

# The Struggle for the Masses

By A. LOZOVSKY

THE fundamental task with which the R. I. L. U. was confronted from its very foundation has always been the struggle for the majority of the working class, the struggle for those workers who are under the influence of international reformism, of the Right and Left opportunism; the struggle for the leadership of the masses, to turn the working class into a "class for itself," his fundamental strategical task in different periods and different countries was solved in different ways.

It is dependent upon the situation, upon the correlation of forces between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and upon the correlation of forces within the working class itself. But it was the need to conduct activities among the workers, however reactionary the organizations to which these workers belong, that stood out sharply in all the stages of the struggle, that was always considered irrefutably true.

This principle was particularly stressed at the Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U., at that same congress which determined the conditions in which it is not only possible, but even essential, to commence organizing new unions, and which summed up the results of the ten years of activity of the Red International of Labor Unions.

Is it possible to state that this fundamental line taken by the R.I.L.U. eleven years ago has been systematically applied? Can we say that all is as it should be in this respect, and that the decisions of all the congresses of the R.I.L.U., stressed by the Fifth Congress, have found sufficient practical application in the everyday activities of the R.I.L.U. supporters? By no means can we say this. On the contrary, we must admit quite openly that there are a number of serious and dangerous shortcomings and weaknesses in this respect, which we must combat determinedly and ruthlessly.

## GERMANY

Let us take Germany as a start. A number of very great successes in the organization of the revolutionary trade union movement can be noticed during the past year—the R.T.U.O. is beginning to become an organization that must be taken into consideration, although numerically it grows at a slower rate than it might. The revolutionary trade union opposition is becoming a serious fac-

tor in the everyday struggle of the working class; it is able to register in its favor several strikes, the formation of a number of new trade unions, and several important successes in the factory committee elections. All these successes, however, are only relative—the present state of the R.T.U.O. by no means is in conformity with the requirements presented to the revolutionary trade union opposition by the growing mass movement. There is a manifest lagging behind all along the line.

What is the cause for this lagging behind? First and foremost, it is to be explained by the fact that during the past year activities in the reformist trade unions have greatly slackened. When the Fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U. decided to withdraw for Germany the slogan of “Join the Reformist Trade Unions” and decided on the organizational crystallization of the revolutionary trade union movement, it stressed particularly that this implied not only the continuance but even the intensification of activities in the reformist trade unions.

There are certain successes in developing the revolutionary trade union movement, in developing the R.T.U.O. and independent trade unions, but none the less simultaneously we must also admit the loss of a number of important positions inside the reformist trade unions, which assists the counter-revolutionary maneuvers of the trade union bureaucracy.

#### ACTIVITIES SLACKENED

Proof is hardly needed to show that our activities in the reactionary unions of Germany have slackened all along the line. What is the reason of this? Surely the supporters of the R.I.L.U. in Germany know that there are about six million workers in the reactionary unions in their country? Surely they realize that to refuse to conduct activities among these millions of workers implies putting off the immediate struggle for power? What is the matter?

What has happened is that it has become more difficult to conduct work inside the reformist unions, because the reactionary trade union bureaucrats take all measures, inclusive of expulsions, to get rid of “restless souls.” The obstacles have increased, but our forces have also increased. If this is the case, then it cannot be given as the reason for slackened activities all along the line. There is another, a more serious cause: the metaphysical manner of placing the question, widespread among part of the functionaries of the R.T.U.O., *either we form independent unions or else conduct activities in the reformist unions, one of the two*. Such a method of putting the question is incorrect and profoundly dangerous.

It is incorrect because it breaks our line into two and opposes

the development of the independent trade union movement to the tactic of winning hundreds of thousands and millions of workers to strengthen and further develop this same independent revolutionary trade union movement.

“OURS ARE BETTER . . .”

When we speak of an independent revolutionary trade union movement we thereby not only determine the attitude of our organizations to the reformist unions, but have in mind most of all the *mass character* of the movement. The independent trade union movement is good only to the extent that it possesses a mass character. In order to make it a mass movement we must lead the millions of workers inside the reactionary trade unions. Anyone who opposes the one to the other is hopelessly confusing the question and simply adds fuel to the fire of the reactionary trade union bureaucrats.

