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.

(Conclusion).

I know the immense difficulties encountered by our unions, not only at home, but even more outside the borders of their own country, when they wish to lend this real aid. And all these difficulties, beginning with those occasioned by the police, will continue to increase, will grow and intensify with the aggravation of the classe struggle.

We must learn how to organise a really international relief action, and to give both moral support, and material and organisatory help.

In the democratic republic of France the movement is in reality already semi-legal. With the further intensification of the struggle attempts may be made to dissolve the Unitary Unions. We possess illegal unions in Italy, in China, in Yugoslavia, semi-legal unions in Rumania, in Greece. Everywhere severe pressure is being put on the revolutionary unions by the bourgeois State, and the unions which are still legal today may be faced tomorrow with the necessity of continuing their activities underground. A subterranean hiding place must be sought as soon as the relations of forces are such that it is no longer possible to maintain the conquered positions.

The question of leading mass struggles from the subterranean hiding place is a very important one. Under illegal conditions an extensive apparatus is not available. Unions existing illegally cannot comprise hundreds of thousands of workers, they comprise only the best [illegible] to the Ways and means must be found to establish contact between the unions and the works and factories, to lead mass strikes spite of illegality, and to emerge from the subterranean concealment at every suitable opportunity.

The experience gained in Italy, in China, in Yougoslavia, Poland and Rumania — it is a sad truth that the number of countries requiring to use this experience increases steadily — is already wide enough. I must say however, that with respect to the utilisation of this experience these countries are further away from one another than they are geographically, and I do not know in what manner our Rumanian comrades will utilise the experience gained by the Polish, or in what manner the Yugoslavian comrades will utilise that of the Italian, or the Italian that of the other countries. The Italians should be able to learn much from the Polish comrades, for in Poland there exists a tradition of protracted illegal work, and in Italy matters are not very favourable in this respect.

I have already referred to the fact that the characteristic feature of the Labour movement today is its expansion far beyond the frontiers of Europe. Only a short time ago we all knew very little about the Labour movement in China or India, for the simple reason that there was no Labour movement there. But during the last few years the Labour movement in these gigantic countries has begun to assume a position of paramout importance, and the working class of these lands is taking the lead in the revolutionary struggle, not only against feudalism, but against militarism, and against the whole of its own bourgeoisie. The Labour movement, both in the colonies and in the older semi-colonies (for instance in Central Africa, where many interesting facts may be ascertained) develops solely by means of the spontaneous strike. This is the original primitive reply given to the bourgeoisie by the most severely exploited workers, and upon the soil thus provided the political and trade unionist groups begin to spring up. From these again the actual trade union organisations are formed. These movements differ in extent and importance, but have all one point in common, whether they be primitive movements, or movements of a higher type, such as the strikes in the Congo, in Central Africa, in South Africa, in India, and in China — they are all definitely anti-imperialist in character. This circumstance imparts to the movement in any colonial country, from the very beginning, certain definite and specific features entirely lacking in the first stages of the movement in the old capitalist countries.

India is on the eve of great revolutionary conflicts. To judge by all signs, a revolutionary wave of enormous power is approaching. And there can be no doubt that in these revolutionary struggles against English imperialism, represented by the Labour Party, the Hindu proletariat will play the leading rôle.

You may see from all this the amount of revolutionary inflamable material which has accumulated in the colonies and semi-colonies, and may judge the powerful part it will play in the struggle against imperialism and against the capitalist system.

In this connection two organisations are of great importance: the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat and the Latin American Trade Union Federation. It is the duty of the RILU. to support these organisations, which hold the class standpoint, to co-operate with them in every way in gathering together the whole of the proletarian forces of the Pacific coast and Latin America, and to form a united front with them.

But the duties incumbent on us are by no means exhausted with this. Whilst discussing what is going on in the colonies, we must not omit to raise the question: what are the adherents of the RILU. doing in the imperialist countries? What have the English comrades done for the Labour movement in India? Very little! What have the French comrades done for the Labour movement of Indo-China, Syria, or Algeria? Damned little! And what do the American comrades know of happenings on Haiti? In this respect we must take an abrupt turn, but not in words alone, in deeds. We must realise that nothing but the alliance between the workers of the capitalist countries and of the colonies guarantees the victory over imperialism and the national bourgeoisie. If we take no practical steps in this direction, we fail to fulfil our most elementary class duty towards the working class of the colonies and towards the working class of our own

I should like to draw a few conclusions from the tasks thus indicated. The first conclusion is as follows. I do not wish to be so understood that my insistence on the necessity of studying the methods of class warfare, and of carefully investigating the experiences of strikes and the strike movement, is taken to mean that I am of the opinion that we must now sit still and wait till these studies have been concluded. We gain our knowledge during the struggles. We must realise that here life, direct work among the masses, immediate leadership of the strike movement is the best teacher. The more we take part in this movement, the better we shall discover laws hitherto unkown to us. During the last eighteen months we have accomplished much in the study of the positive and negative aspects of our strike tactics. We have drawn the balance of these studies in a large number of resolutions passed by the Executive Bureau, we arranged a special conference for strike tactics at Strassburg. We found however that many of our leading comrades not only do not know the decisions passed by the Executive Bureau and the strike conference, but are not even familiar with the decisions of the IV. Congress of the RILU. The Right maintain that we hasten too much in advance, whilst in reality we frequently lag behind. And this, as you know, is no very brilliant strategy. It is our task, when leading the masses, not to separate ourselves from them. But we often separate from them, and remain at a certain distance behind them. And this falling behind the masses is a worse sin than hurrying before them. At the present moment, when the wave is rising, when titanic struggles and tremendous conflicts between capital and labour are impending, and there opens before us the perspective of the development of economic struggles into political, of political struggles into insurrections, possibly contronting the working class of some countries with the decisive struggles for power before long — at this juncture to remain behind is to commit the greatest crime against the advancing Labour movement.

The difference between us and the reformists lies in their fearing to think of the immediate future, whilst we arm for these future struggles. The bourgeoisie does not venture to glance into the future, for it knows what awaits it there. We, on the contrtry, are not afraid to look ahead; we know the line of development of the international class struggle, we perceive its inner antagonisms and their daily intensification, we see the forces assembling on the side of the working class, who observe the regrouping and increasing trend of the masses from Right to Left. The Labour movement is proceeding to the Left, whilst the bourgeoisie, with its political allies, social democracy and reformist trade union bureaucracy, are going to the Right.

On the other hand, the forces of the revolutionary wing of the Labour movement too are growing, and also the forces of the Communist International and the Red International of Labour Unions. Therefore we have no fear of looking into the future, and therefore this future is the object of our desire. At what speed will the class struggle develop? How soon will the revolutionary struggles break out in this or that country? What will be the extent of the class conflicts, and how long will they last? No one can foresee this. But that class struggles of stupendous force are approaching, that the present crisis greatly accelerates developments, that the legend of „prosperity" and organised capitalism has suffered shipwreck, that the demoralisation of capital is revolutionising the broadest masses, that this crisis will serve as point of departure for a thorough regrouping of forces and a far-reaching Left development in the masses, for a great consolidisation of the forces of the revolutionary wing of the Labour movement — of all this there is not the slightest doubt.

We must now be ready for these struggles. The revolutionary army must lose no time, must not disregard the tempo of our work. And we must, I believe, pay serious attention to the methods and forms of our work. We must adapt our daily work to the vast struggles now pending, and so equip ourselves that they do not take us by surprise.

These, comrades, are the tasks before us. This is what must be accomplished at any price, if we want not only to carry on a struggle, but to carry this struggle through to a victorious end. (Applause.)

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