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The Red International of Labour Unions

The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU, or in the Russian abbreviation Profintern) was founded in Moscow in 1921 and dissolved there sixteen years later. So far it has been rather neglected in the recent historiography of the international labour organizations, appearing almost only as a subsidiary aspect of the Communist International (CI).¹

People hold widely differing views about its importance. Geoffrey Swain writes, "The fate of the Profintern will never be more than a footnote in the history of the international labour movement - it never amounted to much [...]".² On the other hand E.H. Carr argues that "The Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern) was in the nineteen-twenties by far the most powerful and important of the auxiliary organizations which gravitated around the Comintern. It was, indeed, the only one which could claim some independence, and was more than a mere subsidiary organ".³ Swain's judgement is based on the failure of the RILU's attempts to build up an influential Communist trade union movement in Germany, Carr's on "the large organization of the Profintern, and its extensive representation abroad, in which it far surpassed any other of the auxiliaries" of the Comintern.⁴

There can be no doubt about its importance in the organizational development of the international Communist movement. The RILU, with its national sections, was an important means of securing and increasing the influence of the Communist parties. Nor should it be forgotten that it represented a cadre reservoir for the parties. But also from the point of view of the relationship between the Bolsheviks and the revolutionary Syndicalists it had an importance of its own. It is frequently forgotten that - besides the politically more numerous and more influential left-wing Social Democracy - they represented Communism's second root, not only in southern Europe, but also in the USA and in Latin America. The Syndicalists found the way to Communism via the RILU, and it is certain that revolutionary Syndicalism influenced many of the Communist movement's attitudes to trade union questions.⁵ Naturally enough, despite all the peculiarities accounted for by its officials' self-interest and by national differences, the RILU's development by and large followed the various stages of the Comintern's development, which, in its turn, was determined by Soviet development. The first phase, from 1921 to 1923, can be regarded as a sort of "revolutionary consolidation", during which relations with the Syndicalists were clarified and the programme points developed by the Comintern at its first Congresses were adopted. The second phase covered the years from 1924 to 1928 and corresponded to the "right" course in the Comintern and the Soviet Union, after the transition to "Socialism in one country". However, in this phase emphasis was placed not only on the efforts towards unity on an international trade union level; there was even public questioning of the RILU's right to exist. However, its leadership's self-interest prevented its dissolution. From 1928 onwards the "ultra-left" course followed in fighting "Social Fascism" led to the abandonment of any attempt at trade union unity. Separate unions were created everywhere. However, while their numbers grew, their influence declined. The RILU lost importance. From 1934 onwards, during the Popular Front, there was a return to increasing Communist trade union influence. But it was now subordinated to trade union unity. The logical consequence of the new policy was the dissolution in 1937 of the RILU. Thus its entire development paralleled that of the Comintern. Even though it did have its own specific field of action, it is not possible to determine any divergent tendencies in its history.

¹ See, for example, the three sentences devoted to it by Thomas Meyer, Karl-Heinz Klär, Susanne Miller, Klaus Novy and Heinz Timmermann, *Lexikon des Sozialismus* (Cologne, 1966), p. 137, under the heading "Kommunistische Internationale". Apart from that it is referred to under the headings "Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund" (p. 273) and "RGO" (p. 533).

² Geoffrey Swain, "Was the Profintern Really Necessary?", *European History Quarterly*, No. 1, 1987, pp. 57-77, here p. 73.

³ E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924-1926*, 3 Vols., (London, 1964), Vol. 3/2, p. 938.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 939.

⁵ See, for example, Salomon Schwartz, "Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale (RGI)", in *Internationales Handwörterbuch des Gewerkschaftswesens*, 2 Vols., (Berlin, 1932), Vol. 2, pp. 1348-1359, here, p. 1350.

1. Historiography: Sources and Secondary Literature

After its dissolution the RILU's archives were sent to the Central Party Archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Today they are in the Russian Centre for the Storing and Study of Documents concerning Recent History. Important material also exists in the various parties' archives. It is also very likely that there are RILU papers in many state archives containing material on the Communist or trade union movements, particularly in trade union archives. However, no survey of any kind exists.

In view of the comparatively slight interest in the history of the RILU it is hardly surprising that its comprehensive literary production, unlike that of the CI, has not been reprinted.⁶

Besides its current publications the RILU published not only a series of anthologies containing its theses and resolutions, but also volumes in which were collected the articles and speeches by its General Secretary, Losovsky. Access to these can easily be obtained through bibliographies.⁷ Although the RILU is mentioned in many of the source publications published about the Comintern and the various Communist parties, there are hardly any devoted to the RILU.⁸

A bibliographical study devoted to the RILU was started in the *Annali*, but it was not continued as promised, so really only the time of the founding of the RILU was dealt with.⁹ The only detailed bibliography available, complete with an informative introduction, is that for the RILU's publications in Germany (which includes a large amount of the material in German published by the RILU leadership).¹⁰

Of course, many Communists' memoirs refer to the RILU. However, there are far too many titles to mention here, nor has anyone, so far, searched the memoirs for such references. Usually the RILU is just mentioned in passing, since normally whatever work the author did for the RILU played only a minor role in his life. There are no memoirs written by officials whose main work was at the RILU headquarters, with the possible exception of Alfred Rosmer, one of its leaders during the founding phase, who published a report about his time in Moscow (1920-1924).¹¹ However, there are autobiographies by two important activists employed

⁶ There is however a re-issue of the German edition of the RILU periodical *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale* on microfiches in the *Bibliothek der deutschen Sprache, Serie 2* (Hildesheim, etc., 1980). Single publications were also published again in the train of the 1968 movement; in Germany, for instance, A. Losowski, *Das Aktionsprogramm der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale* (Berlin, 1922), in id., *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale, mit Beiträgen von L. Trotsky, J. Moneta, P. Frank* (Frankfurt, 1978).

⁷ Witold S. Sworakowski, *The Communist International and its Front Organisations. A Research Guide and Checklist of Holdings In American and European Libraries* (Stanford, 1965), pp. 358-401; Thomas T. Hammond, *Soviet Foreign Relations and World Communism. A Selected, Annotated Bibliography of 7000 Books in 30 Languages* (Princeton, 1965), pp. 983-995. A section about the RILU is also promised for the second volume of the posthumously printed Comintern bibliography by Vilém Kahan, currently in preparation.

⁸ Thus the First RILU Congress is mentioned in Colette Chambelland and Jean Maitron (eds.), *Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et communisme. Les archives de Pierre Monatte 1914-1924* (Paris, 1968), pp. 286-321. Jean Charles provides a sort of source collection with comments in "Les débuts de l'Internationale syndicale rouge et le mouvement ouvrier français (1920-1923)", *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez*, Nos. 25-26 (1978), pp. 161-199, and No. 28 (1978), pp. 125-164.

⁹ Giorgio Migliardi, "L'Internazionale dei sindacati rossi Profintern", *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, Vol. 9 (1967), pp. 325-347.

¹⁰ Dagmar Goldbeck, *Veröffentlichungen der Roten Gewerkschaftsinternationale in Deutschland 1920-1933. Bibliographie* (Berlin [GDR], 1987).

¹¹ Alfred Rosmer, *Moscou sous Lénine* (Paris, 1953).

in professions in which the RILU organized international unions, sailors and teachers.¹²

There is also almost a complete lack of biographies about RILU functionaries. Although there really ought to be one about the RILU General Secretary, Losovsky, it is in fact two other RILU leaders who have attracted the attention of researchers, though more because of their later activities in the Trotskyist opposition: besides the already mentioned Rosmer, the Spaniard Andreu Nin.¹³ Once again it is true to say that references to their activities in the RILU can be found in the descriptions of the lives of many Communist Party functionaries.¹⁴

As for the historiography of the RILU as an international organization, as far as modern historiography is concerned, most attention has naturally been paid to it in eastern Europe,¹⁵ that is, if one ignores the work of contemporary Social Democratic trade unionists,¹⁶ which, however, is important, because there is still so little scholarly literature. This also applies to the book by Nin, for many years the Deputy General Secretary of the RILU.¹⁷ Unfortunately two dissertations written in the West about the RILU's beginnings have never been printed.¹⁸ However, a survey of a sort can be gathered from the relevant sections of E.H. Carr's monumental history of the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Apart from this there are only various essays on particular aspects of RILU history (some of which are based on the already mentioned monographs).²⁰

¹² Georges Cogniot, *Parti pris. Cinquante ans au service de l'humanisme réel*, Vol. 1: *D'une guerre à l'autre* (Paris, 1976); George Hardy, *Those Stormy Years. Memories of the Fight for Freedom on Five Continents* (London, 1956). Both were very involved with Stalinism, so that their accounts have significant gaps.

¹³ Christian Gras, *Alfred Rosmer (1877-1964) et le mouvement révolutionnaire international* (Paris, 1971); Víctor Alba, *El Marxismo a Catalunya 1919-1939*, Vol. 3: *Andreu Nin* (Barcelona, 1974); Pelai Pagès, *Andreu Nin: Su evolució política (1911-1937)* (Barcelona, 1975). However, in biographies of Nin, in contrast to those of Rosmer, his RILU time receives scant attention.

¹⁴ E.g., in Helga and Hansgeorg Meyer, *Fritz Heckert* (Berlin [GDR], 1984), though this should be used with caution.

¹⁵ Cf. the following monographs: G.M. Adibekow, *Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale. Grundriß der Geschichte der Geschichte der RGI* (Berlin [GDR], 1973); B.A. Karpáčev, *Krasnyj internacional profsojuzov (Istorija vznikovenija i pervye gody dejatel'nosti Profintern, 1920-1924 gg.)* (Saratov, 1976); G.M. Adibekov, *Profintern: politika kommunistov v profsojuznom dviženii* (Moscow, 1981); Aleksander Kochański, *Czerwona Międzynarodówka Związków Zawodowych (Profintern) 1920-1937* (Warsaw, 1985).

¹⁶ Paul Olberg, *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale und die europäische Gewerkschaftsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1930); Schwartz, "Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale"; Lewis L. Lorwin, *Labor and Internationalism* (New York, 1929).

¹⁷ Andrés Nin, *Las organizaciones obreras internacionales* (Barcelona, 1978; originally Madrid, 1933).

¹⁸ Albert Reses, "The Profintern: Origins to 1923" (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, New York, 1964); Bruno Groppo, "Les origines de la politique syndicale de la troisième internationale, 1919-1921" (Thèse de doctorat, Institut d'études politiques, 1980). Both have promised monographs based on this in the immediate future.

¹⁹ E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, 3 Vols., (London, 1953), Vol. 3, pp. 201-208, 397-401, 459-462; id., *Socialism in One Country*, 3 Vols., (London, 1964), Vol. 3/1, pp. 525-597, Vol. 3/2, pp. 938-944; id., *Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929*, 3 Vols., (London, 1976), Vol. 3/1, pp. 166-192.

²⁰ C. Chambelland, "Autour du premier Congrès de l'Internationale syndicale Rouge", *Mouvement social*, No. 47 (1964), pp. 31-44; Albert Reses, "Comintern Policy Toward the World Trade-Union Movement: The First Year", in John Shelton Curtiss (ed.), *Essays in Russian and Soviet History. In Honour of Geroid Tanquary Robinson* (Leiden, 1963), pp. 237-252; Aleksander

Of course, far more comprehensive is, on the one hand, the literature in which the RILU is dealt with as a component of the Comintern and, on the other hand, especially that dealing with the RILU's national sections, either within the framework of the trade union policy of the Communist party in question, or within the framework of the general trade union history of the relevant country.²¹ This is particularly applicable in cases where the RILU section consisted mainly of the Communist trade union grouping within Trade Union Councils dominated by the Social Democrats.²² However, there are hardly any specific monographs on the links between a national RILU section and the international organization.²³ So far no research has been done into the social historical aspects. Of course, here too in the historiography of various Communist parties there are references dealing with their social basis. However, in a supranational sense, so far only the Canadian historian Peterson has set up a few hypotheses about the emergence at the beginning of the century of the industrial trade unions, including the Communist trade union movement. He writes in general terms of the new unionism and relates it to revolutionary Syndicalism.²⁴

2. The Bolsheviks and the Trade Union Movement

The Bolsheviks saw a party-trade union relationship very much in the way Karl Kautsky described it for the 1906 party congress of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; SPD) but which was only partially accepted by the congress. Kautsky rejected "trade union neutrality", considering instead that unions should be full of "social democratic spirit" (in other words, the party claimed ideological leadership). He called for close co-operation between the two organizations; for party members to work on behalf of the party within the trade unions (later known as group and cell formation). At the same time he rejected party trade unions, meaning trade unions which really only duplicated the party. In contrast to the SPD, Russian Social

Kochański, "The International Communist Movement and the Trade Unions, 1919-1920", *Acta Poloniae Historica*, No. 24 (1971), pp. 115-134; Bruno Groppo, "La création du Conseil international des Syndicats (Moscou, juillet 1920)", *Communisme*, No. 1, 1982, pp. 5-45; Wayne Westergard-Thorpe, "Syndicalist Internationalism and Moscow, 1919-1922: The Breach", *Canadian Journal of History*, No. 3, 1979, pp. 199-234. Also the essay by Swain mentioned in note 2.

²¹ As the Anglo-Russian Committee was of such essential importance for the RILU special mention must be made of Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front. The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928* (Cambridge, 1976).

²² As an example of this cf. the following descriptions of the Communist Party of Germany's trade-union work: Lore Heer-Kleinert, *Die Gewerkschaftspolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt and New York, 1983); Eva Cornelia Schöck, *Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920-1928* (Frankfurt and New York, 1977); Freya Eisner, *Das Verhältnis der KPD zu den Gewerkschaften in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne and Frankfurt, 1977); Frank Deppe and Witich Roßmann, "Kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik in der Weimarer Republik", in Erich Matthias and Klaus Schönhoven (eds.), *Solidarität und Menschenwürde. Etappen der deutschen Gewerkschaftsgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Bonn, 1984), pp. 209-231.