Let us consider. Can a mass revolutionary trade union movement be created in Germany without winning the workers from the influence of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy? No, this is impossible. This is realized by each and every supporter of the R.I.L.U., but while realizing it they do not draw the necessary deductions. The tendencies which exist on this question may be described appropriately as follows:

“Sooner or later the members of the reformist unions will come to us. We will carry on general agitation and propaganda and we will see that our new unions are better than the old ones, and then they will come to us.”

MINERS AND METAL WORKERS

All this would be very well if it were correct. Actually our new unions can only stand on their legs in the process of the struggle, and in order to conduct the struggle successfully the participation of the members of the reformist unions in the strike struggle is essential. Otherwise all these strikes must end in defeat.

Take the metal workers' unions in Berlin as an instance. The reformist union has 40,000 to 50,000 members, our union has 20,000. Needless to state, we must develop furious activities to unite the unorganized metal workers, who constitute the majority in the Berlin-Brandenburg district, but if we are not going to pay any attention to those 40,000 metal workers belonging to the reformist unions, if we are not going to fight for every worker, if we are not going to fight furiously for each factory, then the black-leg reformist apparatus, which still has considerable masses

of workers behind it, will possess sufficient forces to smash any movement.

The same must be said about the miners' union of the Ruhr. At present we have in this union also about 20,000 members; the reformists have twice as many members. There is a large Catholic union in the Ruhr, and to refuse to work in this union will simply be playing into the hands of the reformists.

#### INDEPENDENT UNIONS

At the present time there are in Germany several independent unions (metal workers, miners, builders, agricultural laborers, seamen and dockers, etc., etc.). All these unions unite a total of about 75,000 to 80,000 workers. If we add up how many workers are united under reformist and Catholic leadership in these same industries we see that they have more than a million workers. Can we think seriously of turning our unions into mass organizations, of making them the determining factor in the class struggle, as long as millions of workers in these industries are outside of our organization, and a part of them even outside of our influence?

Many comrades may say that "we never said anything against working in the reformist unions, it is sufficient even for the R.I.L.U. supporters to speak for it; what we need is that they work stubbornly, systematically, and leave metaphysics alone: Either an independent trade union movement or work in the reformist unions."

There is another form of argument. The workers engaged in the independent unions argue roughly as follows: "We who are at the head of the independent unions should work only in these unions, while the others—the Party, the R.T.U.O.—should carry on work inside the reactionary unions."

#### WE MUST DIVIDE THE FORCES

This is incorrect. Such arguments are just as dangerous, profoundly dangerous. Why? Because thereby we withdraw from ourselves the responsibility for work among the workers in our industry. If we were to take such a stand in Berlin or the Ruhr, for instance, it would mean that our unions in the Berlin metal factories would be isolated from the others; they would also conduct activities among the unorganized, but would take care to keep a good distance between themselves and the members of the reformist unions, every one of whom influence several unorganized workers.

The workers who belong to the reformist unions are to be found in the factories; in the factories they carry out the line of the reformist unions, which have in them their apparatus, their rep-

resentation, while it is our task to drive the reformists out of all the positions they occupy, to wrest the workers and the factories from the reformists.

Because of this we must not divide the workers into two categories; we will conduct work among one category (the unorganized) and let others—the R.T.U.O. and the Party—carry on work among the other category (members of the reformist unions).

There is still another objection made: "It is impossible to carry on activities in the reformist unions in the fashion we would like. There is no trade union democracy; the slightest attempt to oppose our policy to the reformist policy meets with expulsions. Seeing that we have to remain in the reformist unions, isn't it better to follow a policy which would safeguard us from expulsions?"

Such arguments of a Right-wing opportunist character are also still to be met with among supporters of the R.I.L.U. When we speak of the need to carry on activities in the reformist unions this does not mean that we recommend adaptation to reformism, recommend remaining in the reformist unions and thinking of self-preservation only.

#### DRIVE OUT THE REFORMISTS

This would not be revolutionary work in the reformist unions, but the most infamous adaptation to the demands of the reformist apparatus and repudiation of the elementary duties of revolutionaries.

