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WHAT IS THE RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOUR UNIONS?

(A short record of the 5th World Congress)

The results of the 5th World Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions held at Moscow during August and September of 1930 showed to wide masses of workers throughout the world what the R.I.L.U., what the "Profintern", is, the "Profintern" is no longer a foreign world to the workers. It must become a militant reminder for us.

Each worker should see now that the Red International of Labour Unions is the only trade union International uniting the revolutionary T.U. organizations of the whole world; that it is the only international which, under the leadership of the Comintern, is fighting for the every-day interests of the working class, fighting for the achievement of that historical task to prepare the proletariat to destroy the capitalist order and establish the Proletarian Dictatorship.

The R.I.L.U. has over 16 million members in all parts of the world, in several tens of countries. The revolutionary workers of all countries belong to it - white, black, yellow, red. This was clearly seen during the Congress itself, in the composition of the delegation.

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It was plain to every participator in the Congress, even at a surface glance, that rank and file workers, from the factories and workshops, predominated at the Congress. The report of the Mandatory Committee only proved this, when it announced that the Congress was attended by 469 workers and 69 office workers (the composition of the Congress was 538 members; 459 men and 79 women). Industrially, the composition was: 133 metal workers, 64 transport workers, 58 textile workers, 48 miners, 29 agricultural labourers, 29 builders, 29 chemical workers, 24 leather workers, 21 printers, 17 wood-workers, 14 clothing workers, 11 food and drink workers, 10 educational workers, 6 municipal workers, and 4 general labourers. There were 17 Negro delegates (from Africa, U.S.A., West Indies and South America). Out of 538 delegates 464 were elected at the factories and workshops, 38 were elected at trade union meetings, and only 36 were elected by the central T.U. organs. The Negro delegates took an active part in the deliberations of the Congress; a Negro Commission was convened which discussed the problems of the Negro workers and made concrete proposals to the Congress on work among Negro workers. These proposals were adopted by the Congress. (In a later issue of the journal we will publish the speeches and comments of the Negro delegates to the Congress. Editor.)

The Congress summed up the results of the work and struggle of the international revolutionary trade union movement since the Fourth Congress. It reviewed and appraised the conditions in which the struggles of the
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international proletariat during this period has taken place. It appraised the economic crisis of capitalism which developed during this period, a crisis of over-production, of lowered output during the last year, increased unemployment, and drop in international trade. The crisis has affected the various countries to a varying extent, and is a WORLD economic crisis of capitalism.

The Congress drew a clear picture of the path along which the capitalists are seeking for a way out, to transfer the cost of the crisis to other shoulders. This path is that of intensified exploitation of the workers, speeding up labour, worsening the workers' conditions, lowering the living standards of the working class. The Congress pointed out that this precisely is the main line of the offensive conducted by capitalism against the working class. It drew a picture of the position of the working class in the various capitalist and colonial countries. With the direct or concealed support of the reformist T.U. machinery, the capitalists and the governments are waging a struggle to lower benefits, to narrow down the circle of persons eligible to benefits, to prolong the term making workers eligible to insurance benefits, and to transfer the cost of social insurance to the workers.

The Congress showed how the world economic crisis is sharpening the contradictions between the capitalists of the various countries - contradictions over markets which they require for their goods, which they all require so as to procure cheaper raw materials, or which they require as the most profitable source for investing capitals. Congress showed how, in the face for this, with the support and assistance of the reformists, under

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the cloak of pseudo disarmament conferences, armaments are being increased, one country striving to outrace the other and be best armed for the struggle to redivide the markets, for the struggle against the Soviet Union, in which the imperialists see a vast market, and which spells for them the ever-strengthening fortress of the world revolution.

In the reports made by Comrade Losovsky, the General Secretary of the R.I.L.U., and Comrade Schwernik, the Secretary of the Soviet C.C.T.U., as well as the numerous speeches by the delegates, the Congress showed how the Soviet Union, where the working class, having overthrown capitalism, taken the means of production into their own hands, and having established the Proletarian Dictatorship, is following the path of the stormy growth of socialist construction in industry and agriculture, and likewise improving the working and living conditions of the workers, standing out in sharp contrast to decaying capitalism, which is affected by a deep-going and relentless economic crisis. The Congress clearly showed, and this was confirmed by the shock-troopers', representatives of the largest plants in Moscow, Kharkov, Leningrad and other towns, who spoke at the Congress, that the Five Year Plan is being carried out with the greatest of enthusiasm; and that it will be more than carried out. Whilst the call to carry out the Five Year Plan in four years is plain to every Russian worker, each delegate to the Congress, whether from capitalist or colonial country, has now departed with this as the chief slogan.

Situation

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Situation of the Workers and Peasants in the Soviet Union

The gross output of industry in 1929-1930 was no less than 180% and the yield of agriculture was 114% of pre-war.

The increase in the gross output of industry in 1929-1930 over the gross output of 1928-1929 is 37.5%.

The gross output of industry, already comprises 53% of the gross output of the entire national economy, i.e., already predominates over the gross yield of agriculture.