²³ Most recently Kevin McDermott, *The Czech Red Unions, 1918-1929. A Study of their Relations with the Communist Party and the Moscow Internationals* (New York, 1988); Philipp S. Foner, *The T.U.E.L. to the End of the Gompers Era* (New York, 1990).

²⁴ Larry Peterson, "The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism 1900-1925", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, No. 7, 1981, pp. 41-66; the same, "Revolutionary Socialism and Industrial Unrest in the Era of the Winnipeg General Strike: The Origins of Communist Labour Unionism in Europa and North America", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, No. 13, 1984, pp. 115-131.

Democracy accepted this interpretation between 1906 and 1908.²⁵

The Bolsheviks acted consistently in demanding that the trade unions break with the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), when, immediately after the outbreak of war, they were pressing for the formation of a new, Third, International. Efforts in this direction after the 1917 October Revolution initially came to nothing because of the Civil War.²⁶ In addition to this, at first all international activities were directed towards the formation of the CI. Nor was it clear initially whether or not revolutionary trade unions were to be a part of this new International. Another problem was posed by the revolutionary Syndicalists who had formed an important part of the revolutionary anti-war forces when war broke out.²⁷

There was no unified point of view on the trade unions at the Comintern's Inaugural Congress. The opinions expressed were strongly influenced by the speakers' national experience.²⁸ The expected victory of the soviet system seemed to make irrelevant the whole trade union question, that is, the discussion about reformist trade unions.²⁹ In any event, the Congress's "regulations" called for the building of a block "within the relevant elements of Syndicalism".³⁰

However, only a few months later the Russian Communists did an about-turn. The background influencing this change of course is obvious: the defeat of the Hungarian and Bavarian Soviet Republics in summer 1919 and the re-organization of the IFTU at the end of July/beginning of August 1919 (the IFTU was now also known as the "Amsterdam International" after its domicile). This was a time of fresh impetus for its member unions. At the same time the IFTU embraced the post-war world order as laid down at Versailles, by participating in the International Labour Organization (ILO) of the League of Nations.³¹ There was a danger that the weak Communist forces would isolate themselves.

Lenin, in particular, now made a series of statements in which he said that it was necessary to work in "reactionary trade unions", too, citing as a reason the Russian experience.³² Then, at the beginning of 1920, Zinoviev, the chairman of the Comintern, put the case for the founding of a "Red International of Labour Unions", since he foresaw that "in the course of the proletarian revolution [...] the trades unions will split, just

²⁵ Geoffrey Swain, *Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement, 1906-14* (London and Basingstoke, 1983), pp. 18-21; Isaac Deutscher, *Die sowjetischen Gewerkschaften. Ihr Platz in der sowjetischen Arbeitspolitik* (Frankfurt, 1969), pp. 34-37. Lenin's position is best described in "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", in W.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13 (Moscow, 1962), pp. 94-113, here p. 108.

²⁶ Schwartz, "Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale", p. 1348; Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 3, p. 204.

²⁷ For the sake of simplicity I shall use the one word "Syndicalism" below to cover all the variants and shall not differentiate between, for instance, Anarcho-Syndicalists, Unionists or Industrialists, etc., since the differences between them were of only secondary importance for the discussions in the RILU. In any case, what I mean is the whole spectrum of organizations which, as proletarian-revolutionary trade unions, saw themselves as separate from the reformist trade unions as well as from the political parties.

²⁸ *Der I. Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale. Protokoll der Verhandlungen in Moskau vom 2. bis zum 19. März 1919* (Hamburg, 1921), pp. 15, 92f., 107.

²⁹ This was clearly expressed in Trotsky's manifesto, contrasting the new comprehensive soviet system with the incompetence of the old parties and trade unions. *Ibid.*, pp. 178s.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 192. See also p. 66.

³¹ Cf. on this the remarks in Walter Schevenels, *Fünfundvierzig Jahre Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund 1901-1945* (Brussels, s.d.), pp. 57-70.

³² See, for example, "The Tasks of the Third International", in W.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29 (Moscow, 1965), pp. 494-512, here p. 504, and the chapter "Should Revolutionaries Work in Reactionary Trade Unions?" from "'Left-Wing' Communism - an Infantile Disorder", *ibid.*, Vol. 31 (Moscow, 1966) pp. 17-118, here pp. 46-56.

as the old Social Democratic parties split". However, he wanted it to participate in the Comintern.³³ This was obviously the conception initially approved by the Bolsheviks, as can be seen from a "Letter to the Trades Unions of all Countries", published by Zinoviev for the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI).³⁴

3. The International Council of Trades and Industrial Unions

The Bolsheviks' Civil War victory meant that from spring 1920 onwards it was much easier to visit the country. Thus it was possible in June/July to arrange a series of talks, starting on 16 June with a meeting between the Russian trade unions and a delegation from the British trade unions and the Italian General Confederation of Labour (*Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*; CGdL).³⁵ They agreed about rejecting the IFTU and the necessity of a new British international union, about which further talks were needed. The British representatives had to leave, but during the following weeks a number of delegations arrived, on their way to the Second Comintern Congress: representatives of the revolutionary minority in the French CGT, Yugoslavian and Bulgarian trade unionists, representatives of British shop stewards, Syndicalists from Spain (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*; CNT) and Germany (*Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands*; FAUD) and delegates of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) from several countries.

Three points turned out to be particularly controversial at these "unofficial conferences": 1) the Bolsheviks' conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat through the Party; 2) the union of the revolutionary trade unions with the Comintern; 3) participation in the reformist trade unions. In all these points the Bolsheviks were in the minority. A series of compromises was reached. It was agreed that instead of the unions' joining the Comintern, each should be represented on the other's board, but on the question of the reformist trade unions the Bolsheviks got their way. This meant that some of the Syndicalist organizations refused to sign the closing declaration of 15 July, calling for the formation of an International Council of Trades and Industrial Unions (or International Trades Union Council, for which the Russian abbreviation is *Mežsovprof*).³⁶

Thus four days before the convening of the Second Congress of the Comintern a fait accompli existed, establishing at least the organizational framework. The political one was still the subject of violent controversies, which were aired at the Congress.

Above all there were the discussions with the Syndicalists, who were widely represented at the Congress. Although they did not reject the party's conception in principle, they were opposed to membership in the reformist trade unions. Finally the Bolsheviks managed to muster wide support for their demand: to work in them, but to create a new revolutionary Trade Union International at the same time.³⁷

The defeat the Syndicalists experienced in this way could not be softened by the fact that the Bolshevik

³³ G. Sinowjew, "Brennende Tagesfragen der internationalen Arbeiterbewegung. Die Partei und die Gewerkschaften", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 9, 1920, pp. 13-27, here p. 27.

³⁴ *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 10, 1920, pp. 259-265. In accordance with this the Third Russian Trade Union Congress in April 1920 commissioned the trade-union leadership, together with the ECCI, to form an International Trade Union Committee. Cf. Resis, "Comintern Policy", pp. 245-247; Groppo, "La création", p. 13.

³⁵ On the negotiations cf. A. Losowski, *Der Internationale Rat der Fach- und Industrieverbände (Moskau gegen Amsterdam)* (Berlin, 1920); Groppo, "La création", pp. 14-34; Kochański, "The International Communist Movement", pp. 125-128; Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 39-49; Wayne Thorpe, "The Workers Themselves". *Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913-1923* (Dordrecht, 1989), pp. 128-134.

³⁶ Printed in Losowski, *Der Internationale Rat*, pp. 74-77.

³⁷ *Der zweite Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale. Protokoll der Verhandlungen vom 19. Juli in Petrograd und vom 23. Juli bis 7. August 1920 in Moskau* (Hamburg, 1921), passim. Cf. the manifesto, "Die III. Internationale an die Gewerkschaften aller Länder", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 13, 1920, pp. 49-57; Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 50-73. On the Syndicalists cf. Thorpe, "The Workers Themselves", pp. 134-145.

leadership went out of its way to woo them.³⁸ What Thorpe wrote about the discussions at the Second World Congress was very true: "that as eager as the Bolsheviks were to secure the support of all revolutionary groups, particularly that of the syndicalists, they would nevertheless insist that the desired collaboration be on Bolshevik terms".³⁹ Indeed, during their stay in Soviet Russia the Syndicalists were able to experience at first hand the persecution of the Russian Syndicalists, which deepened the gulf between them and the Bolsheviks.

The attitude adopted by the Comintern was not free of contradiction, as Victor Serge indicates in writing: "[...] logic demanded the splitting of the trade union movement, now that the Socialist movement had been split".⁴⁰ Its behaviour can be explained only if one looks at the situation as Carr does: "It was a step taken in a moment of hot-headed enthusiasm and in the firm conviction of the imminence of the European revolution [...]".⁴¹ Zinoviev demonstrated how optimistic the Bolsheviks were when in the course of a speech to the Congress he boldly increased the membership of the unions in the Trade Union Council from eight to ten million. He was counting on the membership of the Italian trade unions, among other things.⁴²

Towards the end of the Congress the International Trade Union Council was inaugurated by the active delegates from the trade union movement. Provisional statutes were adopted and three executive officials elected, Tomsky, Rosmer, and Murphy.⁴³

On 1 August the Council published its first appeal to trade unions all over the world, asked them to join it and at the same time condemning the IFTU as the "class enemy" standing on the other side of the barricades.⁴⁴

The Council started its work with comprehensive organization and propaganda. It prepared a series of brochures in various European languages on trade union questions and started work on publishing a periodical.⁴⁵ It organized its administration, including five sections (for the European countries with Romance languages, for Germany and Central Europe, for Great Britain, for America and for the Orient) to prepare propaganda for the countries in their care and, above all, to make contacts in them. At the same time representatives were sent to a number of countries to establish offices (to the USA, Great Britain, the Far East Republic, Germany and - for an eastern office - Baku).⁴⁶

Talks were continued with other trade union delegations visiting Russia,⁴⁷ but the series of propaganda

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-149.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴⁰ Victor Serge, *Beruf: Revolutionär. Erinnerungen 1901-1917-1941* (Frankfurt, 1967), p. 166.

⁴¹ Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 3, p. 208. Knowing about the later development he can continue: "[...] and a device designed to bridge a short transition and prepare the way for the great consummation had unexpected and fatal consequences when the interim period dragged on into months and years." Cf., for example, Zinoviev's following statement made in 1924: "The RILU was founded at a moment when it seemed we would be able to break through the enemy's front with a frontal attack and swiftly conquer the trade unions [...]. It was a time when we believed we would quickly win over the majority of the workers." *Protokoll. Fünfter Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale*, 2 Vols. (Hamburg, 1924), Vol. 2, p. 912.

⁴² *Der zweite Kongreß*, pp. 637-639.

⁴³ J.T. Murphy, "Zwei Monate der Arbeit", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 14, 1920, pp. 205-215, here p. 209; the statutes are printed on pp. 210s.

⁴⁴ Printed in A. Losowski, "Amsterdam, Moskau, London", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 15, 1921, pp. 335-345, here p. 336-338.

⁴⁵ Murphy, "Zwei Monate", p. 213.

⁴⁶ W. Jarotzki, "Der internationale Gewerkschaftsrat", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 15, 1921, pp. 335-345, here p. 336-338.

⁴⁷ Murphy, "Zwei Monate", pp. 211s.; Jarotzki, "Der internationale Gewerkschaftsrat", pp. 340-344.

missions carried out by, for instance, Losovsky in Germany in autumn 1920 were even more important.⁴⁸

What was really decisive, however, was how many new members it would be possible to recruit from - especially West European - trade unions, and initially the Trade Union Council experienced two important setbacks. The British trade unions, who at the conference on 16 June 1920 had been represented only unofficially by two prominent left-wing members, were not alone in staying with the IFTU;⁴⁹ the leadership of the Italian trade unions, who had signed the appeal for the founding of the Moscow Trade Union Council, had no intention of breaking with Amsterdam.⁵⁰ This was a result of the IFTU - at a Congress in London in November 1920 - taking up a definite position against Moscow. It was not prepared to countenance any form of double membership, which frightened off even more left-wing trade union congresses (e.g. Norway's) from contacting the Trade Union Council.⁵¹ Because of this Moscow could count only on the revolutionary minorities in the trade unions, whose influence was, however, growing, especially in France, but also in Germany, thanks to the unification of the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*; KPD) and the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; USPD). It could count on some Syndicalist organizations, although their continued membership, as the previous discussions had shown, was uncertain, and it could count on unions in less influential countries such as Greece and Bulgaria.⁵²

4. The Inaugural Congress of the Red Labour Union International

On 9 January 1921 the ECCI decided that the Trade Union Council should convene an International Trade Union Conference for 1 May 1921.⁵³ In fact it did not take place till two months later (in July) and turned out to be the Inaugural Congress of the RILU. It overlapped with the Third Comintern Congress, which was held from 22 June till 12 July and pre-empted important RILU Congress resolutions.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Cf. Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 77-85. Losovsky, who had been intensely involved in the conferences leading to the foundation of the Trade Union Council, appeared here still in the name of the Russian trade unions, but in the following months became the dominant spokesman of the Trade Union Council. At the ECCI session on 28 November he was delegated to the Executive Bureau as the Comintern representative. See "Sitzungen des Exekutivkomitees der Kommunistischen Internationale", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 15, 1921, pp. 400-417, here p. 417. In May 1921 Tomsky was relieved of his post as General Secretary of the Council because of his behaviour during the discussion on the Russian trade unions, and replaced by Losovsky. See Resis, "The Profintern", p. 112.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-93; Swain, "Was the Profintern", p. 61.

