

V. b. b.

English Edition.

Unpublished Manuscripts - Please reprint

- INTERNATIONAL -

Vol. 6 No. 16

PRESS

4th March 1926

CORRESPONDENCE

Editorial Offices and Central Despatching Department: Berggasse 31, Vienna IX. — Postal Address, to which all remittances should be sent by registered mail: Postamt 66, Schliessfach 213, Vienna IX. Telegraphic Address: Inprekorr, Vienna.

CONTENTS

A. Lozovsky: Where is the Development of the International Trade Union Movement Heading?

Politics.

R. Palme Dutt: Cross Currents in the British Labour Party.

Karl Kreibich: The Stabilisation Crisis in Czechoslovakia.

The Balkans.

D. Fabian: The Political Situation and the Municipal Elections in Roumania.

Economics.

E. Varga: Economics and Economic Policy in the Fourth Quarter of 1925. III. Special Section (Conclusion).

International Women's Day.

Isa Strasser: The Woman Worker and the Trade Union.

G. G. L.: The Exhibition for International Women's Day.

Krestintern and International Women's Day.

Where is the Development of the International Trade Union Movement Heading?

Plenum of the Central Council of the R. I. L. U.

By A. Lozovsky.

It is more than two years since the III. Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions, and we can now look around us and take stock of all that has happened. During that time Europe has gone on "stabilising", happy humanity has had it dinned into its ears, not only by the leading lights of the bourgeoisie, but by the leaders of the second and Amsterdam Internationals as well. Yet it is odd that the more Europe has "stabilised" the more disquieting and uncertain the situation has become, until to-day, at the beginning of 1926, we are faced with a most profound crisis that is shaking all Europe. Britain, France, Germany, Poland, the Scandinavian and Balkan countries — all are in one form or another in the toils of this crisis.

During the time that there was so much noise about the "stabilisation and pacification" of Europe, pressure was being brought to bear on the working class and its most elementary gains and has been successful to a certain extent, thanks to the economic crisis that is sticking like a shadow to the present "stabilised" Europe.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature seen against the background of the continuous crisis, growing unemployment, the abolition of the eight-hour working day, wage cuts, and the worsening of working conditions is the behaviour of the leaders of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals and their national sections. Not a single Social Democratic party, not a single true-blue Amsterdam organisation has made any effort to get to the bottom of the crisis, to its causes, and draw the political conclusions therefrom.

Not one of the leaders of social democracy has tried to generalise these separate facts and give his diagnosis of what

ails "stabilised" European capitalism. International social democracy has long since lost all ability for scientific analysis of current events. The reformists have long been living from hand to mouth trying to give answers to individual questions without being able to lay down any new line on the basis of the new conditions. Run through the files of the social democratic and Amsterdam press and you will seek in vain for an answer as to what is to be done to-day — not a single new thought, not a single new idea.

The same old musty talk of Democracy, of peace in industry, the wisdom of popular government, expectations from the League of Nations and the International Labour Office, appeals to the good faith of the bourgeoisie, and an ardent ambition to arrive somehow or other at the dignity of a ministerial portfolio — that is all you are likely to glean from the multitude of reformist journals and papers. The spirit of wretchedpenury, intellectual poverty and theoretical degeneration makes itself felt in the whole of the reformist press, in all the activities of the reformists. Even in Italy, for instance, where the unbridled Fascist regime is throwing the whole of its weight against the reformist organisations, reformist thought has been unable to conceive of anything better than becoming the legal opposition and of adjustment to the existing regime. Reformism has stopped at and stabilised itself on the war level. It continues to dream of Holy Alliances and coalitions showing no great wish to notice that the bourgeoisie has sucked out of reformism all it needed and now, instead of being grateful, is giving it the right about, with a kick into the bargain. An intensification of the political and economic crisis, a weakening of the stabilising factors with a lot of shouting about Europe's pacifica-

tion and stabilisation, and reformism adapting itself to the growing reaction — such are the outstanding features of the present phase.

