

The World Crisis, Economic Struggles and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement.

Report of Comrade Losovsky.

(Continued.)

3. Our Weaknesses and Shortcomings in the Leadership of Economic Struggles.

Our own weaknesses and shortcomings are one of the reasons for the success of the treacherous tactics of the reformists. We very often further their scab policy by our own political and organisational weakness. The social-fascists have quite frequently succeeded in discrediting the supporters of the R. I. L. U. at moments when the struggle was hottest, and, not meeting resolute resistance, they brought disorder and dissensions into the masses, causing the loss of the strike.

It is already an undisputed fact that the R. I. L. U. just in time directed the attention of its organisations to the leadership of economic struggles. The decisions of the Fourth Congress regarding the independent role of the R. I. L. U. Sections in economic struggles has been fully justified. Our experiences during the strikes of the last two and half years (Ruhr, Lodz, the North of France, textile workers and miners strikes in the U. S. A., Shanghai, Bombay, etc.) show that we have made some progress in the leadership of economic struggles. The achievements of the R. I. L. U. sections are: a) they have lost their fear of strikes, from which the opportunists of all countries are suffering. An open criticism of our strike tactics is seldom heard in the R. I. L. U. Sections. All those opposed to us have hurriedly departed for the camp of the reformists. b) We have succeeded in stirring new masses of workers, women and young workers included, and in creating the united front of all interested workers. c) We are cured not only of the fear of strikes, but in many cases have taken the leadership into our own hands, and gone on to the end. d) The R. I. L. U. sections are not unskillfully exposing the strike breaking tactics of the social-fascist trade union bureaucracy in the very thick of economic struggles. e) They succeeded in many cases in breaking down the barriers of trade union legalism, in leading strikes without and against the reformist trade unions, and, lastly, f) Great progress has been made in combating right opportunism and left sectarianism during economic struggles.

We should commit a great blunder if we closed our eyes to the great number of political mistakes and of organisational weaknesses and shortcomings of our strike tactics. Our successes, as compared with those at the period of the Fourth Congress, are considerable; but, comparing them with the number of strikes lost and the sharpening of the economic struggle, we must frankly admit that we have made only the first step on the way pointed out to us by the Fourth R. I. L. U. Congress.

If we enumerate shortly all our weaknesses and shortcomings, we shall come to the following list of our tactical and organisational mistakes:

a) Organisations Lagging Behind the militant Spirit of the Masses. This is probably the most common shortcoming of our organisations. There are many cases when the discontent of the workers was not noticed by our rank and file organs, and strikes broke out suddenly, taking the members of the revolutionary trade union opposition in the factories quite unawares. Hundreds of such cases may be found in the strike movements of France, Germany, the U. S. A., Great Britain, etc. This is one of the weakest points in all our activities, and proves that our rank and file organs have not penetrated all enterprises, and frequently lag behind the movement. Not only the rank and file organisations are to blame for it: it is first of all the fault of the leading bodies of the revolutionary trade union movement, and proves that they have been leading on paper but not in practice.

b) Insufficient preparation of economic struggles and reliance on spontaneity. Our organisations begin to think of strikes only when events are taking a sharp turn. All the

activities of the revolutionary trade union movement, however, should be directed towards preparing the masses for the struggle. The preparation of the strike should, first of all, consist of discussions by the men and women workers of all questions agitating the working masses, the working out of concrete and definite demands, the election of organs of struggle, the involving of all interested men and women workers in the deciding strike problems, the promotion of the best and most active workers to the leadership of the strike, and the mobilisation of all revolutionary forces of the trade union movement. Was this done in all strikes? Have you always acted thus, comrades? What was done in the Ruhr district in July 1930?

c) Appointment of strike Committees or elections by small numbers of workers. We are still dealing with many cases in a very bureaucratic manner. There are comrades who think that a strike committee can be appointed or artificially created. Will the problem be solved if we call a certain group of workers a strike or a militant committee? Can we be surprised if, having done such a thing, our Strike Committee does not enjoy a sufficient influence; and can we wonder why the reformists succeeded in breaking the strike? The strike committee appointed in Bradford during the Wool-workers' strike will serve as an example of the bad kind, and one of the good kind is the Strike Committee elected during the metal workers' strike in Mansfeld. In the first case, the strike committee represented the minority of the workers, it was not elected by the shops themselves, the masses were not drawn into the election, the most influential workers remained outside the strike committee, so that it was not standing on firm ground, though its policy was good; in the second case, the strike committee was elected by the overwhelming majority of workers and the whole masses fought under its leadership. Both strikes were defeated, but the struggle in Mansfeld will leave a deep impression upon the masses, while our influence in Bradford extended only to a small percentage of workers. We are not for illusions or fiction. We don't need any fake strike committees and unreal militant committees; whoever does not understand this will do much harm to the revolutionary trade union movement.

d) Underestimation of the role and significance of strike committees and their aloofness from the striking workers for reasons under our control. Whenever strike committees were appointed they did not feel any responsibilities to the strikers: this is the reason why, in many strikes during recent years, the strike committees issued "orders" not heeding the spirit of the masses. A strike committee is valuable only when it daily reports to the masses and does not lose touch with them for a single moment, when it feels the pulse of the masses, when it knows what agitates them, knows of all weaknesses and shortcomings and can quickly dispense possible doubt, etc. Bureaucrats are wanted least of all during the strike movement, they can only spoil matters. Here again the revolutionary trade union movement is to blame most. Do we carry on day to day preparations among the masses for coming struggles? Have we done everything to get most militant and influential elements from the shops into the shop committees, have the supporters of the R. I. L. U. directed the work of the strike committees in this sense? Not always. If this is the case, who is to blame for the bad and bureaucratic functioning of the strike committees?

