

## Report of Comrade H e c k e r t.

Moscow, 17 th August 1930.

It is my task to place before you a number of concrete questions of our practice from the standpoint of **Leninist-Bolshevik self-criticism**. This is the more necessary as in view of the present economic crisis, and the growing revolutionary situation, we cannot take things so easily as does the Amsterdam International, whose leaders declare that capitalism has succeeded in restoring economy and in overcoming the crisis. Leipart, at the last Congress of the Amsterdam International, referred to the world steel trust, and to the sugar and potash syndicates, as examples of the advance of organised capitalism. At the very moment in which he said this, the steel trust dissolved, followed by both the other syndicates, under the pressure of competition and the struggle for the markets.

In our own ranks there were people who attempted to sidetrack us from the main daily problems, and to combat our line. I refer to such elements as Brandler, Lovestone, Haiss, and Kilboom, who at the beginning of this year still maintained that the crisis was an invention of Stalin. It is unnecessary to dispute with these. It is more important to turn to our own work in the light of real Bolshevik self-criticism. This does not mean solely the exposure of our faults and defects, but the creation of a firm organisational basis for overcoming these, that is, we must learn the lessons taught by the experience and achievements won by the workers in their daily class struggles, and pass on these lessons to other countries, that these may not repeat errors once committed. Our criticism must therefore not consist of condemning others, but of benefitting from our own mistakes and shortcomings, in order that we may say to the workers: Look, these are the effects of this or that error, take care you do not repeat it.

I should like to refer more in detail to the lessons of our strike struggle. At the IV. Congress there was much discussion on the attitude to be adopted by revolutionary workers in those countries in which there are no independent Red trade Unions, towards the leaders of the reformist trade unions. At that time the slogan prevalent in the countries with reformist

trade unions was: Compel the bureaucrats. This injurious and dangerous slogan we replaced by: "Prepare independent economic struggle in the working class, organise these, and carry them through." That is, not jointly with the reformists, but without and against the reformists. This has been the decisive and important turn.

The decision in favour of independent economic struggle was passed unanimously by the IV. Congress. This does not, however, mean that all who voted for it were agreed with it. As instances I may name Lessing, etc. who immediately attempted to falsify the decisions of the IV. Congress. Their argument was: For other countries this may be all very well, but our country is an exception. Thus arose the theory of national peculiarities. And after the VI. Congress of the CI. had issued its decision on this question, the Right and the conciliators began a regular combat. This combat has been carried on not only in Germany and the United States, but in Czechoslovakia, Sweden, England, and France. The Right and the conciliators sabotaged and undermined our work until we expelled them from the leadership of the revolutionary trade union movement. It must be observed that a numbers of our directives have been carried out, not so much as a result of our propaganda and organisational work, but because the class feeling of the proletariat has recognised the necessity of revolutionary tactics under present conditions. The history of the last few years shows the necessity of studying the experience gained in all former strikes, even the most insignificant ones. We may remember for instance the Hennigsdorf strike in 1928. Here the revolutionary trade union opposition succeeded in preparing and carrying out a strike against the will of the reformist leaders, demonstrating that we have already learnt how to lead economic struggles. We succeeded in doing this, although opposed by all the forces of the bourgeois state and of the reformists —by the declaration that the awards of the board of arbitration were binding, by the police, by organised strikebreaking. The Hennigsdorf strike was important not only for Germany, but for the whole world. Its lessons were further confirmed by the

plumbers strike in Berlin last autumn. These strikes were a brilliant confirmation of the rightness of our prognosis, of our line in the question of independent leadership of economic struggles. Other strikes of great importance have been those of the Czechoslovakian miners and glass workers, the strike of the Danzig agricultural workers, the Bradford woolworkers, etc. A noticeable feature of the Czech miner's strike was its insufficient preparation. The Czechoslovakian comrades, even built up a special theory on this insufficient preparation: They maintained that the spontaneity of the strike is a sign of the present period.

The strike struggles of the last few years have shown that the part played by women and youth in the struggle of the working class is increasing in importance. This circumstance must be given due consideration in our tactics.

With respect to the conversion of economic struggle into political and revolutionary struggles, our prophecies have been fully fulfilled. The inevitability of economic struggle becoming political was plainly shown during the strike at Hartmannsdorf, where 250 workers stopped work in protest against a 35 per cent wage cut. The police shot down the strikers. The survivors were made responsible and sentenced. Even the prejudiced observer has to admit the political character of this strike.

Unfortunately, we often under-estimate the political importance of such strikes, and fail to explain this to the workers. This is one of our gravest errors. In carrying out the tactics of the united front from below, we have again made many errors.

The speaker then criticised Trotzky's attitude towards the united front. We have not yet succeeded in creating a united front of the workers and the unemployed. Whilst we raise the question of creating a united front from below against the reformist trade union bureaucracy merged in the bourgeois state apparatus, Trotzky opposes us, proposing that we unite with the Amsterdammers and the II. International against unemployment. At the same time left sectarianism must be combated, for this can do great injury to the united front.

Heckert further exposed the dangers of the Right opportunist policy, tolerated by a number of the sections of the R.I.L.U. It has been often proved that Right opportunism undermines in actual practice the working class struggle and demobilises the revolutionary workers. The best weapon against

Right opportunism is the wide use of revolutionary self-criticism, the relentless exposure of even the most insignificant incidents which may lead to a deviation from our correct line.

Comrade Heckert dealt in detail with the question of the struggle against reformist trade union bureaucracy and with the possibility of winning over the reformist trade union apparatus. Some comrades have taken the decisions of the IV. R.I.L.U. Congress to mean that we should never take over posts in the reformist unions, under any circumstances. In individual cases, where the opportunity is offered to capture a post and therewith to expose the treachery of the reformist functionaries, the opportunity must be taken. This applies especially to work in the factories and workshops, whereby the trade union apparatus can be employed to save the workers from the influence of the reformists.

It is wrong to classify all qualified workers as belonging to the "labour aristocracy", as has been done by many comrades in Czechoslovakia and other countries, Rationalisation and the offensive of capital are erasing the differences between the various strata of the workers. The skilled worker of today may be one of the army of the unemployed to-morrow and entirely revolutionary. We must extend our work to the skilled workers, not reckon them wholesale to the social Fascists and consider them to be lost to the revolutionary movement.

An important question for our movement is the transference of our work into the works and factories. We must win over the great undertakings, for it is these which will decide the fate of the coming revolution. There are no "objective difficulties". Such objections are simply excuses on the part of those who are unwilling to work or incapable of it. We must win the great industrial undertaking, or we cannot accomplish the revolution.

No Section of the R.I.L.U. can boast of any great success in work among the agricultural workers. And yet the success of the proletarian revolution depends entirely, as Lenin taught, on our winning over great masses of rural workers and forming a united front with them.

In conclusion, Comrade Heckert called upon the delegates to apply the methods of self-criticism, resolutely and without respect of persons. Our Congress is not to be a Congress of phrases, but of revolutionary action.