

**In the R. I. L. U.****The VIII. Session of the Central Council  
of the Red International of Labour Unions.****The Lessons of the Strike  
Struggles of the Past Year and the Tasks of the R.I.L.U.****Speech of Comrade Kuusinen (Comintern).**

The question now is no longer whether strikes can be carried on during a period of crisis. Experience has shown that strikes can and should be carried on. The question is how they are to be prepared better and how more correctly to carry them out, and how on the basis of the struggle to extend the united front from below and to win a majority of the working class. From this point of view, every strike is valuable for us, regardless whether it had a material success or not. The necessary condition, however, for the success of a strike, not only from a material but also from a political point of view, is that a serious fight is to be carried on for the every day demands of the workers, however small. Naturally, we learn by the experience of victorious strikes the strategy and tactics of the struggle. But, side by side with this, we must study also the experience of lost strikes, so as not to repeat the mistakes and so as to correct the defects which have come on the surface.

The strike of the Warsaw tramway workers has shown us that it is necessary to formulate the demands of the workers and the slogans of the struggle. We know of many strikes which were unsuccessful because much too general demands were put forward. The Warsaw comrades organised a number of meetings at which the workers of the corresponding factories brought forward and discussed the demands of the struggle. In particular, a demand was put forward to discharge an engineer, who had become notorious for his rationalising innovations, which were aimed directly against the workers. This demand was unanimously supported by all the workers and served as the starting point for the development of the struggle.

On the experience also of this strike it is possible to convince oneself of the tremendous role played by the strike committees, elected by the masses of the workers themselves, in the struggle. It would appear as though this was clear and that it required no proofs. But do we not know of such cases, as in South Wales (England) where huge masses of miners were on strike, and where the "central strike committee" was elected at a conference of adherents of the Minority Movement at which 40 persons were present? This shows that not all the adherents of the R.I.L.U. have given sufficiently deep thought to the question or to that of how the appropriate decisions of the V. Congress should be applied in practice.

Another important question: **how and when to take into our hands the initiative of the struggle.** It is true, this does not always depend upon us. We know of cases when comrades do not even attempt to seize the initiative, as was, for instance, the case in France at the time of the great strike of textile workers, or in Great Britain at the time of the miners' strike in South Wales. The strike of the Warsaw tramway workers teaches us how a strike must be prepared and how the initiative must be taken into our hands in time. For this object they held not one but several meetings and were able to rouse the workers for the struggle. The workers felt that they have leaders who will be able to carry this strike through.

Finally, still another essential question is **the extension of the struggle.** At the time of the same strike of tramway workers, the majority of the members of the strike committee were arrested notwithstanding all the measures of precaution. But the comrades at once put forward the demand of releasing the prisoners. This demand was wholeheartedly supported by the strikers and served as a basis for the extension of the struggle. Such tactics entirely and completely conform with the decisions of the V. Congress which pointed out that new

demands, especially political slogans, must be linked up in the closest manner with the struggle.

We have the experience of the heroic struggle of the French textile workers during which our comrades showed that they are also able to fight. They formed barricades and ably organised picketing. The fact that they carried out this work not badly is proved by this: that they succeeded in winning for the C.G.T.U. 3,000 new members. But this notwithstanding, they were not able to achieve decisive political successes because their contact with the masses was still exceedingly weak and they had not yet learnt how to lead the masses.

On the question of **the struggle against the reformists.** Comrades, it is wrong to declare, as is often done with us, that the reformists never take part in strikes. In Germany, for instance, the reformists took part in the strike of the Berlin metal workers, the Duisburg port workers and others, as the pressure of the masses was very great. But does this mean that the reformists want to lead the workers into the struggle? Not at all. And we make a mistake when we say that the reformists lead the struggle of the workers so as to secure a compromise from the employers. At the time of the strike of the French textile workers, our comrades said to the workers: the reformists fight only up to the moment when they will be able to come to an understanding with Laval (the Minister of Labour). What did that mean? It meant that the reformists in any case wanted to fight. But this is profoundly untrue. They did not carry on nor do they carry on a struggle; on the contrary, their object is to demobilise the workers, and they betray them from the very first steps. This is what we must lay stress upon continuously and what we must explain to the workers. We must expose the treachery of the reformists even when they, for the sake of appearances, place themselves at the head of the striking workers. Otherwise they will take advantage of the united front of the workers in the struggle so as to consolidate their influence. After every strike we must wage a special campaign for the exposure of the tactics of the reformists.

