

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER. 1956



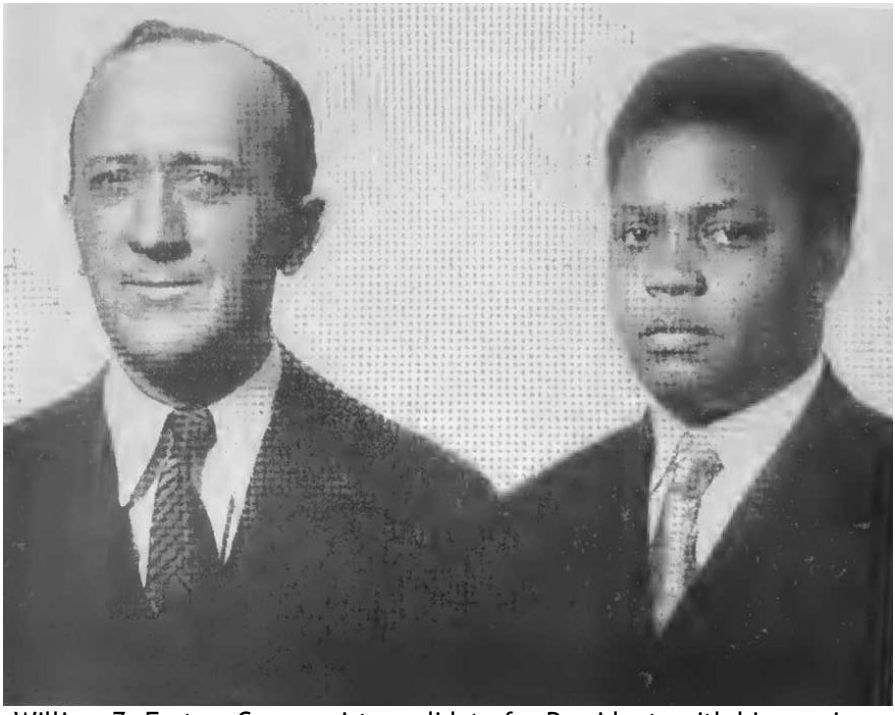
Foster in winter, 1912, on a 7,000-mile cross-country organizing trip



Foster addressing 40,000 workers in Chicago stockyards, spring of 1918, celebrating their organizing strike victory



At a meeting of 20,000 coal miners in Monessen, Pa. in preparation for the 1919 steel strike. Left to right, front: Philip Murray, then vice-president of the United Mine Workers Union; James Maurer, Socialist leader and President of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor; Mary ("Mother") Jones, the veteran mine union organizer, and, in background, Foster, leader of the steel strike



William Z. Foster, Communist candidate for President, with his running-mate, James W. Ford, in the 1932 national election campaign.

# OUTLINE HISTORY of the WORLD TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

*William Z. Foster*

Published on the
Seventy-fifth Birthday of the Author

*TO ESTHER*

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WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

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# CONTENTS

*PREFACE* ..... 15
*PART I: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT (1764-1876):*
THE PERIOD OF COMPETITIVE CAPITALISM

1. THE BEGINNINGS OF CAPITALISM ..... 17
The Guild System, 18... The Development of Mercantilism, 20... The Industrial Revolution, 21... The Bourgeois Political Revolution, 23

2. ORIGINS OF THE WORKING CLASS ..... 24
Transformation of Handicraftsmen into Wage Workers, 25... The Proletarianization of the Peasantry, 27... Forced Labor, Peonage and Chattel Slavery, 29

3. THE BIRTH OF TRADE UNIONISM IN ENGLAND (1764-1824) ..... 31
The Resistance of the Workers, 33... Machine-Breaking and Insurrection, 34... Strikes and Trade Unions, 36... The Guilds and the Trade Unions, 37

4. OWENISM AND CHARTISM (1817-1868) ..... 38
The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, 40... The Rise of Chartism, 41... The Decline of the Chartist Movement, 43... Organized Labor Turns to the Right, 45

5. TRADE UNIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES (1776-1865) ..... 47
The Birth of the Trade Union Movement, 48... The Burning Question of Slavery, 50... The Advance of Organized Labor, 51...The Trade Unions and the Civil War, 53

6. EARLY TRADE UNIONISM IN EUROPE (1848-1864) ..... 54
Birth of the German Trade Union Movement, 55... Early French Trade Unions, 57... The Beginnings of Italian Trade Unionism, 59... Early Trade Unionism in Other Countries, 60

7. THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL AND KARL MARX (1864-1876) ..... 62
Marx and the Workers' General Program, 63... Marxism and Trade Unionism, 66... The IWA Inaugural Address and Provisional Rules, 68

8. THE INTERNATIONAL, THE TRADE UNIONS, AND THE PARIS COMMUNE (1864-1876) ..... 70
The Role of the British Trade Unions, 71... The German Trade Unions and the International, 72... The Trade Unions and the Paris Commune, 74... Rebirth of the French Labor Movement, 76

9. THE ITALIAN AND SPANISH TRADE UNIONS, AND BAKUNIN (1864-1876) ..... 77
Bakunin in Italy, 78... The League of Resistance, 79... Spanish Organized Labor in the International, 80... The Split in the First International, 82

10. THE NATIONAL LABOR UNION AND THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL (1866-1876) ..... 84
The National Labor Union, 85... The NLU and the Negro Workers, 86... The Trade Unions and the Land Question, 87.... The NLU and the International, 89... The Decline of the NLU, 90... The First International in the United States, 91

11. THE WORKERS AND THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION (1644-1876)..... 93
The English, American, and French Revolutions, 93... The Workers in the European Revolution of 1848, 96... The Trade Unions and the Second American Revolution, 99

12. THE WORLD LABOR MOVEMENT UP TO 1876..... 101
The Growth of World Capitalism, 101... The Development of the Working Class, 102... Laying the Foundations of the Trade Union Movement, 105... Political Action and Organization, 107

*PART II: TRADE UNIONS AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL (1876-1914):*
THE PERIOD OF MATURING IMPERIALISM

13. IMPERIALISM AND THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL..... 110
The Development of World Imperialism, 110... The Foundation of the Second International, 112... The Role of the Trade Unions in the Second International, 114

14. BISMARCK AND THE GERMAN TRADE UNIONS (1878-1900)..... 117
The Anti-Socialist Law, 118... The Erfurt Program, 119... Formation of the Trade Union General Commission, 120... The Trusts and Industrial Unionism, 122... Bernstein Revisionism, 123

15. GREAT BRITAIN: CLASS COLLABORATION AND THE NEW UNIONISM (1876-1906) ..... 125
The Conservative British Trade Unions, 125... The Great Dockers' Strike, 127... The Foundation of the British Labor Party, 129... The Labor Parties in the Dominions, 132

16. FIERCE TRADE UNION STRUGGLES IN THE UNITED STATES (1876-1900)..... 133
Troops Against Strikers, 133... Workers and Farmers in Political Alliance, 137... The Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, 138... The Role of the Marxists, 141

17. ORGANIZED LABOR IN FRANCE, ITALY, AND SPAIN (1876-1900)..... 143
The Growth of French Trade Unionism, 143... The Development of French Anarcho-Syndicalism, 144... Marxist Trade Unionism in Italy, 147....The Trade Unions in Spain, 150

18. THE TRADE UNIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES (1876-1914)..... 151

Trade Unionism in the Low Countries and Scandinavia, 151... The Trade Unions in Eastern Europe, 152... Pioneer Trade Unions in Latin America, 154... The Beginning of African Trade Unionism, 156... Asian Labor Commences to Awaken, 157... The Birth of the Japanese Labor Movement, 159

19. THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION SECRETARIAT (1900-1914)..... 161
Formation of the Trade Union Secretariats, 163... The International Secretariat of the National Trade Union Centers, 164... The International Federation of Trade Unions, 166... The Catholic Labor International, 167

20. THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE 1905 RUSSIAN REVOLUTION..... 169
Lenin's Restoration of Marxist Principles, 170... Lenin's Party of a New Type, 171... Lenin and the Trade Unions, 171... The Course of the 1905 Revolution, 174... The Role of the Trade Unions, 208... The Aftermath of the Revolution, 176

21. THE QUESTION OF THE GENERAL STRIKE..... 177
The General Strike in Labor History, 177... Wages and Solidarity General Strikes, 179... General Strikes for the Universal Workers' Franchise, 181... Anti-War and Revolutionary General Strikes, 182... The General Strike as a Working-Class Weapon, 184

22. ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM AS A WORLD MOVEMENT (1906-1914)..... 185
Anarcho-Syndicalism in the Latin Countries, 187... The American IWW and Syndicalism, 188... The British Syndicalist Movement, 190... Anarcho-Syndicalism in Other Countries, 192

23. THE FIGHT AGAINST TRADE UNION REVISIONISM (1900-1914)... 193
Practical Aspects of the Anti-Revisionist Fight, 195... The Fight for Independent Political Action, 197... The Party and the Trade Unions, 199

24. THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE WAR DANGER (1889-1914)..... 201
The War Guilt of Social Democracy, 202... The Course of the Anti-War Struggle, 203... The War Betrayal of Labor, 205... The Role of the Trade Unions, 208

25. WORLD TRADE UNIONISM BETWEEN 1876 AND 1914..... 209
The Growth of the Labor Movement, 210... Struggles of the Working Class, 212... Ideological Advances and Handicaps, 214

*PART III: THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS (1914-1939):*
THE PERIOD OR CAPITALIST GENERAL CRISIS AND THE BIRTH OF WORLD SOCIALISM

26. THE TRADE UNIONS DURING WORLD WAR I (1914-1918)..... 218

Trade Union Leaders Become Part of the State War Machine, 219... Profiteering and Working-Class Resistance, 221... From Wartime Militancy to Revolutionary Struggle, 224

27. THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE 1917 RUSSIAN REVOLUTION (1917-1921)..... 226
The Trade Unions in the Revolution, 227... The Strike, Piecework, and Works Councils, 229... The Trade Unions, the Party, and the State, 231

28. ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE GERMAN REVOLUTION (1918-1920)..... 234
The Overthrow of the Hohenzollern Monarchy, 235... Legien and Company Sell Out Socialism, 237... The Workers Try for the Revolution, 238... The Weimar Republic and the Kapp Putsch, 240... The Hungarian Revolution, 241

29. THE REVOLUTIONARY WAVE THROUGHOUT THE CAPITALIST WORLD (1918-1921) ..... 242
The Birth of Italian Fascism, 242... Offensive and Counter-Offensive in France, 243... The Failure of the British Triple Alliance, 244. The Post-War Struggles in the Americas, 246.. The Growing Trade Union Movement in Asia, 247... World Trade Union Growth (1914-1921), 250

30. THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (1919-1920) ..... 251
The League of Nations, 251... The International Labor Organization, 252... Disinterment of the Second International, 253... The Reorganization of the International Federation of Trade Unions, 254... The Pro-Capitalist Program of the IFTU, 255... The AFL and the IFTU, 257

31. THE FOUNDATION OF THE RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR UNIONS (1919-1921)..... 258
Formation of the RILU, 259... The RILU Program, 261... Disputed Questions of Policy, 263... The Decline of Anarcho-Syndicalism, 265... The Breadth of RILU Work, 266

32. CLASS STRUGGLE VERSUS CLASS COLLABORATION (1921-1926)..... 267
The Gompersites Lead the Surrender, 268... Rationalization in Britain, Germany, and Elsewhere, 270... The RILU Class Struggle Program, 272... The IFTU Expulsion Policy, 273... The RILU in the Colonial Countries, 274

33. THE FIGHT FOR THE UNITED FRONT AND TRADE UNION UNITY (1919-1926)..... 276
The General Problem of Trade Union Unity, 276... The Fight for Organic Trade Union Unity, 279... The Question of the United Front, 281... The Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, 282

34. THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE (1926)..... 284
Events Leading Up to the General Strike, 285... The Course of the Strike, 287...

The Aftermath of the Strike, 290... Comparative Strength of the IFTU and RILU, 292

35. THE WORKERS AND THE GREAT ECONOMIC CRISIS (1929-1932)..... 293
The Devastation of the Economic Crisis, 294... The Soviet-Capitalist Contrast, 295... Conflicting Policies of the IFTU and RILU, 295... The Fight Against Starvation in the Capitalist Countries, 298

36. THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM AND WAR (1929-1939) ..... 300
The Fascist Victory in Germany, 302... The Fascists Take Over Austria, 306... The Changed International Proletarian Fighting Front, 307

37. THE PEOPLE'S FRONT IN FRANCE, SPAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES (1933-1939) ..... 310
Labor Defeats Fascism in France, 310... The Trade Unions in the Spanish Anti-Fascist War, 313... American Labor Beats Back Reaction, 315

38. TRADE UNION PROGRESS IN ASIAN COLONIAL LANDS ..... 319 (1921-1939)
The Stormy Advance of the Chinese Trade Union Movement, 321... Developing Trade Unionism in India, 324... Trade Unionism in Other Asian Colonies, 327

39. THE TRADE UNION STRUGGLE IN LATIN AMERICA (1918-1945) 328
The Pan-American Federation of Labor, 330... The RILU in Latin America, 331... The Latin American Confederation of Labor, 334

40. THE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN FASCIST COUNTRIES (1918-1939)..... 337
The Fascist Unions in Italy, 338... The Nazi Labor Front in Germany, 340... Clerical Fascism in Austria, 342... Labor Unionism in Franco Spain, 343... Fascist Labor Organization in Japan, 344

41. THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS AND SOCIALISM (1917-1939) ..... 346
The Industrial Role of the Soviet Trade Unions, 347... Varied Trade Union Functions, 350... Soviet Trade Union Structure, 351... The Soviet Workers Lead the World Labor Movement, 353

42. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZED LABOR BETWEEN 1914 AND 1939 ..... 354
The Growing Struggle of World Labor, 355... Victories and Defeats, 356... Political and Industrial Organization, 357... Ideological Progress and Decay, 360

*FART IV: ORGANIZED LABOR DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II (1939-1955):*
WORLD SOCIALISM VERSUS WORLD CAPITALISM

43. THE TRADE UNIONS IN WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)..... 364
The General Situation of the Labor Movement, 366... The Class Lineup in the

Anti-Fascist Countries, 367... Trade Union Activities in Individual Allied Countries, 369... First Steps Toward International Trade Union Unity, 372

44. THE POST-WORLD WAR II REVOLUTIONARY OFFENSIVE (1944-1950)..... 373
The World-Wide Revolutionary Wave, 373... The European People's Democracies, 375... The Chinese Revolution, 377... The World-Wide Growth of Mass Organizations, 379

45. THE FORMATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (1945)..... 381
The London Conference, 383... Paris; The Formation of the WFTU, 384... The Program of the WFTU, 386... Flaws in the New World labor Unity, 389

46, THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES (1944-1947)..... 390
Trade Union Growth in the People's Democracies, 391... Tasks of the Trade Unions in the Peoples Democracies, 395

47. THE REBIRTH OF TRADE UNIONISM IN CAPITALIST EUROPE (1944-1947)..... 398
The Renaissance of the Italian Trade Union Movement, 398... The Unified French Labor Movement, 400... The Resurrection of the German Trade Union Movement, 401... The Labor Movement Elsewhere in Europe, 404

48. TRADE UNIONISM FLOURISHES IN ASIA (1945-1947)..... 406
The Revolutionary Chinese Trade Unions, 407... The Trade Unions in Revolutionary India, 408... The Huge Trade Union Growth in Japan, 409... The Trade Unions in the Remaining Asian Countries, 413

49. TRADE UNIONISM IN THE AMERICAS, THE BRITISH DOMINIONS, AND AFRICA (1945-1947)..... 415
The Situation in the United States and Canada, 415... The Latin American Trade Union Movement, 417... The Trade Unions of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, 419... The Peoples' Awakening in Africa, 420

50. THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR (1947-1949)..... 423
The Drive of American Imperialism for World Conquest, 424... Truman Doctrine. Marshall Plan, Atlantic Pact, 426... Division in the Ranks of Labor, 428

51. THE WFTU SPLIT: THE ICFTU FORMED (1947-1949)..... 431
The Clash Over the Marshall Plan, 433... The Split in the WFTU, 435... The Formation or the ICFTU, 437... The Relationship of World Labor Forces, 439

52. THE TRADE UNION SPLIT IN GERMANY, FRANCE, AND ITALY (1947-1949)..... 441
Disrupting the German Trade Union Movement, 442... The Wreckers Attack the French CGT, 444... The Split in the Italian Labor Movement, 446

53. UNION SPLITTING IN THE AMERICAS: CIO AND CTAL (1917-1949)..... 448
The Split in the CIO, 451... The Trade Union Split in Latin America, 453

54. THE COLD WAR IN ASIA (1945-1950)..... 457
The New Chinese Trade Unions, 457... The Unions and the Cold War in India, 460... The Cold War and the Japanese Trade Unions, 462.... The Cold War Elsewhere in Asia, 465

55. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ATOMIC WORLD WAR (1947-1955)..... 466
The People's Fight for Peace: Its Military Aspects, 467... The World Political Struggle for Peace, 469... The Two Trade Union Internationals in the Cold War, 473

56. THE GENERAL LAW OF TRADE UNION PROGRESS ..... 476
The Manner of Trade Union Development, 477... The Two Phases of Progress Evaluated, 479... Examples from World Trade Union Experience, 481... The General Law and Some Conclusions, 484

57. THE WFTU: THE TRADE UNION INTERNATIONAL OF A NEW TYPE..... 486
From Economic to Political Action, 488... The WFTU and Politics, 489... The Three Types of Trade Union Problems, 491... Current Tasks of Socialist Trade Unions, 494

58. TRADE UNION PROBLEMS IN CAPITALIST COUNTRIES ..... 496
Unemployment, Social Insurance, Guaranteed Annual Wage, Sliding Scale, Automation, 496... The Sharpening Attack Upon Trade Union Rights, 500... The Union Shop and Seniority, 501... Trade Union Participation in Industrial Management, 503... Arbitration, 505

59. TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION, DEMOCRACY, AND UNITY..... 506
The Organization of the Unorganized, 506... The Menace of Labor Bureaucracy, 510... The Urgent Question of Trade Union Unity, 513

60. WORLD TRADE UNIONISM MOVES TO THE LEFT..... 517
The Decline of Right-Wing Trade Union Leadership, 517... The Weakening Position of the Skilled Workers, 521... The Rise of Gompersism in the ICFTU, 524

61. THE SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE OF WORLD TRADE UNIONISM... 526
The Impoverishment of the Working Masses, 527... The Deepening General Crisis of Capitalism, 530... The Inspiring Power of Socialism, 533... The Fulfillment of Trade Union History, 534

*REFERENCE NOTES* ..... 537

*INDEX* ..... 562

# PREFACE

In the international labor movement and among the broad circles of the working class there has long been need for a history of world trade unionism. This need is particularly urgent in the United States. Here the workers have long been deluged with bourgeois propaganda, echoed by their conservative leaders to the effect that in this country there is no capitalist system as in other countries; that American workers are not actual proletarians; and that there is no class struggle in America. The workers are also subjected to other brands of this "American exceptionalism." American workers, therefore, need to familiarize themselves with their own and world labor history.

The present volume is intended to be at least a step in this general direction. To do full justice to the immense subject, however, several volumes would be necessary. This book, being only an outline history, is, therefore, necessarily subject to the limitations of dealing too briefly, or sometimes not at all, with important phases of trade unionism in various countries.

A history of the labor movement must bring out the evolution of the trade unions from their simple beginnings to their present high levels of development. Among the evolutionary features of the movement dealt with in this book are: the world growth and expansion of the trade union movement, the unceasing changes in its structure, composition, fighting tactics, and daily tasks, and its expanding and maturing ideology.

Trade unionism, like the capitalist system and the working class, had its first beginnings in England. The history of pioneer trade unionism is, therefore, related chiefly to the early English unions. Following the growth of capitalism, trade unionism spread from England throughout the world, until now almost every country, including the colonial and semi-colonial lands, has its trade union movement.

The trade unions have evolved structurally from the simple, and numerically very weak, local craft unions of the latter part of the 18th century, to world-wide trade union internationals of today, with over 140,000,000 members. They have also broadened out from narrow groupings of skilled workers to immense industrial union organizations, embracing also women, youth, Negro, white collar, unskilled, and agricultural workers.

Trade unionism has similarly passed through a complex growth respecting the tasks that it must solve, from the simplest unorganized strikes over wage demands in its earliest days, to the building of Socialism now-a-days in many lands. The unions' tactics have developed from primitive local strikes of handfuls of workers to great revolutionary

movements of the whole working class and its allies. This entire forward development has been won at the price of countless strikes and other bitter struggles, in which the workers have displayed the utmost courage, devotion, class solidarity, and political understanding.

As it has progressed in size, structure, and fighting ability, world trade unionism has also evolved ideologically. The substance of this evolution has been a hard-won advance from the early confused ideology of the pioneer union workers, full of fighting instinct but heavily tinctured with bourgeois illusions, through many gradations, to an acceptance of Marxism-Leninism and a perspective of Socialism. In the harsh class struggle the Marxists have shown that they are the most effective leaders of the working class. They are the best strike leader and union organizers; they realize most sharply how to link the economic with the political struggles of the toiling masses; how to explain the workings of the capitalist system and cultivate the class consciousness of the workers. Only the Marxists, supported by sympathizing progressive elements, have succeeded in leading the peoples of various countries in the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

The ideological history of the world trade union movement has been an evolution of its membership and leadership toward a Marxist basis. In this battle for working class ideology the Marxists, in the hard everyday struggles on the economic, political, and ideological fronts have defeated many confused and crippling ideological tendencies, stemming basically from the bourgeoisie. Among these were Anarchism, Lassalleism, Fabianism, Bernsteinism, Menshevism, Gornpersism, Anarcho-syndicalism, and various others. In some major capitalist countries, as the United States and Great Britain, this fight has not yet been won, but the world ideological trend among the workers is definitely towards Marxism-Leninism. On a world scale, Marxist-Leninists now stand at the head of by far the greatest number of trade unionists.

*New York, January, 1956* WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

# PART 1
## LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT (1764-1876)

*The Period of Competitive Capitalism*

## 1. The Beginnings of Capitalism

Karl Marx places the general beginning of the capitalist, system, in Europe, in the sixteenth century.[1] Prior to this time feudalism had been the basic European social regime ever since the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century. Capitalism, however, had roots running back many centuries earlier, deep into the Roman economic system, which was based upon huge landed estates—*latifundia*—cultivated by chattel slaves.

Feudalism predominated not only all over Europe, from England to Russia, but it also largely prevailed in Asia—China, India, Japan, etc.—intermingled with various remnants of the preceding general social system based upon chattel slavery. In the broad expanses of the Americas, Africa, and Australasia, at the time of the birth of capitalism in Europe, primitive communalism was universally prevalent, save in narrow fringes along their coasts, where the predatory white invaders had already established their pro-capitalist outposts.

Despite some successes, feudalism never fully mastered the Americas. In what later became known as Latin America, the big landowners and feudal nobles seized enormous stretches of territory as their estates, enslaved the Negroes and peonized the Indians, and built a colonial system subservient to France, Spain, and Portugal. In what eventually evolved into the United States and Canada, the wealthy landowners of England, France, and Holland also handed to themselves vast estates violently stolen from the Indians, and they set about rebuilding the new continent in the likeness of feudal Europe. But their success was only partial and doomed to ultimate failure. The French developed a miniature feudalism along the St. Lawrence; the Dutch also erected the feudal patroon system in the Hudson River area, and most significant, the English, in the Southern states, succeeded in establishing a semi-feudal regime based upon Negro chattel slavery. But generally, in the decisive areas of the United States and Canada feudalism was still-born; the decentralizing effects of the open frontier and the contrary currents of nascent capitalism were too strong for obsolescent feudalism. It could not monopolize the land, it could not establish a landed nobility,* it could not subjugate

* Attempts were made to place crowns upon the heads of Washington, Bol-

the workers and farmers, and it could not beat back the growing capitalist class. Almost from the outset, the economies of these broad areas, in both agriculture and industry, were essentially capitalist.

Although feudalism varied in different parts of Europe, as it also did in Asia, fundamentally it was based upon a monopolization of the land and of all natural resources by a small group of noble landlords. The latter were organized politically in a pyramid-like hierarchy, ranging upward from the lesser country gentry at the bottom to a handful of absolute monarchs—kings, emperors, and popes—at the top. The richest and most powerful of all these autocratic landlords, for 1,000 years, was the Catholic Church, which, at the height of its power, owned about one-third of all the land in Europe, and later came to possess nearly half of the land in Latin America.

Feudal society was overwhelmingly agricultural, up to ninety percent of the people living directly by the cultivation of the soil. The land was farmed by serfs, who were just a rung higher than chattel slaves. They were bound to the soil, worked without pay the fields of their masters, and eked out a thin living during the rest of their work-time by cultivating such small plots as were allowed to them. They used methods of farming which were but little advanced over those employed in ancient Egypt. The serfs had no economic or political rights that the landlords were bound to respect; their basic law was the masters' arbitrary will; they lived in poverty while the parasitic nobles lived in luxury, and for many centuries they died in masses in the countless wars waged by the feudal nobles engaged in stealing each other's lands.

Not surprisingly, the history of feudalism in all countries teems with heroic revolts of the enslaved and pauperized peasants against this barbarous regime of exploitation.

## THE GUILD SYSTEM

Under feudalism towns and cities were small, few, and far between. But they were the scenes of most of the skilled handicraft production of the period. There was, however, a large amount of such production also carried on in the country by the peasants themselves—a fact which was to play an important part in the eventual development of capitalism. The city crafts covered a wide range of production—cloth, iron, copper, silver, gold, pottery, leather goods, hats, shoes, bakery products, baskets, ropes, sails, etc. The large number of magnificent cathedrals, glorious

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ivar, and San Martin, and empires were actually created in Brazil and Mexico, but royalism proved incapable of taking root in the Americas.

paintings, and other outstanding works of art, testify to the high state of development of the handicrafts, particularly during the latter stages of feudalism.

The city handicraftsmen were almost universally organized in guilds, corresponding to their respective trades and occupations—that is, as wool-combers, weavers, armorers, iron forgers, cutlers, jewelers, chain-makers, silversmiths, pin-makers, brewers, hatters, and so on. The noblest of all the guilds, says Trant, was that of the masons, builders of the splendid cathedrals.[2] There were also merchant guilds, which became very powerful. The guild shops in general were very small, consisting usually of a master-workman, two or three journeymen mechanics, and one apprentice. The masters executed ill the processes of the primitive industry of the times; they bought the raw materials, carried on production, and sold their finished commodities in the open market. All the shops in the respective handicrafts were linked together in the craft guilds, which were federated on a city-wide basis. The guilds undertook, and widely succeeded, to create tight little monopolies of workers, production, and trade in their several spheres. In all the cities, however, there were usually considerable numbers of workers, unskilled laborers for the most part, who were engaged in general work and were unaffiliated to any guild.

The guilds date far back into the early stages of feudalism. In Europe they were already to be found in the seventh century, and probably much earlier in Asia. By the eleventh century the European guilds were strong in many centers. The craft guilds, controlling production and trade in the urban communities, collided heavily with the arrogant feudal landlords. This conflict in interest led to many local class struggles and civil wars, in which, as a rule, the guildsmen not only successfully defended themselves, but greatly strengthened their grip upon the economy and the governments of the population centers. It has been said that, “In some towns the victory of the artisans was so complete that the whole civic constitution was remodelled with the crafts as a basis.”[3] Creange states that by 1376 the guilds controlled the city government of Loudon,[4] and on the Continent their grip was even stronger than in England. Adam Smith, who wrote in the mid-eighteenth century as a pioneer capitalist economist, complained that even in his day, on the Continent, “the government of towns corporate was altogether in the hands of traders and artificers."[5] Actually, these guild towns, according to Dobbs, were chiefly dominated by the merchant guilds. The craft guilds rarely extended beyond a purely local basis, but the merchant guilds often carried on activities upon a national and even international basis.

Like feudalism in general, the guild system never got a solid hold in the Americas, particularly not in the United States. There were, however, some attempts to establish guilds in North American cities. Commons points out two such efforts by the coopers and shoemakers of Boston in 1648, and he adds, "These are the only two instances in this country, so far as revealed by a search of the records, where craft guilds were created and endowed with power to regulate their trade and to use the powers of government to enforce these regulations."[6] But Foner indicates still another, the Carpenters' Company, formed in Philadelphia in 1724.[7] Such organizations, made up of masters and workers, and setting out to control wages, prices, working conditions, trade, and the quality of products, were alien to the capitalist atmosphere even of colonial America and they were but short-lived.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF MERCANTILISM

Capitalism did not spring full-fledged from the brow of dying feudalism; instead its beginnings extend far back into the earlier stages of this system. This is especially the case regarding the merchant, who was basically a capitalist. His kind functioned and flourished throughout feudalism, and was to be found even in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as in other pre-capitalist civilizations.

The feudal system provided ample opportunity for the merchant class to grow and prosper—in the exchange of commodities among the city guilds, in the trade between the guildsmen and the landed nobility, and in the development of foreign trade. In all these spheres the merchants tended towards, and largely succeeded in, building up monopolies for themselves. They, too, had powerful guilds, which became the dominant forces in most of the guild-controlled cities of the Middle Ages. Between the artisan guilds and the merchant guilds bitter struggles for power took place, with the latter usually victorious.

The merchant capitalists, in their eternal quest for new markets, were pioneer voyagers, adventurers, and discoverers. Columbus, da Gama, Magellan, Cabot, and many another famous navigator, sailed in the interests of the merchants of their respective countries, usually seeking new routes to the fabled Indies, The merchant explorers of those times, hardly to be distinguished from the pirates, ruthlessly preyed upon each other and upon the peoples they encountered in their travels. Dobbs remarks that, "In France the same word was used for shipper and for pirate." He says, too, that the avaricious merchants "minded nothing, whether what they bartered was slaves or ivory, wool or woolens, tin or gold, as long as it was lucrative."[8]

The worst of the many rapacities of the merchant capitalists was the development of the African slave trade. For over 350 years, up to the mid-nineteenth century, they barbarously enslaved Negroes and transplanted many millions of them to the Americas, making enormous fortunes from this blood trade. Profits of 100 to 1,000 per cent on single voyages of slave ships were common. The merchants of Spain, France, Portugal, and especially of England and her American colonies, flourished in this monstrous occupation.

The merchants gave to the developing states in Europe their first foreign economic policies. By the fifteenth century "mercantilism" was the established program of all the leading countries. Faulkner sums up the mercantilist creed as, "That nation was the most prosperous that bought the least and sold the most."[9] The rich merchants, who had also become the bankers (usurers) of the later feudal period, worked with the ruling landed class, lending them money and financing their wars. They nearly everywhere got control of trade abroad through royal monopoly companies. It was such concerns—English, Dutch and French—that established the first North American settlements in Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, and Quebec, and it was they, too, that laid the basis for the English subjugation of India and other colonies.

The trading-marauding merchants developed towns upon all the navigable rivers of Europe, and especially along the sea coast. From the eleventh century on, they built up flourishing cities on the Adriatic and Mediterranean coasts of Italy, in the areas of the Baltic sea—Germany and the Scandinavian lands—and in the later centuries, particularly along the coasts of Western Europe—in England, Holland, France, Flanders, and Portugal.

## THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The expansion of the national and international markets greatly stimulated production and created a powerful body of merchant capitalists, thereby weakening the foundations of feudalism; but it did not in itself overthrow that social regime and establish capitalism as the dominant system. This was to be brought about as a result of fundamental changes in the feudal mode of production and by the growth of a new capitalist element, the industrialists. These revolutionary developments, which also had roots in the far past, began to be decisively important in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

Marx says: "The transition from the feudal mode of production takes two roads. The producer becomes a merchant and capitalist, in contradistinction from agricultural natural economy and the guild-encircled handi-

crafts of medieval town industry. This is the really revolutionary way. Or, the merchant takes possession in a direct way of production."[10] Historically, this process worked out by guild masters, who had grown rich, expanding and developing handicraft production in a capitalist direction, and, on the other hand, by wealthy merchants investing their capital to the same effect.

The new industrial capitalists eventually broke down the guild controls and mode of production by various devices, which we shall discuss further in the next chapter. They gradually evolved the factory system. This movement proceeded steadily through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Meanwhile feudal production on the land disintegrated and became ready for the violent economic and political revolution soon to burst upon it.

The Industrial Revolution got under way in the middle of the eighteenth century by the development of a whole series of new-type machines, principally in the textile industry. These included the spinning jenny (Hargreaves, 1764), the spinning throttle (Arkwright, 1769), the mule (Comptom, 1779), and the self-acting mule. Another revolutionary device was the cotton-gin, invented by the American, Whitney, in 1793. De Vaucanson and Jacquard also made vital textile machine inventions in France. Other important inventions of these decades were the new iron smelting and rolling processes of Cort and the Darbeys. The key invention of the period was Watt's completion of the steam engine in 1764, which transformed the operation of nascent industry from a hand and water basis to that of steam power. These elementary inventions were the forerunners of many more in the succeeding decades. Combined, they resulted in the growth of the factory system and of what Marx called "Modern Industry."

Conditions were ripe for these basic developments and literally forced their realization. The expanding markets of the sixteenth century were clamoring for commodities of all kinds; there were at hand large numbers of dispossessed peasants available to man the new factories as wage workers, and there had been a huge "primitive accumulation" of capital in the countries of Western Europe, especially as a result of the influx of immense amounts of gold and silver from the Americas, the pillaging of the East Indies, and the blood profits wrung from the African slave trade. These were the basic essentials necessary for capitalism—hungry markets, available capital, and ample supplies of wage workers—and they duly gave it birth.

Capitalism sprang up all over Western Europe and also in the English colonies in America. France, Belgium, Italy, Holland, and the Ger-

man Rhineland district all produced a vigorous capitalist growth; Belgium and Italy pioneered that movement, but England soon became the unchallenged leader of the entire development. This was because of a complex of unusually favorable circumstances—among them her possession of big supplies of coal and iron, a relative freedom from the wars that periodically devastated Europe, a key geographic position in the strategic sea lanes of the period, and an established mastery of the sea. England, with the swift growth of industry, was already, by the first third of the nineteenth century, the recognized "workshop of the world."

## THE BOURGEOIS POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Originally, feudalism, based on serfdom, had constituted a progressive advance over the preceding Roman system, based upon chattel slavery; but due to its internal rigidities and conflicts, it gradually became a fetter upon the further growth and evolution of the forces of production. Concretely, it stood as an obstacle in the way of developing capitalism, which could not freely expand within the iron-like bonds of feudalism's absolute monarchies and its land, trade, and handicraft monopolies. Marx has pointed out that no ruling class has ever voluntarily abdicated, hence advancing capitalism proceeded to smash feudalism and to supplant it only after a long series of revolutions. As Stalin says, "Revolution, the substitution of one system for another, has always been a struggle, a painful and a cruel struggle, a life and death struggle."[11]

The opening phase of the long bourgeois world revolution was the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, which broke the power of the Catholic Church in Northern and Western Europe.

Then followed the English Revolution of 1644, the American Revolution of 1776, and the French Revolution of 1789. These great upheavals dealt body blows to the decadent feudal system. The victory of capitalism was virtually completed by a whole series of revolutions during the next two-thirds of a century, which developed concurrently with the expansion of the capitalist mode of production. These movements included the revolutions throughout the Spanish, Portuguese, and French colonies in the Americas, 1790-1826, the revolution of 1830 in France, the broad revolutionary wave of 1848 in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Spain, and elsewhere in Europe, the American Civil War of 1861, and the Japanese Revolution of 1868.

This series of upheavals, constituting the bourgeois revolution as a whole, cracked the backbone of world feudalism and definitely made capitalism the dominant system. They were conducted by a progressive bourgeoisie, aggressively supported and pushed forward by the masses of

peasants, workers, professionals, etc. The bourgeois revolution weakened or abolished the absolute monarchs, shattered the land monopoly of the feudal lords, dissolved the craft and merchant guilds, did away with the endless restrictions of feudal law, and liquidated the royal-merchant trading monopolies. The bourgeois revolution weakened the grip of the Catholic Church and cut heavily into its wide network of monasteries; it gave a strong impetus to the development of science, it ended serfdom and chattel slavery, it created the modern national state, and it generally cleared the way for a rapid growth and evolution of both industrial and agricultural production.

The revolutionary bourgeoisie fought against tyrannical feudalism for liberty—that is, liberty for itself but not for the masses. It wanted freedom to rule politically as it pleased, to trade and produce without hindrance, to exploit at will the masses of workers and peasants, with the least possible interference from the state. It idealized freedom in such striking documents as the American "Declaration of Independence" and the French "Rights of Man." The bourgeoisie, however, except for its own rights, never took seriously the glowing democratic sentiments of these famous papers, which served well to mobilize the toiling masses to fight through its revolutions against feudalism and also its many national wars against rival capitalist forces.

All these developments represented the progressive, competitive stage of capitalism, which, historically, started to decline at the outset of the 1880's, with the first beginnings of imperialism. But the bourgeois revolution did not halt at this point. On the contrary, it has continued to run on, in the remaining feudal and semi-feudal countries, right down to our own days, when over one-third of the world, entering the next stage of world society, has already started upon the road to Socialism. Among the bourgeois revolutions in this period of imperialism, of which more anon, were those of Russia in 1905 and March 1917, Persia in 1906, China in 1911, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey in 1918, and India and many other Asian colonies in the years immediately following World War II.

## 2. Origins of the Working Class

The capitalist system is based upon the private ownership of the land and the industries, upon production for profit, and upon the exploitation of the workers. Its initiation and continuance demands the presence of large numbers of persons whom, by trickery or force, the capitalists can compel to serve them for wages, to the great profit of the latter. The story of how the capitalist class has assembled its working force, with the de-

velopment of its economic and political system, is one of the most tragic in the history of mankind.

## TRANSFORMATION OF HANDICRAFTSMEN INTO WAGE WORKERS

Throughout the many centuries of European guild history the handicraftsmen, who constituted the main body of industrial workers during the Middle Ages, were essentially independent producers. They generally owned the tools they worked with, they bought their own raw materials, and they sold their finished products. Through the guilds they regulated the conditions of their trades, took care of the sick and the aged, and had a powerful voice in determining the political status under which they lived. The masters, working side-by-side with the journeymen, usually had a comparable income, and every mechanic and apprentice normally looked forward to one day becoming a master in his own right. This system, with variations, prevailed practically throughout Europe. In the United States, although guilds proper were not a factor, the guild-type of shop existed in the towns all through the colonial period and even beyond.

To rising capitalism the guild shop, with its independent workmen and monopolistic practices, was a real obstacle. The budding capitalists, therefore, developed many devices which tended to destroy it. The merchants and wealthy guildmasters gradually grabbed control of the raw materials used by the handicraftsmen, and they also managed to secure for themselves domination over the sale of much of guild production. Moreover, as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they were attacking the very base of the guilds with their so-called “putting out" system, or “domestic economy." As Eaton remarks, “The merchant-employer (almost a capitalist) bought raw material, such as wool, and ‘put it out’ to the smaller craftsmen, the spinners, weavers, carders, fullers, dyers, etc.”[1] This “putting out” plan, beginning in textiles, spread to various other trades. It operated largely in the country areas, where the guilds had no effective controls (runaway shops). The guilds, increasingly dominated by the wealthy masters and merchants, left themselves open to attack by adopting narrow, exclusive policies that kept out many mechanics. They adopted prohibitive initial fees, restricted membership to sons of guildsmen, etc. Dobbs says that in Tudor times there was an increasing tendency for journeymen unable to buy their way into the guilds, “to work secretly in garrets in a back street or to retire to the suburbs in an attempt to evade the jurisdiction of the guild."[2] The “putting out” system extended widely in Europe, and also played a role in the

United States as late as the first half of the nineteenth century. Traces of it were to be found even recently in the sweatshops of the garment trades.

The next major phase in the development of industry, and therefore in the proletarianization of the handicraftsmen, was the growth of what Marx designated as "manufacture." This had at least two stages. The craftsmen were gradually assembled in large numbers in single establishments, there to work under the supervision of the capitalists. Marx says, "The collective laborer, formed by the combination of a number of detail laborers, is the machinery specially characteristic of the manufacturing period."[8] This opened the way for the second phase, the practical development and introduction of machinery, at first made mostly of wood, but later, with the rapid improvement in metal-working, of iron and steel. This was the beginning of the factory system, first of all in the textile industry. These developments required more and more capital, which became increasingly impossible for the handicraftsmen, or even the individual capitalists, to amass. The joint-stock company came into existence.

Eaton, summing up the whole process, says, "The period of *manufacture,* which dates from the middle of the sixteenth century, ends with the industrial revolution at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. With the industrial revolution, for which *manufacture* paved the way, capitalist production, based on large-scale mechanized industry, reaches the conditions for its full development."[4] This was the general trend throughout Europe and the United States. In China, India, and other countries, which had their beginnings of industrialization in the period of imperialism, the elimination of the handicraftsmen was even more brusque and brutal—the foreign capitalists simply planted great industries, mainly textiles, in their lands, which led to demoralization of the handicrafts.

The general result of all this was the gradual elimination of handicraft as the dominant mode of industrial production, the proletarianization of the guildsmen, and the systematic undermining of the guilds themselves. The long drawn out desperate starvation struggle of the English handloom weavers against the encroaching factory system during the first half of the nineteenth century was only one aspect of the widespread misery caused by these revolutionary changes. As late as 1858, only one-half of the weavers in Yorkshire, England, worked in factories,[5] and in Germany, in 1846, there were 78,423 hand-looms, as against but 4,603 power-looms.[6] The English and French revolutions dealt heavy blows to the obsolete guilds, but they nevertheless lingered on until the eighteenth century in England, to the mid-nineteenth century in Germany and Italy,

and even later in Japan and other Far Eastern lands. The independent handicraftsmen, save for historical remnants, had become the wage slaves of the capitalists.

## THE PROLETARIANIZATION OF THE PEASANTRY

Developing capitalism recruited even larger numbers of workers for its growing industries from the ranks of the peasantry, and by its usual brutal and inhuman methods. The essence of this development was to force the peasants off their land and to leave them no alternative but to become wage workers or to starve.

In England, from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, this movement was very marked. Marx, in *Capital,* attached much importance to it. The big landowners, attracted by the high price of wool for the expanding textile industries, proceeded to enclose their lands for sheep pasturage, which required very few workers. At the same time, and for the same general purpose, they also proceeded to expand their land holdings at the expense of the peasants. It has been estimated that in some English counties such enclosed land ran as high as fifty per cent.[7] The Industrial Revolution hastened the development. Whereas, between 1710 and 1760 only some 300,000 acres were enclosed, in the period between 1760 and 1843 nearly 7,000,000 acres underwent the process.[8] The general effect of all this was to drive large numbers of peasants off the soil and to reduce them to hunger and beggary. Marx says the process "conquered the field for capitalist agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a 'free' and outlawed proletariat."[9]

Similar developments took place in France, Scandinavia, and the German states. Large masses of the peasants, by one device or another, were stripped of their small land holdings and made available to the capitalists as workers. In Russia, the same general end was reached by the abolition of serfdom in 1861. The landed nobility, fearing the growing peasant revolts, formally "freed" the mass of the serfs by transforming them into landless peasants, agricultural wage workers, and wage slaves for budding Russian industry. The same purposes were served by the emancipation of the serfs in Germany in 1807-16, by which the peasants lost "one-third to one-half of their holdings."[10] England was saturated with penniless wanderers, and there were said to be 80,000 beggars in Paris alone. These homeless, hungering masses were whipped, jailed, and persecuted mercilessly everywhere. They were ripe fodder for the growing factory system of capitalism, for the development of the mines, and eventually for the building of the railroads. They were altogether

outside the scope of the dying guilds of handicraftsmen.

The wives and children of the dispossessed peasantry were also forced into industry. They soon came to constitute a majority everywhere of the workers in textiles, the pioneer capitalist industry. From time immemorial women and children had worked in feudal agriculture but not in the guild handicrafts and shops. In the growing capitalist industries they were subjected to a ruthless exploitation, hitherto unparalleled in history. The profits-greedy capitalists respected neither age nor sex. They considered children five or six years old as fit to be worked to death.

In the United States, particularly alter the Revolution of 1776, when capitalist industry began to grow rapidly, the proletarianization of the poorer farmers took place along somewhat different lines. With hundreds of millions of acres of rich land still possessed by the Indians, who could readily be robbed of it piecemeal, the big landowners were never able to establish such land-monopolies as they did all over Europe. Nevertheless, during colonial times and in the early years of the Republic, there were many poor farmers along the Atlantic Coast, with only small patches of land. These cultivators, many living on the verge of hunger, furnished armies of recruits for developing capitalist enterprises. This trend also played a part in creating the proletariat in England and elsewhere.

The poorer farmers in America readily became part-time textile and shoe-workers under the putting-out system, and they flocked into the mills when the factory system got under way. Their women and children also became wage workers. Their sons manned the fishing fleets, the whaling vessels, and the clipper merchant ships which carried the American flag all over the world—by the nineteenth century there were at least 100,000 workers engaged in these maritime occupations. The farmers also contributed directly to the building of many pioneer industries in the countryside. During the winter, after the crops were in, they worked in the woods, laying the basis of the lumbering industry. They also had their country breweries, tanneries, grist-mills, and blacksmith shops, with ever-growing bodies of wage workers. Semi-proletarian farmers were the pioneer coal miners, and all along the Atlantic Coast, in nearly every colony and new state, there was bog-iron mining and the establishment of small iron-works, manned principally by the neighboring farmers in their time off from regular farm work. Farmers were also a vital factor in making the network of roads, digging the many canals, and eventually the railroads. The American small farm has always been a rich recruiting ground for building and expanding industry.[11]

In the United States, the proletarianization of the peasantry also took another course, largely unique in capitalist history. This was in the ab-

sorption by industry of the huge number of dispossessed peasants arriving in America to seek their fortune. Particularly after the Civil War the peasant element in the ever-swelling river of immigration became more pronounced. Some of the peasants got land, but most of them poured into industry. The consequence was that on the eve of World War I they formed the big majority, up to eighty per cent or more, of the working force in the major industries, textile, steel, meat-packing, coal, lumbering, marine transport and others.

## FORCED LABOR, PEONAGE, AND CHATTEL SLAVERY

Nowhere in the young capitalist world was the avid thirst for workers more acute than in the three Americas, and nowhere were more ruthless methods used to get workers to man the plantations and the nascent industrial system. One of the more prevalent means used to this end, notably in the North American colonies of England, was the system of indenture. That is, workers were gathered up, not only in the British Isles but in various countries of Western Europe, and packed off to America in "coffin ships" as future workers. There they had to serve terms of indenture, up to seven years or more, allegedly to repay the cost of their passage.

In England the assembling of these "indentured servants" was especially brutal. Kidnappers swept the unwary from the streets in many English towns and shipped them off to the colonies. Also, the English prisons—crowded with debtors, petty thieves, war prisoners, and political dissenters—were constantly drained to find workers for the New World. Hacker states that, "During the first three-quarters of the seventeenth century as many as 50,000 men, women and children were taken from the jails of England and sold as indentured servants for seven-year terms."[12] These unfortunates, including many mechanics, were treated as actual slaves during the terms of their indenture, having no established political rights. They could be sold by one master to another, flogged at will, or have their terms of indenture arbitrarily extended, and they could not marry without their masters' permission. "Throughout the colonial period," says Foner, "the free workers were the least numerous and the least important section of American labor. In Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia at the time of the Revolution probably three out of four persons were or had been indentured servants, and about one out of six of the three million colonists were Negro slaves."[13] The Revolution dealt a heavy blow to this white slavery system, but traces of it still lingered on into the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Much more important than the indenture system, however, in provid-

ing wage slaves for the Americas during the early stages of the capitalist system, were various forms of peonage. The first and longest sufferers from this method of forced labor were the Indians and Negroes, particularly in the colonies of Spain, France, and Portugal, and also in the republics which eventually grew out of these colonies.

From the outset the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors undertook to make chattel slaves of the Indians on their territories, but in this they were only partially successful. For the most part, in Central and South America the Indians, who numbered some ten to twenty million at the time of Columbus' discovery, were reduced to near-serfs under the Spanish *encomienda* system.[14] That is, the *conquistadors*, in grabbing great stretches of territory as their estates, also seized with them the occupying Indians as laborers. The Indians worked the fields and mines of their masters and built their innumerable churches, and in return got only hunger and persecution. "Neither women nor children nor the aged were exempt. All were obliged to devote their personal service to their masters... At the least sign of languishing the lash fell upon their shoulders."[15]

The antiquated Spanish *encomienda* system, and its like in the Portuguese colony of Brazil, because of mass resistance, early proved incapable of effectively exploiting the Indians and it gradually fell into abeyance. The revolutions which swept through all Latin America from 1790 to 1826, wiped out the remnants of this system of serfdom, and a more modern system of peonage was generally introduced. Under this method, the Indians, and eventually the "emancipated" Negroes, were ostensibly free workers, receiving wages for their toil in the mines and on the ranches and plantations. Actually, however, being paid at starvation rates, they were systematically chained in debt by the landowners and thus virtually fettered to their jobs. The Catholic Church, which was far and away the biggest landowner all through Latin America, practiced this method of exploitation no less vigorously than the private landowners—but with a special added application of its religious functions. "The priests," says the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, "also aided [in keeping the Indians in debt] by charging exorbitant sums for any service of the Church and by playing on the superstitions of the peon."[16] This debt-peonage system still prevails far and wide in Latin America agriculture, and it is also a notorious phase of the share-cropping system in the southern United States among both Negro and white workers.

Still another prolific source out of which the working class was built, especially in the early stages of capitalism, was that of Negro chattel slavery. This monstrous system also had its main seat in the Americas, and it lasted from as early as the fifteenth century to the last half of the

nineteenth century. Some fifteen million Negroes were seized and brought to the Americas, with, as DuBois says, five times as many dying in the process of enslavement, in Africa and at sea, during the dreadful "middle passage."[17] When slavery was finally abolished—in Haiti 1790, the Spanish-American colonies 1810-26, the British West Indies 1838, the United States 1863 and Brazil 1888—the total number of Negro slaves emancipated was 15 to 20 millions.

The Negro slave was a forced agricultural worker, compelled to toil for his bare keep. Slavery was an important economic element in the building of world capitalism—both in the original primitive accumulation of capital and in the later expansion of agriculture and the industries. Marx, writing during slavery times, says: "Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance."[18] The young industries of Great Britain and the United States, and likewise the wealth of the hypocritical bourgeoisie, flourished and grew upon the basis of slavery in their main industry—cotton.

Under slavery the Negro slaves, throughout the Americas, carried on not only the production of the staple export crops—cotton, sugar, rice, cacao, coffee, etc.—but they also were generally the skilled mechanics in the areas of slavery. And now that chattel slavery has been abolished, the Negroes constitute millions of workers of all categories in many countries in the Western Hemisphere. At present numbering some forty-five millions persons, they are the most proletarian element in the population of the New World.

## 3. The Birth of Trade Unionism in England (1764-1824)

Capitalism was born in England and so, too, by the same token, were the modern working class and the trade union movement. We date our study in this chapter from 1764 on because this was the concrete beginning of the Industrial Revolution, initiated by the invention of James Hargreaves, a weaver, of the spinning jenny, with which one workman operated by hand a combination of 16 to 18 spinning wheels, instead of the traditional single wheel. After this key invention there came others in rapid succession, as related in chapter 1, and the Industrial Revolution had begun.

Developing British capitalism thereupon took giant strides ahead. Frederick Engels states that, "In the year 1771-1775 there were annually

imported into England rather less than 5,000,000 pounds of raw cotton; in the year 1841 there were imported 528,000,000 pounds," over 100 times as much. "In 1738 there were 75,000 pieces of woolen cloth produced in the West Riding of Yorkshire." In 1831 there were 940,000 pieces produced. Textiles were then the major industry in England—as was also the case eventually in all countries entering the capitalist stage—but other industries were also rapidly growing. Due to new inventions in iron-smelting, that industry expanded apace. Engels states that whereas the total iron production of 1740 amounted to but 17,000 tons, in 1834 it reached nearly 700,000 tons. Coal production also expanded swiftly. Characteristically, in the two counties of Northumberland and Durham the record read, "In 1753, 14 mines; in 1800, 40 mines; in 1836, 76 mines; in 1843, 130 mines."[1] Canals and railroads spread a network over the country. Meanwhile, as Great Britain raced ahead industrially, modern industry was barely beginning to germinate in the ultimately major capitalist countries, United States, Germany, and France.

The British employers, in the true capitalist spirit of unbounded greed, proceeded to exploit their new armies of wage slaves to the last limits of human endurance. During the feudal regime the handicraftsmen, the industrial workers of the period, worked at a leisurely pace, and enjoyed relatively good living conditions. Engels says that the status of the weavers, prior to the factory system, "was far better than that of their successors. They did not need to overwork; they did no more than they chose to do, and yet earned what they needed. They had leisure for healthful work in garden or field."[2] But now the workers, despite the fact that the new machinery had vastly increased their productive capacity, found themselves driven like slaves and forced down into sheer destitution, while the capitalists reveled in unprecedented wealth and luxury. Similar conditions, and even worse, were soon to prevail in all other young capitalist countries.

In his famous book Engels paints a terrible, but incontestable, picture of the living conditions of British workers during the early decades of the Industrial Revolution. The employers systematically increased their exploitation by stretching out the workday and by forcing down real wages. The workers—men, women, and children—toiled from 12 to 16 hours daily; their wages could not buy them the barest necessities of life, and they lived in horrible slums, in such dwellings, says Engels, as were livable only for "a physically degenerate race, robbed of all humanity, degraded, reduced morally and physically to bestiality."[3] The modern economist Kuczynski, dealing with this period of unbridled exploitation in Britain, says, "The working day could not be lengthened any more,

wages could not be lowered any more, the health of the working class could not be undermined any more, without (in many cases) leading to a complete cessation of work."[4]

With the development of British capitalism, the country was periodically stricken by cyclical crises every decade or so. Marx lists these early economic breakdowns, including those of 1815, 1825, 1830, 1837, 1840, etc.[5] They brought fresh agony to the working class. During these holocausts the position of the British workers, overwhelmed with mass unemployment and wholesale starvation, beggared description.

## THE RESISTANCE OF THE WORKERS

The sudden and unbearable conditions of misery and exploitation in which the British workers found themselves with the unfoldment of the Industrial Revolution and the relatively swift development of the British industries, inevitably provoked moods and movements of resistance among the toiling masses. The latter responded in various ways, in order to protect themselves from the new, strange, and disastrous evil of capitalist exploitation. It must be remembered that during the several decades following the invention of the basic machines that initiated the Industrial Revolution, the whole question of working-class resistance presented pretty much of a pioneer problem, which the leaderless and unorganized proletariat had to solve.

One of the several major channels in which this class resistance early began to develop was in the shape of mutual aid or "friendly" societies. That is, groups of workers banded together and out of their own resources tried to protect themselves against some of the worst hazards of the worker's life under capitalism, including unemployment, sickness, accidents, old age, and other situations tending to cut off the income of the working-class bread winners. Although not very effective, this mutual aid trend was an elementary one. It sprang up in practically all countries at the dawn of modern capitalism—in England, the United States, France, Germany, Russia Japan, China, etc.—and it has persisted, in one form or another, down to our own times.

The workers early tried to alleviate their bitter situation by political action. Generally, during the first years of the Industrial Revolution, the bourgeoisie, in fighting against their main class enemies, the feudal landlords, adopted a relatively progressive policy regarding democracy, in order to mobilize on their side the dispossessed and exploited masses of fields and workshops. Where they had actually won control of governments—notably in England, the United States, and France—they did so on the basis of constitutions full of glowing statements about the equality

of all mankind.

Not unnaturally, therefore, the workers appealed to these governments for relief from their intolerable situation. This was all the more to be expected because in the ranks of the workers there were still vivid recollections of the government's regulation, not always unfavorably, of wage and working conditions during the period of the guilds. But the workers were soon to experience the harsh reality that their governments were largely, if not wholly, controlled by the same employers who were so barbarously exploiting them in the industries. About all the workers could do in the situation, politically, short of drastic revolutionary action, was to petition the governments for relief. As for exercising the voting franchise, this right, up to the first half of the nineteenth century, did not exist for the broad masses, not only in Britain, but also much later than this in other capitalist countries. In the Britain of 1801, say Cole and Postgate, in a population of about ten and one-half million, the majority of 254 members in the House of Commons was elected by only 5,723 voters.[6] Under such circumstances, the capitalist governments turned a flinty face against all demands of the workers for wage relief, and it was not until 1802, with the working class pushed down almost to the point of extinction, that the first skimpy factory act was won in England by the aroused workers. This was eventually followed by the conquest of other such laws in 1819, 1829, and 1833.

Another line of resistance adopted by the workers, which was developed at the outset of modern capitalism, was that of organized economic cooperation. That is, the workers undertook to escape all or part of the force of capitalist exploitation by setting up economic organizations of their own. These were usually retail distributive "cooperatives," but sometimes they were cooperatives in production itself. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes a British cooperative as early as 1761.[7] Similar organizations sprang up in many towns and cities. Following 1820, the cooperatives received a tremendous impulse from the movement led by Robert Owen at that time, and they were placed on a working basis by the formation of the famous Rochdale, England, pioneer cooperative in 1844. Economic cooperation, although it could do little to alleviate the terrible conditions of the British workers, was nevertheless destined, in ensuing decades, to play a very big role not only in the British Isles but also in many other national labor movements and in their international organizations.

## MACHINE-BREAKING AND INSURRECTION

During the period covered by this chapter (1764-1824), the harassed and impoverished British workers, seeking a way effectively to combat

their exploiters, also adopted far more aggressive methods than merely building friendly societies and cooperative groups, and petitioning the government. One of these was a marked trend in England towards machine-breaking. This got under way early in 1811 in the textile industry on an important scale, although cases of machinery wrecking were known much earlier. It was a desperate tactic, used mostly among the handloom weavers who, facing starvation from being displaced by power-looms, sought to destroy what they considered to be the cause of their plight, the machine.

The leader of the movement was a more or less mythical "Ned Ludd," with an alleged headquarters in Sherwood Forest, the onetime home of the fabled Robin Hood. Regarding "King Ludd," Cole and Postgate say that, "If such a person existed at all, it is not known who he was."[8] The movement itself, however, was real enough, the Webbs stating that during the Luddite upheaval of 1811-12, "riotous mobs of workers, acting in some sort of organization, went about destroying textile machinery and sometimes wrecking factories." The movement had wide sympathy among the workers generally, and the Webbs add that money to support it "was collected from men of other trades, notably bricklayers, masons, spinners, weavers, and colliers, as well as from the soldiers in some of the regiments stationed at provincial centers."[9]

These struggles verged into open insurrection on the part of the desperate textile workers. The movement was repressed with extreme violence by the government. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* thus describes it: "The rioters were supported by public opinion and they abstained from bloodshed or violence against living beings until in 1812 a band of them was shot down by soldiers on the request of a threatened employer, Horsfalk... The organization was temporarily broken up by a mass trial at York in 1813, which resulted in many hangings and transportations; somewhere among the victims was the real 'King Ludd,' for the elaborate organization suddenly collapsed." Similar movements took place in 1815-16, and "although the center of the rioting was again in Nottingham, it extended over almost the whole kingdom."[10]

This was a period of many strikes, hunger marches, and revolts, during the bitter hard times following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The Luddites of those years, say Cole and Postgate, different from those o£ 1811-12, who attacked only certain specific machines, set themselves against the factory system as a whole, because it now threatened the entire body of handloom weavers with extinction. In many places mills were burnt down and machinery destroyed."[11] Parliament, frightened by the workers' militancy, made machine-wrecking a capital offense, and

the government persecuted relentlessly all whom they could involve with their professional spies and stool- pigeons. The handloom weavers were eventually beaten in their hopeless fight. They were bound to learn from hard experience that the workers should not destroy the machines but get the ownership of them. In other countries—the United States, France, Germany, Belgium, etc.—weavers and others have often displayed resistance to the machines that were wiping out their trades, but these moods never took on the violence that they did in Great Britain early in the nineteenth century.

## STRIKES AMD TRADE UNIONS

But most of all, the British workers, to protect themselves, undertook strikes and built trade unions. From time immemorial British workers, to defend or improve their wages and working conditions, have resorted to strikes. The Webbs trace such movements far back into the Middle Ages, among non-guild workmen, who even formed combinations to this end.[12] But the modern strike and trade union date from the divorcement of the workers from the ownership of the tools with which they worked, and the consequent degeneration of their living standard, which became a reality with the growth of capitalism. The Webbs record continuous British trade unions from about the middle of the seventeenth century.[13] The workers were quick to understand that in their ability to halt production and thus to cut off the employers' profits, they possessed a weapon of major importance. Their strikes at the time were mostly local, and usually directed against only a few shops at a time.

Particularly after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the last third of the eighteenth century, trade unionism began to grow vigorously. This led the employers to have Parliament enact the draconian Combination Act of 1800, which illegalized strikes and trade unionism. The workers, however, in the face of many hardships, openly violated these laws. The Webbs state that the skilled trades "have never been more completely organized in London than between 1800 and 1820,"[14] when the anti-union legislation was effect. The skilled mechanics—printers, masons, watchmakers, etc.—in this period of rapidly growing competitive capitalism, as the Webbs state, comprised a labor aristocracy. They received wages up to thirty to fifty shillings weekly, whereas the workers in the "new industries," especially textiles, iron-works, and mining, starved along on about ten shillings a week,

It was the latter categories who fought through most of the fierce strikes of the period. Hutt cites particularly the strikes of the miners on the North-East Coast (1810), in South Wales (1816), and in Scotland

(1818), the Scottish weavers (1812), the Lancashire spinners (1818,) and the Welsh iron-workers (1816).[15] He remarks that, "Those were stormy days and strikes, especially in the coal fields, were civil wars in miniature, put down with every show of violence." This was the period of the emergence of national unions in Great Britain. There are no reliable statistics of the actual union membership in these years. At this time there were no trade unions anywhere else in the world, except to some extent in the United States—which we shall deal with in a later chapter.

From the outset the trade unionists fought to repeal the Combination Act of 1800. Francis Place, a tailor, was the outstanding figure in this fight. The struggle took on sharp militancy from about 1816, and in 1824 Parliament was compelled to at least partially lift the ban against strikes and trade unionism, Citrine says that the history of trade unionism as an organized movement in Great Britain practically begins with the repeal of the Combination Act in 1824.[16] This new freedom was greeted by the workers with a storm of strikes and a new impetus in union building. In their historic fight for trade union rights the British workers set the example for the workers of the world to follow; that is, not to allow the employers, through the use of anti-union legislation, to deprive them of the rights to organize and to strike. To win these rights was a fight that the working class in every capitalist nation, treading the path blazed by the pioneer British workers, eventually had to make.

## THE GUILDS AND THE TRADE UNIONS

There is a school of bourgeois writers on labor organization who either declare or imply that the modern trade union is only a continuation of the medieval guild.[17] This is an error. The two types of organization relate to two different types of society. The Webbs are correct in stressing this fact. They point out that whereas the guild was a producing and selling organization which contained not only the workers but the real directors of industry at the time, "In the modern Trade Union, on the contrary, we find, not an association of *entrepreneurs,* themselves controlling the process of their industry, and selling its products, but a combination of hired wage-workers, serving under; the direction of industrial captains who are outside the organization."[18] The British unions are not the direct descendants of the guilds. "In no case did the Trade Union in the United Kingdom arise either directly or indirectly, by descent, from a craft cruild."[19] They did, however, as Cole points out, have a relationship to the temporary organizations of journeymen, outside the guilds, to improve their wages and working conditions, during feudal times.[20]

Although the trade unions, historically, are not the descendants of the

guilds, they nevertheless bear many imprints of the latter's influence upon the working class. These are to be found in the guild-like terminology still used in many craft unions, such as "master workman," "journeyman," "apprentice," etc., and also in their still lingering ritualistic practices and ceremonies. The strike and the closed shop are also methods and concepts which have roots back in guild times,

The "friendly," or mutual aid, society, which pre-dates the trade union in nearly all countries, also displays many strong guild influences. The guilds paid close attention to the security of their members against the economic hardships of sickness, accident, and death, and usually one of the first steps taken by workers to protect themselves, upon the decline of the guilds, was the formation of "friendly," mutual benefit, societies. And there are hundreds of cases on record, in England, France, Germany, the United States, and elsewhere, of such societies, under pressure of the developing class struggle, transforming themselves into genuine trade unions. Katayama, founder of the Japanese trade union movement, also declares that he and his co-workers, in the heat of the struggle, reorganized several guilds into trade unions.[21] In all the early capitalist countries the pioneer workers in founding the trade unions were the handicraftsmen—printers, masons, tailors, shoemakers, etc.—and in so doing they were influenced by the still strong guild traditions.

## 4. Owenism and Chartism (1817-1868)

Under the double pressure of increasing capitalist exploitation and of declining real wages, the workers of Great Britain, during the first half of the nineteenth century not only heroically fought to defend themselves, but passing over onto the offensive, delivered major blows aimed towards ending the capitalist system outright. They thereby wrote some of the most glorious history in the whole life of the world's labor movement,

The pioneer workers of Great Britain, of course, could not become class conscious trade unionists overnight. With the period of feudalism not far behind them and weighted down with its traditions, they found tremendous difficulties in understanding the complexities of the new struggle confronting them. Even the most elementary questions of ideology and trade union organization, now considered everyday commonplaces, necessarily loomed up to them in their originality as serious problems, to be mastered slowly in the hard school of the class struggle. Especially as in those days there was as yet no Marx to blaze the path for them.

The long struggle to abolish the anti-union Combination Act of 1800,

which culminated in the partial union victory of 1824, was only one of many big struggles during these decades of the rapidly developing labor movement. Another movement of major importance was the fight for universal manhood suffrage, particularly during 1829-32. At this period, "out of a 16,000,000 population there were only about 160,000 electors in the British Isles."[1] The government was in the hands of the landed nobility and the big capitalists. The fight for electoral reform was pushed by the lesser capitalists and petty bourgeois elements, with the trade unions in the forefront of the battle. But when, after a hard fight, the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed, it merely doubled the number of voters, thus leaving the workers still voteless—betrayed by their bourgeois allies.

Another historic battle of this period was the fight for the Ten Hours Bill. The workers, by continuous pressure, had previously succeeded in forcing the enactment of several factory bills, mostly dead letters, but slightly improving their barbaric working conditions. They especially drove for a shortening of the workday which, under the Factory Act of 1833, was still as much as fifteen hours long.[2] The militant cotton spinners called for a "universal strike" to establish the eight-hour day on March 1st, 1834 (thus anticipating by half a century the American eight-hour general strike movement of 1886). The broad shorter hours agitation resulted in the passage of the Ten Hours Bill in 1847, which the bosses sought to offset by wage-cuts. The *Inaugural Address* of the International Working Men's Association (the First International), written by Karl Marx in 1864, hailed the enactment of this law as "the victory of a principle; it was the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class."[3]

Meanwhile, the historic movement headed by Robert Owen was taking shaped.[4] Owen, who eventually played an outstanding role in the British labor movement, was born in 1771, at Newton, Montgomeryshire. He became part-owner of the New Lanark, Scotland, cotton mills, the biggest in England, employing some 2,000 workers. Revolted by the terrible conditions prevailing generally in industry, Owen initiated many reforms in his plant, paying better wages, cutting working hours, modifying child labor, and building improved housing, making big profits the while. His "model" mills attracted national attention.

But Owen soon went further. In 1817, together with his general agitation for factory reforms, he came forward with proposals for the widespread establishment of self-contained villages of 500 to 3,000 people, equipped with the necessary machinery and land. In these cooperative communities all differences between the capitalists and the workers would disappear and poverty be abolished. The plan, Owen innocently

hoped, would be introduced through winning the good will of the reactionary government and the employers. At the time, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the country was in the midst of a deep economic crisis, and Owen's plan earned much discussion,

Owen's project was one of the several well-known utopias of this period, presented by such well-meaning figures as St. Simon, Charles Fourier, Etienne Cabet, and others. These men undertook to eliminate the horrible effects of capitalist exploitation and also to have the bourgeoisie put into effect the glittering slogans of equality that it was then talking so much about in order to win mass support in its fight against the remnants of feudalism. But these Socialist utopias failed because they bore no direct relation to the laws of Social evolution. However, as Engels points out in his great book: *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, the Utopians played an important role in labor history, as making the first real attack against the capitalist system. He calls Owen the "founder of English Socialism."[5]

His plans not succeeding in Great Britain, Owen came to the United States in 1825, bought 30,000 acres of land in Indiana, and launched his cooperative colony at New Harmony. Widely greeted, Owen spoke twice before the Federal Honse of Representatives, and several prominent figures were among the 1,000 who joined his new colony. Some eighteen of such colonies were established in various other places. But like the many similar utopian schemes of those times in the United States, Owen's colonies failed. It was an economic and political impossibility to build such idealistic islands in the vast sea of American capitalism. By 1828 the movement had virtually disappeared, never having rallied substantial worker or farmer support.[6]

## THE GRAND NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED TRADES UNION

Returning to England, Owen found the working class in a revolutionary mood. Hoping to improve their conditions now and to end capitalism soon, the workers had taken hold of Owen's plan of cooperation and were pushing it vigorously. Soon no fewer than 800,000 workers, it was claimed by Owen, had thus been organized.[7] The movement culminated also, in February 1834, in the formation of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland.[8] Owen furnished the basic planks in this body's platform, and he was elected as its president. His general idea was that the union would take over control of society and then run the industries—a forerunner of the syndicalism of generations later. The movement grew like a bay tree and in a few months it was said to number half a million members, including, as the Webbs say, "tens of thousands of farm laborers and women."

The GNCTU, which had been preceded in 1830 by the short-lived National Association for the Protection of Labor, was a most remarkable organization for this very early period in the life of the labor movement. In contrast to the characteristic scattering local craft unions, it was a class organization, national and centralized, and aiming at the organization of the whole working class, women as well as men. Its purposes, in addition to raising wages and shortening hours, were to "prevent the ignorant, idle, and useless part of Society from having that undue control over the fruits of our toil, which, through the agency of a vicious money system, they at present possess; and that consequently, the Unionists should lose no opportunity of mutually encouraging and assisting each other in bringing about *A Different Order of Things*, in which the really useful and intelligent part of society only shall have the direction of its affairs, and in which well-directed industry and virtue shall merit their just distinction and reward, and vicious idleness its merited contempt and destitution." The "Rules and Regulations"[9] provided extensively for the use of strikes or "turn-outs" (including the setting up of cooperative shops during strikes) but it said nothing whatever of political action. The GNCTU had a ritual, and its likeness as an organization to the American Knights of Labor of half a century later has been remarked.

The establishment of the Grand National was immediately followed by a rash of strikes and intense organizing all over the British Isles. The Webbs say that "a mania" of union building took place and that "Nothing in the annals of Unionism in this country at all approached the rapidity of the growth which ensued."[10] The important unions of builders, garment makers, cotton spinners, and pottery workers, which had not joined the Grand National, nevertheless were in friendly and cooperative relations with it.

Frightened at these threatening union developments, the like of which England had never seen before, the government attacked the GNC'I'U as criminal because of its pledge of secrecy, arresting leaders and members; and the employers, together with causing many lockouts and untimely strikes, forced workers widely to sign "yellow-dog contracts," the infamous "Document" of this period, pledging themselves not to become trade union members. Under these combined attacks, the Grand National, which had not time to consolidate itself, collapsed. By the end of 1834 it had disappeared from the scene as a national organization.

## THE RISE OF CHARTISM

The defeat of the GNCTU did not kill the fighting spirit of the British working class; within three years it was going full speed ahead again,

with its historic movement for the "People's Charter." The central aim of the workers was a profound overhaul of the obsolete and reactionary political system. Especially they were convinced that without the right to vote they could not make serious headway in the improvement of their intolerable working and living conditions. At this time, in England, there was only one voter to 24 people, in Wales one to 23, in Scotland one to 45, and in Ireland one to 115.[11]

The Charter originated in the London Workingmen's Association, which was organized in 1836. Its chief author was William Lovett, a skilled mechanic and a follower of Robert Owen. It was presented publicly as a program in 1838. The aim was to bring about Political reforms that the Reform Act of 1832 had failed to do. The People's Charter contained six points: (a) Universal 'manhood suffrage; (b) annual parliaments; (c) equal electoral districts; (d) payment of Parliamentary members; (e) secret ballot; (f) no property qualifications for members of Parliament. A similar program to this had been introduced without result 58 years previously by one Major Cartwight.[12]

The Charter was developed at a most opportune time. The country had been in a deep economic crisis since 1835 (a crisis which continued until 1842) and acute destitution prevailed among the working class. The workers' fighting spirit had been on the rise; especially since the struggle for the legalization of the unions in 1824. Large sections of the petty bourgeoisie, themselves voteless and stricken by the hard times, were also in a radical mood. And the big bourgeoisie was then fighting the Tories for the repeal of the Corn Laws. England faced a potentially revolutionary situation. Commenting on the Charter, Engels said: "These six points, which are all limited to the reconstitution of the House of Commons, harmless as they seem, are sufficient to overthrow the whole English Constitution, Queen and Lords included."[13]

The announcement of the Charter was received with tremendous enthusiasm by the oppressed and impoverished masses. Monster meetings were held all over the country, some reaching the unprecedented figure of 350,000 in attendance. The general plan to be followed was to carry on an intensive mass agitation, to gather millions of signatures to a monster petition for the Charter, to present this petition to Parliament, and in the meantime, to organize a convention, in the tradition of the Convention of the French Revolution.

All these manifestations of the elemental mass movement of revolt then taking shape threw terror into the hearts of the ruling landowners and capitalists. Fresh in their minds were the tremendous events of the great French Revolution, and they trembled for the safety of their elabo-

rate system of robbing the people. Hence, they lost no time in combining their forces to crush the threatening Charter movement. This was the general situation early in 1839, with a decisive clash in immediate prospect.

## THE DECLINE OF THE CHARTIST MOVEMENT

From the outset there were serious differences among the leadership of the Chartist movement as to its aims, immediate and ultimate, and also as to the best means of bringing these about. The movement quickly divided into right and left-wings. The Charter, brilliancy conceived to unite all the democratic forces of the country, was accepted by the whole movement, but beyond this there was disagreement. The workers' leaders demanded further a drastic revision of the infamous Poor Law, the establishment of a universal eight-hour day, and other important reforms—to all of which the petty bourgeois elements were cold. There was confusion also as to where the movement in general was heading—what were its ultimate perspectives. There were Owenites, who looked toward the establishment of their type of cooperative commonwealth, and there were trade union leaders who saw no further ahead than comparatively minor improvements of the workers' conditions under capitalism. This was ten years before Marx and Engels issued the *Communist Manifesto,* and even the most advanced leaders, such as Bronterre O'Brien, Feargus O'Connor and G.J. Harney, although enemies of the capitalists and possessing a surprising knowledge of the class struggle, nevertheless had only vague ideas as to the future of the working class and society in general.

Radical differences also prevailed regarding the strategy and tactics of the movement in fighting for the Charter. Lovett and his group of right opportunists were for peaceful education, "moral suasion"; whereas O'Brien, O'Connor, Harney, and other left-wingers, advocates of "physical force," realizing the ruthlessness of the enemy they were fighting, proposed to reply with general strike and insurrection if Parliament should reject their petition. Their slogan was "Peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must."

The first big clash with the government came in the summer of 1839. On July 12 the Charter petition, with some 1,250,000 signatures, was presented to Parliament, which promptly rejected it. The government, which had mobilized the army and police, also arrested many Chartist leaders. The convention, which had long been in session, decided by one vote that it was unable to carry through a general strike or an insurrection, and it adjourned on September 14. Some attempts at insurrection

were made in the localities, but these were brutally repressed. National and local leaders were arrested in large numbers.

This failure was a heavy blow to the Chartist movement, but after a year or so, with the release of many of its leaders from jail, it began to revive, Late in 1840 the National Chartist Association, a political party, was formed and it grew rapidly. Again huge mass meetings took place, and the petition to Parliament, six miles long, bore 3,317,700 names. The movement culminated in an attempt at a general walkout in August 1842, the "holy month" strike. The masses of workers, surprised by this sudden and unprepared action, did not rally and the strike failed. This disaster led to further arrests, persecution, and confusion. The movement faded.

The last great political effort of the Chartists came in 1848. Great Britain had been stricken by a serious economic crisis in 1847, and the workers were inspired by the outbreak of the series of revolutions in Europe, beginning in Paris in February 1848. The mass movement surged ahead. Huge meetings took place all over the country, exceeding in size even those of 1839 and 1842. At the convention of April 4, 1848, O'Connor (with exaggeration) reported that the petition to Parliament contained 3,700,000 signatures—gathered in a general population of 19,000,000. Talk of revolution spread. The petition was to be presented on April 10 by a huge procession. But the government, frightened by the revolutionary wave on the Continent, was taking no chances. Under the Duke of Wellington, it concentrated 250,000 soldiers and police, prohibited the demonstration, and announced that it would meet the workers with force. In the face of this menace, O'Connor, Jones, and other Chartist leaders called off the demonstration and delivered the petition in person to Parliament, where it met the usual fate. The government followed up its advantage by arresting many leaders and jailing them for long terms. This defeat dealt the death blow to Chartism. The movement lingered on for a few years longer, but it had irretrievably lost its strength and mass appeal.[14]

The basic reason for the defeat of the Chartist movement was the immaturity of the labor movement, its inability to carry through the revolution envisaged by the Chartist leaders. Among the specific causes of the defeat may be cited the confusion among the leaders regarding the aims and tactics of the movement, the crippling influence of petty bourgeois elements, and the lack of a strong political party to lead the movement. Decisive, too, was an aloofness on the part of many trade unions of skilled mechanics under the conservative leaders. Chartism was, as Engels says, fundamentally a working-class movement. It drew heavily upon the rank and file of all unions, despite the negative attitude of various

of the union leaders. It was especially strong among the textile, metal, and coal mine workers. Significantly it was during the big movement of the Chartists in the early 1840's that the coal miners established their first trade unions. The experience of Chartism went to emphasize the fact that although the skilled mechanics in nearly all countries have been the pioneer trade unionists, they have seldom led revolutionary movements of the working class as a whole.

Although the Chartist movement was formally defeated, it has nevertheless remained a powerful constructive influence in British and world labor history. As Engels stated, it was "'the first working-men's party which the world ever produced."[15] It was, likewise, the first real movement of the workers anywhere on a class basis, it gave an enormous stimulus to working class organization and to the clarification of proletarian objectives and struggle tactics. Marx, Engels, and other revolutionary writers have drawn heavily upon the many basic lessons it taught. As for its concrete program, its famous "Six Points," although arrogantly rejected at the time by Parliament, have long since been written into British law under the pressure of the advancing working class. Chartism, the immense pioneering struggle of the young British proletariat, marked a major milestone in the history and progress of the world labor movement.

## ORGANIZED LABOR TURNS TO THE RIGHT

The years between 1848 and the founding in 1864 of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International) were a period of rapid growth and expansion of British industry and trade. The textile, coal, iron, and other industries grew apace, doubling and tripling their production, and a network of railroads spread over the land. Britain, "the workshop of the world," was swiftly replacing her sailing ships with iron and steam vessels, and by the mid-sixties her exports were over three times as large as in 1850. Free trade and *laissez faire* were the gospel of the ultra-prosperous capitalists, and the Victorian Age, in which British capitalism was to reach its highest point of prosperity, was well under way.

The workers, especially the skilled elements, shared in some crumbs of this prosperity. Work was steadier, and due to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, resulting in big imports of cheaper American grain, the cost of foodstuffs fell considerably. There was, consequently, a tendency for real wages to improve. Kuczynski states that, from the end of the 'forties to the end of the 'sixties real wages increased according to our table—1900 equals 100—from 52 (1843-9) to 63 (1859-68)."[16]

Under these conditions, plus the negative effects of the defeat of the Chartist movement, the British trade union movement began to shift definitely towards the right. The broad class warfare of the previous decades gave way to guerrilla maneuvers by individual craft unions. Prospects of insurrection and revolution faded, to be superseded by concepts of class cooperation. The old trade union slogan, “A Fair Day’s Wage for a Fair Day's Work,” became the symbol of a tame acceptance of capitalism. Strikes were considered pernicious evils, and efforts to form an independent political party of the working class were abandoned in favor of tailing along after the Liberals. The British working class had entered the era of what Samuel Gompers later called, "pure and simple” trade unionism. It was beginning what Engels designated as the forty years’ sleep of the British labor movement.

The unions of craft mechanics, headed by entrenched bureaucratic officials, were in full control. Of the skilled workers, Engels wrote: “They form an aristocracy among the working class: they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relatively comfortable position and they accept it as final.”[17] Their prosperity, as Marx and Engels repeatedly pointed out, reflected the world industrial monopoly being exercised by Great Britain.

The model union of the period was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (machinists), formed in 1851 by the consolidation of several small unions. It was highly centralized and its center of gravity was in building an elaborate system of trade union insurance benefits. It was followed by several other “amalgamated” unions (Carpenters, Ironworkers, Miners, etc.), and generally the labor organization patterned after its conservative policies. There were, nevertheless, some important fights during those years, notably the developing struggle for the nine-hour day and for the Reform Act of 1867.

During the 1860’s trades councils were established in London and many other cities. In 1868, at Manchester, the National Trades Union Congress was organized, with 118,000 unionists represented—probably about one-fourth of the total number of organized workers. This body has continued in existence ever since. The dominant trade union leaders of this period were the so-called “Junta” or “clique,” as they were then called. This leading group was composed of William Allan (Engineers), Robert Applegarth (Carpenters), Daniel Guile (Molders), Edwin Coulson (Bricklayers), and George Odger (Ladies Shoemakers). Most of these leaders were to play an important role in the International Workingmen's Association.

## 5. Trade Unionism in the United States (1776-1865)

Capitalism grew in the United States generally under very favorable conditions. This is a country of vast natural resources, with a territory which under one government eventually stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, providing a matchless national market. Save in 'he slaveholding South, the United States also has been relatively free of feudalistic hangovers, such as a landed nobility and an established church, and it could therefore freely develop upon a capitalist basis. Its geographical position, too, gave it a big advantage by shielding it front the wars which have periodically ravaged Europe.

Up to 1776, however, colonial American capitalism developed under the stifling handicap of British domination; but it broke these economic and political fetters in the Revolution and it began to surge ahead. Capitalism took its next big leap forward when it smashed the slaveowning oligarchy in the Civil War of 1861-65. By the eighties the United States had already overtaken Great Britain and was well on the way to leaving the erstwhile "workshop of the world" far behind in industrial development.

Throughout the pre-revolutionary period, says Foner, "the free workers were in a minority in the ranks of American labor."[1] They were heavily outnumbered by the white indentured workers and the Negro chattel slaves. While the conditions of work and the living standards of the free whites were from 30 to 100 percent better than in England,[2] they were still characterized, as capitalism grew, by destitution wages, a 12 to 15-hour workday, and arbitrary boss domination in the shops.[3] Consequently, the American white workers were not long in taking up the same general orientation as the workers in Great Britain—towards strikes, trade unionism, and political action.

The colonial years were marked by some forty slave revolts[4] and by a number of uprisings among poor farmers and the workers, such as Bacon's rebellion in Virginia in 1676, Leisler's rebellion in New York in 1689, and various other upheavals, in 1756, 1771, etc., all of them violently repressed. There were a few minor strikes in the late colonial era, and during the Revolution, as Morris relates, workers went on strike against the British military authorities in Boston.[5] In the post-revolutionary period, with the growth of industry, real strikes began, among the more notable of which were those of the New York shoemakers in 1785 and of the Philadelphia printers in 1786. The scattered early strikes, as in nearly all other young capitalist countries, were waged almost exclusively by the skilled workers—printers, masons, coopers, bak-

ers, shoemakers, etc.

During the colonial period the only class organizations of the workers were the customary pre-trade union “friendly," or benefit, societies. In the Revolution, Morris states, the workers built many combinations among themselves, approximating trade unions, to resist British exactions; but the real impetus for working class economic organization came after the Revolution, the first genuine trade unions dating from the early 1790's. From this time on, during the next years, strikes and trade unions increasingly became factors in American life.

## THE BIRTH OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

After the Revolution industry made very considerable advances. Generally, save for a couple of post-war crises, it prospered as a result of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Napoleonic Wars. Meanwhile, the country’s population increased rapidly, Also, the factory system was developing, and by 1815 the textile industry was largely operating on this basis[6]—the first textile strike came in 1838. The iron, lumber, flour, and other industries, mostly operating in tiny units in the country, were steadily growing and gradually developing a real proletariat. In 1810 manufactured goods were valued at $198 million, and in 1834 at $335 million.[7] Especially the merchant marine grew rapidly.

The Revolution led to the end of the indentured worker system, and it also resulted, during the next few decades, in most of the white workers getting the right to vote. It did very little, however, to relieve the tragic situation of the Negro slaves. While it prohibited the African slave trade from 1808 on, and set on foot a movement which by 1818 had wiped out chattel slavery in the Northern states, it nevertheless left the slavery system fully intact in its main area— the South. During these years another important phase of the growth of the young proletariat was the moving over of large numbers of women from work in their domestic industries to work in the factories as wage workers.

Generally, this was a period of rising prices, and the workers fought actively to defend and improve their living standards. The free land, greater personal liberties, better wages, and more extensive economic opportunity in the United States definitely stamped their influence upon the unions of the workers, especially in the sense of retarding proletarian class consciousness. Nevertheless, the workers of young America inevitably took the path of class struggle, especially of trade unionism, blazed before them by the British working class. The American workers’ attempts to organize were countered by harsh judicial decisions, arbitrarily based upon the British Combination laws, with numerous strikers being

arrested for conspiracy. As in Britain, however, the American workers organized their unions and conducted their strikes despite such reactionary decisions. By 1824, when the trade union law was enacted in Britain, the male white workers in the United States, by dint of resolute practice, had also won the right, or at least the legal tolerance, to organize. The unions grew rapidly in many towns along the Atlantic seaboard.

Foner puts the date of the beginning of the American labor movement, as such, in 1827, with the formation of the Mechanics Union of Trade Associations of Philadelphia.[8] This was the workers' first important step from simply defending their narrow craft interests to a broad class policy, although still on a local scale. This central council was the first in the world.[9] It was quickly followed by similar bodies formed in other cities, and by 1836 there were thirteen of such local labor councils. Many strikes took place, 173 of them in 1833-37, for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions. In 1835 there was a general strike in Philadelphia, the first in all America. In March 1834, the initial try for a general labor organization was made in the same city with the formation of the National Trades Union, which lasted three years.

The American working class had embarked upon a big forward surge, or offensive, the means by which, in later years, it was to achieve most of its progress. The movement expressed itself also on the political field by the establishment of local labor parties, the earliest of their kind in world labor history. The first of these was formed in Philadelphia in 1828, followed by one in New York in 1829. All told, in the period of 1828-33, there were some 61 of such parties, with 50 newspapers.[10] This was the most elaborate labor journalism in the world at the time.

These local parties reflected the radical democratic spirit of the working masses during the Jacksonian period. The bourgeois parties were not yet well established and it was a relatively easy matter to launch an independent political movement of the workers. The local parties fought for public schools (which were eventually established), abolition of the debtor prisons, a democratic land system, limitation on the exploitation of women and children, the ten-hour day, etc. They paid little attention, however, to Negro slavery and none whatever to the wholesale robbery of the Indians' land. They elected many representatives and were a factor in most of the Northern cities and states. Nationally the movement supported Andrew Jackson.

The labor parties disappeared in the mid-thirties, largely because of internal dissensions and the plottings of bourgeois politicians, but basically because of the political immaturity of the young labor movement. As for the local trade union councils, they were almost completely wiped out by

the sweeping economic crisis of 1837. In this crisis mass unemployment for the first time became a real political issue. In the United States, as in Britain and elsewhere, it was long before the workers could build trade unions solid enough to withstand the periodic economic crises.

## THE BURNING QUESTION OF SLAVERY

The general characteristics of the period between 1830 and 1860 in the United States were: a rapid growth of industry in the North, the expansion of slavery in the South, the increasing settlement of the West, the discovery of gold in California, the swift spread, first of canals and then of railroads, over the country, the gradual consolidation of the trade unions, the development of a powerful movement for the abolition of Negro slavery, and the ever-sharpening quarrels between the Northern industrialists and the Southern slaveholders—"the irrepressible conflict."

Following the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, the production of cotton began a huge expansion and with it, also, the slave system. In 1790 there were only 3,000 bales of cotton produced, but by 1860 this had jumped to 3,841,000 bales, and the number of slaves was increased during the same period from 697,624 in 1790 to 3,953,760 in 1860.[11] The arrogance and political aggressiveness of the Southern slaveholders kept pace with the production of their basic crop, "King Cotton." With the help of their banker and shipper affiliates in the North, they had, up to 1860, furnished 11 of the 16 presidents, and controlled the Senate for 24 years, the House for 22 years, and the Supreme Court for 26 years. Their aim was to dominate the entire country and they even dreamed of introducing chattel slavery into the Northern industries.[12] As Karl Marx put it, what the slaveholders wanted was "not a dissolution of the Union, but a *reorganization* of it, a *reorganization on the basis of slavery,* under the recognized control of the slaveholding oligarchy."[13]

The expanding slave system in the South conflicted directly with the expanding industrial and farming systems of the North and West. Slavery shut off Southern markets to the aggressive Northern bourgeoisie, giving them instead largely to the British; it greatly slowed the development of industry in the South, and it was a constant hindrance to the growth of capitalist farming in the West. Southern control of the government also was a barrier in the way of tariffs, internal improvements, and a banking organization—all indispensable for the industrialists. Slavery especially had a crippling effect upon organized labor in the South.[14] The two systems were incompatible; hence, as Marx pointed out, the central issue in the Civil War was that one or the other of them had to die. The center of American political life during the half century prior to the Civil War was

the growing conflict between the industrial North and the agricultural (slave) South.

Congress was the scene, during these years, of endless battles between the basic contending class forces, and also of various compromises, organized by Clay, Webster, and others, which settled nothing. Among the broad masses of the people the general abolitionist agitation was carried on under the leadership of the American Anti- Slavery Society, launched in 1831 and headed by such fighters as William Lloyd Garrison, Thadeus Stevens, Wendell Phillips, and the great Negro leader Frederick Douglass. This movement, in the face of much persecution, spread all over the North and roused the people to the iniquities and horrors or Negro slavery. Its work was supplemented and strengthened by many heroic insurrections of the slaves in the South.[15] The United States marched irresistibly towards civil war; with the Southern slaveholders and their Northern financial allies on one side, and the Northern industrialists, most of the merchants, and the masses of the working class, the working farmers, the Negro people, and the city middle class on the other side.

## THE ADVANCE OF ORGANIZED LABOR

During the upswing of the labor movement in the period of 1827-37 the workers, besides their strides forward industrially and politically, also began to develop anti-capitalist ideas, in the works of Thomas Skidmore, and others;[16] but the aftermath of the crisis of 1837 marked a retrogressive phase in this respect. There was a confused growth of utopian plans—Owenism. Fourierism, Cabetism, etc. The workers' struggling trade union movement also became a prey to impractical schemes of various kinds, including land reform and producers' cooperatives. Only slowly did the unions recover after the hard times of the 1837 crisis.

By the early 1850's, the unions were again expanding. Almost universally, the unions of the times were composed solely of skilled mechanics, many of them systematically barring Negroes and women and unskilled workers. An important advance during this general period was the entry of the textile workers as an active force in the trade union movement.

The improvement in production methods and the development of the national market were making necessary the formation of the trade unions upon a broader basis; hence, the decade just prior to the Civil War gave birth to many national trade unions, of which the Printers Union, founded in 1852, was the first. The new national unions included Upholsterers, Hat Finishers, Plumbers, Building Trades, Railroad Engineers, Stone Cutters, Lithographers, Cigar Makers, Silver Platers, Mule Skinners,

Machinists, Blacksmiths, Painters, and Cordwainers. Of great importance, too, was the National Industrial Congress, which met annually from 1845 to 1856.

In the middle 1840's skilled printers, shoemakers, and hatters were getting $4.00 to $6.00 per week, while a New York *Tribune* budget set $10.37 weekly as a minimum family budget.[17] The unions fought relentlessly against these wretched wage conditions; they also, not without results, carried on a big ten-hour day movement. "In 1830 the average working day in America had been twelve and a half hours. Thirty years later, the average working clay was eleven hours."[18] In this general period, "collective bargaining" began. Previously the trade unions had simply published their proposed wage scales and tried to compel the bosses to accept them.

A basic development in these years was the growing flood of immigration from Europe. Between 1830 and 1860 some 5,000,000 immigrants poured into the country. Mostly they were Irish and German. In 1860, 47 percent of the population of New York City, 59 percent of St. Louis, 49 percent of Chicago, and 50 percent of Pittsburgh were foreign-born. The Germans, many of them refugees from the Revolution of 1848. played a pioneer role in the sprouting American labor movement.

A major factor, too, was the influx of Marxists in the early 'fifties, chiefly from Germany. They included such men as Joseph Weydemeyer, Frederick Sorge, Adolph Douai, and A. Jacobi. Most of them had been co-workers of Marx and Engels in Germany, and in America they maintained a close cooperation with their leaders. In 1857 they organized the Communist Club in New York, based on the teachings of the *Communist Manifesto,* and they had similar organizations in other big centers. They at once took an active part in building trade unions, in leading strikes, in fighting for the abolition of slavery and in educating and organizing the workers in the face of the historic Civil War,[19] lying just ahead. They worked and fought in the spirit of Marx's famous statement that, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."[20] Many of them won renown in the Civil War.

As the great Civil War approached, the white working class was divided on the basic issue of slavery. The more advanced elements, as among the New England factory workers, took a stand for the abolition of slavery. As early as 1833 the women textile workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, formed an anti-slavery society. There were many others, however, who took an indifferent or even a hostile attitude toward Negro emancipation, on the grounds that emancipation would flood the labor market with cheap labor. Still others took the position that the white

workers were as bad off as the Negro slaves, if not worse, and they demanded the emancipation of both groups. Negative attitudes among the workers towards slavery were intensified by the fact that Garrison and other Abolitionist leaders were hostile to trade unionism. When the war broke out, however, the trade union movement became a solid section of the great Northern coalition which carried it to victory and freed the slaves.

## THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE CIVIL WAR

The revolutionary Civil War began on April 12, 1861, by the rebellious slaveholders' troops firing upon Fort Sumter, South Carolina. The relationship of forces, both industrial and military, heavily favored the North. The South had but 9.000,000 people, 4,000,000 of whom were slaves, while the North numbered some 23,000,000. Faulkner states that, "In 1860 the South contributed only eight percent of the country's nearly two billion dollars of manufactures."[21] Only one third of the nation's railroads, three percent of its iron, eight percent of its soft coal, and ten percent of its capital investment were in the South. During the four years of bitter warfare the South could put into the field only 1,300,000 soldiers, as against 2,898,999 for the North. Moreover, the slaveholders had to force the majority of the people in the South to support the war.

The government of Abraham Lincoln started out with the aim of trying to re-unite the split country on the basis of containing slavery within the recognized Southern slave states, but the exigencies of the military struggle and the strong pressure from the masses forced him to abandon this conservative line. He freed the slaves on January 1, 1863, and earlier, in 1862, he opened the way for the enlistment of Negroes as troops. The war, after the fiercest slaughter in American history, was ended on April 9, 1865, by the complete capitulation of the Southern Confederacy. Capitalism had smashed the remaining major obstacle to its maximum development.

Generally, the working class entered the war militantly supporting Lincoln's containment policy, with the Marxists, from the outset, demanding Negro emancipation. The Negro people, who fought bravely in the war, naturally were a strong driving force for the emancipation of the slaves. The "copperhead" agents of the South, of whom there were many in the North, made it a major point to try to turn the workers against the Lincoln government and the war, but without much success.

The Civil War gave a tremendous impetus to the growth and consolidation of industry. Faulkner says that until about 1850 the bulk of the general manufacturing done in the United States was carried on in the

shop and the household by the labor of the family as individual proprietors.[22] But the Civil War radically changed this primitive picture; by its end the factory system was strongly established in nearly all the manufacturing industries of the time, including textiles, shoes, men's clothing, iron, machinery, dressed meats, etc.[23]

During the Civil War the cost of living soared, with capitalist profiteering running rife, and wages lagging far behind. Faulkner puts the price rise of living necessities in the war at 125 percent, as against average wage increases of but 60 percent.[24] The trade unions went into the war badly weakened following the economic crises of 1854 and 1857,[25] but under the pressure of rising living costs, they soon began to grow again and to consolidate their forces. Numerous strikes occurred, despite the workers' wholehearted commitment to the war. Foner reports that, "20 trades embracing 79 unions were organized in December, 1863; 40 trades and 203 unions by June, 1864; 53 trades and 207 unions by December, 1864, and 61 trades with about 300 unions in November, 1865. It is estimated that in 1864 about 200,000 workers belonged to trade unions."[26] After the annual Industrial Congresses from 1845 to 1856 had ended, another attempt was made, in 1864, at forming a general labor federation, the International Industrial Assembly of North America. But this organization was premature; the first solid American national labor organization was to come with the foundation of the National Labor Union in 1866, at almost the same time as the establishment of the British Trades Union Congress in 1868.

## 6. Early Trade Unionism in Europe (1848-1864)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Continental Europe, lagging far behind England in the tempo of its industrial development, was gradually emerging from the decaying feudal system. The French Revolution and the ravaging wars of Napoleon, knocking down crowned heads all over Middle and Western Europe, hastened the downfall of feudalism and the growth of capitalist forces. The modern capitalist states were just coming into being in the West, but Germany was still a collection of many small units and so was Italy. Russia ruled in the East and Turkey controlled most of the Balkans. The crazy-quilt Austrian Empire, created in 1815 upon the downfall of Napoleon, sprawled clumsily from Tuscany to the Carpathians, and it dominated most of the atomized states later to be consolidated into Germany and Italy.

This whole vast area was slowly developing capitalism, along the general course, as indicated in chapter 1. It responded to the direct im-

pulse of the Industrial Revolution proper from 50 to 100 years after England. A tremendous push was given to it by the European Revolution of 1848. As capitalism on the Continent was slower in developing than in England, so also, by the same token, was its trade unionism. For the most part, the latter's starting point was, roughly, the 1848 Revolution, In this chapter we shall trace the beginnings of the trade unions in the various European countries. That is, up to the historic year of 1864, in which was born the International Workingmen's Association (the First International), an event that constituted a major milestone in the history of the world labor movement.

## BIRTH OF THE GERMAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

"In the beginning of the nineteenth century," says Kuczynski, practically the entire German labor force consisted of serfs working under feudal bondage and of apprenticed journeymen and masters organized in the guild system."[1] The factory system began to take hold in Germany, chiefly in Prussia, in the third and fourth decades of the century. In 1850 there were 6,000 kilometers of railroads, in 1860, 14,687; in the Prussian coal mines in 1850 there were employed 29,907 workers, in 1860, 64,682; the number of steam-driven machines (except locomotives) in Prussia was 1,216 in 1846, and 4,582 in 1861.[2] In 1848, however, remarks Henley, "The number of factory and mine workers was still far exceeded by that of the handicrafts or guild workers."[3] There were still 78,423 hand looms as against 4,603 power looms.

In early capitalist Germany the workers toiled from 12 to 16 hours per day, their wages were at starvation levels, they lived in miserable slums, and they were denied social insurance and the right to vote. Like all other countries entering into capitalism, the German industrial centers had the characteristic "friendly societies" among the workers, who were seeking, by mutual benefit systems, to secure the first elementary protection against the new exploitation that was developing. There had also been early strikes and some typical machine-breaking. Thus Marx recalls that in the seventeenth century all Europe, Including Germany, "experienced revolts of the working people against the ribbon-loom, a machine for weaving ribbons and trimmings," invented in Germany, The machine was prohibited after many riots, during which the inventor was "secretly strangled or drowned."[4]

There were very few, if any, German trade unions before 1848. In that year the German bourgeoisie sought to weaken, if not to break, the feudal shackles upon the economic and political life. The existing situation, of a Germany divided into 36 independent states, each maintaining

economic and political barriers against the others, ruled by reactionary landowners, and dominated by Austria, was an impossible one for the rising German bourgeoisie. Hence, patterning after the example of the French bourgeoisie in the same year, it undertook to unite Germany and to rid it of the harassing feudal controls and hindrances. But, already afraid of the revolutionary spirit of the developing working class, the bourgeoisie did not press far in this revolutionary direction, arriving eventually at a weak compromise with the Prussian landowning Junkers, which, while leaving the latter in political control and Germany still disunited, nevertheless left the door ajar for capitalist economic development. In this struggle, as we shall discuss in a later chapter, the workers took an active part, one of the fruits of which was the beginning of the trade union and political movement of the German working class.

Unions, mostly of a craft character, sprang up in various industrial centers. Two of them—Printers and Tobacco workers—were national in scope. The young movement took on a general form in the organization of the *Arbeiterverbruderung* (Workers' Brotherhood), at the first Workers' Congress in September 1848. Its founder was Stephan Born, who had worked with Marx and Engels in the 1848 Revolution. The organization, which in 1850 had 250 local branches, was a combination friendly society-trade union-political body, which developed an extensive program of worker demands. It had a confused program, calling for mixed commissions of workers and employers to settle wage and working conditions.[5] This organization, together with the scattering of trade unions throughout the country, was swept away by the reaction which set in after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution.[6] In July 1854 the trade unions and other organizations "pursuing political, Socialist, or Communist aims," were ordered dissolved and strikes were strictly forbidden.

During the big industrial upswing of the 1850's and 1860's the German workers, as their brothers in Great Britain and. the United States had done before them, proceeded to organize and strike despite legal prohibitions. Bebel says that during these decades unions "sprang out of the ground like mushrooms after a summer rain."[7] The inevitable movement towards national union organization followed. In 1862 a group of workers in Saxony, who had visited London and studied the British trade unions, set up a committee to convene a national labor congress. To this end they contacted Ferdinand Lassalle, a Socialist co-worker of Marx. Lassalle strongly advised the workers to break with the bourgeois Progressive Party and to establish one of their own,[8] The congress was held in Leipzig, May 23, 1863, and there the *Allgemeine Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein* (General German Workers Association) was formed, with Las-

salle at its head.[9] Lassalle's idea was that Socialism could be arrived at by means of economic cooperatives, subsidized by the government, for which the workers must win the right to vote. His organization was the direct forerunner of the German Social Democratic Party. Although primarily political in character, it also served as a national center for the trade unions. In 1869 this body split and the Eisenacher group, the Social Democratic Workers Party, led by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, was established. These two parties carried on a bitter struggle until Party unity was achieved in 1875.

## EARLY FRENCH TRADE UNIONS

France was one of the pioneer countries in capitalist development, we have previously remarked. Already in 1765 the growing capitalist forces were strong enough to induce Louis XVI scathingly to condemn the guilds.[10] For these organizations this was a crippling blow from which they never recovered, and they were outlawed by the great French Revolution. During the Revolution there were some strikes, and Babeuf developed a Communist program; but the laws of 1791 illegalized not only the guilds, but all combinations and activities designed to raise wage rates.[11]

Up to about 1830 France experienced considerable machine-breaking by unemployed textile and other workers. Lefranc notes many cases of this: in Havre and Rouen, 1790; in Lyons, 1807; and in Paris, 1830. Upon the latter occasion the workers smashed the presses of one of the leading journals in France.[12] In the 1830's a French workers' slogan was: "Down with the Minister! Down with the Steam Engines! Long Live the Workers of Lyons!"[13]

During the years 1820-50 there was a period of utopian agitation in France. As in England and the United States, a number of generous-minded but impractical intellectuals—St. Simon, Fourier, Cabet, Blanc, and others—came forward with idealistic plans for creating new forms of society. Disillusioned at the non-realization of the democratic slogans of the great Revolution, they wanted to free the workers and society in general from the horrors that were developing under the new capitalism. The trouble was that their utopian schemes were but their own arbitrary devices and not developed according to the laws of social evolution. The Utopians, however, with their incisive criticisms of capitalism, were forerunners of Marxism. Generally, they had no large working class following in France.[14] The newer capitalist countries—Italy, Russia, India, etc.—where they eventually came to play a role in the growing movement, were not to pass through this utopian stage which, by then, the working class had outgrown.

During the first half century following the great Revolution there were many strikes, notwithstanding the harsh laws against them. In the period 1825-47 there were 1250 prosecutions of 7000 workers for striking against the intolerable wage and working conditions.[15] The most celebrated strike of these years was that of the silk weavers of Lyons in 1831. This struggle began over trade union demands, but soon became an insurrection, with the workers defeating the armed forces and holding control of the city for several days. Most of the strikes of this time were either of unorganized workers, or of those who were members of the many "tramping" organizations of journeymen mechanics,[16] of friendly societies, and of secret "societies of resistance."[17] Such organizations, in France as in other countries, proved to be convenient means for circumventing the anti-strike laws.

The Revolution of 1830 was a victory for reaction, and the Revolution of 1848, in which the workers took a most active part, also wound up to the benefit of the bourgeoisie. It nevertheless gave an impetus to working class understanding, solidarity, and organization in France, as elsewhere in Europe. Following this Revolution, French industry grew rapidly—the production of pig iron tripled between 1850 to 1865, and the number of locomotives quadrupled. The working class also expanded swiftly numerically, by 1867 there being 300,000 workers employed solely in the mechanized textile industry. Their trend towards organization and struggle also increased.

A hindering influence to the growth of working-class trade unionism and political action in France at this time was the illusion, widely held among the workers, that they could achieve the emancipation which they so ardently desired by mutual aid, especially through the means of economic cooperatives, and particularly those in the field of production. This idea had gotten an impetus during the Revolution of 1848, under the leadership of the utopian Louis Blanc, whose movement had caused the government to set up large (ill-fated) workshops to provide work for the unemployed.[18] The cooperative illusion was further strengthened by Pierre Joseph Proudhon, a printer and the father of Anarchism, who propagated the idea of a stateless society, based upon free cooperative associations of workers. In 1863 he established a number of workers' exchange banks in Paris and the provinces. Proudhon came to play a very important role not only in the French labor movement, but also upon an international scale, and we shall turn back to him again.

In spite of government persecution and Proudhon's illusions the trade unions in France gradually grew. An impulse was given to them by the economic crisis of 1857; and also, in 1862, a delegation of French

workers went to the world industrial exposition in London, where they had a chance to become more closely acquainted with British trade unionism. Returned to France, the workers propagated the formation of trade unions. In 1864 more strength was lent to the movement by the famous "Letter of the Sixty Workers," which called for independent political action by the working class and for freedom to organize trade unions. Under the growing mass pressure, Emperor Napoleon III, in 1864, softened up the draconian anti-combination law of 1791, and the trade unions, "tolerated but not legalized," began to grow and to multiply. But on the eve of the foundation of the First International in 1864 the French trade union movement was still in its infancy.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF ITALIAN TRADE UNIONISM

When Italy entered the period of rapid capitalist development early in the nineteenth century, it was split up into a number of hitherto independent states (much on the German pattern). The country was under the heel of Austria. The great bourgeois Revolution of 1848, which swept Europe practically from end to end, also deeply affected Italy. During 1848-49 the whole Italian peninsula was aflame with insurrection. But this national revolt was defeated. It was only in 1859 that the Austrians were driven out, and not until 1870 that the French were also expelled from Rome. Under the leadership of its own bourgeoisie, Italy was thus able to come forward as an independent capitalist state.

The working class played an active part in the armed revolutionary struggles. It was not yet mature enough, however, to have its own class political program, organization, and leadership, and it followed the lead of the petty bourgeois radicals Garibaldi and Mazzini. It also struck some blows directly in its own behalf, there being a number of strikes during the Revolution of 1848. At this time Italian wages were among the very worst in Europe. The workers also began about this period to form preliminary labor unions— the first attempt at trade union organization being that of the Printers in 1848.[19] Others soon followed—"leagues of resistance," as the workers called them. Predominantly, however, as in the early stages of all capitalist countries, the only protection the workers had was the "friendly" benefit societies, which dated back to the time of the decay of the guilds. In 1839 the government, patterning after the French anti-Combination laws of 1791 and 1810, banned labor unions and strikes, and this law was not broken down until 1890.

Nevertheless trade union action expanded, and during the decade 1860-70 the number of strikes averaged thirteen annually—a figure greatly to be increased during coming years. Significant of future Italian

labor history—some of these strikes were by agricultural workers. The first local labor convention was held in 1853, and the pioneer national labor convention took place in 1861. At this general convention the movement came under the domination of Mazzini (who had previously dabbled in workers' organization), and there it remained until the national convention of 1871, when there was a split.

Mazzini represented the middle-class influence in the young Italian labor movement. His role was in line with the characteristic attempts of the bourgeoisie in all countries to control, directly or indirectly, the working-class trade union and political movements, which it could not smash in head-on attacks. Mazzini proposed a conservative line of action, agitating against strikes and insisting that the anti-trade union law of 1859 could be broken down only by legal and peaceful means. Mazzini, who was not a Socialist, collided with Marx. His politics and leadership were defeated upon the rise among the workers in Italy of the revolutionary influence of the first International.

## EARLY TRADE UNIONISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES

At the time the International Workingmen's Association was formed, 90 years ago, the only important national trade union centers in the world were in Great Britain, the United States, and Germany—in size in the order named. For the rest, there were only small beginnings of the organized labor movement in the various other countries.

The trade union movement in the Austro-Hungarian Empire dates back to the Revolution of 1848, including unions in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) and Austrian Poland. There were strikes in Prague and Pilsen in 1846, and the first union in this area, the Printers, was formed two years later. A fierce reaction followed the defeat of the Revolution in 1848, but the Austrian laws of 1867-1870 permitted unions to be formed within restrictions. In Vienna in 1867 the Workers Educational Association (a mixed trade union and political organization) was established.[20] In the next three decades there were a scattering of trade unions in Hungary and in the various weak industrial centers of the clumsy, sprawling Austro-Hungarian Empire,

In Spain, in Barcelona, the first union, the Weavers, was organized in 1840. The first trade union formed in Belgium was in 1842, again the Printers,[21] and the movement grew very slowly thereafter. In 1864 there were still no real trade unions in Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, although in most of those countries there were workers' mutual benefit societies and occasional strikes. In Russia, which in later years was destined to play such an enormous role in the world's labor movement,

Lozovsky says mutual benefit societies were on hand as early as 1838, but there were no trade unions, and few if any strikes before the 1870's.[22]

When one turns from Europe to the rest of the world at this tune (except in the United States) there was to be found almost no trade unionism at all, which indicates that capitalism was only beginning to get established in these countries. During the mid-nineteenth century the conservative English unions tended to follow the flag into the various British dominions and even into the colonies, mainly to organize the skilled British mechanics who were to be found there. Thus, as early as 1833 and 1836 there were Printers and Cabinet Makers unions in Sydney, Australia, and in 1840 there were at least 10 unions in existence in New South Wales—and a number of strikes had already taken place. The gold rush of the 1850's gave a big impetus to the formation of the Miners organization, and in 1854 the Miners waged a revolt against their hard conditions.[23] The Labor Council of Sydney was organized in 1871, and in 1879 the basis was laid for a national trade union federation. In 1891 the workers carried through an unsuccessful general strike. New Zealand also had a number of early craft unions, dating back at least to 1841.[24] The Federation of Labor was organized in 1916, but the first national labor convention took place in 1885.

The first union in Canada—the Printers—was formed in 1827, with a few other crafts organized in the 1830's and 1840's. During the 1850's the British Carpenters and Engineers unions entered that country and established branches there. A decade later they were followed by unions from the United States—Molders, Printers, Coopers, Plumbers, Cigarmakers, etc.[25] In the same general period British unions also followed emigrating mechanics to the United States, there to come into conflict jurisdictionally with the national trade union movement.

In Ireland, "England's first colony," craft unions sprang up around the beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly in Belfast and other large towns. Already in 1824 the Chief Constable of Dublin was complaining of the militancy of the trade unions, asserting that all the craftsmen were organized and that they exercised a "trade union tyranny."[26] These unions reacted responsively to the Owenite and Chartist movements of this general period. For the most part they were craft unions of skilled workers, working either as parts of, or in close cooperation with, the English trade unions. Irish immigrants, too, played a big part in the Chartist movement, infusing it with much of their fiery revolutionary spirit. The Irish Trades Union Congress was organized in 1894, with about one-half of its 70 affiliates consisting of Irish unions, and the balance attached to "national" unions centering in England.

# 7. The First International and Karl Marx (1864-1876)

The International Workingmen's Association (IWA), the first definitely working-class international organization, was founded in London, at St. Martin's Hall, on September 28, 1864. It registered, by its life and struggles, a tremendous stride forward for the world's working class in general, and for the trade union movement in particular. The IWA was the culmination of many yearnings and direct efforts of workers to establish such an organization. Already in the early days of Chartism there was projected the idea of a working class international, and the Communist League, headed by Marx and Engels, which was active from 1846 to 1852, was the most important direct forerunner of the First International.

The pressures making for the formation of the International at this time were both economic and political. In the first sphere the British trade unions, if they were to protect the higher wages of their members from the use of strike-breakers recruited among the lower-paid workers on the Continent, had to put an end to international scabbery, and the way to do this was by international organization. It was this same consideration, the danger of international scabbery, which also attracted the National Labor Union of the United States to the IWA. In the political sphere the need for international working-class organization was also stressed by the proletarian and national struggles then taking place in many European countries, all of which battles obviously had urgent solidarity interests in common.

The immediate impulse for the formation of the IWA came from the French and British labor movements. A delegation of French workers came to the London industrial exposition of 1862, met with British trade unionists, and proposed an international organization. The latter were responsive, and the two groups finally came together two years later and put their plans into practice by launching the IWA. Karl Marx attended this world historic meeting.[1]

During the next couple of months the detailed carrying out of the general plan was developed. In the Provisional General Council that was set up there were some 55 members, of whom 27 were British, including the members of the famous "Junta," or leading trade union group of the time. There were corresponding secretaries chosen for various countries, with Karl Marx representing Germany.

The newly-born International confronted a host of unique problems, both political and organizational, in working out its general working-class program. Not the least of these problems was to shape definite per-

spectives on the role, structure, and tactics of trade unionism, for in this early period there was much confusion in labor's ranks regarding the most elementary questions in this respect. It was necessary, in the projected program and constitution of the new organization, to give a clear line on these matters. After three drafts of the documents had been rejected, one by Karl Marx was accepted. Marx was already widely known for his international activities as a Communist. The ensuing *Address and Provisional Rules of the International Workingmen's Association,* destined to be of great importance to the labor movement, were the handiwork of this profound thinker and fighter.[2] Marx had therewith become the theoretical and practical leader of the First International.

## MARX AND THE WORKERS' GENERAL PROGRAM

A better choice for leader of the IWA could not have been made, for Karl Marx, with Frederick Engels, long before the formation of the IWA, had already drawn up the revolutionary program of the working class, one which to this day serves in nearly all countries as the workers' basic guide in their fight to defend themselves under capitalism and Socialism. Along with Engels, Marx first stated this program in the *Communist Manifesto,* issued in January 1848 as the program of the Communist League. And he was at that time also deep in the preparation of his great masterpiece of scientific analysis, *Capital,* the first volume of which was eventually published in 1867.

Prior to Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto,* besides the Utopians mentioned above, there had been numerous leaders in the labor movements of various countries who attacked the capitalist system as such. Among these were Thomas Skidmore, a machinist, in the United States in 1829 and thereafter, with his denunciations of capitalist exploitation and his panacea of land reform; Wilhelm Weitling in Germany, a worker, who proposed in 1838 that the workers could find their way to what he called Socialism by means of banks through which to exchange the products of their labor; Pierre J. Proudhon, French printer, who in the middle 1840's developed his social panacea of cooperatives and Anarchism; and above all, the brilliant theoretical leader of the Chartist movement in Great Britain, 1837-1848, James Bronterre O'Brien, an Irish nationalist, who displayed an amazing understanding of the class struggle and the capitalist state. But it was not until the appearance 0f the *Communist Manifesto* that Socialism became a science, founded upon the laws of social development and decay. This is why the Marxian principles of scientific Socialism still stand solidly today, impervious to all reactionary attacks.

Marx, going far beyond the works of Ricardo, Mills, Smith, and other bourgeois economists, analyzed the capitalist system to its very heart. In doing this he especially exposed the secret of how capitalist profits originate and how the capitalists grow rich at the expense of the workers. This was through his revolutionary principle of surplus value. Marx pointed out that exploitation occurs because of the difference in value of what is paid the workers in wages for their labor and the value of what they produce.[3] As Lenin sums it up: "The owner of money buys labor power at its value, which is determined, like the value of every other commodity, by the socially necessary labor time requisite for its production (that is to say, the cost of maintaining the worker and his family). Having bought labor power, the owner of money is entitled to use it, that is, to set it to work for the whole day—twelve hours, let us suppose. Meanwhile, in the course of six hours ('necessary' labor time) the laborer produces sufficient to pay back the cost of his own maintenance; and in the course of the next six hours ('surplus' labor time), he produces a 'surplus' product, or surplus value for which the capitalist does not pay him."[4] Thus was laid bare the elementary process of capitalist exploitation, the basic means by which the capitalists become rich while the workers remain poor; an operation which the capitalists, by innumerable "theories," have ever sought to obscure.

Marx and Engels also profoundly analyzed the class struggle. They pointed out that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."* These struggles have been between exploiters and exploited or among rival groups of exploiters. "In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations." "Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: It has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat."[5] This struggle, the *Manifesto* demonstrates, must go on until the proletariat finally triumphs, abolishes capitalism, and establishes Socialism.

One o£ the elementary principles of Marxism is its analysis of the state as an instrument of the existing ruling class to oppress and exploit the enslaved actual producers. Thus, the *Communist Manifesto* states the elementary truth that, "The Executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Marx

* Engels later amended this to read, "all written history."

attacked relentlessly all conceptions, still held by labor opportunists of various shades, to the effect that the state is a beneficent institution, standing above the classes, and devoting itself to the conservation of the interests of society as a whole. He showed that the workers' state, which succeeds the capitalist state, is the dictatorship of the proletariat, the rule of the working class. This, however, is a temporary situation, as the workers' society moves from Socialism to the next higher stage, Communism, which is stateless. Engels has stressed the point that eventually the Socialist state will "wither away," to be succeeded by a non-state "administration of things." But, as modern experience in the Soviet Union and other countries of Socialism has made clear, the workers' state cannot finally disappear so long as capitalism remains strong in the world and presents an armed threat against developing Socialism.

Together with making this penetrating analysis of capitalist economy and the state, and developing the revolutionary role and Socialist perspective of the working class, Marx, with his close co-worker Engels, also outlined the revolutionary philosophy of the proletariat. This is dialectical materialism, which embraces every branch of science and human thought and activity.

Marxist materialism demonstrates that, basically, men's thinking is determined by the way they make their living. That is, in the main their ideas are determined by their material interests. Thus, says Marx, "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life."[6] As Marx and Engels repeatedly stressed, however, the economic factor is not the only factor in this determination—tradition and other elements also play a part, but ordinarily they are secondary.

In accordance with this principle the bourgeoisie has as its main consideration, in shaping its political policies and also its philosophy, the preservation of its exploitation of the workers. To this end, therefore, it tends to cultivate religious superstition, to doctor social history, and to distort science in its class interest. This is particularly true in the period of imperialism, when capitalism sinks to the lowest levels of reaction in all fields. The proletariat, on the other hand, not being a class of exploiters, can obviously take an objective position in all matters of science and philosophy. When class conscious, the working class is the inveterate enemy of all forms of religious superstition and philosophical metaphysics and obscurantism. The workers' class interests, under capitalism

as well as under Socialism, coincide precisely with a ceaseless search for objective truth in every field of thought.

The fundamental principle of Marxist dialectical materialism is that of evolution. This is carried into every phase of history and every branch of science. For dialectical philosophy, says Engels, "nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher."[7] The bourgeoisie, on the contrary, despite its partial recognition of the principle of evolution in the biological sciences, has an essentially static philosophical outlook. This is true in the religious domain, and especially so with regard to its sacred capitalist system. Capitalism, by which the bourgeoisie lives and prospers, with its savage principle of everyone grabbing all he can from the rest, is considered to be a sort of special creation, based upon eternal human (and divine) principles and destined to last forever.

But Marxists, in contrast, look upon society as constantly in a state of change and evolution. In this evolution capitalism, like feudalism and chattel slavery before it, is only a temporary, passing stage. Marx and Engels foresaw, on the basis of their scientific analysis, the coming of new social stages, built upon the principle of the people owning the earth and the fullness thereof. These were: first, Socialism—with its working principle of, "to each according to his work"—and then, Communism, based upon the plan of, "to each according to his needs." In our day and time the scientific forecast of Socialism, made by Marx and Engels, is already a political reality in various countries, and the establishment of Communism, in the Soviet Union, is now an immediately practical political task.

## MARXISM AND TRADE UNIONISM

Marx and Engels, together with laying the basis of the general political program and perspective of the working class, also developed the theoretical foundations of trade unionism. In this field they were the pioneer theoreticians and also the best. Their work still stands solidly despite a thousand attacks. They clarified for the first time the most elementary questions of trade union outlook, policy, structure, and tactics. Their work was all the more remarkable in view of the fact that when they wrote the trade union movement was still in its infancy, as weak and confused in its ideology as it was small in numbers.[8]

Already in the *Communist Manifesto,* written late in 1847, Mars and Engels gave a remarkably clear picture of the role of the trade unions in the

workers' fight to defend themselves under capitalism and to battle their way towards Socialism. They traced the origins of trade unionism to the workers' historical necessity to overcome the job competition among themselves and to unite their forces against the rapacious employers. The trade union is pictured as the successor of the earlier machine-breaking desperation of the workers, as the elementary organization center of the workers and as indispensable in the development of united economic and political action by the working class. Their later writings were full of this progressive analysis of the trade union question, and they carried on numberless battles not only against the hostile state and bourgeoisie, but also against all those labor sectarians, opportunists, and confusionists of the times, who would weaken, disrupt, or destroy the trade union movement.

Among their elementary contributions to trade union theory, Marx and Engels demonstrated the practical benefits of trade union action in improving wage standards—and this in the face of a host of bourgeois economists (and many confused trade union leaders) who held that the workers, locked in a sort of economic vise, lost through raised living costs any and all wage increases that they might win by trade union action. Such a theory implied passive submission to capitalist exploitation. Marx, in his famous discussion with Weston in 1865, knocked this dangerous illusion on the head. He demonstrated, with elaborate precept and example, that it was possible for the workers under capitalism, by trade union action, to wrest a greater proportion of their surplus value from the employers. Marx summed up that, "A general rise in the rate of wages would result in a fall of the general rate of profit, but, broadly speaking, not affect the prices of commodities."[9] This elementary argument of Marx's gave trade unionism a perspective of resolute struggle against capitalist exploitation. It is now taken as a matter of course in labor circles, and is still used effectively in trade union negotiations with employers who accuse the unions of causing the high cost of living. But to make it prevail originally Marx had to wage years of bitter struggle against various opposition elements in the labor movement.

Another major trade union contribution of Karl Marx was to teach the labor movement the imperative necessity of political as well as economic action. Marx showed that in the prosecution of class interests political action is indispensable. He hailed as a great victory for the working class the passage of the ten-hour bill in Great Britain in 1847- He declared "the combination of forces which the working class has already effected by its economical struggles ought at the same time to serve as a lever for its struggles against the political power of landlords and capitalists," and that, "against this collective power of the propertied classes the

working class cannot act as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes."[10] This principle has also now been largely absorbed by the world's working class (except on the part of such conservatives as those who dominate the American trade union movement); but Marx and Engels, to establish the principle, had to battle for years in the International against all sorts of Anarchists, Syndicalists, and "pure and simple" trade unionists, who would have the workers eschew politics altogether.

Marx also taught the leading role of the Party in the class struggle, as the representative of the broadest class interests of the proletariat. He also developed the closest working relations between industrial and political arms of the labor movement. A protracted struggle was required to lay the groundwork for the establishment of these basic principles in the face of long and bitter struggle against apolitical Anarchists, who wanted no party at all, and against opportunists who wanted the trade unions to adopt a position of "neutrality" towards political action and the Party.

Marx actively supported every strike and other struggle for amelioration of the workers' hard conditions and he repeatedly drafted programs of immediate demands. But at the same time he warned again and again of the futility of the trade unions confining themselves to such partial struggles. They ought never to forget their final objective of abolishing capitalism outright. The conquest of political power is the basic task confronting the workers. In a celebrated passage, directed towards the trade unions, Marx declared, "Instead of the *conservative* motto: *'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!'* they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system.'"[11] To learn this most basic reality in terms of actual achievement, in the face of treacherous opportunist leaders, defenders of capitalism, has been the most difficult of all lessons for the workers, but decisive millions of them have grasped it and are putting it into action.

## THE IWA INAUGURAL ADDRESS AND PROVISIONAL RULES

The *Inaugural Address* and *Rules,*[12] constituting the program of the IWA and written by Karl Marx, contain, popularly stated, the general political line previously worked out by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* and later in others of their writings. The *Address* analyzed the polarization of poverty and wealth in Great Britain and the deepening of the destitution of the masses notwithstanding the enormous increase in the productivity of British industry, and it also condemned the prevalence of reaction generally throughout the Continent. It endorsed

the struggles made by the workers upon the economic and political fields, and it urged that, "Proletarians of all countries, Unite!"

The *Rules* set up an international organization, to be composed of "Workingmen's Societies," "aiming at the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation of the working classes." This classification embraced, as later practice showed, workers' political groupings, trade unions, cultural societies, and cooperatives. (See *Les Trois Internationales,* p. 9). In 1871 these bodies were all grouped into sections, mostly on a national scale. The time was not yet ripe for the setting up of separate internationals respectively for each of these several basic branches of the labor movement. The IWA was to accept both individual and collective affiliations, and it should strive to establish national centers in the various countries. The whole movement would be united through the General Council, with its seat in London. International congresses should be held yearly. The *Rules* contained the general principles of the new organization, stated as follows:

"That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule;

"That the economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopoliser of the means of labour, that is, the source of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence;

"That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;

"That all efforts aiming at that great end have hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in each country, and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries;

"That the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries;

"That the present revival of the working classes in the most industrious countries of Europe, while it raises a new hope, gives solemn warning against a relapse into the old errors and calls for the immediate combination of the still disconnected movements."[13]

# 8. The International, the Trade Unions, and The Paris Commune (1864-1876)

The First International was a political organization. It aimed to coordinate the forces of the working classes of the various countries for united economic and political struggle against the capitalist exploiters and their social systems. It fought against war, against the remnants of dying feudalism, for the abolition of Negro chattel slavery in the United States, for the independence of Poland and Ireland, for the right of the workers to vote, for social legislation, and it carried on ceaseless revolutionary education among the masses.

The IWA, at the same time, was also the international of trade unionism, and it fought militantly for specific trade union demands. It actively supported strikes, built unions, and campaigned against child labor and discrimination against women workers. It was a pioneer champion of the eight-hour day. In short, it laid down the basic trade union program of the modern labor movement. The IWA lived for 12 years, and all its conferences and congresses reflected its fundamental interest in trade unionism.*.

At its very first congress, in Geneva, 1866, the IWA, in a resolution written by Karl Marx, promptly took a stand on the elementary matter of trade unionism. The resolution, entitled, "The Trade Unions; their Past, Present, and Future," while endorsing the traditional fight of the trade unions for improved working and living conditions, criticized the usual narrowness of these bodies. It declared that the unions "have not yet completely realized their power to attack the very system of wage slavery and present-day methods of production," and it also stated that, "In addition to their original tasks, the trade unions must now learn how to act as focal points for organizing the working class in the greater interests for their complete emancipation. They must support every social and political movement directed towards this end."

At the time of the IWA, the working class, undeveloped and politically immature, naturally had many confused ideas about trade unionism, as about various other social matters. Consequently, in the prolonged disputes between the Marxists and the groups of Proudhon, Lassalle, Blanqui, Mazzini, Bakunin, and others, the issue of trade unionism was always at the heart of the controversy, with the Marxists fighting constantly for strong and politically minded trade unions.

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* The IWA congresses were London 1864 (Conf.), Geneva 1866, Brussels 1868, Basle 1869, The Hague 1872, Philadelphia 1870.

## THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

From the outset the British trade unions played a very important part in the IWA. They were largely the initiators of the movement, and throughout they participated heavily in it. As we have seen, the leading group of leaders of the period, the "Junta," were members of the IWA General Council. Very many trade unions joined up directly with the International, and it was said that at one time or another most British unions were so affiliated. In 1866 the Trades Union Conference at Sheffield recommended that the trade unions generally join the International. The same attitude was warmly taken at the Trades Union Congress in Birmingham in 1869.[1] At the Basle Congress of that year, Applegarth reported 95,000 IWA members in England, almost entirely trade unionists. On the other hand, some unions definitely refused to affiliate, including the London Trades Council. Marx was the one who proposed the direct affiliation of trade unions, indicating the great importance he attached to the trade union movement.[2]

The British trade union leaders, for the most part, were but little in harmony with the revolutionary leadership of Marx and the general political objectives of the IWA. They looked upon the organization generally from the narrow trade union point of view that it was an effective means for ending or limiting international strikebreaking, and they also appreciated the national and international financial and moral support that the IWA was able to get for their various strikes. These leaders, under the enervating effects of rapidly developing capitalism, had long since lost the revolutionary spirit of the fighting Chartists of a generation earlier. Their unions were composed chiefly of skilled workers, the new labor aristocracy, and at that time capitalism looked pretty acceptable to these favored elements.

Generally, the British union leaders were not very active in the International; they never made such determined efforts to capture the organization as was done by the Proudhonists and Bakuninists. As a rule, they only weakly attended the various IWA congresses and they rather passively accepted their resolutions. Their "pure and simple" trade union approach to questions before the IWA was a conservative drag upon the organization. More and more they tended to fall foul of the militant Karl Marx. Some of the more active elements among them, such as Hales, Odger, and Eccarius, eventually fought Marx openly and they toyed with the Proudhon and Bakunin opposition groups, without, however, adopting their particular programs. They also used the British Section of the International as a weapon against the General Council, led by Marx. They did not like Marx's demand for the freedom of Ireland, and they

came to a crisis with the IWA over the Paris Commune, They especially objected to the aggressive support of the fighting Commune given by Marx—its revolutionary spirit offended their Liberal friends and, with the exception of Applegarth, they resigned in 1871 from the General Council. This was one of the blows that helped weaken IWA and that led to its eventual dissolution.

## THE GERMAN TRADE UNIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL

The Marxists of Germany, to a limited degree, participated in the work of the First International, but the weak German trade union movement as such played virtually no role whatever in it. During the period of the IWA, from 1864 to 1876, the trade unions were having a hard time to survive and grow in the face of strong opposition from the employers, violent persecution from the state, and worst of all, a gross underestimation of their importance on the part of various Socialist political leaders of the German working class.

Lassalle, whose program for the workers called for a system of cooperatives, subsidized by the state, was a sharp opponent of trade unionism. He held that under capitalism the workers were caught by an "iron law of wages," which inevitably kept their wages down to a subsistence level. (It was against this theory that Marx had fought in his celebrated discussions with Weston—see chapter 7.) Hence, according to Lassalle, not only were strikes and trade unions worthless and a waste of time and effort, but also a danger to the political movement of the working class. Lassalleans even opposed the law of 1869, which conceded industrial workers (but not agricultural workers) had the right to organize. As Marx says, "Liebknecht organized unions amongst the Berlin printers against the wishes of Lassalle."[3] Lassalle was killed in a duel in 1868, but his successor, J.B. von Schweitzer, as head of the General German Workers Association, the dominant Lassallean political organization, continued the anti-trade union policy of Lassalle.

Nevertheless, under the pressure of increasing capitalist exploitation, the need and determination grew among the German workers for trade union organization. In September 1868, therefore, the Lassalleans called a general workers' congress in Berlin and there they organized the *Arbeiterschaftsverband*, or Workers Union. It claimed initially to have some 142,000 members. Schweitzer became president of it—he also headed the General German Workers Association, the political organization. Schweitzer, an autocratic bureaucrat, considered the new economic body as merely a minor department of the political organization. His whole effort was to reduce it to a sort of beneficent society and to pre-

vent its being used by the workers as an instrument for strikes.

Meanwhile, Bebel had returned from England, with model trade union statutes. He and other Social Democrats began to organize independent trade unions. About the same time, Hirsch and Duncker, bourgeois politicians, who had also studied trade unionism in England, started to form unions, to serve as adjuncts to their liberal Progressive Party. Thus there were three national trade union centers—Lassallean, Social Democratic, and Progressive. They waged war against each other. These difficulties were worsened by constant police persecution, by the crippling effects of the 1870-71 Franco-German war, and by the severe world economic crisis of 1873.

In May, 1875, at Gotha, the Lassalleans and Social Democrats composed their differences and established Party unity. This at once led to a movement to unify the trade unions. But the perspective was still not good for the unions, as Lassallean underestimation of the trade unions carried on over into the united Party. If, as was widely believed among Socialists, wage increases won by the workers were automatically wiped out by price rises, trade unions could have but little value. Marx, who represented Germany on the IWA General Council, tried to bring about unity and a better understanding of trade unionism in the Party ranks in Germany, but with only partial success. In 1900 Bebel, the Social Democratic leader, speaking of this period, said: "The Party believed that the special mission of trades unions was to serve more or less as recruiting grounds for the Social Democracy. Many Social Democrats lent their support solely on this ground. Even I myself *at first* regarded the trade unions from this standpoint."[4] As for politics, the prevailing German Socialist view was that the unions should eschew politics altogether as organizations, but the workers should join the Social Democratic Workers Party.

In the face of such limitations and handicaps the German trade unions could make little progress. In 1877 there were reported, all told, only some 25 national unions, with about 50,000 members, or two-and-one-half per cent of the total number of industrial workers. The largest unions were: Tobacco 8,100 members, Printers 5,500, Carpenters 5,100, and Metal Workers 4,400. Many crafts had no unions at all.[5] And even this modest progress was halted when, after two attempts upon the life of Kaiser Wilhelm I, in May and June of 1878, with which the Social Democrats had nothing whatever to do, the Government, through its infamous anti-Socialist laws, proceeded to outlaw and drive underground the whole Social Democratic movement, including both the Party and the trade unions.

Lassalleism remained confined pretty much to German-speaking workers. Its following was limited almost exclusively to Germany, Austria, and the German emigration to the United States. Lassallean influence was to be found strong in American trade unions even in the late 1870's. The Lassalleans never affiliated to the First International officially, although supporting it in a general way.

## THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE PARIS COMMUNE

Proudhonism, with its emphasis upon mutualism and economic cooperation (see Chapter 6), was an enemy of trade unionism. Proudhon not only fought against unions and strikes in France and Belgium, but he carried this war into the International. Its early Congresses were the scenes of constant struggles by the Marxists against this negative element, which opposed political action, strikes, and the eight-hour day. At the first congress, Geneva 1860, the Proudhonists won a majority for their mutualist bank scheme, and at the third congress, Brussels 1868, they passed a resolution favoring mutual credit among workers. By the Basle Congress of 1869, however the Marxists had succeeded in defeating them, and the International definitely committed itself to a policy of national ownership of the industries and land, political action, trade unionism, strikes, and the perspective of the overthrow of capitalism. The petty bourgeois minded Proudhonists were further discomfited by the crash of their main Paris bank in 1869.[6]

Another negative tendency, this time on the left side, the followers of Blanqui, also tended to check the growth of trade unionism. A veteran of the 1848 revolution, Blanqui pinned all his hopes upon early insurrection. Therefore, he had little patience with the slower perspective of patiently building trade unions. Eventually his movement became reoriented and fused with that of the Marxists.

Despite such hold-back influences, the trade unions gradually intrenched themselves, and strikes in France, Denmark and Belgium multiplied. They were fought relentlessly by the governments, with scores of workers being killed and thousands arrested. In building the unions, remarks Kritsky, "The International played an immense role."[7] In early decades the workers' fighting groups were called "societies of resistance," and in 1867 the Shoemakers were the first to call themselves a *syndicat,* or trade union. By 1868-70, on the eve of the Franco-Prussian war, there were 70 unions in Paris,[8] and in all France the International had an estimated membership of 200,000.[9] The labor movement in Belgium was also becoming one of the strongest in the whole International.

The Franco-Prussian war began on July 19, 1870, and in six -weeks

the corrupt government of Napoleon III was hopelessly beaten. On September 4, the French people overthrew the Second Empire and established a Republic, and on February 15, 1871, enraged by the treachery of the reactionary leaders of the Republic, the workers of Paris revolted and set up the Commune in their city to save it from the Germans and French reaction. Efforts, fruitless as it turned out, were made to establish similar communes in other cities and towns throughout France.

The Commune was the first example in history of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[10] Although the workers did not form an actual majority in the government, the whole movement was inspired by a proletarian spirit. Its banner was the Red Flag of the workers, and its perspective was Socialism. The Blanquists were the most numerous element in the government, and the Marxists formed an influential minority. The International, which had at first advised against a revolt in Paris as hopeless, gave the Commune its heartiest support once it was launched. In studying the lessons of this great struggle Marx wrote one o£ his most famous books, *The Civil War in France.*

Although lasting only two-and-half months until May 28, and fighting a bitter civil war nearly all the while, the Commune nevertheless accomplished much in the way of legislation and proletarian organization. It proclaimed the separation of church and state, substituted a people's militia for the standing army, stripped the police of political power, made all functionaries responsible to the electorate, set 6,000 francs a year as the top salary limit, elected and controlled all judges and magistrates, burned the guillotine, tore down the Vendome column, notorious symbol of militarism, and put through many practical measures to conserve the food supply and the health of the people.

The trade unions took an active part in all this constructive work, as well as in the armed defense of the city. Among their notable activities, they began to reorganize production upon a cooperative basis. When the revolt took place many employers fled Paris, leaving their plants standing idle. This created a big unemployment problem, and it lessened the supply of life necessities for the people. Consequently, on April 16, the Commune called upon the trade unions to take up the problem of restoring production on the basis of workers' cooperatives. The decree was carried out energetically. Eventually, there were organized 43 productive and seven distributive cooperatives.[11]

Heroic Paris, however, could not stand alone against the host of enemies arrayed against it. The Versailles government troops began their entry into Paris on May 21, and after eight days of fierce struggle, with the workers defending the city block by block, the Commune finally fell

in a welter of blood and carnage. The victorious armed action, with the butchers, President Thiers and General Gallifet at its head, then murdered the defeated workers by thousands in cold blood. The massacres were even more terrible than the slaughter following the lost revolutionary struggle in 1848. The first great attempt of the world's workers to establish Socialism had been defeated.

The Paris Commune taught the workers of the world many basic lessons which, over the years, Marx, Engels, and Lenin studied most carefully. Among these lessons are: that the workers cannot abolish capitalism and establish Socialism without having a strong Communist Party and a Marxist program; that a close alliance with the peasantry is a basic necessity for working class victory; that the workers, victorious in revolution, cannot simply take over the apparatus of the bourgeois state, but must create one of their own; that the Commune was a living demonstration of the reality of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and many others.

## REBIRTH OF THE FRENCH LABOR MOVEMENT

The overthrow of the Paris Commune was followed by a barbarous persecution by the government of its leaders and outstanding fighters. At least 30,000 working class men, women, and children were shot down by Gallifet after armed resistance had ceased, 45,000 more were arrested after the fall of the Commune, of whom some 15,000 were executed, tortured, imprisoned, or exiled to horrible island penitentiaries. Many thousands fled the country, to England, Switzerland, and especially the United States. All labor organizations were crushed and banned; including the Proudhon groups. The French proletariat was decapitated. The workers of the world mourned the terrible defeat.

Despite the frightful losses suffered by the workers during the Paris Commune and the persecution which followed it, the French proletariat, indomitable and indefatigable, was soon on its feet again and taking an active part in the class struggle. During this period France was undergoing a rapid industrial development. The number of workers in Paris doubled between 1860 and 1881, and the size and character of the industries grew apace. The workers promptly began to try to break the state of siege which the Government directed against them until 1876. Their first reaction of resistance expressed itself in a new growth of mutual ("friendly") societies and cooperatives, but soon real trade unions, *syndicats,* began to appear and strikes started to take place.

The republican journalist Barbaret, backed by Gambetta, began systematically to organize the workers into labor unions. This was in line with the characteristic liberal bourgeois policy of trying to control the

trade unions which the capitalists knew the workers would inevitably form. The policy of Barbaret was one of no strikes and for social peace. The workers proceeded to organize—Printers, Jewelers. Marble cutters, Leather workers, Machinists, Molders, Weavers and many others. In 1875, says Lefranc, there were already in existence 135 labor unions.[13] In 1876, there was a general workers' congress held in Paris, the first in French labor history, with 360 delegates present. claiming to represent 1,100,000 workers—in trade unions, cooperatives, and mutual aid societies.

This was but a preliminary tentative step, however. The congress restricted itself to various immediate worker demands, dealing with the right of trade union organization, women workers in industry, apprenticeship, cooperatives, mutual banks, worker representation in Parliament, etc. The congress even repudiated Socialism.[14] All this moderation in policy greatly shocked the revolutionist Blanqui. However, even this weak and timid organization was prohibited by the government. But the French working class, awakening and going into action, soon rid itself of the conservative Barbaret program and leadership. In ensuing congresses the movement took on more militancy and revolutionary perspective. Thus, at Marseilles in 1879 the congress definitely called itself "Socialist"—the modern French trade union movement was born.

## 9. The Italian and Spanish Trade Unions, and Bakunin (1864-1876)

During the 12-year life-span of the International Workingmen's Association trade unionism in Italy made substantial progress. But in doing so it had to contend with two powerful alien class forces within its own ranks which greatly hindered its advance. These were the destructive petty bourgeois tendencies represented by Mazzini and Bakunin. Giuseppe Mazzini, as we have indicated in chapter 6, was a middle-class Republican, a leader and hero of the Revolution of 1848. He set up a workers' association in 1841 as a section of his Young Italy Party, and then proceeded to dominate the Italian labor movement until 1871, when his grip was broken by the combined, if not united, opposition of the Marxists and Bakuninists.

Ambitious and aggressive, Mazzini even tried to dominate the First International itself. At the founding conference of the IWA in London in 1864 Mazzini had present his emissary, Major L. Wolf, who presented a full-fledged program for the new organization. This was based upon the bourgeois program of Mazzini's Italian Workers Association, and it was built upon the illusions of class collaboration.

But this anti-working-class program was rejected by the delegates, and the program of Karl Marx, based upon the class struggle, was adopted. This defeat ended Mazzini's bold attempt to capture the First International. He died in 1872, but his movement lingered on for several years longer, a negative influence in the young Italian trade unions.

## BAKUNIN IN ITALY

A more formidable figure than Mazzini, however, in Italian labor history was Michael Bakunin, the Russian Anarchist leader who, fleeing from Czarist persecution, established himself in Italy in 1864. Bakunin was a disciple of Proudhon, but with certain important theoretical and tactical modifications. Like Proudhon, Bakunin vaguely stood for revolution and the development of a society based upon the "free association" of workers' mutualist organizations. Unlike Proudhon, however, Bakunin did not believe that society could be gradually transformed by the systematic upbuilding of the new productive organizations; he maintained that only by armed insurrection could the state be destroyed and the new society introduced. Bakunin, like his mentor, Proudhon, had only a confused idea of the role of the working class and of the class struggle. He directed his main attack not against the capitalist class but against the state and religion. He was violently opposed to working class political action, and looked upon all workers' political parties as a destructive force. His whole body of theory and practice was based upon the unsound assumption that the proletarian revolution, as he vaguely conceived it, was a matter of the immediate future. His general line inevitably brought him into head-on collision with the Marxists in Italy and throughout the world.

One of the sharpest differences between the Anarchists Bakunin and Proudhon was with regard to trade unionism. Proudhon, as we have seen earlier, was an open enemy of strikes, of the shorter workday movement, and of trade unions as such. He considered the trade union movement to be the natural enemy of his schemes of mutualist cooperation, and in this conclusion he was not mistaken. One of the major tasks of the trade unions, particularly in France, the home of Proudhonism, was to break the influence of this antagonistic movement.

Bakunin, on the other hand, came to accept trade unionism to a certain limited extent. He viewed strikes as minor revolts, as preliminary struggles to the general armed insurrection that would eventually make the workers, or what he called "the people," dominant in society. In his program he demanded "the transfer of the land to the agricultural associations for use by them, and the transfer of capital and all means of pro-

duction to the workers' industrial associations." In this respect, Lozovsky remarks, "Bakunin already here expressed the idea of transferring the enterprises to the workers' industrial associations, the idea that was afterwards taken as a basis for all the theories developed by the French, Spanish, and Italian Anarchists and Anarcho-syndicalists.[1] This general idea, however, as we have seen in chapter 4, dates back to the days of Owenism in England.

Despite his specific endorsement of trade unionism, Bakunin's general line opposed the formation of solid trade unionism. He depended upon mass spontaneity and decentralization, rather than upon the indispensable organization and discipline, and his policy of throwing the trade unions into armed insurrection upon every possible occasion, definitely worked against their establishment upon a sound basis. In two years' time the Bakuninists in Italy staged no less than sixty local uprisings. The most significant of these struggles were their insurrections in 1868 and 1874, both of which were shot down by the government. Such adventurist policies tended to reduce the budding Italian trade unions to hardly more than conspiratorial groups.

Nevertheless, Bakunin won a powerful influence on the very young and struggling Italian trade union movement. This was primarily because when he came to Italy the country was in the concluding period of the long national revolutionary struggle for independence and the masses were still not clear on a working-class program. Bakunin's rise to influence was facilitated by the fact, as Lozovsky remarks, that he was "a man with tremendous energy and great organizational talent."[2] Around himself he built a strong group, and he used Italy as one of his main bases in his fight to dominate the First International.

## THE LEAGUES OF RESISTANCE

The Italian workers, in their fight against the influence of Mazzini and in their desperate struggle against the repressive measures of the employers and the state, organized in 1871, a society which called itself "Il Fascio Operaio" (the unification of labor),[3] among the leaders of which were the then militant Andrea Costa and Carlo Cafiero. The new organization was in effect of the pre-trade union, pre-party type—"league of resistance" found in the Latin countries at this stage in the development of the labor movement. The new movement held its first convention in 1872, the year following the split with Mazzini. At this time the Marxists were very weak in Italy and the leadership of the movement was taken over by the Bakuninists. The latter formed the Italian Federation of the International. At first the organization affiliated to the General Council in

London, led by Karl Marx, but it soon became a cornerstone in the Bakunin rival organization.

In 1869 there was a total of 771 workers' organizations of all kinds in Italy.[4] During 1870-80 the leagues of resistance type of organization became the dominant form of Italian organized labor. The leagues conducted many strikes and other working-class activities. Out of them soon were to come the trade unions and the Socialist Party. The first continuous trade union, the Printers, was formed in 1872.[5] In the beginning this was a craft union, but it soon branched out towards the industrial form. Other unions also slowly began to appear. The pioneer chamber of labor (local trades council) was established in 1872.[6] In short, the above was the general position of the Italian labor movement at the time of the dissolution of the First International in 1876.

## SPANISH ORGANIZED LABOR IN THE INTERNATIONAL

During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century Spain was the scene of several revolutionary struggles—in 1808, 1820, 1834, 1854, and 1873.[7] In sum, these struggles represented the various stages of the developing bourgeois revolution, which had as its immediate objectives, to drive out the French invaders, to break the power of the landed nobility and the absolute monarchy, to strip the Catholic Church of its enormous estates, and to clip its political power—in short, to open the way for capitalist development in Spain. These various bourgeois revolutionary efforts were only partially successful.

Between 1850 and 1870, industry, with its main base in Barcelona, made considerable progress. This city had long been the center of the bitter struggle that the Spanish working class had waged against its barbarous feudal and capitalist oppressors and exploiters. Engels called Barcelona, "the greatest factory town of Spain, the history of which records more barricade fighting than any other city in the world."[8] After many hard battles, among them the general strike of 40,000 workers in 1855,[9] marked by ruthless terrorism upon the part of the government, the Spanish workers, in 1869, won a measure of right to form trade unions.[10] Consequently, in the next few years the trade union movement grew rapidly. Dutt says of it that in 1873 there were 537 unions and 270 regional federations with 300,000 members in Spain.[11] Wages and working conditions of the Spanish workers were at tragically low levels, and the working class was in a fighting mood to improve them.

In creating the strong trade union movement of this period in Spain the First International played a decisive role, even as, in the same respect, it did in France, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, Holland, Poland, and

various other countries. By the same token, its leaders and organizers were in the forefront of all the current strikes and other struggles of the workers in these counties against the abominable conditions under which they labored.

Bakunin, whose main base from the outset was in the Latin countries, early took a hand in the Spanish situation. He soon came to dominate the Spanish section of the International, which was one of the earliest and strongest organizations in that body. At the pioneer conference of the IWA in London in 1864, a Spanish worker was in attendance, and at all the successive congresses the Spanish delegation took a prominent part. Throughout the life of the International in Spain the Marxists remained a minority. When the split in the International came in 1872 the Spanish Federation went with Bakunin, and to this day pronounced Bakuninist tendencies are still active in Spain.

After the split the great test of Bakunin's organization and policies was not long in coming, in the Revolution of 1873. In February of that year Spain was plunged into a political crisis, which had long been brewing, by the sudden abdication of King Amadeo, whom Engels called, "the only King who ever went on strike." Taking advantage of this favorable situation, the bourgeois forces were able to push aside the monarchy and to set up a republic. Theirs, however, was a weak government, torn with internal dissensions, and in December 1874 the monarchists overthrew it and reestablished the Bourbon kings upon the throne.

Obviously, as Engels points out, Spain was not yet ready for Socialism. The workers, weak in organization, program, and leadership, could not have seized hold of the bourgeois revolution and transformed it into a proletarian revolution. Under the existing circumstances, the best they could have done was to fight for the strengthening of bourgeois democracy, to win democratic political rights for the working class, and to build their organizations in the process.

To the impetuous Bakunin, however, all such political action was out of the question. The change from a monarchical to a republican form of government seemed to him to have no basic interest for the working class. So he called upon the workers to abstain from the general elections in April which elected the Constituent Assembly and established the bourgeois democratic government, such as it was, This tactic demoralized the workers, many of whom nevertheless participated haphazardly in the elections.

Bakunin set his course for revolution. During the summer of 1873 his plan was to launch a general strike in a number of the most important centers. But the militant workers in all-decisive Barcelona, in Engels'

view, were expecting a call for armed action, and they did not respond to the strike movement. The struggle was therefore doomed to failure from the outset. In Alcoy, a factory town of some 30,000 inhabitants, and in a few other centers, local strikes took place, but they were soon shot down by the government. Meanwhile, many Bakuninist leaders, throwing overboard their professed anti-politicalism, confusedly lined up with the bourgeoisie and sat in their local governments. The general result was that the workers were defeated and the Spanish section of the First: International, including the young trade union movement, was dissolved. In evaluating this whole movement, Engels acidly remarks that, "In a word, the Bakuninists in Spain have given us an unsurpassable example of how *not* to make a revolution."[12]

## THE SPLIT IN THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

Of the various struggles against sectarians and opportunists, conducted by the Marxists in the International Workingmen's Association in their long fight to establish a revolutionary proletarian ideology—against pure and simple trade unionism, Mazzinians, Lassalleans, Blanquists, and Proudhonists—by far the most important and serious was that led against the pseudo-revolutionary grouping, the Bakuninists. In this struggle there was at stake the whole future of the labor movement. The fight began almost as soon as Bakunin joined the International in 1868.

When Bakunin came into the IWA he was equipped with the ready-made philosophy we have indicated above. This was all incorporated in the program and structure of his International Alliance of the Social Democracy, recently founded. The Alliance was a continuation of earlier conspiratorial groups with which Bakunin had been affiliated. He set up his secret groupings in various sections of the International, to advance his program of insurrectionary activity. The General Council objected to all this and insisted that Bakunin liquidate his international organization, upon which it would allow his branches to join as such. Bakunin promised to do this, but never carried it out in practice. The result was duplicate organization and sharp internal strife in Italy, Spain, and elsewhere.

At the various International congresses the Marxists and Bakuninists collided upon virtually the whole line of the IWA—on questions of building political parties, carrying on political action, the fight for labor legislation, methods of conducting trade union work, the discipline of the International, the Socialist perspective of the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.—to all of which the Bakuninists expressed fundamental disagreement. The struggle came to a head at the congress in The Hague in 1872. Marx, who had known Bakunin since 1848 and who realized that

the fate of the International was now at stake, attended this congress in person. The result was the expulsion of Bakunin and a few other Anarchist leaders for maintaining a secret, disruptive organization, for indiscipline, and for general incompatibility with the policies and program of the First International.[13]

The Marxists won the bitter struggle in the International, and they definitely established Marxism as the workers' basic ideology. This was amply demonstrated by the course of world labor events in succeeding decades. But the International was obviously in a serious condition. Consequently, Engels moved, and this was adopted, to transfer the general headquarters from London to New York. This, however, was only a last effort to save the organization. The International had played out its role. Internal disputes with the disruptive Anarchist elements, coupled with the severe attacks upon the organization by the various governments in the fierce reaction following the defeat of the Paris Commune, had made it impossible for the organization to continue in its existing form. Besides, the International labor movement faced new tasks of party and trade union building in the various nations, which required new methods and new organizations. The International Workingmen's Association, which had performed tremendous pioneer tasks in laying the foundations of the world labor movement, industrially and politically, had fulfilled its great task. After a four years' fight in the United States, of which more in the following chapter, the First International formally dissolved itself in Philadelphia on July 15, 1876.

Bakunin and his allies failed to recognize the validity of the decisions of the Hague congress. They proceeded to call another congress at St. Imier, Switzerland, in September 1872, claiming that it was that of the First International. The federations of the Latin countries went with the new organization. For the next several years the Anarchist International continued to hold congresses and to carry on activities in various countries. But all this was on a diminishing scale, and by 1878 it had petered out as an organized international movement. As for Bakunin himself, he died in July, 1876.

The young trade union movements of the world were profoundly affected by the great ideological struggles going on in the First International, particularly in their general political outlook. The unions in the main strongholds of capitalism—Great Britain, the United States, and Germany—where the Marxist influence was the strongest, forged ahead in the face of a world of difficulties. Even in those countries where the crippling Bakuninist influence was predominant, the unions in succeeding years showed a great vitality and recuperative power, despite the imprac-

tical policies to which they had been long subjected by the Anarchists.

The Anarchist movement, with its theories and practices of spontaneity, lack of discipline and inadequate organization, petty bourgeois ultra-radicalism, and visionary perspectives, proved by its activities, both within the First International and as an independent movement, that it had nothing constructive to offer the young world labor movement. It was a negative, destructive force, and the workers of the world, in their ever-continuing march ahead, had to pass it by and they did. As for the Marxist forces, although temporarily slowed down by the dissolution of the heroic First International, they became increasingly active in the respective countries, building the workers' political parties, trade unions, and cooperatives, and thus laying the basis for the next great step forward on a world scale, the Second International.

## 10. The National Labor Union and the First International (1866-1876)

While the International Workingmen's Association was pursuing its stormy course in Europe important developments were also taking place in the young labor movement of the United States. As we have seen in chapter 5, the Civil War gave an enormous impulse to the development of American industry, both in concentration and extension in volume. This growth was still further speeded up during the post-war years, with the Northern industrialists taking full advantage of their crushing victory over the Southern slaveholders. All this resulted, as remarked above also, in a rapid expansion of trade unionism, culminating in a convention in Baltimore, August 20, 1866, and the formation of the National Labor Union.

Trade unions in all capitalist countries are basically the same, but they are secondarily shaped by specific economic, political, and historical conditions in the respective countries. In the United States, among these specific and unique characteristics, tending to determine many of the concrete tasks and problems of the National Labor Union, were: the absence generally of feudal economic and political remnants in the United States; the existence of a capitalist class that had just won a tremendous revolutionary victory; a working class with living standards twice or more as high as those existing in Europe; unusually fluid lines between the classes; 4,000,000 Negroes who had just been freed from 300 years of chattel slavery; the presence of a vast amount of cheap land on the frontier; an enormous flood of immigrants that was increasing year by year, and a working class (male white) that had long possessed the voting franchise to a degree unknown in Europe. All this constituted a

very different situation than that obtaining in Great Britain, Germany or France, and other capitalist countries, but it in no sense set the labor movement of the United States aside from that of the rest of the world, as the advocates of American exceptionalism constantly conclude.

## THE NATIONAL LABOR UNION

In this period, due to the rapid spread of the canals and railroads and the consequent swift expansion of the national market, including the market for labor-power, there was an irresistible pressure upon the workers correspondingly to expand their trade unions from a local to a national basis. For only in this manner could the workers hope in any way to control wages and working hours. This imperative produced the many new national craft unions of the time, and it also bought about the formation of the National Labor Union, which was the most successful attempt so far of the American working class to organize a general national labor organization.

At the founding convention of the NLU there were present 60 delegates, including 38 from local unions, six from eight-hour leagues, 12 from local trades councils, and three from national unions—most of the existing national unions holding aloof. The convention claimed to represent 600,000 workers—an exaggeration. The leader of the Movement was William H. Sylvis, head of the Molders Union.[1] The Marxists were very active in building the NLU, but their outstanding political and trade union leader, Joseph Weydemeyer, died in St. Louis of cholera on the day the convention opened.

In the spirit of the great Revolution which it had just passed through, the National Labor Union at the outset adopted generally a progressive policy. It proclaimed its purpose to organize the whole working class, regardless of race, sex, or creed. It gave an active lead to the workers in strikes, and aiming towards a working-class political policy, it broke with the party of big business, the Republican Party, with which it had been allied during the Civil War, and it soon began to orientate towards the establishment of a labor party.[2]

The NLU was essentially a pioneer organization, having but little to guide it in the earlier trade union experience of workers in the United States, Great Britain, or Germany. Yet Karl Marx, who keenly followed the American situation, praised the skill and understanding of the delegates at the initial NLU convention—held two weeks prior to the first congress of the IWA in Geneva. He said;

"I was afforded great joy by the American workers congress at Baltimore, which took place at the same time as the Geneva Congress of the

International Workingmen's Association. The slogan there was organization against Capital, and remarkably, most of the demands I drew up for Geneva were also put forward by the correct instinct of the workers."[3] Marx was particularly pleased with the militant demand of the NLU for the eight-hour day and also its pioneer insistence upon equal pay for equal work by women.

## THE NLU AND THE NEGRO WORKERS

A great problem immediately confronting the new National Labor Union was that presented by four millions of Negroes who had been freed from chattel slavery. Their basic needs were for land, jobs in industry, and a guarantee of all the political rights of American citizens generally.[4] These measures had to be pushed through in the face of resolute attempts of the Southern plantation owners to keep the Negroes down as close as possible to conditions of actual slavery. In 1867 Negro wages in the South were lower than had been paid to hired-out slaves before the war.[5] The Negro question was primarily an agrarian land problem, and its center was in the South. Karl Marx saw this problem, and in a letter of September 1866, addressed to President Johnson and referring to the freed Negroes, he said: "Declare your fellow citizens from this day forth free and equal, without any reserve. If you refuse them citizens' rights while you exact from them citizens' duties, you will sooner or later face a new struggle which will once more deluge your country in blood." This prophecy unfortunately was soon to come true.

To help the Negro people win their rights was a basic working-class responsibility; but the NLU failed to understand this and it did not rise to Marx's conception of reconstruction. Consequently, the Negro people were left to fight the battle alone, with diminishing help from the white Radial Republicans. Their erstwhile allies in the war, the Northern industrialists; were busy treacherously making a bargain with the plantation owners for the joint exploitation of the Negro toilers. The NLU never supported the reconstruction program that was being actively fought for by Frederick Douglass, Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, and others. As a result, the Negro people in the South, betrayed by their capitalist wartime allies and abandoned by the white trade unionists, were crushed down into the most terrible regime of lynching, Jim Crow persecution, and ruthless exploitation to be found anywhere in the capitalist world.

The NLU showed somewhat more interest in the closer up problem of inducting the Negro workers into industry. At its first convention the delegates expressed solidarity with these doubly oppressed workers and promised to organize them. Many NLU leaders and unions tried loyally

to carry out this decision. But their working-class attitude met resistance in various unions of skilled mechanics, filled with white chauvinism and a narrow craft spirit. As the yearly NLU conventions went by there was a waning effort to organize the Negro workers. The latter were willing enough to join, but being barred in many unions, they set out to organize themselves. This suited the anti-Negro elements who, already in the 1867 convention of the NLU, had urged the Negroes to organize separately.[6]

In Washington, on December 5, 1869, the Negro workers formed the Colored National Labor Union, with Isaac Myers, a ship's caulker, as its president.[7] But this organization, facing a world of difficulties and receiving little support from NLU loaders, soon perished. Already it was becoming clear that the question of unifying Negro and white workers in single unions was a difficult one. Failure come to grips with it was one of the several major reasons that led to the ultimate decline of the National Labor Union.

## THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE LAND QUESTION

From early colonial days the workers and their organizations cast hopeful eyes upon the vast expanses of uncultivated land to the west, hoping to secure farms for themselves. From their inception, the trade unions constantly interested themselves in this question. All their programs contained demands for land reform, the substance of which was free farms from the government for the workers. This was also true of the National Labor Union, and the National Reform Association, based on land reform, had mostly worker members. The key mass slogan of the land reform movement was, "Vote yourself a farm." The fact that the land was already occupied by the Indians troubled almost no one. They were generally treated as interlopers, to be pushed ruthlessly aside. The government claimed to own their land.

The heavy and continued mass pressure for land brought about after 1789 repeated easings of the government's terms by which land could be had from the enormous land reserves. Land was progressively sold in smaller lots, at lower prices, and on easier credit terms. In 1852 the government still had 1,300,000,000 acres of land, and it was estimated that its sale and distribution would take from 500 to 900 years.[8] The fight for land was one of the basic causes for the western farmers eventually lining up against the slave owners, who sought to grab all the land they could for themselves, The battle for free land came to a climax with the passage of the famous Homestead Bill in 1862. Under this law free grants were made to settlers of 160 acres each of farm land, provided they would live on it for five years and make a minimum of improve-

ments. Apparently it was the decades-long dream of the workers and poor farmers come true, and one of the greatest concessions won by them in the Revolution of 1861-65.

The democratic effects of this historic law, however, have been greatly exaggerated. Prior to its passage, ever since colonial days, the slaveholders and northern land speculators had been busily grabbing enormous stretches of the public domain, nor did the Homestead Law halt the depredations of the big land-stealers. Hacker says that by 1890, when most of the government land had already been taken up, only 372,659 entries for 160-acre homesteads had been perfected under the Homestead Act, for a total of 48,225,736 acres, as contrasted with four times that much stolen by the land-grant railroad companies.[9] And the small settlers received the least desirable farms. As for the emancipated Negroes, they got practically none of the land.

One school of bourgeois economists and historians maintains that the free land on the frontier acted as an important safety valve for relaxing working-class discontent in the East; for, they say, large numbers of workers had gone west to take up the cheap land, since colonial times. But another group of writers claims that the western settlers were originally almost all farmers, and that the trip west and the equipment of a farm, even if the land were to be had for nothing, cost far more money than the worker could raise. The truth lay between these two extremes. There can be no doubt but that considerable numbers of workers, especially single ones, made their way west and managed, by “squatting" or otherwise, to get hold of important sections of the farmland and valuable townsites. For as Faulkner points out, “An ordinary laborer in the new country might save enough in a year to purchase his eighty acres, while a skilled worker or a school teacher, both in great demand on the frontier, might purchase in less time.”[10] In their long and persistent demands for farms the trade unionists were not simply shooting into the water. The frontier land did seep off at least some of the discontent from the miserable factory centers of the East.

The fight for free land produced the one important social utopia native to the United States. This was the idea that the oppressed wage workers in the East could find liberty and prosperity by getting free land in the West. This false notion was propagated for several decades, up to the time of the Civil War and beyond, by such able worker leaders as Thomas Skidmore, George H. Evans, and Herman Kriege. Karl Marx fought these free land utopias, especially as propagated by Kriege, his erstwhile comrade in Europe.

## THE NLU AND THE INTERNATIONAL

When the International Workingmen's Association was formed practically all the labor unions and other workers' organizations in the world were either affiliated directly or had entered into friendly relations with it. In this respect the National Labor Union was no exception. International spirit and solidarity was strong in the NLU, largely because of the big proportion of recent immigrants in the American working class, who included in their midst many Chartists, numerous Irish nationalists, refugees from the German Revolution of 1848, and eventually many French fighters, exiles from the Paris Commune. Samuel Gompers, writing of the New York labor movement in the early 'seventies, said, "There were soldiers from the red-shirted army of Garibaldi; German 'forty-eighters,' English Chartists, men of big souls and high principles; the *carbonari* of Italy; the home-rulers of Ireland; revolutionaries from Denmark, Austria, Russia."[11]

Like the British trade unions, the National Labor Union was especially interested in the IWA because of its need to halt the flow of scabs into the country. This was a real evil at the time. The question of affiliation with the IWA was considered at the first convention of the NLU in 1866, but insufficient time and lack of funds did not permit the sending of a delegate. The question came up repeatedly at later conventions. At Chicago in 1867, the delegates refrained from doing more than sending a message of greeting and solidarity. The convention of 1869 in Philadelphia, without deciding to affiliate, sent a delegate to the Basle congress of the International. This was A.C. Cameron, editor of the *Workingmen's Advocate,* who carried on negotiations to combat the shipment of strikebreakers to the United States. At the 1870 NLU convention the affiliation question was again discussed. The substance of the resolution adopted was that, "The National Labor Union declares its adherence to the principles of the International Workingmen's Association, and expects to join the said association in a short time. The untimely death of the NLU leader, W.H. Sylvis, in 1869, which brought forth official condolences from the IWA General Council and high appreciation from Marx, weakened the movement for NLU affiliation, hence this was never brought about.[12] The labor press of the time, however, carried the documents and made the activities of the First International known to the American working class.

In relation to the IWA, important was the action of the founding convention of the Colored National Labor Union in 1869. This organization voted to send a delegate, Sella Martin, to the congress of the International scheduled to take place in Paris in 1870, but which was called off

on account of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. The Negroes widely knew of the International and had a friendly attitude towards it, especially because of the strong stand of Marx and Engels against slavery during the Civil War.

## THE DECLINE OF THE NLU

Despite its many fine pioneering qualities, its support of international labor unity, its fight for the eight-hour day, for women's rights, etc., the National Labor Union suffered from many weaknesses, both ideological and organizational. Its leaders, for one thing, became intrigued with the cheap money quackery of the times—the illusion that by having the government issue a flood of greenbacks this would improve the conditions of the workers. They did not realize that such a course would surely send the cost of living sky-rocketing far faster than the workers' wages could advance. Much of the vitality of the National Labor Union was dissipated by this economic fallacy.

The NLU, like most labor organizations of the period, also devoted a lot of its attention and energies to the cultivation of producers' and consumers cooperatives. This was due to current illusions that such cooperatives constituted the main path to working class emancipation. After absorbing much of the unions' resources and attention, these cooperatives failed. The NLU had not yet learned the basic lesson, pointed out by Marx in the *Inaugural Address* of the IWA, that while the cooperatives are valuable working-class organizations they cannot of themselves free the workers. The basic task in this respect, as he pointed out, is for the workers to capture political power. Moreover, the direct building of cooperatives is the function of a distinct cooperative movement, and is not a central task of the trade unions.

The attempt of the National Labor Union to establish a national labor party was a bold step towards freeing the working class from bourgeois political controls. But it was premature and could not succeed. The craft mechanics and their leaders never seized upon the project, and there was much confusion and disharmony over it. The masses of workers were by no means disillusioned as yet with the major parties, especially the Democratic Party.

A serious weakness, too, of the NLU was its lack of a strong national center. Its national organization consisted of hardly more than the yearly conventions. The NLU was thus unable to give a continuous leadership to the young labor movement. Coupled with all the foregoing weaknesses, the leadership, immersed in plans of land reform, cooperative building, and money remedies, tended to neglect elementary trade union ques-

tions of union-building and the carrying out of strike movements. Consequently, during 1870-71 the various national craft unions gradually fell away from the NLU and the organization rapidly declined. At its 1872 convention only seven delegates arrived, and the NLU was ended.

Foner thus summarizes this significant movement, "Despite its short life, the National Labor Union was an important stage in the development of the American labor movement. It had crystallized the most significant issues for workers in this period, and through its educational activities had helped to rally labor throughout the nation around these issues. It was among the first organizations in the world to raise the question of equal pay for equal work for women and place them in positions leadership. It was the first American national labor federation to welcome Negro delegates. The first American labor body to have a strong lobby in Washington, it urged the creation of a Department of Labor; it directed attention to the need for a shorter work day and cooperated to establish the eight-hour system in the federal and state governments. It directed activity to rectify unjust legislation; it fought the unjust grants of land to the railroads, and called for the restoration of the public domain to the people. It was recognized as the representative of American labor by the International Workingmen's Association.... It assisted in the launching of a number of state labor parties and of the first National Labor Party in the history of the American labor movement."[13]

## THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL IN THE UNITED STATES

When the General Council of the IWA moved to New York, in consequence of the decision of The Hague, 1872, congress of the International, the National Labor Union had just about disappeared from the labor scene in the United States. The dissolution of the NLU was a serious setback for the young American trade union movement. The effect of this defeat was greatly intensified by the outbreak of the deep economic crisis of 1873, which ravaged the whole capitalist world for the next several years. This economic breakdown wreaked havoc among the unions, Samuel Gompcrs asserting that whereas the trade unions had a total of 300,000 members in 1873, this number, by 1878, had decreased to but 50,000.[14]

The General Council of the IWA was located in New York City, with F.A. Sorge as General Secretary. The IWA in the United States was based primarily upon individual membership, few unions affiliating directly. The Marxist membership during the four years the general headquarters were in America probably never exceeded 15,000. There were IWA branches in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, St, Lou-

is, and other industrial centers. The organization was made up largely of foreign-born, immigrants, with the German workers the most decisive element.[15]

The International took an active part in the developing economic and political struggle of the workers. They led the big eight-hour day parade in New York on October 1, 1871, carrying, Gompers tells us, the militant old Chartist slogan, "Peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must." Prominent in this demonstration, for the first time in New York labor history, was a delegation of Negro workers.[16] The Internationalists also organized the historic demonstration of the unemployed in Tompkins Square, New York, on January 13, 1874. The demonstration was broken up with extreme police violence. Similar struggles took place against hunger conditions in other cities. The unemployed workers' demands were for relief and jobs on public works. In his memoirs Gompers states that, "Unquestionably, in those days of the 'seventies the International dominated the labor movement of New York City," and he added, "New York City was the cradle of the American labor movement,"[17]

Naturally, in view of the general political immaturity of the workers, the International in the United States was plagued by ideologies alien to the interests of the working class. One of these was bourgeois liberalism, represented by Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin, which had caused a considerable split in the organization in 1871, and created a turmoil that ran over into the period of the International in New York. But the worst disruption was caused by the Lassalleans, who, strong among German immigrant workers, created much confusion with their fantasies about "the iron law of wages" and the supposed uselessness of trade unionism. They were sharply opposed by the Marxists, who, besides stressing the indispensability of the trade unions in the struggle on the industrial field, pointed out that they must provide the mass base for the labor party. Gompers, who was at this time a radical trade unionist, sided with the Marxists in this struggle. Finally, torn with internal strife, the First International dissolved itself in Philadelphia in July, 1876.

The dissolution, first of the National Labor Union and then of the International Workingmen's Association, appeared like a serious retrogression of the American labor movement. But underlying these negative events, new trends were developing that were quite in tune with the general line of advance being taken by the workers in Europe. Those were: first, the further organization and growth of national trade unions; second, the establishment of a national Marxist organization, by the formation of the Socialist Labor Party in 1876, and third, the gradual development of the Knights of Labor, which, founded in Philadelphia in 1869,

was within a few years to become the most extensive and most militant general labor organization in the world.

## 11. The Workers and the Bourgeois Revolution (1644-1876)

The bourgeoisie, as we have remarked in Chapter I, fought its way to power, smashing the preceding system of feudalism by a long series of violent revolutions and national wars. In these struggles the rising capitalists, by appearing as the champions of the whole people against intrenched tyranny, generally won the backing of the workers and other toilers. At the same time the latter tried to come forward with their own people's demands. A review of the many revolutionary battles during the period covered by the first section of this book—that is, from the beginnings of capitalism to the end of the First International in 1876—show a picture of a developing class consciousness, organization, and program on the part of the evolving working class. Let us trace this, at least in broad outline.

### THE ENGLISH, AMERICAN, AND FRENCH REVOLUTIONS

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was a heavy bourgeois blow against the strongest of all feudal institutions, the Catholic Church. The first successful national bourgeois revolution, however, was the Netherlands Revolt of 1579, which marked the emergence of Holland as a decisive sea power. Then followed the great English Revolution, which lasted from 1640 to 1686, and which made England the dominant capitalist country' and the mistress of the seas.[1] These early revolutions were fought out under religions slogans, with their economic and political content largely hidden because of the enormous role played by the Catholic Church under feudalism.

Fundamentally the English Revolution was a struggle between the rising forces of capitalism and those of decaying feudalism. On the one hand, there were chiefly the absolute monarchy, the great feudal lords and Church dignitaries, and the wealthy merchant monopolists; and on the other hand, the developing industrialists, with their "putting-out" system of domestic industry, the smaller merchants, the lesser gentry, who by the breakdown of feudalism had become virtually capitalist farmers, working their estates by wage-labor or the tenant system, and the broad toiling masses of the population—artisans, wage workers, and tenant farmers. Engels says, "The English Revolution of the seventeenth century is the exact predecessor of the French Revolution of 1789," and that, "Cromwell is Robespierre and Napoleon in one person."[2] The revolution,

which cost Charles I his head, ended by a compromise in 1688 which left the rising bourgeoisie in substantial control.

The proletarian, popular element in this great struggle was represented by the "Diggers" or “Levellers." Their outstanding leader was John Lilburne, who wrote several pamphlets on the movement. They had a utopian conception of a new equalitarian society. Among their major demands were those for a republic, full manhood suffrage, a written constitution, a single national legislative chamber, and complete religious freedom. They were especially strong in 1647-50, and their pressure had much to do with forcing the autocratic Cavaliers and the bourgeois Roundheads finally to get together on the Compromise of 1688. Generally their movement was suppressed by violence, with wholesale arrests.

The American Revolution of 1776-83, a bourgeois revolution, had as its main objectives the breaking of the economic and political domination of Tory England and the consolidation of the national market and the government in the hands of the rising American bourgeoisie. This revolution was the first phase of a bourgeois revolutionary movement which, during the next half century, swept throughout the Americas, from Chile to Canada. This broad all-American revolution, although in many countries not breaking the grip of the big national landowners, nevertheless almost completely smashed the hitherto dominant American colonial empires of Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, and France, and it won independence throughout most of the Western Hemisphere for the rebelling colonies.[8] In the United States especially, the Revolution cleared the way for a swift development of the capitalist system. Lenin called the struggle in the English-American colonies one of the “great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars.”[4]

At the time of the 1776 Revolution there was considerable capitalist development in the American colonies, and the artisans, wage workers, and poor farmers gave militant support and even considerable leadership by pressure, to the fight for national independence. Their principal organizations were the Sons of Liberty and the Daughters of Liberty, which, from the earlier days, kept up a vigorous pressure against the vacillating sections of the bourgeoisie, who, fearing that the Revolution was going dangerously to the left, were willing to sell it out to the enemy. As we have remarked earlier, the elementary labor organizations of the times also took a definite stand against the British. Characteristically, “The idea of overturning the tea in Boston Harbor was first promulgated at a meeting of the ship carpenters and caulkers.”[5] The toiling masses, of course, furnished the main body of the soldiers to win the hard-fought war.

With the war won, the bourgeoisie typically tried to have the people forget the glowing democratic principles and promises which it had outlined in the Declaration of Independence of 1776. Consequently, at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which was completely dominated by merchants and planters, the new rulers wrote a constitution that not only left substantially intact the monstrous system of Negro chattel slavery, but also accorded very few civil rights to the white working masses. The workers and farmers were on the alert, however, and they developed so much resistance to the new Constitution that Congress, in 1791, had to attach to it the ten democratic amendments, the famous Bill of Rights. But in their discontent, the masses, however, did not propose to go beyond the confines of bourgeois democracy. The workers and their allies were able to force far greater democratic concessions from the victorious bourgeoisie in the United States than the English toilers had found possible in the English Revolution of a century before.

The French Revolution of 1789-94 went politically much further to the left than either the English or American revolution had done. Together with chopping off the heads of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, it sent many aristocratic parasites to the guillotine, confiscated and broke up their landed estates, outlawed the Catholic Church, assailed religion fundamentally, and ruthlessly swept away every feudal obstacle standing in the way of growing capitalism.

The workers, the peasants, and the small shopkeepers furnished the fighting forces to carry through this bitter revolutionary struggle. It was the workers of the Faubourg Saint Antoine who overthrew the Bastille. They constantly pushed the fight far beyond where the bourgeoisie wanted to go. Meanwhile, the latter, characteristically, filled the air with the most high-sounding democratic slogans and principles, to buttress its claim to be fighting in the interests of the whole people. The Declaration of the Rights of Man is one of the most resounding documents on bourgeois democracy ever written. But after 9 Thermidor (July 27, 1794), when the right-wing of the bourgeoisie overthrew Robespierre and his radical Jacobins, the workers and peasants got nothing from the Revolution but hardships and misery. The measure of their real rights was the notorious Le Chappelier law of 1791, which prohibited all combinations for raising wages or for improving working conditions. The voting franchise was restricted to a handful of male tax-payers—50,000 in a population of 24,000,000.

After the fall of Robespierre, who represented the extreme left of the bourgeoisie, Francois Noel Babeuf, born in 1760 of peasant parents, came forward and fought in the name of the working class. Through his

paper, *La Tribun du Peuple,* he propagated a sort of utopian Communism. He urged that the workers should seize political power by insurrection. Among his programmatic proposals were: "(1) Disfranchise all those not engaged in useful labor; (2) arm the people and disarm the enemies of the revolution; (3) censor the press; (4) abolish the right of inheritance; (5) confiscate the properties of counter-revolutionists (and of all idlers); (6) make useful labor obligatory upon all able-bodied citizens; (7) introduce machines to diminish men's toil; (8) establish public stores in each commune; (9) create councils for economic planning; (10) introduce a popular system of education, equal for all; (11) enable eventually all producers to participate in the making of laws; (12) cancel the national debt, abolish money, and monopolize foreign trade."[6]

On May 10, 1796, the government arrested Babeuf and his group of leaders, who were then moving to seize control of the government. Prior to this, in 1795, they had been active in organizing an uprising which, moreover, came near to success. After a trial of three months' duration, several leaders of the movement were convicted. On May 28, 1797 Babeuf died on the guillotine. This brave fighter led the proletarian cause further and more clearly than any who had preceded him in the revolutions in England, the United States, and France.[7]

## THE WORKERS IN THE EUROPEAN REVOLUTION OF 1848

The Revolution of 1848, a widespread capitalist attack upon rapidly decaying feudalism, produced upheavals from one end of Europe to the other. Its main storm centers were in France and Germany, but England, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Poland, Russia, and other countries were also heavily influenced by it. It was the decisive blow in establishing capitalist domination in Europe. Even Latin America and the United States definitely felt its effects. As the Revolution took place in a more developed capitalism, inevitably the working class played a bigger part in this than in any of the previous revolutions in England, the United States, or France. One of the reflections of the workers' role in the Revolution of 1848 was the rapid growth of trade unions that took place in many European countries.

The Revolution began in France in February 1848. The Revolution of 1830 had been an abortive one. Marx says of it, "It was not the French bourgeoisie that ruled under Louis Philippe, but a *fraction* of it, bankers, stock-exchange kings, railway kings, owners of coal and iron works and forests, a part of the landed proprietors that rallied round them—the so-called *finance aristocracy*.... The real *industrial bourgeoisie* formed part of the official opposition...."[8] "The petty bourgeoisie of all degrees, and the peasantry also, were completely excluded from political power" and,

of course, also the working class—although the latter had brought about the revolution.

The Revolution of 1848, precipitated by the bad harvests of 1845 and 1846, the high cost of living, the economic crisis of 1847, and the wasteful orgies of the government of King Louis Philippe, began on February 25. The Paris workers took to the barricades, the government collapsed, and a new government was installed, with two working class representatives in it, Ledru-Rollin and Flacon. This Provisional Government vacillated about establishing a republic until the workers' leader Raspail went to the Hotel de Ville and *commanded* the government to organize the Republic at once, or within two hours he would return at the head of 200,000 men. This did it, and before the two hours were gone the second French Republic was born.[9]

The new government was the rulership of the whole bourgeoisie. Characteristically, once they were in power, the capitalists considered that the revolution had completely served its purposes and that "the demands of the Paris proletariat are utopian nonsense to which an end must be put." "To this declaration of the Constituent National Assembly," says Marx, "the Paris proletariat replied with the *June Insurrection,* the most colossal event in the history of European civil wars."[10]

The great significance of this insurrection was that the proletariat, definitely splitting with the bourgeoisie, for the first time made an armed attempt at seizing power for itself. On the walls of Paris ran the slogans, "Down with the bourgeoisie," "For the dictatorship of the Working Class." But the heroic effort was fruitless. "The bourgeois republic triumphed. On its side stood the aristocracy of finance, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie, the army, the *lumpenproletariat* organized as the Mobile Guard, the intellectual lights, the clergy, and the rural population. On the side of the Paris proletariat stood none but itself. More than three thousand insurgents were butchered after the victory, and fifteen thousand were transported without trial."[11] In December the National Assembly elected Louis Bonaparte as President. Three years later he seized dictatorial power, and a year after that he proclaimed himself Emperor of France, as Napoleon III.

The June Insurrection of 1848 was the definite forerunner of the Paris Commune. In the latter brave but lost revolution, which we have dealt with in chapter 8, the French workers reached the height of political consciousness and initiative where they could seize power for their own class, passing over from the bourgeois revolution of 1870 which they had precipitated and fought through, to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the glorious Paris Commune of 1871.[12]

In Germany the revolution began a week after the initial outbreak in France. At this time undergoing rapid industrialization, Germany was clutched in the strangling grip of the landed nobility, which stood as a high barrier to all capitalist progress. The conditions of the toiling masses, peasants, artisans, and wage workers, were shockingly bad, and they were made worse by the economic crisis of 1847. The country was overripe for revolution, but the ruling classes were caught completely by surprise when it came.[13]

Within a few days the working masses overturned the governments in Baden, Wurttemberg, Bavaria, Hanover, Brunswick, Hesse, Nassau, Thuringia, and Saxony. Berlin also fell into the hands of the people, and the panic-stricken king had to accede to their demand for a National Assembly. In Vienna the people also took over; the Metternich government fled the city, and the emperor had to agree to the summoning of a Reichstag. “The Hungarians, Bohemians, Southern Slavs and Italians in Lombardy and Venetia, simultaneously demanded autonomy and the granting of constitutions for their provinces. It seemed as though the Danubian monarchy was about to be broken up into a series of separate states."[14] In Italy, as we have seen in chapter 6, the workers played a very important role in the futile 1848 Revolution.

Marx and Engels, leaders of the Communist League (which only a few weeks before had published the famous *Communist Manifesto*), went to Germany from Belgium to help give a constructive direction to the revolution. They located in Cologne, in the most industrialized section of the country, there publishing the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung.* They supported the liberal bourgeois program, for freedom of thought and association, universal and equal male suffrage, a people's militia, a progressive income tax, trial by jury, popular education, labor reforms, and parliamentary government—all within the framework of a united German republic. At the same time the two Communist leaders undertook to strengthen the workers ideologically and organizationally as a decisive factor in the revolution, stressing the workers’ class demands for the right to organize, the shorter work day, etc., and they also held out the perspective of socialism. Engels says that he and Marx considered the situation the starting point of a prolonged revolutionary movement in which the proletariat would gradually have won one position after another in a series of battles.[15]

The German and Austrian bourgeoisie, however, had no intention of pushing the revolution to the point, as they could have done, of even realizing their own official democratic demands. As was true before repeatedly in other revolutionary situations, the bourgeoisie were in mortal

fear of the awakening revolutionary spirit of the working class, and they hastened to make what amounted virtually to a surrender to the landowning reactionaries. They did not fight for the republic nor for a unified Germany. They did, however, secure enough concessions to permit the further industrialization of Germany and Austria. The betrayed working masses fought some rearguard armed actions in the two countries, but the German proletariat, even under the superb leadership of Marx and Engels, was much too weak numerically and too immature politically for themselves to carry the bourgeois revolution through to success and then to push on to the achievement of Socialism. By the middle of July 1849, the Revolution was lost, and the government was proceeding to crush out the trade unions, cooperatives, and elementary political organizations that the workers had succeeded in building up during the struggle. Large numbers of workers were arrested and thousands fled to the United States and elsewhere.

## THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE SECOND AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The American Civil War of 1861-65 was a bourgeois democratic revolution. The central tasks confronting the American people were to break the political power of the southern slaveholders, to dissolve their plantation system, and to abolish Negro chattel slavery. Although standing in urgent need of carrying through all these measures, the northern bourgeoisie wavered and hesitated in the face of its revolutionary tasks. The Lincoln government reflected all these vacillations. If the Revolution was finally pushed through to victory, however limited, this was definitely due to the mounting pressure from the forces on the left.[16]

The great people's coalition which, officially led by the northern bourgeoisie, won the Civil War, was based upon several classes and groups: (a) the more radical sections of the industrial bourgeoisie and of the petty bourgeoisie; (b) the Negro people, the most clear-sighted and resolute of all, who were fighting a war of national liberation;[17] (c) the small farmers, especially of the West, who fought for the land; (d) the working class, which fought against the general menace of slavery, to protect its living standards, and for the land. These were the democratic forces which, although never fully in control of the United States Government, nevertheless were the driving power behind the Revolution.

Characteristically, the northern bourgeoisie, which in general was about as much afraid of the forces of the left as it was of the enemy in front of it, had to be literally driven to take the necessary steps to win the war—including an active prosecution of the fighting, the elimination of

traitorous elements from the government, the repression of seditious Copperhead forces in the North, the emancipation of the slaves, the arming of the Negroes, etc., measures without which war could not have been won. Characteristically also, once having secured its major objectives of militarily defeating the southern slaveholders, the northern bourgeoisie promptly betrayed its democratic allies by redoubling its exploitative pressures against the workers, by grabbing wholesale the land that the farmers had fought for, and especially by making an agreement with the plantation owners to keep the "emancipated" Negro people down as close as possible to slavery conditions.[18]

The working class played a vital, but not the leading role in the Revolution. On the international scale Marx and Engels carried on a brilliant anti-slavery struggle. Also, Marx's articles in the New York *Tribune* undoubtedly were an important element in clarifying American opinion and policy in the whole complex struggle.[19] And the Abolitionist activities of the British workers, with their monster mass meetings and general agitation, were a decisive factor in preventing the British government from joining the war on the side of the southern Confederacy, which would have been a disaster. The letters of the First International to the people of the United States, written by Karl Marx upon the Civil War, are among the classics of proletarian political documents.[20]

On the American national scale, the workers, among whom the pioneer Marxists exerted no inconsiderable influence, were of decisive importance in winning the Revolutionary war. They and the working farmers furnished the overwhelming mass of the northern soldiers, and their political influence was increasingly on the radical left. Unlike the French workers in 1848 and 1871, the American working class was much too immature politically to make a bid, in its own behalf, for the revolutionary leadership of the great struggle. Nor was the objective situation ripe for such a revolutionary effort. The proletariat had no political party of its own, generally supporting the Republican Party, and it possessed only the beginnings of a trade union movement, it had no definite program and it did not raise revolutionary working class demands. The main demands that the workers fought for—the defeat of the slaveholders, the maintenance of the Union, the emancipation of the slaves, the Homestead law, the eight-hour day, etc.—all fell within the general framework of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Socialism, the abolition of the capitalist system, was not raised as a fighting issue; it remained entirely in the category of agitation, on the part of the Marxist groups and in the vague revolutionary aspirations expressed in the current trade union constitutions and press of the times.

# 12. The World Labor Movement up to 1876

The year 1876 may be taken as a point to register an important stage in the life of the labor movement and to sum up its progress so far, for two elementary reasons. First, this was the year in which the workers' initial attempt to form a world organization came to an end with the dissolution of the First International. The second reason is that this period marks roughly the ending of the competitive phase in the history of capitalism and the first beginnings of another, that of monopoly capitalism, or imperialism. Dobb designates the long-continued world economic crisis which began in 1873 as the "watershed" between these two stages of capitalist development.[1]

## THE GROWTH OF WORLD CAPITALISM

During the period covered in the foregoing chapters, the capitalist system, after its early beginnings in Western Europe, spread rapidly and became virtually a world system. Capitalist industry was growing strongly in nearly all European countries and the United States, and its militant traders were penetrating all the more "backward" countries. Industrial techniques were being profoundly changed. The primitive production and exchange methods of the guilds, of mercantilism, of the "putting-out" system, and of "manufacture" had largely given place to the developing techniques of modern industry. The Industrial Revolution proper, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, spread rapidly from country to country, despite all the efforts of the English bourgeoisie to monopolize the new production machinery.

The development of the new capitalist methods was revolutionary not only industrially, but also politically. The rich and expanding bourgeoisie came to grips with obsolete feudalism, and with a whole series of revolutions from the sixteenth century on, proceeded to smash the latter's trading and land monopolies and its guild system, and to tame or abolish its monarchs and landed aristocracy. Capitalism carved out of feudalism's political atomization the modern capitalist states of today. By 1876 world capitalism had dealt the death blow to world feudalism, and the latter's struggles thenceforth in the "backward" countries were only rearguard actions.

The growth of capitalism did not proceed, however, at an even pace in the various countries. Instead, the several nations tended to develop capitalistically with very different tempos. England, as remarked earlier, started out by virtually capturing the world market with its head start of modernized industry. But by the 1870's it was already being threatened

for leadership by the United States, with Germany also looming up as a dangerous competitor. This progress by jerks and starts, which Lenin later characterized as the law of the uneven development of capitalism, came eventually to play a decisive role in the capitalist world, by developing swiftly changing ratios of power among the capitalist states which could be re-adjusted only by great wars.

As developed by the experience everywhere, capitalism also did not progress upward upon an even incline, but by a series of booms and recessions. The fact that the producing powers of capitalism systematically outran the consuming power of the capitalist market, as Marx and Engels pointed out already in the *Communist Manifesto,* caused periodic market gluts and economic crises. Only after the producing powers were greatly curtailed by the crises would the progress ahead be resumed. In the most vigorous segment of world capitalism, the United States, such cyclical crises occurred in 1790, 1793, 1798, 1802, 1808, 1813, 1820, 1828, 1834, 1837, 1840, 1843, 1848, 1857, 1861, 1865, and 1873.[2] These crises evidenced a basic law in the capitalist system, one eventually to have profoundly destructive effects upon that body.

In its beginnings capitalist production was carried on in tiny units, with few workers and primitive tools. But with the invention of costly machines and industrial processes, the size of the shops and the numbers of workers steadily increased. Consequently, the individual capitalist began to give way to the joint-stock company, which was more efficient in assembling capital and in competing with rival concerns. Already by 1703, according to Dobb, about ten percent of all the fluid capital in England was held by joint-stock companies.[3] The Industrial Revolution gave an enormous impulse to this type of combination in all the capitalist countries, so that, by 1876, the process of monopolization was well under way in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and Belgium. But of all this capital concentration, more in succeeding chapters.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKING CLASS

With the growth of capitalism the guildsmen, who were the mechanics during feudalism, not only found themselves transformed into wage workers, but their whole manner of working was also fundamentally changed. The existing trades were split up and reorganized, and wholly new occupations were born. Marx cites the example of the needle-makers. While the skilled guild artisan in Nuremburg, Germany, himself carried out the 20 operations required in making needles, in England, under the manufacture system, these operations were performed by 20 (and even up to 92) separate workers,[4] with all or most of the operations

eventually being done by machines.

In the re-organized and pioneer industries new skills developed in place of the old ones. Among the categories of skilled mechanics thus created, in the various industries, as of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, were power-loom weavers, loom-fixers, iron puddlers, machinists, blacksmiths, boilermakers, molders, pattern-makers, locomotive drivers, switchmen, telegraphers, train-dispatchers, stationary engineers, coal miners, compositors, pressmen, structural iron workers, etc., etc. The basic difference between these new skilled workers and the skilled artisans of the guilds, in an economic sense, was that whereas the guild worker, with but little division of labor, turned out single products complete, the modern mechanics were but cogs in a general production apparatus, each worker performing only a small part of the whole process of producing the given commodity.

In the guild system of feudal times, which lasted a thousand years and was spread all over Europe, practically the whole working force (outside of some detached unskilled general workers) was made up of skilled workers or of apprentices learning to be expert mechanics. In England in 1700, of a population of 5,674,000, the number of artisans and their families was only 240,000, or 4.2 percent.[5] The development of capitalist production, however, quickly radically changed all this. Therewith the skilled workers became a minority of the general working force and large masses of semi-skilled and unskilled workers came into the industries, with their extensive division of labor and splitting up and mechanization of what had formerly been single hand trades. Already in his time Marx could say that, “Unskilled labor constitutes the bulk of all labor performed in capitalist society."[6]

Large numbers of the masses of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, newly created by capitalism, were women and children. Engels says, “of 419,560 factory operatives of the British Empire in 1839, 192,887, or nearly half, were under eighteen years of age, and 242,296 of the female sex, of whom 112,192 were less than eighteen years old.” In textiles, which in England, as in all other early capitalist countries, was the biggest and most important industry, Engels adds that in the cotton factories 56¼ percent of the workers were females; in woolens, 69½ percent, and in silk and flax 70½ percent.[7] Similar conditions prevailed in the textile industries in the United States, Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy in this general period.

Everywhere in England and other countries, the advent of capitalism produced an enormous increase in the number of workers in general. Big industrial towns sprang up and rapidly increased in population. Old trad-

ing cities, filled with new industries, doubled and tripled the number of their inhabitants. Between 1685 and 1760 the population of Liverpool increased tenfold, Manchester fivefold, Sheffield sevenfold, etc.[8] In 1841 the English working class, “including paupers and vagrants," numbered 9,000,000 of a total population of 14,000,000.[9]

Engels remarks of this development, “Thus arose the great manufacturing and commercial cities of the British Empire, in which at least three-fourths of the population belong to the working class, while the lower middle class consists only of small shopkeepers and very, very few handicraftsmen.”[10] Following the lead of Great Britain, similar swift working-class growth took place in all the other countries of capitalism. On the land, too, as capitalist farming grew, the number of agricultural wage workers multiplied.

In the United States in 1820 the number of persons employed in non-agricultural pursuits was 812,042 as against 2,068,958 working on farms; but in 1880, the situation was already reversed, with the majority, 8,807,289, employed in other than farm work and the minority, 8,584,810, working in agriculture. This trend has gone on since. In 1850 there were 1,260,000 persons employed in manufactures and construction, but by 1880 the figure had gone up to 4,600,000. In 1840 there were 15,000 miners, and in 1880 some 320,000, with other industries similarly expanded. During the period 1850-1880, the population of the United States slightly more than doubled while the number of those gainfully employed in non-agricultural pursuits increased eleven times.[11]

Most important, the introduction of the capitalist system everywhere brought about a catastrophic worsening of the conditions of the workers, as we have remarked in passing. Capitalism, wherever it grew, uniformly manifested itself as a means of siphoning the wealth produced by the workers out of the hands of these toilers and into the pockets of the capitalist owners of the social means of production—the industries, the land, the banks, the communication and transportation systems. As never before, the working class suffered from long hours of labor, slum living conditions, underpaid women's work, ruinous child labor, and boss tyranny in all the work places.

The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, hailed their system, which poured into their hands countless millions, as the acme of human prosperity and freedom. Engels, in his historic study of the workers’ conditions in England in the 1840’s has this to say about capitalism and its alleged freedoms and opportunities: "The proletarian is helpless; left to himself he cannot live a single day. The bourgeoisie has gained a monopoly of all means of existence in the broadest sense of the word. What

the proletarian needs, he can obtain only from this bourgeoisie, which is protected in its monopoly by the power of the State. The proletarian is, therefore, in law and in fact, the slave of the bourgeoisie, which can decree his life or death.... Fine freedom, where the proletarian has no other choice than that of either accepting the conditions which the bourgeoisie offers him, or of starving, of freezing to death, of sleeping naked among the beasts of the forests."[12]

## LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The workers in the various capitalist countries quickly began to sense that if they were to survive in the face of the new barbarous capitalist exploitation, they would have to fight back against the employers. At first this fight was defensive in character, mainly through mutual aid (friendly) societies and cooperatives, but it soon passed over onto the offensive, with machine-breaking, strikes, trade unionism, political action, and insurrection. The workers also began to plan how to abolish the capitalist system and to substitute for its murderous exploitation a society worthy of human beings.

By 1876 the trade union movement, following developing capitalism like a shadow, had spread into all the countries of Western Europe, into the United States, and to some extent into the British Dominions. As yet, however, it is doubtful if, taken all together, the trade unions of the world numbered then more than 2,000,000 members—only a tiny fraction of the whole working class, and not two percent as many trade unionists as there are today. The Webbs say that in 1874 the British Trades Union Congress claimed to represent a total of 1,100,000 trade union members, but two years later its official figures showed only 557,000 actual affiliates.[13] In the United States, as we have seen, Gompers estimated the entire number of American trade unionists in 1873 to be about 300,000. Jn Germany, in 1877, according to Zwing, the 30 Social Democratic Unions had a total of only some 50,000 members,[14] and the German independent unions mustered but a few thousand in addition. And very probably, the real trade unions of France, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Spain, Holland, and elsewhere, all told, could not count more than 500,000 members.

During this formation period that we are discussing, the very greatest achievement of the labor movement was the development of the principles of scientific Socialism by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* and in the whole series of their classical writings that followed this immortal document. Marxism gave the workers for the first time a clear understanding of the nature of the society in which they were living, its

brutal exploitation, its devastating periodic economic crises, its oppressive state, and its extremes of wealth and poverty. It provided the workers with a clear perspective of how to develop their fight for partial demands, how to abolish capitalism, and how to build the new social order, Socialism. One of the most valuable aspects of Marxism, as we have seen in chapter 7, is that it gave the first definite understanding of the role and possibilities of trade unionism. Marxism had to battle the various sects and deviations, as remarked above, but by 1876, when the First International ended, it had definitely won out as the dominant philosophy of the labor movement generally.

The trade union movement, during the formative decades prior to 1876, had also mastered many difficult organizational problems. Original tendencies towards reliance upon spontaneity in strikes and other struggles had been superseded by the understanding that there had to be built up solid, continuous, and systematically financed fighting organizations, trade unions. By the same token, the workers learned that all the unions in given localities had to combine in a central council, and that they must also affiliate nationally together. Already in the Owenist movement of the 1820's city-wide councils and national unions had been formed, but enduring central labor councils and national unions were not established in England until the 1850's and 1860's. In the United States the first central labor councils dated from the 1830's, and the first national unions from the 1850's.

The formation of general national organizations of labor was pioneered in England by the National Association for the Protection of Labor in 1830 and the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1833, but they both perished shortly. The present British Trades Union Congress dates back to 1868. In the United States, after several false starts, including the National Trades Union in 1835, and the International Industrial Assembly in 1864, the first real federation, the National Labor Union of 1866-72, was formed. In Germany the first general labor union federation came into existence in 1868. By 1876, however, no general international trade union federation had yet been organized, the trade unions having their first experience at international solidarity through the First International, which, a political organization, embraced all branches of the labor movement—parties, trade unions, cooperatives, and mutual aid societies.

By the mid-nineteenth century the trade union movement had also accumulated much strategic and tactical experience in the class struggle. It had conducted innumerable local strikes, and it had made several tries at national general strikes—in England 1842, Italy 1868, and Spain 1873.

The American labor movement had its first local general strike in Philadelphia in 1835, and during this same year the National Trades Union proposed a national general strike but did not go through with it.[15] By the 1850's trade unions in England and the United States were carrying on organized collective bargaining with the employers, in contrast to the earlier system, with the unions simply posting proposed wage scales and then trying to compel the employers to live up to them.

Skilled mechanics were the original trade unionists in Great Britain and other capitalist countries. In 1876 they were pretty fully in charge of the labor movement everywhere and were using the power of the unions to improve their specific craft conditions, without much regard for the interests of the proletariat as a whole. In England there was already a well-defined labor aristocracy, who damped down the revolutionary spirit of the working class. Similar trends existed also in the United States, Germany, France, and Belgium. The wide development of the textile, coal, and metal industries had, however, forced the beginning of organization among various categories of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, among them women.

The Webbs state that although the first permanent union for women in England was not achieved until 1872, prior attempts had been made many years earlier.[16] This tendency also existed in Germany. In the United States the first strike of women workers, in textile, came in 1828, but little durable organization was achieved until about 1880. The National Labor Union paid much attention to women workers. The first American union to admit women as members on equal terms with men was the Typographical Union in 186.[17]

As Great Britain was the most advanced industrial country during this period, so also were the British labor unions the leading section of the young international trade union movement. Workers came from France, Belgium, Germany, and other countries in delegations to study the pioneering experiences of the British trade unions. Significant also, Marx and Engels made Great Britain their headquarters and did their greatest work there. Continental liberals, such as Max Hrrsch of Germany, also studied the British unions, hoping thus to learn how to control the growing labor movements of their respective countries.

## POLITICAL ACTION AND ORGANIZATION

Workers' political parties (particularly Communist parties) are the highest form of working-class organization. This is because, rising above narrow craft considerations, they organize on a class basis and (when free of bourgeois influences) they commonly fight for issues of im-

portance to the whole working class. They also direct their efforts against the bourgeois state, the main bastion and defender of the capitalist class, the means through which the latter unitedly expresses its elementary class interests. Not strangely, therefore, in Western Europe and the United States, political action and political parties came after the workers achieved considerable trade union experience and organization.

The early trade unions, in order to become real fighting organizations, went through a process of functional revolution. One of major aspects of this was to delegate to a separate movement (which they proceeded to support) the cooperatives, which they had from the outset largely concerned themselves with. This was not an easy lesson to learn, however, and many decades later the American trade unions—the Knights of Labor, for example—were still trying to build cooperatives as their central task. The throwing upon the state of mutual aid features (sick, death, and unemployment benefits), which the unions had taken over from the preceding guilds and "friendly" societies, and insistence that the state establish social insurance, was a much slower process. Even to this day many conservative unions remain loaded down with such mutual aid features, and even consider them to be indispensable for the maintenance of trade unions.

The workers' political parties in those early decades developed pretty much by this evolutionary process out of the trade unions, the elementary, primitive fighting organizations of the proletariat. During periods of powerful working-class upheaval the workers had developed ephemeral political parties—as the local labor parties in the 1830's and the National Labor Party of the late 1860's in the United States, and the National Chartist Association of 1840 in Great Britain—but generally they tried, through the trade unions, to carry on such political activities as they developed, by lobbying and in campaigns for specific legislation and candidates. One of the most basic features of the work of Marx and Engels in the First International and elsewhere was their ceaseless stressing of the elementary need of the workers for their own political party. The workers' supreme achievement in this respect, during this period, was the formation of the First International in 1864, which was a world political organization.

The development of the workers' political party in the various countries was rendered more complex and it required a higher state of class consciousness because it also necessitated a break with the bourgeoisie parties, particularly those of a Liberal hue, which everywhere vied for the workers' support against the parties of the feudal remnants and of big capital. Consequently, although the workers, through their trade unions,

had already had a very considerable political experience by 1876, at that time there was in existence only one genuine national workers' party, the Social Democratic Workers Party of Germany—a symbol of the leading role that the German labor movement was to play internationally in the general period which was then opening up.

The workers' struggle through all the decades preceding 1876 had not been in vain. Not only had they, through Marx and Engels, laid the foundation of the revolutionary program of the world's workers with which to emancipate themselves from capitalism, and also had built considerable labor organization, but they could, in addition, report numerous gains in their material conditions. In Western Europe there was some improvement in the real wages of industrial workers, particularly those of the skilled workers. Cheapening food supplies were a factor in this, but the influence of trade union action also cannot be ignored. Cole claims that in England, the most advanced capitalist country, real wages went up, between 1815 and 1860, for compositors 50 percent, spinners 35 percent, agricultural laborers 36 percent, and miners 44 percent.[18] But these figures are highly speculative.

More manifest in the way of achievements, the 14 to 16-hour day had been abolished, a hard and successful struggle for the ten-hour day was under way, and the eight-hour day had already been made a world issue. Considerable factory legislation had also been written on the statute books in England and elsewhere, and some progress had been made at mitigating the worst features of child labor and the exploitation of women workers. In Great Britain, the United States, and France the legal right had been won to organize into trade unions—a fact which, however, did not hinder the employers from using the most violent means to prevent or destroy the trade unions. The right of male workers to vote had also been secured in the United States and France, and partly in Great Britain, and the workers in all other capitalist countries had this demand in the forefront of their program. This in short was the situation of the world trade union movement at the time the First International came to its end in 1876.

PART II

# The Trade Unions and Monopoly Capitalism (1876-1914)

*The Period of Maturing Imperialism*

## 13. Imperialism and the Second International

The four decades covered by Part II, from the end of the First International to World War I, marked the rise, the development, and the beginning of the decline of world imperialism. By 1876 the leading capitalist countries of the world were beginning to pass out of the early, long-continued competitive phase of capitalism and to enter into that of monopoly, of imperialism. The advent of imperialism signalized the conclusion of the progressive stage of capitalism and initial stages of its trend into the worst forms of reaction. The development also precipitated a great sharpening of the class struggle, culminating, at the end of the period, in the first breakthrough of world Socialism. It was the beginning of the era of great world wars and proletarian revolutions.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORLD IMPERIALISM

Lenin speaks of imperialism as "the monopoly stage of capitalism," "the epoch of finance capital," "the final stage of capitalism," and "moribund capitalism." He analyzes it as: (a) The concentration of production and capital, developed to such a high degree that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (b) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital and the creation on the basis of this, of finance capital, a financial oligarchy: (c) the export of capital, as distinguished from the export of commodities, becomes of particularly great importance; (d) international monopoly combines are formed which divide up the world markets and resources; (e) the territorial division of the world by the greatest capitalist powers is completed.[1]

Already in the late 1870's the concentration of capital into ever-larger and more monopolistic units was a marked phenomenon in all the leading capitalist countries. Characteristically, Jenks and Clark thus illustrate the general trend in the United States: "The average manufacturing plant in the 60 years from 1860 to 1910 multiplied its capital by more than 39, its number of wage earners by nearly 7, and the value of its output by more than 19."[2] The Standard Oil Company, organized in 1865,

controlled 95 percent of petroleum production by 1877, and many other concerns followed its path. Lenin designates 1900 as the time that imperialism can be said to have become fully developed. At that time, in the United States, Moody records 445 "Active Trusts" in the fields of industry, municipal services, and transportation, with a total capitalization of $20,379,162,551. By the time of World War I this trend had enormously increased and American industry was dominated by monopoly capital. "From 1909 to 1929 the estimated wealth of all non-banking corporations increased about 108 percent."[3]

The American hanks grew and consolidated apace with industry, and the hankers became the dominant force in the industrial corporations. The Morgan Company, founded in 1863, had by 1904 some two billion dollars in assets (Moody), and by 1912 these had jumped to over ten billion dollars (Rochester). Many other leading banking concerns also held enormous wealth.

Similar developments, more or less marked, took place in all other capitalist countries. Great industrial and banking concerns grew up through the decades, with a general tendency towards the merging of bank and industrial capital into finance capital. Moreover, as Lenin pointed out, these economic combines and trusts readied out all over the world. Eaton states that, "In 1897 there were 40 international cartels, by 1910 the number had increased to 100, and by 1931 to 320."[4]

Another basic feature of imperialism, as signalized by Lenin, is the export of capital. Great Britain, the oldest capitalist country, the one with the largest accumulation of capital, took the initiative in this field. The British capitalists, finding the domestic sphere for the investment of their accumulated capital becoming more and more restricted, especially after the deep-going economic crisis of 1873, turned more extensively to foreign investment, for lush returns. By 1880 Great Britain had the equivalent of five billion dollars invested abroad, by 1905, $10 billion, and by 1913 its foreign investments amounted to almost $20 billion.[5] At that time, adds Eaton, "current foreign investment possibly exceeded the total net investment of capital at home." France, at this time, says Eaton, had overseas in investments of over 1.2 billion dollars, Germany about 1.7 billion, and the U.S.A. 400 million—a figure that was vastly increased within the next few years.

One of the most outstanding manifestations of growing imperialism over the decades was the wholesale seizure of undeveloped countries by the capitalist powers. These new colonies provided invaluable markets and sources of material supplies. The land-grabbing was mostly accomplished during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From 1884 to

1900, according to Hobson,[6] England seized 3.7 million square miles of territory in Africa, Asia, and Polynesia with a population of 57 million. France got 3.6 million square miles with 36 million people; Germany one million square miles and 16.7 million people; Belgium 900,000 square miles and 30 million people; and Portugal 800,000 square miles and 9 million people. Russia, too, branched out, subduing Bokara and Kiva, and seizing much of Manchuria. Japan, then just emerging as a capitalist power, grabbed Korea in wars against China (1895) and Russia (1904). And the United States, not to be outdone by its imperialist rivals, seized the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico in the Spanish-American War of 1898, and with its policy of ultra-imperialist aggression, it was dominating the whole Caribbean area of Latin America when World War I broke out.

It was the ever-sharper collisions between the rival imperialist powers, in their ruthless grabbing for each others' and other people's lands, resources, and trade that led to the tremendous imperialist war of 1914-18— but of this cynical, wholesale murder more later on.

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The rapid expansion of capitalism in the late 1870's and the 1880's, plus an intensification of the basic capitalistic trend towards the concentration of industry and capital, laid the basis for a speedy growth of all branches of the labor movement—trade unions, cooperatives, and political parties. This growth met with strong opposition, due to the fact that with the developing monopolization of industry, the big capitalists tended more and more to resist the development of the labor movement, especially the establishment of trade unions in the basic industries.

The decades up to the end of the century were a period generally of rapidly developing class consciousness among the workers. The highest expression of this broad political awakening was the establishment of Social Democratic political parties in practically all the important capitalist countries. The growth of these parties, together with expansion of the trade unions, which took place in an atmosphere of increasing strikes, fights for the workers' voting franchise, and a big increase everywhere of the Socialist vote, greatly intensified the spirit of international solidarity among the workers. Consequently, there grew up a strong demand for the formation of another International, to replace the earlier International Workingmen's Association, the First International, which was dissolved in 1876. To this end, several international congresses and conferences were held; in Ghent 1877, Chur (Switzerland) 1881, Paris 1883 and 1886, and London 1888. But the constant and mounting pressure for a

new International did not come to lasting expression until July 14, 1889, in Paris. The organization there formed was given no formal name at the start, but soon became universally known as the Second International.

The Paris Congress created a profound stir among the workers all over the world. They correctly saw in it a tremendous step forward for the labor movement in all countries. It was the second major attempt of the workers to realize the historic slogan of the *Communist Manifesto,* "Proletarians of all Countries, Unite!" Among the 391 delegates at the congress, from 20 countries, were the chief labor and Socialist figures of the world labor movement.

Like the IWA before it, the Second International organizationally was a general, all-inclusive working-class body, drawing into its direct affiliation not only Socialist parties, but also trade unions and cooperatives. The world labor movement had not yet progressed to the point where separate international organizations could be set up for the two latter categories. Differing from its great predecessor, however, the Second International was but loosely organized in its leadership. At the outset, unlike the First International, it had no regular world headquarters or leading staff, no international journal, no regular constitution, no definite international program, no disciplined carrying out of decisions, and not even a definite title. It was to take a dozen years before even a few of these formal short-comings were partially remedied.

The outstanding feature of the founding congress was its predominantly Marxist sentiment. Most of the sects that had plagued the life of the First International—Proudhonism, Blanquism, and Lassaleanism—had disappeared or been greatly weakened. They were practically liquidated by the logic of the Marxists and the stern realities of the class struggle. There were present of the old narrow sects, however, a small Anarchist minority, which for many years to come was still to play an important part, in the shape of Anarcho-syndicalism. By and large, however, the ideology of Marxism (not without many deviations) had become triumphant in the world of labor, and the Paris congress reflected this situation. The pioneer work of the First International, with its brilliant leaders, Marx and Engels, had not been in vain. The seed sown by them had fallen upon fertile ground.

Already, however, there were sinister signs in evidence at the congress of the right opportunism which was eventually to wreck the Second International. This was fundamentally a bourgeois influence in the labor organization. While the various Socialist Parties had broken organizationally with the capitalist political parties, they had not completely severed their ideological connections, as the future was to demonstrate trag-

ically. The right opportunist tendencies in the first congress were represented by the numbers of petty bourgeois radicals who flocked to the movement and, more importantly, by those elements in the trade union leadership at this time, notably in England, who were already displaying tendencies to “re-interpret" Marxism, so as to subordinate the interests of the workers to those of the employers.

The founding congress of the Second International, not adopting a rounded-out program for general guidance as the First International had done, began its practice of simply dealing one by one with the urgent political problems and tasks confronting the workers of the world. The congress endorsed and demanded the eight-hour work day, proposed a people’s militia instead of standing armies, supported proposals for international labor legislation, and rejected a French proposal to endorse the general strike as the way to carry through the proletarian revolution. One of the most important actions of the congress was the establishment of May First as the international day of demonstration and struggle of the working class all over the world. This was done upon a French-American proposal, in the tradition of the great eight-hour strike of May 1st, 1886, and it took the form of active support for the projected general struggle in the United States on May 1st, 1890, for the eight-hour day. In the face of the strong government and employer resistance, however, May First internationally tended to pass beyond the scope of mere demonstrations and to become a one-day general strike. May First eventually became the world day for labor, with the notable exception of the United States, where the increasingly conservative AFL chose instead as Labor Day the first Monday in September.

The Second international was organized upon the specific initiative of the German Social Democratic Party. Frederick Engels took a most active part in its formation (See *Les Trois Internationales,* Paris, 1955.) Germany at this time was by far the strongest Marxist center. Organizing the congress was among the first concrete expressions of the leading role the Germans were to play in the life of the world’s workers in the Second International down to the tragic days of World War I. The English working class, which was the leading mass force in the First International, had fallen behind, largely paralyzed by the corrupting influence of British imperialism upon the labor aristocracy and its leaders.

## THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

It was not until 1901 that the trade union movements of the various countries, after much maneuvering on the question, finally established

the first elementary international bonds among themselves, and not until 1914-19 that this preliminary arrangement was transformed into a real trade union international (see chapter 19). In the meantime, the numerous national groups of trade unions found international representation and solidarity within the framework of the general congresses of the Second International. At all of these gatherings there were, therefore, sizeable delegations of trade unionists, nearly all of them top officials, and, of course, many if not most of the delegates representing the respective Socialist Parties were also members of trade unions.

During its period (1864-1876), the First International, which had also served as the trade union international as part of its general class political activities, had devoted very close attention to all sorts of trade union questions. In the IWA, not only did Marx work out the broad basis of trade union theory, which still stands today as the very foundation of trade union organization and action; but the International, with Marx's closest participation, paid detailed attention to the strikes and other struggles of the unions in all the countries then possessing trade union movements. Just how very close this concern was is well illustrated by a citation by Lozovsky from the Minutes of the General Council of the IWA, in which, in the ordinary run of business, dozens of detailed decisions and actions are contained regarding the support and management of strikes in various countries.[7] This close supervision by the First International was necessary because at this time the local unions in various lands generally had neither national craft organizations nor national labor federations.

The Second International, however, did not concern itself so closely as the IWA had done with specific trade union matters. This was partly because of a decided underestimation of the importance of trade unionism by many German Social Democratic leaders and more importantly, because at the time the Second International was founded there were already in existence national labor unions and general local and national labor federations in nearly all the most important capitalist countries, to take care of all detail work of leadership.

The trade unions, of course, as fundamental organizations of the working class, were basically interested in and concerned with all the general theoretical and practical programs handled by the respective congresses of the Second International and by its skeleton leadership. Frequently, too, the congresses dealt with issues more especially bearing upon the trade unions. Among these were, the fight lor the eight-hour workday, upon which the International laid much stress and conducting of May Day demonstrations in the various countries. These demonstra-

tions, by the way, were no mere placid holidays but real struggles, and throughout the International, especially in Germany, the opportunists lost no occasion to devitalize or abolish them.[8] Then, also, the whole conception of declaring a general strike to prevent war, which came up repeatedly in the congresses, was a matter of the most direct and basic concern to the trade unions.

The trade unions were also deeply involved in the ideological struggles which periodically shook the Second International. Their major leaders, usually top officials, generally, as we shall see, came to be a powerful force in cultivating the revisionist opportunism which eventually wrought such havoc in the International. In view of all these trade union activities inside the Second International, the conception prevailed during the first years that there was no basis for the formation of a separate trade union international. The history of the trade unions, during this period, therefore, is to be found almost exclusively in the life of the labor movements in the various countries.

In the Second International there were, in the congresses and in the movement in general, three major trade union currents. The first and most primitive of these was that which Samuel Gompers later designated as "pure and simple'' trade unionism. This type of unionism, based mainly upon the skilled workers and the craft form of organization, usually made a tacit or actual acceptance of the capitalist system as such. Its slogan was "No politics in the Union," no working-class politics, that is, but generally it was tied up politically with the liberal parties of the bourgeoisie. When it finally began to go into working class politics this was usually in the shape, not of Social Democratic parties, but of broad labor parties. The main habitat of this type of trade unionism was Great Britain, the British Dominions, and the United States.

The second general form of trade unionism in the Second International was that of Anarcho-syndicalism, with its main basis at the time in the Latin countries, France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal. Anarcho-syndicalism, while adopting from Marxism, in distorted forms, some principles of the class struggle, drew most of its programmatic and tactical considerations from Bakuninist Anarchist sources. It aimed at a broad class organization which, shunning political action and party affiliations as such, would eventually abolish capitalism and substitute its own organization as the basis of the future workers' society.

The third and most prevalent type of trade unionism in the International was the Marxist. This form had its main centers in Germany, Austria, the Scandinavian countries, and eventually Russia and the Balkan lands. Accepting in general the tenets, perspectives and tactical princi-

ples of Marxism, these unions, centralized, disciplined, and evolving toward industrial unionism, generally followed the political leadership of the respective Social Democratic parties. As we shall see, however, many of them, during the course of the class struggle, gravely deviated from Marxian principles of trade unionism, also often basing themselves upon the skilled labor aristocracy and following an opportunist policy. The Christian (Catholic) unions (see chapter 19), a minor tendency, were not affiliated to the Second International.

Trade union history in the years of the Second International prior to the first world war was, in a general sense, a struggle for dominance, as labor's established trade union form, among these three elementary and constantly evolving types of trade unionism, with the Marxist type steadily coming to the fore as that most adapted to the workers' needs. But in order to trace these developments and history in general of the world labor movement during these years it is necessary for us to follow trade union experiences in the various leading capitalist countries. In doing this, a halt approximately at 1900 will be timely, when organized labor began to set up its own definite international organization, and also when matured imperialism was confronting the world trade union movement with many new and acute problems. Let us start with Germany, because its labor movement, during the period of the dominance of the Second International, was to lead the world's working class in both the political and trade union fields.

## 14. Bismarck and the German Trade Unions (1878-1900)

Prince Otto von Bismarck, the "blood and iron" Chancellor of newly-unified Germany, a stiff-necked Prussian Junker land-owner, had an elaborate program for defeating the growing and awakening German working class. Various phases of his program were, to make certain minor concessions of social insurance to the workers, to cultivate or tolerate bourgeois and Christian (Catholic) so-called yellow unions, to maintain the Prussian class system of voting,* and to exterminate every branch of the Social Democratic movement. His was the classical method of the carrot and the club—on the one hand, petty reforms for the workers, and on the other, terrorism against them. With this general program in mind

* Under this reactionary voting system big property owners were allotted far more votes than workers. Thus, in 1909, although the Social Democracy polled 23 percent of the total votes cast in Prussia, it received only six representative out of the 420 elected.

and taking advantage of the attempts upon the life of Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1878, Bismarck promptly outlawed the Social Democracy. The employers, too, following up the lead of the government, redoubled their attacks upon the unions. The result was a head-on collision between the working class and the organized forces of reaction. With growing interest and concern, the whole Socialist world watched the developing struggle.

## THE ANTI-SOCIALIST LAW

The anti-Socialist law, entitled, "A Law against the Dangerous Activities of the Social Democracy," went into effect on October 21 1878. It specifically outlawed the Social Democratic Party and its press. While the law was being considered in the Reichstag Bismarck promised that it would not apply to unions striving to improve the economic conditions of the working class, but this was all ignored in the practice. Zwing says, "In reality the trade unions, because of their whole structure, were much harder hit by the law than was the political party."[1] And Farwig states that already on October 23, only two days after the law took effect, the Tobacco Workers Union was dissolved. There followed many others in quick succession—Glass Workers, Carpenters, Metal Workers, Shoe Workers, Miners, etc. In a short while 17 national unions and 18 local organizations were officially broken up. Moreover, 330 mutual benefit societies, led by Social Democrats, were also dissolved.[2] The Christian and bourgeois trade unions, of course, were left unmolested by the government.

Unlike in later years, the Social Democracy of these times was still a militant fighting organization and it stood its ground boldly against the government persecution. The key to this campaign of struggle against the anti-Socialist law was given early, during the Reichstag debate on the bill, when Representative Bracke, amid a storm of applause from his fellow Social Democrats, declared, "We will defy the entire law." And that was what the Party proceeded to do.[3] In September 1879, the Party issued its first illegal paper in Switzerland, and this was soon followed by others; it held its first Party convention abroad, also in Switzerland, in 1880, with others coming in 1883 and 1887, and the Party also carried on underground activities and built a big network of organizations in Germany itself.

The trade unions, in order to function effectively, had to work more in the open, despite all difficulties. To this end they took on all sorts of guises—as benefit societies, social clubs, and what not. Bismarck interpreted his law to the effect that local unions, provided they were strictly non-political, would be permitted to exist, and this decree was also taken

full advantage of by the workers. By these various devices the workers were able to keep the trade unions alive and active, and also to conduct many strikes during the outlaw period. Two marked improvements in the structure and ideology of the trade union movement took place during the course of this hard struggle—they became more centralized, disciplined, and politicalized, and they accepted more than ever the political leadership of the Social democratic Party. The artificially cultivated Christian and bourgeois trade unions stagnated.

The many struggles, however, were not carried on without serious losses to the Party and the trade unions, in journals suspended and workers victimized by the State. Some 14 papers were suppressed and at least 1,500 Socialists were arrested and jailed, many others were exiled or otherwise so harassed, and large numbers emigrated to the United States. But theirs was a winning fight nevertheless. From year to year the vote of the Social Democrats mounted, advancing from 493,000 in 1878 to 1,427,000 in 1890, an increase of almost 200 percent. The trade unions also expanded in numbers, influence and political strength. They went into the historic fight, poorly organized and with but 50,000 members; they came out of it 12 years later with 58 well-knit national unions and 300,000 members.

Obviously, the anti-Socialist law had failed of its purpose to destroy the Social Democracy in Germany. Consequently, Bismarck, who was not so much "blood and iron" by this time, had to resign. His vaunted law was formally disavowed by the government on September 30, 1890. This was a tremendous victory for the German working class, and it was hailed by workers all over the world, it gave a big impulse to the Party and the unions in Germany, and it put the German Social Democratic Party and trade unions definitely in the forefront of the whole international labor movement, a leadership which they were to retain until the fateful year of 1914.

## THE ERFURT PROGRAM

Immediately upon emerging from the hard conditions under the anti-Socialist law, the German Socialist leaders set about re-drafting the Party's general policies. This produced, in October 1891, the noted Erfurt Program. The previous policy document, written in Gotha in 1875, largely by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel was the result of the amalgamation at that time of the rival Lasalleans and Marxist parties. The Gotha Program, replete with Lassallean errors, was profoundly criticized by Marx.[4] The Erfurt Program of 1891, drafted mainly by Karl Kautsky and correcting most of these errors, became a model for Social Demo-

cratic parties in nearly all countries, and for over two decades it served as a sort of unofficial program for the Second International.[5]

The Erfurt Program was two-phased; it had an ultimate program of Socialism and an immediate program of partial demands to be realized under capitalism. The number one of these partial measures was the demand for "Universal, secret, equal and direct suffrage by ballot in all elections for all subjects of the empire over twenty years of age, without discrimination of sex." This demand, departing from the line of Gotha, called for votes for women. From a trade union point of view, other important advances in the Erfurt Program were that it abandoned the Lassallean concept of the "iron law of wages," a theory injurious to trade unionism by making its activities seem futile, and it also specifically demanded the eight-hour day, something not done in the Gotha Program.

The Erfurt Program also became the general political guide of the Social Democratic trade unions, although, usually, they did not concern themselves closely with theoretical questions. A major fault of the Program, however, like its Gotha predecessor, was that it did not deal specifically with the role of the trade unions in the class struggle. The same was to be said of the three important "illegal" conventions of the Party under the anti-Socialist laws, as they did not concern themselves with the urgent question of trade unionism.

## FORMATION OF THE TRADE UNION GENERAL COMMISSION

Another important step taken by the German labor movement upon the abolition of the anti-Socialist law was the establishment of the General Commission to link up the German trade unions nationally. This action had been contemplated in 1878, but the onset of the Bismarckian persecution at that time liquidated the arrangements that were being made. The first trade union convention after the terror was held in Halberstadt in March 1892, at which there were 208 delegates, representing 62 unions with 303,000 members. This convention elected the General Commission of the German Trade Unions, with seven members, to represent the whole union movement. Chosen as president was Karl Legien, who remained at the head of the German trade union movement and played a decisive role in international labor activities until his death in 1920.

Under the anti-Socialist law the unions had generally functioned as local bodies and there was considerable resistance at the Halberstadt convention against the proposal to form national centralized organizations. This led to a small split and the birth of what eventually became the German Anarcho-syndicalist organization. There was resistance also to giving any considerable powers to the new Genial Commission. The

convention finally established that its tasks should be to cultivate the organization of unorganized workers, to assemble the general statistics of the movement, to publish a journal which should present the facts and reports of the unions, and to organize the international relations. These somewhat meager functions were considerably expanded at later conventions, to include the making of general reports on the trade union movement, to mediate in jurisdictional disputes, to carry on union educational work, to collect and dispense May Day funds, etc. The fact is, however, that under Legien's strong bureaucratic controls, the General Commission, with its membership increased to thirteen, soon developed into an autocratic leading body.

During their early decades the German trade unions had to confront much underestimation and even hostility on the part of various Party leaders. Such negative moods, evidenced by the failure of the Gotha and Erfurt programs and the illegal Party conventions to deal with the general question of trade unionism, were due to ideological hangovers from the anti-union attitudes of Lassalleism and to strong fears that the union leadership was building up a rivalry to that of the Party. The early expectation of Socialism also worked against the building of trade unionism. Von Vollmar, for example, was sure that, with the ever-increasing Social Democratic vote, the Party would have a Reichstag majority by 1898.

The situation regarding the role of the unions came to a head at the Social Democratic Party convention in Cologne in October 1893. Legien complained bitterly there of anti-union moods among the leadership, especially with regard to Auer. The latter, in return, painted a picture of the General Commission of the unions developing as a rival power to the Central Committee of the Party (as indeed it eventually did). Other delegates, including Bebel and Clara Zetkin, doubted the future of the trade unions in the face of the rapid growth of powerful industrial corporations and combines. Such opposition went so far that a resolution proposing to make it a duty for Party members to join the trade unions of their occupations was rejected by a vote of 169 against 29.[6] The convention merely voted its sympathy with the unions. This early pessimistic attitude towards trade unionism by the German Social Democracy was in striking contrast with the attitude of Marx and Engels, who were life-long advocates of trade unions.

During the 1890's the German trade unions, confronted by economic crisis and stiffening employer resistance, made but slow progress. In fact, it was not until 1896 that the total union membership, 329,230, exceeded that of 1892. This comparative stagnation by the unions in the face of continual increases in the Party's vote, contributed further to the prevail-

ing underestimation of trade unionism. Actually, the anti-trade union opposition became so strong that the union convention of 1895 had to be postponed and that of 1896 was held only after much difficulty.[7] Open agitation also went on in the Party to the effect that there was no need for the General Commission, that it should be abolished, and that individual unions would suffice. Nevertheless, with eventually improved economic conditions, the German trade unions forged ahead and soon began to set the pace in world trade union growth; in 1900 they had 680,427 members; in 1905, 1,344,803; in 1910, 2,017,298; and in 1914, 2,556,251.[8] The independent Christian and bourgeois trade unions amounted to about one-third of this figure.

## THE TRUSTS AND INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

The growth of monopoly capital in Germany, as in all other leading big capitalist countries, presented the trade unions with most serious problems, if they were to survive, function, and expand. From 1882 to 1907, while the number of workers employed in small plants grew by 25 percent, those working in large concerns increased by 200 percent.[9] The great industrial empires of the Krupps and other big magnates were rapidly taking shape. There was a large number of cartels—in 1905, 385 with 12,000 companies, and by the outbreak of the war, twice as many. Moreover, there was a strong growth of employers' associations—by 1913 there were 143,000 companies employing 4,641,361 workers, united in the militant United German Employers Association.

The new capitalist combinations, actively supported by the government, were far more effective fighting organizations against the unions than were their predecessors, the small capitalists. As in other countries, in varying degrees, they also displayed strong anti-union, "open-shop" tendencies. Herr Krupp insolently asserted that he was going to "remain master in his own house," and on this basis he acted. More and more the employers made use of the lockout to counter the demands of the workers in the unions. Many strikes were lost, and the general consequence was that the trade unions were forced onto the defensive in the trustified industries, being, in fact, largely pushed out of them. Farwig says that in this period almost all collective agreements covered only the small and middle-sized plants.[10] The problem continued to grow more acute with the years, until the outbreak of the first world war. The same problem, m varying degrees, was also plaguing the labor movements of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, and elsewhere.

The old-time craft unions were proving unable to stand up to the big, and ever bigger, combinations of capital.. The skilled workers, through

the specialization of labor, were losing their strategic position in industry. Their strikes were no longer effective against the big employers, with the latter's huge reserve funds, their ready access to governmental means of repression, their control over masses of semi-skilled unorganized workers, and their ability to recruit large numbers of professional strike-breakers. So far as trustified industry was concerned, the craft union form was about obsolete.

One of the elementary answers to this serious problem was to reorganize the labor movement on the basis of industrial unionism. This meant to lift the trade union movement from a narrow craft to a class foundation. The British unions which, unlike those in other countries, had literally grown up with the trusts and were partly intrenched in their plants, met the problem by a slow process of amalgamation of the craft unions. The American craft unions, however, which faced the trust problem in the most aggravated forms, refused to acknowledge it and persisted with their outworn organizational forms until they were driven almost entirely out of the trustified industries, and until the labor movement had suffered two major splits over the question—in 1905, the IWW split, and in 1935, that of the CIO.

The German trade unions, despite much resistance from craft unionists who could not see beyond their noses, gradually grasped the logic of the situation and started early to move towards industrial unionism. The question was first broached in the 1868 workers' convention, but was voted down.[11] It was a major issue in the Halberstadt convention of 1892, and it was also on the order of business at all succeeding conventions right down to World War I. Industrial unionism was seen as a means not only to create more effective fighting organizations, but to ease the recurring jurisdictional quarrels among the craft unions and also to reach the broad masses of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, among whom were large numbers of women. The general result of the industrial union trend was, during the years 1891-1914, to reduce the number of German national unions from 62 to 46, while the general membership increased, in the same period, from 303,000 to 2,556,251 and spread into many new fields of industry. The period was one of increasing numbers of strikes and lockouts. These numbered 73 in 1891, 3,480 in 1906 (stimulating effects of Russian Revolution), and 2,600 in 1913.[12]

## BERNSTEIN REVISIONISM

During the 1880's and afterward many opportunists began to develop in the Second International parties and trade unions, the general conception, subtly and insidiously propagated, to the effect that the workers

could solve all their living problems within the framework of the capitalist system and that therefore it was both foolish and useless to fight for Socialism. They based these false moods and conclusions upon considerations such as, that the expected proletarian revolution did not seem to develop, that the workers were gradually winning the franchise in England and other countries, and that the various Socialist parties were rapidly increasing their vote. Illusions prevailed that they would soon find themselves in a parliamentary majority, and hence the ruling force, in most of the capitalist countries. Especially the revisionists pointed to the slowly rising mass living standards as proof of their program. The expansion of capitalism and its spread into the colonial countries, brought economic profits for the capitalists, and, it was true, some crumbs of this "prosperity" trickled down to the workers in the major capitalist countries, especially to the skilled mechanics. Thus, Kuczynski shows an increase in real wages in Great Britain from point 74 (1900= 100) in 1869-79 to 99 in 1895-1903;[13] in Germany from point 78 in 1868-78 to 97 in 1894-1902;[14] and in the United States from 87 in 1868-78 to 102 in 1897-1908.[15] These somewhat improved living standards, in winning which the developing struggle of the workers was a decisive factor, still amounted only to hunger wages and they were offset by a great intensification of exploitation of the workers in industry.

Von Vollmar in Germany, the Fabian "Socialists" in England, and other simitar elements in France, the United States, and elsewhere, also began to give voice to the new opportunist idea that capitalism was gradually turning into Socialism or into an approximation thereof. The outstanding spokesman of this international anti-Marxian trend was the Social Democrat Eduard Bernstein of Germany. A former bank clerk arid the son of a railroad engineer, Bernstein, under the flag of revising Marx and bringing him up to date, wrote a book in 1898, published in English under the title, *Evolutionary Socialism,* in which he flatly attacked almost every principle of Marxism. He denounced historical materialism, ridiculed surplus value, scoffed at the class struggle, denied that the middle class was declining, sneered at the ultimate goal of Socialism, and maintained that under capitalism the mass of the workers, instead of becoming impoverished, were permanently improving their economic conditions. He pictured for the working class a prolonged evolutionary advance, in which the Socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, foreseen by Marx and Engels, would play no part. This was an attempt to adapt the labor movement opportunistically to the economic and political pressures of imperialism, by sacrificing its policies of class struggle and its perspective of Socialism.

Bernstein soon found himself at the head of a large following throughout the Second International. Many of his supporters were petty bourgeois elements who, seeing the striking advance of the Social Democratic parties, had flocked into it, opportunistically seeking an easy and profitable career. Many of these, intellectuals of various types, had become influential leaders in the several parties. More important, however, was the fact that Bernstein's revisionist theories found an echo also in the minds of many Social Democratic trade union leaders. These elements, basing themselves primarily upon the skilled workers, readily fell victims to such conservative theories and practices. As a rule they did not theorize much about Bernsteinism, but it fitted right into their opportunist manner of thinking and acting. They eventually became the main fortress of anti-Marxist revisionism.

During the next years, right down to the outbreak of World War I, the relentless fight of the Marxists against the Bernstein revisionists was the central ideological struggle in all the parties and unions affiliated to the Second International. And it was, so far as the leadership of this International was concerned, a losing fight.

## 15. Great Britain: Class Collaboration and the New Unionism (1876-1906)

From 1850 to 1875 was the “golden age” of British capitalism, with its very rapid home growth and its spread into many foreign markets. It was a time, too, of trade union expansion. From 1868, when the Trades Union Congress was formed, until 1876, it increased its affiliated membership fourfold. The deep world economic crisis beginning in 1873, however, dealt a heavy blow both to British capitalism and to British trade unionism. British exports dropped off by one-quarter between 1872 and 1879 and did not reach the former level until 1890.[1] In the matter of industrial production, Britain fell far behind the United States. And in the face of the heavy mass unemployment which ensued, and the growing attacks of the employers, the unions suffered losses—between the years 1876-86 the affiliated membership of the Trades Union Congress remained almost stationary.

### THE CONSERVATIVE BRITISH TRADE UNIONS

During this period the trade unions, numbering only 580,976 members (TUC affiliates 1885) out of a working class many times larger, were completely dominated by the skilled mechanics and their leaders. These elements, with preferred wage conditions and forming a labor aristocracy, would have none of the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx nor of their Chartist forebears. The employers definitely cultivated this con-

servative trend by favoring the mechanics in wage rates, at the expense of the vast mass of the unskilled and unorganized. Marx and Engels paid the closest attention to this phenomenon of the upper layer of the working class being systematically corrupted by the employers, who were then entering into the monopoly stage of capitalism. In a letter to Marx, already on October 7, 1858, Engels stated that, "The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat, as well as a bourgeoisie."[2]

By the 1880's the British unions, under conservative leadership, had been divested of their earlier militant and radical qualities. They went in strongly for cooperatives, and they adopted elaborate systems of "friendly society" benefits to cover sickness, unemployment, death, etc. This was the marked trend of craft unionists all over the capitalist world; the German, Bulgarian, American, and other unions of this type going in heavily for such "self-help" protection. They looked upon these benefit systems as indispensable for the maintenance and growth of their trade unions, and the more of them, and the bigger, the better it was supposed to be for the unions.

Characteristically, such conservative unionists commonly opposed governmental projects of social insurance as attacks upon trade unionism. During these years, notwithstanding heavy unemployment, says Rothstein, the occasional trade union leaders who managed to get elected to Parliament never raised there the question of unemployment insurance.[3] The craft union leaders were undisturbed about the fate of the broad masses of unemployed, so long as their own narrow craft interests were "protected." It was in the same spirit, too, that the reactionary leaders of the American Federation of Labor, enemies of all sorts of federal social insurance, as late as the great economic crisis of 1929 vigorously opposed governmental unemployment insurance as an anti-trade union measure.

The British trade unions, with their elaborate system of benefits, also included provisions for strike pay. The heavy cost of the latter during walkouts and the general course of their leaders' social outlook, led them to condemn strikes altogether. Allan, the once militant Engineers (Machinists) union leader, declared before a Royal Commission that "all strikes arc a complete waste of money."[4] This was a typical craft attitude at the time. It is significant that in later decades the revolutionary trade unions, realizing that the world had to win their strikes by economic power, not by money, usually had few if any "friendly" benefit features, and they fought militantly to have the state shoulder the full financial

burden for all social insurance.

The British left-wing in the 1870's and 1880's attacked the conservative trade unions, loaded with benefit systems, as "burial and coffin" societies, One radical union official, Dunning, stated that "the once-powerful Amalgamated Society of Engineers is now as incapable to engage in a strike as the Hearts of Oak, the Foresters, or any other extensive benefit society."[5] This was very colorful criticism, but somewhat exaggerated; for despite their paralyzing benefit systems and their conservative leadership, these old craft unions waged many a hard strike. Obviously, however, they were quite incapable of defending the interests of the working class as a whole; a fact which was soon to be very dramatically demonstrated.

## THE GREAT DOCKERS' STRIKE

With Great Britain's erstwhile world monopoly on industrial production and trade breaking down, the employers during the 1880's intensified their attacks upon the trade unions and upon the living standards of the working masses. The growing left-wing in the trade union movement, led by such men as Tom Mann, Ben Tillett, and John Burns, advocated a militant struggle on the part of the trade union movement. But the conservative bureaucratic clique, successors to the earlier "Junta," who were then controlling the Trades Union Congress, including Henry Broadhurst, secretary, John Burnett, George Shipton, and others, stubbornly refused to read the signs of the times and clung desperately to their dry-as-dust craft union policies.

Then, like a tornado, came the great London dockers' strike. It was preceded by several smaller strikes of Match workers, Gas workers, and others, led by Tom Mann and other Socialist forces. All these strikes were successful. This, as Engels remarked, was the "light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move." The Gas workers and General Laborers Union was organized and began to grow rapidly. Then the London dockers went into action. Long ignored by the stiff-necked leaders of the craft unions, the dockers worked under the worst conditions and they lived in terrible poverty- The historic dock struggle began on August 13, 1889, a month after the founding congress in Paris, of the Second International. The strike started over a minor dispute about wages. Tom Mann and other militants, who for several years had been increasingly active, promptly lent a hand to the strikers, helped found a Dockers Union, and carried the strike agitation to other docks. The strike spread like wildfire along the waterfront, so that within three days 10,000 workers were out, and inside of a week the local dock tie-up was general. For the first time

in labor history, the great port of London had been brought to a standstill. The abused and exploited dock workers were gaining a basic lesson in their tremendous economic power.

The dockers' strike was led by Mann, Tillett, Burns, and other left-wingers. Eleanor Aveling, the daughter of Karl Marx, became secretary of the strike committee. By militant meetings, street parades, and demonstrations, the strike was well-dramatized and it won strong sympathy, not only in the ranks of the workers but also among the middle class. The strike attracted world attention and support. Of the 48,000 pounds collected for the strike, no less than 30,000 pounds, then a very large sum, came from the trade unions of Australia. This magnificent act of solidarity gave the strike a strong lift and it was a big factor in the eventual victory.

The tie-up of the docks was so complete and the mass public sympathy so great, that finally after four weeks of it, the employers had to yield. The workers were demanding six pence (12 cents) an hour, abolition of contract work, and a minimum hiring period of four hours—practically all of which demands were conceded in the final settlement. The dock workers had won one of the most important strikes in the entire history of Great Britain.[6]

The great victory of the London dockers had profound repercussions among the broad masses of the working class, hitherto neglected or ignored by the craft union leaders, who were intent only upon advancing their own narrow craft interests. Dock strikes also developed in Australia and New Zealand in 1890. A sweeping campaign of organization developed in various British industries, principally among unorganized semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The Dockers Union, of which Tom Mann was elected president,[7] grew rapidly and spread to other important posts; the new Gasworkers Union reported a membership of 70,000, mostly laborers; the Sailors and Firemen's Union, formed in 1877, increased to 65,000 members in 1889; the Miners Federation, formed in 1888 with but 36,000 members, enrolled 200,000 by 1890; the Railway Workers Union grew apace, etc.[8] Notable was the progress among working women and among agricultural workers. The Trades Union Congress, which did not contain the whole body of trade unions, reported an increase in membership from 580,976 in 1885 to 1,471,191 in 1890, the fastest union growth ever registered in Great Britain up till that time.

The dockers' victory also had many repercussions in the old trade unions. They began to loosen up their regulations against semi-skilled workers in their trades, many of them put on active organizing campaigns, and they showed a new fighting spirit. The old fetish of sick and

death benefits got a blow; characteristically the new General Railway Workers Union announced that it "shall not be encumbered by any sick or accident fund." Between 1889 and 1891, says Hutt, over sixty new local trades councils were formed. And in London's first May Day demonstration in 1890, some 200,000 workers turned out in Hyde Park. The central slogan was for an eight-hour law—a project anathema to the "non-political" trade union leaders.

The progressive movement among the workers, launched by the London dock strike, was bringing about basic improvements in the British labor movement. It was beginning to develop the trade unions from the previously narrow craft basis over onto a broad working-class foundation. It was also causing the growth of a more progressive type of leadership—at the Trades Union Congress in Liverpool, 1890, Broadhurst, the head of the "old gang" (as they were called) of trade union bureaucrats, was forced to resign the secretaryship. The mass upheaval was likewise bringing about the politicalization of the labor movement. This was the "New Unionism" of the times, which, besides its deep-going effects in Great Britain, was to have important repercussions in Germany, the United States, and various other countries.

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY

From about 1868 on, the British trade union leaders had generally been in a political united front with the Liberals. The Liberal Party, representing the lesser capitalists and the middle class, undertook also to draw into its following the mass of skilled workers, in its long struggle against the Conservative Party, the main organization of big business and the landowners. The chief Liberal leader of this period was William E. Gladstone, who in his 61 years in Parliament was four times Prime Minister. To win working class support, Gladstone engineered a few minor legislative reforms, systematically allowed places on the Liberal election ticket for labor candidates, appointed labor figures to well-paying political jobs, and eventually in 1886, brought two labor leaders, Broadhurst and Burt, into his Cabinet as under-secretaries. Far more than Bismarck, Gladstone was an expert in the corruption and paralyzing of working-class leadership.

These were the days of the "Lib-Lab" alliance in politics, with the trade union officials smugly basking in official favor and personally riding high politically at the expense of the working class. They reflected the glory of the "Great" Victorian Age and had nothing but scorn for Marxism and the "impractical" fighters of Chartist times. As Webb remarks, "At that date all observers were agreed that the Trade Unions of

Great Britain would furnish an impenetrable barrier against Socialist projects."[9] The capitalists of Germany and the United States, then facing rebellious workers, rejoiced at the supposed "fundamental" resistance of the British working class to Socialist ideas.

But like a flash the big British working class awakening in the 1880's, of which the London dock strike was the heart expression, suddenly shook this capitalist confidence in the supposed "innate" conservatism of the British workers. It came as no surprise, however, to Engels, who in 1885 wrote in *The Neve Zeit* as follows about the general British situation: "So long as England's industry monopoly has lasted, the English working class has to a certain degree participated in the advantages of this monopoly. These advantages were very unequally shared; the privileged minority pocketed the most, but even the great mass, at least now and again, had their temporary share. And that is the reason that there has been no Socialism in England since the dying out of Owenism. With the collapse of the monopoly the English working class will lose this preferred position. One day they generally—not excluding the preferred minority—will see themselves on the same level as workers in other countries. And that is the reason why England again will have Socialism."[10]

The first Marxist party in Great Britain, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), was formed in August 1884, 21 years later than that in Germany and seven years later than the SLP in the United States. This indicates the slowing down effects upon the workers of the upswing of British imperialism. The leader of the new party, M. Hyndman, son of a wealthy Liberal, was politically unstable and a pseudo-Marxist, varying from ultra-leftism at the start to support of World War I at the end. He immediately fell foul of Engels, as he had earlier collided with Marx. The new party exerted conquerable influence during the big upheaval of the dock strike period, but sectarian policies soon relegated it to a minor position. Tom Mann was a member of this organization. John Burns also joined it.

Meanwhile, in 1884, a group of left-wing Liberals, calling themselves Socialists, including the Webbs, George Bernard Shaw, and many other intellectuals, founded the Fabian Society. This body, anti-Marxist and opposed to the class struggle, proposed a series of reforms the general effect of which would be to round off the rough edges of brutal British imperialism. The Webbs ascribe much weight to Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* in the Society's formations.[11] Over the years, the Fabian Society continued its agitation upon an ascending scale. It was especially well-taken by the trade union bureaucrats, as it provided them

with a thin veneer of "Socialist" phraseology with which to delude the awakening British working class. The Fabian Society was the basic ideological source of modern right-wing Social Democratic opportunism in Great Britain.

In 1893 a fresh attempt, led by Keir Hardie, was made to establish a broad working-class party, appealing especially to the trade unions—the formation of the Independent Labor Party. It had a reformist program, together with some socialist terminology. The Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society both sent delegates to the founding convention, but neither affiliated with the new party. Tom Mann became secretary of the ILP in 1894.[12] In 1895 the party put up 28 candidates for Parliament, but all were defeated. The party, therefore, went into a decline, but it was destined to play a considerable role later in the British labor movement as a "Centrist" party; that is, one strong on radical phrases but weak on working class deeds. The eventual arch-renegade, J. Ramsay MacDonald, was an early member of this party.

Under the pressure of the developing crisis in the British empire, the British working class was inevitably turning to political action and organization. It was to find its mass expression for this in a general labor party, with the trade unions as its foundation. With its revolutionary ideology, the Marxist party could not, in the current situation, serve as this organization. The workers' mass party at the time had to be a broad organization to which the trade unions, with their still confused ideology, could affiliate. The elementary role of the Marxists then, as since, was to strive from within to elevate if possible this mass party towards the level of Marxist understanding and policy.

The first direct organizational step towards forming the British Labor Party was the setting up of the Labor Representation Committee in London in February 1900, as authorized by the Plymouth Trades Union Congress of 1899. For several years past the left-wing delegates had been urging that this step be taken. Present at the London Conference were 129 delegates, representing 300,000 trade unionists and Socialist bodies with some 70,000 members. On the elected executive were seven trade unionists, two members each from the ILP and the SDF, and one from the Fabian Society. Chosen as secretary was J. Ramsay MacDonald.[13] The party organization adopted a program of immediate demands, with only vague indications of an ultimate Socialist objective.

At the beginning, the new organization made little headway. Old habits of trade union support of the Liberal Party were not to be easily changed. In the 1900 elections 15 labor candidates were put up, but only two were elected. The new movement, however, got a real start by the

issuance of the infamous Taff Vale Court decision in 1901.[14] A strike on the Taff Vale railroad had developed in South Wales, and the company (like other railroad concerns, a violent enemy of trade unionism) took the case to the High Court and there secured an injunction against the union and a damages verdict which ultimately cost the union 35,000 pounds. This head-on attack upon the unions, which largely undermined the trade union acts of 1871 and 1875, provoked a profound indignation among the workers. At the next Trades Union Congress, at Swansea in 1901, many trade union affiliations to the Labor Representation Committee took place, bringing the total of the labor membership up to 850,000. At which critical point, remarks Hutt, the sectarian SDF chose to withdraw from the Labor Party movement.

The rank-and-file workers, from the outset, had popularly referred to the Labor Representation Committee as “the Labor Party," but it did not actually adopt this name officially until several years later. Meanwhile, the Labor Party continued to grow—in 1903 there were 165 trade unions affiliated, with 989,000 members;* and the Party also began to score political successes. In 1902 one of its candidates was elected in a by-election, followed by two more the next year. In the general election of 1906 there were 29 labor candidates elected, as against only 14 elected by the “Lib-Lab” alliance. The Labor Party was thereby established as a mass political force.

## THE LABOR PARTIES IN THE DOMINIONS

In the British Dominions of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa the main path of the working class in developing a mass political party was also through the avenue of a broad labor party. The Irish Labor Party, decided upon in 1913, was formed in 1919, on the basis of a trade union movement of some 225,000 members. In Australia, in 1891, during the aftermath of the loss of a general strike in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, the workers organized a labor party, based on the trade unions. In the elections of 1891, of 45 candidates nominated 35 were elected. The Labor Party in Queensland actually gained a majority in 1899, and the first successful Labor government sat in New South Wales in 1912.[15] In 1941 Australia as a whole was headed by a Labor government.

The New Zealand Labor Paty was formed in 1916, and the first full Labor Government was elected in 1936.[16] In New Zealand, as in Australia, the Marxists played the decisive leading role in organizing the Labor

* In 1305 the total membership of the Trades Union Congress was 1,5-11,000.

Party. In the Union of South Africa, where trade unionism played no very great part until after the Boer War of 1899-1902, there are at present several trade union federations and a relatively strong Labor Party. In Canada the political development of the working class has followed somewhat different lines than in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The Socialist Party of Canada was formed in 1904, and the Communist Party in 1919; but no broad Labor Party based on the trade unions, comparable to those in Australia and New Zealand, was developed. This was largely due to the conservative influence of the American Federation of Labor which, an inveterate enemy of independent working-class political action, has always exerted a strangling effect upon the Canadian labor movement.

## 16. Fierce Trade Union Struggles in the United States (1876-1900)

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was characterized by a strong growth of trade unionism in all leading capitalist countries. We have just seen how markedly this was the case in Germany and Great Britain; now we shall note the working class forging ahead in the United States. During this period the American trade unions had to face a class struggle unequalled in severity in any other major capitalist country. The bulk of the workers in steel, coal, textile, and various other industries were foreign-born.

The American capitalist class, swiftly becoming the richest in the world, was also the most ruthless. Fresh from its victory over the slaveholders during the Civil War, it swept across the country, stealing the nation's lands, forests, and mineral resources, with the help of obedient government officials. The capitalists controlled the government lock, stock and barrel. They brought enormous armies of immigrants into the country—25,123,457 from 1870 to 1914[1]—and flung masses of them into its mills and factories, there to be murderously exploited. They made bitter war against the attempts of the workers to organize. They shamelessly robbed the poorer farmers. They built great trusts, which warred against each other ruthlessly, stealing one another's railroads and industries like common gangsters and bandits. This was monopoly capitalism—imperialism—developing in the United States.

### TROOPS AGAINST STRIKERS

During this quarter century many strikes reached the intensity of local civil wars, with the fighting workers arrayed against government troops and armed company guards. The railroad workers stood in the

front line of the far-flung class struggle. Like a huge explosion, the sweeping strike of railroad workers hit the country in 1877, the first national strike in American history. The railroad unions at the time were very small and had played no important role. Beginning among unorganized workers, Negro and white, in Martinsburg, Ohio, on July 16, against a wage cut, the strike spread over the country with lightning swiftness, from New York to California, and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, tying up many major lines. The frightened authorities proceeded violently against the strikers, using troops to break the unprecedented strike. The railroad workers, aided by other workers, made a militant stand. During the strike scores of workers, soldiers, and company thugs were killed, hundreds more were wounded, large numbers of strikers were arrested, and a big amount of railroad property was destroyed. "This is not a strike, but a revolution," cried the bourgeois press. In St. Louis the workers, led by Socialists, held the city for a week. By August 2nd, however, the great strike was crushed, and the whole nation had had its first real lesson of the tremendous power of the working class.[2] After this strike, the alarmed capitalist class began building fort-like armories in all the big cities, to serve as strong points for the troops against the workers, a practice still continued.

Another of the several big railroad strikes of these stormy decades was that in 1894 of the American Railway Union, an independent organization led by Eugene V. Debs, eventually leader of the Socialist Party. The ARU struck on June 26, in solidarity with the workers striking in the Chicago car-building plants of the Pullman Palace Car Company. Again there was a rapid spread of the strike, despite the hostile attitude of the conservative leaders of the Railroad Brotherhoods. Probably one-third of the 850,000 railroad workers struck. The government and the General Managers Association set out to crush the vital strike. Federal troops were brought out and violent attacks were made upon the strikers, a Federal injunction was issued declaring the strike illegal for interfering with the U.S. mail, and Debs and others of the strike leadership were arrested. The strike was broken, after Gompers and the Railroad Brotherhood leaders had refused to support the struggle with a national general strike.[3]

The coal miners also had several big and bitterly fought strikes during this militant quarter-century. The first, the "long strike" from December 1874 to June 1875, in the Pennsylvania anthracite regions, was fought under semi-civil war conditions. This strike culminated in one of the great tragedies in American labor history—the hanging of ten Irish miners' leaders and the long imprisonment of 14 others, on the framed-up pretext that they were members of a secret terrorist organization, the

Molly Maguires.[4] In 1894 the bituminous miners, 125,000 strong, also struck in Ohio and surrounding districts, against the sweeping wage cuts of this period of deep economic crisis. The strike was beaten by the usual terrorist tactics but this was nevertheless one of the struggles that laid the basis of the United Mine Workers.[5]

A third big miners' struggle was that of the 145,000 Pennsylvania anthracite miners in 1902. It was in this area, in Lattimore, in 1897, that a peaceful, unarmed parade of the workers was shot into by armed mine guards, killing 19 and injuring 40 others. The strike began on June 2, lasted five months, and was fought out under characteristic terror conditions. "Every colliery was now an organized camp surrounded by stockades and barbed wire fences." The autocratic leader of the mine operators, George F. Baker, declared that, "The rights and interests of the laboring men will be protected and cared for, not by labor agitators, but by the Christian men to whom God in his infinite wisdom has given control of the property interests of this country." The solidarity of the strikers had won, when the strike was maneuvered into Federal arbitration, which robbed the workers of most of their victory. This historic strike definitely established the United Mine Workers, and it also brought to the forefront John Mitchell, who became one of the most notorious union reactionaries in American labor history.[6] Up to World War I the coalfields of Alabama, West Virginia, and elsewhere were constant battlefields in which hundreds of workers were killed.

Meanwhile, the Pittsburgh steel workers had been writing one of the most glorious pages in the annals of the working class. On June 30, 1892, the Carnegie Steel Company, forerunner of the United States Steel Corporation, in an effort to enforce a wage cut and also to break the strong Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, locked out its 800 skilled workers in Homestead, on the outskirts of Pittsburgh. The other 3,000 unorganized workers at once made common cause with the locked-out men. The struggle was led by Hugh O'Donnell. The company, which had transformed the mills into stockades, set out to break the workers' resistance by the customary armed violence. To this end they proceeded to bring in 300 Pinkerton detectives from Ohio by way of the Monongahela River. But the workers, who had repelled a similar invasion in 1889, occupied the steel mills and met the oncoming detectives with rifle fire. Several workers and detectives were killed in the battle; the Pinkertons had to surrender and leave town. Despite this worker victory, however, the company, with the aid of state troops, the courts, and gangs of thugs, finally smashed the strike after a bitter five-months' struggle. This defeat broke the backbone of trade unionism in the steel mills for a generation,

but it left one of the greatest of organized labor's fighting traditions. Homestead will ever remain a golden name in American labor annals.[7]

In the Far West, among the metal miners in the Rocky Mountains, this period also witnessed many fierce armed strikes. The workers fought under the banner of the heroic Western Federation of Miners, founded in 1893 and led by William D. Haywood, Vincent St. John, and other revolutionary fighters. During the 1890's and early 1900's, in Montana, Colorado, and Idaho, the miners battled resolutely against the barbarous attempts of the mine owners to destroy their union and to force them down to near-slavery. These strikes usually developed into pitched battles of the miners against the state troops and mine guards, with the armed workers holding their own.[8]

A high point during these decades of fierce class struggle was the general eight-hour day strike of May 1, 1886. This historic strike was initiated by the young American Federation of Labor in its 1884 invention by the adoption of a resolution to the effect that on and after May 1, 1886, eight hours should constitute a day's work, and that upon that day a general strike movement should begin to effectuate the shorter workday nationally. This action was in line with proposal of the Industrial Brotherhood of a decade before to establish the eight-hour day by a universal strike. Ever since the end of the Civil War in 1865 the question of the eight-hour day had been a live issue among the workers and now a major effort was to be made to realize it. Terence V. Powderly, reactionary head of the Knights of Labor, rival to the AFL, treacherously opposed the whole movement.

The strike on May 1, 1886, brought out 350,000 workers, with the main center in Chicago, where left-wing influence was strong in the unions. The eight-hour day was won by some 185,000 workers, particularly in the building trades. The strike had an enormous effect in stimulating the labor movement, many unions dating their beginning from this struggle. It also assured the ascendancy of the AFL in the bitter fight then going on between that body and the Knights of Labor. The great struggle also gave birth to International May Day, the founding .congress of the Second International in Paris in 1889 establishing this as the day of celebration for world labor.[9]

The big 1886 general strike produced one of the most outrageous of capitalist crimes against the working class. At a meeting in the Chicago Haymarket on May 4, protesting the recent brutal killing of six strikers at the McCormick Harvester plant, some unknown person threw a bomb which killed seven police and four workers, injuring many more. The police seized several worker leaders. They were Anarchists, or more

properly, Anarcho-syndicalists. After a most outrageous campaign of hysteria and organized frame-up, Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel were hanged on November 11, 1887, and Neebe, Schwab, and Fielden were given long prison sentences. Lingg was found dead in his cell, a suicide the police said. The whole labor world rang with protest against the barbarous Haymarket tragedy, in which the courts sank to the level of scabs and common gunmen in their desperate efforts to destroy the American labor movement.

There were many other fierce strikes in this general period, such as the 1892 general strike of Negro and white workers in New Orleans, and the Chicago Teamsters' strike of 1905, in which 20 were killed, 400 injured, and 500 arrested. At the heart of the hundreds of bitterly-fought strikes in the United States during 1875-1900 was an attempt of the organized employers to prevent the establishment of trade unionism. It was a ruthless fight which was to rage on with ferocity for several decades more, until in the 1930's the workers succeeded in organizing the basic trustified industries.

## WORKERS AND FARMERS IN POLITICAL ALLIANCE

The many hard strikes during 1876-1900 had their counterpart in the big political movements conducted by the toiling masses during the same period. These movements were breakaways from the two major political parties. They consisted of a developing alliance of workers, farmers, and city petty bourgeoisie, on a specifically American pattern quite different from anything that had as yet been developed, in Europe. In the sense of uniting these democratic forces for a common fight against monopoly capital, this alliance was a historical forerunner to the people's front organizations and struggles of the 1930's. The whole movement was directed against the oppression and wholesale banditry of the arrogant trusts. The general struggle manifested itself in three broad waves—the Grangers in the 1870's, the Greenback-Labor Party in the 1880's, and the People's Party in the 1890's.[10]

The poorer farmers of the Midwest and South were the backbone of the whole movement. Caught in the vise of usurious banks, money grasping railroads, and other trusts, and betrayed by crooked bourgeois party politicians, they sought to cut their way out by militant, independent political action. One of the most striking sections of their forces was the Colored Farmers National Alliance, 1,250,000 strong, in the Ku Klux Klan-ridden South.[11] The industrial workers, fighting the trusts desperately on the industrial front and with many labor party traditions behind them, were also quick to move towards independent political action, alt-

hough their trade union leaders displayed much less enthusiasm for the cause. The petty bourgeoisie were also largely attracted to the farmer-labor political alliance because of the growing pressure of the trusts upon them.

The broad movement had as its central demand the issuance of cheap money by the government, first in the shape of a flood of greenbacks, and, as eventually formulated, by the free coinage of silver at the rate of 16 ounces of silver to one of gold. To the farmers. this appeared the great panacea to free them from the debts that were strangling them—a basic illusion. The workers, not so enthusiastic for currency reform, nevertheless kept it to the forefront upon the general theory that more money in circulation meant better times and more work. The movement also directed its fire against the gouging railroads, in the earlier stages demanding rate regulation and finally fighting for government ownership of the railroads and telegraphs. The people's political alliance also demanded that the public lands be reserved for actual settlers, and that there should be more democracy in government.

The farmer-labor movement polled its highest national vote in this period in the congressional elections of 1878—1,050,000, or about 12 percent of the total vote cast. It remained a decisive force for many years in the agricultural states of the South and West. One of its biggest struggles in the East was the Henry George campaign in 1886 for Mayor of New York City. George probably won the election but was counted out by the political crooks. The whole movement was finally run into the ground and disintegrated in the presidential campaign of 1896, when William Jennings Bryan, of Free Silver fame, merged the slate of the People's Party with that of the Democratic Party in the election.

The 1900 election was the last major attempt for a generation by the workers and farmers to establish a broad independent political party. They had not been strong enough, however, to break the political shackles that had been fastened upon them by the Republican and Democratic parties, agents of the trusts. On the political field, more than on the industrial field, the rapidly developing trusts scored a victory over the working class and its allies, a victory which has not yet been cancelled out.

## THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR AND THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

During the stormy three decades before 1900 the working class, together with conducting many hard-fought strikes and election campaigns, also developed two major national labor federations, the Noble Order of

the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. The K of L was actually organized in 1869, in Philadelphia, during the time of the National Labor Union, but it never caught hold until the great labor upheaval which began to set in with the historic railroad strike of 1877. In the early 1880's, on the basis of several spectacular strikes and boycotts, it began to grow like a prairie fire, reaching its maximum membership of some 600,000 in 1886. By the late 1890's it had become virtually extinct.[12]

Under the strong mass pressure of the period, the K of L set itself the goal to "gather into one fold all branches of honorable toil, without regard to nationality, sex, creed, or color." Its motto was. "An Injury to One is the Concern of All." It aimed at "the complete emancipation of the wealth producers from the thralldom and loss of wage slavery." It was based essentially on class conceptions, and in this sense and in the spirit of its predecessor, the NLU, it actively undertook to organize not only the skilled but the unskilled, women, and Negro workers. In the latter respect, it did much effective work in the South, the K of L. membership being about ten percent Negro.

The Order, at first a highly secret organization with an elaborate ritual, dropped this secrecy in 1881 and became very active openly in the class struggle. It conducted many strikes and boycotts, despite the fact that the K of L leadership, especially T. V. Powderly, the Grand Master Workman, was strongly opposed to such action. Powderly, an early example of a labor leader corrupted by capitalist influences, tried to misdirect the membership away from militant struggle and into such channels as production cooperatives, money reform, land reform, temperance agitation, and the single tax. Although the K of L was a fighting organization, Powderly preached the harmony of interest between capital and labor; "men who own capital are not our enemies," he declared.

As Foner points out, this conflict in aims between the radical rank and file and the conservative leadership cut deeply into the very structure of the K of L. Powderly's betrayal of the great eight-hour strike of 1886, which had disastrous effects upon the K of L, was in line with his general disruptive policy. The organization suffered another and fatal blow in its failure to maintain leadership over the skilled workers. The K of L, as Foner demonstrates at length, contained large numbers of skilled workers, and it set up national trade assemblies to organize them; but Powderly underestimated the still important role of the skilled workers in industry. He declared that, "labor-saving machinery was bringing the machinist down to the level of a day laborer, and soon they would be on a level."[13] The skilled workers' unions tended to pull away from the K of L,

and to develop a separate, and eventually hostile, movement. This finally led to the formation of the American Federation of Labor.

The AFL was founded in Pittsburgh, November 15, 1881, by six craft unions—Painters, Carpenters, Iron-molders, Glass Workers, Cigarmakers, and Iron, Steel and Tin Workers—numbering all told about 50,000 members. The organization lingered along in the face of the strong role being played by the K of L, but the great 1886 strike, which the AFL initiated and the K of L leaders sabotaged, made the former the most decisive of the two organizations. For a while friendly relations prevailed between them and efforts were made to amalgamate but this all failed and soon the organizations locked horns in a duel which was to prove fatal to the K of L.

From the outset the AFL claimed jurisdiction over the workers in Canada. The aim of its leaders was to treat the central body of that neighboring country as just another state federation of labor. In 1902, a few years after the formation of the Canadian Trade and Labor Assembly, the AFL refused that body the right to charter federal and local unions, and its own international unions had the right to full autonomy in Canada.[14] Repeatedly, the Canadian unions within the AFL have collided with the latter's leaders over the question of the right to conduct their own affairs. This is one of the two situations (Ireland is the other) where trade unions of an independent country are controlled by those in a neighboring state.

The genius of the AFL was Samuel Gompers, an immigrant Jewish cigarmaker from London. In establishing the AFL, Gompers and his coworkers had in mind a very different organizational pattern than that animating the Knights of Labor. Their model was the British trade union movement, which at this time was based almost exclusively upon skilled workers and cooperation with the employers, at the expense of the working class as a whole. Its political line was to work as the labor wing of the Liberal Party. The Constitution of the AFL was copied almost word-for-word from that of the British Trades Union Congress,[15] and the leading body of the new federation, the Legislative Committee, was a facsimile of the Parliamentary Committee of the British organization. For many years the AFL's concept of international labor relations hardly went further than an exchange of delegates with the British unions at their respective national conventions.

Gompers, McGuire, Strasser, Laurrell, and other founders of the AFL were formerly Socialists, or pretendedly so. Gompers himself once declared that he had studied German in order to be able to read Marx in the original. He also said, "I believe with the most advanced thinkers as

to ultimate aims, including the abolition of the wage system."[16] He called Engels and Sorge his friends and spoke highly of Marx. In a letter to Victor Delahaye he said that he was seeking in organization "the final emancipation of the proletariat of the world."[17] The smattering of Marxism had by Gompers and his friends enabled them to avoid many of the disastrous, peculiarly "American," mistakes of the Knights of Labor leaders—their infatuation with cooperatives, money and land reform, and single-tax panaceas. By 1900 the AFL had 548,321 members and was rapidly growing. The K of L itself (with but 100,000 members in 1890) was practically dead by the turn of the century, the victim of gross misleadership. As for Powderly, he was defeated in the K of L by the left-wing in 1893, and he spent the rest of his years as a petty bureaucrat in the Federal government's employ.[18]

At the outset the AFL, born out of the great class struggles of the 1876-1900 period, retained a considerable degree of militancy and class spirit, and its preamble was definitely based upon a recognition of the class struggle. But by 1890 its form as an organization, primarily of skilled workers, proceeding upon the basis of a harmony of interest between capital and labor, was definitely shaped. It had embarked upon a path of excluding the unskilled, the Negro workers, and the women workers, of warring against Socialism and the Labor Party movement, of tying the workers to the capitalist system, and of generally peddling working-class interests for the supposed benefit of the skilled mechanics. The AFL leaders did this with a cynicism and personal corruption that far exceeded anything of the kind ever developed in Great Britain or anywhere else. Soon Gompersism became the worldwide symbol of everything that was corrupt and reactionary in the labor movement.

## THE ROLE OF THE MARXISTS

During the period 1876-1900 American Marxists had as their chief political organization the Socialist Labor Party. Despite their small numbers and various ideological weaknesses, they played a very important part in the many sharp economic and political struggles of those years. For the most part they were immigrant workers, who already made up the body of the working force in the basic industries and who brought to their new home the radicalism they had learned in Europe. They found this very serviceable in the desperate struggles they had to wage against the voracious capitalist masters of America.

There were several types of alien ideologies in the ranks of the workers that had to be fought by the Marxists, in addition to the native deviations of money and land quackeries, single tax, and white chauvin-

ist attitudes towards the Negro people. First, there was Lassalleism brought over by German immigrant workers. The latter deviation, with its belittlement of trade unionism, was long a source of struggle in not only the AFL and K of L, but also in the SLP. Gompers supported the Marxists in this fight, and in his memoirs he is full of praise for the sound trade union position of Marx, Engels, Sorge, and other left-wing fighters in the 1870's and 1880's.[19]

Bakuninism, the rock upon which the First International had split, also played its negative role in the United States. With Johann Most as its most voluble spokesman, it secured a strong grip during 1880's in Chicago, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. The Bakuninists split the SLP. But the Haymarket tragedy dealt Bakuninism a blow, the growth of trade union and political action weakened it more and more.

The worst deviation that the workers, particularly the Marxists, had to fight against during those years was the "pure and simple" trade unionism of Gompers. This expressed grossly the bourgeois influence in the labor movement. By 1900 this right opportunism was well developed and already it stood forth as the main obstacle in the workers' ranks against the development of a strong and progressive labor movement.

Another of the many grave weaknesses of the early Marxists was the sectarian tendency among the foreign-born Socialists, especially among the Germans, to stand aside from the general struggles of the workers and to concern themselves chiefly with the affairs of their own national groups. Engels, who followed carefully the development of the American labor movement, repeatedly thundered against this sectarian aloofness and urged full participation in all the economic and political movements of the workers.[20]

This chronic sectarianism was much worsened, but in new forms, by the accession of Daniel De Leon, pseudo-Marxist, to the leadership of the SLP in 1890. A brilliant intellectual, De Leon at once began to develop an ultra-left, super-revolutionary outlook and polity. He called upon the workers to quit the mass trade unions, with their primitive philosophies and corrupt leaders, and to form perfect revolutionary industrial unions. He scored as injurious to labor all struggle for political reforms; the workers, according to him, having but one demand, the proletarian revolution. He violently opposed all labor party tendencies and every form of cooperation with the struggling farmers. As for the Negro question, for De Leon it simply did not exist; although at the time there were horrible lynchings weekly in the South and the Negro people all over the country were suffering from the most terrible persecution and exploitation.[21]

De Leon's narrow sectarianism, which he presented dogmatically under the guise of Marxism and backed up with a bureaucratic rule in the SLP, soon produced a strong opposition. The American Socialist movement, striving to participate actively in the broad working class economic and political struggles of the times, could not long be shackled by the sectarian De Leon. The inevitable outcome was that the Party split in 1900. This gave birth a year later to the Socialist Party, under the leadership of Morris Hillquit, E. V. Debs and Victor Berger.

## 17. Organized Labor in France, Italy, and Spain (1876-1900)

Following the serious defeat of the French working class by the overthrow of the Paris Commune in 1871 (see chapter 8), the workers gradually began to rebuild their trade unions. From 1876 on yearly national workers' congresses were held. The rebirth of the trade unions took place amid an expanding industry and a growing working class. Although the luxury trades remained a key sector in the French economy, there was also a substantial increase of heavy industry, steel production mounting from 383,000 tons in 1880 to 4,630,000 tons in 1913.[1]

### THE GROWTH OF FRENCH TRADE UNIONISM

Membership statistics of these decades are very unreliable. In 1890 there were reported some 138,692 trade unionists, and by 1894 the number had mounted to 403,440.[2] In 1912 there were a total of 1,064,000 union members in France, of which about 400,000 were affiliated with the General Confederation of Labor (CGT). After 1884 the trade unions had the legal right to organize.

The French local unions, in reaching higher forms of organization, took the usual course of setting up national and local federations. The Hatters formed the first national federation, or union, in 1879, followed by the Printers in 1881 and the Miners in 1883. By 1910 there were 66 of these national bodies—some craft and some industrial in form.[3] More important in the early stages of the French trade union movement, however, were the local and regional federations, or *bourses du travail.*

The French *bourse* had far more functions and union authority than the central labor councils in the Anglo-American countries. They provided unemployment, accident, and other forms of social insurance; they served as labor exchanges; they had libraries, offices of information, labor museums, and trade education; they organized local unions, developed statistical work, and carried on strikes. Generally the *bourses* received subsidies from the local city governments. In the pioneer stages of

the movement the workers paid far more attention to the work of the *bourses* than to that of the national federations.

The initial attempt to establish a general French labor movement was the National Federation of Labor Unions, founded in 1886. This movement was dominated by Jules Guesde, a Marxist Socialist with a strong ''leftist" bent. His conception of the trade unions was pretty much that they should merely serve as auxiliaries to the Socialist Party, providing it with members and money. Under his stifling control, the new national organization repelled the workers and by 1894 it had perished.

The first successful national union organization was established by the local *bourses.* The original *bourse* was established in Paris in 1887, and it was quickly followed by similar organizations in Nimes, Marseille, Saint Etienne, and other centers. In 1892 there were 14 *bourses*; in 1898, 74, and in 1908, 157 of them. In 1892, meeting in Saint Etienne, the *bourses* organized themselves nationally into the *Federation des Bourses du Travail.*[4] The leader of this *bourse* movement was Fernand Pelloutier, who died in 1901.[5]

Meanwhile, efforts were continued to establish a general organization of the whole trade union movement. This resulted in 1895, at Limoges, in the formation of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT). Thus, France now had two national organizations—one made up of the local *bourses* and the other consisting of the national federations, with the former much the stronger. This dualistic situation finally resulted, at the Congress of Montpellier in 1902, in the *bourses* becoming merged into the CGT. But they were nevertheless far from losing their identity. Up until 1912 the CGT consisted of two national sections, of *bourses* and federations, with two national secretaries of equal authority, and with each group holding separate national conferences and conventions, as well as meeting all together in the annual CGT congresses.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

Anarcho-syndicalism, that is, the predominant trend in French trade unionism, began to mature its specific characteristics after 1895, when Pelloutier invited the Anarchists to join the trade unions, which they did. It was based upon an amalgam of (a) trade union structure (both for the daily struggles of the workers and also for the foundation of the future society), (b) Anarchist philosophy of society, action, and organization, (c) a distortion of the Marxist concept of the class struggle, and (d) French revolutionary traditions. Developing experience demonstrated, especially when Anarcho-syndicalism met the hard tests of World War I and the Russian Revolution, that it was only another brand of opportun-

ism operating under a cloak of revolutionary phrases.

The Anarcho-syndicalists placed all their reliance upon the trade unions and trade union action. They maintained that the unions, or *syndicats,* were the sole working-class organizations and that they alone could represent the workers' interests. They considered the trade union to be not only the working-class fighting organization of today, but also the producing organization of tomorrow, after capitalism had been overthrown. This general idea had been promulgated as early as the days of the Owenite movement in England (see chapter 4), and it was also a plank in the platform of Bakunin in the First International. Eventually in the course of the class struggle, it was to be exposed as a utopian concept.

French Syndicalism was anti-political—it rejected sharply all political parties and all participation in elections and parliaments. A number of factors helped to produce this false Anarchist position. Guesde and other Socialist leaders of the period had a crippling underestimation of the trade unions, which made the workers suspicious of all politicians. Besides, the Socialist ranks were so badly split at this time that by 1899 there were no less than five separate Socialist parties. They all brought their quarrels into the trade unions—a disruptive situation which further antagonized the unions towards all political parties. Matters were made still worse by the entrance of the right opportunist Socialist Millerand into the bourgeois government of Waldeck-Rousseau in 1899, a treason which shook the whole Second International and still further alienated the French trade union movement from politics. The attitude of the Anarcho-syndicalists was that the state should not be penetrated, but destroyed entirely from the outside by direct action.

The Anarcho-syndicalists made a vigorous application of the strike weapon in the workers' daily struggle. This they supported by a free use of the boycott (union label, etc.), and by the practice of sabotage. In general sabotage implied "poor work for poor pay," which had a long tradition in the labor organization of many countries in the shape of various types of go-slow movements. But in the event of serious struggles the French unions also did not hesitate to "put the machines on strike" too, by various devices. This practice, also, had long been known to the labor movements of various lands, including the AFL. The French Syndicalists, fighting ruthless employers who tried to starve them into submission, and a reactionary government which as a matter of settled policy used armed violence against them, actively defended sabotage as a legitimate weapon for the workers in the class struggle. The 1900 convention of the CGT voted 117 for sabotage and 76 against it.[6]

The French Syndicalists also made a cardinal principle of "militant

minority." This was the small group of extra active, bold and courageous workers, the "little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump." They depended upon the militant minority to set the mass of the working class into motion and, as in the case of sabotage, also largely depended upon it to do the fighting for the workers as a whole. They relied heavily also upon Anarchist conceptions of spontaneity, which worked directly against the building of strong unions and the development of a solid discipline.

The Anarcho-syndicalists, basing themselves generally upon mass action by broad trade unions, had no place for the individual terrorism of Anarchism. Bomb-throwing, which played such a prominent role in the Anarchist movement of the 1880's and 1890's, had no part in the Syndicalist movement—another consequence of Marxist influence.

The great weapon that, according to the Syndicalists, was eventually to overthrow capitalism was the general strike, long advocated in the congresses of the First and Second Internationals by the Anarchists. "The complete cessation of work is the revolution," declared the *Federation des Bourses* in 1894.[7] In their book, *Comment Nous Ferrons Le Revolution*, Pataud and Pouget, prominent trade union leaders, painted a picture of how the French unions at this time contemplated abolishing capitalism by means of the general strike. This implied a great exaggeration of the power of the trade unions in striking and also an underestimation of the fighting power of the capitalist state in such a crisis. With the Revolutions of 1830, 1848, and 1871 behind them, the French workers took readily to the plan to do away with capitalism by the general strike.

The several groupings of Socialists in France adopted varying attitudes towards developing Syndicalism. The main Marxist stream, however, then united behind Jules Guesde, who fell by the wayside politically in World War I, flatly opposed virtually every Syndicalist concept. The five Socialist parties in France united into one party in 1905, but this unified party could not win the workers and the CGT for a policy of political action and for a general Marxist line of struggle. In all the CGT conventions, however, the Socialists formed a strong minority.

French Syndicalism may he said to have come to maturity at the CGT convention in Amiens in 1906. At this gathering Syndicalism was first signalized as a separate labor tendency. A delegate, Latapie, declared: "There has been too much talk here as if there were only Socialists and Anarchists present. It has been especially forgotten that there are also Syndicalists here. Syndicalism is a new social theory." The convention resolution, the famous *Chartre d'Amiens,* written mainly by Griffuelhes, General Secretary of the CGT, definitely declared the CGT independent of all political schools and parties, endorsed the class struggle,

and declared that the trade union (syndicat), "today the resistance groupment of the working class, will be in the future the groupment of production and distribution, the base of social reorganization."[8]

The basic theoretical work in the development of French Anarcho-syndicalism was done by a body of workers, trade union militants and leaders, including Fernand Pelloutier, Victor Griffuelhes, Emil Pouget, Georges Yvetot, and others. But numerous intellectuals—Henri Bergson, Paul Lagardelle, Gustav Herve, Georges Sorel, and others—also lent a hand. Of these Sorel was the most important. Sorel's main "contributions" were a glorification of violence in the class struggle and the reduction of the general strike and socialism to the status of social myths. Sorel specifically attacked many principles of Marxism. His general line was a revision of Marxism from the "left." Proudhonist and Bakuninist conceptions being out of place in a modern labor movement and Bernstein right-wing revisionism being unadaptable to the revolutionary spirit of the French workers, Sorel tried to give Anarcho-syndicalism a rounded-out philosophy by adapting Marxism to it. In doing this Sorel, like Bernstein, continued to call himself a Marxist.

As a "new social theory" Syndicalism was to fail as a world labor trend. Not, however, before it created a spectacular stir in labor circles in many countries. But we shall come back to all this later on.

## MARXIST TRADE UNIONISM IN ITALY

In chapter 9 we have seen that during its pioneer stages, through the 1850's and early 1860's, the Italian labor movement was under bourgeois republican leadership, as represented by Mazzini. Its next evolutionary step was through Anarchist Bakuninism, up until the early 1870's. From then on Marxism became the dominant political ideology among the organized Italian workers and peasants. The growth of Marxism was achieved through a variety of economic and political organizations, culminating in the classical European forms of the time—a broad Socialist Party and a national Federation of labor.

One of the most important of these evolutionary steps was the formation in 1882 of the Labor Party, under the leadership of C.C. Jazzari. This body carried on considerable activity until 1888, when it expired. Meanwhile, the predominant type of movement was the *fascio*, previously mentioned. This was a sort of combined industrial and political organization, with a left-wing program, and it spread widely. The *fasci,* like all other working-class organizations, were persecuted by the government. It was from this early type of genuine labor movement that, a generation later, Mussolini was to misappropriate the name for his counter-

revolutionary *fasci di combattimento.*

The *fasci* were the direct forerunners of the Socialist Party. The Party was organized in Genoa in August 1892,[9] and it accepted the affiliation of the *fasci* and the trade unions in the industrial and agricultural regions. The outstanding Party leader at this time was Filippo Turati, eventually a prominent Italian revisionist. The leader of the strong left-wing in this general period was Arturo Labriola. In the election of 1895 the Party polled 77,000 votes and in 1895, 135,000.

Meanwhile, the trade union movement proper was also beginning to take shape. This, like the trade unions in Spain, followed the general organizational pattern of the French labor movement, with its heavy stress upon the local *bourses*, or labor councils. It has been a common development in labor history for one young labor movement thus to pattern after another, older one, with which it stood in close relations. Thus, the nascent labor movements in the British colonies and dominions almost always designated their national organizations as "Trades Union Congresses"; in Middle Europe, likewise, the young trade union movements usually had their "General Commissions," on the German model; and in our days we see the trade unions in the People's Democracies generally following the organizational lead of the Soviet trade unions.

The first Italian *camere del lavoro,* or local trade union councils, the equivalent of the French *bourses du travail,* were organized in Milan, Turin and Piacenza in 1891. Others followed rapidly, the Socialists taking the lead in building them. In 1901 they numbered 60. In 1893 a national convention was held of the twelve existing local councils, and the Federation of Italian Labor Councils was formed. The new national body adopted a program of activities along the general lines of the similar organization in France; but whereas in France the trade union movement was then under left-wing leadership, in Italy it was controlled by more conservative elements. Meanwhile, the *fasci* continued to play an important and militant role. At the Party convention of 1893, one of their leaders extended greetings from 65,000 organized peasants, and it was also reported that all told the *fasci* embraced some 300,000 peasants, miners, and factory workers.

In 1902 a Central Secretariat of Resistance was established to link up nationally the various elements in the Italian trade union movement. The *Confederazione Generals del Lavoro* (CGL) was formed in October 1906, in Milan, with Rinaldo Rigola at its head. The CGL founding convention had a majority of right Socialists, but there was a strong minority of Anarchists, Syndicalists, and left Socialists. The new national center adopted a program which, while endorsing political action, established

an independent attitude towards all political parties. One of the most significant features of the Italian trade union movement from the start was the attention it paid to the masses of agricultural workers employed upon the huge estates, or *latifundia.* Tridon reports a strike of 300,000 workers on the land in 1894.[10] In 1907 the CGL reported 190,422 members, a number that increased to 383,770 in 1911.[11] This union growth took place in the midst of a rapidly developing Italian industry, especially from 1900 to 1913.

Meanwhile, the labor movement, industrial and political, had been battling on in the face of strong governmental persecution and violence. Hundreds of workers were shot or imprisoned. But the wave of strikes continued to rise throughout Italy. In 1898 the government issued a decree virtually attempting to abolish the trade unions. Union and Party building went on, nevertheless. Speaking of this general period in Italy, Engels said: "Italy is going through the same trial that Germany had to undergo during the 12 years of the anti-Socialist law. Germany defeated Bismarck; Italy will triumph over Crispi"[12]—a prophecy which came true.

As in the Latin countries generally, the Italian workers early began to use the general strike as a weapon, on both the local and national scale. As we have seen previously, general strike attempts, verging into insurrection, had been made by the Bakuninist forces in the 1870's. In the years we are now discussing one of the most significant of such broad struggles was the local general strike in Genoa in 1900, which was violently repressed. But the most important class battle of this whole period was the general strike of 1904.

This big strike, which Crook calls "one of the largest strikes in history of the labor movement up to that time,"[13] grew out of bitter working-class resentment at extreme police and troop violence used to break up several recent strikes. The general strike was actually initiated by the Monza Labor Council; Milan and other Councils took up the issues, and on September 5 the big struggle began. The strike involved workers in many categories, largely paralyzing the economic life of the nation. At its height, some 1,000,000 workers were on strike. The strike, essentially a great protest demonstration, was called off September 19 by the joint action of the local labor councils. Inasmuch as the official labor movement was controlled by reformists, with the revolutionary minority unable to act effectively, the strike was sabotaged by its bureaucratic leaders. Candeloro saw that it left a bad taste in the mouths of the workers.[14]

In October 1907, on the basis of the decisions of the Stockholm congress of the Second International, the SP and CGL of Italy established a close collaboration. Later on this developed into a pact of alliance. The

general effect of this was to put the trade unions more completely under the crippling influence of the reformists of the Socialist Party. This, in turn, stimulated the growth of Syndicalist unionism in protest.

## THE TRADE UNIONS IN SPAIN

Following the dissolution of the First International in 1876, the Anarchists were able for a few years to straggle along as an international movement (see chapter 9). In some countries, as in Great Britain, Anarchism died out as a real force in the class struggle, while in others, as in France, it practically dissolved itself into the advancing Anarcho-syndicalist movement. In Spain, however, Anarchism, with a strong proletarian following, lingered on as an important factor in the labor movement, down to and beyond the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. This historical overhang of Anarchism was due to a number of specific Spanish conditions, chief among which were the failure of Spain to develop along the lines of big industry and the general weakness of the Marxist movement in that country.

The main stronghold of Spanish Anarchism, from the days of the First International, was in Barcelona, the chief center of Spain's weak economic system. There the Anarchists dominated the trade union movement, tending to develop it along Anarcho-syndicalist lines. This movement also extended into Andalusia, where it had a grip among the impoverished peasantry. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, under the existing fierce exploitation and rigid tyranny, Barcelona was the scene of many hard-fought strikes and political struggles. The Anarchist element in these was manifested in a whole series of bomb-throwings, particularly in the 1890's. The principal Anarchist organization during most of this period the Workers Federation of Spain, founded in 1881. It lasted until 1888 and was succeeded by a number of local groupings, and eventually by the Federation of Anarchists of Iberia. For considerable periods the trade union movement was largely underground.

The chief center of the Marxist movement in Spain was in Madrid, where there was only a small proletariat. In 1879 the Socialist Party of Spain was founded. Its leader was Pablo Iglesias, who eventually became one of the most noted of right-wing leaders in the Second International. In 1888, upon Marxist initiative, the first real national trade union center was organized, the *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT). In 1890 this body had 7 sections and 2,000 members; in 1900, 138 sections and 50,000 members; and in 1913, 331 sections and 147,000 memhers.[15]

The unions in the Barcelona area, however, continued their independent existence, developing generally in a Syndicalist direction. In

1908, under the impulse given by an international Anarchist congress in Amsterdam, the Anarchists organized the *Solidaridad Obrera* in Spain (Workers' Unity) and in 1910, they established the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), (the National Confederation of Labor), which was more definitely Syndicalist in its orientation.

Among the many hard fights made by the Spanish working class during this period was the general strike of July 26, 1909, against the Moroccan war. This mass protest against the war was led by the Socialist Party, and it was participated in by Socialists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, Nationalists and Radical Republicans. The strike, which paralyzed the public services, lasted a week. Its storm center was, as usual, in Barcelona. The government took violent measures against the mass anti-war demonstration and followed it up with a period of rigorous repression.[16]

## 18. The Trade Unions in other Countries (1876-1914)

. The decades following the dissolution of the First International in 1876 brought about the extension of capitalism into many new countries and therewith also the development of new segments of the ever-expanding world trade union movement. In the previous chapters we have observed the course of developments during general period in the main lands of capitalism—Great Britain, the United States, Germany, France and Italy—now let us take a look at the trade union situation in other capitalist countries.

### TRADE UNIONISM IN THE LOW COUNTRIES AND SCANDINAVIA

Belgium and Holland were pioneer capitalist countries and, as already remarked, they began about as soon as England to develop an industrial system. This inevitably produced a sprouting of craft unions during the mid-nineteenth century. In view of the prevailing political reaction, however, the growth of the trade union movement was slow. The workers in these countries nevertheless did play an important part in the congresses of the First International, being represented by such outstanding figures as Cesar de Paepe and Domela Nieuwenhuis, who were, or became, Anarchists. By the time of World War I the union movements of both countries, notably heavily industrialized Belgium, were significant organizations in the world labor movement. Their importance was enhanced by the fact that these two countries, and likewise little Portugal, all of them acting largely as satellites of the British Empire, had managed to seize huge slices of Asia and Africa during the great land-grab period of 1875-1900.

As for Scandinavia—capitalism began to develop rapidly in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway only after about 1880, with Denmark in the lead. Prior to that time there had been only scattering craft unions in these overwhelmingly agricultural countries. As late as 1862 there were still 44 guilds, dating back to the Middle Ages, in Copenhagen, and 226 of them throughout Denmark. The later rapid growth of trade unionism in these countries upon a unified basis was facilitated by the fact that there were no important racial, national or religious minorities in these areas to vex the situation by setting up separate organizations.

The first union in Scandinavia was that of the Printers in Copenhagen, formed in 1877, followed soon afterward by many others.

By 1885, in Sweden there were 105 local unions, with the pioneer national union being, as usual, that of the Printers. Denmark established the first general national trades federation in 1877, but this was dissolved (for a time) by the police. In 1898 and 1890 the Swedish and Norwegian national labor federations were established. In 1900 the numerical strength of the three union movements was: Denmark 70,000, Norway 5,000 and Sweden, 44,000; in 1915 the three groups had increased their strength respectively to 132,000, 76,000, and 111,000.[1] Generally, the trend of the unions was from the craft to the industrial form,.

The Scandinavian labor movement went through many struggles in order to get established, the most important of which was the unsuccessful strike of 1909 in Sweden. Largely under the ideological influence of the nearby powerful German Social Democracy, the Scandinavian workers developed strong Social Democratic parties—Denmark 1871, Norway 1887, and Sweden 1889. Norway deviated from the general pattern by establishing a broad Labor Party. The workers also organized a strong consumers' cooperative movement in the three countries. In all these countries there was a considerable left-wing in the trade unions and the Socialist parties. After the loss of the 1909 Swedish strike, the left forces tended to deviate in the direction of Anarcho-syndicalism, of which more later. Hjalmar Branting of Sweden, the outstanding Scandinavian Socialist leader, was one of the most important advocates of Bernstein revisionism.

## THE TRADE UNIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

Prior to World War I, which resulted in the revolutionary break-up of the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, and Turkish Empires, such countries as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and others in Eastern Europe did not exist as separate and independent political states, but as so many colonial peoples, their industries hindered and blocked by

neighboring and bigger capitalist systems. The peoples who came to make up their new governments after the end of the first great war were then under the iron heel of the four empires—hence trade union building among them could be carried out only under great political difficulties, especially in the terrorized Russian and Turkish spheres. The development of capitalism and therewith also of the labor movement in this whole area was further handicapped by the fact that the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Turkish empires were themselves largely in the position of being the semi-colonial satellites of the stronger empires to the West—Great Britain, Germany, and France.

In Russia trade unions, together with workers and peasant parties, were harshly prohibited by the barbaric tsarist dictatorship, on pain of long terms of imprisonment in Siberia. As we shall see later, in a special chapter, there were few open trade unions before the Revolution of 1905. The same rule held good in Poland, Finland, and other areas dominated by Russia.

In Austria, where a somewhat less autocratic regime prevailed, there were, as we have seen, a scattering of trade unions in the later decades of the 19th century. In 1892 the Metal Workers established the first national union and there was also formed a General Commission of the trade unions. The following year the first general trade union convention in Austria was held. By 1912 the Social Democratic unions totaled 428,363 members.[2] The Social Democratic Party was organized in 1888, and under the leadership of Otto Bauer, Karl Renner, and Victor Adler, and with its special opportunist conception of Austro-Marxism, it was of much importance in the life of the Second International. In Austria, as in some other European countries (sec later chapter), Catholic trade unions played a very important role.

Poland, a country then divided into three parts, which were under the Russian, German, and Austrian empires respectively, nevertheless managed to build the beginnings of a trade union movement, especially in the Austrian-controlled section of the country. The first union was the Printers in Galicia in the 1870's. By the beginning of the century there were in Austrian and German Poland substantial unions of Miners, Railroaders, and Municipal workers, as well as of the various crafts.[3] The Polish labor movement was later split badly along religious and national lines. The Polish Socialist Party was formed in 1892.

Czechoslovakia is another country that did not formally exist until after World War I, but the workers had long since, as early as 1867 and in the face of the sharpest national and capitalist oppression, begun to lay the foundations of the trade union movement. In 1878 they formed the

Socialist Party. In 1897 they established their own national central labor body, after the Austrian general trade union federation had refused them autonomy within that organization- In 1913 the Czech unions had a membership of 104,574.[4]

The Hungarian trade union movement began to take shape about 1890, to the accompaniment of many strikes and a big May Day demonstration that year. The Socialist Party was formed at the same time. The Hungarian Trade Union Council was organized in 1894. Many craft unions were established in the period of 1900-05. In 1912 there were 111,966 Hungarian trade unionists affiliated to the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centers. In 1897 there was a general strike in Hungary, and in 1905, 1906, and 1907 there were important rural strikes.

In Bulgaria, despite severe repression, the Social Democratic Party was formed in 1894 and there were the beginnings of a trade union movement by the end of the 19th century. Already in 1897 Georgi Dimitroff, later to become famous as the head of the Third International, was secretary of the Apprentice Printers Union.[5] Under the impulse of the Russian Revolution of 1905, many strikes took place in Bulgaria during the next years, of Miners, Textile workers and others. The young labor movements of Rumania, Greece, Serbia, and other Balkan countries came into existence about the same time under hard conditions, in the midst of dictatorial regimes of their respective countries. The report of the International Secretariat for National Trade Union Centers of 1912, gives the following figures for the affiliated trade union membership in these countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina 5,522; Croatia 5,538; Serbia 5,000; Rumania 9,708; Bulgaria 3,000 (1910).[6]

## PIONEER TRADE UNIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, the vast stretches of Central and South America and the Caribbean Sea area, trade unionism began to develop shortly before the turn of the 20th century.[7] It followed heavy capital investments by the British in these areas—in 1891 these amounted to 167,000,000 pounds—followed by those of the Americans and Germans in the years after the Spanish-American War of 1898. Previously the fiercely exploited wage workers and the poor peasants had taken an active part in the literally hundreds of revolts and revolutions that periodically swept the score of Latin American countries since they won their independence from Portugal, Spain, and France by revolutionary struggle in the 1820's. But when they began more directly to feel imperialist oppression and domination, the workers also started to develop regular strikes and to organize trade unions. The Anarchists and Anarcho-syndicalists were the

pioneer union builders m the vast areas of Latin America.

The voracious capitalists and landlords, however, treated these strikes pretty much as though they were insurrections and used the utmost violence against them. Thus, there were several thousand workers killed in the Chilean strikes of 1907, and some 1,500 killed during the "tragic week" general strike of January 1919 in Argentina. Similar butcheries of strikers were to continue for many years. It has estimated that at least 68 percent of the population of Latin America is non-white—Indians and Negroes—and the unions reflected this population diversity in their membership. They were entirely free of the Jim Crow racial chauvinism which made such a blot on the record of the labor movement in the United States and the British Dominions.

From the beginning the Latin American trade unions displayed the composition characteristics of the labor movements in all the semi-colonial and colonial areas; that is, in addition to the usual crafts of city merchants, they contained large numbers of Agricultural workers (on the big sugar, coffee, cotton, sisal, and banana plantations), Miners, Longshoremen, Textile workers, and Railroaders Prior to World War I, the Latin American workers had succeeded in establishing organized national trade union centers in Pern (1814), Argentina (1890), Cuba (1890), Chile (1909), Mexico (1912}, Bolivia (1912), and El Salvador (1914).[8] As early as 1909, under Syndicalist auspices, a general trade union conference was held in Buenos Aires, embracing six South American countries. The Socialist Party and Anarcho-syndicalist movements grew apace with the trade unions.

The biggest mass trade union movement of the period in these areas was in Mexico during the Revolution, beginning in October 1910 and lasting several years. In 1912 the workers started to organize unions and it was not long before, in alliance with the fighting peasantry under Zapata and Villa, they were exercising a decisive influence upon the course of the Revolution. The Constitution of 1917, written just before the Russian Revolution, contained the most advanced labor clauses in the world. During the long and hard struggle the *Confederación Regional Obrero Mexicana* (CROM), the general labor federation, organized in 1918, reached a total of some 2,200,000 members in 1927, a large proportion of whom were agricultural workers. This made it almost as big an organization as the American Federation of Labor in the United States, which in 1927 had a membership of 2,812,526.

In the Spanish colonics—the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico — seized by the United States in the Spanish-American War of 1898, the American masters continued and intensified their notorious "open shop,"

anti-union policies. In the Philippines, where there had previously been many peasant insurrections, the first trade union, the Printers, was organized in 1902. The Cigarmakers followed in 1908, and in 1913, on May 1st, which became a national holiday, the first national workers' organization, the *Congreso Obrero de las Filipinas*, was established.[9] In Cuba, under Spanish rule, there were precarious local unions of Railroad, Sugar, and Tobacco Workers, dating from about 1895. In 1892, the first workers' congress was held. With difficulty, after the American occupation began, the workers gradually built their union organizations. The first solid national labor federation, the *Confederación Nacional Obrero de Cuba,,* was formed in 1920.[10] Puerto Rico also had some local unions in the 1890's. These, like those in Cuba, were affiliated to trade union centers in Spain. In 1898, the *Federación Regional de Trabajadores de Puerto Rico* was formed, and in 1901 the Puerto Rican union movement affiliated to the AFL, on the same basis as a state federation of labor, with one vote in the latter's national conventions.[11] Prior to World War I the unions in the three colonies waged many hard strikes, particularly of sugar workers.

## THE BEGINNING OF AFRICAN TRADE UNIONISM

Before World War I the only important African trade union movement was in the Union of South Africa. This movement began to develop as early as 1887, when the Carpenters Union was established in Capetown.[12] But the unions took on a mass character during the first decade of the 20th century, after Great Britain, shooting down Boer resistance in 1899-1902, had seized the fabulously rich gold and diamond mines of the area. Under pressure of the crude exploitation and autocratic rule set up by the mining corporations, the white miners, principally British, began to organize. Characteristic of whites in colonial countries, except for the left-wing minority among them, they largely ignored the wretched conditions and urgent demands of the great mass of native Negro workers in the mines. In the Johannesburg mines the typical wage of a Negro miner at that time was about one-eighth as much as that of a white miner.[13] In Rhodesia today (*N.Y. Times*, September 13, 1955), "The average Negro worker in copper mines earns $210 a year and white copper miners each a $5,600 average a year."

The Miners' unions conducted numerous hard-fought strikes. In 1913, the workers, during a general strike, held Johannesburg for several days. Their strike was broken by imperial troops under the command of General Smuts. The following year they had another general strike, which was also smashed by Smuts' troops. Every labor leader was ar-

rested and ten were deported without trials. All told, 10,000 strikers were jailed.[14] In these big battles the Negro and Indian Miners struck solidly with their white fellow workers; they also conducted numerous strikes of their own.

The conditions of the white workers were bad enough, and they were keen to improve them. The situation of the Negro and Indian filers were incomparably worse, but the white union leaders, despite growing left opposition, did little or nothing to remedy them. On the contrary, they kept the Negroes strictly out of the unions, strove to prevent them from learning the skilled trades, while the Labor Party, which grew out of the many class battles, was opposed to giving the vote to the Indians and the Negroes. In this general respect their narrow chauvinist attitudes were akin to the "White Australia" views of the unions in Australia and to the Jim Crow policies of many American trade unions. In recent years there have been some modifications of the lily-white practices of South Africa^ trade unions.

## ASIAN LABOR COMMENCES TO AWAKEN

In the decades just before World War I the great toiling masses of Asia were definitely beginning to stir. Under the ruthless economic, political, and military pressures of the imperialist powers, they were being impoverished and enslaved beyond human endurance. In these vast areas, with their hundreds of millions of people, the national bourgeoisie and the proletariat were taking shape and launching their basic struggle for national independence. As yet, the proletariat was following the political lead of the national bourgeoisie in the respective countries, but already it was beginning to strike blows in its own direct class interest, as well as in that of the nation as a whole. Before the first world war, in many colonies and semi-colonies strikes had already taken place, but as yet there were no real trade unions or workers' political parties.

Of the colonial countries, India was at this time the most advanced industrially and had the largest and most articulate capitalist and working classes. Gradually, in spite of the de-industrializing policies of the British imperialists, some national industries were coming into existence. Whereas in 1858 Bombay had but one small textile mill, in 1900 it had 193, employing 161,000 workers. The pauperization of the workers and peasants under British rule beggared description. From 1800 to 1900 in India, says Dutt, there were 21,400,000 deaths by famine, 75 percent in the last generation[15]—most of them because of ruthless British exploitation.

As early as 1857, when the first great armed uprising against the British rulers took place (misnamed the "Sepoy Rebellion" by the Brit-

ish), the Indian people began to strike back sharply at their oppressors. But the fight of the Indian people for independence began solidly to take shape only in 1885, with the organization of the Indian National Congress. This body limped along for 20 years, however, until it received a tremendous impulse from the big Indian national upsurge of 1905. The Russian Revolution was an important factor in this movement. About this time the toiling masses, workers and peasants, also began to manifest themselves as a new great political force in India. Dutt records many peasant uprisings and early strikes of the half-starved working class. One strike, he says, took place in 1877, and between 1882 and 1890, twenty-five strikes were noted in the Bombay and Madras presidencies. In 1884 the Bombay textile workers formed an association for strike purposes. The strike movement took on greater strength after the 1905 Russian Revolution, which deeply stirred the whole colonial East. During 1905-09 there was an unprecedented wave of strikes on the railroads and in the textile mills, including a six-day general strike in Bombay in 1908, to secure the release from prison of the workers' leader, Tilak.

These movements, those of the Congress and especially the strikes of the workers, met with harsh repression from the British authorities. But all this terrorism was unavailing to halt the advance of the Indian people. The basic national independence movement, with a growing labor organization within its framework, was on its irresistible way, eventually to break British rule in India.

In great China also the people, prior to World War I, had definitely begun their eventually victorious fight against the imperialist invaders and exploiters. The big Taiping rebellion of 1850-54, which was murderously repressed by the forces under the British general "Chinese" Gordon, had in it a strong anti-imperialist element. So likewise, had the "Boxer" rebellion of 1900, which was drowned in blood by the combined troops of Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and the United States. The Chinese people, as those in India and in Europe, also were greatly inspired to struggle by the 1905 Russian Revolution. This was a big factor in the formation of the Kuomintang nationalist organization, and for the partial victory in the Chinese bourgeois revolution of 1912, led by Sun Yat-Sen.

Inevitably, within the fold of the national liberation movements in the colonial countries, the working class, which at first followed lead of the national bourgeoisie, proceeded under left leadership to organize its own trade unions and political party. It had to do this order to defend its class interests, to protect itself against direct exploitation by the foreign imperialists and also by the feudal landowners and national capitalists.

All this added enormously to the strength of the general nationalist movement. The working class, allied with the peasantry, eventually challenges the wavering bourgeoisie and takes over the leadership of the whole people in the fight for national independence, as finally came to pass in China in the mid-twentieth century. In this pre-World War I stage, however, the numerically weak Chinese industrial proletariat, like that in India, Indo-China, Indonesia, Burma, Malaya, and other colonial lands, was only beginning to wage its first strikes. Organized trade unions and working-class political parties were to come later.[16]

## THE BIRTH OE THE JAPANESE LABOR MOVEMENT

Japan, of all the countries of Asia proper, never became a colony or semi-colony of the rapacious Western imperialist powers. This was primarily due to the easily defended Japanese islands. Nevertheless, Commodore Perry forced open the closed doors of Japan in 1853, with the British, Russians, and Dutch following fast in 1854-56, flooding the country with their commodities and seeking political controls. They all managed to secure “extra-territorial" rights for themselves. The Japanese revolution, a kind of *coup d’etat* by the more progressive wing of the feudal aristocracy and the lower-class Samurai, came in 1868, when the Meiji overthrew the Shogun emperors’ government which had ruled Japan since 1192. “All that happened was that power passed into the hands of the more progressive wing of the feudal aristocracy and the military gentry (the Samurai). The former was gradually developing into a bourgeois class and was more closely identified with the mercantile bourgeoisie.”[17] The new government had to carry through a number of bourgeois political and economic reforms under pressure.

Free from imperialist domination, Japan, unlike oppressed India and China, was able to industrialize itself rapidly and to have a normal capitalist development. Most of the necessary initial capital came from government imposition of taxes upon the peasants, with considerable originating with the bankers, merchants, and landlords. The government set up model factories and sold them to the rich merchants. The Mitsui, Sumitomo, Konoike, and others, were old merchant families, who quickly became transformed into major industrialists. New rich capitalists—the Mitsubishi, Okura, Shibuzawa, etc., also sprang up. Ample supplies of wage workers were created by the “whirlwind expropriation” of the peasantry during the 1880’s and 1890's. Special features of the new Japanese working class were the extremely low wage level prevailing, hardly above that in colonial countries; the very close link of the proletariat with the peasantry and the high ratio of women workers—1910, 71 percent.[18] The industrial sys-

tem grew apace. In 1860 there was not one cotton mill in Japan, but in 1900 there were 162. In 1900, of the 7,171 industrial plants in Japan, 4,150 were in textile, and only 2,388 used mechanical power. Between 1900 and 1914 capital invested in industry, banking, and transport tripled, and so did Japanese exports. In 1889, after a sharp class struggle, a national bourgeois constitution, based on the Prussian model, was promulgated, and in 1890 the first general elections were held, with only 10 percent of the workers having the right to vote. In this set-up of pseudo-democracy the Emperor remained virtually absolute.

With a militarist past, Japan easily developed an aggressive foreign policy, which soon took on characteristic imperialist features. In 1874 Japan grabbed the Ryukyu Islands, and in 1878 the Bonin Islands. In 1895 it defeated China in an aggressive war, and seized control of Korea. In 1900 it participated, along with other imperialist powers, in putting down the "Boxer" rebellion in China. By 1905, although lagging in certain key industries, Japan was already a full-fledged imperialist state. In that year it scored a major victory by militarily defeating tsarist Russia, thereby widely extending its "sphere of influence" in China. Japan went into the imperialist world war of 1914 on the side of England, France, Russia, and the United States, with the special perspective of grabbing all possible Chinese territory and trade.

The trade union movement in Japan began to take shape, with the usual sporadic strikes, in the 1880's. Sen Katayama, pioneer trade union organizer and Socialist (later, Communist) leader,* dates the organized trade union movement from 1897, during which year the Iron Workers in Tokyo organized the first trade union in Japanese history.[19] Others soon followed—Railroaders, Printers, etc. There were many strikes, notably the big and successful walkout of Railroad Workers in 1898. The unions, growing rapidly, were suppressed in 1900. During these years the number of industrial workers was expanding swiftly—from 338,000 in 1900 to 1,086,000 in 1914. In the general forward movement of organized labor the Socialist Party was founded in 1901 by six leaders, including Sen Katayama, Denjiro Kotoku, and Isao Abe. Generally the unions followed the leadership of the Socialists, but from 1908 to 1922 the Anarcho-syndicalists had considerable influence in the trade unions and the Socialist Party.

For a time during the 1890's there was a so-called "liberal" period in Japan, but soon the government attacked the labor movement, especially its left-wing, with savage ferocity. On the very day the Socialist Party

* Sen Katayama died in 1933.

was formed the government ordered its dissolution forthwith—it was transformed into an Educational Committee.[20] It was re-organized in 1906 and again declared illegal in 1907. Strikes were rigorously repressed and their leaders jailed wholesale. The Socialists valiantly opposed the imperialist war of 1904-05 with Russia, and the workers waged many strikes, for which they were barbarously persecuted. At the Amsterdam 1904 Congress of the Second International Katayama and Plekhanov, leaders of the Japanese and Russian Socialist parties, shook hands amid the tumultuous enthusiasm of the delegates and they pledged a unified fight against the war. In 1911 the whole labor world was shocked by the secret strangling in prison of Kotoku and eleven other Japanese left-wing fighters. The entry of Japan into World War I was marked by a further stepping up of these savageries against labor. When that war began in 1914 the trade unions probably numbered less than 10,000 members.

## 19. The International Trade Union Secretariat (1900-1914)

The developing trade unions in the various countries, almost from the beginning, expressed a strong urge towards international organization and action. They felt a keen need to support each others' strikes, to block the importation of strike-breakers, to learn from one another's general experience in the class struggle, and to meet jointly the many problems that confronted them in a capitalist system that was international in scope. To the masses of trade unionists, if not to their conservative leaders, there always was the greatest meaning in the basic working-class slogan enunciated by *The Communist Manifesto*, "Workingmen of the World, Unite!"

Already in the times of the Chartist movement there were strong international tendencies in the labor unions of Great Britain, and the pioneer trade unionists of France, Belgium, and other countries expressed similar trends. As we have seen, it was on the basis of the initiative of organized workers in Great Britain and France that the International Workingmen's Association, the First International itself was founded. *The Beehive,* organ of the London Trades Council, became the official paper of the IWA. During its life, the International continued to pay the closest attention to trade union questions of all sorts. So much was this the case that many labor writers have falsely concluded that the First International, which was fundamentally a political organization, was in reality a trade union international.

Although the early trade unions utilized the First International as their general organization, there was a growing demand almost from the

outset that the trade unions as such should be linked up internationally. In fact, an effort was made at the initial congress in Geneva in 1866 to restrict the new organization solely to manual workers. Wisely, however, the motion was voted down, as it would have excluded many non-working-class fighters, including Marx and Engels.[1] Historically, what the workers of the various countries then needed most was a broad political organization, and this was what Marx fought for and what the workers built.

There was, however, a continuing and a growing need for an international trade union organization of some kind, and the idea kept cropping up at the various congresses of the First International. It was the plan behind the holding of the Socialist congress at Ghent in September 1877, in the interim period between the end of the First International in 1876 and the beginning of the Second International in 1889. By this time the trade unions in the various countries had become strong enough so that they could have maintained a trade union international, a brother to the political international. But there was sufficient conservative opposition among the labor leadership to block its formation. In these years the stiff-necked bureaucrats then at the head of the British labor movement definitely opposed the whole project.

The Webbs say, "The Parliamentary Committee made it clear, in their annual reports, that far from favoring international action, the position they assumed was that they were so well organized—so far ahead of foreign workers, that little could be done until they were more on a level with the skilled workers of England."[2] The British Trades Union Congress of 1886, nevertheless, disregarded its leaders and supported the international congresses of 1887 and 1888, which turned out to be predominantly Marxist in their sentiment, to the great chagrin of the British conservative union leaders.

Like the First International before it, the Second International also acted as the rallying point of the trade unions internationally. The Congresses of 1889, 1890, and 1907 invited the affiliation and participation of trade unions generally. At the Stuttgart 1907 Congress, for example, of the 877 delegates present 266 were listed as representing trade unions directly. Obviously, however, a very large number of the regular party delegates were also trade unionists. The British Labor Party, with 123 delegates, listed only 8 as coming directly from trade unions,[3] although undoubtedly at least half of the delegates were actual trade unionists. The greater part of the trade union delegates, however, were paid officials in their organizations.

In the various early congresses of the Second International the idea

of a supplementary trade union international also arose frequently. The project had received a blow at the start, however, when it was voted down at the founding congress in Paris, 1889. This time it was the German leaders who formed the basis of the opposition.[4] They were obviously afraid that if such an organization were to be established it would very probably fall under the control of the British, French, and American trade unions, whose loyalty to the Social Democracy was very tenuous, to say the least. The AFL, which favored closer international trade union cooperation and action, for the same reasons, in reverse, that the Germans opposed it, proposed to this end the holding of a general trade union congress at Chicago in 1893 during the World's Fair. But this plan was later abandoned, when only the British Trades Union Congress accepted the invitation.[5] Henceforth, as the idea kept coming to the fore in ensuing congresses of the Second International, notably at Zurich, 1893, and London, 1896, its inveterate enemy was the increasingly conservative German trade union bureaucracy,

## FORMATION OF THE TRADE UNION SECRETARIATS

The need for international organization and action among the various trade union movements was much too strong, however, to be thus summarily brushed aside by conservative labor leaders. Therefore, inasmuch as the latter refused stubbornly to establish a general international trade union organization from the top, so to speak, the unions themselves proceeded to build it brick-by-brick from the bottom. It was a slower process, but as we shall see, it eventually accomplished its objective.

One of the processes in this building from the bottom upward that individual trade unions in England began to establish organic connections with their counterparts on the Continent, and vice versa. The national trade union centers also commenced to exchange delegates to their respective general congresses. In this regard, in 1891, the AFL and the British Trades Union Congress began to exchange fraternal delegates at their national congresses, a practice which they have continued until the present day.[6] These were only tentative steps, however. The pressure for international solidarity among the world's workers continued to grow and soon raised the labor movement onto higher ground in this general respect. The formation of international secretariats for the unions in individual crafts and industries began to take shape. The earliest to move in this direction were the Printers, in July 1889 in Paris, where 17 delegates from the typographical unions of France, Spain, Italy, Germany, the United States, England, and Belgium got together in the first conference of this kind. They were followed, in May 1890, when 112 delegates from

the National Miners Unions of England, France, Germany, and Austria met in Paris to form the International Miners Federation.[7]

These new-type international conferences and organizations gave the respective unions in the given trades and industries valuable, if only rudimentary, contact with each other. The ultimate consequence was that many other categories of unions followed the lead of the Printers and Miners by also setting up international trade secretariats, as the new organizations soon came to be called. By 1900, 17 of such bodies were in the field, and by the beginning of World War I there were 32 of them. The largest were: Miners 1,374,000; Metal Workers 1,106,000, and Transport Workers 881,950. In building these trade secretariats the unions were developing a permanent, if elementary, type of labor organization—so that, in our own day both the World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions have, with variations, full sets of them.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTERS

Meanwhile, as the individual international trade secretariats were gradually taking shape, the demand for a general trade union international made up of the representatives of the national labor movements as such, became more and more insistent; especially on the part of the English, French, and American trade unions. But the German leaders, as usual, were against it. Nevertheless, the British managed to have a general invitation sent out for union representatives from various countries to assemble at the convention of the Danish trade unions in Copenhagen in 1900. There, Karl Legien, autocratic leader of the German trade unions, pooh-poohed the idea of a trade union international, stating that questions of general importance to the trade unions "could quite well be handled at regular congresses of the Labor and Socialist International (the Second International)."[8] Despite this bucket of ice-water, however, a second general labor conference had to be called in Stuttgart 1902, to take place at the same time and location as the German trade union convention. This international conference produced a vague international center, but without officers or staff.

The actual founding of the new international organization, however, did not take place until 1903, in Dublin. There the International Secretariat of the National Trade Union Centers was formally set up, with Legien, by informal consent, acting as general secretary. This cunning bureaucrat, who had blocked the movement as long as he could, quickly took the leadership of it when he could no longer stall it. Legien's bu-

reaucratic machine had also been no less active in getting the key positions in the individual International Trade Secretariats, as fast as they came into existence. Thus, at the outbreak of World War I in 1914, of the 32 International Secretariats, Umbreit lists all but five as having their headquarters in Berlin.[9]

After its preliminary conferences in Copenhagen (1900), Stuttgart (1901), and Dublin (1903), the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centers held several further conferences prior to World War I, as follows: Amsterdam (1905), Christiania (1907), Paris (1909), Budapest (1911) and in Zurich (1913). The affiliated membership, 2,477,000 in 1904, reached 6,843,909 in 1914. In the latter year there were 19 national trade union centers affiliated.[10]

In the meetings of the respective international trade secretariats and also of the International Secretariat for National Trade Union Centers there was a constant conflict going on between those elements, mostly British, French, and American, who wanted to develop this new international machinery into something approaching a real trade union international, and the Legien group of conservative bureaucrats, who strove to reduce the various trade secretariats and the general secretariat into so many international post-offices and statistical bureaus. At the Paris (1909) conference, for example, upon the continued insistence by the French that the International Secretariat of the National Trade Union Centers should take up and deal with the question of the general strike, the Legien-dominated conference decided that "All theoretical questions, and those which affect the tendency or tactics of the trade union movements in the separate nations will not be discussed." In the same narrow spirit the Christiania (1907) conference of the Secretariat referred the question of "International Trade Union Action Against War" to the Socialist International as a "political" question and refused to discuss it.[11]

During this period the AFL was formally affiliated to the International Secretariat, and American delegates attended most of its conferences, Generally, the AFL's position was on the conservative side regarding political questions. In Budapest (1911) the Industrial Workers of the World (of which the present writer was the delegate) challenged the right of the AFL, as an organization dedicated to the preservation of capitalism, to represent the American working class in labor's international. The IWW protest was defeated, however, with only the two delegates from the French General Confederation of Labor (Anarcho-syndicalist), supporting it.[12]

## THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Despite the constant sabotage of the project by Legien and the other conservative Social Democratic leaders who followed his general leadership, the demand for a genuine world labor federation would not down. It kept coming up at the succeeding meetings of the International Secretariat, particularly after 1907. The demand, as always, came chiefly from the British, French, and American delegations. The French and Americans, discontented at the way Legien and the Social Democrats in general were running things, had stayed away from the 1907 meeting in Oslo, but they attended the later conferences and again raised their demand for a broader international organization.

Lorwin sums it up: "The French delegates demanded the holding of general trade union congresses which would discuss not only trade unionism but general political and social questions. The American delegates criticized the same Secretariat as having no meaning for American workers and proposed that the International Secretariat be re-organized into an International Federation of Trade Unions."[13] This was in 1909, at Paris. The two succeeding conferences, in Budapest 1911, and Zurich in 1913, devoted most of their time to this increasingly urgent question. So far as Gompers was convened, the issue provided him with a good club with which to beat the American Socialists, whom he abhorred.

Finally, at Zurich the pressure became so strong that even Legien had to make a maneuver in the matter by allowing the formation of at least a shadow trade union international. The American delegate, G.W. Perkins, head of the Cigarmakers Union and a close co-worker with Gompers, came to the Zurich conference with explicit instructions from the preceding AFL convention to demand the establishment of "an international federation of labor,"[14] but as was the habit of AFL bureaucrats, he did not allow this instruction to cramp his dubious activities. Sassenbach describes what took place at Zurich. He says there was a "proposal by the American delegate Perkins to change the name of the International into the *International Federation of Trade Unions* which was unanimously accepted. Perkins pointed out that it was not a question of altering the form of the organization, but only its name, and Legien agreed...."[15] Thus the American instructions went out the window and the labor international with them. Sassenbach adds that when it came to select a president for the IFTU, "Legien was, of course, chosen."

The Zurich betrayal of the international needs and wishes of the workers took place on the very eve of World War I. Legien and his cronies had not the slightest intention of resisting the imperialist war which was then looming on the horizon, nor had Gompers. So they left the in-

ternational trade union movement without any real organization or leadership to meet the great world crisis which was then so obviously and rapidly developing.

## THE CATHOLIC LABOR INTERNATIONAL

While the trade unions were thus struggling their way towards an international organization in the face of the treachery of their top leaders, the Catholic, or so-called "Christian" trade unions (as a few Protestants also belonged to them), then existing in various countries, were also moving towards some measure of international cooperation. They finally achieved this to pretty much the same extent as did the Social Democratic trade union leaders, by setting up the International Secretariat of Christian Trade Unions. They also organized international secretariats for various trades and industries. The whole movement was engineered by the Vatican.

As early as 1847 the Catholic Church began to organize religious groupings among the workers in specific crafts.[16] But the movement did not really get under way until 1891, when Pope Leo XIII, "the workingman's Pope," issued his famous Encyclical *De Rerum Novarum,* proposing in sum the organization of Catholic trade unions. The purpose behind this move was, of course, to combat the rising Social Democratic influence among Catholic workers. Significantly, the most strenuous efforts to set up these organizations took place precisely in those Catholic, or largely Catholic, countries where Social Democracy was strongest, notably in Germany, where the class had just smashed Bismarck's Anti-Socialist law.

During the next two decades the Catholic ("Christian") unions acquired some hold in various mainly Catholic countries. At the time when World War I began the Christian International claimed membership of 542,213, of which, according to Nestriepke, 342,785 were in Germany. The rest were in scattering organizations, chiefly France, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and Italy. Significantly, in these years the Church made no attempt to establish its unions throughout heavily Catholic Latin America, as at this time there was no strong Social Democracy there to combat. It may be remarked, however, that never, not even in such predominantly Catholic countries as France, Italy, Poland, etc., did the Catholic unions ever succeed (even down to our times) in recruiting more than a small minority of the Catholic workers in any country. These workers, like the working class in general, manifestly prefer the economics, struggles, tactics, and social perspectives of Karl Marx to those of the Vatican.

The Catholic unions followed a policy of class collaboration, mixed with religion. They opposed Socialism, Syndicalism, and Communism. They denied the existence of the class struggle, deprecated the use of strikes and other active means of struggle, opposed working class (especially Socialist) political action against the employers, and they advocated a general line of cooperation with the latter. They accepted the capitalist system and the bourgeois state, and they proposed to reform them only in minor respects. They did, however, demand union recognition, collective bargaining, factory inspection, the eight-hour day, legislation for women, etc., all of which they hoped to achieve on the basis of collaboration with the bosses.[17]

The launching of the Catholic unions was essentially an attack upon the labor movement. Nevertheless the path of these organizations has not always been rose-strewn for their leaders. Nestriepke tells how the German employers, who were against trade unionism in principle, were often hostile even to this tame variety. This was true also of many Catholic employers. Consequently, the Christian unions, although committed programmatically against strikes, nevertheless occasionally had to wage them. Generally, however, these unions were disruptive of working-class unity. They tended to confuse the workers ideologically and thus to weaken their struggles on both the economic and political fields.

In the non-Catholic countries, notably in the United States where Catholics are only about 23 percent of the population, the Vatican, although it could not successfully launch trade unions of its own, nevertheless, from the 1890's and even earlier, has steadily sought to influence and to control the trade union movement. It is a well-known fact that although Powderly himself was a Catholic, the Church took a sharp stand against the radical Knights of Labor, and this was one of the many reasons for that organization's decline. Through later decades the Church has also striven persistently to influence AFL policy and leadership in a conservative direction, and not without very considerable success. This policy is continued today by the Catholic Church, not only in a general sense through such bodies as the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, but also by direct pressures upon various top leaders of the AFI. and CIO. Typically, in the recently merged two federations into AFL-CIO (December 1955), the leading eight-man Executive Committee contains no less than four Catholics.

Religion, as such, has no place in trade union life. Of course, the Party of the working class—the Communist Party—must deal with such an active, important ideological element and it takes a scientific, atheistic stand. But the trade unions being necessarily broad class organizations

made up of workers of varying religious and non-religious beliefs, cannot concern themselves with religious doctrinal questions, for this would at once divide the movement. They must and do, however, take up the cudgels in a practical trade union way against any and all churches and individual clerics who venture to attack the labor movement or otherwise to carry on reactionary political activities. In this respect, even in the most religious countries, the trade union movement has often conflicted militantly with reactionary clerical forces, and in doing this it has generally been supported by its members of all denominations.

At the Geneva congress of the First International in 1866 Karl Marx gave the world's workers a clear line on this complex question, on which, in the main, they have followed ever since. The French delegation to the congress, having in mind to secure an anti-clerical pronouncement by the International, proposed that the question of religion be placed upon the agenda of the congress; but Marx sharply opposed this as highly divisive of the workers, and the French project was not considered by the congress. This was the beginning, or at least a powerful re-affirmation, of the principle of what came to be known later as “the outstretched hand” in a trade union sense to workers of all denominations. Generally the labor movement in all countries has since followed this sound principle and has kept the unions upon a non-sectarian basis. This is a major reason why the Christian unions have made relatively so little progress, even among orders with devout religious convictions.

## 20. The Trade Unions in the 1905 Russian Revolution

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 was the first of the great imperialist wars. Imperial Russia and imperial Japan fought like wolves over the territory that they were mutually tearing from the body of helpless China. But as they battled murderously against each other, the workers and peasants of Russia took a hand in the struggle on their own account, transforming the war into a civil war aimed at the overthrow of tsarist-capitalism.

Before examining this situation more concretely it is necessary to note the tremendous changes that had been taking place in the Russian labor movement in the previous few years. These developments, as the ensuing years and decades were to make manifest, were of the most profound importance, not only for Russia but for the entire world. This was the crystallization, under Lenin's leadership, of Bolshevism, or what came to be known as Marxism-Leninism. Stalin later designated Leninism as “the Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution.”[1]

## LENIN'S RESTORATION OF MARXIST PRINCIPLES

By the turn of the century the petty bourgeois and trade union bureaucrats of the Second International were becoming deeply infected with the poison of Bernstein revisionism (see chapter 14). Carried away by the illusive prosperity of the long upswing of capitalism, they were increasingly concluding that Marxism was obsolete; that Marx's economics was antiquated; that his principles of the class struggle no longer applied, and that the workers should look for their emancipation, not to the revolutionary abolition of capitalism, but to the gradual transformation of that system into Socialism. They were ideologically corrupted by imperialism.

These revisionist opportunist notions had penetrated into the labor movement in Russia, as into that of all other countries, taking on specific forms to conform to the Russian situation. The outstanding fighter against this revisionism was V.I. Lenin, who was born of middle-class parents at Simbirsk, Russia, on April 10, 1870. Lenin brilliantly challenged the whole opportunist analysis and program of the revisionists, showing with incontrovertible logic the validity of Marx's revolutionary principles and program in the period of imperialism. Among his early presentations of this fundamental thesis, Lenin in 1902 wrote his famous booklet, *What Is To Be Dane?* The first basic collision between the revolutionary and revisionist groups in the Party took place in London in 1903, at the second convention of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, which had held its founding convention in March 1898. At the historic second convention, which, because of terror conditions in Russia bad to be held abroad, the followers of Lenin were generally in the majority.*

Both Party factions agreed that Russia at this time stood upon the eve of a bourgeois revolution, but they differed fundamentally in their conception of the role of the working class in the situation. In brief, the Mensheviks took the position that inevitably the bourgeoisie must lead the revolution, that the workers should support this leadership, that the peasantry were essentially a counter-revolutionary force, and that the question of Socialism had to be pushed away off into the dim future, to be arrived at by a slow process of evolution, as capitalism and the labor movement gradually grew in Russia. On the other hand, the Leninists, among whom was the young Joseph Stalin, contended that the bourgeoisie would betray the revolution by compromise with the tsarist landown-

* Hence the names of "Bolshevik" and "Menshevik" deriving respectively from the Russian words for majority and minority.

ers, that, consequently, the workers, in alliance with the peasantry, must struggle for the revolutionary leadership, that they should fight for the establishment of a government (dictatorship) of the workers and peasants, and that their general aim must be to cause the bourgeois revolution to grow over into a proletarian revolution. The approaching revolution of 1905, as it turned out, was to provide an acid test of the diametrically opposite theories and program of the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.

## LENIN'S PARTY OF A NEW TYPE

One of the basic phases of the Party controversy turned around the question of what kind of party the workers should build. The Mensheviks, like their political brothers in other countries and in accordance with their opportunistic conception of the role of the working class as subordinate to the bourgeoisie, fought for a broad, amorphous, and loosely constructed party; one in which real discipline and a strong leadership would be both needless and impossible. Such a party, conforming to the harsh restrictions of the tsarist regime, would make it out of the question for the workers to contest the political leadership of the bourgeoisie in the revolution. In radical contradiction to this petty bourgeois type of party, Lenin proposed a strong, well-knit, and disciplined organization, based upon the principle of democratic centralism. He insisted that party members should be not merely supporters of the Party's campaigns, as the opportunists wanted, but dues-paying members, attending its meetings, participating in its struggles, and obeying its discipline. The Party would, of course, have to be an underground organization, because the tsarist autocracy brutally suppressed, with long prison terms, all attempts to form genuine working-class organizations, both political and industrial.

Lenin understood very well that while the internal dispute over the form of the Party seemed to be only an organizational question, in reality it reflected the profound political gulf between the two groups in the Party. The opportunist political program of the Mensheviks necessitated the loose and formless type of party they proposed, whereas the revolutionary program of the Bolsheviks required Lenin's "party of a new type." In this historic fight Trotsky lined up with the Mensheviks, and so also, eventually, did Plekhanov, pioneer Marxist leader in Russia.

## LENIN AND THE TRADE UNIONS

At the end of the nineteenth century, under the iron repression of the tsarist regime, there were no trade unions in Russia.[2] Strikes began, however, as early as the 1870's, and in the 1890's they began to take on a large scope. In St. Petersburg in May 1896 there was a general strike of

40,000 textile workers against the 14 and 15-hour day; in March 1902 there was a local railroad and general strike in Rostov-on-Don; in the Spring of 1903 there was a broad walkout of oil workers in Southern Russia, and in the Spring of 1904 there was a general strike in Odessa.[3] All these struggles were brutally repressed, with the slaughter of many workers. At the turn of the century there were no open trade unions in Russia. The workers had only a few underground unions and a number of benefit societies. Open trade unions came only with the outbreak of the 1905 Revolution. Trade unionism had been long "in the air," however, what with the industries expanding and the working class growing. In the early 1900's, therefore, the government made a rather fantastic effort to corral and devitalize the incipient labor movement which it greatly feared, by setting up "labor unions" directly organized by the police. These were the so-called Zubatoff organizations, named after their founder, the chief of the Moscow secret police. They failed, however, due largely to their penetration by revolutionary workers.

Previously, in the late 1890's, there had appeared a new labor group, the "Economists." Undoubtedly under direct employer influence (for many of them eventually joined the reactionary Constitutional-Democrats, "Cadets"), the Economists proposed to organize "pure and simple" trade unions, pretty much on the Gompers model. They wanted to confine the workers' struggle to the economic field, leaving the political leadership in the hands of the bourgeoisie. They also undertook to cramp the trade union movement into the rigid legal confines of the tsarist regime.

The Economists were politically the forerunners of the eventual Menshevik faction, having many things basically in common with the latter. Lenin at once took up the cudgels against them. He denounced the movement as "a desertion of Marxism, a denial of the necessity for an independent political party of the working class, an attempt to convert the working class into a political appendage of the bourgeoisie."[4]

In his controversies with the Economists and the Mensheviks, Lenin profoundly theorized the trade union movement, laying the foundations organically, tactically, and theoretically of trade unionism in the period of imperialism. Especially he did this in his booklet, *What Is To Be Done?* Marx and Lenin were the greatest of all theorists of trade unionism. Marx's most significant contributions on the subject were in *The Communist Manifesto,* the *Inaugural Address* of the First International and *Value, Price and Profit;* while Lenin's principal trade union theories arc contained in his *What Is To Be Done?* and *"Left-Wing" Communism*, *An Infantile Disorder.*

Lenin warred against the Gompers-like anti-politics of the opportunists. He demonstrated the indispensability of trade union political action. Moreover, he proved the primacy of all-embracing political action—including such matters as the fight for the economic demands of the workers, the struggle against the autocracy, the national question, labor legislation, and the revolution itself—over the narrow wages-and-hours policies of the Economists and their blood brothers, the Mensheviks.

Lenin also combatted the opportunist theory of the neutrality of the trade unions toward the Party—the theory upon which the revisionist trade union leaders in Germany and elsewhere were building up their own narrow bureaucracy as a rival force to the Party leadership. Lenin, on the contrary, promulgated the unity of the labor movement and the need for the closest cooperation of all branches, with the Party in the lead. For the trade unions, his principle was: not direct affiliation to the Party, but also not neutrality towards it. The unions and the Party should jointly struggle against the autocracy. Lenin clearly established theoretically the leadership of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletariat.

Lenin likewise attacked the pragmatic conception of spontaneity in organization and ideology that prevailed among the Economists and Mensheviks. He advocated instead for the trade unions principles of solid structure, centralized leadership, and conscious theory. On the question of trade union organization, he outlined in great detail the only kind of trade union structure then possible under the tsarist terrorism—a loosely constructed, but nevertheless firm, underground trade union movement. Lenin said, "If we are out for wide workers' organizations, and not for wide arrests, if it is not our purpose to provide satisfaction to the gendarmes, these organizations must remain absolutely loose and not bound by any strict rules."[5] Under the harsh circumstances, he pointed out, regular reports, mass conventions, etc., were out of the question. Lenin skillfully combined legal and illegal working-class activities. The Bolsheviks, of course, from the outset endorsed the principle of industrial unionism. It was on the above general Leninist basis that the Russian labor unions were built and that they played a vital role in the 1905 Revolution.

Lenin especially battled against the gross underestimation of theory on the part of the Economists; against their opportunist conception that the workers would pick up the necessary guiding principles as they went along in the class struggle. This was a Russian expression of the same opportunist line as that of Gompers, who never tired of boasting that he and his collaborators worked along from day-to-day pragmatically, without any over-all labor theory whatever. To such bourgeois ideological

opportunism Lenin counterposed the imperative need of Marxist theory, both for the immediate daily struggles under capitalism and for the final struggle to abolish Capitalism and to establish Socialism. Lenin declared that, "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."[6]

In these historic controversies, in reply to the Economists' Gompers-like attacks against "intellectual interference," Lenin made his famous defense of the role of the revolutionary intellectuals in the labor movement. He said: "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness; i.e., it may itself realize the necessity for combining in unions, to fight against the employers and to strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc. The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes—the intellectuals. The founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia."[7]

## THE COURSE OF THE 1905 REVOLUTION

The Russo-Japanese war began on February 8, 1004, when the Japanese made a devastating sneak attack upon the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. The next 18 months were marked by one catastrophic Russian defeat after another, and on August 23, 1905, Japan at the peace conference, under the chairmanship of President Theodore Roosevelt, stripped Russia of Port Arthur, Southern Sakhalin, its Korean sphere of influence, and the whole of Southern Manchuria. One imperialist wolf had snatched the prey from the mouth of the other.

The Russian masses, half-starved, bitterly exploited, and savagely tyrannized over, were against the tsar's imperialist war from the start. They had no taste whatever to be cannon fodder for the corrupt tsarist autocracy. The first major signal of the revolutionary storm that was brewing was a big and successful strike of the Baku oil workers in December 1904. Fuel was poured on the growing fire by the brutal killing of 1,000 workmen and the wounding of 2,000 more during the peaceful demonstration of 140,000 workers before the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on January 22, 1905, "Bloody Sunday." A wave of burning indignation swept Russia. Led by the fighting metal workers of St. Petersburg, workers all over the country began to strike. The wave of strikes was general and revolutionary in character. In January alone some 450,000 struck. Lenin says that during the year of 1905 the total number of strikers was 2,800,000, or over one and a half as many as the whole

body of the working class.[8] The great mass of the peasantry also began to go into action, 2,000 estates being burned and the land re-distributed. The students everywhere joined the movement, and the people began building Soviets in the major centers. The Polish national movement flared up in insurrection.

The Russian workers demanded the eight-hour day, the abolition of the tsarist government, the calling of a Constituent Assembly, Their revolutionary pressure became so great that on August 19, 1905, the tsar established a reactionary Duma. The Revolution stormed on, however, the workers refusing to be fooled by this empty maneuver. The whole movement came to a climax in the Moscow armed uprising in December. The tsarist army, although wavering in various places, shot down the Moscow insurrection, and in the face of mounting terrorism, the Revolution began to subside.

The 1905 Revolution was, as Lenin called it, a "dress rehearsal" for the far greater and decisively successful Revolution of 1917. The 1905 struggle reflected the theoretical and tactical concepts of Bolshevism that Lenin had been developing during the years preceding the revolution. The workers fought for the leadership of the bourgeois revolution; they developed a great fighting alliance with the peasants, and they aimed directly at establishing a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. This was, in outline, the general Leninist program which was to carry to success the great November Revolution of 1917. If the Revolution did not succeed in 1905 this was chiefly because the working class was not yet well enough developed and organized politically, because the vast mass of the peasantry was still not fully ripe for revolutionary action, and because the Mensheviks, with their counter-revolutionary policies, were still too strongly entrenched in the ranks of the working class.

## THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS

The revolutionary strike movement of 1904-5, which Crook called "the greatest mass strike the world had known,"[9] was directly led by Lenin and the Social Democratic Labor Party. In some centers the young Soviets were the immediate leaders, and generally the skeleton trade union movement was a basic organizational force in the broad struggle. The Moscow Soviet called the general strike of December 7th, which became an armed revolt.[10] Lozovsky says that, "Everywhere initiative groups, commissions, strike committees, trade unions, workers' delegate councils were formed,"[11] and they all took part in developing the great strike movement. In view of the revolutionary spirit of the workers and their

high degree of spontaneity, the Party and the trade unions were able to develop sweeping strikes with but a small minimum of organization.

Despite the still prevailing terror, the workers began openly to form trade unions. The first to organize, according to Lozovsky, were the Moscow Printers. They were soon followed by other trades—Tailors, Tanners, Shoemakers, etc. The Railroad workers. Metal workers, and Textile workers, who formed the backbone of the vast strike movement, also began to organize. At the end of 1905, says Lozovsky, "there was not a single large town in Russia where a trade union had not been formed." Many of these cities also had central labor councils This was under the tsarist regime, when, according to the law of 1874, to carry on strikes was a crime punishable by the loss of civil rights and property and by exile to Siberia.

In September 1905 the first national trade union conference in Russian history was held in Moscow. Lozovsky states that there were present delegates from 26 Moscow unions and labor groups and from ten unions in other cities. Workers' benefit societies were also permitted to attend the conference, but police-controlled unions, of which there were a few, were barred. A second national trade union conference was held in February, 1906, in the midst of a growing terror from victorious tsarism. Some 200,000 workers were represented. Marquand states that by 1907, "the number of unions had grown to the surprising figure of 650, with an aggregate membership of 250,000 of which over a third were in the metal and textile trades."[12] The unions lived precariously, liable to be closed down and their leaders arrested at any time by the police. In 1907 there were 104 of such arbitrary seizures and disbandments of trade unions.

## THE AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution of 1905 had far-reaching repercussions among the workers and the oppressed peoples of the world. As we have already remarked, it was a great inspiring force in colonial and semi-colonial Asia. It gave a strong impetus to the national liberation movements in Persia, Turkey, Egypt, China, India, and various other oppressed lands. It also stimulated the incipient trade union movements in these countries.

The Revolution also stirred deeply the labor movements in Europe and America. The workers everywhere were thrilled and inspired by the mighty blows delivered against arrogant tsarism by the awakening Russian proletariat and peasantry. The Revolution was also a testing ground for the Marxist and revisionist theories then increasingly clashing in the organizations of the Second International. One of the many lessons of the

Revolution was that regarding the mass political strike, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, became an issue of decisive importance in the life of the International.

As for the Russian trade unions during the hard years following the failure of the Revolution, Lozovsky says that, subject to violent police repression, they led "a miserable existence." The defeat of the Revolution was also the defeat of the trade unions. But by 1910 the trade union movement was reviving and becoming active.[13] The Russian working class, under the brilliant political leadership of the great Lenin and the Bolshevik party, quickly recovered from its serious defeat in the Revolution. By 1912 the workers were in fact again marching and fighting their way ahead to the fundamental revolutionary victory of November 1917. The workers were unable, as yet, however, to reconstruct an open trade union movement. Lozovsky says that when the 1917 Revolution began there were in existence but three trade unions in Russia, with about 1,500 members.[14]

## 21. The Question of the General Strike

The Russian Revolution of 1905, among its many major lessons for the working class, basically clarified the complex question of the general strike. For many years previously, almost from the inception of the labor movement, this had been a moot issue, with very much confusion existing regarding the whole matter. The 1905 Revolution, however, like a flash of lightning, demonstrated the tremendous effectiveness of the general strike, particularly in a revolutionary situation, and at one stroke it placed the use of this great and primarily political weapon upon the agenda of the world labor movement.

### THE GENERAL STRIKE IN LABOR HISTORY

When workers first began to organize, to feel their economic strength and to force concessions from the employers by strikes, it was an easy progression ideologically, with the growth of the labor movement, to arrive at the conception of the general strike as the means to settle the gravest problems of the working class. Even in the earliest days of the labor movement the question of the general strike kept springing up more or less spontaneously in the minds of the workers. In England, the birthplace of trade unionism, already by 1833 William Renbow, a union shoemaker, in his pamphlet entitled *Grand National Holiday and Congress of the Production Classes,* put forth the plan of a month's national holiday, or general strike[1]—an idea which was, as we have seen in chapter 4, to play an enormous role in the eventual historic Chartist move-

ment. The general strike plan, on a local scale at least, also was an important factor in trade unionism in the United States in the big labor upheaval of the 1830's, as exemplified by the Philadelphia general strike of 1835.

The organizational and tactical evolution of the trade union movement has worked historically in the direction of the general strike. Thus, at the earliest period the workers struck in single jobs, and later in groups of shops in individual localities. Eventually, however, with the expansion of industry and the national market, they began to wage national trade or industrial strikes, until now such general nationwide walkouts of Miners, Railroad workers, Textile workers, Maritime workers, and others have become commonplace throughout the world labor movement in the capitalist countries. Meanwhile, under the pressure of violent employer opposition, local general strikes also began to take place, of which there have been scores, in all parts of the world. The whole trend towards an ever-broader struggle by the workers inevitably leads to the general, or mass strike, of which there have been many in world labor history, At the apex of this development is international May Day, which, in its proper application, calls for a world general one-day strike.

During the period of the First International (1864-1876) the Bakuninist Anarchists were the outstanding advocates of the general strike, and they put it forth as a basic panacea for all the workers' problems. They raised the question repeatedly in the congresses and the national sections of the International. They also undertook upon several occasions, with dubious results, to put their slogan into effect, mainly in Spain and Italy. The Anarchists were followed by the Anarcho-syndicalists as the champions of the general strike as the cure-all for the working class. From the middle of the 1890's on they made the general strike the center of their entire ideology and program, and all their activities were centered around it—later we shall estimate their experiences in this respect.

Generally the Marxists opposed the Anarchist and Anarcho-syndicalist campaign for the general strike. They understood that the latter were nursing the general strike panacea as a substitute for real organization and struggle and they realized that to put through a successful strike was a matter requiring solid organization, a ripe situation and clear heads among the workers. They properly had no sympathy for the wave-of-the-hand dependence upon spontaneous general action by the working class, as conceived by those who proposed the general strike as the answer to every major question. In these early stages the labor movement was unable successfully to carry through general strikes, what with the

workers' political parties being weak and undeveloped, and the trade unions, except in England, including only a tiny fraction of the working class.

Early Marxists were correct in opposing the Anarchistic idealistic conception of the general strike, but they were sometimes somewhat one-sided in their opposition, in contrast with their highly effective policies in other directions. In 1873, in the journal *Der Volkstaat* (October 21, November 2, 5) Engels undertook such an analysis, in opposing the Bakuninist Anarchists' reliance upon spontaneity for general strike action. He said that for such a strike "a complete organization of the working class and a full treasury are necessary," and he opined that the reactionary governments would prevent the workers from achieving these ends. And even if they did have them, "they would not need to take the round-about means of the general strike to reach their goal."[2] The fact is, of course, that in an intense political situation, in which general strike action becomes possible, strong organization in the key industries is enough to achieve such a strike. Many labor movements of today, so far as organizational strength is concerned, are quite able to bring about "general" strikes.

During the pre-World War I decades of the Second International the right-wing leaders seized upon Engels' statement and with gross distortions made it their key text in fighting against all approaches of the workers to the question of the mass strike. The German Social Democratic leader Auer put this opposition in a sentence: "The general strike is general nonsense," said he. In the matter of Engels and the general strike, Stalin says (*Leninism,* Vol. I, p. 90): "But we have to remind you that Engels' criticism related, not to the general strike per se, but to the purely industrial or economic strike advocated by the Anarchists, who looked upon it as a substitute for the political struggle of the proletariat. This criticism has no bearing upon the general strike for political ends." It was not until the 1905 Revolution in Russia that, under the leadership of Lenin, the Russian working class demonstrated in practice and theory the validity of the general strike as a tremendous weapon of the working class. Thenceforth the Marxists became the real champions of the proper strategical and tactical use of the national general strike, or more properly the mass political strike, in the class struggle.

## WAGES AND SOLIDARITY GENERAL STRIKES

World labor history is replete with records of local and national general strikes carried on for wage demands or in support of hard-pressed workers fighting for such demands. There have also been many demon-

strative general strikes, usually for a specified short period. International May First, as proposed, was such a mass international demonstrative strike.

Italy has had many such strikes—city-wide in Genoa 1900, Florence 1902, Rome 1903, Parma 1908, Milan 1907 and 1913, and the national general strikes of 1904 and 1914. Spanish labor history, from the 1870's to the 1930's, has had even more of such mass strikes, local and national—at least a score of them being on record—for combined economic, political, and solidarity objectives. Especially notable were the general strikes of 1902 and 1909, radiating from Barcelona. Many economic and political gains were made in these strikes.

France, from the middle 1890's, especially with the rise of Anarcho-syndicalism, was the scene of much agitation for the general strike, and the French leaders repeatedly took up the question at the various international congresses. During the general period we are considering, the decades just prior to World War I, this agitation culminated in several general strike attempts. In October 1902 the CGT called a general strike in support of the striking coal miners, but it did not materialize substantially.[3] Marseilles in 1904 had a general strike, but with limited success. The French unions, during the rise of Syndicalism after the congress of Amiens in 1906, conducted many sympathy or solidarity strikes, but they did not reach the level of successful general local or national strikes. The French unions also paid much attention to turning May First into a real day of strike and struggle, the demonstration of 1906, for example, being practically a general strike of 200,000 workers for the eight-hour day.

The same fighting spirit was shown in Latin America, where almost every country has had one or more general strikes, fought through under virtual civil war conditions. During this period Argentina. Chile, Peru, Uruguay, and other countries of the area had local or national general strikes. Japan, after World War II, has had several big general strikes.

To mention only a few more such strikes during these decades—these were the American eight-hour day general strike of 1886, the Australian general strike of August 1917, the Seattle, Washington, general strike in February 1919 of 65,000 workers in support of striking shipyard workers; the May 1919 strike of 35,000 workers in Winnipeg, Canada, in solidarity with striking metal trades workers, the historic British general strike of 5,000,000 workers in 1926 to back up the striking coal miners, and the general strike of 125,000 workers in San Francisco in July 1934, in support of the strike of the maritime workers all along the Pacific Coast. All these strikes were defeated primarily by reason of the treasonous policies of the conservative top leaders of organized labor.

## GENERAL STRIKES FOR THE UNIVERSAL WORKERS' FRANCHISE

Another prolific source of general strikes was the struggle of the working class in Europe for the right to vote. Prior to World War I almost every country in Europe, including Germany, discriminated to a greater or lesser extent against the workers' political franchise. Consequently, nearly everywhere the Social Democratic parties put at the head of their immediate programs the fight for the "equal, secret, direct, and universal" franchise in the respective countries. Most of them largely built themselves on struggle around this issue. Frequently this movement raised the question of the general strike. Naturally, all such plans for general strikes were of great concern to the trade unions, which were indispensable in carrying them out.

The ruling classes everywhere refused very stubbornly to concede the workers the full right to vote, especially as during this general period they believed that for the workers to vote freely would mean a sudden end to their own rule. Consequently, with no legal, parliamentary way open for them to win the franchise, the workers turned their attention to the general political strike as the means to force this right from the reluctant employers and governments. This was noticeably the case after the decisive role of the mass strike in the 1905 Russian Revolution. The Anarcho-syndicalists, with their wrong apolitical views, however, were not at all interested in this political application of their much-cherished tactic of the general strike.

The workers of England, the pioneers as usual in trade union matters, were the first to undertake to win the ballot through a broad political mass strike. This was the heart of the program of the great Chartist movement of the 1830's and 1840's. As we have seen in chapter 4, however, the huge British strike movement to this end failed because of the inexperience and lack of organization of the working class, and the British workers had to fight on for several decades longer before they finally won the voting right.

Undeterred by this failure and by the pessimistic preachments of conservative Socialist leaders, the workers in Belgium also set out in 1893, to win the vote by striking for it. At that time, in a total population of 6,500,000, only 137,772 could vote. The workers delivered three mass strikes against the employers and the government, in 1893, 1902, and 1913. They partly broke down the iniquitous voting system, but it was not until the big post-World War I revolutionary upsurge that they finally won the equal ballot. The workers in Sweden, facing a similar undemocratic voting system,[4] also carried through a general strike, in 1902, for

equal voting rights, with partial success, again despite timid leaders. They had another general strike of a mouth's duration in 1909 over economic and franchise issues, and again with partial success.[5] The workers of Holland, in 1903, also had a general strike, mostly over economic questions, but in which the franchise was an issue. In Austria, in October 1905, directly under the influence of the general strikes in Russia, the workers tied up the industries throughout the country to back up their demand for the vote. As a result, in January 1907, they secured universal male suffrage.[6]

In Germany, too, under the powerful Russian example, the workers were resolved to end their voting handicap by a general strike. Their pressure became so great that at its convention in Jena in September 1905, while huge strikes were raging across the border in Russia, the Social Democratic Party gave a somewhat hesitant endorsement of the mass political strike as the means by which to protect and extend the workers' right to vote. The conservative trade union leadership, however, would have nothing to do with this. Meeting in convention four months earlier than the Party, in May 1905, and realizing the mass strike action that was contemplated, the bureaucrats condemned the general strike in principle and practice.[7] This action made the later decision of the Party still-born, and the final result was that the mass strike was virtually made a forbidden topic in the German trade unions. This clash between the unions and the Party had profound effects throughout the German labor movement, to which we shall come back later on.

## ANTI-WAR AND REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL STRIKES

For half a century before the Russian Revolution of 1917 the many international congresses of the Socialist and trade union movements had occupied themselves with the general strike as the means to halt capitalist wars and to bring about the Socialist revolution. put as we shall see in chapter 24, the world labor movement as a whole did not master this anti-war problem and it came to a terrible debacle in its failure to block the wholesale slaughter of World War I. The Russian Revolution of 1905 gave a clear lead to the line to be followed in this general respect, but the revisionist gentlemen at the head of the Second International would learn nothing from the “barbarous Russians.”

The general strikes in the 1905 Revolution were aimed against the war and against the very existence of the tsarist-capitalist system. At this time, in Russia, there were many big and important strikes, but the great weight of the movement came in two broad sweeping strike waves in January and October-November. They established the eight-hour day in

various industrial centers. Lenin says that in January 140,000 workers struck, and in November half a million factory workers, plus "several hundreds of thousands of railway workers, postal and telegraph employees, etc."[8] Leaders in the strike movement were the skilled metal and railroad workers. These general strikes, beginning largely over economic questions, grew inevitably into the December armed insurrection, the ill fate of which we have outlined in chapter 20.

Lenin stated that, "In no capitalist country in the world—not even in advanced countries like England, the United States of America, or Germany—has such a tremendous strike movement been witnessed as that which occurred in Russia in 1905." And he said regarding revolutionary Russia, "the struggle for immediate and direct improvement of conditions is alone capable of rousing the backward strata of the exploited masses, gives them a real education and transforms them—during a revolutionary epoch—into an army of political fighters within the space of a few months.... Only the waves of mass strikes that swept over the whole country, coupled with the severe issue of the imperialist Russo-Japanese war, roused the broad masses of the peasants from their slumber." Rosa Luxemburg, who became an ardent champion of the general strike and wrote a history of the Russian mass strikes, called the January strike the "broad background of the revolution."[9]

In the interim period between the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, general strikes, as we have seen, took place in several European countries. One of the most important and significant of these was the revolutionary strike of the Spanish workers against the Moroccan war of 1909. At this time the Spanish government was embarking upon a war of conquest against the people of Morocco. The revolutionary workers in Barcelona, 300,000 strong, on July 26, began a general strike against the war. The local tie-up was complete and the strike began to spread to other parts of Spain. A national general strike was scheduled for August 2nd, but extreme government repression prevented its coming to full realization.[10]

The great Russan Revolution of 1917 unleashed another series of national general strikes in various countries in Eastern and Central Europe, aimed in the main at the overthrow of capitalist governments. In Russia itself the first phase of the Revolution, its bourgeois stage, was initiated by a general political strike of the workers. The strike began in St. Petersburg on January 9 and in a few days embraced Moscow and other cities. On February 18 another strike wave began at the Putilov metal works in St. Petersburg; it spread rapidly and with the Bolsheviks leading, it took on an insurrectionist character. On February 27 the tsarist

troops refused to fire upon the workers and the bourgeois revolution had won. The second phase of the Revolution, its Socialist stage, was accomplished seven months later by an insurrection on November 7, with the Bolsheviks at its head and with the armed workers occupying the factories.

The German Revolution of 1918, preceded by broad strikes in the latter stages of the war, burst forth on November 5 in a combined general strike and insurrection, before which, on November 9, the Kaiser fled the country. During the next several years, while the revisionist Social Democrats refused to take power and to begin to establish Socialism, the German workers waged several other general strikes. But in later chapters we shall come back again to both the Russian and German revolutions and the role of the trade unions in them.

## THE GENERAL STRIKE AS A WORKING-CLASS WEAPON

The long list of general strikes in labor history shows conclusively that the workers in all countries, during periods of acute struggle with employers and their government agents, turn instinctively to the general stoppage of industry as a means to break the reactionary resistance of the employers and their political tools. Nor has the pessimism of the leaders served to prevent them from thus using the general strike. Time and again, under the most difficult conditions, they have had recourse to the mass political strike, but not always with the happiest results. It was not until the great mass strikes during the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, carried out under Communist leadership, that the tremendous economic and political power of the general strike was fully realized and effectively utilized.

To wage a general strike is not a course lightly to be embarked upon, as has been done more than once in the past. The political mass strike is a two-edged sword which, if carelessly used, can become more harmful than beneficial to the workers. It is a weapon which, to be effectively utilized, must be firmly grasped and resolutely wielded. The greatest handicap that the workers in most countries have faced in their efforts to carry through general strikes has been the timidity and treasonous attitude of conservative Social Democratic labor leaders, who, afraid of the great power of the movement they were heading, have lost no time in dissipating it, to the serious harm of the working class.

"The general or mass strike is fundamentally a revolutionary political weapon. The halting of national production on a universal scale is a matter of such decisive importance to capitalist society that its definite trend is to raise the question of political power. The general strike is a major

political struggle. The capitalist state considers such strikes to be real challenges to its political authority and it proceeds accordingly, to try to break them with every means at hand. This is a central lesson from the history of the labor movement during the past century and a half.

Of course, there have been many protest general strikes, usually on a local scale and for only a specified few days, where the state did not feel called upon to develop in full its violent strike-breaking tactics. There have also been some national general strikes where the Social Democratic leaders followed such a timid line of concessions and retreat that the employer class, considering this to be enough of a defeatist policy, did not feel it necessary to use the full coercive powers of the state.

Normally, however, in labor's universal experience, when the workers have set out upon a general strike, local or national, with no short time limit established for it, they have had to face the most determined efforts of the state to break their strike, by using violence from the outside and by cultivating right Social Democratic treachery from within.

It is in this strike-breaking spirit that all the major capitalist countries, especially the United States, are adopting union-crippling legislation which they vainly believe will make future general strikes impossible. History shows, however, that state violence and strike prohibitions have not prevented the workers from using the general strike time and again and with decisive effect, when they are in fighting mood and have resolute leadership. That they will continue to do so is a foregone conclusion.

## 22. Anarcho-Syndicalism As a World Movement (1906-1914)

Anarcho-syndicalism was born in France and there it developed as a full-fledged movement. It reached ideological maturity at the Amiens convention of 1906, as we have pointed out in chapter 17. After this, up to the outbreak of World War I, the movement tended to take on a world scope, securing more or less of a foothold in almost every country that had a trade union movement. In this period Anarcho-syndicalism definitely made a bid against Social Democracy and against Marxism for ideological supremacy in the ranks of international organized labor.

The basis of Anarcho-syndicalism in its strongholds—France, Spain, and Italy—originally was to be found in its ideological background of Proudhonism and Bakuninism among the workers of these countries, in the comparative industrial backwardness of these nations, with their high percentage of handicraft industries, in the extensive revolutionary traditions of these lands, in the extreme political corruption prevailing there,

including that in the ranks of the Social Democratic deputies, and in the predominance of Catholic authoritarianism in the social life in these countries. But in the considerable international extension of Syndicalism in the immediate pre-war years, the movement showed that it was quite able to secure a grip in countries of monopoly capital, countries without any background of Anarchism, including the United States and Great Britain.

Anarcho-syndicalism could develop this international expansion because it appeared to provide satisfactory answers to many of the workers' class problems, particularly those raised by imperialism, and which Social Democracy, increasingly a prey to rank opportunism, was manifestly not able to master. Thus, the anti-politics of the Syndicalists seemed to large numbers of workers to be the correct reply to the hordes of revisionist politicians who were infesting and devitalizing almost every Social Democratic Party; its militant "direct action" appeared as an effective alternative to the weak-kneed political action of the Social Democrats; its industrial unionism was the only type of unionism able to fight the trusts and obviously was vastly superior to the atomized craft unions still tolerated in many countries by the Social Democrats; and in view of the spectacular success of mass political strikes in the Russian Revolution of 1905, the general strike of Syndicalism seemed a plausible and effective means to combat the looming war danger and also, in due time, to abolish capitalism altogether. Therefore, in a situation imperatively demanding a fighting organization and policy by the workers, as against the feeble front being made by the compromising revisionist Social Democrats, Syndicalism, presenting itself as the solution of these problems, proceeded to grow and flourish. This it was able to do because Communism, led by the great Lenin, was at this time only beginning to emerge as tin international force in the labor movement.

In many countries Syndicalism occupied the position of being labor's left-wing, or of heavily influencing it. This was true not only of the labor movement generally, but also of many Social Democratic parties. Significantly, at the Stuttgart (1907) Congress of the Second International, when the majority delegation of the French Socialist Party presented a resolution to the congress on the question of the relations between the trade unions and the party, a matter then being discussed, the resolution was condemned and rejected as Syndicalistic, which it was. Also when in 1912 the American left-wing in the Socialist Party prepared a program in pamphlet form, *Industrial Socialism,* written by William D. Haywood and William E. Bohn, it was virtually a Syndicalist document. Similar trends existed in other Socialist parties. Despite its many weaknesses and

crudities, therefore, Anarcho-syndicalism was thus, in some respects, a forerunner of the powerful Communist movement of a decade later as the organization of the left-wing. The Communist parties, however, everywhere grew directly out of the Socialist parties, not from the Syndicalist trade unions.

## ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN THE LATIN COUNTRIES

In France the CGT, especially from the time of its Amiens convention of 1906, pursued an ultra-militant course. It made a big struggle on May Day of that year. "The first of May found Paris in a state of siege," says Levine.[1] Never since the Commune had there been so many troops there. Some 202,507 workers struck in 2,385 plants. In the many strikes that ensued during the next few years various collisions took place with the police and troops, numerous workers being killed. The most revolutionary section of the CGT was that of the building trades workers, who conducted a number of spectacular local general strikes in Paris and elsewhere.

The most important strike in France during the immediate pre-war period was that of the railroad workers. Conducted for wages and hours demands, the strike began unexpectedly on October 10 1910, in Paris. The leading committee called a general railroad strike, which tied up several of the most important lines. The Premier of France at the time was Aristide Briand, a renegade Socialist and at one time a super-advocate of the general strike. He arrested the strike committee, called the railroad men to the colors virtually as soldiers, and used the troops against the strikers. The strike was crushed. The railroad union which conducted this fight was ordinarily one of the most conservative in the French labor movement.

Meanwhile the CGT was securing the attention of militant elements all over the world, not only those of an Anarchist turn of mind but also large numbers of left-wing Socialists. These elements were attracted to the CGT by its aggressive policies generally; its relentless fight against the political trimmers in the Socialist Party, its active use of the strike weapon, its new forms of labor organization and fighting tactics, its vigorous denunciation of militarism, its repeated threats to combat a declaration of war by starting a revolutionary general strike, and its plans to base the new society upon the trade unions. The CGT increased its membership from 150,000 in 1904 to 400,000 in 1912.

In Italy, during the decade before World War I, Anarcho-syndicalism, largely patterned after that in France, also took on a substantial growth. During 1907 it conducted strikes involving 575,000

workers. The Syndicalists' movement centered in Parma. In 1908 they felt strong enough to undertake a general strike in that province. The whole labor movement rallied behind the great strike, but after a bitter struggle it was lost. At this time the Italian trade unions and Socialist Party were in the hands of the reformists; hence the Anarcho- syndicalists (unlike their brothers in France, who controlled the trade union movement) quit the Socialist Party and the unions under its leadership and embarked upon a policy of dual unionism. In 1912, gathering together their weakened forces, they formed the *Unione Sindicale Italiana,* with 101,729 members. At this time the Socialist-led labor union organization, the CGL, had 320,000 members. Lagardelle and Sorel, French Syndicalist theoreticians, were in constant contact with the Italian movement.[2]

In Spain, which had a powerful Anarchist movement running back to the days of the First International, the Anarcho-syndicalist movement caught hold even more solidly than in Italy. In 1910 the movement set up the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), which, however, did not begin to play an important role in the Spanish labor movement until about 1916. The Spanish Syndicalist movement, like that in neighboring Portugal and in Italy, generally took the French CGT as its model lor structure, tactics, and general philosophy. In these countries the working-class Anarchists joined the trade unions and formed a basic element of Anarcho-syndicalism.

In the countries of Latin America the Anarcho-syndicalist movement also constituted an important factor in the broad labor movement, especially among the emigrant workers from Spain, Italy, and Portugal. The Anarchists and Syndicalists were the pioneer union builders in this vast area. The Socialist movement generally was weak, the Second International, in the pre-World War I years, paying little or no attention to the establishment of parties and unions in the colonial and semi-colonial sectors of the world. The Communist movement, of course, was not yet born. The Syndicalists were especially active in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Bolivia, playing an important role in the early trade unions in these and other Latin American countries.

## THE AMERICAN IWW AND SYNDICALISM

The principal organization of Anarcho-syndicalism in the United '-States was the Industrial Workers of the World, founded in Chicago, June 27, 1905. The IWW originated as a revolt against the shameful reaction and corruption of the Gompers trade union bureaucracy. In the face of rapidly growing trusts which, on the one hand, carried on a ruth-

less policy of open shop in the industries, and on the other, systematically bribed the trade union leadership through the National Civic Federation, the Gompers leaders clung to their outworn craft unionism and their incredibly rotten practices of class collaboration. The IWW was a militant workers' answer to this combination of treachery and decay.

Initially the organization was led by left Socialist leaders, Eugene V. Debs, William D. Haywood, and Daniel De Leon. The 34 organizations, with 90,000 members, making up the founding convention,[3] were exclusively trade unions, all of them led by Socialists, mostly of the left. The convention adopted a preamble, supporting political action, but not endorsing any specific political party. The program made a slashing attack upon Gompersite reactionary craft unionism, and it laid basic emphasis upon industrial unionism.

Already at the first IWW convention there were Syndicalist apolitical features in the program, notably the clause proposing that the workers should "take and hold that which they produce by their labor" with their economic organization, "without affiliation with any political party." This amendment was fathered by De Leon, himself a semi-Syndicalist. At the fourth convention of the IWW in 1908, the preamble was further amended in a Syndicalist direction by striking out the political clause altogether and adding the famous Syndicalist sentence that, "By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."[4]

Meanwhile, obviously under Anarcho-syndicalist influence, notably that of the CGT of France, the proletarian Anarchists joined the IWW and helped to push it towards a Syndicalist program. Big factors in causing this action were the workers' disgust at the opportunist policies of the SP leaders and the fact that the vast millions of foreign-born workers to whom the IWW appealed chiefly were largely without votes. De Leon and Debs, with different objectives, quit the now thoroughly apolitical IWW, and quickly the IWW militants came to hate the right-wing Socialist leaders as violently as they did the Gompers union bureaucrats. As in several other countries, so in the United States, the bulk of the left-wing of the Socialist Party, mainly composed of immigrant workers, was highly sympathetic to the IWW, when not actually affiliated with it.

The IWW conducted many bitterly-fought strikes, some of them famous in United States labor history. Notable among them was the hard strike of 23,000 textile workers in Lawrence, Mass., in 1912. This dramatic strike attracted international attention. Millions of workers admired the fine fighting spirit of the organization generally. But the IWW, hamstrung by characteristic Syndicalist shortcomings, had, after seven years

of hard work, only some 60,000 members on January 1, 1917,[5] on the eve of the entry of the United States into World War I. At this point let us leave the organization for a while.

Minor elements in American Syndicalism were the Syndicalist League of North America, founded in 1912, and the International Trade Union Educational League, organized in 1914, of both of which the writer was general secretary. These organizations differed programmatically in two major respects from the IWW, of which they were split-offs. First, they opposed the dual union policy of the IWW, which drew the militants away from the mass conservative unions and isolated them in sterile revolutionary sects, and, second, they rejected the current Syndicalist theory that the trade unions would be the producing organs in the future society, holding instead that the producing organization had to be a completely different type of organization, creating its own managers, engineers, and superintendents.[6]

## THE BRITISH SYNDICALIST MOVEMENT

Great Britain had an early, minor development of the IWW in the 1905-1910 period. It also experienced, in much more marked degree, the Anarcho-syndicalist movement which was characteristic of the period just prior to World War I. This took initial organizational shape in Manchester, November 26, 1910, when the Industrial Syndicalist Education League (ISEL) was formed.[7] Its outstanding leader was Tom Mann, veteran of the great London dock strike of 1889 and a life-long fighter in the labor movement. The movement promptly attracted wide left-wing rank and file support and also that of many, at the time, progressive union leaders, including George Hicks, J.V. Wills, John Hamilton, W.H. Mainwaring, Noah Ablett, A.J. Cook, W.W. Craik, A.A. Purcell, and others.[8] The ISEL, while subscribing in a general way to the philosophy of French Syndicalism, put its real stress upon industrial unionism through amalgamation, and upon a militant and united strike policy. The British Syndicalists, unlike the American IWW, wisely concentrated their efforts within the old trade unions.

Almost immediately the British Syndicalists became a dynamic force in the labor movement. The trade unions were ripe for their stress upon unity and aggressive strike action. The workers in Great Britain, like those in other big capitalist lands, faced urgent problems raised by the advent of monopoly capital and imperialism, but the Social Democratic trade union bureaucracy, with its class collaboration in the industries, its antiquated craft unionism, and its flabby Labor Party political action, was unable to give the workers real leadership. The times called imperatively

for left-wing leadership, and as Communism was still only taking shape in Russia, Anarcho-syndicalism stepped into the leadership vacuum.

During the years 1910-1914 the British labor movement made unprecedentedly rapid advances.[9] It waged many successful strikes, the most important of which were those of the Railwaymen, the Transport Workers, and the Miners. These successive national strikes, repeatedly tying up the country's economy, gave the British ruling class a frightening shock, and also one to their faithful labor lieutenants, who were almost equally alarmed at the untoward behavior of the British working class. The great offensive of labor spread also to Ireland, one of the most bitterly fought strikes of the period being the general strike of the Transport Workers in Dublin, led by Jim Larkin.

The unions grew very rapidly, drawing in new categories of unskilled and women workers. The Miners Union increased in one year from 160,000 to 900,000 members. Between 1910 and 1915 the hitherto almost stagnant membership figure of the Trades Union Congress leaped up from 1,647,715 to 2,682,357. As many unions were unaffiliated, the total union membership gains far exceeded the foregoing figures. A powerful amalgamation movement also ran through the unions, industrial union sentiment growing on all sides. The need for it was great because, characteristically, in the atomized craft unionism of Britain in 1907 there were 75 unions in mining, 77 in the building trades, and 273 in textiles, all independent.[10]

One of the many important results of this rank-and-file unity campaign was the consolidation of the National Union of Railwaymen into an industrial union. But most vital of all was the formation, in April 1914, of the "Triple Alliance," upon the initiative of the Miners. This big combination of the key workers in British industry, Transport Workers, Miners, and Railroaders, numbering about 2,000,000 all told, was designed to be an offensive and defensive alliance, to come to grips with monopoly capital. When World War I broke out this interrupted preparations by the Triple Alliance for a general strike of its entire membership. Later we shall see how the reformist leadership gutted this big movement, which at the time attracted the admiration and hopes of fighting workers all over the world.

At the heart of the tremendous labor offensive of 1910-14, the greatest British labor had ever known and the historic continuant of the big struggles of Chartism and the big London Dockers' strike, were the Syndicalists, led by Tom Mann. This Syndicalist leadership is generally conceded by labor writers. The Syndicalists gave the real direction and inspiration to the rank-and-file movement, which in various forms, was the

dynamo of the broad struggle. The heads of the trade unions had nothing to do with this basic labor renaissance except to oppose and sabotage it. Its stormy, progressive course was in flat contradiction to their entire program of class collaboration.

The outbreak of World War I put a temporary damper on the strong forward movement of labor in Britain. It also gave a new turn to the world Syndicalist movement, a development which we shall discuss in due order. Syndicalism during the next few years was not without continuing effects in Great Britain upon the revolutionary shop stewards' movement of war times, and it was also later to give birth to the short-lived guild socialism of the post-war period.[11]

## ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES

In practically all of the countries of Central and Western Europe there was more or less of a Syndicalist movement. In Germany this was represented by the *Freien Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften.* This body dated back to the period following the anti-Socialist law, which was abolished in 1890. Dining the existence of the law such unions as existed were, by compulsion, on a local scale; but after the repeal of the law and when the unions began to organize on a national scale, a body of "Socialists" some 10,000 strong refused to go along. They eventually became the center of Syndicalism in Germany. They never played an important role, although in 1919 their number jumped up to 100,000 members.[12]

In the Scandinavian countries the Syndicalist movement took on somewhat more body and political weight. Here American IWW influence played a part. In Norway, says Lange, "From modest beginnings in 1911 a well-organized and skillfully led minority movement, advocating industrial unionism and more aggressive trade union tactics, succeeded in gaining a majority within the Trade Union Centre in 1920."[13] They later tried to reorganize the movement. Both Sweden and Denmark also had sizeable Syndicalist movements, and the same was true of the Low countries, Holland and Belgium.

In Eastern Europe there was a sprinkling of Syndicalists in what are present-day Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Russia itself had no organized Syndicalist movement, but during the early years of the 1917 Revolution there were marked Syndicalist tendencies in the widespread proposals and attempts to have the trade unions as such operate the industries.

Japan, the only country in the Far East with considerable industrial development prior to World War I, was also the sole one to have a substantial Syndicalist movement. The upswing of Syndicalism, beginning

about 1910, affected Japan as it did many other capitalist countries. Numerous Japanese intellectuals and workers accepted the new philosophy. Kotoku and his eleven comrades who murdered in jail by the police in 1911 were Anarchists and Syndicalists. The Syndicalist tendency for a while had considerable importance in the Socialist Party and the trade union movement. In 1920 it led to a minor union split.

The "white" dominions of the British Empire—Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa—all developed Syndicalist movements (and their "One Big Union" offspring) of some strength. These organizations were largely affiliated with the American IWW. As its name signified, the Industrial Workers of the World was international in scope and it tried to establish itself as a world organization. Besides official groupings in Mexico and other Latin American states, it also set up definite IWW administrations in Britain and the Dominions. In Canada the IWW exerted a considerable influence in the West, and in South Africa and Australia it was also a factor. In Australia it was relatively strong, and in 1916 the organization was outlawed for its anti-war activities.[14] It was accredited with much influence in the Australian general strike of some 100,000 workers in August-October 1917, and also in the temporary adoption, in 1918, of the One Big Union plan by the trade unions. (E.W. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labor Movement*).

## 23. The Fight Against Trade Union Revisionism (1900-1914)

During the decade just prior to World War I the fight against opportunism, symbolized by the revisionism of Bernstein of Germany (see chapter 14), was a growing struggle throughout the Second International. The trade unions, of course, were deeply involved in this issue, the main stronghold of revisionism being in fact the conservative trade union bureaucracy.

Revisionism implies much besides the abandonment theoretically of the principles of Marx and of the general objective of Socialism. It means also to compromise and weaken the whole of the workers for their everyday demands. Revisionists, by accepting capitalism theoretically, also accept in fact the political and economic leadership of the bourgeoisie. This is class collaboration, which is the opposite of the Marxist policy of class struggle. In the labor movement the revisionist elements historically have based themselves upon cultivating the interests of the labor aristocracy, a policy which dovetails snugly with the policy of the imperialist monopolists to favor the minority of skilled at the expense of the mass of unskilled workers.

The substance of revisionism is that the revisionists or opportunists enter into a partnership, open or implicit, with the bourgeoisie, disregarding the interests of the broad masses of the working class. The revisionists become what Lenin called them, agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the working class. They serve as tools to induce or compel the workers to work and live at the lowest standards they will submit to.

The fight against revisionism during the immediate pre-war period in the Second International and in the trade unions had two general aspects. The first was the theoretical struggle to restore nearly-abandoned Marxist principles. This fight was led politically by Lenin and his co-workers, although during these years the world left-wing was far from being united ideologically. The second phase was the immediate struggle, waged in every Socialist Party and trade union against the increasingly opportunist leadership, to develop militant policies in the everyday struggles for specific demands. In fact, these two phases, the theoretical and the practical, were organically linked together, the theoretical struggle against the several varieties of Bernsteinism always turning around very practical questions of working-class organization and economic and political demands. The anti-revisionist fight began to get under way at the turn of the century and in general it tended to sharpen up as revisionism became more intrenched, until the outbreak of World War I. As we have seen, the Syndicalist movement also reflected this struggle in some respects.

During this period the revisionists did great harm to the labor movement. They weakened the workers' ideology, they prevented the growth of working-class organization, and they sabotaged in general the daily fight of the labor movement—especially after about 1907, when revisionism became more definite and consolidated. Occasionally the workers would break through the line-up of bureaucratic machines, develop broad mass struggles, and show something of the vast potential fighting strength that the workers possessed—as we have just seen in Great Britain during the period 1910-14. But generally theirs was a losing fight; with the opportunist bureaucracy in the unions, save in Russia and a few other countries, gradually growing stronger and more conservative—and leading the working masses to the dreadful betrayal and disaster of the first world war.

The most cunning section theoretically of Bernsteinism was in Germany, but the most flagrant and decadent element of world revisionism was the Gompers trade union bureaucratic machine in the United States. The latter misleaders, who had jettisoned their skimpy store of Marxism during the 1880's when they were laying the foundations of the American Federation of Labor, had become outright and brazen defenders of capi-

talism, and they were otherwise thoroughly corrupted. Many of them—plain thugs and gangsters—ruled their unions at the point of the gun. They sold out strikes shamelessly, robbed the workers, and blackmailed the employers right and left. During these years Gompersism was a stench in the nostrils of the world labor movement.[1]

During the period from 1900—when we left the American trade union movement (see chapter 16)--until the outbreak of the war in 1917, the battle against revisionism in the United States was fundamentally a struggle against the rotten Gompers machine and its right Socialist allies. It was conducted, in the main, by the TWW and the left-wing of the Socialist Party. The AFL conventions were constant battlegrounds in this fight. In the 1912 convention the Socialist forces reached their peak strength of 5,073 votes against 11,974, in a ballot to defeat Gompers for president.

In Germany, during the same general period, the fight against revisionism also went ahead upon a rising scale. This was marked, on the one hand, by the gradual crystallization of powerful bureaucracies which controlled the Party and the trade unions, and with this bureaucracy moving steadily to the right. At the same time there was a gradual formation of a left-wing, of which. Rosa Luxemburg was the most outstanding local figure and Lenin the basic theoretician.

## PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE ANTI-REVISIONIST FIGHT

One o£ the major fields of battle of the workers against their conservative trade union leaders in the various countries was over the elementary question of conducting a vigorous struggle for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions. Tied up with class collaboration agreements with the bosses in one manner or another, the revisionists fought like poison against anything approaching an active strike policy. Generally these elements would go into a strike action only when they were pushed by the rank and file and could no longer hold their membership in check. And usually, once in a strike, they would spare no compromise or sabotage to get the workers back on the job again. Of course, the very idea of a general strike was super-distilled poison to these opportunists.

The foregoing was the usual strike-strangling policy of the right Social Democratic trade union leaders in Germany, England, Belgium, Japan, and elsewhere. But worst of all was the situation in the United States. There, over the years, hundreds of strikes were broken by union scabbing; that is, by one group of craft unions, under the pretext that its union contracts with the bosses were “sacred," blithely staying at work and thus helping the

employers break strikes. Many other strikes, too, were cold-bloodedly betrayed for cash. Of course, there were many union exceptions to such policies of strike-breaking, but these reactionary activities were the norm so far as the Gompersite unions were concerned, and the latter made up the majority and dominated the movement in general.

Another crippling policy of the revisionist trade union leaders was a conscious refusal to organize the broad masses of workers. They were satisfied to have the skilled workers in the unions, in line with their fundamental policy of basing their organization and activities primarily upon the mechanics in the industries. England was notorious for this exclusionist attitude; Germany, with a strong left-wing, was somewhat less afflicted in this respect; but again the United States was the horrible example, as for half a century many of its unions systematically excluded Negroes, women, foreign-born, unskilled workers, and especially Chinese. For many years, too, the Federation itself skillfully avoided launching major and resolute campaigns to organize the millions of workers in the almost completely unorganized, trustified industries. Characteristically, these industries were never organized until after 1935, when it was done on the basis of the broad revolt of the CIO forces against the hard-boiled reactionary AFL bureaucracy.

The fight for industrial unionism was another aspect of the practical struggle against revisionist trade unionism. Craft unionism was rendered essentially obsolete with the growth of the trusts and the powerful employers' associations after the 1890's. The need for unions covering whole industries, instead of single crafts, was made imperative. But generally the leaders of the craft unions, especially during the period we are now dealing with, stood stiff-necked in defense of antiquated craft unions and against all attempts to amalgamate them upon an industrial basis. The birth of industrial unionism in most countries came pretty much as a rank-and-file revolt against craft unionism and craft leaders. In Germany, Austria, and some other countries where the Social Democratic Party was strong and had a powerful left-wing, the transition in the main to industrial unionism was somewhat easier; but in England, and especially in the United States, this transition, such as has taken place, came only after many years of bitter struggle against the craft-conscious trade union bureaucracy.

Generally the fight of the left-wing and the rank and file was to raise the operation and organization of the trade union from a craft to a class basis. This was the general goal they had in mind in their struggle for a militant strike policy, for the organization of the unorganized, and for the advance to industrial unionism. This basic trend was especially to be

seen in the fight for state social insurance. Historically, the unions of skilled workers approached this question almost exclusively from the standpoint of their own particular crafts. That is, they would build up elaborate benefit systems in the craft unions and let the huge masses of unskilled and unorganized fend for themselves as best they could, without any financial protection whatever for unemployment, sickness, accident, and old age. This was particularly the case with the British and American craft unions, which for long decades systematically opposed state insurance of all sorts as injurious to the trade unions. They declared that unions could not hold together without benefit systems. The German trade unions also, even in their best days, were not free from this craft narrowness, what with their elaborate individual benefit systems and their marked disinterest in projects for government social insurance. It was a historic achievement of the left-wing to break down this craft exclusiveness and to put the whole question of social insurance upon a class basis by making a general working-class fight for it through political action, and by making insurance apply, not merely to a few favored labor aristocrats, but to the whole working, class.

## THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

From the beginnings of the capitalist system the bourgeoisie has always tried to keep the working class, after it began to win the franchise, under its political domination. This was usually expressed, in the earlier periods, through some sort of a Liberal party. It has been one of the persistent objectives of labor opportunists—revisionists and others—to further this effort to maintain the working class in political tutelage to the bourgeoisie. This has always been a cardinal point in their general program of class collaboration. Independent political action by the working class has ever been hated by opportunist union leaders almost as much as by the capitalists themselves.

The establishment of Sodalist parties in almost all of the capitalist countries during the period of 1865-1900 marked a tremendous step forward for the working class. It implied an organizational, and partly a political, break from the bourgeois control, although many bourgeois influences were carried on over into the Socialist parties by opportunist elements who joined them. In the younger countries of capitalism—Germany, Austria, Russia, Scandinavian, Japan, and others—where the trade unions and workers' parties originated and grew virtually side by side, the basic movement toward independent class organization and action was readily accomplished by the workers; but in the older capitalist countries—notably England and the United States—where the trade unions had a long head

start on the workers' political parties, the advance to independent political action could be achieved only after decades of struggle against conservative trade union bureaucrats, lined up solidly with the employers in the characteristic "Lib-Lab" alliance, which meant the political subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie. In fact, even down to the present day the left-wing and mass of workers, despite decades of effort, have not yet been able to break the "Lib-Lab" alliance of the American trade union leadership with the parties of the capitalist masters.

When Bernsteinism in Germany, which along with Fabianism in England was the most definite form theoretically of revisionism, came upon the scene (see chapter 14), independent political organization and action by the workers was pretty much an accomplished fact—if not in Great Britain and the United States—then at least all over the Continent of Europe. Inevitably, with their general line of class collaboration, the revisionists set out to put a practical end to this and once more to throw the working class under direct bourgeois political control. They, of course, could not openly propose the liquidation of the Socialist parties, but they undertook to achieve the same practical end by having these parties participate, through their representatives, in the cabinets of the bourgeois governments. The general effect of this would be to break down the workers' political opposition to the given governments and to have them accept political responsibility for the latter's reactionary programs. This line of revisionist policy led to one of the most bitter fights in the life of the Second International.

The first step of the revisionists in this general direction was the acceptance by Alexander Millerand, Socialist, in 1899, of a cabinet post in the Waldeck-Rousseau government. Side-by-side with Millerand sat General Gallifet, butcher of the workers in the Paris Commune. This situation led to a sharp debate at the 1900 congress of the Second International in Paris, the result of which was the adoption of a centrist resolution, written by Kautsky, mildly criticizing Millerand's action. Millerand was expelled from the French Socialist Party and revisionism was also roundly condemned in the German Party. Undeterred, however, by these reverses, the revisionists persisted in their course. In 1905 John Burns, erstwhile British Socialist, took a job in the cabinet of the Campbell-Bannerman government, and he was followed in 1906 by Aristide Briand and Rene Viviani in France, who were taken into the Clemenceau cabinet. All these elements became the rankest of traitors to the working class. They were the advance-guard of the many other Socialist betrayers who took bourgeois cabinet posts during World War I.

The "Lib-Lab" alliance went its way in the United States with char-

acteristic Gompersian ultra-rottenness. The principal hook-up of the union leaders with the capitalists was through the National Civic Federation, organized by big business forces in 1893. The obvious purpose of this organization was to castrate or destroy the trade union movement, but Gompers and other AFL leaders generally cooperated with it. The AFL leaders were such obedient servants of the ruling class that it was unnecessary to bribe them with cabinet posts. With them cold cash was more in order, and/or also, were well-paid posts in industry.

In sensational exposures in 1913 it was shown that M.M. Mulhall, an agent of the National Association of Manufacturers and of the Republican National Committee, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in corrupting AFL trade union officials for election services and that he had many of these gentlemen, so-called labor leaders, regularly on his payroll.[2] The Democratic Party, needless to add, had its own types of Mulhalls. Such corruption was in the very nature of the capitalist politics of the AFL, and the Gompers bureaucracy took the whole shocking Mulhall exposure in its stride, pretty much as a routine matter.

## THE PARTY AND THE TRADE UNIONS

The Marxist Party—in our times, the Communist Party—is the leading organ of the working class. Composed of the most advanced elements politically of the proletariat, concerning itself with all questions of vital interest to the workers, and attacking capitalism in all its ideological, economic, and political controls, the Party is the uniquely fitted organization to head the workers generally in their daily struggles, to lead them in the abolition of capitalism and in the construction of socialism. This is Lenin's "Party of a new type," the vanguard of the proletariat.[3]

The revisionists, above all the conservative trade union bureaucrats, have always systematically fought all tendencies leading towards the creation of this type of leading party. This struggle has long gone all in all countries in varying forms. A full dress debate was held in the Stuttgart 1907 congress of the Second International over the ever-present question of the relation between the Party and the unions. The upshot of this was the adoption of the Austrian-Belgian (actually German) resolution which, implicitly denying the leading role of the Party, declared that both the Party and the unions have tasks of equal importance in the fight for Socialism, and that each operates in absolute independence.[4] This was the so-called policy of trade union neutrality towards the Party—a victory for revisionism.

The Bolsheviks theoretically stood for affiliation of the trade unions to the Party (which is accomplished in a distorted way, for example, in

the British Labor Party), but they did not then press this point, in view of the many divisions still existing in the ranks of labor. Plekhanov pointed out at the congress that there were then 15 parties in Russia contending for working class support and that any attempt to bring the trade unions organically closer to the Social Democratic Party would only deepen this split situation. The practical Bolshevik line for the unions was neither affiliation to the Party nor neutrality toward it; but close cooperation of all the forces of labor under the general political leadership of the Party.

Meanwhile the fight went on everywhere over the perennial question of the role of the Party. In Great Britain the revisionists had arrived at the formation of a broad Labor Party, following a reformist policy and concerning itself only slightly with theoretical questions. This party, theoretically controlled by the trade union members, through their majority in its Executive Committee,[5] is in actuality dominated by a handful of top trade union officials. Their attitude was thumbs down against all efforts to create also a solid Marxist Party to give real proletarian leadership to the whole labor movement.

In Germany the leaders of the Free Trade Unions, almost exclusively party members and the main support of Bernstein revisionism, fought furtively to control the Social Democratic Party. This control they succeeded finally in establishing in 1906, in connection with the big struggle then going on over the question of the general strike. Realizing that the Social Democratic Party, under stress of the bitter struggle then taking place in Russia, at its coming convention would endorse the general strike as the means to win the universal suffrage for the workers, the trade union leaders as we have remarked in chapter 21, forestalled the Party's action at their own convention in May 1905, and there drastically condemned the general strike. The Party, four months later, at Jena in September, duly endorsed the general strike. The result was that the two wings of the movement, political and industrial, were in direct conflict, the one officially in favor of the general strike and the other opposed to it. Consequently, a meeting of the two executives took place at Mannheim, in February 1906, the result of which was an abject surrender of the Party leadership to that of the trade unions.[6] It was forbidden even to discuss the general strike in the trade unions. Legien became, in fact, if not formally, the leader of the German Social Democracy. Some German trade union writers, notably Zwing, became virtually anti-party. Mannheim was a decisive victory for revisionism, and the drift of the German Party to the right became more and more accentuated. The road was thus opened for the opportunist debacle seven years later with the advent of World War I.

In France the Anarcho-syndicalist trade union leaders were also opposed to a strong leading political party, and, in fact, to any workers' party. Their opposition was based on different grounds, however. It originated not in any desire to tie the workers to bourgeois political leadership, but in a "leftist'' attempt to ignore politics altogether. In the long run, however, the practical effect was the same: apoliticism also played into the hands of right revisionism and it was a major factor in the surrender of the French trade union leaders to the warmongers in 1914.

In the United States the ultra-reactionary Gompersite trade union leaders were the most extreme of all revisionists in their fight against the effort to organize a leading Marxist political party. They did not want any working-class political party at all, not even one with leaders on the Bernstein model. For a generation they fought the Socialist Party with fire and sword, aiming to destroy it.[7] They had the satisfaction eventually of seeing this party, which in the meantime lost both its Marxist integrity and its proletarian fighters, decay into a political dishrag and become a contemptible hanger-on of the trade union bureaucracy.

Russia was the scene prior to 1905 of the greatest of all debates on the question of the leading role of the Party, the revisionists suffering an overwhelming defeat. In chapter 20 we have traced the course of this historic struggle, which was carried on under the brilliant leadership of Lenin. Without this victory for a fighting party of the proletariat the triumph of the great Revolution of 1917 would have been impossible; and with the victory, a whole new turn in world history was made. Lenin's Party of a new type was indispensable for the achievement of Socialism.

## 24. The Trade Unions and the Fight Against the War Danger (1889-1914)

World War I was a mass slaughter, provoked and carried through by the big imperialist powers for the most sordid reasons. Over 10,000,000 people had to die, 20,000,000 more were crippled, and countless millions were pauperized, in order that the capitalist monopolists of the world, like a pack of hungry wolves, could re-divide the world in their efforts to satisfy their insatiable greed for profits. Characteristically the war was carried through under the most hypocritical slogans of national defense and of making the world safe for democracy. Also characteristically, the armies on both sides of the great conflict bore the sanctimonious blessings of the Christian churches of their respective countries.[1]

The vast human holocaust of 1914-18 was the natural result of the workings of the capitalist system. Basically important in its development was the operation of the law that Lenin named the uneven development

of capitalism. That is, with some of the imperialist powers, notably Germany, Japan, and the United States—growing faster economically than others—especially Great Britain, Russia, and France—the only way that capitalism could redress the varying international power relationships, according to the swiftly changing ratios of strength of the respective imperialist states, was through a vast war slaughter. In the authentic spirit of capitalism the rival imperialist powers murderously sought to destroy each other. Guilt for the war rested upon all the imperialist states; that is, upon the capitalist system as such.

## THE WAR GUILT OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Sharing deeply in the capitalist war-guilt were the opportunist Social Democratic leaders of the world's labor movement, political and industrial. These elements, as we have pointed out in previous pages, despite their elaborate talk about Socialism and about their loyalty to Marxism, were, in fact (and their like are so till this day) fundamentally agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the working class, with the general function of restraining the demands and struggles of the workers within the framework of capitalism and the basic interests of the monopolist capitalists. As is quite clear in the present years, the Social Democratic leaders in 1914 were elementary defenders of the capitalist system, and this basic position led them inevitably to follow their national bourgeoisie into the terrible slaughter of World War I and to drag the working class with them. Of course, no less skillful than the openly bourgeois warmongers, the Social Democratic leaders knew very well how to cover up their treason to the working class by trickery and deceitful slogans. They were an indispensable cog in the vast war machine of international imperialism.

Contrary to the assertions of many apologists for the traitorous line of the Social Democracy during this profound crisis in human history, the Socialist leaders were not confronted suddenly with an unexpected war crisis which overwhelmed them with its abruptness and complexity. Just the reverse was the case. The war for 25 years previously had been obviously developing and they all knew this. Engels had clearly prophesied and analyzed it twenty years earlier, and its approach was a matter of general Marxist understanding. Moreover, most of the Socialist Parties, after the turn of the century, had conducted an active and widespread campaign against war. In view of the militant mass response, especially contemptible was the later attempt of the opportunists to blame the war debacle upon the workers, who it was falsely said, were so carried away by bourgeois chauvinism and war hysteria that they would have torn their leaders to pieces had they attempted to fight the war ac-

tively. The inescapable fact, however, is that the Social Democratic support of the bourgeoisie in the first world war was entirely in line with the whole program of the opportunist leaders of the Second International. The big anti-war movement led by the Socialist parties prior to the outbreak of the war showed clearly that the workers would have resisted the war had they been given leadership to this effect.

The Legien bureaucrats also made the argument, in attempting to justify their course, that if they had made a stand against the war the government would have destroyed the union movement that they had been so long and painfully building. This was the same contention that they had used in every congress of the Second International to forestall every kind of militant action. It was but a tricky excuse. Their support of the war did not come primarily in order to save the trade unions, but as a natural expression of the pro-capitalist opportunist line of the revisionist leaders.

The decades-long struggle of the workers of the world against the approaching imperialist war, in the very nature of things, was a fight on two fronts. The one front was against the imperialist powers which were obviously heading towards a world war; the second front was against the revisionist Social Democratic leaders, whose historic task it was to break up the workers' opposition to the great war that was clearly in the making. Only on this basis is the history of the Second International during the period of 1889-1914 understandable.

A very heavy share of Social Democratic responsibility for the terrible debacle of the Second International in 1914 rested with the top Social Democratic (and Anarcho-syndicalist) trade union leadership. As we have seen, these labor leaders, particularly in the decisive German labor movement, practically dominated the Social Democratic parties and largely determined their policies. Had they taken a stand against the war, their millions of affiliated workers all over the world would have surely supported them. But this was the last thing these autocratic misleaders had in mind. Corrupted by their close and systematic cooperation with the capitalists, they had long since disregarded their proletarian origin, broken with the principles and perspectives of Socialism, and become the hard core of revisionism. When the basic test of organized labor came in August 1914 they simply lived up to their elementary pro-capitalist orientation when they joined forces with the imperialists in the war.

## THE COURSE OF THE ANTI-WAR STRUGGLE

From the foundation of the First International in 1864 the workers of the world had to concern themselves with the halting of wars launched

by capitalists.[2] These peace efforts, during the life of the First International, related to such war dangers as the attempt of the English reactionaries to throw Great Britain into the American Civil War on the side of the Southern Confederacy, the Austrian-Prussian War of 1866, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The characteristics of these wars was that they were national wars, usually between only two powers, and they were historically parts of the general process of establishing the modern bourgeois states in Europe and America. After the advent of the Second International in 1889, however, the problem of war became changed and grew far more sinister and dangerous. This was the beginning of the period of imperialist wars, of tremendous struggles between whole groups of aggressive powers, aiming at world conquest. Thus the fight against war became a life and death question for the world labor movement.

All the congresses of the Second International from the beginning had to deal with the growing danger of devastating imperialist war. As for understanding the nature of the war that was clearly approaching, Engels, Kautsky, and other Marxists of the times made a clear analysis of it, demonstrating definitely that the threatening general war was imperialist in character, that it was destructive to the interests of the workers, and that, therefore, it had to be fought against by all the forces of the world proletariat. These conclusions saturated the many anti-war resolutions adopted at Second International congresses, and also the general campaign of the Socialist parties against the approaching war.

The anti-war programs evolved during the years' long discussions included such measures as: refusal of (voting against) war credits for the governments, the systematic limitation of armaments, arbitration of international disputes, submission of war declarations to referendum votes of the peoples, substitution of militias for regular armies, and constant exposure by all labor unions and parties of the imperialist nature of the coming war.

The French, Spanish, and other delegations, especially those with an Anarchist background, kept submitting to congress after congress their proposal to counter a declaration of war by a general strike. From 1864 on there was hardly an international labor congress where this proposal was not raised. The general strike advocates became more and more insistent after the great mass strikes during the 1905 Russian Revolution. Save for the Geneva congress of 1866, however, the succeeding congresses regularly voted down the general strike proposal as impractical.

