

Unity of the International Trade Union Movement

By A. LOZOVSKY

DURING the course of its development the labor movement has undergone many crises. One of the most important of these crises, owing to its character and consequences, is the national and international split in the trade union movement. The root and source of this split is to be traced back to the outbreak of the war, when the leading elements of the socialist parties and of the trade unions identified the fate of the labor organizations with the fate of the capitalists of their respective countries. The four years of war and the six years of peace which followed it opened the eyes of broad masses of workers and made it clear to them wherein lies the source of weakness of the proletarian masses. This experience has proved the following: the more peacefully the socialist parties and trade unions were disposed towards the bourgeoisie, the deeper they drove a wedge into the working class. The history of the last ten years is the history of the decay of the social democratic parties and of the reformist trade unions; it is the history of a slow recovery on the part of the proletarian rank and file by means of the founding of Communist parties and revolutionary trade unions, or trade union minorities. The splitting of the political parties, the drawing of all sound proletarian elements away from the influence of these parties, was the prerequisite for the overcoming of the crisis. The process of the formation of the Communist parties began, with the exception of Russia, with the commencement of the war and found its international expression in the formation of the Communist International, the five years existence and success of which we have recently celebrated. While the political labor movement faces all the revolutionary elements with the direct task of building up the Communist parties as rapidly as possible, the interests of the labor movement demand the preservation at all costs of the unity of the revolutionary movement by means of a struggle within the trade unions for a revolutionary program and revolutionary tactics. There is no contradiction in the fact that the revolutionary workers have, on the one hand, split the social democratic and the so-called independent parties in order to form revolutionary Communist organizations and that, on the other hand, these same workers combat with all their power, those communists, who wish to split the trade unions. The different character of these two types of workers' organizations compels the communists to conduct a different policy regarding them in order to achieve the same end: the capturing of the masses. The setting up of the communist parties was everywhere accompanied by the slogan: "fight for the unity of the trade unions, fight against the theory of destroying the trade unions", and in those cases where such a theory has arisen, the Communist International declared the most energetic fight against it.

But if the Comintern has always fought against splitting the trade union movement, why then was the Red International of Labor Unions created? The R.I.L.U. was created after the Amsterdam International had linked up its fate with the League of Nations, after the Amsterdam International had, along with the representatives of the largest employers' organizations, taken part in throttling the revolutionary labor movement in all countries, after the Amsterdam International had proclaimed the sharpest struggle against the Russian revolution and the Communist International. From the beginning of 1920 the discontent with the old program and the old tactics made its appearance in all countries, but this discontent did not yet possess a sufficiently clear and definite ideological character. It was necessary to bring together these multifarious views, to assemble the revolutionary forces existing in the International trade union movement around an ideological and organizational centre, to work out a clear policy and to take up the struggle against reformism which was poisoning the labor movement in a common revolutionary front. There therefore arose in 1920 the R.I.L.U. which

continued to develop. From the first day of its existence the R.I.L.U. emphatically pronounced against the splitting of the trade unions. That alone is to be seen from the following facts:

1. The R.I.L.U. pronounced itself against the slogan of destroying the trade unions.
2. The R.I.L.U. proposed to the Amsterdam International to restore the unity of the French and Czechoslovakian trade union movement.
3. The R.I.L.U. has at all its congresses decided that all revolutionary unions shall affiliate to their respective internationals.
4. The R.I.L.U. has several times openly declared that the International Propaganda Committees will be dissolved as soon as the revolutionary unions in question are admitted into the respective internationals.
5. The R.I.L.U. at its II. Congress issued the slogan of the united front and often approached the Amsterdam International with the proposal for common action.

class struggle, and in spite of every provocation stood by its standpoint; against splits and for unity.

The III. Congress of the R.I.L.U. drew the logical conclusion from the four years' struggle for unity in proclaiming the slogan of amalgamating both Internationals by means of an International Unity Congress. The conditions for this have become much more favourable, as the consciousness of the necessity for unity has penetrated the broadest masses. A change can be seen in the English labor movement as a result of the bourgeois policy of the "Labor Government."