⁵⁰ Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 88-90, 213-219; Swain, "Was the Profintern", pp. 61f. The background to the conflict with the CGL leadership was, of course, Communist criticism of its behaviour during the strike and sit-in movement in North Italy during September 1920.

⁵¹ Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 100-105, 107f. Cf. also the Trade Union Council's Open Letter to the London congress, "To the World Congress of the Yellow Trade Union Leaders in London", which was full of violent verbal attacks.

⁵² Murphy, "Zwei Monate", pp. 214s.; Jarotzki, "Der internationale Gewerkschaftsrat", pp. 344s.; "Der Drang nach Moskau", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 16, 1921, pp. 372-376. For the situation in November, cf. the ECCI and Trade Union Council's call to the workers of Great Britain: "An die Arbeiter Großbritanniens", *ibid.*, No. 16, 1921, pp. 345-354, here p. 352.

⁵³ "Aus den Protokollen des Exekutivkomitees", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 16, 1921, pp. 425-440, here p. 426.

⁵⁴ However, even the fourth Russian trade union congress (17 to 25 May 1921), at which Losovsky spoke about the international trade-union movement, had laid down some guidelines. The intention was to promote the unification of all revolutionary trade unions in the Comintern. However, if there were too much

As if to demonstrate "the Comintern's leading role", to quote an ECCI letter written on the eve of the Congress,⁵⁵ the Comintern's trade union discussion began on 3 July, a few hours before the International Trade Union Congress started. (So that delegates sent to both events could attend all the sessions, they were subsequently arranged at different times.)⁵⁶

In the forefront of the Congress were the discussions with the various Syndicalist representatives dealing with the trade unions' independence as intended by the French Charte d'Amiens and with the rejection of working in the reformist trade unions. This was contrasted with the necessity of "forming Communist cells" in the reformist mass organizations and with the struggle to take them over. In the trade union theses proposed by the trade union commission and universally adopted on the last day of the conference, this question of principle did still play a leading role, but they also suggested a programme of action for the RILU and for representation on each other's executives.⁵⁷

The RILU Inaugural Congress ran from 3 to 19 July.⁵⁸ On its agenda were: the Trade Union Council's report; the world-wide economic crisis and the mission of the trade unions; the relationship between the RILU and the Comintern; the control of production (the control of workers); factory committees (works councils); unemployment; organizational matters; women. Of course, the name of the new international trade union alliance also had to be decided. It was attended by 380 delegates from 41 countries (336 with voting rights, the rest in an advisory capacity only). They all had equal rights as representatives of the few Communist-led state central offices, of a few Syndicalist organizations and, above all, of the revolutionary minorities in the IFTU trade unions. This enabled the Congress to claim that it represented 17 million of a total of 40 million trade unionists, in other words nearly half of them. But as Resis wrote: "Membership figures of the RILU are unreliable, because of the ill-defined criteria for determining membership. The so-called minority movements within the reformist unions consisted of actual or supposed Communist sympathizers who in many cases were not formally organized in a Profintern-affiliated group. Membership figures published by various Communist sources seldom tally with each other. For example, the figures published in the final report the *Mežsovprof* [...] were much lower than those Rosmer presented on the floor of the Congress [...] Since the 'minority movements' were so loosely defined, the credentials of the 380 delegates [...] were certainly spurious."⁵⁹ It seems almost consistent with this that the situation caused a number of delegates to feel that they, and their votes, were caught in the political

resistance, the Russian delegates were to accept a formally independent International, too, whose relationship to the Comintern would be guaranteed by their having representatives on each other's boards. Another resolution was that the Russian trade unions were to apply for membership in the International Trade Secretariats. Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 111-116.

⁵⁵ *Protokoll des III. Kongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale (Moskau, 22. Juni bis 12. Juli 1921)* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 4-11, here p. 7.

⁵⁶ For the trade union discussion at the Third Comintern Congress, cf. Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 117-132 and Annette Neumann, "Die Bedeutung des III. Kongresses der KI 1921 für die Aneignung marxistisch-leninistischer Positionen in der Gewerkschaftspolitik", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, No. 5, 1986, pp. 579-591. Of course, questions concerning the trade unions were frequently dealt with under other items on the agenda, too - especially when Comintern tactics were discussed - without its making any difference to the content of the trade union item.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1057.

⁵⁸ The collected daily bulletins documenting the progress of the Congress for the delegates were later published as the minutes of the Congress. A Russian, a French and a German edition have been traced. Cf. Sworakowski, *The Communist International*, p. 381; Hammond, *Soviet Foreign Relations*, p. 989; Goldbeck, *Veröffentlichungen*, p. 32. See also *Resolutionen, Statuten, Manifeste und Aufrufe des ersten internationalen Kongresses der Roten Fach- und Industrieverbände, 3. Juli bis 19. Juli 1921* (Bremen, 1921), and A. Losowski, "Der erste internationale Kongreß der revolutionären Gewerkschaftsverbände", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 18, 1921, pp. 28-45. Resis gives a detailed description of the Congress in "The Profintern", pp. 133-228.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135f.

discussions between the Syndicalists and the Communists at the Congress.⁶⁰

Although the comprehensive agenda and the two weeks they allowed themselves show that the Congress discussed exhaustively the problems facing the trade unions, it was once again obvious that the "cuestiones más apasionadamente discutidas"⁶¹ were the ones concerning the relationship with the reformist trade unions and, above all, about the relationship between the RILU and the Comintern. The principle of trade union independence was challenging the Comintern's concept of an "organic union" of the two Internationals by means of representation on each other's board. Since the Communists managed to persuade a number of Syndicalists to vote on their side, their proposal was adopted with a majority of 285 to 35, or according to some sources 287 to 32. Further work in the reformist trade unions was also approved, despite the protests of the Syndicalists.⁶²

The question of trade union tactics was summed up in the programme of action, which in its essential points was identical with those already enumerated in the trade union resolution of the Comintern Congress.⁶³ Resis had summarized its ideas in four points: direct action; industrial trade unions; workers' control; factory committees or works councils.⁶⁴ As had been frequently mentioned, these ideas approached those of the Syndicalists.⁶⁵ Subsequently the programme of action was popularized by a widely circulated brochure by Losovsky.⁶⁶ In a similar manner many of the trade union problems discussed by the Congress, e.g. unemployment, women, the colonial question, were dealt with.⁶⁷

As to the organizational construction of the RILU, one decision among others was to set up "International Propaganda Committees" to influence the International Trade Secretariats and Unions.⁶⁸

Membership criteria set out in the statute's conditions for admission were less narrow than the Comintern's "21 Conditions".⁶⁹ Obviously no-one wanted to prevent the membership of those Syndicalists who were prepared to co-operate.⁷⁰ In any case RILU was far more centralistic than the IFTU. Its member unions no longer had any autonomy and were far more directly subject to the resolutions of its congresses and leadership bodies.⁷¹ The latter consisted of, first, the Central Council, which, according to representatives of the member countries selected in accordance with an agreed code, who in their turn elected the second body, an Executive Office with seven members.⁷² At the first session of the Central Council, immediately after the end of the Congress, its members were Losovsky and Nogin (Russia), Tom Mann (Great Britain), Arlandis

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 135 and above all Thorpe, *"The Workers Themselves"*, pp. 181s.

⁶¹ Nin, *Las organizaciones*, p. 83.

⁶² Thorpe, *"The Workers Themselves"*, pp. 182-188; Resis, *"The Profintern"*, pp. 131-161, 181-196.

⁶³ The relevant commissions of the two Congresses had held mutual consultations. Cf. *Protokoll des III. Kongresses*, p. 178.

⁶⁴ Resis, *"The Profintern"*, p. 161.

⁶⁵ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 161: "All four of these major points were also cardinal tenets of the revolutionary syndicalists, who construed them somewhat differently than the Communists". Cf. also note 5.

⁶⁶ Cf. note 6.

⁶⁷ Resis, *"The Profintern"*, pp. 197-201, 207-213.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-206.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 223f.

⁷⁰ For instance, recognition of the Comintern's ideological leadership, contained in the draft, was removed. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 222s.

(Spain), George Andreychine (USA) and Anton Meyer (Germany). Losovsky was General Secretary with Meyer and Mann as his deputies. The seventh seat was kept for the French, for when they declared their formal accession.⁷³

Thus was achieved the organizational union in a formally independent organism of trade unions supporting the October Revolution. The reason why the Bolsheviks changed their original idea of having a Comintern trade union section was probably that the creation of the RILU was, as Losovsky wrote to a French Syndicalist in January 1922, "le résultat d'un compromis entre les communistes et les syndicalistes. L'ISR est construite sur le bloc et [...] nous concentrerons toute notre énergie et toute notre attention pour consolider cette union".⁷⁴ It should be added that, in fact, the Syndicalists had split over this question. Besides those who leaned towards the Bolsheviks there were also strong forces, influenced by the Anarchists, who because of the "organic union" of the RILU with the Comintern and the cell tactics and especially because of the situation inside Russia and the persecution of the Anarchists and Syndicalists, seized the opportunity to break with the RILU and concentrate on forming an independent Syndicalist International.⁷⁵

5. *The Organizational and Political Development of the RILU, 1921-1927: Congresses - Central Council Sessions - Officials - Press - Relationship with the CI*

The dates set by the First RILU Congress for holding congresses and Central Council sessions could be adhered to only in the first year, and then with some difficulty. This showed that the over-optimistic expectations cherished at its foundation - that it would soon replace the Amsterdam Trade Union International were unrealistic. Although it managed to establish an important influence in certain countries and areas, thereby consolidating itself as an organization and creating a routine for its officials, it was impossible to conceal the fact that at the same time in certain areas there were signs of a sort of "identity crisis". This was partly accounted for by the discussions within Soviet Communism and the Comintern. Whatever the reason, after the assimilation of Syndicalists who were prepared to co-operate, the RILU's influence extended no further than impressing a trade union influence on the Communist parties. Formally it might still be autonomous; in fact it was only the Comintern's trade union department.

Rather more than six months after the RILU's Inaugural Congress, from 17 February to 5 March, parallel to the First Extended ECCI Plenum, from 24 February to 4 March, the Central Council's Second Session was convened to draw up its first organizational and political balance.⁷⁶ Besides the reports from the Executive Bureau and the representatives of some countries, discussion was devoted mainly to "capital's offensive" and the answer to it: the new United Front tactics. Other topics were the relationship with the Syndicalists, various tactical measures to be taken against Amsterdam and the organization of the International Propaganda Committees.

The RILU's Second Congress was held from 19 November to 2 December 1922, almost parallel to the Fourth Comintern Congress (5 November to 5 December).⁷⁷ The smaller number of delegates (213) was a sign

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Groppo, "La création", p. 45.

⁷⁵ The "International Workers' Association" was finally founded at the end of December 1922 in Berlin. Cf. Thorpe, "The Workers Themselves", pp. 237-268.

⁷⁶ No minutes were published after this conference. Losovsky sums it up in *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale*, No. 3 (14), March 1922, pp. 159-164. The resolutions *ibid.*, pp. 231-238, and in the first special supplement to *Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz*, No. 35, 25 March 1922. Cf. also Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 250-254.

⁷⁷ It was not possible to find out if the only bulletin about the Congress was the Russian one mentioned in Sworakowski, *The Communist International*, pp. 387s., and Hammond, *Soviet Foreign Relations*, pp. 989s., or the Russian minutes based on it; Goldbeck, *Veröffentlichungen*, makes no mention of a German edition. The course of the Congress is summed up in: *Inprekorr*, No. 7, 10 January 1923; the Congress resolutions in: *Beschlüsse und Resolutionen des 2. internationalen Kongresses der revolutionären Gewerk-*

that, contrary to the expectations of 1921, its influence had declined. The number of trade union members represented at the congress was quoted as 12 million, a clear indication of the final break with a number of Syndicalist organizations, but also with the CGdL and of the general stagnation of the RILU's influence within the IFTU. On the agenda were: the report of the Executive Bureau; the United Front; a number of organizational questions; the RILU-Comintern relationship; the problem of unemployment; the struggle against imperialism and war; the situation of the Russian trade unions; trade unions in the colonies; the relationship to the co-operatives.

The most heated discussion was once again the problem of the relationship to the Comintern. Immediately after the First RILU Congress the majority of the French revolutionary trade unionists - who were expelled from the General Federation of Labour (*Confédération Générale du Travail*; CGT) at the end of 1921 and formed the CGTU (*Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire*) in July 1922⁷⁸ - had sent an ultimatum saying that they would oppose the RILU unless the "organic union" between the two Internationals were removed from the RILU statutes.⁷⁹ The RILU leadership now ceded this point. All that was now called for was co-operation in the form of action committees as and when the need arose.⁸⁰ The CGTU delegation thereupon declared its willingness to join. With the CGTU the RILU had won over an important independent national central office, one that at times was stronger than the "Amsterdam" membership organization. In the time to come it played an important role in the RILU. Shortly afterwards Czechoslovakia also founded its own Communist umbrella league, the International All-Trade Union League (*Mezinárodní všeodborový svaz*; MVS).⁸¹

Apart from this the main spotlight was on practical questions. United Front tactics dictated the course of discussions on what the trade unions should be doing. The general tendency of the Congress was a stagnation in Europe and America coupled with an increased turning to the colonies. After the Congress had itself altered the statutes the following members were elected to the enlarged Executive Bureau: Losovsky, Tomsy, Kalnin (Russia), Fritz Heckert (Germany), Monmousseau (France), Arno Hais (Czechoslovakia), Tresso (Italy), Nin (Spain), Watkins (Great Britain), William Z. Foster (USA), Harden (Australia) and Kunitaro Ande (Far East).

