

# Fight for the Unity of the Labour Movement

## For International Trade Union Unity

By A. LOZOVSKY

The fight for unity of action and trade union unity in the struggle against the offensive of capital, against fascism and the war danger, has spread to all the countries and workers' organisations. The trend of the masses towards unity of action has grown to such an extent that many leaders of the social-democratic parties and reformist trade unions are compelled to follow the sentiment of the masses. The most enthusiastic fraternisation of the workers of all tendencies is taking place before our eyes. This sentiment of the masses not only rouses fury and alarm among the bourgeoisie, but also great alarm among the leaders of the reformist trade unions, most of whom are on the extreme right flank of the international reformist labour movement. Ever new facts come to the fore every day, proving that the leaders of the *Amsterdam International* are conducting systematic work directed to the hampering of the united front and trade union unity. Thus the leaders of the C.G.T. in *France* repudiated the proposal of the unitary trade unions for merging the entire trade union movement from top to bottom and for the formation of a unified General Confederation of Labour. *Leon Jouhaux*, the leader of the reformist C.G.T. of *France*, brought pressure to bear upon the reformist trade unions of *Rumania* to make them abandon the united front and unity with the revolutionary workers. The General Council of the *British Trade Unions* does not even want to hear about a united front with the revolutionary workers. The leaders of the reformist trade unions of *Sweden*, *Denmark*, *Holland*, *Belgium* and *Czechoslovakia* proceed along the same line. Thus the leaders of the sections of the *Amsterdam International* are carrying through—with a stubbornness and insistence worthy of better application—the decisions of the *Amsterdam International* made in *Weymouth* against the united front and trade union unity.

We are not going to contend here the right of the leaders of the reformist trade unions to pass whatever decisions they wish. Nor are we going to tell the leaders of the *Amsterdam International* that the decision they made in *Weymouth* to the effect that all the revolutionary trade unions, including the R.I.L.U., should be liquidated, is merely thrusting a sword into water. Such a decision is only apt to make the revolutionary workers of the world enrolled in the R.I.L.U. burst into hearty laughter.

The leaders of the *Amsterdam International* got into a blind alley because their policy and tactic went bankrupt. They hope evidently to come out of the blind alley which they themselves created by demanding the liquidation of the revolutionary trade unions. Any group of people, of course, including the leaders of the reformist trade unions, has the right to adopt absurd decisions. But those millions of workers who are organised in the reformist trade unions should ask themselves: Where are these decisions finally leading us? What is the difference between the resolution of the General Council of the *British Trade Unions* and the decision on this question made by the leaders of the reformist trade unions of *Czechoslovakia*, *Sweden* and *Denmark*, or the decisions against the united front and trade union unity adopted in their time by the leaders of the trade unions of *Germany* and *Austria*? There is no difference whatsoever.

The leaders of all the sections of the *Amsterdam International* are carrying through the same policy as that of the trade union leaders of *Germany* and *Austria*. The workers should draw a logical conclusion, i.e., consequently the results will be the same. This is what every worker should think over. And when the leaders of his trade union pass decisions to the effect that the revolutionary trade unions should be dissolved, every worker not only has the right but must ask: "What for? For what purpose? Of what use will this be to the workers?"

The *Amsterdam International* in *Weymouth* proposed to the R.I.L.U. that it liquidate itself. Why? If the biggest section of the *Amsterdam International*—the *German* trade unions—went bankrupt, does this mean that the R.I.L.U. shall be liquidated? Why should the R.I.L.U. be liquidated? It seems that the R.I.L.U. should be liquidated to enable the *Amsterdam International* to carry on its old policy, i.e., to lead the working masses along the

*Austro-German* way, with more freedom than heretofore. It is losing one's head, indeed, to make such kind of proposals. Anyone who expects that a single person could be found in the R.I.L.U. who would follow the advice of the leaders of the *Amsterdam International* has no head at all on his shoulders. It would be best of all if the leaders of the reformist unions stopped talking about dissolving the revolutionary trade unions and liquidating the R.I.L.U., for nothing will come of such talk except chagrin for the reformist leaders.

The revolutionary trade unions and the R.I.L.U. for many years have been proposing seriously, without any hidden purpose, to build a unified trade union movement in every country and to create later an international trade union unity on this basis. Herein lies the essence of the entire policy of the *Red International of Labour Unions*. But, the leaders of the reformist trade unions are saying, the R.I.L.U. and its sections do not stop their criticism while proposing unity, they do not discontinue their struggle against reformism and the reformist policy and tactic. First of all the R.I.L.U. and its sections have openly declared many times that they are ready to stop their attacks on the leaders of those reformist organisations which will come out together with us in a united front of struggle against the bourgeoisie. The R.I.L.U. and its sections have never conducted a struggle against the workers organised in the reformist trade unions. They have always been struggling against the reformist policy and tactics carried through by the leaders of the reformist unions, which is far from being one and the same thing.

