

Comrade Piatnitsky (Org. Department):

At the first Org. Conference we elaborated theses for the fractions, we dealt with them in the commissions and I do not remember that anyone had anything to say against the theses. In explanation of this question I wrote an article on the work of Communist fractions in trade unions to which no exception was taken. Therefore, one might assume that everybody was in agreement with this article and the theses. But as we see, this is not the case. Considering that comrades are now making this question the main issue of our deliberations, representing it even as the only contentious question, this is a proof that the Parties have begun to work in the trade unions, to form fractions and to be really active. It would be well for all the comrades to participate in the discussion and to tell us whether the theses which we have now elaborated can be applied or not.

What then should be the work of the fractions what Executives shall they have, what comrades are to be in the executive and what connection must there be between trade union fractions and party organisations, between fraction and fraction? These are the questions with which I propose to deal. Hitherto not all Party members eligible to trade unions have joined them. This must be admitted. I have received from the German Party a list on which districts are named where only a small percentage of Party members is organised in trade unions: Upper Silesia 42%, Silesia 48%, the Ruhr District 35%, whilst the other districts fluctuate between 60 and 80%. And the whole in Germany about 60,000 of the Party membership is organised in trade unions.

Matters are even worse in America where we have only 40% of our Party members in trade unions, in Czecho-Slovakia 50 to 60%, and in France not more than 50%. This cannot be allowed to continue. Our Parties must carry on a big ideological struggle so that every Party member, without fail, joins a trade union. I speak with emphasis of the ideological struggle, because in Germany the procedure was as follows: after the Frankfurt Party Congress a "decree" was issued, a date was fixed and whoever was not a member of a trade union before the expiration of this date was to be expelled from the Party. In this manner about 400 comrades were lost to the Party.

At present there are more opportunities for work in the trade unions than hitherto. Why? Firstly, we have now a fulcrum in the factories: nuclei can carry on an ideological struggle and exert pressure to bring all our comrades into trade unions. Secondly, the centre of gravity of trade union work can be transferred to the factories. This is not a theoretical argument, we have already experience in this respect which must be utilised. I will give you a few citations. The following statement about a motor works nucleus is contained in the report of the German Party:

"We started at the beginning of 1925. Only two of the 32 delegates were Party members. When a meeting of the workers of the shop was convened one of our two comrades was informed, that he should be there as a member of the section Executive. He then made a report and explained the attitude of the respective shop delegate. The consequence was always a vote of censure and the election of a comrade into the section Executive. In this manner we gained 11 delegates within half a year and now we have 13 comrades in the section Executive."

A nucleus of 12 comrades in Battersea (London) writes, as follows:

"The workers were about 75% organised. The group (nucleus) altered that.

One strike was against non-unionists. There was bickering between the A. S. L. E. & F. and N. U. R. and E. E. U. and other unions. The group made it its object to break this down and an

all inclusive workers' committee was formed. When the company tried to break down the factory paper the men stood by it, until to-day we have reached a position where the men are willing to follow any reasonable lead given by the Party. They are not exactly revolutionary; but any working class lead on current economic questions will get their support."

In this manner the nucleus achieved a great success. Many workers joined trade unions. What is the result of such tactics? Firstly more members are added to the trade unions and new trade union officials are also elected in the factories. Since we are the ones who brought the workers into the trade unions, Communists are elected. Communists consolidate their position and are able to get into their hands the minor official posts in the trade unions.

I should also like to emphasise that our comrades must carry on the small everyday work in the factory as well as in the trade unions, and must not limit themselves to high politics. It is only by steady everyday work that our comrades can get influence in the trade unions and can capture them. One more thing: Communist workers must also be active in Christian, National-Socialist, fascist and other trade unions. I have only a few figures about Christian trade unions. One can safely say that there are a couple of million of Christian trade unionists throughout the world. In Belgium the general Christian trade unions have 200,000 members, in Poland 160,000 in France 125,000, in Hungary 133,000, in Germany they had once as many as 900,000 but have now only 600,000 members. They are represented in the metal and building industry and everywhere. Hitherto, we have not been active among these workers. How can we expect to get the majority if we do not work among all workers, even though they be Christian or National-Socialist?

In Germany and France, fractions were formed in two different ways. In Germany we have a certain amount of influence in the lower trade union organisations. On the other hand, only very few of our comrades are in the leading trade union organs. Matters are different in France. We have a Communist majority in the Central Committees and we have also Communists in the lower organs, but no fractions in the lower organisations and also in the leading trade union organs.