We must openly admit that the raising of this question at the Congress of the Comintern, as well as at the Conference of the R.I.L.U., met with resistance. This resistance is mainly to be explained by the fact that the opponents of this slogan had not thoroughly thought out the trade union tactics of the R.I.L.U. and of the Comintern. This slogan met with specially energetic opposition on the part of the German delegation which

international organization with such people as do not recognize our program. Our program has been recognized by history and it will finally be recognized by the whole working class. This unity proposal is not, as some comrades think, a coalition between the leaders of the R.I.L.U. and the Amsterdam International. The unity of the international trade union movement can be set up in the event of our succeeding in arousing ten millions of proletarians to take an interest in this campaign. Some comrades are so afraid of reformism that they anxiously ask: "What will happen if the Amsterdam International accepts your proposal and agrees to the International Unity Congress?" To which we answer: "Excellent! We will be only too pleased if the Amsterdamers accept this proposal, as it is precisely the task of our unity resolution to realize this unity." — "Well, and what if you are in the minority in this united International?" ask the same comrades. — "If we are in the minority then we shall fight for the majority and hope to win this majority." — "You are prepared to take part in an international unity Congress without any previous conditions?" — "Yes, we are prepared to take part in an international unity congress without any previous conditions. The relation of forces at the unity congress will decide the program and tactics of the new international." — "And if the Amsterdamers lay down conditions, what then?" — "If that is the case, the negotiations will soon show what conditions of either party are acceptable and what are not acceptable by both parties. The working masses will judge themselves." — "And if the Amsterdamers refuse negotiations regarding unity?" — "If they refuse so much the worse for them. We will not abandon our struggle for unity."

In our struggle for unity we have our eye on the masses and attach very little value to the good-will and the mood of this or that leader. As soon as the unity of the international trade union movement is a necessity for the masses, we have to fight for this unity and mobilize the broadest masses against those who oppose this unity. And there is not the least doubt that unity is threatened. The danger comes from two sides: before all from the side of the right wing of the Amsterdam International. This was to be seen at the Vienna Congress, when the right Amsterdamers endeavoured to render the resolution as vague as possible in order to leave open every loophole. After the Vienna Congress the Bureau of the Amsterdam International sent a letter to the All-Russian Central Trade Union Council proposing negotiations on the basis of the decisions adopted in Vienna. To these negotiations the Amsterdamers attached the following two conditions:

1. They will conduct negotiations only with the Russian trade unions and only with regard to the affiliation of the Russian Trade Unions to Amsterdam.

2. The negotiations regarding the affiliation shall have as their basis the program and statutes of the Amsterdam International.

That the Amsterdamers laid down such conditions is not to be wondered at. They are continuing the sabotage which they began at the Vienna Congress. If we look up the letters which have passed between the Amsterdam International and the All-Russian Trade Union Council during the last two or three years, we see that all these proposals have already been made on many occasions, to which the All-Russian Trade Union Council has always replied that it had no hand in drawing up the program and the statutes of the Amsterdam International and therefore has no reason to recognize them as pre-conditions. It is in this manner that the right Amsterdamers sabotage the unity of the trade union movement. There is nothing surprising in this. But it is less easy to understand why the representatives of the left wing take part in this combination. Do the leaders of the left wing of the Amsterdam International believe that this way is the shortest cut to the restora-

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6. At the International Peace Congress at the Hague the R.I.L.U. attempted to propose the united front to the Amsterdam International. Similar attempts were undertaken after the Ruhr occupation and before and after the Frankfurt Conference.

7. The R.I.L.U. regards the united front in the trade union movement as the first step towards the organizational union of the divided portions of the movement.

8. In every case in which tendencies to split the trade unions appeared in the ranks of the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. the R.I.L.U. has opposed this attitude with the greatest determination and defended the slogan of trade union unity with all the means at its disposal.

All these facts are known to those who have more or less carefully followed the activity of the R.I.L.U., the decisions of its congresses and the instructions of its executive organ.

How did the Amsterdam International and the organizations affiliated to it reply to all these measures of the R.I.L.U.? They replied with a furious campaign against the Communists and with their expulsion from the trade unions. If the R.I.L.U. had allowed itself to be actuated by the same motives as the Amsterdamers, that is by the wish to get rid of their opponents at any price, then to-day the disruption of the trade unions along the whole line would have been an accomplished fact. The R.I.L.U. was only prompted in its attitude by its regard for the requirements of the