The Third Session of the Central Council was held from 25 June to 2 July 1923, shortly after the Third ECCI Plenum (12 to 23 July).⁸² Its agenda contained: General Secretary Losovsky's report; the struggle against Fascism; the International Propaganda Committee; labour migration; the situation of trade unions in a number of countries. The discussions were concerned with the first United Front experiences with parts of the IFTU and also with the political situation (the occupation of the Ruhr). For the first time strike strategy was discussed; a commission was set up to explore it further.

The Third Congress was held from 8 to 22 July 1924, following the Fifth Comintern Congress (17 June

schaften (Berlin, 1923). Surveys of the Congress can be found in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 3, pp. 459-462, and Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 302-332.

⁷⁸ See: Laurent Batsch and Michel Bouvet, *CGT. Autour de la scission de 1921* (Paris, 1983); Jean-Louis Robert, *La scission syndicale de 1921. Essai de reconnaissance des formes* (Paris, 1980); Georges Lefranc, *Le mouvement syndical sous la troisième république* (Paris, 1967), pp. 247-265.

⁷⁹ On this, see also Dieter Marc Schneider, *Revolutionärer Syndikalismus und Bolschewismus. Der Prozeß der ideologischen Auseinandersetzung französischer Syndikalisten mit den Bolschewiki 1914-1922* (Erlangen, 1974).

⁸⁰ Cf. also the documentation on this agenda item, which was also published in other languages: *Die Rote Gewerkschafts- und die Kommunistische Internationale. Die Frage der wechselseitigen Beziehungen zwischen der RGI und der KI auf dem 2. Kongreß der RGI* (Berlin, 1923).

⁸¹ Cf. McDermott, *The Czech Red Unions*.

⁸² *Bericht über die 3. Session des Zentralrats der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale: 25. Juni bis 2. Juli 1923*, supplement to *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale*, No. 7, 1923. Cf. also the special number of *Inprekorr*, "Beschlüsse und Aufrufe der Dritten Session des Zentralrats der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale", No. 119, 18 July 1923.

to 8 July).⁸³ There were 311 delegates representing 39 countries. Besides two reports by Losovsky on what the Executive Bureau had been doing and what was planned for the RILU's next actions, the agenda was: the struggle for the eight-hour day; trade union and works councils; the International Propaganda Committees; strike strategy; the unity of the international trade union movement; the situation in Great Britain and in the colonial countries. The most ticklish political problem was definitely that of the trade union unity. This arose from an initiative thought up by the IFTU's left wing, which had originated within the British trade unions, and which wanted to take up contacts with the Russian trade unions (more on this below).

A discussion on strike strategy was important for the RILU's future work. Contrary to the Congress's expectations the basic line discussed on "planned", quasi-military strike preparation and execution turned out to be more valuable as propaganda. This was the first Congress at which no Syndicalists were present. Only a minority of the German delegation, representing the remains of the alliances and, because of the KPD's turn to the left at the beginning of 1924, having again a certain resonance, called for an organizational break with the reformist trade unions, but could not rally any support. The members of the once again extended Executive Bureau were now: Losovsky, Lepse, Dogadov, Melnitshansky, Kalnin (USSR), Heckert, Ottomar Geschke (Germany), Monmousseau, Jacob (France), Mann, Allison (Great Britain), Hais, F. Sejpka (Czechoslovakia), Foster, William F. Dunne (USA), Tim Buck (Canada), José Penelón (Latin America), Redens (i.e. Mieczysław Bernstein, Poland), Nin (Spain), Germanetto (Italy), Georgi Dimitroff (Bulgaria), Lazar (Yugoslavia), Lumivuokko (Finland, Semaun (Java) and Tani (Japan).

The Central Council's Fourth Session was not held until almost two years later, from 9 to 15 March 1926, and so overlapped with the latter part of the Sixth ECCI Plenum (17 February to 15 March).⁸⁴ This was definitely an expression of the RILU's leadership's growing tendency towards independence, which included a bureaucratization of the organization - it was no coincidence that the number of Executive Bureau officials was considerably increased in 1925/26 - but above all it indicated differences concerning the campaign for unity with the Russian trade unions. The main points on the agenda were: the Executive Bureau's report; the trade union movement's next tasks; the situation in particular countries (especially in East Asia); the struggle for the eight-hour day and for social policies. What distinguished the conference was that great strides had been made in two areas: in Great Britain and in the East (especially in China). In the case of Great Britain discussion was limited to the minority movement in the trade unions. No mention was made of the contacts between the Russian trade unions with the TUC leaders in the Anglo-Russian Committee and the hopes for unity with the IFTU arising therefrom. (Tomsky, the chairman of the Russian organization, did not attend the conference.) But the perspectives arising from the revolutionary wave starting in China in 1925 were perhaps even more important and indicative of success for the further development of the RILU, especially as there was no "Amsterdam" rival out there. But confronting this encouraging development was the stagnation or even decline of the RILU's traditional European sections, i.e. the greatest part of its organization, so that the detailed questions concerning this matter were typical of this session of the Central Council.

The Executive Bureau was intended to deal with the RILU's daily work. However, according to the report to the Second RILU Congress, "from the beginning it has been obvious that only some of the officials can work in Moscow all the time".⁸⁵ Thus it was that an additional secretariat was formed in which, for instance between the Second and Third Congresses, Losovsky, Kalnin and Nin worked, "independently dealing with all

⁸³ *Protokoll über den Dritten Kongreß der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale, abgehalten in Moskau vom 8. bis 21. [!] Juli 1924* (Berlin, 1924). A survey in Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 560-566.

⁸⁴ *Protokoll der Vierten Session des Zentralrats der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale, abgehalten in Moskau vom 9. bis 15. März 1926* (Moskau and Berlin, 1926). Cf. also Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 594-596.

⁸⁵ *Bericht des Vollzugsbüros der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale an den zweiten Kongreß der revolutionären Gewerkschaften in Moskau, 25 November 1922* (Berlin, 1922), p. 5. The Secretaries of the International Propaganda Committees also continually took part in the work of the Executive Office. Cf. *Bericht des Vollzugsbüros der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale an den dritten Kongreß der R.G.I. in Moskau am 5. Juli 1924* (Berlin, 1924), p. 261.

the smaller matters and, in addition, preparing the agendas for the sessions".⁸⁶ In this way Losovsky, who was the General Secretary of the RILU from its inauguration till its dissolution in 1937, ensured the continuity of the work. The work of the officials played an increasingly important role, too. A number of departments were created. Apart from the technical-organizational services these were the Organizational Department (for guiding the affiliated unions and the International Propaganda Committees) and the Information Department.⁸⁷ In the middle of the 1920s these were joined by the Eastern Department, the Socio-Economic Department, the Educational and Cultural Secretariat and the Youth Commission.⁸⁸

There were offices, some founded by the Trade Union Council, which acted as representatives of the Moscow RILU leadership in a number of countries. Their most important job was to distribute the RILU's publications and to secure the contact between the relevant organizations and the Executive Office.⁸⁹ The most important office was the one for Central Europe in Berlin. In 1924 the British one was absorbed in the TUC's minority movement. The Latin one started in Paris in 1922-1923. An Eastern Office and a Balkan Secretariat existed with interruptions. As time went on the RILU also tried to establish "intermediary stations" in colonial and semi-colonial countries. However, there is almost no documentation about the work of these offices, as their activities were almost always semi-conspiratorial or entirely clandestine. The same applies to various representatives sent to all sorts of countries by the RILU leadership.

The International Trade Union Council had already founded its own press.⁹⁰ *Meždunarodnoe raboče dvīženie* appeared as early as the beginning of 1921. Some copies were also printed in other languages (partly in the appropriate countries). In the autumn of that year, after the formal founding of the RILU, this periodical was merged with a briefly published information bulletin from the Executive Bureau, and took over its title *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale* (The Red International of Labour Unions). From then on it was the RILU's official organ and appeared in three languages: German (till 1933), Russian (till 1936) and French - some numbers were also printed in English and Spanish. Apparently the various editions were not necessarily always identical. The German ones were printed in Berlin.

Although this periodical had a more theoretical slant, it was supplemented by a series of information sheets aimed at particular countries. In addition to this, in the middle of the 1920s the officials of the various RILU departments in Moscow began publishing specialized periodicals. For instance, starting in May 1926, the Socio-Economic Department produced the monthly magazine *The Workers' Guide to Social Economy* with German, English and French editions. Starting in 1928 the Secretariat for Culture and Education (Agitprop Department) published a bulletin, *Trade Union Propaganda and Cultural Work*, in the same three languages. In 1930 the German edition was transformed into a supplement to *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale*. Probably of more importance was the activity of the Eastern Department. Its publication, *The East and the Colonies*, developed in 1927 from an internal Russian information, later press, service and appeared in German, English and French.

Of course, the newspapers of the various Communist parties and/or their associated national unions and/or the opposition trade union groups played an important part in the public relations work of the RILU.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung in den Jahren 1924-1927. Bericht des Vollzugsbüros der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale an den 4. Kongreß, in Moskau am 15. März 1928* (Moscow and Berlin, 1928), pp. 286-296.

⁸⁹ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/2, pp. 942-944; *Bericht des Vollzugsbüros an den dritten Kongreß*, pp. 275-283.

⁹⁰ Goldbeck provides a complete survey of the RILU press in *Veröffentlichungen*, pp. 16-23. This bibliography also contains detailed accounts of the RILU periodicals appearing in Germany. There are also some accounts in Hammond, *Soviet Foreign Relations*, pp. 994s.

⁹¹ See, for example, the survey "Die revolutionäre Gewerkschaftspresse" in *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, pp. 302-308.

Officials in the various central office departments kept them steadily supplied with articles and other material. The International Propaganda Committees also produced numerous bulletins and periodicals, which - except for Germany⁹² - have not yet been listed. However, the RILU's press publications were only a part of its comprehensive publication activities, which have not yet been systematically looked into.⁹³

As a concession to the CGTU the Second RILU Congress had dispensed with the "organic union" between the two Internationals.⁹⁴ However, this in no way altered the RILU's close attachment to the Comintern. After all, after the remaining revolutionary Syndicalists had joined the Communist parties, the RILU no longer contained any political force independent of the Comintern. Although since the Fifth Congress Losovsky had regularly been a member of the ECCI, sometimes even of its Presidium,⁹⁵ in principle attention was paid to the formal equality of both organizations, as expressed in common appeals and manifestos. In accordance with the resolution of the Second RILU Congress there was initially an action committee comprising three representatives of each International, which met twenty times before the Third RILU Congress.⁹⁶ As for the other partner, in June 1923, the Third ECCI Plenum had passed a resolution that Communists in trade unions must act in accordance with RILU resolutions and work towards the union of all trade unions.⁹⁷

It came to be common practice for the ECCI Plenum or World Congress to pass trade union resolutions, sometimes immediately before meetings of the relevant RILU bodies. In this way the Comintern had an important say in the line to be followed by the RILU. As time went by it took over control more and more directly, an example of this being the detailed internal instructions about the election of the delegates to the 1930 Fifth RILU Congress issued to the party organizations by the KPD Central Committee Secretariat.⁹⁸

An additional instrument for exerting such influence was the ECCI Trade Union Commission, authorized by the Sixth ECCI Plenum (February/March 1926). The reasons behind this were obviously the differences of opinion between Tomsky and Losovsky about the Anglo-Russian Committee and the possibility of unity with the IFTU.⁹⁹ Little is known about the work done by this Commission. Initially it was headed by Palmiro Togliatti, until he left Moscow at the beginning of 1927 and handed over to Jules Humbert-Droz.¹⁰⁰ The latter wrote to Togliatti on 8 April 1927 complaining that he had to be continually on his guard against Losovsky's attempts to split the trade unions and that the ECCI Secretariat was constantly warding off RILU resolutions to that effect. However, Losovsky was almost alone with his opinion in the ECCI Trade Union Commission, while

⁹² See Goldbeck, *Veröffentlichungen*, pp. 21-23, 79-107.

⁹³ Goldbeck, *Veröffentlichungen*, is a bibliography only of the RILU publications appearing in Germany. Extremely important titles, especially those by Losovsky, can be found - usually in the Russian edition - in Hammond, *Soviet Foreign Relations*, and Sworakowski, *The Communist International*. Of course, *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale* reported regularly on what was being published, so did the Executive Office's reports to the Congresses. See, for example, *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, pp. 296-299.

⁹⁴ František Svátek provides a survey of the representatives exchanged up to that point in "The Governing Organs of the Communist International: their growth and compositions, 1919-1943", *History of Socialism Yearbook* (Prague, 1969), pp. 179-266, here p. 230. Cf. also Resis, "The Profintern", p. 272.

⁹⁵ Svátek, "The Governing Organs", passim.

⁹⁶ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/2, p. 941.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Printed in Hermann Weber (ed.), *Die Generallinie. Rundschreiben des Zentralkomitees der KPD an die Bezirke 1929-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1981), pp. 145-149.

⁹⁹ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 592-594.

¹⁰⁰ Jules Humbert-Droz, *De Lénine à Staline. Dix ans au service de l'Internationale Communiste 1921-1931* (Neuchâtel, 1971), pp. 267, 277.

Tomsky and the Russian trade unions were going to the other extreme.¹⁰¹ At the 1928-1929 turning point this Commission also gave a sign when in April 1929 - in the discussion with the "rightists" - the creation of new trade unions was being urged.¹⁰²

6. *The RILU and the Trade Secretariats: The International Propaganda Committees*

Although the Inaugural Congress of the RILU was against the IFTU, it was in favour of membership in the International Trade Secretariats, and so dismissed the idea that revolutionary unions which were already members should leave. Instead so-called International Propaganda Committees were founded to influence the Trade Secretariats.¹⁰³ Where revolutionary unions were not members - as was particularly the case with the Soviet trade unions - their membership was to be encouraged. In accordance with the RILU's structure, the Propaganda Committees consisted of both existing revolutionary trade unions and Communist minorities from the IFTU unions.