The reports of the German Party show that there are 1,226 trade union fractions in 14 districts, 50 of which can be considered active fractions. Six districts report that together they control 81 local administrations. In one district 25 trades councils are in our hands.

As to France let us take up the Central Committees. The Central Committees of the metal workers and agricultural labourers unions are composed entirely of Communists. The committees of the chemical and transport workers' unions consist almost entirely of Communists. The Central Committee of the foodworkers union has 18 Communists among its 26 members. In the dockers union four of the six members of the Central Committee belong to the Communist Party.

Actually, what is a fraction? It is the amalgamation of the Communists in all non-party organisations (Trade Union, Co-operative, Sportorganisation etc.). It must be the group of the organisation which is best equipped with knowledge and who works the most actively and consequently and thus gains the confidence and the following of the entire membership. Thus fraction work is only part of Party work. Can a fraction concern itself with all Party questions? Certainly not. The fraction must always deal with questions which come up for discussion in the respective non-party organisation. All other questions must be dealt with in the Party organisations.

If we consider this necessary condition — and it cannot be otherwise — then a fraction in the trade unions cannot deal with all manner of questions which are within the competence of the Party. According to material received the German Party has Communist fractions in the lower trade union organisations. I cannot tell if these fractions are really active. We have received statistics from the Party in Thuringia. There they have 52 fractions in the metal workers union, but only 15 of them are active. There are 15 fractions in the builders masons, and carpenters' unions, but only one of them is active. There are 45 fractions among woodworkers of which only 4 are active. Among the miners there are 16 fractions of which only 1 is active. Among the miners there are 16 fractions of which only 1 is active: among railwaymen, 30 fractions, of which 4 are active etc. As yet the work of the fractions is very inadequate. Why? Firstly because there are no fraction executives; secondly, because at

regular fraction sessions Party questions are also dealt with, this is detrimental to the work of the Party organisation as well as to that of the fraction alike; thirdly, the fractions had a wrong political conception of the trade union question, the tactics of the Party in the trade unions were wrong in that they consisted in too much indulgence in "high" politics by the fractions in the trade unions, to the detriment of everyday questions. If fractions had carried on daily everywhere in the factory and in the trade unions, the necessary everyday work, we could have reported better progress in the trade unions.

Fraction work in France has been tackled in a quite different manner than in Germany. In France there are many Communists in the Executive, but the idea prevails that to have Communists in the Executive is sufficient to secure Communist influence even when fractions and fraction work are lacking. We once had the case when a Party declared it had the support of the entire railwaymen's union since the entire Central Committee was in the hands of the Communists. But when the Government arrested the Central Committee, the entire trade union did not join in the railwaymen's strike which had been declared. I very much fear that something similar might happen in France because no fraction work is done in the trade unions from the bottom to the top.

One more thing: in France some comrades are of the opinion that there must be a fraction in the elected organs, but not in the lower organisations. Comrade Sauvage said for instance:

"I am an opponent of permanent fractions, namely, fractions in the lower organisations which as a rule wind up as trade union parties or co-operative parties parallel to the Party. Our entire work must be conducted on a nucleus basis and it is only by putting life into this work that we will be able to work in all the organisations to which we must extend our influence. Our experiences in the metal and chemical industry are typical. There is also another argument, namely that the numerous nucleus and fraction meetings which the Party members are compelled to attend prevent their doing justice to Party work."

I do not think that Comrade Sauvage is right when he says that only Party organisations should have the right to call together, for instance, the metal workers, at a time when a campaign is in progress. This is the task of fractions which have to be formed in the lower organisations. I have perused some reliable material on the position of fraction work in the lower organisations in France. This material shows that in 60% of the cases there are no fractions in the Red trade unions and no fraction executives on the spot.

I will now deal with the question of executives. I have material from Germany, a report of the Berlin metal workers on the composition of the fraction executive. There are 35 branches in the Berlin metal workers' union. They elect 6 comrades to the Executive, 23 urban divisions of the German metal workers union send five comrades, the General Electrical Company district—1, the Siemens-district also 1, seven factory council main groups—2, women—1, the youth—1, office workers union—1, and the literature and agitprop departments and the "Rote Fahne" one representative each into the fraction executive. This makes 21 members altogether and another member is added from the trade union department of the C. C. The report of the trade union department of the Berlin-Brandenburg district contains the following statement:

"We built the fractions in the following manner. All metal workers belonging to the Party are first of all amalgamated centrally into a fraction of the whole. Besides this 35 branch fractions are formed and in addition our comrades are amalgamated into fractions according to the districts in 25 metal workers urban divisions. The composition of the fraction executive is as follows:

1. A managing committee of five comrades.
2. The fraction executive consisting of representatives of branches, districts and factory council groups, one representative of the General Electrical Company district, and one from the Siemens concern district, one treasurer, one literature agent, one from the union employees, one from the district executive of the Party, and one from the "Rote Fahne".
3. The enlarged fraction committee consists of one representative from each of the 35 branches and 25 districts and factory council groups; also all union employees, the entire narrower fraction committee (bureau)".

What work are the fractions actually to do? We gather from the report of the **glass workers' union in Wittenberg** that: "The leadership of the fraction is in the hands of the trade union secretary of the local section executive of Wittenberg because the factory workers' union is the biggest and most important organisation of the local industrial area. He has the support of the comrades who are in the administration of the local union office."

Thus it is not the fraction which works and is responsible for this work, but the trade union secretary of the Party with the support of the Communist members of the managing committee.

Apart from these two cases where the executive is either numerically too strong and therefore unable to do active work or where the fraction executive is replaced by the Party executive, I will give you an example of another type of fraction executive, that of the **bootmakers' union in Cologne**.

"The fraction executive is composed of the best delegates from every factory. We have formed a leading body of five out of these functionaries. Comrade X is the head of the fraction."

Comrades, I do not think that we can carry on fraction work with such executives. What is actually a fraction executive? What are its tasks? Is it to elaborate draft legislation? Certainly not, it is to direct the everyday trade union work.

Who can best direct the every-day work of the Communists in the trade unions? Those comrades who are active in that body which directs daily the trade union work.

If we now carry on trade union work, our fractions must utilise this material to show all those who are in the branches how the trade unions work. Who can arrange this material? Who can supply all this material to our fractions except those in the trade union executive who make all the proposals there.

Can those who come from the factories or the "Rote Fahne" or the agitprop know all the details of trade union work? Of course not.

I do not want this to be misunderstood. I am not opposed to having representatives from the factories also elected to the fraction executive, because in Germany, for instance, the comrades who are to form the executive are not always disciplined. They do not always carry on Party policy. Sometimes they vote with the Social Democrats. How can this be remedied? We must find a way out. This way out we indicated in our theses. If the comrades in the fraction executive are no good, efficient Party comrades must be co-opted who are capable of influencing them and showing them how the work is to be done. But if we have efficient comrades in the trade union executives who carry out faithfully the policy of the Party then it must be left to them to lead the fractions.

What do we see in France? I do not know who is to blame for the neglect of fraction work. But we must admit the fact that our comrades in the trade unions are not organised and that they do not carry on fraction work.

I will endeavour later on to deal more fully with this question. My opinion is that the fraction executive should consist of those who are in the trade union executives, and if they are bad Communists, a few good comrades should be co-opted.

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Now as to the question of **connection between the fractions**.

On the whole at present conditions in all the Parties are sure that no connection exists between the fractions. The lower fractions receive no directions nor material from the fractions above them. We Bolsheviks were never believers in a set organisation plan or certain organisational methods. We always adopted our organisational work to existing conditions. This applies also to the liaison system. There were times when we had direct connection between fractions in the Russian trade unions. Today this system no longer exists. In future and as Party organisations grow stronger, this connection can also be done away with in the capitalist countries. But at present it must be developed.

I have heard all the reports and I must say that on no other field of Party work is the state of affairs as lamentable as on the field of fraction work. Communists in the non-Party mass organisations are as yet inactive. They do show no initiative in everyday work either and wait for the Party authorities to intervene directly. Such a state of affairs must cease. With us in the Russian Party we had a time when no fraction directions were issued at all by the C. C. Nevertheless Communist work in trade unions was not neglected, our comrades worked

on their own and soon found means by which the Party got the upper hand in all organs. And only then, in the process of work, directions were gradually elaborated for the fractions. But even without direction Communists carried on work in the mass organisations and this enabled us to get a majority everywhere. The same must be the case in other parties. Communists must everywhere develop initiative, they must show that they belong to the Party which is the general staff of the working class.

Now as to the trade union departments of the Party executives.

What is the work of trade union departments to be? Are they to do fraction work, as this was done in France, where there is, first a trade union department, and, second, a trade union commission in the C. C. Certainly not. The trade union department of the Party is only to superintend the work, to give instructions, to call the comrades in the fraction executives together to consultations and to discuss all questions with them. The Party is to issue general instructions on Communist trade union work to the fraction executives, but the everyday work itself must be done by the fraction which knows conditions in the trade union and has every opportunity to carry out the work as the Party wishes it to be carried out. The Party of course has the right to intervene at any moment. It has been said that in our theses not enough stress is laid on the rights of Party executives with respect to fractions. Such is not the case. We are of course prepared to emphasise these rights, but I should like to impress upon you that the Party should not intervene where this is not necessary. It shall only remedy any shortcomings of the work, but on no account exercise petty tutelage.