But though fettered by the bourgeois state in many countries and by the social democratic organisation, the working class cannot remain in the old positions and stabilise itself on the theory and practice of reformism. Whereas the social democrats intentionally seek no new paths, or seek them where they will least find them, the minds of the masses are groping towards some way out. The oppression and pressure are far too great not to call forth a corresponding reaction in the masses. The old method has been tried and found wanting: reformism has shown all it may ever have been capable of. All past and present social democratic governments have proved to be nothing but the tools of the bourgeoisie defending it even to the extent of organising strike-breakers against workers out on strike belonging to their parties. Mention need only be made of what happened in Germany during the few years the social democrats were in power, the services rendered to the Motherland by the MacDonald's Government, and what is at present being done in Sweden and Denmark where the worthy Social Democrats are protecting fascist bodies to the great harm of even the reformist trade unions.

All that could not pass unnoticed by the masses, amongst which — and among the masses following the Social Democrats as well — we now mark deep-seated discontent, uncertainly, ideological ferment and the ever present search for a way out of the mess they are in. Opposition currents have come into being in the reformist unions; in many countries a left wing has taken shape — that Left Wing that stands between the R. I. L. U. and the I. F. T. U. and which, with all its lack of ideological clarity and unformed character, represents a real threat to orthodox reformism. Here it is enough to point to the leftward move of large bodies of the British Trade Union movement, to the shaping out of a left wing in Sweden, Belgium and in Czechoslovakia, to the growth of a Social Democratic Left and corresponding left-wing aspirations in the trade unions in Germany, and soon to realise that the roots of this movement lie in the continuing instability of capitalism and the stabilisation and ossification of reformism.

The outstanding feature of the international labour movement at present is the birth of left tendencies inside the reformist organisations and the formation of an opposition in the Second and Amsterdam Internationals, which means, of course, the weakening of international reformism.

The most prominent manifestation of the new aspiration that has taken shape during the past year can be considered as the formation of the Anglo-Russian Committee, a product of the new orientation of a very considerable and influential part of the Amsterdam International. For a good while the reformists diverted themselves with saying that the Anglo-Russian Committee was not an organisation, but a political slogan, an idea. Their hopes, however, could not but be dashed when the agreement between the Soviet and British unions was ratified after Scarborough.

Granted even that the Anglo-Russian Committee is not an organisation; but as a political idea does it not represent something new in the European labour movement? If the representatives of the British trade unions were in Soviet Russia as long ago as in 1920, why did not such a committee come into being then? Because at that time Soviet Russia was utterly exhausted, the Russian working class was in an exceptionally bad position and the Revolution could not then exercise such an attractive influence on the British labour movement as in 1924. Now, it is these two capital moments — the steady worsening of the British working class's position, and the considerable improvement in the position of the working class in the U. S. S. R. — that form the ground on which the Anglo-Russian rapprochement has developed.

Here it may be asked: why an Anglo-Soviet and not a German-Soviet rapprochement? Is it possible that the working class is better off in Germany than in Britain? Why has there been a change of heart in England in favour of Soviet Russia while in Germany the change is towards the American Federation of Labour? Surely like causes should have like effects? The broad mass of the German proletariat undoubtedly looks to the U. S. S. R. We see that in the rank and file of the German social democracy and reformist unions: and if this friendliness

has not manifested itself in the same forms as in the case of the Anglo-Soviet rapprochement this must be put down to the exceptional hostility of the social democrats to communism. It must be borne in mind that the move to the left of the working masses is bitterly opposed not only by social democratic ideology but also by the social democratic and trade union machinery. In those countries, such as Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, where the party differentiation has profoundly affected the masses this change inclining towards Russia is not so noticeable in the masses, is progressing at a considerably slower rate and is given organisational expression to with difficulty owing to the organisational opposition of the social democrats.

Where party differentiation has not cut into the broad masses (Britain) the left wing takes shape with greater ease. It is for this very reason that this change has been so marked in Britain, even at the top of the trade union ladder. In Britain the dead hand of social democratic traditions wields least influence while the insular type of British reformism has not such a perfect bureaucratic machinery constituting an appendage of the bourgeois state inside the working class.

