

# The V. Congress of the R. I. L. U. and its International Importance

By F. Emrich (Berlin).

The V. Congress of the R.I.L.U. was held in a period of rapid development of the crisis of capitalist society. Whilst the IV. Congress predicted the approaching wave of class struggles, at the time of the V. Congress the struggle of 150,000 textile and metal workers was being waged in North France against the reactionary social insurance law. The growing world economic crisis, the series of strikes and lockouts since the IV. Congress, clearly show the bankruptcy of the Amsterdam theory of organised capitalism, of industrial peace and class collaboration. After the analysis of the world situation and the international trade union movement there were three main questions in the foreground of deliberations at the V. Congress:

1. the problem of winning the masses;
2. the organisation of the counter-offensive of the proletariat;
3. the development and consolidation of the organisations of the revolutionary trade union movement.

## The Problem of Winning the Masses.

Has the R.I.L.U. to record any political and organisational achievements in the struggle for the masses since the IV. Congress? Ten years ago, in the year 1920, Amsterdam numbered 23 million members; in 1930 Amsterdam numbers only 13,800,000 members according to its report submitted to its last Stockholm Congress. In estimating the relation of forces between the R.I.L.U. and Amsterdam it must be borne in mind that in such countries as Germany, Great Britain etc. many revolutionary workers are still members of the reformist trade unions. Can one assert that the 5 million workers organised in the General German Trade Union Federation (ADGB.) are behind Amsterdam? Today, after the elections to the Reichstag, nobody will believe this.

The R.I.L.U. numbers today, after ten years of its existence, 17 million fighters. In spite of this the V. Congress quite emphatically pointed out that a disparity exists between the political influence of the revolutionary trade union movement and the organisational position of the adherents of the R.I.L.U. in all countries. The Amsterdam trade union apparatus is undoubtedly still a strong bulwark of counter-revolution. In the capitalist countries the whole power of capitalism stands behind the Amsterdam apparatus. But in the countries like India and China what is Amsterdam, without the energetic support of the State apparatus? The V. Congress was able to record a number of successes in the struggle for the masses, but at the same time the Congress exercised sharp self-criticism on account of a number of failures and a decline of the red trade unions in France and in Czechoslovakia.

## Economic Crisis and Revolutionary Strike Strategy.

Whilst the IV. Congress decided, against the open and concealed resistance of the Rights, on the independent leadership of the economic struggles, the V. Congress dealt with the organisation of the counter-offensive. When at the IV. Congress it was stated that there existed a block between the police, the employers and the trade union apparatus against the striking workers, the Rights opposed this formulation. But the development since the IV. Congress has completely confirmed the correctness of these decisions. Amsterdam has become an open strike-breaking agency. Would it have been possible, without the decisions of the IV. Congress in regard to the independent leadership of the economic struggles, to be the initiators and leaders of the powerful strike struggles of the last years in all countries, such as in Yorkshire, Mansfield, Bombay, North France, Lodz etc. Would we have been able to lead thousands of struggles in the factories without the clear line of the IV. Congress in regard to the conduct of struggles also against the will of the reformist trade union apparatus? The revolutionary trade union movement has in the last few years broken the monopoly of

the reformist trade union apparatus in the leadership of strikes. The V. Congress drew the balance of the 2½ years of strike experience. It stated that the revolutionary trade union movement has to record great achievements in the independent organisation and leadership of struggles, from the strike in Lodz up to the wool workers' strike in Bradford. But it was also ascertained that enormous shortcomings still exist in the sphere of strike strategy and tactics.

The revolutionary trade union movement has not yet succeeded in mobilising those forces in order to transform the struggles of the workers into political struggles: class against class. Inadequate politisation of the struggles, faulty united front tactics, weak preparation, undeveloped united front organs before and during the struggles, inadequate exposure of the "Left" Amsterdam manoeuvres, insufficient organisation and consolidation of the cadres of the revolutionary trade union movement, bad connection with the unemployed—these are the main shortcomings in the economic struggles. The struggle for the every-day demands is not the aim but the means to the aim. Strike struggles in the present situation are undermining the rotten capitalist stabilisation. "The final aim of the strike struggle under capitalism is the destruction of the State apparatus, the overthrow of the State power of the capitalist class." It was Lenin who uttered these words. The V. Congress of the R.I.L.U. decided on the counter-offensive and provided the revolutionary trade union movement with the weapons in order to organise better than hitherto the future struggles into deliberately revolutionary mass actions against the capitalist State.

## The R.I.L.U. for the United Front.

The delegates of the V. Congress have hardly returned to their countries and the decisions of the Congress have hardly been published, and the Amsterdammers are already spitting out venom against the "Moscowites". "Moscow wishes to spit" writes the organ of the "Leit" social fascists, the "Leipziger Volkszeitung" in Germany. We are used to being accused of being destroyers of the unity of the workers by the Amsterdammers who, in the interest of the capitalist system, have split the trade union movement in Rumania, France, Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia etc. Have not the German social fascists expelled ten thousands of revolutionary workers from the trade unions? The V. Congress declared itself for the united front tactic, because it is one of the most important methods for capturing the masses. The United front with the social democratic and non-party masses for wages and bread, against the social insurance robbers, for the daily interests of the workers, that is the line which was successfully applied after the IV. Congress. The decisions of the V. Congress pledge the adherents of the R.I.L.U. to conduct in the factories and trade unions a persistent ideological struggle, on the basis of broadest united front, for the workers who are still under the influence of Amsterdam. Ruthless struggle against the Amsterdam trade union bureaucracy and against those adherents of the R.I.L.U. who are of the opinion that the "labour aristocrats" who are still siding with Amsterdam, cannot be won over for the revolution.

## Fight Against Opportunism.

The decisions of the IV. Congress encountered the fiercest opposition on the part of the Right opportunists in all countries. Many of these opportunists are today already in the ranks of the Amsterdammers. The decisions of the V. Congress will likewise encounter the resistance of all those who are opposed to an offensive tactic. The following examples from Germany will show that we have still many opportunists in our ranks. A members' meeting in the building workers' union in Pössneck (Thuringia) decided to contribute to the election fund of the Communist Party the sum of 200 marks out of the funds of the local branch. The chairman, a Communist has up to now

refused to pay out this amount. In Erfurt (Thuringia) an election appeal for the candidates of the Communist Party was passed in the local branch committee of the shoe-makers' union against the opposition of the opportunists by all against 3 votes. A motion to contribute 500 marks to the election fund of the Communist Party, was frustrated by the opportunists in the local branch committee of this union, although these people are members of the Communist Party. The efforts to draw the metal workers' union in Weimar (Thuringia) into the anti-fascist committee, were frustrated by the chairman of this local branch, who is likewise a Communist. It is of course impossible to carry out the decisions of the V. Congress with such revolutionaries. In addition to the Right dangers there exist "Left" sectarian tendencies, which are the reaction to the Right opportunist deviations. The latest discussions in the International and in particular in Germany on the relations of the R.I.L.U. to the social democratic workers have clearly shown the path which must be pursued.

### **Development and Organisation of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in Western Europe.**

Organisational questions played a big role at the V. Congress. A decision of enormous political and organisational importance has been adopted which means a turning point in the strategy and tactics of the R.I.L.U. in Western Europe and which is of particular importance for the further consolidation and development of the revolutionary trade union opposition in Germany and in Poland. It reads:

"The adherents of the R.I.L.U. in these countries must, in view of the insolent splitting practice of the reformist leaders and the growing antagonism between the latter and the broad masses of workers, already now, consistently, deliberately and persistently work at the organisation and development of a revolutionary trade union movement for the purpose of a better and more successful preparation and leadership of the class struggles of the proletariat."

This decision, which is the outcome of the experiences gathered in the last 2½ years, was necessary because the former organisational forms and methods of the revolutionary trade union movement in these countries proved to be inadequate in order effectively to combat the organised strike breaking of the Amsterdammers and to conduct successfully the struggles of the workers. The formation of independent organs of the revolutionary trade union opposition will, of course, take place in the process of the struggles with the class enemy. The firm organisational welding together of the adherents of the R.I.L.U. in these countries will contribute to the setting up within the reformist trade unions of a firm ideological and organisation front against the Amsterdam strike-breaking apparatus. The above-mentioned decision is without doubt the most important decision of the V. World Congress. In all countries the red trade unions and the opposition will now, following the decisions of the V. Congress, set up their organisational apparatus on the basis of the factories.

### **Conclusions.**

The class struggle in the highly developed capitalist countries and in the colonies is becoming more and more acute. The fact that the problems of the revolutionary trade union movement in the colonies were dealt with in a report and in the discussion at the V. Congress shows the great importance which the R.I.L.U. attaches to the emancipation struggle of the colonial peoples. It is further worthy of note by the international trade union movement that the representative of the Russian trade unions declared, that now, after the Rights have been ousted from the Central Council of the Russian Trade unions, the latter will more than hitherto assist the international revolutionary trade union movement with its great experiences.

The decisions of the V. Congress are the weapons for the annihilating struggle against the exploiters and their agents, the reactionary trade union bureaucracy. If we energetically and boldly apply these decisions in practice, then the revolutionary trade union movement will, under the leadership of the Communist International, successfully conduct the struggle against all enemies of the proletariat.