IN THE R. I. L. U.

Lessons and Prospects of the Economic Struggles.

Report delivered by Comrade Losovsky at the Plenary Session of the Executive Bureau of the R. I. L. U.

(Continued).

In the question of the political strike we naturally take our stand at the opposite pole to the social democrats and reformists. They are opposed to economic strikes, and even more to political ones. They believe that this „expensive" means of struggle can be replaced by others, whilst we on the contrary are of the opinion that this means is effectual precisely for the reason that it comes expensive for the capitalist state. Every strike must be carefully prepared, care must be taken when it begins to go beyond the limits, when it spreads to fresh categories of workers, when a step forward may be made, when fresh reserves are to be brought into the field, when the demands can be extended and a number of political demands added, and when this strike is in a position to pass forward into a political mass strike raising the whole of the political problems already facing us.

It need not be said that we cannot isolate the political strike from the other methods of fighting. It is true that the fighting methods of the working class, the methods of direct action, can be reduced to their component parts like the links of a chain: the economic strike, the political strike, the armed rebellion, the civil war. But it must not be assumed that any sharp dividing line can be drawn here; there is no Chinese wall between the economic and the politikal strike, or between the political strike and the insurrection, or between the political strike and the insurrection, or between the insurrection and the civil war. Each form of struggle can and must merge into the next.

** In order to be able to pursue a correct policy in the sphere of the leadership of the mass movement of the proletariat, it is therefore necessary to carry on a relentless struggle against reformist and strike-breaking trade union bureaucracy on the one hand, and against the remnants of reformism in our own ranks on the other. Are there still such remnants to be found among us? I believe that they still exist in every section of the R. I. L. U. (this became especially conspicuous after the IV. Congress). They are perhaps small in number, but there certainly are groups

opposing their standpoint to that of the R. I. L. U. This became observable as early as the IV. Congress, but the tendency did not take a definite form until after this Congress. It formed a special political group in Germany, it possesses an organised group in France, in the United States, in Czechoslovakia. All these groups have one common base, they all suffer from organisation fetishism, or, if you like, from cretinism in their attidude towards the reformist trade unions. They are of the opinion the idea of leading economic struggles without and against the reformist trade unions is in itself heretical. Hence they are ready to subject the movement of the proletariat to historically evolved forms, and are prepared to abandon an independent leadership of the economic struggles on the pretext that these struggles must be led by the historically evolved reformist trade unions. It must further be remembered that they one and all deny the radicalisation of the masses, and disavow the term, possessing a profound political content, which we apply to the social democratic parties and reformist trade unions leaders when we call these social fascists. They all form a special judgment on the situation, have their special policy, and their own special tactics. It ist just this which places them beyond the pale of the revolutionary trade union movement. Some of them have already broken organisationally with the Red International of Labour Unions, others, for instance the Rights in France in their own federations, have broken with us ideologically; but that which they all possess in common leads them further and further away from the revolutionary wing of the labour movement. This must be clearly recognised, and due consideration given to the extent to which these tendencies, these groups, under different titles and under different flags, have deviated from our line, and how greatly they have already become alien and hostile ideologically, some of them organisationally, towards our tactics.

Under these conditions the question arises: what is to be done, what methods are to be employed against these elements. We must differentiate between the leading elements with social-democratic traditions, and the certain even if small number of workers following these elements. What line is to be adopted towards them? In the past some of these Rights have shown themselves to be outside of the ranks of the R.I.L.U., as for instance when they rejected our motion with respect to Czechoslovakia, in which we proposed that the internal disagreements should be settled democratically, that is, the majority of the members should decide what leaders they want. But Hais and Sikora hold the standpoint always held by the Amsterdamites, that they are bound to remain the heads of the trade unions till the end of their lives, and, if the majority of the union members do not desire this, then they are going to remain in their positions against the will of the majority.

It is obvious that we could not agree with such a policy, and the consequence was that this group of Czechoslovakian Rights placed itself outside of the ranks of the Red International of Labour Unions. As I have already stated, there is another type of Right, who are still in our ranks.

I may give an example. We appealed for participation in the 1st August demonstrations. We were of the opinion that a demonstration against war must be carried out on an international scale. But several trade union leaders in France spoke openly against these demonstrations, against demonstration strikes, against demonstrative proclamations. And now I say: a violation of discipline by action is no longer a shade of opinion. If we call for a strike or other action, then agitation against this is strike-breaking in our ranks. It brings our revolutionary ranks into confusion, and must be fought against with the utmost decision.