At the same time, we must **criticise also the manifestations of opportunism** in our own ranks. Unfortunately, there are still not a few of these manifestations among us. Even at the time of the tramway workers strike in Warsaw, which was carried out so well, there was a moment after the arrest of the strike committee when the reformists proposed to send a deputation to the authorities, and our comrades did not know how to oppose them. In the Ruhr, our comrades at present have called upon the workers only to adopt a resolution of protest against the last emergency decree and send it to the Government instead of mobilising the masses for the struggle.

A few words **on the work in the factories.** This is not merely a problem of organisation, it is in the first place, a question of the political content of our work. For instance, we convene in Great Britain factory-shop meetings but the workers do not attend them. Why? Because our British comrades—and not they alone—do not know the immediate interests of the workers, do not know the work and life of the workers in the factory. They frequently do not know what question to put forward at a meeting so that the workers may attend. The question is not merely to rouse the workers for a strike. A strike is not organised every day. One must know the day-to-day interests of the workers so as to lead their day-to-day struggle. One must live the life of the worker in the factories, must feel where the shoe pinches and understand how to give expression to his complaints and his needs. Only in that case shall we be able really to win the factories and with them the majority of the working class.

## Comrade Niederkirchner on the Activity of the International Committees.

The V. R.I.L.U. Congress raised a number of urgent tasks before the I.C.'s, including the task of their becoming leading organisations of the revolutionary T.U. movement in the different industries. Has this task been accomplished? We have established that only a few I.C.'s have made some steps forward in this direction. In most cases our I.C.'s represent so far only European, in some instances, only even Mid-European, organisations, not influencing America and the Eastern countries. The contacts that a number of I.C.'s have succeeded in setting up with the revolutionary T.U. movement of the American and Eastern countries are by far insufficient.

Simultaneously, the undoubted growth of influence of the I.C.'s can be noted. The increasing number of members lined up in the Red trade unions and T.U. organisations in the capitalist countries, and also in the Soviet trade unions, has made for the number of members lined up in the I.C.'s also to grow. In most of the branches of industry, including also the Soviet trade unions, the number of members lined up in the I.C.'s has by far outstripped the corresponding reformist Internationals, which year in year out keep losing their adherents in all countries.

Another urgent task raised by the V. Congress before the I.C.'s was the necessity to transfer from agitation and propaganda to active participation and leadership in preparation and carrying out of strike action. Also this task has not been accomplished by all of the I.C.'s. Thanks to the fact, that some of the I.C.'s had been transferred to the capitalist countries, into the very midst of the struggle, these I.C.'s were able to take direct part in the struggles waged during this year. We wish particularly to note the successful work of the Miners' I.C. during the recent strikes of miners in Germany, France, England and Poland. Similarly, the Agricultural Workers' I.C., the I.C.'s of the textile workers, metal workers and building workers carried out some effective work.

The third task confronting the I.C.'s—is the internationalisation of the struggle. Here we have some achievements: during the strikes of the Berlin metal workers, the Ruhr miners, the French textile workers and the metal workers in the Saar Basin, the I.C.'s succeeded in organising solidarity movements. Special border conferences were called and solidarity action taken. However, this movement has so far not taken on sufficiently wide swing, particularly as regards the collection of funds and other material support to the strikers and their families. In the same way, the experiences acquired in the different countries are still not taken into account and not enough generalised, not sufficiently transferred from one country to another. Recently we held a number of industrial international conferences, the tasks of which were: to sum up experiences acquired and to draw up a fighting programme. We can particularly stress the conferences of the agricultural workers, railwaymen and miners. These conferences yielded some positive results, especially the railwaymen's conference. Simultaneously, these conferences showed also that without any serious preparatory work, the results are much smaller than might have been expected.

For this same end, border organs, committees, etc., should be set up, uniting the workers of neighbouring countries, for drawing up joint fighting programmes, under the leadership of the corresponding I.C.'s.