The reconstruction of agriculture. The formation of big State grain farms, already in the current year have 1,060,000 Hectares under cultivation.

On May 1st 1930 to 50 per cent of the peasant farms in the main grain producing districts were organized in the collective farms, whilst in the Spring of 1928 only 2% were collectivized.

The area under cultivation in the collective farms last Spring increased from 1 1/2 million Hectares in 1928 to nearly 35 millions Hectares.

The gross grain yield in the collective farms during the three years has increased 50-fold, and the marketable grain yield has increased more than 40-fold.

The area under cultivation this year was 7.4 million hectares more than last year.

Already in the current year the collective farms will give more than half the total marketable grain.

Distribution of the National Income

Whilst the share of the exploiting classes in the national income in the most advanced capitalist countries

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is approximately 50% and even more, in the Soviet Union the share of the exploiting classes in the national income is not more than 2%.

During the last year the national income increased by 80%.

During the five years wages have increased more than 79%, being 139% of the pre-war level of real wages, whilst if the socialized part of wages be taken into consideration, wages are 167% of the pre-war.

Unemployment

According to figures for June 1st, 1930, unemployment has been reduced by more than 700,000.

Since then 100,000 unemployed have been sent to classes for training and immediately upon completion will be sent to work. The 200,000 adolescents among the unemployed are insufficient to cover the number required for the factory training schools in the current Autumn.

In many trades there is a shortage of labour power (turners, fitters, mechanics, stone masons, painters, electro-technicians, etc.).

Social Insurance

The social insurance budget, guaranteed by the State and the employers, has increased from 880 million roubles in 1927 to 1,400 million roubles in 1929-30, and is estimated at 1,800 million roubles for 1930-31.

During the last two years the benefits paid out for incapacitation amounted to 647 million roubles, and a sum of 440 million roubles is assigned for this purpose in 1930-31.

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The sum spent on benefits to completely incapacitated workers, and the families which have lost the breadwinners is 308,780,000 roubles, whilst it is proposed to spend 393,486,000 for this purpose in 1930-31.

During the last two years 13,907,000 roubles were spent on old-age pensions, and it is intend to pay out 37,911,000 roubles for this purpose in 1930-31.

It is proposed to extend the old-age pensions for workers to all branches of industry, the pensions to be raised from 50% of the average wages to 60%, and the age to be lowered (at present 55 years).

During the last three years 494 million roubles have been spent on maternity and childhood protection; creches, kindergartens, 294 million roubles; during the last two years the sum spent for medical insurance to insured workers was 487,985,000 roubles, and it is proposed for 1930-31 to assign 423,188,000 roubles.

In 1928-29 547,000 persons stayed in the Health Resorts, Sanatoriums and Rest Homes, and 671,000 in 1929-30, of which number 80% were factory workers.

In addition the People's Commissariats for Health sent 325,000 workers to the Health Resorts and sanatoriums.

Each worker gets 14 days vacation on full pay, in addition to the usual rest days, and in harmful works they get a month's vacation.

More than 54 million roubles were spent on labour protection 1928-29, and 79 million roubles in 1929-30, whilst 200 million roubles are assigned for this purpose for 1930-31.

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The Workers' Welfare Fund (for additional requirements to build workers' houses, creches, clubs, etc.), in 1927-28 received assignments to the amount of 83,984,000 roubles in 1927-28, and in 1928-30 was assigned 321,900,800 roubles.

During the three years 1,880,000,000 roubles have been spent on housing construction for the workers.

Working Hours

In 1927 already there was no worker working more than 8 hours a day, and by May 1st, 1930, 77% were already working only 7 hours a day, whilst for workers in the dangerous trades and for adolescents under 18 the working day is of 6 hours duration. In 1930-31 all the workers will be put into the seven hour working day.

83.4% of the workers have already been put into the five-day week, every fifth day being a rest day.

Trade Union Cultural Activities

In the current year the trade unions will spend 18,800,000 roubles for the stamping out of illiteracy and 50 million roubles for training T.U. cadres.

The total expenditure for cultural catering to the union membership will increase from 135 million roubles in 1928-29 to 370 million roubles in the current year, and 363 million roubles is the sum laid down for 1930-31.

The workers and workers' children are ensured scholarship in the vocational schools and universities.

The line has been taken that not less than 70% of the students in the higher educational institutions be factory workers.

At the present time more than 30,000 workers are being trained at T.U. expense to enter the universities. The unions this year assigned 28,250,000 roubles for this purpose.

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In 1929 26 million workers attended the various political, general educational, industrial, physical culture, and other circles in the clubs.

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The Growing Colonial Revolutionary Movement

The working masses of the colonies have entered upon the struggle against capitalism on a widespread scale, for the economic crisis actually affects the colonies, where the already slave-like exploitation of the workers is now being intensified.

The revolutionary movement in China and in India, a number of uprisings in such colonies as Indo-China, Egypt, and many others, - all these are directed, in their final aim, against the capitalist system.

The Congress stressed the international character of the working class struggle, pointing to the international movements which have taken place since the Fourth R.I.L.U. Congress in 1928; May 1st, the international day of struggle against unemployment on March 6th, 1930, day of struggle against imperialist war, August 1st. These movements were conducted successfully despite the opposition of the bourgeois as well as the social-democratic governments.