e) Too careless attitude towards strike demands, and the working out of demands within the narrow circle of the leading comrades. This is one of the most outstanding shortcomings. We often think that it is sufficient to have the demands published and to call the workers out and that they will immediately answer our appeal. While such methods of action might be understood and are often inevitable in countries with an

illegal trade union movement, to serve as the starting point of the movement, they are absolutely wrong and harmful in countries where legal and semi-legal possibilities exist. The most important part of a strike is the serious discussion by the whole mass of workers of the demands; only in this case will every working man and woman consciously join the fight. If, on the activity of the masses if we are deciding their problems strikes out of ten are doomed to failure. We all forget that we are faced by the firmly organised united front of the bourgeois State, the employers, and the reformists, and that we can depend in our struggle only on the class consciousness and activity of the striking masses. But how can we depend on the activity of the masses if we are deciding their problems for them and instead of them? Even in countries where the trade union movement is illegal such methods may be applied only at the very beginning. It is even here necessary to discuss every demand in the shops themselves, and to elect a strike committee that is trusted by the whole mass of workers.

f) **Inability to counteract the demagogic slogans and left phrases of the trade union bureaucrats.** The reformists sometimes use left slogans and put up left demands. These tactics frequently cause confusion among our organisations. In such cases it is the principal task to put every step taken by these gentlemen under the control of the strike committee and the mass of workers, especially, if these gentlemen happen to be members of the strike committee. The Brandlerites say: "We must not criticise the reformists during a strike." The slogan: "Armistice among different tendencies during a strike" may often be heard even now pronounced by the Unitary Trade Unions of France. What do such slogans mean? They mean sowing faith in those who will betray the strike tomorrow. We must of course draw the line between reformist workers who are members of strike committees, and the leaders of reformist trade unions and parties. The first must be drawn into the united front based on the class struggle, but the last must not be granted any armistice, any mercy in exposing their crimes before the working class—only thus shall we be able to expose the left manoeuvres of the reformists and to prepare the masses for their hidden and open strike-breaking.

g) **Violent Measures applied to the backward groups of the proletariat. Peremptory commands instead of methods of persuasion.** We must fight strike-breakers with all our might, etc., but that is not the point now. During our preparations for strike we very often meet resistance from the politically backward workers. The conscious purveyors of social-fascist and fascist ideas and tactics in the enterprises are one thing, but the backward worker, wavering and misled by our enemies is quite another thing. Violent measures are extremely dangerous in this case. The principal method that must be applied to these workers is the method of conviction; we must never think that this class of workers is quite hopeless and lost to the cause of revolution, only because he often follows social-fascism and fascism. Such an interpretation is radically wrong. Untiring explanatory work must be carried on among the masses: linked up with experience it will be successful.

h) **Theoretical recognition of the revolutionary line and the failure to apply it in practice.** There are many comrades who quite willingly vote for revolutionary resolutions: at the same time they think that these resolutions have nothing to do with their own country or at any case with their factories and mills. They approve of everything in theory, but as soon as they are faced by practice they advocate submission to the reformist trade union discipline, set their hopes on the reformist trade union apparatus, consider the collective agreements a prerogative of the reformist unions, look askance at the independent election lists for the shop committees, etc. etc. We have in this case opportunism in practice, the opportunism that exceedingly weakens our ranks in our struggle with the enemy. All undercurrents are brought to light in times of struggle; therefore special attention must be paid, in periods of strike movements, to the struggle against opportunism in practice.

i) **Inability to conclude strikes in an organised fashion at the right moment and dragging out of strikes to the point of complete exhaustion and disorganisation of the strikers.** Strikes are one of the sharpest weapons and therefore we should realise the limit of their efficacy, and reckon with the limits of endurance of the strikers. We know of cases where

workers won strikes after 3—6 months of struggle—but such cases are rare: each of us knows strikes that are continued on principle even though the workers have returned to their jobs. In most strikes, the situation becomes clear already after the first weeks, and therefore it is not necessary to protract the strike for too long a period, if the situation is not favourable to the strikers. The principal task to be kept in mind in such cases is to prevent the strikers from dispersing; therefore it is better to terminate the strike in an organised manner than to return to work in disorder. Tremendous tact and capability are necessary to choose the right moment and to be firm enough to resist the defeatist tendencies of a part of the strikers. A timely retreat is better than a serious defeat. It is important to retreat in good order, to maintain influence among the masses and to prepare for a new struggle.

j) **Confusion in the presence of the employers and incapability to organise negotiations.** Every strike has, first of all, some definite aim: wages, working hours, etc. It is a difficult task to skilfully carry on negotiations during a strike. The bourgeoisie applies two methods, either prompt refusal to carry on any negotiations or attempts to drag out negotiations, giving empty promises, etc. It is extremely dangerous to take the word of the employers or their agents. We must be firm. We must not let ourselves be fooled, never use diplomatic dillydallying, but demand plain answers to plain questions. The most important thing is not to become enmeshed in behind the scenes negotiations; therefore it is necessary to report immediately to the strikers on everything that took place during the meeting with the employers. It is extremely important in such cases to expose unasked for representatives and meddlers, that are crowding the doorsteps of the employers. The wrath of the working masses must be directed against them. Only then will the reformist go-betweens fail to harm the movement.

4. Economics and Politics in the Strike Struggle.

Reformist theories about the impossibility of strikes during a crisis are penetrating into our ranks as well. The same tendencies quite recently existed among the trade union functionaries in Germany, Britain, etc. It is true that a crisis gives birth to an additional number of difficulties (considerable stocks of goods, fear of unemployment, tremendous reserves of labour, etc.). But economic struggles, nevertheless, continue and will continue in a period of crisis. The present crisis is accompanied by a violent attack on wages, and if we support the theory of the impossibility of struggles, we should have to submit uncomplainingly to the inevitable. This is just what the reformist trade unions want us to do. But can the revolutionary trade union movement agree to this? If it professed the same views, it would cease to be a revolutionary movement. We are not blind to the difficulties, but we are not willing to surrender. Experience proves that strikes are possible during a crisis: take for instance, the wool-workers strike in England and the metal workers strike in Mansfeld. The sharper a crisis becomes, the more it undermines the already tottering capitalist stabilisation, the more rapid the succession of political crises, the more they will be accompanied by an ever-increasing number of economic and political strikes. Even now the wave of discontent and workers' protests is rising. Even now hundreds of thousands of workers are demonstrating their discontent and despair by mass demonstrations and strikes. We must realise that, under present-day conditions, purely economic strikes are a thing of the past, and that economic struggles will show tangible results only if closely linked up with the political struggle.

