

Opening of the Congress of the R. I. L. U.

Moscow, 16th August 1930.

The V. Congress of the RILU. was opened in the great hall of the trade union buildings, in the presence of the representatives of 55 countries. The General Secretary of the RILU., Comrade Losovsky, held the opening speech, stating inter alia:

Today the RILU. meets under difficult international conditions. Ten years ago, when the Foundation stone of the RILU. was laid, the capitalist world was just passing from a period of artificial post-war prosperity into one of severest economic crisis. For a whole decade capitalism has been endeavouring to overcome this crisis, and has mobilised every force for this purpose, including social democracy. But when we draw the balance of the last decade, we see the capitalist world still shaken by the convulsions of the economic crisis. All the strivings of the bourgeoisie and of social democracy, all their talk about organised capitalism and American prosperity, have been in vain. The prognosis advanced by us ten years ago has proved right. Capitalism has developed on a downward curve, as proved by the extremely severe economic crisis of the moment. When the RILU. came into being, international reformism occupied a fairly powerful position in the working class of the capitalist countries. At that time the Amsterdam International counted 20 million members. And what do we see today? International reformism is forced to admit a considerably thinning of its ranks.

At that time the International of the reformists, according to their official figures, had 24 million members; now there are only 13 million left, and of these a considerable part are adherents of the RILU. — the revolutionary trade union oppositions in the reformists unions. During this time the RILU., in spite of the loss of the Italian and Spanish Labour Federations, has swelled to a powerful world organisation. The growth and strengthening of the RILU. has been accompanied in this decade by the advancement of the first country of the proletarian dictatorship, the Soviet Union, in which the RILU. first came into being. In the course of these ten years the SU. has proved to the whole world what the proletariat is capable of accomplishing when it develops its creative energy and creative power. It has accomplished this at a time when social democ.

cracy has possessed governmental power in many countries of Europe, but has led the working class to disastrous defeat, and thereby prepared the way for the Fascist dictatorship. In the course of these years international reformism has supported capitalism, whilst we have destroyed it.

Our movement still possesses many defects and weaknesses, and these we shall subject to searching self-criticism at our Congress. With the aid of self-criticism we can forge a powerful weapon with which to combat capitalism. The central question at this Congress is indubitably the organisation of the economic struggles of the proletariat. This question was already raised at the IV. Congress of the RILU., at the time when we issued the slogan of the independent Leadership of the economic struggles.

Our International is really international. Every worker and peasant, wherever he may take up the struggle — whether in China, India, or in the Philippines — and whatever the colour of his skin, is our ally and our brother, and we shall fight with him and for his interests. (Enthusiastic applause.)

After Comrade Losovsky's opening speech, a Presidium of 41 persons and a Secretariat of 10 were elected.

The V. Congress of the RILU. was greeted by Comrade Kuusinen as representative of the ECCI., Comrade Clares for Latin America, Comrade Gardi from the Pacific Secretariat, and Comrade Nossov on behalf of the Moscow trade unions. The Congress was further greeted by various workers delegations of the Soviet Union.

Report of Comrade Losovsky.

The second session took place on 16th August. Numerous workers' representatives from various parts of the Soviet Union greeted the Congress. The Congress then passed on to the 1st point of the agenda: "The report of the Executive Bureau and the tasks of the international revolutionary trade union movement." Comrade Losovsky, received with tumultuous applause and the singing of the "International", gave his report.

The speaker analysed the crisis now convulsing the capitalist world. This crisis is one of over-production. It has arisen out of the disparity between the steady increase of the possibilities of production on the one hand and the limitations put on the markets by the impoverishment of the masses and the insurrections in the colonies on the other. The speaker described the symptoms of the present crisis, the decline of production, the closing down of undertakings, the increasing unemployment, the prohibitive tariffs, the imperialists conflicts for the markets, the growing want and misery of the working class, etc. In the capitalist countries the standard of living of the workers sinks steadily. All capitalist, colonial, and semi-colonial countries are affected by unemployment. It is clear that either the proletariat of the capitalist countries must help the working class of the colonies, or the colonial coolie will press the standard of living of the workers in the capitalist countries even lower.

Comrade Losovsky further analysed the rôle played by international reformism as agent in the service of capital, and exposed the true countenance of the so-called Left wing of the Amsterdam International in the persons of its leaders.

The situation in the capitalist countries must be compared with that in the Soviet Union. Here the crisis, there advance. In the Soviet Union not only the working class is enjoying the benefit of the economic prosperity, but the collective movement enables the broad masses of the peasantry to have their share. Before the revolution the workers of Russia, and especially the peasants, never satisfied their hunger. Were the quantities of industrial and agricultural products produced by the Soviet State to be produced in a capitalist country, the shops in such great towns as Moscow would be overfilled with goods, but the workers' districts and the villages would see nothing of them.

Comrade Losovsky concluded his report in the forenoon session of the Congress on 17th August. He first spoke of the economic struggles of the proletariat. In the period following the IV. Congress of the RILU., the working class confronted the bourgeoisie in every strike and economic conflict. One

of the most effectual weapons against the proletariat is the "Labour Government". The world crisis has created a new fighting situation, greatly intensifying it, and stamping an expressly political character on all strike struggles. It is true that the Sections of the RILU. have at once taken up the leadership of the economic struggles, and have often been able to guide the movement and carry it on to the end, and it is true that they do much towards exposing the strike-breaking role played by social democracy, etc., but there are still many shortcomings to be recorded in this direction. There is still a tendency to lag behind the fighting spirit of the masses, an inadequate preparation for the strike conflict, the appointment of strike committees or their election by too few votes, the drawing up of the demands of the workers on strike by too small a circle of persons, the recognition of the revolutionary line in theory and failure to apply this line in practice, confusion in regard to the employers and an incapacity to organise negotiations competently. The economic struggle merges into the political. Under present conditions there are no purely economic strikes. To revolutionise the strike movement means making clear to the strikers the connection between their economic demands and the whole system of the bourgeois dictatorship, to expose the rôle of social fascism, and to convert every proletarian into a class conscious fighter for the working class.