I will deal now separately with the countries and will endeavour to give an outline of the main tasks.

GERMANY:

One must give up the former practice of casual and manifold composition of fraction executives, and adopt instead a uniform and correct course. First of all in trade union organisations in which we have a majority the Party organisation and the trade union department must watch carefully over the activity, helping the comrades to utilise to the full the already acquired positions for the development of trade union work in this union. Then the abolition of special trade union days as well as fraction dues wherever they had been introduced. Attention should be paid to the trade unions in which we are working, and efforts must be made to win over the majority of the trade unionists employed in the factories. The German Party has all the premises for truly successful trade union work.

FRANCE:

Matters are utterly different in France, where old traditions exist which are making themselves felt to this day. The Party must do its utmost to overcome the existing difficulties in trade union work by a steady ideological struggle, and must not endeavour to capture the trade unions by disciplinary measures and mechanical decisions. Collaboration between the Red trade Unions and the Party is still inadequate.

The French comrades are faced with another great task; they must reorganise all the Red Trade Unions on a factory basis. The territorial form of organisation of the Trade Unions is inefficient. The worker must have the possibility, as soon as he enters a factory, to join the union in which all the workers of the factory are organised. The Trade Union work must be carried on in the factory. We can only beat the reformists if we start at once to work in the shops (factories). The Red Trade Unions must be built up in the same manner as the Party. Then we shall create a good connection between the Party and the Unions. The French comrades must furthermore develop the connections between the fractions in the higher organs of the Trade Unions and the fractions in the basic organisations.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA.

In Czecho-Slovakia the trade unions are stronger than the Party and therefore the latter must exercise stricter control of trade union work than this is necessary in Germany and France. It must not happen that candidates' lists for factory councils elections are drawn up by the trade unions without control and confirmation by the Party. That factory councils in some cases

have the upper hand over factory nuclei is impermissible. The Party must follow definite tactics and must establish correct relations between Party and trade union, firmly yet not dictatorially. If this is done it will be possible to improve our trade union work.

ITALY:

We must show that the Communist Party is the only Party which fights for the interest of the working class by defending the trade unions.

Through a systematic fraction work in the Unions it can still more increase its influence and prevent that the Reformists turn the Communists out of the Unions. In its Trade Union work the Party must concentrate its chief activity towards winning new masses of workers for the Trade Unions. By this it will on the one hand break the fascist offensive against the Trade Unions who stand on the ground of the class struggle and on the other hand they will overcome the reformist sabotage of the forthcoming economic struggles of the proletariat.

But the Party must at the same time go into the fascist unions, for not only fascist workers are organised there. Workers enter these unions because pressure is exercised. They must have a fascist union membership card if they are to get employment.

GREAT BRITAIN:

The British Party is very small but it has shown now trade union work should be carried on. We must profit by the experiences of the British Party which has achieved its successes by steady everyday work. It has taken deep root in the trade unions. Its task consists in strengthening its communist work in the unions.

AMERICA:

As to America, the possibilities there are much greater than in Germany. There are 17 million unorganised workers there. Only 3 million workers are organised in trade unions. If the Party succeed in bringing the unorganised masses into the trade unions and in forming new trade union organisations, the trade unions will be in its hands. The Party must above all begin with this recruiting campaign and pledge all members of the Party eligible for the unions to join them, as up till now only about 40% of the Party members are organised in the unions.

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The theses we have proposed are nothing new. We already proposed and adopted directions in this sense for fraction work last year. But there was then no reality in them and the comrades did not pay sufficient attention to them. They thought that it was quite a fine resolution which might be adopted but which it was not necessary to carry out. I think that matters are different now. Trade union work is the main work. We can do trade union work if we have fractions. To build up fractions we must have policies and the policies are here before us. May be comrades imagine that the time has not yet come for the theses to be put into practice. Very well. Try to give us for every country an adaptation of these theses. We have no objection to this. But one principle must be laid down, fundamentally, namely, the line of the connection between the fractions and the composition of the fraction executives.

With respect to the Party organisation and its relation to the fraction, the Party organisation has of course the higher rights. It is empowered to do everything, it can carry out re-organisations whenever it deems this necessary. I believe, however, that our Parties are now strong enough to cease doing the work for organisations which should carry it out themselves.