The last two and half years are remarkable for the considerable number of solidarity strikes. May First, August First 1929/30, and March Sixth, 1930, witnessed numerous demonstrations and strikes all over the world in which economic and political slogans were closely intertwined. It must be noted that, on the international days of struggle against war and unemployment very few of our organisations succeeded in bringing about political strikes. Strikes of a more or less mass character broke out in France, China, Uruguay, Cuba; but even this small number is a great progress as compared with the past.

The revolutionary trade union movement is becoming a serious motive power both in economic and political struggles. The objective situation is extremely favourable for the outbreak of struggles. Take France, for instance: 150,000 workers are striking against the social-insurance law. This strike is

a brilliant example of the intertwining of economics and politics. It has stirred up tremendous masses and agitates the whole country. As far as we know, the movement is led by the Unitary Trade Unions. We see at any rate that strikes, for whatever reasons they might have broken out, are directed against the social-insurance law. They are economic strikes, but they are no less protests and demonstrations, and being directed against a law adopted by Parliament, they acquire a purely political character. Can we really call all the strikes that broke out recently purely economic strikes? Let us consider the strike in Lodz, the wool workers' strike in England, the Mansfield strike, the strikes in Bombay, etc. They are all economic strikes as to their form, but political in their essence, for they are struggling for the achievement of general class aims and tasks. This, however, does not imply that strikes are not divided into economic and political ones, and that we must in every strike immediately put up all the well-known economic and political demands. It means, on the contrary, that every strike, especially at the present time, calls for a definite solution of the basic problem of class relations; raises the issue of whether the bourgeoisie will succeed in burdening the working class with the consequence of the crisis or not. Here we are confronted with a whole number of new features, that have found their clearest expression in the events of the last two years and a half: solidarity strikes, demonstration strikes, political mass strikes. It is our principal task to find out how the different forms of strikes are related to each other. We should commit a serious blunder if we failed to grasp that the close relations of all forms of strikes to each other is the outstanding feature of the strike struggle in the present period. Strikes are mostly economic strikes at the beginning, sometimes they break out in answer to lock-outs, e. g. Ruhr, Lodz, Northern France, etc. But they attract not only the workers that are directly affected by the decisions of the employers, but also other classes of workers who realise the danger of the capitalist attacks on the standard of living of one class of workers threatens their own interest.

During this period we have had strikes for the defence of dismissed workers (communists and members of the revolutionary trade union movement) protest strikes caused by police brutalities, strikes against reaction and for the defence of the demands of the unemployed (Cuba), strikes on August First 1929/30 against the War Danger (Uruguay, France); therefore we must strive for a complete understanding of the internal mechanism of the modern strike movement. The anarcho-reformists, the people with the divided brains put economics on one shelf and politics on the other. It is the trade unions that deal with economics, and if it is necessary to take up politics, let the political parties do so. In several countries anarcho-syndicalist views of this kind are penetrating even the sections of the RILU. Undoubtedly a division of labour exists, and should exist, between the Communist Parties and the revolutionary trade unions as to leadership in the economic and political struggles. But whoever thinks that economics may be separated from politics has not the slightest idea of either economics or politics, and wants to drag back the workers' movement to the quarrels between us and the anarcho-syndicalists, to quarrels outlived and thrown to the garbage heap of life.

Economics and politics are so closely intertwined that it is difficult and even impossible to draw the line so much desired by the opportunists and syndicalists. One could hardly find an example of a seemingly more economic strike than that of the Australian miners, but nevertheless clashes with the police took place, the strikers organised their workers' defence corps that were led by former war veterans. The Australian miners adopted the pledge of the Red Army of the U. S. S. R., and each member of the workers' defence corps pledged himself to be faithful to the working class.

I must use the opportunity now to rectify my mistake made in connection with the miners' strike in New South Wales during my lectures in the Lenin School. Basing myself on newspaper information, I stated that neither the Party nor the supporters of the R. I. L. U. were in any way related with the leadership of this strike. On the ground of information received from the Australian delegates, it must be stated that both the Communist Party and the supporters of the R. I. L. U. took a most active part in the strike and in the organisation of the Workers' Self-Defence. It is extremely gratifying to be able to rectify such mistakes.

In France we are witnessing at the present time a certain relapse to anarcho-syndicalism, finding its strongest expression in the views of the neo-syndicalists on the formula of making strikes political. I should not argue the point with them if it was only a question of terminology. If they do not like the word Politics, they will possibly agree to accepting the word revolutionising. But, so far as I am informed, the neo-syndicalists are not arguing on terminology: on the contrary, they dislike the principle involved, they want to separate economics from politics: which means that they radically oppose the line taken by the R. I. L. U. The revolutionising of strikes must not be interpreted mechanically. A mechanical interpretation is, as a rule, especially harmful in tactics; the problem must be considered from a dialectical point of view, from the point of view of the development of the struggle of the working class. When the Australian miners began to organise the Workers' Self Defence Army, it was one of the most important political measures for the defence of their economic demands; when the Shanghai workers during strikes appoint active groups of pickets for the struggle against strike-breakers and police gangs, they combine economics with politics; when the workers of the banana plantations in Columbia fought bloody battles with the hired gangs of the "United Fruit Company", they were also combining economics with politics. The art of leadership, while keeping in mind the starting points of the demands of the workers, popularising them among the masses, mobilising the very last worker for the defence of the demands, at the same time leads the working masses on to putting up demands of a more general character and to the struggle against all and any obstacles obstructing the extension of the strike movement. Examples of this are the struggle against social-fascist gangs, against compulsory arbitration, against arrests, repression, against dismissals of the most class-conscious workers, against administrative and legal prosecution, against misinformation by the yellow press on the strikes, against taxation of wages, fines, eviction of unemployed from their homes, against the dispersion and closing down of revolutionary trade unions and the seizure of their premises, against social-fascist betrayals and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, etc.

To revolutionise the strike movement means to point out to the strikers the relations between their economic demands, and the attacks on their wages and standards of living and the system of bourgeois dictatorship; it means to show the workers the limits of economic struggles and how the social-fascists, under the banner of bourgeois democracy, strive to subordinate the workers' movement to the power of capital; to lead every worker to a full understanding of the strike-breaker role played by the social-democrats and the trade union bureaucracy, to educate every worker into a class conscious fighter in the fundamental interests of the working class.

