

# THE MINERS' STRUGGLE IN ENGLAND

## The Manoeuvre of the General Council against the Miners' Struggle.

By A. Lozovsky.

Heavy clouds hang over the strike of the British miners. Behind the backs of the strikers, negotiations are taking place, agreements and mutual concessions being made, the purpose of which is perfectly clear. The fight of the 1,200,000 miners is again in danger, not because the pressure on the part of the bourgeoisie is being continually increased, nor because the Cherrills and Birkenheads are spitting out venom and threatening all and sundry. No, it is not this that is endangering the miners' fight, but the fact that the General Council have once again openly declared that they are going to adopt measures to "support" the miners. They have already once "supported" the miners in the same way as the hangman's rope supports his victim. They are once again beginning to display an interest in the miners' struggle; and this reawakened interest "happened" to coincide with the **Conference of Trade Union Executives** at which the General Council would have had to answer for their shameful conduct.

There is a rather curious story connected with this conference of the Trade Union Executives. The General Council were to have convened this conference immediately after the

general strike in order to give an account of their actions to those who had entrusted them with full powers. The General Council postponed the conference until June 25, in the hope that by that time the miners' struggle would have been ended in one way or another and that it would then have been possible to deliver the report in a "peaceful" atmosphere, i. e. simply to bury the painful debate and receive a general amnesty and absolution. The miners, however, still continued their struggle, in spite of all the machinations of the General Council. The leaders of the General Council fully realised that it would be a difficult job to come forward and submit an account of their actions during the general strike while the miners' struggle was still going on. It would have meant stating plainly under what circumstances the strike was called off, what "guarantees" the General Council had received etc. The miners' struggle is a crying refutation of all the talk and chatter, both of the Right and the so-called Left leaders in the General Council as to how they succeeded in concluding an honourable peace. Thus it came about that the miners' struggle appeared as an unexpected disturbing factor in the plans of the politicians in the General Council.

When it was seen that the miners were still holding out and would still be holding out even during the conference, the General Council began to manoeuvre, to retreat and to attempt to obscure the issue. Two days before the conference the General Council decided to make a further grant of £ 10,000 to the miners; thereupon the General Council began to work on the Miners' Federation and to persuade them to agree to a postponement of the conference. This manoeuvre was crowned with success. The declaration of the General Council regarding the postponement of the conference of the Trade Union Executives states:

"The General Council and the Miners' Federation consider this (the postponement) imperative so that a united policy may be adopted to resist to the fullest possible extent the Government's action... The General Council and the Miners' Federation regard it as of the greatest importance at this juncture that all sections and parties should avoid statements, either in speech or writing, which create friction and misunderstanding and divert attention from the purpose in view."

Every single word of this declaration is a real gem. It appears that the General Council consider it necessary that "a united policy be adopted". But upon what basis? The submission of the miners to the mineowners? Obviously. For the sentence, "to resist to the fullest possible extent the Government's action", contains nothing concrete. At the present moment the fundamental question of the struggle is — the miners' lock-out. Nothing is said regarding this question, but instead it is strongly emphasised that it is necessary to "avoid statements, either in speech or writing, which create friction and misunderstanding". What speeches are meant here? Speeches directed against the policy of the General Council. The General Council regard criticism of their actions as exceedingly injurious, as this would "divert attention from the purpose in view". What is the "purpose" that the General Council have "in view"? To help the miners? If they had wanted to do that then there would have been no need for them to call off the general strike. It is the "purpose" of the General Council to cloak and conceal the treachery they have committed. Speeches and articles however would hinder this purpose.

In return for a vague promise of indefinite support the General Council demand complete silence and the cessation of any criticism. In whose interest is this? If we did not have enough information in this respect English justice would have furnished an answer. English judges are now sentencing workers to imprisonment for criticising the General Council. The defence of the "purity and innocence" of the General Council lies therefore in the, if not particularly clean, nevertheless very firm hands of the English Courts "which stand above the classes".

This transparent manoeuvre on the part of the General Council, which is obviously being carried out at the expense of the miners, unfortunately found support and sympathy with the Executive of the Miners' Federation. This is a very alarming symptom for the fate of the miners' struggle. According to Cook, the postponement of the Conference of the Trade Union Executives is dictated by the desire to set up a united front of the trade union movement to ward off the attack on the Soviet

Union. We do not share in this opinion. The fight against the attack upon the Soviet Union can be conducted along with the attack on the treachery of the General Council. In order to protect the Soviet Union from attacks it is not by any means necessary to grant an amnesty, an absolution to the traitors and capitulators in the General Council.

The General Council gave the miners the most vague promise to raise the question of placing an embargo on coal. What do the General Council demand in return for this promise? According to Cook, the General Council request the Miners' Federation to forget the past in view of the serious threats against the whole labour movement.

We see, therefore, that the General Council demand very much for their promise which does not bind them to anything. To forget the past means to forget the treachery of the 12th of May. Why should the miners forget Black Wednesday? What do they receive in return for this general amnesty? A resumption of the general strike? Oh, no! A stoppage of the transport of coal? By no means. The miners are rewarded with a new interference by the General Council in their struggle. This means an attempt at a compromise, an attempt at an understanding at all costs, further parleyings with Ministers, miserable talk and, in the final end, the old treachery dressed up in new phrases.

The interference of the General Council in the affairs of the miners is already beginning to bear fruit. The chairman of the Miners' Federation has already declared that he would prefer a reduction of wages to a lengthening of hours. A strange declaration, to say the least. The fight is still going on against the reduction of wages and against longer hours. What sense is there in making such declarations which suggest capitulation? Will the mineowners, perchance, regard this declaration as anything else than the commencement of a surrender? Certainly not. Such are the first beneficent results of the "united front" between the leaders of the General Council and those of the Miners' Federation.

The events now taking place in the fight of the miners deserve the greatest attention. What do these millions of workers get who are deceived by the General Council? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except a further deception. And finally, what do the 1,200,000 miners get who have already been fighting for 10 weeks. Thanks to this manoeuvre they will get a new Black Friday. This is the real meaning of this united front between the leaders which is directed entirely against the miners and against the whole proletariat of Great Britain.

## The Fight of the English Miners in Danger.

By John Pepper.

The Central Council of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union has requested the General Council of the English Trade Unions to convene the Anglo-Russian Committee for the purpose of supporting the miners in their struggle.

This step which has been undertaken by the trade unions of the Soviet Union is of tremendous international importance.

The English miners who are fighting with heroic endurance, are confronted with all the combined forces of the enemy. In spite of the entreaties of the leaders of the Labour Party, the English government has brought in its bill for the extension of the working day in the mines to eight hours. The Right trade union leaders are now endeavouring to induce the government at least to lay before parliament for discussion the bill for the reorganisation of the coal industry. But the Conservative government pays not the least regard to the requests of these "leaders". It has already long forgotten the terms of the Coal Commission's Report, just as it never for one moment considered the Samuel Memorandum seriously.

Ever since a suspicious "contact" has begun to be established between the General Council, the leaders of the Labour Party and the leaders of the Miners' Federation, the entire English bourgeoisie has been full of hope and has been broadcasting the joyful tidings of an approaching "peace".

Even Cook is inclining more and more to the leaders of the General Council. First he gave his consent to the postponement of the Conference of Trade Union Executives which should have taken place on June 25th — in other words, he gave his consent to a postponement of the criticism of the treachery of the General Council. He has now taken a further step in this direction. He has issued a declaration which is directed only