regarded the slogan of the amalgamation of the two internationals as "opportunism," even "menshevism." Why the communists can be together with the reformists in a common national organization and why they cannot be together in an international organization would be hard to say. The opponents of this slogan have unwittingly promoted the splitting tendencies which are to be found among a section of the German workers. We must prove our will to unity by facts, and the proposal to convene an international unity congress is the best proof that trade union unity is for us no empty phrase and no maneuver as a few over-clever comrades think. The National Council of the C. P. of Germany adopted a resolution regarding this question which is anything but clear. Here it was said that the slogan of uniting both internationals is to be understood in the sense that unity is to be accomplished on the basis of the programme of the R.I.L.U. To understand the decisions of the R.I.L.U. and the Comintern in such a way is not to understand them at all. Of course it would be best if all the workers were to recognize the platform of the R.I.L.U., but in that case what sense would there be to speak of amalgamating the two internationals? We propose however an amalgamation of both internationals and the creation of a united international in spite of the fact that half of the organized workers do not accept the program of the R. I. L. U. We are not at all afraid of being in an

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tion of the unity of the international trade union movement? If they really believe that they will soon be convinced of the incorrectness of their standpoint. Some leaders of the Amsterdam International, apparently, consider it possible to prescribe conditions, thereby forgetting that the conditions depend upon the actual relation of forces. We must therefore advise the one and the other to abandon the idea of their being able to impose their will upon the revolutionary trade union movement.

What is the explanation of this policy of the Amsterdam International? It is due to the fact that there are a number of men in this international who would rather split the Amsterdam International than declare themselves ready to unite with the revolutionary workers. At the International Congress of the Metal Workers the representative of the French Federation declared that in the event of the Russian Metal Workers' Federation being admitted into the International, the French Federation would withdraw from it. For those people who have concluded an alliance for life and death with the bourgeoisie, who grovel before Herriot, splitting is better than unity. We must at all cost destroy that will for further splitting and dismemberment of the labor movement, which to a large extent still exists in the Amsterdam International. We can only do this if all the revolutionary organizations affiliated to the R.I.L.U. realize that the fight for the unity of the international trade union movement is a long and serious one, that it is no mere maneuver, but a real desire corresponding to the needs of the masses. Unity can only be the result of a long, persistent, systematic propaganda among the masses. The followers of the R.I.L.U. must link up the every day struggles against national and international capital, our struggles for

the eight-hour day, for improving the conditions of the workers and our defensive and aggressive actions, with the question of unity of the trade union organizations, we then shall be able to mobilize the masses for this slogan and convert this slogan into a battle-cry of ten million proletarians. It is hard to say how much time we shall require to achieve this unity. But no matter how much effort it may cost us, the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. will continue the struggle they have taken up and will, in spite of all the sabotage of the reformists, bring about the national and international unity of the trade union movement.

OUR DATES

Workers Party Units and Friendly Organizations do not arrange conflicting dates in Chicago.

- Saturday, Sept. 20.—Concert and Ball—Benefit THE YOUNG WORKER, Workers Lyceum, 2733 Hirsch Blvd., Jewish Propaganda Committee.
- Sunday, Sept. 21.—Workers Lyceum, 2733 Hirsch Blvd., Entertainment and Dance by Vanguard Junior Group.
- Sept. 27.—Communist Social — Benefit DAILY WORKER, North Side Y. W. L. Branch.
- Saturday, Oct. 11.—Dance—Hersh Lekert Branch, Workers Lyceum, 2733 Hirsch Blvd.
- Sunday, Oct. 12.—Foster-Gitlow Campaign Meeting, Ashland Auditorium (afternoon).
- Sunday, Oct. 12.—Concert and dance, Russian and Ukrainian branches of W. P., Schoenhofen Hall, Ashland and Milwaukee Aves.
- Saturday, Oct. 18.—John Reed Memorial Meeting.
- Saturday, Oct. 25.—Freiheit Ball, Ashland Auditorium.
- Friday, Nov. 7.—Seventh Anniversary Russian Revolution, Ashland Auditorium.
- Saturday, Nov. 15.—City Mask Ball.
- November 22.—Marshfield Branch Social.
- November 27-30.—DAILY WORKER, Labor Defense Bazaar, Workers Lyceum, 2733 Hirsch Blvd.
- Wednesday, Dec. 31.—T. U. E. L. Dance, West End Hall.
- Wednesday, Jan. 21.—Lenin Memorial Meeting, Ashland Auditorium.
- Saturday, February 28, 1925.—Red Revel, West End Women's Club, 37 So. Ashland Ave.
- Sat., Oct. 4.—Russian performance at the Soviet School, 1902 West Division St. Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia.