IN THE R. I. L. U.

Ten Years of the Red International of Labour Unions.

By A. Losovsky.

When in the middle of the year 1920, in the fire of intervention and blockade, the foundations of the Red International of Labour Unions were laid, even among the communists some voices of doubt were to be heard. It was argued, there is still a trade union international which unites 23 million workers; would it not be better not to create our own world organisation of trade unions, in order not to lay ourselves open to the accusation of splitting the workers. But the Comintern and our Party dismissed these objections, which were based on the fear that "something bad might happen", and determinedly pursued the course, through the medium of the Central Council of the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union, of founding and forming an international revolutionary trade union centre.

The negotiations for the founding of this body commenced upon the initiative of the Comintern already in June 1920. The first negotiations were participated in by the „left" representatives of the English Trades Union Congress, **Robert Williams** and **A. Purcel**, who immediately after their departure from the Soviet Union forgot the pledges and promises given by them. After long discussions with the representatives of the Italian Confederation of Labour, **D'Aragona, Colombina** and others, and with representatives of the Spanish Confederation of Labour, the anarchist **Pestanha**, an agreement was arrived at on the founding of a provisional International Council of Trade Unions.

The main question in dispute in this period was the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the mutual relations of the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. We should not have succeeded at that time in founding the provisional International Council if the Comintern had not intervened and brought pressure to bear on the Italian Socialist Party and if, on the other hand, **Lenin** had not interested himself in this question and advised that we must in the first place found the Centre, and the exact formulation of the platform of the new international could be undertaken later.

At its inception the R.I.L.U. united only a few organisations (R.S.F.S.R., Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria). During the whole of its ten years existence the R.I.L.U. has fought for the masses, in uninterrupted ideological-political fight against reformism and against the Right and "Left" deviations from the communist policy in the trade unions. In this fight the R.I.L.U. has grown and become the world organisation of the revolutionary trade union movement.

At the time of the founding of the R.I.L.U. the yellow Amsterdam International had more than 23 million members. Now, at their Stockholm Congress, at which the social fascist bureaucrats come forward as open representatives of their governments, they number only 13 million.

In these ten years the R.I.L.U. has developed from an international Propaganda Committee embracing only a few European countries, into a world organisation uniting the revolutionary trade unions and the revolutionary minorities of 55 countries.

The way of the R.I.L.U. is the way of unrelenting fight in every factory, in every work place, not only against capital but also against its agents among the working class. In these years the R.I.L.U. has grown far beyond the frontiers of Europe and, step by step, won the trade unions of new countries where the Labour movement has arisen only
last few years. At the present time the R.I.L.U. has
trade unions, minorities or groups in all importa
of Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South A

Australia, while four-fifths of the organisations affiliated to the Amsterdam International are European organisations. The young Labour movement of the colonial and semi-colonial countries turned right from the beginning to the Comintern and to the R.I.L.U., for both organisations have arisen as a result of the victory of the October Revolution and of the militant internationalist initiative of the C.P.S.U.

What has filled the life and work of the R.I.L.U. in the past ten years? What has inspired the work of the supporters of the R.I.L.U. in all parts of the world? The whole work of the sections of the R.I.L.U. and of the R.I.L.U. itself has consisted in the carrying out of communist policy in the trade union movement, in winning the masses for the Communist Party and the Comintern, in spreading the influence of communist ideas to ever fresh sections of the workers. That was the meaning of the founding of the R.I.L.U.; and this work the R.I.L.U. has carried on during the whole ten years of its existence.

On its path of development the R.I.L.U. has encountered great difficulties, not only from the side of organised reformism, the employers' organisations and of the bourgeois state, but also from the side of those immature, backward elements of the Labour movement who were drawn into the R.I.L.U. during the period of the revolutionary wave and afterwards began to turn away from it, and as a justification propounded all sorts of theories regarding the "independence" of the trade unions, "unity under all circumstances", that the trade unions, as super-party organisations, should be based on the policy of compromise between reformism and Communism, etc.

While in the first period the chief danger was the remnants of anarcho-syndicalism, in the next period — to the extent to which the reformist trade unions became auxiliary organs of the bourgeois state and of the employers' organisations — the Right danger became the chief danger, for it sought to convert the united front with the masses into a united front with the leaders; the united front for the fight against the capitalists into a pact of non-aggression between reformists; the united front of the class struggle into the united front of reconciliation with reformism.

The Right danger became particularly conspicuous after the 9th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. and the IV. R.I.L.U. Congress (March, 1928). At that time the Comintern mobilised all its organisations for the fight against this danger — the advance of the Rights and the Conciliators in the Comintern and in the R.I.L.U. was repelled.

