

International Reformism in its True Colours

(NOTES OF A TRADE UNIONIST)

By A. Lozovsky

The Amsterdam Suitor and his American Fiancee

DURING the last two years the Amsterdamites have been making desperate efforts to get a firm foothold in America, and to bring under their influence all the diehard trade union bureaucrats of that country whose value is quoted very highly on the Amsterdam exchange. They have showered their attentions particularly lavishly on the American Federation of Labour, whose dollars would considerably replenish the disordered state of the finances of the Amsterdam business men.

But the American fiancee is a practical woman, and, therefore, takes up a more than coldblooded attitude towards the fascinating and sweet-sounding serenades of these Amsterdam wooers, guided by the home truth that marital co-habitation should be based on careful account-keeping. And what kind of accountancy is it to exchange the full value and full weight of dollars for the problematic and harried joys of the Amsterdam love-makers? The marriage did not come off, for there was neither love nor a balance sheet.

But the Amsterdamites never say die, and, therefore, they have decided to begin the conquest of America through Mexico. For this purpose a whole delegation was sent there composed of the cream of Amsterdam (Purcell, Brown, Jouhaux, Mertens, Dissmann, Buozzi, Duhr, Zhulavsky, Lindiey, Fimmen, Ben Smith and Largo-Caballero), which offered the hand and heart of the Amsterdam International to the Mexican trade unions. We do not know how this premarital journey will finish, but we are compelled to note one more than strange circumstance. When the Bureau of the Amsterdam International at its last meeting on September 21st, began to examine the question of the composition of the delegation, the following transpired:

"Taking into consideration," reads the official decision, "the circumstances in which the delegation to Mexico was appointed, the Executive Committees states that it takes no responsibility whatever for it, either on its own behalf or on that of the I.F.T.U. ("Bulletin

of the International Federation of Trade Unions," September 28th).

There's a fine story! The delegation comprises the most prominent leaders of the Amsterdam International and suddenly the Bureau does not assume responsibility! In that case who sends the delegation? Who will bear the expenditure? If the delegation was sent by Amsterdam, why does it refuse responsibility? If Amsterdam pays the expenses—then why waste money on an irresponsible delegation?

One can only draw the following conclusions from the decision of the Bureau of the Amsterdam International: (1) the delegation or part of the delegation was elected not by Amsterdam, but by someone else; (2) the money is given not by Amsterdam, but by someone else. But who is this mysterious stranger? None other than the Mexican Gompers, the Minister of Labour in the Calles Government, leader of the Mexican trade unions, Senor Morones. The Mexican fiancee organises a visit of the bridegrooms, and pays the expenses of their transportation, while Amsterdam sends its leaders and does not take responsibility for them!

The Happy Argonauts

There were four of them: Dissmann, Ilg, Labet and Brownlie. They were sent to the United States from the Metal Workers' International in order to beseech the American metal workers to affiliate on any conditions whatsoever to the organisation which by tradition bears the name of the International. One of these four, by way of a little variety, bears the name of a "Left Winger," but this pseudonym does not in the slightest degree hide his reformist finger-nails, and he is just as independent of Socialism as his honourable colleagues. The only reason for their being in the service of Labour organisations is to fulfil—some for conscience sake, others for money—the pre-conceived plans of the bosses.

The Argonauts being thus constituted, the success of the expedition was assured in advance, for the

nearer a trade union leader is to the employer, the more honour and respect he encounters among his American colleagues. The emissaries of the Berne Metal Workers' International exceeded themselves in pleasing eloquence and—oh, joy!—the Congress of the American Metal Workers' Union decided to affiliate to the Berne International, but on one little condition. "The Union reserves itself the right (so reads the resolution) not to take part in activities of the International contrary to the policy of the American Federation of Labour." That is what 100 per cent. American internationalism looks like!