Recently the Polish social democrats called upon the miners to make a one day's demonstration strike. We know that they wanted to arrange this one day's strike for the purpose of throttling the struggle. It was not a one day's strike which should have been called for, but a strike advancing definite demands; this was what the logic of the struggle required. And what do our comrades do? They issue an appeal in which it is not said whether there is to be a strike or not, and if there is to be, what demands are to be advanced; it is simply stated that they are against everybody, against Pilsudski and the social fascists. I do not know what this really is; in any case it is very feeble strategy, and shows that as soon as the problem of the direct guidance of the masses has to be concretely faced, a process of shuffling begins, instead of a definite and correct attitude being adopted. Or let us take Germany. In a large number of towns there are many comrades—in Central Germany for instance—who have voted for the resolution of the IV. Congress of the R.I.L.U., for the independent leadership of economic struggles, for the election of strike committees, for the setting up of their own lists for the works councils elections; but as soon as the elections to the works councils take place, then they forget that all this must be realised, and seek every possible way of avoiding the fulfilment of these elementary tasks. What is this: opportunism in actual practice, or something worse?

I believe that we shall have to devote very serious attention to this misunderstanding, or we shall not emerge from the reformist bog, and the independent leadership of economic struggles will remain empty sound. Our ranks are still strong in legalist tendencies, in trade union legalism, in worship of the trade union whatever it may be like, be it the most reactionary of all, of the stamp of the trade unions of the American Federation of Labor. In spite of all this, we cling to these trade unions with what may be termed a certain piety. I believe that this tendency is still present to a high degree in our ranks. The capability of putting up a decisive fight against this legalism, and of doing what is necessary for the working class against and without trade union bureaucracy: this capability we do not yet possess. We have still to attain it, and we have still much to do to free ourselves from these ideological influences, which fetter our activity and initiative.

We are unsound at still another spot. There are comrades who maintain that at the present time, in the third period of post-war capitalism, strikes are inevitably certain of defeat. Can a partial strike bring any results for us? We have social democracy against us, the trade unions, the State, the police, the courts of law; we have everyone against us. We shall wait for the final decisive struggle, and then we shall show our courage; at present, however, we should lose everything, and should scarcely be able to gain anything. This sounds extremely radical, but it is Philistine opportunism, for it employs revolutionary phraseology for the purpose of postponing the daily struggles, the struggles during the course of which the consciousness of the masses is developed, the struggles during the course of which we train our army for the more decisive and greater struggles to follow. In my opinion we should combat these phrases determinedly. This is a variety of opportunism, and a very harmful one.

Finally, in our ranks there are still some elements who regard the strike movement as an object in itself. This reminds me of the old anarchist theory that every strike is a good thing. I believe that these ideological remnants too will have to be banished from our midst. The anarchist conception of the strike has nothing to do with our revolutionary line. Wherever this false idea of the strike obtains, whether from the economic or the political standpoint, it is a residue of anarcho-syndicalism which must be combated.

I am not in a position to enumerate here all the Right tendencies, theories, etc. observable at the present time in the movement, beginning with Sweden, where our comrades wanted to dissolve the unity committee because the reformists demanded this, and ending with Rumania, where members of revolutionary unions expressed themselves in favour of legalism at any price, under a Fascist government. It is important for us to realise that the Right deviation in our ranks is not accidental, that it is not incorporated in individual persons, to vanish with these persons when they die politically or physically. Unless we realise this we fail to recognise that the increasing acuteness of the struggle will cause even our ranks to waver, will bring deviations even into the communist ranks.

In Soviet Russia, too, a Right deviation has been observable among the leaders of the Soviet Union. How has this found expression? In the fact that the increased difficulties were accompanied by a wavering attitude on the part of some leaders. They believed that this wavering would contribute to the removal of the difficulties. Politically this wavering attitude has been distinguished by opposition to self-criticism.

to the rapid tempo of industrialisation, to the rapid tempo of the collectivisation of the rural districts, to the new tempo of activity in the trade unions—showing the ideological relationship with the international Right, with the international conciliatory tendency. In this deviation there are expressed outspokenly trade-unionistic tendencies and usages, a certain bureaucratic petrification, and some trends directed against the R.I.L.U. All this has indubitably been the result of an influence alien to the working class being exercised in our trade union movement.

The U.S.S.R. is of course not Czechoslovakia; here the formation of special unions and the seizure of the trade union buildings is of course impossible, for here the Party is very strong, here the working class has passed through a certain school. Here there are no waverings and vacillations, for every one of our workers knows that such vacillations endanger not only the speed of socialist reconstruction, but the existence of the Workers' State itself. Hence the decision, firmness, and promptness with which the trade union movement of the Soviet Union has liquidated these vacillations; the II. Plenum of the Central Council of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union, followed by the III. Plenum, drew the political balance, and not only replaced their leaders, but spoke openly of the waverings and falterings, of the Right tendencies, of the trade-unionistic survivals, and of all the other glories of reformism. It can be said that the II. and III. Plenums brought about a revolution in the sphere of the inner policy of the Soviet trade unions, and at the same time in their outer policy, so far as the attitude af the Soviet labour unions towards the RILU. is concerned. The new leaders of the Central Council of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union pursue the line corresponding to the interests of the Soviet proletariat and of the international proletariat.