Immediately after the Inaugural Congress delegates from the different branches of trade and industry met in order to found their various committees. By August 1921 there were already fourteen.¹⁰⁴ As time went by more were added.¹⁰⁵

The International Trade Secretariats' reaction was to vote by a large majority to exclude any union belonging to the RILU. The many applications from Russian trade unions for membership¹⁰⁶ were refused.¹⁰⁷

In spite of the initial high hopes, only twice did it prove possible to undermine the IFTU leadership's resolute refusal. In 1922/23 the International Union of Food Workers (IUFW) allowed its Soviet counterpart to join it, on condition it promised not to distribute its own international propaganda. Thus, although it represented almost half of the IUFW membership it had no more influence than the other unions. Nor were any other RILU unions admitted, which was why the International Propaganda Committee for Food Workers continued to exist. The Soviet group of trade unions had had to cancel its membership as a condition of joining the Trade Secretariat. During the 1928/29 "ultra-left" turn it resigned from it. In the interwar period the IUFW was the only Trade International to have Soviet trade union membership for some years.¹⁰⁸

The case of the Teachers' International was somewhat different. The Pedagogic International had come

¹⁰¹ Siegfried Bahne (ed.), *Archives de Jules Humbert-Droz*, Vol. 2: *Les partis communistes des pays latins et l'Internationale communiste dans les années 1923-1927* (Dordrecht and London, 1983), p. 404. Further references to the commission *ibid.*, pp. VII, XXVIII, 377, 379 and 384.

¹⁰² "Zum bevorstehenden Plenum des EKKI (Diskussion der Gewerkschaftskommission zu den Problemen der Streikstrategie und der Gewerkschaftstaktik)", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 16, 17 April 1929, pp. 964-984.

¹⁰³ See *Resolutionen, Statuten, Manifeste und Aufrufe des ersten internationalen Kongresses*, pp. 60s.; Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 203-206. Cf. also the resolutions of the Second and Third Sessions of the Central Councils on this in: *Inprekorr*, 1st special supplement to No. 35, 25 March 1922, and No. 119, 18 July 1923, p. 1043; Nin, *Las organizaciones obreras internacionales*, pp. 87s., 144-148.

¹⁰⁴ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 532.

¹⁰⁵ The Executive Office's report to the Fourth RILU Congress 1928 (*Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, p. 82) mentions 18.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, the letters of the Russian leather industry trade union in *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 16, 1921, pp. 362-365.

¹⁰⁷ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1 p. 533.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 533s., 543s.; *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, pp. 140s.; Willy Buschak, *Von Menschen, die wie Menschen leben wollten. Die Geschichte der Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuß-Gaststätten und ihrer Vorläufer* (Cologne, 1985), pp. 487s.

about because of the unification of various Socialist teachers' unions in Europe between 1920 and 1922. Its strongest section was France. It was a member of the CGT and after the split joined the CGTU. However, some unions stayed in the IFTU. This International now accepted the Soviet teachers' union and re-named itself the International of the Workers in Education (IWE). It was joined by further RILU organizations. At the time of the "ultra left" turn in 1928-1929 the remaining IFTU unions left. However, under the auspices of the Popular Front there were negotiations about a fusion. Unlike the RILU the IWE was not dissolved, even though it had almost completely lost its influence. In 1945 it joined the newly formed World Federation of Trade Unions.¹⁰⁹

Occasionally it seemed as if other branches might be approaching each other. For instance, in May 1923 there was a meeting in Berlin between representatives of the International Transport Workers' Federation, who stood on the left wing of the IFTU under their leader Edo Fimmen, and the Russian transport workers' trade union. But the contacts failed to develop, not least because of the influence of the IFTU.¹¹⁰ Also in March 1923 there was a meeting between the Russian trade unionists and the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) in Friedrichshafen, but the agreed continuation of the talks failed to materialize.¹¹¹ So the meetings acted above all as the beginning of direct contacts between Russian trade unionists and parts of the IFTU, with the aim of establishing a unified international trade union (which led to the Anglo-Russian Committee).

So on the whole the International Propaganda Committees were not particularly successful.¹¹² Although the Committees continually held conferences, mostly connected to RILU meetings, the press,¹¹³ which usually only put in sporadic appearances, showed that their effectiveness was slight when compared to that of the International Trade Secretariats. The Fourth - and similarly the Fifth - RILU Congress had to admit that its organizational solidity left something to be desired, however much its political influence had grown. Even though the seats of many of the committees had been transferred to West Europe (which was presumably done for mainly propagandistic reasons, to demonstrate to Amsterdam their independence from the "Russians"), their organizational backbone was still the Russian trade unions, who, above all, continued to provide the money. During the 1928-1929 turn the tendency arose to transform into separate "red" craft internationals the Committees, which the Fourth Congress had re-named International Propaganda and Action Committees (later known simply as International Committees). But simultaneously the Committees, whose influence was

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 544; *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, p. 142f.; Hermann Schnorbach, *Lehrer im Internationalen Gewerkschaftsbund. Entstehung und Entwicklung des Internationalen Berufssekretariats der Lehrer von 1918 bis 1945* (Weinheim and Munich, 1989), pp. 32-34, 40s., 181-189, 212s.

¹¹⁰ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 547-549. Sailors represented a special problem in this branch, in which there was a very active Propaganda Committee. After the Inaugural Congress of the RILU they wanted to form their own Propaganda Committee, but were finally granted only special status within the framework of the general Transport Workers' Committee. Sailors' Clubs grew up in the harbours (Harbour Offices/Inter Clubs) with close contacts to the various secret Communist organizations, including the Soviet Secret Service. 1930 saw the foundation of the International of Seamen and Harbourworkers (ISH). This was probably not just a result of the new "ultra-left" trend of setting up separate Trade Internationals in opposition to the IFTU. The new International was more independent of the RILU officials and so more easily able to take on other tasks. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 532, 541s.; M. Disch, *Von den Weltkongressen in Moskau 1921. Tagebuchblätter* (Hamburg, s.a.), pp. 65-68; Jan Valtin, *Tagebuch der Hölle* (Nördlingen, 1986); Hardy, *Die Welt*; Stephen Schwartz, *Brotherhood of the Sea: a History of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific 1885-1985* (New Brunswick, 1986), pp. 62, 65s., 75.

¹¹¹ Cf. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 542. In Fritz Opel, *75 Jahre Eiserne Internationale 1893-1968* (Frankfurt, 1968), pp. 71-76, further references to more contacts. Before this, in 1920, the Chairman of the Russian metal workers' union, Shliapnikov, had travelled through several European Countries trying unsuccessfully to revive the International Metalworkers' Federation on a revolutionary basis after the World War.

¹¹² See *ibid.*, p. 544; for a critical balance of the Central Council's 4th session *ibid.*, p. 595. Cf. also *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, pp. 82-139.

¹¹³ Cf. note 92.

continually diminishing, reduced their activity.¹¹⁴

7. Unity for the RILU and the ITUL?

The development of the RILU was accompanied by verbal tirades against Amsterdam. The IFTU leaders were called "capitalist lackeys", "the running dogs of capitalism" and above all "yellow", in other words representatives of "economically peaceful" organizations.¹¹⁵ The IFTU was hardly more restrained and, for example, in September 1920 condemned the International Trade Union Council as a "swindle and bluff".¹¹⁶ In these circumstances co-operation was hardly to be thought of.

Immediately Amsterdam reacted to the Communists' political ideas with organizational exclusion resolutions.¹¹⁷ At the same time the IFTU in its turn attempted to split the Communist trade union movement, by offering the *Russian* trade unions membership.¹¹⁸

With the transition to United Front tactics at the end of 1921 the RILU also changed its attitude to the Amsterdam International. It indicated that it was prepared to co-operate with Amsterdam in order to achieve common goals. This new line was formally accepted by the second session of the Central Council in March 1922.¹¹⁹

In the spirit of this new line Losovsky, as early as December 1921, by appealing directly to the ITUL, had tried - unsuccessfully - to act in unison to prevent the threatened split in the CC in France.¹²⁰ The RILU seized upon the suggestion of a conference between the two Trade Union Internationals made at the beginning of 1922 by the Norwegian Trade Union Federation, which belonged to neither, but the ITUL, wanting to

¹¹⁴ Cf. the relevant section of the resolution on "organizational questions" in *Protokoll über den 4. Kongreß der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale. Abgehalten in Moskau vom 17. März bis 3. April 1928* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 559-572, here pp. 570s., and the resolution "on the activity of the International Industry Committees (IPAKs)" in *Protokoll des V. Kongresses der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale. Abgehalten in Moskau vom 15. bis 30. August 1930*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1930), 1, pp. 327-329; Werner Müller, *Lohnkampf, Massenstreik, Sowjetmacht. Ziele und Grenzen der "Revolutionären Gewerkschafts-Opposition" (RGO) in Deutschland 1928 bis 1933* (Cologne, 1988), pp. 224-228; Nin, *Las organizaciones obreras internacionales*, p. 148. For instance, the Committees' German press ceased publication between 1927 and 1930. Cf. Goldbeck, *Veröffentlichungen*, p. 22.

¹¹⁵ Cf., for example, the ECCI and International Trade Union Council's Open Letter to the IFTU Congress in November 1920, "To the World Congress of the Yellow Trade Union Leaders in London", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, No. 15, 1921, pp. 457-462, or the Trade Union Council's appeal of 1 August 1920, in *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, No. 1, January 1921, pp. 21-23.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Cf. also the IFTU Congress in London on the International Trade Union Council and the correspondence between the IFTU and Zinoviev after the Congress, in *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, Nos. 2/3, March/May 1921, pp. 1-3, 17-25. A survey of demarcation resolutions by the IFTU member unions in *ibid.*, pp. 4-11, and No. 5, September 1921, pp. 135-141.

¹¹⁷ Cf., for example, the committee's resolution of March 1921, stating that every affiliated trade union declaring for Moscow automatically put itself outside the IFTU. This was aimed particularly at the International Trade Secretariats and their member unions. See *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, No. 4, July 1921, p. 112.

¹¹⁸ Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 104, 107, 263.

¹¹⁹ Cf. the resolution "Die Offensive des Kapitals und die proletarische Einheitsfront", in: 1st special supplement of *Inprekorr*, No. 35, 25 March 1922. Cf. also Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 250-252.

¹²⁰ Cf. the documentation in *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, No. 1, January/February 1922, pp. 19s.; Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 545.

negotiate only with the Russian trade unions, was not prepared to consent.¹²¹

This turning to the United Front had made the Communists uneasy, too. They began to question the RILU's right to exist. Should it not rather - as a contribution to the United Front - be dissolved? Most explicit in its demands was the group around Paul Levi, which, however, had already been excluded from the KPD. But other parties took up similar positions.¹²² However, they remained isolated. There were no leading forces in either the RILU, the Comintern or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) prepared to liquidate the RILU at that time.

The position changed with the emergence of a left-wing within the IFTU, whose primary support was in the leadership of the British Trades Union Council (TUC). The TUC leaders raised again the matter of the IFTU's offers to the Soviet trade unions,¹²³ demanding that they be seriously followed up by the IFTU rather than loaded with ultimatums. This happened at the IFTU Congress in Vienna (2 June to 6 June 1924).¹²⁴ The Soviet trade unions had indicated that under certain circumstances they were prepared to accept the positions adopted by the British. The Congress ended with a compromise; contacts with the Russians to continue, but only concerning the acceptance of IFTU statutes and programme points. Although the new IFTU chairman was British, so that to all outward appearance the TUC was in the ascendant, in fact it was clear that most members' central offices were not at all interested in a Soviet membership and that the British would have to take the initiative themselves.

On the other hand the RILU was now faced with the dilemma of deciding whether or not to transfer its strongest section to the IFTU. This was the question - although unspoken - being considered at the Fourth RILU Congress a month after Vienna. This Congress took up the position that an international trade union congress, convened in accordance with its membership numbers, ought to carry out a unification to a single Trade Union International.¹²⁵

Close contacts between the British and Soviet trade unions did now indeed come about.¹²⁶ The Anglo-Russian Committee was formally inaugurated at a conference in London from 6 to 9 April 1925. Its aim was to bring about the international unity of the trade union movement. It was planned for the IFTU to confer with the Soviet trade unions; this to be brought about by the TUC.¹²⁷ Accompanied by growing criticism and violent resistance from the IFTU's right wing, this conference was the first of a series of such meetings, which were held as follows: London, 17 September 1925; Berlin, 8/9 December 1925; Paris, 30 July 1926; Berlin, 23 August 1926; Berlin, 23 March to 1 April 1927.¹²⁸ The results of all the conferences were always vague. All the British produced were declarations of intent to be active in the face of Amsterdam as and when the occasion arose. The TUC made no concrete commitments, nor was the RILU ever mentioned, only the Soviet trade unions. The Norwegian and Finnish Trade Union Leagues, neither of which belonged to an International, showed great interest in the Committee. The Soviet trade unions kept trying to bring them into play, but the British were having none of that, as they did not want anyone to think that they were planning to create a third Trade Union International. The Anglo-Russian Committee, which, on the British side, reflected only the policy of the TUC

¹²¹ Resis, "The Profintern", pp. 225-257; Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 3, p. 459.

¹²² Resis, "The Profintern", p. 244s.; Swain, "Was the Profintern Really Necessary", p. 68.

¹²³ See correspondence from the second half of 1923. Cf. on this Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 550s.

¹²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 551s.; Schevenels, *Fünfundvierzig Jahre IGB*, pp. 94s.