A great many weaknesses and shortcomings may be noticed with respect to the above; they are all based on the lack of understanding of the organic connection between economics and politics. Therefore we find here both left and right mistakes, frequently mistakes of both kinds combined, strangely reflected in one organisation, and even in one person.

Strikes are one of the sharpest weapons for struggle; it is not only permitted, but sometimes even necessary to be able to manoeuvre. Our enemy is strong, well organised, and possesses tremendous resources; all the power of the bourgeois State, the Social Democrats and the trade union bureaucracy are in the other camp. We must learn how to manoeuvre; we must not think that every struggle is a final and decisive battles, they are only skirmishes, that forge the class solidarity of the proletariat, that oppose class against class, and train the masses for the final struggle.

There are comrades who think, that the longer a strike lasts the better; and they drag it out to the point that the workers, single and in groups, return to work, while the trade union and the trade union opposition keep on asserting that the strike is still going on. In such cases strikes are confounded with boycotts, and are proof of wrong tactics; when struggling we must not only know how to attack, but also how to retreat. I am asking you, which is better: to drag out a strike until the workers utterly exhausted and disorganised, return to work or, if affairs take a turn unfavourable to us, to beat an orderly retreat and return to the enterprise? The main thing is to prevent the smashing of the strike and the demoralising of the strikers. Defeat is not a disgrace.

We can gather a great deal of valuable positive and negative experience by the study of the strike movement of the last two years. The most severe mistakes committed in all economic and political strikes are based first on the failure to build up a united front from below, in trade union legalism, and secondly, on left phraseology which camouflages passivity. These negative experiences must also be studied; but I am asking you, have our sections done anything to seriously study their own mistakes in order to come to the necessary conclusions? Furthermore, when we, in the beginning of 1929, convened a special conference in Strassbourg on problems of strike tactics, and drew up a very detailed resolution on the basis of international experience, our organisations did not utilise it fully. The careful study of this concentrated international experience might be of tremendous service to our comrades in the preparations, conduct, revolutionising and successful termination of strikes.

Thus we have come to the central task of the present Congress—to the organisation of economic struggles. This means that strikes must never be begun lightheadedly, in a haphazard manner as of old, that we must never wait until a strike has begun already, and then begin to improvise—but it means that we have to prepare the masses from day to day for the struggle, and remodel the whole activities of our organisations for this purpose. Both the Strassbourg Conference, and a number of resolutions of the EC on strike tactics in different countries quite clearly define the real essence of the revolutionary preparation of a strike. I want to ask now the comrades present: did the adherents of the RILU properly prepare and conduct the woolworkers' strike in Bradford, the miners' strike in Illinois, the street car workers' strike in Tokio, the strike in Latin America, etc. They prepared them badly and conducted them still worse. The worker thinks a great deal before he decides to go on strike; he does so because he is quite serious about defending his own interests. But when strikes are badly prepared, and demands are not clearly formulated, the working masses are split, lose faith in their own power and have not that faith in their own strength and in victory. We very often jump from one demand to another and in the end we forget where the strike began. The workers who go on strike want first of all to achieve what was demanded at the beginning of the strike. Fewer abstract programmes and slogans, more attention to the direct demands of the workers, for this is at the present moment the essence of revolutionary trade union tactics.

To take the leadership of the economic struggle of the proletariat into our own hands, is, under the present circumstances, equal to organising a counter-attack. It means to lead the masses on and on, combining their economic struggle with the common class demands of the proletariat.

Strikes, as I have already said, are one of the sharpest forms of struggle, in which we establish voluntary discipline; strikes are for this very reason schools of solidarity, where a militant class contact among the workers is hammered into shape, where they learn how to fight the triple alliance of the bourgeoisie State, the employers and the social-fascist trade union bureaucracy. But strikes are not the aim—they are only the means to an end. Lenin, who was the greatest strategist and tactician known to mankind, defined this end as follows:

“The final end of the strike struggle in the capitalist State is the destruction of the State apparatus, the overthrow of the particular class state power.”

This formula is absolutely clear, and there is nothing to be added to it. If we are struggling for the overthrow of the bourgeois State, we are doing it in order to establish the power of the working class. Thus the strike movement trains the masses for the struggle, for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolutionising of the struggles consists just in this. The sharpening of the class struggle still further accentuates the close relation between economic and political struggles and markedly brings out the fundamental aims of the strike movement—the overthrow of bourgeois class rule.

V. Organisation and Ideology of the R.I.L.U. Sections.

1) New Methods and Rates of Work.

The International revolutionary trade union movement has travelled a long way since the Fourth R.I.L.U. Congress.

The slogan of the Fourth Congress concerning the independent leadership of economic struggles has become part of the daily practice of our organisations; successes have undoubtedly been achieved in several capitalist and colonial countries with respect to the leadership of the economic movement of the proletariat.

The R.I.L.U. at the same time has considerably extended its influence and penetrated several new countries the labour movement of which had not been linked up with that of the international proletariat. It is sufficient to look at the composition of the present Congress to prove that considerable progress has been made. Let us cite Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Indo-China, India, several African colonies, the labour movement of which has been until recently detached from the international labour movement, and we shall have to admit that the influence of the R.I.L.U. has considerably extended.

When estimating the activities of the R.I.L.U. from this point of view, it will be necessary to take into consideration the extreme difficulties which the R.I.L.U. met in keeping in touch with the labour movement not only of the new but of the old countries. We do not enjoy the immunity of the Amsterdam gentlemen, who are sent at the expense of their governments to the remotest corners of the world to pacify the discontented workers in the capitalist countries and colonies. All forces of the police apparatus, the whole influence of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy are applied to isolate the R.I.L.U. from contact with the labour movement in the capitalist and colonial countries. But we are breaking down the barriers, in spite of all, for which all our activities and the present Congress are ample proof.