The importance of all strikes which have already taken place, and of those taking place in the future, goes far beyond the frontiers of any single country. This is the peculiarity of the present moment. The latest events in India—the textile workers' strike, the formation of the Girni Kamgar Union — exercise an influence extending far beyond the borders of India. The smaller strikes taking place in Czechoslovakia, in France, the Balkans, the United States; the recent strikes in Belgium; the smaller strikes in Germany, etc., have all acquired international importance owing to the peculiarities of the situation, and therefore we, the Red International of Labour Unions and its organisations, are set the extremely important task of internationalising the leadership, of internationalising the movements and extending them to many countries, of drawing the worker troops into the struggle and leading them from their various countries to the scene of the struggle, and of solving the problem of the international leadership and the practical internationalisation of our tactics. Why are these struggles becoming more and more international in character? This is the consequence, in the first place, of the growth of the international trusts, and in the second place of the indubitable solidarity of the revolutionary wing of the labour movement in the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the different countries. Therefore there stands on the order of the day the international strike, the organisation of, let us say, an international boycott or of some strike, international action on both sides of a frontier, action with relation to great political events on important points of frontiers. All this now forms part of our agenda, and the practical solution of this question is the most important task, the most important stage of our struggle. We must postpone these matters, we must not regard these questions merely theoretically. These are problems set us practically by the struggle; and we must learn to go somewhat further than the frontiers of our own country, to remember that in a struggle involving this or that group of workers, in this or that district, it is not only the workers of the country concerned who must mobilise, but these must at the same time seek contact with the workers of other countries. Therefore, it is incumbent on us as the Red International of Labour Unions, as an international class trade union organisation, to concentrate the attention of all our sections on this problem.

Let us take for instance the bloc, the pact of solidarity, concluded a few months ago, during the congress of the Unitary Unions of Mexico, between our American comrades and these Unions. This pact is however only on paper at present. But we are not writers; we are practical men, we must convert such documents into something concrete. I could adduce dozens of instances in which comrades have contented themselves with the sending of resolutions in times of strikes.

The problem of international aid in times of struggle, the question of the organisational form to be taken by this aid, of stimulating the whole of our work internationally, of the organisation of joint action, is a practical question which must be solved at any price. Should we fail to solve it, should we continue internationally as before, then we shall fall behind the tempo of development of events. Life will stride forward and pass our organisations by, for at the present moment there is a widespread need for the organisation of international action, for the co-ordination of undertakings, for joint parallel advance on different sides of the frontier.

(To be concluded).

The Five-Year Plan

The Five-Year Plan of Cultural Construction.

The Struggle against Church and Religion.

In the year 1913 out of 100 persons in Russia 76,5 were illiterate. Up to the year 1928/29 we have made a great stride forward. Out of 100 persons 46 are illiterate. At the end of the Five-Year Plan there will only be 18 illiterates out of 100 persons. Illiteracy will be completely liquidated in the most important districts of the country. The illiteracy of the youth (12 to 15 years) will be liquidated to 100 per cent. (At present 3 million youths are being taught to read and write.) In the towns 93 per cent. of the population will be able to read and write.

The elementary education will be arranged in such a way that by the end of the five years all children of the Soviet Union from 8 to 11 will attend the elementary schools. Only in the most backward districts where there are particulary great difficulties will this plan not be completely fulfilled. As a result at the end of the five years the elementary schools will be attended by 17 million children as against 9,5 million in 1927/28 and 7 million in 1914.

The Soviet Union needs 85,000 engineers as against the existing 30,000; 110,000 technicians as against the existing 40,000. In order to realise this huge programme, ten to twelve new technical high schools and 175 technical schools are being established. The number of the scholars will be increased to 64 000, and 90 per cent. of the students will receive scholarships.

During the last decade 1,5 million workers have been trained, 400,000 in the factory schools, trade unions schools etc. 5 million peasants will attend short courses in order to raise the level of the cultivation of the soil.

The Five-Year Plan provides for an increase in the number of reading huts from 22,000 to 38,000, i. e. by 75 per cent. This means 5,5 reading huts per district. The number of libraries is be increased from 23,000 to 34,000. In addition, 40 000 new travelling libraries are being organised. The number of the clubs, people's houses etc. is being augmented by 25 per cent.

With regard to the press it is intended to increase it threefold in the course of the five years. That is eight times the pre-war level. The circulation of the newspapers will be increased from 1,700,000 in the year 1927/28 to 5 million in the year 1932/33. The publication of books is to be increased from 1,850 million leaves to 4,000 million in the year 1932/33. The publication of mass literature will be increased five to sixfold.

The number of cinemas will be increased from 8520 to 50,000 (of which 14,000 will be school cinemas); that is a sixfold growth. The Five Year Plan provides for the installation of cinemas in at least 80 per cent. of all clubs and the establishment of at least 3 cinemas in every district.

The wireless is to be increased twentyfold, from 350,000 sets in 1927/28 to 7 million in the year 1932/33.

It is intended to supply with wireless sets at least half of all workers'dwellings and 3 million peasant houses, all the workers' clubs, peoples' houses, reading huts, schools, barracks, collective and Soviet farms and Red corners.