masses. The left elements in Amsterdam, who are already beginning to realize that there is no other way out of this condition of split, must be won for this struggle and for the fusion of both internationals at this congress.

The trade union movement in the Near, Middle and Far East has made enormous progress in the last few years. One only need mention the trade union movement in Japan, China, the East Indies, India and Egypt to understand the entire significance of a union of the trade union movements of the East and West. The trade union movements in the Near, Middle and Far East are to a considerable extent linked up with the R. I. L. U. But there is a number of trade union organizations which belong to no international. It is necessary to bring the trade unions of Japan as well as of the colonial and semi-colonial countries into the united proletarian trade union family. In order to obtain the active participation of the trade unions in these countries in the united international, the Communist parties and the trade unions of the mother countries maintain close contact with those in the colonies. In the course of the past year something has been done in this direction. This task must be followed as before, and we must set ourselves the practical daily task of drawing the labor movement of the Near Middle and Far East into the fight for the united international. The unity of the trade movement is directed against the bourgeoisie and their social-democratic lackeys. The fight for the united front and for trade union unity will bring the revolutionary workers closer to the workers still in the reformist and other organizations and will transfer our struggle against social-democracy to the very depths of the laboring masses. The fight for unity will only then be successful, if the Communist parties in every country become a mass force to be reckoned with. To this end it is necessary that more and more nuclei and fractions be built up in all existing trade union organizations, that the entire opposition within these organizations be united, that we gain every foot of ground from the reformists and that our fight against international reformism be increased to the utmost.

The organizational unity of the trade union movement does not signify an ideological rapprochement or an armistice with the reformists; it signifies the hundredfold intensification of the fight against reformism.

At present the international labor movement is going thru a peculiar period of quiet and of the consolidation of its forces. Of course this is only a conditional quiet, for the intensified class struggles are continuing, but an immediate struggle for power is not going on. This present stage of the class struggle requires new, more perfect and more modern forms and methods of trade union tactics. The "Leninist link," which must now be grasped with all our strength "in order to hold the entire chain," is the slogan of unity, of genuine, sin-

the slogan of unity, of genuine, unnecessary that the slogan of unity from below be made our battle cry in the factories and workshops, that committees for proletarian unity be created, that factory councils be fought for, that fractions and nuclei be established in all trade union organizations, that a sincere coalition be entered into with the left elements in the reformist trade unions, that an opposition of the revolutionary minority be created and organized, that the Anglo-Russian trade union bloc be supported to our utmost, that the fight against the Second International and the right wing of the Amsterdam trade union international be intensi-

fied, that a fight be carried on for the convocation of an international unity congress, that the trade unions of the Near, Middle and Far East be drawn into the fight for unity, and that the Red International of Labor Unions be supported and consolidated. If we do all this the masses will be with us.

The more successful our fight for unity will be, the shorter will the period be still separating us from the immediate struggle for power. The fight for unity brings us near to the social revolution. That is the historical significance and the importance of the slogan of the fight for the unity of the international trade union movement.

Russian Meetings in Chicago District

Comrade Alexander Chramov, national organizer of the Russian section of the Workers Party who is touring the United States will be in the Chicago district from May 12 to May 26. He will speak in the cities of this district the following dates:

Gary, Ind., Sunday, May 17, at 2 p. m., at 215 W. 18th Ave.
 East Chicago, Ind., Sunday, May 17, at 6:30 p. m., at the Russian school, 144th and Olcat Ave.
 Chicago, Ill., Tuesday, May 19, at 1902 W. Division St.
 Chicago, Ill., Wednesday, May 20, at 3925 So. Kedzie Ave.
 Chicago, Ill., Thursday, May 21, at 2734 W. 18th St.
 Pullman, Ill., Friday, May 22, at Stanciks' Hall, 205 E. 115th St.
 Milwaukee, Wis., Saturday, May 23, at Miller Hall, cor. State and 8th St., 3rd floor.
 Kenosha, Wis., Sunday, May 24, at 2 p. m., at German-American Home, 665 Grand Ave.
 Chicago, Ill., Sunday, May 24, at 7 p. m., at 1902 W. Division St.
 Chicago, Ill., Monday, May 25, at

1080 W. 14th St.

Milwaukee, Wis., Tuesday, May 26, at Miller Hall, cor. State and 8th St., 3rd floor.

At the meetings at Pullman, Kenosha, Milwaukee on May 23, and Chicago on May 24, the voices of Lenin, Trotsky, Lunacharsky and others will be heard from phonograph records.

All comrades who have any connections with Russian workers are requested to inform them about these meetings. If there are any prospects for the organization of a Russian branch in the district, the Russian district committee should be notified at once at the following address:

Russian District Committee W. P., 1113 W. Washington Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

A John Reed Junior



This is a member of the John Reed Pioneer group of Soviet Russia. The youngster is proudly exhibiting the name of the group, John Reed, which they wear on their caps.

In the United States, in the city of Chicago, there is also a John Reed Junior group functioning quite successfully. To celebrate the first anniversary of their organization the group is giving a surprise party and dance, Saturday eve., May 23, at the Workers' Home, 1902 W. Division St. There will be an interesting program for children and for adults. They promise something new in entertainments. Besides that, there is a surprise. Admission for children will be 10 cents and for adults 20 cents.

Max Shachtman, editor of the Young Worker, will bring greetings from the Pioneers of Soviet Russia. Music furnished by the Y. W. L. orchestra.

Don't forget the date and place, Saturday, May 23, at 1902 W. Division street.

George E. Pashas

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