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The Russian Trade Unions in 1923

By
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Chairman of the All-Russian Central Council
of Trade Unions



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INTRODUCTION

AFTER the deluge of slander and misrepresentation poured upon the Russian trade unions by our reactionary labor leaders, it is a relief to turn to this little pamphlet, which is a verbatim record of the report made by M. Tomskey, Chairman of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, to the Enlarged Council Meeting of the Red International of Labor Unions, July, 1923, at Moscow.

Here is a picture of the Russian trade unions as they really live and function. In sharp contrast to the unions in the capitalist countries, which have been retreating for more than two years and losing, point by point, the gains of a generation of struggle, the Russian unions are growing, consolidating their organization, extending their power, and slowly but surely, raising the standard of living of the Russian workers. In this forward movement they are overcoming obstacles greater than any ever before presented to the trade unions of any land. The ruin of the war, the civil war, the blockade, the famine, the backward industrial system which they inherited, and above all the legacy of illiteracy left by generations of Czarist oppression, were all problems before any one of which the labor movements of the most advanced capitalist countries might stand aghast. But the splendid and heroic will, the revolutionary determination of the Russian workers, is meeting and solving them all. The Russian workers are now definitely establishing their new regime, in which the trade unions, for the first time in history, have their proper position of power and responsibility.

This pamphlet is a complete refutation of all the slanders propagated in the trade union press of America by Samuel Gompers and others, against the Russian trade unions and in the interests of capitalism. It deserves a wide trade-union circulation.

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The Russian Trade Unions in 1923

By M. Tomsy

Chairman, All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions

I.

ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNIONS

THE central body of the Russian trade union movement is the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions (A.-R. C. C. T. U.), which embraces twenty-three Central Committees. These are the central executive committees representing the twenty-three industrial unions into which the entire union membership is organized. That is our structural form.

Geographically, the A.-R. C. C. T. U. unites 99 provincial trade union federations, known under the name of Provincial Trade Union Councils. These 99 organizations are directed partly through nine district bureaus, with 39 of them directed by the Central Council. It is, of course, impossible to give here a detailed description of these 170 bodies.

Our trade union movement has carried out a tremendous amount of work since the change introduced in February, 1922, in the policies of the A.-R. C. C. T. U. The work was extremely difficult since it had to be carried out in a great and widely branched organization over a vast territory stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean and from the White to the Black Sea, with an inadequate railway system and a comparatively backward population.

CZAR LEFT ONLY RUINS AND IGNORANCE

It must be pointed out that the Czar left us an inheritance of 80 per cent illiteracy. However, in 1922, even the most backward of our unions, such as the Agricultural Workers, had no more than 50 per cent illiteracy among their members.

Under such conditions our work was naturally greatly retarded. Owing to the fact that our labor movement is young (we have a history of only about twenty years), our instructors, who are up to the standard from a revolutionary point of view, who are ideologically

sound and who exhibited unparalleled heroism during the struggle of recent years, were extremely weak from the point of view of their cultural standard.

The present wide labor movement which began to develop only after the February revolution, is only six years old. The men leading the movement at present were produced by the October Revolution, i. e., they have been leading the movement only for about five years. Naturally, their task was difficult. Also, the task was difficult because the entire union machinery had to be built from the bottom up. New methods of work had to be introduced and the membership of the unions went through several re-registrations.

UNIONS REORGANIZED UNDER "NEP"

We could not, considering our new task, and with the re-introduction of the free market and of private capital, leave in our union ranks the doubtful union members, namely, the semi-proletarian elements, the home workers, etc. These had to be removed and this naturally led to a reduction of the union membership.

Another reason for the reduction of the union membership was the cutting down of the working force in various enterprises and the concentration of industry, which resulted in mass lay-offs in some trades.

The third cause was the transition from collective to individual membership.* When, in April, 1922, we proposed this change, some of our trade unionists became somewhat alarmed, fearing that we might lose great numbers of our members. You probably know that the foreign press and the Menshevik emigres, were writing that the Russian workers were being forced into the unions almost at the point of the bayonet. We are now steadily carrying out, throughout our vast territory, the program of individual membership.