At the Stuttgart 1907 congress the Second International adopted its final basic program against imperialist war. This was the work of Lenin, with whom Rosa Luxemburg worked in close cooperation. Their joint

proposal took the form of an amendment to the rather toothless anti-war resolution that had been presented by August Bebel. The amendment read: "If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working class and of its parliamentary representatives in the country involved, supported by the consolidating activity of the International (Socialist) Bureau, to exert every effort to prevent the outbreak of war by means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the accentuation of the class struggle and of the general political situation. Should war break out nonetheless, it is their duty to intervene in favor of its speedy termination and to do all in their power to utilize the economic and political crisis caused by the war to rouse the peoples and thereby to hasten the abolition of the capitalist system."[3]

Bebel and others had insisted upon "toning down" the language of the Lenin-Luxemburg amendment, but it still clearly contained the revolutionary policy of countering the outbreak of imperialist war with a struggle of the workers to abolish capitalism and to establish Socialism. As proved later by the Russian Revolution, Lenin's policy, if followed, would have overthrown European capitalism and established Socialism over most, if not all, of Europe. Obviously, however, the many right-wingers present at the Stuttgart congress had not the slightest intention of carrying out any such revolutionary proposals; but in view of the strong anti-war sentiment at the congress they considered discretion the better part of valor and made no formal opposition to the epochal amendment. The historically correct resolution as a whole was adopted by acclamation.

In the ensuing half dozen years the war crisis grew sharper and sharper, and upon several occasions the rival Triple Alliance of Germany and its allies, Austria and Italy, and the Triple Entente of Great Britain, Russia and France, narrowly escaped coming to general hostilities. Consequently, at the Copenhagen congress of 1910 and the Basle conference of 1912—the latter called because of the crisis created by the Balkan War—the war issue was again to the fore, sharper than ever. In both meetings resolutions containing the historic Lenin-Luxemburg amendment were adopted. As for the question of the general strike, which was again raised with vigor, this matter was referred for a full discussion at the next congress of the Second International, scheduled for Vienna, on August 23, 1914; but this congress, because of the outbreak of the first world war three weeks earlier, never took place.

## THE WAR BETRAYAL OF LABOR

There are many reasons to believe that the workers over most of Europe would have fought actively against the war, had they been given the

signal by their leaders to do so. The workers in all the countries were in a high state of militancy. In 1909 the Spanish workers had struck against the Moroccan war. In the Balkan crisis of 1912 the respective Socialist parties of the area had taken a strong anti-war stand. The workers of Russia were obviously in a strong fighting spirit; in fact, says Stalin, "the advance of the revolution was interrupted by the World War."[4] And the enormous anti-war meetings held in Germany, Great Britain, France, Belgium, and elsewhere, even as the war declarations were being made among the respective powers, could mean only one thing—the workers of Europe were ready to come to grips with the capitalist wholesale murderers who were bent upon deluging the world with the blood of the toiling masses.

The Second International had at its disposal an imposing array of proletarian strength. In the heart of capitalist Europe its political parties were supported by 12,000,000 voters, and it had important delegations in every parliament. The members of trade unions under Socialist leadership, including non-affiliates to the IFTU, amounted to at least 10,000,000—a strategic force able to halt every important industry on the Continent. Besides, the Social Democrats had control of a huge cooperative movement. Their forces, taking a strong stand against the war, could have rallied many millions more behind them and they could have made impossible the waging of the war. Even if they had been unable to halt the war, they could have laid the basis for a revolutionary ending of it, as the Russians did.

In spite of all this there took place the great betrayal by the Social Democratic leaders. It began in Germany by the Social Democrats voting the war credits on August 3rd, and by their proclaiming a readiness to defend the fatherland. They were quickly followed by the Socialist parties of Austria, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and elsewhere, with the trade unions, including the French Syndicalists, generally following suit. The ruling capitalists of the world must have laughed cynically among themselves to see the workers' leaders thus abandon the working class and come out openly in the service of the mass butchers. The workers of most of the world, under this betrayal, took up the unholy business of slaughtering each other.

But not all did so: the working class in Russia, led by the Bolshevik Party and the great Lenin, remained true to the Stuttgart resolution and the basic interests of the workers of the world. Its representatives in Parliament braved the terrors of the tsarist regime by voting against the war credits, and generally by opening up a struggle against the war. This was the first step in Lenin's policy that was to deal capitalism a mortal blow

in the Russian Revolution.

The workers of Serbia, where the war started, followed the anti-war example of the Russians, and so too, in the course of the war, did the Bulgarian "narrow" (revolutionary) Socialists, the Socialist party of Canada, minorities in Australia, in New Zealand, most of the Italian Socialist Party, the bulk of the American Socialist Party, the IWW, and various other organizations. But the brave stand of these anti-war groups could not offset the terrible betrayal by the Socialist parties in the leading countries of Europe. The working class had been sold by its leaders into the hands of the warmongers as cannon fodder.

There has been a tendency to blame the whole war debacle simply upon the German Social Democracy. This party, indeed, had a tragic responsibility for breaking labor's lines in the face of the war. It was the leading party in the Second International, proud of its working-class traditions and jealous of its political leadership. The workers of the world looked to it to set an example of proletarian courage and clear-sightedness in the face of the profound war test. When it failed completely in this leadership responsibility, and became the first party to join hands with the imperialist warmakers, this had disastrously confusing and demoralizing effects upon the workers' parties and trade unions in all other countries.

But this reality, nevertheless, must not obscure the basic fact that the collapse of the workers' anti-war policy in the face of the outbreak of World War I was the natural culmination of the policies of opportunism that the leadership of the most decisive Socialist parties of the world and of the Second International as a whole had been developing during the past two decades. It was the fruition of the corroding class collaboration in the industrial field that had undermined the fighting spirit of the trade unions; the maturing of the labor imperialism that had long been developing in the growing support being given to imperialism and militarism; the logical climax of the insistence of the opportunists, through the years, that they would distinguish between "defensive" and "offensive" imperialist wars and that they would support their countries in "defensive" wars. The debacle of Social Democracy in World War I was the sure result of international Bernstein revisionism, in its various breeds and types.

The workers were given no say whatever in the terrible decision. The betrayal was the work solely of the powerful bureaucracy that been built up in the parties, trade unions, cooperatives, etc. In his book, *Political Parties,* written on the eve of the war, Michels paints a deadly picture of the denial of democracy, cynical routinism, crass materialism, and politi-

cal corruption of the clique of officials, particularly in the German Social Democracy, who were running organizations of the working class. They turned out to be a perfect tool of the ruling class at the key moment in 1914, when the latter in the prosecution of their imperialist schemes of conquest, saw fit to muster the peoples for reactionary war.

## THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS

The trade union bureaucrats of Germany, Great Britain, France, Austria, the United States and other countries played a decisive role in bringing about the terrible debacle of August 1914. Long since become supporters of capitalism, in fact if not always in words, and looking upon themselves essentially as labor partners or agents of the capitalists, these elements did not hesitate when it came to responding to their masters' call for mass cannon fodder. In all the workers' organizations that supported the war the top trade union leaders were the most blatant and chauvinistic. Without their active support and initiative, the key Socialist parties never could have defeated their anti-war left-wings and carried through the great betrayal. Characteristically, during the decades that have since passed, extremely few of these right-wing elements have ever admitted that their endorsement of the war was an error, not to say a crime.

Generally, the trade union leaders were quick to endorse the war officially, on the heels of the right-led Social Democratic parties. In Germany, however, Legien, the real boss of the Social Democratic Party, gave the lead to that Party's great treason by proclaiming industrial peace and developing a pro-war line on August 2, one day *before* the Party voted for the war credits, thus heavily influencing the Party's later disastrous action.[5] In England on August 4, the day following the German betrayal, both the Labor Party and the Trades Union Congress joined the war camp. Similar action was taken m Belgium. In France, where the Anarcho-syndicalist leaders only two weeks before the debacle had demagogically declared for a general strike in case of war, the bulk of the trade union officials nevertheless walked tamely into the war, side-by-side with the leadership of the Socialist Party, drawing their masses after them. In Japan Suzuki, the Gompers of that country, gave the war his blessing. Italy did not come into the war until May 1915, but her right opportunist Socialist and trade union leaders, who on August 4, 1914, had declared for a general strike if Italy entered the war, proceeded to adjust themselves to war support, under a play of radical phrases. In the Unite^ States the first tactic of the bourgeoisie was to stay out and to exploit the war. During this period the policy of the Gompers bureaucrats

was, like that of the monopolists, one of "strict neutrality." But when the capitalists decided that the time was ripe to go in, which they finally did in April 1917, the Gompers trade union leaders were in the very front row of the promoters of the war, helping to break down the strong resistance of the workers.

The pro-war attitude of the revisionist trade union leaders was .clearly made manifest by the complete failure of the International Federation of Trade Unions to do anything whatever to halt the war. This anaemic body, born in 1900 under the name of the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centers (see chapter 19), did not even discuss the question of war during the pre-war decade, when obviously the danger of general hostilities was increasing from year to year. The controlling Legien machine took the position that all such matters fell solely within the competence of the political International. Consequently, also, in the final crisis of August 1914, the IFTU remained inert, doing absolutely nothing, while the great war tragedy was enveloping the world. Its total bankruptcy was quite in line with that of its revisionist brother political organization, the Second International.

## 25. World Trade Unionism Between 1876 and 1914

Before entering into the experiences of the trade unions in the terrible bloodbath of World War I, let us pause for a moment to review some of the major aspects of the labor movement: its growth, struggles, and problems, during the period dealt with in this book section; that is, from the dissolution of the First International in 1876 to the collapse of the Second International at the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Generally these were decades of rapid growth, expansion, and consolidation of capitalism. In Western Europe and the United States, the homelands of the capitalist system, there had been not only a swift industrialization, but a rapid crystallization of industrial, transportation, and financial combines, and this had produced a financial oligarchy which dominated both the industrial systems and the political states. Competitive capitalism had thus become monopoly capitalism, or imperialism, as Lenin analyzed it. In the ruthless and constantly raging struggle among the capitalist powers for domination the United States had emerged by far the most powerful. Great Britain, once the unchallenged industrial leader of world capitalism, had fallen far behind in the competition. Thus in the decisive matter of steel production, the United States produced two-and-a-half times and Germany twice as much as Great Britain, with similar conditions prevailing in other branches of the world economy.

During these decades capitalism penetrated into many new areas.

The countries of Eastern and Central Europe had all acquired industries to a greater or lesser extent. The imperialist powers, in this general period, had also divided up among themselves the vast stretches of territory and hundreds of millions of people of Africa and Polynesia and they were ruthlessly exploiting them. They had similarly reduced practically all of Asia and Latin America to a colonial or semi-colonial status. On the eve of World War I capitalism, before it took the fatal plunge, was at the peak of its strength and domination. Its predecessor system, feudalism, had been beaten on all fronts, and the new system of society—Socialism—destined historically to succeed capitalism, had not yet begun to appear upon the horizon.

## THE GROWTH OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

In 1876, as we have pointed out in chapter 12, the last point at which we summed up the status of world trade unionism, the entire body of trade unionists then to be found in all countries would hardly exceed 2,000,000; by 1914, however, this figure had been increased about six times over. According to the International Labor Office, the total number of trade unionists in 1914 (including the Christian unions (542,263), the Hirsch-Duncker unions (65,000) and a few more like them, amounted to 13,222,000.[1] The principal national groups of labor unionists were as follows; Great Britain 199,000; United States, 2,672,000; Germany, 2,271,000; France 1,026,000; Italy 962,000; Scandinavia 319,000; Australia 523,000; Netherlands 227,000; Belgium 203,000, and Canada 166,000. Although greatly expanded in numerical scope, the trade union movement was, however, still almost entirely confined to Europe, the United States and Australasia. The only important unions in Asia as yet were those in Japan, and they at this time had hardly more than 100,000 members. Latin America had but few unions, and Africa almost none.

While growing rapidly, the trade unions, in accordance with the changing composition of the working class in production, had largely altered their make-up. The movement was not composed so predominantly of skilled workers as it had been in the years prior to 1876; the semi-skilled machine operators were more and more of a factor, enormous numbers of women had also come into the industries and unions. Large numbers of agricultural workers were also being drawn into the unions, and "white collar" workers of various categories—teachers, office workers, store clerks, etc.—were playing an ever more important role in the labor movement. It was not without certain difficulties that the unions in some countries re-adjusted themselves from the traditional forms and practices in order to bring into their ranks these new categories

of wage workers. This was particularly the case in the United States, where the ultra-reactionary Gompers bureaucracy, catering to the narrow exclusiveness of the skilled workers, systematically barred their unions against women and Negro workers; and they habitually ignored the elementary tasks of organizing the unskilled, agricultural, and white-collar masses.

During the period under consideration, 1876-1914, the trade unions also basically modified their structures in response to the growing need for better fighting organizations. This was the time of building strong national unions, local councils, and national federations in the various countries. The most important step forward structurally, however, was the advance, partial though it was, from the craft to the industrial form of union. The industrial union became imperative with the rise of the trusts, the growth of powerful employers' associations in all industries, and the decline of the decisive role of the skilled workers in industry. But the transition to the higher industrial form, while relatively easy in the labor movements led by Marxists (Germany, Russia, Austria, etc.), met with much opposition from the "pure and simple" unionists in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Above all this was true in the United States, where craft unionism was a life-and death fetish of the Gompers machine. The progress from the craft to the industrial form also symbolized the advance of the labor movement from the particularized interests of the skilled worker to the general interests of the working class as a whole.

While the trade unions were thus growing and expanding, the political organization of the working class was also making real headway. At the time of the end of the First International in 1876 there was in existence only one real Socialist Party, that in Germany, organized in 1869. There were but the bare beginnings of Socialist Parties in Holland (1870), Denmark (1871), and the United States. The total Socialist vote in general was at most only a few hundred thousand.

But all this changed rapidly. In 1889 the various Socialist parties formed the Second International and by August 1914 there were workers' parties, mostly designated Social Democratic, in all the major countries of capitalism. The Second International in this pre-war year had as affiliates 27 Socialist parties in 22 countries, with a combined voting strength of 12,000,000, and with important blocs of representatives in nearly all the Parliaments: Germany 110, France 103, Finland 90, Austria-Hungary 82, Italy 80, Sweden 73, Great Britain 42, Belgium 34, Denmark 32, Norway 23, Russia 13, Holland 16.[2] The Australian Labor Party at this time had a majority in the Federal Parliament.[3] Because of American organized labor generally following the Gompers "Lib-Lab" political policy of voting for

capitalist candidates, so-called friends of labor, the workers in the United States had only one Socialist representative in Congress, and to him, the Gompers leaders were violently opposed.

During this general period the cooperative movement also made striking progress. From a modest movement in 1876, by 1914 it had grown so much that there were some 9,000,000 members of the European cooperatives following Social Democratic leadership.

## STRUGGLES OF THE WORKING CLASS

During the four decades in question the workers in the various countries conducted countless strikes and other struggles. These tended to take on ever-wider scope and deeper intensity. National strikes in given crafts and industries were so multiplied by 1914 as to be almost commonplace. Numerous local general strikes had occurred, as we have seen, and also several national general strikes. Besides this, there were numberless political battles for the right to vote, to shorten the work day, to elect parliamentary representatives, and to write elementary social insurance legislation for unemployment, sickness, and old age pensions. For the most part (except for the Gompersites) the unions had learned definitely that they could not hope to solve the social insurance problems simply by their own union mutual benefit systems, but must insist upon necessary legislation by the state—a sharp step forward for the old-style trade unionists.

The period started off with the slashing national railroad strike of 1877 in the United States, and this was soon followed by many similar class battles by the American working class. Among the innumerable struggles in the various countries during these decades were the bitter and successful fight of the German workers against the anti-Socialist laws of Bismarck from 1878-1890, the great English Dockers' strike of 1889, the national general strike of the American workers (1886), of the Belgian workers (1893, 1902, 1913), the Swedish workers (1902, 1909), the Dutch workers (1903), the Spanish workers (1909), the Italian workers (1904, 1914), and above all, the Russian workers' mass strikes of 1905. This great movement, carrying the workers' struggles to higher levels than the European Revolution of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, was a revolutionary drive straight at the heart of capitalism that set the fabric of the whole bourgeois world atremble. Throughout this period of intense struggle the Second International was led by the German working class.

During these many hard struggles the workers in the several countries forced various important concessions from the employers. Chief

among these was the shortening of the workday. In the countries where the trade unions were strong the old 12 to 15-hour day was made pretty much a thing of the past, and the eight to ten-hour day, save in certain continuous industries, became the general rule—with the much fought-over universal eight-hour day placed definitely on the agenda of history. The workers also won in many countries the beginnings of social insurance, factory inspection, and improvements in their right to vote.

The workers' innumerable wage struggles also at least partly modified the harsh exploitation by the employers. In the leading capitalist countries during this period there were some improvements in living standards especially among the skilled. Speaking of the United States, the leading capitalist country, Faulkner states that from 1897 to 1914 there were very slight increases in real wages.[4] The same generalization would probably apply also to England and Germany. The basic relative and absolute impoverishment of the workers, pointed out by Marx, continued, however, to operate; that is, to say, first, despite the rapid increase in their output, the workers were getting an ever-smaller share of what they produced, and, second, notwithstanding certain small improvements in real wages in the imperialist countries, these were more than offset for the working class as a whole, by factors of growing unemployment, industrial accidents, and speed-up, and especially by the catastrophic drop in living standards brought about by imperialist exploitation of the billion or more people in the colonies and semi-colonies.

One of the basic and most significant trends of the workers' broad struggle during this general period was its increasing political character. This politicalization manifested itself not only in the marked building of the Socialist parties and in the multiplying political campaigns by these parties, but also in the changing nature of the strike itself. In the earlier decades of the trade union movement in the various countries, strikes generally bore almost an exclusively economic character. That is, they aimed chiefly, with their partial stoppages, to hit the pocket-books of the respective employers and to confront them with the alternatives of making a settlement or of going broke. But the great national strikes—craft, industrial, and general—which had already become a pronounced development on the eve of World War I, without losing their basic economic features, also were producing powerful political effects. This trend was so definite that the state looked upon such strikes as direct challenges to its own authority and proceeded accordingly, and the employers never failed to call upon the government for active strike-breaking assistant. This general trend towards the politicalization of the workers' struggle, despite the efforts of treacherous leaders to subvert and defeat it, pointed

inevitably in the general direction of the eventual struggle for political power by the working class,

## IDEOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND HANDICAPS

A tremendous loss suffered by the world's workers during this general period was the death of Karl Marx on March 14, 1883 and of Frederick Engels on August 5, 1895. These were the two great pioneers of the Socialist and trade union movement. They analyzed the capitalist system and the problems confronting the workers of the world; they worked out the fundamental economic and. political program of the workers; they unfolded the general strategy and tactics by which this program was to be carried out under capitalism; they clarified the principles by which the new order of society, Socialism, was to be brought about and organized—all of these not necessarily in the same way in each country. With its boundless strength, the working class during the period in which it lost its great leaders Marx and Engels, was then rearing two other leaders, also of superlative capacity, V.I. Lenin and Joseph Stalin.

In their many hard and bitter struggles during these decades the workers won many very important economic and political conquests, but their greatest victory was in the vast economic and political organization that they succeeded in building up in carrying through their struggles, As Marx and Engels evaluated the workers' daily conflicts: "The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate results, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers."[5] In this term "ever-expanding union," is also comprised the development of the ideology of the workers.

In this respect the workers of the world, in their labor movement, made real progress during the period in question; for Marxism, despite many attempts to distort and destroy it from both within and without, became overwhelmingly the ideology of the world's organized workers. This pre-eminence of Marxism as the ideology of the working class was especially strengthened by the classical writings of Lenin and by the working-class experience in the 1905 Revolution in Russia. By the same token, the sectarian ideologies which once plagued the life of the First International had been almost complexly wiped out. Proudhonism, Blanquism, and Lassalleanism, so virile in the previous period, were liquidated during the ensuing years of the class struggle. Bakuninism, the rock upon which the First International split, lingered only in isolated groups in its original purely Anarchist forms. And primitive "pure and simple" trade unionism, with its contempt for Socialism, its repudiation of working-class political action, its affiliation organizationally with the capitalist political parties, and its rigid craft unionism, was also becoming ex-

tinct, its one remaining major stronghold being in the antiquated and corrupt Gompers trade union machine in the United States.

All this was on the positive side; but there were also serious negative developments in the matter of the workers' ideology. There was, as we have seen, the development of Anarcho-syndicalism from the 1880's on, which, originating in France and having its main centers in the Latin countries, tended after about 1906 to become a world movement. This ideology was a mixture of Anarchism and militant trade unionism, with traces of a Marxist class struggle conception. It exerted a confusing and weakening influence in the labor movement.

The formation and building of Catholic ("Christian") trade unions, which was an important development in the period from the 1890's on, represented a wedge of hostile forces driven into the organization and ideology of the working class. This movement, henceforth, was to become an additional hindrance in the forward drive of the working class in many countries.

The period of 1876-1914 also gave birth to an "ultra-leftist" brand of Marxism, which came to play a considerable and harmful part in the ranks of organized labor. The clearest expression of this deviation was De Leonism in the United States. Daniel De Leon, with a sectarian and idealistic misconception of Marxism, declared that the fight for immediate demands was both useless and harmful. He said that the workers had only one demand, the Socialist revolution. He objected to participation in the old trade unions, and projected readymade utopian schemes of "perfect" revolutionary industrial unions. He ignored the bitter struggles of the Negro people and the poor farmers. In view of De Leon's key position as head of the Socialist Labor Party when it was still the accepted party of the left-wing, sectarianism did much harm to the labor movement by its tendency to isolate the Marxists from the mass organizations and main struggles of the workers and other democratic masses.

A second gross distortion of Marxism that also came to maturity during this general period was that of "centrism," or Kautskyism. This was the trend which Lenin castigated as being for the revolutionary word but against revolutionary action. The Kautskians were characterized by a great parade of Marxist phrases, but their policies of action dovetailed with those of the right-wing. Lenin said of Kautsky and his Russian coworker, Plekhanov: "Those people castrate Marxism; they purge it, by means of obvious sophisms, of its revolutionary living soul; they recognize in Marxism *everything except* revolutionary means of struggle, except the advocacy of, and the preparation for, such struggle, and the education of the masses in this direction."[6] Kautskyism developed most

sharply in Germany, but it had its representatives in all countries. Lenin identified Trotsky with this general trend. Centrism began to take definite shape during the last decade before World War I, as the great world crisis was rapidly developing. Its basic function, with its stress upon radical phrases, was to provide a treacherous halting place for the masses midway in their revolt against the right and their march to the left. Lenin fought Kautsky centrism as the main danger during the crucial period of World War I and the revolutions which followed it.

But the greatest of all internal dangers to the working class, which also came to maturity during this general period, was that of right revisionism. This disease of the labor movement grew in various types in the several countries—Bernsteinism in Germany, Fabianism and MacDonaldism in Great Britain, Menshevism in Russia, and Gompersism and Bergerism in the United States—but basically it was the same everywhere, the major expression of bourgeois influence in the ranks of the working class. This elementary deviation, which continues its devastation down to the present day, is fed by all other deviations of right, “left,” and center.

From the very earliest days of trade unionism and working-class struggle of every kind there have been conservative elements, right opportunists, who believe that the workers have more to gain by catering to the employers than by fighting them openly. The special quality of right revisionism, however, is that it is the distinctive product of monopoly capital. It originated and it flourishes in the period of imperialism. It represents basically the organized effort of the pro-capitalist forces in the labor movement to control the working class and to prevent it from delivering major blows against the bourgeoisie. Developing from the mid-nineties, revisionism grew with the growth of imperialism; by 1914 it was the dominant conception of the forces who led the Second International. During the period of World War I, the revisionist, or right Social Democrats, who are in fact as Lenin called them, the "left-wing” of the bourgeoisie, came to full maturity as a counter-revolutionary force, the open defenders of capitalism against the revolutionary assaults of the working class. The main source of this counter-revolutionary force was the conservative trade union leadership, based on the skilled labor aristocracy.

In previous chapters we have seen how revisionism, that is, right Social Democracy, has acted as a serious brake upon the progress and struggles of the working class; it has built up powerful bureaucracies (a new and dangerous element in the life of the working class) which stifle all democracy in the Socialist parties and the trade unions: it was the

main obstacle to the development of industrial unionism and the organization of the broad masses; it opposed the decisive political leadership of the party and supported policies of "neutrality" towards the trade unions, which mean submission to the opportunist top union leadership; its negative influence was to be felt in every important strike; it sabotaged the Russian Revolution of 1905, and we have just seen how it traitorously broke down the workers' resistance to the imperialist World War I and turned itself into a recruiting service among the workers to provide proletarian cannon fodder for the terrible mass butchery. In succeeding chapters we shall also see how the right Social Democracy fights against the great surge of proletarian revolution in the post-war period and demonstrates itself to be the chief foundation pillar of the rotting capitalist system.

# PART III

# THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

# (1914-1939)

*The Capitalist General Crisis and the Birth of World Socialism*

## 26. The Trade Unions During World War I (1914-1918)

At the outset of the first world war the International Federation of Trade Unions, an organization without body or solidity, made a few feeble gestures in order to keep on living. Its general president, Legien, seeking to retain control of the organized international trade union movement, carried on some correspondence with the heads of the various national trade union centers, urging that they maintain wartime relationships. Characteristically, he disclaimed all responsibility for the outbreak of the war, saying: "It is surely not our fault that the work of the organization has been disrupted. Other forces than the working class have decided the course of events. We have to take things as they are."[1] Gompers, Jouhaux, Mertens, and other labor leaders replied in a similar vein, but throughout their correspondence ran a defense of the capitalist governments of their respective countries.

The general result was that no unity of action could be established and the IFTU fell apart. Obviously, in the eyes of the bourgeois-minded top trade union leaders it would have been most unseemly, if not outright treasonous, for the trade unions to maintain connections across the battle lines. According to these leaders, it was their appointed task to help destroy their fellow workers in other countries. Consequently there developed three international trade union centers: Berlin, Amsterdam, and Paris. Generally, the labor unions re-formed themselves into three loose groupings, conforming to the line-up of the capitalist countries; namely, unions of the Central Powers, Allied Powers, and Neutrals.

Thenceforth, as the murderous struggle dragged its bloody way through the next four years, the pro-war trade union leaders in the various warring countries became a sort of labor section of the belligerent bourgeoisie. They repeated the capitalists' war slogans, with trimmings to fit them to labor circles. They became a decisive factor in carrying on the unprecedented slaughter of the toiling masses in the service of the capitalist class.

## TRADE UNION LEADERS BECOME PART OF THE STATE WAR MACHINE

With the outbreak of the war, the capitalists in the several warring countries began to set up class collaboration devices to draw the workers' political and trade union leaders more completely into the war machine of the respective governments. This they did in various manners in accordance with the several national situations, always, however, keeping the labor men in the category of helpers. They were very much on guard to see to it that the labor movement did not exploit the war situation to enhance its own prestige or to strengthen its general position.

In Belgium Emil Vandervelde, chairman of the International Socialist Bureau, became a member in the bourgeois government cabinet and thereafter saw to it that the leadership of the Socialist Party and the trade unions gave undivided support to the war. In France, immediately upon the beginning of the war, Marcel Sembat and Jules Guesde also entered the bourgeois government as cabinet members. Guesde had long been one of the "orthodox" Marxists, and for years had conducted an active struggle against the right revisionists. Later on, Albert Thomas, another well-known figure in the Second international, joined the French cabinet and became the Minister of Munitions.[2] This was the *"union sacree."*

In Russia the Mensheviks and other opportunist groups extended their active endorsement and support to the war, but they were given little open recognition and cooperation by the tsarist government. This stiff-necked autocracy, with terror as its principal means of control, figured on keeping the masses enchained to the war by force. Class collaboration never became a major weapon of tsarism. In Italy, after that country joined the war in 1915, the right Social Democratic leaders soon abandoned all their former pretense of opposition. The government organized their cooperation and that of the conservative D'Aragona trade union bureaucracy by setting up Committees for industrial Mobilization, nationally and in the various provinces[3]. In Austria the Social Democrats got anything but a friendly hand from their fellow warmakers of the autocratic Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In fact, the reactionaries eventually attacked the labor movement and things got so bad that Frederick Adler, prominent Social Democratic leader, in October 1916, shot and killed Count Stuergkh, the Prime Minister.[4] Such an act was practically unheard of in Social Democratic history, no matter what the provocation. In Japan, while the government flattered and played up the Suzuki pro-war trade union leaders, it was wary of giving the labor movement too much official recognition.

In Germany, where on the eve of the war the unions were in a sharpen-

ing conflict with the employers, the autocratic Kaiser's government at first was not in need of such elaborate organizational class collaboration machinery as in the western democracies. From the beginning of the war there was a basic working together with the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions, but on a basis where the Junker government circles let it be definitely known that they were the boss. Thus at the outbreak of the war, when the unions complained of the many hardships they had to face, the Minister of the Interior told them bluntly that trade unions would be allowed to exist in the war situation only "if they made us no difficulties."[5] It was only in early 1918, when the German workers, under the influence of the Russian Revolution, were threatening to overthrow the Kaiser's government, that Scheidemann and other Social Democrats were brought into the cabinet, to head off the threatening workers' movement.

In Great Britain, at the outset of hostilities, the Trades Union Congress and the Labor Party voluntarily declared an "industrial truce," to last for the period of the war. Later on this program of submission to the war lead of the bourgeoisie took the form of a definite coalition, first with the Asquith government and then with that of Lloyd George. Arthur Henderson entered the first of these governments, and several other Party and trade union representatives were cabinet members in the latter government. When the war ended, G.N. Barnes, John Hodge, J.R. Clynes, G.H. Roberts were members of the Lloyd George cabinet,[6] and many lesser officials were members of the network of war committees which covered the country.

In the United States the government and the employers outlined a complex of class collaboration arrangements to tie the Gompers machine and the pro-war right Socialists into the war machine. But the rabid open-shop monopolists, jealous of keeping their great trustified industries unorganized, were careful not to extend labor the status of a coalition partner. As usual, the cooperation of the blatant, jingoistic Gompers leaders was to be had readily, without too much political recognition of organized labor. In the war machinery that was set up these labor leaders were usually kept in an advisory capacity only; at all times the ruling capitalists made it very clear just who was running the country and the war. The most that Gompers, close friend of President Wilson, could get in the war set-up was the position as Chairman of the Committee on Labor of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense.[7] The other top union leaders were also brought into third line advisory posts in the many state and local war committees.

What the ruling class expected and got in the several countries from the labor men whom it made part of its war control machinery was: first a

full endorsement of the war, so that the workers could be made at least to tolerate the massive slaughter, and second, the establishment of social peace during the war period; that is, the virtual liquidation of the class struggle on the part of the workers. This too, they secured from their thoroughly tamed labor lackeys, at least so far as the latter could deliver it to them, a power which eventually proved to be very limited in many cases.

What happened in Great Britain illustrates what took place generally under the wartime "industrial truce" in the various countries. The trade unions relinquished the right to strike, and they undertook, even at the cost of giving up many hard-won industrial rights, to speed war production to the limit. At the so-called Treasury Conference in February 1915, "the trade union lamb has laid down with the capitalist lion." The agreement there made with the government was later incorporated into law, with the result that virtual industrial conscription was established. Hutt thus sizes up the situation: "The right to strike was abandoned 'for the duration,' its place being taken by government arbitration; all trade union rules and conditions were suspended; 'dilution' of labour in the most massive scale was initiated; the introduction of 'leaving certificates' practically tied the worker to his job."[8] In return, the government vaguely promised that trade union conditions would be restored at the end of war and that no wartime profiteering at the expense of the workers would be permitted. At the same time, as in other countries, the British government enacted the drastic Defense of the Realm Act (DORA) to curb resistance by force.

A similar dismantling of the workers' fighting forces was carried through in other warring countries by the trade union and Socialist Party leadership. In the United States the complaisant Gompers bureaucrats even went to the extent of making a formal agreement with the government to the effect that they would not endeavor to organize the workers in the unorganized trustified industries. This was the so-called status quo principle. It was the substance of their statement of May 29, 1918, and it became the established policy of the War Labor Board, of which the labor leaders were members.[9] All these concessions were wrung from the trade unions in the several countries of the West to the tune of the most extravagant promises of the good things that were in store for the workers once the war was won, coupled, at the same time, with the passage of various repressive laws curtailing civil liberties.

## PROFITEERING AND WORKING-CLASS RESISTANCE

Immediately the war began the capitalists in the various warring countries unleashed campaigns of the most ruthless exploitation and

profiteering. As always, they did not allow the elementary needs of the country, engaged in a desperate war, to interfere with their profit- gouging. On the contrary, the very needs of the nation they seized upon as providing them their golden opportunity to get rich quick. Prices soared everywhere, complaisant governments refused to install effective price controls, and universally the workers' real wages sank.

In Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Australia, and elsewhere the capitalists outdid each other in profit-grabbing. In Russia the ruthless capitalists and tsarist bureaucrats cheated the armed forces to the point that their fighting capacity was slashed. In Japan the brutal profiteering resulted in the great national rice riots of 1918, which gave the ruling class a real fright. The workers were the backbone of the latter extremely militant movement. In Great Britain, as Hutt cites, the war produced "the most amazing profits that this country has ever witnessed.... Above 4,000,000,000 pounds of profits made owing to the war and during the war and in excess of the profits made before the war."[10] In the United States the profits frenzy surpassed anything anywhere else. The Beards state that during the war no less than 18,000 new millionaires were created.[11]

The workers everywhere were at great difficulty to defend their living standards in this situation. Their leaders had signed away their right to strike and were busy telling the workers that they had to make every sacrifice in order to win the war. The situation imperatively demanded, to defend the workers' immediate interests, the growth of a rank-and-file strike movement, and that is what took place in practically all of the belligerent countries, despite the efforts of the trade union leaders, the employers, and the government to suppress it.

In France, after the initial demoralization caused by the utter failure of the Anarcho-syndicalist leaders to go through with their general strike program in the face of the outbreak of war, the anti-war minority organized itself and, principally led by the Metal Workers Union, conducted numerous wartime strikes.[12] In Italy there were also a number of strikes during the war due to mass pressure from below. In Spain, a neutral state, there were general strikes in 1916 and 1917. In Germany there were many small strikes, mostly unauthorized, in the early war years. These, however, took on a broader scope in the later period of the hostilities. In January 1917 there was an extensive strike in the armaments plants of Berlin and elsewhere, inspired by pressure from the rank and file. The Russian Revolution in November 1917 had profoundly stirring effects upon the German proletariat. Two pronounced results of this were the bitter coal mine strike at the end of December 1917 and the general polit-

ical strike in January, 1918, chiefly in the munitions plants and involving about 1,000,000 workers.[13] These strikes developed against the will of the General Commission of the German trade unions, whose leaders, Legien and others, were neck-deep in cooperation with the German exploiters and warmongers. In Austria, too, there were scattering wartime strikes in 1915 and 1916, but the strikes took on great volume and militancy in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution. The movement culminated in a general strike in Vienna in June 1918, which was called off on the basis of various concessions to the workers.[14]

In Great Britain the main resistance force to the sell-out policies of the pro-war trade union leadership was the Shop Stewards' movement. Hutt says: "The general feature of 1914-18 was the development of shop leadership in place of the disarmed union machine.... Here was the organization 'at the point of production' which was the workers' answer to collaboration with the state machine."[15] Like the minority movements all over Europe, the Shop Stewards' movement was led by the left-wing. The first strike in which it played an important role was that of the Clyde machinists in March 1915. In this struggle, the shop Stewards demanded the right to bargain with the companies on the grounds that their leaders, tied up with collaborator arrangements with the state, were not free agents. Another important strike was that of the South Wales Miners in July 1917, in which the Shop Stewards were also an important leading factor. In 1916 the workers formed the National Shop Stewards and Workers Committee Movement. The year 1917, says Hutt, was the war's peak year for strikes, over 300,000 workers being involved, with a "loss" of 2,500,000 days' work.

In the United States and Canada the same general pattern prevailed. The Gompers machine, working closely with the government, spared no effort to discourage and suppress all militancy on the part of the workers, both regarding strikes and organization campaigns. Nevertheless there were many war-time strikes and much organizational work carried on. During the 19 months of hostilities there were no less than 6,800 walkouts.[16] "The number of strikes in 1917—a total of 4,233," says Lorwin, "exceeded those of any preceding year."[17] The American workers, like their brothers in Europe, obviously had no such reverence for the imperialist war as had their official leaders. The trade union minority movement in the United States, made up of left Socialists, Syndicalists and Farmer-Laborites, lacked the political and organizational definiteness of the Shop Stewards movement in Great Britain, but it conducted militant war-time strike activities. The fighting spirit of the workers was very high and AFL strikes often developed spontaneously. In many cases also,

strikes and organizing campaigns were led by local AFL leadership. As for the IWW itself, in the face of ferocious persecution by the government, denunciation by AFL top leaders, and attacks by local vigilante thugs, it conducted many war-time strikes—in lumber, in copper, on the docks, etc. The members of the erstwhile Syndicalist League of North America, working in the AFL, led in the national strikes and organization campaign of the packinghouse workers, 200,000 strong, and when the war came to an end, they were busy organizing the half million workers in the great national steel plants, a drive which had been started with a program of striking the steel industry during the war. The vital steel organizing campaign met with the most shameless and disastrous sabotage by the Gompers bureaucratic machine as well as with violent attacks from the employers and the government.

Generally the world trade union movement grew during the war, due basically to the militant efforts of rank-and-file elements. In the United States the AFL expanded from 2,020,671 members in 1914 to 2,726,478 in 1918—but an active policy on the part of the top leadership could easily have brought a total of several million new members into the trade unions. The CGT in France almost collapsed at the outbreak of the war, but by the end of the struggle it had about regained its initial strength. The German Social Democratic unions went into the war with 2,521,303 members in 1914. They lost heavily in the early years of the war, because of the non-struggle policy of the bureaucrats and general confusion in the ranks of the workers over the betrayal by the leadership, and because of the heavy drafts made upon the unions' membership for the war recruits. In 1916 their membership had dropped by about two-thirds, to but 944,713; but by the year 1918 it had picked up again to 1,369,799.[18] The British Trades Union Congress entered the war in the midst of a rapid membership expansion, due to the big Triple Alliance movement of 1912-14. In 1915, the TUC had 2,682,957, and in 1918, 4,532,085 members.[19] As for the growth of the world trade union movement as a whole during the war years, 20 leading countries, excluding Russia, had all told 13,222,000 members in 1914 and 21,000,000 in 1918.[20]

## FROM WARTIME MILITANCY TO REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE

At the outbreak of the war in August 1914 the Socialist Party and trade union bureaucracy had been strong enough, with their rigid organizational controls and chauvinist demagogy, to demoralize the working class and to prevent its taking militant action to combat the war. But as the war went on, piling up its mountains of proletarian dead and bringing

unbearable hardships to the hundreds of millions behind the fighting lines, the rising spirit of resentment and rebellion among the masses gradually broke down the controls of their treacherous leaders. The most significant sign of this was the increasing number of strikes, which were in flat violation of the "industrial truce" and "sacred union" schemes of the labor leaders. These strikes increased in volume and intensity as the war continued, being a clear forewarning of the great revolutionary storm that was to come, in which the aroused working class would undertake to make a final reckoning with the capitalist system which had brought all this slaughter and misery to the peoples of the world.

During the war the revolutionary workers tried to recreate the International and the anti-war struggle that the revisionists had destroyed. This was the significance of the wartime conferences of left-wingers held during the war in Switzerland, at Zimmerwald (September 1915) and at Kienthal (April 1916). At these historic conferences the great Lenin was present, seeking to educate and to win the movement for the revolutionary Bolshevik policies which were soon to score world-shaking victories in tsarist Russia. The conferences were the path of working-class development leading up to the eventual formation of the Communist International in 1919 and the Red International of Labor Unions in 1921. Among the delegates present were representatives of the Italian Confederation of Labor, the Bulgarian Federation of Labor, the trade union minority movement of France, and the Shop Stewards Movement of Great Britain.[21]

One of the significant storm signals of this period was the insurrection in Ireland during Easter Week of 1916. This tragic struggle was another rising in the long history of such rebellions during the 700-year struggle of the Irish people for freedom and against English oppression. The leader of the movement was James Connolly, a worker and a former organizer of the American IWW. He was a Marxist of exceptional talent. The headquarters of the movement was in Liberty Hall, home of the Irish Transport Workers Union. The insurrection began on April 24 and was crushed by April 29, after these patriots, mostly workingmen, had held Dublin for five days. A few days later, on May 12, the British executed Connolly, Pearse, and other leaders of the ill-fated attempt, the wounded Connolly being carried on a stretcher to the execution spot.[22]

The rising anti-war spirit of the workers and peasants reached its climax in tsarist Russia. There, these toiling masses, breaking through all Social Democratic betrayers and false leadership, struck capitalism a blow that shattered it to its very foundations. It was a blow, the effects of which are still rolling around the world, with ever-increasing momentum.

The Russian Revolution was the first successful effort of the working class and its allies in any country to put an end to the monstrous capitalist system which could produce such an overwhelming human tragedy as World War I.

## 27. The Trade Unions in the 1917 Russian Revolution (1917-1921)

The Russian Revolution of 1917 came in two mighty blows against the tsarist-capitalist regime, delivered by the workers and peasants, fighting side-by-side. The first of these blows climaxed on March 14, when it broke the power of the Romanoff absolutism and put the capitalists in power. This was the bourgeois democratic phase of the Revolution. It was followed on November 7 by a still more tremendous revolutionary attack by the workers and peasants, which overthrew the bourgeoisie and brought the working class to power. This was the proletarian, or Socialist, Revolution.

These world-shaking events followed a general pattern long foreseen by Lenin. Major elements of his program, now so dramatically realized by the course of revolutionary events in Russia, were: (a) the Revolution in its first stage was a bourgeois democratic revolution which, under the rising pressure of the masses, passed, as Lenin said it would, into a higher, Socialist stage; (b) as Lenin foresaw, the Revolution was carried through by a broad alliance of the working class with the great mass of the peasantry in the March Revolution and with the poorer sections of the peasants in the November Revolution; (c) the Revolution was violent because, as Lenin stated, the landowners and capitalists had one basic answer to the demands of the people—armed force and civil war; (d) the whole movement realized Lenin's famous clauses of the Stuttgart anti-war resolution of 1907, of transforming the imperialist war into a war for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism; (e) the working class, with the Communist Party at its head, was the leading force in the Revolution in all its phases. Lenin's greatness as a political leader was overwhelmingly demonstrated by the way in which he had forecast the general course that the Russian Revolution must and would take.

As Stalin pointed out later, the Russian Revolution broke the imperialist front at its weakest link. The Romanoff monarchy, based on a near-feudal land-owning system, was rotten at the heart and the Russian bourgeoisie was also relatively weak. These forces broke down under the mighty assault of the worker and peasant masses, whose usual bitter exploitation and oppression had been greatly accentuated by the wholesale

slaughter and profiteering of World War I. One of the weakest spots in the whole tsarist-capitalist set-up was that, of necessity, the right Social Democrats, the Mensheviks, were not strong enough to blunt and divert the revolutionary blows of the aroused masses. They tried to save Russian capitalism, as they saved capitalism elsewhere in Europe in the revolutionary crisis at the end of the war, but in Russia they were simply too weak to accomplish their historic counter-revolutionary mission. Particularly were they defeated by the workers because the latter were extremely fortunate in having at their head the political genius, Lenin. He led the revolutionary forces successfully through many highly critical situations, which, had the workers been less skillfully headed, could have resulted in irretrievable disaster.

With unerring political instinct, the capitalists of the world at once understood the basic meaning to them of the November Socialist Revolution. From the outset they grasped its inner significance in that it implied the end, in Russia at least and probably eventually throughout the world, of their beloved capitalist system, the means by which they systematically wrested billions and billions annually from the labor of the workers and peasants. So they confronted the Revolution, from its beginning, with a fierce hatred and hostility which still remains the basis of their whole attitude towards the USSR and its new brother regimes, People's China, and the People's Democracies of Europe and Asia.

Consequently, from the end of 1917 to the end of 1920 the revolutionary Soviet people had to wage a desperate war against the invading armies of Britain, France, Japan, the United States, and Poland, and against a whole series of tsarist generals—Yudenich, Kornilov, Denikin, Semenov, Kolchak, Wrangel, and others, armed and backed by the hostile capitalist powers. This war the Soviet people had to fight through under conditions of devastating economic breakdown, hunger, and actual starvation. The trade unions were a basic factor in the war, both on the industrial and military fields. Finally, with a heroism and determination unmatched in human history, the workers and peasants smashed and chased all the hostile armed forces out of their country by the conclusion of 1920, and they were therefore free to begin their next great revolutionary task—that of building Socialism.

## THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE REVOLUTION

Following a big strike in Petrograd and Moscow in January, 1917, the Russian Revolution burst forth in the next month. On February 18 (March 3) it began with a strike in the Putilov Metal Works in Petrograd. This quickly developed into a general political strike, which took on the

character of an armed uprising. It was war-time and Petrograd was full of troops. On February 27 (March 12) the soldiers refused to fire on the revolutionary strikers, and the Romanoff tyrant Nicholas II fell. The bourgeois-democratic revolution had won.[1]

The capitalist government which came out of this first revolution, after some changes, eventually was headed by Alexander Kerensky, a Socialist-Revolutionary. The new government had no intention whatever of establishing Socialism or even of ending the war. With the full support of the Mensheviks, it continued on in the imperialist war butchery and it also undertook to fasten the yoke of capitalism firmly upon the necks of the workers and peasants. The consequence was that these masses, headed by the Communist Party, led by Lenin, marched on to the second Revolution, the Socialist Revolution of November 7th, 1917. This uprising established the Soviet government and the dictatorship of the proletariat, or rule of the working class.

The seven months' period between the bourgeois-democratic and Socialist revolutions was one of sharpest class struggle, with the workers rapidly building the Communist Party and the trade unions, in preparation for the final test of strength lying directly ahead. The employers, realizing the decisive issue at stake, built their associations and generally tried to fortify themselves in economic and political control. But the workers were not to be robbed of their victory. Lozovsky thus pictures the intense battle that raged: "July, August, and September saw a ferocious economic struggle. The employers closed their enterprises. The workers re opened them. If the employer offered any resistance, the workers' red guard threw him out of the factory."

During this crucial period there were many strikes, but generally the position was one of the workers more and more occupying the factories by armed strength and insisting upon their operation. "In August and September," says Lozovsky, "we broadcast the slogan: *'No Strikes!,* for the conflict between the workers and employers could not be solved by any particular union or in a separate industry. During this period workers' control was not an empty word, but a question of life and death for the working class. The question was put thus: Closing of the enterprise, stopping production, simply meant—to kill the Revolution, while to prevent this shut-down meant to save the Revolution and its conquests."[2]

It was now definitely a question of the fight for political power. In accord with the Communist Party, the trade unions raised the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets." The revolutionary seizure of power took place, centering in Petrograd, on November 7, with the trade unions doing their full part, building battalions of red guards, fighting on the barri-

cades, and guarding the factories from saboteurs and wreckers.

Meanwhile, as the basic struggle of the workers against the bourgeoisie for political power was building up during the crucial months between March and November 1917, a resolute fight also went on against the Mensheviks, who were the labor agents of the capitalists over the leadership and policies of the trade unions. At the third All-Russian trade union conference, held in June 1917,* the Mensheviks were still in majority control (as they also were in the Soviets), the Bolshevik trade union group casting 36.4 percent of the total vote and the Mensheviks 55.5 percent. The conference endorsed the general Menshevik political line. At the convention of the trade unions in January 1918, however (the first such gathering ever held in Russia), the ratio of trade union representation had radically shifted, with the Bolsheviks polling 65.6 percent of the convention vote and the Mensheviks 21.4 percent.[3] From then on Menshevik strength in the unions declined very rapidly; at the third trade union convention in 1920 they had only 6.8 percent of the delegates. At the time of the November uprising, says Lozovsky, the Bolsheviks had so won the leadership of the workers that only the Printers, the Bank Clerks, and a few white-collar unions opposed the seizure of power.

During the months following the bourgeois-democratic revolution of March 1917 the trade unions grew rapidly. At the beginning of this period there were, according to Lozovsky, only three real trade unions in Russia, with 1,500 members. By June 1917, however, the number of organized workers had increased to 1,475,429, by January 1918 to 2,532,000, by January 1919 to 3,638,000, and by April 1920 to 4,326.000. There were then 32 national unions, and the plan adopted was to reduce the number to 23, the organizations being built upon the industrial principle of "one undertaking, one union."[4]

## THE STRIKE, PIECEWORK, AND WORKS COUNCILS

The November Revolution, abolishing capitalism and starting the nation along the road to Socialism, confronted the trade unions, as well as the Communist Party, with a whole series of unique problems of organization and policy, basic in character and demanding immediate solution in the fire of the revolutionary struggle. One of the most urgent of these problems concerned the question of using the strike. On this matter the trade unions had to make revolutionary changes in tactics. From time immemorial, ever since the very beginnings of capitalism in England, workers everywhere had used the strike as a powerful weapon against

* "The first and second trade union conferences were held in 1905 and 1906.

employers. The Russian workers, in their revolutions of 1905 and 1917, had been outstanding in this respect.

But it was one thing to strike against hostile capitalist employers and something entirely different to strike against the workers' own Socialist government, whose supreme task at the time was to maintain and increase production. The Petrograd and Moscow trade unions, quick to recognize that for the workers to strike against the Soviet Government meant to sabotage their own cause, in line with this new situation, the "Moscow Council of Trade Unions on October (old style) called upon the workers to strike and to armed battle; but on November 7, as soon as the struggle was won, it proposed to the workers immediately to end the strike called during the active participation of the armed conflict, and to return to the factories and commence work."[5] The correctness of this decision was testified to by the fact that during the crucial early years of the Revolution the aim of the Mensheviks and of every counter-revolutionary group was to provoke strikes, in order to cripple the young and weak Soviet industries, and with them, the Revolution. With the industries shattered by war, famine, and industrial breakdown, and in the face of the imperative need to build a great industrial system in the shortest possible time, it would have been supreme folly for the workers to defeat their own ends by strikes.

On this general basis the practice of striking soon fell into abeyance among Soviet workers, who developed techniques of conferences and negotiations to settle such minor grievances as grew up, mostly from bureaucratic neglect. In 1920, however, there were 43 recorded strikes, and scattering ones later. Strikes were never outlawed. Visiting conservative labor leaders have often pretended to be shocked at the disuse of the strike in the Soviet Union, but this is sheer hypocrisy. Obviously, strikes are unnecessary in a Socialist regime.

Another thing that bourgeois-minded trade union leaders have criticized in the USSR is the wide prevalence of piece-work, with the unions' support, in Soviet industry. But as the Soviet workers had to learn at the outset, whereas piecework under capitalism is a means of exploiting the workers, in a Soviet regime, where there are no exploiters, piecework is indispensable for developing maximum production, for expanding industry, and for raising living standards. In capitalist countries if workers make increased wages under piecework, the jobs are re-timed and the rates cut; but in the USSR such trickery is not practiced, regardless of good earnings made. Work is both an honor and a social duty in the USSR, and the workers adopt every constructive means to build their industries under the constant threat of war from their surrounding vora-

cious capitalist neighbors.

Another basic problem confronting the Russian workers and trade unions, from the days immediately following the March 1917 Revolution, related to the role of works councils (and shop committees). This type of organization, embracing all the workers, organized and unorganized, in a given enterprise, sprang up spontaneously all over Russia. Various factors contributed to this growth. Among these were the facts that Russian industries at this time were not national but predominantly local; that the national trade unions were still very weak, and had no local branches, and that the works council form was then especially effective in organizing the workers, in conducting strikes, and in exercising workers' control over capitalist production. The works councils also played an important part in nationalizing the factories and, in the early stages, of resuming production under Soviet controls.

Many workers concluded (both in Russia at this time and all over Europe later) that the trade unions were obsolete; that historically their functions were simply to defend the workers' daily interests under capitalism, and that the works councils were the revolutionary economic organizations of the working class. But the Russian Communists never subscribed to this erroneous conception. As against the anarchic local works committees, they understood the need for strong national labor union organization. They vetoed the calling of a national congress of works councils, frowned upon local organization of works councils and at the third national conference of the trade unions in June 1917, the delegates decided that "the factory committees must become the local organs of the unions." This continues to the present day to be the practice in the Soviet trade union movement, the works councils performing all the elaborate functions of local unions in a Socialist regime.*

## THE TRADE UNIONS, THE PARTY, AND THE STATE

In a Socialist system inevitably all the organizations of the working class and peasantry work in closest harmony with one another, tending definitely to establish mutual organic connections. It would be a contradiction in principle and politically absurd for one organization, whatever its kind, to set itself up as independent of and with conflicting interests to the balance of the Socialist institutions. While each organization must

* Generally there has been a lack of uniformity in the use of the terms "works councils," "factory councils," and "shop committees." We use the terms of "works" or "factory councils" as applying to the whole plant, and "shop committees" as applying to departments of the plant.

exercise a certain working independence, obviously they are all parts of one broad harmonious social mechanism. Such minor conflicts or frictions as may sometimes occur among them are not due to antagonistic interests, but merely to organizational defects, bureaucracy and inexperience.

The Communist Party, made up of the most advanced elements of the working class and its allies and operating in the decisive field of political action, is the leading organ of the Soviet proletarian dictatorship, and it works out the central decisive Soviet policies. The trade unions in Russia were generally founded and cultivated by Communists, and they grew up in the Leninist conception of the leading political role of the Communist Party. The bulk of the Party's membership is made up of workers, i.e., trade unionists, and the two types of organizations work in the closest and most friendly collaboration. The Party and the trade unions exchange fraternal delegates at their respective conventions.

The question of working out the precise relations between the trade unions and the Soviets presented many unique problems and caused much discussion in the early years of the Revolution. Trotsky wanted to make the unions just so many formal branches of the state; but Lenin, in the celebrated debate of 1920, collided head-on with this bureaucratic conception.[6] He insisted upon a vigorous trade union movement, with the defense and protection of the workers' conditions in the foreground. He said: "Our country has a peasant majority. We have, of course, a proletarian dictatorship, but with bureaucratic distortions. And the struggle against bureaucratic distortions can be conducted along two lines: through the state apparatus and through direct pressure on the part of the workers themselves, whose trade unions protect the interests of their members and thereby combat bureaucracy."[7] "The question of the governmentalization of the trade unions," adds Lozovsky, "gradually receded to the background, being deferred to some future, the question of direct protection of the workers' interests came to the fore (NEP came)." Lenin's position for strong and vigorous trade unions prevailed in the historic debate and it has ever since been the basis of Soviet trade union policy. Working out the relations between the trade unions and the Soviet state was one of Lenin's many basic contributions to trade union theory and practice.

The trade unions, however, were extremely active in all phases of political life. Large numbers of their officials and members became leaders in the government, the industries, the army, and other Soviet institutions. The unions came to have full charge of the operation of the social-insurance laws, factory legislation, and health protection of the workers.

The Second Trade Union Convention (January, 1919) decided that "all compulsory regulations issued by the Commissariat of Labor affecting labor conditions must be previously approved by the general meeting of the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions." The unions' voice was also virtually final in the determination of wage rates. Another resolution of the second national trade union convention called upon "the trade unions to take a more active and energetic part in the Soviets by direct participation in all the state organs, by organizing mass proletarian control over their activities, etc."[8]

The role of the trade unions relative to the management of industry was also an issue that presented many complexities in the early days of the Revolution. At first there was a strong Syndicalist tendency to the effect that the trade unions, rather the works councils, should directly operate industrial production. During the acute phases of the revolutionary struggle these and the shop committees had set up sharp controls over the still capitalist-owned industries, and after nationalization had been brought about, a strong trend existed to continue this control in the role of industrial management.

This would have been incorrect, as industry requires its own organization, and the Communist Party, notably Lenin, was opposed to it. The industries are directly led by the economic organs of the state, and ultimately by the Communist Party. As early as December 1917 the Supreme Economic Council was established; in 1918. Lenin initiated the first steps towards large-scale state-planned production; in April 1921 the Gosplan, or national planning agency, was established, and in 1928 the first five-year plan was initiated by the economic organs of the government.

Short of direct and decisive all-around industrial management, the trade unions have retained and developed many vital and leading functions in industry. They are strongly represented in all the state economic bodies. Together with looking after the workers' wages and working conditions, social insurance, factory legislation, and the workers' general welfare, the unions are also the principal means of establishing labor discipline and of putting into effect the general directives of the economic organs. They have furnished countless thousands of managers to the industries; they train the great mass of the workers in economic skills; they actively support every means of increasing production, with shock brigades, Stakhanovism, etc., and they are generally indispensable for the government's speedy industrialization of the country.

The Communist International in 1928 thus summed up the role of the Soviet trade unions: "Under capitalism, the mass labor organizations, in

which the broad masses of the proletariat were originally organized and trained, i.e., the trade (industrial) unions, serve as the principal weapons in the struggle against trustified capital and its State. Under the proletarian dictatorship, they become transformed into the principal lever of the State; they become transformed into a school for Communism, by means of which vast masses of the proletariat are drawn into the work of Socialist management of production; they are transformed into organizations directly connected with all parts of the State apparatus, influencing all branches of its work, safeguarding the permanent day-to-day interests of the working class and fighting against bureaucracy in the departments of the State. Thus, insofar as they promote from their ranks leaders in the work of construction, draw into their work of construction broad masses of the proletariat and aim at combatting bureaucracy, which inevitably arises as a result of the operation of class forces alien to the proletariat and of the inadequate cultural development of the masses, the trade unions become the backbone of the proletarian economic and State organization as a whole."[9]

## 28. Organized Labor and the German Revolution (1918-1920)

World War I marked the beginning of the general crisis of world capitalism. This means that, due to the workings of monopoly capitalism, or imperialism, all the basic contradictions inherent in the capitalist system become intensified to such a degree as to begin to undermine and destroy the system itself. The tendency is intensified for productive power to outrun the shrinking capitalist markets and for cyclical economic crises increasingly to develop into veritable holocausts of mass unemployment and industrial stagnation. The economic exploitation of the workers reaches new extremes and strikes take place on a hitherto unprecedented scale. The monopoly capitalist groups wage an ever-sharper struggle against each other and against their lesser capitalist rivals. The military wars among the capitalist powers grow into great world slaughters, such as humanity has never before known. The colonial and semi-colonial peoples are subjected to unprecedented exploitation and oppression, with the result that their revolts become more far-reaching and explosive than ever. The era of proletarian revolution begins, of which the great Russian Revolution was the pioneer. Previously only a hope and promise for the international working class, Socialism became a living reality upon one-sixth of the world.

The first world war dealt a heavy blow to world capitalism. It devastated and undermined many of the capitalist powers, pauperized count-

less millions of people, inflamed the world's workers with a new, revolutionary spirit, and opened the way for the Russian workers and peasants to make a fundamental Socialist breach in the walls of international capitalism. One of the most important capitalist developments during the war was the coming to the front of the United States as the world's leading imperialist power. American industry flourished and its capitalist owners reveled in wealth, on the basis of millions of soldiers destroying each other on the bloody battlefields of Europe. The United States went into the war a debtor country to the extent of some seven billions; it came out the world's leading creditor nation, the other capitalist states being in its debt to the extent of about 16 billions.[1] The United States had also managed to grab unto itself a great portion of the world's gold supplies, and with its superior equipped industries it was a menace to the foreign trade of every other nation. This advance of the United States to first place among the capitalist powers was a development destined to be of profound significance in ensuing decades.

## THE OVERTHROW OF THE HOHENZOLLERN MONARCHY

Betrayed into the war by their Social Democratic political and trade union leaders, the German workers only gradually began to break through the bureaucratic controls of their treasonous officials and to develop a resistance to the war and to its wholesale slaughter and pauperization. Their growing opportunism resulted in a break in the Social Democratic Party in December 1915, which led to the formation in 1917 of the Independent Social Democratic Party, a Kautsky centrist organization. The left-wing also crystallized early in 1916 into the Internationals, or Spartakusbund, led by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, and Clara Zetkin. This organization, at first affiliated to the Independent Social Democratic Party, became the Communist Party in December 1918. These splits, however, did not seriously disrupt the organic unity of the trade unio movement.

Meanwhile, as we have seen in chapter 26, many wartime strikes began to take place, particularly in the ammunition plants. During 1915-17 there were 601 strikes.[2] To such movements the Legien trade union leaders were rigidly opposed. Suddenly the Russian Revolution burst like a vast explosion, just across the German frontier. This event exerted a tremendously inspiring effect upon the awakening German working class. Their rising revolutionary spirit was manifested, among other events, by the holding of enormous mass meetings on January 6, 1918, in protest against the harsh peace terms imposed upon the Russian people by the arrogant German military leaders at Brest-Litovsk. There was the April

1917 strike of 300,000 workers, followed by the big January 1918 munitions plants strike, involving up to 1,000,000 workers. During these struggles there had also developed a strong rank and file works council movement (heavily influenced by the Russian events) centering in Berlin, and carrying on agitational activities far and wide in the trade union movement.

In early 1918 the Central Powers suffered heavy military defeats on the Western Front. In a spirit of desperation, therefore, the German war leaders ordered the main fleet, stationed at Kiel, to attack the chief British fleet. It was a hopeless project, the idea being to prevent the British from getting hold of the German navy after the defeat of Germany, which was then looming. But the German sailors refused to die wholesale for the glory of the Fatherland. They revolted on November 2, overcame their officers, and set up a soviet. Like a stroke of lightning the revolt spread, and within a week there were soviets of workers and soldiers in cities all over Germany.

The revolutionary climax came in Berlin on November 9. The Hohenzollern government, then headed by Prince Max of Baden, saw what was coming and, handing the workers a few political sops, had drawn Scheidemann and other Social Democrats into the cabinet. But these maneuvers did not succeed in blocking the surging revolt. On the ninth the workers, despite Legien's opposition, spontaneously declared a national general strike, the old government resigned, and the Kaiser fled to Holland. A great wave of joy swept through the German working class. It seemed as though the long-looked-for Revolution had become an accomplished fact.

With the political power virtually in its hands, the German working class, had it had revolutionary leadership, could undoubtedly have ended capitalism in Germany and, as the Russian workers did, started their country along the way to Socialism. The workers' revolutionary enthusiasm, their militant action, the soviet pattern that they followed, were sufficient evidences of this possibility. But Socialism was the last thing their conservative leaders wanted, despite their labels as Social Democrats and their many years of talk about striving for Socialism. The bureaucrats were firmly committed to the maintenance of capitalism (a fact which is clearly manifest in our years) and all they wanted to do was to reform capitalism a bit, to make it more palatable to the workers by taking off some of its rough edges, Th Social Democratic bureaucracy of the Party, the trade unions, and the cooperatives, had smashed the workers' anti-war offensive in August 1914 and dragged the people into the war in the service of the German bourgeoisie; now, in the grave crisis of December

1918, their second great job of counter-revolution was to save the capitalist system in Germany from proletarian revolution. This they went about doing actively and without hesitation.

The workers set up a national Council of Commissars of six members; three, Ebert, Scheidemann, and Landsberg, from the right-wing (Majority Socialists), and three, Haase, Dittmann, and Bart from the center (Independents). The six had full power to act until the projected National Congress of Soviets should assemble. The latter body met in Berlin on December 16, to decide what form of government Germany should establish. The Communists demanded the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the right-wing, with its control of the Party and trade union apparatus, outnumbered the combined opposition by about eight to one. It, therefore, decided against soviets and for the calling of a Constituent Assembly on January 19, 1919.

The significance of this move was that the opportunist majority were turning the country back to the capitalists, and so it developed at the Constituent Assembly. The center group, true to its wavering nature, wobbled between the right and left, and, in fact, actually helped the right-wing to prevail at the Berlin meeting.

## LEGIEN AND COMPANY SELL OUT SOCIALISM

Meanwhile the wily Legien, the real boss of the Social Democratic Party, proceeded to "settle" the Revolution in his own trade union way. Already on November 8, before the Kaiser had actually fled, Legien, who had retained a solid grip upon the trade union bureaucracy, got together with the employers and made an agreement shaping the future general political course of Germany. It was the most comprehensive conference between labor and capital yet held in any country. The entire body of the capitalist class was represented through their associations, with the big monopoly capitalist Hugo Stinnes as their chief spokesman. On the other side there was represented the whole working class (including the Christian and Hirsch-Duncker, but not the Syndicalist, unions) with Karl Legien as their leading spokesman. The historic conference actually went on while the machine guns were rattling in the streets of Berlin and other German cities, until November 15.[3] Then the conference produced a general agreement.

The agreement contained twelve points. The substance of it was that the trade unions were recognized as the industrial representatives of the working class, the right to organize was fully recognized, the yellow (company) unions would be abolished, the job rights of returning soldiers would be protected, joint employer-union control over hiring and firing

was agreed to, collective agreements were to be generally worked out, works councils should be established in all plants with 50 workers or over, arbitration committees were to be set up, the eight-hour day was conceded, without reduction in pay, there should be organized a general "parliament" of employers and workers, to adjust the foregoing and various other features of the national industrial life[4]—the notorious *Arbeitsgemeindschaft,* or class collaboration arrangement.

The meaning of the Stinnes-Legien agreement was that there should be no revolution, no Socialism in Germany; that capitalism would go right ahead on the basis of the reforms granted. The general idea was to "settle" the revolution as if it were a mere "labor dispute," and this was actually accomplished. The conscious purpose on both sides of the negotiations was joint cooperation to halt the Revolution. The employers later freely admitted this, but of course the Legien crowd could not. Dr. F. Reichert, head of the Association of German Iron and Steel Manufacturers, said: "Even in the early October days the real situation was clear. The question was this; how could we save industry? How could we protect the employing class from the sweeping socialization of all branches of industry, from nationalization, and the threatening revolution?"[5]

Legien thus sold the German Revolution for a mess of pottage. The autocratic employers, with their backs to the wall and eager to save what they could from the ruin, were glad to pay the price of universal union recognition and the eight-hour day. It was a cheap bargain to forestall Socialism. No wonder that not long afterward Stinnes named one of his many ships after Karl Legien, who died to 1920. How cynically the employers really looked upon the notorious agreement was dramatically illustrated when, 19 years later under Hitler, they treated it as merely another "scrap of paper," ruthlessly wiping out the eight-hour day, the trade unions, and all.

## THE WORKERS TRY FOR THE REVOLUTION

Betrayed on both the political and industrial fields by Socialist opportunists, the most advanced Gorman workers tried nevertheless to bring to reality the Socialist Revolution that had seemed to be within their very grasp. Their open battle with reaction came in January 1919, beginning with a general strike. The struggle was immediately provoked by the removal from office of Eichorn, the Chief of Police of Berlin, an Independent Social Democrat. The workers took to arms, led by the Communist Spartacus group, which in December 1918 had become the Communist Party of Germany. The left-wing of the Independents also supported the revolt. Within the next few days the revolutionists occu-

pied Berlin railroad stations, telegraph offices, gas, water, and electric plants, and other key buildings. The fighting spread to other cities.

The Social Democratic provisional government, true to the Social Democratic policy of saving capitalism at any cost from Socialism, mobilized the reactionary ex-officers of the army, placed them under the command of the Social Democratic traitor Noske, and then, with the help of troops from the provinces, they succeeded in shooting down the revolutionary movement. The armed struggle lasted two weeks. The ruthless course of the government caused the resignation of the Independents from the cabinet, but as always, men of revolutionary words, not deeds, the latter took no decisive stand on the side of the revolutionary forces.

Early in March 1919 the revolutionary workers carried through another general strike movement, in an effort to force the government to adopt a revolutionary course. The workers' demands included the arrest of Noske, Scheidemann, and Ebert, the reopening of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, and the release of political prisoners. Called by the Berlin Soviet, the strike began on March 3, and extended rapidly. The Communists were a vital factor in it. But in a week the movement was crushed by the troops of Noske and General von Luttwitz. The main stronghold of the movement was Munich, where the workers held out until May 1. There were bloody reprisals by the government.

It was in the aftermath of the fierce struggle in January that the outstanding Communist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were savagely murdered. On January 15, when the revolt of that month had been put down and thousands of workers were being arrested, Luxemburg and Liebknecht were seized. On their way to prison, while in the custody of the police, they were killed in cold blood. Thus perished two of the finest leaders of the world's working class. The murderers were well known, but were not punished.[6]

The elections for the National Assembly were held on January 21, 1919. They resulted in a victory for the bourgeois parties, which went into the Assembly at Weimar with 54 percent of the delegates. This situation did not disturb the right Social Democrats, however, who promptly teamed up with the capitalist leaders and established the bourgeois Republic that they really wanted. The Social Democrats Ebert and Scheidemann were chosen President and Chancellor respectively, as representing the largest party. At the Assembly the still frightened capitalist delegates talked a lot about socializing key industries, but of course nothing substantial ever came of all this .shadow-boxing.

In 1919 the German workers undoubtedly wanted the establishment of Socialism, but they made the mistake of trusting their treacherous,

phrase-mongering, pseudo-Socialist leaders. In the National Assembly elections the Majority Socialists polled 11,112,450 votes, mostly of workers; the Independents got only 2,188,305, and the Communists did not participate in the elections.[7] With such strong support the right-wing leaders, in collaboration with the capitalists, proceeded to re-fasten the yoke of wage slavery upon the necks of the workers. Thus was the advance of Socialism checked in Germany, and therewith also all over Central Europe. The capitalists of this vast area could thank the right Social Democrats that their social system was not replaced by Socialism during the great revolutionary upheaval following World War I.

## THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC AND THE KAPP PUTSCH

In order to crush the Socialist revolution the right Socialists, as we have seen, reassembled the officer corps and the most reactionary sections of the old, largely disorganized imperial army, and .used them against the revolutionary workers. The natural consequence of this crime developed when on March 12, 1920, a body of these forces under General von Luttwitz (Noske's military pal) and with Dr. Wolfgang Kapp as their political leader, marched into Berlin, captured the city, and set up a government which aimed to restore the monarchy. The Weimar government, unable to defend itself, fled overnight to Dresden, and later to Stuttgart. This was the notorious "Kapp putsch."

German democracy was at stake, and President Ebert, on the 16th, frantically called upon the workers for a general strike. But even before they got his call, says Crook, they were already beginning to strike. Almost immediately they had Germany tied up tight from border to border. The right and center Social Democrats and the Communist Party all supported the strike, and it was endorsed also by the bourgeois Democratic Party. All the unions, including the Christian and Hirsch-Duncker, and even the "yellow" unions, joined in the strike. Nestriepke says that only a few unions of the state personnel did not participate. On the 14th, two days before the official call by Ebert, the general strike was already in full swing.[8] It was tremendously effective.

General von Luttwitz tried to break the strike by his armed forces. But the militant workers refused to be intimidated. On the 17th Kapp resigned and fled to Sweden, and on the 18th von Luttwitz also quit. The strike continued, however, for several days longer with workers in the Ruhr occupying the plants. The revolutionary workers saved the situation after the criminal folly of their leaders had opened the way for this very dangerous attack from the most reactionary forces in Germany.

The victory offered a splendid opportunity for the Social Democracy,

had it been so disposed, to take full control of the country. But to do this would have been contrary to its whole line. So it contented itself with making a trade union agreement with the Ebert government, pledging the punishment of the Kappists, immediate socialization of certain industries, dissolution of reactionary military formations, and the resignation of Noske,[9] little of which was ever carried out. The Berlin workers insisted upon adding a few more clauses to put some teeth in the agreement, and the strike was called off on March 22.

Then the Weimar government, headed by the right Socialists, committed further criminalities. Instead of dissolving the military reaction, it turned its attack upon the militant workers. It saw only one enemy, the Communists, and it developed a terror against them. The Social Democrat Stroebel, cited by Crook, says that government troops and police instituted a house-to-house search, arresting workers' leaders, and in some cases executing them after summary courts-martial. It was ultra-reactionary policies such as these which, a dozen years later, were to lead to Hitler fascism. One result of the Kapp affair was an enormous increase in his Party prestige and control by Legien, for had the latter not, with his trade unions, saved the situation after the Social Democratic political leaders had just about ruined it?

## THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

World War 1 released powerful revolutionary national liberation struggles in Central Europe, resulting in the breaking away of various peoples, chief among them those of Poland and Czechoslovakia, from the imperialist empires—Russia, Germany, Austria, and Turkey—which had long held them in chains. There were upheavals in various countries of this general area, notably the big strikes in Austria, during the final year of the war, leading up to the overthrow of the Hapsburg monarchy on October 5, 1918. Outraged by the war and deeply inspired by the Russian Revolution, the workers would have set up a revolutionary government in Austria, but the dominant Social Democrats, as in Germany, wanted a bourgeois republic, and that is what the workers got instead of a Socialist regime. The rapidly growing Austrian trade unions carried through many war and post-war strikes.

The only country where the movement reached the height of proletarian revolution was in Hungary. The bourgeois revolution of October 1918 was mainly carried through by the trade unions, which at this time had some 721,437 members. In December 1918 the Communist Party was formed. Under pressure of the wide destitution and the political militancy of the masses, the workers, on March 21, 1919, abolished the Ka-

rolyi capitalist government and established a dictatorship of the proletariat. The leading party in this was the Socialist Party, which was an amalgamation of the former Communist and Socialist Parties. The leader of the new government was Bela Kun, a Communist.

The workers' government lasted only until August. It was opposed by the right Socialists of Vienna, and also by those of the same stripe in Hungary. The Kun government was followed by a Social Democratic government, but this was destroyed by the combined armed assault of reactionary Rumanian, Czechoslovakian, and French troops. The sell-out of the Revolution in Germany by the right Social Democrats had a poisonous effect upon the revolutionary movement in Austria and Hungary and virtually doomed it in advance.

## 29. The Revolutionary Wave Throughout the Capitalist World (1918-1921)

The years immediately following World War I were marked by a great international upsurge of the working class, outraged by the devastation of the war and inspired to struggle by the revolutionary example of the Russian Revolution. In several countries this big working-class offensive reached the point of revolutionary assaults upon the capitalist system; in many others it expressed itself in unprecedentedly huge and militant strikes. Everywhere, except in Russia, the general pattern was the same: a working class eager to fight, a right-wing bureaucracy cooperating with the employers and the state to weaken and betray labor's struggle, and a left-wing not yet strong enough to secure the leadership of the militant workers. The general period culminated in a powerful counter-offensive on the part of international capitalism.

### BIRTH OF ITALIAN FASCISM

Except for those countries mentioned in the previous two chapters, Italy was the most blazing revolutionary center in the early post-war period. The bitter discontent of the masses came to a head in the national strike of the 500,000 metal workers (FIOM) in September 1920. Failing in their wage demands, the workers had adopted a policy of obstructionism in the shops; the bosses replied to this with a threat of a general lockout, which the workers answered with a national sit-down strike. The revolutionary workers, with red flags flying in the plants, armed themselves and occupied all the steel mills, foundries, machine shops, and general metal works in Italy. The whole Italian working class and the bulk of the peasantry stood behind the strikers. The workers were ready for revolutionary action, and the Giolitti government was stricken and

rendered helpless by the sudden working-class offensive. The historic hour had struck for the Italian Socialist Revolution.[1]

In this supreme crisis of Italian capitalism the opportunist Social Democrats, who controlled both the Socialist Party and the trade unions, as everywhere else in the capitalist world, came to the rescue of the hard-pressed employers. Left elements demanded at a joint meeting on September 9 of the General Confederation of Labor (CGL) and the Socialist Party, that the fight be transformed into a struggle for power; but the Turati, Serrati, D'Aragona leading groups vetoed this, and instead moved for a settlement of the great struggle on a trade union basis.[2] The Government agreed to this, and in return for calling off the strike made the unions a few concessions, most of which were not realized in practice.

This was the German pattern of sell-out all over again. The results were disastrous. The CGL, which had increased in membership from 249,039 in 1918 to 2,320,163 in 1920, declined catastrophically. Chaos entered the ranks of the workers, who had expected to carry through the revolution. Taking advantage of the prevailing confusion and disappointment, the employers began their ruthless counter-offensive, which resulted, in 1922, in putting Mussolini at the head of the government, in destroying the trade union movement, and in fastening fascism upon the Italian people. A tragic defeat, due to the reformist Socialist leadership. The Communist Party, with the brilliant Antonio Gramsci as its general secretary, formed in January 1921, was not strong enough to ward off the catastrophe, not only for the Italian working class but for the labor movement all over Europe.[3]

## OFFENSIVE AND COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN FRANCE

The General Confederation of Labor of France (CGT), like labor organizations all over the world, came into the post-war situation with a greatly increased membership—a reflection of the strong fighting spirit prevailing among the workers. It increased from 400,000 members in 1912 to 1,200,000 in 1918 and 2,000,000 at the end of 1919. The workers were counting on winning a general improvement in their miserable conditions following the terrible war. As elsewhere, the capitalists in France, during the slaughter, had been lavish with post-war promises. As did the unions in most countries, the CGT adopted a program of "reconstruction" at its convention in Lyons in September 1918. With its 1,300,000 war dead and 4,500,000 wounded, France was seriously crippled. The center of the CGT program was "the nationalization under the control of the producers and consumers, of the great branches of the modern economy; land and sea transports, mines, oil, big credit organiza-

tions."[4] To direct the industries there should be created an Economic Council of Labor. All this, in the new reformist spirit of the CGT right leaders, was to be established by peaceful political action.

Nevertheless, strikes began to develop. These centered on the railroads and came to a head in the big general strike of May 1920. At the heart of this movement was a demand for railroad nationalization. At this time a deep division existed in the French labor movement, going back to the war betrayal in 1914. The revolutionary minority, led by Gaston Monmousseau and others, mostly Communists now, were for a resolute fight, but the Jouhaux, Dumaulin, Merrheim leaders, once Anarcho-syndicalists, had now become typical Social Democratic reformists and acted accordingly. The strike agitation was climaxed by a general strike of the Railroaders on May 1. According to the plan, the CGT supported this by three successive waves of strikes, of metal, building trades, transport workers, dockers miners, gas-workers, and others, during the next ten days.

But the whole thing was a ghastly fiasco. The workers did not strike effectively, and on May 22, the strike was called off unconditionally. The basic cause of the debacle was that the reformist leadership, who covertly were against the entire movement, had failed utterly to organize and prepare the workers for the serious struggle.[5] The left-wing, most of whose leaders had been arrested at the outset of the strike, was not strong enough to carry the movement through despite this treachery. The after-effects were catastrophic. Within a year the CGT lost over two-thirds of its members, went down to 600,000, and late in 1921 the organization was split nationally on a right-left basis—to which we shall return later,

## THE FAILURE OF THE BRITISH TRIPLE ALLIANCE

The British workers were dragged into the war in 1914 just as they were consolidating their big Triple Alliance of 2,000,000 Miners, Railroaders, and Transport Workers. The current fighting spirit of the workers, plus the active wartime policies of the Shop Stewards Movement, resulted in a big growth of the trade union movement. In 1914 the British unions, affiliated and non-affiliated, amounted to about 4,000,000 members; at the beginning of 1919 the figure was 6,500,000 and at the end of 1920, 8,344,000.[6] The Labor Party vote also increased to 2,375,000 in 1918. Like the German and French federations, the British Trades Union Congress, to meet the big influx of members, reorganized itself in 1919; the most important feature of the reorganization was the transformation of the loose Parliamentary Committee of ten members into a more centralized General Council of 32, grouped into 17 industrial sections.

As elsewhere, the militant British workers promptly collided with the employers in the post-war period. But the Social Democratic political and trade union leaders, like their similars in Germany, Italy, France, and other countries, wanted not to fight their wartime capitalist pals but to cooperate with them. To secure this cooperation they were quite ready to descend, as right Social Democrats did everywhere, to the grossest forms of betrayal of the working class in struggle.

The first major post-war strike was the successful one of the Clyde shipbuilders in January 1919. This was followed in September by a successful short national railway strike. Shortly after, the 1,000,000 coal miners demanding wage increases and nationalization of the mines, went on a national strike in mid-October. They appealed to their Transport and Railroad allies in the Triple Alliance for active support. This brought the much-advertised organization to its fundamental test. In anticipation of fighting it, the employers in 1916 had consolidated their forces into the Federation of British Industries, and the Lloyd George government had let it be known that it was prepared to use troops to break a Triple Alliance strike. Despite the readiness of the working class to fight, the Transport and Railroad leaders of the Alliance turned tail and quit. Upon the appeal of the Miners for active help in their strike, these officials refused to act. As Hutt says, "The railway and transport union leaders fought shy of a sympathetic strike and limited themselves to the role of conciliators."[7] After twice setting a strike date, they finally called off the whole movement on the pretext that the Miners were getting a settlement, which was not true. This was "Black Friday," one of the worst days in British labor history.

Thus perished ingloriously the much-prized Triple Alliance, from which the British workers had hoped for great results, rankly betrayed by its opportunist leaders. The Miners had to battle on alone for 13 weeks and they got a very unsatisfactory settlement. There were chaos and indignation throughout the whole labor movement at the cynical sell-out of the Triple Alliance. Such betrayal policies cost the British trade union movement the loss of 2,000,000 members in the next couple of years and by the end of 1921 over 6,000,000 British workers suffered weekly wage cuts of eight shillings or more.[8]

Elsewhere in Europe there was a fast growth of trade unionism and struggle during the early post-war years, all heavily influenced by the Russian Revolution. In newly independent Poland, the unions held their first national convention in 1920—all told there were about 1,000,000 trade unionists—Social Democratic, national, and Christian, In Czechoslovakia, also just become independent, the number of trade unionists

shot up from 161,247 in 1918 to 727,055 in 1920. Yugoslavia, with two general strikes in 1920, had a total union membership of some 180,000. Austrian unions in 1920 numbered 940,000 members, an increase of 700,000 since 1914. Hungary had 100,000 trade unionists in January 1918 and 800,000 in June 1919. Similar growth was experienced, in the face of strong employer resistance, in Spain, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia. During this period Communist Parties were established in most of these countries, and they were a dynamic factor in causing the marked trade union growth.

## THE POSTWAR STRUGGLES IN THE AMERICAS

In the United States and Canada during the war the workers, with but little respect for the demands of the imperialist war, developed militant strike and organizing policies. This carried them over into an offensive at the end of the war, to redress the heavy real wage losses they had suffered during the war. But they ran head-on into powerfully organized monopolists who were driving for the "open shop," and were especially determined to wipe out the organizational gains made by the workers during the war—the AFL had increased in membership from 2,020,671 in 1914 to 4,078,740 in 1920.

The general result was the biggest series of mass strikes in American history. These strikes took place in practically all the industries, and during the bitter struggle nearly every union, AFL and independent, was fighting for its very existence. Among the industries most heavily affected were: steel, meat, meat-packing, lumber, coal and metal mining, railroads, textile, metal, building, clothing, printing, etc. It was a tremendous drive of the capitalists, from 1918 to 1922, to destroy or helplessly to cripple the American labor union movement. Its force was accentuated by the cyclical economic crisis of 1921, High points in the struggle from the workers' standpoint were the local general strikes in Seattle (February 1919) and in Winnipeg (May 1919), and the national strike of 367,000 steel workers in September 1919. In the non-trustified industries the unions withstood the blast, but in the trustified industries practically all of the strikes were defeated, or nearly so. The AFL, between 1920 and 1924, lost 1,212,941 members, or about 30 percent of its entire membership,[9] and the trade unions lost their precarious grip in many basic industries.

In the face of this big counter-offensive by the monopoly capitalists, the reactionary AFL leaders sank to the lowest levels of treachery to the working class. They freely sabotaged the crucial strikes of the period; they systematically kept their own craft unions at work while other unions in the given industry struck desperately; they cynically rejected all

proposals to amalgamate the unions and to make a common front against the arrogant enemy; their policy, one of retreat, was each for himself and the devil take the hindmost; they fled disgracefully before the employers' onslaught, and they wound up the period by making a disastrous surrender in 1922, with their so-called Baltimore & Ohio plan, which had world-wide repercussions and to which we shall come back later.

In Latin America the combined effects of World War I and the Russian Revolution also produced numerous strikes and a considerable growth of trade unionism (see chapter 18). As usual, these strikes met with armed opposition from the employers and the state. Characteristic of the period were: the slaughter of 1,500 striking workers in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in January 1919; the 2,000 massacred during the strikes in Patagonia in June 1921; the 3,000 workers butchered in the Chilean nitrate strike of June 1925; the 500 strikers killed in Ecuador in November 1925, and 1,500 banana strikers killed by United Fruit Company agents in Colombia in December 1928.[10] The most significant action of the Latin American unions, however, was in Mexico, where they continued to play a vital role in the Mexican Revolution. Communist Parties sprang up in most of the Latin American countries during this period, and they were a major factor in the rising young labor movement. There were a few scattering Socialist parties in Argentina, Chile, etc., but they were small, weak, and of only minor influence.

The young trade unions of Latin America were animated by a strong anti-imperialist spirit, developing a major attack against the United States, the hated "Colossus of the North," or Yankee imperialism. In an effort to combat this movement, the Gompers leaders of the AFL in 1918 launched the Pan-American Federation of Labor (COPA) in Laredo, Texas. Agents of the American monopolies, they tried to seize control of the Latin American labor movement, but generally the latter trade unions looked upon the COPA for what it was, an arm of United States imperialism. Flagrantly covering up and defending the gross aggressions of the United States against the Latin American countries, the COPA lingered along until 1930, holding five general conventions in the meantime. No reliable statistics are available as to the organizational strength of the Latin American labor movement at this time, but outside of revolutionary Mexico, where the unions claimed a couple of million adherents, the number of trade unionists was not great.

## THE GROWING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN ASIA

In chapter 18 we have seen that prior to World War I, although strikes had occurred in many countries, there was as yet very little trade

unionism in Asia except in Japan, and to a much less extent in the Philippines. But the trade union picture in Asia changed drastically after the first world war, especially under the influence of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The 1905 Revolution in Russia had stimulating effects upon the national liberation movements and labor struggles all over Asia, but this was far more the case under the tremendous inspiring impact of the great Russian Socialist Revolution of November 1917. This was especially the case because the Communist International, formed in 1919, from the outset laid major stress upon the development of the trade union and national liberation movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

In Japan, as in nearly all other countries, the war caused a big expansion of industry, a corresponding growth of the working class, and a sharp deterioration of living standards. Between 1914 and 1919 the number of factories in Japan went up from 17,000 to 44,000 and the factory workers from 854,000 to 1,777,000.[11] In 1921 there were 50 strikes, but in 1918, 417. The Russian Revolution profoundly stirred the Japanese working class. The high point in the developing mass struggle was the national rice riot of August 1918, which E.H. Lattimore calls, "the greatest revolt of the Japanese people in the present century." Students and peasants participated in large numbers in the growing mass movement. In 1920 the first May Day was celebrated. In 1921 the old Friendly Love Society, the class collaborationist trade union and mutual benefit organization formed by the conservative Bunji Suzuki in 1912, was reorganized into the Japanese Federation of Labor. By 1923 there was a total of about 125,000 trade unionists in Japan, with local councils in the major centers. The first national peasant federation was established in 1922. Generally, the movement developed in the face of harsh police repression.[12] The Japanese Communist Party was formed in 1922 and at once became an important factor in the young trade union movement. It was immediately outlawed.

In the Philippines, an American colony, the other small trade union center in colonial Asia before World War I, the scattering unions were united, in May 1919, into the *Federación del Trabajo de Filipinas,* with a membership of some 100,000.

In India, during the war, there was a considerable expansion of industry, and the numbers of the working class grew accordingly. In 1914 the total of factory workers (not including miners or railroaders) was 951,000, and by 1922 it had increased to 1,361,000. Living and working conditions for the toiling masses were dreadful, and under the stimulating influence of the Russian Revolution the workers increasingly organized and went into action. Dutt dates the second great wave of struggle

of the Indian masses as of 1919-1922. "It was the shock of the first world war, with its lasting blow to the whole situation of imperialism and the opening of the world revolutionary wave that followed in 1917 and after, which released this mass movement of revolt in India."[13] He adds that, "The closing months of 1918 and the first months of 1919 saw the opening of a strike movement on a scale never before known in India." The government met these struggles with an iron repression—in the Amritsar strike massacre 379 were killed and 1,200 wounded. There were 200 strikes in the first six months of 1920, involving 1,500,000 workers.

S.A. Dange, president of the All-Indian Trade Union Congress, thus describes the state of organization during this general period: "There were no Communists in India before 1921 and no Socialists in India before 1934, whether in group or party form. There were no trade unions in Indian life before 1918 and no central organization. The AITUC was founded in October 1920, not in order to coordinate trade union activity, but mainly in order to elect 'workers' representatives' to the International Labor Organization which was established in 1919. But once founded the AITUC tended to become the central mouthpiece of the trade unions."[14] The trade unions made their first real advance during the period 1927-30. There are no reliable figures as to the number of trade unionists in this early stage, but it was small. The Indian National Congress, headed by Gandhi, mildly favored trade unionism, but did practically nothing to promote it. Nor was any serious help forthcoming in this respect from the conservatively led trade unions in Great Britain. The real pioneers in building the Indian trade union movement were the Communists.

The Chinese trade union movement also took a leap forward, largely as a result of the impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Many strikes took place in this period. Hu Chiao-mu says, "The Chinese working class first demonstrated its strength in the May 4th Movement of 1919 and began to accept the influence of Marxism-Leninism. The workers in Shanghai, Tangshan, and Changhsintien called a political strike for the first time in Chinese history, as their part in the nationwide anti-imperialist struggle of the people.[15] Sun Yat-sen, leader at this time of the people's revolutionary movement, and a friend of Lenin, supported the organization of trade unions.

As in all the Asian countries, the Communists were the pioneer trade union organizers in China. In July 1921 the Communist Party was organized by Mao Tse-tung and a few others out of the previously existing Marxist groups. It at once turned its attention to the building of trade unions as a major phase of its general activities. Although the factory workers numbered only about 1,000,000 in a population of 450,000,000,

Mao and his co-workers realized that the working class must become the leading force in the developing Chinese national liberation movement.

The first All-China Labor conference was held in May 1922 in Canton. There were present 162 delegates, representing 300,000 workers from 200 unions in 12 cities. Significantly, as Lattimore remarks, the conference was held under the auspices of the labor secretariat of the Communist Party.[16] The gathering demanded the eight-hour day, industrial rather than craft unionism, mutual aid in strikes, and the formation of a permanent federation of trade unions.[17] As we shall see later, the next few years were to bring to the Chinese trade union movement, under Communist leadership, many big strikes, a very large growth, and a vital role in the swiftly expanding revolutionary anti-imperialist movement of the Chinese people.

## WORLD TRADE UNION GROWTH (1914-1921)

Despite all the treason of the right-wing union leadership, which exerted the controlling influence in nearly all the capitalist countries, the workers of the world did manage to make substantial gains in trade union membership from the year 1914, at the beginning of World War I, to 1921, at the end of the big post-war offensive of the workers. Statistics of the period are not reliable in such matters, but Lorwin gives the figure for total union membership at 15,000,000 in 1913 and 45,000,000 in 1920.[18] Between 1920 and 1922, this number fell off again about 25 percent. In Lorwin's total there should also be noted 3,367,400 Christian union members, as reported in their Hague Congress of 1920—this membership being scattered through Germany, Belgium, Holland, France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Hungary, and Spain.

In the 1920 figures the largest national groups of trade unionists affiliated to the respective national centers were: Germany 8,500,000, Great Britain 6,500,000, Soviet Russia 5,200,000, United States 4,500,000, Italy 2,300,000, France 1,500,000, Poland 1,000,000, Austria 800,000, Czechoslovakia 750,000, Belgium 700,000 and Australia 650,000.[19]

During these years the trade unions succeeded in organizing considerable numbers of women, agricultural, and white-collar workers. In 1920 there were an estimated 2,500,000 women trade unionists in the capitalist countries, and the IFTU had as an affiliate, the International Congress of Working Women. In August 1920, under IFTU auspices, an international congress of agricultural workers was held in Amsterdam, representing some 2,000,000 organized workers. The agricultural workers at this time were playing a very important role in the labor move-

ments of Soviet Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Balkans, and some colonial countries. Germany presented the best example of successful organizing work among white collar workers—teachers, technicians, office workers, store clerks, etc.—there being some 700,000 in 12 unions, affiliated in a special section, the AFA, to the *Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (ADGB) as the Social Democratic unions in Germany were called after their reorganization in June 1919. These figures all represented large increases over those of 1914 for the various categories internationally.

## 30. The Reconstitution of the International Federation of Trade Unions (1919-1920)

Emerging from the wholesale human slaughter of World War I, the imperialist masters were confronted with three basic and urgent tasks. These were: (a) to halt, and possibly to throw back, the proletarian revolution which was threatening the very existence of world capitalism; (b) to try to patch up again their badly war-wrecked economic and political system; (c) to consolidate the gains which the British-French-American-Japanese imperialists had won by their war victory. These objectives were also shared fundamentally by the war-partners of the imperialists—the right-wing Social Democrats of all countries.

### THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The principal means devised by the war victors to achieve their imperialist objectives was the League of Nations. This project, largely conceived by President Woodrow Wilson, was incorporated in the Treaty of Versailles, which organized what Lenin called "the robbers' peace" at the end of the war. The peace treaty, signed in June 1919, placed the war guilt solely upon Germany and its allies, handed back Alsace-Lorraine to France, stripped Germany of other European territories, took away all its overseas colonics, and loaded it down with mountainous war reparations debts. Thus the treaty sowed the seeds of World War II—Hitler was to find in its terms a perfect platform for his violent nationalism and fascism.

Throughout its existence, which came to an end with the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the League was no more than a vehicle for cultivating the interests of the victorious Allies. Its pretensions of being an organization for world peace were only a sham, as the course of events was to make tragically clear. From the start the League was drastically anti-Soviet. Generally Great Britain and France ran the League proceedings from within, while the United States bossed them all from without.

If this country refused to affiliate formally with the League, this was primarily because the American monopolists felt that non-affiliation gave them greater freedom of action.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks attacked the League as an imperialist institution, but the revisionist Social Democrats hailed it and gave it their hearty support from beginning to end. The League's pro-capitalist, anti-Communist purposes fitted right in with their own conceptions. Indeed, much of the unsavory history of the League was engineered by the Social Democrats, who so numerously headed or represented European capitalist governments in that body during the life of the League, in the period between the two world wars.

## THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION

The International Labor Organization, as part of the machinery of the League of Nations, was organized at a broad conference in Washington, in October, 1919. Albert Thomas, notorious right-wing Socialist, became its director. Built upon a tri-partite basis of representatives from employers, governments, and workers, which was an organic guarantee against radical labor action, the ILO firmly committed, of course, to the maintenance of the capitalist system, was organized to damp down the revolutionary spirit of the workers. From the outset the ILO met with sharp opposition from the left, but it has always been a darling institution of the reformist Social Democrats.

The ILO survived the eventual smashup of the League, and it continues on today as a section of the United Nations. Located in Geneva, it has held annual conferences in various parts of the world Usually these are heavily attended by representatives of the respective governments, employers' associations, and labor unions. The worker representatives have to be endorsed by their several governments. Throughout its existence the institution has remained firmly m the hands of the agents of monopoly capitalism, and no matter what revolutionary winds were blowing the ILO has always held to its original course of killing off revolutionary working-class action in the name of illusory reforms.

The ILO concerns itself with many questions of interest to the workers—the shorter workday, protection of women and child workers, social insurance of various kinds, health hazards, etc. Its procedure is to pass "conventions" or "recommendations" on these questions in an advisory sense. Up to 1952, some 198 of such resolutions have been adopted.[1] But very few of them have been enacted and put into practice by the employers and governments of the various countries. Sizing up the work of the ILO, a Soviet trade unionist says that, "Many resolutions along these

lines have been adopted, but in practice they have remained nothing but pious wishes."[2]

## DISINTERMENT OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The year 1919 was one in which embattled capitalism established several new international organizations to pull together its war-wracked system. One of its most important acquisitions in this respect was the reorganization of the Second International, which had fallen to pieces at the outbreak of World War I. The Second International had performed a major service for capitalism by breaking up the workers' anti-war resistance in September 1914; during the war its affiliated parties had also worked faithfully to keep the workers lined up for the imperialists in the slaughter, and now a revived Second International would help the capitalists to reconstruct their system and especially to checkmate the revolutionary threat of the working class. To these post-war tasks the Second International promptly and continuously addressed itself.

The Second International was reconstructed at Bern in February 1919. At the congress there were 102 delegates from 26 countries, with the left organizations from Russia, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Serbia, Finland, and Latvia notably absent—also the delegates of the Youth International and the Women's Secretariat were not there. The Belgian Socialist Party and the AFL refused invitations, because representatives of "enemy" parties were present.

The business of the Bern congress reflected basically that being transacted simultaneously by the imperialist peace conference at Versailles. The majority at this congress put the blame for the war upon the Germans and criticized the German Party for the 1914 debacle. They heartily endorsed the League of Nations. They gave a tongue-in-check endorsement to the principle of the self-determination of nations. They were obviously hostile to Soviet Russia, but in view of the strong mass support for the first Socialist Republic they had to step cautiously in this matter and referred the whole question to the next congress. The International Socialist Bureau was reconstructed, with Camille Huysmans as its Secretary and Brussels as its headquarters.

The centrists—Kautsky, Ledebour, Longuet and company—were present at the Bern congress. But these word-mongers still had a special role to play in diverting the masses of workers from revolutionary action; hence, in February 1921, they set up the Vienna, or Two-and-a-half, International. This was only a passing dispute among blood brothers, however, and, after two years of independent existence, in May 1923, they and their international went back home to the Second International.

## THE REORGANIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Another organization with a pro capitalist policy that was established during the eventful year of 1919 was the International Federation of Trade Unions, which, as we have seen, had also collapsed during World War I. The first step towards the reconstitution of the IFTU was also taken at Bern, Switzerland, in February of 1919, where a conference of trade union leaders took place. But nothing much was done but quarrel over who and what was responsible for the war. About the only substantial thing they accomplished was to issue a general call for a trade union congress to be held in Amsterdam in July 1919. Meanwhile, there went ahead the reconstruction of international trade union secretariats, such as existed before the war.

The Amsterdam congress, the first trade union world congress ever held, brought together 91 delegates from 14 countries, with a total membership of 17,740,000. Present were representatives from Great Britain, Germany, United States, France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Luxemburg, Switzerland, and Spain. Notably absent were the trade unions of Soviet Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe. The colonial countries were also wholly unrepresented. Only about one-half of the total number of trade unionists in the world sent delegates. These facts indicated the reality was that the trade union movement internationally was split over the Social Democratic betrayal in World War I and the Russian Revolution.

The congress reconstituted the IFTU on a new basis. During the period from 1901 to 1914 (see chapter 19) the organization had been merely a skeleton, with no constitution, no congresses, no mass representation, and with narrowly restricted functions. The re-vamped organization, however, steered a new course in these respects. Especially it undertook to handle a wide variety of questions, economic and political. This was a reflection of the revolutionary spirit of the workers during these years and of the widespread demand for a real trade union international. The workers were forcing at least the forms of such an organization upon their reluctant, bureaucratic Social Democratic leaders.

At Amsterdam the IFTU, for the first time, drew up a regular constitution. This provided for a Bureau of five officials, to meet monthly, and a Management Committee of the Bureau and ten additional members, to meet twice a year. The chairman selected was W.A. Appleton of Great Britain (and he was succeeded by J. H. Thomas, who shortly afterward took the leading part in smashing the Triple Alliance in Britain). The vice-presidents were Leon Jouhaux of France, and Corneille Mertens of

Belgium. Gompers was ineligible for office as the AFL had not yet formally affiliated itself to the IFTU as established. Jan Oudegeest and Edo Fimmen of Holland were chosen as secretaries. The headquarters was established in Amsterdam—hence the title of "Amsterdam International," by which the IFTU later became universally known.

In the pre-war times the IFTU, with headquarters in Berlin, had been tightly controlled by the Legien bureaucracy. This reflected the hegemony which the German Social Democracy exerted over the Second International as a whole, from its foundation in 1889 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. But in the new period opening up for the world labor movement things were going to be different. The Central Powers had lost the war; therefore, in the minds of the bourgeoisified Social Democratic trade union officials from the Allied countries, the unions in those countries had thereby also lost the leading position which they had hitherto held in the International. As Lozovsky says: "the victory of the Allies which brought about the collapse of Germany, brought about the downfall of Legien."[3]

The election of the IFTU officials brought to expression all the narrow national chauvinism of the Social Democratic leaders. As a nationalist, Legien recognized the bourgeois logic that, coming from a defeated nation, he should not serve as the head of the trade union international. But he did put in a strong claim for the post of first vice-president, and when this was handed to Jouhaux he refused to take the second vice-presidency.[4] The British and French were running the IFTU and so it remained until the outbreak of World War II.

## THE PRO-CAPITALIST PROGRAM OF THE IFTU

Prior to World War I the dominant trade union leaders of the Second International were deeply tainted with bourgeois nationalism. During the war, with the labor officials working cheek-by-jowl with the imperialist warmakers, these pro-capitalist trends were greatly intensified. Consequently the Amsterdam congress, which was a gathering almost exclusively of big trade union officials, devoted itself basically to the same tasks as those that had concerned the heads of the capitalist states themselves at the Versailles peace conference; namely, how to put war-stricken capitalism back on its feet again and how to save it from the advancing proletarian revolution. At the congress the interests of the working class were only a secondary consideration and definitely subordinate to the main task of rehabilitating world capitalism. The congress was marked with such sharp nationalist janglings that for a time it was doubtful whether it would be able to re-constitute the IFTU as a working body.

The first of these national fights developed over the question of war guilt. Instead of the leaders mutually criticizing themselves, as they should have done, the representatives from the Allied countries all justified the position of their countries during the war, and they hung the war blame upon the Germans—just as the collection of imperialists had done at Versailles. This did not sit well with the Germans and Austrians, however, who were just as keen in defending the war role of their respective capitalist fatherlands. It looked as though agreement on the question would be impossible and that the congress would be wrecked. Finally, however, being given an ultimatum by the "Allies," the Germans and Austrians. through the delegate Sassenbach, declared, with essential self-justification, "We recognize the guilt of Germany in occupying Belgium, and, as it is now shown, we did miscomprehend the general situation; but this is explained by the fact that the working class has to defend its fatherland so long as it is in danger." Sassenbach's weasel-worded statement, however, was later indignantly rejected by the German Federation of Trade Unions as an unjustified admission of war guilt.[5]

The opportunist trade union leaders gathered together in Amsterdam were, of course, enemies of the young Soviet Republic. They had hailed the bourgeois revolution of March 1917 and the Kerensky regime, but with the growing possibility of the developing Socialist revolution, they had participated in various "labor" delegations—from Britain, France, the United States, and elsewhere—that went to revolutionary Russia, to urge the workers to keep that country in the imperialist war and to beware of the Bolsheviks. At the time of the Amsterdam congress the revolutionary Soviet government, attacked on all sides by armies of the Allies and of domestic counter-revolution, and with the workers living on starvation rations, literally had its back against the wall. This, of course, was precisely no disastrous situation for the Amsterdammers. So the congress, with a wary eye on the working-class masses who deeply endorsed the Revolution, contented itself with mildly protesting against the capitalist blockade and intervention and with platonic well-wishes for Socialism in Russia. It did nothing, however, to pull off the imperialist armies that were trying desperately to overthrow the Soviet government. A franker expression of Social Democratic policy towards the Russian Revolution was that of the Polish Socialist Party, which actively supported the Polish dictator Pilsudski's war against Soviet Russia.

Generally, as chauvinistic defenders of the Allied cause, the dominant elements in the Amsterdam congress, notwithstanding the protests of the German and Austrian delegates, with only secondary criticisms, went along with the terms of the imperialist peace dictated to the van-

quished nations by the assembled victors at Versailles. The congress accepted the principle that Germany had to pay reparations, which, when finally established in 1921 by the League, were set at the fantastic figure of 132 billion gold-marks—equivalent to about 60 billion dollars at the present time. The Amsterdam congress, like succeeding gatherings of the IFTU, also dodged the specific question of disarmament, under a cloud of pacifist phrases.[6] As it turned out, the only nations disarmed after World War I were the defeated Central Powers, an outcome which was not at all offensive to the imperialist-minded leaders of the IFTU. The congress also welcomed the first conference of the ILO, soon to open in Washington,

At the Amsterdam congress a head-on collision took place between Karl Legien and Samuel Gompers over the so-called Labor Convention, adopted by the Versailles peace conference. Gompers, one of the main labor architects of the peace treaty, particularly endorsed its Labor Convention because it contained his nonsensical "principle" that, "the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce"—the general demagogy being that under capitalism the workers are free. Legien, however, sharply attacked the League's Labor Convention, virtually accusing Gompers of treachery. "Legien," says Lorwin, "went so far as to insinuate that any man who could acquiesce in these deficiencies must be in the pay of the capitalist class, thus provoking a scene with Gompers."[7] Despite the opposition of the British and American delegates, the congress sharply criticized the League document.

## THE AFL AND THE IFTU

In November 1920 the second congress of the IFTU took place in London, This was a sort of continuation of the organizing congress of Amsterdam, 14 months earlier, as here the organization established its program and completed the mobilization of its forces. The claim was made that there were 26 million workers represented,[8] which was the highest membership figure ever to be reached by the IFTU. It was the time when the revolutionary upsurge among the workers was very strong. Dutt says, "the post-war revolutionary wave readied its height in 1920 (with the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw, with the defeat of the Kapp putsch in Germany, and the short-lived rule of the workers' councils in the Ruhr, and with the Councils of Action in Britain)."[9] The IFTU congress tipping its hat to the revolutionary mood of the workers, adopted a radical program, demanding the universal eight-hour day, the cancellation of war debts, nationalization of the land and the industries, and the ultimate establishment of Socialism. All of which, as the sequel

showed, were just so many more "pious wishes" on the part of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, Gompers, potentate of the AFL, did not like the way things were developing in the new trade union international. He had been deeply humiliated by the rough treatment he received at the Amsterdam congress; moreover he was repelled by the "left" program that the IFTU was working out. Gompers had so far retreated from the pro-Marxist sentiments of his early years that, like the American capitalists themselves, he had come to look upon even the most opportunistic Social Democrats as dangerous "reds." The Gompers leaders, says Lorwin, "seemed to regard confusedly, 'Amsterdam,' the Third International, the socialists, and all other-radicals as of the same dangerous breed against which American labor had to be guarded."[10]

The monopolist rulers of the United States, rejecting affiliation with the League of Nations, were electing to follow a course of so-called isolation; hence the Gompers bureaucracy, as the faithful handmaiden of the capitalist class, proceeded to follow suit. The break with the IFTU came at the Montreal 1920 convention of the AFL. While referring the whole matter of international affiliation back to the Executive Council, the convention practically decided upon disaffiliation until the American demands were met—specifically for a lower per capita tax, a rule that only unanimous congress decisions should be mandatory, and that all affiliates should have complete autonomy in working out economic and political policies. Underlying all these pretexts, however, was the Gompers notion that as a loyal capitalist organization the AFL could not associate with such a "revolutionary" body as the IFTU.

More in line with Gompersian conceptions of internationalism was the ILO, to which the AFL remained affiliated and in which the workers were held safely under lock and key by the automatic majority of the bourgeois governments and the employers. It was not until 1936, 16 years later, that the AFL resumed its affiliation with the IFTU—chiefly for the purpose of fighting against the rising people's front tide of the period.

## 31. The Foundation of the Red International of Labor Unions (1919-1921)

Already at the outset of World War I Lenin understood that the refusal of the right Social Democrats to fight against the war had basically split the world labor movement, a conviction which was fortified by their later betrayal of the Russian Revolution. Historically, the parting of the way had come for those revolutionary fighters who were resolved upon a

struggle for Socialism and those opportunist elements who saw in the labor movement only a means to further their own interests at the expense of the working class, within the framework of capitalism. The general result of this situation was the foundation of the Communist International in 1919, as the revolutionary wave in Europe was rising, as the capitalists were working up their infamous peace treaty at Versailles, and as those faithful helpers of capitalism, the opportunist Social Democrats, were busy reconstructing their political and trade union international organizations at Bern and Amsterdam.

The Communist International, or "Comintern," (Cl), was formed in Moscow, March 2-6, 1919, with 19 parties and groups participating. Lenin led the work of the historic congress. The delegates worked out a program based upon the revolutionary principles evolved by Lenin in his various writings. The new organization, born in the tradition of the "First International," declared that "the new era has begun," the era of the downfall of capitalism—its internal disintegration, the epoch of the proletarian communist revolution. The congress developed a two-sided course of struggle—an immediate policy, to wrest all possible concessions from the capitalist system, and an ultimate program, to put an end finally to capitalism altogether and to erect in its stead a new Socialist society based upon the dictatorship of the proletariat.[1] The Young Communist International was established in Berlin in November, 1919.

The formation of the Communist International marked a great turning point in the history of the world labor movement and of the world in general. Capitalism henceforth would have to face on a world scale a resolute mass movement, headed by the revolutionary proletariat and its Communist parties, determined to put an end forever to the brutal capitalist exploitation, to its cultivated ignorance and superstition, its ruthless tyranny, and its murderous wars. The working class of the world was beginning to break loose from the crippling tutelage that the world imperialists had been able to retain over it with the help of the opportunist Social Democratic leadership of the Second International. The real fight for world Socialism, the first stage of which was the victorious Russian Revolution, had now begun in earnest.

## THE FORMATION OF THE RILU

Inevitably the international split in the ranks of the working class, brought about by the revisionist Social Democratic betrayal of the workers in the war crisis of September 1914 and by their treacherous sabotage of the great Russian Revolution of November 1917, was bound to involve also the trade unions. Obviously, the Soviet trade unions and the

revolutionary workers in other countries were not going to submit tamely to the yoke of Gompers, Legien, Jouhaux, Thomas, and other labor bureaucrats of the IFTU. Already at their conference in June 1917 and at their first national congress in January 1918, the Soviet trade unions had indicated the need for a new trade union international.[2] Similar sentiment existed in other countries. Consequently, as the revolutionary forces were crystallizing themselves politically into the Communist International, they also began to consolidate on the trade union field. The first concrete expression of this was the establishment of the International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions in Moscow on July 15, 1920.[3]

The International Council had as its background a series of conferences among left trade unionists, held in Moscow early in 1920. The signers of the manifesto of the new organization, comprising some 9,000,000 workers, represented the Soviet Trade Unions, the General Confederation of Labor of Italy, the National Confederation of Labor of Spain, the Syndicalist Unions of Bulgaria, the Confederation of Labor of Bulgaria, and the Communist trade union minority movements in France and Georgia. Further endorsements were given by the British Shop Stewards Movement, the Transport Workers of Holland and the Dutch Indies, the German Syndicalist unions, the Syndicalist Unions of Italy, and the Norwegian unions. The Council set up was a propaganda organization, dedicated to a fight against class collaboration, for a program of class struggle, and with the general perspective of the eventual organization of a new world trade union organization. The Council exchanged delegates with the Executive Committee of the Comintern.[4]

The decisive trend of the left trade union forces was for the formation of a solid new international, and this crystallized in July 1921 in the re-organization of the International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions into the Red International of Labor Unions. Present at the founding congress were 200 delegates from all over the world. Among the well-known trade unionists present from the capitalist world were Mann (England), Hekert (Germany), Rosmer (France), Haywood and Foster (United States), and Zapatocky (Czechoslovakia). The RILU elected a broad Executive Council, made up of four delegates from Soviet Russia, two each for all organizations from the larger countries, and one each for the smaller movements. The Executive Bureau consisted of seven elected members. A. Lozovsky, veteran trade unionist of Russia and France, was elected General Secretary.

The chief listed supporters of the RILU were as follows: Russia 6,500,000; Germany 2,500,000; Italy 3,000,000; France 500,000; Great Britain, 500,000; United States 500,000; Spain 800,000; Australia

600,000; Poland 250,000—or in all, some 17,000,000. The affiliates were of two general types—independent unions and left-wing groups in the conservative unions. The above membership figures were only estimates, in many instances.

## THE RILU PROGRAM

The aims of the RILU, or "Profintern," as stated in its constitution, read;

"(a) To organize the large mass of workers in the whole world for the abolition of capitalism, the emancipation of the toilers from oppression and exploitation and the establishment of the Socialist commonwealth.

"(b) To carry on a wide agitation and propaganda of the principles of revolutionary class struggle, social revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and revolutionary mass action, for the purpose of abolishing the capitalist system and the bourgeois state.

"(c) To fight against the corruptive ulcer, gnawing at the vitals of the world labor movement, of compromising with the bourgeoisie, against the ideas of class collaboration and social peace, and against the absurd hopes for a peaceable transition from capitalism to Socialism.

"(d) To unite the revolutionary class element of the world labor union movement and carry on decisive battles against the International Labor Organization attached to the League of Nations, and against the Amsterdam International of Trade Unions, which by their program and tactics are but bulwarks of the world bourgeoisie."[5]

The congress paid central attention to the cultivation of trade union and national liberation movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. This was in line with Lenin's celebrated theses on the colonial question at the second congress of the Comintern in August 1920, in which, showing colonialism to be a fundamental prop of the world capitalist system. Lenin pointed out the revolutionary importance of the alliance between the toiling masses in the colonies and the proletariat in the imperialist countries. This orientation was new in world labor history, and during the next years it was to have the most profound consequences in developing the revolutionary movement in the colonial countries.

The congress also gave a strong endorsement to the industrial form and practice of trade unionism, and therewith also to the organization of women, Negroes, youth, and the unskilled and semi-skilled masses generally, who had so long been ignored, neglected, and even betrayed by the unions of skilled workers. The resolution declared that, "The slogan 'One Union for One Industry,' should become the slogan of the militant revolutionary unions."

The role of works councils (and their shop committees), which were springing up all over Europe as a result of World War I and the Russian Revolution, also was given much attention by the congress. The RILU called for the building of works councils everywhere. Elected by all the workers in a given shop, plant, or factory, regardless of whether or not they were members of trade unions, the works councils and shop committees provided a powerful means of establishing working class unity locally, to facilitate solid strike action, to serve as local democratic bases against the autocracy of the trade union bureaucrats, and to exert the maximum working-class strength in the shops.

Especially the congress stressed the revolutionary role of the works councils. They should serve as organs to exercise the greatest possible working-class control over industry, dealing with questions of hiring, firing, financial management, etc., etc., and looking eventually towards the expropriation of the employers. They had nothing in common with the "mixed committees'" and pseudo nationalization schemes (with workers' control left out) of the Social Democrats and the employers. The works councils, instead of being a substitute for trade unions, as many "leftists" urged, should be developed as local trade union organs on the basis of industrial unionism.

The next decades were to witness a prolonged struggle over the question of the functions of the works councils, with the left-wing forces trying to develop them into the real fighting organizations that the workers wanted, and with the right Social Democrats, aided actively by the employers and the governments, seeking to reduce them to mere grievance committees, or as close to this as possible. This struggle was to result finally, as we shall see, in the works councils playing an enormous role in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, while they have been thoroughly castrated in the capitalist countries. Nearly every country in capitalist Europe now has works councils laws to this general crippling effect.

The RILU congress also took a sharply critical attitude towards the General Confederation of Labor of Italy, which had not long since made the disastrous "settlement" of the revolutionary Metal Workers' strike of 1920, and, in substance, the congress called upon the revolutionary Italian workers to take their vacillating leaders in hand. The resolution warned of the danger of the rising reaction, particularly of the strong fascist trends then beginning to come into evidence in Italy and other European countries.

In the spirit of a real proletarian international the RILU surveyed the problems confronting the workers in the various countries and gave gen-

eral indications as to how they could be met. This was in contradiction of the nationalistic practices of the Second International and the IFTU which pursued a policy of "hands-off" the individual countries.

In line with its cultivation of trade union unity to the maximum the congress did not set up new international trade secretariats to duplicate or rival those of the IFTU, but instead organized International Propaganda Committees, with the task of winning the conservative unions in these spheres as units for the revolutionary policies of the RILU.

## DISPUTED QUESTIONS OF POLICY

The RILU founding congress was marked by a couple of sharp disputes, in which there were collisions between the majority and the substantial Anarcho-syndicalist minority. One of these debates was over the question of dual unionism. Widely among the Syndicalist and other "leftist" elements there prevailed the conception that the old conservative craft unions were obsolete and dying, and that, therefore, the workers should quit them and establish new and revolutionary organizations, based upon the principles and structures of industrial unionism. This dual unionist conception had long prevailed in the United States, where its most militant advocates were the Industrial Workers of the World. The idea also was held by large sections of the Syndicalist groups and unions in France, Spain, Italy, and elsewhere, as well as by certain "leftist" Communist groups. Unitedly, these forces tried to commit the RILU congress to this general dualist, splitting perspective.

But they failed. The congress went sharply on record to the effect that the militants should remain within the old unions and work there to win them as a whole, by democratic processes, for the RILU. The resolution on tactics declared that the "most conscious, revolutionary, active elements should work organically in the very thick of the working class; in the factories, and shops, in the lowest nuclei of the unions, striving to secure responsible, leading positions in the labor union movement from top to bottom."[6] The line was to win the unions, not to split them. To this end, the RILU everywhere followed a policy of developing broad progressive movements, made up of Communists, left Socialists, and other militant elements. This was a solid declaration for trade union unity, one which was destined to have far-reaching consequences in the future.

A big factor in making this historically correct decision was Lenin's famous booklet, *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder,* which he had written in 1920 in order to combat anti-parliamentarism, dual unionism, and other sectarian practices in Communist ranks. In condemning dual unionism Lenin said, "A greater lack of sense and more harm to

the Revolution than this attitude of the 'Left' Communists cannot be imagined." He declared also that, "There is no doubt that Messrs. Gompers, Henderson, Jouhaux, Legien, etc., are very grateful to such 'Left' revolutionaries who, like the German 'opposition-in-principle' (heaven preserve us from such 'principles'), or like so many among the American revolutionists in the 'Industrial Workers of the World,' preach the necessity of quitting reactionary unions and of refusing to work in them."

Thus Lenin scotched the sectarian practice of dual unionism which, by splitting the ranks of labor and by isolating the militants from the masses, had already done serious harm, especially for a generation past in the United States. The RILU resolution established standard practice on the question, which endures in Communist ranks until this day. But many of the Syndicalists did not like the decision.

Another bone of contention at the RILU congress was the question of the relationship to be established between the RILU and the Comintern. The doctrinaire Anarcho-syndicalists, with their anarchist background, were generally opposed to political parties and to all political action. Their attitude was an inversion of that of the Social Democratic right, which took the position that the trade unions should be "neutral" towards the Party. The latter line also worked out in practice as a virtual split in the ranks of labor, with the trade union leaders trying to dominate the Party, as in Germany, or to suppress and combat it, as in England, the United States, and elsewhere.

The Communists and the other left-wing elements at the Congress of the RILU, with a Leninist conception of the unity of the whole labor movement, favored the complete cooperation of the unions with the party of the working class. They constituted a majority in the congress, and writing the resolution in this conception, they decided, "To establish the closest possible contact with the Third Communist International as the vanguard of the revolutionary labor movement in all parts of the world on the basis of joint representation at both executive committees, joint conferences, etc."[7] This action greatly antagonized many Syndicalists.

The establishment of organic connections between the two internationals was, however, a tactical error. It tended to narrow down the RILU, in view of the fact that vast masses of workers all over the world were not yet prepared to work in such close relationship with the Communist parties; nor was the world situation revolutionary enough to induce the masses to overcome these hesitations and wholeheartedly to accept Communist Party political leadership. Consequently, at the Second Congress of the RILU in 1932, upon the proposal of the CGTU of France, the mutual representation clause was rescinded and the two in-

ternationals henceforth operated upon the basis of close cooperation, but not in organic affiliation.[8] This has ever since been general Communist practice in all the capitalist countries.

Most of the Syndicalists present at the congress supported the line that was developed, but a hard-core group were obviously discontented. Besides disagreeing over the questions of dual unionism and the relations between the RILU and the Comintern, they also were in opposition to the whole concept and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat as it was working out in Soviet Russia inevitably in the form of a workers' and peasants' state. They clung to the traditional utopian Syndicalist conception that the trade unions as such should both run the industries and lead society as a whole. They had hopes that the Russian Revolution would develop in this way, especially in view of the strong Syndicalist tendencies that were manifested at its outset. But by 1921 it was obvious that the Syndicalist concept would not prevail in the first Workers' Republic, and this further antagonized the schematic and dogmatic elements among the Syndicalists.

## THE DECLINE OF ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

The foundation congress of the RILU in 1921 marked the end of the Anarcho-syndicalist movement as a major force aiming to lead the proletariat. This movement which, especially after 1906 (see chapter 22), had made a strong bid for world left-wing leadership, had been weighed and found wanting. During the hard tests of World War I and the Russian Revolution, it had been bankrupted both theoretically and practically. Its great panacea, the general strike, had proved inadequate of itself either to prevent the war or to bring about the proletarian revolution; its attempt to ignore political action had become obviously absurd and dangerous; its frequent trends towards dual unionism was a serious menace to labor unity; its sectarian attitude towards religion was clearly a detriment to trade unionism; and to cap the climax, the Russian Revolution had clearly demonstrated that the old Anarcho-syndicalist conception of the trade unions transforming themselves from fighting bodies into producing organizations after the revolution was an illusion. With his brilliant writings, Lenin had torn the theoretical foundations from under Anarcho-syndicalism, as well as from Social Democracy. He had completed the defeat of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Sorel. The genuine fighters on the left were inevitably gravitating towards the camp of Marxism-Leninism.

Most of the Syndicalists represented at the RILU congress, in line with this historic situation, recognized the course of events and aligned

themselves with the Profintern* and Comintern. Most important, the CGTU of France, headed by Gaston Monmousseau and containing the bulk of the French Syndicalists, definitely affiliated itself with the RILU in 1923. The Syndicalist movement in Great Britain disappeared, that in Italy and other countries collapsed, likewise the Japanese Syndicalist groups; and the American IWW, in the loss of the Haywood-Hardy group, was irreparably weakened. In Latin America RILU forces everywhere tended to supplant their Syndicalist predecessors.

But by no means all the Syndicalists easily made this historic advance to Marxism-Leninism. After the RILU congress a group of them assembled in Berlin and there, on December 1922, they set up a new international, pilfering for it the name of the First International, the International Workingmen's Association.[9] The new body claimed to have some 200,000 members. The groups and organizations represented were in Germany, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico. This congress already registered a big decline in Syndicalist strength from the Syndicalist conference held in Berlin in December 1920, which claimed to represent a million workers.[10]

The Berlin International and its affiliates, whose chief strongholds were in Spain and the Latin American countries, thereafter played a declining role. According to Lorwin, in 1924 the organization claimed 393,000 members, with its main organizations, the CNT of Spain {200,000), the CGT of Portugal (50,000), and the FORA of Argentina (60,000). By 1928 the total membership of the Berlin International was given as only 162,000,[11] with a constant downward trend. As late as the present writing (March 1955) the Syndicalist International is still maintaining a shadow headquarters in Paris, with a few impotent sectarian groups scattered in various countries, the only important Syndicalist center being the CNT, in Spain. And the CNT is in a state of acute theoretical disarray—its long-time Anarchist doctrines of anti-politics being violently contradicted, by the realities of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath.[12] The Anarcho-syndicalist tendency has practically perished, its best fighting elements, traditions, and hopes being absorbed by the Communist movement.

## THE BREADTH OF RILU WORK

From its inception the RILU undertook a scope of action far and away beyond anything ever undertaken, before or after, by the IFTU. In this respect, as in so many others, it definitely blazed the trail for the

* A popular shortening o£ the Russian name for the RILU.

World Federation of Trade Unions of our times. Among its wide variety of activities, the RILU cultivated strong movements among the youth, women, and peasants for strike-relief, prisoners' aid, workers' education, sports, and cooperative organizations.

One of the RILU's most striking innovations was its intensive study and development of strike strategy. It has always been the practice of conservative trade union leaders to handle strikes in the most offhand manner, as though they involved no special training or theory. They have never made any real study of this whole question, which has played such a vital role in the life of the working class for some two centuries. Their general idea has been that strikes at best are a menace and the less said of them the better.

But the RILU, breaking sharply with this primitivism and opportunism, initiated a profound inquiry into every feature and phase of strikes—how and when to wage them, the many different kinds of strikes, their relations to political action, the whole complex question of strike leadership, and a vast range of other questions in this general connection. All the congresses of the RILU concerned themselves with this matter; numerous special conferences, some upon an international basis, were held on strike strategy and a broad literature on the subject sprang up in many countries. Outstanding in this respect were the extensive writings of A. Lozovsky, general secretary of the RILU,

## 32. Class Struggle Versus Class Collaboration (1921-1926)

With the fascist seizure of power in 1922 in Italy and the defeat of the October 1923 revolutionary struggle in Germany, the employers in Europe had managed to halt the great post-World War I revolutionary wave and to save their capitalist system everywhere, except in Russia. Without the aid of the treacherous right Social Democrats this would have been impossible. Otherwise, in view of the workers' revolutionary spirit, undoubtedly all of Central and Eastern Europe would have gone Socialist.

In their joint effort to put capitalism on its feel again after the war's vast ruin the capitalists and the Social Democrats worked side-by-side in class collaboration. In England the Laborites and the Liberals, in 1924, formed the first short-lived "Labor" government; in Germany the Social Democrats, Liberals, and Catholics cooperated in carrying on the bourgeois Weimar republic; in France the Left Bloc, including the Socialists, similarly got into control and strove to re-invigorate capitalism; in Denmark a boss-friendly Social Democratic government took over; in Poland

the Social Democrats cooperated with the reactionary Pilsudski, and in Italy the Socialists even made a pact of cooperation with Mussolini in 1921.[1] In Austria, Belgium, Holland, and Czechoslovakia similar class collaboration movements developed.

With this joint working together of capitalists and Social Democrats at the expense of the workers, plus the influx of a huge flow of American dollars, tottering European capitalism managed to get erect again. This fact led the Comintern, at the meeting of its Executive Committee in March 1925, to issue its famous statement to the effect that European capitalism had succeeded in achieving "a partial, relative, and temporary stabilization."[2] This balanced situation, however, was fated to endure, as it turned out, for only a very few years.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the counter-revolutionary class collaboration between the Social Democrats and the employers during these years was the so-called rationalization of industry. This was an intense industrial speed-up, based upon the prolongation of the workday, overtime work, shortening of rest pauses, application of piece work, bonus systems, and a general weakening of union controls. All this was accompanied by a wide introduction of the conveyor system, an extensive re-division of labor, and other methods of mass production.[3] This rationalization, which became a wide drive in many capitalist countries, was pushed by bosses and Social Democrats alike. Its intensification of production, without a consequent extension of markets, was an important factor in producing the great economic smash-up of 1929.

To counter this vicious rationalization campaign the Comintern and Profintern forces everywhere carried on a policy of sharp class struggle, stimulating the workers into a militant defense of their threatened unions and living standards. The Social Democratic trade union bureaucrats replied to this policy of class struggle by initiating a widespread campaign of strike-breaking and mass expulsion of militant fighters from the unions, altogether without precedent in the history of the world labor movement.

## THE GOMPERSITES LEAD THE SURRENDER

The big rationalization of industry drive of the middle and late 1920's first got under way in the United States. At the end of the defeated (betrayed) strike of 500,000 railroad shopmen late in 1922 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad came forward with a proposal, later known and hated as the "Baltimore & Ohio plan." This was to the effect that if the workers would join with the company in promoting production efficiency this would redound greatly to the former's benefit. Wages would automatical-

ly increase, the workday shorten, shop conditions improve, and unemployment vanish. This movement also involved neighboring Canada.

The AFL bureaucrats, who had been thoroughly chastened during the big strike and open shop drives of 1918-22, grabbed at this reactionary rationalization proposal as a life-saver. Swallowing the employers' propaganda, the AFL convention of 1925 endorsed the proposal as its "new wage policy," individual unions hired efficiency engineers to speed up production, and strikes were condemned as obsolete and a menace to the workers' interests. The labor bureaucracy developed its so-called "higher strategy of labor," according to which organized labor had now passed into a new and higher stage in which, on the basis of mass production and class collaboration, the workers would automatically and continuously improve their living standards. The bureaucrats loudly shouted that the class struggle was over and that henceforth the workers' path forward, marching hand-in-hand with the employers, would be a rosy one.[4]

Actually, what happened in the rationalization drive, however, was that the workers' general conditions were much worsened. During these years, while the profits of the employers soared to new heights and the productivity of the workers increased by leaps and bounds, real wages remained almost stationary, going up only by two points during 1923-26.[5] And most of this advance went to the skilled workers. Meanwhile, with the union leaders' attention focussed upon increasing production, hours of labor and working conditions steadily deteriorated in the United States and Canada, and the workers' fighting morale sank. For the first time in American labor history the trade unions failed to grow during a period of "prosperity"—in 1923 the AFL membership was 2,926,468 and in 1929 it was virtually the same, 2,933,546.[6]

Samuel Gompers died in 1924, but in his successor, William Green, the AFL got a leader after Gompers' own heart. Green, a typical reactionary, in cultivating the imbecilic class collaboration of the times, even went so far as to plead servilely with the big monopoly capitalists to admit the trade unions to their anti-union trustified industries, on the grounds that the AFL unions, with their "new wage policy," would be more effective for the bosses than the existing company unions in getting maximum production out of the workers.

During this period American capitalism went into the post-war boom "phase" of its economic cycle. This fact, plus the hectic drive to rationalize industry and the campaign to enmesh the workers in class collaboration, created a "prosperity" intoxication such as the United States and Canada had never known before. Always when industry is on the upswing the capitalists go into ecstasies as to the excellence of capitalism,

but they outdid themselves in the 1920's. The country reeked with fantastic "prosperity" utopias. For example, among others, Carver, a bourgeois economist, argued that the workers, with savings from their "high" wages, were gradually buying up the industries and thus bringing about a silent revolution.[7] The trade union leaders drank in all this and organized a whole series of banks and other financial enterprises, which soon collapsed.

Speculation ran high and the soothsayers of capitalism exulted that the United States had developed a "new capitalism," one immune to economic crises and which advanced upon an ever-rising spiral of progress. "Socialism is nonsense," "Ford has defeated Marx," they shouted. In their drunken exuberance they had no inkling of the terrific economic holocaust just ahead, in October 1929.

## RATIONALIZATION IN BRITAIN, GERMANY, AND ELSEWHERE

The capitalists and Socialists of the world stood spellbound in admiration at the "wonders" of the "new capitalism" in the United States, and they lost no time in imitating it. The German Social Democrats especially waxed enthusiastic over industrial rationalization. Tarnow, a well-known trade union theorist, said, "We must distinguish two epochs in the development of capitalism; the epoch of British capitalism, which was limited in its possibilities of expansion, and the epoch of American capitalism, which on the basis of the latest technical advances can unendingly expand and develop. For the first epoch Marx and Lassalle were typical.... For the second epoch, Ford is typical." Naphthali, another German trade union expert, wrote: "Cyclical development, under which there was a regular succession of prosperity and crisis, of which Marx and Engels wrote, applies to the period of early capitalism."[8] At the German Social Democratic Party convention of 1927 in Kiel, the outstanding leader, Hilferding, declared, "We are in the period of capitalism which in the main has overcome the era of free competition and the sway of the blind laws of the market, and we are coming to a capitalist organization of economy."[9] The revisionist advocates declared that at last the present system was arriving at the period of "organized capitalism" and "super-imperialism" long dreamed of by Bernstein, Kautsky, and other opportunists.

Summing up this general trend, Lenz says, "The increased control by the state over conditions of labor, the general tendency towards state capitalism and the transformation of the trade unions into subsidiary bodies of the capitalist state, into executive organs of capitalist society, was lauded by the theoreticians of reformism, as economic democracy and an

approach to Socialism."[10] On this basis the German trade union leaders worked hand-in-glove with the employers to suppress strikes and to get more production out of the working class, with the same general negative results upon the workers' standards and militancy as in the United States and Canada. In Germany strikes dropped from 4,785 in 1922, with 27,733,833 working days "lost," to but 358 strikes in 1930, with but 4,030,717 working days "lost."[11]

In Great Britain, too, the reformists grabbed at rationalization as providing a new and stronger base for class collaboration. Particularly was this the case after the ill-fated general strike of 1926, which we shall discuss later on. The trend crystallized in January 1928 in a general conference between the TUC leaders, led by Sir Ben Turner, and the employers headed by Sir Alfred Mond of the chemical combine. Hutt says of this gathering; "The orthodox policy of letting the employers run the industry while the unions fought for their members' rights and interests was disposed of as 'inconsistent with the modern demand for a completely altered status of the workers in industry.' The unions thenceforth would 'use their power to promote and guide the scientific reorganization of industry.'"[12] That is, the union leaders would cooperate with the employers to exploit the workers more intensely. To this end, a National Industrial Council was to be established. The movement was popularly called "Mondism."

