

What Workers of Other Countries Can Teach Us

VITAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE R. I. L. U.

By N. HONIG.

TWO hundred and fifty thousand Lancashire weavers on strike! Not a wheel turns in the biggest textile area in the world. The British labor misleaders confer, confer, and confer some more with bosses and government while the revolutionary minority movement stirs the strikers on.

The scene shifts across the English Channel, to Belgium. A strike starts in one of the coal pits in Limoges. Inside of a few days every miner in Belgium is out. Into Germany, across the border into France the strike spirit spreads. The strike becomes a great demonstration of international working class solidarity.

IN POLAND

In terror-ridden Poland, where death threatens every militant working class fighter, the tramwaymen of Warsaw erect barricades and battle the Pilsudski police and troops. The Polish tramwaymen, after a bitter, fierce struggle, win their demands.

Mass strike struggles, not merely of thousands, but of tens and hundreds of thousands of workers, are constantly being waged by the toiling masses of these countries, workers with a growing tradition in the battle of class against class.

LESSONS FROM THE BARRICADES

Who can calculate the immense value of the lessons of these struggles, to the American workingclass? Out of generations of life and death struggles, out of battles on the barricades, out of mass rebellions against reformist misleaders, out of countries where starvation has stalked since the years of world imperialist war, countries under the iron grip of fascist dictators, these lessons come to us.

Our shortcomings are many, in our preparations of struggles, in our work in the A. F. of L., etc. We have a lot to learn. Experience teaches us . . . and we can also learn much from the collective experiences of the revolutionary trade union movements in other countries.

ALMOST ON A SILVER PLATTER

The Red International of Labor Unions, of which our Trade Union Unity League is the American section, offers us these experiences, you can almost say on a silver platter. We have, up to now, paid little, almost no attention to the pamphlets published by the RILU, and to the RILU magazine. The time has come when the RILU literature must be popularized, must be circulated broadcast.

Let us look over some of the recent publications of the RILU. "How They Won the Strike of the Warsaw Tramwaymen;" "Stop Munitions!" and others. We talk a lot about how to win strikes, how to prevent the shipment of munitions; the RILU pools the experiences of the workers in all countries, and tells us how to win strikes, how to halt munitions, and we have, at least up to now paid very little attention.

HOW THE POLISH TRAMWAYMEN DID IT

"How They Won" is worth its weight in gold to every worker interested in the building of the revolutionary unions. Ruthless speedup measures were breaking the tramwaymen's backs. A ten-hour stretch on the cars was the rule. The Red Tramwaymen's Union, **Right in the Shops**, prepared the tramwaymen for struggle. At the end of the day's work mass meetings were held in the workshops and other branches of the service; not only union members but also the unorganized and the members of reactionary unions were invited.

At every meeting and gathering the Red Union and the Red Trade Union Opposition emphasized that the capitalist plan of rationalization could be stopped as soon as the workers elected their committee of struggle under the leadership of the Red Trade Union Opposition. This committee started one of the most militant strike struggles ever seen in Poland. The strike was spread from the shops to the power station and the depot.

The attacks by the fascist police came fast. But the workers had defense corps and gave a good account of themselves. Seeing the splendid organization of the strikers, the motor-bus men joined them.

United front . . . united front . . . this was the slogan which caught

on like wildfire. The fascist and reformist trade union leaders negotiated phoney agreements for the strikers but the strikers did not fall for them. There are eleven tramwaymen's unions in existence, but the strikers fought under a united front led by the militant workers.

The fascist and reformist trade union officials negotiated phoney agreements, but the strikers paid no attention to them. The demands against the speed-up and rationalization measures must be won! And they were won. Unity of all the tram workers, and tactics based on that unity, won the strike.

REAL ACTION AGAINST WAR

War bursts out in the Far East. On that front, and from the border countries bordering on the Soviet Union, the imperialists plan to attack the land where the workers rule. In the plans for the coming war, the conscription of the seamen, the dockers, all transport workers forms a vital part.

The refusal to transport munitions in becoming a fact, in many of the biggest ports of the world. The ports of Germany, France, Great Britain, Norway, have seen huge mass demonstrations by marine workers, supported by all other workers, against the transport of munitions. The social-democrats try to hinder this movement, but the members of their own unions join the "stop munitions" movement.

The dockers of Dunkirk, France, conducted a general strike against war shipments. They linked it up with a strike for wage increases, giving a splendid example of how anti-war work should be conducted. Thirty-seven in the crew of a British ship transporting soldiers to India struck and delayed this war transport for a long time. In France a united front committee of all unions in war and transport industries was set up. **How to fight Munitions Shipments**—that's what we learn from this RILU pamphlet.

THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

How, under Socialism, as in the Soviet Union, do the trade unions improve the wages and conditions of the workers; what are their methods of work; what part do they play in the construction of Socialism? These are questions which workers often ask. When imperialism is preparing to attack the Soviet Union, the popularizing of the work of the Soviet Trade Unions is of the greatest importance.

"Trade Unions Under Socialism," by J. Shvernik, secretary of the Central Council of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union, tells how, the Soviet workers, in their struggle for Socialist construction, are realizing their creative energy and initiative in new Socialist forms of labor.

DRAWINGS FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WORLD WORKERS

One of the most criminal examples of neglect has been the keeping of the RILU magazine away from the workers of the U.S.A. Glance at the table of contents of any issue of the RILU magazine. "The Austrian miners in the Fight Against Factory Fascism." . . . "Cotton Textile Workers Struggles in England" . . . "United Front Tactics in the Latin American Countries" . . . "The Belgian General Strike and Its Lessons" . . . "The Unemployed Movement in Mexico."

I remember the time, a few years back, when Party members and those active in the revolutionary unions and oppositions suddenly began talking "Strassburg Resolution (on strike strategy)." "Comrade, have you read the "Strassburg Resolution," "You must read the Strassburg Resolution," we used to tell each other. It became a sort of a fad (and a very good fad), because it had been mentioned in the speeches of some Party leaders. Then the fad died down.

We shouldn't need to be hit on the head by a hammer to begin reading the very important RILU literature. We should realize that reading it is an essential part of making a real turn toward work in the factories. We should realize that we'll be better able to win strike and other struggles if we draw from the experiences of the struggles of the workers of the world.

NOTE—All RILU literature can be obtained from Trade Union Unity League, 2 West 15th St., New York City.