It is necessary to emphasise also a number of important shortcomings in the work of our I.C.'s. Very little attention has so far been given to the question of help to the corresponding national organisations in the work of reorganising on the industrial principle and on the shop basis. Practically no work was carried on among the emigrants, and workers of other nationalities, in spite of the fact that in many places they form large sections of the proletariat. Our I.C.'s do not sufficiently popularise the successes of the Socialist construction in the Soviet Union, especially along lines of their industries. In spite of the growing danger of a fresh war against the Soviet Union, we have so far not succeeded in developing a wide explanatory campaign among the masses, and are not waging a determined struggle against the war danger. This particularly refers to the I.C.'s of those branches of industry, which serve as a basis in present-day war: the chemical, metal, textile and transport industries. Thus, one of the major tasks of

the I.C.'s—to penetrate the enterprises of the war industry and the other branches of industry connected with it, to strengthen our influence over these groups of workers.

Of the other tasks, it is essential to stress the development of work among the unemployed, a task which up till recently had practically not been taken up by the I.C.'s: the same can be said of the task to study more seriously the question of international capitalist cartels and trusts. The Social-Economic Department of the R.I.L.U. must take upon itself the task of working up and supplying the I.C.'s with corresponding materials, which can be of vast significance for the correct orientation of the I.C.'s in the present-day situation and for rendering proper leadership in the economic struggle.

In conclusion, Comrade Niederkirchner pointed out that it is necessary for us to pay more attention to the struggle against the reformist industrial secretariats. Although they are losing their influence over the masses and are carrying on their treacherous work under cover, it would still be wrong to underestimate them. Our task is to expose their harmful activities wherever we go, to show the workers, still lined up in the reformist trade unions, the real face of these capitalist agents and thus win over the majority of the working class.

## Comrade Emmerich (Germany).

At the evening session on December 12th Comrade Emmerich (Germany), Secretary of the R.I.L.U., made a long speech dealing with the Minority Movement of Great Britain.

What, asked Comrade Emmerich, is the reason why the Minority Movement of Great Britain is one of the weakest links in the revolutionary T.U. movement despite the favourable situation for us in England? First and foremost, it is because the M.M. is still isolated, detached from the broad masses of the workers in the reformist unions. No wonder tendencies to build the M.M. outside of the existing unions still exist among some of our comrades to this very day, though this was condemned by the Fifth Congress. It is possible to note successful work by the M.M. among the unemployed, who for the main part are outside the influence of the reformist unions. But the chief masses who are inside of the reformist unions, are very inadequately touched by the influence of the M.M.

This underestimation of work among the organised workers is not a peculiarity of the English revolutionary movement. We had a similar situation in Germany, and in France, as well as in other countries. But while in Germany we already have a turn, an improvement in this respect, in Britain we do not yet observe this turn, although it is precisely in Britain that the struggle against the reformist influence over the masses is particularly important. While in such countries as Poland, Germany, we see intensified fascist physical terror, in England of no less importance is the ideological terror instituted by the reformist T.U. bureaucrats, which poisons the working masses. The struggle against this is no less difficult and no less important than the struggle against physical terror. Our English Comrades however, do not give due attention to this question and cannot boast of any substantial successes in this respect.

The logical consequence of the M.M.'s lagging behind on this fundamental point is that the M.M. has not yet become the organiser and leader of the English working class economic struggles. During the miner's mass movement, when the Act for the Eight-Hour Day expired, the M.M. had the opportunity of showing widespread fight to the reformist T.U. bureaucrats. It did not take advantage of this opportunity even to the slightest extent. Our English comrades refused to carry out the slogan "Leave the mines after 7 hours work", on the pretext that it was not popular among the workers. But neither did they present any other slogans and the movement died out.

We must note also the great organisational confusion in the M.M., the existence of a whole number of organisations and committees in the M.M., which have the object of drawing the masses into the M.M., but do not carry out this object. The M.M. still possesses no basis in the factories. In order to eradicate these shortcomings the M.M. must develop work to set up a broad united front from below and reorganise on a factory basis, so as to become a real mass organisation of the revolutionary trade union movement of Great Britain.