The Role of the Labor Unions in the Russian Revolution

By A. Lozovsky (Dridzo)

Price 5 Cents

Published by The Union Publishing Association
New York City
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INTRODUCTION.

Are there any labor unions in Soviet Russia? What part are they playing in the Revolution? Are they still necessary and what is the scope of their activity? What is their structure? And what is their future?

All these and many other burning questions are answered by Comrade Alexis Lozovsky, the head of the Russian Labor Unions and their spokesman in Western Europe in the fall of 1920.

We hope that this new pamphlet will contribute much to dispel the confusion and cloudiness that now prevail in the ranks of the revolutionary workers of America regarding the role of the labor unions in the Revolution, not only in Russia, but in our own country.

It is evident from the discussion going on since the Russian Revolution that both the extreme reactionary and the ultra-radical have distorted conception of the unions: their origin, present and future functions and tasks.

We already have the benefit of real revolutionary experience. Suffices to mention Hungary, Germany and Russia in order to safely state that during the Revolution whoever has the unions on his side, is going to win it.

Comrade Lozovsky says that "it is impossible to accomplish a social revolution outside of the unions or against their will." Lenin has also said that the Bolshevist Revolution could not have lasted two weeks without the aid of the unions.

In Hungary it was the yellow socialists, leaders of the trade unions, Weltner, Garami and their aids, that brought about the downfall of the Communist regime. The weakness of the Hungarian Soviet Republic consisted in the fact that the labor unions, which in Russia form the backbone of the
Proletarian Dictatorship, in Hungary they were hostile to it and refused to give their utmost support to the Communists.

The reverse of the Hungarian experience is to be found in the fact that the Capp-Lutwitz coup-d'état in Germany last year was defeated in no time by the united power of the German labor unions, who like one struck a death blow to the monarchist putch (insurrection).

It can safely be stated that had the Spartacists in Germany had a predominant influence in the labor movement, Germany would be a Soviet Republic by now.

This points out the way for action in the American labor movement. Stress should be laid on revolutionary work in the unions that group the mass of the industrial proletariat.

We must have the unions not only during the period of actual combat with the capitalists and their governments but even after the Dictatorship shall have been established. The function of the unions as organs of disciplined and efficient production and distribution must be broadened and much of the task of Communist reconstruction and responsibility for the running of the industrial apparatus given into the unions.

The lesson from the Russian Revolution, which is so aptly put by Comrade Lozovsky is that the unions, being the natural grouping of the workers as producers, which develop the class consciousness and militancy of the workers, develop at the same time their sense of responsibility and discipline, preparing them for the difficult task of organizing production and exchange in the Communist society.
Comrades, permit me before broaching my report on the Labor Movement in Russia, to give you the ardent fraternal greetings of the Russian proletariat, of that Russian proletariat which struggles, suffers, but never loses courage.

The war, lit by the criminal hand of the imperialists of all countries, divided the working classes into national diplomatic groups. The slogans of international solidarity were forgotten. Instead of the motto: “Workers of all lands, unite!” the men who call themselves socialists and great union leaders, cried: Workers of all lands, cut each other’s throats!”

A sort of bloody drunkenness came over the minds of the workers. Death had its feast day. Millions of workers’ corpses covered the fields and the plains of Europe. And in this furious vortex of death and destruction, the speculators of the Stock Exchanges and the financial sharks filled their pockets, transforming the human flesh into money, all stained with blood. But the blood, as a great poet has said, is a peculiar moisture: the fields and plains of Europe, saturated with blood, have brought forth a revolutionary blossom. Humanity, thrown into an abyss of misery and fear, has found its revenge in the revolution: crowns have fallen by the dozen; in their
turn tumble into the abyss the capitalists and bourgeois regimes that wore them.

We were completely cut off from you. We were isolated. Our word of truth never reached you. Russia, the first of the great powers to break the chains that enslaved it during the war, was denounced and cursed not only by the imperialists, but also by men who have come from the socialist ranks and who follow them like flunkeys.

Since the October days the Russian worker, his organizations, his activities, his great suffering, his spirit of sacrifice, his boundless devotion which permit him to withstand the unheard of tortures of hunger and cold—all this has been jeered at, scoffed at and calumnied. The bourgeois press of the whole world invents the most abominable lies against the Russian workers. It represented us as bandits, as destroyers, as apaches, as men without honor or conscience for whom there is nothing sacred in this world and who have pillaged the national wealth, filling their pockets with it. With this yellow capitalist press, with the papers subsidized by the kings of finance, by the barons of coal, steel and oil, we have seen march in line the socialist-patriotic press of all countries, munching in its proper fashion this capitalist and bourgeois piece of invention and wetting it with socialist saliva. All these Thousand and One Night stories can not but provoke in the Russian workers a sentiment of aversion and disgust.

We, the delegates of the Russian unions, have come to relate to you our true situation; to tell you that above the heads of the malicious sneerers, to
tell you—after Lasalle’s advice,—to you, our class brothers, what this situation is. This is the goal which we propose to you, such is our duty and such is the mandate that we have received from the organized working class of Russia.

THE UNIONS UNDER CZARISM

In Russia, as in every other country, the labor movement commenced with the development of capitalism. The first strikes in Russia broke out between 1870 and 1880. But up to the Revolution in 1905 there were no labor unions in Russia. There were societies of mutual aid, but not very numerous and their activities were so much limited by the police laws, that they had no influence whatever on the labor conditions or on the toilers’ life. There was an economic struggle, but no unions.

During the periods of conflict, a strike committee was organized at the head of which usually was the secret social-democratic organization of the locality. The strikes generally ended with deportations to Siberia of the members of the strike committee and the czarist regime tightened its mailed fist and became unbearable and choking.

Only in 1905 were unions organized. Rapidly they embraced the large laboring masses. In 1906 and 1907 in Russia there were 200,000 organized workers. But the defeat of the Revolution was the defeat of the Labor Movement.

From 1907 until 1914 the unions led a miserable
existence, as a consequence of the incredible police persecutions. The councils and committees were under constant menace of arrest. The police carried away the treasuries and books. The chairmen and the secretaries of the unions were deported to Siberia. Thus czarism made impossible all organized economic struggle.

The declaration of war—the same war that was waged for justice, civilization and culture,—was the signal for the complete destruction of the labor unions.

A proof of this repression exercised by czarism can be found in this fact: on the eve of the Revolution in 1917 in Russia there were only three unions with a total membership of 1500. But in spite of this rudimentary state of the labor movement, the toiling masses led no less tenaciously the economic struggle and in this struggle, under the yoke of czarism was forged the class consciousness—this great hatred against the oppressors—which broke out with elemental force in 1917.

THE MARCH REVOLUTION AND THE GROWTH OF THE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

The overthrow of Czarism was the point of departure for the creative and organizing work of the masses. The Russian workers created simultaneously four organizations:
1. First of all, everybody came out from the underground secret party organizations and appeared in the open,—the Bolsheviki and the Mensheviki, who obstinately fought to win influence over the masses.

2. The workers organized the Councils: the Soviet of workers' deputies as instruments of the political struggle as well as organs embracing all of the workers. From the first days of the Revolution, the Soviets of workers' deputies began a struggle for power; the provisional government was already a result of the accord between the workers' Soviet of Petrograd and the imperial Duma.

3. Simultaneously appeared the Shop and Factory Committees, which took into their own hands the economic struggle and took the lead of the extraordinary wave of strikes. The Shop and Factory Committees introduced the eight hour day by a simple declaration; they watched over the labor conditions and in general fulfilled the rôle of unions. These committees were confronted with many other questions, such as the question of production, workers' control, raw materials, fuel, the sabotage of the contractors and proprietors of the factories, etc., questions which played a decisive rôle in the October Revolution.

4. Since the first days of March commenced the feverish work of creation, organization and consolidation of the unions. With their growth, the unions slowly assumed control over the Shop and
Factory Committees in the economic domain, leaving to them only the limited domain of production.

THE PREPARATIONS OF THE BOURGEOISIE

The March Revolution, even though it opened the road of organization and creation to the toiling masses, had overthrown nothing but czarism; the whole State apparatus with its functionaries, the whole capitalist system with its monstrous consequences: the anarchy in production, exploitation of the masses, capitalist profits, decisive influence over the governmental apparatus by the organizations of contractors and industrials, private property of the means of production, etc.—all that remained intact.

The manufacturers and industrialists painfully consented to democratic reforms; but they became absolutely intractable when the question of the essence of their privileges and prerogatives arose.

From the first days of the March Revolution the working class and its "absurd aspirations" became the object of a furious hatred on the part of the contractors and manufacturers: these gentry understood perfectly well that the Revolution once begun could not be stopped half-way, that one of the principal classes, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, must be master of the situation. And the bourgeoisie began to act.

First of all, it took possession of all the State institutions; it took possession of the State apparatus itself, knowing full well what decisive rôle
this apparatus plays in the class struggle. It immediately proceeded with the creation of all-Russian organizations of employers, embracing thousands of enterprises with millions of workers. It carried on, through its press, a violent campaign against the "usurping" tendencies and aspirations of the workers, accusing them of anarchism, demoralization, etc.

It concluded a pact with the Menshevik and the Social-Revolutionists, obliging these socialists—as Miliukov frankly reveals in his History of the Russian Revolution—to defend the bourgeois revolution. It proceeded with the systematic closing down of those plants and factories in which the workers were more revolutionary, in order to subdue these workers by hunger. It made a pact with the officers' corps preparing them to crush with arms the advancing Revolution.

WORKERS' CONTROL BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

With the month of May 1917 commenced the attacks of the bourgeoisie: but these movements took on a more insolent character after the unfortunate uprising of the workers and soldiers in Petrograd on the 3rd and 5th of July.

July, August and September saw a ferocious economic struggle. The employers closed their enterprises. The workers reopened them. If the employer offered any resistance, the workers' red guard threw him out of the factory.
When a manufacturer declared that he had no more raw materials or money, a commission of control, elected by the workers, studied his books, verified his treasury, learned from the bank the state of his account and examined to what extent the closing down of the enterprise was inevitable.

During this period workers' control was not an empty word, but a question of life and death for the working class. The question was put thus: closing of the enterprise, stopping production, simply meant—to kill the Revolution; while to prevent this shut-down, meant to save the Revolution and its conquests.

Thus the question of the running of every enterprise became a general question which interested the whole working class. The economic strikes, the strikes as a means of struggle lost at this epoch all of their force of attack, for the employers themselves provoked the workers to go out on strike in order to demoralize production, to lessen the products of the factories and to lay all responsibility on the workers in the eyes of the army and the great mass of the people.

THE NECESSITY OF OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The unions, the shop and factory committees understood these provocative tactics of the employers. In August and September we sent broadcast the motto: "No Strikes!" for the conflict between the workers and employers could not be solved by any particular union or in a separate industry,
but only by the whole, from the viewpoint of production within the limits of the State.

The sharp and intermittent economic conflicts of the strike battle, unproductive and without an issue, the offensive tactics of the masters, the feverish banding and organization of the bourgeoisie, the acts of the generals, the utilization by the bourgeoisie of the whole State apparatus against the workers, all this brought forward before the unions the problem of power.

The theory and practice of the Mensheviki and the Social-Revolutionists extolling collaboration with the bourgeoisie but in reality leaving the workers at the mercy of the employers, obtained the majority at the All-Russian Conference of the unions on June 17th, 1917, but they were completely discredited in the month of August, 1917. The economic struggles became sharper and sharper (the strike of the leather workers in and around Moscow, 100,000 striking for three months; the great conflicts in the Ural Mountains, in the Donetz basin, in Petrograd, in Central Russia, etc.) taught the great laboring masses to think straight, to think politically.

The Russian unions, in accord with the Bolshevik party, raised the battle-cry: "ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS!" understanding clearly that all questions concerning the relations between the classes had to be solved on the national arena, i. e. by a new Revolution.