However, comrades, we should commit a great crime if we rested on our laurels, if we overestimated these partial successes; it would be the limit of self-conceit and narrow mindedness. We must openly confess that we lost a number of positions. Wherein do these losses find their expression? First of all (a) the membership of a number of revolutionary trade unions has been considerably reduced. Take for instance the Unitary Confederation of Labour in France (C. G. T. U.) the revolutionary trade unions in Czechoslovakia, our trade unions in the U. S. A., the trade unions in Japan. The number of members has become less in all these unions. This is an extremely dangerous sign. It would be stupid and unworthy of a revolutionary if he ignored this fact. b) A number of revolutionary trade union organisations were driven underground and lost their mass base. We must frankly confess, comrades, that the fact alone of the dispersion and smash-up of a trade union is a loss of important positions. Have the revolutionary trade unions of Yugoslavia and Rumania not lost a number of positions lately? Don't forget that the labour movement of these countries has fairly old revolutionary traditions. Nevertheless the adherents of the R.I.L.U. failed to hold their legal positions, to strengthen their organisations underground and to save their base among the masses. c) Several sections affiliated to the R.I.L.U., though growing in numbers, did not keep pace with the rapidity of the progress of the movement in the respective countries. The trade union opposition in Germany, undoubtedly has grown; but it has not yet won the rank and file, its organisations might be still better, it has not yet acquired a mass character. The objective situation in Germany, however demands that all forces should be directed towards organising the growing discontent of the masses. Thus the opposition is confronted by a number of extremely complicated and important tasks in connection with the leadership of the growing economic struggles. Or take China. The Red trade unions have undoubtedly grown in comparison with 1928. But can we compare the beginning of 1928 with the present situation in China? In China we witness at present a new revolutionary upsurge of the masses, and a vast territory has been occupied by the Red Army. But if we ask ourselves: what has been done on the Soviet territory with reference to the organisation of trade unions, what is the state of our trade unions in the principal centres of China, we must confess that the growth is a very slow one, and lags far behind the real opportunities.

I have given a few examples only. But the delegates present here know themselves the situation of the labour movement in their own countries; are you able to enumerate any successes achieved in organisation during the last two years and a half? Are you progressing or lagging behind?

What's the reason for these losses? Where is the origin of this unfavourable situation in a number of countries? The reason is mainly to be found in the un-heard-of persecutions of the revolutionary workers' movement in all countries; all efforts of the bourgeois State are strained to the utmost in the struggle against the supporters of the R.I.L.U. Dismissals from the factories, arrests, murders, breaking up of organisations, the seizure of their premises, the suppression of the revolutionary press, all these are the links of the long chain of capitalist attacks on the working class. The reformist trade union bureaucrats are developing feverish activities in the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary wing of the workers' movement; they very often take the initiative themselves in smashing-up the revolutionary workers' organisations. If we cast a cursory glance at the political map of the world, we see that the revolutionary trade union movement is illegal and semi-legal, in at least 30 countries; we know of tens of thousands of supporters of the R.I.L.U. suffering in jails and cut off from active life altogether. Whenever the Amsterdam gentlemen are talking in a sneering tone about the losses of our positions, we are entitled to answer that in some countries the united front of the bourgeoisie, social-fascist trade union bureaucracy and the employers is still stronger than we are.

We have to reckon with the objective situation, of course. But comrades, repressions do not explain everything. And the truth is that we are still working very badly, that we are not yet in close touch with the masses, that we are not flexible enough, that we are not introducing new forms and methods of resistance to the capitalist attacks, that we have not yet worked out a whole system of measures helping us to manoeuvre in the changing situation of the respective country. The origin of our troubles lies in the bad work among the masses, and in the bad liaison between our trade unions and the trade union opposition with the workers in the factories. I wonder if any of the Sections of the RILU apart from the Soviet Union has organised a general inspection of its lower organisations during the last two years and a half? Which of you has charged himself with the task to spend not a week, but say, a couple of days on the study of fifty rank and file organisations, e. g. shop committees, trade union sections, trade union groups, legal or illegal nuclei, on which our sections in the factories and mills are based? I somehow fail to remember such cases. But how do you resist the vicious terror of our enemies if you do not consolidate your main positions?

Another reason of our losses is that many of our organisations are not dealing with their respective problems concretely enough and, instead of sticking to the prose of the economic struggles, they have burst into the poetry of general talk and phrases. There are comrades who think, that revolutionary trade unions are organisations that deal only with world-wide problems, but problems of wages, social-insurance, working hours, housing conditions, women's activities, activities amongs the young workers in the shops—all these problems are too insignificant, too trifling—let the reformist bother about them. This is a purely reformist interpretation of reforms; these comrades forget that the difference between ourselves and the reformists is not that the reformists are for reforms and we are against them, but that we are striving for reforms by way-of the class struggle; they, on the contrary, want to achieve them by means of class collaboration.

At this point, quite naturally, the question arises of what tasks confront the revolutionary trade union movement. Are the revolutionary trade unions to function as the Communist parties? If it were so, the very existence of the revolutionary trade union movement would be unnecessary. No, the revolutionary trade unions have their own specific tasks, their own problems; they are the only organisations that can solve them. Among these are, first of all, the problems of the economic condition of the working class. The union that neglects the day-to-day interests of the workers is a bad union. The I. RILU Congress charged our organisations with the task of combining the struggle for the day-to-day needs with the general political aims. The combination of these two factors is the principle underlying the revolutionary policy of the trade union movement. The revolutionary trade unions are organisations following the same path as the Communist parties; but they are using different methods, different tactics. Further, by means of pressure brought to bear at the Congress we strove to get a real measure of self-criticism

developed in our organisations; There is no doubt that there is a change for the better in this respect but it must be considered as most inadequate. After the unsuccessful builders' strike in France, an interesting resolution was published by the Central Strike Commission concerned in which consideration was given to all the negative features of this particular movement. A very good thing; but what was done afterwards? Were any attempts made to explain this viewpoint to the workers. Did the workers who took part in this unsuccessful strike get to discuss this resolution. Were any resolutions passed by them? To all these questions you will get an unsatisfactory answer. The resolution was passed, and then they went on to the next item on the agenda. Yet real work begins only with the publication of a resolution. After all it is necessary to make all our good and sound deliberations understood by the WHOLE of the working masses involved. Take Britain. The position in the British section of the trade union movement is very bad indeed. The National Minority Movement exists on the surface; practically no rank-and file bodies exist at all—there is a little agitation and very little organisation. And did you get the "Worker" as Organ of the N.M.M. carrying on systematic work to explain the reasons for its own weaknesses? Did the N.M.M. Executive attempt to bring those holding membership in the N.M.M. together, district by district, and face them with the question of why it was that things were going so poorly? Not a bit of it. From time to time, the Executive meets, passes the resolutions criticising its own weaknesses, calms down again, and matters go on just as they were before. Can we stand for this sort of thing?