¹²⁵ Cf. "Der Kampf um die Einheit der internationalen Gewerkschaftsbewegung", in *Protokoll über den dritten Kongreß*, p. 31s.

¹²⁶ The definitive study of British-Soviet trade union relationships in the nineteen-twenties is Calhoun, *The United Front*.

¹²⁷ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 576-578; Calhoun, *The United Front*, pp. 140-147.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 184s., 199-202, 274-277, 281-287, 336-339.

leadership, the General Council, and was not an expression of the radical wing in the trade union's grass roots,¹²⁹ was brought down by the miners' strike, or the General Strike, in 1926. The Soviets were disappointed by the TUC Council's avoidance of an open confrontation with the British government when it came down to it. Even so, it was more than a year later (September 1927) before the break was made final by the TUC at its Congress in Edinburgh. During that time the Committee was the object of violent disagreements on the Soviet side between Stalin and Bukharin, representing the party leadership, and the United Opposition around Trotsky and Zinoviev, who had been demanding the withdrawal of the Soviet trade unions since July 1926.¹³⁰

Although during its existence the Anglo-Russian Committee was never discussed controversially - at least publicly - it was clear from the beginning that there were different opinions about trade union unity and thus different expectations from the Committee. Tomsy and the Soviet trade union leaders made it quite clear from the beginning that they wanted to seize the opportunity of joining the IFTU at the expense of the RILU, but never said this openly. It is true that Tomsy, according to the published minutes, said at the Third RILU Congress that the Russian trade unions would undertake nothing without the approval of the RILU and the Comintern.¹³¹ But Nin tells us that after this speech there was a closed conference for a select group, during which Tomsy found himself obliged to distance himself clearly from all liquidation intentions touching the RILU, and that he then altered the stenogram of his speech accordingly.¹³²

Alterations to the statutes of the Russian trade unions carried out at the end of 1925/26 make it clear that they did indeed have such intentions. Almost all the unions replaced the statement that they would join the RILU with a more general one that they should belong to an international trade union league.¹³³

A subsidiary aspect of the unity campaign after 1924 was the setting up in some West European countries of "Unity Groups" acting within the IFTU trade unions as non-Communist groups independent of the RILU and pressing for the unity of the two Internationals. However, they never had much influence and quickly fell apart once the downfall and dissolution of the Anglo-Russian Committee came about after the failure of the strike in Great Britain.¹³⁴ An informed guess would be that these groups owed much to the support of the RILU. The international workers delegations from the RILU which visited the USSR in the middle of the nineteen-twenties were also an important part of the unity campaign.¹³⁵ They were the mirror image of the visits made at the same time by a number of IFTU leaders to the USA, in order to study capitalism at the highest

¹²⁹ This was organized by the British Communist Party in the National Minority Movement. Cf. also this Roderick Martin, *Communism and the British Unions 1924-1933. A Study of the National Minority Movement* (Oxford, 1969).

¹³⁰ See Carr, *Foundations of Planned Economy*, Vol. 3/2, pp. 322s., 327-329, 345, 348s., 357; Calhoun, *The United Front*, pp. 262s., 269-271, 341-344, 353-357, 370s., 388-390. Cf. also *Leon Trotsky on Britain* (New York, 1973), pp. 251-303.

¹³¹ Cf. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 565.

¹³² Nin, *Las organizaciones*, pp. 139s. Cf. also the opinion expressed on this subject by Rosmer, as a Congress participant, in Gras, *Alfred Rosmer*, p. 303.

¹³³ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 585. Nin, *Las organizaciones*, p. 142. This was violently attacked by the opposition in the CPSU. Nin mentioned further circumstantial evidence that the Soviet trade unions considered the RILU obsolete: their representatives failed to attend RILU leadership sessions; the Soviet trade unions took no more notice of the International Propaganda Committees; RILU attacks on Amsterdam called forth Soviet protests. They were supported above all by the KPD trade union cadres, the future *Kommunistische Partei-Opposition* (KPO). *Ibid.*, p. 130, 142. But Kaganovich, a close collaborator of Stalin's, was also in 1925/26 considered definitely to support the dissolution of the RILU. Cf. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, p. 585.

¹³⁴ Cf. *Die internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1924-1927*, pp. 53-55; *Archives de Jules Humbert-Droz*, Vol. 2, pp. 404, 669.

¹³⁵ Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 579s.

stage of development it had reached.¹³⁶

8. *The Conflict of the Factions within the Communist Party of the USSR and the RILU*

The RILU's inaugural phase was completely dominated by the conflict between the Communist majority and the Syndicalist minority, which led to the defection of those Syndicalists particularly closely attached to the Anarchist movement, and to the founding of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) in 1922. By far the greater number, particularly those in the CGTU-dominated circle around the newspaper *La Vie ouvrière*, came to a satisfactory arrangement, especially after achieving the cancellation of the "organic unity" of the RILU and the Comintern as a concession during the Second RILU Congress. They all ended up in their countries' Communist parties.

Thus it was that oppositional forces within the RILU could result only from the formation of factions within the various Communist parties, particularly the Soviet one. Interestingly no effect was made on the RILU by the big party discussions which took place at the end of Wartime Communism concerning the role of the trade unions, at which part of the Bolshevik party cadre, posing as the workers' opposition, opposed the party officials. In direct contrast to this, the struggle of the Trotsky-led left-wing opposition affected the RILU, too, from 1923 onwards, even though during the internal disagreements it never issued any public statements. The reason for this should probably be sought less in its claim to be, as a trade union, "above party differences", than in the trade union's subordination to the party.

The first prominent Trotskyist in the RILU leadership was probably George Andreychine (Georgij Andrejčin), a Bulgarian, who after emigrating to the USA had joined the IWW and then proceeded to Soviet Russia. Elected to the Executive Bureau at the RILU Inaugural Congress, he later went on to work as a RILU official. In 1923 he was removed from his RILU post, obviously because of his support for the opposition.¹³⁷

However, Trotskyist opposition within the RILU is particularly associated with the name of Losovsky's deputy, Nin. It is true that in April 1925 he issued a declaration refuting rumours about his sympathy with the opposition and distancing himself particularly from the Rosmer-Monatte group, excluded from the French Communist Party (*Part Communiste Française*; PCF). However, this was done under pressure. The public declaration had been demanded after letters from him to Rosmer and Monatte had been intercepted.¹³⁸ It is not known to what extent Nin supported oppositional positions within the RILU leadership; for instance, did Nin, like Trotsky and Zinoviev, call for the Russian trade union to break with the Anglo-Russian Committee after May 1926? However, with the escalation of the factional conflict starting in the second half of 1926, Nin was one of the opposition's most important "international" activists. He belonged to its International Commission, which compromised the members, mostly foreign Communists, dealing with the relevant matters in Moscow.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Cf. Opel, *75 Jahre Eiserne Internationale*, pp. 92-95.

¹³⁷ Cf. "George Andreychine" in Branko Lazitch and Milorad Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (new edition, Stanford, 1986), p. 7; Gras, *Alfred Rosmer*, p. 227; Serge, *Beruf: Revolutionär*, pp. 236s. A more negative opinion, attendant upon his appearance at the RILU Congress, can be found in Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, 2 Vols., (New York, 1931), Vol. 2, pp. 915s. After 1924 he collaborated closely with Trotsky, was then arrested and exiled, but finally released. After 1945 he initially held important posts in Bulgaria, but after 1947 he was again arrested there and shot.

¹³⁸ Cf. Nin's declaration "Chacun à sa place!", in *Correspondance internationale*, No. 48, 6 May 1925, p. 383 (also in *Inprekorr*, No. 73, 5 May 1925, p. 981). In No. 75, 25 July 1925, p. 609, there was as a result a short editorial note to say that a statement had been received from two Spanish comrades, which was not going to be published, but instead forwarded to the appropriate Comintern bodies. Nothing was said about the contents, but it is easy to guess that doubts were thrown on Nin's denial. The reason for Nin's declaration was later reported by two former Spanish Communists to whom he had revealed his sympathies with the opposition when they visited him in Moscow: José Bullejos, *La Comintern en España. Recuerdos de mi vida* (Mexico, 1972), pp. 60-62, and Julián Gorkin, *El revolucionario profesional. Testimonio de un hombre de acción* (Barcelona, 1975), pp. 137-141, 165s.

¹³⁹ Serge, *Beruf: Revolutionär*, pp. 243s.

In 1927 at the latest his position as a Trotskyist was a matter for open discussion. Speaking to the ECCI Presidium on 27 September 1927 Trotsky said Nin was "one of the best staff workers of the international proletarian vanguard" and had openly supported the opposition, adding, "What fate are you preparing for him?"¹⁴⁰

Nin made a strong impression at the Fourth RILU Congress by attacking the right wing (i.e. the leadership of the Soviet trade unions) during a discussion, demanding more influence for the Soviet worker and a "left-turn" for the RILU. This provoked violent reaction.¹⁴¹ Even though he was supporting, with these demands, only a small part of the opposition's programme and had, naturally enough, failed to repeat any of the demands addressed directly to the party and the Comintern, it is remarkable that this last appearance by a supporter of the left-wing opposition at an international Communist forum took place nearly six months after Trotsky and most of the other opposing members had been expelled from the CPSU. Of course, it cost Nin his RILU post and shortly afterwards he, too, was expelled from the CPSU.¹⁴² It is interesting to note that his name continued to be listed as a member of the editorial board on the cover of the German edition of the RILU organ *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale* until May 1929.

Moreover, the Left-Wing Opposition had stated its policy on some key RILU questions, e.g. the relationship to the IFTU's left wing, but more especially to the Anglo-Russian Committee.¹⁴³ It had vigorously

¹⁴⁰ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-1927)* (New York, 1980), p. 412.

¹⁴¹ *Protokoll über den 4. Kongreß*, pp. 179-183. He is answered by, among others, Soviet delegates (Kozelev, Yaglom), a Bulgarian (Rosov), an Italian (Germanetto) and Losovsky. The Latin American delegates, obviously inspired from "above", issued a declaration against Nin's anti-USSR "slanders". *Ibid.*, pp. 183-185, 223s., 228-230, 235s., 275s., 338s. In his memoirs the Mexican delegate Siqueiros reports that this speech, which provoked a "violentísimo tumulto", made a great impression on his fellow painter and then comrade, Diego Rivera, who was attending the RILU Congress as a guest. That was the start of his Trotskyist sympathies. See David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo* (Mexico, 1977), p. 236. Rather more important were the direct contacts Nin was able to establish on the edges of the Congress with the Cuban Communists Julio Antonio Mella and Sandalio Junco. Cf. Alejandro Gálvez Cancino, "Julio Antonio Mella: Un marxista revolucionario", *Críticas de la economía política*, No. 30, 1986, pp. 101-151, here p. 217. The circumstances under which Mella was murdered in 1929 have never been satisfactorily explained. He may have been the victim of a Stalinist purge, because of his Trotskyist sympathies. Junco, one of the most important members of the trade union cadre in Cuba's Communist Party, was a co-organizer of Cuban Trotskyism.

¹⁴² At least - probably because he was a foreigner and possessed of international prestige - he was not arrested, even though from Moscow he was maintaining contact with the exiled Trotsky in Alma-Ata and, together with the few remaining unimprisoned opposition members still in Moscow, was sending care parcels to the exiles. See Serge: *Beruf: Revolutionär*, pp. 273, 307s. His surviving letters to Trotsky, dating from 1928, from the Trotsky Archives are printed in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, No. 10, June 1982, pp. 35-45. As his correspondence with the Spanish Communist Joaquín Maurín living in Paris exile shows, he had been trying to get out of the country since the beginning of 1929; it cannot be a coincidence that that was when Trotsky was exiled. Then, when the dictator Primo de Rivera fell, he was able to return directly to Spain in the summer of 1930. Cf. the Nin-Maurín correspondence with a commentary by Pelai Pagés in *L'Avenç*, No. 50, June 1982, pp. 24-35, and No. 51, July-August 1982, pp. 30-39, and also Nin's letter to Maurín dated January 1929, carried to Paris by Tasca in *Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, Vol. 8, 1966, pp. 649s.

¹⁴³ Cf. on this note 130, plus Trotsky, "Questions and Answers about the Opposition", in *id.*, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-1927)*, pp. 101-108, here p. 104s.; Trotsky and Zinoviev's declaration of 11 June 1926 in Ju. Fel'stinskij, *Kommunističeskaja opozicija v SSSR* (Benson, 1988), Vol. 1, pp. 248-253, here pp. 249s.; Trotsky, "K pjatnadcatoj partijnoj konferencii", *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 83-103, here pp. 95-97. Moreover, Trotsky, basing his criticism on events in France, where, since 1924, the revolutionary Syndicalists had been pushed out to the margins, wrote against the party's increasing tendency to interfere in trade union administration: "Bringing the trade unions closer to the party at the price of separating the unions from the working class can have no value whatsoever. The tendency toward making the unions into slightly enlarged editions of the party must be decisively rejected." "Problems of the Comintern", in *id.*, *The*

opposed the intention of liquidating the RILU, planned by the Soviet trade union leadership with the silent support of the Stalin-Bucharin party leadership. At the same time the RILU leadership, headed by Losovsky, was avoiding an open confrontation with the Soviet trade union leaders around Tomsky. However, the opposition saw everything as part of a general political perspective aimed (until 1933) at the reform of the CPSU and the CL. The Trotskyist opposition both inside and outside Russia did indeed express opinions about trade union questions but these were always coloured by political considerations. In general their groups were too weak to make much impression in trade union circles. In a circular dated January 1928 about problems of the international left-wing opposition Trotsky had called for the election of as many opposition delegates as possible to the Fourth RILU Congress to make programmatic and practical suggestions there,¹⁴⁴ but apart from the contribution by Nin, who was there as a member of the Executive Bureau, the opposition was not publicly represented. If there were some delegates belonging to it, the situation was such that they could meet only conspiratorially. For a while, 1930/1931, it was possible in the CGTU, the French section of the RILU, to build up together with the non-Trotskyist Communist opponents a broadly based opposition movement within the trade unions, the "opposition unitaire", which did quite well initially but then fell apart, not least because of the French Trotskyists' internal disagreements.¹⁴⁵ It is not possible to speak of an organized Trotskyist movement within the RILU, as one can in the case of some parties or even the Comintern itself.