With regard to the revolutionary trade union movement in the colonies and semi-colonies, the Congress pointed out that the proletariat must gather and organize its forces there to fight for its national and class interests. The revolutionary trade union movement in the field is confronted with two most important tasks: the struggle against the foreign imperialists and the struggle for interests of the working class against bourgeois-landlord oppression.

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The Congress pointed out the still great weakness of the revolutionary trade union movement in the colonies, the absence or lack of crystallisation of the rank and file organizations, indetermination in the start towards the national bourgeoisie and inability to fight for the everyday requirements of the workers.

The Congress gave direction for work in all the most important colonies and semi-colonies and dwelt in especially great detail on China and India.

It stressed the exceptionally great importance of the revolutionary trade union movement in China, where the bourgeois-landlord counter-revolution is collapsing, where the rule of imperialists is decaying and where the revolutionary upsurge is rapidly gaining strength, where there already exist a number of Soviet districts, and where the Red Army is strengthening.

THE WINNING OF THE MAJORITY OF THE WORKING CLASS FOR THE IMPENDING DECISIVE STRUGGLES IS THE FOREMOST TASK OF THE R.I.L.U. We must not only have ideological, political, influence over the masses, it is most important to organizationally reinforce them on our side, to organize them, to lead them in the offensive against capitalism. Organizational weakness is still the chief defect of the revolutionary trade unions. This is why the Congress had to pay great attention to questions of the REORGANIZATION of the revolutionary trade union movement. THE FIFTH CONGRESS PUT BEFORE THE R.I.L.U. THE TASK OF TURNING THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNIONS, THE REVOLUTIONARY T.U. OPPOSITION MOVEMENT, INTO STRONG, MASS ORGANIZATIONS. The Congress showed that the substance of the R.I.L.U. line (the gist of the new tactics) is to: 1. HEAD the growing dissatisfaction

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dissatisfaction; 2. TO GIVE FORM to the conscious and frequently unconscious dissatisfaction among the masses; 3. TO CONSOLIDATE them on the basis of their every-day requirements; 4. TO FIRMLY LINK UP the struggle for the every-day requirements with the struggle for final objects; 5. TO RAISE each strike to a higher level; 6. TO TURN every strike against the ENTIRE capitalist system; 7. TO ORGANIZE the masses on the basis of the everyday struggle, in order to PREPARE them for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the Proletarian Dictatorship.

The Congress and the Negro Movement

The African continent is acquiring increasing importance as an object of capitalist exploitation. The imperialist powers are beginning to take increasing "interest" in Equatorial Africa. Since the world war efforts for capitalist exploitation of the African colonies have become not only popular in the imperialist circles of France and Belgium, but are more and more gaining ground in England, which is energetically exploiting Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, (East Africa), the Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, (West Africa). The United States, in turn, are building vast plans for the "peaceful" conquest of certain territories in Africa; Liberia (rubber), Abyssinia, Sudan (cotton).

The intensified imperialist pressure on these colonies is meeting with growing resistance from the toiling masses, in particular from the labour movement (strikes in Gambia, Congo, Rhodesia, and elsewhere).

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The conditions for the labour and trade union movements differ very largely in these countries. In a number of African colonies up till very recently the system of slavery was very widespread. Forced labour is still very widely applied. And it was only recently that "free" proletarians appeared, and simultaneously the embryo of the trade union movement (Sierra Leone, Congo, Mozambique). The organizations, however, are still very weak.

The central task in these countries should be to organize the industrial proletariat which, despite its small numbers, is nevertheless the main basis of the trade union movement in these countries. Leaning on these class organizations of the proletariat, efforts must be exerted to draw in the unions the day labourers and handicraft workers, who comprise the greater majority of the urban proletariat in these countries.

The membership must be differentiated in the existing craft unions by gradually squeezing out the non-proletariat elements (in the first place the small owners). At the same time the handicraftsmen and small traders should be organized in cooperatives, which should be subjected to the constant control of the trade unions.

It is necessary to fight for the formation of unions in which the native and foreign workers should unite.

The existence of many millions of agricultural labours in these colonies makes it imperative to organize them (first and foremost at the big plantations). At the same time close connections must be set up between the agricultural workers and industrial workers to defend the interests of the semi-proletariat elements in the villages.

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In view of the weakness of the proletariat leading nuclei in the trade union movement of these countries, and the danger arising therefrom of the trade union movement being distracted from the class struggle towards the narrow policy of bourgeois nationalism and class collaboration, the revolutionary trade union movement of these countries is faced with the vital task of training and creating proletarian cadres.

The central problem of the trade union movement in South Africa was and still remains that of labour and the hostile attitude which has been set up between the organizations of white, native and coloured workers who comprise the overwhelming majority of the South African proletariat. According to tradition the white workers look upon the coloured workers as scabs.

NOTE: See also special resolution passed by the Congress on work among Negro workers generally. This resolution has been running serially in our journal.

(Editor)