The rationalization drive spread to many industries, until it all blew up in the great, world economic crisis of 1929-32. Its general effects were to speed up production, to lower the workers' wages, to worsen working conditions, and to increase capitalist profits. The British left-wing opposition said of it: "The most important measure for rationalization has been the steady reduction of the total wages bill," that, "a general speeding up of labor is also taking place," and that, "All of these measures lead only to the further displacement of labor and consequent further restrictions of markets and production." It concluded that "the chief issue before the working class is to fight rationalization."[13] Meanwhile, the membership of the Trades Union Congress dropped from 4,350,982 in 1925 to 3,744,320 in 1930.

Rationalization, the Social Democratic panacea for all the evils affecting the working class, accompanied by the most extravagant "prosperity" illusions, spread in various forms to nearly all other capitalist countries—France, Italy, Japan, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Scandinavia, Australia. Generally this organized collaborationist movement, after it fell to pieces during the great world economic crisis, soon became one more tragic memory of the treacherous role of Social Democracy in the

life of the world's working class.

The revisionists attempted to justify their *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* and other forms of trade union class collaboration on the false grounds that it was merely the logical extension of the practice of making trade union agreements. In a “leftist” way the Syndicalists tended to agree with this erroneous conception by refusing altogether to sign union contracts with the bosses. The Communist trade unionists, however, while realizing the practical necessity of temporary agreements with employers, do not consider that they "suspend the class struggle,” but merely change its forms. The fight to improve conditions goes right on in the shops under such contracts, and the advent of new contracts are the occasion for renewed class struggles. The workers must make short-term agreements, ending them at the most opportune seasons, and they should not consider agreements “sacred” in the sense that they justify one union working while another in the same industry is striking, or in any other way disrupting working class solidarity. Without trade union agreements the struggle in the industries would be reduced to a chaotic guerrilla basis.

## THE RILU CLASS STRUGGLE PROGRAM

During the 1920’s the main strategy of the RILU forces was to turn the big retreat of the opportunists into a working-class counteroffensive. Consequently they collided head-on with the policies of the reformists in all fields of the class struggle. Particularly was this the case regarding the rationalization (speed-up) of industry. The RILU countered this paralyzing movement with an active defense of the workers’ interests. Its affiliates in the various countries fought to defend the eight-hour day, against excessive overtime, speed-up, and deterioration of shop conditions, for improved wage rates, etc. In these years there were many important strikes in the several countries, despite the joint efforts of the employers and the Social Democrats to abort and suppress them.

In the course of the struggle the RILU built up strong organizations and movements in numerous countries. Its general policy was to organize minority groups of progressives in the conservative unions and thus to stimulate the latter into a more active defense of proletarian interests. This was the Leninist policy of the militants working with the organized masses. At the same time the left-wing forces carried on a democratic struggle to win the official leadership of the unions.

Germany, in view of the revolutionary position of its working class, was the main scene of RILU activity in the industrialized countries. Special efforts were directed toward enlivening, invigorating, and winning the works councils which were very difficult for the conservative union

leaders to dominate. It is doubtful though, following the serious revolutionary defeats of 1923-24, whether the RILU opposition forces ever led more than one-third of the total union membership in Germany.

In Great Britain RILU supporters built a strong force in the National Minority Movement. This movement was launched in London in August 1924, with Tom Mann as president and Harry Pollitt as secretary. The NMM almost immediately became a real force in British labor circles. On crucial questions at TUC congresses left-wing elements under NMM general influence usually polled one-third or more of the total vote. At its national conference of March 1926 the NMM had 883 delegates, representing over 1,000,000 trade unionists.[14] This movement played a major part in cultivating the working-class fighting spirit that culminated in the great British general strike of 1926.

In the United States the RILU forces were organized chiefly in and around the Trade Union Educational League, founded in Chicago in December 1920. A characteristic minority organization, the TUEL, during 1922-26, exerted a wide influence in the trade unions. At least one-half of the organized labor unions in the United States, at one time or another, during this period, endorsed its major slogans of amalgamation, organize the unorganized, labor party, and recognition of the Soviet Union. The bankrupt Gompers machine was greatly confused by the initiative of this militant opposition. The Canadian section of the TUEL was no less successful during these initial years in winning mass support.[15]

Similar opposition movements were developed by the RILU in practically every capitalist country. These movements took on special strength and activity in France, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland, Spain, and various other lands, built up a strong press, conducted a wide educational propaganda among the masses, and led many hard-fought strikes. They all fought within the framework of a legitimate and healthy trade union democracy, in line with trade union tradition.

## THE IFTU EXPULSION POLICY

The IFTU, or Amsterdam International as it was universally called, replied to the RILU's unity activities with a vicious expulsion policy. Whereas the RILU forces, as a matter of working-class principle, constantly strove, even under the worst provocations, to avoid splitting the unions, the reformists adopted as settled tactics after World War I the policy of expelling militant oppositionists and the disruption of unions wherever they found this necessary in order to maintain their leadership and to enforce their class-collaboration policies. They disregarded left election majorities and clung to their official positions. They applied the

expulsion policy to a greater or lesser extent in all the capitalist countries as the other side of their general class collaboration program. The RILU policy was for expelled unions and individuals to fight their way back into the mainstream of the trade union movement. Down to the present day this expulsion splitting policy remains fundamental with the right opportunist union leaders in fighting the left-wing.

In many instances the right-wing expulsions were so far-reaching that they led to deep splits in the national labor movements. In France, following the betrayal of the big railway strike of 1920, the Jouhaux bureaucrats resorted to wholesale expulsion of militants in a desperate effort to stamp out the rising left-wing opposition movement. This led to a split in December 1921 and the Formation of the Unity Confederation of Labor (CGTU), which controlled about one-half of the French labor movement, having some 300,000 members. In Czechoslovakia, for similar reasons, a split took place in January 1923, which gave birth to the One Big Union, a general industrial organization with, about 250,000 members.[16] In the United States the expulsion policy was also widely applied in the Miners, Machinists and many other unions, and often anti-Communist constitutional clauses were adopted. In the Needle Trades some 40,000 were expelled in New York during the mid-1920's. There were huge expulsions also in Germany, Austria, Poland, Japan, and other countries.

These wrecking tactics upon the part of the revisionist trade union leaders were effectuating a definite split throughout the international labor movement in the various countries. Despite all efforts of the RILU unionists to remain within the old trade unions the necessity grew, especially after the fourth congress of the RILU in July 1928, for the expelled members and unions to crystallize into definite independent movements, such as the Trade Union Unity League in the United States. Meanwhile the organizations as a whole fought tirelessly for the establishment of an all-inclusive trade union movement. Some dualist trends, however, developed on this policy, both in the United States and elsewhere. These were mistakes.

## THE RILU IN THE COLONIAL COUNTRIES

During these years the RILU, like the Comintern, paid major attention to work in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Already at its first congress in 1921 the RILU, in the spirit of Lenin, called upon "the workers of Turkey, India, Korea, China, Egypt, and other countries exploited by world capitalism to enter into the brotherly family of the Red Trade Unions in order to overthrow by their combined

efforts the world domination of the bourgeoisie and on its ruins create an industrial brotherhood of the toiling and oppressed."[17] A similar approach was made to the peoples of Latin America and Africa.

In all the RILU congresses the colonial question occupied a central position. Large numbers of delegates were present, despite great difficulties en route, from such lands. Conferences were called in these vast areas, international bureaus were set up there, trade unions were established, and the growing class struggle was stimulated and organized. In later chapters we shall deal in some detail with the tremendous movements beginning to shape up in these countries, which were all deeply stirred by the Socialist Revolution in Russia.

In all this work the RILU differed fundamentally from the outlook and practice of the IFTU. The RITU considered the fight against imperialism in the colonial lands as of the most fundamental importance, not only in the interest of the exploited masses in these countries but also in order to strengthen the struggle of the working class in the imperialist nations. It worked on the Leninist principle that one of the most basic props of the world capitalists is precisely its system of colonialism, and that the workers in the capitalist and the colonial countries must forge a great alliance. The IFTU, on the other hand, in the spirit of the revisionist Social Democrats, tended to ignore and betray the mass struggles in the colonial lands, either openly or covertly subscribing to the opportunist position that colonialism was essential to capitalism, to the preservation of which they were devoted, and on the whole beneficial to the masses in the colonial lands.

The broad anti-imperialist struggle of the RILU forces posed many new and difficult strategical and ideological questions for the young labor movements in the colonial countries. There were at least three major elements in this general problem: (a) the trade union had to give support to the national bourgeoisie, when it was really making an anti-imperialist fight, in the national liberation movements; (b) the unions, at the same time, had to conduct a struggle against this same bourgeoisie in order to defend and advance the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, and (c) they had to be guided throughout by the fundamental Leninist principle that the working class is the only social force in the colonies that can he definitely depended upon to lead the national liberation struggle to ultimate success.

The IFTU, like its predecessor, the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centers, was almost exclusively a European organization. But the RILU, in the tradition of the First International, but more effectively so in the practice, was truly a world trade union organization.

Its militant entry into the vast colonial areas, embracing over one-half of the human race, marked a new stage in the development of the world labor movement.

## 33. The Fight for the United Front and Trade Union Unity (1919-1926)

Particularly since the rise of imperialism, after the 1880's, it has always been a basic policy of the capitalists to seize upon all ideological and other differences in the ranks of the workers and to stimulate and exploit them in order to weaken or destroy the unity of action and organization of the working class in both the political and industrial fields. Especially has this been the case since the great growth in numbers and potential strength of the labor movement. These divisive questions in the ranks of the workers, cultivated and organized by the employers and their conscious or unconscious agents, relate to matters of politics, craft, sex, nationality, religion, and race. The basic splitting force among the workers is, obviously, bourgeois influence in the labor movement.

During the period with which we are here dealing—from 1919 to the British general strike of 1926—the boss-organized splits in the labor movement were very serious. Not counting the international splits on the political field, there were four distinct trade union internationals in existence—the RILU, IFTU, Anarcho-syndicalist, and Christian (Catholic). Besides, there were various other union-splitting tendencies at work which did not rise to the level of concrete international organization.

These numerous, deep, and crippling splits in the ranks of the working class were in marked contrast to the unity to be found everywhere in the ranks of the employers' associations, both within the respective countries and often internationally. Then, even as now, one did not find employers organized in different associations, based on lines of religion, sex, nationality, and the like. On the contrary, all the employers, regardless of ideological differences, in a given industry or trade were almost always organized in single organizations. The absurdity of creating special economic organizations along ideological lines was left to the working class—with the help of skillful capitalist-inspired splitters in their ranks.

### THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF TRADE UNION UNITY

In addition to the traditional splitting tendency of craft unionism, with its exclusion of women and the unskilled, which we have discussed previously in passing—the most basic and serious working-class split was the division between the Social Democrats and the Communists.

This split was caused, as we have seen, by the war betrayal of 1914 by the right Socialists, by their sabotage of the Russian Revolution, and by their persistent refusal to lead a resolute fight in defense of the workers' daily interests. This historic split, represented in the world political field by the Communist International and the Second International, had its reflection in the economic field in the RILU and the IFTU. As to the latter organizations' respective strength in 1924, Lozovsky, head of the RILU, summed this up in general as follows: "The Amsterdam International unites between 14,000,000 and 15,000,000 members.... We unite between 12,000,000 and 13,000,000."[1] The big drop of the IFTU from its claimed 26,000,000 in 1920 was due to the disaffiliation of the AFL, the loss of Italy to fascism, and heavy membership declines in Great Britain, Germany, France, and elsewhere.

Another serious division in the ranks of labor was that of the Anarcho-syndicalists, represented by the Berlin International with some 200,000 to 300,000 members. This split was especially important in the Latin-European and Latin-American countries. The movement, as we have seen, had taken on an international scope after about 1906.

Important also in the list of divisive forces in the ranks of the working class was the so-called Christian, or Catholic trade union movement, which began to take shape in the early 1890's. The International Federation of Christian Trade Unions during the 1920's numbered up to 3,000,000 members,[2] and its unions were definitely an obstructive factor to the workers of Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Canada, Mexico, and elsewhere.

A hindering type of trade unionism that had also grown up in the period following 1900 were the so-called national unions. That is, workers in the respective national minorities in a given country, instead of taking part with the general labor movement, often proceeded to organize trade unions of their own. Many countries suffered from this bourgeois national tendency, among them Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Germany, etc. Great Britain, France, Scandinavia, Japan, etc., were free of this particular anti-solidarity pest, having fewer national minorities.

The Social Democrats, especially in Austria before World War I, were directly responsible for the growth of this national unionism.[3] The Bolsheviks defeated such divisive nationalistic tendencies in prerevolutionary Russia. In the United States, with foreign-born immigrant workers counting up to 60 to 85 percent of the working force in various industries, actual national labor unions of immigrants were, however, never formed. The problem of organizing the many nationalities—sometimes up to 25 different groups in a given steel mill or coal mine—

was dealt with, first in the Knights of Labor and later in such AFL unions as the Miners, Carpenters, Textile Workers, and others, by the formation of "language locals" for the respective major national groups. As the immigrants became Americanized and learned English, the language locals, as such, gradually passed out of existence.*

The world labor movement has also had considerable difficulty with racial trade unionism. The worst example of this, during this period, was in the United States, where many of the AFL trade unions systematically excluded Negro workers, forcing them either to form separate unions or to remain unorganized, as they generally did. In chapter 10 we have seen that in the post-Civil War years the American Negro workers formed their own national organization, the Colored National Labor Union. The British trade unions operating in the colonies and dominions also systematically excluded the non-white workers, and this became the settled policies of the Miners and of most other unions in Australia, and especially in the Union of South Africa.

The complex problem of labor unity was further vexed by the employers themselves directly organizing "trade unions," as barriers against the formation of real unions. These organizations were of various types. In Germany (and several other countries) there were such organizations as the Hirsch-Duncker unions, directly organized by the bourgeois liberal party. In Czechoslovakia, for example, practically all the political parties, including the capitalist parties, had their own trade unions. In Russia even the tsarist police took a hand in establishing "labor unions." The most important types of boss-organized unions, however, were the so-called "company unions." These were to be found to a greater or lesser extent in all the major capitalist countries—Great Britain, Germany, Japan, France, Belgium, etc.—but their real home was in the United States.

Company unions, directly organized, financed, and officered by the employers, were initiated in the United States in 1886; but it was only after 1900 that the employers began to cultivate them on a large scale as a definite part of their program, at all costs, to keep their trustified industries unorganized. At the end of World War I there were some 250 of them, chiefly in the basic industries. By 1927 the number had increased to 900, embracing about 1,000,000 workers.[4] These company unions were part of an elaborate anti-union set-up, including far-reaching spy-systems, company gunmen and detectives, and company terrorism in the

* Characteristic of American labor organization at this time, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party after it were made up chiefly of national "language federations."

shops and industrial towns. The employers and their personnel managers installed them as sure-fire preventives of trade unionism. Despite the vast company union machinery, however, the workers, during World War I, succeeded in building up extensive unions in meat-packing, steel, lumber, metal-machinery, and other trustified industries, and a few years later, during the great organizing drive of the 1930's, they were able to break down the company unions nearly altogether. The various types of company unions—"yellow" unions in international trade union language—were forerunners of the eventual state unions of Mussolini, Hitler, and other fascist dictators.

## THE FIGHT FOR ORGANIC TRADE UNION UNITY

From its inception in 1921 the RILU carried on an active and persistent campaign for the unification of the trade union movement, both in action and organically. Its ceaseless struggle for labor's solidarity was a basic expression of the revolutionary proletarian character of the RILU. This was in direct contrast with the bourgeois trend of the conservative leaders of the IFTU, marked by the disregard by these reactionaries of labor unity in general and by their willingness at all times to split or otherwise weaken the trade unions in order to hang onto control of them. Splitting the trade unions is a fundamental expression of bourgeois influence in the labor movement.

In the various countries the RILU forces worked tirelessly to unite and strengthen the labor movement fundamentally. They were everywhere the most active supporters of campaigns to organize the unorganized into the unions, into those affiliated with the RILU and those that were members of the IFTU. They were also tireless champions of the amalgamation of the numberless craft unions into modern-type industrial unions, and they had as a fundamental point in their program the establishment of one national trade union center in each country, instead of up to half a dozen centers, as existed in most capitalist countries. In all these campaigns characteristic Social Democratic opposition was encountered.

The RILU forces, however, did not fight for unity in an abstract way, on the basis of unity at any price. The very foundation of the unity drive was to strengthen the fighting capacities and policies of the trade unions. The central strategy, as remarked earlier, was to overcome the world-wide retreat of the opportunists during the 1920's, with their extensive systems of *Arbeitsgemeinschaft,* or class collaboration, and to bring the harassed and attacked labor movement over onto a counter-offensive.

At this time of sharp internal labor controversy it would have been

idle to speak of uniting the Social Democratic and Communist Parties into one political organization, what with the strong controls exerted by reactionaries in many of the Socialist parties. In the famous “21 points” of 1920 Lenin had made it clear that proletarian political unity involved a drastic cleansing by the working class of opportunist leadership and class collaboration policies from its organizations. The stand of the Communists and other left-wing elements was that, in view of the very basic need of the trade unions for all-inclusive membership, it was then both possible and indispensable to establish general trade union unity. This unity, however, could be effective only upon the basis of class struggle policies and a fighting leadership. In this general respect the RILU, throughout its life span, fought without respite to unify the trade union movement.

In line with this general policy, the RILU at its third congress in July 1924 came forward with a broad program for the unification of the world trade union movement. This historic proposal stated: “Never for a moment stopping its determined fight against all manifestations of reformism within the international labor movement, mercilessly revealing all its treacherous substance, untiringly explaining this to all workers who do not understand yet the role of reformism as a brake to the struggle of the proletariat for emancipation, the Third Congress, in the interests of the concentration of the proletarian forces and in the interests of a united leadership in the struggle of the worker against the economic offensive of capital and fascist reaction, considers it the most pressing task of its activity to develop a widespread campaign among the working masses in favor of the unity of the international labor movement. This unity campaign, chiefly and first of all developed below among the broad masses, must put before them in all its proportions and with perfect clearness the question of creating one International of Labor Unions."[5]

The resolution set up the "Unity Commission of the World Labor Movement” of 17 members, to carry on the campaign for labor unification. It also proposed that the RILU "must not miss any negotiations with the Amsterdam international and with its separate sections on the question of realizing unity and a united front, this to be done under the condition of a consent in each individual case on the part of the RILU and under its leadership." In later years, especially after its fifth congress in 1930, under the pressure of the expulsion policy, there were certain leftist, sectarian tendencies here and there in the RILU—marked by trends toward needless dual unionism in some cases, failure to put up joint slates in workers’ councils’ elections, and other such narrownesses.

The RILU carried on its organic unity campaign actively in many

countries. Together with a similar campaign by the Comintern, this created unity sentiment far and wide among the workers, which was eventually to bring about important united front developments. As for general trade union organic unity, however, the RILU proposals met with a flinty opposition from the right-wing labor bureaucrats. As a matter of basic strategy, these opportunist elements were rigidly opposed to the organizational unification of world labor. A split trade union movement had become indispensable for them, if they were even to hope to maintain their controls. They realized that a broad, all-inclusive trade union international would be fatal to their plans of labor domination and class collaboration. To maintain a split world labor movement, therefore, ever since, down to the present time, has remained a fundamental policy of right Social Democrats all over the capitalist world.

## THE QUESTION OF THE UNITED FRONT

The RILU did not confine itself to fighting for organic trade union unity through organizing the unorganized, amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial organizations, and general proposals for the united federation of labor upon a national and international scale. It also undertook to cultivate united front action and organization in the daily battles of the workers around specific issues. The Leninist unity-in-struggle policy the RILU supported from the outset. The program, while including agreements at the top with the Amsterdam leaders, did not end there, however. It especially depended upon the "united front from below"; that is, the cultivation of a strong unity trend among the broad masses of workers. Repeatedly the RILU congresses re-iterated that unity from below was the main united front policy. The Social Democrats shied away systematically from this whole united front policy almost as much, if not so successfully, as they did from organic trade union unity.

In the early 1920's important developments nevertheless began to take place around the burning question of the united front. In April 1922 the Comintern held a general conference in Berlin with the leaders of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals over the matter of shaping up a common program of working-class policy regarding the coming Genoa conference of the capitalist powers. The reformist leaders—both right and center—agreed to this conference only under the pressure of the revolutionary workers of Eastern and Central Europe—in 1923 Germany was to reach a high point of revolutionary struggle. Characteristically, the opportunist bureaucrats went through only the motions of making unity. After much wrangling an agreement was drafted at the conference, to fight for the eight-hour day, to demand the recognition of Soviet Russia, etc., and a

three-sided committee of nine was appointed to enforce the agreement. But the opportunists had no intention of carrying out these proposals, which were only sops to the prevailing radical spirit of the workers. As the reactionary Borkenau says, "After the conference of the three Internationals, the official leadership of the Socialists remained deaf to all appeals for cooperation."[6] Consequently nothing concrete came out of the conference in the way of organized international action.

But the workers in Europe and elsewhere were not to be so easily defeated in their attempts to establish unity in action, in the face of the efforts of their opportunist trade union and political leaders to keep them divided. The next years, all the way up to World War II, were to be marked by a rising struggle for the united front, with the RILU making many proposals to the IFTU and with its individual unions also working to this general effect. As in their betrayal of the anti-war struggle in 1914 and their sabotage of the Russian Revolution, the counter-revolutionary character of the right-wing leaders was also clearly expressed in their stubborn struggle against the united front.

The fight for united front action upon a shop, local, national, and international scale for the coming years saturated the whole activity of the RILU and its affiliated bodies. This took on a wide variety of forms—of stimulating the shop committees into action, of widening strike committees by the inclusion of all categories of workers in them, of intensive organizing campaigns, of linking the unions and their actions unofficially together through rank and filers. High among these solidarity efforts were campaigns to unite the workers in the Fat East and to bring them into close cooperation with the workers in Europe, and the RILU made it a special task to begin to organize the Negro workers in the United States and Africa.

## THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE

As Lozovsky says, the Amsterdam International as such could make a flat rejection of the RILU united front proposals, but its affiliated organizations, under heavy rank and file pressure, could not always do so. In this respect a serious break in the cynical resistance of the reformist labor bureaucrats came about in the field of general transport. The result was that a united front conference was held between the two transport international in May 1923 in Berlin, with Germany then rising to another high pitch of post-war revolutionary struggle. This was at the time when the Second International and the IFTU, in their desperate efforts to keep labor divided, were initiating all over the world their policy of expelling Communists from the unions.

At the Berlin conference, says Lozovsky, "We adopted very elementary decisions: the fight against war by creating control committees in all seaports, in important railway centers, etc. But all that was adopted by the conference of the International Transport Workers met a sharp and decided opposition from the Amsterdam International."[7] Fimmen and Oudegeest went at each other's throats over this matter, but finally Fimmen resigned and the Oudegeest crowd managed to sabotage the growing transport unity into nothing. Meanwhile, however, with the Soviet trade unions a new situation was growing up that the Amsterdam bureaucrats found far more difficult to handle.

From the outset the trade unions of the Soviet Republic had refused to knuckle down to the Amsterdam labor misleaders and they became the backbone of the new international, the RILU. With the victorious Russian Revolution behind them, they enjoyed tremendous prestige among the workers of the world, and in view of the strong Comintern and RILU campaign for labor unity, there was constantly a strong demand to bring about their affiliation with the IFTU on a sound basis. Under this pressure, which became all the stronger because of the growing danger of fascism and war, the leaders of the IFTU in August 1923 invited the Russians to talk over trade union unity. But they did this in such a tricky way, demanding that the Soviet trade unions, as the price of affiliation, should drop their revolutionary criticism, take up an oppositionist attitude toward the Soviet government, etc., that the IFTU proposal promptly brought forth the hoped-for rejection from the Russians. Thus Amsterdam tried to delude the militant European workers into believing that it was striving for trade union unity.

Oudegeest thought that by this cynical maneuver he had put the Soviet trade unions on the shelf indefinitely; but the British trade unions refused to allow matters to be disposed of so readily. In February 1925 the British delegates at the meeting of the General Council of the IFTU made a motion to the effect that a conference, without preliminary conditions, should be held with the Soviet trade unions, looking towards bringing about their affiliation. This proposal was rejected by a vote of 13-6, whereupon the British leaders themselves proceeded to hold a conference with the Soviet union leaders two months later in Moscow. There was set up a joint "Anglo-Russian Advisory Committee," "to promote international unity."[8]

The cause for this unusual action of British labor bureaucrats splitting so openly with their fellows in the top councils of the IFTU was twofold: first, there was a rising spirit of revolt among the British working class, soon to erupt in the great general strike of the following year,

and the trade union leaders were not insensitive to this growing pressure; and second, Great Britain had its eye on the very promising Soviet trade market, and wanted to get its paws into it—another consideration which was by no means lost upon the bourgeois-minded British labor officials.

The existence of the Anglo-Russian Advisory Committee brought renewed pressure upon the Amsterdam International for world trade union unity. Things got so tense that even the disaffiliated Gompers in the United States, a violent Soviet hater, was alarmed at the new course of developments. The Amsterdam General Council, after reassuring itself that the British union leaders did not intend to disaffiliate and to launch a new world federation with the Soviet trade unions, in December 1925 voted the British proposal down again and re-iterated its decision of February of the same year, placing definite blocks in the way of international labor unity. There the situation stood when, a few months later, the great British general strike began in May 1926. As we shall see, this struggle was to lead to the dissolution of the Anglo-Russian Advisory Committee.

## 34. The British General Strike (1926)

The huge general strike of some 5,000,000 workers, which hit Great Britain like lightning in May 1926, was basically an expression of the developing general crisis of the world capitalist system. The explosion occurred in one of the most sensitive sections of that system, Great Britain; because that empire had long been losing its once unique commercial pre-eminence to a host of active competitors in the world market, the United States, Germany, Japan, and various others, including the British Dominions themselves. Although a "victor" in World War I, Britain had suffered greatly in that slaughter, and the unfavorable situation leading up to the historic general strike represented the Empire's re-adjusting to a lower economic position in the hierarchy of capitalist nations.

The relative decline of Great Britain in the world capitalist economy was becoming marked already in the 1880's, with the emergence of new and strong imperialist rivals in the world. The British capitalists, no longer sole masters of the international markets and of the colonial world, began to restrict the special wage considerations they had been giving to the skilled British workers out of their super-profits and to slash into the already very low living standards of the broad masses of toilers. It was this basic trend that produced the great strikes and organizing campaigns around the famous Dockers' strike of 1889, and also around the no-less historic movement of the 2,000,000 Maritime workers, Railroaders, and Coal miners in 1911-14, culminating in the formation of the Triple Alliance of these three key categories of workers. This was the

same elementary force that was to culminate in the general strike of 1926.

Generally by 1926 world capitalism had succeeded, after the war, in achieving a "partial, relative, and temporary" stabilization, and the United States was experiencing a hectic boom. But not Great Britain; it continued to suffer along with stagnant industry. Bell states that in 1913 Britain exported 89,000,000 tons of coal, but in 1924 only 61,650,000 tons; production in shipbuilding, which was 1,898,000 tons in 1913, had decreased to 1,165,000 in 1924; and steel production in 1924 was barely above the level of 1913.[1]

Eaton gives these figures on mass unemployment in Britain: "In 1920, 2.4 percent were unemployed, in 1921, 16.6 percent. In no subsequent year, save 1927 (9.6 percent), did unemployment fall below 10 percent until the world was again plunged into war in 1939.[2] This mass unemployment, hardly touched by the skimpy government social insurance, brought untold misery to the workers. To add to these workers' difficulties the employers were driving to put through still lower living and working standard generally. In July 1925 Premier Baldwin put the case bluntly, declaring that "all the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet."[3] The short-lived MacDonald Labor-Liberal government of 1924 brought no relief whatever to the threatened position of the working class.

## EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE GENERAL STRIKE

The center of Britain's economic difficulties lay in the coal industry, the basis of its industrial system as a whole. Except for the war period this industry, suffering from excessive foreign competition and the growing development of substitute fuels, had been in more or less of a crisis for the past quarter century. The aggressive stand of the miners in defense of their living standards was the trigger that had set off the tremendous, and generally successful, strikes of the 1911-14 period. The outbreak of World War I eliminated, however, the possibility of an immediate clash between the employers and the newly-formed Triple Alliance.

The next big collision between the miners and the coal operators came in 1921. This, as we have indicated in Chapter 29, led to the failure of the Triple Alliance on "Black Friday," April 15, to act in support of the 1,000,000 striking miners, due to the cynical betrayal by J.H. Thomas, railroad union leader, and other opportunist union bureaucrats. Although left to make their fight alone, the miners nevertheless managed, by a long hard strike, to secure their first national agreement and to maintain substantially their living and working conditions.[4]

Upon the expiration of the 1921 agreement in July 1925 there came the basic clash that was to culminate ten months later, in the great general strike. There were some 25 percent of unemployed in the industry at the time, and coal was piled mountain high, not only in England, but also in nearby Germany, Belgium, and France. The British employers arrogantly demanded wage cuts of from 13 to 48 percent in standard rates, the abolition of the seven-hour day (for eight hours), and the substitution of a series of district agreements for the prevailing national agreement. The fighting miners refused to accept these draconian demands and the struggle began. Their leader at this time was A.J. Cook, a very active figure in the National Minority Movement.

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress voted its complete support to the miners. The coal operators served notice that if their terms were not accepted by July 30 they would lock out the miners. Obviously unready for this drastic action, the government set up a Royal Commission to investigate the situation, and the employers accordingly withdrew their lockout notices. This was "Red Friday," and it was hailed as a real victory for the workers. Actually what had happened, however, was that the Government had secured time to prepare, as it did, for the great struggle which it knew was lying just ahead.

The next several months were a period of intense anti-strike operations by the Baldwin government. It proceeded to mobilize trucks, to develop special depots of locomotives, to organize automobiles for emergency work, to assemble lists of potential strikebreakers, and to train personnel for key industrial posts. The body through which these active strike-breaking measures were carried out was the Organization of the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS). The country was divided into ten divisions and emergency economic and political organizations established in each. Great masses of troops were also moved into strategic areas. In short, the government prepared itself as though to put down a revolution.

Meanwhile, the right-wing arm-chair bureaucrats at the head of the trade union movement—Thomas, Citrine, Pugh, Bevin, Smith, and others—were bewildered at the course of events. Nor did the centrists—the Purcells, Hicks' and Swales' show up much better. The Left—the Communist Party and the National Minority Movement, headed by Harry Pollitt and very powerful in the rank and file of the unions—demanded that the General Council take immediate and energetic steps to meet the great crisis that was obviously developing. Crook remarks that, "Pressure from the 'left,' and especially from the small but vocal Communist Party, to have extensive preparations for a possible general industrial struggle initiated, had, if anything, only a contrary effect upon the General Coun-

cil." Regarding the leaders' unreadiness, says Crook, these leaders were "unprepared and proud of it."[5]

The opportunist trade union leaders, far more of the type to lead friendly negotiations with the bosses than to wage a general strike against them, floundered about, hoping for an eventual settlement, They rejected plans for the re-constitution of the Triple Alliance, and it was almost at the very last that they conceded limited power to the General Council to lead the whole movement. The bureaucrats went along with the elemental mass movement of the British working class simply because they could do nothing to stop it. The whole vast struggle was utterly foreign to the entire concept of the Social Democratic theory and policy of class collaboration. The last thing the bureaucrats expected or wanted was real class war against the arrogant exploiters of the British working class.

On March 11, 1926, the Royal Commission on Coal, headed by Sir Herbert Samuel, made its report, ordered the previous year. It took substantially the side of the coal operators—nationalization of the coal mines was rejected, the government subsidy to the coal industry must stop, wages had to come down and working hours go up. Of course, nothing was to be done against the interests of the parasitic stockholders. There followed several weeks of fruitless negotiations, the government moving for a strike and the General Council moving against it. The final result was that the national general strike order went into effect at midnight May 3rd.

## THE COURSE OF THE STRIKE

At the Scarborough congress in September of 1925 the delegates had voted 3,082,000 to 79,000 for a strike policy; on the eve of the strike the unions also voted 3,600,000 to 50,000 in favor of the general strike, and when the strike came on May third they responded accordingly, with a solid walkout. Britain had never seen anything to approach it. "There were no trains, no bus service, no trams, no papers, no building, no power." The mines, steel mills, chemical works, and other key industries were down almost 100 per cent. Remarkable also was the way the white-collar workers struck. Say Cole and Postgate, "Unions like the Railway Clerks' Association—black-coated, of recent date, and doubtful spirit—in most cases came out as loyally as modern fighting men like the National Union of Railwaymen or ancient and obstinate craft societies like the London Compositors."[6] Of the 1,100 unions in Great Britain, only three ratted, the most important of which was Havelock Wilson's Sailors Union.

The skilled struck side-by-side with the unskilled. On the London and North-Eastern Railway, for example, of 11,500 locomotive engineers only 75 remained at work.[7] The spirit of the workers was magnificent. Highly militant, they were at last going to settle some real scores with the employers, or so they hoped. The second big wave of strikes came out on May 11, shipyard workers, metal trades, and others. Hutt says that despite the government's frantic gathering up of strike-breakers, there were more workers on strike the day the strike was called off than the day it began.

The government, resolute and thorough, attacked the strike with great vigor. It saw as its main problem to keep going a minimum of transport, especially the moving of foodstuffs. This it was able to do in a measure, with the fleets of trucks and automobiles at its command. The government also used the armed forces to intimidate the strikers, and it used the radio with deadly effect, filling the country with outcries about "civil war." The OMS built up a skeleton transport organization in the cities and on the railroads. But when the strike was called off this strike breaking body had hardly made a real dent in the ranks of the strikers. Winston Churchill, then a member of the Cabinet, was an especially virulent strike-breaking element.

From the start the strike leaders were in a state of confusion and panic. Their whole collaborationist world was tumbling down about their ears. Their strategy was not to win the strike by a resolute course of policy, but to settle it, and as the sequel showed, at any price. Cole and Postgate describe this attitude as that "Muddle and fear reigned then. Fear among many Council members who dreaded the strike weapon they had chosen and wanted only to lay it down; muddle between the Miners and the Council itself,"[8] The general result was that the Council pursued a vacillating, defensive policy. "Never," says Hutt, "was there any carrying of the war into the enemy's camp."[9] So timid were the leaders that they even refused a strike gift of 350,000 pounds from the Soviet workers. The Council descended to the absurdity of designating the strike as purely an industrial dispute; whereas the whole country knew it was a major political struggle which could involve the fate of the government and the labor movement.

A national general strike is essentially a revolutionary weapon; that is, if it is not merely a protest strike of a stated few days' term. It aligns the working class and the capitalist class in a basic political collision. When organized labor undertakes to halt the industrial life of the nation the government is bound to accept this as a definite challenge to its right to rule the country. This is precisely what the Baldwin government did,

and it fought against the general strike on the basis that it was an incipient civil war. The General Council, whether it liked to or not, had to accept, one way or another, the logic of the situation. To win it had to take most determined measures in order to halt the key industries dead and to compel the government to make a settlement—even if the working class was not yet ready to abolish the capitalist system and to set up a Socialist government. But all such revolutionary analysis and bold action were quite foreign to the opportunist British trade union leaders. Their path was the other one, to surrender to their masters, the capitalists.

Meanwhile, as the opportunist strike leaders wavered and trembled and stalled before the resolute action required, the government, through its radio facilities, bellowed out that the strike was being broken by a big back-to-work movement. This further weakened the fighting will, if any, of the union leaders. An objective American observer, however, Professor Crook, denies that any substantial break was occurring among the strikers. He called the whole agitation a "mythical weakening" of the strike. He describes, for example, the situation in the key sector of the strike, the railroads, as follows: The Great Western Railway, on the day the strike was called off, had had a return of but 25 men in a normal working force of 6,206, and the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, had only 273 locomotive engineers on the job, of its total number of 14,671.[10] Other roads were in similar bad shape.

Overwhelmed by the great movement they were supposedly heading, the opportunists o£ the General Council, on May 12, marched into Prime Minister Baldwin's office and made an unconditional surrender. They pretended that the Samuel's Coal Report had been reinterpreted in the miners' favor. Hutt says, "such was their pitiable confusion that the 'second line' had been called out, according to plan, only a few hours before; such their wishful thinking that some among them actually sent 'victory' circulars to their members."[11] The great strike had lasted nine days. The effect upon the strikers of calling off the strike was catastrophic. Crook states that, "For twenty-four hours after the broadcasted announcement of the strike's ending, the confusion in trade union ranks was indescribable."[12]

The sell-out treason of the General Council, listed as "unanimous," was shared in not only by the Thomas-Bevin rights, but also by the Purcell-Hicks center. As for the Miners, they repudiated the Samuels Report, on the basis of which the great strike had been called off, and they practically boycotted the Council in the last days of the strike. They continued their strike for several months more, till it wound up in a defeat in November. This was "Black Friday" of 1921 all over again; engineered

by the same opportunist labor leaders, but this time upon a vastly bigger and more harmful scale.

## THE AFTERMATH OF THE STRIKE

Realizing that they had dealt organized labor a heavy blow in the strike defeat, the employers set out to cripple the unions fundamentally by slashing wages and worsening conditions generally. This, however, had the immediate effect of stiffening the workers' fighting spirit, and the wage-cut notices were hastily withdrawn. No doubt many employers, not merely the highly vocal minority of Moseley fascists, wanted very much to press on towards fascism. Churchill himself was an open admirer of Mussolini, and he had declared that if he lived in Italy he would support him. But the situation was not ripe for fascism in England. The employers lacked the necessary fascist organization, their potential mass middle-class following had not been prepared, the British economic crisis did not yet warrant such desperate measures, and any attempt at setting up a fascist dictatorship would surely have provoked a fierce struggle by the enraged working class.

Therefore, the employers' counter-offensive did not reach the stage of an actual try for fascism. It did, however, have sufficient strength and virulence to culminate in the passage in 1927 of the notorious "Trades Disputes and Trades Unions Act." It was to take the workers two decades before they could repeal this vicious legislation. The law, the worst enacted in Great Britain for over a century, stripped the trade unions of many hard-won rights. General and sympathetic strikes were strictly forbidden, anyone leading or participating in an "illegal" strike was liable to a fine or imprisonment up to two years, mass picketing was outlawed and ordinary picketing severely limited, union funds were made subject to civil suits for damages, civil service unions were prohibited from affiliating with the Trades Union Congress or the Labor Party, the rights of unions to discipline strikebreakers were curtailed, and sharp restrictions were placed upon the rights of the unions to raise financial levies for the Labor Party. The reactionaries chortled with glee over this ferocious legislation, believing that at last they had succeeded in hamstringing the more and more threatening trade union movement—a reactionary hope, however, that was not to be realized.

After the betrayed strike, not unnaturally considerable pessimism set in among the workers. The Trades Union Congress lost half a million members during the following year. With their opportunist policies, the leaders thus succeeded in reducing the total membership of the Congress from 6,505,482 in 1920, to 3,744,320 in 1930. Many trade union bureau-

crats were frankly glad that the general strike had failed—Thomas and others like him insolently said, "Never Again." How the conservative union leaders felt about the whole situation was indicated by the fact that within a month after the anti-trade union law was passed, they were sitting down with the employers and cooking up the previously described scheme of class collaboration known as "Mondism," the British version of the notorious American speed-up program, the "Baltimore and Ohio plan." The genera] result of Mondism, says Hutt, was that "Throughout industry conditions worsened, with extensive speeding up, breaking of piece-rates, violating of agreements,"[13] and decline of union membership.

One of the most disastrous consequences of the sell-out of the great general strike was the disruption it caused of the Anglo-Russian Advisory Committee, which had seemed to open up promising prospects of moving towards world trade union unity. The British trade union leaders, in full retreat before the capitalist offensive, were only too eager to seize upon, as an excuse, some Soviet trade union criticism of their mishandling of the general strike, to dissolve formally their connections with the All Soviet Council of Trade Unions. This they did at the Edinburgh convention in September 1927. Their splitting action won much applause from the triumphant employers. It was part of the opportunists' intensified policies of servility to their capitalist masters.

The most fundamental analysis of the British general strike was that made by the Soviet leader Stalin.[14] Stalin traced the combination of economic and political factors, summing up to the accentuated decline of the British empire that had precipitated the great strike. Briefly stated, his seven reasons for the loss of the strike were, (a) "The British capitalists and the Conservative Party... proved in general to be more experienced, more organized and more resolute, and therefore, stronger, than the British workers and their leaders," (b) "The British capitalists and the Conservative Party entered this gigantic social conflict fully armed and thoroughly prepared, whereas the leaders of British labor were caught unawares... (c) "the capitalists' general staff, the Conservative Party, waged the fight as a united and organized body... whereas the general staff of the labor movement... proved to be internally demoralized and corrupted," (d) whereas the capitalist class waged the fight as an elementary political struggle, the leaders of labor tried to conduct it as an economic struggle, thereby condemning it to failure, "For, as history has shown, a general strike which is not turned into a political struggle must inevitably fail," (e) the capitalists developed their full international support, whereas the labor leaders did not, (f) the failure of the Amsterdam International

actively to support the strike definitely contributed to its failure, (g) the British Communist Party, although pursuing an "absolutely correct" policy, still lacked the necessary size and mass prestige to have influenced decisively the course of the strike.

## COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF THE IFTU AND RILU

Following the loss of the British general strike the German trade union leaders, headed by Theodore Leipart, secretary of the German Federation of Trade Unions, made an unsuccessful effort to break the British control of the IFTU. At the fourth congress of the Amsterdam International, in Paris, August 1927, Leipart undertook to defeat A. Purcell for re-election as President of the IFTU, by nominating George Hicks, another English delegate in his stead. This brought about a deadlock, and the British walked out. They returned later, however, and at a special meeting of the IFTU in September the delegates picked out as general president Walter Citrine, secretary of the British Trades Union Congress. Notoriously, Citrine had distinguished himself in the breaking of the British general strike; hence, by Amsterdam International standards he rated being placed at the head of this world federation of labor.[15]

At the outbreak of the world economic crisis of 1929-33 the relationship of forces numerically between the two world trade union federations was approximately as follows: The IFTU showed a total of 13,800,000 affiliated members.[16] These were grouped by industry and trades into 29 international trade secretariats. The IFTU membership was almost exclusively confined to Europe; there being, of the grand total, only some 156,000 members in Canada, 82,000 in Argentina, and 9,000 in Africa. The RILU at its fifth congress, in August 1930, reported a total affiliated membership of 12,880,275, organized into some 13 International Propaganda Committees, or trade union secretariats. The RILU general secretary, A. Lozovsky, estimated (too heavily) that including unaffiliated, sympathizing organizations, the total membership of the organization would run to about 18,000,000.[17] For example, although Germany shows no regular RILU affiliates, the movement had some 2,000,000 general supporters there. In Britain RILU figures show 10,000 members, but obviously the support of the National Minority Movement spread into the hundreds of thousands. The same was true of many other countries. The RILU was especially strong in the young and growing labor movements in Latin America, in China, Japan, India, Korea, and other lands of the Far East, and in the beginnings of organization among Negro workers in various countries.

# 35. The Workers and the Great Economic Crisis (1929-1932)

Capitalism in all countries has always developed through a series of cycles of alternating industrial activity and depression, one such cycle every decade or so. The cyclical crises are caused basically by capitalist production outrunning the available markets at the time. The sag in industry continues until, by mass lay-offs, destruction of surplus commodities, etc., the productive forces are reduced below those of consumption, whereupon the cycle begins all over again. England, the United States, Germany, Japan, and all other capitalist countries have had these periodic crises, and the tendency of the crises is to become more international and more sweeping in scope.

The broad world economic crisis of 1929-32 was such a cyclical crisis of over-production, as Stalin stressed.[1] But it was the deepest, longest, and most devastating economic crisis in world history. Whereas, says Dutt, the deepest previous periodic crisis fall of production internationally was seven percent, world industrial production, between the second quarter of 1929 and the third quarter of 1932, fell by 42 percent. In the same period many countries went off the gold standard, capital export halted, international finance was in chaos, international trade, measured in gold dollars, dropped by 65 percent, world unemployment rose to an unheard of total, estimated at from 30 to 50 million.[2] At least that many more toilers worked only part time. The crisis was of unparalleled duration, becoming after 1932 what Stalin called "a depression of a special kind," with industry continuing in a state of stagnation until 1939; that is, until the approach of World War II again revived production. This crisis, as we shall see, was also to bring profound political developments in its aftermath.

The great severity of the world cyclical economic crisis of 1929-32 was basically due to the fact that it was superimposed upon the deepening general crisis of the capitalist system as a whole. This means, said Stalin, "that the imperialist war and its aftermath have intensified the decay of capitalism and undermined its equilibrium, that we are now living in the epoch of wars and revolutions; that capitalism no longer represents the *sole* and *all-embracing* system of world economy, that side-by-side with the capitalist system of economy there exists the socialist system, which is growing, which is flourishing, which is resisting the capitalist system, and which by the very fact of its existence, is demonstrating the rottenness of capitalism and shaking its foundations. It means, furthermore, that the imperialist war and the victory of the revolution in the

USSR have shaken the foundations of imperialism in the *colonial* and *dependent* countries, that the authority of imperialism in these countries has already been undermined, that it is no longer capable of ordering affairs as of old in these countries."[3]

## THE DEVASTATION OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The great crisis, says Stalin, began in Poland and the Balkans, but it took on its terrific sweep only when it hit the United States, with the deep stock market crash in October 1929. Thence it spread swiftly throughout the capitalist world. The economic structure of the United States, the boasted capitalist country of permanent "prosperity," collapsed under the 1929 blow. By the end of 1932 over $160 billion in stock market values had been wiped out, production in basic industry sank by 50 percent, 5,761 banks failed, the value of farm products fell from $8.5 billion to $4 billion, wage cuts for all industries ran to at least 45 percent, and early in 1933 17,000,000 workers walked the streets unemployed. The destitution among the American toiling masses was unprecedented.[4] In Canada, near-neighbor of the United States, industry was similarly crippled and 1,000,000 workers were jobless.

In Germany the economic crisis was likewise devastating. General industrial production dropped by 45 percent and every branch of the nation's economic life was stricken with paralysis. In August 1932 the government figures showed 5,225,000 fully unemployed, but the actual number was at least 8,000,000, not counting the additional huge masses working on short time. *Abend*, a German Social Democratic paper, estimated that 17,000,000 persons in Germany were living on relief rates of only three dollars to four dollars per month. Weekly wages fell from 42 marks in 1929 to 21 marks in 1932, with 38 marks as the estimated minimum cost of living.

In Great Britain industrial production sank by about 25 percent. Eaton points out that the reason for the comparatively smaller industrial decline in Britain was the fact that that country, which had never fully recovered after World War I, was already in a depressed condition when the great crisis hit.[5] The official number of unemployed soared from 1,165,000 in 1929 to 2,970,000 in 1932, with some 800,000 more jobless not on the official lists of unemployed, and another million or two working on short time. Wages were heavily slashed, as in all other capitalist countries, and relief rates were on the usual starvation levels.

The crisis also dealt industrialized Japan a body blow. In 1932 there were 2,840,000 workers fully unemployed and millions more partially employed. Like the workers in the United States, the Japanese workers

had no government relief system in 1929. In France, in June 1932, there were 2,300,000 workers unemployed and 5,618,800 working part-time. Similar conditions prevailed in Italy, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Spain, Scandinavia, Australia, and other capitalist countries. The crisis also struck with great severity in the colonial and semi-colonial lands. In China, India, and other Asian countries unemployment reached record figures, peasant industries were wrecked on a large scale, and mass starvation stalked everywhere like a plague. In Latin America also the crisis was especially disastrous, the industry and foreign trade of these countries falling off from 50 to 80 percent.

## THE SOVIET-CAPITALIST CONTRAST

During this period of profound economic crisis throughout capitalism, the world had a striking lesson in the superiority of Socialism over the capitalist system. With capitalist production cut almost in half, production in the Soviet Union, in sharp contrast, continued to boom ahead, untouched by the world-wide capitalist crisis. Varga points out that between the years 1930-32 Soviet production rose no less than 81 percent. It was during these years that the bulk of the famous first five-year plan was completed, bringing about the investment of 64 billion rubles in industry, transport, and agriculture. While tens of millions of workers all over the capitalist world starved in joblessness, there was work for everyone in Soviet Russia, and the swiftly growing industrial system, which had already abolished unemployment completely, clamored for more and more workers.

This historic contrast between moribund capitalism, sickened and rotting, and flourishing Socialism, vigorous and growing, was one that brought keen embarrassment to the capitalists of the world and their Social Democratic henchmen. For these elements, on their knees before the capitalist system of human exploitation arid oppression, had long since written off the Soviet system as worse than a total failure. But for tens of millions of toilers in factories and fields throughout the world, the great demonstration of the superiority of Socialism over capitalism in the supreme test of the 1929-32 economic crisis, came as a glorious justification of their hopes and struggle for a new world, one fit for civilized human beings to live in.

## CONFLICTING POLICIES OF THE IFTU AND RILU

The great economic crisis caught the capitalists of the world totally unprepared. Almost without exception, their economists had been holding forth the perspective of an endless capitalist upswing. In the United

States the "great engineer," President Hoover, poured out Pollyanna propaganda to the effect that the "new capitalism" was on the verge of forever abolishing poverty. The capitalist economic and political soothsayers had been so intoxicated from the upward swing of the economic cycle that they were living in a dream world of wishful thinking.

By the same token, the right Social Democrats, who for a long time past had been taking their main economic ideas directly from bourgeois sources, were similarly surprised and flabbergasted at the sweeping onset of the historic crisis. In painting rosy perspectives for the capitalist system, they had been even outdoing their bourgeois mentors. All over the capitalist world, with mock Marxist phrases, the leaders of the Second International and the IFTU had chattered about capitalism entering a new, better, and more enlightened phase of "organized capitalism" and "ultra-imperialism." Then came the demoralizing smash of the crisis.

In complete contrast to all this bourgeois confusionism, the Marxist-Leninists at the head of the Comintern and the RII.U had been warning of the approach of a severe crisis, hence they were not at all surprised when it came. At its sixth congress, held in July-September 1928, almost on the eve of the crisis, the Comintern warned the workers of the world that the current economic "boom" which the Social Democrats were hailing as the beginning of a new era of capitalist progress, was only temporary and would soon be ended by a great crisis and with a general sharpening of the class struggle all over the world.[6] The RJLU oriented upon this same general analysis and perspective.

The right Social Democrats in general, lost in dreams of capitalist progress and class collaborationism, poured out their scorn and ridicule upon the Marxist-Leninist world perspective. But the next years were to give this forecast the most striking confirmation; not only by the almost immediate development of the great economic crisis, but also by such sharp economic and political collisions as the growth of world fascism, World War II, the Chinese Revolution, and other great struggles. In pointing out in 1928 that what was actually taking place in the world, beneath the thin veneer of capitalist "prosperity," was a profound deepening of the general crisis of the capitalist system and sharpening of the class struggle, the Comintern was brilliantly and historically correct.

The right Social Democratic trade union and political leaders, besides sharing the capitalist no-crisis illusions on the eve of the great economic smashup, also, in harmony with their general political line as lackeys of the bourgeoisie, had basically the same ideas as the employers regarding what to do about the crisis, once it came. Everywhere the capitalists minimized the extent and probable length of the crisis, and so did

the Social Democrats; their joint song being that "prosperity was just around the corner." Such a basic harmony of viewpoint was only to be expected alike from Social Democratic and capitalist leaders, whose basic economic "principles" were essentially the same.

Historically, the capitalist attitude towards cyclical crises has been to shove their burden onto the workers through slashed wages and mass unemployment, until the economic storm blows itself out and the upward swing of the economic cycle begins all over again. This was the way, too, that the employers undertook to meet the great economic crisis of 1939-32. Logically enough, opportunist Social Democratic policy fitted right in with this barbarous course. This was made clear by the failure of the IFTU and its major affiliated bodies promptly to initiate a solid fight to defend the workers' interests in the tragic situation.

Lorwin—who is no friend of the left-wing—says correctly that "the leaders of the IFTU were slow in grasping the gravity of the economic depression which followed the financial panic of October 1929."[7] A. Lozovsky, head of the RILU, comments that as late as July 7-11, 1931, the main reporters at the Stockholm Congress of the IFTU made no mention of the economic crisis, but devoted themselves to class collaborationist projects of "nationalization," "planned production," and the like. "International reformism, as represented by the Second and Amsterdam Internationals, simply denies the fact of the world economic crisis."[8] This do-nothing international attitude of the IFTU was reflected in a similar passivity, on the national scale, by the British Trades Union Congress, the German Federation of Labor Unions, the American Federation of Labor, and by other conservative labor organizations at the time. These bodies, particularly in the first couple of years of the crisis, tried simply to shrug off the disaster.

In basic contrast to all this passivity by the IFTU and its affiliates and sympathizing organizations, the RILU and its supporters carried on a militant struggle all over the world to mitigate the effects of the crisis upon the working class. This took the form especially of an active strike policy against wage cuts, and of the unfoldment of an international struggle against layoffs and for unemployment relief and social insurance. Everywhere the RILU organized the unemployed and linked them up with the trade unions. As early as March 6, 1930, the RILU organized a day of world-wide protest and struggle against unemployment, which was a big success in many countries. After this came countless other mass actions while the crisis lasted.

Under the militant pressure of the left the IFTU trade union leaders had to begin to show some traces of activity during the latter phases of

the crisis. How little body there was to their "fight," however, was illustrated by the fact, cited by Lorwin, that alarmed at the progress of the left-wing in the 1931-32 period, the IFTU proposed an international trade union conference on the economic crisis, but the whole project was abandoned offhand when the AFL refused to go along with it.[9] Mass pressure can frighten such capitalist-minded union leaders into a semblance of activity, but it can never make them really fight for the workers' interests. Whenever conservative leaders manage to hang onto their posts during surging mass movements they "head these struggles in order to behead them," if and when they can. A widespread German watchword of this period, *Zwingen die Bonzen* ("Force the leaders"—to fight), was, as the RILU said, an incorrect slogan. With such leaders the workers' immediate aim must be to keep all authority out of their hands and to get rid of them as soon as possible.

## THE FIGHT AGAINST STARVATION IN THE CAPITALIST COUNTRIES

During the three years of 1929-32, in 15 leading countries, there were 18,794 strikes, involving 8,515,000 strikers, with 84,763,700 working days "lost." Of these, 1,468 strikes took place in England, 2,700 in the United States, 3,601 in France, 1,304 in Germany, 688 in Czechoslovakia, 6,889 in Japan, 1,333 China, and 480 in India.[10] Most of these strikes were led by the left-wing, RILU forces. Among the more important of the strikes were those of Miners, Textile workers, and Railroad workers. Many of the strikes were accompanied by sharp clashes with the police, who used harsh measures of violent repression against the workers.

Generally the IFTU Social Democratic trade union leaders pursued a non-strike policy, so far as they could force it upon the rank and file. The employers all over the world followed a course of drastic wage-cuts and of otherwise worsening the conditions of the workers. As usual, reflecting the elementary policies of their masters, the IFTU union leaders made no fighting resistance to this line, holding in substance with the capitalist economists that wage cuts were unavoidable in the crisis and had to go through. If there were not greater strike movements during the crisis the basic cause for this was the no-strike policy of the still dominating Social Democratic trade union leaders.

The spirit of non-resistance was common among right Social Democratic leaders all over the world. Matthew Woll, vice-president of the AFL, expressed it well when he hailed as one of the greatest industrial achievements in the history of the United States the fact that the more

than 1,000,000 railroad workers were induced by their leaders to accept a ten percent wage cut without a strike. As usual, in no country was the true bourgeois essence of Social Democratic policy in general more clearly expressed than among the frankly pro-capitalist union leaders of the United States. All such surrender policies of Social Democracy were in flagrant contradiction to the fighting line of the RILU forces, which everywhere fought militantly against wage-cuts and other deteriorations of working-class conditions.

During the great crisis, with non-fighting Social Democrats controlling most of the trade unions in the capitalist countries, the left forces made their best struggle showing among the unemployed masses. Under RILU leadership unprecedented movements of these desperate masses took place in many countries. One factor facilitating an effective struggle was that the right Social Democrats exerted little control generally in this field. To a very large extent, especially in the early stages of the crisis, the conservative union leaders of the IFTU brand tried to wash their hands of the whole unemployment problem. That is, the workers, ejected from their jobs, were left to shift as best they could, in many cases even being dropped from the union membership rolls because of inability to pay their dues. The RILU forces, on the other hand, devoted major attention to these starving masses, seeking to organize and to activate them in struggle. This fight was centered mainly for unemployment relief, social insurance, and public works programs.

In Great Britain the National Unemployed Workers movement conducted many hunger marches and demonstrations of the unemployed. These won the support, far and wide, of the trade unions, and they attracted national and international attention.[11] In the United States and Canada the Unemployed Councils carried on similar activities, organizing numberless local, state, and national demonstrations and marches of the unemployed. On March 6, 1930, some 1,125,000 workers participated in the great national unemployed demonstration. Meanwhile, the AFL leaders, supporting the do-nothing policies of President Hoover, cried out that unemployment insurance would be an insult to American workers and would "undermine the trade unions" and "destroy the American way of life." Not until July 1932 did the AFL Executive Council finally give its reluctant support to a bill for national unemployment insurance.[12] In Germany, in the face of sabotage by the right trade union leaders, the left opposition carried on wide activities, to awaken and activate the unemployed. Meanwhile, Hitler was achieving rapid headway because of the failure of the Social Democrats to make an active fight for the workers' interests. In many other countries—Japan, France, Belgium, Poland,

Czechoslovakia, Australia, Argentina, Chile, China, India, etc.—similar struggles of the unemployed took place under RILU leadership. On a world basis the RILU was indisputably the leader of the unemployed.[13]

In several countries, in the aftermath of the 1917-1923 revolutionary wave, and forecasting future upheavals, the resistance of the workers, farmers, and others to the crisis took on sharp political forms. In Great Britain the second Labor government was elected in 1929, and in 1931 the sailors in the British Navy went on strike against a reduction in pay. In Spain a bourgeois revolution was carried through successfully in April 1931. In Japan there were numerous cases of mutiny in the armed forces in 1932, protesting against the invasion of China. In China the war against the counter-revolutionary forces took on greater vigor and wider extent.

The world economic crisis of 1929-32 was marked by a far sharper fighting spirit on the part of the workers than had ever been the case in any previous cyclical crisis. This increased militancy, under active cultivation by the RILU and the Communist International, manifested itself also in the shape of unprecedented solidarity between the employed and unemployed, and in an active cooperation between the jobless workers and the rebellious poorer farmers in many countries.

The great struggles of the period made it very clear to the exploiters of the world that the time was forever past when, as in many previous economic crises, the workers could be forced to starve on through, in destitution and desperation until, by the slow workings of the capitalist system "things began to pick up again." For this favorable situation in the great crisis no credit was due to the right Social Democracy, which did all it could to perpetuate the old tragedy of the workers passively suffering out the crisis. The sharp new fighting spirit of the workers in the great economic crisis of 1929-32 testified, first of all, to the fact that there was a new revolutionary fighting force in the world, the most basic expressions of which were the Russian Revolution, the Comintern and the RILU.

## 36. The Trade Unions in the Fight Against Fascism and War (1929-1939)

Fascism is "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital."[1] Although differing somewhat in the various countries when it has come to power, fascism basically brings about the violent destruction of bourgeois democratic government, of popular liberties, of the workers' political parties, trade unions, and cooperatives. The big monopolists turn to

the violence and demagogy of fascism when in their developing crisis, they are no longer able to rule with traditional bourgeois democratic forms and methods.

The fascist trend got under way in the revolutionary crisis following World War I, when the reactionaries began to set up dictatorships in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, and other countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Fascism scored its first big victory in the establishment of the Mussolini dictatorship in Italy in 1922. Fascization of Japan was also stepped up greatly when the rulers of that country invaded Manchuria in 1931. Fascism, a product of the general crisis of capitalism, was given another strong impulse by the profound difficulties caused the capitalists by the deep economic crisis of 1929-32. But particularly after the seizure of power by Hitler in Germany in 1933, the fascist drive became violent and threatening. The reactionaries of big capital thenceforth aimed not only at making Europe fascist, but the whole world as well. Consequently, all humanity soon came to face the most dreadful danger of devastating war and fascist enslavement.

Hundreds of Communist workers were killed and thousands were jailed in this big offensive of reaction. One of the major casualties was Antonio Gramsci, head of the Italian Communist Party, who died in a fascist prison on April 27, 1935.

True to their fundamentally different natures, Social Democracy and Marxism-Leninism reacted in opposite ways to the grave fascist danger. The right Social Democrats, whose whole outlook and policy were based upon the assumption that capitalism had to be maintained at all costs, tended to break down the workers' resistance and to clear the way for fascism, and finally, even to embrace it—"social fascists," the Communists called them at the time. In the spirit of conciliating fascism the Social Democrats, including especially the trade union leaders, participated in several of the various fascist and near-fascist governments of the period in Eastern and Central Europe; made a non-aggression pact with the Italian fascists in August 1921,[2] and as we shall see, they proposed even more shameful collaboration with the victorious German fascists.[3]

On the other hand, the revolutionary Comintern and RILU unions, mortal enemies of the capitalist system, in tune with the fighting spirit of the world's workers, waged a relentless struggle against the menace of fascism in all its manifestations. It was they who gave the essential leadership to the world labor movement in this gravest of all crises. The anti-fascist, anti-war struggle, in one form or another, went on in all countries, and the left-led trade unions everywhere were the very heart of it.

## THE FASCIST VICTORY IN GERMANY

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the economic crisis of 1929-32 was particularly severe in Germany, and the position of German capitalism was rendered still more precarious by the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty, which stripped Germany of vital European and colonial territories and loaded that country down with unpayable war reparations debts. In this critical situation, fearing proletarian revolution, the big German capitalists undertook to solve their problems by the desperate means of fascism—which meant the violent suppression of the labor movement, the establishment of a reactionary dictatorship, and the development of a ruthless imperialist war offensive. The monopolists were all the more induced to such a violent course because of the wishy-washy policies of the Social Democracy, which, tangled in the web of class collaboration, could be depended upon to weaken the workers' resistance in the face of the fascists' drive for power.

The seeds of fascism were planted in the Social Democratic betrayal of the German Socialist revolution in 1918. The bands of officers mobilized then by Noske to shoot down the revolutionary workers provided the kernel for Hitler's eventual mass organization. His Nazi Party at first grew relatively slowly, but it expanded swiftly during the economic crisis of 1929-32, its national vote increasing from 800,000 in 1928 to 13,418,547 in 1932. Under Hitler's demagogy, which was heavily financed by the Krupps, Thyssens, and other monopolists, there streamed into his ranks masses of dispossessed city middle classes, impoverished peasants, and famished and backward working-class elements.

The basic cause of the growth of the Hitler movement was the refusal of the Social Democracy to give fighting leadership to the broad toiling masses of the people who were destitute as a result of the great economic crisis. The Social Democracy kept its whole attention and hopes focussed upon the sterile Weimar government, in which it was the largest party. The Weimar republic, which was the crystallization of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (class collaboration), for which the right Socialists had peddled away the proletarian revolution in 1918, did virtually nothing to relieve the overwhelming misery of the people. Moreover, Social Democratic reliance upon it acted as a brake upon the fighting spirit of the workers, especially after the opportunist trade-union leaders had adopted rationalization, or the speed-up, in industry. From 1922 to 1932 the number of strikers steadily declined, from 1,823,921 to 127,720, and the Social Democratic ("free") trade union membership dropped from 7,568,000 in 1921 to 4,418,000 in 1931.[4] So it went until 1933, when Hitler kicked over the outworn Weimar republic like a house of cards.

The opportunist right trade union leaders were primarily responsible for the fatal policies which led the German Social Democracy to disaster at the hands of the fascists. The Leipart-Grassmann bureaucrats controlled, root and branch, the main mass movement of the workers, the trade unions. The Socialist Party, every important national union, and the entire labor press were also completely dominated by them. They (the Legien group) had been the real bosses of the Party since they won control in the 1906 fight over the general strike issue (see chapter 23), and they had peddled away the Revolution in November 1918 for the Weimar republic.

The Communist Party, with Ernst Thaelmann at its head, and the Red Trade Union Opposition (RILU). pointed out the folly of the class collaboration policy of the Social Democratic Party and its trade unions, and repeatedly called for a united front of all labor's forces on the basis of a program of active anti-fascist struggle. This was in line with the Communist united front policy, first promulgated by Lenin in December 1921 and often proposed to Social Democrats. On four key occasions, therefore, precisely when general strike action would have been disastrous to Hitler, the Communist forces proposed such broad strikes—in April 1932, against an impending sweeping wage cut; on July 20, 1932, when the von Papen dictatorship expelled the Social Democrats from the control of the government of Prussia; on January 30, 1933, when Hitler became Reichschancellor, and on March 1, 1933, after the Nazi-organized Reichstag fire of February 27.[5] But the right-wing Socialist union leaders only sneered. They undeviatingly followed their line of refusing to swing the trade unions into struggle and of supporting "lesser evil" candidates of the bourgeois parties in the elections. They saw an enemy only on the left. Their police in strategic Prussia allowed Hitler's Storm Troopers and Steel Helmets a free hand against the Communists, while rigidly suppressing the Red Front and other workers' defense organizations. Dutt is right when he says that, "Fascism grew to power under the protection of the Social Democracy." Certain "leftist" trends in the German Communist Party tended to prevent it from fully developing its fundamentally correct united front policy.

In the face of this chronic Social Democratic bankruptcy the German Communist Party and the Red Trade Union Opposition grew rapidly, the Party vote going up by 1,384,000 (to a total of 4,983,341) between 1930 and 1932, and the RTUO winning control of a large number of works councils. But the Social Democratic Party, primarily because of its still solid control of the national trade unions, continued to cripple the action of the great bulk of the working class right on down to the final

debacle. This was evidenced by the firm grip the Leipart bureaucrats retained in the national works councils' elections and by the more than 8,000,000 votes polled by their party in the 1932 general national elections.

In April 1932 the inevitable happened. The “lesser evil” policy of the Social Democrats resulted in the victory of Hitler’s forces. The way the ruling class handled it was cunning. The Social Democrats, mobilizing their full trade union following, supported and elected the old reactionary, General von Hindenburg, as a “lesser evil” than Hitler, instead of making a united front fight for a workers' ticket, as the Communists proposed. Several months later, on January 30, 1933, Hindenburg yielded to the clamor of the fascist thugs and made Hitler Chancellor. The job was done; fascism was in power in Germany. In a situation where the decisive sections of the bourgeoisie were heading towards fascism and war, the policy of the Social Democrats of cooperating with the bourgeoisie in a struggle against the left, had led to its inevitable conclusion—a fascist Germany.

Above all, the trade union leaders, the main force in German Social Democracy, were responsible for this great political tragedy. But they were not at all dismayed by Hitler's rise to power. As loyal servitors and supporters of the capitalist system, they confidently expected to play their customary role in the new regime, as they had done in the rapid succession of the several capitalist governments just prior to the advent of Hitler. For how could the employers get along without their trusted Social Democratic trade union lieutenants to keep the workers in line for them to be exploited?

With such conceptions in view, the Social Democratic leaders—Wels, Kautsky, Leipart, and others—set out to incorporate themselves into the Hitler regime. They declared that Hitler, a man of the common people, had achieved power by constitutional means, and they even boasted that had it not been for the policies of the Social Democracy he never could have come to power. As usual, the opportunist trade union leaders outdid all the rest in their servility. On April 29, says Marquant, “the *Gewerkschaftszeitung* (official trade union journal) published an article welcoming the national-socialist (Hitler) May Day as a day of victory for the working-class movement”[6] and calling upon the workers to participate in the Nazi celebration.

Writing in the midst of the struggle, Fritz Heckert says that “Leipart, Trotsky's ally, delivers up the trade unions to Hitler, declaring that the ADGB (German labor federation) accepts the reorganization of the trade unions according to the Italian (fascist) pattern, and he writes that the

tasks which the trade unions are confronted with must be fulfilled independently of the form the regime of the State takes. That the trade unions are always ready to cooperate with the employers' associations; that they will recognize State control and accept State arbitration. That they offer the Government and Parliament—that is, the Hitler Reichstag—the help of their knowledge and experience."[7]

After World War II men were shot for lesser acts of collaboration with the Nazis than this, but such collaboration (surrender) was the official line of the "great" German Social Democracy towards victorious Nazism. However, Hitler arrogantly refused to accept their preferred support. The German monopolists, bound for world conquest, for the time being at least, were done with *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* and the other trappings of class collaboration, upon which the Social Democrats based their policies and activities. This was to be the era of violent stormtroopers, not of slick-speaking Social Democrats. Dr. Ley, head of the Nazi labor front, hit the nail on the head when he declared: "The Leiparts and the Grassmanns may profess their devotion to Hitler; but they are better in prison."[8] Only those labor leaders, and they were numerous, who put on the collar of fascism outright could become accepted parts of the Hitler labor bureaucracy.

"None of these acts of submission was enough," says Marquand. "On May 2 all trade union buildings were occupied, and all leaders arrested; and on May 13, all trade union property was confiscated."[9] Thus, the several millions strong German trade union movement, which the workers had been building for 70 years, gave up without even a semblance of a fight. It has been said that, fearing a hard struggle and a general strike, Hitler's original intentions had been to proceed slowly with the suppression of the trade union movement—it took Mussolini several years to do this job. But when Hitler observed the spineless attitude being taken by the trade union leaders he decided to break up the movement with one sweeping blow, which he did. It was impossible for the Communists, by themselves, to materialize a general strike in the face of Social Democratic opposition. On May 17, four days after the seizure of the unions' property, the Reichstag Social Democratic delegation, most of them trade union leaders, further demonstrated their abject servility by voting for the fascist government's resolution.[10] Hitler showed his appreciation of this belly-crawling on June 23, by outlawing the Social Democratic Party and arresting its few remaining extreme right-wing leaders. The Communist Party had long since been outlawed. The Hitler terrorist dictatorship was established in Germany, grace to the class collaboration, pro-capitalist policies of Social Democracy.

## THE FASCISTS TAKE OVER AUSTRIA

In February 1934, shortly after Hitler seized power in Germany, the Hitler brand of fascists also grabbed control in Austria. The general pattern of political events was essentially the same—the capitalist system in deep crisis, the big capitalists resolved upon fascism, the working class willing to fight, and the Social Democracy, with its loyalty to capitalism and with its "lesser evil" policy, betraying the workers into the hands of their class enemies.

The big Austrian empire had been shattered by the Revolution following World War I and what was left of the structure, embracing 6,000,000 people, lingered along in chronic crisis. The workers, however, numerically speaking, were the most strongly organized in the world. Their trade unions, re-organized upon the industrial union basis in 1928, numbered some 650,000 members at the end of 1933, and the Social Democratic Party had practically the same number of members as the unions, a ratio quite without parallel in any other country. The party polled 70 percent of the votes in Vienna and, with 72 representatives, was the strongest in the national parliament. The brand of Social Democracy in Austria was of a special type, "Austro-Marxism," championed by Bauer, Benner, Adler, et al, being noted for its radical phraseology. These men had been leaders in the unlamented Two-and-a-Half International. Like centrism in Germany and elsewhere, Austro-Marxism, when things came to a showdown, demonstrated that it followed the same opportunist line as that of right Social Democracy everywhere. As in Socialist parties all over Europe, the mainspring of the Austrian Social Democracy was the trade union bureaucratic leadership.

The fascist menace raised its head early in Austria—Mussolini influence—and already in July 1927 the workers replied to the growing fascist provocation with an effective spontaneous national general strike. Mortally fearing a proletarian revolution, the Social Democratic leaders called the strike off. Political conditions continued to deteriorate in Austria, and Bauer and his colleagues, following through with their "lesser evil" policy, even went so far in their futility as to support one group of fascists, the clerical (Italian) element, against the Hitlerites.

Encouraged by the spineless attitude of the erstwhile radical Austro-Marxist leaders, the sprouting Austrian fascist dictator, Dollfuss, in March 1933, abolished parliament and proclaimed an open dictatorship. For the next eleven months the Social Democratic Party continued to plead and maneuver for cooperation with the Dollfuss government, even on the basis of being barely allowed to exist. But the workers wanted to fight to restore their vanished liberty, and on February 10, 1934 they be-

gan to strike. The small Communist Party called for a general strike. At first the Socialist leaders vetoed the strike, but finally had to proclaim it. This was another typical case of opportunist Social Democrats going along with a struggle which they could not halt, but which they could and did betray to defeat.

The dominant, typically conservative Austrian trade union leaders wanted none of the general strike, which, under the armed attack of the fascist forces, soon became an insurrection. Dutt says that the official general strike call never reached the majority of the workers, and a great part of the trade unions made no attempt to make it effective. "The railwaymen continued to carry the government troops, thus giving to them full liberty of movement and concentration."[11] The Workers' Defense Corps, which was to lead the armed struggle, was never mobilized, and generally a defeatist attitude was displayed by the leaders. In view of such sabotage the disastrous outcome of the struggle was a foregone conclusion. After a few days' heroic struggle, which inspired the workers of the whole world, the Vienna workers were beaten and the fascists emerged the masters of Austria. They at once proceeded to outlaw and destroy the workers' parties and the trade unions.[12]

Dutt thus correctly sums up the situation: "The struggle of the Austrian workers was not defeated by the superior forces of the enemy. It was defeated by the disorganizing role of the Social Democratic leadership."[13] Later even Bauer himself admitted that with a firm policy the vitally important struggle could have been won. He said: "After four days' fighting the workers of Vienna were defeated. Was this result inevitable? Could they conceivably have won? After the experience of those few days we can say, that if the railways had stopped running, if the general strike had spread throughout the country, if the *Schutzbund* (Workers' Defense Corps) had carried with it the great mass of the workers throughout the country, the government could hardly have succeeded in suppressing the rising."[14]

## THE CHANGED INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAN FIGHTING FRONT

The swift advance of fascism, especially after Hitler's seizure of Germany in January 1933, confronted the world labor movement, in fact all toiling humanity, with the most deadly crisis it had ever known. Obviously the fascist leaders were heading towards a second world war, determined to wrest world control from their imperialist rivals. But even more fatal, wherever they were securing control, they were setting up dictatorial regimes, run completely by monopoly capital and in which no

popular liberties existed. Fascism meant the destruction of the workers' political parties, trade unions, and cooperatives, and the extinction of all democratic rights that had cost the workers of the world two centuries of struggle to establish. By mid-1934 the fascist plague had spread, save for Czechoslovakia and the Scandinavian countries, all over the vast stretch of Europe between the eastern borders of France and the western borders of the Soviet Union, and its tentacles were also beginning to envelop Asia. The countries completely or practically fascist at this time included Germany, Japan, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Finland, Austria, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Latvia, Lithuania, and Esthonia, embracing, all told, at least 200,000,000 people, and many more countries were threatened. The big capitalists of the world were definitely dreaming of being done, once and for all, with the labor movement and Socialism. The danger of fascism faced the entire world.

Manifestly the militant advance of fascism called for a vigorous counter-offensive on the part of the world's workers and other democratic strata; in defense of their living standards, their liberties, their organizations, and their very lives. The Second International and the International Federation of Trade Unions, however, saturated as they were with pro-capitalist opportunism, could not possibly develop any such effective anti-fascist struggle. As was all too plain, their political policies in Italy, Germany, Austria, Japan, Poland, and elsewhere, of pursuing their collaboration with the capitalists even to the point of accepting fascism, was helping to fasten the terrible fascist yoke on the necks of the people. Practical experience had clearly shown that right Social Democracy was no real barrier to fascism.

In this grave crisis for world labor, practical leadership had to come from a different quarter, and it did—from the Marxist-Leninists, the Communists. A resolute symbol of this fighting Communist spirit was the heroic Dimitrov before the Nazi court at Leipzig in September-December 1933. The people's counter-offensive against fascism took the shape of a tremendous reorganization of working-class policies, organizations, and fighting tactics—along three broad avenues.

The first of these fundamental measures was that the Soviet Union entered the League of Nations in September 1934, after the fascist powers had quit that body.* Through its spokesman there, Litvinov, the USSR proposed to the peoples of the world that they align their governments into a great international anti-fascist peace front. This revolutionary policy, had

* At this time the Soviet trade unions also joined the International Labor Organization (ILO).

the non-fascist governments accepted it, possessed the possibility of preventing World War II and of halting and strangling the fascist menace. For the non-fascist countries possessed vastly greater strength in manpower, armed forces, and natural resources than the fascist nations.

The second great Communist measure to halt and destroy fascism was the people's front policy, worked out at the seventh congress of the Communist International, July-August, 1935. This policy, briefly stated, proposed to strike fascism at its roots in the various countries by the creation everywhere of people's front movements (national fronts in the colonial lands) composed of workers, peasants, intellectuals, tradesmen, and other strata of all political groupings, willing to fight for peace and against fascism. Representing the overwhelming mass of the populations, this movement looked forward to the establishment of people's front governments in the respective countries.

The third great anti-fascist measure of the Marxist-Leninists was to establish essential organic world trade union unity. On the basis that a united workers' front was indispensable for any serious fight against fascism, the RILU began to amalgamate, by rank-and-file action, its independent unions in the various countries (France, Czechoslovakia, United States, Rumania, India, Spain, Canada, Latin America, and elsewhere), with the corresponding individual unions and national centers of the Amsterdam International. In some instances, as in France, the unity was established by regular negotiations, in others, as in the United States, the left-wingers simply joined up with the old unions as individuals or groups. The political need for such a drastic unity move was imperative; the workers, in a fighting mood, were ready for it, and the erstwhile autocratic IFTU bureaucrats, weakened and demoralized by their basic defeats in Germany, Italy, Austria, and elsewhere, were unable to prevent it. This course of amalgamation naturally brought about the systematic liquidation of the RILU, with the Soviet trade unions (18,000,000 strong in 1933) remaining independent. The RILU dissolution process was begun in 1935 and concluded in 1937.[15] This development was the fitting climax of the long and resolute fight of the RILU for trade union unity.*

As the sequel will show, the general course of the peoples' life and death struggle against fascism—in the pre-war years, during the war itself, and after the great armed conflict had ended victoriously —was fundamentally in line with the policies developed by the world Communist forces to counteract and shatter the deadly menace of fascism.

* The RILU held five general international congresses, all in Moscow: in 1921, 1922, 1924, 1928, and 1930.

# 37. The People's Front in France, Spain, and the United States (1933-1939)

The drive of the fascists for world power affected every capitalist country in the world to a greater or lesser extent. After Hitler's successful seizure of Germany and his break-up of the German labor movement, big capitalists everywhere began to nourish hopes and illusions that the historic hour had struck for the destruction of the working-class parties, unions, and cooperatives, together with their aspirations for a new Socialist society. All over Europe these fascist moods grew and expressed themselves in strong reactionary movements; they also deeply affected Great Britain and its dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa; they influenced the countries of the three Americas, and they stirred the great Asian colonial and semi-colonial lands. Here let us deal only with the anti-fascist, anti-war struggles in three key areas—France, Spain, and the United States to counter the world-wide wave of fascism.

## LABOR DEFEATS FASCISM IN FRANCE

Hard upon the heels of the Hitler victory, the French fascists (the later Vichy government showed that French monopoly capital was saturated with them) made a violent but ill-organized attempt, on February 6, 1934, to overthrow the French Republic. This *putsch* failed, however. The CGT and the CGTU replied with a powerful joint one-day national strike on February 12, the first successful general strike in French labor history. Following up this initial victory, the workers and their allies developed a counter-offensive which, during the next three years, not only halted fascism but carried the French labor movement forward to the greatest strength and victories it had ever known.

The explanation of this unusual situation, of the French workers defeating fascism, while the workers of Italy, Germany, Austria, and various other countries of Eastern and Central Europe had been crushed by the new and deadly menace, was to be found basically in the fact that in France the right Social Democracy had a far less firm grip upon the working class than it had in those countries conquered by fascism. If the Socialist Party in France had been relatively as strong as its brother parties in Germany and Austria, undoubtedly, with its fatal "lesser evil" and class collaboration policies, it, too, would have broken down French working class resistance and thus cleared the way for a fascist victory. But as it was the Communist and Anarcho-syndicalist left-wing elements were powerful in France, both in the political and trade union fields.

Consequently they were able in the crisis to give the militant masses effective anti-fascist leadership. This was the decisive element in the striking success of the French People's Front movement in its initial stages.

The Communist Party was the political leader of the French Popular Front. It initiated the famous People's Front slogan, and after having had 23 previous united front proposals rejected by the Socialist Party it succeeded finally in compelling the right leaders of that party—the Blum group—to agree to a united front between the two parties as the basis of an all-inclusive people's front of workers, farmers, intellectuals, shopkeepers, etc., to fight against fascism and war. This combination of the Communist, Socialist, and Radical parties, the CGT and other workers' organizations, swept France in the election of April 1936, electing a national "people's front" government. The Communists did not actually participate in this government, which was headed by Leon Blum, right Social Democrat.[1]

In this whole big movement the left trade union forces played a decisive role. As we have seen earlier, the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), because of the expulsion policy of the Jouhaux leaders, had been split in 1921 and the Unity General Confederation of Labor (CGTU) formed. For the next 15 years bitter strife raged between the two national organizations, despite constant efforts by the left forces to re-unite the trade union movement. The CGTU in the big upsurge of anti-fascist spirit among the workers, redoubled its efforts for unity. It was this body which gave the basic impulse for the successful 24-hour national general strike of the two federations on the crucial day of February 12, 1934.

In line with the general RILU policy of creating a united trade union movement to help meet the fascist crisis, the CGTU also launched a militant drive to amalgamate the two national labor federations and their component unions. This unity was achieved at the general trade union congress in Toulouse in March 1936. Before the Toulouse congress assembled, many organizations had been already unified "at the bottom," so convinced were the workers that to combat the fascist menace a united labor movement was indispensable. The right-wing leaders, pushed on by the radical mass sentiment, had little choice in the matter. Even the anti-Communist V.R. Lorwin admits that the CGT right-wing leaders resisted the amalgamation.[2]

The re-organized CGT declared its independence from all political parties and forbade its officials to hold political office. While the congress re-endorsed the historic Anarcho-syndicalist "direct action" Charter of Amiens, it also clearly embarked upon a course of political as well as industrial action. Upon invitation the CGT accepted a partial participa-

tion in the Blum government. The Jouhaux forces were in a majority at the Toulouse congress. The congress decided, both to tolerate varying working-class political opinions and to prohibit the formation of political fractions within its ranks.[3] The CGT program called for the nationalization of key industries and credit organizations and for planned production and distribution under a Superior Economic Council.

Immediately following the achievement of trade union unity in March and the election victory of the Popular Front in April, 1936, in May and June a sweeping strike movement developed throughout France. At least 2,000,000 -workers struck during this time. The strikers were extremely militant, occupying the factories as the Italian workers had done in 1920, and they submitted strong demands for wage increases and union recognition. The strike movement resulted in victories all along the line, the ensuing "Matignon agreement" providing for a general 12 percent wage increase, collective bargaining, the right of all workers to join trade unions, and the establishment of a shop steward system.[4] The number of collective agreements soared from 29 in 1936 to 5,700 in March 1938.[5] Almost immediately, the government, under heavy mass pressure, nationalized the Bank of France, the railroads, and armaments production. Later on, the Popular Front government passed laws establishing the 40-hour work week and providing for paid vacations for workers. In the light of these successes, the trade unions grew swiftly; the CGT increasing, in one year, from 1,000,000 to 5,300,000 members. The Catholic unions also grew from 100,000 to 400,000,

All this trade union unity, people's front anti-fascist struggle, and sit-down strike movement, had nothing in common with the "lesser evil," class collaboration policies of the Second International. It was precisely this type of class struggle organization and action that the Social Democrats in Germany and Austria had disastrously refused to agree to in the face of the fascist threat. Indeed, the French Social Democrats had also made similar repeated refusals of united action with the Communists, until they were literally overwhelmed by the upsurge of the masses eager to fight the fascists and the employers, and who were substantially led by the Communist Party and the CGTU.

Leon Blum, as Premier, soon re-demonstrated the basic fact that right Social Democrats cannot be forced or induced to follow a class struggle policy. Significantly, says Galenson, "all the important labor legislation of the Popular Front government was passed in these few days of June, 1936"[6]—that is, when the mass pressure was on. During the next year of his term as Premier, Blum's line was such with his "pause in the workers' demands to catch our breath" policy, his refusal to aid the

struggling Spanish Republic, and his general catering to the will and interests of the employers, that it soon made ducks and drakes of the promising people's front movement. By the outbreak of World War II the pro-Munich appeasement and splitting policies of the right-wing Socialists had again largely disrupted the CGT and had catastrophically reduced its membership. Particularly disastrous was their sabotage of the anti-Munich general strike of November 1938. From 5,300,000 members in 1937 the CGT dropped to about 2,000,000 late in 1939.

## THE TRADE UNION'S IN THE SPANISH ANTI FASCIST WAR

A crucial defeat for the anti-fascist forces was the loss of the Spanish civil war of 1936-1939.[7] Preceded by the establishment of the Republic in 1931 and by the bitterly fought uprising of the Asturian coal miners in 1934, the People's Front, composed of Communists, Socialists, Anarcho-syndicalists, peasants, nationalists, Catholics, Liberals, etc., won a striking victory in the national elections of February 16, 1936. The democratic forces won 253 seats in the Cortes, as against 153 for the reactionary forces led by Gil Robles. Obviously, as the Communists proposed, the reactionaries should have then been promptly and thoroughly cleaned out of the government apparatus, the army, the police, the industries, the banks, the school system, etc. But the Liberals and Social Democrats would not hear of such revolutionary policies. The result was that, with the fascists solidly entrenched in key positions and with a free hand to plot, the inevitable counter-revolution took place. Led by Generals Franco, Mola, and others, the fascist revolt began on July 17, 1936, in Morocco and it soon spread. The civil war was on.

The war was most fiercely fought. The Spanish workers and peasants, and the volunteers who came in from various countries—the several International Brigades from France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States—battled with unsurpassed heroism. But they faced too great odds, with both Hitler and Mussolini sending in large amounts of troops and ammunition to help the fascist rebels. Besides, throughout the war the Republicans were hamstrung by weak and divided leadership, and also by Trotskyite treachery in the ranks. It was only in the later stages of the war that the Communist Party, led by Dolores Ibarurri (Pasionaria) and Jose Diaz, who had initiated the popular front movement, came to exercise crucial leadership in the struggle. After an agony of courage, struggle, and disaster, Madrid fell on March 28, 1939, and a giant stride had been taken by Hitler towards World War II.

The basic reason why the Spanish Republic was overthrown was be-

cause the world democratic forces did not follow the example of the Communists and enable the embattled Loyalists to secure the necessary supplies of men and guns and planes, to offset the help Franco was getting from fascist Germany and Italy. For this crime the European Social Democratic parties were chiefly responsible. The Second International refused to respond to the proposal of the Comintern for an international front to support Republican Spain. And even more disastrous, the right Social Democrat Blum, head of the French Popular Front government, put out the fatal slogan of "non-intervention." This policy denied Republican Spain its legitimate right to purchase abroad arms with which to defend itself. The Social Democratic political and trade union leaders in France, Britain[8] the United States, and elsewhere took up the reactionary slogan, and so did the Western bourgeois democratic governments. Thus People's Spain was doomed. Only the Soviet Union furnished arms and other aid to the Republican government. Because of the Social Democrats' refusal to fight capitalist reaction, another country was lost to advancing fascism.[9] Their "non-intervention" policy in Spain was as fatal as their companion "lesser evil" and "class collaboration" policies had been for Germany and Austria.

The trade unions played a vital role in the tragic Spanish civil war. There were two national federations; the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), orientation Anarcho-syndicalist, and with its main base in the major industrial center, Barcelona; and the *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT), led by Social Democrats and Communists, with its chief center in Madrid. At the outset of the war each national federation claimed to have about 700,000 members. During the war both grew rapidly, and in April 1938, the UGT claimed 1,904,569 members, and the CNT (with considerable exaggeration) 1,700,000.[10] Agricultural workers made up at least one-third of each organization.

Both union groups supported the people's war and their tasks were many and complex: to muster the workers and peasants as soldiers, to keep up the production of munitions and other materials, to operate the supply lines, etc. The right-wing Socialist elements and the "leftists" in the UGT were a hindrance, and in the case of Largo Caballero, a real danger. The Anarchistic elements in the CNT were full of political weaknesses. With their anti-political ideas and lack of centralization and discipline, their support of the government was a wavering one, nor were they a stable element in the hard-pressed army. In the latter respect Madariago says, "In the Anarcho-syndicalist units, commanding officers were unknown and there was complete equality. These units, moreover, fought when and where they pleased, left the front when they pleased,

and served under their own flag."[11]

During the war both labor federations sent representatives into the successive Caballero and Negrin Republican governments. To do this the CNT had to swallow its Anarchistic anti-political conceptions. The FAI (Spanish Anarchist Federation.) also authorized its members to take official posts in the government.[12] All this seriously discredited many cherished Anarchist doctrines.

The presence historically of strong Anarchist currents among the workers of Spain had long operated directly against the growth of a mass Communist Party and of trade unions with a Marxist outlook. Consequently at the outset of the war the Party was very small; but as the war progressed and as the validity of Communist policies became recognized in the hard struggle, the Party grew very rapidly and its influence expanded throughout the trade union movement.

One of the major objectives of the Communists in the war was the establishment of working class unity on both the political and economic fields, as the foundation of the whole struggle of the Spanish people against fascism.[13] They succeeded in setting up good collaborative relations with the Socialist Party, except the right-wing, and in Catalonia the two parties were merged into one.[14] Nationally both parties, in August 1937, signed a joint program of action.[15] The two youth organizations were consolidated—all of which steps toward unity were sharply condemned by the chiefs of the Second International.

In the trade union field the RILU forces amalgamated their union, the CGT, with the UGT, and much progress was also achieved in bringing together the UGT and CNT unions, which for many years had been hostile towards each other. In March 1938 these two labor federations formulated a pact of cooperation, or more strictly speaking, of mutual non-aggression. The main aim of this was to win the war through a more efficient army and industry. The pact proposed the nationalization of key industries and the protection of the economic interests of the workers in the industries and on the farms. However, the eventual loss of the war and the establishment of fascism dispersed the mass membership of the UGT and CNT, and drove both organizations underground.[16]

## AMERICAN LABOR BEATS BACK REACTION

The broad movement of the masses which swept Roosevelt into the Presidency of the United States four times in succession between 1932 and 1944, although not identical, was definitely akin to the people's front movements which took place in many other countries during the 1930's. It grew out of the terrible economic crisis of 1929-32, and it was primari-

ly a powerful counter-offensive of the working class and its political allies against extreme reaction. Despite the facts that Roosevelt, a wealthy man and an imperialist, stood at the head of the movement, particularly at the outset, the New Deal bore many reactionary characteristics, and that for the first few years it had had the backing of large sections of monopoly capital, nevertheless the democratic sections of the people played a very important role in it. Especially from 1935 on the New Deal took on many features of a mass anti-fascist people's movement.[17] In this respect it clearly reflected the world-wide struggle of the peoples in many countries against fascism. The major Roosevelt social reforms were mainly pushed through by the great masses of workers, farmers, and middle-class elements, and were generally hated by the monopolists.

There were powerful American capitalists who would have been very happy to see the United States take the same path as Nazi Germany, hut they were unable to bring it about. This was basically because crisis conditions in the United States were not as deep-going as they were in Germany. Moreover, the American monopolist bourgeoisie still had financial reserves with which to maneuver, whereas the German big capitalists lacked such surplus strength. Not the least factor, also, the Social Democracy in the United States had no such death clutch upon the American working class as it had upon the German proletariat; therefore it was unable to paralyze the resistance of the workers in the face of the fascist threat. As it was, the American workers broke through the Social Democratic bonds, organized a powerful fight against monopoly capital, and during the Roosevelt regime won the most important victories in the history of the American labor movement.

Although the Communist Party was relatively small—ranging from 30,000 to 75,000 members during the period—its influence and that of other left elements was nevertheless strong in the big advance of labor. In March 1935, in line with the general unity policy of the RILU, the Trade Union Unity League, with at least 100,000 members, largely militants, merged itself, without getting Green's permission, into the AFL unions. These militants worked with the Lewis-Hillman forces in the CIO and with their experience and fighting spirit they there played a decisive role in the big organizing campaigns and strikes that followed. With thousands of contacts in the key and trustified industries, the Communist Party also threw its entire strength into the huge campaign. The Lewis-Hillman forces, in death struggle with the Green bureaucrats, welcomed this effective Communist support. Everybody knows that the Communists were in the frontline of building the CIO. Lewis' biographer Alinsky states, "The fact is that the Communist Party made a major con-

tribution in the organization of the unorganized for the CIO."[18]

When, at the outset of the liberal Roosevelt period, the trade union movement got its big offensive under way, it faced a whole series of basically necessary tasks. These included: (a) the organization of the trustified industries; (b) the inclusion of the Negro workers into the trade unions; (c) the establishment of industrial unionism; (d) the organization of a mass labor party; (e) the enactment of a program of social insurance, and (f) the development of a higher type of trade union leadership. Substantial progress was made in all these fields during this most striking forward movement ever experienced by trade unionism in the United States.

The greatest specific working-class achievement during the Roosevelt years was the organization of the workers in the trustified and unorganized industries—steel, auto, maritime, lumber, electrical, rubber, chemical, metal mining, communications, and large sections of the coal mining, textile, and railroad industries. As a result of the long militant drive, the total number of trade unionists in the United States was raised from about 3,000,000 in 1933 to some 16,000,000 at the end of 1948. One of the highlights of this historic surge forward of the working class was the July 1934 general strike of 125,000 workers in the San Francisco Bay area, brilliantly led by Harry Bridges but crassly betrayed by the Green bureaucrats, locally and nationally.

The ultra-reactionary Green (Gompers) machine in the AFL did its utmost to block this elemental movement for organization, but the tide swept on over it. Even the AFL unions, under mass pressure, also grew rapidly. The trade union movement was split in two in getting the organizing work under way, the Congress of Industrial Organizations being born in November 1935, as a revolt led by the John L. Lewis and Sidney Hillman group against the reactionary AFL Green machine bureaucrats. The elementary job was accomplished nevertheless. By conquering the big “open shop" industries for trade unionism, the workers dealt monopoly capital a body blow and they therewith achieved the greatest victory ever won by the American working class.

Vital progress was also made in the long-urgent task of organizing the Negro workers. For 40 years the reactionary AFL and Railroad craft unions, many of them with anti-Negro clauses in their constitutions, stood as barriers against drawing the broad masses of Negro workers into the unions—to the infinite shame and harm of the labor movement and the injury of the Negro people. But the vast organizing drive, which was marked by high working-class militancy and a definite left-wing spirit, broke through this anti-Negro resistance in the unions. This victory,

largely the work of Communist influence, registered a long step forward for the labor movement. Today some 1,500,000 Negroes are trade union members, and although much discrimination is practiced against them in the unions and the industries, there are now very few unions that still dare to bar Negroes openly from membership.

The big organizing drive of the Roosevelt years lifted the American trade union movement above the level of the narrow craft unionism which for over a generation had prevented the organization of the basic industries. The CIO, which organized these industries, was based upon the industrial principle. The half-century long battle of the left-wing for industrial unionism was at last won. There are still many craft unions in the American labor movement—in building, printing, railroads, etc.—but their craftism is no longer dominant nor able to prevent, by its narrow practices, the organization of the vast millions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Moreover, even the AFL unions are no longer strictly wedded to the craft principle, many of them branching out in various directions in an indiscriminate grab for members.

When the American working class went into the great economic crisis of 1929-32 there was practically no Federal social insurance. But the big sweep forward during the 1930's also changed this substantially. Now there exists at least a skeleton system of social insurance and the demand to increase it is more and more insistent, both on a governmental basis and in trade union agreements within specific industries. But this big start towards social insurance—long advocated by the Communists and other left wingers—could be made only after the masses had broken down the opposition of the AFL bureaucrats who, as we have remarked earlier (see chapter 35), were long opposed in principle to government social insurance.

Although during the big drive against reaction in the 1930's the American working class won many concessions it did not succeed in the long overdue task of building a great labor, or labor-farmer party. There was a sharp increase of trade union political activity, especially in the CIO, but this did not reach the point of an actual break with the bourgeois political organizations, particularly not with the Democratic Party. The main reasons for this were threefold: (a) lingering bourgeois illusions among the masses of workers; (b) relentless opposition on the part of the conservative trade union leadership; and (c), strong resistance by the Democratic chieftains—Roosevelt could tolerate and even favor the trade union organization of the workers in the basic industries, but he gave little or no support to trends that could lead to a breakaway of the working class from the political tutelage of the Democratic Party.

In the historic task of improving the quality of the trade union leadership the workers made only temporary and uncertain progress during the general forward movement of the 1930's. For at least four decades the American trade union movement had been crippled and world organized labor was scandalized by the reactionary leaders of the AFL, with their craft scabbery, open thievery, gangster control, political crookedness, and outright, blatant support of the capitalist system. The broadening of the base of the unions, from the skilled aristocracy to the wide unskilled and semi-skilled masses, undoubtedly lessened many of these evils, especially the flagrant corruption with which the AFL leaders were so deeply affected.

The powerful influence of the left-wing of the CIO—Communist and other militant elements—who officially headed at least one-fourth of the whole membership and influenced other vast sections, raised the whole ideological tone of that organization. Although the CIO's later dominant leaders, the Murray group, did not break with capitalism, they came to support many progressive reforms and activities. With its broad industrial unions, fighting spirit, and progressive policies, the CIO soon became definitely the leading section of the American labor movement. Its progressive influence also powerfully affected the situation within the AFL, with the result that that organization developed some elements of internal democracy and its notorious leadership corruption was considerably abated, but as we shall see later, this CIO progressive leadership was soon to suffer a disastrous retrogression under the impact of the drive of American imperialism for world conquest.

## 38. Trade Union Progress in Asian Colonial Lands (1921-1939)

Now let us retrace our steps and examine the progress being made meanwhile by those new sections of the world trade union movement taking shape in Asia, up to the outbreak of World War II, In this vast area, as in the colonial world in general, the British, French, Dutch, Japanese, Portuguese and American imperialists were following essentially the same general policies, of restricting the growth of developed industrial systems, of monopolizing the local markets for their imperialist profits, of exploiting the workers, mostly on the plantations and in the mines, to the last limit of human endurance, and of violently repressing every organized attempt of the toiling masses to achieve some measure of relief from their depressed economic and political conditions. The general consequence of this barbarous imperialist regime was that the peoples of the enslaved countries lived in misery, famine, and exploita-

tion that beggared description.

Under these conditions trade unionism grew slowly and with great difficulty. The working class was stunted in growth and restricted in mobility. The characteristic mechanical crafts, which played such a vital role in the initial stages of the trade union movement in Europe, the United States, and the British Dominions, were much less a factor in the colonial lands, being still largely under guild or semi-guild conditions. The working class in the colonial countries definitely bore the mark of the imperialist domination under which it was growing—being composed chiefly of great masses of agricultural wage workers on the plantations, large bodies of textile workers, and considerable numbers of coal miners, railroad workers, and seamen—all occupations which grew under imperialism. The trade unions in these countries almost universally assumed the industrial form and their strikes, in the face of the prevailing harsh repression, even when waged for relatively minor demands, often took on the character of virtual insurrections. Under such circumstances, the labor aristocracy being less a factor, reformism also had a narrower base. The trade union movements of the colonial and semi-colonial countries evidenced a high national and class consciousness and they tended definitely to gravitate towards radical and often revolutionary leadership.

From its inception in 1921 the RILU, in the spirit of Lenin, paid close attention to the development of trade unionism in China, India, Indonesia, Burma, Indo-China, Korea, the Philippines, and other colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia. The workers there, bitterly oppressed by the Western imperialists, shaken by World War I, and profoundly inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917, were ready for trade union organization. Consequently, the Comintern and RILU supporters laid the foundation of trade unions all over Asia, and in the mid-twenties they stood at the head of the young trade union federations in most of the countries of colonial Asia.

One of the most important single steps taken by the RILU in this great area was the establishment of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat in Hankow, China, in August 1929. For the next several years this body was active throughout the Ear East. Present at the founding conference were trade union representatives from China, India, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Korea, Australia, USSR, France, Britain and the United States.[1] This conference laid out as its program of work, to battle for improved wage and working conditions, to fight the growing war danger, to combat imperialist aggression, to break down national and racial prejudicial barriers, and to strive for trade union unity. From the beginning the Asian unions had to fight against imperialist terrorism, and

they grew in an atmosphere of sharp persecution and struggle.

In past decades the Second International and the Amsterdam International (IFTU) had paid no attention whatever to organizing the workers of colonial Asia. This was because the opportunist Social Democratic leaders of these bodies being bourgeois-minded, they either covertly or openly considered the colonial system to be indispensable for furnishing raw materials and markets for Western capitalism. Moreover, as Lenin pointed out repeatedly, the labor aristocrats in the imperialist countries, upon whom the Social Democratic parties and unions based themselves, shared in the super-profits from the exploitation of the colonies. It was only when the Communists took the lead in trade union work in the vast colonial areas that the Social Democrats began to bestir themselves in this general field. Characteristically, also, when the bourgeois national leaders in these countries launched government-controlled unions as a labor-splitting device to weaken the power of the working class, then being rapidly organized under RILU and Communist Party leadership, they promptly got the full cooperation of the IFTU and of the scattering of Social Democrats of the respective countries in their union-wrecking activities.

## THE STORMY ADVANCE OF THE CHINESE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The Chinese trade union movement was born in the fire of the Chinese people's revolution, and it fought in that revolution, literally arms in hand, for over 25 years, until it came to full maturity with the victorious establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in 1950. The first major strike in China (railroad workers) took place in October 1912, and the first national union (also railroad workers) was founded in 1924.[2] The trade unions began to take shape after the Russian Revolution of 1917, and they held their first national conference in 1922 (see chapter 29). They did not, however, organize nationally into the All-China Federation of Labor until 1925. In the meantime the unions carried on many struggles against 15 to 25 cents a day wages, against the 12 to 20 hours workday, and against the employment of 6 and 7-year-old children,[3] and they grew in these struggles. The unions were built on the industrial principle, and their most influential leaders were Communists.

The first of the long series of Chinese civil and imperialist wars was getting under way. In 1924 the Communist Party and the Kuomintang (KMT), the latter led by the great Chinese bourgeois revolutionist Sun Yat-sen, formed a united front together and began an armed struggle against the reactionary feudal war-lords, to establish the Republic

throughout the country. The masses of the people welcomed this movement with tremendous enthusiasm. Scores of strikes and peasants' insurrections took place, and the national armies grew and advanced rapidly.

Among these mass movements was the big Hong Kong and Canton strike of 250,000 workers, from June 1925 to October 1926. Then came the huge Shanghai general strike of Textile, Metal, Railroad and other workers in February 1927.[4] This famous strike, although it raised many elementary economic demands, had as its core the people's determination to be rid, once and for all, of the outrageous British, Japanese, and other foreign imperialist domination of China. The strike spread all over the country and lasted for several months. In many cases it resulted in substantial concrete victories for the workers and growth of their movement. At the time of the movement's fourth congress, which was held in Hankow, June 19, 1927, the total trade union membership nationally reached 2,800,000 (including many agricultural workers), and the closely cooperating peasants' associations grew to 9,500,000 members.[5] In 1927 there were only some 2,750,000 industrial workers in China.[6]

Sun Yat Sen, a liberal and a friend of the Soviet Union, died in March 1925. Whereupon, the reactionaries, alarmed at the revolutionary spirit of the workers and peasants, began to plot a counter-revolution. Consequently in April 1927 Chiang Kai-shek, representing the big landowners, money lenders, and foreign imperialists, organized an uprising, seized control of the army, and began a ferocious terror against the Communist Party, the trade unions, and the peasant organizations. Tens of thousands of militant workers and peasants were shot down or tortured to death with medieval fiendishness. Girls with bobbed hair—considered a sign of radicalism—were shot on the spot summarily, handbill distributors were beheaded, and Communists were sliced to pieces or burned to death in the public squares. During 1927 Chiang's murderers butchered 37,985 prisoners, and in the first half of 1928, some 7,930 more.[7] All over the world progressive labor protested against these shocking outrages.

The next two decades of war were very difficult ones for Chinese trade unionism. In Kuomintang China the trade unions were either crushed or driven underground. Chiang's thugs, operating under the name of the Workers Trade Alliance, carried on a violent suppression of every semblance of trade unionism. The military incursions of the Japanese, beginning in 1931 and intensified in 1937, brought fresh barbaric assaults against the harassed working class and its attempts to organize.

In 1938, in the parts of China still controlled by his gang, Chiang Kai-shek set up what he called the Chinese Association of Labor (CAL).[8] This was a semi-fascist organization, closely controlled by the govern-

ment, with compulsory membership, an anti-strike policy, animated by a violent red-baiting campaign, and concerning itself chiefly with checking the workers from making wage demands. At the end of World War II the CAL claimed to have 594,000 members. Generally it was welcomed as a brother organization by the IFTU and the AFL.

Meanwhile, the workers and peasants, led by the Communist Party, which was headed after 1931 by the brilliant Mao Tse-tung, continued the long wars for national independence and freedom—from 1927 to 1936 against Chiang; from 1936 to 1945 against the Japanese; and from 1945 to victory in 1950 against Chiang's forces. Gradually the people's forces built up a free territory, which by the end of World War II contained about 90,000,000 inhabitants. In this area the genuine trade union movement of China continued to struggle and function. It shared all the bitter hardships and dangers of the fighting revolutionary forces during these heroic years, one of the outstanding features of which was the famous "Long March" of 3,000 miles across China, in the face of great military odds and fabulous natural difficulties.

During practically all of this 25-year period the big cities and railroads were almost entirely in the hands of Chiang's Kuomintang and of the invading Japanese forces. The Communists organized much underground trade union work, however, in the occupied areas and industries. The fifth national convention of the All-China Federation of Labor was held secretly in Shanghai in November 1929, right in the teeth of the ferocious Chiang terror. For the most part, however, the revolutionary struggle was conducted in the outlying regions where the industries were very small and the workers were few. In the early thirties the All-China Federation of Labor decentralized and the movement consisted basically of local general federations of unions.[9] In 1943 the six local trade union federations were combined into the North China Federation of Trade Unions, with 700,000 members.[10] Chen Yung was elected president of the All-China Federation of Labor. At this time the movement had 2,830,000 members. It was not until August 1, 1948, 19 years after its fifth convention, that the movement held its sixth national convention in Harbin. During this hard period the Communist Party also did not hold a general convention for 17 years.[11]

During the more than two decades of war the trade unions carried on a host of special tasks, in addition to looking after the welfare of the workers. They largely managed the industries and transport systems. In many cases they actually carried the factory equipment piecemeal on their backs, as the people's armies marched into the interior. Characteristic of the wartime tasks of the revolutionary trade unions were those stat-

ed by the General Labor Union of Yenan in 1940, as follows; “To organize all the workers of the Border Region for active participation in the war of resistance and national construction. In order to guarantee victory, we must increase the discipline and productivity of labor, raise the political, cultural, and technical level of the workers, and strengthen the bonds between the workers and soldiers."[12]

One of the great qualities of the political genius Mao Tse-tung was his constant realization that even in an agricultural country like China, where the proletariat was only a tiny minority, the working class must nevertheless lead the revolution. This proletarian leadership was expressed, not only in mobilizing the most advanced workers into the Communist Party, in the building of trade unions, in strengthening the proletarian clement in the army, and in the cultivation of practical worker leadership in the villages and towns, but above all, in building and leading the Communist Party in the proletarian principles of Marxism-Leninism. This was done even at a time when, cut off almost entirely from the cities, all the armed fighting bodies of the Revolution were made up overwhelmingly of peasants and petty bourgeois elements.

Characteristically, in the opening sentence of its statement of June 24, 1938, the Party declared: “The CCP is the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Chinese working class. Its historic mission is the final liberation of the Chinese nation, for it is only by liberating the whole of mankind that the working class can liberate itself.” By the same token, the first sentence of the Constitution of the Communist Party, as adopted on June 11, 1945, also states: “The CCP is the organized vanguard of the Chinese working class, the highest form of its class organization. Standing for the interests of the Chinese nation and people, its task at the present stage is to struggle for the realization of the New Democracy in China. Its ultimate aim is the realization of Communism in China.” And Article One of the Organic Law of Chinese People's Government, adopted September 27, 1949. reads: “The People’s Republic of China is a State of the People’s Democratic Dictatorship, led by the working class, based on the alliance of workers and peasants, and rallying all democratic classes and various nationalities within the country.”[13] It was in this Leninist spirit that the Chinese trade union movement was built and that it fought through a quarter century of armed revolutionary struggle.

## DEVELOPING TRADE UNIONISM IN INDIA

In the advance of trade unionism in Asia after the Russian Revolution (see chapter 29) India played a prominent part. During the two world wars a considerable growth of industry took place despite British re-

strictions—the production of steel going up from 700,000 tons annually in 1939 to about 1,500,000 tons in 1945. India now has the biggest single steel works in the British Empire. The working class grew accordingly, many strikes took place and the trace unions expanded. The workers fought against starvation wages and a work week that often ran to 100 hours or more. All through this period the number of strikes averaged about 175 per year; m 1928, the high point of struggle, there were no less than 31,647,404 days' work "lost" through strikes.[14] The All-India Trade Union Congress, founded in 1920 with an estimated membership of 10,000,[15] had some 190,000 members in 1929 and claimed 452,000 members in 1945.[16]

The Indian trade union movement grew under severe persecution from the controlling British authorities. Its history is replete with murder, jailings, and other violence experienced by the workers at the hands of the imperialist forces and their reactionary Indian helpers. Symbolic of this oppression was the great Meerut trial of 1929. Although formally trade unionism had been legalized in 1926, in March 1929, the British government, Mussolini-fashion, made a sweeping raid upon the offices of the most important trade unions and workers' and peasants' political organizations. All told, 32 leaders were arrested, including three Englishmen. The Meerut trial of these prisoners, which attracted worldwide attention, lasted three-and-a-half years. It ended with savage sentences being inflicted upon the convicted men ranging from three years imprisonment up to transportation for life. The present Secretary of the AITUC, S. A. Dange, a Communist, served twelve years in prison. "Yet this trial," says Dutt, "as historic a trial for the suppression of a rising labor movement as that of the Dorchester Laborers a century ago in British labor history, was conducted under a (British) Labor Government, which accepted full responsibility for it."[17] As in all other countries, the pioneer Indian trade union movement grew in spite of legal prohibitions.

The Indian trade union movement, like that of all other colonial countries, got little or no support from the Social Democratic Party, in this case the Labor Party, in the imperialist ruling country, here Great Britain. The only help in this respect came from the British Communist Party, which constantly concerned itself with assisting the workers of India to organize their trade unions. Characteristically, British Social Democratic influence always tended to soften up the growing Indian resistance to British imperialism. In line with this general tendency, in 1927 the British TUC tried to get the radical AITUC to affiliate to the Social Democratic-controlled International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), but this move was defeated. For unity's sake, however, Dange

says, the left-wing did not insist upon affiliation to the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), as it could have done. At this time, the neighboring Chinese Federation of Labor was affiliated to the latter organization.

From the beginning, the Indian trade union movement was an organic and active part of the general national liberation movement of the Indian people, which was fighting for independence from British imperialist domination. This broad movement was led by the rising young Indian bourgeoisie, of which Gandhi was the outstanding spokesman. Its leading Congress Party had vast support among the workers and peasants. However, the Indian bourgeoisie, which dominated the movement, while anxious to keep the workers of field and factory lined up in the national independence camp, looked very much askance at their efforts to organize trade unions and to wage strikes, particularly when these struggles were also directed against the Indian employing class.

Consequently, the Congress Party took little or no interest in building the young trade union movement, even though this obviously was a very powerful weapon against the British rulers. In this respect Gandhi had no such liberal position as did his great Chinese neighbor Sun Yat-sen. The historic task of laying the foundations of the Indian trade union movement fell to the left-wing, basically to the Communists. The latter, year after year, kept the trade union issue before the Congress Party. The Social Democrats did not establish their own party in India until 1934—thirteen years after the Communist Party was founded—and their role in the trade unions, afterwards as before, was dubious and opportunist.

The Congress Party did not, however, completely reject the trade union question, especially when its officials saw this potentially powerful movement coming under the leadership of the Communists. Like bourgeois elements all over the world, their conception of working-class industrial organization ran pretty much along the channels of company unionism. Thus, in 1920 Gandhi took a hand in the union organization of striking textile workers. He established the *Mazdoor Mahajan*, which has ever since been considered a "model" union by the Congress Party. This was an attempt to company-unionize the Indian trade union movement. Dange describes some of the "principles" upon which this so-called trade union was formed: the employers made regular contributions to finance the organization; the union was formed on a craft basis; it opposed strikes and put forward class collaboration and arbitration as the workers' cure-all—one of its arbitration cases was pending for 17 years; it was organized on a town, not a national basis; it never affiliated to the AITUC (even when this, for a time, was under conservative leadership) nor

did it affiliate to any world organization, all such national and international labor affiliations being held dangerous by Gandhi.[18]

Dange, the pioneer and outstanding Indian trade unionist, says: "The mass trade union movement in India is mainly the creation of the Communist Party."[19] This is not to state, however, that Liberals and Social Democrats, especially intellectuals, did not participate actively in the movement, usually to its detriment. Indeed, during 1920-22, Tajpat and C.R. Das were presidents of the AITUC and J. Nehru and Subhash Bose were presidents in 1929-30. Under the latter conservative regime the AITUC suffered two serious right-left splits. In the Annual Session of the AITUC in 1929, when most of the leaders of the big mass unions of the AITUC were undergoing the trial in Meerut prison, the AITUC suffered a serious split, on the main issue of cooperation with the British Royal Commission of Labor, though the right-wing group led by Joshi and Chamanlal stated that they had split on the issue of international affiliation. The right seceders then formed the National Federation of Labor. In the Session of 1930 the nationalist leader, Subhash Bose, who was elected President at the previous Session, split the AITUC again. In this split the lefts lost the AITUC and they set up the Red Trade Union Congress.

However, in line with the general militant trade union policy of the RILU in the face of the rising danger of fascism and war, a strong movement for labor unity was initiated by the RILU forces. In 1935 the Red TUC merged with the AITUC, and in 1938, the National Federation of Labor united with the AITUC. Thus, the organic break in the trade union movement was healed.[20]

## TRADE UNIONISM IN OTHER ASIAN COLONIES

In other Asian countries—Indo-China, Indonesia, Korea, Burma, Malaya, Thailand, the Philippines, etc.—especially harsh conditions of imperialist exploitation prevailed and trade union organization remained at a minimum between the two world wars. Except in the Philippines, militant labor organization was rigidly repressed. Wages everywhere were at destitution levels, and working hours ran from 10 to 15 per day. In all these countries the local peoples were treated as inferior beings, apparently in existence only to satisfy the insatiable profit-lust of the arrogant European and American imperialists.

Strikes by the workers, meeting with extreme repressive measures, often developed into armed insurrections. The workers burst into insurrection in Java and Sumatra in 1926, a movement savagely put down by the Dutch imperialists. "Only reformist and right nationalist trade union organizations standing on the program of collaboration with Dutch impe-

rialism are allowed to exist legally."[21] During this general period there were some unions in Indo-China, but they were rigidly controlled by the French imperialists. In Korea there was a general strike in 1929, with occasional strikes (revolts) of miners and seamen against their Japanese exploiters. The Korean "workers federation," operating mostly illegally, was supposed to have 44,000 members. In Burma there was also a skeleton of an organization prior to World War II.

Between the world wars the most developed trade union movement in the Asian colonial countries, next to China and India, was that in the Philippines. Here, as elsewhere, a two-phased policy prevailed: that is, a niggardly toleration of the scattering of conservative skilled craft unions and a hard-fist against the basic unions of Agricultural workers, Miners, Seamen, Textile workers, and others. In 1927 there was an insurrection of sugar and other agricultural workers on Negros Island.[22] The Philippines movement repeatedly split into rival federations; in 1939 there were, all told, some 100,000 members in the labor movement. In the Philippines, as in all the colonial Asian countries, the leadership of the basic trade unions was mainly in the hands of the Communists, and the unions were generally affiliated to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat (RILU). It was after World War II that the workers in most o£ these countries broke through the imperialist repression and succeeded in establishing solid trade union movements on a mass scale.

## 39. The Trade Union Struggle in Latin America (1918-1945)

The vast expanse of Central and South American territory, stretching from the United States to Cape Horn, with about 170,000,000 people organized into 20 states, and covering about 9,000,000 square miles has long been plagued and overrun by imperialists. The general status is hat of semi-colonies. Particularly since the beginning of the 20th century, Latin America as a whole has been a battleground of rival imperialist powers—the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, and Italy. During this long and harsh struggle the United States, commonly called "Yankee imperialism" and the "Colossus of the North," being the most powerful of the capitalist countries, has slowly pushed aside its rivals and more and more established its own hegemony. At the time of the outbreak of World War II, however, the United States was facing a real threat from the fascist Axis powers—Germany, Japan, and Italy—Hitler having definitely placed as one of his major objectives the conquest of Latin America.

During the period of 1810-1826 the great bulk of the Latin American peoples, in long and hard-fought revolutions, won their formal freedom from Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, and England. But the series of republics which they then created have never been truly independent, being in the main dominated by the imperialist powers throughout most of these decades, chiefly by Great Britain and the United States. A few of the smaller countries—Puerto Rico, Honduras, Guiana, Martinique, etc., have remained actual colonies.

The countries in this immense area display the same basic characteristics as other regimes under imperialist domination; namely poorly developed industries, production and trade in the hands of foreign investors and tyrants, one or two-crop agricultural systems, dictatorial political regimes, great extremes of wealth and destitution, harsh repression of all mass attempts at the betterment of conditions, widespread illiteracy among the masses, and with near-starvation chronic among the workers of both industry and agriculture. Throughout almost all of Latin America the poverty of the peoples, including the American colony of Puerto Rico, is comparable to that prevailing in India and the Near East countries.

The trade union movement in Latin America, from one end of the great area to the other, has had a long and desperate struggle to establish itself, in the face of the violent reaction organized by the dominant big land-owners and their allies, the foreign imperialists of all types. As Betty Wallace correctly says, "There is no other continent where the trade union movement has had such a violent and checkered history,[1] as that of Latin America. In these countries labor action usually has not been a question of relatively peaceful negotiations with the employers, but a long series of harsh and bitter struggles. In chapter 18 we have listed a few of the many wholesale massacres of workers that have taken place during strikes in Latin American countries. In their desperate attempts to stamp out trade unionism, nowhere have the exploiters of labor written such a bloody record of repression and murder as in Latin America.

The Latin American trade union movement has in its historical background many revolutionary struggles by the peoples of the respective countries. These include not only the far-reaching independence revolutions of 1810-1826, but also literally hundreds of other uprisings in the individual countries, Bolivia had 60 revolutions in 74 years, Venezuela 50 in 70 years, Paraguay over 100 revolutions since it set up its own government—with similar conditions prevailing in nearly all the countries from Mexico to Argentina. In general, these armed struggles, originating mainly in the abominable conditions of the toiling masses, summed up to abortive attempts to carry through the as yet very incom-

plete bourgeois democratic revolution in Latin America. Usually these revolt movements fell into the hands of men-on-horseback, *caudillos.* The *latifundists*, faced by weak capitalists, a skeleton middle class, and a small proletariat, have ruled right on through hundreds of revolts.

## THE PAN-AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

The Latin American trade unions—in Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, and a few other countries—had already taken root before the beginning of the 20th century, as we have seen in chapter 22. But the real growth of the movement set in after World War I and it continued upon an accelerated basis up into World War II. During this period in Latin America there was a substantial growth of the usual type of colonial and semi-colonial industries—such as plantations producing for export: coffee, sugar, bananas, etc., metal mining, railroads, docks, and the like, and the modern proletariat expanded accordingly. With this growth came an ever-stronger pressure for working class trade union and political organization.

Through the early years of the Latin American labor movement, particularly between 1900 and the outbreak of the first world war, most of the unions of the vast area were headed by Anarchists and Anarcho-syndicalists, we have also noted in chapter 22. The latter found it relatively easy to propagate characteristic "direct action," "anti-political" ideas among the immigrant workers of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian backgrounds. In 1928 these unions set up the Continental Association of Workers (Syndicalist in tendency), but it died out shortly afterward. The Berlin International (IWMA) paid a great deal of attention to Latin America. At its fourth congress in Madrid, in June 1931, the IWMA reported a membership of 40,000 in Argentina, 4,000 in Brazil, and 6,000 in Uruguay, and also organizations of unspecified size in Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Paraguay, and Peru.[2]

The most determined early effort, however, to link together the trade unions internationally in Latin America was that made by the Pan-American Federation of Labor (COPA) founded at Laredo, Texas, in November 1918, Present were 46 delegates from the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Colombia. This body was sponsored by the American Federation of Labor, which attached so much importance to the COPA that it successively delegated its own presidents, first Gompers and then Green, to preside over it. The notorious Matthew Woll, a capitalist-labor leader, was one of its moving spirits. The COPA organization had definitely an imperialist orientation; its brazen aim being to work hand-in-hand with the United States State De-

partment to bring the countries of Latin America under Yankee imperialist sway. Such a cynical objective was in no way strange or contradictory to the reactionary Mr. Gompers, with his blatantly pro-capitalist outlook and policies. At this time the AFL, which was already holding the Canadian labor movement in its grip through direct affiliation, was, like the Wall Street imperialists themselves, striving to set up its dominion all over the three Americas, stretching from Canada to Argentina. For this purpose it called its reactionary policies the "Monroe Doctrine of Labor."

The COPA held five congresses; a sixth was scheduled for 1930 in Havana, but it never took place. The organization lingered along on paper for several years more and then disappeared from the scene. Towards the end it claimed to have affiliated 20 organizations in 14 countries.[3] It was run by the reactionary Gompers clique of the United States and the corrupt Morones clique of Mexico, Gompers' close affiliate. The component organizations were located mostly in the general Caribbean area, where the influence of the United States was most potent and where Yankee imperialism, with its grip upon the Panama Canal, was fighting most actively for control and was also perpetrating the most flagrant international outrages against the Latin American peoples.

The AFL was a defender of American imperialist interests and as such, in COPA, it came frequently into sharp conflict with the Latin American unions, particularly in Central and South America. Characteristically, at its third congress in Mexico City in 1921, mildly declares Lorwin, besides protesting against reactionary American immigration policies, "the delegates from Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Santo Domingo voiced the belief that the AFL had not sufficiently protested against President Wilson's interventionist policies in Santo Domingo and Nicaragua. Despite Gompers' reassurances, the congress protested against these policies and demanded the immediate evacuation of American marines from Santo Domingo."[4] In refusing to affiliate to the COPA, the Argentina trade unions expressed the general opinion of the workers of Latin America by characterizing COPA as "one of the means by which the Secretary of State of the United States wants to extend its influence."

## THE RILU IN LATIN AMERICA

The Amsterdam International (IFTU), in the true imperialist spirit of the Second International, paid but little attention to developing real unions in Latin America, but when it did occasionally try to win a few affiliates in the area it was promptly rapped upon the knuckles by the AFL leaders, who looked upon Latin America as their own private (imperial-

ist) preserve. The Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), on the contrary, from its beginning was very active in Latin America, and in so doing came into sharp conflict with the AFL and its hand-cultivated Pan-American Federation of Labor.

In the years immediately following the establishment of the RILU in 1921, left-wing labor unions became established in various of the countries of Latin America. They carried on many strikes and did much pioneer organizing work. In the mid-twenties these unions were linked together in the Latin American Trade Union Secretariat, RILU, with headquarters in Montevideo, Uruguay. This body waged a militant struggle against AFL-COPA influence in Latin America md it was an active supporter of the Anti-Imperialist League, which carried on an extensive struggle against the malignant influence of Yankee imperialism and its labor agents throughout Latin America.

In May 1929 the RILU forces in Latin America, at a general congress in Montevideo, organized themselves into the *Confederación Syndical Latino Americano* (CSLA), a body which maintained fraternal relations with the RILU in Moscow.[5] Present at this congress were delegates from the RILU, Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, El Salvador, Paraguay, Guatemala, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and the United States. This was the most representative international labor congress ever held in Latin America up to that time. An. official estimate was made of 1,000,000 Latin American workers represented at the congress. Miguel Contreras was elected secretary general.[6]

The CSLA was organized at a critical moment in the history of the labor movement of Latin America. Only a few months later the great economic crisis of 1929-33 hit the whole area with a devastating crash. Together with the young and vigorous Communist parties of these countries, the CSLA waged a militant struggle to protect the workers from the ravages of the crisis. This was in line with RILU policy all over the capitalist world. In March 1930 a big unemployment demonstration was held throughout Latin America. This was only the first of a long series of such struggles. They were intermingled with many hard-fought strikes against the wave of wage cuts, which everywhere accompanied the economic crisis. These included strikes in Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina, Colombia, and other countries.[7] Often these strikes, in the face of terrorist conditions, verged into revolts. One of the most important struggles of these years was the general strike and insurrection in Cuba in August 1933, headed by the Communist Party, which overthrew the Machado dictatorship, established a new government, and won the eight-hour day and various popular freedoms.

In the mid-thirties the fight against the economic crisis devastation grew over into the fight against fascism. Hitler and Mussolini had been quirk to decide that they would concentrate upon establishing themselves in Latin America. They also uttered loud threats against the United States and declared, in substance, that they aimed to take over the Panama Canal. Most of the reactionary forces in Latin America rallied to their banner—*latifundists* and clerical bigwigs generally, and also many *comprador* capitalists. Latin America was on its way to becoming an important battlefield in the world struggle against fascism.

Yankee imperialism moved swiftly and cleverly to save and extend its grip upon Latin America. In March 1933 President Roosevelt announced his well-known "Good Neighbor" policy, a sort of Latin. American extension of his "New Deal" in the United States. Shortly afterward Roosevelt traveled to Montevideo to popularize his new policy. The Good Neighbor policy, of course, did not abolish American imperialism, as many claimed at the time, but it did check the long series of armed American interventions into the territory and political life of many Latin American republics. Consequently, Roosevelt gained much prestige among the democratic masses of Latin America, if not among its rulers. The Good Neighbor policy was to prove a serious stumbling block in the path of the super-aggressive German, Italian, and Japanese fascists throughout South and Central America, and it generally worked out to the advantage of American imperialism.

In July-August 1935 the Communist International, at its seventh congress, put forth its historic slogan of an all-out people's front struggle against fascism. This slogan, promulgated at a most strategic moment, when the fascists were launching their great drive for world conquest, produced profound repercussions in Latin America, as in many other parts of the world. The Communist Parties and RILU unions in the respective countries of Latin America, took the lead in a stormy counter-drive everywhere against fascist reaction. Big people's front movements developed in Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and various other countries, in numerous places registering substantial victories.[8] The Latin American workers, peasants, and intellectuals were active in struggle as never before.

During these several years of struggle the Latin American trade unions grew rapidly, with the Communist and RILU supporters nearly everywhere in the lead. In tune with the general line of the RILU for trade union unity, as the basis of the people's front to combat fascist reaction, the RILU forces systematically set about unifying the labor movement in the several countries. They also put forth actively the idea of a great all-

inclusive new Latin-American labor federation. The workers of Latin America were preparing for the greatest leap forward they had ever made. To this work the CSLA, the RILU general organization, devoted its major efforts. As for the RILU on a world scale, as we have seen, due to such unity movements as it was carrying through in Latin America, it was at this time gradually dissolving itself in the name of the larger people's front unity against the sinister fascist enemy, of the workers and of all the peoples.

## THE LATIN AMERICAN CONFEDERATION OF LABOR

The *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina* (CTAL) was formed in Mexico City in September 1938. The call for the congress was sent out by the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico* (CTM), headed by Vicente Lombardo Toledano. The situation was ripe for this big unity movement, which worked in the spirit of the world-wide people's front struggle against fascism. Consequently, practically all the important labor organizations in Latin America,[9] whether led by Communists, Socialists, Syndicalists, Apristas, Catholics, or non-party elements, were present at the congress; from Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Cuba, and Uruguay. The big unions in Brazil were also sympathetic, but being illegal, could not get to send delegates. The old CSLA (RILU) merged itself into the CTAL. Vicente Lombardo Toledano, an independent Marxist, was chosen president of the new organization and still ably leads it.

The founding congress of the CTAL attracted wide international attention. The movement was much in tune with the big CIO organizing campaign then sweeping through the industries of the United States. Consequently, John L. Lewis, president of the CIO, was in attendance. AFL representatives, however, always alert to guard the interests of Yankee imperialism in Latin America, were conspicuous by their absence—in the spirit of the discredited COPA, they were hostile to CTAL from the start. Besides the many international delegates present, from France, Spain, Sweden, India, etc., there were also representatives of the ILO and the IFTU. The latter were glad to seize upon this opportunity to edge out the rival AFL from the strategic Latin American field. The IFTU had grossly neglected Latin America for a quarter century but it was alert enough to step in, once the Communists and other left elements had built up this splendid movement.

The CTAL congress set up an organization composed of trade union representatives from the various countries, not more than one center be-

ing organized in each country. It established a leading Central Committee, consisting of a president, four vice-presidents, one general secretary, and four regional secretaries. While recognizing the autonomy of the affiliated national centers, the CTAL is far from being a passive organization.[10] It actively enters into organizing campaigns, strikes, legislative struggles, and various other aspects of the class struggle.

The main slogan of the CTAL is, "For the Emancipation of Latin America." Its Declaration of Principles states: "The workers of hand and brain of Latin America declare that the social regime prevailing in the major part of the countries of the world should be replaced by a regime of justice, which should abolish the exploitation of man by man, a democratic system governing in the interests of the human community, respecting the economic and political independence of each nation and the solidarity of all the peoples of the world, proscribing forever armed aggression as a means of solving international conflicts, and considering the war of conquest as contrary to the welfare of civilization...."[11] The CTAL declared strongly for world trade union unity, and roundly condemned imperialism and fascism. One of its elementary points of program was for the complete equality of all the variegated peoples of Latin America, the majority of whom are of Negro and Indian descent.

The CTAL has rarely published its membership figures, but its total in 1944 was estimated at 4,000,000, which would be some three-fourths of the entire number of trade unionists (including members of state-controlled unions) in Latin America. At its congress in Cali, Colombia, in 1944, the CTAL listed as its affiliates 18 unions and federations in Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina; Uruguay, and Paraguay. The largest body was the CTM of Mexico, with 1,300,000 members.

The CTAL and its affiliated unions spread over a vast stretch of territory where for over four centuries the big landholders (lately come under tutelage of the imperialists) have ruled with an iron hand. The landowners know nothing and care less about democracy, although the score of countries have democratic forms. With their Catholic Church allies, they violently overthrow governments, those at home and those of their neighbors. They have robbed the workers and peasants and ruthlessly shot down those who dared to oppose their imperious will. Trade unionism possesses only the most precarious rights—those the workers can enforce in the struggle—and labor legislation is notorious for its inadequacy, and also for its usual lack of enforcement. This was the Latin America that the CTAL was born into—a world of backward agriculture

and stunted industry, mass oppression, poverty, and illiteracy, and increasingly dominated by Yankee imperialism.

