

The V Congress of the RILU

The Fifth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions which took place in Moscow during the month of August was the first congress at which Lozovsky had an absolutely free hand for his policies and his intrigues. The first three congresses took place under the influence of the Leninist trade union course and Lozovsky felt it necessary to "agree" if only formally. At the IV Congress (March 1928) the relation of factional forces in the Comintern indeed permitted Lozovsky to make considerable advances in putting over his line but he was met in the congress with a strong and determined opposition (Tomsky, Yaglom, from the USSR; Walcher, Germany; Gitlow, USA, etc.) which could count on the unofficial support of the head of the Comintern (Bukharin).

1. THE ANALYSIS OF THE OBJECTIVE SITUATION

The analysis of the objective situation presented in Lozovsky's report and accepted as gospel truth by the congress is full of the usual "third period" phrases about the "collapse of capitalism," the "wobbling of imperialism," the "collapse of stabilization," etc., etc. filled in with masses of meaningless and random facts and statistics. One point, however, is very interesting. The course of the strike struggle within the last two years proved a hard nut for Lozovsky to crack with his dogma of the "revolutionization of the workers," and of "world-shaking radicalization." During 1929 and 1930 there has been an astonishing falling off of strike struggles in most countries of the world. Now, every worker knows

2. THE SITUATION IN THE RED INTERNATIONAL

Thru all the camouflage of bombast and phrases the devastating situation in the RILU became clear in Lozovsky's report and in the remarks of the delegates. In defiance of all facts and rule of arithmetic Lozovsky complacently insisted that the RILU was the largest world trade union federation but when it came to examining the actual situation another picture emerged. Outside of the Soviet Union what is there? In Germany, the RILU adherents have—as Piatnitzky has pointed out—lost practically all contact with and influence among the organized workers (the factory council elections, the German Metal Workers Congress, the convention of the revolutionary building trades workers union, etc.). In France the CGTU has, according to official figures, lost about 200,000 members in the last few years and is fast losing more. In it moreover there, are at least three discernible opposition movements, controlling tens of thousands

3. THE TACTICAL LINE OF THE RED INTERNATIONAL

What is the reason for this black picture? The reason for the collapse in influence of the RILU is the absolutely false and destructive policies it has been following for the last two years or so. Nobody dared criticize these policies at the V Congress. On the contrary, in Lozovsky's report and in the resolution these false and dangerous policies, which have disrupted and destroyed the RILU, were not only officially approved but were even extended and carried to their logical conclusions.

1. *The course towards dual unionism as a system.* As the whole revolutionary movement learned thru bitter experience, the system of dual unionism is the curse and blight of revolutionary trade union work. Yet this is precisely the course of the V Congress. What does Lozovsky declare is the main task before the RILU today? Perhaps, to win influence among the millions of organized workers in the mass unions? No! Lozovsky declares:

"The consolidation of the independent revolutionary unions must become our most important task."

No more thoroughly destructive conception could be imagined!

2. *The course of deserting and splitting the mass unions is complete.* Every lesson of Leninism on mass work and on

But the V Congress followed two years of "enlightenment" and expulsions. The Congress was purified in advance. The only discordant element was Santini of the Italian CGTU, a leader of the "new opposition" (Trotskyist) in Italy and he was made short shrift of in the approved Lozovskyan manner. Yet the shadow of the opposition forces all over the world hung heavy over the congress and more than one speaker referred to them with great uneasiness.

The revolutionary workers of the world should study the line laid down at the V Congress of the RILU very carefully. It is the trade union line of the official Communist movement and, as Lenin said, "the trade union question is the life and death question for the Communist movement."

that the strike is the most elemental and the most fundamental form of class action of the proletariat. How can the falling off of strike struggle be squared with the "world-shaking radicalization"? Lozovsky, however, is ready. First he insists that in the first half of 1930 there has been "a considerable increase of the number of strikes in most countries"—which is directly contrary to all available facts and figures. Secondly, according to Lozovsky, even if there were fewer strikes their "quality" was much higher! Thirdly, the versatile Lozovsky discovers that the strike is not such an important sign of radicalization after all. But he could not conjure away the hard facts.