The Rights in the R.I.L.U. reckoned very much on the former right-opportunist leadership of the Central Council of the trade unions of the Soviet Union, some leaders of which, at the IV. Congress of the R.I.L.U., formed a united front with the Rights in the C. P. of Germany. But the trade union movement of the Soviet Union did not prove a favourable environment for the growth of right-opportunist tendencies. The right-opportunist leadership was removed from the Soviet trade unions, which meant at the same time a severe blow to all right groupings in the Comintern and in the R.I.L.U.

The decision of the 9th E.C.C.I. Plenum and of the IV. R.I.L.U. Congress has now no longer any open opponent in the R.I.L.U. There are Right tendencies; there is also sabotage of the line of the R.I.L.U. and of the Comintern (this was to be seen in the factory council elections in Germany); but these opportunistic tendencies are subjected to a sharp fire from all sections of the Comintern and of the R.I.L.U. Does this, perchance, mean that the Right deviation is already defeated, that it has already disappeared? No, it still exists, and in many countries even in an organised form (France). It is a great danger, for the essence of the Right deviation is reconciliation with the social democracy under the plea that the social democratic party is also a workers' party and that the social democrats are "misguided brothers".

In the course of the fight waged by the Comintern and the R.I.L.U. for the line of "Class against Class", for the independent leadership of economic struggles, in the fight against the least attempt to find a middle path between Communism and reformism, "Left" sectarian tendencies made their appearance in the R.I.L.U., involving the danger of estrangement from the masses. The essence of this "Left" in the[illegible] consists in lumping together the social fascist leaders The [illegible]rkers who follow them; in not knowing how to Soviet fro[illegible] not wishing to work — in the reformist trade unions for the realisation of the united front from below; it consists in employing methods of command and of setting up "Left" slogans (permanent general strike, armed strike, and such like) which merely remain on paper.

Before the R.I.L.U. there now stands the question of the fight on **two fronts**, the question of the fight for the correct communist policy in the trade union movement, against Right opportunism as the chief danger, and against "Left" sectarianism.

The R.I.L.U. would not have arisen, nor would it have been able to acquire any considerable influence over the masses if it had not received constant ideological, political and organisational aid from the Communist International. This leading role of the Comintern has found expression during the whole of the ten years existence of the R.I.L.U., not only on the occasion of working out the main line of the international revolutionary trade union movement, but also in the practical carrying out of this line. The R.I.L.U. emphasises the leading role of the Comintern not only in its decisions, but this leading role is realised in actual practice in the fights against the enemies of the working class.

The R.I.L.U. unites a great number of various organisations: to it there belong trade union federations as well as minorities, illegal and semi-legal trade unions. But the variety of the forms is no hindrance to the unity of the political line, to the unity of the tactics which are determined in the international revolutionary trade union movement by the role of the Comintern as leader.

From the historical standpoint ten years is but a short time. But for the organisation this time is quite sufficient in order to show in actual fact what it really represents. The R.I.L.U. has shown in practice that it is a world organisation, in spite of the many weaknesses and shortcomings which have existed in its work and which will form the subject of discussion at the V. R.I.L.U. Congress.

The most important of these faults are: the lagging behind the mass movement, and the disproportion between political influence and the organisational consolidation of this influence. But in spite of these faults, in spite of the many failings, in spite of the fact that in a number of countries the followers of the R.I.L.U. have not yet learnt how economic struggles must be conducted, have not yet drawn their conclusions from the collective decisions adopted by the R.I.L.U. Congresses — in spite of all this the R.I.L.U. has accomplished a great work in uniting, rallying and ideologically welding together the forces of the international revolutionary trade union movement.

Lenin foresaw this role when in 1921, in his message of greeting to the first Congress of the R.I.L.U. he wrote:

> "It is hard to find words to express the full political importance of the international congress of trade unions. The winning of the members of the trade unions for the idea of Communism is proceeding steadily forward in all countries, in all the world; not evenly, not regularly, but unevenly, overcoming a thousand hindrances, but nevertheless marching steadily forward. The international congress of trade unions accelerates this movement. Communism is gaining the victory in the trade unions. No power in the world will be able to stay the collapse of capitalism and the victory of the working class over the bourgeoisie."

The ten years existence of the R.I.L.U. confirms the correctness of this prediction made by Lenin. The development of the revolutionary trade union movement is proceeding not regularly nor evenly; it is overcoming thousands of difficulties; but it is marching steadily forward, that is the chief thing. Therefore, the proletariat of the Soviet Union, engaged in the task of building up Socialism in the land of the proletarian dictatorship, in sending its greetings to all revolutionary workers fighting in the ranks of the R.I.L.U., expresses the firm conviction that, in the approaching hard political and economic struggles in the capitalist and colonial countries, the R.I.L.U. and it sections will know how to lead the masses under the flag of the Comintern in the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat and for the victory of Communism in the whole world.