Although in 1927/28 the Trotskyist opposition had been almost completely defeated, the "left-turn" of the years 1928/29 created a new wave of opposition.

9. The RILU in the Comintern's "Ultra-Left" Phase 1928/29-1934

The trend towards a new orientation had its beginnings at the Fourth RILU Congress, which took place from 17 March to 3 April 1928.¹⁴⁶ Outwardly the RILU appeared to have reached a new climax, but the Soviet trade unions' high membership concealed the fact that the RILU had been losing popularity in nearly all the capitalist countries. The gravest consequences had arisen from the defeat of the Chinese Revolution, even though the Communists continued to cling to the fiction that there was a Chinese organization numbering millions.

In his report Losovsky mentioned a number of the points brought up by the delegates as the reason for the trend. Capitalism's offensive was provoking radicalization, while the reformist trade unions were becoming more and more a part of capitalism. "The United Front from below" was spoken of more frequently and attention paid to the role of unorganized workers, who were said to be more revolutionary than trade union members. But above all strikes came to the fore-front. What was new was that they were now employed independently against the leadership of the reformist trade unions and so were used as a means to combat them. Together with the polemics against the "rightists", for instance in Germany, this introduced a basic change of direction, which

Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-1927), pp. 195-204, here p. 202.

¹⁴⁴ See "Problems of the International Left Opposition (Two letters)", in Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-1929)* (New York, 1981), pp. 38-45, here p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ The "opposition unitaire" drew its strength from the CGTU Teachers' Union, whose leadership was in the hands of opposition Communists who, without being Trotskyists, were prepared to co-operate with them. Among the French Trotskyists, Rosmer played a leading part in forming the "opposition unitaire". Eventually, however, the trend established itself - the one supported by Trotsky - of concentrating on building up one's own opposition. Cf. Yvan Craipeau, *Le mouvement trotskyste en France. Des origines aux enseignements de mai 1968* (Paris, 1971), pp. 53-57; Jean Rabaut, *Tout est possible! Les "gauchistes" français 1929-1944* (Paris, 1974), pp. 59-69. For Trotsky's opinion, see his article dated 4 January 1931 "Les erreurs des éléments droitiers de la Ligue dans la question syndicale", in Léon Trotsky, *Le mouvement communiste en France (1919-1939)*, ed. by Pierre Broué (Paris, 1967), pp. 379-389. One of the spokesmen of the official party minority in the Teachers' Union was Georges Cogniot. In his memoirs he refers continually to the Union leadership, attacking it as "Trotskyist". Cogniot, *Partis pris*, Vol. 1, pp. 137-143.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *Protokoll über den 4. Kongreß*. A survey in Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, Vol. 3/1, pp. 177-192. However, it was really only confirming its assent to the direction already taken by the Ninth ECCI Plenum in February 1928.

shortly afterwards was to lead to the Communist parties' abandoning the work within the reformist trade unions which had been laid down as an initial principle and trying instead to form new revolutionary unions.

One result of this was an open conflict backstage between Losovsky and the Soviet trade unions' "rightist" leadership, i.e. the majority of the Soviet delegation attending the Congress, whom he had forced to toe the new line by obtaining a resolution from the Politburo of the CPSU.¹⁴⁷ Not only was nothing said about this conflict at the Congress; attention was also diverted from it by Nin's intervention.¹⁴⁸ As to the structure of the RILU's leadership, an alteration was made at the Congress. The Central Council, consisting of 95 members and 18 candidates, now once again elected the Executive Office, comprising 19 members and 13 candidates, meeting to do so immediately after the end of the Congress and calling itself the Fifth Session.¹⁴⁹

In the following year a series of conferences systematically developed the new policy.¹⁵⁰ From 19 to 21 January 1929 there was a RILU conference in Strasbourg with representatives from seven countries. Drawing on the "lessons" learnt from important strikes in the previous year it proclaimed the principle of the "independent economic struggle" with leaders elected by the workers and independent of the existing trade unions.¹⁵¹ During the following months there was in many countries a transition to organizational independence of the Communist trade union opposition. Even though it was not stated openly they did, in fact, form new trade union leagues - a course which was given its name by the German example, the RGO or *Revolutionäre Gewerkschafts-Opposition* (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition), founded on 30 November/1 December 1928.

However, this course also provoked considerable opposition. The Trotskyists were not alone in refusing to follow it. Opposition was frequently connected with the Right opposition in the CI, which was excluded from the Communist parties in the months following the Sixth Comintern Congress (summer 1928).¹⁵² The Right opposition saw emphasis of the United Front policy as the important point in their trade union work. Among their numbers were often the most important trade union cadres. In contrast to the Left opposition they saw themselves principally as groups influenced by the relevant national position and not by international problems. During the Fourth RILU Congress this conflict broke out only internally, while publicly it was limited to a deputies' dispute,¹⁵³ but in the eighteen months before the Sixth Session of the Central Council at the end of December 1929 the Soviet trade union leaders around Tomsky were relieved of their posts. In Germany the right-wingers around Brandler and Thalheimer and in the USA those around Lovestone were expelled from their respective Communist parties. In Spain events led up to the break with the Catalan party organization around

¹⁴⁷ Trotsky circularized the exiled Soviet left opposition with this information in June 1928. Cf. "Rumors from Moscow", in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-1929)*, pp. 120-126, here pp. 125s.

¹⁴⁸ See above.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-1929)*, pp. 517s.

¹⁵⁰ Stalin had already indicated the way he wanted things to develop. At the end of December 1928 he said, "a situation is quite conceivable in which it may be necessary to create parallel mass associations of the working class, against the will of the trade-union bosses who have sold themselves to the capitalists. We already have such a situation in America. It is quite possible that things are moving in the same direction in Germany too." "The Right Danger in the German Communist Party. Speech Delivered at a Meeting of the Presidium of the E.C.C.I. December 19, 1928", in J.V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 11 (Moscow, 1954), pp. 307-324, here p. 315.

¹⁵¹ See *Erfahrungen, Lehren und Aufgaben in den Wirtschaftskämpfen. Streiktaktik und Streikstrategie. Resolutionen der Straßburger Konferenz, mit einem Vorwort von A. Losowski* (Moscow and Berlin, s.a.),

¹⁵² Cf. Robert J. Alexander, *The Right Opposition. The Lovestoneites and the International Communist Opposition of the 1930s* (Westport and London, 1981); K.H. Tjaden, *Struktur und Funktion der "KPD-Opposition" (KPO). Eine organisationssoziologische Untersuchung zur "Rechts"-Opposition im deutschen Kommunismus zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Meisenheim, 1964); Theodor Bergmann, "Gegen den Strom". *Die Geschichte der Kommunistischen-Partei-Opposition* (Hamburg, 1987).

¹⁵³ In Losovsky's attack on Walcher, the leading trade unionist of the KPD right wing. *Protokoll über den 4. Kongreß*, p. 74.

Maurin, and so on. In all these cases, recognized Communist trade union leaders with considerable influence within the existing unions were expelled, while at the same time "red" trade unions were proclaimed. Within the CGTU, simultaneously with the "opposition unitaire", there arose a purely internal trade union opposition, which wanted nothing to do with the ultra-left course, being instead strongly influenced by Syndicalist traditions.¹⁵⁴ Finally, an oppositional bloc was also formed in the trade union leadership of the Czechoslovakian MVS, parallel to a similar development in the party. It did not want to go along with the ultra-left course and at the beginning of 1929 it had a majority. It expressly opposed the party's interference in trade union activities. All this led to a split in the MVS; the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had to found a new umbrella organization.¹⁵⁵

Even if - after "Black Friday" on 25 October 1929 - the start of the world-wide economic crisis seemed to offer confirmation of this whole trend, it must be remembered that, in fact, it had nothing to do with it. The trend was nothing more than a consistent application of the Comintern's left-turn, expressed in the slogans "Third Period", "United Front from below" and "Social Fascism". It started as early as the Sixth CI Congress (July-August 1928) and was consolidated at the Tenth ECCI Plenum (3 to 19 July 1929) and it had its origins in the Soviet Union's internal development.

After the Central Council's Sixth Session in December 1929 had drawn up an interim balance of the success of this course,¹⁵⁶ it was confirmed at the Fifth RILU Congress in August 1930.¹⁵⁷ This was arranged with even more pomp than the earlier ones, in order to celebrate the RILU's tenth anniversary, counting from the founding in summer 1920 of its immediate predecessor, the International Trade Union Council. Many congratulatory addresses were given. A number of subsidiary organizations, already founded or in the process of being so, especially in colonial countries,¹⁵⁸ were introduced. This, and the - once again - increased number

¹⁵⁴ The CGTU minority provided the members for the Comité pour l'indépendance du syndicalisme. The moving force behind that was the group around the periodical *La Révolution prolétarienne*. It provided the impulse in 1930/1931 for a committee with the CGT left, which intended to re-unite the two central offices. The attempt failed and a large number of the CGTU oppositional members left and joined the CGT. Cf. Rabaut, *Tout est possible!*, pp. 38-56; Craipeau, *Le mouvement trotskyste*, pp. 47, 53; Daniel Guérin, "Une tentative de réunification syndicale 1930-1931", in *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, No. 1, 1966, pp. 107-121. In August 1931 the RILU Executive Office also held a discussion with representatives of the minority, which naturally came to nothing. Cf. the minutes in *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale*, No. 17/18, 30 September 1931.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. McDermott, *The Czech Red Unions*, pp. 206-235. It should be remembered that the MVS joined the Social Democratic Trade Union Association as early as 1930.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Protokoll der sechsten Session des Zentralrates der Roten Gewerkschafts-Internationale, abgehalten in Moskau vom 15. bis 24. Dezember 1929* (Berlin, 1930).

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Protokoll des V. Kongresses*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1930).

¹⁵⁸ From the very beginning the RILU had attached great importance to developments in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and had presented an appropriate programme in resolutions passed at the First and Second Congresses. More and more room was devoted to their concerns from one Congress to the next, a sure sign that the RILU had managed to get a foothold in some colonial countries. These successes, especially after 1928, were somewhat exaggerated to the outside world, probably in order to distract attention from the defeats caused by the RGO policies in Europe. As from 1925 the RILU had an organization in China whose membership was counted in millions (but which, from the middle of 1927 onwards, was bloodily persecuted by the Guomindang). Building on this, in May 1927 a Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat was created, domiciled in Shanghai, which at times was an important centre for the newly emerging Asiatic trade union movement, but, because of police repression, led a precarious existence and disappeared from the scene completely at the beginning of the 1930s. Cf. A. Lozovsky, *The Pan-Pacific Trade Union Conference. Hankow May 20-26, 1927* (Moscow, 1927); Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, Vol. 3/3, pp. 1040-1042; Frank Farrell, "The Pan-Pacific Trade Union Movement and Australian Labour, 1921-1932", *Historical Studies*, No. 69, 1977, pp. 441-457; the same, "Australian Labour and the Profintern", *International Review of Social History*, No. 1, 1979, pp. 34-54. In 1927/28 the RILU "discovered" Latin America. In 1929 the *Confederación Sindical Latino-Americana* (CSLA) was created, with its seat

of delegates¹⁵⁹ seemed to prove that its fortunes were on the up and up. In fact, as the last Congress ever, and in view of the actual stagnation or even diminution of the influence on trade unions of the newly created organizations, especially in the important industrial countries of Europe and America, it clearly signaled the fall of the RILU. Significantly the leading bodies were cut down in size, the Central Council to 90 people and its elected Executive Bureau to 27.¹⁶⁰

The Central Council held its Eighth, and final, Session from 7 to 17 December 1931. (The Seventh Session was the one held immediately after the Fifth Congress at which the Executive Office was elected.) After the RGO course had led to defeat all along the line and to a loss influence, it was imperative to introduce some tactical corrections, for instance, to stress that - without abandoning the party line in principle - not all party work within the reformist trade unions should be abandoned.¹⁶¹

The failure of this entire policy has been depicted as typical of the RGO in Germany.¹⁶² Its place

in Montevideo. However, because of the RILU's general course, its influence was, with few exceptions, marginal. In 1933 Nín said frankly that the CSLA "en realidad, no es más que una ficción burocrática". It was dissolved in 1937. Cf. Robert J. Alexander, *Communism in Latin America* (New Brunswick, 1957), pp. 51-53; Julio Godio, *Historia del movimiento obrero latinoamericano*, Vol. 2: *Nacionalismo y comunismo 1918-1930* (Mexico, 1983), pp. 171-191; Ricardo Melgar Bao, *El movimiento obrero latinoamericano. Historia de una clase subalterna* (Madrid, 1988), pp. 258-270; Humbert-Droz, *De Lénine à Staline*, pp. 376-378, 391s.; *Archives de Jules Humbert-Droz*, Vol. 2, pp. XLI-XLIII, 155s., 452-456. There is a complete survey of the relationship between the RILU and Latin America in Aleksander Kochański, "El sindicalismo latinoamericano: Materiales del archivo moscovito de la Internacional Sindical Roja", *Estudios Latinoamericanos*, No. 11, 1988, pp. 249-295. In 1930, as a special organization for the black workers in Africa, the USA and the Caribbean, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers was founded, with its seat in Hamburg (because of its access to the sea routes to the harbours of the world). It was mainly concerned with propaganda, contacting the emerging trade union movement in colonial countries where, of course, the Committee and its publications were strictly illegal. The most outstanding personality connected with it was George Padmore from Trinidad. At the beginning of the National Socialist era the Committee had to move its headquarters abroad. Its organ *Negro Worker*, for instance, appeared in Copenhagen, Brussels and finally Paris. With the beginning of the Popular Front policy it faced a crisis, because as a result of Soviet efforts to bring about co-operation with France and Great Britain the Communist movement relinquished its basic anti-colonialist orientation. George Padmore, for instance, broke with the Communist movement. In 1936/37, at the time of the RILU's general dissolution, it, too, disappeared. Cf. Rolf Italiaander, *Schwarze Haut im roten Griff* (Düsseldorf and Vienna, 1962), pp. 53-73; Heinz Deutschland, "Die Anfänge der afrikanischen Arbeiter- und Gewerkschaftsbewegung (1918-1945)" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leipzig, 1967), pp. 256-264; Imanuel Geiss, *Panafrikanismus. Zur Geschichte der Dekolonisation* (Frankfurt, 1968), pp. 256-264; L.O. Golden, "Meždunarodnyj profsojuznyj komitet negritanskich rabočich", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1970, pp. 60-70; Ruth Deutschland, "Die 1. Internationale Konferenz der Negerarbeiter vor 50 Jahren", *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika*, No. 4, 1980, pp. 703-712; James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary. George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York, etc., 1967), pp. 17-38.