of workers and many organizations. In Czechoslovakia the Red unions were expelled from the RILU and fake paper "unions" with no membership set up. In Sweden and Norway the revolutionary elements in the unions are being attacked as "counter-revolutionaries" and dissociated from the RILU. In the Balkan countries and in Italy the Red federations have been practically destroyed. In China the Red unions are acknowledged to have no membership. In Great Britain the Minority Movement has completely collapsed, as the recent Trade Union Congress showed. In the USA the blackness of the situation is only too obvious. In India the "Red Flag" union has declared against the policies of the RILU. It would not be too much to say that, in the two years since the IV Congress, the RILU has been reduced to a mere skeleton with very little and rapidly diminishing influence outside of the Soviet Union.

the trade unions is flouted. The task of splitting the unions is laid down as a principle. The slogan of: "Into the unions" is officially rejected as a left wing slogan; instead of which the unorganised are to be told to join the trade union opposition directly and simply just as they would a trade union.

What the meaning of the decisions of the V Congress on this head are is made clear in the official report of Thaelmann, secretary of the German CP, at the Berlin functionaries meeting:

"This (the line of the V Congress) is the last and decisive step towards the establishment of the principle of new trade unions and therewith to the general splitting of the German trade union movement."

3. *The course of "independent leadership" is complete.* The system introduced about two years ago of the left wing functioning as the union, even tho it may represent a small fraction of the membership, calling strikes, making agreements, etc. has received official sanction and been extended. The directives of the Sixth Enlarged Plenum "Communist trade union work must be conducted within the framework of the statutes and decisions of the respective trade unions" is now denounced at the worst

On Aug. 17 began the 19th Convention of the German Metal Workers Union, which—since the collapse of the United Miners Workers of America—is the largest national union in the world, with a membership of over 600,000. The convention which lasted a week—is very rich in lessons to the revolutionary workers all over the world.

The German Metal Workers Union (DMV) was always a stronghold of Communist influence. In 1923 the Communists had almost a majority of the delegates at the convention of that year while even at the last convention there were nearly 50 Communist delegates. Today—after two years of the new course—there was not one single member of the Communist Party of Germany at the Convention. Of the 309 delegates, 301 were Social-democrats and 8 were members of the Communist Opposition! Such are the results of the ultra-left trade union policy in practise.

The delegation of the Communist Opposition put up a valiant battle against the Social-democratic leadership on all important questions of policy and administration. On some questions they were able to rally a considerable group of Social-democratic delegates against the leadership, so that on these questions the vote was 187 to 118 and 190 to 115.

The Social-democratic press revelled in malicious joy at the bankruptcy of the official policy of the CPG which they paraded as the "collapse of Communism in the trade unions."

opportunism. The results of this course in the recent strikes in Germany and elsewhere and the factory council elections are only too well known.

4. *The course towards trade union unity is scrapped.* The slogan of trade union unity—in every industry, in every country, on a world scale—has always been the fundamental slogan of the revolutionary trade unionists. Today it is sneered at and officially dropped. Lozovsky devotes a whole section of his report in attacking this slogan. Today, because of the course of the CI and the RILU, the Communists appear before the workers not as the unifiers of the trade union movement but as the splitters of the movement. This, as Lenin pointed out many years ago, is "rendering the best possible service to the bourgeoisie."

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Such is the course of the RILU—a course of isolation and demoralization for the revolutionary forces. It is a course of anti-Leninism, open and unashamed! But for popular consumption, so to speak, this course is sugar-coated. It is camouflaged with phrases about "mass work" and "winning the majority of the working class." It is hidden by unprincipled attacks upon specially chosen scape-goats upon whom all the blame for the consequences of the new course is unloaded. It is confused with all sorts of "new turns" which remain peacefully on paper to deceive the gullible while the official course of destruction is carried thru—the left wing forces dissipated and demoralized—unions split—the masses deserted—the working class left leaderless! It is up to the Communist Opposition movement to brush aside these evasions and subterfuges and to resist the disintegrating policies of the leaders of the RILU and CI to the bitter end. It is up to the Communist Opposition to take up now the task of rebuilding the left wing and reestablishing the prestige of the Communists in the trade union movement remembering that:

"The strength of a Communist Party depends upon its influence in the trade unions."

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