In all the factories and workshops of Russia, the question was raised before the union members as to whether they desired to remain in the unions and continue paying their membership dues or not. This campaign was carried on everywhere, and those desiring to withdraw from the unions were allowed to do so. Of course, here as in other cases, our antagonists became busy, whispering in the ears of the workers and telling them to leave the unions.

* The "collective" membership consisted of affiliation of the workers in shop and factory groups, somewhat similar to the check-off system of the United Mine Workers of America. The "individual" membership requires action by each separate worker in order to remain a union member.

UNION MEMBERSHIP COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY

The results were as follows: About 95 per cent of all the workers and employes in all Russia declared their desire to remain in the unions. The minimum in any province of those desiring to remain union members was 88 per cent. In Moscow, 99 to 100 per cent of the workers continued their membership.

We see, however, that the membership of our unions began to drop since the beginning of 1922, that is, since the change was introduced. On January 1st, 1922, we had 6,745,000 members; on October 1st, 1922, we had 4,545,000 members. By January 1st, 1923, this number had dropped to 4,502,000, namely, a reduction of 33 per cent was recorded. I have already pointed out the causes in the cleaning out of doubtful elements, the change to voluntary membership and the extensive lay-offs due to industrial concentration and shut-downs.

FIVE MILLION MEMBERS IN APRIL 1923

We have no exact data for all of Russia of a later date than January. However, according to figures relating to the greater half of Russia and to its most important industrial centers for April 1st, 1923, the membership in the unions is now growing and has increased on an average of from 5% to 5½%. If we consider this 5 per cent increase in addition to the trade unions of the Far Eastern regions of Russia, which are now part of the All-Russian unions, the membership on April 1st, would be approximately 4,893,000.

II.

FINANCES

OF all the organizational tasks confronting our trade unions, the most important and difficult one at present is the financial question. As is probably known from the series of pamphlets by Comrades Andreyev and Lozovsky, our trade unions formerly performed a number of governmental functions. We functioned as semi-governmental and semi-union bodies. On the other hand, certain government organs were fulfilling trade union functions.

Thus, acting partly as governmental institutions, the trade unions naturally could not exist on membership fees, especially under the system of payment of wages in kind (in commodities). The unions were therefore subsidized by the Workers' State.

UNIONS PUT ON THEIR OWN RESOURCES

Beginning with February, 1922, a sharp change had taken place in this respect. All subsidies from the government were stopped and we put before our various organizations the question of continuing to exist upon our own resources or of perishing.

This required steel nerves, a firm will and affected very adversely a number of our organizations. However, now as then, we prefer to see a weak trade union go to pieces (we will rebuild it again—and we know how to build unions) rather than encourage inability to become adjusted to new conditions. Yet even the stronger unions had considerable trouble in carrying out the new policy.

We must bear in mind the financial position under which we are existing. I mean the constant depreciation of our currency. I believe that our German comrades and the German trade unions are also in a difficult situation, since they, too, are forced to adjust their budget to the conditions of a constantly sinking currency. This is one of the almost insurmountable obstacles to the normal work of the trade unions.

Nevertheless, at present, of the 23 Central Committees, only one resorts to the aid of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. The other 22 Central Committees exist on their own resources and some of them have even managed to save up some capital. The situation in the Provincial Trade Union Councils is considerably worse. Only 50 per cent of them are able to exist on the local dues, the other 50 per cent requiring aid from the center or from the local soviet.

ALL-RUSSIAN CENTRAL COUNCIL AIDED BY GOVERNMENT

The A.-R. C. C. T. U. itself—I say this frankly and our western comrades must know that we do not for a moment hide this fact—still, unfortunately, exists almost entirely on state subsidies.

Our budget is covered by membership dues from the central organizations only to the extent of 15 per cent. Here we are touching the sore spot so frequently irritated by our opponents—the former leaders of the Russian trade union movement, the Mensheviks, who are mostly counter-revolutionary emigrants. It is the question of the subsidization of our unions by the state.