Or let us take the question of unemployment. We all know that there are tens of millions of unemployed, that this is the chief question disturbing the working masses. I want to ask what has been done in this respect in Britain? Have we really made any progress in organising the unemployed. Our unemployed organisation in Britain has stagnated in its development—from time to time hunger marches are organised which are not even of a sufficiently mass character, and then petitions are submitted, and everything follows the old traditions, slowly and bureaucratically. Very little has been done by us to organise the unemployed in Germany, the USA., Latin America; nothing has been done in Japan, etc. And when you ask why, what is the reason for this incorrect approach to this most important question which is now troubling tens of millions of people, you get one answer: the old trade unionist traditions are making themselves felt, we have expressed here the inability to utilise the new situation, to lead the masses who are agitated by hunger and unemployment to unite them around the revolutionary trade union movement. The pre-revolutionary rates of working make themselves felt, while the times are such that other methods and forms of work are required.

There is something more serious in our sections however, You, present here know of no few facts when our sections disregard the growing dissatisfaction of the masses, and when strikes break out without our knowledge. I could give dozens of instances, from the reports received by the R.I.L.U., of the absolutely disgracefully bureaucratic attitude of our officials to what is going on in the factories. They wait till somebody comes to report what is going on at the factories. They all maintain the point of view that the workers must come to them, without thinking that they themselves should go to the factories. In view of this, we often see a discrepancy between the growing activity of the masses and the stationary passivity of our functionaries.

Next, just look at Czechoslovakia, at our sections in America, Britain, Spain, France, etc. Just take a glance at their work. I ask, have they any plan, have they put themselves the task of drafting all their forces into one, most important district? There are innumerable resolutions, but extremely little practical work.

In order to repel the relentless offensive against the revolutionary trade union movement undertaken by the powerful front of our enemies, we must know how to reorganise our ranks, we must change the speed of our work.

Comrades, we must recognise that there is still a certain amount of bureaucratism in our ranks, that there are still many old traditions, and that there is not that persistence, that concentrated passion which is required to beat back the offensive and then to go on to the counteroffensive.

2. Against Right Wing Opportunism and Left Wing Mistakes.

Since the Fourth Congress extremely dangerous and harmful rightwing opportunist deviations have manifested themselves in a considerable part of the RILU Sections, which have threatened the application of the Fourth Congress decisions. The central point of attack by the right wing opportunists was the sharp manner in which the question of independent leadership in economic struggles was raised. The initiator was the right wing group in the Communist Party of Germany, under the leadership of Walcher, Brandler, and others. Even at the Fourth Congress this group attempted to oppose their line to the revolutionary tactics of the overwhelming majority.

They maintained the point of view that independent leadership of economic struggles is bluff, that the conquest of the trade unions means the conquest of the reformist trade union apparatus; that our task is to push the trade union bureaucrats into the struggle; that our sharp assertion that the Amsterdamers are turning into a capitalist tool only hinders our struggle; that we must submit to any and all conditions of trade union discipline; that we should not drive the trade union bureaucrats to the need of expelling us from the unions; that our chief task is to exert all our forces, all means, to remain in the trade unions, even if necessary to give up revolutionary activities. In a word, they based themselves on the tactic of unity at all costs and at any price.

This group had barely come forward against the decisions of the RILU, when it was already in the clutches of the Social-Democracy, who utilised and still utilises these "Communists" in the struggle against the Comintern and the RILU. Great political and organisational work had to be carried out in Germany to wrest from these trade union legalists that section of the workers which was misled by their opportunist theories. The German comrades carried out this struggle against the rights with all possible energy, and now the right are only a small group who publish a few small journals, chiefly for their own consolation.

There were also serious attacks of the Right wing in Czechoslovakia, a group of old trade union bureaucrats, consisting of Hais, Nadvornik, Sikora, etc., considered that the RILU could be played with: at all the Congresses they signed resolutions and upon their return they steadily continued to do the opposite. For many years we systematically fought this gang of social-democrats, who by accident had got into the revolutionary camp. Our aim was to isolate these trade union officials from the masses. When Hais & Co. saw that their well being was coming to an end, violating the statutes and decisions of the International General Trade Union Federation, they seized the premises, funds, and under the protection of the police used this property of the workers for the struggle against the revolutionary workers of Czechoslovakia.

The Executive Bureau of the RILU paid very serious attention to these events in Czechoslovakia. In order to show up to the workers the true face of Hais and his friends, the Executive Bureau sent a special Commission abroad, the object of which was to organise a conference with the leading elements of the revolutionary unions of Czechoslovakia, so as to expose the agents of the social-democracy in our ranks. Hais and his friends, before the arrival of the delegation, declared that they agreed with the RILU in everything, that they only do not agree with their Communist Party. They are prepared to accept all the decisions of the RILU, but that they "do not desire to submit to youngsters in the Political Bureau of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party". The very first speech of these gentlemen showed that the crux of the matter was not the Political Bureau of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, but that this group desires to get back into the ranks of social-fascism.

The commission, of which I was chairman, offered Hais to settle the conflict on a democratic basis by convening a congress and promised to use every effort to guarantee the real representation of the masses at the congress. Hais refused to settle the conflict on a democratic basis, for he knew that the workers were not on his side and as he intended to disorganise the ranks of the revolutionary movement as much as possible, he declared that he could not accept our proposal. The commission of the E.B. in its first appeal to the Czechoslovakian workers exposed Hais' attitude and predicted that

Hais would be found in the ranks of social-fascism within a very short time. This happened much sooner than many expected in Czechoslovakia. At present we know that Hais was carrying on negotiations with the social-fascists during the whole of last year. But if we could make deeper investigation into the archives, we could find proofs that he had been carrying on negotiations with the social-democrats already before the seizure of the premises, and that he had received instructions from them to this effect. Now the Social Democratic press in Czechoslovakia is celebrating a victory. Hais and his group, together with other Rights, have joined their ranks.

We regret to state that Hais did not leave alone; he took with him 10-12,000 workers, which is of course not his merit but rather the fault of the supporters of the R.I.L.U. And therefore a resolute struggle must be launched in Czechoslovakia against Right tendencies which are very far from being eliminated.