* * *

The year just passed was further remarkable for an exceptionally rapid growth in the T. U. movement in the Near, Middle and Far East and in the colonies, the most outstanding feature being the stupendous extension of the labour unions in China and the part they took in the national struggle for emancipation. There are over 1,000,000 organised workers at the present time in China, according to the latest data published at the Kuomintang Congress held at the beginning of January of this year. Need it be said that this organised force is playing an exclusively important role in the struggle of the toiling masses of China against foreign Imperialism? Need it be further said that the affiliation of the Chinese labour unions to the R. I. L. U. in May 1925 is an act of tremendous historical importance?

Storm-swept China, however, is not alone in having a rapidly developing T. U. movement: in Japan, too, the work of organisation is forging ahead despite disruption, and the T. U. movement is growing apace and drawing the broad masses into the organised struggle. Furthermore note must be taken of the extremely difficult struggle of the working class in Indonesia in defence of their organisations against Dutch Imperialism. We see the same thing taking place in India, Egypt, and other colonial countries. All this goes to show that the past year saw a further development of the T. U. movement in fresh countries and the gradual induction of the matured workers' organisations into world politics and the world labour movement.

It has always been an accepted tradition of the European labour movement that the centre of the world was in Europe, that any federated body of the trade unions or socialist parties of Europe was enough to entitle it to be called an International, the International, even though the workers of the other continents had no relationships whatever with it. As is common knowledge, the traditions of the Communist International and the Red International of Labour Unions are entirely different. From its very inception the R. I. L. U. went beyond the confines of Europe, practically giving first place to the question of the T. U. movement of the East and colonies. The tremendous revolutionary significance possessed by the trade unions of the East was particularly emphasised by the events of last year. The Shanghai and Hongkong strikes were a model of revolutionary struggle, and the European workers may learn from the backward Chinese toilers how to fight their class enemies.

* * *

Two projects of symptomatic importance were framed on the basis of this extension of the T. U. movement into new lands: 1) the Pacific conference of working class organisations called on the initiative of the Australian Trade Unions; 2) the Pan-Asiatic congress of labour unions convened on the initiative of the Indian and Japanese unions. Both are as yet projects only, but it may be noted that while the first aims at linking up working class organisations only, certain prominent leaders of the reformist T. U. movement of Japan are dreaming of a Pan-Asiatic conference attended by representatives of the workers, employers and governments on the type of the Geneva Labour Office of the League of Nations.

But, apart from the dissimilar nature of both conferences, they show that outside Europe there are plenty working class organisations which have had the problem of the international

labour movement thrust on their notice and which are now beginning to look in their own way for some solutions to this problem. With all their essential differences, both conferences are symptomatic as denoting that the trade unions of fresh countries are about to enter the arena of the international T. U. movement with their own demands, their own requirements, and their own views. Another very illuminating circumstance pointing to the awakening of the workers of these new countries is the All-America Seamen's Conference to be held in Montevideo on the 15th of March of this year. It was to have met in Havana, but the wild persecutions of the Cuban workers by American Imperialism put it out of the question.

Up to a twelvemonth ago the East simply did not exist for the Amsterdam International, but since the Chinese labour unions joined the R.I.L.U. and the Chinese workers have shown that they represent a force to be reckoned with, Amsterdam has roused itself and begun to play up to the Indian trade unions, many of whose leaders are, as is well known, promising young reformists. Of course, the Amsterdam International had no wish whatever to do with the Chinese labour unions that had appealed for help to the European workers. What could Amsterdam have to do with any struggle against Imperialism? The mere mention of struggle is enough to upset the digestion of the Amsterdam leaders and break in on their peaceful snobbish wellbeing that abhors disorder, disquiet and disregard of existing laws, especially when the people who violate them are "wild, uncultivated" workers. How be it, we are confronted with a development of the labour movement in the non-European countries and an urge towards international federation which faces the R.I.L.U. with the many tasks we now propose to deal with.