Up to the end of World War II, which is as far as we will carry our story of Latin American labor at this time, the CTAL, in its few years of existence, had already made a notable record of achievement. In Cuba, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, and Costa Rica, trade union unity had been brought about on a national scale and a single all-inclusive federation established.[12] A strong labor press was cultivated. Many strikes had also been conducted, and the elements of a program of social insurance had been introduced into various countries. Especially the CTAL and the many strong Latin American Communist parties had aroused the anti-fascist spirit of the masses and won and organized their strong support for the great anti-fascist World War II. If Hitler and Mussolini and their agents were unable to establish themselves throughout Latin America, save in Argentina, the credit for this real peoples' victory belongs chiefly to the CTAL and the vigorous Communist parties of these countries.[13]

During these early years the CTAL enjoyed a high degree of trade union unity. It combined within its ranks, as a trade union movement should, workers of all the various ideological tendencies. But it also contained many unhealthy forces, who were due eventually to cause the CTAL serious trouble. These included corrupt leadership elements—decayed Social Democrats and Apristas, who set as their major task in life to fight the Communists, even at the cost of labor disunity; crooked labor leaders (AFL brand) on the payroll of the Mexican, Brazilian, Argentinian, and other governments—an old and harmful practice in Latin American unionism; and ambitious Catholic leaders, eager to inflict sectarian unionism upon the workers, an evil from which Latin America had hitherto largely escaped.

At the outset of the CTAL the powerful drive of the workers for trade union unity and a great Latin American labor movement broke through the existing scattered local leadership controls of these disruptive elements and they were unable to halt the broad and militant mass movement. As was normal in the great colonial and semi-colonial areas, China, India, etc., the mass movement was led in Latin America by Communists and other left-wing forces. As reactionaries usually do in such circumstances, therefore, those in Latin America went along with the progressive mass tide into the CTAL but patiently awaited the arrival of the time and opportunity when they would be able to do their work of disunity and disruption.

# 40. The Labor Organizations in Fascist Countries (1918-1939)

The monopolist employers, where they have established fascism seek by every means to indoctrinate, disorganize, control, and terrorize the working class. To this end they always find that some form of labor organization helps to serve their reactionary purposes. These fascist labor bodies, while varying somewhat in form from country to country, have certain basic features in common: (1) they are so organized as to have no real proletarian character; (2) they are prohibited from taking strike action; (3) they are closely supervised by the state which metes out severe penalties upon the workers for infractions of its labor regulations; (4) they have no real power to bargain collectively with the employers; and (5) their working “principle" is everywhere a denial of the class struggle and an insistence upon the alleged harmony of interest between capital and labor.

Fascist so-called labor practice is “class collaboration," carried to its logical extreme. Class collaboration, which Social Democrats invariably apply as their working theory and practice, at all times signifies the subordination of the working class to the interests of the capitalist class. No real collaboration between workers and capitalists in the field of trade union economic functions is possible. Under fascism one simply sees the subordination of the workers, which is always implied by class collaboration, carried out to its complete expression.

In the counter-revolutionary drive in Eastern Europe following the Russian Revolution of November 1917 a major and general aim of the organized employers was to destroy the genuine trade unions. This trend continued to grow right up to the outbreak of "World War II in 1939. The trade union movement in this whole vast area therefore found itself increasingly confronting terroristic conditions and was forced to carry on a life-and-death fight. This situation was worsened following Mussolini’s victory in Italy in 1922, and even more so after Hitler’s capture of power in Germany in 1933. The growing hardships of the unions in Eastern Europe were indicated by the butchery of the Rumanian railroad strikers in 1933, by the violent repression of the 125,000 textile strikers in Lodz, Poland, the same year, and by the gradual fascisation of the states in this whole area on the borders of the Soviet Union.

There were also strong fascisation tendencies in the trade union field in the vast areas of Latin America. In various of the countries there, notably Argentina and Brazil, but including several others, reactionary governments had set up strong controls over the trade unions by the eve of

World War II, which closely approached those of fascism. Union domination by reactionary governments was facilitated by the very dangerous practice, in existence in Mexico and other Latin American lands, of labor officials taking all or part of their salaries from the respective governments. And in far-off China, Chiang Kai-shek, in his thug-controlled pseudo-labor unions, also had developed a distinct type of fascism.

Accompanying the growing fascisation of the trade unions in many countries before the second world war, was the ever-present pattern of the Communists leading the workers to battle against encroaching fascism and the right Social Democrats systematically undermining the workers' resistance to the fascists. Here let us examine somewhat more closely the definite forms of fascist labor organization in the countries of fully established fascism.

## THE FASCIST UNIONS IN ITALY

Although Mussolini seized the Italian government in 1922 and had at his beck and call hundreds of gangs of fascist thugs, who roamed the country under police and military protection, killing union leaders and burning labor headquarters, he nevertheless had serious difficulty in crushing the General Confederation of Labor (CGI.). This body suffered the additional handicap of being under right-wing Social Democratic top leadership, under the very D'Aragona clique who, by their refusal to fight in 1920, had been responsible for the victory of' fascism. It was not until the reign of terror of November 1926, after the attack upon Mussolini's life by a maniac, that the government was finally able to suppress the CGL, the workers' parties, the labor press, and the cooperatives.[1]

In the meantime, the workers, in the face of grave difficulties, had conducted many strikes, as real wages sank steadily, in 1926 these being 30 percent below the figure of 1921.[2] One of the most important strikes before fascism closed in was that of 125,000 metal workers in March 1925. Conducted in an atmosphere of government thuggery, the strong strike was called off by the reformists, despite rank-and-file willingness to continue it. The CGL rapidly lost membership—from 1,206,000 in 1922, to 400,000 in 1923, to 200,000 in 1924,[3] to dissolution, upon reformist initiative, in January 1927. Meanwhile, the Anarcho-syndicalist union had collapsed and its leader, Rossono, had gone over to the fascists. Throughout these critical years the Social Democratic trade union leaders had steadily refused cooperation with the Communists, who, headed by Gramsci, Togliatti, and other dauntless proletarian militants, were carrying on a heroic fight, both under general semi-legality and in the fascist organizations. The reformists had other plans than such strug-

gle, and in February 1927 the ex-CGL officials, D'Aragona, Rigola, Maglione, and others, publicly surrendering to the victory of fascism, offered their cooperation to Mussolini[4]—a fitting end to their opportunist regimes.

At the start Mussolini, pioneering in fascism, was uncertain as to just what type of state and state-controlled unions to build. Consequently for the first four years the parliamentary system, gravely weakened, continued to operate and the regular trade unions, under increasing state curbs and gangster terrorism, struggled along in open existence. Meanwhile, the Mussolini regime was building more or less compulsory fascist trade unions. In November 1924 the general confederation of these unions claimed to have 1,766,025 members.[5] In April 1925, after the "fascist" strike of metal workers in the previous month, strikes were outlawed as "acts of war."[6] Under the decree of October 2, 1925, the fascist General Confederation of Industry and the Confederation of Fascist Corporations recognized each other as the sole representatives of employers and workers respectively.

Labor and general laws now followed each other rapidly, constructing the so-called "corporate state," which was about completed in 1932. Under this fascist system the workers' "unions" and employers' organizations were linked together respectively into confederations. "There were nine confederations in all, one each for management and labor interests in industry, agriculture, commerce, banking and insurance, and a ninth for professional men and artists."[7] In addition there was a set of 22 guilds or corporations established to carry on the economic functions of the country. All these labor and economic organizations were definite parts of the state, and all were directly under the control of the Fascist Grand Council, headed by Mussolini. The whole official bureaucracy was appointed from the top down, which meant ultimately by the fascist dictator. Behind him stood the great capitalists and landowners of Italy, supported by the Vatican. Much of the Italian fascist conceptions came from Catholic clerical sources.

Under this autocratic set-up the national trade unions and the employers' organizations—the confederations—carried on "collective bargaining" with each other. In case of "disputes," these were at first referred to boards of compulsory arbitration, but finally to labor courts. The whole business, of course, mean arbitrary dictation to the workers by the employers as to the wages and working conditions to prevail in industry. Here was "class collaboration" brought to its logical and ultimate end of complete employer domination. Cynically, the erstwhile Social Democrat Mussolini stated in February 1928, "I declare that henceforth

capital and labor shall have equal rights and duties as brothers in the fascist family."[8]

Meanwhile, with living conditions for the workers and peasants being drastically worsened and with the masses plunged into a new slavery, the Communists and other lefts continued the struggle against Mussolini's terrorist dictatorship, at great peril to life and liberty. In February 1927 the Communists reorganized the CGL, just as the D'Aragona leadership, having liquidated it, were offering their services to Mussolini. The new CGL established its official headquarters in France, among the large masses of Italian workers located there, and from this base it conducted an underground union organization, strikes, etc., in fascist Italy. In 1930 the CGL affiliated to the RILU. This type of underground work was kept up until and through World War II. Just what a serious price the militant workers, especially the Communists, paid for these activities is indicated by the fact that of the 111 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Italy, 92 of them served 563 years in fascist jails.[9] From the end of 1926 on, Palmiro Togliatti was the head of this fighting Party.

## THE NAZI LABOR FRONT IN GERMANY

After seizing power in Germany in January 1933 and smashing the trade union movement by a nationwide storm-trooper raid on May 2nd (see chapter 36), Hitler proceeded, with extreme ruthlessness, to exterminate the last traces of trade unionism from among the German working class. He had intended to go slowly at first, as Mussolini had done, but as Neumann remarks, encouraged by the spinelessness of the Social Democratic leadership—Leipart-Grassmann in the trade unions—he smashed the unions with one sudden blow.[10] Then, on May 11, he set up the Labor Front, the supposed labor organization, with Dr. Ley, leading Nazi politician, at its head.

At first, following the Mussolini model of the corporate state, Hitler established parallel confederations of workers and employers, but fearing that this arrangement had too much of a class struggle element in it, he proceeded, in June 1934, to "atomize" the working class by re-organizing the Labor Front upon an amorphous basis. Thus, all "producers," bosses and workers, were put into the one organization, which was set up in four divisions, of workers, salaried employees, artisans, and employers.[11] Industry generally was combined in the National Economic Chamber. The entire scheme, like the rest of the National Socialist German Workers Party and the Nazi state in general, was directly under the control of Hitler personally Eventually it was claimed that the Labor Front had

27,000,000 (compulsory) members.

This gigantic machine, based upon "class collaboration," was in no sense a labor movement, but an apparatus for propagandizing and dominating the workers in industry. It also had an elaborate auxiliary, the "Strength Through Joy" movement, to control the workers also during their leisure time, a device copied from Mussolini's similar body, the *Dopolavoro.* The Labor Front did not make labor contracts, nor carry on "collective bargaining," as did Mussolini's confederations. All this was left to the tender mercies of the individual capitalists to take care of. Labor disputes, if any, could he referred to the so-called Courts of Honor. Strikes, of course, were forbidden, and this ruling was enforced with the most barbarous punishments, both by physical assault arid by imprisonment.

The Nazi regime constituted the most extreme form of big employer dictatorship. It was the rule of finance capital, of which Hitler, Goering, Hess, et al, were the political representatives. They, in fact, became big capitalists themselves. Marquand thus sums up the Nazi system: "The 'philosophy' of National-Socialist labor legislation states as its fundamental principles, the unity of the entrepreneur and workman... the leadership principle, 'full authority downwards, full responsibility upwards'; and rigid state control over industrial relations."[12] The employer was "the master in his own house"; he was the "leader" in the factory, and the workers were required to do his arbitrary bidding. As Marquand also states: "He had power to decide upon all matters, affecting his business, including wages, hours, and other working conditions." The only rule to which the employer had to conform was to issue in writing his instructions regarding wages and other matters. The employers voluntarily "liquidated" their organizations when the Labor Front was established, but in reality these bodies went right on with changes only in name.

Nazi Germany, so long as it lasted, was the capitalists' dream come true. The great monopolists, having no serious opposition, fully exploited the workers, robbed the farmers, and gobbled up their smaller competitors, with the most militant support of the government. Naturally, the conditions of the workers under such a regime went from bad to worse. As Hitler, preparing for war, pushed ahead with an intense armaments production, the working day was gradually lengthened and real wages sank. By the outbreak of the war in 1939. the living standards of the German working class had fallen off by about one-third under fascism.

The experience showed that the workers in Germany were able t0 build little or no underground trade unions during this pre-war period. This was due to two cooperating factors: the savagely repressive measures of the Hitlerites and the paralyzing effects of the non-struggle

policies of the right Social Democrats. The great mass of the workers, nevertheless, remained immune to the intense, pseudo-revolutionary demagogy of Hitler. Many of the more backward working-class elements, however, did become infected by it. It was officially claimed (an exaggeration) that one-third of Hitler's party membership was made up of workers.[13]

## CLERICAL FASCISM IN AUSTRIA

In Austria fascism had a decidedly clerical complexion, The Dollfuss regime, after crushing the labor movement by violence in February 1934 (see chapter 36), avowedly set out to realize the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. But it became quickly manifest that the Vatican's conception of an earthly paradise was identical with that of the monopoly capitalists. Austrian clerical fascism, like the brand of Mussolini and Hitler, involved the complete destruction of the labor movement, democratic liberties, and parliamentary government, and also the institution of unlimited exploitation of the workers of fields and factories.

The Dollfuss government accorded a very privileged position to the Catholic Church. The same Vatican influence was manifest in organizing the labor set-up. After dissolving the Social Democratic trade unions,* Dollfuss called in the heads of the Christian (Catholic) unions and commissioned them to form and head up the Trade Union Federation of Austrian Workers and Salaried Employees.[14] This fascist body was given a monopoly of representing the "interests" of the workers and was also presented with the confiscated funds of the dissolved legitimate trade unions. Thenceforth, the authority of the new federation was backed up by the wholesale arrest and persecution of workers who dared oppose it and the Dollfuss regime. Its key officials, as usual, were appointed from the top down. Under the clerical fascist regime the usual disastrous results ensued to the workers' living standards.

The Austrian workers, with a long record of strong organization and militancy behind them, succeeded in building considerable underground organization, both political and trade union. They not only conducted numerous strikes, but even largely obtained control of some of the fascist unions, notably the key organization of Metal Workers. Both Socialists and Communists participated in these illegal activities. The IFTU extended formal recognition to the "Committee of Seven," set up by the

* Prior to the dissolution, the statistics o[ the Austrian unions were: Social Democratic 450,000; Catholic 100,000; Heimwehr (fascist) 40,000; German 50,000.

Social Democrats.[15] The situation came to a sudden turn for the worse when Hitler's forces invaded Austria on March 12, 1938, and fastened on the nation the deadly Nazi clamp. A year later, on March 15, 1939, Hitler's *Wehrmacht* also occupied neighboring Czechoslovakia and stamped out the trade unions and all other forms of working-class organization in that country.

## LABOR UNIONISM IN FRANCO SPAIN

After successfully crushing the Spanish Republic in 1939, with the help of the Social Democratic international policy of "non-intervention" (see chapter 37), dictator Franco proceeded to build his system of fascism, based on the Falangist Party. Spanish fascism also had a strong clerical element in it—the rigid hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, together with its conservative backing, making definitely for a fascist system. Inevitably, as one of the pillars of the new fascist regime in Spain, there had to be a system of "labor unionism"; of course, strictly controlled by the state, of which Franco is the head.

The *Delegaciones Nacional de Sindicatos,* an auxiliary of the Falangist Party, consists of 23 national vertical *"sindicatos"* or "unions." These are composed of both workers and employers, with the latter in command. Membership is compulsory, and it is claimed to total 10,000,000. The heads of the respective unions are appointed by Franco, and the same is true of the top officials of the district and local federations. There are two sides to the national unions, the "social" and the "economic," with a fascist bureaucrat in charge of each. Naturally, democracy for the workers stands at zero, or lower. Wages and hours are decreed by the Ministry of Labor, to which body the national unions may submit "recommendations." Disputes may be taken up with the labor courts and the "Supreme Courts of Social Justice." The organization of free unions is sedition, subject to heavy prison sentences. Strikes are crimes. The general result over years of the Franco regime has been a catastrophic decline in living standards of the workers.[16] The boss-controlled syndicates send one-third of the representatives hand-picked to the National Cortes.[17] Periodically, these "unions" hold "workers' congresses." At the third such gathering, in July 1955, the workers, despite strict fascist controls, demanded wage increases.[18]

After the tragic defeat of the People's Front government in 1939 it was a considerable period before the two major trade union federations, the UGT and CNT, were able to re-establish skeleton organizations in Franco Spain and to resume activities there on an underground basis. Much passive resistance has been developed and, despite the ferocious

penalties for open resistance, many strikes have taken place. Chiefly under the leadership of the Communist Party, a number of important mass demonstrations have been organized. Among the more recent of these movements were the general strike of 1947 in the Basque country and the big general strike movement of 1951, centering in Barcelona.[19]

## FASCIST LABOR ORGANIZATION IN JAPAN

During the period between the two world wars (for earlier periods see chapters 18 and 29), the Japanese labor movement experienced grave persecution. The country, its bourgeois revolution incomplete, suffered from strong feudal hangovers. The ruling classes viewed every semblance of working-class organization with deep hostility. In 1900 the law made it a crime to form trade unions or to wage strikes, and the law of 1925 gave the police the power to prohibit meetings, dissolve unions, and to break strikes virtually at will. Criticism of the emperor system was drastically punished. Between 1920 and 1938 some 60,000 persons were arrested on charges of radicalism.[20] In 1932 alone 14,000 arrests were made under the "dangerous thought" law.[21] The Communist Party, reorganized in 1926, was crushed again in 1933.

The Social Democracy in Japan had considerable strength before World War II. After several splits and re-groupings, it crystallized in 1932 into the Social Masses Party. The Communist Party, formed m 1922, although wielding much influence, was illegal throughout most of the period up to the second world war. In 1937 the workers' parties then in the field polled over 1,000,000 votes, or 10 percent of the national total, and they secured 38 representatives in the Diet—37 of the Social Masses Party and one of the Proletarian Party The Japanese Federation of Labor, formed in 1921 out of the old Friendly Love Society, was reorganized in 1931 and remained the main body of organized labor through this period. It was dominated by the Bunji Suzuki clique of conservative Social Democrats. The left (RILU) forces established independent unions in 1925, and in 1934 the left-wing National Council of Japanese Labor Unions was formed. This body gained considerable influence, but it was soon suppressed by the police. The Japanese Federation of Labor was affiliated to Amsterdam (IFTU). No great increase in union membership was registered between the wars; the total number of trade unionists in 1921 was 103,412 and in 1936 about 420,589, the peak pre-war figure.[22] This was about 8 percent of all non-agricultural workers. Although there were 2,000,000 women workers, only 23,423, or less than two percent, were in the trade unions in 1938.

The Japanese Social Democrats were cut from the same opportunist

cloth as their fellows in Europe and America, and when the Japanese militarists began their invasion of China in 1931 they promptly gave it their support, while in the face of savage repression the Communists and other lefts opposed it. Bunji Suzuki, the chief right-wing trade union leader, went to the United States to "explain" the imperialist intervention to the American people. Even this servility, however, did not satisfy the Japanese employers and landowners. A signal of where they were heading to was given by the split led by Akamatsu, erstwhile Social Democrat, of the party and the trade unions in 1932, right after the Manchurian "incident." This split brought about the formation of a fascist party and fascist trade unions. In the mid-thirties the fascist unions claimed some 40,000 members, as against 240,000 in the legitimate unions. The reactionary trend of the employers in the trade union field was further exemplified by the fact that by 1936 they had organized company unions and "welfare associations," of the American type, with three times as many members as the trade unions.[23]

The crisis came to the Japanese unions and parties with the expanded Japanese invasion into North China in 1937, an adventure which for Japan was the beginning of World War II. The Social Masses Party—the Social Democratic Party—promptly pledged its support to the war and the Socialist-led trade unions followed suit.

In November 1938 the Socialist manifesto, praising the overrunning of China, declared, "We humbly offer three banzai for the Emperor and thank our officers and men for their hardships and toil."[24] The left-wing split off in 1934, formed the Japanese Proletarian Party in 1939, and were very active, along with the old-established Communist Party, in organizing the people's front movement of the period.

As in Germany, Italy, Austria, and elsewhere, the capitalists, headed for fascism, had no further use for the Social Democratic type of leadership as their main arm in the labor movement. Their pattern was the storm-trooper, Hitler brand. Therefore, in 1937 they abolished the remaining left-wing trade unions, and in 1940 ordered the disbanding of the Social Masses Party and the Great Peasants Union and all other trade unions. Then the government proceeded to develop the Industrial Patriotic Society (known as *Sampo*) which had been founded in 1940. The Social Masses Party was replaced by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, of which *Sampo* became the industrial army.[25]

*Sampo* was a labor front on the Nazi order. Its class collaboration program was stated by its head, the Welfare Minister: "In *Sampo* all the trouble between labor and capital has been swept away, and they have been united under the banner of loyalty to the Throne." Under *Sampo,*

the workers in each plant formed a "co-operative body," of which the employer was the leader. The funds of the disbanded trade unions were handed over to the fascist labor front. By early 1941 *Sampo* was said to have 4,500,000 members. It sent delegates to fascist Germany and Italy.[26] In 1943 it claimed to have 6,000,000 "members."

Thus ended the pre-war stage of trade unionism in Japan. Many of the conservative trade union leaders gave direct or indirect support. to *Sampo* and to the fascist political organizations. The underground opposition that was carried on by the workers in the face of the prevailing savage persecution was, as always in such circumstances, led by Communists. An important center of the opposition was in People's China, where Japanese Communists and left trade unionists maintained a base among the soldiers from which to operate in Japan.

## 41. The Soviet Trade Unions and Socialism (1917-1939)

The establishment and construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union has throughout been the greatest social epic in the history of mankind. When the workers and peasants, on November 7, 1917 seized political power in old Russia from the corrupt gang of tsarist landowners and capitalists who had for so long exploited the Russian people, the industrial apparatus which fell to their lot was almost worthless. The relatively few industries were old-fashioned, and being owned previously by various groups of imperialists, their machinery was of all sorts and types of foreign manufacture. The whole industrial system lay in ruins as the result of seven years of imperialist and civil war. The country, with its agriculture also ruined, was gripped by famine. To make this terrible situation still worse, the workers had absolutely no experience at managing industry, and the previous engineering staff had either fled the country or gone permanently on strike. Industrial production fell to about ten percent of pre-war and many thousands starved to death. Of course, no help was to be had from the world capitalists who, instead, set up a tight economic blockade against the young Socialist country and also did their utmost to overthrow it by military intervention.[1]

Despite all these unparalleled hardships and difficulties the Soviet people, particularly under the brilliant leadership of Stalin—Lenin died on January 21, 1924—have succeeded in building a great new industrial system. They defeated internal counter-revolution and pioneered new Socialist types of institutions; they trained thousands of engineers and millions of skilled workers; they re-organized the medieval agriculture onto a modern collective basis, and entirely out of their own resources

they built a vast body of highly developed industry. By 1928 the USSR had recovered to the point of equalling pre-war industrial production; by 1935 it was the leading industrial nation in Europe, and now, despite the terrific devastation of World War II in the meantime, the Soviet Union is fast overtaking the United States in industrial production, and in numerous respects already excels it in industrial and scientific techniques. By 1935, Socialism was definitely established, and now the country is on the verge of entering into the next higher stage of society above Socialism, namely, Communism.

This era of vast and swift industrialization provoked much opposition to the Communist Party line by Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and other renegade spokesmen of the remnants of the classes of exploiters defeated by the Revolution. The ensuing controversies, led brilliantly by Stalin, were highly complex and developed some of the most valuable points of Marxist-Leninist theory, particularly regarding the building of Socialism.[2]

The industrialization of the Soviet Union, although carried out in the midst of staggering problems and hardships, has been for speed and thoroughness entirely without a parallel in the history of the world. Of revolutionary significance to the world's working class is the fact that during the doing of this tremendous task there have been vast improvements made in the living and working standards of the toiling masses; wages have been drastically raised and working hours cut from 12 or more to 8 or less, a great social insurance system has been built up, the once widespread illiteracy practically wiped out, and the curse of mass unemployment forever abolished. By the great Revolution the exploitation of man by man has been completely done away with, and the toilers of factory, office, and field have become the masters of their own political fate. They have succeeded in achieving a spiral of ever-upward development of economic and cultural mass well-being.

## THE INDUSTRIAL ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS

The trade unions, organized in the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU), played a decisive role in the overthrow of Russian tsarism-capitalism, as we have seen in chapter 27. They have also since been indispensable in carrying through the enormous program of industrialization. The fundamental task of the Soviet labor organizations, the basic function that makes them real trade unions, is to protect and cultivate the specific economic interests and cultural welfare of the workers. In doing this, however, the unions assume a direct responsibility for the development of maximum production. This is possible only in

a Socialist country, where there is no private ownership of industry, or individual profit-making, and where the benefits of increased output flow entirely to the advantage of the actual producers. In a capitalist country for the workers to assume responsibility for production would mean to fatten the purse of the wealthy owners and to paralyze the labor movement with class collaboration practices and theories.

While the direct management of industry rested with the economic organs of the state, the unions were a driving force. To the general end of improving production in the pre-World War II period now under discussion, the Soviet trade unions performed a number of vital industrial services. Besides furnishing numberless managers for industry and candidates for engineering courses, they also were the major means for training skilled workers. The spectacular growth of Soviet industries during these years made necessary literally millions of new skilled workers. The trade unions, through their special schools and shop courses, were the basic means through which this enormous new working force was created. In capitalist countries the employers and their state are always very careful to restrict to the minimum control by the trade unions over the education of apprentices and the supply of trained workers; but in a Socialist country, where the workers own and control both the industries and the State, such a problem cannot exist.[3]

Another basic economic function of the trade unions in building and operating the Soviet industries was the establishment of worker discipline in industry. In capitalist countries discipline in industry is enforced by the will of the employer, but in Soviet industry, inevitably, it must be essentially voluntary and self-imposed. This was an especially grave problem during the early days of the Revolution, when the workers were just beginning their tremendous experience in constructing and managing modern industry. It was progressively solved by a close cooperation among the Communist Party, the trade unions, and the economic organs of the state. One of the major means to this end was the realization by the workers that strikes were both needless and harmful in a Socialist country.

In the working out of Soviet planned production, which replaces the economic chaos of capitalist economy, the trade unions also perform fundamental tasks. They participate in the formulation of the great five-year plans, from the highest organs of the state down to the individual factories and shops, in numberless production conferences. The unions are the main means relied upon to acquaint the million-masses of workers with the details of the five-year plans and to develop among them the initiative and enthusiasm with which to make possible the achievement

of the nation's objectives in production. The trade unions are an indispensable part of the workers' great economic-political machinery for drafting, popularizing, and realizing the five-year plans.

Increasing the individual output of the workers is, of course, a fundamental task, and here again the trade unions have always played an indispensable role. To this end they use many means, among which perhaps the most important is the piecework system, described in chapter 27. The bulk of all industrial workers work on piece rates. Then there is a whole group of practices comprised under the general head of "Socialist emulation," which are enormously important. There are the shock-brigades, the *udarniki*, and the Stakhanovites, who are named after a famous coal miner. These systems, however, were not introduced without considerable internal friction. Thus, N.M. Tomsky, first secretary of the AUCCTU, who opposed them, among his other wrong policies, had to be removed from his post and replaced by N.M. Shvernik.

In the Soviet Union work is an honor, and those who distinguish themselves by improving the techniques and output of industry receive wide recognition as industrial heroes. Lozovsky states that in industry in 1937, "67 percent of the workers are engaged in Socialist competition; of these 23 percent are Stakhanovites and 22 percent shock workers."[4] The foregoing are some of the reasons why the output per worker in industry in the Soviet Union at this time was increasing twice as fast as that of the workers in American industry. It also explains why the Soviet workers were completing better than on time, their famous five-year -plans, to the amazement of the industrial world. The free worker under Socialism has a totally different attitude towards his work than a wage slave under capitalism.

On the basis of rapidly increasing industrial output the Soviet workers' wage and working conditions systematically improve. There are no parasitic, blood sucking employers, bankers, or landlords to take a huge cut out of what the workers produce, as in all capitalist countries. The only charges against the national production are such legitimate costs as those for the further development of industry and agriculture, national defense, education, and social insurance. Already at this time, despite the enormous tasks and handicaps facing the people, wages were rapidly on the increase, the shorter workday (eight, seven, and sometimes six hours) was established and an enormous school system was being built.

The establishment of the workers' wages in the USSR is no dog-eat-dog struggle, as in all capitalist countries, with the exploiters trying by every possible means to grab an ever-larger share of the workers' product. With no capitalists, no such struggle is possible. The establishment

of the workers' share of the national production is a scientific calculation, worked out in the shape of collective agreements between the representatives of the unions and those of the economic organs of the government. The element of class struggle does not enter into the situation. The Webbs thus describe it: “The note in these discussions is not one of conflict and struggle between hostile parties... but rather one of objective examination of the statistical facts and the consideration of public policy, to which both parties agree to defer.” “Far from there being less collective bar gaining in the USSR than in Great Britain or the United States... there is actually very much more than in any other country in the world.”[5]

## VARIED TRADE UNION FUNCTIONS

The Soviet trade unions, in line with their higher plane of operation and development, early had a large variety of functions that dwarfed those of trade unions in all capitalist countries. One of the more important of these was the management of the elaborate national system of social insurance. This insurance covers every hazard to which the worker is exposed. Characteristic of the tremendous growth of this vital institution; "In 1927-38, 1,600,000,000 rubles were appropriated for social insurance, in 1932—4,323,000,000 rubles, and in 1936—8,875,000,000 rubles."[6] In 1933 the whole system of social insurance, previously handled by the Ministry of Labor, was turned over to the AUCCTU to manage. In all the unions, from their top committees to their smallest shop organizations, there were committees to take care of the insurance interests of the workers.

The trade unions in the USSR also officially manage and control the entire national system of factory inspection, labor protection. As Lozovsky remarks, already in pre-war years the Soviet system of consumer safety and health in industry was far superior to that of any other country in the world. This great social function was also delegated to the AUCCTU in 1933, when, in fact, the Ministry of Labor was abolished and its functions transferred to the trade unions. The entire question was handled by the Labor Inspection Department of the AUCCTU, with each national union picking out its own inspectors and building its own inspection service. “In 1935-36 the Labor Inspection Board had over 4,500 paid labor inspectors and 219,400 unpaid, elected labor inspectors on its rolls.”[7] Consequent upon this system, enormous progress was being made in improving working conditions in Soviet industry. In capitalist countries the so-called Labor Departments are merely sections of the capitalist state, part of the exploitation machinery of the capitalists. But

in the Soviet Union this matter was in the hands of the workers themselves.

The Soviet trade unions also had many other functions, which were little, if at all, developed among the trade unions in the capitalist world. They had an enormous press and social and educational features on a huge scale. Not the least of the trade union work was the political education of the workers. From their foundation, the Soviet trade unions, in the spirit of Lenin, were the mass schools for Communism. The trade union activities were clustered around the plans which, to the Soviet workers, were not hated places of confinement and slavery, but valued and interesting centers of their life. The factories belong to them, not to class enemies. "In 1940, says E.S. Smith, "the unions owned 6,000 clubhouses and Palaces of Culture, 15,000 libraires and 10,000 movie projectors. They also ran 100,000 clubrooms on factory premises."[8] Such social facilities were constantly and rapidly on the increase.

## SOVIET TRADE UNION STRUCTURE

The trade unions in the Soviet Union are built on the industrial plan: that is, all the workers engaged in one enterprise belong to the one union, including the office staff. Originally following certain patterns under capitalism, there were only a small number of national unions, as few as 23 in 1931, but in that year the number went up to 47, and in 1934 to 154—to facilitate working with the respective government economic organs and to carry out the multiple activities. The Soviet trade unions had no employers to fight and consequently no need to consolidate themselves into a few national organizations, designed principally for the purpose of conducting effective strikes. Lozovsky thus states the position of the movement on April 1, 1937: "There are altogether 162 trade unions in the USSR with a total of 21,999,900 members, constituting 84.6 percent of the total number of employed persons in the country."[9] The basic trade union unit was the workers' council and shop committee. Within the shop committee, however, there was still a smaller unit, the group, or brigade, or gang, each of which had an elected organizer. Membership was voluntary.

The Soviet trade unions, from the outset, were based upon a thoroughly democratic system. Lozovsky sums up the system briefly: "All trade union bodies—the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the central committees of the various unions, the territorial and regional committees of the unions, the factory and local committees, the shop committees, and the shop trade union organizers and group trade union organizers, are elected by secret ballot. Elections are held at regular intervals and all trade

union officials are liable to recall."[10] As part of the never-ending struggle against tendencies towards bureaucracy, the Soviet trade unions especially cultivated the system of unpaid functionaries. At least 95 percent of the vast numbers of workers engaged in activities as group and shop committee organizers, social insurance committeemen, local factory inspectors, etc., were not paid for these tasks. No other trade unions anywhere else had such a high loyalty and discipline in this respect.

Far more than any other trade unions in the world, those in the Soviet Union paid close attention to the specific problems and interests of women workers. In Soviet industry, as in Soviet government, every occupation was open to women, and they are found in a range of work that is unknown in any capitalist country. In 1936 there were 8,492,000 women workers of all kinds in Soviet industry, or over one-third of the total. They played a corresponding role in the trade union movement. The unions and factories created a whole network of institutions conserving women's interests, without even remotely a parallel in capitalist countries.

The Soviet trade unions also made it a basic phase of their general work to attend to the needs and requirements of young workers. In capitalist countries, on the other hand, trade unions are notoriously neglectful of youth interests. In the USSR the young workers had their own representatives in all the leading committees of the unions, and at every stage of the movement there were special youth committees and programs. In the tremendous construction projects during this period, the youth especially distinguished themselves by their tireless devotion and courage. In their multiple youth activities, the trade unions worked in close cooperation with the Young Communist League. Another big youth feature was organized sports activities. The unions are the base of the recent world successes of Soviet athletes.

The trade unions of the Soviet Union, unlike so many of those in capitalist countries, also paid the closest attention to work in the countryside. This was in line with the basic Communist policy of the closest alliance between the workers and peasants. Thus the trade unions played a fundamental part in the big movement in 1929-32 for the collectivization of the farms, when they sent 25,000 of their best organizers into the country to help the peasants in carrying through the monumental task of uniting the scattered individual holdings into modern cooperatives. In 1930 the trade unions also delegated 180,000 workers to help the collective farmers operate and repair their newly acquired machinery. As Lozovsky says, "The formerly illiterate and backward agricultural laborers, toiling for the kulaks, have been replaced by a new and large section of skilled workers—tractor drivers, combine operators, chauffeurs, etc."[11]

In all their activities the Soviet trade unions worked in close collaboration with members of the Communist Party, the Red Army, and the Soviet government. It could not be otherwise because they were all the same people, with harmonious interests. The former exploiters had vanished from the scene and the erstwhile class lines between the workers, peasants, and intellectuals were rapidly disappearing.

## THE SOVIET WORKERS LEAD THE WORLD LABOR MOVEMENT

During the period of the First International (1864-1876) the leading working class of the world was the British; during the period of the Second International (1889-1914) and in the interim years, the leading working class was the German; and during the period of the Third International (1919-1943), and the years since, the leading working class of the world has been that of Soviet Russia. This is because, first, the Russian workers in 1917 made the initial great breach in the wall of world capital, and, second, since then, they have been able, in general, to blaze the most effective path for the world's workers.

The achievement and the building of Socialism in the Soviet Union were the greatest of all object lessons to the workers and peasants of the world, pointing for them the way to emancipation. This great lesson was clarified and emphasized by the splendid theoretical work of Lenin and his ablest pupil, Stalin. Hundreds of workers' delegations to the Soviet Union attest to the value the world's workers place upon these revolutionary lessons.

The Soviet trade unions have always set the pattern for general trade union functions and possibilities. The many functions, described above, as of 15 or 20 years ago, have since been enormously expanded and developed.

The Soviet workers, from the outset, likewise have always given the greatest practical international assistance to other workers in struggle. The Russian revolution provided the labor movement in the capitalist countries and the liberation movements in the colonial lands with the greatest stimulus they had ever known. The Soviet workers gave most active support to the embattled workers in Central Europe in the revolutionary struggles of 1918-23; they proffered massive support to the British general strike of 1926; they backed militarily the Spanish Loyalists in 1936-39, and they were ever the most active supporters of the Chinese Revolution.

During this period the Soviet workers were also the leaders in the world struggle against right opportunism, both at home and on a world scale. They have been the inveterate enemies of class collaboration in all

its forms. They have also led the international battle against all sorts of pseudo-leftism, particularly counter-revolutionary Trotskyism, of which, more anon. They have raised the whole international struggle to a higher theoretical tone.

Another of the greatest examples of Soviet working-class leadership in this period was the long struggle of the Soviet trade unions for world trade union unity, in the face of the bitter opposition of the opportunist heads of the Amsterdam International (IFTU) and the American Federation of Labor. The Soviet trade unions were the heart of the persistent battle of the RILU for the united front and for international trade union unity, Their junction with the British trade unions in the Anglo-Russian Committee was only one of their many efforts for a unified world labor movement. On the very eve of the second world war (with the RILU already dissolved in 1937), they made a final move, upon the proposal of the British trade unions at the Zurich congress of the IFTU in July 1939, to unite with the IFTU upon the basis of a fighting policy. The Americans, however, defeated this unity proposition.[12] This AFL splitting action, as the sequel showed, gave the death blow to the IFTU, which thus failing crucially to accept the leadership for a united world labor movement, never had another chance to do so.

In the historic fight of the workers and other democratic forces of the world, which developed after Hitler's seizure of power in Germany in January 1933 and which carried the peoples of the world through the great anti-fascist World War II, the Soviet working class and people in general gave another striking example of their world leadership. They outlined in the beginning the triple-phased program which would have blocked the advance of fascism and defeated it in its early stages—namely the world peace front proposed by the Soviet government, and the people's front and world trade union unity policies of the Communist International. And when, in spite of their struggle for peace, war came, it was the Soviet people who furnished the general democratic policies and the main military strength for winning the war. Undoubtedly, the Soviet people, with their great Communist Party and broad trade unions, were the basic force in saving the world from the most terrible fascist slavery.

## 42. International Organized Labor Between 1914 and 1939

During the 25-year period between the two world wars, covered by this summary chapter, the most basic thing that happened in the workers' world, and in the world in general, was the Russian Revolution of November 1917, which brought about the birth of the first Socialist Repub-

lic. This epoch-making event marked the beginning of another era in world social development. It was the initiation of a quite new period, one in which the toilers of the world, freed finally from the yoke of capitalist slavery, would eventually, for the first time, walk the earth as free men. The great Russian Revolution fundamentally altered the economic, and political situation throughout the world. It constituted a new and revolutionary factor, which henceforth was to exert a profound influence in the life of the workers and peoples of all countries.

In these same years the principal thing that took place within the capitalist system was that this social order slumped into a general crisis, from which crisis it has since proved unable to recover. This general crisis, which is the result of the maturing of the many inner conflicts and contradictions within the capitalist system, first manifested itself by the outbreak of the devastating first world war. Further major developments of it through the period we are here considering, included the Russian Revolution, which dealt world capitalism a mortal blow; the beginning of the colonial revolution in Asia, especially in China, which was undermining the major underpinnings of world imperialism; the chaotic situation in the capitalist international financial system following World War I, including the broad wave of inflation and the abandonment of the gold standard; the widespread development of fascism, which indicated the growing weakness, not the strength, of world capitalism; the expanding hegemony of American imperialism at the expense of its imperialist rivals; and the sharpening generally of the antagonisms among the big imperialist capitalist powers of the world, which, in 1939, were to plunge sick world capitalism, and the peoples of the world with it, into another great war disaster. Such were the workings of the general capitalist crisis.

## THE GROWING STRUGGLE OF WORLD LABOR

The period between the two world wars was one marked by an enormous expansion and intensification of the struggle of the labor movement, industrial and political, all over the world. This developing struggle embraced not only ever greater numbers of workers, but also gigantic masses of peasants and petty bourgeois elements, following the leadership of the working class. The period was characterized by a deep politicalization and revolutionization of the toiling masses, with the objective of their struggles more and more definitely the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism. In this respect, the struggle of the world's labor movement as a whole was on a far higher level than ever before.

Among the many broad economic, political, and revolutionary strug-

gles of the period, most of which we have discussed in previous pages, the most outstanding was the great Russian Revolution, which set the pace for the class struggle all over the world. Then there were the rapidly developing Chinese Revolution; the German, Austrian, and Hungarian revolutions; the revolutionary national sit-in strike or the Italian Metal Workers in 1920; the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, the various revolts in the British, Japanese, and other armed forces, and the developing world-wide struggle against fascism—a struggle which at this time was leading up to World War II—an explosion that would shake the capitalist system to its very foundations and swing new broad sections of it into revolution.

All these revolutionary struggles were highly political and in every instance the trade unions played a vital role in them. The latter also conducted a host of other struggles which, although largely political and in some cases revolutionary, were fought primarily for economic demands. Among these may be cited the big Hong Kong and Shanghai general strikes of 1926 and 1927, the numerous fierce general strikes of these years in Latin America, the huge British general strike of 1926, the militant French sit-in strikes in connection with the People's Front movement of 1936, and the sweeping strike and organizing movements of the CIO in the United States, beginning in 1935.

## VICTORIES AND DEFEATS

In the period of intense class struggle between the two world wars the general course of the world labor movement was a victorious one; but there were also many serious defeats and losses. The greatest advance made by the world's workers was the Russian Revolution, which tore away from the body of the capitalist system one-sixth of the world's surface and changed the course of world history. Another tremendous success was growing consolidation and expansion of the revolutionary forces in China, which at the time World War II began, controlled areas embracing some 100,000,000 people,[1] and which were rapidly tearing the colonial foundations from beneath world imperialism. Still another major success, full of revolutionary significance for the future, was the halting of the fascist offensive in France in 1935-1936 by the combined forces of the People's Front. And of world importance, too, was the successful trade union organization of the basic, trustified industries of the United States by the CIO.

As against these and other major victories, however, the world's workers and their political allies had to register numerous serious defeats. The most crucial of these was the loss of the German revolution in

1918, a fact which prevented the whole of Central and Eastern Europe from going Socialist. Then there were the heavy losses of the revolutionary movements in Austria, Hungary, and Italy during the years 1918-20, the defeat of the British general strike of 1926, and the loss of the Spanish Civil War. Of the gravest importance, too, was the capture of many countries by the fascists—Italy, Germany, Spain, Poland, Japan, etc.—especially between 1933 and 1939. The latter was a menacing general disaster, which meant the almost total destruction of the workers' parties, trade unions, cooperatives, and democratic liberties in all these countries. When the balance of the whole period was struck, however, the forces of labor had the best of it by far, as the outcome of the pending World War II was to prove beyond all doubt.

In the quarter century prior to the outbreak of the second world war the workers, during the course of their numerous fierce struggles, won many specific economic and political concessions. Among these were the general abolition of the class system of voting and the extension of suffrage in Germany and various other countries, the broadening of the system of social insurance in numerous capitalist lands, and the almost universal establishment, by legislative and trade union action, of the eight-hour day for industrial workers. Accomplishments in raising real wages were much more meager, however, despite the fact that the workers' productivity was almost everywhere increasing by leaps and bounds. What minor achievements were made in this respect were largely cancelled out by the effects of the post-war inflation, mass unemployment, heavy taxes for war and for war preparations, and the ruinous effects of the deep world economic crisis of 1929-32. Moreover, the advent of fascism in a dozen countries worked havoc with the living standards of many millions of workers. As Marx long ago pointed out, capitalism was bringing about the absolute impoverishment of the workers.

## POLITICAL AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION

From 1914 on was a period of rapid change and development of international labor organization, both political and industrial. The reformist Second International and the Amsterdam International (IFTU) were resurrected and reorganized in 1919, after their collapse in the face of World War I. The Two-and-a-Half International (Kautsky reformist) was established in 1921, but amalgamated with the Second International in 1923. The revolutionary Communist International was formed in 1919, and the Red International of Labor Unions came into existence in 1921—and voluntarily dissolved itself in 1936-37, in the furtherance of world trade union unity. The Berlin International (IWMA, Anarcho-

syndicalist), was formed in 1922 and still exists as a shadow.

During the 25 years under summary the international trade union movement as a whole made substantial increases in membership strength. As we have seen in chapter 25, the total number of trade unionists internationally in 1914, including all types of unions except company unions, amounted to about 13,222,000. By 1939 the figure approximated some 60,000,000. Of this grand total the Soviet trade unions at this time numbered about 25,000,000, the IFTU at its Zurich Congress in 1939 claimed 20,000,000, the Christian unions ran to about 3,000,000, and there were probably a dozen million more of independents in the several countries.

The union growth over the period as a whole was not a steady one. Following World War I, there was a tremendous spurt in union membership in nearly all the capitalist countries. Much of this was lost later, however, because the Social Democrats, with their class collaboration policies, refused to rally the workers for militant struggle to combat the employers' big offensive against organized labor during the 1920's. The loss of Germany, Italy, Japan, and various other countries to fascism also meant the virtual wiping out of the trade union movement in these lands. These big membership losses were only partly compensated for by the large gains in France during the People's Front period and the sweeping increases in the immense organizing drive in the United States during the late 1930's.

The period also marked the birth of Socialist trade unionism; that is, those unions aiming for a Socialist regime and those devoted to specific tasks of building Socialism. The new-type unions in the USSR were characterized by their immense size, their industrial form, their shop base of works councils, shop committees, and work groups, and the other features which we have remarked in passing. The new Socialist unions, both in the USSR and in the capitalist countries, exerted a strong influence upon all the unions in the capitalist world, not only in their ideology but also in their structure and fighting militancy. They tended to speed up the latter's trend towards industrial unionism, and they were also basically responsible for the spread of the works councils, which on the eve of World War II existed, in one form or another, in nearly all non-fascist European countries. They also, especially through the RILU, greatly improved the fighting methods of trade unions everywhere, being responsible for improved strike strategy,[2] the use of mass picketing, sit-down strikes, and the like. And they primarily made the long under-evaluated general strike an accepted major weapon of the working class. The RILU represented altogether a higher level of trade unionism than the IFTU.

During the general period we are discussing, the composition of the working class, and therefore of the trade union movement, underwent certain modifications which have continued on over into the post-war years and which we shall deal with in later chapters. Among these changes was the tendency for the ratio of white-collar elements to outrun that of industrial workers proper. In some instances there was an actual decline in the number of industrial workers despite sharp increases in output. For example, in the United States during 1923-29, although the volume of production went up by 13 percent the number of workers fell by 7 percent.[3] A marked trend, too, was the heavily increased ratio in industry, and, therefore, also in the trade unions, of machine operators and workers on production lines and conveyor systems—a product of the big development of mass production methods. Another important tendency, beginning about 1900 but accentuated in the period between the great wars, was to narrow the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers, reflecting the less strategic position of skilled craft mechanics in modern industry.

Another marked development in international labor circles during these years was the closer attention that was paid to organizing and defending the interests of youth, women, and agricultural workers. This development was largely due to growing left-wing influence in the world's labor movement. Traditionally, right-wing bureaucratic trade union leaders, basing themselves primarily upon the skilled workers, have grossly neglected the above categories of workers. An event of world importance, too, in labor's ranks was the partial breaking down of the Jim Crow exclusion walls in the United States and the admission of large numbers of Negro workers into the trade unions. This progressive development was also very largely due to left-wing influence—the conservatives, for many decades, having cold-bloodedly barred Negroes from the unions and the industries.

One of the most basic labor features of the quarter century we are here discussing was the long struggle for trade union unity by the left-wing forces. The right-wing, by its refusal to fight against the imperialist World War I, by its betrayal of the Russian Revolution, by its policy of wholesale expulsions, and by its persistent class collaboration program of non-struggle against militant imperialism and fascism, had split the trade union movement and kept it split. Throughout the period the right-wing, as a matter of basic policy and control, maneuvered to keep the trade unions divided; while the left-wing, true to its revolutionary spirit, struggled to unite the international labor movement. To this end, the latter's main weapon was the famous Leninist policy of the united front. As

World War II with its fascist threat came upon the world, the trade union movement was still deeply split; but the united front experiences in France, Spain, and elsewhere had clearly shown that there was a real path to world labor unity and that this was it.

## IDEOLOGICAL PROGRESS AND DECAY

The quarter century here reviewed was marked by a fundamental advance in Marxist theory and policy, particularly by the great Lenin. All this went to prove that instead of being a dogma, as class enemies of the workers assert, Marxism is a highly flexible guide to action. Lenin's theoretical work covered a vast scope—a Marxist analysis of imperialism, the development of a scientific technique of proletarian revolution, the analysis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the unity of interest between the workers in the imperialist countries and the peoples in the colonial lands, the development of the organizational and ideological principles upon which the Communist Party, the Party of the proletariat, is built, the statement of many trade union principles, etc. It was an irreparable loss to the workers of the world when Lenin died in January 1924.

Stalin, the ablest pupil of Lenin, also made many notable contributions to the science of Marxism which, as a result of Lenin's basic work, had become "Marxism-Leninism." Stalin's many theoretical achievements especially included an analysis of the national question, and a working out of the complex of questions around the basic problem of building socialism in one country—his celebrated controversy with Trotsky and others on this general question being among the real classics of Marxism.

Another major Marxist-Leninist theoretician and practical revolutionary leader who came to the fore during this period, which was so rich in newly developed Marxist theory, is Mao Tse-tung, the leader of the Chinese Revolution. Mao's basic work, including the host of economic, political, and military problems that he had to face up to, was his elementary task of adapting the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions of vast semi-colonial China in revolution.

By the same token, as revolutionary Communist theoreticians rapidly expanded and developed Marxism, the right Social Democrats degenerated deeper and deeper into the morass of bourgeois propaganda, misnamed theory. More than ever, they came to the forefront as the most cunning of the various breeds of ideological misleaders of the toiling masses. During this period they concocted some new brands of opportunism, as varieties of their basic pro-capitalist right-revisionism.

One of the especially poisonous brands of counter-revolutionary

thinking and acting developed during this period was Trotskyism. This poison, while originating in the Soviet Union, was nevertheless essentially international in character. While Trotskyism did not develop in the usual Social Democratic circles, nevertheless it fitted right in with that pseudo-Socialist demagogy. Marked by revolutionary words and counter-revolutionary deeds and alliances, Trotsky proposed policies that would have provoked a civil war between the workers and the peasantry and would have brought the USSR into war with the capitalist world. The Trotskyites wound up by becoming direct agents of German and Japanese warlike fascism. Their policies could only have resulted in the downfall of the Soviet Union, had not the Soviet workers seen fit to reject and repudiate the whole Trotsky line and group. On the international scale the Trotskyites followed a similar counter-revolutionary line. In China they opposed the united front policy between the workers and democratic revolutionaries—a policy which was finally to open the door to victory in the great Chinese revolution. In Spain, under the pretext of fighting for Socialism, the Trotskyites organized an armed revolt behind the lines of the Loyalist forces. In England they violently opposed united action between the Soviet and British trade unions for world trade union unity. Elsewhere they pursued a similar treacherous course. By the time of the outbreak of World War II this counter-revolutionary clique had pretty much exposed itself in most countries.

Another deadly brand of opportunism that developed between the two wars was in connection with Fordism—this current being more directly produced by the right Social Democrats. It was the elaborate demagogy developed by Social Democrats in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and other capitalist countries, in connection with the big ideological drive of the capitalists for the rationalization (speed-up) of the industries during the late 1920‘s (see chapter 32). This boss ideology, grabbed hook, line, and sinker by the Social Democrats, was labelled the “New Wage Policy" and the “Higher Strategy of Labor" by the Gompersites in the United States, and with more "scientific" phraseology, as “organized capitalism” by the European Social Democrats. The dangerous demagogy was dealt a crippling blow by the great economic crisis of 1929-32, and little was heard of it again until after World War II.

Still another bourgeois theory taken up and developed by Social Democrats in the period between the two world wars was Keynesianism. This is the complex of capitalist economic theories evolved by John Maynard Keynes, prominent British bourgeois economist, avowedly to prevent mass unemployment. Keynes' general theory has it that owing to certain contradictions between production and consumption, the capital-

ist system in its monopoly stage tends to create mass unemployment. This capitalist flaw, if not corrected, could even lead to revolution. So he proposes to cure this capitalist weakness, and thereby to end the cyclical and general crisis of capitalism by "managing the economy." That is, he would speed up the flagging industries by certain governmental financial policies, the main substance of which is large-scale governmental spending. Applications of this policy in the pre-war period were made not only by Roosevelt in the United States in his New Deal program, but also by Hitler in Germany, in his armaments and war preparations program for curing mass unemployment.

The Social Democrats everywhere saw in Keynesianism the way for the salvation of capitalism and allegedly also for the emancipation of the working class. Keynesianism cannot cure economic crisis and mass unemployment, as was made clear in Roosevelt's years; but it can do a world of harm to the workers; first, by creating illusions in their minds as to how to fight unemployment, and second, by laying them open to the machinations of the warmongers with their fatal program of jobs through munitions-making. Unfortunately, not only the Social Democratic bureaucracy became deeply infected with bourgeois Keynesianism, but so also did large numbers of workers. Down to these post-World War II days Keynesianism remains a very serious ideological menace in the labor movements of the most important capitalist countries.

A marked development during the 35-year period in the matter of the leadership of the labor movement was the elemental move of the masses in the direction of the Communists and other left-wing forces. This was clearly to be seen in the statistics of the trade union movement, as well as in countries led by the left forces. This trend to the left was intensified because in the many big struggles of the period where decisive victories were won, as in Russia, China, France, the United States, etc., the leadership was always in the hands of the left, or of left sympathizers; whereas where the workers suffered disastrous defeats—as in the German revolution, the revolutionary Italian metal strike, and the British general strike, the leadership was right Social Democratic. The defeat in the Spanish civil war was also directly traceable to the disastrous non-intervention policy of the world's Social Democrats. And the reason that the fascists, in the years just prior to World War II, were able to take over so many countries was obviously the refusal of the Social Democrats to go into a resolute united front with the Communists against them. Marxism-Leninism, in the struggle, was proving again and again its superiority over right opportunism. By the same token, too, the electoral "victories" won by the Social Democrats in this period—the two Labor governments

in Britain and the "Socialist" governments in Scandinavia—meant virtually nothing in terms of bettering the workers' living conditions.

The shift from right to left leadership in the labor movement on a world scale was the most significant thing that took place between the two world wars in the workers' trade unions and political parties. It reflected the growth of the Socialist revolution m a world where the capitalist system was rotting and breaking down. It was the sign-manual of the bankruptcy of the Second International and the swift ascendancy of the world trade union and political forces of Socialism. The right to left shift among the workers was to become spectacular in the years following World War II.

## ORGANIZED LABOR DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II (1939-1955)

*World Socialism versus World Capitalism*

# 43. The Trade Unions in World War II (1939-1945)

Both World War I and World War II were expressions of the general crisis of the world capitalist system. These two vast human slaughters had a common origin in the strivings of rival groups of imperialist powers for the mastery of the world. A basic difference between them, however, was that whereas World War I remained a reactionary imperialist war throughout its duration, World War II became transformed on the allied side into a justified and progressive people's war.

At its outset World War II was dominated by two imperialist currents: (a) intense imperialist rivalries among the capitalist big powers, and (b) an implacable imperialist hatred by all these powers for the great Socialist state, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The anti-Comintern fascist axis—Germany, Japan, and Italy, and their smaller satellite states—had in mind a clear objective: to smash and dominate the western bourgeois democracies—Great Britain, France, the United States, etc.—and also to crush the great Socialist democracy, the USSR. The Western democracies, for their part, while aiming definitely at holding in check the fascist powers, so far as Western imperialist interests were concerned, obviously wanted to have the fascist powers destroy the Soviet Union, if they could, and with their own military assistance, if need be.

The pre-war diplomacy among the powers turned around these conflicting objectives. In the early 1930's the fascist powers unfolded a program of active aggression against China, Ethiopia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc. The Western powers "appeased" them time and again, in the hope that eventually Hitler and his pals could be induced to turn their guns against the USSR. This appeasement the Western powers made, although they were much the stronger militarily at this time. Their most disastrous crime in this respect was the sell-out of Czechoslovakia in the notorious Munich agreement of September 30, 1938. Their reactionary hopes for an eventual German-Soviet war also explained why they so stubbornly rejected all Soviet proposals for an anti-fascist international peace front.

The great war began in Europe by Hitler opening up an attack against Poland, which forced Great Britain and France to declare war on

Germany September 3, 1939. The United States took a position of neutrality, its big capitalists, no doubt, hoping to repeat their cynical performance of the early years of the first world war by getting rich on the munitions trade while their imperialist rivals shot each other to pieces. The Hitler imperialist strategy for imperialist domination was clearly, first to defeat the Western democracies and then to turn and crush the Soviet Union.

There was, however, a second basic element in the war situation, a factor which Stalin has especially stressed. This was the resistance of the democratic masses of the world's peoples, who were opposed to the war. Their chief and most powerful spokesman was the USSR, and they were also defending themselves militarily in China, Ethiopia, Greece, and elsewhere. It was in this peace spirit that the Soviet Union had so insistently fought to maintain world peace in its fruitless attempt to unite the bourgeois democratic countries with itself in a vast people's anti-fascist peace front. When this alliance obviously could not be created, the USSR, with its non-aggression pact with Germany on August 21, 1939, 10 clays before the war began, undertook to keep out of the conflict that the imperialists, all hostile to the Soviet Union, were so swiftly generating.

When Hitler's armies, after a few weeks' warfare, had knocked to pieces and driven into the English Channel the fascist-infested armies of Great Britain, France, Belgium, etc., Hitler developed the second stage of his general strategy of conquest. He treacherously invaded the Soviet Union on June 21, 1941. With the USSR mastered, which he calculated would be a job taking only a few weeks, the door for world conquest would be wide open for him and his allies. But this time he bit off far more than he could chew.

Up to this time, although the lives and liberties of the peoples of the world were gravely threatened by the advance of fascism, the control of the war, on both sides, was in the hands of imperialists: it was an imperialist war. But the involvement of the USSR in the struggle immediately changed the character of the war by vastly strengthening its democratic content. With the British and French imperialists thoroughly discredited and virtually wiped out militarily in the war, the people's forces became dominant in the war's direction So far as the countries of the West were concerned, the war was practically lost when the USSR entered it. Nor could the belated entry of the United States on December 7, 1941 have saved the situation. Although the United States put up a big war effort in Europe with air-bombing, lend-lease supplies, and, in the closing stages of the war, with a large-scale invasion of Europe, its main force was di-

rected against Japan, and the basic task of defeating Nazi Germany, the backbone of the fascist forces, fell to the USSR. As the future course of the struggle showed, it was the USSR that brought into the war the vast military forces needed to win it, particularly in the key European theatre. No less important, the Soviet Union also gave to the war the mass democratic impulses and policies, without which the conflict could not have become a people's democratic war, nor have been carried on to victory.

## THE GENERAL SITUATION OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

One of the first effects of the great military drive of the fascist powers was to wipe out trade unionism over still larger areas of Europe and Asia. In fact, trade unionism was extinguished almost completely throughout the whole territory from the existing war borders of the USSR to the English Channel. The only important exceptions, where trade unions still existed legally, were in Sweden and Switzerland, which were "neutral" countries, and in Finland, an ally of Hitler, where the Social Democratic unions were tolerated. Vast areas of the most industrialized sections of the USSR had also been overrun by the fascists and trade unionism was abolished. A similar disorganization befell the trade unions in the Philippines, Indonesia, and other Asian countries, at the hands of the Japanese conquerors.

The fate of the French CGT showed what the European workers could look for in this respect from the fascists. Hitler at once destroyed the unions in those parts of France occupied directly by his troops, and in 1940 his satellite Vichy government officially dissolved the CGT, which then had 800,000 members. In October 1941 this puppet government issued a so-called *Charte du Travail,* organized a national fascist "union" center with compulsory membership, forbade strikes, and established strict state union controls.[1] For a time this fascist union was led by Hubert Lagardelle, erstwhile Syndicalist theoretician.[2]

During the war the fascists drastically slashed living standards and worsened working conditions, especially in the conquered countries. The people in the overrun Soviet areas were treated worst of all. The workers everywhere, especially those of the occupied nations, were reduced to the status of virtual slaves. Kuczynski says that "the Nazis have in certain countries, brought back conditions for many of the workers reminiscent of two thousand years ago."[3] The 12-hour working day became widespread and Kuczynski reports cases of the 100-hour week. Wages were driven down to the starvation point and mass cultural activities were largely abandoned. These were the conditions prevalent among the 300,000,000 people ruled by the fascists in Europe during the war.

In various parts of nazified Europe the workers reorganized their trade union centers as best they could, mostly upon the initiative of the Communists. These underground labor unions, skeleton organizations, usually worked in close relationship with the political parties and with the extensive and growing general resistance movements.[4] They carried on many illegal activities, including sabotage and strikes, directed against the Nazi regime. From 1938 to 1944 French production went down by 50 percent. The CGT of France reorganized in 1943. upon the basis of a central committee of five reformists and three Communists, took an active part in underground work. The big wave of French strikes in 1944. culminating in a general strike as the Allied invasion was developing, testified to the great activity of the unions. Many union leaders: Semard (Railroad), Grenet (Paper), Vercrius (Textile), Michel (Leather), Poulemarche (Chemical) and great numbers of others, lost their lives, execute by the Nazis.[5] Large numbers of CGT workers were shot—and 75,000 members of the Communist Party were executed. About 2,500,000 French workers were transported to Germany to work as slave laborers.

In Italy the trade unions had a similar record of heroic underground activity. The CGL, which had been reorganized after its breakup by Mussolini in 1926, was smashed again in its French headquarters by the Hitler advance of 1940. Nevertheless, the trade unions continued to exist tenuously and, principally jointly with the Communist Party, carried on many anti-war activities in Italy. The Italian resistance movement especially took on strength after 1943, when big general strikes were organized, culminating in the armed uprising of 1944-45.[6]

In the face of the most drastic repression, the underground trade union movements of the occupied areas in the USSR, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, and other European countries, also performed much heroic illegal trade union work. In Japan, too, notwithstanding savage persecution, the workers led a number of strikes, and the same was true in the Philippines, Indonesia, and elsewhere in Asia. In warring China, as we have seen, the democratic trade unions were a strong factor in both the occupied and unoccupied regions.

## THE CLASS LINEUP IN THE ANTI-FASCIST COUNTRIES

The workers in the countries allied in the anti-fascist coalition gave World War II their hearty support, particularly after the entry of the Soviet Union. They realized that it was their war and that the fate of world democracy was at stake in the struggle. On this basis they gave the conflict everything they had, and their support was the decisive factor in

winning this all-important war. In this respect their attitude was basically different from that of the working class towards the imperialist World War I; a war which, despite sharp governmental pressures and insistent Social Democratic propaganda, was never truly accepted by the great masses as a people's war.

The workers' wholehearted support for the second world war was also shared by the farmers, the middle class, and large numbers of the lesser capitalists. But key sections of the big bourgeoisie in the allied countries showed a most dubious loyalty, when not actual hostility, towards the war. This was because they, like their class brothers in fascist Germany, Japan, and elsewhere, were themselves heavily infected with fascist moods and sentiments. They had dreams of a world in which Socialism and a militant labor movement would be no more. Characteristically, the French big capitalists were rotten with fascism, which was a major reason for the swift collapse of France under Hitler's attack. The British finance capitalists also had a big pro-fascist sector, which provided the architects of Munich. The bulk of the American monopoly capitalists also were notoriously sympathetic to Hitler, and they heavily backed the virulent pro-fascist America First movement of the period. Roosevelt's active war policies, reflecting the position of liberal capitalist elements, were far more in harmony with the will of the American people generally than with that of Wall Street.

All through the war the big business "copperheads," or "fifth column" elements, behind the lines of the allies were a menace to the democratic prosecution of the war. They never got over their original conception that it was a "wrong" war; that what should have happened was an all-out capitalist war against the Soviet Union. Throughout the hostilities they cynically exploited the war situation to fatten their own pocketbooks by ruthless profiteering; they were bitterly opposed to the unconditional surrender slogan; they sabotaged lend-lease and other military cooperation with the USSR; and they especially opposed the establishment of a second, western front in Europe. Their idea was to "Let the Germans and the Russians fight each other to a standstill." They especially dreaded a revolutionary outcome of the war, and they accepted the Soviet alliance with the gravest misgivings.

The British and American governments signed the Atlantic Charter on August 14, 1941,[7] about four months before the United States actually got into the war. This document was later to serve as the foundation for the United Nations. It followed pretty much the lines of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" in World War I, which laid the basis of the ill-fated League of Nations. The Atlantic Charter declared against territorial

aggrandizement at the expense of weaker countries, for the right of self-determination of nations (Churchill wanted this to apply only in the Atlantic area), for world free trade and freedom of the seas, and for an eventual organized world peace guaranteed by all nations.

All through the war the democratic, pro-war forces—above all, the workers—had to press the capitalist governments to keep them on something like a firm anti-fascist line. They also had to fight for government recognition, so that they could function effectively; they had to contend against constant attacks upon the workers' wartime living standards, and against infringements upon the rights of the trade unions. But the biggest of all their struggles was the international pressure during 1942-44 to compel the Western governments to open up the excessively postponed Western European military front and to fulfill their just share of fighting in the war. The prevailing big capitalist idea was that the Allies should keep their enormous military forces inactive in the British Isles until the Germans and Russians had just about shot each other to pieces, whereupon the Allies would take over and write an imperialist peace to their own liking.

This infamous scheme cost the Soviet Armies countless thousands of dead beyond their share in the war—the Russians, all told, suffered 6,115,000 battle deaths, about eleven times as many as the United States (325,469) and Britain (244,723) combined. The Red Army, however, instead of being wiped out by Hitler, smashed the latter's armed forces and occupied all of Eastern and Central Europe, up to and far beyond Berlin. Consequently, the Anglo-American imperialists, hoist by their own petard, were quite unable to write the reactionary peace which they had contemplated.

## TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES IN INDIVIDUAL ALLIED COUNTRIES

In Great Britain, in the face of the Hitler assault, the Communist and left trade union forces demanded that in order to fight fascism, the Munichite Chamberlain government should be replaced by a people's government. Organized labor as a whole did not back this demand, but the ruling class deemed it wise nevertheless to fire Chamberlain and to put Churchill at the head of the Tory government. The latter proceeded in May 1940 to organize his government on a coalition basis, bringing several Labor men into the cabinet, but retaining a solid Tory majority.

Generally, in their all-out fight to win the war the British trade unions paid special attention to increasing munitions and all-around production. To this end they adopted a no-strike pledge, which was loyally

carried out in the face of widespread profiteering by the employers. They also set up Joint Production Committees—of which there were some 4,500 at the end of the war. The response of the workers to the war situation was also evidenced by a strong growth of trade unionism. The number of women trade unionists nearly doubled between 1938 and 1944,[8] and the membership of the Trades Union Congress, reaching 7,000,000, topped the previous record of 6,500,000 in 1920.

The left-wing was highly active in all the war work. As in 1914-18, the shop stewards' movement came into existence and it held several major conferences during the war; but this time it was supporting, not fighting against, the war. This movement, which was highly effective on the production front, also paid attention to guarding the workers' threatened living standards; the right-wing leaders, true to their kind, taking the war situation as a signal to lower the workers' living conditions.[9]

The United States came into the war immediately following the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Prior to that time the trade union movement shared the general view of the great bulk of the American people who, while eager and willing to give full financial and munitions aid to the fight against the fascist powers, definitely wanted to stay out of the war, as the unions showed in many polls and other tests. With Pearl Harbor, however, the question of full-scale war participation was settled for the American people.

The American labor movement carried out much the same special war tasks as organized labor did in Great Britain, with the left forces also in the lead of all war work. The major attention was turned to all-out production. Among other means, Labor-Management production committees were established in the shops—5,000 of them by the end of the war. A no-strike pledge was made by Labor, and this was generally carried out loyally, but John L. Lewis managed to wage several important coal strikes. Some unions adopted incentive wages. Gross profiteering was practiced by the employers, and with wages frozen and prices only half stabilized, organized labor faced a difficult situation in combatting rising living costs. As Allen states, "During 55 months of war the acknowledged profits of all corporations, *after payment of taxes,* reached the astronomical figure of $52 billion."[10] In 1939 net profits amounted to 3.1 percent of net worth, but in 1944 they had more than doubled, rising to 6.4 percent.[11] During the war period the trade unions grew very sharply, the AFL going up from 4,847,443 in 1940 to 6,931,221 in 1945, and the CIO increased from 3,810,318 to about 5,500,000 in the same period.

Politically the stage was set, in this people's war, where organized labor could and should have insisted upon a coalition status with the

Roosevelt government. It did not, however, but contented itself instead with accepting third line governmental posts of an advisory character. There was also set up as a sort of side issue, the Combined Labor Victory Committee, made up of seven members (AFL three, CIO three, RR unions one) with Roosevelt presiding. But it had hardly more than a formal existence. Both the AFL and CIO increased their political activity during the war, but they failed drastically to meet the situation politically. Their failure to attain coalition status within the Roosevelt government, which they never even proposed, was due, first, to Roosevelt's obvious fear, as Democratic Party leader, that this might lead to a labor party, as indeed it could, and second to the fact that the conservative trade union officials had precisely the same fear of a labor party.

In the Soviet Union the trade unions had vastly more say in the conduct of the war than in any other country. Not only were they heavily represented in all government organs, but they also had delegated to them full charge of various key wartime economic functions. Their whole apparatus was turned to improving production, with extraordinary increases in output. They played an especially vital role in putting back into full production the large number of factories that were moved bodily into the deep interior to escape the initial advance of Hitler's forces. This work was stupendous. Thus, typically, 45 days after a large plant was evacuated intact from Leningrad it was again in full production.[12] The unions' production slogan was, "All for the Front." The consequent tremendous upsurge of production was decisive in defeating Hitler. Even the reactionary Herbert Hoover grudgingly admitted that the USSR "had stopped the Germans even before Lend-Lease had reached her."[13]

The Soviet trade unions were charged with the effective organization of the supply of food, fuel, housing, clothing, etc., for the working population. They also had full charge of the placement of workers in industry, something that the employers in the capitalist countries were jealous to keep under their own management. The trade unions were also empowered by the State Council of Defense to supervise and control prices of the people's necessities. It was up to them to see to it that government regulation in this field was strictly enforced.[14] The Soviet trade unions, of course, had no profiteers to combat, nor did they have to deal with grasping employers controlling the government and seeking to take advantage of the war situation in order to weaken the unions and to worsen the conditions of the workers.[15]

In the capitalist countries during the war the workers had to fight literally on two fronts; against the fascist class enemy abroad and against the usual class enemy at home. In the Socialist Soviet Union, however,

the trade unions could concentrate on the decisive fight against the fascist enemy. There was no class struggle element in their policy at home. The government belonged to the workers, and as for employers, they, save for a few skulking Trotskyites, who reflected their interests, had long since been eliminated both economically and politically.

With so much of the world overrun by the German, Italian, and Japanese fascists, there was, during most of the war period, little legal trade unionism to be found outside the borders of the three great powers—Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union—and a few other countries. In the British Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—the trade unions actively supported the war, much on the lines of what was being done in Great Britain. In India the All-India Trade Union Congress, left-led, supported the war with a vigor that antagonized Gandhi and Nehru, who never could achieve conditions for an active, pro-Allied war policy. In the broad expanses of Latin America, although only Mexico and Brazil sent (small) contingents of troops to the war, the fact that all the other countries broke off diplomatic relations with the Axis powers, including even Argentina at the last minute, was largely due to the intense anti-fascist activity of the progressive Latin American Confederation of Labor (CTAL).[16]

## FIRST STEPS TOWARD INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION UNITY

During the war the Amsterdam International (IFTU), always bureaucrat-ridden, practically collapsed, displaying no activity. Characteristically, however, the Soviet trade unions, from the beginning, moved towards international labor unity as an active war measure and upon the general principle of the basic need for world labor unity. They found cooperation among the British trade unions. The British Trades Union Congress in September 1941, voted to set up an Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, and the first meeting of this committee was held in Moscow in October of the same year.[17]

Attempts were afterward made to bring the AFL into this committee, the British leader, Walter Citrine going to the U.S. for this purpose. In May 1942, however, the AFL rejected the British proposal that the AFL, the CIO, and the Railroad Brotherhoods should all affiliate to the new committee. Green insisted instead that another committee be established, the Anglo-American Trade Union Committee—to include only the British unions and the AFL. This was done in February 1943.[18] Meanwhile, the AFL, without success, was trying to breathe the breath of life again into the inert IFTU.

This typical disruptive action by the AFL reactionaries foreshadowed

and was the germ of the eventual post-war split in the world trade union movement. At this time, the Red Army was smashing to pieces Hitler's "invincible" *Wehrmacht* and winning the war for the Allied nations—with the American and British troops still remaining in the British Isles. The whole world rang with praise for the Red Army's valiant success, and even the narrow-minded William Green had to admit that, "The heroic stand of the Red Army arouses the admiration of every loyal American."[19] But Mr. Green and his fellow labor imperialists nevertheless would not deign to sit on one committee with the brave Russian workers who were making possible the world-saving victories of the Red Army.

## 44. The Post-World War II Revolutionary Offensive (1944-1950)

World War II was brought to a victorious conclusion by the unconditional surrender of Germany in May 1945 and of Japan in August of the same year. The attempt of the fascist powers to conquer and shackle the world had been defeated by the stern and heroic armed resistance of the democratic peoples. But the victory was won at the terrible price of 25,000,000 dead, 32,000,000 wounded, and measureless property destroyed. The world's peoples rejoiced that they had escaped fascist enslavement, even at such a horrible cost.

The democratic masses of the world did not stop short, however, at the end of actual armed hostilities and the overthrow of the fascist powers. They did not simply lay aside their arms upon the defeat of the fascists and go back home and resume their pre-war occupations as before. On the contrary, realizing that tremendous capitalist reactionary forces still existed in the world, they continued to fight on, generally with political means, but also, when necessary, with military weapons. With sound logic (save when they had been befuddled by Social Democratic and religious misleaders), they pressed home the struggle against the social system which had spawned fascism and had cursed the world with the dreadful war. After the war's end they developed the greatest revolutionary attack upon capitalism and the biggest drive towards Socialism that the world had so far experienced.

### THE WORLD-WIDE REVOLUTIONARY WAVE

The great revolutionary offensive of the toiling masses following the end of World War II, which was the organic continuation of that terrible struggle, assumed various forms. It was especially powerful in Europe and Asia, the two areas most ravaged by the war and where the peoples had suffered the deepest from the attack of fascism. This revolutionary move-

ment was elemental and spontaneous in the sense that it grew everywhere on the basis of the specific national conditions and the general international situation. It was not "called" by any international organization.

The heart forces of this great movement were the working class and the peasantry, and the most outstanding and resolute fighters in the great mass movements were the Communists, who closely expressed the revolutionary mood and will of the aroused peoples. on the other hand, as the ensuing years were to demonstrate, the chief defenders of the capitalist system in this critical situation were the right Social Democrats and the Vatican forces in the respective countries. It so happened that the hulk of the outspoken bourgeois political leaders, who previously had either become fascists or collaborated with them during the period of fascism, had thereby gravely compromised their standing among the peoples and were therefore unable to serve as effective post-war leaders in defense of capitalism. It was the joint maneuverings of the right Social Democrats and the Catholic leaders that saved capitalism in Western Europe.

In the tremendous early post-war period revolutionary mass movement in Europe—in Eastern Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, and Albania—set up "people's democracies," with a strong orientation towards Socialism; while Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, at the outset of the war and in the face of the Hitler offensive, had reaffiliated with the USSR and set up Soviets. Of the 600,000,000 people in Europe, about one-half are now living in Socialist regimes. In France and Italy coalition governments were established. These included Communist representatives, with the Communist Party in each case the largest and best organized party in the country. Strong Communist fractions also developed in the Scandinavian and the other European parliaments, except in the still surviving fascist governments of Spain and Portugal. In Austria and West Germany the allied armies sat on the lid and prevented an explosion in these countries. The broad revolutionary movement which swept the continent immediately following World War II also affected Great Britain, manifesting itself in the big victory of the Labor Party in the elections of 1945. This victory was won on the basis of Socialist slogans, the British masses still naively believing that non-Socialist leaders such as Attlee, Bevan, Morrison, et al, would lead the country to Socialism.

In Asia, with its 1,400,000,000 people, the great revolutionary movement was even more sweeping. In view of the colonial and semi-colonial nature of the regimes in this vast area, the revolution was basically anti-imperialist. The peoples fought for national liberation and independence. The tremendous Asian anti-imperialist movement embraced

more than one-half of the human race. Almost every country in that broad continent became involved in the huge struggle for freedom. The numerous civil wars and other forms of struggle involved China, India, Indonesia, Indo-China, Burma, Malaya, Korea, the Philippines, Ceylon, and other countries. In Japan the American occupation armed forces, by their very presence, held the revolutionary impulse of that people in partial check.

The immense revolt of these long oppressed Asian peoples proceeded to shatter and undermine nearly the whole Far East colonial system of Great Britain, France, Holland, Portugal, Japan, and the United States. It was a massive blow at the very foundation structure of world capitalism—colonialism and imperialist exploitation. The movement resulted quickly in India and various other colonies largely winning national independence and it culminated in the great victorious Chinese Revolution, which started 600,000,000 people on the way to Socialism. During the last quarter of the 19th century the great powers divided among themselves what remained of the independent countries in Asia, Africa, and Polynesia (see Lenin's *Imperialism*); but now these peoples, by their great colonial revolts, are undoing the earlier imperialist land grab.

The capitalists of the world looked with alarm and dismay at the broad revolutionary offensive of the world's toiling masses at the end of World War II. They trembled for the life of the capitalist system, under which they live parasitically at the expense of the workers and peasants all over the world. And well they might be alarmed, for while before the war some 200,000,000 people in the USSR were marching towards Socialism, after the war the number suddenly soared to 900,000,000, or to over one-third of the human race. Capitalism had indeed paid a high price for its monstrous crime of inflicting the terrible World War II upon the world.

Nor did the capitalists delay long in getting a counter-revolution under way. With the announcement of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947, the big capitalists of the world, with the Wall Street monopolists in the lead, started their counter-offensive against the developing revolution; they began the "cold war" which still goes on- This and the next several chapters are devoted mainly to a survey of the status of the world labor movement during the crucial years of 1944-47 before the cold war was launched.

## THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES

The capitalist leaders of the world were not unexpectant of a revolutionary wave after the second world war, as they had been taught a bitter

lesson in this respect by the big mass revolt that followed the first great war. It was in the hope of preventing or of squelching such an upheaval, therefore, that Prime Minister Churchill proposed during the war that the United States and Great Britain, instead of opening up a second front in Western Europe, which would ease Hitler's pressure upon Russia, should attack Europe in its "soft underbelly" and work their way into the Balkans, where the big post-war revolutionary movements were to be expected. Then, in military command of the situation, the Anglo-Americans would be able to stamp out the expected revolutions, as, in fact, they later succeeded in doing in Greece.

It was in the same spirit of trying to stifle the expected post-war revolution before it got under way that the Anglo-American leaders, while the war was going on, set up a number of so-called provisional governments in London—for France, Poland, and other occupied countries. These hand-picked governments were made up chiefly of right Social Democrats, Vatican agents, and other pro-capitalist elements. The general plan was that as soon as hostilities were concluded the provisional governments would step in, take charge of the respective national situations, and hold everything solid for a continuation of capitalist exploitation.

But the peoples concerned had other ideas as to what should be done after the war. Hence they proceeded to bypass the provisional governments and, even as the war was still in progress, they began to establish instead revolutionary coalition governments. They were able to elect these revolutionary governments peaceably because the reactionary states had been smashed in the war. The new governments were based upon coalitions of all the parties that had fought against Hitlerism before and during the war. The coalitions included Communist, Socialist, Catholic, peasant, and petty bourgeois parties. This policy was, in fact, a continuation of the national anti-fascist front which had conducted the war, and which dated back to the people's front strategy adopted by the Communist International at its seventh congress in 1935. The new coalition governments were called "people's democracies," and they were established in various countries of Eastern Europe—including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Albania, and Eastern Germany, covering, all told, a population of 100,000,000, The only place where the reactionary "provisional government" scheme of the capitalists succeeded was in France, where the head of the new government, the fascist de Gaulle, had behind him the armies of Great Britain and the United States.[1]

The people's democratic governments in Eastern Europe were all es-

tablished in general democratic elections during 1944-1946. This fact, however, did not deter the violent opposition of the self-appointed leaders of the provisional governments. In consequence, the new coalition governments in several countries had to suppress counter-revolutionary revolts, organized with the support of the Western powers. With the Red Army nearby or in actual occupation however, the capitalist leaders of the West were unable to bring real military force against the people's democracies, as they did with fatal effect against the Greek democracy in 1945-48.

The European people's democracies adopted a whole series of progressive measures, varying from country to country and including the abolition of the monarchies and establishment of republics, the nationalization of the major industries, financial institutions, and transportation systems, the break-up of the big estates and the division of the land among the peasants, the establishment of a planned economy, the separation of the Church from the State, the equality of the various national minorities, the unfoldment of a whole new body of civil liberties, etc. This was not yet Socialism, but the trend of the people's democracies was definitely towards this goal, as the next few years were to demonstrate by their steady orientation to the left in policy.

The people's democracies were a new form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or rule of the working class, and they thus constituted in certain respects a new road to Socialism. The leading parties in the several people's democracies from the beginning were the Communist Parties, which had won their political leadership because of their clear-headed programs and their long struggle against Hitlerism, both before and during the war. In all the people's democracies there was a merger of the Communist and Socialist parties upon a Marxist-Leninist basis, into either Communist or Workers parties. The right-wing Social Democrats were sloughed off in the unification process.

In the post-war establishment and growth of the people's democracies of Eastern Europe a decisive role was played by the trade unions. They were at the heart of every organization and struggle of the new regimes. In succeeding chapters we shall deal further with their activities.

## THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

The high point of the post-World War II revolution in Asia was the victorious climax of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 and the establishment in 1950 of the Chinese People's Republic. The early phases of this tremendous revolution, particularly the role of the trade unions, we have dealt with in chapter 38. The great movement came to its successful cul-

mination as part of the general world revolutionary wave following World War II. It set the pace for the whole colonial revolutionary movement in Asia, and its success enormously increased the fears of the capitalists everywhere as to the future of their world system.

The Communist Party and the Kuomintang in 1936, upon the initiative of the Communists, established a truce in their long war, as we have seen in chapter 38, on the basis of a common struggle against the Japanese invaders. This proposed joint struggle, however, Chiang Kai-shek constantly betrayed, as he saw only the Communists as his enemies. In this respect he was encouraged by his American backers, Wall Street already having its eyes fastened upon dominating war-torn China.

After Japan had capitulated in August 1945 under the combined attack of the United States, China, and the USSR, the Chinese Communist Party, a few days after the surrender, made a declaration calling for the establishment of a united front people's democracy in China. This was along the general line then being followed by the peoples of many countries in Europe, namely that those parties which had carried through the war against the fascists should continue cooperating in the post-war governments. This was a very popular plan in China, as elsewhere in the world, and Chiang had to make at least a pretense of agreeing to it. But this agreement was only a maneuver. His actual strategy was to destroy violently the powerful Communist forces at all costs. To his ill-fortune, he set out to try to do just this impossible thing.

In patching up a peace between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party early in 1946, the United States took a hand as a "mediator," sending out a special representative for this purpose, General George C. Marshall. The substance of American policy, however, was not a benevolent neutrality, but pressure against the Communists and encouragement to Chiang to be more and more demanding. This belligerency Chiang was nothing loath to adopt. With his usual duplicity, although pretending to make an agreement, he proceeded to attack militarily the Communist people's armies in various places. In consequence, in July 1946 a general civil war got under way throughout China.

As Hitler had believed when attacking the USSR five years earlier, Chiang also calculated that it would be a relatively easy matter to wipe out the Communist forces. For he had an armed force at least three times as large as the People's Liberation Army, his troops occupied nearly all of the big cities and they controlled the railroads, they were also fully armed with the latest American weapons, and more was to be had where these came from. On the other hand, the forces led by the Communists were ill-equipped, practically without an airforce, and had been depend-

ent for replacements upon what they could take from the enemy in struggle. In launching the civil war Chiang made a typical bourgeois underestimation of the fighting strength of the Communists, who had behind them the great masses of the Chinese people. During the ensuing four-year civil war the People's Liberation Army broke Chiang's military power, destroyed or captured 8,700,000 of his troops and won over 1,700,000 others, as well as seizing immense supplies of munitions of all kinds. By October 1, 1949, the Central People's Government of China was proclaimed, with Mao Tsc-tung as Chairman. By the end of 1950 all of China was under control of the people, with Chiang isolated on the island of Formosa.

The Revolution was victorious. 'The world-wide post-World War II attack upon capitalism had reached its summit, at least for the time being. World capitalism had lost another enormous slice of territory, some 4,000,000 square miles, and well over half a billion people, erstwhile subjects of its exploitation. It was a terrific blow, one from which, as in the case of its loss of the USSR thirty-three years earlier, the capitalist system can never recover.

The new Chinese people's government, its leader Mao Tse-tung characterized as "a dictatorship of the people's democracy based upon an alliance of the workers and peasants and led by the working class (through the Communist Party)."[2] The Chinese People's Republic, although not from the outset following the classical Soviet form of the Russian Revolution, is headed towards the same general goal. Mao states that its objectives are, "to develop from an agrarian country into an industrial country and to pass from a New Democracy to a Socialist and Communist society, in order to abolish classes and to bring about world Communism."[3]

Although the industrial working class was and still is relatively small in China, the trade union movement played an important part in the actual struggles of the people in the revolution, as we have indicated in chapter 38, and the proletarian conceptions of Marxism- Leninism were the dominant philosophy of the epoch-making movement. In the new society that is now shaping up in China the role of the unions will become far more vital than before. In succeeding chapters we shall deal with the modern Chinese trade union movement.

## THE WORLD-WIDE GROWTH OF MASS ORGANIZATIONS

Together with its fundamental attacks upon the world capitalist system, as evidenced by the new people's democracies in Eastern Europe and the sweeping anti-imperialist, anti-colonial movement in Asia, the revolutionary wave following World War II produced a tremendous

growth of worker and worker-led class struggle mass organizations of various sorts. In the early years following the end of the war, particularly in the period of 1945-47, these mass organizations literally sprang into existence and achieved a growth hitherto without parallel in the history of the world labor movement. They included trade unions, cooperatives, women's and youth movements, peace organizations, and working-class political parties.

The trade unions experienced an unprecedented growth. All over the world the workers, in one general impulse, proceeded to unify and strengthen vastly their industrial organizations. In the old European and American trade union strongholds the organizations grew swiftly and in Asia the movement fairly leaped to the fore. The workers were obviously resolved, where they did not succeed in abolishing capitalism altogether, at least to place some limits upon their exploitation by the insatiable capitalists. Moreover, the workers in their surge forward took a very progressive course, solving many questions of organization and unity over which unwilling and reactionary right-wing bureaucratic leaders had stumbled and fumbled for many years. Our following five chapters will be devoted to a review and analysis of the position, problems, and struggles of the world trade union movement during this period of unequalled swift growth, especially from 1945 to 1947, when the cold war began.

The cooperatives, historic in the annals of world labor, were another movement that grew like a bay tree on a world scale following the ending of World War II. Before the war, says Warbasse, the International Cooperative Alliance alone had 100,000,000 members.[4] But with the rapid growth of the people's democracies after the war, with their heavy stress upon producers' and consumers' cooperatives, by 1947 the world total of cooperatives was probably double the figure given by Warbasse.

The international women's movement, both industrial and political, had long been one of the major concerns of the workers in all countries. After the war's end this movement took on a swift growth, one which made all previous efforts of the labor movement in this direction seem puny by comparison. The trade unions, growing rapidly, absorbed large numbers of women workers in many countries; in the people's democracies, for example, the number of women trade unionists averaged about 25 percent or the whole. Especially spectacular progress was made in the political organizations of women. This received its main expression in the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), formed in Paris in November 1945. This organization, defending all the economic, political, and social interests of women, reported 81,000,000 members in 1947, and shortly afterward passed the 100,000,000 mark.

The organization of the youth, primarily workers and peasants, also soared to new heights of political maturity and numerical strength immediately following the war. This is another category to which the labor movement, especially its left-wing, had long paid attention. But the results accomplished in the first years after the war far overtopped all previous achievements. The youth movement crystallized in the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), founded in London in November 1945. By 1953 this movement had reached the enormous figure of 85,000,000 members in 88 countries. The WFDY concerns itself with a host of youth activities and needs—jobs, education, industrial training, sports, military problems, etc.—and, like the WIDF, it is based upon a broad united front of progressive elements of all political and non-political groupings.

One of the most important of the many mass organizations which developed so spectacularly after World War II was the World Council of Peace, which held its first international conference in April 1949, simultaneously in Paris and Prague, after the cold war had begun. By 1952, at its third congress in Vienna, this remarkable mass movement for peace represented some 700,000,000 people in 72 countries.

Highly significant and an elemental part of the great advance of the workers in organization and unity in the years right after World War II, was the rapid growth of Communist Parties in many countries, especially those where the war had raged and where the post-war revolutionary wave rose highest. This Communist Party growth, which was not merely numerical but also in political influence, reflected the splendid fighting qualities and political leadership of the Communists during the war, alike behind the fascist lines, on the battlefields, and in the allied democratic countries. It was an expression of the growing influence generally of the left-wing in the world labor movement. Among the larger of the Communist parties in 1947 in the respective countries were: Soviet Union 6,000,000, China 3,000,000, Italy, 2,100,000, Czechoslovakia 1,700,000, France 1,000,000, Poland 700,000 Rumania 600,000, Bulgaria. 450,000, Yugoslavia 400,000, West Germany 400,000 (and 1,700,000 in the United Socialist Party of East Germany [SED]).[5] There was also a considerable growth of the Socialist parties in the West European countries. In the people's democracies the Socialist and Communist parties merged.

## 45. The Formation of the World Federation of Trade Unions (1945)

Already by the organization of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee in 1941 (see chapter 43), it was indicated that in the post-war pe-

riod a big new effort would be made to establish world trade union unity; to overcome the division in labor's ranks that had caused such disastrous weakness during the pre-war years in the face of advancing fascism. As the war continued and victory began to loom on the horizon for the democratic forces, the perspective for labor unity became more propitious. The tremendous fighting progressive spirit generated among the workers in the hard struggle against fascism was bound to carry over into the post-war period and to express itself in efforts to improve labor's organization. There was also especially the driving need for the organized workers to take a united position in the peace-making and in the reshaping of the world that must come after the war.

The International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), headed by Walter Schevenels, was totally incapable of meeting the urgent need of the world's workers for trade union unity. It had long been ridden by right-wing trade union bureaucrats; it was hopelessly wedded to policies of class collaboration, and it was directly responsible for the split condition of organized labor in the pre-war period. In the period of the advance of fascism prior to the war it had proved itself to be completely bankrupt. Even Lorwin was moved to remark that, "Though the IFTU at this time claimed 19,000,000 members in 23 countries, it was little more than a name and a memorv."[1]

The pressure for a new world organization came from various quarters—from the French and Italians, from the Latin Americans, from the American CIO, from the Russians. The leaders of the British Trades Union Congress, who obviously realized what was coming and wanted to head and control the growing movement, proposed in November 1943 that a world trade union conference be called in June 1944, to further the Allied war effort, to adopt a labor attitude towards eventual peace and reconstruction, and to consider the question of world labor unity. This conference was not held, however, because of war reasons. The AFL took a sharp position against it advocating the re-vitalizing of the IFTU. The Soviet trade unions, as strong advocates of world unity, criticized the British for taking unilateral action.

The next big effort for world trade union unity came in December 1944, when a preliminary conference of the British TUC, the CIO, and the Soviet trade unions was held in London to make preparations for a general conference, the date for which was finally set for London on February 6, 1945. As in the case of the first world conference proposal, an invitation was also extended to the AFL to attend this one. But once more the AFL refused to participate. Instead, it urged the half-dead IFTU to call a world conference of its own—which would have meant again to

exclude half or more of the world's labor unions. Despite the efforts of the AFL and other of the reactionary forces to galvanize it into life again, the IFTU remained inert. In its bankruptcy the latter decided also to send representatives to the scheduled general London conference.

Thus, already at this early stage there was to be seen the beginnings of the later split in the international labor movement. While the right-wing Social Democratic labor leaders in Europe did not feel themselves strong enough to oppose the powerful new unity movement that was developing, the AFL bureaucracy, more deeply intrenched in reaction, could do so. It was able to go ahead openly with its traditional disruptive course, the enemy of everything progressive in labor's ranks.

## THE LONDON CONFERENCE

The London Conference, beginning on February 6, 1945, was made up of 204 delegates, representing some 60,000,000 workers in 42 countries.[2] It was the largest gathering of the world's workers ever held up to this time, and although it did not include regular delegations from Germany and Japan—the war was still going on—it was also the most representative. Especially significant in this respect were the large delegations of representatives from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, categories which had been almost unknown in the narrowly European congresses of the IFTU. Equally, if not more important, the conference largely bridged the gap between the right and left sections of the labor movement, the split that had been originally caused by the treasonous policy of the Social Democrats in supporting' the imperialist World War I in the fatal days of September, 1914.

The conference laid central stress upon winning the war, calling upon the workers everywhere to increase military production. In reporting on war activities, the reports of delegates from the Nazi-held countries on the underground activities of their unions in the liberation movements were a feature of the conference. The conference paid special attention to the protection of the living and working conditions of the workers during wartime. It also demanded that full freedom of speech, assembly, religion, trade union organization, social insurance, etc., be established in the countries liberated from fascist rule. Stress was also laid upon the need to strengthen the unity of the United Nations. Plans were also put forth for the eventual peace treaty and for full trade union participation therein.[3]

Generally there was agreement expressed in working out this program. On the question of establishing a new international, however, serious differences of opinion developed. The delegations from Latin Amer-

ica, the USSR, France, Australia, the American CIO, and various other countries wanted a new organization set up, and they rallied around a resolution to this effect presented by Sidney Hillman of the CIO. At this time the CIO, under the influence of the then powerful left-wing, was taking a progressive position, and its sound stand on the new international was reinforced by the CIO need to combat the narrow position of the AFL.[4]

The British leaders, led by Citrine, one of the "heroes" who broke the general strike of 1926, were opposed to forming a new international. With an eye upon collaboration with the reactionary AFL leadership, they proposed instead that the half-dead IFTU should be galvanized into life again. But this reactionary proposal, which was quite out of tunc with the great forward surge that was developing in the world's labor movement, found little support except from a few European bureaucrats—Schevenels, Oldenbrook, Nordahl, and others. The conference therefore agreed upon a "compromise," which set up a committee of 41 to call another conference, the main purpose of which, in addition to writing a general program for world labor, was, "To prepare a Draft Constitution for the World Trade Union Federation, which it is the purpose of the conference to establish."[5] In this preparatory committee the USA, United Kingdom, France, USSR, and Latin America were given three votes apiece, the other countries one each. The Christian unions were invited to attend in an advisory capacity. Louis Saillant, of France, was elected secretary of the committee and Walter Citrine president.

One of the first major steps of this committee was to demand official representation in the United Nations Conference, to be held in San Francisco, and a seat in the General Assembly. The Soviet UN delegation, in fact, had already made a move to this general effect to the steering committee, but this was rejected. Eventually the proposal of the new world labor organization was emasculated, due primarily to the maneuvers of the AFL, jointly with the United States and British governments. The gigantic new world federation was thus placed on a level with the AFL and many other organizations, in a purely consultative position. This, of course, weakened the whole position of labor in the United Nations, which suited the AFL leaders precisely.[6]

## PARIS: THE FORMATION OF THE WFTIJ

On May 23, 1945—two weeks after VE Day—the preparatory committee issued a call for a second world labor conference. This was held in Paris, beginning on September 25 and lasting until October 8, 1945. On October 3 the conference transformed itself into a congress. There were

listed 346 delegates from 56 countries, representing 67,000,000 organized workers. The delegation included two representatives of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and 29 from that body's international trade secretariats. The International Federation of Christian Trade Unions also had a representative.[7] There were large delegations from the colonial and semi-colonial areas of the world. The AFL was invited to attend, but it refused, the only important national federation in the world so abstaining. The American Coal Miners union also stayed away, but the conservative Railroad Brotherhoods sent two delegates.

The larger organizations represented were those of the USSR 27,124,000, Great Britain 6,600,000, USA (CIO) 6,000,000, Italy, 5,200,000, France 5,100,000, Latin America 4,000,000, Czechoslovakia 1,500,000, Rumania 1,267,201, Sweden 1,087,000, Poland 1,011,000, Mexico 1,000,000, Hungary 888,000, China 800,000, French Catholic 750,000, Yugoslavia 662,000, Australia 625,000, Cuba 557,000, Nigeria 500.000.

The principal thing done by the Paris Conference was to make a draft of a constitution for the new organization, the World Federation of Trade Unions. After a last-ditch fight by the British and other conservative elements to save the IFTU, this draft was filially adopted unanimously on October 3 and referred for final action to the congress, which then went into session. The gathering was not following the advice of the Citrines, Schevenels, and Kupers, and other representatives of the decadent IFTU but hearkening to the voices of Saillant, Di Vittorio, Hillman, Tarasov, Frachon, Toledano, Dange, and others, who spoke in terms of the unity will of the world's workers.

The Constitution[8] as finally adopted, provided for an international federation, the WFTU, with headquarters in Paris. The World Congress, to be held biennially, was based on a democratic graduated representation calculated to provide a greater ratio of delegates to the smaller organizations, ranging from 1 delegate for each union with up to 250,000 members; 1 delegate for each 500,000 members for unions of 5,000,000 to 10,000,000, to 1 delegate for each 2,000,000 members for unions of 15,000,000 or more members. In the congresses the votes were apportioned on the basis of 1 for each 50,0000 members of a union of up to 250,000 members, graded downward to 1 vote for each 400,000 members in organizations of 15,000,000 or more. Article IV specifies that, "The autonomy of the trade union movement of each country is guaranteed." "As a rule" only one general center is recognized in each country.

The WFTU was headed by a General Council, chosen at the congress and, as elected at the first congress, consisting of 74 members and 59 sub-

stitutes, from 51 countries. (At the third congress in 1953 the General Council consisted of 185 members and substitutes). The Council was also formed upon the democratic diminishing ratio principle, organizations with 1,000,000 or less members having 1 representative and one substitute, on up through several categories, to 5 representatives and 3 substitutes for organizations with over 15,000,000 members. The Council, to meet at least once a year, was to be the leading body between congresses.

There were also provided an Executive Committee and an Executive Bureau. The EC as elected, consisted of 26 members (raised to ?2 at the third congress) of which the USSR and the United States-Canada were allotted 3 each, Great Britain, France, and Latin America 2 each, and 1 each for other representative organizations and areas. Elected at the congresses, the EC elects from its own ranks a number of vice-presidents.

As first constituted, the E.C. consisted of: president, Sir Walter Citrine (Great Britain); general secretary, Louis Saillant (France); vice-presidents: V.V. Kuznetsov (USSR), S. Hillman (USA) L. Jouhaux (France), V. Lombardo Toledano (Latin America), H.F. Chu (China), G. Di Vittorio (Italy), E. Kupers (Netherlands). Saillant, the active secretary of the organization, 35 years old, was formerly secretary of the French Woodworkers Union, and had greatly distinguished himself during the war as head of the French national resistance movement. The present president of the WFTU is Giuseppi Di Vittorio, fighting head of the Italian trade union movement. The number of vice-presidents has been raised to twelve.

The congress also established international trade departments. These bodies were generally to be led by the WFTU and to follow its policies and discipline. This form contrasted sharply with that prevailing in the old IFTU, in which the international trade secretariats did about as they pleased. General WFTU per capita ranged from 4 pounds sterling annually for 1,000 members of organizations of 5,000,000 or less, down to 10 shillings per 1,000 members of organizations of 15,000,000 or more members.

## THE PROGRAM OF THE WFTU

The World Federation of Trade Unions was founded upon the principle of an all-inclusive united front of genuine trade unions of every political tendency. This was fundamentally correct policy. In order, however, for such a broad organization to be held together, as was indispensable for the welfare and strength of organized labor in meeting the difficult tasks ahead, it was imperative for the WFTU to confine its activities basically to furthering the minimum economic and political needs of the

proletariat; that is, to immediate questions of struggle, not spelling out in detail the question of the ultimate political objectives of the working class programmatically. Narrow national and religious questions, destructive splitting issues in pre-war times, also had to he kept out of its deliberations. The WFTU thus had to, and did, organize and operate upon the basis of the broadest common denominator of the workers in all countries; namely, the practical problems immediately confronting them in their daily lives. Only in this way could it possibly hope to build up and maintain world trade union unity.

Upon this basis the Paris congress stated the purposes of the WFTU as follows in the preamble to its constitution:[9]

"(a) To organize and unite within its ranks the trade unions of the whole world, irrespective of considerations of race, nationality, religion, or political opinion;

(b) To assist, wherever necessary, the workers in countries socially or industrially less developed, in setting up their trade unions;

(c) To carry on the struggle for the extermination of all fascist forms of government and every manifestation of fascism, under whatever form it operates and by whatever name it may be known;

(d) To combat war and the causes of war and work for a stable and enduring peace;

By supporting the widest possible international cooperation in the social-economic spheres and measures for the industrial development and full utilization of the resources of the undeveloped countries;

By carrying on a struggle against reaction and for the full exercise of the democratic rights and liberties of all peoples;

(e) To represent the interest of world labor in all international agencies whose responsibility will be to solve the problems of world organization, resting upon agreements or conventions concluded between the United Nations, and in such other international bodies as may be decided upon by the World Federation of Trade Unions;

(f) To organize the common struggle of trade unions of all countries;

Against all encroachments on the economic and social rights of the workers and on democratic liberties;

For the satisfaction of the need of the workers for security of full employment;

For the progressive improvement of wages, hours and working conditions and living conditions of the workers;

For full and adequate social security to protect workers and their families against the hazards of unemployment, sickness, accident and old age;

For the adoption of all other measures furthering the social and economic well-being of the workers;

(g) To plan and organize the education of trade union members on the question of international labor unity and to awaken them to a consciousness of their individual responsibility for the realization of trade union purposes and aims.

In order to achieve these ends, the World Federation of Trade Unions bases its work on the following principles:

(a) Full democracy within the trade unions of all countries and close collaboration among them;

(b) Permanent contact with affiliated Trade Union Organizations, fraternal support and assistance to them in their work;

(c) Systematic exchange of information and experience in trade union work with the object of strengthening the solidarity of the international labor movement;

(d) Coordination of action by the workers' organizations for the realization of their international aims and decisions;

(e) Protection of the interests of the workers in emigration and immigration;

(f) Using every available means of making known and explaining the purposes for which the World Federation of Trade Unions is organized, the objectives which it seeks, its program for the achievement of these objectives and its decisions on specific issues."

In following out this general line, the congress and succeeding Executive Committee meetings enacted a series or statements and resolutions, urging the adoption of democratic peace terms by the United Nations and demanding the right of the organized workers to participate in the peace making machinery, endorsing the general program adopted by the world labor conference in London in 1944, demanding universal trade union rights and social insurance, condemning Franco's Spanish dictatorship, re-asserting the people's right to self-determination, condemning all racial persecution, proposing the organized industrialization of the less developed areas of the world, for the curbing and elimination of international trusts and monopolies, for the calling of an Asian trade union conference to further technological development in this vast area, and praising the work of President Roosevelt, who had recently died.

This broad economic-political approach of the WFTU to the world tasks and struggles of the proletariat was a far cry from and a big advance over the right opportunist "neutrality" theories of the Legien Social Democrats of a generation ago, who held that the unions should keep away from all political questions and who would not even concede the

need for a trade union international, inasmuch as the Second International was supposedly taking care of their world interests. The WFTU policy was equally distant from and superior to the old-time narrow sectarian views of the Anarcho-syndicalists, who insisted upon stating in the trade unions every theoretical question of the workers' ultimate goal and how to get there (thereby keeping the broad masses of more conservative workers out of the unions), and who also sought, with their "direct action" theories, to withdraw the trade unions from the political struggle.

Notwithstanding the necessary limitations upon the scope of its program, the WFTU, from the outset, was a fundamental part of the broad anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist movement which developed in many parts the world with the conclusion of World War II. The employers and other exploiters in all countries, plus their right-wing Social Democratic agents, were very well aware of this basic fact. This was why they promptly set as one of their most elementary tasks the crippling or wrecking of the new world labor organization.

Another basic requirement of the WFTU, in order to hold itself together and to make function effectively its vast organization of labor, containing in its ranks, as it did, workers of varying ideologies, was that it be built upon a solid basis of trade union democracy. At the first congress the foundations were laid for such democracy, in a far greater measure than had ever before been achieved upon an international scale. In the make-up of the congress and of the leading committees regulations were adopted for a full representation of every country and tendency. Moreover, the movement, animated by a thoroughgoing practice of self-criticism and a deep spirit of internationalism, was geared to protecting the interests of the workers in all parts of the world. It was, therefore, the height of cynicism that the AFL, which was controlled from end to end by the most bureaucratic, corrupt, reactionary, and autocratic leadership of any labor federation in the world, should dare to criticize the WFTU on democratic grounds.

## FLAWS IN THE NEW WORLD LABOR UNITY

At its first congress the WFTU achieved far and away the highest and broadest trade union unity ever secured by the world's working class. The establishment of the new world organization, which was accomplished by one of those great leaps forward characteristic of the general law of progress of trade unionism (see chapter 56), in which the controls set up over the years by the labor bureaucrats are either loosened or broken, bridged over, at least for the time being, many of the disruptive tendencies which previously had worked such havoc nationally and in-

ternationally with labor unity. But these still remained potential menaces to the solidarity of the workers.

The most serious danger to world labor unity was that presented by the AFL. This body, dominated by a pro-imperialist leadership, became a violent enemy of the WFTU from the start. It not only refused to affiliate, but it poured out a flood of red-baiting and billingsgate against the new organization that was hardly to be equalled in the capitalist press anywhere. It was avowedly determined to split the WFTU if the opportunity should present itself.

As for the IFTU, this former international, dried up and brushed aside by the course of events, simply folded up and perished. In December 1945 its General Council held a meeting and formally dissolved the organization. Although the AFL was an affiliate and the AFL leaders were pinning their hopes upon a revival of the IFTU, they did not even send a delegate to its funeral services. The score of IFTU international trade secretariats, however, had more vitality. They took exception to the "13 department" plan of the WFTU at the latter's foundation, and no agreement was ever reached upon it. During 1948 the conservative secretariat leaders, maneuvering with the AFL, broke off negotiations and moved into the split of the WFTU, which was then developing.[10]

The International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (Catholic), with approximately 3,000,000 members, which sent delegates to the Paris Congress (which founded the WFTU), proposed that it would affiliate on the condition that it could maintain its separate organization. This was rejected, and the IFCTU continued on as an independent organization, a disruptive force in a number of European and Latin American countries.

## 46. The Trade Unions in the People's Democracies (1944-1947)

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) became the international expression of the world-wide, swift, and broad growth of trade unionism which took place immediately after the end of World War II. This labor union expansion manifested itself in practically all countries which had at least a degree of industrial development. The new unionism was no mere reconstitution of the pre-war unions; it was superior to the old unionism both qualitatively and quantitatively; in outlook, structure, fighting tactics, and leadership. The general effect of this tremendous growth of trade unionism was to raise the world labor movement up to a higher plane in every respect than it had ever previously achieved.

One of the most important segments of the vast new trade unionism that sprang up after World War II was that of the people's democracies

of Eastern Europe—Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Albania. The workers and their allies in these countries, upon defeating the Hitler tyranny and the old-time cliques of exploiters, not only set up people's front governments under the leadership of the powerful Communist and Workers parties, but they also organized strong trade unions. Dating back to the period of the underground resistance movements, these unions took an active part in the whole revolutionary struggle. They were an indispensable part of the fighting forces of the people. The same trend developed, as we shall see further along, among the people's democracies of Asia. In Eastern Europe the trade union movement had hardly existed at all under the Hitler regime; but by the end of 1947 it had expanded, in the tremendous offensive of the workers, peasants, and other anti-fascist elements, to the number of at least 17,000,000 members, a figure that has since been greatly exceeded.

## TRADE UNION GROWTH IN THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES

With the exception of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the countries of Eastern Europe which established people's democracies at the end of World War II, prior to this time had but a sparse record of trade unionism, as we have seen in previous chapters. For the most part the workers' labor unions, with but few members, had struggled along before the Hitler era, living under reactionary regimes, dominated by domestic land owners and foreign imperialists. In pre-war Czechoslovakia one percent of the landlords owned 43 percent of the land; in Hungary one percent owned 47 percent, and similar conditions prevailed in the other countries of Eastern Europe. The important industries were in the hands of British, German, and French imperialists. The great toiling masses of the people lived on a starvation level. On the eve of World War II, whereas the per capita annual income in France—figured in Polish money—amounted to 1,830 zlotys,[1] that in Poland was only 610 zlotys, or one-third is much. As bad or worse living standards existed throughout the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

The trade unions lived under conditions of illegality, experiencing harsh governmental repression. When the Hitler forces seized these countries the unions, already living tenuously, were all either destroyed outright or driven completely underground. But in the concluding weeks of the war the trade union movement in the entire area of Central and Eastern Europe, under the general political leadership of the Communist Parties and in cooperation with friendly people's governments, literally sprang into existence during the general struggle and swiftly took on an

extension and growth hitherto unknown in these countries.

In the process of reorganizing and reorienting the trade union movement in Eastern Europe after the anti-fascist war, the workers generally followed the broad pattern of the Soviet trade unions. This was primarily because, although their basic economic, political, and social tasks were not identical with those in the Soviet Union, they nevertheless rested upon the same fundamental basis—the rebuilding of their shattered economic systems and the remodeling of their governments upon a Socialist foundation. By taking the same general course as the trade unions in the USSR, they were acting quite in line with necessity and with historical precedent in trade unionism. In the present period, when great world masses of people are moving towards Socialism, the vanguard trade unions in the international labor movement are those in the Soviet Union. They are blazing the way for the world proletariat, even as in earlier decades and facing different world situations under capitalism, first the British, and then the German trade unions, had been the world leaders of the labor movement.

In East Germany, which became the German Democratic Republic, the workers began rebuilding their trade unions at least a year earlier than was done in West Germany, which was under Anglo-French-American control. By 1947 there were some 5,000,000 members in the Free German Federation of Trade Unions (FDGB). In Czechoslovakia, the Central Council of Trade Unions, starting from scratch in late 1944, had 2,299,312 members by the end of 1947, and 3,075,000 by December 31, 1948[2]—figures unprecedented in Czechoslovak history. In Poland, after the Central Council of Polish Trade Unions was formed in November 1944, the trade unions organized 1,333,109 members by December 1945, and had 3,000,000 by the end of 1947.[3]

The Central Trade Union Council of Hungary, with 90,000 members in March 1945, soared to a record membership of 1,638,387 at the middle of 1948.[4] The workers in Hungary had experienced 25 years of white terror. The Yugoslav unions, which had been almost wiped out during the Hitler-Mussolini occupation, reached the unprecedented figure of about 1,000,000 members by the end of 1947. The Bulgarian General Workers Union, reorganized in 1944, after 21 years of illegality, reported a membership of 500,000 by 1947.[5] The Rumanian General Confederation of Trade Unions, after an illegality of 30 years, was re-established in 1945, and by 1947 it had constructed an organization of about 1,500,000 members.[6] The unions in Albania, on a smaller scale, also made rapid progress. In Greece the workers, participating in the general movement for the new people's democracy, also established strong trade unions in

the midst of the armed struggle, first against the Hitler forces and ultimately against those of Great Britain and the United States.

At the third world congress of the WFTU in Vienna, October 1953, the membership of the trade unions of the countries of Socialism and people's democracy was reported as follows: The USSR 34,000,000; China 10,200,000; East Germany 5,135,000; Poland 4,100,000; Czechoslovakia 3,500,000; Rumania 2,350,000; Hungary 1,650,000; Bulgaria 900,000; Korea 800,000; Viet Nam 390,000; and Albania 70,000.[7] Yugoslavia, not then reported, had 1,800,000 trade unionists. The unions in all these countries have since grown greatly.

Together with this swift growth in numerical strength, which in every case ran far beyond anything the workers had ever accomplished in pre-war days, the trade unions in the new people's democracies of Eastern and Central Europe also achieved after World War II higher levels of labor unity than ever before in their history. In previous decades the unions in these countries had experienced disastrous disruption along lines of politics, occupation, and nationality, splits which were cultivated by various opportunists and other elements alien to the working class. For many years during this period the left-wing had fought an uphill and fruitless battle for trade union unity. Typically, prior to World War II, Czechoslovakia had 18 national centers, Yugoslavia several, Poland four, and the unions in other countries were similarly split up. But the workers, upon the advent of people's democracies, put a quick end to such working-class division and produced united labor movements in all the revolutionary countries. This was class trade unionism, in contrast to the craft, religious, political, and even racial trade unionism of the times when the supporters of the Second International dominated the respective national labor movements.

One of the greatest evils of the many splitting tendencies afflicting the pre-war trade union movements was union divisions along political lines. With the establishment of the people's democracies, however, the basis for trade union unity in this vital respect was laid by the fusion of the Socialist and Communist parties in these countries, which took place right after the war. These mergers brought together the real fighters of both parties, eliminating the right opportunists in the unification process. As for bourgeois political trade unions and those based upon national minority lines, such splitting practices were done away with forthwith as entirely harmful to the interests of the working class. Union divisions along religious lines were also ended. The so-called Christian unions, which had had considerable organization in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Eastern Germany, were absorbed into the general united

labor movement. In all these countries, which have large bodies of Catholics, the religious workers freely joined the general unions of the working class. Labor unity, which the workers of all these splitting tendencies had made look next to impossible only a few years before, was established quickly by the workers once they had broken through the disciplines and controls of the reactionary and conservative labor bureaucrats.

The trade unions of the new people's democracies, in line with common sense and with the long striven-for goal of the workers, based their revived economic organizations almost exclusively upon the principle of but one union in each shop and in each industry, and of only one international trade union center in each country. Thus in Poland in 1947 there were but 38 national unions in one general organization, in place of the scattered 343 unions of the old days before the war; the Yugoslav workers were organized into 26 unions; the Bulgarians into 32; the Czechoslovaks into 21, the Rumanians into 19, and the workers of East Germany into 15 unions. The other people's democracies had similar types of industrial unions. These organizations all had solid foundations in the shops through the works councils and shop committees which spread everywhere with the regrowth of the trade union movement in general.

The unions in the people's democracies also established a far more democratic basis than the unions in the capitalist countries. The fundamental foundation of their trade union democracy is the fact that the people's governments are in the hands of the workers, farmers, and intellectuals, and that the great bulk of the industries are owned by the people. The big capitalists, who are the elementary source of reaction in all capitalist countries, do not own and dominate all the key social institutions as they simply do not exist. Also the hard-crusted labor bureaucracies of the right Social Democrats, agents of the employers, which are the curse of labor unionism all over the capitalist world, are conspicuous by their absence. With the all-inclusive works councils and shop committees as their industrial base, the new Socialist unions practice a democracy hardly even contemplated in unions dominated by Social Democratic bureaucrats under capitalism. To the general end of cultivating democracy, one of the most striking features of all these unions is that they are rapidly developing the policy of promoting volunteer work in the trade unions and thus decreasing the number of paid officials. It is not surprising that these broad class unions are fully democratic also in that they reach out and embrace the great masses of young workers, women workers, and agricultural workers, who have everywhere been neglected by the right-led unions.

The trade unions in the people's democracies, while exercising a powerful influence upon all the organs of the state, remain organizationally independent of the government. Characteristically, the unions in Poland are protected by an act of parliament against state interference in their internal affairs. By the same token, all acts of parliament and all government decrees which deal with the Polish workers' interests in any respect—in production, wage conditions, social insurance, and the like—first have to be approved by the national trade union federation. This is in line with the general pattern of the USSR and of the new democracies. Others of the people's democracies have similar pro-union legislation and governmental practices, all of which are in glaring contrast with the world-wide tendencies in the capitalist countries closely to control the trade unions legislatively, to curb their right to strike, and to limit their activities generally.

## TASKS OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES

The countries of people's democracy were terribly devastated during World War II with the fascist invaders systematically looting the various lands, enslaving their peoples as forced laborers, and subjecting their territories during the war to the heaviest of all the fighting. Eastern Europe was the scene of by far the most devastating and bloody battles. Twice the whole area was fought over and ravaged—once as Hitler's "invincible" *Wehrmacht* stormed east against the USSR, and again as it came staggering back to Nazi Germany thoroughly whipped by the Red Army of the Soviet Union. Poland alone had 6,028,000 of its people killed and 14,000 factories destroyed,[8] and Yugoslavia had 1,700,000 dead, with East Germany and the other countries similarly decimated. The great hulk of the 6,000,000 Jews butchered by Hitler were killed in this general area.

With their peoples at the point of starvation and with their industries and agriculture wrecked, the supreme task of these nations in the early post-war period was to reconstruct their economic situation, especially upon the new basis established by the people's governments of the whole region. In this life-and-death task the trade unions, with their sense of Socialist responsibilities, played a most important role. The unions applied the characteristic Socialist methods of no-strikes, piecework, Stakhanovism, and Socialist competition. They were strongly represented in the economic organs of the state and in the nationalized industries. The general result was, as in the Soviet Union, although not so markedly, a rapid post-war industrial recovery, far outrunning the industrial pick-up

in the much less war-damaged states of the capitalist West. The people's democracies, once the war's wreckage was largely repaired, everywhere launched upon ambitious programs of industrial expansion, based upon planned economy and two, three, and five-year plans, to lay the basis for their future prosperity. Typically, Poland in 1954 produced 100 million tons of coal against 38 million tons in 1938, its steel production went up from 1.5 million tons in 1938 to 4.6 million tons in 1954,[9] and it now manufactures nine times more machinery than before the war.

In the people's democracies, upon the basis of the rapidly developing industries and agriculture, there began immediately after the war's end and under the general supervision of the trade unions, a pronounced improvement in the living and working conditions of the toiling masses of factory and field. Despite the urgent need for intense efforts to expand the industries, real wages began to go up rapidly, with the trade unions exercising the decisive influence in establishing the wage rates. The eight-hour, or shorter, workday, was established universally; the basis was laid for a system of social insurance, without a parallel in the capitalist countries; and a broad mass educational campaign was launched and has been continued ever since with increasing vigor. The whole vast area of the people's democracies was thickly dotted with schools, libraries, hospitals, rest homes, clubs, and other health and cultural institutions devoted to the interests of the workers and other useful toilers.

In the people's democracies the workers' voice is decisive in the establishment of wage rates. How general wage rates are worked out is thus described by Hilary Minc, vice-Premier of Poland: "National income is divided into two parts—the part consumed and the part accumulated or earmarked for the expansion of the productive apparatus and of the economy. The basic task of the plan is to define the best and most advantageous relation between the quantity of consumption and accumulation. The proportions which are best are those that guarantee the greatest possible rate of economic development and of the working masses. This is what we have planned, and because of our plans the average standard of living of the working people by the end of the Six Year Plan will be 50-60 percent higher than in 1949; that is, approximately twice as high as pre-war"[10]—an objective which, by the way, has been duly realized. Under this just and scientific system of wage-setting, in which the unions' voice is basic, there is no place for the private profits which, inflated to the maximum degree, are the bane of the working class under capitalism.

As in the USSR, the trade unions in the people's democracies generally have had delegated to them the administrative functions usually car-

ried out by governmental labor departments. The basic significance of this is that all these functions are managed by the unions themselves instead of, as in capitalist countries, by bourgeois elements whose only interest is to reduce to the bare minimum cost all such social services. Characteristic of the general system is that of Rumania, the constitution of which says: "The organization, guidance, and control of the activities of the Social State Services (health, factory inspection, social insurance, etc.) are performed by the General Confederation of Labor through the Council of Social State Services."[11] All the countries of people's democracy, in addition to free medical service for the workers, have elaborate systems of social insurance—for sickness, maternity, industrial injury and disease, old age, and unemployment—all of which are paid for by the state and managed by the workers. The same is also true of the whole complex system of safety and health regulations in the industries. The latter legislation, dictated in the interest of the workers' welfare and not of the employers' profits, covers a scope far wider than anything known in any capitalist country.

The trade unions of the people's democracies, much like their brother organizations in the big neighbor country to the east—the USSR—have an elaborate organization, from the top to the bottom in the unions, made up mostly of volunteer workers, for carrying on these multiple social institutions. Typically, in Polish industrial enterprises there are elected committees or individuals to act as organizers and administrators respectively of factory inspection, social welfare and insurance, and cultural and educational activities. There are an estimated 200,000 Polish factory inspectors alone. The unions in all the other countries of people's democracy have similar organizations. The vast bulk of these workers function upon a voluntary basis, a central aim of the unions in the USSR and the people's democracies being to reduce the number of paid union officials to the minimum.

Among their many other functions the trade unions of the people's democracies, particularly in the early years, had to be keenly on the alert to help defend the new people's governments from machinations and plottings of internal counter-revolutionaries who still infested the various countries, and also from the assaults of external enemies. That these were real dangers was made all too plain by the Anglo-American shooting down of the Greek people's democracy in 1944-48 and the repeated revolts in Poland, Bulgaria, and other states, instigated by Anglo-American forces. Especially dangerous in this respect was the attempted overthrow of the people's democracy in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. The American ambassador in Prague was largely responsible for causing the

simultaneous resignation of 17 bourgeois cabinet ministers from the Czechoslovak people's democratic government, his expectation being that this action would precipitate a counter-revolution. The plan backfired, however; the workers under the leadership of the Communist Party and the trade unions, rallied behind the government and enabled it to proceed without the bourgeois ministers. The general result was that the Czechoslovak government, after this test stronger than ever, took a long stride to the left, towards Socialism.[12]

## 47. The Rebirth of Trade Unionism in Capitalist Europe (1944-1947)

Throughout Western Europe the trade unions, virtually wiped out under the Hitler regime, literally sprang into existence again under the pressure of the post-World War II upsurge, once the fascist tyranny was militarily overthrown. But the working class was unable in this broad area to push on and to establish people's democracies, as it had done in Eastern Europe. This was because of treachery by the Social Democracy in these countries, the aggressive political policies of the Vatican, and especially the presence of the Anglo-American-French armies, which were quite ready to shoot down any revolutionary upheavals. Lt us check some of the West European movements.

### THE RENAISSANCE OF THE ITALIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The Italian trade unions began to spring up again with the entry of the allied forces into Italy in 1943. The expanding labor movement was a big factor in the general strikes and uprisings which took place in 1943-44.[1] On June 4, 1944, the famous Pact of Rome was formulated to establish trade union unity in Italy. Participants in this were the three leading tendencies—Communist, Social Democratic and Christian Democratic. This pact had an important antecedent in the pact of common action between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party in August 1934, in the fight against Mussolini fascism.

The Pact of Rome called for trade union unity without regard to distinctions of political opinion or of religious faith. It provided for one organization in each shop, industry, city, province, and also nationally. The unified organization was to function democratically and to guarantee the free expression of views and criticisms by the constituent groups. The new federation was to be independent of all political parties and of the state. It was to be named the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL), The respective leaders in its construction were Giuseppe Di

Vittorio (Communist), Bruno Buozzi (Socialist), and Achille Grandi (Christian Democrat).[2] There was a fourth lesser group, the Action Party. The tri-partite structure of the CGIL reflected the composition of the Italian government, the cabinet of which consisted of Christian Democrats, Socialists, and Communists.

On this basis, with the war still going on in the North, the CGIL held its initial convention at Naples in January 1945, chiefly of delegates from the then liberated areas, with some 1,300,000 enrolled members. The convention, the first held openly in Italy in 21 years, met in a spirit of relative unity and it ratified the proposed constitution and worked out a program of immediate demands. It elected three general secretaries, Di Vittorio, Grandi, and Lizzaderi, and it picked out an Executive Committee of 25 (7 from each of the three main tendencies, and 4 for the minority). Already at the convention it was evident that the Communists were leading the movement. The anti-Communist Galenson thus describes the situation: "Communist labor leaders tended to be superior for several reasons. The Communist Party was the only anti-fascist party to remain organized in Italy during fascism. Its leaders were men of tested worth. Socialist and Christian Democratic labor leaders had served little or no apprenticeship before their appointments."[3]

With their attention focussed upon economic reconstruction, the CGIL unions conducted but few strikes during the next two years. The federation held its first truly national convention in Florence after the war in June 1947, representing an estimated membership of 5,500,000 workers. There were some factional disputes at this convention, but the reactionary elements, in the face of the powerful unity sentiments among the workers, did not yet feel strong enough to split the unified CGIL. The convention adopted a progressive program, including, among other points, extensive nationalization of the public services and industry, and the dissolution of the big landed estates. The voting at the convention established a directive committee of 75 members, among whom were 38 Communists (who got 2,631,129 votes), 19 Socialists (1,029,052 votes), 11 Christian Democrats (610,104 votes), 2 Republicans, 2 PSLI, 1 Actionist, 1 Anarcho-syndicalist, and 1 Independent. The Executive Committee of 21 contained 4 general secretaries and 6 vice-presidents, representative of the various groupings.[4] In the localities the workers were also following Communist leadership, in June 1947 some 80 percent of the provincial labor chambers being headed by Communists.[5] Di Vittorio, a Communist, was far and away the outstanding leader of the movement.

This was the trade union situation in Italy upon the eve of the beginning of the cold war. The CGIL had an enormously greater membership

than ever before, and for the first time in many decades it contained all the political groupings within one unified organization. This situation, the product of the revolutionary spirit of the workers, was one, however, that the reactionaries could not permit to last, and already they were whetting their knives to slash the CGIL.

## THE UNIFIED FRENCH LABOR MOVEMENT

The French *Confederation Generale du Travail* (CGT), which had functioned underground during the war, was legally reconstituted in September 1944. It held its first general convention in April 1946, with a reported membership of 6,000,000. It was a convention of unity. The working class being very militant at the time, the professional labor splitters, those who live politically by dividing the workers' ranks, thought it the better part of wisdom to go along in a united labor movement. That is, all did except the Catholic union leaders. Their organization, the French Federation of Christian Workers (IFCTU), had developed a membership of 700,000 and it refused to become part of an all-embracing CGT.

In France, as in Italy and many other countries on the Continent, the majority of the working class entered the post-war period following the general leadership of the Communist Party. Galenson (no friend of the left-wing) says: "When the first (French) party conventions were held after the war, the Socialists had a third of a million members, while the Communists had a million. In the labor movement, especially among industrial workers, the proportion of Communist superiority was even more pronounced." He also remarks that at this time, "the Communists controlled all the major industrial unions and practically all the major departmental federations."[6] V.R. Lorwin puts the Communists in a majority of four to one at the CGT convention of April 1946.[7] This Communist leadership had been won by superior initiative, organization, devotion, and struggle against the fascists during the past ten years. Lorwin remarks that "The Communists had a leadership tested by years in clandestine operations or in jail.... It was more vigorous and disciplined, yet more flexible than its rivals."[8]

Not unexpectedly, therefore, the Communists were in the majority at the 1946 convention of the CGT. Characteristically, in the spirit of their traditional cultivation of labor unity, they did all possible and more to develop good working relations with the more conservative minority delegations. At the convention representation was established upon a modified proportional basis, with the fullest guarantees provided for the rights of the minorities. Benoit Frachon, Communist union leader, was made

co-general secretary of the CGT along with the Socialist Leon Jouhaux. Commenting upon these developments, L.L. Lorwin says: "The Communists achieved a dominant position in the CGT in the course of 1946, but they generally used their power with moderation."[9] Discussing the new CGT leadership, Galenson adds that the majority at the 1946 convention "permitted the reformists a far higher percentage of places on the executive organ of the CGT than their following gave them."[10]

During this early period the CGT centered its main attention upon the restoration of the war-ruined production, and with it the wrecked living standards of the workers. The Communists were especially alert in planning and carrying out these basic tasks. This meant hard work and as few strikes as possible. Meanwhile the CGT pressed for and got nationalization of the coal mines, munitions industries, public utilities, insurance companies, and the larger banks, as well as a broad extension of the health services and of social insurance in general. A National Economic Council was established, with Leon Jouhaux as its president. Plant committees were set up to improve production, and representatives of the unions were allotted numerous places on the boards of directors of the nationalized enterprises. Works councils were established generally. Meanwhile, the employers, badly discredited by their previous support of the Vichy fascists, were only slowly reconstituting their organizations in the industries and on a national scale.

At this time the Communist Party was the largest and best organized political party in France. Together with the Socialist Party it could have combined into a two-party workers' government in France—which would have opened up the possibility, if not the probability, for the development of a French people's democracy on the Eastern model. But the Socialist Party, led by Leon Blum, a notorious right-wing revisionist, being basically a party of capitalism, wanted no such Socialist perspective. Blum insisted instead upon a tripartite government, made up of the SP, CP and MRP (Mouvement Republicaine Populaire), the Catholic Party. This decision, which was backed by the new American overlords of France, obliterated for the time being the possibility of France's moving towards Socialism, as the people's democracies of Eastern Europe were doing. This was the general situation in France when the cold war began in 1947.

## THE RESURRECTION OF THE GERMAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The policy of the American government for the reconstruction of post-war Germany included some conception of permitting the rebuild-

ing of the trade union movement, but under severe limits. In this respect there were several special points in the American Military Government's (AMG) policy. These were, at all costs, to keep the Communists from leading the revived trade unions, to prevent the formation of a united German labor movement which would interfere with the plans of the United States for the maintenance of a separate West Germany, and above all to keep the labor movement from adopting a program and engaging in activities that could threaten the existence of capitalism in Germany. Remembering the experience after World War I, the Allied military authorities were in dread of a German revolution. Phillips says that their policy regarding the trade union movement "was a mixture of fear and hostility."[11]

The restrictions that came to be placed upon the regrowth and consolidation of the West German labor movement were primarily the work of the Americans. In the four-zone military-political set-up that was established in Germany after the surrender of the Hitler regime on May 7, 1945, the United States was the boss of the three Western zones; the French had only a shadow of strength, and the British, weakened badly by the war, were not in much of a position to stand up to the aggressive United States. So the fate of the trade unions, for the time being at least, was in the hands of the reactionary American generals, who supervised the reorganization of post-war Western Germany.

Immediately upon the fall of the Hitler regime, the German workers rid themselves overnight of Hitler's Labor Front and began to move for the reorganization of the trade union movement. Particularly the Communist Party was very active in this respect. The workers, however, met with a very different response respectively from the military authorities in the East and in the West. In the Soviet-controlled East every assistance was given them to re-organize; whereas in the capitalist West, where the American generals determined the policy, deliberate obstructions were raised to the re-formation of the unions. The general result was, says Phillips, that "In May 1946, trade union membership figures showed that the Soviet zone had 2,000,000 organized trade unionists, that the United States and the British zones had 600,000 each, and that a much smaller number were organized in the French zone."[12] As we have seen in chapter forty-six, the East Zone membership reached 5,500,000 by the end of 1947.

The heads of AMG were particularly opposed to the formation of national unions and of general federations covering all four zones, as they feared that the Communists would lead such organizations, even as they dreaded a united Germany for the same reason. The workers, however, in

both East and West Germany, repeatedly demanded national trade union organization. During the period from November 1946 to August 1948 the young trade union movement convened no less than nine inter-zonal conferences, held in all four zones, and at all of them the question of national organization was favorably to the fore. Typically, at the 6th inter-zonal conference of October 21-23, 1947, at Bad Prymont, British Zone, "a resolution of the Soviet Zone, calling for the convocation of an all-German Trade Union Congress in the Spring of 1948, was accepted."[13]

At first the AMG generals met the workers' demands for national organization with evasion and subterfuge, but finally they came out flatly against it. All their pressures, sometimes exercised subtly, sometimes openly, were used to prevent all-German trade unions. The repeated demands of the unions for general labor unity remained unavailing—at this time. With the country under complete military domination, a major strike upon this question, or any other, would have been suppressed by force. Finally, in a situation to which we shall come back in chapter 51, the American military forces and their union leader aides had their way by definitely splitting the unions in the West away from those in the East.