During the same period we witnessed the revolt of the Rights also in France where, after the Congress of Unitary Trade Unions and the Fourth R.I.L.U. Congress, the opposition took definite form under the name of the "Committee for the Defence of Syndicalism." Its leaders are Monatte and Chambellan. It is a typical right opportunist anarcho-reformist group, veiling its social-democratic convictions with chatter about the independence of the trade unions and with protest against the "interference" of the French C.P. with the affairs of the trade unions. But if we take the essential feature of the policy pursued by this group, we see that it is an agency of the reformist Confederation within the Unitary Trade Union movement. There was much talk in France about the necessity of creating nuclei and bases within the reformist trade unions, but all this has remained on paper up till now. The reformists, instead, have succeeded in gaining a firm foothold within the ranks of the Unitary trade union movement by creating the "Committee for the Defence of Syndicalism" and other opposition groups.

Several months ago a new opposition made a new appearance in France, calling itself "Unitary". This new opposition turned out from the very beginning, to be under the ideological leadership of the Tratzkyist organ in France "La Vérité". This group uses more elastic methods than the "League for the Defence of Syndicalism"; it even argues with the anarcho-reformists. It uses much finer and better veiled slogans. The group bases itself on the Federation of Educational Workers in France which proclaimed its convictions in a special manifesto, to the effect that it agrees in general with the policy of the R.I.L.U., but does not agree with the Communist Party and opposes the interference of the C.P. in the internal affairs of the trade unions, etc. Not satisfied with that the new opposition quite openly declares that it does not agree with the R.I.L.U. on the question of the radicalisation of the masses, the political character of strikes, and so on. To sum up, the contradictions between the Unitary Opposition and the R.I.L.U. are the following. Is the turn to the left of the masses a fact, or is it a Moscow invention, as asserted by the social-democrats and their echo in the Federation of Educational Workers? 150,000 workers are on strike in France at the present moment—is this a sign of the turn to the left of the masses or not? They approach this question from the point of view of metaphysics,—they want to be presented with all signs of radicalisation and are evidently of the opinion that we can talk of a swing to the left only when the struggles at the barricades begin, only when the whole working class moves into action. But by this they are only exposing their utter ignorance of the most elementary questions of the class struggle.

Let us admit that incorrectly formulated demands were put up during several strikes; that their purpose was not sufficiently clear, that a number of blunders were committed. But does this entitle us to decline to give the strike a political turn? Does this entitle people who call themselves "left" Communists to protest against the political transformation of strikes? There is nothing "left" in all the writing of this group. It is only a right opportunist group which, for the purpose of manoeuvring, considers it more profitable to veil its views with left phrases.

Very serious right vacillations showed themselves in the M. M. in England, in the U. S. A., in Brazil, in Paraguay, etc. The facts prove that extremely dangerous opportunist mistakes, that weaken our movement, were made in several Latin-American countries. It will suffice to mention that the supporters of the R. I. L. U. in Brazil recognise a trade union leadership appointed by the police. We may further mention that in the left trade unions of Finland there was worked out a theory of capitulation to the effect that all principles and all convictions may be sacrificed, for the sake of retaining the legality of the trade unions. This capitulation theory ended with political bankruptcy; when the fascist danger became real, and the leaders were beaten up, the left trade unions, for safety's sake, declined to organise a political strike.

Now the fascists have seen their weaknesses and are smashing up their organisations. During this period serious right deviations appeared in the strongest R. I. L. U. section—in the leading group of the Soviet Central Council of Trade Unions. Already at the Fourth R. I. L. U. Congress several of the delegates of the Soviet trade unions made an attempt to create a right fraction for the struggle against the "ultra-left" line followed by the R. I. L. U. Furthermore, the right deviations of comrades **Tomsky**, **Yaglom** and others were most sharply expressed in the questions of socialist construction and the rates of the reconstruction of the whole activities of the trade unions in connection with the Five Years' Plan. Doubts and deviations were also aroused in this group by their views on the collectivisation of agriculture and all the measures taken in our attack on the capitalist elements of town and country, which pursued the aim of breaking the resistance of our class enemies and safeguarding our progress. All right opportunist waverings and hesitations were based on underestimation of the forces latent within the working class, on the underestimation of internal possibilities of the initiative and energy of the masses released by the revolution. On the question of the R. I. L. U. policy this opportunist group became a centre attracting all right elements of the international trade union movement. The retaining of this group in the leadership of the Soviet trade union movement would have been a serious danger for the Soviet and the international trade union movements. Therefore, the trade unions of the U. S. S. R. launched a resolute attack against the leadership, and in the course of several months a number of responsible trade union functionaries were removed from their posts. This change of the leadership considerably strengthened the R. I. L. U., and strengthened connections between the C. C. T. U. and the R. I. L. U., for a unanimous carrying out of all campaigns, for a common resolute struggle against opportunism within the Soviet Union and beyond its boundaries.

It is noteworthy that a number of right opportunists have already left the RILU (Hais, Walcher) but others are creating opposition within our ranks, as is the case in France. The French opportunists have proved so cowardly that on the ground of a formal pretext they have refused to accept the proposals of the Unitary Federation of Labour to send several of their representatives to the RILU Congress, for the purpose of elucidating their views on the tasks of trade unions in France and all over the world. They went into hiding in the most cowardly fashion. We cannot but say most frankly that we consider their work disorganising and extremely harmful, as it is an attempt to smuggle into our ranks the policy of the Amsterdam International.

We by no means want to throw the workers and the leaders of this opposition into one heap. We know there are very good revolutionists among the proletarians organised in the Food Workers' Union, in the Dockers' Union, etc., who are followers of the Unitary Opposition, thinking that it is leading them to the same goal by a shorter way. We must make all efforts to show to these proletarians whether the Unitary Opposition is leading them. The Committee for the Defence of Syndicalism has become an open agency of Amsterdam,—it is breaking strikes, leading the trade unions on to independence, and then, further, into the ranks of the reformists federation. This is the inevitable way taken by any opposition against a correct policy. The leaders of the Unitary Opposition must be frankly told that their policy of struggle against the RILU, but under the banner of the RILU, is a very dangerous game that cannot last very long. We must openly declare here that, while criticising the weaknesses

of the Unitary trade unions of France we shall render them the most systematic and resolute support in their struggle against the different varieties of opportunism, for their class position is correct: they must struggle against the agents of Amsterdam within their own ranks.