* * *

The period under review is likewise in the highest degree interesting in that both the bourgeoisie and the reformists, and they particularly, have persecuted the workers. It is common knowledge that the alliance between the social democrats and the most reactionary imaginable bourgeoisie is a perfectly open one. There is a complete division of labour: the police follow up and arrest the leaders of the revolutionary unions while the reformists seize the trades halls and anything belonging to their political opponents they can lay hands on. The last arrests in Yugoslavia aimed at preventing the meeting of the Congress of Independent Trade Unions to have been held on January 25th, were ideologically prepared beforehand by the social democracy and the reformist T. U. federation. The same thing in Roumania and Greece. Mention need hardly be made of Bulgaria — the role of the social democrats in the Tsankoff brutalities is well enough known as it is.

But this Balkan type of Holy Alliance of Amsterdammers with the police and secret service agents has a tendency to be applied in other countries as well. Such an attempt is being made in Finland where the social democrats are using the methods of the provocateur against the T. U. leaders to prepare the way for splitting the T. U. centre, to get the leadership of the same into their hands later on. That is how the democrats act wherever they are weaker than the communists and the revolutionary workers. But where they have the T. U. leadership they take far simpler action. In that case, as in Italy for instance, the alliance of the police and reformists carries out the very same tasks in a different way. The reformists dissolve the unions and the police arrest the leaders. For some reason or other this is called, not Balkanising, but democratising the unions.

There is thus not the slightest doubt that certain of the social democratic and reformist T. U. leaders have approached still closer to the ruling classes and the bourgeois state, and for the sake of retaining their places in their seats of power, form a bloc with the police and the secret service to smash the revolutionary wing of the labour movement. And after breaking up the unions, with the Amsterdam International's assistance, they will enter new victories on the credit side of their accounts, forgetting, however, to add the price at which these most dubious victories will have been bought.

* * *

The course struck by certain of the T. U. bureaucracy bringing them into closer touch with the police to throttle the revolutionary T. U. movement is only part of the strategic

plan aiming to keep the T. U. leadership — whether the workers want it or not — in the hands of the social democrats. The same object is being aimed at by the new orientation in relation to the American T. U. movement to mobilise its forces not only against the Soviet trade unions, but particularly against the growing opposition inside the reformist trade unions. To the same extent that dissatisfaction grows inside the reformist unions and the opposition takes root, are closer ties welded between the leading lights of the movement and the bourgeois state and its organs on the one hand, and help sought from the A. F. of L., on the other. Of all the labour organisations on the face of the earth the A. F. of L. is the most moderate. Its bigwigs are mostly out and out reactionaries who openly fraternise with fascists, are bitter enemies of Socialism; they regard Soviet Russia with horror and are always beseeching the Government of "these States" never to recognise Soviet Russia. Hitherto always taking up a negative attitude to the limited trade unionism of America, the European social democrats have at last discovered some kindred trait in the U. S. A. movement and are now prepared to go and learn of the A. F. of L. leaders.

This is giving rise to a most interesting and peculiar state of affairs in many European countries, namely, that in the same measure that the masses are most evidently turning towards the U. S. S. R., as is to be seen from the number of workers' delegations pouring into Russia, the leaders are looking to America.

There is a cleavage inside every reformist organisation owing to the opposite directions in which the working masses and the Amsterdam bureaucracy are moving. This change in favour of America and these attempts to drag Uncle Sam into European affairs to oppose the leftward drifting labour movement of Europe, in the first place of Britain, is a characteristic feature of the past year.

* * *

Another symptom of the growing disquiet and uncertainty prevalent among the masses is to be seen in the growth of left tendencies in numerous social-democratic parties and the ideas broached by the British Independent Labour Party of uniting the Second and Third Internationals. It is only a demagogic slogan for some of the leaders. Of that there is not the slightest doubt. But the fact that the I.L.P. leaders are being forced to have recourse to such demagogy is enough to show the serious change that has come about in the masses. For the Third International has always been a bogey for every sort of humanitarian British socialist. If these moderates are now dishing up a plan like this (while refusing to fight together with the British Communist Party for the working class's most elementary gains) it least of all points to a stabilisation of capitalism. Were we even in possession of no other data evidencing the instability of the so-called stabilisation, the mere birth and growth of the left spirit within the social democracy would be sufficient to draw the conclusion that things are far from well with capitalism.