Comrade Losovsky further dealt with the Right and "Left" deviations and the necessity of combating these in the Sections of the RILU. He then enumerated the chief immediate tasks of the RILU. Above all the revolutionary trade union movement must devote the utmost effort towards aiding the workers in their daily struggles for better conditions and higher wages, must utilise every fighting trend in the workers, must fight against social fascism, must gather around it all workers, including the non-party, the social democrats, the Roman Catholics. The united front is our fighting method. The united front draws the backward workers into our ranks, it fights ruthlessly against social democracy, against compromises with the reformist leaders. The German trade union opposition has found the right way in organising trade union opposition groups in the works and factories. This is an example which should be followed in other countries. We must take energetic steps in the interests of the unorganised. In those places where there are no revolutionary trade unions, the unorganised must be induced to join the reformist unions, that they may swell the opposition in these. In countries where there is a powerful trade union opposition, such as Germany, the slogan of "Join the reformist trade unions" must be replaced by "Join the trade union opposition". The growth of the class struggle beyond the boundaries of the countries raises the question of the consolidation of international solidarity. Frontier committees and fraternities must be founded, and the active support of the striking workers of other countries must be organised. This applies especially to the workers of the mother countries. The Sections of the RILU., must insist unceasingly on the connections between the struggle of the peasants in the colonies and that of the peasants in the mother countries. The slogan of the "independence of the colonies" must be made one of our leading fighting slogans. In view of the growing war danger, and of the war preparations against the Soviet Union, the proletariat is set the task of organising the struggle against war. The defence of the Soviet Union is the centre upon which the attention of the workers is concentrated. Upon the efficiency with which we organise this war against war depends whether the imperialists will succeed or fail in their aim of crushing the workers' revolution.



At the evening session speeches were delivered by Comrade Heckert on the tasks of the trade unions in the period of the growing revolutionary situation, by Comrade Tormossova on the participation of women in the revolutionary trade union organisations and in the revolutionary struggle, by Comrade Raschal on work among the youth, and by Comrade Ford on the position of the Negroes in different parts of the world. The Congress then elected committees to deal with the Japanese, Chinese, British, Spanish, Czechoslovakian, Negro, and social insurance questions.

Comrade Tormossovas Report.

Moscow, 18th August, 1930.

It is characteristic of the strike movement of recent years that it has been participated in with great activity and heroism by the **working women**. This is caused in the first place by the employment of fresh millions of women as cheap labour in the process of production and in the second place by capitalist rationalisation and the crisis which so particularly affects the army of women workers. There are about 20 million women industrial workers all over the world. The total number of women wage-earners, not including women agricultural workers, is stated by the Geneva Labour Office to be 50 million. From year to year this army of women workers grows. In **France**, before the war, the share of production falling to the women workers was 20%, but now this figure is 40%. In **Czechoslovakia** the number of women workers doubled between 1921 and 1929. We see the same development in all the other capitalist countries.

The deficient organisations possessed by the women workers are entirely inconsistent with the role played by women in the process of production, and with their activities in the strike movement. We have not yet learnt to anchor the activities of the women workers securely by means of organisation; our organisational work among the women is still very imperfect.

Comrade Tormossova compared the economic position of women in the capitalist countries with that in the Soviet Union (equal political rights with men, equal pay, vocational continuation schools, four months leave for confinement, etc.) The speaker then described the tasks of the revolutionary trade union movement with regard to work among women. The broad masses of working women must be brought into the revolutionary movement; they must be organised, and the best workers among them must be trained for leading positions. The main centre of work among women workers is the factories and workshops. Here committees of women workers must be formed, and the women gathered around these. The millions of women workers in town and country must be won over for our struggle, for the communist revolution. There can be no true mass movement without the women. Today, on the eve of the decisive struggle of the proletariat, we recall these words of Lenin with special emphasis.

Comrade Ford's Report.

Comrade Ford, reporting for the International Trade Union Committee of the Negroes, first described the situation of the Negroes in the different parts of the world, and the frightful exploitation of the Negroes by the imperialist Powers. The insurrections which have taken place of late years in various quarters of the globe show the progressing revolutionising of the Negro masses. In 1928 there was a rising in French Equatorial Africa. Lately there were insurrections in South Africa and Nigeria, where the "Labour Government" headed by MacDonald caused hundreds of women marching at the head of the insurgent Negro masses to be shot down. In the USA, the lynching of Negroes is a daily occurrence. The USA. government sends to the electric chair without ceremony, those Negroes who carry on revolutionary work among the Negro workers.

Of late years the movement among the Negroes has made great progress, especially since the founding—in accordance with the decision of the Executive Bureau of the RILU,—of the **International Trade Union Committee of the Negroes**. In August 1929 a special Negro Seamen's Conference was held in Vladivostock. This year an International Negro Workers' Conference was organised, attended by 17 representatives of the USA., the Gold Coast, Gambia, Nigeria, and South Africa. The repressive measures taken by the imperialist Powers prevented many delegates from appearing. Owing to inexperience, the preparatory work for this Conference was inadequate. It dealt with the question of the struggle against capitalist rationalisation, and especially with the struggle against war danger. The Conference stressed the experience gained in the great war, in which the Negro workers and peasants served as cannon fodder . . . The International Negro Committee has done excellent work. Numerous pamphlets, appeals, and leaflets have been distributed among the Negro workers. The question of the right of self determination of the

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