Carrying on activities in the reformist unions implies overcoming absolutely all difficulties, fighting for every single worker, driving the reformists out of the positions occupied by them, winning from the reformists those workers who still follow them, wresting from the reformists the rank-and-file trade union positions, rousing the indignation and fury of the working masses against the reformist trade union apparatus and its officials, who are corrupt right through.

Do we see such activities conducted in the reactionary unions in Germany? Hardly. We do not see them, not because we are situated at a great distance, but because practically no such work is carried.

Unfortunately, Germany is no exception. Whether we look to England, Czecho-Slovakia, France or the United States, everywhere the same thing is to be observed.

#### WAITING FOR THE MASSES

In Czecho-Slovakia there are 70,000 members of the Red unions, and about a million members in the reactionary unions. At the last parliamentary elections 700,000 votes were cast for the Communist Party, of which number at least 100,000 were votes cast by work-

ers belonging to the reactionary trade unions. Why did these workers remain in these unions; why did they not join our unions?

Because we oppose one field of work to another. "We have independent Red unions," argue some comrades, "and the rest will come of itself. When the workers become disappointed, when they see that the reformists are scabs and frauds, they will come to us and become active members of our organizations."

Sooner or later, of course, the workers will come to us. But is it our task to wait with folded arms till this happens? This, however, is precisely the line followed by the R.I.L.U. supporters in many countries when matters touch upon the reactionary unions.

In France and the United States we have our own revolutionary unions, but, not to speak of the fact that recently there has been a big drop in membership in our unions, the R.I.L.U. supporters lose sight entirely of the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of workers in the reformist unions whom we can and should win.

#### INCORRECT LINE IN STRIKES

While we carry on no work at all inside the reformist unions in France the reformist agents of the Independence Committee are carrying on quite vigorous work in our ranks. In other words, the reformists are taking advantage of the tactic presented by us to weaken our ranks, and we let the reformist trade union bureaucracy alone, although the objective conditions are favorable to the extreme for us in spreading revolutionary ideas among the workers, including the members of the reformist unions, and mastering the tactics of the revolutionary trade union movement.

This incorrect line is seen in all strikes. Thus during the miners' strike in France we failed to win the majority despite the tremendous unrest among the miners. A strike is now being waged in France of 120,000 textile workers, and the leadership is in the hands of the reformists. All this is the result of the metaphysical manner of placing the question: "Independent unions or else activities in the reformist unions."

We observe the same picture in the United States. Our unions not only do not grow, but, under the blows of the employers, the police and our own mistakes, have lost part of their membership. Side by side with our small unions there are some relatively mass unions, affiliated to the American Federation of Labor. Well, do we conduct activities in these unions, do we organize groups in them, form contacts? No, despite all the dozens of decisions, this practical work is not being carried on.

#### DIFFICULTIES?

Why? The most popular argument is: because the American trade union bureaucracy forthwith expelled from the unions anybody

who comes out in defense of the class line. But if the trade union bureaucracy expels us, does this mean to say that our work must be stopped? The expulsion of R.I.L.U. supporters just proves that our work is dangerous for them, for it undermines their influence. Instead of insistently maintaining the line laid down we see serious vacillations and slackened work all along the front.

Even in those countries where there are no independent revolutionary unions with the exception of one or two, as in Britain, we likewise observe weakened activity in the reactionary unions. When attempts are made to find out what is wrong, what has caused this slackening, nothing but the word "difficulties" is to be heard. It is more difficult to fight capitalism than to fight the trade union bureaucracy, but we do not turn down the task put us because of its difficulty.

In view of this the objection as to the difficulties won't stand water. To refuse to overcome difficulties is following the line of least resistance, is opportunism pure and simple, and has nothing in common with the revolutionary tactic of the R.I.L.U.

#### EVERY-DAY DEMANDS

Work inside the reformist and other reactionary unions requires from us not words but deeds. In some cases this work is interpreted to mean the publication of leaflets and non-periodical journals from time to time, speeches, and demands presented under all conditions which exceed three, four and fivefold the demands presented by the reformists.