How restless the masses are may be seen from the circumstance of the German Social Democratic Party and the General Trade Union Federation having agreed to form a united front with the Communist Party on the question of confiscating the property of the royal houses. Neither the Social Democratic Party nor the G. T. U. F. had the faintest idea say a couple of weeks before of supporting this Communist Party slogan and had openly opposed the Communists on this question. The slogan met, however, with such a warm response from the masses that both the S. D. P. and the G. T. U. F. were forced into taking up the matter with the Communist Party and jointly advocating the demand made in the slogan that for long did not please either the social democrats or the T. U. bureaucrats. And what about the Left, almost revolutionary, speeches of many prominent leaders of the French and Austrian social democracy? It is not so long ago since there was complete politico-ideological unanimity in the ranks of the social democracy, and suddenly we have these speeches, in themselves valuable symptoms, destroying the previous harmony.

What to these facts show? That there is a sullen ferment working in the masses which is reflected on top among the social democrat leaders, some of whom, for fear of losing influence among the masses, have begun to sing a different tune and are calling for the formation of the very united front that was laughed to scorn for years in the columns of the social

democratic press. But, besides these people anxious to make a little political capital out of a new phrase, we have social democrat militants fired by a sincere desire to find a way out of the blind alley up which they are being marched. Actually, there has always been such a desire, but not still now has it acquired that general mass impetus, that in turn marks a new stage in the development of the world labour movement, firstly; and bears witness, secondly, to anything but a happy state of affairs in social democracy.

* * *

Careful examination of the domestic life of the I. F. T. U. and the R. I. L. U. during the period reviewed reveals the development of two different processes: in the Amsterdam International an intensification of the ideological struggle, growing differences of views ill-veiled by polite phraseology, and a steady marking time. Inside the R. I. L. U. increased ideological solidarity and an extension of its sphere of influence in the East, above all to China. Now, the fight going on inside Amsterdam is forcing both sides to seek allies, one side looking to the Right, to America, for its allies, the other side to the Left, to Soviet Russia. While the idea of unity is being caught up by ever greater and greater numbers of the workers and being steadily opposed by Amsterdam, it is being lent all possible support by the R. I. L. U. In the minds of the broad masses the true advocates of unity are the Communist International and the R. I. L. U.: that can be neither disputed nor disproved, it is a title won and recorded. With all the fluctuation of the revolutionary minorities — which was particularly evident in Germany — the R. I. L. U.'s influence in the world labour movement is slowly but surely growing, while the authority and influence of the Amsterdam International is slowly declining. For that body the fateful question has been and is the question of unity: it is the rock on which the whole of international reformism is bound to go smash. Amsterdam's authority has only increased among the bourgeoisie who are wholly and fully with Amsterdam against Moscow.

But it must not by any means be taken for granted that closer contact between the bourgeoisie and the Amsterdam Right Wing and further concrescence of the reformist leaders with the bourgeois state (the Reformist Confederation of Labour and the Left Bloc in France, etc.) in any way signify that the ruling classes are going to fulfill the moderate reformist hopes and expectations. Exactly the reverse; the nearer reformism approaches the ruling classes and the better its intentions become, the more suspicious and cautious becomes the attitude of the bourgeoisie to it. It is enough to consider the mutual relations of Fascism and reformism in Italy to realise that in some countries the reformists have already played their part and that the Reaction can get on without them.

Consider again the many years' talk in the International Labour Office about special legislation in general and the eight-hour working day in particular with not a single thing actually being done. This inactivity of the Amsterdam International and the bodies set up with its help is making for discontent among the most peacefully inclined workers and leading to their marking energetic protest. The International Labour Office is a white sepulchre like other "achievements" of reformism (Dawes Plan, Locarno, and so on), and will finally lead to the discrediting of the Amsterdam International.