Thus, even the logic of the economic struggle led the Russian unions to the October Revolution. The
unions found themselves face to face with the problem of power; it arose before them as the problem of saving the Russian Revolution, and its creator, the Russian Proletariat.

THE UNIONS ON THE MORROW OF THE REVOLUTION

The unions and shop committees furnished and formed the frame of the workers' columns which made the October Revolution. The Russian Communist party inspired and led them.

The unions and the shop committees formed the companies of attack; they organized a special guard to watch over the safety of the factories. The unions put at the disposal of the new government their forces and their technical means and appealed to the workers to put themselves to work when the victory was assured. Thanks to the unions, the conquest of power was accomplished in two directions. On one side, all of the political institutions were occupied and their apparatus was destroyed; on the other side, the unions and the factory committees put their hand on the apparatus of production.

The difficulties appeared from the first days of the Revolution. Certain shop and factory committees understood of the Revolution as a simple transformation of the factory to the workers who work in it. Such anarchic aspirations, very strong during the first period of the October Revolution, found an energetic opposition from all the centralized
unions. Already before the October Revolution the unions pronounced themselves against the parceling up of production. As soon as the victory was certain, the unions and the soviets of workers' deputies established the central organisms of direction in industry.

Thus the Supreme Council of National Economy was founded, after that the councils of popular economy in the departments and districts and the provincial committees for the different branches of industry. All of the organs created by the unions undertook, on one side, to put in application the nationalization of industry, and on the other side, assumed the direction of the nationalized enterprises.

By participating constantly in the work of the directive organs of industry, by controlling their activity, the unions were led little by little to concentrate all of their attention on the problem of labor, wages and the general upbuilding of the Proletarian State.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN RUSSIA

It is necessary to clearly show the particular characteristics of the Russian unions in order to understand their rôle and their importance.

In Russia, the unions are not built on a narrow trade basis. A metal worker working, for example, in a weaving factory is, a member of the textile union; while the carpenter, working in a metal
factory, is a member of the metal workers' union. That means that not only the manual workers, but the clerks and technicians, too, working in a metalurgical enterprise, belong to the metal workers union.

This form of organization was very difficult to establish. The personnel of the offices and the technicians, especially the latter, did not want at any price to be incorporated in the same union with the workers. Some of them declared that it was not becoming that graduated engineers should mix with and disappear in the large grey mass. But the unions resolutely and with insistence declared themselves against all kinds of "craft unions." The engineers and the whole personnel were obliged to enter the proletarian ranks. Now in the metal workers' union there exists a section of engineers and mechanics; the same in the textile union, in the union of chemical products, and elsewhere.

The most obstinate resistance was offered by the physicians. They protested in the most categorical manner against the idea of one only union, where the physicians and attendants of the hospitals and drug-stores would be members.

To be in the same union with a nurse, or—what horror!—a laundress, working in the hospital constantly, seemed to them an outrage against science and the university. But the fire of the Revolution melted much greater prejudices. The prejudices of the physicians were melted as well. To-day they form, together with the hospital and ambulance
service personnel, one only union: that of the public health workers.

The cooperative union of production in Russia is built along the following line: in the base, the SHOP and FACTORY COMMITTEE, elected every six months by the workers and employees in an enterprise. The assembly of the committees of one city or a district elect the DISTRICT COMMITTEE. The conference of shop delegates of the factories of one department, elect the DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE and the national congress elects the CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE UNION OF PRODUCTION. In the treasury of the Central Committee enter 50% of the dues of all members.

Outside of this Union of Unions in a vertical sense, there exists another Union of Unions in a horizontal sense. In the districts, a district union bureau, in the departments, a Soviet of Unions; and in the center the Soviet of the All-Russian Unions.

WORKERS' CONTROL IN THE REVOLUTION

The October Revolution triumphed by inscribing on its banner this watchword: "Peace, land and workers' control!"

But we must always bear in mind that during the first day that followed the October Revolution, workers' control implied only a LIMITATION of the private property and not its ABOLITION. The control over production could not be realized integrally before having in advance decided the most
fundamental question: Who is the master of the factory?

When the workers took the power in October, 1917, everywhere they felt themselves as the masters of the factories.

Since then workers’ control had to transform itself and become workers’ management (administration). But workers’ management is a new form of organization of production; it changed all the previous relations and put the unions face to face with new problems.

After the October Revolution the economic strikes ceased: the workers, having set in motion a mighty power, forced the bosses to give them new rates of pay. If the employer refused to submit to the demands of the union, his enterprise was immediately confiscated and made collective property, i. e., nationalized. The strike as an economic struggle disappeared by this fact. None but political strikes ever broke out, by means of which some of the moderate elements (clerks, engineers, physicians, etc.) attempted to resist the October Revolution. The unions could not remain indifferent before these strikes, directed against the Social Revolution. During the days of civil war, the strongest labor organizations (in Petrograd, Moscow, etc.) resolutely declared themselves against such strikes.

Let us notice here that it was precisely on this question of strikes against the Revolution that the workers and officials were divided into two camps. While all of the workers—except the printers,—were for the October Revolution and against all
strikes, all of the commercial and bank employes, the whole technical personnel, all the representatives of the liberal professions were against the October Revolution. In Moscow, in Petrograd, we saw engineers’ strikes, doctors’ strikes, directed against the workers and the power conquered by them. This profoundly irritated the workers and the abyss that was dug then between functionaries and workers, was filled only during the last few months, and not completely at that.

ARE THE UNIONS STILL NECESSARY?

What do unions represent since the conquest of the power by the proletariat? Are they really necessary in the actual conditions? Immediately after the October Revolution some comrades felt doubtful on this subject. They reasoned thus: the unions were organizations of combat against capitalist exploitation. Capitalist exploitation once having disappeared, the unions should disappear as well. They should disappear, for in their place have come the political councils of workers’ deputies, much larger organizations and capable of fulfilling economic functions as well.

Others thought that the unions should disappear making room for the Shop and Factory Committees. But the revolutionary experiences and the needs of the masses showed that the unions not only are not superfluous after the Social Revolution but that they are the pillars of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

From the beginning we drew the line of demarc-
ation between the factory committees, the unions and the Soviets of workers’ deputies. The Soviets of workers’ deputies are the organs of power. They are the expression of the workers’ dictatorship; they are the form that the proletarian State has taken in a determined phase of the development of the social struggle; during the transition period between capitalism and Communism. But the State is a passing phenomenon. The State, under the Soviet form, as under all other forms, must disappear together with the disappearance of the classes. Thus the closer we approach Communism, the more the Soviet system extends and consolidates itself, its character as a proletarian apparatus of defense and attack will disappear, for this apparatus can exist only as long as the class struggle lasts. With the affirmation of the workers’ power, the center of gravity of the Soviets is displaced and passes from the political domain into the economic domain, for whatever the form of social groupings will be, a centralized apparatus for the organization of production and distribution is necessary.

While the Soviet activity must pass little by little into the economic domain, the work of the unions, since the first day of the Social Revolution, becomes sharply an economic task. The question of pay, of labor conditions are inseparable from production itself. The productive forces of the country, at the disposal of working class, become the object of preoccupation of the particular unions. By organizing the work, they are organizing production itself; they become, so to speak, the spinal cord of the
economic apparatus. So the role of the unions cannot but grow from day to day and the future of the labor movement at once becomes clear. The further we go away from capitalism and we approach Communism, the more will the unions merge with the economic organs of the Soviet Republic, which are already created with the aid of the unions and thus a unique system of economic organisms is created which distributes labor and production.

In socialist society, the functions of the unions change radically; all forms of labor organizations lose their specific characters. The political party of the proletariat, the unions, the political Councils, all unite organically, are joined together and intersected. A new and unique economic organization is created, which is the synthesis of all the forms which the labor movement takes.

THE FUNCTION OF THE RUSSIAN LABOR UNIONS

This is the essence of the development of the divers forms of the labor movement. This development will be the result of the labor organizations, during a whole historic period whose duration cannot be determined, for it depends on the march, more or less rapid, of the Social Revolution the world over and the definite liberation of humanity from capitalist oppression.

The Russian unions, like the rest of the labor organizations, find themselves in the just indicated evolution. In order to understand the sense in
which the movement orientates itself, let us enumerate the functions of the Russians. Here are these functions:

1. They fix the pay;
2. They form the organs of direction in industry (Council of National Economy, Committees for direction in the nationalized enterprises, etc.);
3. They fix the conditions of labor;
4. They form all the organisms occupied with the protection of labor;
5. They form, through the military bureaus of victualling, the detachments and columns of supply; these columns count tens of thousands of workers in all provinces, who make propaganda among the peasants and help provision the starved cities;
6. They elect their representatives to the organisms that supervise supply (inspection of supply);
7. They elect the members of the “peasant and labor inspection” who participate in the control of the activities of the State organs;
8. They furnish the workers with working suits;
9. They constitute the centers of education and culture among their members;
10. They watch that the principle of obligatory labor shall be strictly applied;
11. In collaboration with the Supreme Council of National Economy and its local organs, they determine the general principles of the economic policies;
12. They participate in the distribution of lodgings and apartments;
13. They delegate their representatives to all the State commissions;
14. They watch through their organisms over the maintenance of order and discipline in the shops and factories;
15. They elect their representatives to the “commune of consumption”, etc.

I tried to enumerate the functions of the unions, but I could not mention them all. One must always bear in mind that the unions were born, developed and consolidated during a period of extreme effervescence, in a period of struggle and combat; the unions acted energetically every time the Soviet Republic was threatened with danger. Then they mobilized 70 per cent. of the members of their committees of direction; these members formed the frame of the army and there they played the rôle of cement among the large masses of soldiers. The continuous combat against international imperialism, the permanent danger of counter-revolution in the interior, have forced the Russian unions to always make extreme efforts and to send their best workers to the different fronts. The Russian unions are not organisms of power; however their resolutions (mostly touching upon questions of the toilers’ life and labor) are definite resolutions and always receive the sanction of the corresponding organs of power.

WITH THE REVOLUTION

In this enumeration that we just made and which is far from being complete, one sees that the Rus-
sian unions fulfil a whole series of State functions. That is very natural; in the workers' State the labor organizations must by all means exercise such State functions.

But that which seems so natural to us, was strongly contested by the Mensheviki who proclaimed forthwith the independence of the labor movement. They reasoned as follows: "The October Revolution is not a Socialist Revolution, but a form of the bourgeois Revolution. The Soviet Republic is not a workers' republic, but—here they lack clarity—a passing formation which must degenerate into a petit-bourgeois Republic. This Revolution, not being a socialist one and the State not being a workers' State, the unions, as class organizations, must hold a position of combat towards the Soviets, they must be independent from them and must content themselves with the protection of labor, without assuming other economic or political functions."

To what extent does this viewpoint correspond to the viewpoint of the Russian proletariat? This can easily be seen by these divers facts: in the All-Russian conference of the unions held during the month of June, 1917, the Mensheviki and the Social-Revolutionary group, which defended the same viewpoint, had 55% of the delegates; at the "democratic conference" (September, 1917) 37% of the delegates; at the first labor union congress (January, 1918) 21%; at the second (January, 1919) 9%; at the third congress (April, 1920) only 6%.

The great masses of the working class do not oc-
cupy themselves with such "profound" reasoning, being too busy determining what kind of Revolution this one should be. Having taken the power, they aspire to use it in order to realize their social interests.

Is the October Revolution a socialist revolution or not? There is no sense in discussing this question! We send the amateurs of abstract discussions to the imperialists of all countries and their press. International capitalism and its literary mercenaries know why they hate Soviet Russia and the Russian proletariat; they know it much better than these invalid politicians who have come out of the socialist ranks.

NO REVOLUTION WITHOUT THE UNIONS

An overwhelming majority of the Russian unions have adopted the Communist viewpoint. How is phenomenon to be explained? Not because it has been forced on them, certainly. It suffices to point out that the Russian unions count over 5,000,000 members, while the Communist party has only 600,000.