This situation we consider as faulty, but not from the point of view of principle. We do not take this money from a bourgeois government, but from our own government of workers and peasants, and

there is nothing wrong with a workers' government supporting workers' organizations which are its foundation stones. We consider the situation faulty because the government of workers which supports us is itself poor, and it is time for the unions to get on their own feet.

UNIONS AID THE WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

We do not deny that we come, when necessary, to the aid of our government. If needed, we undertake to carry out various campaigns, including the so-called "bread loans." * However, this aid of ours is in no way connected with or conditioned by the receipt of subsidies. We extend this aid because the state receiving it is our own proletarian state, and we shall continue to extend such aid even when we become financially entirely independent.

The new economic policy—"Nep"—has not changed the character of our workers' government, nor its relations with the trade unions. If we strive to live without governmental subsidies—and we hope to be able to manage our finances independently within a year—it is not because these subsidies deprive us of any independence in the management of our affairs, but because we are extremely reluctant to take money from our poor government. We are confident that we shall overcome this necessity in the future, because the unions are growing stronger all the time.

III.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

UNEMPLOYMENT

I SHALL take up the economic situation of the Russian workers. The most painful question confronting the working class at present is unemployment. Unemployment was caused by the drastic reduction of working forces carried out by a number of government establishments. Tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of various state and municipal employes have been laid off. The second cause is the con-

* The "bread loan," so-called, consists of advances of grain to the Soviet Government at guaranteed prices to be paid at a later date. It secures the peasants against loss through depreciation of currency and provides them with certain future resources; the advantage to the Soviet Government lies in the steady flow of grain to the cities. The "bread loans" have assisted materially in stabilizing Russian economic life.

centration of industry. The number of unemployed in Russia is about 400,000. This figure refers to one month ago. More recent data are not yet available.

It should be noted that of this number of unemployed, registered at the various Labor Exchanges, there are many elements who register themselves only in order to be entitled to the various exemptions given to the unemployed by our laws. However, this does not change the above number to any appreciable extent, and we may say that 10 per cent of all the Russian workers are now unemployed.

There is very little prospect of improving this situation in the near future, because the concentration of industry, now in process, is caused by the difficult economic situation. We lack capital and cannot set all our factories and works running at full speed. The weaker establishments must therefore be closed, as it requires too many sacrifices and too much labor to start our industries running full speed, and the western European capitalists are unwilling to invest their money in Russia on our terms.

HAVE NOT SURRENDERED TO CONCESSIONAIRES

Like Leslie Urquhart, western capitalists want concessions for which we should pay them, and not they us. This is, of course, unacceptable to us. Some capitalists believe that Russia, which lies between Europe and Asia, is a country in which they should be able to reap usurers' profits, while some capitalists want to get concessions in industries which we can manage ourselves, such as the oil industry, etc. The soviets will not allow such concessions. This means that unless the attitude of the capitalist world toward Russia changes, our present unemployment will prevail for some time. This is one of the grave conditions under which the Russian working class is forced to live at present, thanks to this "capital blockade."

WAGES

The economic situation of the workers generally has considerably improved, however. A survey of conditions in Petrograd, Moscow, Ivanovo-Vosnessensk, Nijny-Novgorod, Kharkow, the Don Basin, Baku and Gresni, of the principle industrial centers of Soviet Russia, showed that by January 1st, 1923, wages had increased considerably as compared with the figures given by Comrade Andreyev at the last plenary session of the Red International of Labor Unions. At that time Comrade Andreyev considered it satisfactory progress that in August, 1922,

the Moscow workers were receiving 57 per cent of their pre-war wages.

TOWARD THE PRE-WAR STANDARD

We now have the following figures: In January, 1923, the average wage in all industries throughout Russia were 54 per cent of the pre-war level; the same in February; and 59 per cent in March. In Petrograd we had, in March, 72 per cent; in Moscow 90 per cent of the pre-war wages. These figures require some explanation.