Unlike the I. F. T. U. the R. I. L. U. has always called down on itself the hatred of the bourgeoisie, a hatred that is growing steadily. It is not for nothing that the bourgeois press is horrified with the very idea of an International Unity Congress and beseeches Amsterdam not to fall into this Muscovite trap, for the bourgeoisie are afraid of two things: 1) unification of the whole world T. U. movement into a single Trade Union International; 2) that somehow or other demagoguery (read 'communism') might get the upper hand in such an International. The Amsterdam leaders fear the same thing, but such fear is the last thing to show that they have confidence in their own forces. Fight the Amsterdamers never so hard, though, against this international unity congress or however many a left winger may wobble on this issue, our slogan is making headway in the masses and winning more and more adherents which means that Amsterdam is meeting with defeat on this policy.

* * *

Where, then, is the international T. U. movement heading? The working masses are clearly moving left. Of that there

can not be the slightest doubt. But while the broad masses are driving to the left, some of the more witless leaders are sticking to the old formulas, giving preference to coalition with the bourgeoisie over any coalition with the communists, and are prepared to smash any organisation at all to prevent the united front being formed and unity brought about. This leftward drive of the masses is not, however, the result of objective conditions only, but is also a result of the work of the Communist International and the R. I. L. U. The unity idea is gaining ground. It has struck root, and the more extensive the crisis becomes and the more the economic position of the toilers deteriorates, the greater the sympathy shown with the slogan of the united front and unity. No matter how splendidly organised the social democracy may be in some countries (as in Austria, and Germany) or what measures they may take against this militant slogan, it is forging ahead, transcending all boundaries and smashing all barriers and is so enthusing the masses that, as happened in Germany, the most out-and-out opponents of the united front are being forced to buckle to and work shoulder to shoulder with the hated communists though only for the time being.

Simultaneously with the spread of the unity idea extensively and intensively among the broadest masses, there is a turn to the left taking place seen most clearly in the new orientation towards the U. S. S. R. reflecting, on the one hand, the crying need for unity, and on the other, the political and economic victory of the Russian proletariat. Soviet Russia's economic growth is reacting on the international labour movement as seen in the growing sympathy for the U. S. S. R. and, particularly important, for revolutionary methods of struggle as well.

The change in favour of Soviet Russia likewise means the beginning of a change of tactics in every country. This means that the mass of the workers have lost confidence in the old methods and although the left social democratic workers do not yet draw the full political conclusions from their sympathies to Soviet Russia, these conclusions will come of themselves.

Along with this change of the masses looking to Soviet Russia there is a change occurring among certain of the leading circles towards America. Now, the whole question is one of which of these two forces will prove to have more attractive power of the working class — America or Soviet Russia. For the greater number of the leaders of international reformism America, with its full-blooded capitalism, is the promised land. The working masses for whom America is synonymous with new ways and means of scientific management and exploitation, have nothing to seek overseas, they look to the U. S. S. R. and by that they are turning their backs on the Second and Amsterdam Internationals and their policy. To a broad and deep leftward move — that is where the development of the international trade union movement is heading.

POLITICS

Cross Currents in the British Labour Party.

By R. Palme Dutt.

During the last few weeks a number of events have taken place in the life of the Labour Party, which bring out with increasing sharpness the conflicting tendencies within it. On the one hand the Right Wing has moved more openly towards a Liberal-Labour alliance or even fusion, and the issue has now become one of general discussion within the party. On the other hand the conflict of working class interests with the policy of the parliamentary leaders has been sharply brought out by the Weir Houses question, in which the parliamentary group, after severe internal division, definitely threw over the policy of the Trades Union Congress, and the Right Wing leaders applied discipline to the Left Wing to compel them to accept this. This has aroused strong criticism, even the Independent Labour Party officially censuring the action of the parliamentary group. Finally the Labour Party Executive has at last begun the policy of exclusion, not only against individual Communists, but against local labour parties. At the same time the Left Wing movement is rapidly gaining strength in the local labour parties, and a national conference will shortly be held.