The workers of all tendencies have sufficient reasons now for marching side by side and shoulder to shoulder in the struggle against their class enemies. The offensive on the living standards of the working class is going on. Fascism is bringing unheard-of misery to the broadest working masses, reaction is raising its head in all countries. The R.I.L.U. and its sections have been proposing to all the reformist trade unions to fight together to raise the living standards of the working class, against fascism, for freedom of the workers' organisations, etc. Every joint action in this field is an enormous gain for the working class.

Why are the leaders of the *Amsterdam International*, the leaders of the trade unions of *Great Britain*, *France*, *Sweden*, *Denmark* and *Czechoslovakia*, opposed to the united front? All this can be explained quite simply. If they build a united front with the revolutionary workers, it will make it difficult for them to carry through a policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. A united front between the revolutionary and reformist trade unions aims at joint action against the bourgeoisie, and a rejection of the united front means unwillingness to come out against the bourgeoisie. Thousands of facts can be given as an illustration of this statement. This is what every worker should seriously think over.

After the smashing of the *German* and *Austrian* trade unions the *Amsterdam International* lost over one-third of its membership, and so it is natural that it is anxious to make up for its losses by trying to win over those national centres which were outside the *Amsterdam International*. The *American Federation of Labour*, the *Norwegian Trade Union Federation*, etc., are among such centres. The *Norwegian trade unions* are going to settle the question of affiliation to the *Amsterdam International* in the nearest future. Three tendencies are at war inside the *Norwegian* trade unions. One is in favour of affiliation to the *Amsterdam International*, the other is for affiliation to the R.I.L.U., and the third wishes to remain outside both the internationals and to take the initiative of building a unified international trade union movement. In its letter to the *Norwegian Trade Union Federation* the executive bureau of the R.I.L.U. expresses its readiness to support the *Norwegian* trade unions provided they engage in the struggle for international trade union unity. The official organ of the *Norwegian* socialists, i.e., the "*Arbeiter Blatt*," advises *Moscow* "to go to *Paris*." It advises the revolutionary trade unions to join the reformist trade unions. But this kind advice was already given in *Weymouth*, and it will hardly become more

convincing after being translated into Norwegian. If the Norwegian trade unions are really eager to build trade union unity, and the "Arbeiter Blatt" states that this is their intention, they have an excellent opportunity to take the initiative, to elect a special committee for contacts, to establish contact with the Amsterdam International and the R.I.L.U., and to display activity in this sphere. But the R.I.L.U. needs no advice in the spirit of Weymouth.

We trust that the Norwegian Trade Union Congress will not maintain a position of liquidating the revolutionary trade union movement, and that it will ward off all those who, going under cover of slogans for unity of the trade union movement, endeavour to drag the Norwegian unions into the Amsterdam International.

The members of the reformist and revolutionary trade unions demand unity. The workers are right. A unified trade union movement is not only imperative, but also possible. It is imperative because it will strengthen the fighting capacity of the working class. It is possible because the revolutionary trade unions do not make any unacceptable demands to the reformist trade unions. The revolutionary trade unions are anxious to organise a joint struggle for the raising of the living standards of the working class, against fascism, for freedom of the workers' organisations, workers' press, etc. Trade union unity is possible because we openly say what this unity is for, on what basis it is to be built, and of what use it will be to the working class. We do not deceive anybody. We state our aims and tasks openly. As a rule, we are accused of manœuvring when we propose the united front and trade union unity. We answer to this: Yes, it is a manœuvre against the bourgeoisie, but it is not a manœuvre against the working class. For it is in the interests of the broadest toiling masses. Refuse to struggle against class collaboration, stop the struggle against reformism, and then unity will be restored rapidly, say the leaders of the reformist trade unions. But giving up the struggle against class collaboration would be an abandonment of our views, it would mean treachery to the cause of the working class. We will never stop the struggle against class collaboration. The revolutionary workers cannot promise, and will never promise, to give up the struggle against reformism. They wish to confine the struggle to the limits of trade union democracy. We want to have the right to express our views within a unified trade union organisation, having a definite programme and tasks. We want the social democratic, Communist and anarchist workers to have the right to express their opinions of the basic aims and tasks of the working class and of the methods of achieving these aims, within the framework of a unified trade union organisation. Is this unacceptable? We believe that these conditions are acceptable to every worker. They are in keeping with his interests, they are a guarantee to the worker that his unified trade union organisation will wage a struggle against the employers and in the course of the exchange of opinion will work out correct methods for the overthrow of the rule of capital. This is why we are for the united front, for trade union unity on a national and international scale.