Why has Moscow overtaken Petrograd so greatly? This is not due to the fact that we are personally located in Moscow and therefore favor the Moscow workers against those of Petrograd, but chiefly it is because in the pre-war days the Moscow workers were not so progressive nor so well organized as those of Petrograd, and were more poorly paid. Then there is also the fact that Moscow is the center of the textile industry, the workers of which were among the worst underpaid workers in Russia before the Revolution and were generally treated most miserably. That is why Moscow reached 90 per cent and Petrograd only 72 per cent of the pre-war wage.

EQUALIZATION UPWARDS

If we analyze the figures showing the growth of the wages, we will find that the wages of the more progressive workers are now growing more slowly than those of the backward industries, such as the food and textile workers. This is due to the fact that the wages of the least organized workers before the war, which were therefore the lowest, are now increasing most rapidly and approach nearest to their pre-war level.

Thus, we see rapid progress in the case of the food workers, the confectionery workers, etc.—mostly women—whose pay in the old days was miserable. Now the wages of all the workers are becoming more or less equalized; all are given a living minimum wage, which closely approaches the pre-war rate. Thus, the secret of the disproportionate raise of the textile workers, food workers and chemists is to be found in the fact that they had been the poorest paid categories of worker before the war, while the metal workers were receiving the highest pay. We see that while the metal workers' wages in Moscow are now only 75 per cent of their pre-war wages, the tobacco workers and chemical workers are 108 per cent of their pre-war wages. The metal workers attained their present wage scale only recently, in conse-

quence of the especial efforts made by the A.-R. C. C. T. U. to get the metal workers on the same level with the other industries. In January, 1923, the metal workers were receiving 61 per cent, the textile workers 71 per cent, the chemical workers 87 per cent of their pre-war wages.

WAGES COMPARATIVELY SATISFACTORY

Can this situation be considered satisfactory as compared with the situation of a year ago? Certainly. The economic situation of the workers has doubtlessly improved, but, of course, it is still far from good if we consider the objective economic situation of the Russian worker—because our pre-war wages were anything but sufficient. Unfortunately, the economic condition of the country does not afford the possibility of rapidly improving the pay of the worker still further.

THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY EFFECTIVE

We have also heard the whisperings of our Menshevik emigres that, in spite of the "loudly proclaimed" eight-hour working day and the Labor Code, the Russian trade unions, through their sanctioning of overtime work, have actually "abolished" the eight-hour day.

We have made a survey of the situation. We were, of course, firmly convinced that our workers have not been deprived of the eight-hour day. However, we had no guarantees that some abuses had not been made.

SIX-HOUR DAY IN UNHEALTHFUL TRADES

Now the survey made by us showed the following results: The average working day in the basic industries is as follows: Eight hours in the metal industry; 7.7 hours in the textile industry; 7.9 in the chemical industry (the latter figures are due to the harmful trades in these industries); while the average working day for all industries throughout Russia is only 7.9 hours—that is to say, less than eight hours in spite of the overtime work allowed by us in some cases. This length of the working day is due to the six-hour day prevailing in industries detrimental to health.

WAGE POLICIES AND COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

I wish to touch upon our wage policies and our system of carrying them out. The previous system consisted, as is probably known, of governmental fixing of wages. Now, however, we have introduced the system of collective agreements in every industry. Our collective

agreements are of two types: centralized collective agreements and local collective agreements.

The centralized collective agreements are made by the Central Committee of the particular union directly, or by the representatives of the local organizations. The local agreements are concluded by the local branches of the unions.

I consider it necessary to dwell at length upon the centralized collective agreements which are frequently misinterpreted by our enemies. The centralized agreements correspond to the forms and structure of our industry at the present time.

METHODS OF REACHING AGREEMENTS

The trade unions deal chiefly with nationalized industries, centralized in the form we call "trusts." These trusts have big factories in the provinces of Nijny-Novgorod, Moscow, etc. The local unions are unable, of course, to conclude collective agreements with those trusts which embrace, each in its own industry, all the factories of that industry located throughout Russia.

Moreover, I think that if I were to work in a purely bourgeois state and should have to deal with private capitalists, I would prefer collective agreements concluded by the central union organ and affecting the entire group of factories belonging to the trust or an employers' association. This, in fact, was the policy pursued by us in the pre-war days when we were confronted with manufacturers' associations.

LOCAL MODIFICATIONS PROVIDED

However, centralized agreements are concluded also with factories and industries which are wholly dependent on the government budget. Such are our transport, our post office and telegraph; in which case, however, the centralized agreement, which is a binding minimum, includes provisions for possible modifications or supplementary agreements in certain localities.

SOVIET LABOR CODE PROTECTION

That part of the collective agreements relating to the civil rights of the workers is of but little importance in Russia. The government Labor Code, though it has been considerably abridged lately, still provides sufficient protection to the workers, so that there are very few branches of industry which could effect a further improvement of the civil rights of the workers through the unions' collective agreements.

CHARACTER OF AGREEMENT RELATION

I wish to touch upon another important question relating to the collective agreement. It has been partly dealt with by Comrade Andreyev in his report. However, I consider this question of such importance that I may be justified in raising it again, and I am sure it will also be useful to our western comrades.

I refer to the character, the social basis and essence of our collective agreement. We trade unionists know that a collective agreement with a capitalist represents the division of power between labor and capital as fixed on paper. What, however, is the significance of a collective agreement, signed by the trade unions and the government industrial organs in a proletarian state? Does it also represent the division of two struggling forces?

SOCIAL CONTRACT NOT CLASS COMPROMISE

Not at all. The economic situation of our workers is difficult, not because the nationalized industries—which are the mainstay and foundation of our economic life—do not want to give the workers more, but because the proletarian state and its industries are unable to do so. Therefore, each collective agreement establishes wages in accord with the economic possibilities of the particular trust or syndicate. Our trade unionists get a higher rate of wages as the particular industry becomes able to pay it.

DIFFICULTIES ARE OBJECTIVE

It has even happened that collective agreements were signed, which provided for a wage scale which the particular enterprise could not pay. This leads to all sorts of trouble and to the inability of this certain branch of industry to discharge its obligations, to delays in the payment of wages, resulting in discontent among the workers; this sometimes leads to disputes and even to strikes.

Thus, the collective agreement between the government industries and the trade unions represent, in Soviet Russia, the economic situation of the particular industry at the moment of the signing of the agreement, as well as the general economic situation of the Soviet republic.

This could not be otherwise. Though our economic policy has been changed, and our industries put on a self-supporting basis, and our factories sometimes come out on the market as competitors, buying

and selling from each other (of which we greatly disapprove), yet essentially our national industries remain unchanged.

WORKING CLASS OWNS BASIC INDUSTRIES

The working class has been and is the owner of most of the means of production in Russia. We change our economic policy in accordance with the economic and political situation, but the basic fact remains—that the means of production, the factories, transport, etc., are in the hands of the working class.

Neither does our attitude towards production change in any respect; that is, in fixing wages and in settling economic disputes. We take into consideration the economic difficulties of our own workers' state, and when such a difficulty results in some hardship for us, we do not regard it as a hostile act. We, the working class, are the owners and rulers of Russian industry. As such we take the trade risks inherent in ownership, and when our workers' government, which corresponds to a board of directors, does all that is possible to meet our needs, we do not think of our government as an enemy because it cannot do more.

IV.

THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE STATE

WE thus come to the question of our attitude towards the state and of our participation in the industrial life of the country. I believe I have already dwelt with the questions of the trade unions and the state under the proletarian dictatorship in a number of articles and pamphlets. Comrade Lozovsky and many other trade unionists have also covered this subject. I therefore think it advisable to present our attitude towards the state in figures.

UNIONS IN POSITION OF POWER

We have our representatives in the following institutions: The Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee—the highest governing body in Russia, five of the thirteen members of the Presidium are our representatives. We have a consultative voice in the Council of People's Commissars and we have a representative with a deciding vote in the Small Council of Peoples' Commissars. We have a representative with a deciding vote in the Chief Concessions Committee.

We also have a representative with a deciding vote in the Council of Labor and Defense and in the Commissariat of Internal Trade. We have four representatives in the State Planning Commission, and we are represented also in its presidium. We have our representatives in the Economic Section, the Agricultural Section, and other sections of the State Planning Committee.

In the presidium of the Supreme Economic Council we are represented by one deciding vote. Our representatives also participate in the work of the various commissions for building, electrification, fuel, in the Economic and Concessions Committee of the Supreme Economic Council, in the Central Scientific Technical Council, in the Central Organizational Department for the calling of industrial congresses, in the Central Committee for the reorganization of the trusts—in fourteen commissions in all.

LABOR COMMISSAR CHOSEN BY THE UNIONS

We also have our representative in the presidium of the Peoples' Commissariat for Labor, including Comrade Schmidt, the Peoples' Commissar for Labor, and Comrade Nemchenko. We are represented in the Committee on Bonuses and in the Central Committee on Conflicts.

I shall not burden you with the names of all the bodies on which we are represented, as there are very many of them, including all the principal governmental departments; the Peoples' Commissariat of Food, Communications, Agriculture, among whose presiding members are members of the Central Committee of the Agricultural Workers' Union; Finance, Foreign Trade, etc. This, then is our relation with the state. This also determines the influence of the trade unions over the governmental departments.

NO LAW PASSED WITHOUT UNION SANCTION

Our relation to the legislative activity of our government can be seen from the fact that not a single law, circular or order affecting the workers or working conditions is passed without the sanction of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions.

Relations similar to those in the center exist also between the provincial unions and the local government authorities. It very seldom happens that the Chairman of the Provincial Trade Union Council is not a member of the presidium of the local soviet. Thus, Comrade

Melnichansky, the Chairman of the Moscow Provincial Trade Union Council, is automatically a member of the presidium of the Moscow Soviet. The same is true in Petrograd and other cities.

V.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

I SHALL now take up the question of our educational activities. Our educational system has very many defects and we are far from satisfied with it. We have not yet developed sufficient cultural work among the union membership. However, whatever we are doing is characteristic of our labor movement, and sharply distinguishes our unions from those of western Europe.

I have already told you that we received from the Czar a heritage of an uncultured, illiterate people. Russia was largely illiterate, and at the beginning of 1921, we had some unions, for instance, the Union of Public Provisioning, which had a membership of 65 per cent illiterates, the wood workers, 50 per cent; the miners—the pride and joy of the revolution—50 per cent; the agricultural workers 80 per cent. Comrades, I believe that you will agree with us that it would have been shameful for us to leave the Russian proletariat, which has performed such miracles of heroism, in the mire of ignorance and illiteracy.

UNION SCHOOLS WIPING OUT ILLITERACY

The statistics of three months ago show that as a consequence of our work, the total number of illiterates in the trade unions is only 400,000, that is, 10 per cent of the membership. On January 1st, we had 2,462 schools for the liquidation of illiteracy.

We thus see that we had to engage in "non-union"—though we consider it very important union—work. For through spreading knowledge among the proletariat we were helping our Peoples' Commissariat for Education, which, of course, we were only too anxious to do. Moreover, the trade unions have been supporting a number of educational institutions and maintaining some entirely. *The unions are maintaining 4,262 primary schools, 403 secondary schools, 943 kindergartens, 571 nurseries; including a total number of 939,735 students and children.*

UNION CLUBS AND LIBRARIES

Our club activities are also far from satisfactory, in spite of the fact that three months ago we had a total number of 2,898 trade union clubs. We have in all Russia, 5,083 factory and club libraries, the bulk of which—about 1,317—belong to the railway union, and 582 are managed by the Agricultural Workers' Union.

Our library activities are so extensive that in the past five months we have sent out to the various provinces 544 libraries with more than 150,000 books.

HIGHER EDUCATION FREE TO UNION MEMBERS

Our higher educational institutions which are directed by the Peoples' Commissar for Education, allot to the unions through the central committees, free scholarships to those union members whom the unions select. Among them the Central Committee of the Metal Workers has 200 scholarships; the Railway and Marine Transport Workers, 725; the Miners, 194; the Agricultural Workers, 200; the Leather Workers, 145; the Sugar Workers, 287; the Food Workers, 110; the Communication Workers, 150; the Medical and Public Health Workers, 39; the Local Transport Workers, 52.

Where do the trade unions get their funds for their support of schools, libraries, etc.? In making collective agreements, the trade unions include provisions for the payment, by the enterprise, of from 2 per cent to 10 per cent of the total amount of wages—over and above the wages the workers receive—for the purpose of educational work. Here, in the center, the co-operatives pay one per cent for educational purposes. We thus get considerable sums for the support of the various schools.

This, however, is a heavy burden upon our industries, so that we are now turning the entire chain of our schools, with the exception of the clubs, the primary and secondary schools and children's nurseries, over to the government.

By this means we lower the percentage required for cultural needs to one per cent. We are turning the schools over to the government because the tremendous scale of this work also distracts us from the club work of the unions, which we consider of prime importance.

WORKERS' UNIVERSITIES AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

I shall also touch upon the general educational and vocational schools and courses established by the unions. On January 1st, 1923,

there were altogether 584 factory schools providing vocational training; besides 199 workers' universities and educational courses.

In addition to that, we have the so-called Workers' Faculties, in which 18,000 trade unionists are studying, out of a total of 30,000 students. At the beginning of the 1923 semester, 10,000 trade union members will enter the higher schools of Russia with the aid of the unions. Last year, of the 130,000 students in the Russian universities, 20,000 were members of the various unions.

AN AMBITION AND A DANGER

This, of course, is good work, but it is not wholly satisfactory. Thus, in spite of the fact that the work in our clubs is carried out on a wide scale, we wish they could satisfy every need of the worker so that the club would become the center of all his activities. We do not shut our eyes to the dangers confronting us. With the development of the new economic policy, a number of amusement places, such as cinema shows with vulgar programs, cabarets, saloons, etc., have been opened, and they naturally attract the workers.

We cannot agree to the bourgeois poisoning of our workers with their culture. We wish to bring about a situation in which no working man would be attracted by any amusement place outside of those of his union. It will be extremely difficult to accomplish this and we are approaching this situation very slowly. However, we have this object in view, for were we to allow the bourgeoisie to contaminate our workers with their capitalist culture, we would be in danger of losing our membership. So far, we have accomplished little in this field.

VI.

TRADE UNION TECHNIQUE DIFFICULTIES

TRADE union technique presents great difficulties to us. We are poor technicians. We do not have precise, established apparatus such as the European trade unions can claim.

The Russian workers knew many things and have learned much. The one art which the Russian workers have thoroughly learned is that of making revolutions. We can undertake to teach this art to anyone. We can also build up trade unions and direct the masses.

UNION MEN WHIPPED KOLCHAK AND DENIKIN

That our unions have played a tremendous historical role can be seen by the fact that at the grave moment when Kolchak was attacking us from Siberia, Denikin from the south and Yudenitch from the west, and the ranks of the Red Army were yielding to the heavy pressure of the enemy, we unhesitatingly assumed the task of a mobilizing staff for our Workers' State. We mobilized 70,000 of our members and sent them to the front. These 70,000 union men played a decisive part in the entire war, making up the nucleus of the army which put the fear of death into the hearts of our enemies.

We have thus learned much, but we have yet to learn trade union technique from our western comrades. We are, for instance, confronted with a new question—that of sport.

FREE WORKERS NEED SPORTS AND GAMES

Sports, in Russia, have never been developed. They are now appearing spontaneously and we do our utmost to support them. Western Europe has sport circles; and we would therefore appreciate it if you told us how they are organized. What kind of sport suits metal workers; which is best for textile workers, for dock workers—we have found out that we do not know this. And if anyone were to help us in this matter, we would be extremely grateful.

Back in April, 1922, I was telling the Russian workers and trade unionists that it is our task to learn from the West the technique of the trade union organization, the system of collecting membership dues in a country with a depreciating currency—the cheapest and most efficient methods of accountancy, so that we may be able at any moment to know our membership and have correct statistics. And now I must repeat this same thing, since we have not yet learned how to do all this.