It is a stupid nonsense, as a well-known Russian writer, Gleb Uspensky has said, to think that 600,000 men can impose their will upon 5,000,000 and that those five million mechanically impose their régime upon 100 million Russian peasants. No régime can exist that does not reflect the interests of a determined class, if it is not the expression of

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the hopes and aspirations of a determined social group which plays a decisive rôle in production. Only the eternal fog-dwellers, the old women of socialism, can imagine that a State can exist without a social foundation. What social group has found expression of its interests in the Soviet form of State? Is it the Russian bourgeoisie? You can ask them yourself. They will very quickly answer you in an entirely different manner. Is it the Russian peasant then? But Otto Bauer and Kautsky have shown that the peasants are against the Soviets. Then, is it the Proletariat? No, say the Mensheviki and the Social Revolutionists, the workers, too, are against the Soviet power.

We thus come to an unhoped for discovery: there is a State of 130 million inhabitants, against which have declared themselves the bourgeoisie, the peasants and the workers. The Soviet régime has no support whatever, and in spite of all this, for three whole years the united forces of the international counter-revolution and the Russian counter-revolution are vainly trying to overthrow it. Even the State of Monaco has a determined social foundation; only Russia has none. This is a miracle, nothing less.

To these absurd conclusions shall come every one who explains everything by his malignity against the Bolsheviki, instead of analysing the events and forces which choke each other and fight. However, this thing easily explains itself; the Bolsheviki have acquired a preponderating influence
in the labor movement because they express plainly and methodically the interests of the classes which struggle and labor. The Revolution would have been impossible in Russia if even before the month of October, 1917, the Bolsheviks did not have the immense majority in all unions, for it is impossible to accomplish a social revolution outside of the unions or against their will.

Only children can imagine that during the Revolution one can do without the unions or that the communist influence in the labor movement is an accidental and passing phenomenon. In the beginning of the 1917 Revolution the Bolsheviks were in the minority in the unions; but they did not think of leaving them in order to form others, small, but very proper and very pure ones. The Bolsheviks said: "We are in minority, therefore, we must double our efforts of work in the unions, for if our theory is correct and we must win the toiling masses, we shall conquer the unions as well, which are the organizations of these masses. On the contrary, if we cannot conquer the unions, i.e. the toiling masses, it shows that our theory is not worth a penny, for it evidently is in contradiction with the tendencies of the labor movement.” By long, tenacious and methodical work, the Bolsheviks obtained a majority in the labor unions, and that conquest would have been impossible if the interests of the great mass of workers were opposed to the theory and practice of the Russian Communist Party.
WAR ON THE IMPERIALISTS

The October Revolution has made the international political problem very acute; the Russian unions found themselves face to face with this problem.

The October Revolution was treated with equal hostility by all imperialists—the Entente imperialists and the German imperialists. Since the end of 1917 toiling Russia has been encircled by the fire of the imperialists' armies. The internal uprisings, organized and supported by the Entente, the Brest-Litovsk peace which was imposed on us, the grabbing of Ukraine, of Siberia, Archangel, Caucasus, of Turkestan, the southern provinces, all this forced our unions to ask themselves: "What are the unions in the other countries doing?" How do they react? What have they done to break the chains of Brest-Litovsk? What have the unions of the Entente countries done in order to make impossible the monstrous Versailles peace which falls upon its authors as an eternal shame? What did they do, after all, against the war machine put in operation in August, 1914, which still continued to mutilate human bodies, to scatter to pieces the brains of tens of millions of men on the bloodstained fields of Europe?

We in Russia saw with horror, bitterness and sadness enough to break one's heart, how certain unions swallowed the Brest-Litovsk peace, and how
others did not shudder before the spectacle of the
cynical peace of Versailles!

The Revolution taught us to look far beyond our
national frontiers, and we knew that the working
class and the whole of humanity with it, would not
come out from the impasse into which they were
driven by the war, unless the labor organizations
are obliged to do on international scale what they
have been doing on national scale.