Why should we carry on work in the reformist unions? To win the workers to our side. To do this each worker must see for himself that we are better than the reformists, that we really defend his every-day demands, that we formulate them; that we are well-read in price lists agreements, that we can find our way about in labor legislation, that we are fighting for what at the given time is troubling each worker.

In a word, the worker must see in us not simply good revolutionaries who tell them in words the way out of the crisis, but also good revolutionary trade unionists, revolutionaries who, in business-like fashion and militantly, solve the problems which at the given time engage the attention of the workers, and in order to get a reply to which they appeal to their unions and trade union delegates or the Social-Democrats.

The question of the content of our work inside the reformist unions is the basic question. Frequently it is held that our work inside the reformist unions is chiefly to expose them. Of course it is a most important task to expose the scabbing of the reformists, but the crux

of the matter is how to expose them. They can be exposed anyhow, "generally," and they can be exposed on the basis of concrete facts applying particularly to the given plant and the given industry.

#### OPPORTUNIST POLICY

If we are simply going to expose and don't do anything to prove by action that we can carry on trade union work better than the reformists, and organize the every-day defense of the workers' interests, direct strikes better than the reformists, however eloquent we be, our eloquence will never open for us the doors to the broad masses.

Revolutionary tactic by no means requires that such economic demands be presented as may seem unachievable to the workers. To be a revolutionary does not mean to call for a strike every day and to lead the strike which has been commenced to the grave—all this is simply a deviation from the revolutionary line and a distortion of revolutionary tactics. Revolutionariness is displayed not in the number of demands and not in the shouts for strikes, but in the methods of getting the demands which have been presented carried out.

It is easy enough, as is frequently done, to present the slogan: "Down with the 5 per cent Wage Cut, and Long Live the Proletarian Dictatorship." Of course, an advanced worker understands the connection between these two slogans, but we draw up the slogans not only for the advanced workers, but for the basic masses of the men and women workers.

The task is to lead the workers to understand the connection between wage cuts and the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship. This can be done, not by mechanically linking up these demands, but by using the strike further and further, learning from the lessons of the strike itself in the process of the struggle, and by explaining to the workers the connection between their elementary demands and the struggle of the working class against the entire capitalist system.

#### VERY LITTLE DONE

When we stress the need for work in the reactionary unions the various shades of opportunists begin to shout: "We told you so; we told you what would happen," etc. But if we take a glance at what these gentlemen say we will see how correct is the saying that it is not always when two people say the same thing that they mean the same.

What did the Rights say? They proposed that we force the trade union bureaucrats to fight; they proposed that we pursue such a line

in the trade unions as would give the reformists no grounds for expelling us; they proposed that we reject independent leadership in the economic struggle and let it all alone for the reformist trade union apparatus; they proposed and propose—and this is the entire meaning of the new trade union program of the Brandlerites, absolutely illiterate and stinking with opportunism—to confine all our work to the limits of trade union legalism, to submit to the trade union statutes, trade union discipline, and behave ourselves approximately in the same way as the “Labor” Party in Britain behaves towards the monarchy, *i. e.*, be the opposition to their majesties, the black-leg trade union bureaucracy.

Needless to say, we cannot accept this Liberal policy, for this is a policy of subjecting the interests of the working class to the interests of the bourgeoisie. What is there in common between this rotten opportunist policy and our line of *untiringly extending and deepening work inside the reformist unions to strengthen the independent revolutionary trade union movement?*

Nothing at all, and therefore our comrades should not be confused at the cries of the opportunists, who all the time clutch at us, making it appear that they take part in the revolutionary working class struggle.

The struggle for the masses is incompatible with a mechanical or metaphysical conception; it requires pliancy, the ability to orientate in each given moment, and an understanding of the fact that the struggle for our class is far from being ended, that we must go to those places where the workers are to be found, whether it is a reformist, a Catholic or a fascist union, whether it is a sports organization or any other.

We must conduct our activities where the workers are to be found, from day to day undermining the bureaucratic trade union apparatus, undermining the influence of the Social-Democracy, disintegrating and smashing the entire system of deceit and suppression of the workers' initiative, the entire policy and tactics of international reformism, which subjects the interests of the working class to the interests of the international bourgeoisie.