¹⁵⁹ 538 delegates from 60 countries - in comparison, at the Fourth RILU Congress there were 421 delegates from 49 countries. *Protokoll des V. Kongresses*, Vol. 2, p. 275.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 301, 305 - in neither case was a difference made between full members and candidate members.

¹⁶¹ Cf. A. Losowsky, *Vorwärts zur Gegenoffensive des Proletariats: Referat und Schlußwort, gehalten auf der VIII. Session des Zentralrats der R.G.I. am 7., 8. und 17. Dezember 1931* (Berlin, 1932), and *Beschlüsse der 8. Session des Zentral-Rats der RGI, 7. bis 17. Dezember 1931* (Berlin, 1932). Somewhat shortened minutes of this meeting were printed in *Die Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale*, from No. 1/2, January 1932, to No. 5, first half of March.

¹⁶² Cf. Müller, *Lohnkampf, Massenstreik, Sowjetmacht*.

within the RILU was as prominent as that of the KPD in the Comintern. Müller has also listed the RGO's various stages of development: first, from spring 1928 to summer 1929, the "clarification", i.e. pushing through its course of action in the KPD against the "rightists" and "conciliators"; then, up to summer 1930 - as a political preparation - founding the RGO as a "home" for the previous faction within the trade union and extracting it from the trade unions; third, up to the following year, the organizational task of founding its own industrial trade unions in some branches ("unified unions") during the winter of 1930/1931; finally, up to 30 January 1933, the efforts to compensate for the failure of this policy by tactical twists and turns - e.g. laying renewed stress on party work within the existing trade unions. Parallel developments were taking place in other countries, which, however, have not yet been researched in so detailed a manner.¹⁶³ The RILU did not manage to found new revolutionary trade union groupings with real mass influence anywhere at all. All the new RGOs had less influence than their predecessors, the Communist factions within the existing trade unions. In those rare cases where they had access to existing trade union central offices (France, Czechoslovakia) their influence declined sharply. In fact, as Trotsky wrote in 1933 on the occasion of the convocation of an "Anti-Fascist Workers' Congress" by the RGOs of several countries, the RILU had been reduced to "nothing more than a Communist party, or part of a Communist party, only under another name".¹⁶⁴

Mass unemployment, that most significant "product" of the world-wide economic crisis, did not pose an exclusive problem for the RILU. On occasion Communist parties intervened directly, organizing a movement for the unemployed.¹⁶⁵ In August 1931, after running an "International Day of the Unemployed" on 25 February, a conference of Communist parties and RGOs in Prague decided to remove the movement for the unemployed from the responsibility of the RGOs.¹⁶⁶

10. Leading up to the Dissolution of the RILU, 1934-1937

When Communist politics collapsed in Germany in 1933 there were direct organizational consequences for the RILU, over and above the suppression of the RGO - the Central European Office and a number of publications had to be moved - but no political consequences resulted until, in 1934, the CI adopted the Popular Front policy. In the trade union area this meant a readiness for co-operation, including even full unification, with the IFTU trade unions (which, in the final analysis, meant being prepared to dissolve the RILU). So as a result of the new policy, once again, in 1934/35, letters and public statements flew to and fro between the RILU and the IFTU on the question of unification. The RILU called on the IFTU to discuss the unification of both national and international leagues, starting with unity of action, while the IFTU trotted out its old argument: it already represented a basis for trade union unity. It wanted unions to join its Central Membership Offices in their various

¹⁶³ See, for example, the remarks on the USA in the chapter "Red Unionism" in Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism. The Conflict that Shaped American Unions* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 43-81, and on Spain in Rafael Cruz, *El Partido Comunista de España en la Segunda República* (Madrid, 1987), pp. 119s., 142-148, and Bernhard Bayerlein, "Die Kommunistische Partei Spaniens als Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale vor dem Spanischen Bürgerkrieg. Von der Taktik der 'Einheitsfront von unten' zur Volksfrontpolitik" (M.A. thesis, Ruhr University Bochum, 1978), pp. 30-34, 118-121, 134-136, 225-227.

¹⁶⁴ "The Economic Onslaught of the Counterrevolution and the Unions", in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-1933)* (New York, 1972), pp. 169-172, here p. 170. Trotsky added: "This organization does not bind the party to the unions. Being, because of their small numbers, absolutely incapable of replacing the trade unions in the sphere of mass action, the RILU is at the same time incapable of influencing them from outside because it is hostilely opposed to them as rival organizations."

¹⁶⁵ For the RILU's programme on this problem, see the relevant section in the theses "Organisatorische Fragen der revolutionären Gewerkschaftsbewegung", in *Protokoll des V. Kongresses*, Vol. 2, pp. 312-335, here pp. 325s. For general remarks on this, cf. Richard Croucher, "Communist Unemployed Organisations Between the World Wars. International Patterns and Problems", *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. XXX (1990), pp. 584-597.

¹⁶⁶ Müller, *Lohnkampf, Massenstreik, Sowjetmacht*, pp. 223s.

countries. The IFTU was prepared to negotiate with the Russian trade unions only about their joining.¹⁶⁷ However, negotiations had already been taking place in France, where one of the few "genuine" RILU sections outside the USSR existed, during which it became clear that in order to attain unity the Communists were prepared to make a number of politico-ideological concessions. Initially the Comintern leadership expressed some resistance, but this line was generally adopted, binding for all, at the Seventh Comintern Congress (July-August 1935)¹⁶⁸ and more particularly at the subsequent International Trade Union Advisory Session, in which delegates who were active in trade union work and representatives of the Comintern and the RILU participated.¹⁶⁹ Although in the following months the RILU made several more public appeals to the IFTU,¹⁷⁰ events were now determined by how things were developing in the various countries. France was a particularly good example. Since October 1934 negotiations had been going on between the CGT and the CGTU, with the Communists coming closer to the CGT's demands step by step. They had agreed: that on principle trade unions should be independent of parties; formally to abandon Communist factions; that Communist trade unionists should not take on leading party posts; that the united CGT should be a member of the IFTU and also of the International Labour Exchange and similar institutions. All this meant that the merger could be adopted at a congress held in Toulouse from 2 to 5 March 1936, giving Communist trade unionists a real say in the deliberations of the IFTU as a result.¹⁷¹ In places where the Communist trade unions consisted only of the uninfluential "red" leagues created in 1929/30 they just joined up, either after formal talks with the national IFTU Central Office - this was the case in Spain¹⁷² -, or by dissolving themselves and subsequently joining individually - this was what mostly happened in, for example, the USA.¹⁷³

The RILU's "subsidiary organizations" in colonial countries ceased to exist in 1936,¹⁷⁴ and in the same year the RILU's organs ceased publication. No ceremony marked the dissolution of the remaining organization in Moscow in December 1937, nor was there even a public announcement, as there was in 1943 when the Comintern was dissolved.¹⁷⁵ All that remained to be settled was the question of direct negotiations between the IFTU and the Soviet trade unions. For this purpose a delegation travelled from Amsterdam to Moscow in 1937. The Soviet trade unions demanded a number of conditions which, at various conferences in 1938/39, the IFTU refused to accept, even though the left-wing minority, much increased by the addition of the Communists

¹⁶⁷ Lidia Schewtschenko, "Zum Kampf der Kommunistischen Internationale um die Gewerkschaftseinheit in den Jahren 1934-1939", in *Studien zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Sammelband* (Berlin [GDR], 1974), pp. 308-450, here 309-311.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 312-316.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 316-318 and especially G.M. Adibekov, "Meždunarodnoe profsojuznoe soveščanie 1935 g.", *Novaja i novejšaja istorija*, No. 3, 1988, pp. 3-16.

¹⁷⁰ Schewtschenko, "Zum Kampf der Kommunistischen Internationale", pp. 325s.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 313s., 318-321; Lefranc, *Le mouvement syndical*, pp. 323-334, and Antoine Prost, *La C.G.T. à l'époque du front populaire 1934-1939. Essai de description numérique* (Paris, 1964), pp. 127-136.

¹⁷² Cruz, *El Partido Comunista de España*, pp. 240-243.

¹⁷³ Cochran, *Labor and Communism*, pp. 74-77.

¹⁷⁴ See note 158.

¹⁷⁵ Adibekow, *Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale*, p. 140, and *Die Kommunistische Internationale. Kurzer historischer Abriß* (Frankfurt, 1970), pp. 537s., mention the relevant resolution. The latter book also records the relevant document number in the CPSU's Central Party Archives, but neither book reveals who was responsible for the resolution. This would seem to indicate that it was the work of a Comintern body which in fact had no right to do so.

(especially in France, Spain and Mexico) was overwhelmingly in favour of admitting the Soviets.¹⁷⁶

Typical of the developments as a whole at the time of the Popular Front was not only the abandonment of the RILU but above all the readiness to make far-reaching ideological concessions. Except for all points touching the USSR, there was now a far-reaching readiness to accept the Amsterdam International's politico-programmatic positions (though at the same time giving them a "leftist" interpretation). At the time of the RILU's inauguration the heart of Communist trade union work was factional activity, i.e. openly political conflict with "Reformism". Now it was primarily aimed at taking over and running positions of leadership, thus ensuring the acceptance of the current party line.¹⁷⁷ In, for example, the CGT this led swiftly to accusations of "noyautage". The Communists were charged with a systematic "colonisation" of the trade unions.¹⁷⁸ This led in many places to renewed splits in trade union unity, either at the outbreak of the Second World War, though it was possible to mend these breaks after 1941, or, with finality, when the Cold War broke out.

11. A few final remarks

Parallel with the Comintern the RILU had helped develop a "monolithic" organization. Within their common framework, marked by their acknowledgment of the October Revolution, the RILU had, however, at the time of its inauguration, offered a broad display of different positions, all the way from revolutionary Syndicalism to Bolshevism, way beyond the political framework of the Comintern. This represented an independence which was soon abandoned, giving the Communists within the organization the chance to take over the exclusive leadership. This led to the RILU's in fact becoming a part of the Comintern and following its development at every point. The internal organization of its being collapsed. Fewer and fewer conferences etc. were convened while at the same time the number of officials was increased and more and more bodies were created. This, however, did not signify an increase in trade union influence; on the contrary, it declined. In fact the RILU could fulfil to only a limited extent its aim of becoming the revolutionary trade union movement's international centre. It had access to existing trade unions in only very few countries. In most countries it had to make do with the Communist factions within the trade unions, in other words the party's organized influence within the mostly Social-Democrat-dominated trade unions.

The RILU then relinquished its not inconsiderable trade union influence during the 1928/29 about-turn, by trying to set up its own trade unions in place of the existing ones. In reality the new "revolutionary trade unions" were nothing more than a second edition of the Communist Party. When, after 1934, yet another turnabout led to membership in the reformist trade unions, this happened under policies and a programme which had changed since the 1920s.

Even so, the RILU had considerable importance for the history of the Communist movement because its place was at the "join" between the working class and the party, which enabled it to play a strategic role in the party's efforts to obtain mass support. It was also an important reservoir for recruits to the Communist parties and an important influence in the political socialization of the party cadres.

Translated by Delia Grözinger

¹⁷⁶ Schevenels, *Fünfundvierzig Jahre IGB*, pp. 187-190, and Erwin Oberländer, "Die Moskauer Verhandlungen zwischen IGB und Sowjetgewerkschaften, November 1937", *International Review of Social History*, No. 3, 1980, pp. 350-394.

¹⁷⁷ Schewtschenko, "Zum Kampf der Kommunistischen Internationale", p. 317, sums up a conclusion of Kuusinen's in his speech at the International Trade Union Advisory Session as follows: "What was important was that Communists, in the interests of practical trade union unity, should give a lead in participation in trade union work; less important was the creation of internal Communist factions." The way in which bureaucratic machinations in the very top party ranks were able to undermine the briefly held Communist influence is outlined as far as the USA and Mexico were concerned in Harvey Levenstein, "Leninist undone by Leninism: Communism and unionism in the United States and Mexico 1935-1939", *Labour History*, No. 2, 1981, pp. 237-261.

¹⁷⁸ Lefranc, *Le mouvement syndical*, pp. 373-380, and Prost, *La C.G.T.*, pp. 137-161.