When we saw, after the conclusion of the Ver-
sailles peace, the international organization for ex-
ploration of the small and weak nations, which
bears the nice name of “League of Nations”, create
an International Bureau of Labor, composed of
workers, masters and representatives of govern-
ments, we asked ourselves: “But what are the
workers doing in this den of vultures calling itself
League of Nations? What are they doing there?”

When we saw at last the creation in Berne and
Amsterdam of the International Federation of
Trade Unions, at the head of which were the men
who collaborated in the International Labor Bureau
of the “League of Nations”, we asked ourselves:
“Can we consider those men who make common
cause with the authors of the Versailles peace and
so many other monstrous crimes, as representatives
of labor?”

The Russian union replied: No! And they took
the initiative for the creation of a true International
of Labor Unions, which should have neither direct
or indirect relations with the League of Nations or
any of its sections. Thus on the 15th of July, 1920, was born on the initiative of the Russian unions, "The International Council of Revolutionary Unions" United by ideas with the Communist party on national scale, the Russian unions believe that it is necessary to establish a close connection and strong ties with the center of the international communist movement, the Third Communist International.

"OUR GREAT CRIME"

Comrades, permit me to conclude my report by the general characteristics of the situation in which the Russian proletariat finds itself to-day. The situation of the workers is extremely difficult. Three years of imperialist war, three years of blockade have terribly weakened the economic apparatus and the proletariat of Russia.

Our sufferings are due to the blockade and to the fact, that the great cities and the industrial centers are being so often separated from the Ukraine, rich in wheat, or from the coal fields of Donetz, or from Siberia with its rye and butter, or from Turkestan with its cotton. Petrograd which on the eve of the Revolution had 2,700,000 inhabitants, now has no more than 900,000. The metal workers' union of Petrograd which in August, 1917, had 200,000 members, has only 50,000 now. The textile workers' union which during the same period had 36,000 members in Petrograd, now has only 10,000. The same phenomenon is noticed in the
other industrial centers, like Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Tula, etc. It is because food is scarce and we cannot transport the Siberian wheat on the Volga, while in Ukraine, it is difficult to transport because we have to repel constant attacks from all the unchained dogs of the Entente.

The Russian worker suffers from hunger. From the little supplies we have, he foregoes one part for the army and the other for the children. No matter how poor our provisions are, the children up to the age of 16, receive in all schools breakfast and dinner. When the unscrupulous demagogues point to the starved Russian worker and tell us, who live in these tortures of hunger, that we are responsible for all this, we reply to them: "Yes, we are guilty! Our great crime is to have made the Revolution, not having been too gentle with the bourgeois property, having no particular sympathy for international capitalism, having dared to put a sacrilegious hand on the sacred bourgeois régime. Yes, our "crimes" are great. But we, the Russian workers, are proud of these crimes. We do not ask for aid and compassion from our class enemies and of their lackeys. But we ask you: "Who is responsible for the suffering of the Russian proletariat? Whose fault is that our means of transporation have been destroyed, that Russia is weakened economically?"

The Russian workers, with a sublime heroism and with a sublime spirit of sacrifice, are dying on all fronts defending their conquests, trying to break the blockade with which international capitalism
starves our bodies and tries to strangle the Revolution.

We are forced to suffer hunger and cold, but the Russian worker never loses courage. The Revolution is not a plaything with which one amuses oneself and gets tired of. Neither is it made to order; socialism does not fall from the skies already made. It suffices to read the history of the birth of the bourgeois order in France, to read the bourgeois historians Thiers, Taine, Sorel, Aulard and others, in order to understand what the Russian Revolution represents, which has aroused the great masses of the people. The birth of the new order is painful, very painful. The Russian worker feels it in all his daily life.

But we never look back, we look for our salvation not in the forms and relations of Western Europe, which are falling in ruins; we always look ahead, with a deep hope and a boundless faith.

Capitalist society is decomposing and only Communism can save mankind. Let the bourgeois press sneer at us, let the gentry that call themselves socialists viciously laugh at us, the Russian proletariat shall surge forward and above the sneers, for it has chosen as a watchword those great words of Dante, with which our great teacher Karl Marx ends the first volume of his “Capital”: “Go your way, and let people say what they please!”