Do you think the Argonauts reacted in any way to this conditional affiliation? Do you think that with the statutes in their hands they even attempted to object to this disgraceful behaviour? Do you think that these gentlemen remembered their negotiations with the Metal Workers' Union of the U.S.S.R., to which they presented all kinds of conditions, shielding themselves behind the "dignity and prestige" of their International? Not a bit of it! These gentlemen are ready to submit to any humiliating conditions from the American union, if only they can receive support in their struggle against the growing influence of Communism.

But will the American uncle help? It would be interesting to know what Robert Dissmann, the professor of "chatterology," the "Left Wing" ventriloquist of Right Wing policy, thinks about this.

The Miners' International "Helps" British Miners

Two weeks before the beginning of the coal lock-out, on April 16th, the Executive Committee of the Miners' International met in Brussels and passed a high-sounding resolution about its readiness, in case of need, to declare an international strike in support of the British miners. It is worth reading this resolution through over and over again. It is as follows:

"The international mining crisis will lead in an increasing degree to grave social conflicts. Alleviation of the crisis can only be brought about by

means of international regulation of the production and distribution of coal. The Executive Committee of the International Miners' Federation is in favour of complete support of the British miners in their struggle against extension of working hours, decrease of wages, and the abolition of the national wage scale. The Executive Committee is ready in case of necessity to take the necessary steps to obstruct the importation of coal to Great Britain from abroad. If, after discussion with the respective national miners' unions, these measures also include the decision to declare an international miners' strike, the Executive Committee of the International Miners' Federation will decide to compel every national organisation not to stop the strike until a sound basis for resumption of work be found in all countries. In the event of an international strike breaking out, the Executive Committee of the International Miners' Federation will be looked upon as a Strike Committee whose instructions are obligatory for all countries."

When this resolution was passed we remarked that this decision of the E.C. of the Miners' International was nothing more than a gesture, that the Amsterdamites would not move a finger to give real help to the miners. Six months have passed. During this long period the Miners' International has had sufficient time to fulfil its promise. But this International has done nothing, absolutely nothing to aid the miners, though it has done a great deal against them.

Why, look at the conduct of the Secretary of this International, Hodges, alone! This blackleg from day to day was engaged in England in disorganising the miners' ranks, while the E.C. of the Miners' International generously and sympathetically looked on at his strike-breaking work.

The German, Belgian and French Amsterdamites circulated reports that an international strike had not taken place because the British had not asked their colleagues to fulfil the obligation they had taken upon themselves on April 16th. In reply to this vile demagoguery the British Miners' Federation raised the question of an international strike. What did the Amsterdamites who were pinned to the wall reply? The following is the official decision of the Executive of the Miners' International on September 1st—at the beginning of the sixth month of the miners' lock-out.

"The request of the British miners concerning the declaration of an international miners' strike has been thoroughly examined. The majority of the national organisations affiliated to the Federation, not being able to satisfy this request, have nevertheless given the assurance that they will continue financial support to the British miners on an increased scale. The national organisations comprising the Federation will, as before (!) apply the maximum efforts to prevent the importation of coal to England."

Compare this resolution with the resolution of April 16th and you will say: Surely this is open and cynical blacklegging! And the British miners are still putting some kind of hopes in this band of blacklegs, and giving their money to support the thrice-branded agent of capitalism—Hodges!

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International Reformism—continued

Take three of four hundred fat, pudding-faced, smooth-shaven people, adorn each of them with three or four gold rings, gold watches with massive gold chains, gather them all together into one hall decorated with national flags, scat them in strong armchairs (remembering that a real leader weighs not less than a couple of hundredweight) shove a thick expensive cigar into each of their mouths, put a flask of strong anti-Communist perfume of the Ku-Klux-Klan brand into their hands, and finally stir up all this mixture of heavy-weights in the holy water of popish eloquence, and you will get the Congress of the American Federation of Labour. This Congress is now in session at Detroit, and it is difficult even for an experienced eye to distinguish whether this is a Labour congress or the congress of the Anti-Communist League.

