

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Editor's Note: This is the seventh of a series of articles on Russia which Mr. Foster was commissioned by The Federated Press to write. Former dispatches told of the almost insurmountable difficulties the soviets had to overcome to insure the continued life of the new republic.

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MOSCOW.—Of all the lies told about Russia none has been circulated more persistently than the assertion that under the soviet system the trade unions have been robbed of their importance and now are negligible in power and consequence. Some American labor men have repeated this ad nauseam. Now, exactly the reverse is true. The fact is that the trade unions are the very foundation of the whole soviet structure; without their support and co-operation it would go to smash in a hurry. This is frankly recognized here on all sides.

The Russian trade union movement is throbbing with life. This was strikingly manifest at the recent convention of the All-Russian unions, which I had the good fortune to attend. The convention occupied itself with the most weighty social, political and economic problems now confronting Russia. And so important were its sessions considered that many of the country's greatest men, including Lenin, Gorki (Gorki sat through several sessions) attended them and participated. Public interest was intense. It was almost impossible to get a ticket of admission to the great theater where the convention was held. The place was constantly jammed with spectators and the mass of delegates (3,105 delegates representing 8,485,800 members).

In front of the building was stretched a cordon of Red Army soldiers to hold back the big crowds seeking entrance. During the convention word came to the presiding officers that some delegates, eager to secure admission for their friends, were bunching their delegate cards and sending them out so that those on the outside could come in with the cards. To stop this practice the chair announced that all delegates leaving the hall would have to display their cards and those unable to do so would be arrested.

Take this surging Russian trade union convention, dealing with most vital problems, and with people braving jail to attend it; compare it with our American Federation of Labor lack lustre affairs, occupying themselves for the most part with trivialities, and mustering at best a baker's dozen or two of spectators, and one gets a fair idea of the comparative importance and vitality of the two trade union movements in their respective countries. It ill becomes American union leaders to sneer at the Russian labor movement.

Although the Russian trade unions have accomplished things without parallel in labor history they are for the most part of very recent origin. In fact, the movement as it now stands may be properly said to be only four years old. The first traces of unionism in Russia began to develop toward the end of the nineteenth century when a few workers' benefit societies led a precarious existence. Occasionally these primitive bodies waged strikes, but in such events the czar's agents inflicted frightful hardships upon them, often shooting the strikers and exiling their leaders. Under such conditions the movement made little headway.

The first great wave of real trade union organization came with the revolutionary attempt of 1905. Unions sprang up all over Russia. But with the failure of the revolution and with the attendant bitter persecution by the government they soon began to go down again until within a couple of years the movement practically disappeared. A lively revival occurred in 1912-13 and great headway was being made when the war came on and almost completely wiped out the movement again.

And so the situation remained all through the war, with the workers destitute of industrial organization. It is stated that at the outbreak of the February revolution in 1917 there were in all Russia only three unions, which had a combined membership of but 1,385. With the downfall of the czar's government a tremendous trade union renaissance took place. Millions of workers streamed into the organizations.

The following table will show the progress of the movement to its present status, where it encompasses practically the entire Russian working class: January, 1917, 1,385; June, 1917, 1,475,429; January, 1918, 2,532,000; January, 1919, 3,638,812; April, 1920, 4,262,000; May, 1921, 8,485,000.

More Are Jobless.

Unemployment is on the increase. This fact is gathered from the July report of the United States Employment Service just made public. The increase in unemployment in 38 cities from which figures were taken gives the total of jobless as 38,066, an increase of one and one tenth per cent over June.

Dayton is the only one of the Ohio cities enumerated that showed an increase in employment during July. There were 126 workers able to secure positions, which is an increase of 1.3 per cent.

Decreases in the number of workers in the other Ohio cities were as follows:

City	Total dec.	%
Cleveland	4,324	6.6
Youngstown	4,927	22.03
Toledo	1,130	8.9
Cincinnati	945	7.5
Columbus	100	1.7

Among the cities outside Ohio where decreases in the number employed were reported in July were: Indianapolis, 1,352, or 10.6 per cent; San Francisco, 597, or 8.46 per cent; St. Louis, 998, or 6.09 per cent; Pittsburgh, 3,928, or 5.9 per cent; Boston, 1,405, or 2.5 per cent; Baltimore, 433, or 1.5 per cent; New York, 1,914, or 1.32 per cent, and Chicago, 1,229, or .77 per cent.

The total decrease in thirty-eight cities was 38,066.

Twenty-one cities showed a decrease in unemployment of 21,152.

Marseilles, France.—The communist mayor of Cadolive, near here, who was removed from office by President Millerand because he had refused to sign the official papers ordering mobilization for the advance on the Rhine, has been reelected by the municipal council, which was called to elect a successor. The vote for the ousted mayor was unanimous.

New York.—After a delay of two years the magazine, Soviet Russia published at 110 West Fortieth str. here, has been granted its second class mailing rights. The magazine, published by the soviet bureau here before its head, L. C. Martens, was reported last winter, now is published by Kenneth Durant, under the editorship of Jacob Wittmer Hartmann.

Salina, Kan.—Harry Theodore, alleged I. W. W. member, has begun serving a 30-day sentence in the county jail. Representation of the I. W. W. is the only offense charged against him. A fine of \$300 has also been assessed against him. The chief evidence against him constituted radical literature he had with him.