Another aim of the AMG generals was to bar the affiliation of the German trade unions with the World Federation of Trade Unions. They were unable, of course, to block the unions of the Soviet Zone which had a delegation at the second WFTU congress held in Milan in 1949; but they did succeed in keeping isolated those in the Western Zones. H. Warnke, head of the Eastern unions (FDGB), declares that, "the inter-zonal conferences of the German trade unions had in fact unanimously put forward their application for admission into the WFTU."[14] The Executive Bureau of the WFTU, in its meeting of December 13, 1946, voted the affiliation of the German trade unions, and during 1946-47 it sent two missions to Germany to this general effect, among others. At the Prague session of the General Council of the WFTU in June 1947, a four-zone delegation of German trade unionists appeared and enthusiastically accepted the proposal of affiliation to the WFTU.[15] The WFTU had also decided to establish a Liaison Bureau in Germany, to maintain its contacts with the trade unions; but American resistance within and without the unions managed to sabotage and defeat the whole affiliation plan. The AMG finally specifically denied the WFTU the right to have a Liaison Bureau in Germany.

Despite all these handicaps the workers in West Germany did succeed within the next couple of years in building up a trade union movement of some 5,000,000 workers. One of the important features of this was that the Christian (Catholic) and Hirsch-Duncker (Liberal) trade unions, for the

first time in their history, became part of the general trade union movement. This was done on the grounds that the new federation (DGB), which was made up of 16 industrial unions, should not be linked to any political or religious group.[16] At present, however, Christian Democratic leaders are trying to reorganize the Christian trade unions in Germany.

In blocking the formation of a united German trade unionism, and with it preventing the carrying through of a program of nationalization and other badly needed reforms, the AMG had powerful allies in the labor movement itself. Chief among these were the right-wing Social Democrats, especially the remnants of the old trade union bureaucracy; the elements who had sold out the German Revolution, paralyzed the unions with class collaboration under the Weimar Republic, and capitulated before Hitler in his drive for power. The American generals built upon such reactionary labor figures as the so-called *alte männer* (old men) of the trade union movement. Characteristically. the head union leader in the American Zone, a thorough-going tool, was none other than the notorious Fritz Tarnow, a trade union revisionist theoretician of past memory.

Together with such corrupted right German Social Democrats, the AMG had the active cooperation of the American Federation of Labor leaders. From the outset these labor pro-capitalists, realizing the key importance of the German trade union movement in their fight against the WFTU, did not spare time, men, or money in order to shape the growing German unions in their own reactionary likeness. At all times their main policies were virtually indistinguishable from those of the US State Department. Speaking of the American labor leaders' disruptive work, a delegate at the Second Congress of the WFTU said, "Always and everywhere we can detect the hand of the AFL."

With the Western trade unions misled and tied hard and fast, the conditions of the workers naturally were bad. In 1946, in the Western zones, real wages were only 60 percent of what they had been in 1936, under Hitler, but the employers' profits had increased by 260 percent.[17] The American generals were busily organizing the badly discredited pro-fascist employers (this organization was a democratic right which had to be applied, they said), and they made no serious attempts at de-nazification. The foundations were thus being laid for a future reactionary role for Western Germany.

## THE LABOR MOVEMENT ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

As for the remaining European capitalist countries—Great Britain, although heavily war-ravaged, had been spared fascist occupation. Therefore, its labor movement escaped destruction. The trade unions

continued to grow, advancing from 6,375,000 (TUC) in 1945 to 7,500,000 in 1947—a figure which topped the previous record, in 1930, by about a million. The left-wing greatly extended its influence, but there was no spectacular growth of the Communist Party, as in France, Italy, and many other continental (occupied) countries. The revolutionary spirit of the workers expressed itself in the national elections of 1945 which, by a big majority, put in power the third Labor government, which lasted until 1951. This, however, was largely a shot into the water. Under such non-Socialists as Attlee, Bevan, and Morrison, the Labor government made no real progress towards Socialism. Although it nationalized steel, transport, coal, and the health services, about 20 percent of the national economy, it left these industries mainly in the hands of the capitalists to manage. Big purchase prices were paid for the nationalized properties, capitalist profits soared to record levels, and the real wages of the workers sank. "In 1951," says Eaton, "the average wage a (British) worker was taking home bought 7 percent less than in 1947."[18]

Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg were all occupied by the Hitler forces during the war; hence the workers' trade unions, political parties, and cooperatives were all wiped out. Once the fascists and their Quislings were driven out, however, the trade unions and other organizations made swift recoveries, in every instance swiftly exceeding pre-war levels of membership. The Communists increased their strength everywhere, but the allied armies, plus the right Social Democracy and the Vatican, were able to cancel out the possibility of any successful moves towards setting up revolutionary people's democracies. Belgium had a strong Christian trade union movement, which functioned legally during the war, with Hitler's sanction.

Among the fascist countries (not previously remarked) Spain and Portugal were canny enough to stay out of the war, so their reactionary dictatorships escaped the revolutionary sweep of the war and its aftermath. Finland, which was in the Hitler line-up, had its Social Democratic unions tolerated by the Nazi dictator,[19] and there was no great change in their membership figures after the war. A powerful left-wing developed, but not strong enough to break the power of the intrenched Social Democratic Party and to establish a people's democracy. In Austria, with its long record of a very strong trade union movement, the workers, with Soviet support, quickly rebuilt their trade union movement. The Austrian General Confederation of Labor, constituted in April 1945, by the end of December 1948 had 1,278,680 members, about two-thirds of the total of industrial workers. The movement generally remained in Social Democratic control.

During the war Sweden was a "neutral" country, but heavily under Nazi influence. Already highly organized, the Swedish unions, numbering 1,053,266 in 1947, made no big growth after the war. Under Social Democratic government for years, Sweden followed a policy of mild reform, with most of its public services already "nationalized." The Swedish left-wing emerged from the war with increased, but not decisive strength. Switzerland, another "neutral" country, came out of the war period with a strong right Social Democratic Party and a lively weak Communist Party. Like Sweden and practically all other labor movements in Europe, Switzerland's labor organization joined the WFTU upon its foundation in 1945. Ireland, also being "neutral" during the war, was not basically affected in its membership and leadership by that great straggle. It presents a special situation, with the movement split three ways. Altogether, at present, there are 158 trade unions in Ireland, with a combined membership of 513,812. These are divided into three general affiliations: the Irish Trade Union Congress, the Congress of Irish Unions, and the British Trades Union Congress, and there is also a considerable body of independents. This tangled situation is basically a hangover from the former status of Ireland as an English colony, in which, as in the Dominions, the practice grew up of British unions building branches in these areas. In 1953-54 conferences were held to unite the Irish labor movement, but it was found impossible to override the conflicting bureaucratic interests which profit from the present split situation.[20]

## 48. Trade Unionism Flourishes in Asia (1945-1947)

As Japanese imperialism was toppled in August 1945 under the combined blows of the United States, the Soviet Union, People's China, and the various Asian national resistance movements, a vast colonial liberation movement sprang up all over enslaved Asia, as we have indicated in chapter 44. It was an inevitable extension of the great people's war against fascism. This upheaval was a major part of the world-wide revolutionary outburst that followed World War II. The Asian movement, like that in Europe, carried with it a swift and huge growth of trade unionism. Countries that hitherto had known no trade unions, or only skeleton organizations (see chapters 18 and 19), after the end of the Japanese war swiftly produced strong and vigorous labor organizations—and Communist Parties. Aroused Asia, soon counting its trade unionists at about 20 million, literally leaped overnight into the front line of the world trade union movement, becoming one of its largest, most progres-

sive, and best fighting sections. This was a development of stupendous significance in the world history of organized labor. The WFTU alertly cultivated this whole trade union movement, among its many other activities to this effect scheduling a Pan-Asia trade union conference in Peking in May 1949.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY CHINESE TRADE UNIONS

At the end of the Japanese imperialist war the Chinese Communist Party, the heroic leader of the workers, peasants, and intellectuals of China, proposed to the Kuomintang in August that the two forces should join hands in a common government for the building of a free and democratic China. This was in line with the general revolutionary policy of organizing people's democracies on the basis of those parties which had fought against the fascist oppressors. The reactionary Kuomintang had at least pretended to so fight, but at all times the bulk of its troops had been lined up against the Communists. However, Chiang Kai-shek would have none of such a progressive post-war program as the Communists proposed. He had the firm backing of the American government—which had an eye upon dominating China itself—and in harmony with this Chiang rejected the Communists' program of peace and a united people. After a lot of tricky maneuvering to hide his real intentions, Chiang in July 1946 had gotten under way the civil war, which by 1950 was to result in his complete defeat. By June of that year his huge American-equipped armies had been completely defeated and smashed, and with their shattered remnants he fled to the island of Formosa.

As the People's Liberation Armies drove the Chiang forces before them, one of the many major tasks they undertook was to build up the trade union movement. A basic step in this direction was the holding of the convention in Harbin in August 1948, at which the All-China Federation of Labor was reorganized. At this convention, the sixth of this body, there were 518 delegates, who represented 2,836,059 workers, among them 800,000 in the Kuomintang areas. This was the first general trade union convention held since 1929. For the earlier stages of the Chinese trade union movement, see chapter 38.

At the Harbin trade union convention there was a linking up of the Chinese Association of Labor, the All-Liberated Areas Trade Union Federation, the Shanghai Association of Workers, and of several other organizations of labor in various parts of the country, including some under the iron heel of Chiang Kai-shek. The meeting voted for affiliation to the WFTU, which, at its Prague conference in 1947, had urged the calling of this general convention.[1] The movement organized itself on the broad

model of the Socialist trade unions in the USSR and the European people's democracies, with generally the industrial form, based on shop committees.

At the convention reports were made showing improved conditions of the workers and peasants in the liberated areas, despite the heavy losses and demands of the war. In former years a working day of 14 to 16 hours had been the rule, but now in most industries this was down to 8 or 10 hours, with a weekly limit of 12 hours overtime. Plans were worked out for the development of collective agreements with employers—the Communist Party policy calling for the expropriation only of foreign imperialist enterprises and of Chinese concerns acting as their agents. The policy preserved small capitalist enterprises.

At this time the people's military forces had well under way the final drive which, during the next 18 months, was to break the power of the Chiang regime completely. Hence the trade union convention devoted itself mainly to the most urgent war tasks, especially those related to improving production. They included resolute efforts to defeat the attempts of Chiang's retreating armies to apply a "scorched earth" policy as they fled. Epstein says that in many places the workers saved important enterprises from destruction—coal mines, railroads, etc.[2] The Harbin convention set as its basic task, "the complete overthrow of the rule of American imperialism and its lackeys in China, and the formation of a new democratic people's republic."[3]

## THE TRADE UNIONS IN REVOLUTIONARY INDIA

In February 1947 the long struggle of the Indian people for national liberation was climaxed by the so-called Mountbatten agreement, under which, as it was ultimately worked out, Great Britain granted India dominion status in the Empire.[4] This victory of the Indian people was of world importance. Later similar agreements were established regarding Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma. But certain strings were tied to this independence by British imperialism. The basic reason for this was the fear on the part of the British imperialists that otherwise the Indian people and others in tune with the great people's upheaval following World War II, might well take the revolutionary path being followed by China.

The agreements with India and the other colonies were formulated by the British Labor government then in power, with the full support of the Churchill Tories. Consequently, as loyal supporters of capitalism and imperialism, all possible safeguards were placed by the Labor imperialists around the interests of the exploiting classes, especially the British capitalists. Dutt says of the conditions set up by these agreements: "The

interests of the extensive British capital holdings in these countries are protected by the administrations; and the powerful British imperialist monopolies, either directly or in leonine partnership with the weaker local monopolies, exercise a dominant influence in the economy. The feudal-imperialist exploitation of the masses continues unchanged, with the lowest colonial standard of living of the peasants and workers. Police repression is even more violent than before."[5]

Meanwhile, the trade union movement had been having a hard struggle of it during the war and the first couple of years afterward (for earlier phases, see chapter 38). The All-India Trade Union Congress, demanding Indian independence, had supported the war, but in the face of sharp persecution from the British overlords of the country. One of the weapons used by the latter was the formation in December 1941 of the so-called Indian Federation of Labor, led by the renegade M.N. Roy. This body, notoriously financed by the British government, was subsidized to the extent of £1,000 per month.[6] At the time of the 1945 congress of the WFTU in Paris it was said to have a membership of some 145,000 members.

After the war the All-India Trade Union Congress, the pioneer Indian trade union national center, headed by S.A. Dange, led an active struggle in defense of the workers' interests. From 1945 to 1947 the number of strikes more than doubled, going up from 820 to 1,811, and the work days "lost" increased from 4,054,499 to 16,562,666.[7] As the new Indian dominion government came into existence the AITUC demanded an extension of nationalization of industry and of rights for the workers—a program that got a cold shoulder from the hesitant Nehru government, which decided to go slowly on. nationalization. As matters now stand, the railroads, aviation, the posts, telegraph, and telephone, and some of the banks, have been nationalized, and the motor transport is now being taken over by the state. Premier Nehru announces a Socialist goal for the government. Meanwhile, the AITUC was making substantial organizational progress. In 1945 it had 450,000 members, in 1946 600,000, and in 1947 800,000, or about 13 percent of the organizable workers in India.[8]

## THE HUGE TRADE UNION GROWTH IN JAPAN

Although the defeat of Japanese imperialism was brought about by the joint efforts of the United States, the USSR, and China, the US government managed to grab virtually sole control of Japan in the post-war period, and it proceeded thenceforth to dominate it through General Douglas A. MacArthur, ultra-reactionary darling of American fascists. American imperialist aims, executed through the SCAP for post-war Ja-

pan, briefly stated, were to prevent a revolution, to preserve monopolist controls, and to develop Japan into a satellite state of the United States. MacArthur's policies, as military satrap of Japan, were such that the various post-war governments were all conservative, despite the radical mood of the masses. Miriam S. Farley thus sums up the general situation: "Aside from the new black-market millionaires, the dominant groups after the war were old-line politicians, bureaucrats, and the Zaibatsu,"[9] the pre-war financial oligarchy. A major point in MacArthur's program was to maintain the Emperor system, which he did.

Under directives from Washington, MacArthur established a decree of free speech and free assembly—to do anything else would have been impossible under the circumstances. In this period the Socialist and Communist parties quickly came into existence again and assumed importance. Especially there developed, almost overnight, a monster trade union movement. Previously the trade unions had failed to achieve a strong growth. The Ministry of Labor in 1950 provided these figures of their status through the years: 1921—103,412; 1927—309,493; 1936—420,581 (pre-war peak); 1939—365,804; 1940—9.455; 1944—none. *(Japanese Labor Disputes in Statistics*). The WFTU says the post-war trade unions grew "at a rate hitherto unknown in history."[10] By 1947 they had assembled 4,000,000 members, and in June 1948 the movement reached its highest post-war figure of 6,533,954 members, out of a total of some 9,000,000 workers.

By 1947 the Japanese trade unions had become crystallized into two main national centers. The largest was the Congress of Industrial Unions (*Sanbetsu,* JCIU), left-led. This body, formed after the armistice in August 1946, was based upon industrial unionism and was largely influenced by the experience of the CIO in the United States. When one year old the organization claimed to have 1,770,000 members. Its leaders were Katsumi Kikunami, chairman, and Kazuyoshi Dohashi and Yasuo Sakagnshi, sub-chairmen.

The second largest union federation was the Japanese Federation of Labor (*Sodomei,* JFL), led by right Social Democrats, many of whom had supported Japan's imperialist war. This federation, a revival of the pre-war national labor organization, claimed some 1,064,000 members in 1947. Its leaders were Komakichi Matsuoko, chairman; Kanju Kato, sub-chairman, and Toraichi Hara, general secretary.

At the outset, the Communists strongly urged united labor action, but, says Farley, "the JFL and the right-wing Social Democrats held back, fearing, as they said, to be swamped in a Communist tide."[11] The JCIU was composed of some 34 industrial unions; whereas the JFL was

made up of four industrial unions and about 2,400 local unions in more or less direct affiliation. In 1946 there was a third federation formed, with about 100,000 members, led by the Socialist Hitoshi Yamahawa—the All-Japan Council of Labor Unions (JCLU). In 1947 the WFTU estimated that of the organized workers, the JCLU had 38 percent, the JFL had 20 percent, while about 40 percent were independent.[12] Many of the independents worked closely with the left *Sanbetsu,* but some were continuations of the *Sampo,* of fascist years, under new names. The overwhelming trend, however, was for genuine trade unions.

The JCIU was somewhat more to the left in its program than the JFL; for example, while the former demanded the 40-hour week, the latter demanded the 48-hour week. The two called for the development of systems of social insurance, of which Japan at this time had only the beginnings. The JCIU favored affiliation to the WFTU, but the JFL did not. Both organizations assumed the position of (only) formal independence regarding political parties. About 25 percent of the unions' members were women, and a very large percentage were white collar workers.

The Japanese working class, long oppressed by brutal exploitation, suffering terrible hardships during the war, and facing a collapse of industry and of living standards after the war, was not slow to use its new freedoms and unions to improve economic conditions, even as its parties fought on the political field for drastic reform of the semi-feudal system. During 1946 and 1947 there was a big wave of strikes which reached its peak in October 1946. In the election of April 1946 the Socialist Party polled 9,800,000 votes and the Communist Party 2,135,737.

Most of the early strikes were short and resulted victoriously for the unions. Militant and progressive, the workers developed many new strike tactics, such as letting passengers ride free on the street cars, various types of slow-down and sit-down strikes, "lightning" protest strikes, and especially the so-called "control of production." Of this, a WFTU commission to Japan said; "When a dispute arose, instead of striking, which in the wretched economic state of affairs might add to the hardships of the population—the *Sanbetsu* trade unions (JCIU) expelled the management and took over the managing of the factories themselves until the settlement of the dispute."[13] This practice spread far and wide and was very effective, but in December 1946 it was declared illegal.

In Western Germany the controlling American generals, with the aid of the strong Social Democracy, were able to suppress virtually all strikes and other mass movements during the early post-war years. But in Japan MacArthur could not do this, as the right Social Democracy there was weaker. Nevertheless, he intervened brusquely to block movements

which he considered dangerous. He attempted to prohibit the May First demonstration of 1946, which was a gigantic affair; he refused passports to the delegates to the WFTU congresses and other meetings; he made difficult the coming to Japan of the WFTU delegations of 1946-47, and especially he blocked the great general strike movement of February 1, 1947. The basis of this big movement was the government workers—principally Teachers, Railroaders, Electrical Power workers, Communications workers and Public Office workers. They were organized in several industrial unions, some independent and others affiliated to the JCIU and JFL. All told, they numbered about 2,400,000 members. From the spring of 1946 on a degree of united action was established amongst these unions by the National Council of Government and Public Office Workers Unions, headed by the left-winger Yashiro li. During and after the war the cost of living shot up about 850 percent, but the workers in the government services had averaged increases of only 20 to 40 percent.[14]

No important wage increases being forthcoming, the government workers' unions launched a strong strike movement. To head this a Joint Struggle Committee for all the government unions was organized. The reactionary Yoshida government refusing to make satisfactory wage concessions, the unions set February 1, 1947, for a general strike. The broad labor movement backed up this move, the three important labor federations and many independents establishing, on January 15, the All-Japan Joint Struggle Committee of Labor Unions, representing some 4,000,000 workers. This body also adopted a program of demands, which most of the unions favored striking for.

Japan was obviously in for a broad general strike, which General MacArthur maneuvered actively to prevent. He had the puppet Yoshida government make some minor wage concessions and he summoned in the labor leaders and tried to intimidate them into calling off the strike. These tactics failing, MacArthur, just nine hours before the strike deadline, arbitrarily forbade the walkout. The trade unions, not wanting to come to grips with the American military machine, yielded before this ukase and called off the strike movement.

This debacle weakened the trade unions, especially the left-wing, which had led the general movement. The All-Japan Joint Committee of Labor Unions was disbanded. The workers, however, established the Democratic Front Election Committee for the approaching elections and they also organized the "National Liaison Council of Labor Unions" (*Zenroren*) to bind together the various sections of the trade union movement. This included all three major federations, and they claimed

for it a membership of 5,837,000.[15] Disruptive forces were at work, however, in the movement, and these were made much worse by the advent of the cold war, beginning in 1947, and to which we shall return later on.

## THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE REMAINING ASIAN COUNTRIES

Most of the other countries of Asia, fighting to free themselves from the status of colonies, entered the post-war period with strong national liberation movements, which frequently verged into armed insurrections. Usually these movements carried with them a substantial growth of trade unionism, far beyond anything these weakly industrialized countries had known in pre-war years Almost universally, the young trade unions were founded and led by Communists, jointly with other left-wing elements. These movements, unlike the early trade unions of Europe and the United States, were not based upon the skilled crafts, but upon the large bodies of Agricultural workers, Textile workers, Miners, and Railroad workers, created by the imperialist regimes. The industrial form of union prevailed everywhere. Practically all of these organizations affiliated with the WFTU upon its foundation in 1945. Their early history was marked with many strikes and armed struggles, too numerous to mention here.

Prior to the war there was but a small trade union movement in Indonesia, and the workers were paid only six to eight cents a day. After the Japanese were expelled the unions grew rapidly. In May 1946 the Indonesian Federation of Trade Unions was formed, with 400,000 members. In November of the same year this body and other unions were combined into the Central Organization of the Workers of Indonesia (SOBSI), which at its first convention in May 1947, reported 1,222,207 members. It was made up of 20 industrial unions, one of which, the sugar workers, had 850,000 members. The union was led by the left. The Dutch government in 1947 attempted to destroy SOBSI, but failed. Not long afterward, at the end of 1949, the Indonesian people cracked the power of Dutch imperialism in the island country and achieved political independence.[16]

Under the British agreement which conceded India dominion status, Pakistan was split off from India and set up as an independent country- Its development of industry fell behind even that of India as a whole and the working class was weak, However, the trade unions in Pakistan broke away from the present unions in India and in 1917 established the Pakistan Trade Union Federation.

The workers of Burma initiated their trade union movement during the world economic crisis of 1930 and forced some recognition from the British government. The movement was wiped out during the Japanese

occupation, but it reconstituted itself in June 1945, in the All-Burma Trade Union Congress, with a membership of some 20,000.

The Ceylon Trade Union Federation, organized in 1945, had a membership of about 20,000 at its foundation and 107,995 in 1948. Counting independents, the total number of trade unionists was then 189,000. There were three national federations. In the big strike of June 1947 they all acted together. There was only a very weak labor movement prior to the war, under British imperialism.[17] The country now has nominal independence in the British Commonwealth.

The workers of Korea, who lived 36 years under Japanese imperialist domination, began to organize unions secretly as early as 1920, and in 1925 they formed a national federation. Like the workers in all these countries, however, it was only after the end of World War II that their movement took on a mass character. The Federation of Trade Unions of Northern Korea (Soviet Zone) was formed in November 1945, and by the end of 1948 it had 700,000 members. In South Korea there were two federations, with a total of 325,000 members.[18]

Prior to World War II no trade unions were recognized in Malaya by the British government. After the war, however, the workers, as in all other Far East countries, began to organize on a mass scale. In 1946 the basis was laid for the Pan-Malayan Federation of Labor, which by 1948 had 300,000 members. The country was soon to plunge into a long war of liberation which still goes on.

The Philippines, as we have seen in previous chapters, has a record of trade unionism going back as far as 1918. A national federation was established with left leadership in 1935, but this was wiped out under the Japanese occupation. As in most other Far East countries, the. working masses conducted a resistance movement against the Japanese invaders, and this continued on over into the post-war period in the Hukbalahap movement, against the American rulers. In July 1946 the country was conceded formal political independence by the United States. In 1948 there were all told some 450,000 organized workers, of whom about 300,000 were plantation workers The two principal federations were the Congress of Labor Organizations and the Federation of Philippine Workers.[19]

The workers of Thailand (Siam) also gave their trade union movement its real foundation after the war. The General Federation of Trade Unions of Siam was organized in April 1947 by Communists and other left forces. It reported 50,000 members.[20]

Indo-China (Viet-Nam) developed its first trade unions in 1928. During the Japanese occupation the workers conducted a heroic guerrilla

struggle, which after the war developed into a full-scale war for national independence under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. In May 1946, the workers reorganized into the Viet-Nam Trade Union Congress, with a membership of about 250,000. In the areas still controlled by the French only skeleton trade unions exist.[21]

Among the countries of the Near and Middle East, the one producing the most important trade union movement is Iran. The Communist-led Tudeh Party was responsible for organizing the Central Council of Unified Trade Unions in 1944, which later claimed 300,000 members.[22] The unions in Turkey and Syria, living under harsh dictatorships and in very thinly developed economies, were very weak. In Israel (Palestine), however, a strong trade union movement grew. The first trade union, of agricultural workers, was organized in 1911. The *Histadrut* (General Federation of Jewish Workers) was established in December 1920. It was founded by Social Democrats and is still controlled by them. After the end of World War II the Jewish people made a gallant and successful fight to establish a Jewish state, Israel. Since then, however, that new state has become an outpost of American imperialism in the Near East. The *Histadrut* in 1949 had some 241,794 members.[23] There is also a small federation of Arab workers in Israel.

## 49. Trade Unionism in the Americas, The British Dominions, and Africa (1945-1947)

As an organic part of the vast revolutionary wave that followed World War II there was a worldwide growth of trade unionism. This was especially marked in the early post-war period, before the world labor movement was disrupted by the "cold war." The trade union advance affected practically all countries, but as we have seen in previous chapters, it developed most spectacularly in Europe and Asia, the areas directly devastated by the war. In other continents, although there was also much trade union progress registered, this proceeded at a considerably slower pace.

### THE SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

When the war ended in the fall of 1945 the American trade unions were in the concluding phase of an unprecedented organizational advance, which began in 1935 and which by 1948 had added about a dozen million members, a 400 percent increase, to the labor movement as a whole. Between the end of 1945 and the end of 1948 the AFL raised its membership from 6,931,229 to 7,500,000; the Miners and Railroad Unions remained almost stationary, and the CIO, which had taken to con-

cealing its membership figures, stayed at an announced "6,000,000" members. The Department of Labor said that in 1946 there were 14.8 million workers under union agreements in the United States.[1] In 1955 it stated that there were some 18,000,000 trade unionists in this country.

During the three years, up to the eve of the cold war, the AFL unfolded the most venomous campaign of attack against the WFTU, which it falsely declared to be an arm of the Soviet government. In this red-baiting and ideological warfare against the left, the AFL bureaucrats were the bell-wethers for the developing anti-Soviet offensive of the monopoly capitalists of Wall Street which was then generating. At its 65th convention, in October 1946, the Executive Council of the AFL established an International Labor Relations Department, for the purpose of warring upon the WFTU.[2] To head this committee there was chosen the notorious labor-capitalist Matthew Woll, one of the most extreme reactionary elements in the United States in any party. The independent Miners and Railroad Unions, although holding aside from the WFTU, did not display the anti-left violence that characterized the AFL bureaucrats.

The CIO on the other hand, deeply influenced by its strong left-wing, took a militant stand in favor of the WFTU. Officially, the WFTU made the following comment upon the relations between itself and the CIO, "The CIO has shown constant interest in international affairs. Under the leadership of its vice-president Sidney Hillman it played an important role in the creation of the WFTU."[3] In October 1945 the CIO also sent a representative delegation to the Soviet Union, which spent considerable time there studying the Soviet system in general and the Soviet trade unions in particular. Upon its return it submitted a highly favorable report signed, among others, by the eventual bitter anti-Soviet figure James Carey, secretary-treasurer of the CIO. The delegation, enthusiastic over its Soviet visit, pledged itself "to do everything within our power to cement cordial relations with the Soviet trade unions and to establish ever closer unity between our two great countries for the maintenance of lasting peace and for growing prosperity and democratic progress." Regarding the Soviet trade unions, the delegation said: "We have been impressed by their promoting the interests of the workers, as well as by their magnificent and whole-hearted participation in winning the war and in the tasks of reconstruction.... Our observation has increased our pride in being associated with such a great trade union movement through the World Federation of Trade Unions."[4] In view of what happened later, it is well to make note of these expressions of admiration for and solidarity with the Soviet trade unions.

The Canadian trade unions, as remarked earlier, are, to the extent of

about three-fourths of their membership, connected organically with the AFL, CIO, Miners, and Railroad Brotherhoods of the United States.[5] There are three main national centers in Canada: the Trades and Labor Congress (AFL), with 558,722 members in 1955; the Canadian Congress of Labor (CIO), with 360,782 members, and the Catholic Syndicates of Quebec, with 100,312 members. In 1940 the total Canadian union membership was 400,000, and in 1945, 600,000. There was by no means such rank anti-WFTU sentiment in the Canadian unions, even those affiliated to the AFL, as in the Green brand unions in the United States. But their international policies were determined by the latter organizations, hence, they were not represented at the founding congress of the WFTU in 1945.

This situation again emphasized one of the greatest handicaps of the Canadian labor movement—the fact that the bulk of the trade unions in Canada have their policies laid out for them by ultra-conservative labor bureaucrats in another (oppressor) country. On this point the well-known Canadian Communist Party and trade union leader, Tim Buck, remarks: "The situation in which the head offices of most Canadian unions are in the USA means that trade union policy in Canada is decisively influenced by the needs of US imperialism, and not of Canada."[6] The subordination of the Canadian trade unions to reactionary American labor leaders helps vastly in the active drive of American imperialism to make a US satellite of Canada, both economically and politically. The AFL and CIO Canadian unions are being united now in the current merger movement.

## THE LATIN AMERICAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

During the war the countries of Latin America became primarily suppliers of raw materials to the allied powers on the democratic side. This included not only foodstuffs and industrial crops, but also various mineral ores. In the war years also, with the supplies of foreign goods practically cut off, there was a moderate spurt in industrial production in Latin America, accomplished mostly by speeding up the existing plants, rather than the building of new facilities. These gains, however, were immediately threatened upon the end of the war by the re-influx of foreign imperialist competition. In general, the industrial backwardness of Latin America, under imperialist strangulation, may be gauged by the fact that it produces only two percent as much steel as the United States.

The war resulted in strengthening the imperialist grip of the United States in Latin America. Its rivals Germany, Japan, and Italy, were largely driven out of the area, and the power of Great Britain was much weak-

ened. From 1938 to 1948 the Latin American investments of Great Britain declined from 774,000,000 pounds to 314,000,000 pounds while those of the United .States increased from 2.6 billion dollars to 4.1 billion dollars.[7] Lombardo Toledano sums up the situation: "Among the changes undergone by these countries, the most far-reaching is certainly the increase of their economic dependence upon the greatest imperialist power in history, the United States of America."[8] The Labor Research Association, in 1954, gave an indication of what domination by the United States means to these countries economically. It pointed out that during the past eight years—1946-1953 inclusive—US private corporations have taken out 22 times more money from Latin American countries than the US government has put into all types of economic, technical, and social aid to that region. That is, the US obtained during this period $5.8 billion "in return for roughly $189 million in various forms of lend-lease, technical aid, funds for hoof-and-mouth disease eradication, etc., which came out of the pockets of US taxpayers." Meanwhile, the American corporations have reinvested $1.6 billions to secure more profits in the future.[9] The general effects of this pumping out of the wealth of Latin America are still lower living standards and increased political oppression for the toiling masses in this vast area, which has a population about equal to that of the United States.

The CTAL (sec chapters 18 and 39) came out of the war period intact as the head of the labor movement of Latin America, although reactionary forces-decayed Social Democrats, demoralized An arch [s| elements, agents of Yankee imperialism—were already whetting their knives to slash it. Even the Social Democrat, Alexander, has to admit that, "During World War II, the CTAL... contained virtually all important trade union groups in Latin America."[10]

At the second congress of the WFTU in July 1949, Lombardo Toledano, head of the CTAL, thus pictures the struggle of the Latin American labor movement in the early post-war years: "In the face of conditions of greater poverty... the working class finds itself obliged to struggle vigorously by all means at its disposal and it has done so uninterruptedly during the last three years. Great demonstrations against the cost of living, great strike movements have taken place in all countries, but particularly in Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Colombia. Even in countries where during this period of time and up to the present the trade union movement has been subjected to the influence of reactionary governments, such as that of Argentina, or of cliques of traitorous leaders like the CTM in Mexico, the movement of working class and peasant struggle has reached great dimensions."[11]

## THE TRADE UNIONS OF AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, AND SOUTH AFRICA

In previous chapters we have reviewed the early post-war situation in the British dominions of India and Canada; now let us glance at the others. Australia (see chapter 18) has a trade union movement dating back over a century. Although controlled by Social Democrats, the movement has a record of much militancy and progressive fighting spirit. It has always possessed an active and influential left-wing, particularly in periods of working-class offensive—first the IWW and left Socialists, then the British type Syndicalists, and nowadays the Communists. After World War I the Australian workers succeeded in winning the 46-hour week, and after World War II, the 40-hour week.

Characteristically, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) took an active part in forming the WFTU. Even before that body was organized it proposed that the wartime Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee be broadened to include the Australian labor unions. Powerfully organized in the economic field and in the Labor Party, the unions in 1945 claimed 1,500,000 members,[12] or about 65 percent of the organizable elements; but they listed only 625,000 members upon the founding of the WFTU. In the early post-war years the Australian workers, together with their brothers in New Zealand, gave active support to the people of Indonesia in revolutionary fight against Dutch imperialism and for national independence.

New Zealand has a labor movement in many respects similar to that of Australia—with a well-organized Labor Party and with potentially powerful trade unions. They also are generally led by right Social Democrats, but the left-wing has always exerted considerable influence. These trade unions also date back over a century, railways, banks, telephone system, aviation, and broadcasting of New Zealand were already nationalized, and at the end of World War I the labor movement was demanding also the nationalization of coal and transport. The New Zealand Federation of Labor, which was active in the formation of the WFTU, had 165,000 members in 1945, 190,000 in 1946, and 250,000 in 1948.

The trade unions in the Union of South Africa, as we have remarked in chapter 18, have had a quite different history than those of the other British dominions. They have been stunted in their growth numerically and also in their ideology by their attempt, despite the efforts of the left-wing, to build the trade unions solely upon the basis of white workers. This white chauvinist policy reflected the ultra-reactionary program of both British imperialism and the Dominion government to set up a situa-

tion whereby a handful of white exploiters could rob and oppress, under an organized color bar, the overwhelming Negro majority in the country. Despite all efforts to keep them unorganized, the Negro workers had succeeded by the time of the first congress of the WFTU in 1945 in building up a trade union membership of some 150,000, about 80,000 of them in Johannesburg. These Negro workers were denied passports to attend the founding congress of the WFTU.[13] At the end of World War II the South African Trades and Labor Council (white) was listed by the WFTU as having 70,000 members.

## THE PEOPLES' AWAKENING IN AFRICA

Throughout the vast continent of Africa the many peoples long oppressed by British, French, Dutch, German, Italian, Belgian, Spanish, Portuguese and American imperialism, are rapidly awakening and. they are developing a huge and complex struggle for national independence. In the main, together with its normal specifically African features, this great movement is following the general line of that in Asia. All these peoples are striving to throw off the capitalist parasites and to establish free regimes to their own liking. The African national colonial revolution, in tune with the struggling masses all over the world, was given a powerful impulse by World War II. As everywhere else in the colonial world, the African peoples in striking back at their imperialist exploiters and oppressors, are building, as one of their major weapons, a trade union movement.

The imperialist subjugation of Africa was one of the most terrible dramas in human history. For four centuries, from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the European and American plantation masters raided Africa for slaves, carrying off or murdering during this brutal enslavement at least 60,000,000 of its people. With the growth of world capitalism and the glutting of the market for chattel slaves, the capitalists learned that it was a far more profitable process to steal the rich lands of Africa and to exploit the peoples in their home territories. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, therefore, they began a new and still more terrible rape of Africa. Within two decades the six leading European imperialist powers grabbed about 80 percent of the African continent, fighting like a pack of wolves over their prey. Great Britain, France, and Belgium got the lion's share of the booty. During the two world wars Germany and Italy were stripped of such African territories as they had previously managed to seize. The African peoples, overwhelmingly Negro, fought desperately against this land robbery and enslavement, but they were eventually beaten into submission in some of the most terrible

of modern wars.

In despoiling Africa of its rich agricultural, timber, and mineral wealth, the imperialists established systems of exploitation which, for brutality and cynical disregard of human life, have never been surpassed in modern times. The tribesmen, dispossessed of their lands, were forced to labor on the plantations and in the mines for a few cents a day. Consequently, destitution was the common lot, sickness and undernourishment enveloped the peoples, and their original cultures collapsed under the alien pressures.

It is to the eternal disgrace of the Second International that it never took up a serious fight against this monstrous African system of imperialist colonialism. On the contrary, its right opportunist leaders tended to ignore this outrage, or even to apologize for it as one of the harsh necessities of the capitalist system. This was quite in line with their pro-capitalist ideology. The various subjugated peoples they held to be incapable of self-government, and argued that they would be ready to be freed only after a long colonial apprenticeship. It was not until the advent of the Communist movement, md especially of the great Lenin, in the period of the Russian Revolution of 1917, that the organized workers of the world came to understand that it was one of their historic tasks in the fight against capitalism to join hands with the colonial and semi-colonial peoples in their growing struggle against imperialism.

The peoples of Africa never became reconciled to imperialist domination of their countries. This fact is fully attested to by the many uprisings and wars that they conducted through the years, usually against hopeless odds and without clear objectives. Not to mention the bitter wars that went before—during the last half century, especially the Spanish, Italian, and German exploiters felt the wrath of the fighting tribesmen, particularly in the northern deserts, areas which were very difficult to subjugate. The story of the heroic struggles of the African peoples against their oppressors is a great historical epic, as yet unwritten.

Today Africa is seething with revolt, which bears a definite anti-imperialist character. Many factors have contributed to bringing about this growing revolutionary movement, which extends from Egypt and Morocco in the North to the Union of South Africa in the South. Among these awakening factors may be listed: the growth of a proletariat throughout Africa; the developing political maturity of the African peoples under the hard pressures of imperialism; the inspiring influence of the Russian Revolution; the stimulating example of the victorious struggle of the colonial peoples in Asia and elsewhere, and the enormous influence of the rise of Communism throughout the world, with its basic

stress upon the fight against colonialism. The African anti-colonial movement is one of the many elementary manifestations of the general crisis of the world capitalist system. Colonialism is doomed, no less definitely in Africa than in Asia and Latin America.

In chapter 18 we have indicated some of the earlier aspects of trade unionism in Africa. Now that movement has become widespread, an organic part of the vast national liberation struggle. There are the beginnings of a strong trade union movement in the British, French, Spanish, and Italian colonies and erstwhile colonies. In the northern range of countries of Africa, in Algeria, there is a trade union movement of some 350,000 workers, affiliated to the CGT of France. In Morocco the General Union of Confederated Trade Unions of Morocco, also affiliated to the CGT, had in 1946 a membership of about 55,000, of whom 33,000 were Moroccans. In Tunisia the National Federation of Workers, formerly affiliated to the CGT, was constituted as an independent body in 1946, with 33,000 members.[14] In the Egyptian Sudan the labor movement dates back to 1932, and in 1946 it established its first national central federation, which by 1950 had an estimated membership of 30,000.[15]

"The trade union movement of French Equatorial Africa and West Africa includes 13 federations of trade unions affiliated to the French CGT, with a total of some 80,000 members"[16] located on the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Dakar, Nigeria, Senegal, and Mauritania, the Sudan, Guinea, Haute-Volta, and the Cameroons. The CGT also has two trade unions in Madagascar, with 10,000 members. These French areas are the territories where most of the victims came from for the infamous slave trade of yesteryear. In the British West African colonies there are also a number of trade unions. Among these may be mentioned the Nigerian Trades Union Congress, with about 53,000 members in 100 unions; the Gambia Labor Union of 50,000 members, and the Sierra Leone Trades Union Council, with eleven unions of some 10,000 members.[17] In British South Africa the most important trade unions are the Northern Rhodesia Mine Workers Union, and the labor unions in the Union of South Africa, with which we have dealt in the previous chapter. There are also important labor activities in Kenya and elsewhere.[18]

The African unions are made up of workers characteristic of colonial regimes—principally Agricultural workers, Miners, and Railroad workers. The skilled trades are carried on mostly by whites and they often play a minor part in the local labor movements. The African trade unions are confronted with elementary tasks, the raising of the abysmally low wage rates, reduction of the long working day, urgent questions of housing and education, enactment of the beginnings of laws for safety and

health and for social insurance, and a struggle against the color bar (Jim Crow system), especially in the British colonies and dominions.

The World Federation of Trade Unions, from the outset, has paid great attention to the organization of colonial workers, including the African Negroes. One of the most striking features of the three world congresses which it has held up to date has been the strong delegations of colonial workers. In April 1947 a conference of African unions was held in Dakar, with 60 delegates of 21 organizations present, representing 800,000 workers.[19] In October 1951, at Bamako in the Sudan, the WFTU and CGT held a conference of 144 delegates from 14 countries,[20] In this general respect the WFTU is carrying forward the pioneering work of the Red International of Labor Unions, of decades before. One of the most significant steps in this direction taken by the RILU, was the holding of a world conference of Negro workers in Hamburg, Germany, on July 7-10, 1930, to which came a number of pioneer trade unionists from many countries of Negro America and Africa.[21]

## 50. The Beginning of the Cold War (1947-1949)

To oppose the big revolutionary upsurge that took place after World War II there was bound to develop a strong capitalist counter-revolutionary movement. The experience in connection with the first world war taught this elementary lesson. In earlier chapters we have seen how, in response to the tremendous revolutionary storm which began in Europe with the advent of the Russian Revolution in November, 1917, the employers, to save their social system in the various countries and on a world-scale, were quick to pull their war-shattered forces together again and to launch a counter-revolutionary attack against the rebellious workers.

This employers' offensive, which had already begun by 1918 in Eastern Europe, took on greater force with the passage of the years. It grew into fascism, and it finally culminated in the attempt of the Anti-Comintern pact countries—Germany, Japan, and Italy—to dominate the world through World War II. As we have also seen, the most powerful ally the capitalists had among the masses in this long counter-revolutionary drive was the right Social Democracy, whose special function it was, on behalf of threatened capitalism, to blunt the fighting capacity of the workers and to confuse and demoralize them in the face of the advancing enemy. Without this help from the Social Democracy the employers, hard hit by World War 1 and the Russian Revolution, never could have saved what they did of European capitalism.

## THE DRIVE OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM FOR WORLD CONQUEST

The forward surge of the workers following World War II, which we have analyzed in the previous six chapters, was soon met by a powerful capitalist counter-offensive. This time it was the United States, dominated by the biggest and wealthiest monopolies in the world, which gave leadership to the capitalist forces. The United States economy and government are dominated by powerful monopolies: "one-tenth of one percent of all the corporations earned 50 per cent of the total corporate net income, less than 4 percent of all the manufacturing corporations earned 84 percent of all net profits of all manufacturing concerns. Sixty-six corporations have assets of one billion or more."[1] This country of big business finally unfolded a bitter attack against the USSR, the Chinese Revolution, the European people's democracies, and the great mass organizations that the workers and peasants had succeeded in building up in so many countries during and following the great war. This was the beginning of the so-called cold war.

The drive of American imperialism was not simply to defend the capitalist system from the attacks of the advancing revolutionary forces of the world—although fear for the safety of the system was definitely a powerful element in this situation. The American-led capitalist attack went much beyond mere defense: it was essentially offensive and its general aim was to reduce the world, both its Socialist and capitalist sectors, to the sway of Wall Street big business. Essentially this counter-revolutionary offensive was akin historically with that of Hitler and his allies. Its basic ultimate aims were to destroy world Socialism and democracy, to replace them by a revamped brand of fascism, and to establish the world-control of American monopoly capital through another great war, this time an atomic devastation.

Concretely, American imperialism has been striving in the cold war, (a) to overthrow the Socialist governments of the USSR, People's China, and the European people's democracies, and to re-establish capitalism there; (b) to re-arm Germany and Japan as American puppet states; (c) to penetrate and capture the European markets; (d) to undermine the strength of the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires to its own benefit; (e) to tighten American controls over all of Latin America; (f) to turn the Mediterranean Sea into an American lake and to control the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; (g) to dominate the airways of the whole world; (h) to reduce the United Nations to a sort of auxiliary of the American government; and (i) to make the United States the industrial center and Washington the political capital of the world.

Various powerful forces have impelled the American imperialists along this aggressive course. As far and away the most powerful of all the capitalist countries the United States, which is in the grip of big business, inevitably grasps at the mirage of world domination. Its capitalist masters believe that such a course, involving the building of a gigantic military machine, will guarantee them endlessly their present enormous profits and more. They are also convinced that only in this way, by such artificial stimulation, can they keep their basically sick economic system from collapsing into a profound economic crisis. They believe, furthermore, that only they, with their superior techniques and know-how, will be able to save and maintain obsolete world capitalism, for the safety of which they entertain grave fears. This fascist dream, organically the same as Hitler's, is the product of a world capitalist system—obsolete, cancer-eaten, and sinking ever deeper into general crisis.

Wall Street's campaign for world domination is being conducted far more cunningly, however, than Hitler's was. Whereas the Nazis and their allies filled the air with clamor for war and against democracy in principle (despite their use of Socialist names and slogans), the American reactionaries are carrying on their drive for world mastery under hypocritical pretenses of the defense of world democracy and peace. They are also generally making a more skillful use of the fascist big lie of the "Communist menace." Even the most enormous military organizations and the most aggressive diplomatic war policies arc placed before the people as innocent defense moves in behalf of threatened humanity. The Wall Street tiger wears a disguise of sheep's hide—but with its stripes showing around the edges.

In its drive for world mastery American imperialism, in addition to its formal capitalist allies and puppet states, has had in its general support, two powerful forces, the chief purpose of which has been to confuse and disorganize the workers and the masses of the people. The first of these is the Vatican. As never before, the Vatican has been very active politically during the post-World War II period. With the traditional bourgeois parties of capitalism smeared with fascism and discredited all over Europe, the Vatican stepped into the picture and organized the principal parties for the defense of capitalism and in support of the general line of American imperialism. Thus, in West Germany, France, and Italy (not to mention other countries) the Vatican forces have the three leading political parties.

The second major organization of mass support for capitalism in this most critical period of its existence is the right Social Democracy, including the trade unions which follow the lead of this element. As we

have seen in preceding chapters dealing with the revolutionary struggles of the workers in Europe and elsewhere, the right Social Democrats are fundamentally enemies of Socialism and supporters of the capitalist system. They do not aim at the replacement of capitalism by the new structure of Socialism, but the gradual revamping of that system in a liberal direction, leaving the basic machinery and profits of capitalist exploitation intact. The experience since the Russian Revolution has made it perfectly clear that they are ardent defenders of capitalism. Logically and inevitably therefore, in the post-World War II period, all over Europe the right Socialists lined up, cheek-by-jowl, with the Catholic parties in the capitalist governments supported and maintained by American imperialism. They also held the fort for capitalism in Great Britain, along with the Tories.

## TRUMAN DOCTRINE, MARSHALL PLAN, ATLANTIC PACT

During the latter stages of the war, as we have remarked in chapter 43, the American and British imperialists had followed a strategy based upon the assumption that they would take over world domination once the war was over, with the United States in the driver's seat. The first definite sign of this aggressive policy going into effect, in the post-war situation, was the announcement of the so-called Truman doctrine by President Truman on March 12, 1947. This action took the form of a $200,000,000 loan, mainly in military supplies, to the Greek and Turkish governments, both near-fascist dictatorships. The practical effect was that the United States, with the connivance of the British Labor government, took over the job of shooting down the Greek people's democracy, a job which the British had been trying in vain to accomplish for the past three years.

The Truman doctrine was a sinister move and it bared a large and dangerous phase of the post-war conquest policy of the United States. This was the fact that the United States, the most powerful capitalist state and would-be world master, was already assuming the right to dictate what type of government the various peoples, in this case the Greeks, might or might not have. This first open aggression in Europe was soon followed by others. It was only two months after this that the Communists, upon American insistence, were forced out of the coalition governments of France, Italy, and Belgium. Also, in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, as we have seen, it was the American ambassador who brazenly tried, but failed, to bring about the overthrow of that people's democracy by causing the simultaneous resignation of 17 bourgeois ministers from the Cabinet. And in the crucial elections in Italy in April 1948

the United States government went so far in its intimidation policy that it had a fleet stationed nearby in the Mediterranean to prevent an expected left-wing political victory. These were the beginnings of the arrogant policies of domination over other governments that Washington has since pursued so assiduously.

The Truman doctrine was followed quickly by another aggressive move, this time in the financial field. This was the promulgation of the so-called Marshall plan. That is, on the basis of a speech by Secretary of State George C. Marshall on June 5, 1947, the United States offered the various European capitalist countries big loans and grants, presumably for the purpose of aiding their industrial recovery, but actually to bring them under American economic and military controls.[2] This was the beginning of the huge financial aid enterprise, the European Recovery Program (ERP), which was to cost the American people all told about 13 billion dollars in the next four years and was to place almost every important capitalist government in the world upon the American payroll. It was the basis of the United States plan to establish a degree of hegemony or domination over the other capitalist countries, and with them also of the United Nations, such as had never before existed in capitalist world history. This summed up to a big advantage for Wall Street's general program of world conquest, and it created a new world war danger.

At first the pretense was made that Washington loans and grants would also be made to the USSR and the people's democracies, as they had all been recent war allies. But this pretense was soon exposed. In July 1947, when the Marshall plan was discussed among the European war allies and the Soviet delegate Molotov proposed conditions of acceptance that would protect the sovereignty and economic interests of the various nations receiving American funds, no agreement could be reached. On the basis of the Marshall plan the United States, as a major phase of its conquest policy, thus split the anti-fascist alliance that had won World War II. The cold war was on its way.

The real meaning of the Marshall plan was the re-arming of capitalist Europe under American leadership against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies. It also provided a powerful means for American big business to penetrate the economies of the 16 European countries that agreed to the plan—as the bulk of the "aid" from the United States was in the form of goods. The Western European countries, ravaged by the war, were in no position, under their capitalist regimes, to make protective bargains against the oppressive conditions laid down by the Americans. John Gunther said of the situation, "It is my honest belief that if American aid were withdrawn from Greece the Greek government could

not survive ten days. Nor could the governments of France and Italy survive more than a few weeks or months."[3] Great Britain and a whole row of other European capitalist countries were little, if any, better off.

The Marshall plan was followed, in April 1949, by the North Atlantic Pact. This was the anti-Soviet military alliance beginning to take shape. Under American pressures the Marshall plan countries were spending greater sums for military purposes than they were receiving from the United States. Dutt says, "Economic and political intervention, which was previously conducted in the name of the Marshall plan and the alleged aims of 'recovery,' was now conducted on a far more extensive scale in the name of the requirements of military preparedness, strategic plans and unification of command, and the prosecution of the 'cold war'."[4]

The whole program of the Truman doctrine, Marshall plan, and North Atlantic Pact was conducted to the tune of a defense against a mythical "red menace," and with main reliance upon the American monopoly of the atomic bomb, A policy of "get-tough-with-Russia"—"atomic diplomacy"—was initiated. Military appropriations in the United States soared, and this country began to build air bases all over the world, aimed against the USSR. The cold war became more and more bitterly waged. In the United States open propaganda was made of "knocking out" the Soviet Union with a "preventive" shower of atomic bombs. The United Nations became a servile tool of American policy.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the home of the atom-bomb, the imperialists, as part of their program of conquest and war, began to introduce a whole series of national and state laws and governmental decrees of a distinctly fascist character. The general purpose of all this was so to intimidate the workers and other democratic masses that they would be unable to make any real resistance to Wall Street's policy of world domination and military aggression. The Taft Hartley law, seriously crippling the rights of the unions, was enacted 'by Congress; loyalty tests were established in the government services, in the school system, in industry, and elsewhere; the leaders of the Communist Party were arrested on the grounds that they were "teaching and advocating the violent overthrow of the government." McCarthyism began to develop, and fascism became a real danger in the United States.

## DIVISION IN THE RANKS OF LABOR

The Wall Street imperialists, with their policies of world conquest and war, had succeeded in transforming into two hostile camps the wartime grand alliance that had saved the world from fascist slavery; it was

not long also until it had created, nationally and on a world scale, the most serious divisions in the ranks of organized labor, in both the economic and political fields. Especially the trade unions were the victims of this organized disruption.

The right Social Democrats nearly everywhere automatically rallied to the aid of American imperialism, with its virulent anti-Soviet slanders, its huge financial handouts, and its aggressive imperialist policies. Especially they were entirely in sympathy with Wall Street's program of preserving capitalism from the threat of proletarian and colonial revolution. By the beginning of the post-World War II period the counter-revolutionary role of the right Social Democrats, as saviors of capitalism, had long been thoroughly established and they spontaneously took to it again. Had they not, during 1918-23, saved Germany from Socialism, and had they not also successfully sabotaged proposals for a united, organized fight in Europe—a fight full of revolutionary possibilities—to prevent the rise of German and Italian fascism? They were perfectly in character, therefore, when they became a major force in the counter-revolutionary movement launched by the United States after World War II.

The leading Social Democratic Party in Europe at this time was the Labor Party, which was then standing at the helm of the British government. With its prestige, it was taking the lead generally in pulling together again the various national Socialist parties, which had been smashed by the Hitlerite regime. The United States took care of the role of the Labor Party by extending to the British government the enormous loan of $3,750,000,000 on July 13, 1946, a loan which was soon followed by huge grants under the Marshall plan. The wild-eyed anti-Socialist capitalists of the United States were astounded at themselves in thus supporting a government which was supposed to be building Socialism. But it was a very canny move, which eventually paid them handsome dividends. It sewed up the alliance between American imperialism and the right Social Democracy. Thenceforth, the Attlees and Bevins took the lead in singing praises of the "generosity" and the "disinterested help" of the Americans, and the Labor Party was eventually everywhere in the forefront in lining up the half-dead Socialist parties to champion the Marshall plan and the rest of Wall Street's program.

Meanwhile, inevitably the Communist and other left-wing forces in Europe and elsewhere were developing a stand against the Truman doctrine and especially against the Marshall plan. The failure of the July 1947 meeting, at which the Marshall plan was formally launched, to arrive at a just and reasonable basis for American help in restoring war-

ravaged Europe, convinced the left generally that there was nothing in the whole scheme for the European peoples other than hardships and danger. The United States had become enormously wealthy during the war, and it was obvious that it was going to use this vast financial strength as a means to establish its hegemony over the other nations of the earth.

The Communist and broad left opposition to the Marshall plan and the aggressive imperialist program generally took on concrete shape at a meeting of nine major European Communist parties, held in September 1947, in Poland. The parties were those of the USSR, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, France, Yugoslavia*, Rumania, and Hungary. At the conference these parties set up the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), to secure a measure of cooperation among themselves—the Communist International having been dissolved in May 1943. The Cominform was never extended beyond these nine countries.

The Cominform took a sharp stand against the Marshall plan, the Truman doctrine, and the rest of the aggressive program of Wall Street imperialism. The resolution of the Conference declared that, "The Truman-Marshall plan is only a constituent part, the European section, of the general plan of world expansionist policy carried out by the United States in all parts of the world.... The aggressors of yesterday—the capitalist magnates of Germany and Japan—are being prepared by the United States for a new role—to become the instrument of the imperialist policy of the United States in Europe and Asia. Anglo-American aggression has split the world into two camps—the imperialistic and anti-democratic camp, which has as a main aim the establishment of American imperialism and the smashing of democracy; and the anti-imperialist and democratic camp, which has as a main aim the undermining of imperialism and the strengthening of democracy and the liquidation of the remnants of fascism." This did not mean, however, that the whole world was solidly lined up in the two camps. The resolution also warned sharply against the growing danger of a new world war, and it called upon the Communist parties to give a lead to the peoples of Europe in defending the national independence and sovereignty of their respective countries against the dangerous threat from American imperialism.[5]

These sharp differences between the Socialist and Communist parties over the Marshall plan and the rest of the American imperialist program, inevitably reflected themselves also in the trade unions. The right Social Democrats interpreted this situation as the signal for a trade union split.

* Yugoslavia broke with the Cominform group one year later.

The idea of their working within labor unions, probably in the minority, and seeking to win them to support their general position, had become quite foreign to their whole conception. They had long since adopted the policy of splitting all trade unions that they could not control and, with the help of the employers and the government setting up labor organizations dominated by themselves. This union-smashing is class collaboration in its deepest degeneracy. This had been their settled policy for over twenty-five years, since the days of the German Revolution. During the anti-Hitler war and the post-war revolutionary upsurge, it is true, they had been compelled, under the current strong mass pressure, to accept some measure of unity with the left, but now, with the dispute over the Marshall plan to confuse matters, they concluded that the time was ripe for them to revert to their standard policy of splitting all unions that they could not dominate.

This splitting policy of the right Social Democracy fitted in perfectly with the interests and aims of the American imperialists, who above all else wanted to break up and ruin the splendid, united trade unions that the workers had built up so effectively upon the end of World War II. The next years, therefore, were to sec one of the most tragic situations in the history of the world labor movement—with the Social Democrats, aided brazenly by the employers and the state, seeking everywhere to split the trade union movement along the line of "right" and "left," and with the Communists and other progressives, supported by the bulk of the world's workers, fighting relentlessly to preserve labor unity, internationally and in the various countries. The splitting activities of the Social Democrats, beginning in 1947, constituted one of the most treacherous acts in their long record of betrayal of the working class. Our next four chapters will be devoted specifically to the unfoldment of this deadly crime against organized labor.

## 51. The WFTU Split: The ICFTU Formed (1947-1949)

American imperialism set as one of its early and major objectives in the cold war the splitting and wrecking of the World Federation of Trade Unions. This splendid international represented the highest level of world trade union organization which the workers had ever attained, and the imperialists decided it simply had to go. Wall Street could not hope to make any serious progress with its grandiose scheme of establishing hegemony over the world and of preparing for a new world war against the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, if it were to continue to

be confronted by a united and alert world labor movement under progressive leadership. Therefore, at all costs, the WFTU had to be destroyed and the unity of labor in the various countries broken up.

To accomplish this labor-wrecking necessarily required an "inside job"; it had to be done primarily by forces within the labor movement itself, by treacherous elements who were willing to place themselves at the disposal of the capitalists and to support them in their imperialist policies. For this reactionary task a perfect instrument was at hand in the right-wing Social Democrats, who during the past generation had already accumulated a world of experience in this general respect. These confirmed, violent haters of Socialism in practice and ardent defenders of capitalism, had long since proved their willingness to carry out the most drastic attacks, under the master's orders, against the left.

Inasmuch as the United States was the leader in the big post-war drive of reaction, the American monopoly capitalists undertook especially to press into their labor-splitting service "their own" right Social Democratic leaders, the heads of the AFL and the CIO.* These elements were assigned the role of chief union-smashers, in trying to clear away the great labor obstruction standing in the way of the advance of American imperialism. Nothing loath, the AFL bureaucrats, themselves blatant labor imperialists and open advocates of the capitalist system, willingly took on this work of treason to world organized labor. The CIO leaders, however, were a bit slower, as they had a strong left-wing to contend with. However, they did finally plunge into the union-breaking up to their necks and furnished many of the most malignant figures in this filthy work. They were facilitated in their attack upon the WFTU by the fact that Sidney Hillman, the strongest internationalist among them, died July 10, 1946.

Consequently, the AFL-CIO top leaders became the head union-splitters for Wall Street imperialism—in Europe, in Asia, in Latin America, and in the United States, although they tried to cover up these activities by alleging them to be in the interest of peace and the working class. With batteries of disorganizes in the field, operating out of well-furnished offices, the American trade union leaders spent large amounts of money in their splitting work. Much of these funds came out of their own treasuries, but they also had access to the huge sums, literally several billion dollars yearly, that the United States, under the Marshall plan

* Although these elements do not advocate Socialism, nevertheless, their basic functions as conservative trade union leaders are otherwise identical with those of the characteristic right-wing union leaders in Europe.

and otherwise, was then squandering all over the world. The servile labor misleaders everywhere worked hand-in-glove with the U.S. State Department, which got its basic program from Wall Street monopoly capital. With their practically identical polices, it was impossible to tell just where the State Department left off and where the labor leadership began. Never in the whole history of the world labor movement had it confronted such a thoroughly organized and lavishly financed campaign of strikebreaking and union-wrecking.

The direct material interest of the pro-capitalist American labor leaders in all this shameful imperialist pro-war campaign was that they counted upon sharing in the loot to be won by American imperialism. It was as simple and cynical as that. Meany and the others figured upon their union treasuries rolling in wealth (as indeed they are) from the fictitious prosperity brought about by Wall Street's war economy; they expected to reap much adulation and favorable publicity (as they are doing) from the capitalist press, the employers, and the government; and they looked forward with assurance to becoming the leaders of the new world labor movement that they were forming (and they have become the dictatorial bosses of the ICFTU). It all amounted to a campaign of labor imperialism, dovetailing at every point with the general program of imperialist expansion and conquest projected by American monopoly capital.

## THE CLASH OVER THE MARSHALL PLAN

The announcement of the Marshall plan in June 1947 was the signal for the ever-willing right Social Democrats to split the WFTU, The only reason they had gone along with this progressive organization in the first place was because they could not do otherwise, in view of the radical mood of the workers at the end of World War II. But reluctant cooperators, they were quick to grasp the fact that the Marshall plan offered them the splitting issue that they sought. Only a few weeks alter the plan was announced, as the WFTU states, a meeting was held in Switzerland of AFL and CIO representatives with the renegade Lovestone present, where it was decided that if they could not compel the WFTU to accept the Marshall plan they would split it and organize a new movement.[1]

At its first Congress in October 1945, the WFTU had adopted a plan of international aid and economic rehabilitation among the various countries. This called for: "(a) To increase industrialization and agricultural technical progress under democratic control in all backward countries, in order to free them from their present position of dependence and to improve the standard of living of their population. (b) To see that this program is not used for monopolistic profiteering interests, native or foreign,

which would injure the legitimate national and social interests of these countries, (c) To support the assistance which may be given to these countries by the technical and financial resources of advanced countries in long-term credits and other means, without permitting the latter to interfere in the internal affairs of the needy countries or to subject them to the influence of international trusts and cartels."[2]

Already at the July 1947 meeting of the European powers at which the Marshall plan was discussed it was evident that the latter had nothing in common with the democratically controlled international aid envisaged by the WFTU. The M-plan was demonstrated to be a scheme which would bring capitalist Europe under the economic and political tutelage of the United States, as it soon did. This imperialist set-up did not in the least appall the conservative American trade union leaders, however; nor were the British repelled by it. Already it was being made clear that in the imperialist drive that the United States was beginning to unfold Great Britain was slated to be some sort of a minor partner, but one held tightly in check.

The issue of the Marshall plan was injected into the WFTU at the November 1947 meeting of its Executive Bureau. Although the question was not on the agenda of the meeting, Carey of the CIO, a militant apostle of American imperialism, with his characteristic arrogance announced beforehand that he would speak upon the M-plan nevertheless. He was allowed to state his views, and the matter was duly scheduled for discussion at the next meeting of the Bureau. This arrangement did not suit the M-plan advocates, however, and hardly had the session ended than they began an active campaign to have another Bureau meeting called immediately to discuss the Marshall plan.

By the end of 1947 the right-wing elements in the WFTU undoubtedly had decided upon a split and they were assembling their forces to put through the M-plan in the WFTU at any cost. The AFL was already openly advocating a split—and its October 1947 convention unanimously endorsed a resolution submitted by David Dubinsky to this general effect. The AFL leaders, however, badly discredited in the eyes of European labor because of their notoriously reactionary and disruptive activities, were unable to take the official lead in organizing the split and had to defer to the British.[3] The latter leaders, long soaked in class collaborationism, were not slow to head the disruptive work. Consequently, at its meeting on January 28, 1948, the British TUC sent the WFTU an ultimatum to the effect that if the Executive Bureau were not convened by the middle of February (two weeks hence), with the Marshall plan on its agenda, they would feel free to call an international conference of all trade unions favoring that plan.[4]

The date for the next Bureau meeting was duly announced for April 30, which was as soon as it could properly be organized. The British, however, considered these few weeks delay intolerable, so they called a conference in London on March 9, 1948, of all the labor movements in the Marshall plan countries. The CGT of France and the CGIL of Italy, with some 10,000,000 members, did not attend; but the AFL, CIO, the West German trade unions and others, all led by conservatives, were present. The conference endorsed the M-plan, declared it to be free of any element of American political dictation, called upon the workers everywhere to give it their wholehearted support, and set up a Trade Union Advisory Committee to work for the Marshall plan. This international conference was a direct challenge to the WFTU—the first real step towards a general split. The AFL reactionaries were especially joyful at the prospect of international disruption that had opened up.

Meanwhile, the capitalist governments went ahead organizing the application of the Marshall plan. On April 3, 1948, by the signing of the Foreign Assistance Act, the plan became official American policy, and a couple of weeks later tbc sixteen European nations which had agreed to accept aid under the M-plan, established the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). All this activity was closely supervised and organized by the U.S. State Department, At one blow, Wall Street was trying to take over the management of Europe, as in fact it soon largely did. The American capitalists and their labor lackeys believed that in the Marshall plan they had an invincible weapon; that in view of the war-ravaged state of Europe and the semi-starvation conditions prevailing among the peoples, no government, not even of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, much less any trade unions, would dare to refuse the American offer of "aid," even with all the political strings that were attached But they were due for a few surprises in this respect; the revolutionary countries and labor movements could not be forced to put on the collar of Wall Street.

## THE SPLIT IN THE WFTU

The next several months were a period of confusion and quarrelling in the WFTU. In Rome, at the end of April 1948, the Executive Bureau met. Endorsement of the Marshall Plan was rejected and the Soviet trade union delegates, in a final effort to save world labor unity, came forward with a proposal, which was adopted, that each national trade union center should be left to follow its own policy on the M-plan question. But the British and American representatives were opposed to this unity proposition. With a show of unanimity, the Bureau adopted a set of rules for the

conduct of its business, but this action could not heal the growing dissension. In line with the demands of American big capital that the WFTU must go, the conservative elements had decided finally upon a split, and they were awaiting a favorable opportunity to strike the blow.[5] By now they were definitely enlisted on the side of reaction in the cold war that American big business was organizing.

The actual split in the WFTU came on January 19, 1949, at the meeting of its Bureau in Paris. It developed around a letter from the British Trades Union Council, which proposed, in short, that the World Federation should suspend its functions and that a receivership committee of trustees he selected to take charge of the assets of the dissolved organization. This insolent letter contained a further ultimatum; that in the event of the WFTU refusing to comply with this demand of the TUC, a withdrawal of the latter would follow.[6] The letter of the TUC was based upon an action of October 27, 1948. That the CIO leaders knew well what was in the wind was seen shortly afterward, when at its convention in November, the CIO specifically refused to endorse the WFTU and authorized its Executive Board to take whatever steps it saw fit regarding the International.[7]

At the Bureau meeting on January 19th, Arthur Deakin of Great Britain, president of the WFTU, presented the TUC letter for action. He was militantly supported by Carey of the CIO, who declared arrogantly, "It is no use pretending that the WFTU is anything but a corpse. Let us bury it."[8] The disruptionists demanded that all the national trade union centers be advised to cease Federation activities at once. When asked what they would do if the majority should reject their proposition, Deakin declared that this was their business, but as for the TUC, its mind was made up. The splitters also refused to accept the holding of a world congress of the WFTU—the only competent body to consider their proposal of dissolution. They knew that they would be a minority at such a world congress. With their outrageous proposition voted down, Deakin and Carey, accompanied by Kupers, a right-wing Social Democrat of Holland, walked out of the meeting and the split was on. This secession was at once carried over into the International Trade Secretariats, and as we shall see in the following three chapters, it had already been developing in Germany, France, Italy, the Americas, and Asia. The French government backed up the splitters by closing the international headquarters of the WFTU in Paris, forcing it to re-locate in Vienna.

In order to justify their criminal action in splitting the WFTU, the American and British disrupters launched into a vicious red-baiting attack against the WFTU. They accused it of being dominated by the Rus-

sians, of being an arm of the Soviet government and of various other high crimes and misdemeanors, mostly taken from the propaganda arsenal of Goebbels and his like.

As for the charge of Russian domination of the WFTU, this was discredited on the face of the WFTU constitution. This provided that, although the Soviet trade unions had 27,000,000 members they were allotted less votes than the TUC and CIO confirmed, with their 13,500,000 members all told. Also, in the Executive Committee the USA and Great Britain (including Canada) had 5 votes against 3 for the USSR; in the General Council the ratio was 7 to 5; and in the World Congress the ratio was 235 votes to 205. Under such circumstances the charge of Russian domination was nonsense. The fact is, there had been general satisfaction at the prevailing ratio of votes on the part of the British and American unions, and it was only later on, to justify the split, that the issue of alleged domination by the Soviet trade unions was concocted.

The charge that WFTU was a vehicle for the foreign policy of the Soviet government was similarly baseless—the work of a desperate group of splitters willing to use any and all slanders to bolster their position. To understand this we have only to recall the glowing statements of Carey upon the return of the CIO delegation from visit to the Soviet Union, to the effect that they were full of "pride in being associated with such a great trade union movement (as that of the Russians) through the World Federation of Trade Unions." And no one less than Deakin himself, as late as July 21, 1948, in the *Daily Herald,* under the head, "WFTU Not Soviet Tool," repudiated the domination slander. The paper said: "Vigorous denial that the World Federation of Trade Unions was acting as a tool of Soviet imperialism was made by Mr. Arthur Deakin at the International Transport Workers Federation Congress in Oslo yesterday."[9]

## THE FORMATION OF THE ICFTU

Capitalists all over the world hailed the split in the WFTU particularly in the United States, where Wall Street had placed the destruction of that organization as one of the first and most important tasks in the drive for world domination. The reactionaries at the head of the AFL, who had long since parted company from any proletarian spirit that any of them may have had originally, were particularly joyous at the split. Under the title, "WFTU Broken Up—Next Steps for Free Trade Unions," the AFL Executive Council, on February 4, 1949, declared, "The American Federation of Labor and the free trade unions throughout the world can only vigorously applaud the severance by the British Trades Union Congress,

the CIO and the Netherlands Federation of Labor of all relations with the so-called World Federation of Trade Unions."[10] It urged the immediate formation of a new international, and it promptly began to move in this direction.

The AFL, in the spirit of imperialism which dominated its top leadership, muscled right in to take charge of the new international that was being formed. This did not sit well, however, with the British reactionaries, who had taken the lead in the split and who also reflected the hatred of British imperialism for American imperialism. But they were soon shouldered aside by the aggressive and financially well-heeled AFL leaders. The United States was rapidly taking over the leadership (domination) of capitalist Europe, and what more fitting than that the AFL should also assume control of the new labor international. Both the US government and the AFL had limitless funds to achieve their associated objectives in this respect. As for the CIO, it was still suspect, owing to the big role that the left-wing had played in its formation and up-building and it did not yet enjoy the full favor of Wall Street, such as the AFL did.

Soon there were some 100 AFL and CIO agents "loaned" to the U.S. government. After they had scurried all over Europe, Latin America, and Asia, seeking to spread the split into the various countries, a preliminary conference of the secessionist elements was held in Geneva, June 25-26, 1949. The credentials committee reported as present 127 delegates from 35 countries, representing 38 national trade union centers and 12 International Secretariats, with an estimated membership of 42,000,000,[11] an exaggeration. This was a mobilization of the trade union forces of the war-scattered Second International,* backed by the financial resources and political influence of the U.S. State Department. The conference called another meeting, to be convened in London, for the purpose of establishing a new international.

The London meeting, held during November 28 to December 9, 1949, was made up of 261 delegates, purporting to represent 59 national trade union centers in 53 countries, with a claimed membership of 48,000,000, which was an inflated figure. Of the 18 existing international trade secretariats 14 sent delegates. Lorwin estimates that 44 percent of the membership was located in Europe and 30 percent in North America. Obviously, the remaining 26 percent, or about 12,000,000 members, supposedly situated in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, existed almost completely on paper. At this congress the real membership did

* The Second International, after being broken up by fascism and the war, was reconstructed in Frankfurt, Germany, in July 1951.

not exceed 40,000,000, if that.

The American conservative trade union leaders came in force to assure their control over the new international—ten from the AFL, ten from the CIO, and one from the United Mine Workers. Although warring bitterly against each other in the United States, characteristically, these elements had no trouble at all, at the call of American imperialism, to unite their forces in the war against the WFTU. They arrogantly dominated the London gathering, to the indignation not only of the British, but also of other delegates. Even American sources have remarked these U.S. controls. The *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* of Cornell (April 1950) suggestively remarks: "It is hardly exaggerated to state that the ICFTU has been sponsored by the United States unions."

After functioning ten days as a conference, the London gathering adopted a constitution and went into the first congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The new labor federation, created by American imperialism to fight the WFTU, was born. The ICFTU established an Executive Board of 26 members, and elected an old-line Social Democrat, J.H. Oldenbroek of Holland, as general secretary. It set up its headquarters in Brussels. Eventually it gathered unto itself 19 international trade secretariats, and it established regional bureaus in Europe (ERO), Asia (ARO), and Latin America (ORIT). The congress was scheduled to meet every two years.

The ICFTU, in its programmatic statements, made a big show of defending the interests of the workers, but its real purpose was made clear by its all-out support of the Marshall plan and by its virulent attacks upon the countries of Socialism and of people's democracy, Its aim was not to fight the capitalists and imperialists, but the left-wing of the world labor movement. This elementary reality it was to make all the more evident in ensuing years, with its red-baiting, cultivation of the split all over the world, refusal (Milan, 1951) of the offer of the WFTU of joint action in the workers' daily struggles, and its general acceptance of the pro-war line of American imperialism.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OE WORLD LABOR FORCES

At its recent congress in Vienna, May 1955, the ICFTU claimed a membership of 54,000,000. However, at its latest congress in Vienna, October 1953, the WFTU reported a total representation of 88,581,313 from 79 countries, of which 8,000,000 were not direct affiliates. This was an increase of almost 14,000,000 above the figure of 67,000,000 at its foundation congress in May 1945. The WFTU was able to register this big gain despite the split, because of the enormous increases in trade

union membership in the post-war years, especially in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy. The latest figures of membership of the WFTU (See World Labor Union *News,* October 1955) show 84,000,000 actual affiliates. The two internationals give a reported grand total of 142,600,000 trade unionists in the world,* to which at least a dozen more million members of independent and Christian unions may be added.

Discounting all charges and counter-charges of exaggeration of membership figures, it is clear that the WFTU is by far the larger of the two internationals. The best proof of this was the occurrence of the split itself. For had the right wing been in the majority and able to control the WFTU, it would not have split in the manner it did, but would have sought ways and means to force out of the organization sections or all of the left-wing, as it had done elsewhere. Thus, for the first time the left-progressive elements constitute a definite majority, particularly in the leadership, in the world trade union movement. The basic significance of this fact is that it indicates the elemental drift of the labor movement of the world that is taking place from right to left. This is in line with the still more basic fact of the developing trend of the world towards Socialism.

The WFTU is not only the larger of the two internationals, but it is also composed of the most advanced, most evolutionary sections of the world's working class. The ICFTU has its main strongholds in the United States Great Britain, Western Germany, Scandinavia, and the Low countries—that is, in the countries of the older and more firmly established capitalist and imperialist systems, with the largest bodies of more conservative-minded skilled workers. Its forces elsewhere in the world, in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, are tenuous and scattering, consisting mostly of unions built up by capitalist governments and the employers to fight the WFTU organizations.

The WFTU, on the other hand, has its main bases: first in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, the leading dements of the world proletariat, where it has a grand total (at the third WFTU congress) of about 53,000,000 members; second, in those imperialist countries hardest hit by the general crisis of capitalism and where the workers are most revolutionary—in Japan, France, and Italy, where in each case the lefts outnumber the rights by large majorities—and third, in the colonial

* The congresses of the two internationals have been: WFTU, Paris 1945, Milan, 1949, Vienna 1953; and the ICFTU, London 1949, Milan 1951, Stockholm 1953, Vienna 1955.

and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where left-wing influence is heavily predominant, with a total of some 28,007,840 members. The ICFTU still bears the earmarks of the old IFTU, of an organization based upon controls by the labor aristocracy, whereas the WFTU is founded on the broadest masses of the world's working class.[12]

The WFTU, the international of a new type, is infused with a militant and dynamic spirit, which is unknown in the ICFTU. The typical international of the right wing was the old dry-as-dust International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), of which much of the musty spirit remains in the ICFTU. Whenever the ICFTU shows any new methods of work, such as in its efforts to reach the masses in the colonial world, this is done primarily to block the work of the WFTU, the pioneer in these areas. Characteristic of the different spirit and role of the two organizations—while the ICFTU officially drags behind the Anglo-American imperialists trying to save world capitalism—vast sections of the membership of the WFTU are actually building socialism. The WFTU is the vanguard of the trade union movement of the world.

## 52. The Trade Union Split in Germany, France, and Italy (1947-1949)

Europe, of course, was a decisive battleground in the cold war. The various countries, at the conclusion of World War II, were lying in ruins and the peoples were in a state of semi-starvation. The masses were turning strongly to the left, as evidenced by the powerful trade union movements they built up, the radical coalition governments they constructed in many countries, and the revolutionary mood of the working class everywhere. Undoubtedly, at the end of the war the bulk of the toiling masses in Europe wanted a system of Socialism established, but they were by no means clear as to how this should be done.

That continent, therefore, became the number-one target of the United States, with its cold war directed at winning world mastery. It was the place where the American government poured out its billions most lavishly after the war, to brace up the respective economies and to re-arm the various capitalist countries. The United States became the "gendarme of Europe," seeking to stifle the brewing revolution and to take over general control of the situation. It was in Europe, therefore, that the United States made its most determined efforts to destroy the potentially very powerful trade union movement of the first post-war years. The union-wrecking drive, which had its international expression in the split in the WFTU in 1949, had as its principal base the thoroughly cultivated splits

in the leading trade union movements of Europe.

As everywhere else, it was the right Social Democrats who in Europe led in this union-wrecking. They were the willing tools of Wall Street in launching the cold war, particularly around the issue of the Marshall plan. As skilled labor splitters, of course, they veiled their nefarious campaigns with an elaborate demagogy about preserving peace and democracy. For this work the conservative leaders of the AFL and CIO were especially mustered into service by the U.S. State Department. There were many of these "labor" agents at all the crucial points of struggle in Europe and they poured out money freely to pay for the various union-breaking campaigns. The AFL leaders were especially active in these government-financed schemes, and they gloated over the disruption they were causing in the united labor movement of early post-war Europe.

## DISRUPTING THE GERMAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

In chapter 47 we have seen how the American Military Government, dominated by American generals and in active collaboration with AFL agents and leaders, worked successfully to prevent the formation of all-German trade unions and also of a united German working class with national labor unity. Along with this work of division went constant pressure to keep the unions in the Western zones from electing left leaders and from adopting progressive programs. The United States government, with its AFL and CIO aides, was directly responsible for killing off the movement in Western Germany for the nationalization of industry, and it was to blame also for inflicting upon the revived German trade unions the old leadership that had cursed them in pre-Hitler days. Lorwin significantly remarks that "most of the leaders of the trade unions in the Western zones had been trade union officials before 1933."[1]

The later splitting of the German trade union movement particularly took shape after the beginning of the cold war in 1947 through the announcement of the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan. Especially with the Marshall plan weapon in hand, the American military chiefs and their AFL-CIO aides—Brown, Brauer, Katz, Rutz, and others—and with their office staffs, labor press, etc., stepped up their splitting activities on all fronts. One of their major jobs in this sense was to split the trade union movement of Berlin. Besides itself being very strong, this movement had vast prestige in the labor movement throughout the country as a whole. It was led by Communists. As even the Social Democrat, Alexander, admits, "The elections in 1946 and 1947 gave the Communists sizeable majorities in the council of the Federation of Free German Trade

Unions of Greater Berlin."[2] The military authorities, plus the AFL-CIO splitters and the West Berlin police, succeeded, however, in balking the will of the Berlin workers by establishing the Independent Trade Union Opposition (UGO). With roughhouse tactics reminiscent of Hitlerism, they were able during the next year to equip this body with the necessary "majorities" and to fix it up as the labor organization of Western Berlin.[3]

Prior to 1947 the AMG generals and their AFL assistants had a hard time blocking the formation of an all-German national federation of labor, which the workers had repeatedly declared for in their inter-zonal conferences. But once the cold war got into operation, they boldly advanced from policies of sabotage and equivocation to those of open opposition to national labor unity. Lorwin states that the advent of the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan "put an end to the expectation that an all-German labor federation could be formed."[4]

An inter-zonal conference in Dresden in February 1948, held under WFTU auspices, decided to establish a Central Council of German Trade Unions, set up a committee to organize it, and called a broad conference for the following month. At this point the AMG (Allied Military Government) dominated by the Americans, directly intervened and in effect broke up the conference "by the refusal of the occupation authorities to permit delegates to attend... the movement for the unification of all German trade unions came to an end."[5] The conservative British union leaders, enemies of the left, also had a hand in this treachery. In October 1949, under American and German Social Democratic prodding, the unions of all the western zones formed the *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB), the German Federation of Trade Unions, which became affiliated to the ICFTU. The German trade union movement was thus definitely split.

This labor-wrecking naturally greatly weakened the position of the German working class and the workers had to pay for it in less bread and butter. The bosses, on the other hand, profited hugely from the windfall of a systematically crippled trade union movement. As the Scripps-Howard papers of April 1-3, 1955, pointed out, a whole new crop of post-war millionaires, some 200 of them, have sprung up.

The AFL bureaucrats openly rejoiced over the splitting of the German labor movement and claimed all the "credit" for it. This betrayal of labor's basic interests, in harmony with the usual demagogy of the warmongers of these times, they decked out with elaborate protestations of patriotism and devotion to the interests of world peace and democracy. David Dubinsky, renegade Socialist and one of the main instruments of reactionary AFL policy, thus boasts of this ignoble achievement: "Had it

not been for the extensive educational activities of the Free Trade Union Committee of the AFL in Germany after the Second World War, and for its energetic intervention then in behalf of free trade unionism, the Communists acting through the intervention of the World Federation might by now have seized control of the reviving German trade unions."[6]

## THE WRECKERS ATTACK THE FRENCH CGT

The splitting movement which the Social Democrats, allied with the employers and the capitalist governments, were everywhere carrying out in the WFTU during 1947-49, struck France with full force. This involved strike-breaking and union-smashing in an unprecedented scale. In the time-honored tradition of the working class, a strike-breaker is a scab, the lowest vermin that crawls the earth. But the AFL, CIO, and French right Social Democratic leaders, under direction of American imperialism, considered the doing of this dirty work to be an honorable profession.

The elimination of the Communists from the French coalition government in the spring of 1947 was a signal for an intensified attack upon the living standards and labor organizations of the French working class. Real wages in France at that time were 50 percent below what they had been in 1938[7] and they had fallen between July 1946 and December 1948 by about 30 percent.[8] Meanwhile, with production steadily improving, profits were rolling in to the fascist-minded employers, who were reveling in the subsidies and under the armed protection of the Anglo-American imperialists.

In the mid-summer of 1947, the CGT moved actively to alleviate the worsening situation of the workers. It raised a whole series of wage demands and condemned the Marshall plan and Truman doctrine. No substantial concessions could be had from the employers and the government by negotiation, hence a number of major strikes took place among Miners, Railroad workers, Dockers, Gas and Electricity workers, the Building Trades, and other categories of workers. The movement was so broad as to become almost a general strike, an estimated 3,000,000 workers striking. The reactionary government, under American urging, met the strikers with police violence and the threat of troops, Galenson says, "The strikes of November-December 1947 were perhaps the bitterest in French experience and the stakes in the country and in the labor movement, the highest."[9]

It was just at this critical moment, with organized labor fighting for its very existence, that the right Social Democrats, aided by Trotskyists and old-line sectarian Syndicalists, chose to strike their blow at French

labor unity. They had been greatly dissatisfied ever since the formation of the unified CGT at the end of World War II; in fact they never would have participated in such unity had it not been that they could not do anything else in view of the strong militancy of the working class. From the outset, however, they kept up factional activity within the CGT, gradually organizing their forces in preparation for the opportune moment to split. In the spirit of the most detestable strike-breaking techniques of the employers' associations, they decided that the splitting moment had arrived when the CGT was locked in an all-out struggle against the employers and their obedient government. The AFL and the CIO bureaucrats, as in Germany, had their agents in France to encourage, organize, and finance this strike-breaking. It was all part of the master plan to wreck the WFTU.

The right opposition forces, led by the old-time reformist, Leon Jouhaux, then co-secretary of the CGT, openly condemned the strike and urged the workers not to participate in them. The Catholic union leaders took much the same position. As against the CGT program of price controls plus wage increases, the Jouhaux clique advocated simply the enforcement of price controls, which the reactionary government could not be made to do. The opposition forces went back to work like ordinary scabs and their leaders worked openly with the employers and the government to break the strike. The general result was that, although the unions secured some wage increases, they suffered considerably organizationally from the treachery from within and from the severe government repression from without. Regarding the use of troops against the strikers, the right-winger V.R. Lorwin significantly remarks: "As on many other occasions in Europe when troops have had to be used, it was a Socialist who was Minister of the Interior—the energetic Jules Moch."[10]

With labor's forces shaken in the great struggle, the Jouhaux-AFL-CIO clique promptly took the next step in their union wrecking program by organizing a secession movement from the CGT. In December 1947 this took the form of establishing the so-called *Confederation Generale du Travail-Force Ouvriere,* commonly known as *Force Ouvriere* (Workers' Force). This body held its first national convention in April 1948, and strongly endorsed the Marshall plan. Thenceforth it became an active factor in putting across the program of Wall Street, which was directly promoting the subjugation of France to the program of the American imperialists, It eventually became the French affiliate of the ICFTU.

The AFL and the American State Department heavily financed this union-wrecking, strike-breaking campaign in France. Without their support it never could have been organized. Lorwin says that the AFL, be-

sides giving the splitters 100 typewriters, extensive office equipment, food packages, etc., also made them a "loan" of $25,000.[11] This, however, is a gross understatement of the lavish financial assistance extended to this shameful movement by the AFL bureaucrats and the U.S. State Department. The Jouhaux clique alone got 30,000,000 francs (American funds) from the French government.[12]

The wholesale strike-breaking campaign in France basically failed. Under the leadership of Benoit Frachon and with the full support of the powerful Communist Party, the CGT, although considerably weakened numerically by the attacks of organized reaction, survived the fiery test and definitely maintained its leadership of the French working class. It came through the split with by far the bulk of the organized workers in France under its banner. The FO and the Catholic unions (CFTC) remained essentially fringe organizations.

In the ensuing years the left-led CGT, instead of waging a life-and-death struggle against these organizations, as the reactionaries expected, constantly approached them in a united front spirit and, with the help of mass pressure, even won their limited co-operation, through United Action Committees, for the general strike of August 1953. At that time the CGT contained 70 percent of the organized workers in France,[13] and at the 29th Convention of the CGT in June 1953. it was reported (by Henri Raynaud) that CGT candidates were winning from 73 to 90 percent of the elections throughout the factories of France.[14]

## THE SPLIT IN THE ITALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT

The General Confederation of Italian Labor (CGIL), re-organized upon the downfall of fascism and the victorious end of the war, was at that time far and away the best and strongest trade union movement ever achieved by the Italian working class (see chapter 47). Containing some 6,685,564 members[15] at the end of 1947, who were engaged in all branches of industry, it was a striking example of trade union unity achieved in the fire of the class struggle. Its Agricultural Workers Union had the unprecedented number of 1,900,000 members, and in the latter part of 1947 it conducted a successful strike of over 1,000,000 farm workers—one of the largest farm strikes ever held in the world.[16]

But all this splendid organization, built at the cost of endless work and struggle, meant precisely nothing to the right Social Democratic and Vatican trade union leaders, once the word was sent forth by the American would-be world conquerors that, besides the World Federation of Trade Unions, the CGIL and every other labor organization that opposed them had to be destroyed. They set about their work of union-smashing

in Italy with the cynicism and unconcern of professional strike-breakers. The whole operation, as usual, was brazenly supervised by the U.S. State Department officials and their AEL-CIO labor bureaucrats, who were busily organizing a split everywhere in the World Federation of Trade Unions.

The split in the ranks of Italian labor developed in stages. The principal splitting issue was the Marshall plan, although the conservative labor leaders were quite ready to grab upon any question with which to divide the ranks of the workers. The beginning of the split was the expulsion of the Communists from the cabinet of the De Gasperi government in the spring of 1947. This broke the cooperative alliance of the three major political groups—Communists, Socialists, and Christian Democrats—which had expressed itself not only in the structure of the government but also, as previously remarked, in the leadership of the trade unions.

The next important step in the planned split was the breakaway of the Catholic leadership from the CGIL. With the energetic support of the Vatican, these elements had organized their faction within the CGIL into the Italian Workers Christian Association as early as 1943. They struck their blow in August 1948, when they established the Free Italian General Confederation of Workers (LCGIL). Inasmuch as about 90 percent of Italian workers are Catholic, the Vatican trade union leaders counted upon the bulk of them following the trade union lead of the Church—a hope which, as we shall see, was to be grievously unrealized. Significantly, only a month before the LCGIL was formed an attempt was made to kill Palmiro Togliatti, the Communist leader; an outrage for which, however, the Catholic leaders promptly disclaimed all responsibility.

The Republican and right Social Democratic leaders made their splitting move in May 1949, with the full blessing of the world-wide right-wing trade union leadership. Previously the right Socialist leader in Italy, Giuseppe Saragat, had broken away a fraction from the Socialist Party on the grounds of refusal to work with the Communists. The bulk of the party, however, continued to follow the leadership of Pietro Nenni, left Socialist and close co-worker with the Communist Party. The new trade union group formed by Saragat and the Republicans called itself the Italian Federation of Labor (FIL). This was followed shortly afterward by a split in the latter organization and the establishment of the Union of Italian Workers (UIL). Later, in April 1950, the LCGIL and FIL were merged and formed the Italian Confederation of Workers Unions (CISL). To make confusion worse confounded, each of these split-offs attempted to establish a whole new set of national unions and local federations. The

CISL and UIL became affiliates of the ICFTU.

The. crystallization of these various split movements was carried through, as in France, with the most shameless strike-breaking. At this time the CGIL, the main Italian labor federation, was waging many strikes and other movements in protection of the workers' sinking living standards, against the huge plague of unemployment, against the wholesale capitalist profiteering, and against other evils pressing upon the workers. But the splitters gave no heed to these urgent struggles. Instead, they denounced the strikers, walked through picket lines, and otherwise comported themselves as strike-breakers. All the while the agents of the U.S. State Department and their AFL-CIO assistants, Irving Brown, Elmer Cope and others, who acted towards Italy as though it were an American colony, lavishly spent money in cultivating the split. Norman Thomas, the American Socialist leader, gave this disruption his blessing. Meanwhile the employers—Catholics, Protestants, Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, and what not—remained solidly united in their joint organization.

The period 1948-1950 constituted a severe struggle and trial for the CGIL. It was under the fiercest attack, both within and without, from the De Gasperi government, the Vatican, the employers, the United States government, the AFL-CIO misleaders of labor. It came through this hard test, not without some losses, but as the solid, unbreakable trade union organization of the Italian working class.

During the splitting period fantastic figures were afloat, both in Italy and abroad, as to the numerical strength of the respective labor groups. But the indisputable fact remained that the CGIL, under the capable leadership of Giuseppe Di Vittorio, went right ahead winning about 80 percent of the factory councils' elections throughout Italy. Even Galcnson, whose anti-left bias is well-known, accredited the CGIL in 1952 as having 3,500,000 members, three- and-a-half times as many as those of the two largest of the split off organizations, the CISL, (800,000), and the UIL (200,000) put together. Actually the CGIL, at its Genoa convention of October 1949, reported 5,117,300 members,[17] and in the great strikes of 1953, with its united action policy, the CGIL was able to lead the whole body of Italian organized labor, in spite of the betrayal tactics of the Catholic and right Social Democratic union leaders.

## 53. Union Splitting in the Americas; CIO and CTAL (1947-1949)

Already in the concluding stages of World War II it was obvious to Marxist-Leninists that United States monopoly capital was embarked

upon an aggressive reactionary course aimed at world mastery. At its convention of July 26-28, 1945, the Communist Party of the United States, in its main resolution, declared that "the most aggressive circles of American imperialism are endeavoring to secure for themselves political and economic domination of the world," and it warned also that "if the reactionary policies and forces of monopoly capital arc not checked and defeated, America and the world will be confronted with new aggressions and wars and the growth of reaction and fascism in the United States.[1] This Communist forecast has proved to be all too true.

In order to win the backing or tolerance of the peoples of the United States and Canada for its plans, it was imperative for American imperialism to win the support, or at least to break down the opposition, of the leadership of the trade union movement. So far as the AFL, with its then 7,000,000 members, was concerned, this presented no serious problem. The ultra-reactionary Green bureaucrats dominating that body, rank labor imperialists and long-time bitter enemies of the Soviet Union and everything progressive, were already warring against the World Federation of Trade Unions, which at that time was just coming into existence; and then, as now, they were in the forefront of the sabre-rattling forces that were making for war.

With the CIO, however, the situation was somewhat different This federation, with about 6,000,000 members in the United States and Canada, was carrying out policies of a distinctly progressive hue. This was mainly because it had a strong and well-entrenched left- progressive wing (which the AFL had not), leading some 20 percent of the organization as a whole. This progressive force, which had played the most active part in building the CIO during the big organizing drive of 1935-45, was fully in tune with the anti-fascist spirit of World War II, and its influence had resulted in giving the CIO an advanced program in many respects—regarding Negro workers, political action, international organization, etc.—and in making it the progressive leader of the American-Canadian labor movement as a whole.

At the time when the war came to an end and when American imperialism was embarking upon its warlike program of world conquest the CIO was definitely taking a progressive position in various matters. It was an ardent supporter of the WFTU (which the AFL bitterly opposed), and it was in opposition to the rising spirit of militarist reaction (which the AFL was distinctly cultivating). At its 1946 convention the CIO declared that, "We reject all proposals for American participation in any bloc or alliance which would destroy the unity of the Big Three," and in the same anti-war spirit, its 1947 convention called for "the fulfillment of

the basic policy of our late President Roosevelt for unity of purpose and action among the three great wartime allies—the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union within the United Nations."[2] The CIO conventions were also relatively free of the fascist-smelling red-baiting which disgraced the national gatherings of the AFL.

This situation, with the CIO developing a pro-peace line, was very dangerous to the warlike aspirations of Wall Street imperialism for world domination. Above all, the would-be world conquerors had to break down this progressive position of the CIO, which stood as a serious barrier to the cultivation of militarism and war hysteria among the masses of the people of the United States and Canada. To the end of "correcting" this situation, therefore, the government sent General George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, to the 1947 convention of the CIO, to win over that body in support of the brand-new Marshall plan, which the AFL had already enthusiastically endorsed.

Marshall, however, did not succeed in getting his plan adopted by the CIO convention. Instead, that body, in line with its previous progressive policy, outlined a constructive program of American aid to Europe, without even mentioning Marshall's grandiose project. However, Philip Murray, president of the CIO, later falsely interpreted the convention resolution as an endorsement of the Marshall plan. The significance of this act was that Murray, an old-time Gompers type leader of the Coal Miners, who had so far ridden out the progressive wave in the CIO, had now openly abandoned his anti-militarism and subscribed to the aggressive policy of American imperialism. Obviously, the Catholic Church, which was then very busy all over Europe trying to save capitalism, also had much to do with the defection of Murray and the group of Catholic leaders who dominated the CIO. As we have seen in chapter 51, the CIO leaders became as active and as virulent as those of the AFL in splitting the WFTU.

The going-over of Murray and his group to the warmongers' camp created a sharp tension between the right and left in the CIO. This was greatly worsened in the Presidential elections of November 1948, in which the CIO Executive Board declared for the candidacy of the notorious sabre rattler Truman, while the dozen progressive unions generally supported Henry Wallace, who made peace the central issue of his election campaign.

This independent political step of the progressive unions was entirely in accordance with the practice of the American trade union movement. Never before had the CIO or AFL attempted to assume the right to decide the course of their affiliated unions in such matters. Murray himself

had made this quite clear at the CIO convention in 1947, as follows: "We never determine the course of action of affiliates.... We leave the ultimate decision to each of the International unions for important policy decisions. There is a reason for that: I hope the day will never come in the history of the CIO when it shall take upon itself the power to dictate a rule, or to provide by policy methods of dictation and rulings that run counter to the very fundamental principles of true democracy."[3]

But "the day" did come, and very soon at that. The word had gone out from the White House that the CIO had to be purged of its progressive, actively anti-war forces, and the Murray-Carey-Reuther majority, as loyal supporters of American imperialism, set out vigorously to do this job. The Murray group, which in previous years had cooperated to a certain extent with the left-wing, now swung over fully to the right, joined forces completely with Reuther, Carey, Rieve, and others and became the most violent of jingoists and red-baiters. The eventual result was the most cynical and largest scale union-wrecking in the history of the American labor movement.

## THE SPLIT IN THE CIO

The actual split occurred at the October 1949 convention of the CIO in Cleveland. It took the form of the expulsion of eleven progressive-led unions, with a total membership of over 900,000. They included the Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (450,000 members), the Farm Equipment Workers (40,000), Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (85,000), Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers (36,000), Office and Professional Workers (25,000), United Public Workers (60,000), Communications Workers (15,000), Fur and Leather Workers (100,000), Longshoremen and Warehousemen (85,000), Marine Cooks and Stewards (6,000), and the Fishermen and Allied Workers (20,000). These unions had previously been given "trials" before the CIO Executive Board, which operated upon the principle that they had to be expelled at any cost. This was done in violation of every tradition of American trade unionism, as well as to the injury of the deepest interests of the working class. Meanwhile, a nationwide purge was carried through to eliminate all progressive officials from CIO city and state bodies.

The CIO convention of 1949, at which the expulsions took place, was an orgy of red-baiting. At the 1946 convention Murray had boasted that, "As a democratic institution we engage in no purges, no witch-hunts. We do not dictate a man's thoughts or beliefs. Most important of all, we do not permit ourselves to be stampeded into courses of action which create division among our members and sow the disunity which is

sought by those false prophets and hypocritical advisers from without who mean us no good."[4] But now all these fine sentiments were thrown out of the window, once American imperialism called imperatively for the support of its loyal adherents. The CIO staged the biggest labor union witch-hunt in American labor history. Consequently, Murray and Reuther were hailed by the capitalist press and the professional warmongers, red-baiters, and labor haters all over the country for their crime against organized labor.

In a growing atmosphere of red-baiting and war hysteria, the expelled progressive unions became the target of every reactionary force in the United States and Canada—the press, the employers, the governments, and the AFL and CIO bureaucrats. The latter especially opened up a campaign of union-raiding against the independent unions which was without precedent in the United States. One of the major steps in this disruptive campaign was the formation, by a split, of a new national union to oppose the progressive and highly successful United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers, of course, with the active help of the employers, state officials, the bourgeois newspapers, the Catholic Church, etc. The man who directed this particular splitting campaign, James Carey, secretary-treasurer of the CIO, is the same notorious bureaucrat who was so active in splitting the WFTU and who later said, "In the last war we joined with the Communists to fight the fascists; in another war we will join the fascists to defeat the Communists."[5] Under all this unprecedented pressure from the government, the employers, and conservative labor leaders, the expelled unions, despite heroic efforts to hold their ground, have been gradually reduced in numerical strength until, at this date, they have only about one-third of their strength at the time of the expulsion.

The 1949 split, deliberately organized by the Murray-Reuther-Carey leadership, had serious consequences for the CIO itself. That body lost most of the progressivism and militancy that it had once possessed. Its membership dropped to 4,000,000, and the organization never wholly recovered its earlier level. The CIO's former aggressive organizing spirit, reflecting the strong left-wing, faded, and the federation's vital campaign to organize the workers in the South failed. The CIO also abandoned its once progressive and leading role in world labor's ranks. Like the AFL bureaucrats, the CIO leaders became part and parcel of the State Department's labor machinery, especially in its efforts to wreck the anti-war wing of the world labor movement. They seemed to compete with the AFL leaders as to which could red-bait the most, shout the war slogans of American imperialism the loudest, and struggle the most actively

against the World Federation of Trade Unions. The CIO lost its once proud position of being the left wing, the progressive leader of the American trade union movement.

At present writing, a general merger has taken place between the AFL and the CIO. The new AFL-CIO, drawing together in one organization some 15,000,000 workers, has tremendous industrial and political potentialities for the American working class. But these possibilities will have to be fought for by the progressive elements, because, as things now stand, the conservative clique of AFL labor bureaucrats have fastened their grip upon the new organization. George Meany, an extreme right wing clement, has been elected President of the merged body and the majority of the new council are former conservative leaders of the AFL. 'The AFL leaders also inflicted upon the new federation a highly undemocratic constitution, aimed at even more closely consolidating their present autocratic hold upon the trade union movement. They also stand for close collaboration with the big monopolists, and they give full support to Wall Street's program of world domination. There is much militancy currently among the American workers. Consequently the Meany leadership will never be able to hold the new AFL-CIO to the conservative program they have planned for it.

## THE TRADE UNION SPLIT IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin America is the great hinterland of American imperialism. Consequently, it got major attention from the labor splitters, those who attacked the WFTU generally. Wall Street has some 40 percent of its foreign investments located in the score of countries in this area, which constitutes a vast source of raw materials for Yankee industries. "The Office of Business Economics of the Department of Commerce reported that direct investments of United States capital in Latin America stood at $5,700,000,000 at the close of 1952—more than double the figure reported in 1943."[6] Of this total sum about one-fourth was invested in oil properties. Profits extracted from Latin America range from 10 to 50 percent annually. A characteristic of the situation is that many American plants, to escape the union conditions and "high" wages in the United States, are opening up branches in Latin America, where wages are from 10 to 30 percent of what they are in the United States. This runaway trend is particularly true of the American colony and military strongpost, Puerto Rico. At all costs this whole strategic area had to be consolidated for Wall Street.

As soon as World War II was over and the United States got the cold war on foot throughout the world, it paid special attention to Latin Amer-

ica. Lombardo Toledano, president of the Latin American Confederation of Labor (CTAL), says, "The campaign of preparation for war began. The governments of Latin America were officially advised to prepare for a third world war. Belief in the imminence of war rapidly brought with it the loss of all liberties and advantages won during the second World War."[7] The United States quickly tightened up its economic controls in Latin America and, among other measures, developed military pacts with eight of the respective countries (with four rejecting them), put air bases in various Latin American countries, and whipped together the reactionary governments of most of Latin America into a servile bloc in the United Nations.

One of the major problems confronting Yankee imperialism in organizing and subjugating Latin America for the cold war was presented by the CTAL. This progressive organization had an established record of resolute strikes and political struggles in behalf of the workers and peasants throughout Latin America. Except for Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Cuba, the CTAL had also organized all the national labor federations throughout Latin America. During the war it was a real power in the fight against the thickly-strewn local fascists, and it emerged from that historic struggle numerically strong and with great mass prestige. Especially was the CTAL dangerous to Yankee imperialism because of the deep poverty of the toiling masses, their political repression under barbaric dictators, and their bitter hatred of the United States, the Colossus of the North. The annual per capita income in Latin America is about one-fifth of what it is in leading industrial countries, and from 50 to 80 percent of the people are illiterate.[8] Always a tinder box of political revolt, Latin America was particularly alarming to the imperialists after World War II, with Asia flaming in colonial revolution. John Foster Dulles openly expressed the fear that, "Latin America may go the way of China."

Meanwhile, the only other important labor organization in Latin America was the General Confederation of Labor in Argentina. This body which had been seized upon by the fascist Peronista dictatorship and made into a compulsory "labor front," was antagonistic to the CTAL and no serious obstacle to the plans of American imperialism in Latin America.

Most urgent Wall Street imperialist needs demanded that the CTAL be crippled or wiped out. To take care of this job American imperialism called upon its labor agents at the head of the American Federation of Labor. This group, long notorious for its defense of American capitalist policy in Latin America, readily took on the task The AFL, which for many years has never relaxed its frenzied red-baiting, had opposed the

CTAL from its formation. The CIO leaders, however, had to maneuver a bit, as they had participated in the formation of the CTAL in 1938 and, under the pressure of their left-wing, had ever since maintained very friendly relations with that organization. Nevertheless, the CIO leaders, in obedience to their imperialist masters, proceeded to knife their Latin American brothers and to join with the AFL in the drive to destroy their splendid organization. This was the WFTU split carried into Latin America. As remarked earlier, in the United States and Canada the AFL and CIO were very hostile and warring against each other, but this did not prevent their joining hands to wage war upon the progressive Latin American labor movement.

The splitting campaign was specifically authorized by the AFL conventions of 1946, 1947, and 1948. It was prosecuted all over Latin America in a blaze of red-baiting. The AFL chief field representative in this campaign was Serafino Romualdi, a former U.S. government official. The split was carried out under the direct supervision of the U.S. State Department. How much money the latter spent on this work, so vital to American imperialism, is a matter of speculation, but it has been estimated to run into the millions. All over Latin America reactionary bourgeois papers supported the campaign, and notoriously they do not work for nothing, nor do the other ragtag and bobtail adventurers who also joined the union-wrecking. This disgraceful work the AFL repeatedly blessed at its conventions. At this time the CTAL quit the ILO, charging it with aiding the union splitters.

The campaign culminated in January 1948 in the holding of an AFL-sponsored convention in Lima, Peru. Here the Inter-American Confederation of Workers (CIT) was formed. The CIT, a lineal descendant of the notorious Pan-American Federation (COPA) of a generation before (see chapter 39), did not prosper, with its paper affiliates and reactionary bombast. At the second congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions, Lombardo Toledano, president of the CTAL, had this to say of it: "The reactionary papers gave it all possible publicity. They proclaimed the death of the CTAL, and the birth of the new organization, inspired by the American Federation of Labor. But this did not bring the expected results. The International Confederation of Labor (CIT) is entirely without importance."[9]

A failure, the CIT was replaced in Mexico City in 1951 by a new combination, the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT).[10] The political line of this organization, like that of the CIT and COPA before it, is (a) to support the general line of American imperialism, and (b) to complain demagogically of the disastrous effects of this

line among the Latin American peoples. Its two-faced complaints, of course, are quite harmless to the interests of the big bosses to the North. ORIT became the Latin American section of the split-off of the WFTU, the ICFTU.

The splitting efforts of the AFL and CIO created much confusion and disharmony among the workers of Latin America. This was just what the labor agents of Yankee imperialism wanted. Their efforts at building their own shadow unions into mass organizations were subordinate to their primary objective, to weaken or kill the CTAL. Like their similars everywhere else, they could see only one enemy, the Communists—by which term they included all who dared to fight against the war program of American imperialism.

Generally, the dictatorial national governments and other forces of reaction took advantage of the AFL-CIO campaign of disruption in Latin America. Nowhere in the world are trade unionists now so persecuted as in that area. Many have been assassinated and countless numbers have been jailed. In Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela trade unions are outlawed. In Argentina and various other countries they are under strict control by the government. In Cuba, for example, where the CTAL had a splendid organization of 557,000 members, or 60 percent of the total of the working class, the government stepped in, jailed the progressive union leaders, and appointed others to suit the employers. This drastic action surprised no one in Latin America. In most of these countries also the Communist parties have been driven underground. The AFL-CIO splitting campaign has greatly intensified this regime of general reaction.

As things now stand, Latin America is a paradise for the labor splitters. Besides numerous independent single unions, there are four international labor organizations and movements. These are: (a) CTAL, the progressive fighting organization of the workers, with affiliations in a dozen or more countries; (b) the ORIT (AFL-CIO tendency), which basks in the favor of the employers and the U.S. State Department; (c) the Catholic Unions (CTSC), and (d) the Aprista (Haya de la Torre opportunist tendency). These several movements all have followings in the various countries. The Latin American Trade Union Federation (ATLAS), under Peron fascist domination, claimed to have 6,000,000 members in the CGT of Argentina.[11] Following the overthrow of the Peron dictatorship in September 1955, the CGT's leadership has been deposed by the new government, with the body of union officials arrested. The broad result of the widespread union rivalry and disruption throughout Latin America is that the total trade union movement of the whole vast area has been

greatly weakened since the days when organized labor was practically united under the banner of the CTAL.

Of the several labor federations in Latin America the CTAL is the strongest. It has the best mass prestige, carries on the most resolute struggles for the workers, and has the broadest general support among the masses. But it has nevertheless been seriously injured bv the Wall Street organized split. Its real strength is hardly to be measured statistically, because it has strong followings among many labor organizations which are not among its direct affiliates. It has been said that, “The CTAL is like an iceberg, most of its strength is under the surface. Large numbers of workers in its former affiliates still follow its lead.”[12] At its convention of 1953 in Santiago, Chile, over one-half of the participants came from organizations not affiliated to the CTAL. The CTAL follows ceaselessly a campaign for united labor action and for the eventual organic unity of the whole trade union movement. At the third world congress of the WFTU in Vienna in October 1953 there were represented trade unions from 20 Latin American countries, with 3,453.340 members,[13] but they were not all CTAL affiliates.

## 54. The Cold War in Asia (1945-1950)

With the end of World War II in Asia, in August 1945, the cold war promptly began. Its substance was a general reactionary intervention on the part of the United States in the many colonial liberation wars and political struggles which broke out practically all over Asia immediately following the cessation of hostilities against Japan. Wall Street tried vigorously to establish its hegemony over this vast area. The cold war in Asia was not identical with that in Europe and the Americas, and it varied from one Asian country to another.

But it was everywhere an organic part of the American drive for world mastery, everywhere it strove to destroy trade union unity, and everywhere it had the faithful support of the right Social Democrats, tools of American imperialism.

### THE NEW CHINESE TRADE UNIONS

The development of the civil war in China in 1946 by Chiang Kai-shek, under American instigation, against the people’s liberation forces led by the Communist Party, was definitely the launching of the cold war in that country. It was an attempt by Wall Street to make a satellite country of China. As was later demonstrated in Korea and' elsewhere, the so-called cold war often also manifests itself by shooting wars. Chiang, the agent, or “running dog," of American imperialism as the Chinese people

call him, did not prosper in this phase of the cold war. As indicated in chapter 48, his counter-revolutionary course climaxed in a general debacle in 1949. The new People's Republic of China emerged from the rubble of his regime, which was a conglomerate of feudal and imperialist reaction. The first major act in the cold war thus resulted in utter disaster for American imperialism in the total loss by it of China, with its 602,000,000 people and its territory larger than that of the United States. But as events were soon to demonstrate, China was by no means yet free of the cold war.

Upon smashing Chiang's reactionary government the people of China immediately set to building a new society, which definitely is heading towards Socialism. This society the great Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung characterizes as "a dictatorship of the people's democracy based on an alliance of the workers and peasants, led by the working class through the Communist Party."[1] Tremendous progress is now being made in the industrialization and general modernization of China. Since 1949 industrial production has quadrupled and grain production is up 90 percent.[2] One of the most striking phenomena of the twentieth century is the spectacular manner in which China, just a few years ago kicked about by British, American, and Japanese imperialists, has become almost overnight one of the world's recognized great powers.

Naturally, the trade unions play a big role in the new revolutionary Chinese society. Their tasks in general are very similar to those of the unions in the Soviet Union and the European people's democracies, with the unions exerting a decisive influence in the political life, in the growth and management of industry, and in the defense and improvement of the living and working standards of the toiling masses. The Chinese unions' tasks, of course, are also shaped by the specific features of the national economy, particularly by the low level of industrialization and by the fact that, within limits, capitalists are still allowed to function in China.

The Chinese trade union movement, which had a record behind it of 25 years of struggle in China's liberation wars, as we have pointed out in chapter 48, reorganized itself at its sixth convention in Harbin, August 1948. Its structure and policies were further elaborated at its seventh convention, held May *2,* 1953, in Peking. To this key gathering progressive trade unionists also came from all over the world—120 of them from 20 countries. The WFTU had a big delegation present, headed by its general secretary, Louis Saillant.

The Peking convention was composed of 831 delegates, representing 10,200,000 members, a growth of nearly 8,000,000 since the Harbin convention of live years earlier. The All-China Federation of Trade Un-

ions is composed of 23 national industrial unions, with 180,000 basic shop organizations. It is headed by an Executive Committee of 99 members, with one place left vacant for Formosa, the big Chinese island which is now occupied forcibly by the American military. The labor federation is led from day to day by a secretariat. The convention was opened by Liu Ning-i, vice president; the main report was made by Lai Jo-yu, president, and it was closed by Liu Chang-sheng, vice president of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. The ACFTU is affiliated to the WFTU.

The ACFTU follows the general political leadership of the Communist Party and it supports the People's Republic of China. In its constitution preamble it declares that, "It was after the birth of the Chinese Communist Party—a party of the Chinese working class itself —and under its direct leadership that the working-class movement of present-day China progressed along the road to victory." Of the government the preamble says, "The People's Republic of China is a republic led by the working class. Hence, the interests of the state and the common interests of the entire people constitute the fundamental interests of the working class."

The preamble states thus the tasks of the unions: "The most important tasks of the trade unions of China during the period of national reconstruction are, to strengthen the unity of the working class, to consolidate the alliance of workers and peasants, to educate the workers to observe consciously the laws and decrees of the state and labor discipline, to strive for the development of production, for the constant increase of labor productivity, for the fulfillment and .over-fulfillment of the production plans of the state, for speedy industrialization of the country, and for steady advancement toward Socialism. The trade unions should constantly show concern for the improvement of the living and working conditions of the workers, and on the basis of developing production, gradually but actively improve the national and cultural life of the workers."[3]

The Chinese trade unions, in common with those of the USSR and the European people's democracies, not only look after the immediate interests of the workers, but they also assume responsibility for the development of the national economy, upon which development the advancing welfare of the workers depends. Of this the Chinese workers are very conscious. As one speaker at the convention pointed out, it is only in this manner "that we can change the economic backwardness of our nation, gradually realize industrialization, and advance toward a Socialist society. It is only through the development of production that we can

continually improve the material and cultural life of the working class and the entire people." With wage rates in the state enterprises scientifically established in union negotiations with government economic bodies, which are politically controlled by the workers themselves, strikes are unnecessary.

Along the general lines indicated above in the preamble the Chinese trade unions are doing a tremendous job. They are cultivating Socialist emulation to improve production, educating thousands of workers to assume posts of leadership in the industries and the government, overcoming the widespread mass illiteracy, developing a whole system of social insurance and factory inspection, managed by the trade unions, and organizing a vast network of rest homes and other cultural and health institutions. At the Peking convention it was reported that, "The Workers' Publishing Press alone, operated by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, published 339 different kinds of books and periodicals, amounting to over 35,570,000 copies during the period from September 1949 to March 1953."[4]

## THE UNIONS AND THE COLD WAR IN INDIA

India achieved national independence in 1947, and already the United States monopoly capitalists, in their drive for world dominion, had set out to subjugate that huge, populous, and strategic country. Their weapons were, as usual, money, economic penetration, and military intimidation. At first India, led by Nehru after the assassination of Gandhi in June 1948, was not inclined to resist the United States actively, but as the years passed it took more and more of an independent pro-peace position. This was due to a number of causes—its fear of being reduced practically to a colony of the United States, the dread of a new and devastating atomic world war, the influence of British investors in India who are hostile to American penetration, and the strong pressure of the masses of the Indian people.[5] Finally, it has come to the point where the American imperialists look definitely upon India as an enemy, and as one of their increasing attacks against that country, they are arming her big, militant, and hostile neighbor, Pakistan.

During the post-war years the All-India Trade Union Congress, the traditional labor federation of India, a left-led organization (see chapter 48) fared roughly at the hands of the Indian employers and the government. An affiliate of the WFTU, it took a sharp and consistent stand against the warlike program of American imperialism, coupled with a militant defense of the economic interests of the oppressed and poverty-ridden Indian workers and peasants. This did not sit well with Nehru's

Congress Party, which is primarily the political organization of the Indian bourgeoisie; particularly the latter did not relish this militant labor policy during the early years of the cold war, when the government's foreign policy was somewhat undecided.

Already in the mid-1940's the Nehru government launched into a campaign of repression against the AITUC. It was reported to the second world congress of the WFTU, held in June 1949, that of the 177 members of the general council of the AITUC, 88 had been or were then in jail at the instance of the Nehru government. Many strikes were broken by force, numerous strikers were killed, there were about 25,000 left-wing militants in jail, and the AITUC was virtually outlawed. Of this period, the Communist Party of India stated: "On its own admission, during the first three years of its rule, the government jailed 50,000 of its adversaries and killed or wounded 13,000. And it is common knowledge that these figures reflect only a small part of the truth."[6]

The Indian government also made a head-on attack upon the AITUC by launching a rival federation to war against it. No sooner had the Congress Party gained power than it initiated a strong move, backed by the Socialist Party, to capture the recognized labor federation from within. This failed, however, whereupon the government, through Sardar Patel, organized a labor movement to its own liking in May 1947, called the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). which was duly affiliated with the IFTU.[7] Disaffected at the result of this split, however, the Socialists organized another one of their own, establishing shortly afterward the *Hind Mazdoor Sabha* (HMS).

With the blessing of the government and the employers, the INTUC gathered together a considerable membership. Part of this was secured through the absorption of the Indian Federation of Labor (IFL), led by the British tool and renegade, Roy. Late in 1949 the INTUC, not without considerable exaggeration, claimed to have 1,200,000 members.[8] Although carrying out an aggressive policy regarding the AITUC, the INTUC was committed to the Gandhian policy of passive resistance—which meant actually non-militancy, so far as the class struggle in general was concerned. At its seventh congress in Nagpur in January 1955 the INTUG's president enthusiastically endorsed the Gandhi passive resistance conception. As for the condition of the workers under the new regime, he said: "The economic position of the workers at present is worse than even before the war."[9]

The right Social Democrats of India, true to the pro-capitalist line of the Second International, generally supported the conquest campaign of American imperialism, so far as they could in the face of the powerful

anti-imperialist spirit of the Indian masses. They backed actively the early phases of American policy in the cold war. Nehru, although never a member of the Socialist Party, called himself a believer in Socialism but he now considers Marxism "outmoded."[10] More and more the right Socialists opposed the Nehru government, as it increasingly took up an active position for world peace and against the aggressive line of American imperialism. As for the Communist Party, while combatting much of Nehru's domestic policy, it has supported the pro-peace moves that he has made in the international field. These reached a high point in the agreement of June 1955 with the USSR for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the admission of People's China to the United Nations, the return of Formosa (Taiwan) to that country, and generally for a policy of peaceful co-existence of all nations. India was a big factor in bringing about the important Geneva conference of 1955.

As things now stand in India after all this reactionary union--splitting there are in existence four main labor federations—the AITUC, the INTUC, the UTUF, and the HMS. The number of organized trade unionists is about 2,500,000 out of a grand total of some 5,000,000 industrial workers. The AITUC, in line with WFTU general policy, carries on a ceaseless campaign for united action and eventual organic amalgamation of the four national labor federations.

The several labor splits have enormously increased the already sharp difficulties in the way of building the trade union movement in India. These obstacles include, the extreme poverty of the farm and industrial workers, which creates grave problems in financing the labor organizations, the caste system, which despite the powerful solidarity trends among the working masses, is a strong divisive element, and the severe language problem—thus at the recent convention of the AITUC, in Calcutta, although the main business at hand was conducted in Hindi, eight languages were required to carry on the convention work.[11]

## THE COLD WAR AND THE JAPANESE TRADE UNIONS

As part of its program for world domination the United States government planned to make post-war Japan, with its 85,000,000 people, into a satellite state, as its main bastion against the revolutionary USSR and People's China. To this end, the U.S. was careful to see to it, despite much propaganda to the contrary, that the *Zaibatsu* monopolists retained their grip upon the economy of Japan. At the end of 1953, it was estimated that these families controlled 45 percent of all coal produced, 65 percent of shipbuilding, 50 percent of ammonium sulphite, 50 percent of copper, etc. Of the 195,273 war lords, militarists, and reactionary gov-

ernment officials "purged" by SCAP at the outset, 177,000 had been reinstated by 1951, and the remaining 18,000 had been promised relief.[12] During the occupation American big business invested about $2.6 billion in Japanese industry. The United States made deep inroads into Japanese trade, had the country on its dole and built military bases all over the country—in 1952 there were in construction 32 American air bases, 14 naval bases, and many army bases.[13] *New Times* (No. 29), 1954, estimates that, all told, there are 719 American bases in Japan. As for the Japanese workers, their real wages are about 77 percent of pre-war.

An inevitable part of the American cold war was a sharpening of the struggle against the left-wing in the trade unions, and this took place in Japan, as elsewhere, under the supervision of agents of the ICFTU. Already in late 1946 a strong red-baiting campaign was launched within the Japanese Congress of Industrial Unions *(Sanbetsu),* then the left-led, strongest trade union center in Japan (see chapter 48). This took the form of disruptionist "Democratization Leagues," which had the backing of the right Social Democrats and the employers, and were established by MacArthur. "Certainly," says Farley, "it received strong encouragement from SCAP"[14] As this movement went along its disruptive course, General MacArthur in June 1950 virtually outlawed the Communist Party, which in the elections of 1949 had polled 2,984,627 votes, as against 4,129,888 for the Socialist Party.[15] In August 1950 he also dissolved the National Liaison Council of Trade Unions, affiliated to the WFTU.

Meanwhile, the struggle between right and left sharpened within the right-led Japanese Party of Labor (*Sodomei*), accompanied by a deep split in the Socialist Party. This situation resulted in *Sodomei,* by late 1949 coming under the leadership of the left, led by M. Takano. In 1950, a new move was made to bring organized labor under the control of the right Social Democrats by the formation of the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (*SOHYO*) with heavy American backing. The first program of *SOHYO* proposed to eliminate Communist influence in the unions, to concentrate upon economic questions to the exclusion of politics, and to affiliate the Japanese labor movement to the ICFTU, rival international to the WFTU. But as an American observer remarks, the *SOHYO* failed to achieve any of these reactionary objectives.[16] Instead, in 1952 it rejected affiliation with the ICFTU and it promptly came under left leadership, with M. Takano as general secretary. It adopted a progressive program, stressing solidarity with the workers of all Asian countries, including People's China. The membership of the progressive *Sanbetsu* declined and now that body has only a handful of members. It is, however, still influential and striving for trade union unity, in accordance with WFTU policy.

Thus, successively, the three largest general labor organizations created by the workers of Japan since the end of World War II— *Sanbetsu* (JCIU), *Sodomei* (JFL) and *SOHYO* (GCTUJ), each eventually developed, in varying degrees, a progressive orientation, despite all the efforts of the right Social Democrats , the employers, the Japanese government, and MacArthur's SCAP* to bring the Japanese unions under right wing leadership. Insofar as they were able, the American AFL and CIO also took part in this determined effort to mislead the Japanese working class.

Undetermined by their many failures, the Japanese right Social Democrats are now desperately trying to split the *SOHYO*, having in April 1954 set up a disruptionist dual organization known as *Zenrokaigi*. At present writing a bitter struggle is going on between these rival forces. The current relationship of strength of the two groups is that *SOHYO* has more than half of all industrial workers, and *Zenrokaigi* has only about one-fourth as many.

The *SOHYO* generally advocates a line of cooperation for peace with the USSR and People's China, and opposition to warlike American imperialism while the *Zenrokaigi* follows the usual right Social Democratic policy of catering to the dictates of Wall Street in its fight for world mastery. *SOHYO* is in friendly relations with, and *Sanbetsu* is affiliated to, the WFTU, whereas *Zenrokaigi* is affiliated to the ICFTU. In all the right-led unions there is a strong and increasing sentiment for affiliation to the WFTU, but the number of WFTU affiliates is small. Many delegates of unaffiliated Japanese unions have attended meetings called by the WFTU and its trade departments. They have also visited the Soviet Union, People's China, and the European people's democracies.

Since the end of the war the Japanese workers, in their struggles to clarify their ideology and to build a strong trade union movement, have gone through a veritable maze of splits and union reorganization movements. In June 1954, according to government figures, of a total of 14,290,000 employed workers, 5,986,168 were organized. Of plants with 500 or more workers, 90 percent were organized. These figures give the principal trade union federations as follows: The General Council of Japanese Trade Unions *(SOHYO)* 3,003,161 members, with 600,000 more in unions friendly to this organization; Japanese Trade Union Congress *(Zenrokaigi)* 707,837; General Federation of Japanese Trade Unions *(Sodomei)* 595,091; National Federation of Industrial Organizations *(Shinsanbetsu)* 40,951; and the National Congress of Industrial Unions

* The fire-eater MacArthur was fired from his post as dictator in Japan on April 11, 1951.

*(Sanbetsu)* 13,141.[17] The Government also listed some 2,363,986 trade unionists as unaffiliated with general national trade union centers. Of the total number of trade unionists, 3,893,639 worked in private enterprises with more than 30 workers; 958,905 worked for public corporations, and 1,243,203 were government employees.

## THE COLD WAR ELSEWHERE IN ASIA

All over the rest of rapidly awakening Asia the same general pattern of cold war has prevailed, with American imperialism and its local agents trying to stamp out the many national liberation movements of the respective peoples, together with their persistent efforts to capture, split, and break up the militant trade union movements, which generally sprang up after the war under Communist and other left leadership in the various countries. Of the estimated 30,000,000 trade union members in Asia and Australasia, including China but not the Asian part of the USSR, at least three-fourths are led by Communists and by other left elements who are cooperating with them. At the third world congress of the WFTU there were represented 23,888,300 trade unionists of Asia and Australasia.[18] In some of these countries—Ceylon, Burma, etc.—the Trotskyites have played a small and disruptive role.[19]

In Indonesia, with its more than 80,000,000 people, the Indonesian Federation of Trade Unions (*SOBSI*) has had to wage a hard struggle against Dutch imperialists and their Social Democratic agents. This big organization, with 2,600,000 members, is affiliated to the WFTU and has a progressive leadership. The general trade union movement, however, has been split into five segments. In the October 1955 general elections in Indonesia, the Communists polled over 20 percent of the total vote. In Malaya, the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions, founded in 1948 by Communists, is also an affiliate of the WFTU. It has had to function under the hard conditions of armed revolutionary struggle. In the Philippines the WFTU affiliate is the Congress of Labor Organizations, which remains in fraternal relations with the older Federation of Philippine Workers,[20] but it has to function in the midst of red-baiting and sharp attacks upon the left. The Philippine government is a satellite of the United States and follows all its warlike turns in policy.

The young left-led trade union movement in Pakistan (another satellite of the United States) was split in 1950, and the ensuing All-Pakistan Federation of Labor, established by right-wing elements, joined the ICFTU. In Burma after the Thakin Nu government, largely influenced by Social Democrats, was granted dominion status by Great Britain, it at once opened fire against the left led All-Burma Trade Union Congress.

This body was forced underground and a new organization, Socialist-led, the Trades Union Congress, was formed and affiliated to the ICFTU.[21] In Ceylon the left-led trade unions have had to face a similar repression from the government and rivalry from right Social Democratic trade unions.[22] In Siam the General Federation of Trade Unions, founded by Communists, was disrupted by Social Democrats following the general American line of the cold war, and a new organization was established in 1950, which affiliated to the ICFTU.[23] In Korea and Indo-China the trade union movements, generally pioneered by the Communists, were split by the wars in these countries, with the Social Democratic factions generally tailing after the lead of the imperialists and building the trade unions in their areas on this basis. Hardly a single country in Asia, except People's China, has escaped the trade union split, which all over the world, is a direct result of the launching of the cold war by the United States.

## 55. The Struggle Against Atomic World War (1947-1955)

The years following the end of World War II have been among the most dangerous ever confronted by humanity. This was the time when the drive of American imperialism for world conquest got under way and quickly assumed the highly threatening aspect of a profound world danger. The big monopolists, who shape United States policy, definitely oriented upon the basis of a war policy. They understood very well that they could not buy up the Soviet Union and its allies, as they were doing with so many capitalist countries; nor could they terrify them with atom bomb threats, as soon also became apparent. American big business early concluded that if it were even to hope to establish world hegemony in its drive for maximum profits, it must fight arms in hand for this domination. In this respect the policies of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were basically the same, both steering a course which assumed the necessity and inevitability of a third world war.

Every phase of United States policy, foreign and domestic, went to justify this terrible conclusion. The Truman doctrine, the Marshall plan, and the Atlantic pact, which we have dealt with in preceding chapters, were rapidly followed by other phases of the war policy. These included military expenditures of 40 billion dollars a year—twenty times as high as ever before in peace time.[1] The squandering, during nine years, of 48 billion dollars of American money abroad for armaments there.[2] The building of American air bases, in the most provocative manner, all over the world, literally encircling the USSR and the people's democracies with a network of such bases—950 of them, manned by 1,370,000 Amer-

ican soldiers.[3] The clinging by the United States to the atom bomb as a war weapon, despite the world-wide protest against it.

United States diplomatic and military foreign policy were part of the general war program of Wall Street. Various angles of this have been: the get-tough-with-Russia line, the announced determination to "'liberate" all the "enemy countries"—i.e., to foment civil wars in them; the Dulles threat of "instant massive retaliation"; the toleration of an open propaganda by high officials for a "preventive" war; the re-arming and re-nazification of Germany and Japan; the threat to "unleash" Chiang Kai-shek by an American intervention in People's China; American intervention in the Korean and Indo-China wars; the United States occupation of Formosa; the American-cultivated military alliances in Europe and Asia—NATO and SEATO; the announcement by President Eisenhower that the United States would use atomic weapons in "the next war"; the persistent carrying out of hydrogen bomb tests, to the fright and indignation of the world; and various other policies, all going in the direction of war. The war intent of Wall Street's policies was further made evident by the cultivation of an hysterical warmongering and fascist-like red-baiting campaign without precedent in the United States, which was designed to intimidate the masses and to stifle all struggle for peace.

The "danger" of a Soviet attack was howled forth endlessly as the justification for all these monster war preparations and policies. This was the Big Lie of the period, there being no danger whatever of any such "attack." It was also the pretext used by Hitler to prepare his drive for world conquest. With its Socialist regime, the USSR is not, and could not be, an imperialist country. Its fundamental program is necessarily for a peaceful co-existence with all other countries, regardless of their internal systems. There has never been the slightest danger that the Red Army would "march across Europe" or Asia. If the USSR had had any such idea in mind, certainly it would not have been so stupid as to stand passively aside all these years while the capitalist world has been feverishly re-arming itself. The "Red menace" is merely a myth, deliberately concocted as a justification, first for Hitler's and then for Wall Street's attempts at the military conquest of the world.

## THE PEOPLE'S FIGHT FOR PEACE; ITS MILITARY ASPECTS

The launching of the aggressive drive of American imperialism towards war and world conquest created more alarm throughout the world than did that of Hitler in its early stages. This was because it was being carried on by a country far more powerful than the Germany-Japan-Italy

fascist combination which had brought about World War II; because it was equipped with super-deadly atomic weapons; because it was more skillfully obscured behind a tricky propaganda of peace and democracy, and because the war-wracked countries were less able to resist it. Consequently, the world peace forces launched a broad and active movement to maintain world peace, the equal of which the world has never before seen. The common people developed a tremendous challenge to the assumed right of the monopolist capitalist masters to drench the world in blood whenever they feel that this will advance their imperialist interests. The vast world peace movement, rejecting the capitalist propaganda to the effect that war is inevitable, fought for the principle of the peaceful co-existence of all nations; irrespective of their differing internal regimes.

Fundamental in the defense of world peace was the fact that the countries of Socialism and people's democracy succeeded in building up a defensive military machine which was powerful enough to doom in advance to defeat any armed attack that might be launched by the imperialist capitalist powers. One of the outstanding features of the period of World War II and of the years immediately following it has been the demonstration of the tremendous fighting capacity of the countries with a Socialist orientation. This was shown dramatically by the USSR during the war by the manner in which the Soviet Red Army broke the backbone of Hitler's *Wehrmacht;* despite the facts that the Germans had the economic power of all Europe behind them, that they had swiftly wiped out the armies of France, Britain, Belgium, Poland, etc., and that all the bourgeois military experts of the world declared that Hitler would be in Moscow in a few weeks after his treacherous attack upon the USSR.