WILLING TO LEARN FROM ANYBODY

When I then, in April, 1922, stated that we should have to visit western Europe in order to learn trade union technique, I was ridiculed. They said: "Tomsky wants to send his trade unions to Karl Legien!" However, I am ready to go to Legien or even to Gompers himself, if they would only teach me the necessary technique. Gompers and Scheidemann know this technique because their trade union movement has been in existence for 70 or 80 years. We, however,

know very little, and there is nothing shameful about learning whatever Scheidemann knows that is useful to us, though, of course, it would be better to learn it from revolutionary comrades.

This is a thing of tremendous importance to us. Scores of our people have gone through western Europe, and when they return they say: "Western workers have long established methods, worked out during a century of experience; they know how wide a shelf should be, the kind of paper they have to use for any purpose; they have a well-trained staff of instructors." All of which we do not have.

SELF-TAUGHT WORKERS LEAD THE MASSES

We frequently meet in our unions, good leaders, politically irreproachable, capable of carrying away the masses, or orientating themselves in the most intricate questions, but—take a look at his handwriting—it is large and clumsy, for he is a self-taught worker, or he has learned to write from his comrades while in prison.

We have organized trade union courses and they are located right in this building. You will find at these courses good comrades, many of whom have been representatives of the provincial trade unions, many on the presidium of the Provincial Councils, all of them tried revolutionists, with long party and trade union standing—yet we had to teach some of them elementary subjects, the first rules of arithmetic. So, that, if anyone were to teach us the western trade union technique, we should be extremely grateful.

VII.

THE UNIONS AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

IN conclusion I wish to touch upon another question which strongly interests the West. It is the question of "we and the party,"—the trade unions and the communist party.

I shall not dwell at any great length upon this question, for it is not the business of my present report to show or to justify our relations with the Party. I only wish to point out certain facts. I wish to call the attention of the comrades to the fact that the relations

which have developed between us and the party are the result of our peculiar situation.

THE PARTY ORGANIZED THE UNIONS

The working class of Russia first organized an illegal revolutionary party, and then, afterward, the trade unions. As a matter of fact, 80 per cent of our unions in 1905 were built up by the old Social Democratic Party. During its illegal existence the party found shelter in the trade unions. In 1917, during the second period of regeneration of the trade unions, from 50 to 60 per cent of them were organized by the party.

These two facts, the foundation of the party previous to the unions, and the organization of trade unions by the party, were the primary causes of the block which has made our labor movement strong. The bloc of the union with the party and the influence of the party upon us are not denied by us.

UNION INFLUENCE WITHIN COMMUNIST PARTY

Nor can it be denied, on the other hand, that the party is influenced by the trade unions as well. The following figures will illustrate this: Four members of the Presidium of the A.-R. C. C. T. U. are also members of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. These four members are equally engaged in party and trade union work, though the latter is their particular task.

The current work of the party is guided by two bodies: the Political Bureau and the Organizational Bureaus of the Central Committee. Two members of the Presidium of the A.-R. C. C. T. U. are also members of the Political Bureau. Four members of the A.-R. C. C. T. U. are also members of the Organizational Bureau. Comrade Rudzutack, a prominent trade unionist, was transferred to party work after the last party congress. The party needed a good organizer and we had to part with Comrade Rudzutack in order that he might take up the duties of Secretary of the Party.

HARMONIOUS CO-OPERATION, NOT "DOMINATION"

In the presence of such relations, can there be any talk of the "domination" of the Party over the trade unions? There is not a single provincial committee of the party which does not include several members of the presidium of the local trade union council. Such

are the practical relations between the party and the trade unions. I believe these relations are characteristic of the Russian labor movement—and a rather good characteristic.

Owing to these relations, much that seems unclear and strange in the history of our labor movement can be cleared up. Only these close relations between the unions and the Communist Party can explain some of the miraculous accomplishments of our revolution.

If we could imagine the entire labor movement of Germany joining hands with the German Communist Party, would there be any doubt about the immediate establishment of the Soviet power in Germany? A much better organized and stronger Soviet government than our Russian soviets, for the German people are much more highly cultured.

If we could imagine the British trade unions joining hands with the Communist Party of England—the red flag would be flying from the London town halls before very long. This is what the union of the Communist Party and the trade unions means to the labor movement anywhere.

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