The Soviet Rock in the American Bog

At this Congress an unusual event took place. An officially-invited speaker, Mr. Sherwood Eddy, a missionary who has recently returned from the U.S.S.R., took the liberty of saying that in the U.S.S.R. people walk on their feet and not on their heads, that there is an economic revival there, that the Soviet country is developing, and that it would not be a bad thing to send a delegation to the U.S.S.R., etc. This was unexpected, and what is more, unpleasant.

If Mr. Sherwood Eddy had come on to the platform clothed only in a top hat, without the remaining attributes of civilisation, it would have perplexed those present less than a favourable opinion on the U.S.S.R. It badly jarred the nerves of all the trade union bureaucrats, and the chairman, William Green, hastened to make a "denial." He, of course, knows that things are bad in the U.S.S.R., better than anyone else does, for how could the workers obtain anything if they preached terrible Bolshevik doctrines?

Mr. Green maintained the honour of the old firm and the Detroit Congress remained in its old position. One may see how reactionary was this conclave of corrupt and perverted trade union bureaucrats from the fact that even Bromley—to whose visiting card the miners have added a well-merited epithet—even Bromley appeared to be frightfully "Left" in this American Zoo. How could they not fear Bolshevism, how could they not wax furious, when in this terrible wild country of Russia, we can get along without the bourgeoisie! Have you ever heard of such a thing—living without millionaires! Whom would they pray for every day, whom would they bow to, whose boots would they lick? Hence the anti-Soviet speeches of William Green. What these Mr. Greens mean is that lackeys must have bosses.

The United Front of Amsterdam and the Bosses

It was at Hamburg, during the time of the strike at the docks. The Social-Democratic Transport Workers' Union did not want to allow a strike at all costs, but the workers, as will be remembered, would not agree to the proposals of the arbitration court. The strike began unanimously despite the will of the trade union leaders.

On the second day of the strike, the Minister of Labour declared the decision of the arbitration court to

be binding for the workers and bosses. When the decision of the Ministry of Labour was announced, two appeals appeared in a Social-Democratic paper, the "Hamburger Echo," of October 2nd, of identical length and identical nature: one appeal was from the Transport Union, the other from the employers' association with a summons to return to work.

We give below side by side both these appeals to strikers, printed in the very thick of the strike:

"In view of the fact that the Minister of Labour has declared the arbitration decisions binding for the port enterprises, the movement for improving wages and labour conditions undertaken by the German Transport Workers' Union and the Central Union of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen and also consequently by the port sections of both organisations, has finished. Therefore no kind of support whatsoever should be expected from the organisations mentioned. Payment of strike pay cannot take place even in a covert form. The rumours spread among the port workers by irresponsible elements that the port workers will be rendered some kind of financial aid—even in the event of the impossibility of the said organisations recognising the strike—are unfounded."

District Administration of the Greater Hamburg Union of Transport Workers, Hamburg Committee of Engineers and Firemen's Union.

"By a decision of Herr Minister of Labour, the ruling of the Arbitration Court of September 29th is proclaimed binding on workers and employers: work in the port should not be stopped and the improved wages contemplated by the arbitration award should be paid to the workers. The wage scales for loading and unloading concerns for shore warehouses, etc., equal: 7.20 marks for the first shift, 8.20 marks for the second and 8.64 marks for the third shift. For the so-called overtime shift, a special addition of 20 per cent. will be paid. Supplementary wage scales are also extended, and in a considerable number of cases increased. The workers will be taken on in the usual employment bureaux and receive wages in the usual way."

Union of Port Employers, Hamburg.

Of these two proclamations the Social-Democratic, we should say, is the more succulent. The Amsterdamites, like the employers, declare the decision of the arbitration court to be sacred, but threaten to deprive the strikers of financial aid if the latter take heed of "irresponsible elements."

We are faced with a united front of the Amsterdamites and the bosses in order to smash the movement. The Amsterdamites are against the united front when they have the task of rallying the workers of various tendencies against the employers; but when it is a question of the united front against the workers' interests, then they are in the front ranks. The strike at the Hamburg docks was smashed, thanks to the united front of the Amsterdamites and the employers. Let the German workers remember what the united front à la Amsterdam looks like!

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