Besides, the right deviations and the right groups in the ranks of the RILU, "left" secretarian views and tendencies have shown themselves. We are conditionally calling them "left", as they are at bottom also opportunist. These "left" tendencies have nowhere acquired an organised form. But they are to be met with in several varieties in a number of countries. In respect to this Comrade Merker's views are very characteristic in their incorrectness; his views on the relations between the social democratic workers and ourselves on the one hand, and between these workers and the social-democratic apparatus on the other. Social-democracy embraces hundreds of thousands of workers; are we entitled to say that these workers are lost for the cause of the revolution? Can we lump the social-democratic workers and the social-democratic leaders together? This, of course, would be a great mistake, as it would mean cutting ourselves off from the workers who are quite honest in their mistakes, and who can be convinced of the truth of our cause. The social-democratic functionaries must not be put on the same footing with the rank-and-file proletarians, and the active leaders of the reformists, who are pursuing a strike-breaking policy in the factories, must not be confounded with the rank-and-members of the unions. It is true that the social-democrats and the trade union bureaucracy has a certain foothold in the shops; it is quite true, too, that we must struggle against the Social-Democratic Party itself, and tell every member of that Party that he is responsible for its policy; but the manner in which we talk to the rank-and-file workers must be entirely different from our approach to the responsible representatives of the Social-Democratic Party. The problem is to find a way of splitting away the workers from the Social-Democrat trade union machine, to tear them away from the influence of the strongly organised social-fascist apparatus. That will be achieved only if we discriminate in our agitation and propaganda, and if we create a united front to include the Social-Democratic workers and make every possible effort to draw them into struggle. The united front among the rank and file is by no means something between Communism and reformism. It is by no means a pact of non-aggression between these two. On the contrary, it is an alliance for a joint attack against the employers. This is the only possible basis for any united front.

Some of us often want to astound the workers by extremely left and eloquent formulae. But most of these "left" and right phrases are not serious. Take for instance, the slogan of the general permanent strike. It was after a successful strike, put up in Cuba on the day of international struggle against unemployment. What does the expression "general permanent strike" mean? It is an empty phrase, liable to confuse the worker's mind. Why should we permanently strike? If the workers are so strong as to be able permanently to strike, why do they not overthrow the bourgeoisie, and why not begin to work for themselves? There is very little common sense in this slogan; bluffs of this kind must be most resolutely resisted. A like slogan was proclaimed during the miners' strike in Czechoslovakia. The slogan of an armed strike proclaimed in Japan is evidently wrong. I asked several of our Japanese comrades what the slogan meant, but they didn't know themselves. Who invented this clever slogan? It is in any case utter nonsense. Does the slogan imply that an armed rebellion is to break out here and now in Japan. Obviously not. Does it mean that the workers, after declaring the strike, must defend themselves with arms in their hands, and that they must fight the strike-breakers? The slogan lacks clearness. The Hyogikai writes in one of its appeals for the First of May that "we have got to instil panic into the bourgeoisie". How does the Hyogikai intend to do this? By frightening it by words? The bourgeoisie is not afraid of words. It knows that they are hollow phrases. But the bourgeoisie is afraid of revolutionary actions; while our comrades, on their part, try to substitute revolutionary words for revolutionary actions. I shall cite another example. We read in the appeal of the Hyogikai how to prepare the first of May campaign; the appeal gives the following schedule:

March 15-31 preparatory period, April 1-10 organisational preparatory period, April 10-16 preparatory mobilisation, April 16-25 final period for organisation and preparation, April 26-May 1, mobilisation. I don't understand who is able to explain all this metaphysics; but I should be much obliged to any delegate from Japan who can explain to us what all this means. I shall give a few other examples of left phrases. Taking into consideration that the majority of the members of the reformist unions consist of skilled workers, and that the unions are chiefly defending their interests, a theory sprang up that all skilled workers were hopelessly lost for the cause of the revolution. To say this is as wrong as to deny that a part of the skilled workers are the basis of reformism, and the agents of its strike-breaking policy in the factories.

I should like to direct your attention to some more samples of left phrases. Our trade unions in Czechoslovakia, robbed by the Hais gang, and weakened by continous prosecutions, were not able to apply the Ghent system owing to the lack of funds. The workers should have been told about it. But what did our comrades do? They published an appeal declaring that the application of the Ghent system was incorrect in principle, that it was extreme opportunism, etc. Thus the illusion was created that the revolutionary trade unions decline to utilise social-legislation. Is such a point of view correct? Of course it is not. It is an evident "left" exaggeration, a left mistake that created very great difficulties for a large number of our Czecho Slovakian organisations.

Take France, for instance, where our comrades put up the correct slogan of wage increases and refusal to allow deductions from the workers' wages in connection with the new

social-insurance swindle. The slogan is correct and should have been supported by all; but when running through the wealth of agitation literature on this problem we often meet very "left" and quite unnecessary phrases and slogans, as for instance: "Whatever the results of the struggle might be, the employers will in any case burden the worker with the expenses for social-insurance." Or: "Down with social-insurance!" And so on. It is all very "left" and patently stupid. Are there any workers who will seriously struggle if you tell them that all their sacrifices and efforts are in vain, as they will in any way be burdened with the expenses of social-insurance? How is it possible to struggle for a wide introduction of social-insurance, when putting up the slogan of: "Down with social-insurance!"

There exists one more variety of deviation that has cropped up during the last period; it is the revived theory of neutrality. The Neo-Syndicalists keep on repeating the same phrase that was current about 20—26, years ago. This theory has been revived with the express purpose to split away the trade unions from the Communist Party. It is contradictory to all the resolutions of all R.I.L.U. Congresses, which emphasised the necessity of the closest relations between the Communist Parties and the trade unions and of common actions on a national and international scale. Will the V. Congress revise what was said by the I. Congress? I think it will be sufficient to confirm our decisions, and combat those who want to drive a wedge between the trade unions and the Communist Parties, and who in the interests of reformism want to weaken the international trade union movement.

(To be concluded.)