This is why we should now check up what has been done in this sphere since the V Congress. We know what has been done to strengthen and develop the revolutionary trade union movement, but we do not know what has been done to extend activities in the reformist unions, or, rather, we know that very little has been done.

#### V CONGRESS DECISIONS

Those who desire, not in words, but in deeds, to win the majority of the working class, who desire to conduct a successful struggle

for the masses, must comprehend the following extract of the decisions of the V Congress of the R.I.L.U.:

"A stubborn, plodding struggle is required from the R.I.L.U. adherents in the *reactionary unions*, particularly in the reformist unions (and likewise the Catholic and fascist unions, where they are really mass organizations), in order to win the workers of these organizations to the class struggle and to transfer them, in compact groups, to the corresponding Red trade unions, or in order to strengthen the revolutionary trade union opposition.

"A most determined struggle must be waged against any interpretation of this most important work in the spirit of trade union legalism. Work assumes particularly great importance in those organizations where there are no parallel general revolutionary trade centers, as in Britain, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Norway, and likewise in the countries where the revolutionary trade unions are illegal.

"For this purpose the *tactic of the united front from below* must be pursued on a widespread scale as a means of penetrating into the very thick of the working class, breaking down all barriers separating the workers belonging to the reformist unions from the R.I.L.U. supporters, and as a reliable means to overcome the stiffness, stability and tendency for the membership of the Red trade unions and supporters of the revolutionary trade union opposition to decrease."

#### UNITED CLASS FRONT

Thus the Congress of the R.I.L.U. not only emphasized the need for conducting activities in the reactionary unions, but also pointed *how* and *why* this should be done. Of particular importance in this respect is the application of the tactic of the united front, for without a united front, not in words, but in deeds, activities in the reformist unions will be fruitless.

How could it be otherwise? In so far as we work in the unions to win over to our side the working masses the question as to the methods of work assumes particularly great importance. The foundation of foundations should be the tactic of the united front from below, the tactic of unity in the struggle against the class enemy. The tactic of the united front is all right if this united front is established on the basis of a concrete program of demands. The united front is of use and importance if it is anti-capitalist. Any other united front is anti-labor, and this means that the R.I.L.U. supporters must determinedly fight it.

#### INTENSIFIED ACTIVITIES NECESSARY

The reformist trade unions at the present time form the chief prop of the tottering and fluctuating capitalist system. We would be committing a tremendous mistake if in hoping for the rapid de-

velopment of the revolutionary process we were to refuse to intensify activities in the reformist unions. There are some comrades who think approximately as follows: "As the workers are rapidly being revolutionized activities in the reactionary unions become superfluous."

Such argumentations are incorrect. Precisely *because* the working masses are becoming revolutionized we should intensify our activities in the reactionary unions, as now is the time most suitable to win the masses from their reactionary leaders. If we don't do this the reformist trade unions, in the days of the decisive struggle, may draw with them considerable masses and thus smash the movement.

We must disintegrate the reactionary trade union apparatus by actions *from without* and *from within*. We have already learned, with defects and falterings, how to do it from without, but as regards doing it from within matters are in a terribly bad state. The sooner we effect a determined improvement in this sphere the sooner we succeed in disintegrating the reactionary trade union apparatus, the sooner will we strengthen the revolutionary trade union movement and lead the masses to the struggle for power.

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#### EXTRACT FROM "COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL" BY LENIN

All oppressing classes of every description need two social functions to safeguard their domination: the function of a hangman, and the function of a priest. The hangman is to quell the protest and the rebellion of the oppressed, the priest is to paint before them a perspective of mitigated sufferings and sacrifice under the same class rule (which it is particularly easy to do without guaranteeing the "possibility of their realization" . . .). Thereby he reconciles them to class domination, weans them away from revolutionary actions, undermines their revolutionary spirit, destroys their revolutionary determination. Kautsky has turned Marxism into the most hideous and bigoted counter-revolutionary theory, into the most filthy clerical mush.