A further demonstration of the unparalleled fighting ability of the Socialist peoples was given in the Chinese revolution, which came to a victorious end in 1949-50. In this epic, years-long struggle the ill-equipped people's armies (which had practically no airforce) destroyed the far larger forces of Chiang Kai-shek, which were armed to the teeth with the very latest American military equipment. This tremendous feat amazed and shocked the capitalist world, and its amazement was further intensified by the sight of the half-armed people of North Korea, with the help of Chinese volunteers, fighting to a standstill the modernly equipped armies of the United Nations, which were trying to stamp out the colonial revolution in their country. The Korean development was a profound shock and surprise to the bourgeois military elements planning a new world war. Nor was this shock lessened by the events then going on in Indo-China, where, in a long and terrible war, the people's armies,

fighting for national freedom, held off and defeated the best troops that imperialist France could send against them.

But even more important than all this in the military defense of world peace, was the breaking, by the Soviet Union, of the Wall Street monopoly of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. This tremendous development literally cut the heart out of the whole strategy of the atomaniacs in Washington. Many, if not most, of the latter had been calculating that, once they had amassed a sufficiency of the dreadful weapons, they could easily bring the Soviet Union to book by a "preventive war." The thought that maybe the Russians might also get the atom bomb was scoffed at. But the "preventive war" strategy of the imperialists was knocked to pieces when it was made known that the Soviet Union also had the bomb.

Besides wrecking the war plans of the warmongers, the development of the A- and H-bombs by the USSR also raised the general peace struggle of the peoples to a higher and vastly more effective level. Previously, the enormous propaganda machine of the war plotters had tried to make it appear to the world that the "inevitable" war which they had in mind would he speedily and easily settled by a shower of atom bombs upon the industrial cities of the Soviet Union. But the announcement made by President Truman, that the Soviets also had the bomb, put a sudden end to this dreadful nonsense. With a great shock, this reality brought home to vast masses all over the world the decisive fact that if the warmongers dared to launch their atomic war this would become a two-sided affair, with consequent horrifying destruction. As a result, the world demand for peace was tremendously stimulated. Even large sections of the capitalists themselves, fearing that the capitalist system would be destroyed in such a war, as it certainly would be, very markedly lost their previous enthusiasm for a "preventive war" against the USSR, People's China, and the various people's democracies of Europe and Asia. The breaking of the atom bomb monopoly by the USSR was perhaps the greatest and most decisive democratic-peace victory of this crucial period.

## THE WORLD POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Together with these pro-peace military developments, the democratic forces of the world carried on simultaneously a tremendous agitation everywhere for peace. This went ahead upon a rising scale following the launching of the cold war by the Truman government in 1947, finally reaching a breadth and intensity hitherto quite unknown in the history of the world. Participants in this vast world peace campaign included not only the various governments of people's democracy and Socialism, with

their long struggle within the United Nations, but also the enormous democratic people's organizations of various sorts that had grown so swiftly and extensively after the end of World War II. In chapter 44 we have listed the larger of these organizations—the vast trade unions, huge youth groups, monster women's organizations, and mass Communist parties. The entire world agitation for peace centered in the World Peace Council, with its up to 700,000,000 adherents and active supporters.

The whole vast and militant world peace movement collided directly with the war plans of the Wall Street would-be world conquerors, to the latter's great discomfort. A decisive struggle raged around the Korean war of 1950-53. This war, launched by the Wall Street puppet Syngman Rhee government, was actively supported by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Their common line was to extend the war into People's China, and they both tried, but failed, to introduce the A-bomb into the conflict. World opposition to this war, and especially to the use of the A-bomb, was so great that the Washington warmongers could not develop any real United Nations military support, and they finally, after stalling the peace negotiations for many months, were compelled most unwillingly, to sign the armistice. This was a major defeat for the war plans of American imperialism. It was hailed as a great peace victory, however, by the peoples of the world, including the American people, who hated the war deeply. The Korean peace was a serious defeat for Wall Street militarism, but it was hailed joyously by the American people.

The world peace forces scored another big victory in the settling of the "dirty war," as the French called it, in Indo-China. As we have seen, by early 1954 the people's armies in that country had largely defeated the French imperialists and were willing for a cease-fire. But at this point the United States intervened, sought to block the peace negotiations and, as the American press freely admitted at the time, had its air and naval forces mobilized for an all-out attack upon the Indo-Chinese national liberation forces. Great Britain, France, and other American allies refused, however, to go along with this scheme to spread the war. World opinion demanded peace. Wall Street had to yield to it, and the armistice was signed in May 1954. This was another major victory for the forces of world peace and the American masses shared in this victory.

Hard upon the heels of the crisis over the Indo-China war came another over the Chinese off-shore islands, Quemoy and Matsu. The United States, arrogantly controlling Formosa, was all prepared to defend the two islands with atom bombs. Several sharp ultimatums to this effect were issued by the State Department to People's China. Again an aroused world public opinion, including that in the United States,

blocked and defeated the plans of the warmongers in this extremely threatening situation.

Meanwhile, a broad new phase of the elementary peace forces—the so-called neutralist movement—began to develop in various parts of the capitalist world. This mass "third group" movement, although not prepared to support the full peace program of the basic peace forces, nevertheless was genuinely for peace. It was actively fought by American imperialism as an opposition force, which it was, to Wall Street's imperialist program. The neutralist movement roused strong opposition to the warmongers in Great Britain, France, and many other countries. In the former colonial strongholds of capitalism, the peace and neutralist movement reached a high stage, culminating in the great 1955 Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations, comprising a majority of the human race. Meanwhile, as world peace sentiment mounted, American diplomatic prestige sank to the lowest levels ever known.

This was the general situation as the famous conference of the Big Four powers, the USA, USSR, Britain, and France, came together in Geneva in July 1955. The Wall Street program had been thoroughly bankrupted in military practice and in world public opinion. An overwhelming majority of the world's population, loaded down with armament taxes and dreading an atomic war, was categorically demanding peace. The system of war alliances, which the United States had been so actively and expensively building, was shaken to the core. For several years past one of the central demands of the peace movement had been for a top-level international conference. This mass demand crystallized in the proposal for the Big Four conference in Geneva. The Eisenhower government, fearing such a gathering, opposed it vigorously, but finally had to yield to the world-wide demand.

At the Geneva conference American imperialism, represented by President Eisenhower, precipitately retreated from its policy of war threats, under a great deal of peace talk. Laying aside his erstwhile atomic ultimatums, Eisenhower distinguished himself with elaborate assurances of the "peaceful" intentions of his government, at the same time holding fast to every arrogant demand of Wall Street imperialism. One of the major objectives that Eisenhower had in mind in this policy was to allay, if he could, the vast fear throughout the world that the United States was leading humanity into a terrible atomic world war. He sought to restore the badly damaged peace reputation of the United States. By his peace talk Mr. Eisenhower also seemingly cleared the road for a second term for himself in the White House, this being before his heart attack. For above all, the American people want a President who, they be-

lieve, will keep them out of war.

The Geneva conference left standing the many basic problems that have been threatening the world with war—the re-unification of Germany, the ending of the arms race, the destruction and prohibition of atomic weapons, the seating of People's China in the United Nations, the liquidation of the American occupation of Formosa, the dismantling of American air and naval bases abroad, etc. The basic antagonisms between capitalism and Socialism also remain. The big thing that Geneva did, however, was to develop the position that these problems should be settled through negotiations, not through atomic war. This registered a basic success for the world peace movement. It was a major defeat for Wall Street's theory of the inevitability of war and a major victory for the world peoples' policy of the peaceful co-existence of all nations. American mass sentiment rallied tremendously in support of Geneva.

At Geneva Wall Street's war program was balked. This was a matter of great importance—even if the halt should be only temporary. It could lead to far-reaching constructive economic and political consequences. The war danger was not totally eliminated—it will last as long as imperialism does—but it was shoved into the background by the pressure of the world peace forces. A new period of diplomatic negotiations has been opened up, and the people must see to it that these are fruitful. As the sequel has already shown, there are many and powerful forces seeking to continue the cold war and even to re-activate the war danger, and they must be resolutely defeated. We may be sure that Wall Street imperialism, with such means as it can command, will continue its futile, but dangerous, attempt at world mastery. With persistent vigilance by the peace forces, however, the Geneva conference can be made to mark the beginning of the end of the cold war and the opening of an era of real peace.

The peace-loving masses are now in a position to win an historic victory; namely, the final halting of the dreadful atomic world war which the big monopolists of the world, led by the Moguls of Wall Street, had definitely decided upon. This indeed would be something new and revolutionary in the world, and it could mark a turning point in world history. One of the main features of this would be that the Socialist countries, freed from the monstrous drain of war and war preparations upon their economy, would be able so swiftly and spectacularly to raise the living standards of their people that this would have profound effects upon the workers in the capitalist countries, inspiring them to new and greater struggles to establish Socialism in their countries. But such vital victories can be won only by ceaseless struggle on the part of the peace forces against the forces of predatory imperialism.

## THE TWO TRADE UNION INTERNATIONALS IN THE COLD WAR

The ICFTU and the WFTU have followed opposite policies throughout the cold war; the former generally supporting the program of American imperialism, and the latter systematically opposing it. In accordance with the basic policy of the Second International, the ICFTU, during this most critical period in world history, has seen an enemy only on the left, especially in the countries of people's democracy and Socialism. As we have noted in passing, the ICFTU backed the Truman doctrine, the Marshall plan, the Atlantic pact, the Korean war, the Indo-China war, the imperialist butchery in Malaya, the re armament of Germany, the American occupation of Formosa, the refusal of Wall Street's politicians to ban and destroy the atom bomb, and practically every other ramification of American imperialist policy. The ICFTU thus violated the most vital interests of the working class throughout the world.

In this pro-imperialist policy the ICFTU (headquarters in Paris) followed the tricky line of supporting the Wall Street war program and then complaining feebly of some results of its application; of voting for the enormous arms appropriations bills, and then protesting about the high cost of living; of tying the unions to the war chariots, and then griping about the restrictions upon the worker's civil liberties. The work of the ICFTU, like that of the Second International in general, was particularly insidious in its covering up the imperialist-war propaganda of the monopolists with a veneer of labor phrases. But the ICFTU sank to its lowest levels, in the service of the imperialists, by its systematic splitting of the WFTU on a world scale, and by its disruption of the labor movement in many individual countries—France, Italy, Germany, United States, Asia, and Latin America. The substance of ICFTU policy throughout the cold war has been a united front with American monopoly capital against the peace and democratic forces of the world and in defense of the world capitalist system.

All this ICFTU tailing after aggressive American imperialism, as it has driven ahead for world domination through an atomic war, was quite in the traditional spirit of the right Social Democracy during the past 40 years. It was but a logical continuation of that movement's betrayal of the Russian, German, Chinese, and other people's revolutions. During its course the most blatantly reactionary leadership has been that of the Americans, the Meanys, Reuthers, et al who have vied with the capitalists themselves in their shameless warmongery. This is especially true of Meany, head of the AFL-CIO, whose position on foreign policy is hardly to be distinguished from that of vice-president Nixon, Senators

Knowland and McCarthy, and others of similar pro-fascist political hue. These labor leaders have been enemies of all negotiations with the USSR. They even boast that "American labor is not so easily taken in by Soviet peace propaganda as Wall Street."[4]

The top American labor leaders were able to take their aggressive position not because the workers and the masses of the American people want war (which they emphatically do not), but because they autocratically control the unions and are able to violate the opinions of their membership. These conservative elements have also profited from the intensive campaign of warlike intellectual terrorism carried on by Senator McCarthy, and others of his ilk. Such terrorism intimidates the general political oppositionist forces, and it also specifically acts as a weapon against progressive minorities in the trade unions. This explains why the AFL top leadership for many years supported the notorious Un-American Activities Committee, and why they calmly accept the clauses in the Taft-Hartley law which bar Communists from holding office in trade unions.

Whenever European ICFTU leaders, under the heavy pressure of the peace-loving masses in their countries, have tended to veer in the direction of "neutralism," the American labor imperialists have been quick to crowd them back into line again. At the third world congress of the ICFTU, held in Stockholm in July 1953, when the British and other delegates wanted peace negotiations conducted with the Soviet Union, the Americans objected, calling it "appeasement." "A struggle between the British and United States delegates over this issue resulted in defeat for the policy of peaceful co-existence."[5] The British leader, Sir Vincent Tewson, general secretary of the British Trades Union Congress, who had been president of the ICFTU and who was opposed by the Americans, did not run again and was supplanted by the Meany figurehead, Omar Becu of Belgium. A similar fracas occurred at the 1955 congress of the ICFTU in Vienna, with many Europeans denouncing the American labor dictators as warmongers. As the United States government is having increasing difficulty in controlling the United Nations, so also are its labor lieutenants finding the going more and more stormy in dominating that creature of American imperialism, the ICFTU.

On the other hand, the WFTU (headquarters Vienna) has, from the outset of the cold war, carried on an energetic struggle for peace and against the world domination plans and policies of American imperialism. The WFTU is a foundation section of the world peoples' movement for peace. It has not only prosecuted a far-flung peace campaign upon its own account as a trade union movement, but also as a member of the

World Council for Peace, in the Executive of which it has delegates. The WFTU unions were major factors in collecting signatures for the several enormous petitions of the World Peace Council, with their hundreds of millions of names attached. These petitions were without parallel in history, and the widespread educational work involved in their collection did much to bring about the many defeats suffered by American imperialism in its attempts to organize a world war. The latest world congress of the WFTU in Vienna, October 1953, fully endorsed this fight against the warmongers.

The WFTU and its affiliated unions have steadily opposed the various steps in the conquest program of Wall Street imperialism, its wars in Korea, Indo China, etc. They have especially campaigned against the manufacture and use of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. They have given active support to the struggling national liberation movements and revolutions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They have fought against the huge armament appropriations and the loading down of the workers with unbearable taxes. They have battled vigorously against all infringements upon the peoples' democratic rights—the trend toward fascism—which was almost everywhere a part of the imperialist drive toward war. They have revived May Day, long sabotaged by the right Social Democrats, and have again made of it a day of international demonstration and struggle.

One of the major necessities of the warmongers has been to slash the living standards of the workers, so that a still greater proportion of what they produce could be grabbed for their maximum profits and devoted to the preparations for war. The right Social Democrats, accepting monopoly capital's war perspective, and also its logic that war preparations inevitably bring with them industrial speed-up, higher taxes, and lower living standards for the workers, also used their powerful influence to deter the workers from striking against all these added burdens. If the misleaders have occasionally condoned certain big strikes as, for example, those of the miners and metal workers of 1953-54 in Bavaria and the Ruhr, the first large German strikes in twenty years, it was because they could not successfully over-ride the workers' fighting will.

But in this respect, all over the world where WFTU influence is strong, the warmongers have had to contend with powerful worker resistance. Consequently, the post-war years have witnessed many great strikes, mostly imbued with an anti-war spirit. Notable were the vast strikes in France and Italy in 1949 and 1953, the big Spanish strike of 1951, the huge strikes in Indonesia in 1953, the several Japanese general strikes in 1953, the big strikes in Brazil, Chile, and other Latin American

countries in 1953-55, and various strikes in Africa and other areas. Nor have Great Britain and the United States, despite conservative trade union leaders, been without many important strikes during the post-war period. Often the strikes of these years ran from one to several millions of workers. In the new strength of the trade union movement such massive strikes have now become almost commonplace.

If the war drive of American imperialism has been checked and halted upon various occasions, especially at the 1955 Geneva conference of Big Four powers, the ICFTU can claim no credit for these vital working-class victories, because all along its right-wing leadership has played the game of American imperialism, either openly or covertly supporting its program of war and world conquest. But the WFTU, true to the interest and will of the workers and other democratic elements, has been a major factor in the peace struggle on every front all over the world. It has been weighed and not found wanting in the test of the crucial post-World War II years, when humanity has been fighting off the most deadly war threat it has ever confronted.

In the more conciliatory spirit initiated at Geneva, obviously the opportunity now presents itself to the world labor movement to end the cold war in its own ranks. This could and should mean the development of united front movements for immediate objectives between the present rival labor organizations in the respective countries and also between the two trade union internationals as such, looking eventually towards the cultivation of organic trade union unity. Already, alarmed at these possibilities of labor unity in action and organization, the right-wing trade union officials in Great Britain, the United States, France, and elsewhere are striving to block such get-together tendencies in labor's ranks. But the workers can, by alert action, frustrate the labor splitters and thus advance the cause of unity. "End the Cold War in Labor's Ranks" is one of the most basic demands of the workers in this period.

## 56. The General Law of Trade Union Progress

Society has its principles or laws of growth, function, and decline. Among them, particularly with regard to the capitalist system under which we live, may be mentioned the various laws relating to the economic factor in determining the course of history, to the extraction of surplus value, to cyclical economic crises, to the class struggle, to monopoly capitalism, to the general crisis of world capitalism and to proletarian revolution. The basic theoretical achievement of Marxists is to have been able to analyze these social laws and to draw from them the necessary conclusions. Bourgeois economists are characterized by a gen-

eral failure to recognize or understand social laws. At the burial of Karl Marx on March 18, 1883, his brilliant co-worker, Frederick Engels, said of the great thinker and fighter: "Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history."

As part of society the trade union movement—here we speak primarily of that in the capitalist countries—is subject to society's basic laws of growth and development. Trade unionism grew with the capitalist system, and as part of that system it is conditioned by such laws as those of the class struggle, of the uneven development of capitalism, and others. For example—capitalist cyclical economic crises historically have had far-reaching effects upon trade unions, mostly in a disruptive sense; colonial regimes have placed their indelible stamp upon the worker composition of the unions; the expansion of trade unionism on a world scale relates to the growth of international capitalism, and so on.

The trade union movement also has specific laws of its own. With some 140,000,000 members throughout the world and over two centuries of history behind it, the movement has not grown and does not function haphazardly. Trade unions are born, advance, and decline according to ascertainable principles or laws. It is a weakness of trade union writings that more attention has not been paid to this basic aspect of the movement's life.

## THE MANNER OF TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT

Historically speaking the trade unions have grown numerically, spread from country to country, and developed new structures, new programs, new tactics, and new ideologies to fit themselves for new situations and tasks. This whole development, considered in its broadest outlines, constitutes an evolution; in the same sense that the history of society represents a general social evolution.

The growth of trade unionism, however, while evolutionary in an historical sense, has not been a steady evolutionary advance in an immediate sense. The growth graph made by it is not a smooth incline but a series of plains and peaks, with a general upward tendency. The trade union movement has advanced with alternating periods of slow evolutionary expansion and of swift and stormy growth. Sometimes the trade unions have expanded at a snail's pace, or even retrogressed, and at other times they have raced ahead at tremendous speed, making progress in all sectors. This alternation of periods of faster and slower development is the general law of the progress of the trade union movement. Its reality is attested to by the history of organized labor in every capitalist country.

The periods of faster and slower development of the unions relate directly to the rise or decline in the fighting spirit of the working class. Generally the periodic bursts of militancy by the workers are the results of long accumulated or suddenly precipitated grievances. They may be caused by wars, sweeping wage cuts, sudden drops in real wages, economic crises, open-shop drives, the threat of fascism, and the like. Industrial boom periods may also generate lesser offensives by the workers, with extensive union-building by the workers, as labor history amply indicates. The periods of intense working-class struggle may be short, or they may cover a decade or more; they may be local, national, or international in scope. When the economic and political situation is mature and the workers have a strong Communist Party, the working-class offensives may, of course, become proletarian revolutions; but this is not our concern here.

The high peaks of trade union struggle have been accentuated by the growth of monopoly capitalism. From the earliest days of trade unionism in all countries, during the period of competitive capitalism, there were characteristic peaks of working-class struggle, but the phenomenon became greatly extended and intensified with the appearance of the trusts and combines, as capitalism entered the stage of monopoly. This was to be observed in every capitalist country.

The question of mass spontaneity enters into the situation. When the workers are in a militant mood and the political situation is matured, often a small incident may trigger a broad fighting movement. Both the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the German Revolution of 1918, although based on deep and fundamental class contradictions, got started in relatively small local revolts, which spread like prairie fires. All capitalist countries have had similar experiences on lesser scales. The Flint sit-down strike of January 1937, for example, was the spark that touched off the big series of strikes and organizing campaigns that built the CIO in the late 1930's, The workers throughout the country, burdened with long years of hard times, exploitation, and general oppression, were ripe for struggle and the small but dramatic strike in Flint was sufficient to set them actively into motion. As workers become better organized economically and politically, however, they are less dependent upon these moods of spontaneity, vital though they may be. With their present-day strong organization and accumulated power, the workers are able to precipitate big offensives themselves, without waiting until the dam bursts of itself from the irresistible mass pressure behind it.

The history of the labor movement everywhere under capitalism shows that the workers, where bourgeois democratic conditions prevail, have made considerable progress during the less active periods of class

struggle. The Second International, during its best period of 1889-1914, lived during a relative calm in the class struggle, save in Russia and to a lesser extent in the United States; but the workers nevertheless succeeded, despite an increasingly right-wing Socialist leadership, in building up powerful mass trade unions, parties, and cooperatives on an international scale. This growth both Lenin and Stalin stressed strongly in their estimates of the historical role of the Second International.

Trade unions may also retrogress organizationally and ideologically during periods of lessened class struggle. This was notably the case with the AFL unions during 1923-29. These were years of high industrial activity, when normally the trade unions should have grown considerably. Instead, they fell off in membership and their fighting morale sank to the lowest levels in American labor history. This decline occurred because during this period the unions became enmeshed by their reactionary leaders in the current class collaborationist, no-strike, no-fight theories, to the general effect that if they speeded up production they automatically would reap higher real wages. This was the era of the Baltimore & Ohio plan, the higher strategy of labor, the new wage policy, and other opportunist illusions.

## THE TWO PHASES OF PROGRESS EVALUATED

The two phases of organized labor's mode of progress, the slow evolutionary growth and the strong revolutionary advance, however, are not to be equated as of the same significance. The second phase—that of the strong fighting offensive—is much the more potent. During such periods of active struggle the trade unions, in all capitalist countries, have always made their greatest advances. The trade union movement, like the working class in general, makes its main progress not by slow evolutionary steps, but by militant leaps forward. This principle has applied both in the development of strike movements and of direct attacks upon the capitalist system.

Mere militancy of itself is, however, not enough to guarantee victory and trade union growth. The workers must be well-led or even the most powerful spontaneous movements will go onto the rocks of defeat. Particularly is the danger great when the workers are led by right Social Democrats—the enemies of all aggressive struggle by the workers. This stern reality has been made clear time and again in world labor history, including such ill-fated Social-Democratic led movements as the German Revolution of 1918, the revolutionary Italian metal workers' strike of 1920, the ill-fated American big strikes of 1918-23, and the British general strike of 1926.

A tragic example of the treacherous leadership of Social Democratic union officialdom was exhibited, as we have seen earlier, during the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany during the period of 1920-1933, The workers were ready to fight, but the Social Democratic labor bureaucrats, with a firm control on the workers' political parties and trade unions, managed to defeat their will to struggle. The first result was that the trade union movement was wiped out by the fascists, from the western borders of the USSR to the English Channel, save in "neutral" Sweden and Switzerland, and in pro-Hitler Finland. It took a victorious world war to reestablish the European labor movement.

Normally during the recurring periods of stormy struggle the trade unions make their greatest growth, as the history of the world labor movement eloquently proves. In periods of hard fighting the workers are the most conscious of a need of strong trade union organization. They are also most in the mood to build it. In every capitalist country the greatest gains in union membership and general strength have been made during the periods of hitter struggle.

During these periods of acute class struggle the workers understand most clearly the need for political organization and action. The theory that the workers turn alternately from industrial to political action and vice versa is not borne out by labor history. Instead, in all countries the periods of intense industrial struggle are almost always also the periods of the greatest political activity on the part of the working class.

By the same token, the trade unions have always made their most significant advances ideologically during times of sharpest mass struggle This, too, is one of the basic lessons of world labor experience. When they are in hard struggle with the employers and the state the workers are the most receptive to advanced Marxist concepts. It is easiest then for them to understand the basic causes of their conflict, to grasp the class role of the state, and to understand the treachery of the right Social Democracy. In all capitalist countries periods of sharp class struggle are thus periods of the most rapid working-class enlightenment and growth of class consciousness.

Likewise, the struggle periods are those when the workers are most inclined to get rid of their right-wing bureaucratic leaders, the products of times of lesser class struggles, and to replace these parasites with fighting workers. Traditionally, all over the world it is during great working-class movements that the workers produce new and better leaders. Fear of thus losing their jobs is one of the basic reasons why the chair-warming labor bureaucrats so acutely dread the rise of militancy and working-class struggle.

The period of the fighting offensive is also the most advantageous for the trade unions in other respects. Then the workers inevitably throw their largest forces into action and they are best able to deliver solid blows against the capitalist exploiters. And then, too, with the masses alert and in a fighting mood, they can most readily break through the network of hindrances and crippling bureaucratic controls that the conservative Social Democratic leaders have been able to fasten upon them during calmer periods of the class struggle. A trade union movement going into active struggle is like Gulliver breaking the cords with which the Lilliputians have bound him,

Marx, Lenin, and many other Communist leaders have repeatedly pointed out that at certain times and due to specific conditions the tempo of the class struggle is greatly speeded up, and that then the workers perform "miracles" of courage and achievement. “In such great developments,” says Marx, "twenty years are but as one day— and there may come days which are as the concentrated essence of twenty years.”[1] The law of trade union progress, which signalizes the periods of acute class struggle as the times of greatest trade union development, dovetails with and is part of the basic principle thus outlined by Marx.

## EXAMPLES FROM WORLD TRADE UNION EXPERIENCE

Trade union experience under capitalism in all countries goes to prove the validity of the general law of trade union progress, as stated above. The history of organized labor in Great Britain, the classical home of trade unionism, is typical. The British unions have always made their greatest progress during periods of the most active class struggle, when the fighting spirit of the proletariat was at the highest pitch. Among the most important of these periods of intense struggle were the years 1830-48, the time of the historic Owenite Chartist movement; the big London dock strike of 1889, which opened the doors of the British craft unions to the unskilled masses; the militant mass strikes of 1908-14, which gave the British working class a glimpse of its revolutionary power and led to the formation of the Triple Alliance of 1914-20; the big increase in membership and activity in the world-wide mass upsurge following World War I; the basic agitation and struggle connected with the general strike of 1926, and the increase in struggle and union growth in the immediate aftermath of World War II. These were the times when the basic increases in British trade union membership were made, when real improvements were achieved in trade union structure and tactics, when the most concessions were wrung from the employers, when the workers sensed most clearly the need for political action, when the rank and file

most successfully broke through the bureaucratic controls of class collaboration, and when the working masses made the greatest progress in ridding themselves of bourgeois thinking.

German trade union history tells the same general story of a record of plains and peaks in trade union development. Three peaks were: the swift union growth after the workers' defeat of the anti-Socialist laws in 1893, the stormy expansion of the trade unions in the revolutionary situation after World War I—from 1,415,518 members in January 1917 to 7,338.132 in December 1918—followed by relative union stagnation during the 15 years of class collaboration under the Weimar Republic; and then, again, there was the swift re-creation of the trade unions, from nothing to about 10,000,000 members, during 1945-49, following fascism and World War II.

The Italian labor movement has had a like experience of big leaps ahead during periods of sharp class struggle, and so, also, have the French unions, with interim periods of relative calm in the class struggle, marked by little or no trade union progress. Both movements grew enormously in the struggle periods following the two world wars. A famous "peak," too, in French labor history was during the people's front struggle of the years 1935-37, when the workers succeeded by militant mass action in halting French fascism, in skyrocketing the CGT membership from 1,000,000 to 5,000,000, in winning the great national sit-down strikes, and in bringing about organic unity between the CGT and the CGTU, despite the resistance of reluctant Social Democratic leadership.

The Japanese trade union movement, which had functioned precariously for many years previously under semi-feudal conditions, took its first great leap forward after World War II. It soared from a position of no real unions at all under the militaristic-fascist regime to a movement of almost 7,000,000 members within two years after the end of the war. Almost like magic the awakened Japanese workers cast off old-time methods of thought, built powerful industrial unions, developed original forms of strike tactics, and acted like veteran trade unionists. In this period the modern Japanese labor movement literally crashed into existence, almost overnight.

The history of the American trade unions also exhibits the workings of the general law of trade union progress—with the characteristic alternating peaks of struggle with rapid union growth, and plains of lesser class struggle with relative organizational and ideological stagnation. Among the highest points of struggle and expansion of the trade union movement in the United States may be listed: the historic trade union upswing of 1827-33, the period *of* struggle and union-building immedi-

ately following the Civil War, the big burst of class struggle and organization during 1877-96, a period of developing imperialism, the considerable union expansion of 1918-20 during and after World War I, and, above all, the sweeping trade union growth and struggle of 1933-48, a product of the great economic crisis of 1929-33 and the fight against world fascism.

During the latter tremendous surge forward the workers, breaking through the stifling controls of the Green labor bureaucracy, established the CIO, adopted industrial unionism, and launched a series of struggles and campaigns which organized the hitherto open-shop basic industries and raised the total number of trade unionists in the United States and Canada from 3,000,000 in 1933 to about 16,000,000 at the end of 1948. Moreover, characteristic of such periods of swift advance the CIO, hearkening to its big left-progressive wing, broke with many of the old reactionary Gompersian shibboleths and practices and adopted many new and progressive policies and tactics—with regard to Negro workers, women and youth workers, political action, mass picketing, international labor unity, etc. The CIO swiftly became the vanguard of the American trade union movement.

The trade unions of the countries of Socialism and people's democracy—the USSR, People's China, and the rest—all had similar experiences during their earlier phases under the capitalist system. The trade unions of old Russia, hardly able to exist even in skeleton form under tsarist tyranny, took their first great jump forward during the Revolution of 1905, when in a few months' time they became an organized movement of about 250,000 members. Suppressed in 1908-12 by tsarist reaction, they again made a rapid expansion during the Revolution of 1917. In March 1917 the Russian trade unions totalled only a handful, but by June 1917 they counted 1,475,420 affiliates, and by January 1918, 2,532,000—after which they went ahead still faster, until finally they have reached their present gigantic membership.

The Chinese trade unions first burst upon the scene of labor history during the big revolutionary united front drive of the Kuomintang and Communist Party forces in 1925-27 against feudal reaction. Although prior to 1925 trade unions had hardly been known in China, by 1927 they already had jumped to 2,600,000 members. After the Chiang Kai-shek counter-revolution in 1927 the unions, suffering many terrifying hardships, were reduced to skeletons, or wiped out, except in the liberated areas. With the victorious advance of the Chinese Revolution, the trade unions again grew rapidly, reporting 2,836,059 members in 1948, and by 1953 the membership had risen to 10,200,000. The European people's

democracies, with their huge trade union movements, have all had similar experiences, their labor organizations making their real growth during the periods of hard struggle.

The trade unions in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy are now matured labor organizations. The peaks-and-valleys method of growth no longer prevails among them to anywhere near the same extent that it does in the capitalist countries. That rises in working class militancy, under economic and political stress, still play a role with them, was dramatically demonstrated by the enormous industrial achievements of the Soviet trade unions during World War II. The barriers to the development of these unions have been broken down and their enemies are dispersed. They grow freely numerically, they adapt themselves readily to the new tasks confronting them, and their ideology expands and flourishes without capitalist interference. Such unions live in a condition of more or less permanent militancy and rapid development.

## THE GENERAL LAW AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

The reality of the varying tempos of the class struggle and of the fighting spirit of the working class, which underlies the general law of trade union progress, as we see, has played a very important role in the history of the world trade union movement. The workers and their leaders have tried to understand this phenomenon and they have responded to it internationally and tactically in various ways. Historically, the three major currents in the modern labor movement (without checking the older ones), which can be roughly grouped under the trends of right Social Democracy, Anarcho-syndicalism, and Communism, have taken different attitudes towards the recurring waves of struggle and the periods of relative working-class calm.

The right-wing Social Democrats have always based themselves upon a minimum of class struggle. They are the ardent proponents of *Kleinarbeit;* that is, of day-to-day work, of the slow, bit-by-bit advance. Their fundamental policy is class collaboration, and they are inveterate opponents of militant class struggle. Their great dread is of outbursts of aggressive fighting spirit on the part of the workers, whether these are powerful strike movements, or incomparably worse, attacks upon the capitalist system itself. They are advocates of evolution and enemies of revolution. They especially require the periods of calm for building their hard-and-fast bureaucracies, an enterprise at which they are very expert. As the history of all countries shows, when right Social Democrats, during periods of working-class upheaval, are compelled to lead big movements of struggle, "they head them only to behead them." The whole pol-

icy of the Social Democrats is tied in with the fact that at bottom they are only petty bourgeois reformists, without any Socialist perspective.

The Anarchist trend in the labor movement has always gone to the other extreme from that of the right Social Democrats. The early Anarchists practically ignored the current urgent tasks of day-to-day demands, struggle and organization. Their basic reliance was the spontaneous action of the masses. This also was a petty bourgeois tendency; for middle class elements are notoriously lacking in definite programs and fighting organizations. The Anarcho-syndicalists have practically the same weaknesses in this respect; that is, an over-reliance upon the spontaneity of the working class and too little attention to the questions of organization and daily struggle. For them the general strike has always been the cure-all, and they have usually hoped to achieve their general strikes through arbitrary manifestoes, rather than by hard preliminary organization work and by striking the blow at the strategic moment. The usual result has been failure. This is the experience of Anarcho-syndicalism in all countries.

The Communists and other left trade unionists, on the other hand, know how to advance the cause of the workers in both phases of the general law of trade union progress. They are the best day-to-day builders and fighters during periods of relative calm in the class struggle. They are also the ones who understand best how to lead broad masses of workers in the periods of active class struggle and to utilize these struggles to build strong trade unions, and when it is timely, to march on to Socialism. The basic method of Communists is that of the revolutionary advance; but they also know how to make slow evolutionary progress when this is the only way. This puts them into harmony with the fighting methods of the workers, who, facing daily grievances in their work and life, constantly fight against them, and who also, confronting from time-to-time heavier attacks upon their living and working conditions, reply to them with sweeping offensives which, in appropriate situations, may become revolutions.

The Communists fully appreciate the fundamental importance of the periodic expressions of high working-class spontaneity or fighting spirit; but they also understand no less well that unless this militancy is skillfully educated, organized, and led, it must, especially under modern conditions, dissipate itself in defeat. It is precisely because the Communists, unlike the right Social Democrats and Anarcho-syndicalists, know the significance of both the active and the passive phases of the general law of trade union progress in building the trade unions and in leading them in active struggle, that trade union leadership on a world scale is gravitating towards the left.

Trade union militants need to have a working knowledge of the general law of trade union progress. This will enable them to work more effectively in both phases of the class struggle; during those calmer times when the working class makes only a slow evolutionary advance, and during its militant upheavals when it makes revolutionary leaps ahead. Avoiding the wrong tendencies of the Social Democrats to play down and underestimate the periods of active struggle and also the Anarcho-syndicalists' distorted estimation of militant moods among the workers, the Communists and other left-wingers must understand and utilize both these periods to the full.

With the immense trade unions of today it is possible for the workers themselves to generate powerful offensives, but the most successful and sweeping of these forward movements depend upon a stimulating correlation of economic and political conditions, during which the fighting spirit of the workers is raised. The big thing is that the workers' leaders should understand the significance of such great movements of advance and on the basis of them—to build the trade unions, to register solidly with their demands, to remove the bureaucrats from office, to get a better leadership, to strengthen the unions' economic and political action, and to improve drastically the ideology of the working class.

## 57. The WFTU: The Trade Union International of a New Type

The World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions differ fundamentally in their structure, composition, methods of work, and political outlook. The WFTU, to paraphrase Lenin, is an international of a new type. Incorporating the historical experience of the working class, it also looks forward to the new world system of Socialism that is being born. The ICFTU, in contrast, is wedded to the past, and its leaders are trying to utilize it as an instrument for the preservation of the obsolete capitalist system.

The present period is one of deepening general crisis of the capitalist system, the most basic expression of which is the abolition of capitalism and the development of Socialism in the USSR, People's China, and various other countries. The WFTU reflects this situation in the fact that a large part of its membership, the bulk of it in fact, lives in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy. As the true international of labor, however, the WFTU also has extensive affiliations and supporters in the capitalist world, including the main labor union federations in Italy, France, and Japan, the most powerful labor groups in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and strong left trade union minorities, supporters of the

WFTU, in the trade unions of many leading capitalist countries. The ICFTU, on the other hand, is an organization existing only in the capitalist world, and it stubbornly refuses to recognize the reality of the Socialist regimes now embracing one-third of the world population.

The WFTU faithfully reflects the present state of the workers, awakening as they are in all parts of the globe, inasmuch as it is truly a world organization. Besides its following in the industrial countries, it also has powerful organizations in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and it is thoroughly in harmony with the vast national liberation movements developing in these areas. But the ICFTU, like the IFTU before it, is primarily an organization of industrial Europe. Pro-imperialist, it is essentially alien to the undeveloped regions of the earth. What organizations it has in these countries have been built largely in cooperation with the employers and the capitalist governments in order to combat the growing organization and influence of the WFTU.

As the true labor union organizations of the working class, the WFTU and its affiliates base their policies upon cultivating the welfare of the whole class—skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled; upon the workers in agriculture as well as in industry. The ICFTU and its affiliates, however, still follow essentially the historical right opportunist orientation of basing their policies primarily upon the interests of the more skilled, and now the white-collar workers. This is also true when they extend their unions to include broad masses of unskilled and semi-skilled—as is notably the case in the labor movements of Great Britain, the United States, and West Germany. The trend is also more and more for the leaders of these Social-Democratic trade unions—in Asia and Latin America, as well as in Europe and the United States—to become the direct, and often subsidized, representatives of the employers and the capitalist states.

The methods of struggle of the WFTU are also on altogether a higher plane than are those of the ICFTU. WFTU policy is based upon the class struggle, while the ICFTU follows the line of class collaboration. The latter organization is saturated with the dry-as-dust bureaucratism characteristic of Second International organizations in general, which was typified in the defunct International Federation of Trade Unions that was superseded by the WFTU. The WFTU, on the contrary, conducts vivid fighting working class activities, emphasized, among innumerable manifestations, by the broad agitation and discussions it carries on for months prior to its world congresses, by the multiple activities of its trade departments, by its firm support of all important strikes, by the immense world-wide May First demonstrations which it cultivates, by its specific

and intense international campaigns and conferences, by its extensive literature, by its widespread defense of trade union rights,[1] of social insurance, of the unemployed, of civil rights in general, of the special demands of women and young workers, of working class education, and the like, and above all, by its militant fight for world peace. The WFTU is a real trade union international, alert and alive to all the needs and moods of the world's workers. The quality of its mass work is a whole era ahead of that of the ICFTU. It also represents big advances over the former Red International of Labor Unions.

## FROM ECONOMIC TO POLITICAL ACTION

Historically the trend of the trade union struggle is from the economic to the economic-political. That is, the workers, at the outset, make and fight for certain elementary economic demands, which, as they take on volume and strength, tend to become also political in character. This transformation has taken place with innumerable trade union economic demands in all industrialized countries. The trend, in fact, amounts to one of the elementary laws of the class struggle. It relates to the development of the trade union movement from a craft to a class basis. The process has been greatly speeded up with the advent of imperialism and the increased strength of the labor movement.

A couple of examples will suffice to illustrate the workings of this universal principle of working-class progress. Thus, everywhere, from their inception, the workers have demanded and enforced by economic action their right to organize and to strike. Usually acting more or less upon an individual union basis, they have had to fight for decades to win this general right; first in the practice and finally in general legislation—often with the assistance, and sometimes under the general leadership, of the workers' political parties. Practically all industrial countries now have laws "guaranteeing" this basic right. The workers' fight for the shorter workday also went through a similar evolution from the economic to the political. First, the trade unions fought as best they could, often for decades, in the respective industries to decrease working hours; but eventually these essential craft efforts grew into broad class political struggles for legislation—for the ten-hour day, then for nine hours, and eventually for eight hours. Eight-hour laws are now to be found in nearly all industrial countries. By the same token numerous other original trade union economic demands have grown into economic-political demands and have resulted in widespread legislation upon the respective questions.

This politicalization of the class struggle—which is the most elementary justification of working-class political action—has been vastly

speeded up and intensified by the coming and development of the imperialist era of capitalism. This is especially true of the period of the general crisis and decline of the world capitalist system, which began with World War I and the Russian Revolution. Not only do the economic demands of the workers more swiftly take on a political character, as indicated above, but the period is also thrusting forward a whole series of new and most vital political questions—regarding war, fascism, colonial and proletarian revolution, etc.—which imperatively demand working class attention. Moreover, nowadays the employers, facing a vastly strengthened labor movement, increasingly seek to use the state power in order more effectively to subjugate and exploit the workers. To defeat such attacks and to advance their own cause, the workers and their allies also must needs turn more and more to political action, but of course, without slackening their economic struggles. This decisive politicalization trend carries the workers along a political path, the ultimate end of which is the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

## WFTU AND POLITICS

The WFTU works in a full realization of the politicalization of the struggle of the working class and the trade unions. It and its affiliates not only back up the economic demands of the workers but they also help to raise these demands to a broad political level and to mobilize behind them the maximum support of the workers and their allies. This sharp political consciousness of the WFTU and its affiliates places them upon an altogether higher level of working class understanding and activity than the ICFTU and its organizations.'

One of the many wrong policies of right-wing Social Democrats in this general respect is to consider political action virtually as a substitute for trade union action, especially when it calls for labor legislation. As the bourgeois state, under worker compulsion, passes more and more laws regarding wages, hours, working conditions, social insurance, and what not, the European labor opportunists tend to conclude therefrom that trade union action in these fields has become more or less unnecessary and obsolete. This cripples the unions. The tendency was particularly noticeable under the bourgeois German Weimar Republic, with its worship of arbitration and *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, and when strikes almost disappeared. The AFL conservatives expressed the same error in a reverse sense by playing down labor legislation in various spheres as practically an infringement upon the natural functioning of the trade unions. Correct trade union policy, however, as expressed by the WFTU, contrary to such opportunism, supports the workers' political fight for labor

legislation, especially in the interest of the vast unorganized masses. But it considers such legislation as constituting minimum, not maximum standards. The unions must continue to strive to shorten hours, raise wages, or otherwise improve the workers' conditions as far as they can, in advance of existing legislative standards. Only thus are they able to retain their full functions as working-class organizations.

Trade unions, no matter how active they may be politically, however, cannot substitute for political parties. The political party, including Labor and Social Democratic patties, perform political tasks which are quite impossible for trade unions. This is, above all, true of the Communist Party, which is the fundamental party of the workers. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class, made up of the most class-conscious elements among the workers, those who are most developed in Marxist-Leninist theory and who have proved themselves to be the best fighters in the front lines of the class struggle. Upon all occasions, Communists set the example of heroism and efficiency for the workers as a whole. To the Communist Party falls the task of developing and defending Marxist-Leninist theory, which, in the fullest sense, it is impossible for a broad all-inclusive trade union movement to do. The Party coordinates all the organized and unorganized sections of the working class under one general political leadership, and it conducts the many-phased struggle against the employers and the state, all the way to the establishment of Socialism. Lenin says, “The Party is the highest form of class association of the proletarians."[2] The Party is the political leader of the working class.

The workers of the world have arrived at varying stages of political organization, ranging from the non-working class political party line of the AFL and CIO (the most primitive or all), through Labor parties and right Social Democratic parties, and Workers and Communist parties which have broken completely with capitalism and are marching on toward Socialism and Communism. As the general crisis of capitalism deepens and the class struggle becomes more politicalized the elementary trend is towards united working-class political action, of which the Communist Party is the highest expression.

The WFTU carries on intensive activity in support of every political measure, legislative or otherwise, which is of concern and value to the working class. In this respect it is far in advance of the ICFTU and of its predecessor, the IFTU, with their lingering concepts of political “neutrality” and inactivity. Nevertheless, the WFTU is not a political party, nor is it affiliated to or controlled by any political party. Its member unions in all parts of the world arc to be found constructively supporting and

strengthening the various stages of political organization of the workers—front the primitive political forms in the United States, where the trade union movement is still attached politically to the bourgeois parties, up to the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, where the Communist Parties lead the peoples and the governments. Also, in the United Nations and in its separate parts—ILO, UNESCO, etc.—the WFTU is the tireless advocate of the interests of the world's workers.

## THE THREE TYPES OF TRADE UNION PROBLEMS

In this general period, in fact ever since the birth of the Soviet Union in November 1917, trade union problems on a world scale fall into three general categories. The first of these categories relates to the trade unions living and functioning in countries that have either set up definite Socialist regimes or have established people's democracies that are moving rapidly along the route to Socialism. The second category relates to unions situated in countries with capitalist regimes or which arc dominated by imperialist powers. Labor organizations, existing under these two basically different types of social systems naturally confront many different kinds of tasks, while at the same time they face a third type of problems, which bind them together in a world movement covering both the Socialist and capitalist countries.

In the countries of Socialism and people's democracy the basic conditioning element determining the nature and tasks of trade unionism is the fact that the capitalist system has been abolished. The ownership of the factories, fields, mines, railroad systems, banks, and all other social means of production rests in the hands of the people. The exploiting capitalists and landlords, defeated completely in the great Revolution, are now only a historical memory so far as the USSR is concerned, and the people's democracies are fast travelling toward the same goal. Workers in these regions receive the full product of their labor, minus only what is necessary for the further development of industry, the defense of the country, mass education, social insurance, and other public services.

The basic result from all this is that so far as the unions are concerned their long and hard struggle against the exploiters has resulted in complete victory. They no longer have strong internal class enemies to fight. Their relationship to the peasants and intellectuals, the other two big social groups, is one of friendly cooperation, as they all have their basic interests in common. The unions experience nothing at all themselves of the powerful networks of employers' associations which dominate every capitalist land. Under such circumstances, there is no class struggle element in the Socialist trade unions' work, so far as the national

situation is concerned. Their line of development is through a process of peaceful and rapid evolution.

As we have seen in chapters 27 and 56, the trade unions under conditions of Socialism and people's democracy, precisely because the workers and their allies have won their revolution, have inevitably developed entirely new and different attitudes regarding the state, the management of industry, strikes, piece-work, labor discipline, and various other questions, in sharp contrast to the position commonly taken in these matters by trade unions in capitalist countries. This has caused the right Social Democrats, always eager to deal a blow against Socialism, to challenge the right of the labor organizations in these countries to call themselves trade unions. The AFL bureaucrats constantly harp upon this theme. They have the arrogance to speak of their own unions as "free trade unions'' and to sneer at left-led unions as not being unions at all. This by the AFL, in which the top leaders were far less democratically elected than are members of the government Senate and House.

In the countries of Socialism and of people's democracy, even as in those of capitalism, the basic function of the trade unions is the same—to protect and advance the workers' living and cultural standards. The main difference is that the former are doing this under specific conditions where the workers have accomplished the revolution and are the masters of their own destiny—while the latter have not yet made their revolution. The labor organizations in the USSR, People's China, and the European and Asian people's democracies are genuine trade unions, freer by far than those in capitalist countries. They are working in societies that are a whole stage higher than capitalism.

The trade unions in the capitalist countries, on the other hand, constantly confront conditions of hard class struggle. The industries, the land, the government, the press, the schools, the churches, and all other key social institutions (and frequently even the labor leadership itself) are in the hands of their enemies, the capitalist exploiters. The workers have class opponents on all sides, and they can get from the capitalists only those things they can win in battle. Despite conservative Social Democratic leaders, with their crippling policies of class collaboration, the basic policies of the trade unions in all capitalist countries are those of class struggle. Under capitalism the labor movement constantly has to fight even for the right to live and grow; something, of course, that is unthinkable under Socialism. Indeed, it is only a very few years since the fascist capitalist imperialists, in a violent offensive, wiped out every branch of organized labor—parties, unions, cooperatives, cultural organizations—practically all over Europe and throughout large parts of Asia.

The life, structure, outlook, and policies of the trade unions under capitalism are conditioned by the central fact that they still confront the historic task of the world's workers, to abolish capitalism and to begin the great march towards Socialism, and eventual Communism.

Notwithstanding the specific differences in the tasks of the trade unions in the respective capitalist and Socialist countries, the labor unions of both types of regimes are bound together internationally by the most powerful of interests in common. Thus, obviously, trade unions in the USSR and People's China are equally interested with the unions of Great Britain and the United States and other countries in the preservation of world peace. They are also mutually concerned with combatting the growth of fascism in the world. And so with many other questions.

The victory of the democratic forces in strikes, in political struggles or otherwise, in capitalist countries, or the success of national liberation struggles in colonial lands, is of profound importance to the workers in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy. Besides appealing to the high spirit of proletarian solidarity of these unions, such victories make their position more secure in a world where militant capitalism is still strong and dangerous. The growth of the left-wing and the defeat of right Social Democracy, the establishment of trade union unity, and other big steps forward under capitalism, are at the same time, victories for the workers in the revolutionary countries. The tremendous successes of the workers in building Socialism in the USSR, People's China, and elsewhere, are objectively also of major importance for the workers in all capitalist countries, although their conservative leaders try desperately to hide from them this vital fact.

The supreme value of the WFTU, the thing which above all else stamps it as the true trade union international, is precisely the fact that, recognizing the powerful bonds of interest between the workers living under capitalism and those living under Socialism and people's democracy, it binds them together on a world scale for active cooperation in every field of struggle. This enormously increases the power of the world's working class. The supreme error of the ICFTU, on the other hand, the basic proof that it is not serving the working class internationally, lies in the fact that it not only refuses to organize jointly the workers living under Socialism and people's democracy with those under capitalism, but repeating the red-baiting slogans of the capitalists, it strives to array them against each other. This enormously weakens international labor and it amounts, in plain English, to doing the work of the pro-fascist warmongers. Such a splitting policy has nothing in common with proletarian internationalism.

## CURRENT TASKS OF THE SOCIALIST TRADE UNIONS

The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR (AUCCTU) is the leading trade union organization in the world. It is the largest, registering 40,240.000 members at its eleventh congress in June, 1954, an increase of 12,000,000 in five years.[3] It is the most scientifically organized, with its 43 unions based upon the industrial principle and thoroughly adapted for their work in production and in protecting the workers' interests. In 1930 there were only 23 national trade unions, and by 1944 this number was increased to 176. But after that a new tendency toward consolidation set in and by 1949 the number of unions was reduced to 67.[4] Later it was cut to the present figure. These unions are also carrying out the most advanced tasks, in building the Socialist regime and in preparatory work for the early establishment of Communism.

The AUCCTU, headed by N.M. Shvernik, is the vanguard labor movement of the Socialist system now growing in many parts of the world. The Soviet trade unions arc blazing the trail for the unions of the new Socialist era that is now opening up internationally. The trade unions of People's China and the other people's democracies are of course closely adapted to their specific national situations and needs; but they necessarily, as Marxist-Leninist trade unions, find most adaptable the general patterns of structure, ideology, and methods of work that were first developed by the Soviet trade unions, much as the early trade unions everywhere generally followed the lead of the pioneer British trade unions.

The AUCCTU confronts as its major task the same one that all the trade unions in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy face, namely, the quickest possible development of the backward industrial system which they inherited from bankrupt capitalism. This task has been especially difficult in the USSR, which was a semi-feudal country 38 years ago when the workers took command. But that country is already overtaking the United States industrially and will soon surpass it. Since 1929, whereas U.S. production has (roughly) doubled, that of the USSR has increased 14 times over.[5] Premier Bulganin said: "In 1955… the level of our industry is more than three times the level of 1940." This spectacular Soviet industrial development has taken place despite the vast devastation of two world wars—in World War II, for example, the Nazis destroyed half of all the industries.[6] Another great Soviet handicap has been the need to build a huge military defense—a waste forced upon the Soviet people by the insanity of decaying capitalism.

The basic tasks of the Soviet trade unions are those of growth, centering around the supreme need to build industry and agriculture. Conse-

quently, as usual, the 11th convention of the Soviet trade unions also paid close attention to this central problem in all its complexities. It reported tremendous advances in those methods characteristic of Socialist production, which we have described in chapter 27. About 90 percent of the workers are now practicing Socialist emulation. This brings out their latent creative abilities, it being reported that in the recent past over 900,000 proposals for industrial improvements came from workers. During 1951-53 the output of industry advanced by 45 percent, a rate of production increase never equalled by any capitalist country.

The advance of Soviet industry, notwithstanding the huge demands for defense against the capitalist threat of a new world war, made possible big advances in the living and cultural standards of the working population. During the first three years of the current five-year plan real wages increased by 30 percent[7] as against stationary conditions and real wage declines in many capitalist countries. The number of workers went up by 6,000,000. Unemployment has not existed for many years past in the USSR.

The Soviet trade unions pay intensive attention to the elaborate state systems of social insurance and factory legislation, both of which are under the direct control of the workers. In these respects the USSR has built up legislation far in advance of anything anywhere else in the world. This is because there are no capitalists to block such legislation, as in bourgeois countries, on the grounds that it may cut into their sacred profits. Characteristically, regarding the enforcement of the strict Soviet safety and health laws, Z. Sokolov says, "Orders issued by trade union labor inspectors are obligatory for the management of all enterprises, and the inspectors can fine managerial personnel for infringement of labor legislation and safety regulation, and even institute criminal proceedings in case of grave violations."[8] The trade unions also supervise the application of the housing programs.

The Soviet trade unions devote much time and effort to the cultivation of mass education—industrial, general, and physical. They have a vast network of thousands of schools, clubs, theatres, sanatoria, rest homes, etc. to take care of the interests of the workers in these vital respects. The scope of these institutions completely outdistances cultural activities of trade unions in the capitalist countries. The Soviet labor unions pay special attention to sports, and they are a major factor in the recent spectacular achievements of Soviet athletes in international competition. There are over 1,000,000 trade union athletes, who hold 18 world records.

The trade unions in the countries of Socialism and people's democ-

racy are also far and away the most democratic in the world, and they constantly seek to improve themselves in this respect. They steadily make war against all tendencies towards bureaucracy and routinism in their ranks. Among the many measures they practice to this effect—largely unknown in the trade unions in capitalist countries—are: a sharp criticism and self-criticism, from top to bottom, in the work of the unions and their leaders; a strict enforcement of constitutional regulations throughout;[9] a systematic education of the membership in the Leninist principles of democratic unionism; the mass discussion of trade union agreements, labor legislation, and five-year plans, and last but not least, the cultivation of volunteer work in the operation of the unions in order to keep down the number of paid officials. At the 11th convention of the AUCCTU it was reported that in 405,000 primary union organizations, or 97 percent of the total, all union administration work was carried on by volunteers.

The forgoing brief sketch of the problems and activities of the trade unions in the Soviet Union may serve as more or less of a review of the work of the trade unions in the people's democracies in China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and elsewhere. All of these unions have a basic similarity, in their structure, ideology, and tasks, which vary them sharply from the unions in the capitalist countries. This is because they are actively building Socialism, while the latter are not. Many of their methods, especially with regard to the cultivation of trade union democracy, could be very profitably adopted by unions in capitalist lands.

## 58. Trade Union Problems in Capitalist Countries

Historically, trade unionism is rapidly on the forward much, not only in the lands of Socialism and people's democracy, but also in the capitalist countries. As remarked earlier, this thrust ahead of organized labor is one of the most pronounced features of the post-World War II world situation. It is resulting in a whole series of new problems relative to the demands of the workers, to their relationships with the employers and the state, and to other questions. A prolific source of new problems resides in the attempts of the employers to curb and to weaken the on-pushing trade union movement.

### UNEMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL INSURANCE, GUARANTEED ANNUAL WAGE, SLIDING SCALE, AUTOMATION

One of the characteristic features of today's trade union movement is the strong determination of the workers not to tolerate further the terrible mass unemployment which has plagued them for many decades. Unem-

ployment has, of course, been completely abolished in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, and the workers want to wipe it out also in the capitalist countries. With this in mind, the workers all over the capitalist world have developed elaborate programs. "Full employment" is one of the most potent and significant slogans of the period.

A serious weakness in the workers' economic programs, however, specifically those in Western Europe and the United States, is an undue dependence upon the production of armaments to furnish jobs. This is a major error, both economically and politically. Such arms production is a serious economic waste and its long-run effects must inevitably be to exhaust the resources of the countries, to cause higher taxes, higher prices, and lower real wages. But even worse, wholesale armaments production plays right into the hands of the warmakers. The very existence of an enormous military machine is in itself a serious provocation to war. Heavy armaments production in the present situation, with American imperialism driving for world conquest, clearly increases the war danger, especially as it involves the workers directly in the filthy business. Those labor leaders, the Social Democrats everywhere, and most notably conservative heads of the AFL-CIO, who are constantly clamoring for more munitions appropriations, are betraying the most profound interests of the working class.

The fight against mass unemployment is much more complex than simply to rely upon monster arms production. It involves a militant fight to maintain and improve wage rates, to shorten hours, to slash working class taxes, to control prices and profits, to cultivate East-West trade, to carry out elaborate public works, to develop social insurance, to expand the mass educational and health systems, and the like. This fight must be carried on in the clear Marxist understanding that mass unemployment is a fundamental disease of the capitalist system; that it will tend to get worse with the deepening of the general capitalist crisis, and that it can be finally eliminated only by the abolition of the capitalist system.

Together with the fight against mass unemployment, another of the basic expression of the militancy of the workers during the present period is their determination to free themselves as far as possible from other economic hazards which they face. This has resulted in an enormous and rising demand for social insurance of all sorts—against sickness, accidents, old-age, maternity, unemployment, and other economic stresses upon the workers. The WFTU and its unions, with their international activities and agitation, have been especially effective in this world-wide field of struggle.

Two weaknesses in the policies of right-wing union leaders are here

to be avoided. First, the one common among European Social Democrats, of tending to rely simply upon the skimpy and inadequate social insurance provided by the bourgeois states, and of failing to use the economic power of the unions actively to back up the workers' social insurance demand. On the other hand, there is the strong tendency in the American trade unions largely to ignore political action in this matter and to rely primarily upon direct negotiations with the employers to establish various forms of social insurance in their respective industries, by the creation of "welfare funds," and the like. Such "fringe demands" are a most important phase of American trade union negotiations, existing welfare funds, "fringe" benefits, controlled directly by the employers and the labor leaders, amounting annually to about $33 billion dollars.[1] These funds are becoming a serious source of financial corruption in the labor movement, and require far more careful guarding.

The correct line on the social insurance question is an active combination of both political and economic action. When sole reliance is placed upon the bourgeois state the great industrial power of the workers is neglected, and when, as in the United States, political action is played down, the interests of the huge masses of unorganized workers, who do not come within the protection of the special "welfare funds" of the unions, are sacrificed.

A characteristic demand also of this period is that of the American CIO Automobile Workers Union for a guaranteed annual wage. This amounts, in substance, to a demand for a full wage social insurance. It is very popular among the workers. The demand is correct in principle, but a danger in it, especially when handled by conservative Social Democratic leaders, is that the number of workers to be guaranteed the annual wage will be unduly restricted, and thus set aside as a preferred category among the working class. The first negotiation of this demand, in June 1955, by the Auto Workers, resulted in an up to six months' extension of supplementary unemployment insurance to laid-off workers, with most workers getting much less. In a section of the Steel Workers Union recently the period was raised to one year. This whole matter is a question demanding broad working-class political action.

During the post-World War II period considerable stir was created in the ranks of international trade unionism regarding the sliding scale of wages, known nowadays in the United States as the "escalator clause." The French CGT and Italian CGIL, with active WFTU support, demanding the sliding scale of wage adjustment, and the UAW-CIO championed the escalator clause in the United States. It is conceivable that in Europe during the strongly inflationary trends then prevailing, and with powerful

and militant trade unions such as those in France and Italy, the sliding scale could be a convenient method of adjusting wages for organized labor. But in the United States and in the Anglo-Saxon countries generally, with the official gross manipulation of government cost-of-living statistics, and with Social Democratic class collaboration practices, labor history is full of instances of the negative working of the sliding scale. Only in the face of rapid inflation and where the unions are strong and militant enough periodically to jack-up the base rates and to take a hand in the statistics-making, could the sliding scale conceivably be of any benefit to the workers. In general, tying wages organically to indices of cost-of-living rates or to the fluctuations of production is wrong in principle, as tending to commit the workers to the highly unsatisfactory *status quo*.

Another current major issue in the United States and other capitalist lands of mass production is that of automation—the tendency to make industry largely automatic, to "run machines with machines." There are four major aspects in this: "(a) automatic machinery; (b) integrated materials handling and processing equipment; (c) automatic controls systems, and (d) electronic computation and data-processing machines."[2] This development is spreading rapidly in production, notably in automobile, electrical manufacturing, and other mass production industries. Lavish statistics are at hand, showing large reductions in the working forces where automation is highly developed. Typically, the electronics business expanded its output by 255 percent between 1947 and 1952, with only 40 percent more workers. Many American industries present the same picture, with large increases in production but with small increases, or even declines, in the size of the working force. Buckingham says that "In some business operations, computers can replace about the entire work force."[3] "Where are the workers?" is the question one asks himself in going through the Ford engine plant.[4] It is estimated that at the present rate automation in the United States is displacing 1,000,000 workers annually, and this figure is increasing. A basic economic result of automation is that by expanding production at the cost of less worker purchasing power in the market, it increases the tendency toward economic crises.

The American unions are very worried over the automation development, especially as there is now (mid-1955) an army of unemployed of about 3,000,000. In this matter the workers are confronting afresh similar difficulties to what they have faced historically on various occasions—by the original introduction of machinery, by the initiation of mass production, and by the rationalization of industry. But this time the problem of the elimination of workers through new production methods presents

itself in sharper forms than ever. The general results have been a strengthening of the demand for the shorter work-day and week, and a stepping up of the demand for a guaranteed annual wage by the steel and other workers.

To meet the new issues of automation is a complex matter. There is no ready-made panacea for it. To combat it requires an increase of the militancy of the labor movement on all fronts—with sharpened demands for the shorter workday, better unemployment insurance, an intensification of the demand for nationalization, and the like. Above all, the fight against the ill effects of automation demands an active class struggle policy; for with class collaboration prevailing, automation could be disastrous for the working class.

In dealing with this question, M.I. Rubinstein points out the different approaches to the automation problem by workers under capitalism and by those under Socialism. While the workers in the capitalist countries dread the new automation processes, as increasing the already serious mass unemployment, the workers in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, having no fear whatever of unemployment, hail automation and all such improvements in production as highly advantageous to themselves, to whom the benefits of automation inevitably flow.[5] In line with this, *Izvestia,* in Moscow, is demanding a faster introduction of automation into Soviet industry.[6] In the *New York Times* of December 15, 1955, American engineers, just returned from the Soviet Union, praise highly the progress in automation being made in that country.

## THE SHARPENING ATTACK UPON TRADE UNION RIGHTS

One of the outstanding features of the present drive of world reaction under the leadership of American imperialism is a growing attack upon the traditional rights and political independence of the trade unions, an attack which would be impossible in the countries with a Socialist orientation. Many capitalist countries are experiencing this attack; among others Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Indonesia, India, Greece, Latin America, and others. The worst assaults are shaping up in the United States, as part of the domestic phase of the American imperialist drive for world domination. They are expressed by such semi-fascist legislation as the Taft-Hartley Act, which limits the workers' right to strike and puts the unions under government control as never before. Under this law the Auto Workers Union has been cited for contributing funds to political candidates. One of the most abominable features of this law is the so-called anti-Communist clause, which compels union officials to swear that they are not Communists. Besides this, the country is now affected

by a widespread outburst of "right-to-work" (to scab) laws on a state scale. Much other vicious anti-labor legislation is pending. The trade unions are also hit by the many recently instituted laws, loyalty pledges, and red-baiting Congressional committees that are gradually tending to take the United States in the direction of a fascist police state.

A deplorable feature of this dangerous situation is that many of the conservative top union leaders are not averse to this type of ideological intimidation. For if the thought-control hysteria laws and practices tend to repress the democratic opposition in the country at large, they also serve the purpose of the reactionary bureaucrats by intimidating the progressive opposition in the unions. That the bureaucrats realize this sinister fact is made clear by the high value which they place upon the and-Communist clause in the Taft-Hartley law. It is characteristic of Social Democrats that in this period they are willing to compromise labor's most cherished strike rights, and to concede that with the unions growing bigger and stronger they must submit to a large degree of state control. Thus, the battle to protect union rights is half lost at the outset.

Obviously, if they are to avoid the most serious danger to their rights, the workers must collide head-on against the multiplicity of measures by which the various governments are seeking to establish state controls over the trade unions and to rob them of valued rights, won only after many decades of bitter struggle. The WFTU is very conscious of this danger, and with its *Charter of Trade Union Rights,* has been conducting a world-wide fight against it.

The WFTU demands full trade union freedom. *The Charter of Trade Union Rights* declares, "Workers shall have the right to form trade unions, to join existing trade unions and to take part in any trade union activity without authorization or control by the public authorities or by employers.... Members of trade unions shall freely draw up their trade union constitutions, determine how the trade unions shall function and what shall be their activities. They shall elect their leaders and executive bodies freely and without restriction.... The right to strike is a basic right of the workers. Every worker, whatever his trade, shall have the right to resort to strike action without any limitations whatever."

## THE UNION SHOP AND SENIORITY

With their strong drive in this period towards trade unionism, the workers in the capitalist countries, as is all fit and proper, are insisting that all the workers in given shops belong to the unions. This is nothing new, of course, but the difference is that, despite increasing employer resistance, the union, or closed, shop, has now become far more wide-

spread and effective than ever. Notably, this general problem does not exist in the countries with a Socialist orientation, where practically the whole working class is organized and where there are no bosses to play off unorganized workers against those in the trade unions.

The employers greatly resent the "closing" of their shops to non-union elements, and they are always seeking, by one device or another, to prevent it from happening. Particularly is this the case in the United States, where the monopoly capitalists have a long and violent open shop tradition. The Taft-Hartley law, which was a big stride toward a police state, among its many malignant features, undertakes to make more difficult, if not impossible, the full union shop and the union dues checkoff.

This raises a major issue for organized labor in the United States, where union shops, by agreement with the employers, have existed for over a century in the skilled trades—and now they are also in basic industry. This is peculiarly an American problem, for this type of closed shop is almost unknown in traditional union centers such as Great Britain, Germany, France, and various continental countries. For the most part the labor movements of the world depend upon securing 100 percent union shops, not by checkoffs and union agreements with employers, but by union organizing activities. American workers should and will fight to maintain their union shops by trade union contracts, but it is a fact nevertheless that it is far more healthful for a union to keep a shop fully unionized by virtue of its own direct efforts, rather than through agreements with the bosses.

Another problem characteristic of this period, with its enormously expanded trade unionism, is that of job “seniority.” For many decades the workers in the capitalist countries have suffered grievously from the arbitrary power of promotion and discharge possessed by the employers, especially that of discharge during times of economic crisis. At present there is a general movement all over the capitalist world to curb this brutal right of the employers. This is a manifestation of the workers' growing insistence upon the right to work, another problem which does not exist in the Socialist countries. The question becomes more acute in the capitalist lands with the current increase in unemployment and the prospect of much more joblessness in the non-distant future.

There are two general ways in which the unions have met this problem, which is, of course, a problem existing only in the capitalist countries. First: in Europe generally the seniority, or right-to-work, problem has been handled almost completely through legislation, with the trade unions as such having little or nothing to do directly with the question in the industries. This is a serious weakness, for such vital matters should

not be left to biased state bureaucrats. In the United States the trade unions, on the contrary, undertake to settle all these matters upon an economic basis, in direct negotiations with the employers, with legislative control not entering directly into the picture. Second: in Europe the workers' claim to promotion or to hold a given job in the case of a threatened lay-off is determined by a number of circumstances, including length of service, technical qualifications, and with special importance attached to the family responsibilities which the given worker bears; whereas, in the United States, in the huge networks of seniority systems that have developed during recent years, by far the greatest weight is laid upon the question of length of service in the establishment of priority claim to a given job. The American workers jealously guard their seniority rights, as some measure of protection against dreaded unemployment.

What is needed in the United States is something of a synthesis of the European and American systems, especially with regard to the determination of a worker's right to his job. The American system, with its super-stress upon the length of work as the sole basis for seniority, is too rigid. In this respect, the more flexible European system, which also takes into account other factors, is better for the workers, particularly in periods of heavy unemployment. Under the inflexible American system of seniority, for example, the Negro workers, who are relatively newcomers in many industries and who therefore usually stand towards the bottom of the seniority lists, are grossly discriminated against during layoffs. But, of course, all the capitalist seniority systems are at best too narrow and should be supplemented by much more drastic legislation, enlarging the social insurance systems and more concretely guaranteeing the workers the right to work, and also the right to collect adequate unemployment insurance when no work is to be had.

## TRADE UNION PARTICIPATION IN INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT

Still another problem characteristic of this general period of trade union expansion is that of so-called "co-determination," or participation of the workers in capitalist industry management. The workers in many countries are much in the mood to challenge the management, when not also the ownership of the industries, by the capitalists. This drive takes various forms, from demanding representation of the workers in nationalized industries to insistence upon their sitting on the boards of directors in privately-owned industries. The fight for participation in management can be generally a progressive tendency on the part of the workers. The problem is to see to it that the demand is backed by militant trade union-

ism and is not turned to class collaboration ends by opportunist trade union leaders. AFL President Meany's repeated blasts against the demands of the workers to be represented in the management of industry, for example, are just one more manifestation of his servility towards capitalism. He says, "We do not want 'co-determination'—or the representatives of workers on the boards of directors or in the active management of industry."[7] Nor is it a sign of a progressive spirit when the UAW-CIO states officially that, "The worker does not seek to usurp management's function or ask for a place at the Boards of Directors of concerns when organized."[8]

In the countries of Socialism and people's democracy, with the industries in the hands of the working class and with the avenues of industrial promotion wide open, the urge of the workers for participation in industrial managements presents no problem, particularly not of a class struggle nature. But under capitalism, with the capitalists on guard against the workers at every key point in their economic and political structure, it is a growing class problem of major proportions. As usual, the right Social Democrats develop cunning plans to defeat any real invasion by the workers upon the industrial prerogatives of the masters.

In Great Britain, under the recent Labor Government, for example, the trade union and Labor Party leaders, rejecting the insistent demands of the workers for representation in the boards managing the nationalized industries—coal, steel, transport, etc.—left the running of these industries to the respective capitalists and their managerial experts, with results that could be expected. This was a very different situation than in France, where the workers, led by Communists, were heavily represented at all stages of the controls of the nationalized industries.

In West Germany the Social Democrats, in their characteristic spirit of protecting capitalist interests at the expense of the workers, have, in collaboration with the Christian Democrats, worked out an elaborate system of co-determination—the so-called *Mitbestimmungsrecht.* The Catholics of the world hailed this as the application of their Industrial Councils plan, The first law of this kind was enacted in April 1951 to forestall a general strike of German metal workers and coal miners. Under the law the workers and the capitalists each elect five members on the board of directors of a given industry, with an eleventh man, supposedly a neutral and who has the decisive vote, elected mainly by the stockholders.[9] McPherson remarks that, "Iu practice the eleventh man will be more acceptable to ownership than to labor.[10] And so it has turned out in reality. In 1952 this principle, in worse forms, was, with the support of Social Democrats, extended to the other industries through the Works Councils

law, which strips these bodies and the trade unions of many of their traditional rights.

The German workers made much resistance to the latter law, with demonstrations and big strikes. It was said that one had to go back to the days before 1933 to find protest movements upon such a large and radical scale. Instead of this type of legislation, which is geared to the Schumann plan, the re-arming of West Germany, and the making of maximum profits by monopoly capital, the Communists proposed a general strengthening of the works councils in the direction of the workers' control with regard to social, personnel, and economic questions in the industries. They called upon the workers to boycott the new Works Council law.[11] The right Social Democrats virtually accept the new variation of class collaboration in industry as a substitute for nationalization, and some also for Socialism itself.

## ARBITRATION

Historically, arbitration of labor disputes has been basically a weapon of the employers wherewith to castrate strong trade union struggles of the workers. Almost like clockwork, the odd-man on an arbitration board turned out to be on the bosses' side. Even so, the latter rarely proposed arbitration, except when the union concerned was in a very strong position, in order to cut down its strength. Innumerable strikes have been frittered away through arbitration. In these times of powerful trade unions and left-wing leadership, the workers are in a far better position to utilize arbitration than in the past. The employers still have a special liking for arbitration, and so do bourgeois lawmakers, notably if they can make the arbitration process compulsory. Arbitration reaches its full flower under fascism, where the employers appoint both sides of the arbitration boards, as well as the odd-man in the middle.

Inasmuch as arbitration has been a favorite policy of employers to circumvent the militancy and strength of the workers, it goes without saying that it was also blessed by their labor lieutenants, the right Social Democrats. Arbitration, along with "impartial chairmen" to circumvent the militancy and strength of the workers, it goes with class collaboration.

The left-wing, however, has always been wary of arbitration in all its forms, and the more so when it approached the status of being compulsory. Generally it has proved far better to keep union negotiations directly between the workers and the private employers or the employing states. Third parties almost always confuse the issue and weaken the workers' position. About the only time that arbitration has proved acceptable to

militant workers has been when a strike was so far lost that the workers had no other choice, or when the union was certain that it could control the selection of the odd-man among the arbiters, as has sometimes happened. In these latter years, however, with the general strengthening of the trade unions, the workers have been much more able to use the means of voluntary arbitration in certain instances, and in more than one case they have forced unwilling employers to arbitrate.

## •59. Trade Union Organization, Democracy, and Unity

Through its long and revolutionary history the world's labor movement has built up a very large anti powerful organization—of political parties, trade unions, cooperatives, and other class groupings—comprising the bulk of the industrial workers. They are wrong who think, therefore, that the class struggle henceforth is to consist only of peaceful negotiations and friendly arbitration with the employers, and that a labor leader nowadays must be a sort of glorified clerk, statistician, and lawyer. Contrary to this, the labor movement must keep on strengthening its forces and striving to put real working-class fighters at its head. This is primarily because the ruling classes, although they have lost over one-third of the world to Socialism and now face an immense trade union movement, nevertheless still possess gigantic strength. Also, all the lessons of class struggle history should convince the workers that the exploiters will ruthlessly use their power when it comes to a crisis, rather than yield to the advancing workers of the world. What Hitler did to the European labor movement should teach us that mere size is not safeguard enough for unions in capitalist countries. The only practical working thesis for the labor movement in this period is that it still has before it great struggles in which it will be sorely tested and will need all the strength that it can muster.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNORGANIZED

Organize the unorganized, therefore, still remains a vital and basic slogan of the world's workers. The determining factors for the organization of the scores of millions of unorganized workers are: first, that these workers imperatively need the protection of trade unionism, and second, that world organized labor urgently requires their added strength to its international economic and political front.

From the inception of the trade union movement two centuries ago the question of drawing in the unorganized workers has always been of vital, and often even of desperate importance. This task continues to have real significance, although during the long struggle the workers have fi-

nally gotten themselves into a position where they have the potential strength to master this perennial question when they so decide. The first decisive moment in this long hard battle to organize the broad masses came after World War I, when there developed the Russian Revolution and a tremendous growth of the trade union movement in many countries. The next great leap ahead took place after World War II, with the victory of the People's revolution in China and several other Asian countries, and a still broader expansion of trade unionism into all parts of the world.

This great advance was more than a quantitative growth of the trade union movement; it was also qualitative. The trade unions have not only built up an immense organization of about 140,000,000 members, but about one-half of these are engaged in the supreme task of building Socialism. Also, in all the major capitalist countries the trade unions working with the proletarian parties, have succeeded in solving decisively the most stubborn of their problems, the unionization of the basic monopolized industries—a task which for many decades stalled the labor movement of the United States, Germany, France, Italy, and other countries.

The present membership of world trade unionism could be at least doubled, there being a union potential of at least 300,000,000 members in the world, and the working class is growing rapidly internationally, if not evenly in all countries. All over the capitalist world there are great masses of unskilled workers in industry and commerce that are still unorganized and are eligible for trade unionism. The agricultural workers present the single largest task of union organization. There are an estimated 90,000,000 of them, particularly in the big plantation areas. That they are organizable has already been fully demonstrated, among other instances, by the powerful unions of agricultural workers existing in capitalist Italy and also in various colonial lands, notably in Indonesia. Their organizability has also been shown by the many big and hard-fought strikes of plantation workers in Latin America and Asia. The experience in China and elsewhere has proved that these workers will also fight for Socialism.

Historically, the trade unions following the lead of the Second International, with their attention centered upon the industrial workers, principally the skilled mechanics, have grossly neglected to organize the farm workers. This is true in Great Britain, West Germany, and other capitalist countries, as well as in the colonial lands. The United States is the "horrible example" in capitalist countries, where because of the narrow craftism that prevailed for so long in organized labor, less than one percent of the agricultural workers are in the unions.[1] The question of

organizing the world's agricultural workers increases sharply the badly ignored situation of the Negro workers, who are mostly farm workers under the bitterest oppression and exploitation. At present, on a world scale, there are only about 3,000,000 Negroes organized: in the United States 1,500,000 (industrial workers), Latin America 1,000,000; Africa 500,000.

Women workers are another seriously neglected category with regard to trade union organization. They average about 30 percent of the working class in the capitalist countries. Labor history demonstrates that they are readily organizable and that they make splendid strikers and fighters in every phase of the class struggle. History also shows that in every capitalist country there have been strong currents among conservative labor leaders to bar women workers from the unions and the industries. Characteristically, Theresa Wolfson says (*The Woman Worker,* p. 57), "It was not until 1874 that an intensive movement to organize women workers was undertaken in England, and then not by the British trade unions, but by the Women's Trade Union League, which attacked the problem via 'sympathetic ladies and gentlemen on the outside.'" Similar opposition to the unionization of women also took place in the early days among the skilled workers of Germany, France, Belgium, United States, and other countries. Such male supremacy trends have been a major factor in holding back the unionization of women in general and in making it possible for employers to pay them far lower wages for equal work—in France women's wages are 17 percent less than those of men; Italy 19 percent; West Germany 37 percent; Belgium 39 percent; Great Britain 40 percent; and Netherlands 41 percent. Widespread wage discrimination also in the United States against women is shown by the fact that, according to Labor Department figures, among operators in factories women receive $1,908 yearly and men $3,216.[2] In the countries of Socialism women are paid equal wages for equal work.

In the vast general advance of trade unionism during the past three decades considerable improvement has been made with regard to the organization of women workers. But that much more remains to be accomplished, even in the most strongly unionized capitalist countries, is shown by the situation in the United States. Of the 19,500,000 women wage workers only 3,000,000 belong to trade unions. While 32 percent of men wage workers are organized, the rate is but 15 percent for women, more than one-half of them are married women, and 28 percent of them are clerical workers. Characteristic of the WFTU's intensive work among women are the Mothers' Conference for Peace in 1955, and the scheduled International Conference for Working Women, to be held in June, 1956.

A third broad category of the unorganized are the so-called white-collar workers. Within recent decades enormous masses of these groups in all the countries have come into the labor force—school teachers, salespeople, office workers, government employees, communications workers (postal, telephone, movies, etc.), skilled technicians, etc. Characteristically, in the United States, while the general number of wage earners went up 225 percent between 1870 and 1940, in the same period the number of salaried employees (mostly "white collar" workers) increased by 1,600 percent.[3] In some instances there has been an actual decline in the number of industrial workers—thus, whereas thirty years ago there were some 700,000 workers regularly employed in American coal mines, now, due to mechanization, the use of coal substitutes, etc., the number is only 200,000. In Germany in 1892 one worker in ten was non-manual, but in 1943 the ratio had increased to one in three. Similar statistics are at hand from Great Britain, Japan, and other capitalist countries, indicating the growing importance of this group of workers. About one half of the workers in these categories are women.

The general trend of white-collar workers is to experience the basic evils of low wages, insecurity of work, and other hardships that plague production workers. Decades ago many of this general type of workers had preferential treatment, with better wages, paid vacations, some prospects of promotion, etc.; but these advantages are now very much on the vanishing side. In the United States in 1890, says Mills, the average income of white-collar workers was about double that of industrial workers, but now the income of the lower-paid white-collar workers is about equal to that of semi-skilled workers in industry.[4] Notoriously, these workers are now also subjected to the hazards of unemployment far greater than in the past. Similar conditions exist in other capitalist countries. This deterioration of their conditions makes the white-collar workers definitely organizable in a trade union sense.

Generally the conservative trade union leaders in the capitalist countries have done but little to organize these important categories of workers. But where unions have been formed among them, white collar workers have proved to be responsive and willing to fight for improved conditions. A notable example of this was seen in the British general strike of 1926. Some 15 to 20 percent of the labor union membership of West Germany is white collar, and about the same ratio prevails in Great Britain. The American trade unions are considerably weaker in this respect. In Japan the white-collar workers especially in the government services, have a comparatively high level of organization and they have played an important role in the many big strikes and political struggles of the post-

World War II period in that country. The Teachers Union of Japan, affiliated to the left-led *Sohyo,* the largest trade union center, has 530,000 members. In *Sohyo,* of its 3,080,000 members, 1,954,000 are government employees, a large percentage of them white collar workers.[5]

In all these categories of unorganized workers the youth form an important section. It has been one of the greatest sins of Social Democracy that it everywhere grievously neglected to organize this vital section of the proletariat. Never has the labor movement so keenly needed the enthusiasm, energy, and fighting spirit of the youth as it does now.

World organized labor now has the potential to increase its strength quickly and greatly, if it will but tackle systematically the job of unionizing the vast number of unorganized factory, agricultural women, and white-collar workers. The unions would much better employ their surplus funds in this productive way than to pile them up in strike funds and especially in profit-yielding capitalist enterprises, as American unions are now doing to an unprecedented extent Typical of this hoarding is the financial status of some of the more important of these unions. AFL-CIO, and Independent: Railroad Trainmen $54,000,000; Miners $34,000,000; Teamsters $31,000,000; Electrical Workers $26,000,000; Auto Workers $17,000,000 and Ladies Garment Workers $13,000,000. These moneys do not include about $300,000,000 now held in "welfare funds" by the unions. In 1954 the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (CIO) reported its accumulated wealth at $250,000,000, including ten insurance concerns, two banks, and huge housing interests. All this is a sort of trade union capitalism. The total assets of all American trade unions is estimated at $1 to $1.5 billion.[6]

At its Vienna congress in 1955 the ICFTU leaders talked and resolved much about launching a world-wide organizing campaign. In the United States the AFL-CIO is planning a big organizing campaign among the many millions of still unorganized workers. But one can be certain generally that, as in the past, the elementary international task of organizing the workers, especially as this involves principally unskilled and semi-skilled workers, will in the future also be carried out mainly by the left and progressive elements, now affiliated to, or sympathetic with, the World Federation of Trade Unions.

## THE MENACE OF LABOR BUREAUCRACY

The fight for trade union democracy has for several decades been a vital and growing issue in the labor movement. The trade unions, like the Social Democratic parties, have long been infested with parasitic and bureaucratic leaders, darlings of the employers, who have systematically

used their official positions to the detriment of the worker members of the unions. Hundreds, if not thousands, of strikes and other struggles have been lost because the workers have been prevented, by the lack of union democracy, from making then fighting will prevail.

As we have seen time and again in this book, the trade unions of England, Germany, and many other countries have suffered deeply from such bureaucracy. Opportunists, getting into union office by hook or crook, typically make a life-time tenure of it, using every known device, usually with the direct or indirect help of the employers and the state, to keep their posts, until finally they tumble over into their graves from old age, still maintaining their official positions.

In no labor movement has this disease of bureaucracy reached such a virulence as in the United States, where under the Gompers-Green reigns (70 years long) an almost unbelievable lack of democracy prevailed, with the unions often being controlled by actual gunmen and crooks. The big influx of unskilled and semi-skilled workers during the 1930's and 1940's eased the situation somewhat, but it is still possible for a decrepit bureaucrat like old Hutcheson of the Carpenters to pass his post of president down as a heritage to his son, and for the disreputable Ryan of the Longshoremen to hold his job for many years as president on a life-time basis, without in the least shocking the decorum of the AFL.[7] Now, under President Meany, the recent merger of the AFL and the CIO has been put through on a super-centralized basis which aims to consolidate the labor bureaucracy even tighter. The conventions of the federated organization will be gatherings of the highest trade union officials, many of them wealthy men, with practically no rank-and-file participation whatever. Direct control of the new organization by the workers has diminished almost to zero.

The evil of bureaucracy is particularly dangerous for the workers during the present period, for several elementary reasons: (a) the recent big growth of labor unions in all capitalist countries gives the bureaucrats more power to enforce their anti-working-class policies; (b) bureaucratic domination of the trade unions has become a settled and basic part of right Social Democratic policy; for only by such means is it possible to check the militancy of the workers and to impose upon the unions crippling policies of class collaboration; (c) with the trade unions now grown so large and powerful and with the world political situation so tense, it becomes more necessary than ever for the employers and the governments to exert controls over the labor movement through the labor lieutenants of big business, the conservative trade union bureaucrats. Today, in many instances, the pro-war labor leaders, especially in the United

States, have become virtual agents of the State Department.

Left-led trade unions, both under capitalism and in the lands of Socialism and people's democracy, are also not entirely free of certain bureaucratic tendencies in their leadership. Lenin especially never tired of fighting against any and all trends of this general character. But it is one thing to have to deal with an occasional incompetent or routinist who may have wormed his way into office in a left or progressive trade union, and quite something else to have to contend with a hostile clique of thoroughly organized bureaucrats such as exist in innumerable trade unions in the capitalist countries—officials, who, taking their major policies from capitalist sources, are basically alien to the interests of the working class.

Throughout the world Communists and other left forces systematically combat bureaucracy in both the economic and political organizations of the working class; because, basing themselves upon proletarian policies, the only way these policies can receive expression is through democracy in the workers' organizations. By the same token, the right-wing elements understand and operate upon the principle that if they are to effectuate their pro-war and other boss-inspired policies, the indispensable way to do this is by suppressing rank and file democracy and by concentrating autocratic power in the hands of the conservative officialdom.

In left-led unions everywhere there is always a campaign going on to strengthen trade union democracy: by self-criticism, the cultivation of the principle of voluntary work for the unions, the systematic advancement of new leading elements, and the like; but there is virtually nothing of this kind going on in right-led unions, where the bureaucracy rules, uncritical of itself and forbidding all criticism by others.

In these right-dominated unions measures needed to combat the usual arrogant and intrenched cliques of pro-capitalist bureaucrats may include: the right of the rank and file to criticize the leadership and to place independent election slates in the field, frequent and broad conventions with shop worker participation, the institution of the recall for delinquent officials and of the referendum upon important questions, a specified retirement age for executive officials, the abolition of extravagant leader salaries,* stimulation of the voluntary work principle at all points where

* In the United States a few characteristic yearly salaries of top union leaders are: Harrison (Railway Clerks) $70,000; Lewis (Miners) $50,000: Beck (Teamsters) $50,000; McDonald (Steelworkers) $40,000; Meany (President of AFL-CIO) $50,000; Moreschi (Building laborers) $30,000; and Dubinsky (La-

possible throughout the unions, a vigorous fight against all state controls over the unions, which usually work out to the benefit of the conservative bureaucracy, the wiping out of all constitutional clauses and official practices prohibiting the membership of revolutionary workers, the lifting of all union discrimination because of race, sex, nationality or religion, and various other measures of like democratic character.

The fight for trade union democracy is an imperative part of the militants' struggle for a progressive trade union movement. It is impossible for the workers to go ahead and to meet effectively the urgent economic and political tasks of today if they permit to stand at the head of their organizations officials who represent the basic policies of their class enemies, the employers.

## THE URGENT QUESTION OF TRADE UNION UNITY

Trade union unity, which is a basic phase of working-class unity in general, is a problem of vital concern to the trade unions in both the capitalist and Socialist countries. Trade union unity is the foundation for creating the larger unity of the workers and their allies on every field of struggle. It makes possible the broad united front and people's front movements which are fundamentally necessary if the toiling masses are to fight successfully against their arrogant and powerful capitalist enemies. The terrible defeat of the workers and other toilers at the hands of pre-war fascism should be an unforgettable warning of the danger inherent in a divided working class.

Trade union unity is a broad question with many facets, both economic and political. One of its foundation necessities is the firm linking up of the class conscious left-wing, the mainspring of the working class, with the broad masses of the workers. This joins the fight for Socialism in its various stages with the fight for the everyday demands. This unity by no means takes place automatically; it requires a constant struggle on the part of the left against all sorts of divisive "left" sectarian and right opportunist practices and leaders. The whole progress of the labor movement depends upon the successful achievement of this fundamental type of unity within the ranks of the trade unions.

A most elementary aspect of trade union unity has always been the

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dies Garment Workers) $23,400; all with extravagant expenses added. British trade union salaries, in comparison, are much lower. For example, Tewson (General Secretary of the TUC) receives $5,000; Tiffin (Transport) $4,760; Campbell (Railwaymen) $4,600; and Horner (Coal Miners) $3,000. They all have relatively limited expense accounts.

question of organizing the unorganized—of bringing the great masses of the workers into systematic relationships with each other. World organized labor has now reached the stage of development where it is potentially strong enough to master this eternal labor problem once it sets out unitedly to do so. The biggest unity task in this respect, as we have seen above, is to turn the labor movement's earnest attention to unionizing the remaining unorganized masses of factory, agricultural, Negro, women, youth, and white-collar workers.

Another vital aspect of the problem of trade union unity—one that has played a big role in trade union history—has been that of industrial unionism. There has been a continuing and pressing need for the unions to rise above the narrow boundaries, practices, and thinking of craft unionism by organizing all the workers in given shops and industries into single unions. This is a cause, however, that is largely won, with powerful industrial unions in all the major industrial countries—after over half a century of struggle by Communists and other left-wingers. One of the most significant signs of the times in this general respect is the "industrial unionism on the picket lines," notably developing in the United States. This means that non-striking craft workers are increasingly refusing to cross the picket lines of striking workers. The shameful Gompersite doctrine of the "sacredness of union contracts," which long made a virtue of union scabbery and caused the loss of innumerable strikes, has fallen heavily into abeyance.

But the fight for industrial unionism is not fully won. There is still a grave weakness in the great multiplicity of craft and semi-craft unions remaining in Great Britain, the United States, and other capitalist countries. They signify that the long menace of craft division during strikes is not yet eliminated. Notorious craft unionists dominate the newly merged federation of labor in the United States, and they have written into its constitution the asininity that craft and industrial unions are of equal importance as forms of labor organization. The WFTU, a tireless fighter for trade union unity, states its program for organic unity briefly as follows: one union in each enterprise, one national federation in each craft or industry, one trade union center in each country, and one world trade union organization.[8]

The most basic aspect of the problem of trade union unity, however, has to do with healing or bridging over the big split—industry-wise, nationally, and internationally—on the basis of ideological differences in the ranks of the world's working class. This rupture has greatly weakened the international labor movement and it stands as a serious obstacle to further labor progress.

In analyzing the present big labor split two basic causes for it must be noted. The first, as remarked in earlier chapters, is that it is, at bottom, the work of the employers, above all, of the American monopolists. The latter, in their drive for world conquest, found it an imperative necessity to cripple or destroy the splendid labor organization created after World War II by the workers in the various countries, of which the WFTU was the world expression. They especially sought to drive a wedge between the workers of the capitalist and Socialist sectors of the world. As supporters of capitalism, the political and trade union leaders of the Second International undertook this union-splitting task at the behest of the employers.

The second cause for the world-wide trade union split is the fact, also remarked earlier, that the right Social Democratic labor leaders have long since adopted the policy of splitting such unions as they cannot control through regular democratic channels. This dovetails perfectly with the labor-splitting needs of the imperialists. Thus, we have the right-wing secession movements in Italy, France, Japan, Latin America, and in the WFTU, where the rights were definitely in the minority; and by the same token, there was the big expulsion movement in the CIO of almost 1,000,000 workers in 1949. It is in line with this policy of expelling "difficult" minorities that the right-wing of the British Labor Party is now preparing to try to oust the Bevanites.

The recent merger of the AFL and CIO in the United States was in contradiction to the basic splitting policy of the right Social Democrats. Here there was no question involved of serious ideological differences. The conservative Meany group, which has come to the top of the merged organization, hopes thus to be the better able through the united organization to still further tighten its grip upon the labor movement and also to tie the working class to the imperialist anti-Soviet program of the State Department, of which they are the most militant supporters and instigators. Generally, this consolidation is a big stride forward for the American working class, but a millstone around its neck arc the ultra-conservative bureaucrats who dominate it.

Great difficulty is created in the problem of labor unity because of the combined deliberate splitting policies of the employers and their labor lieutenants, the right Social Democrats. But the situation, although complex, is by no means hopeless. The need of the workers for unified action will override, in the long run, all splitting tendencies. Nor can all the financial subsidies and political support from American imperialism prevent this. This has been clearly seen in France and Italy, where the CGT and CGIL have succeeded in developing powerful united strike

movements, involving many millions of workers, despite the counterefforts of professional Social Democratic labor splitters. Such united actions are the pathway to eventual organic unity.

The WFTU aims at complete trade union unity, covering both the capitalist and the Socialist sectors of the world, in line with the urgent needs of the world's workers, that organization has several times proposed united action to the ICFTU, and the Christian International, only to have its proposals rejected with insults. The latest example of this, to date, was when the 1955 congress of the ICFTU, under strong pressure from the professional warmongers of the American AFL and CIO (and despite powerful European opposition) not only refused such an offer of cooperation from the WFTU upon urgent current questions, but at the same congress it set up a new department for the specific purpose of intensifying the ICFTU war against progressive labor unions throughout the world which dare to take a stand against Wall Street's war program. Naturally, the bourgeois press everywhere greeted these disgraceful ICFTU actions as notable victories for the "free world." Such a disruptive and desperate course by the ICFTU is suicidal. It is in flat contradiction to the will of the world's workers for trade union unity and for a policy of world peace. It must eventually go bankrupt in the face of the workers' needs for unity and of the unity policies being followed by the WFTU.

The Geneva Big Four conference of July 1955, by taking steps to ease the cold war, has also, as we have seen, set in motion forces which if carefully developed, can greatly improve relations between the two trade union internationals. That is, if the peace forces of the world will see to it that the promises of peace made by Eisenhower and other bourgeois statesmen at Geneva are lived up to, this will lead to a lessening of the cold war and to a mitigation of the war danger. It also could soften, if not eliminate, many of the causes of conflicts between the two trade union internationals. Moreover, an easing of war tensions in the respective capitalist countries, by lifting the hampering controls now enforced upon the unions, and under the sharpening of the class struggle, could bring about an intensification of the need for trade union unity. The leaders of the ICFTU, however, dominated by the conservative Meany group of the United States, are presently doing all possible to prevent the coming together of the two trade union internationals. But such divisive tactics will prove to be futile. The irresistible economic, political, and social forces which, at the end of World War II, manifested themselves so powerfully by creating the World Federation of Trade Unions, will smash through the present disruptive schemes of bankrupt right Social Democratic polit-

ical and trade union leaders and will ultimately produce a greater degree of labor solidarity than ever before.

## 60. World Trade Unionism Moves to The Left

One of the most striking developments of the past 40 years, of supreme importance to the world's workers, is the decline of Social Democracy as the leading force in the international labor movement. During this period the center of gravity of leadership has been moving rapidly to the left; to the Communists, left Social Democrats, and other militant elements. This basic trend manifests itself both in the political and the trade union fields. The world labor movement has largely undergone a general political re-orientation.

Prior to the first World War and the Russian Revolution the right Social Democrats were definitely the leaders of the workers' political and industrial organizations in all the main countries of world capitalism. But since then they have been losing their strategic position catastrophically, and the leadership of world labor has been irresistibly passing into revolutionary hands, chiefly those of the Communists. This elementary fact, as we have remarked in chapters 51 and 57, is graphically illustrated in the realm of trade unionism by the superior numerical strength of the WFTU—88,600,000 compared to that of the ICFTU—54,000,000. It is further emphasized by the far stronger strategic position of the WFTU on a world scale.

### THE DECLINE OF RIGHT-WING TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP

In the spreading decay of right Social Democracy as the world's leading force in trade unionism (and politics) there stands out the great lighthouse-like fact that this type of trade unionism and leadership has become extinct in all the countries that have embraced Socialism and people's democracy, which means in one-third of the whole world. In all these lands right-wing unionism has been superseded by trade unions of the Marxist-Leninist type. As Socialism advances in the world, right-wing Social Democracy, both in its political and industrial phases, disappears from the scene. Under Socialism there is no basis for right Social Democracy, with its pro-capitalist class collaborationism. All the peoples who have definitely embarked upon the road to Socialism, have, in this very process, necessarily cast aside the parties and the trade union practices of Social Democracy and have adopted left organizations and policies adapted to their needs.

The meaning of this highly significant fact is that the fate of right Social Democracy is inextricably tied to that of the capitalist system it-

self. The two are organically related. Social Democracy is still a trend within the labor movement, large numbers of honest workers belonging to its organizations; but its opportunist leadership has tied it in with the capitalist system. Hence, as that system dies Social Democracy perishes with it. The general crisis of capitalism is at the same time the general crisis of Social Democracy. As its general crisis weakens and ultimately destroys capitalism, by the same token, this also undermines and finally wipes out Social Democracy. This is one of the most vital political lessons of the past 40 years of labor history.

The loss of the countries of Socialism and people's democracy has been a mortal blow to Social Democracy, even as it has been to the capitalist system. Here some 65,000,000 organized workers are outside of ICFTU control. Likewise, a great loss has been the developing breakdown of the colonial system of the imperialist powers. The colonies, ever since the beginning of imperialism, have been a foundation prop of world capitalism, and the advance of the national liberation revolution among them is a growing disaster to the capitalist system. Consequently, it is a blow to that subsidiary of capitalism, Social Democracy. The Social Democrats, because of their long-time pro-imperialist orientation, never built strong unions and parties in the great colonial and semi-colonial areas; hence they had little of such directly to lose. Their real loss is due, however, to the weakening of the capitalist system in these regions and to the growth of strong left trade unions and political parties there. At present the right-wingers are making frantic efforts to build their forces in Asia, Latin America, and Africa; but sound labor movements cannot be organized upon the basis of employer support and by subsidies and political backing from imperialist governments. The colonial and semi-colonial areas of the world are basically territories for Communist and other left-wing parties and trade unions.

Right Social Democracy has not only been wiped out in the countries with a Socialist orientation and stymied in the colonial world; it has likewise been seriously weakened on its home grounds, the European capitalist countries themselves. Particularly is this so in those countries where the effects of the advancing general capitalist crisis are the most marked. This weakening trend cannot be reverse by the huge subsidies granted these countries by the United States, which are generally also subsidies, sometimes even directly, to Social Democracy itself. Nor can the Social Democracy, with its unions and parties, build a solid organization in these countries by allowing itself to be used, as we have seen repeatedly in previous pages, as a buffer against the advance of Socialism.

In France and Italy the Communists and left Social Democrats have

definitely won the trade union and political leadership of the great majority of the working class. As Woodrow Waytt says: "French Socialism has far less working-class support than before the war.... Civil servants, teachers, and others in the lower ranks of the professional classes are now the principal supporters of the party." Of Italy he says, "Today the Saragat Socialists (right-wing) have practically no working-class support at all."[1] This loss takes place because in these countries, heavily hit by the general crisis of capitalism, the right Social Democrats have failed utterly to give constructive leadership to the hard-pressed workers. In Western Germany also, despite the efforts of the combined Social Democrats and allied military powers to stamp out all opposition, there remains a high and explosive militancy among the German workers, as witness the big strikes of the past couple of years.

In Great Britain there has long been a strong opposition against the right-wing leadership, both in the industrial and political spheres. This usually amounts numerically to over one-third of the total movement, in both the Labor Party and TUC congresses, and often it runs considerably higher.[2] At the September 1955 Congress of British Trades Unions the average vote for the General Council was 4,141,000 against an average of 3,271,000 for the opposition (R. P. Dutt, *Labour Monthly,* October 1955). As this is being written, the Labor Party is in a crisis, having lost 1,500,000 votes in the recent national election, the most serious reverse since 1931. The right-wing leadership, in line with general Social Democratic strategy, is recklessly seeking an opportunity to expel the strong Bevan opposition leadership—which would make matters worse. Other European labor movements have similar left oppositions, notwithstanding the reckless efforts of hard-boiled bureaucracies to suppress them, And in that important capitalist country in the Far East, Japan, the big trade union movement (see chapter 54) is definitely of a left orientation.

The remaining world strongholds of right Social Democracy are in the countries least affected, so far, by the general crisis of capitalism. This is notably the case in Scandinavia, but, above all, in the United States. This country—and its next-door neighbor, Canada—possesses in the Meany trade union bureaucracy and in the support of the bulk of the mass trade unions, the numerically strongest and richest and also the most conservative section of world Social Democracy. The capitalists through their press, by financial and political corruption and even by law—see the Taft-Hartley Act, prohibiting Communists from holding executive offices in unions—definitely operate to maintain this conservative labor leadership in power.

This is because the latter, among their innumerable sacrifices of

working class interests, constantly condemn Marxism-Leninism and sing the praises of the capitalist system; they are undeviating enemies of the USSR, People's China, and the people's democracies; they support unquestioningly all wars of the bourgeoisie, regardless of their objectives; they use their powerful influence to keep the workers within the folds of the Republican and Democratic parties and to prevent their launching a Labor-Farmer party; they agree to huge price increases for the industrialists, to offset wage raises won by the trade unions (see the 1955 wage movements of the Auto Workers, Steel Workers, and Coal Miners); they peddle to the workers every form of superstition and obscurantism that the employing class puts forth in order to buttress its class rule; they damp down the fighting spirit among the workers; in short, they systematically interpret their class collaboration doctrines and practices in the sense of the subordination of the working class to the will and profits of the employing class. Consequently, the employers, although they hate the trade unions as such, consider the conservative top labor leaders as their friends and allies, which they are, and they energetically cultivate their control of the trade unions, especially in the face of strong left-wing developments. To break this organic connection between the conservative trade union leaders is always a basic task of the rising left-wing.

In December 1955, the AFL and CIO merged into a new federation. The AFL-CIO, which has a membership of 15,000,000, by far the largest in the capitalist world, opens up a new vast potential strength for the working class, regarding strikes, political action and organizing work. Mr. Meany, the president of the AFL-CIO, however, contemplates no militant policy for the new organization. He is proposing, instead, a general "non-aggression pact" with big business, upon the grounds of the harmony of interest of capital and labor. In deprecating strikes to the president of the National Association of Manufacturers, he said, according to the *New York Times* of December 10, 1955, "I never went on strike in my life, never ran a strike m my life, never ordered anyone else to run a strike in my life, never had anything to do with a picket line.... I have no experience with that type of power."

Social Democracy retains its strength in the United States fundamentally because this is the country that has been the least affected up to now by the general capitalist crisis. In fact, this country, cannibal-like, has grown fat upon the hardships suffered by the peoples of other capitalist countries. But Social Democracy is by no means as solid as it seems, even in the United States. There are powerful currents of discontent in the American working class, and that the United States, as a segment of world capitalism, cannot escape directly feeling the negative effects of

the general capitalist crisis, was taught by the great economic crisis of 1929-33.

## THE WEAKENING POSITION OF THE SKILLED WORKERS

In addition to the disintegrating effects upon it of the deepening general crisis of world capitalism, Social Democracy, including the ICFTU, is also being weakened by the declining role of the skilled workers in industry and in the trade union movement. Traditionally, the right Social Democrats have based themselves upon these more conservative elements in the labor movement, as Lenin stressed many times. He speaks of them as, *"the craft union, narrow-minded, selfish hard-hearted, covetous and petty bourgeois 'labor aristocracy,' imperialistically minded, bribed and corrupted by imperialism."*[3] "This stratum of the 'labor aristocracy'... serves as the principal bulwark of the Second International."[4]

But the skilled workers are becoming less and less a solid prop for Social Democracy. The first major reason for this is that they have largely lost their dominating position in industry, particularly in trustified industries. The time is past when the industrial working force consisted of a body of highly skilled mechanics at the top and a great mass of unskilled workers at the bottom. For one thing, the skilled trades, apart from the new groups of technicians, have been largely divided up into more specialized lines, which, incidentally, is the basic reason why the long-term apprenticeship system has fallen so much into abeyance. On the other hand, the unskilled workers are tending to become semi-skilled workers, operators of machines, or workers on the assembly lines. What is happening to the labor force generally in the United States, and these trends are more or less typical of all the advanced capitalist industrial countries, is shown by U.S. government figures. During the period of 1910-50, while the male skilled workers in general went up from 14.5 percent to 18.6 percent of the total working force, their skills were greatly divided and specialized—above all in the major industries. The semi-skilled increased from 11.2 percent to 20.1 percent, and the unskilled went down from 18.2 percent to 8.5 percent.[5] It is not that the skilled workers are being wiped out, but that they have lost the monopoly position that they once had. The advance of automation is still further weakening their general position. Similar trends are developing in other countries. "In France, of the 21,500 workers in the Renault plants, only 7,000 have qualifications, and only 500 are highly skilled workers."[6] The skilled workers are tending also to become more radical minded. They are no longer the special preserve of the right Social Democrats, but are going to the left, notably in France and Italy.

Secondly, in accordance with their diminished role in industry, the skilled workers have also largely lost the aristocratic wage position that they formerly held. The wage gap between them and the more unskilled categories, percentage-wise, tends constantly to narrow, in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, and elsewhere. This does not necessarily mean, however, that in terms of actual money, the wage gap is being reduced. In the United States, the Department of Labor points out, there is a long-term trend to lessen the percentage wage differential between the skilled and unskilled. "In 1907, for example, skilled rates were about double those of unskilled rates. In 1947, on the other hand, skilled occupational rates were higher by only half as much as unskilled rates; that is, the spread over these 40 years has been reduced to about a half."[7] In Germany and Scandinavia the narrowing of the wage gap is even more marked than in the United States. And in Great Britain, "in many manufacturing industries the top skilled ratio is only 17 to 20 percent above the lowest rate for unskilled male workers."[8]

The skilled workers are, of course, dissatisfied with this, to them, relatively unfavorable wage course. In the United States they are fighting for percentage wage increases which favor them and against the tendency, marked after the end of World War II, of industrial unions to negotiate flat, "across the board," "cents per hour" increases. Such equal percentage raises would, of course, greatly expand the gap, in money, between the skilled and unskilled. The skilled workers are, with some success, demanding special increases for their respective categories. In Great Britain, says Harry Pollitt, "There are now signs of dissatisfaction on the part of the skilled workers, who are demanding a greater differentiation in wage rates between themselves and the unskilled workers, and one of their arguments is that the present levels of wages do not attract young workers into the skilled trades as apprentices."[8] Pollitt's judgment was borne out by the June 1955 strike of the British locomotive engineers and firemen, in which the wage differential question was central.

While the tendency to disprize the special industrial skills of workers is general in the capitalist countries, the reverse trend is to be observed in the countries of Socialism and people's democracy. There, by wage rates and otherwise, every incentive is being given to the workers, from the top to the bottom grades, to do all possible to improve their skill as producers.

Thirdly, the weakened position of the skilled workers in capitalist industry inevitably reflects itself in a lessened influence for them in the trade union movement. Half a century ago the skilled workers dominated the labor movement in all its branches. Indeed, at that time, and from

their inception in the capitalist countries (it was different in the colonial lands), the trade unions were basically organizations of skilled workers. Their leaders consciously and cynically—and with the blessing of the employers—made agreements which grossly favored the skilled workers at the expense of the unorganized masses.

But this general situation is decidedly not the case now in any leading industrial country. During recent decades, particularly since the rise of industrial unionism, the vast influx of unskilled and semi-skilled production workers (as well as white collar workers) into the unions has definitely shifted the center of gravity away from the skilled workers to those of less skill. These less skilled masses are not all sympathetic to the aristocratic wage control pretensions of the skilled mechanics, when these are won at their expense. This development has tended to transform the labor union movement from a craft to a class basis—an advance which ultimately is disastrous to the interests of the Second International and its union bureaucracy.

In the old trade union centers—Great Britain, Germany, and the United States—the narrow craft unions, made up primarily of skilled workers, no longer dominate the labor movement, although they have not ceased trying to do so. Their erstwhile leadership has been taken over by the broader industrial, or semi-industrial unions, of General Transport workers, Maritime workers, Railroaders, Miners, Factory workers, Automobile workers, Metal workers, and other industrial groups. This is true also of the United States, where craft unionism still lingers strongly. Even here, however, many unions which still call themselves craft organizations, such as the Machinists, Boilermakers, Electrical workers, and others, have branched out, taking in not only "specialists," helpers, and laborers in their own crafts, but also workers of the most varied industries. In Japan, a latecomer in the world's trade union movement, the skilled workers, save in its very earliest beginning, have never dominated the union movement.

The weakening of the position of the skilled workers in industry and in the trade union movement is basically disastrous to the Second International and its ICFTU. These movements have tried to recoup their losses by reaching out to the groups of semi-skilled workers and the new masses of white-collar workers, and not without some measure of success. But these new forces cannot replace the old-time aristocratic skilled mechanics, with their strong monopolistic unions and aggressive craft attitudes, which fitted in perfectly with the policy of class collaboration of the right Social Democrats. One of the new labor trends, especially in the United States, is for the big employers, instead of, as formerly, favor-

ing the skilled workers at the expense of the unskilled, to make wage concessions to the stronger unions in general, at the expense of the weaker ones and of the unorganized. Therefore, in the post-World War II period, the wage advances of such key unions as Auto, Steel, Teamsters, etc., have far outrun those of the weaker unions, not to mention those of the unorganized. These tend to widen the already wide gap between organized and unorganized workers.

## THE RISE OF GOMPERSISM IN THE ICFTU

Another basic manifestation of the decline of right-wing influence in the world labor movement is the marked degeneration that has taken place in Social Democratic ideology. This has reached the point where, except for their left-wing, Social Democrats generally consider that Marxism, if it ever had any validity, is now clearly obsolete. They have also practically abandoned even their programs of nationalization. The sharper grows the world contest between the dying systems of capitalism and the emerging system of Socialism, the more the Social Democrats are compelled to come forth in their true light as defenders of the capitalist system.

The degeneration of the ideology of the Second International, from even a pretense of Marxism to a more or less open defense of capitalism, also reflects itself in the ICFTU, which is the trade union wing of that International. This means the adoption of new forms of class collaboration in the trade union field, more closely linking the right bureaucracy with the employers. One of the best known of these new forms is German "co-determination," discussed in chapter 58. On this matter Theodore Lit, speaking of Germany, says, "Classical Marxism having been largely abandoned as the approach to this goal (Socialism), post-war labor has raised the battle of 'co-determination' and now seeks not the replacement of the propertied classes but full and equal partnership in all important decisions affecting the individual plant and the economy as a whole."[10] This substitution of co-determination for Socialism as the goal is Gompersian acceptance of capitalism, modernized and dolled up to fit the psychology of workers long accustomed to a Socialist perspective. The right-winger Karl Zwing, in his book *Mitbestimmungsrecht,* cited by Perlman, considers that under co-determination we will see "the national economy ruled neither by capitalism, nor yet by Socialism, but by the principle of group cooperation." Commenting upon this, Perlman correctly remarks, "Thus Socialism gets quietly shelved as an issue for the present, and, in all probability, as an issue for the future as well."[11] Perlman, an ardent proponent of Gompers' "pragmatic" and "job conscious"

(not class conscious) unionism, which accepts capitalism in principle, has no basic quarrel with Zwing and other German right-wing trade union leaders, although Sturmthal seem to think he has.[12]

Meanwhile, the undisguised American Gompersites—the Meany leading group—have muscled into the ICFTU and taken it over. They are unblushing defenders of capitalism—"free enterprise," they call it, like the bosses. Over 40 years ago Gompers set the tone for the opportunist trade union bureaucracy, with his pragmatism and pro-capitalism. He said, "The movement of the working people, whether under the AFL or not, will simply follow the human impulse for improvement in conditions wherever that may lead, and wherever that may lead they will go without aiming at any theoretical goal.... We decline to commit our labor movement to any speculative philosophy."[13] The essence of this proposition is the indefinite acceptance of capitalism.

The present-day top leaders of the American trade union movement still harp essentially upon the Gompers string, except that they even more blatantly speak out for capitalism. George Meany says, "Our goals as trade unionists are modest, for we do not seek to re-cast American society in any particular doctrinaire or ideological image... We believe in the American profit system."[14] As for the class struggle, this is considered nonsense. Philip Murray, late head of the CIO, characteristically said, "We have no classes in this country, that's why the Marxist theory of class struggle has gained so few adherents. We are all workers here."[15] David MacDonald, head of the United Steelworkers union (CIO), over 1,000,000 strong, reinforced Murray's statement at his union's 1954 convention, thus: "We are engaged in the operation of an economy which is a sort of mutual trusteeship." He says that the hundreds of thousands of stockholders employ a group of managers, who are employees just like the working force.[16] On this basis, American trade union leaders no longer speak of the struggle as between "capital and labor," but between "management and labor." This is part of the widespread campaign of the bourgeoisie to make big capital look necessary, progressive respectable, and sacrosanct.[17] Such pro-capitalist attitudes are especially emphasized in practice by stubborn resistance to independent working-class political action and organization by the bureaucracy.

The top leaders of American organized labor, who are also the leaders of the ICFTU, not only accept capitalism and deny the class struggle, as do the very capitalists themselves, but they are deliberately following the Wall Street imperialists in their ill-fated project of attempted world conquest. Standing in the forefront of the warmongers, they are quite willing, if not anxious, that a world war be fought against the "reds" to

achieve their imperialist objectives. No doubt, if the monopoly capitalists bade them go that far, many of them would follow their capitalist masters into fascism.

The conservative, capitalist-minded leaders of the American trade union movement belong where they are, in the ICFTU. In spouting their capitalist ideology they are only saying openly what the right-wing trade union leaders of Britain, Germany, France, Belgium, and elsewhere are saying and doing in practice, under the cover of pseudo-Socialist phrases. The European leaders are alarmed at American union primitives, not because they differ with them in principle, but because they object to such crude bourgeois demagogy and warmongery, which affront the radical peace-loving European workers. They also resent their aggressive drive to conquer the international labor movement, much as the Wall Street monopolists are striving to master the world.

Domination of the ICFTU by the American bourgeois trade union leaders is a developing threat to that organization. In the long run it must lead to definite splits and to breaking away of large masses of workers. Strong opposition to the American dictators of the ICFTU, with their arrogance and their over-ample supply of money, is developing and it is bound to become more pronounced. Vast masses of the peoples throughout the world deeply oppose the attempts of Wall Street to subjugate them, and by the same token, large sections of the ICFTU also are against the efforts of the Meany leaders to mould that organization into a sort of labor auxiliary of American imperialism.

## 61. The Socialist Perspective of World Trade Unionism

The most burning economic and political questions now confronting the world's workers are: the struggle for peace and against atomic war, for democracy against the threat of fascism, for improved mass living standards against deepening capitalist exploitation, for colonial liberation against monopolist imperialism, and for the national independence of all the peoples against the threat of Wall Street world domination. Out of these elementary struggles emerges the greatest struggle of all, that against capitalism and for Socialism. The latter is the central political issue of the present period and it is becoming more and more the dominant one, with the outcome increasingly favorable for Socialism. World Socialism is inevitable. It is the great goal to which the world's workers are always driving, despite the efforts of reactionary Social Democratic leaders to divert and to hold them back.

The workers of the world are pushing towards Socialism because of two basic urges: first, because they can no longer live under the worsen-

ing conditions produced by the dying capitalist system, and second, because, with Marxism-Leninism to guide them, they are powerfully attracted by the great successes of Socialism—as demonstrated by the USSR, People's China, and the people's democracies, which now embrace one-third of the world's population and are swiftly growing.

## THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE WORKING MASSES

Under the capitalist system the productive power of the workers has been enormously increased, but the vast bulk of this increased production has fallen, not to the actual producers, but to the owning, exploiting classes. Historically, capitalism has failed to bring the benefits of steam power, machinery, electricity, and of industrialization generally, to more than a very small portion of the world's population. The popular masses still lack elementary necessities of life. In the great capitalist city of Paris, for example, almost half the homes have no private toilets, about three-fourths are without baths; and one-fourth have no running water at all. The erstwhile colonial and semi-colonial countries have about 70 percent of the world's population and only about five percent of its industrialization. Capitalist is all the more incapable of utilizing for the masses the vast potentialities of mass production, automation, electronics, and nuclear energy. These tasks remain for Socialism to fulfill.

As Karl Marx pointed out over a century ago, the capitalist system, based upon the robbery of surplus value from the workers by the capitalists, inevitably works out to the enrichment of the few capitalists and the impoverishment of the great mass of workers. The whole history of the world's economy under capitalism since then has gone to prove the truth of Marx's basic analysis. This is why Marxism is today such a decisive factor in the world.

As for the populations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other colonial and semi-colonial areas, comprising about two-thirds of the human race, the capitalist system has been for them an unmitigated disaster, especially since the advent of imperialism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Their primitive industries have been wrecked, the growth of their capitalist economy stunted, the independence of their countries destroyed, and the living standards of the working masses forced down to starvation levels. This is why these vast areas and populations are now seething with revolution.

In the chief capitalist countries of Europe, up to World War I, some improvements in real wages took place among the workers, especially the skilled, as we have remarked in passing, Much of this "prosperity" for the workers came, however, from the super-exploitation of the colo-

nial peoples by the imperialist European states, of which the workers got some crumbs. But the first great war and the devastating economic crisis of 1929-33 slashed deeply into the workers' living standards. Writing in 1936, J. Kuczynski states: "Today labor conditions in England, in Germany, and in France are undoubtedly considerably worse than they were forty years ago. The purchasing power of the workers is smaller and the intensity of work is very much higher."[1] Fascism and World War II dealt further blows to the living standards of European workers, as well as those in Japan and other parts of the capitalist world. High taxes, high prices, and low real wages are the lot of the workers in the capitalist countries in the present period. A reflection of this is the series of big post-war strikes in France, Italy, Germany, and Great Britain. All of which is preparing the way for Socialism by revolutionizing the outlook of the workers.

American workers who, in one sense, are the labor aristocracy of the world labor movement, have fared somewhat better under capitalism in their living standards than have their colonial and European brothers. This is at least indicated in a study by the US Department of Labor in 1952, which puts the average annual per capita income in various countries in dollars as follows; United States $1,453, Sweden $780, Great Britain $773, Denmark $689, Norway $587, Belgium $582, Italy $235.[2] American "high" wages are offset by the greater production demanded of American workers, by the intense speed-up under which they work, and by their shorter work life in industry. A worker over 40 now finds it almost impossible to get a new job in production industry. Actually, American workers proportionately have shared badly in the enormous wealth produced by them. "The average wage of $3,500 a year," says Lumer, "is $666 below the skimpy Bureau of Labor Statistics budget for a minimum standard of health and decency for a family of four, as of October 1951."[3] Nor can this unfavorable situation be altered by the many current schemes of stock-selling to the workers. In the United States 69 percent of the families received less than $5,000 a year in 1953, whereas the more realistic Heller Budget sets a figure of $5,335 per year as being necessary. In New York, the richest city in the world, there are 2,000,000 people living in tenements condemned as unfit half a century ago, and 300,000 people are on relief.

The workers of the United States, like elsewhere under capitalism, are receiving progressively less in percentage of what they produce. Calculating real wages and production, and taking 1900 as 100, Kuczynski shows that the relative position of the American worker declined from 101 in 1885-1897 to 71 in 1922-1933.[4] The Labor Research Association,

figuring on the combined basis of wage rates, unemployment, prices, and production, and taking 1939 as 100, indicates that the relative position of the American worker fell to 73.4 in the period of 1939-1952.[5] Perlo sums up this period by stating that "between 1939 and 1952 the output per manufacturing worker increased about one-third, while his real annual purchasing power remained practically unchanged."[6] Between 1949-1952 the purchasing power of all wages in the United States declined by 5 percent. This helps to explain why the number of strikes in the United States has increased. The farmers are worse of—the average of farm prices having dropped over 25 percent during 1945-55.[7]

The relatively higher living standards of American workers than those prevailing in other capitalist countries are due to a variety of causes. They have their roots in the historical, long-continued shortage of workers in the building of the enormous industries and wealth of the United States during the past two centuries. A major contributing factor also has been that the United States escaped the ravages of the two world wars. Also, the workers have received some dubious economic advantages from the dominant imperialist world position of the United States during the past few decades. This is particularly true at the present time, with this country's widespread exploitation, not only of colonial peoples but also of those in other capitalist countries. Engels and Lenin especially stressed the fact that the workers get a few extra crumbs from the banquet table of the imperialist exploiters. The most skilled workers reap the chief benefits from this, but the broad masses of the working class also get some share of it in the shape of more steady employment. This is what is now happening in the United States upon an unprecedented scale.

The higher wages of American workers basically account for their relatively conservative moods. This is what causes bourgeois illusions to linger in their minds, what keeps them still affiliated, in the main, to the monopolist-dominated Democratic Party, and what leads them to tolerate such bourgeois reactionaries as the Meany group to stand at the head of their trade union movement. But all this will pass. It is only a reflection of the current so-called prosperity of American imperialism. When American monopoly capital, enmeshed in the general crisis of world capitalism, faces the stormy days surely ahead of it, then the American working class will undergo a swift radicalization. A foretaste of this was the great working class struggles of the periods of the big economic crisis of 1929-33, and of the Roosevelt regime from 1933 to 1944. The American working class is passing through the same general historical experience as the British, German, and Japanese workers, who were also noted

for their conservative ideology during the period of the upswing of the imperialism of the respective British, German, and Japanese monopolists.

## THE DEEPENING GENERAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

The whole course of capitalist development is tending to increase the radicalization of the workers. Since World War II, the general crisis of capitalism (see chapters 28 and 35) has greatly deepened.[8] This is demonstrated by the further gigantic losses of peoples and territory of capitalism to the Socialist world, which now embraces 900,000,000 people, the growing collapse of imperialist colonialism, the splitting of the world into two great economic markets to the grave detriment of capitalist trade, the division of the world's governments into two political blocs, and the sharpening trade and other rivalries among the capitalist powers, now struggling to recover from some of the effects of the war. The general capitalist crisis also translates itself into worsened conditions for the workers in capitalist countries—greater pressures against their living standards, their civil liberties, and their labor organizations. This leads to further radicalization of the working masses generally in the capitalist world, and they are constantly in less of a mood to tolerate the harsh conditions that decadent capitalism is forcing upon them.

At present most of the capitalist countries are experiencing something of an industrial upswing. But this is fundamentally unhealthy, being based largely upon repairing the tremendous property damages of the war, making up the large commodity shortages caused by the war, and in carrying out the huge preparations going on for a new world war. The current "boom" is only temporary, and it will be succeeded by a serious economic slump, with the capitalist powers savagely competing among themselves over the restricted capitalist world markets. Unemployment is already a serious problem in various countries, including the United States, and it will grow worse. The basic course of capitalist development is into ever deeper general crisis.

The dominant monopolists are quite aware that their world capitalist system as a whole is in a perilous condition, and they are seeking desperately for a way to solve that system's increasing difficulties. Their main panacea is Keynesianism, which has been adopted by all the most important capitalist countries. This theory, worked out by the British economist, J. M. Keynes, aims to save the obsolete capitalist system. The heart of it is that capitalism can overcome its chronic, and now highly dangerous, tendency to produce ever-more serious economic crises and mass unemployment through over-production, by government appropria-

tions for make-work projects. This is the big capitalist illusion. Keynesianism has become the economics of world monopoly capitalism in its period of general crisis and decline.[9]

The basic flaw in Keynesianism, however, is that it does not cure the elementary evil which, at bottom, causes economic crisis and mass unemployment; namely the robbery by the capitalists, in the shape of profits, rent, and interest, of a huge share of what the workers produce. In fact, it makes this fundamental capitalist contradiction still worse in the long run by enabling the capitalists to reap even greater profits, rent, and interest at the expense of the workers' purchasing power. Thus, during World War II American capitalists secured in profits, after taxes, the fabulous sum of $52 billion.

This was Stalin's stated law of maximum profit for monopoly in effect with a vengeance.[10] He thus defines the law of maximum profits, which is the heart rule of monopoly capital: "the securing of the maximum capitalist profit through the exploitation, ruin, and impoverishment of the majority of the population of the given country, through the enslavement and systematic robbery of the peoples of other countries, especially backward countries, and, lastly, through wars and militarization of the national economy, which are utilized for the obtaining of the highest profits." This is a perfect picture of Wall Street policy.

All the other make-work projects of monopoly capital, as well as munitions making, are also established on the maximum profit basis. One can imagine the orgy of maximum profits that would take place if the government should apply the 101 billion dollars road plan of Eisenhower, or under the 200 billion dollars public works plan the government is said to have in reserve. This deepens the elementary conflict between the productive capacity of capitalist industry and the limited capacity of the market to absorb this production.

With its enormous projects of keeping industry going on through a vast expansion of government and private credit, Keynesianism has for the time being slowed the American economy from plunging into a serious crisis (although it has had three minor crises since the end of World War II).[11] But it is only postponing the ultimate smashup. Under the Keynesian deficit financing schemes the total of private and public debt has soared from 406.3 billion dollars in 1945 to 605.5 billion dollars in 1954; the national debt has been pushed to the fabulous point of 290 billions; there has also been a big inflation of state and city debts from 13.7 billion dollars in 1945 to 33.3 billion dollars in 1954: installment debts have reached the unprecedented level of 30 billions; industry has been enormously over-developed and the whole economic system has been

stretched and expanded with extravagant credits, designed to spur flagging industry. For the workers, this warlike and inflationary Keynesianism ultimately means higher prices and taxes, lowered real wages, increasing unemployment, fresh hordes of capitalist parasites living upon interest from the sea of new public and private debts, and an increased danger of war and fascism. Obviously, all this is sowing the whirlwind. laying the basis for an eventual devastating economic crash.

It is one of the characteristics oi this period of the decline of capitalism that the trade union movements of the most important capitalist countries are building elaborate economic programs to protect the workers against cyclical crises, mass unemployment, and the other growing hazards of obsolescent capitalism. The workers fought for unemployment relief in the earliest periods of British trade unionism; great public workshops to furnish work for the jobless masses were a central feature of the French revolution of 1848, and Foner points out that as early as the economic crisis of 1837 American workers were demanding public works and unemployment relief.[12] But now these worker economic programs are vastly larger and more comprehensive than ever before.

The central lesson that the workers have to learn from this struggle and labor history is that in their fight against economic crises and mass unemployment, in their various make-work programs of higher wages, shorter hours, expanded social insurance, better health and educational systems, and government public works of various kinds, they must constantly strive to cut the evil at its heart; namely, by attacking the employers' profits, their ownership of industry, and their control of government. They must put the tax burden upon the employers, control prices, reduce profits, and otherwise challenge the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists. The workers' economic program is one of class struggle, as opposed to the class collaboration of Keynesianism. Without this militant fight the workers cannot protect themselves against the onset of an eventual economic crisis of disastrous proportions. The stern logic of this political reality and program must lead the workers to capital levies, to the nationalization of industry, and ultimately to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism. There is no other final solution than this for economic crises.

Together with trying to continue the life and maximum profits of capitalism with the pulmotor of Keynesianism, the monopoly capitalists of the United States have their overriding plan of making American big business the master of the world. They want to establish Washington as the capital of the world, with no more Socialism and workers' movements to bother them. This is a perspective of fascism and war, and this

is what lies behind their instigation and continuation of the cold war. World conquest is a wild and impossible dream which, tried militarily, could only lead the peoples of the world to wholesale massacre, the American capitalists to complete defeat, and the world capitalist, system to its final obliteration. The workers of the world have no such vision of wholesale slaughter; they strive for their advance ultimately to Socialism, through peaceful channels. This they have the potential power to accomplish if they will but develop it. Their supreme task in the present period is to prevent the catastrophic war contemplated by Wall Street and its Washington agents now running the government.

## THE INSPIRING POWER OP SOCIALISM

Worsening economic and political conditions are fundamental factors in radicalizing the workers and impelling them along the road to Socialism: but they are not the only ones. Besides them there is the positive urge of the workers to forge ahead to create a new and better order of society. The workers do not simply stand passively and wait until the pressures of capitalism force them into action. The most advanced section among them, the left-wing, with a definite Socialist goal in mind, works for this purpose incessantly under any and all conditions. More and more, the broad masses move toward adopting this revolutionary position of the left and, in all their fights over immediate issues, they tend to press on consciously for Socialism. This is the ideological evolution of the workers all over the world.

The mass drive towards Socialism has become enormously strengthened since the birth, first of the Soviet Union in 1917 and then of the European and Asian people's democracies at the end of World War II. Increasingly, the workers see, despite the enormous efforts of all the scribes and soothsayers of capitalism to hide these revolutionary facts from them, that Socialism means for the peoples a rapid growth of their industrial systems in all parts of the world, far beyond the achievements of capitalism, and that with human exploitation abolished, this is bringing about a swift rise in living standards in the whole Socialist sector of the world. The workers everywhere are learning also that Socialism means the final end of war, the abolition of unemployment, the development of broad systems of social insurance that thoroughly protect the workers against every financial hazard of life, the rapid rise of living standards, the growth of a new culture far superior to anything known anywhere under capitalism, and the unfoldment of popular freedoms and genuine people's democracy infinitely in advance of the distorted and limited bourgeois democracy of capitalism. Under Socialism not only a

new society is being developed, but also a higher type of man himself. The Socialist world is operating upon a plane a whole social era in advance of the capitalist system.

The revolutionary example of the USSR, People's China, and other countries with Socialist regimes in developing their industries and improving the lot of their peoples, is currently exerting a tremendous power in inspiring the workers in the capitalist countries and the peoples in the colonial lands to fight to improve their conditions and to look forward to a new life, in which they will no longer be looked upon and utilized as mere work animals and cannon fodder, created to serve the master capitalist class. The inspiring force of this great revolutionary example will increase enormously with the passage of the years and the further unfoldment of Socialist institutions in the various countries. Particularly will this be the case when the working masses of the world, putting political fetters upon the imperialist warmongers, are enabled to end the present fabulous expenditures for military purposes, which are forced upon the Socialist countries by the capitalist cold war, to devote all these at present wasted resources to the upbuilding of their industries and to cultivating the physical and cultural well-being of the peoples.

## THE FULFILLMENT OF TRADE UNION HISTORY

Since the earliest beginnings of the labor movement, about two centuries ago, the workers of the world have waged literally hundreds of thousands of strikes; they have conducted numberless political struggles, and they have carried on endless educational work and organizational campaigns. They have participated in many bourgeois revolutions, and in these latter decades, side by side with their peasant and other allies, they have also taken part in many proletarian and colonial liberation revolutions. Their long course of struggle, marked by matchless courage and devotion, has been waged at the cost of multitudes of victims of capitalist jails, thugs, and executioners. The irresistible march forward of the world's working class is the greatest epic in world history.

During this long and bitter struggle the workers have won many victories. Under capitalism, despite fierce capitalist opposition, they have secured a voice in the regulation of wage scales and they have prevented the sinking of real wages in the capitalist countries to colonial levels, which are the basic ideal of all capitalists. They have largely slashed the 12-16 hour working day of industrial workers to 8 hours or less. They have established the voting franchise in most of the capitalist countries, and they have raised the workers' voice in all the parliaments of the world. They have combatted illiteracy and won at least a minimum of

general education. They have won a new recognition of the rights of women. They have built up systems of social insurance, health protection, and accident prevention, which have at least modified the early capitalist savageries in these elementary questions. They have built up a very powerful movement against war. But overtopping all these hard-won victories, the workers in the Soviet Union, People's China, and the many people's democracies of Eastern Europe and Asia have accomplished the supreme objective of the labor movement by abolishing capitalist rule and laying the basis for Socialism and ultimate Communism.

Marx long ago pointed out the supreme importance of the organization and experience that the workers were gaining during the course of the class struggle. Their greatest victory in this general respect has been the elaboration of Marxism, which is a whole new scientific view of life. This was the basis of their revolutionary victories in the past, and it is the key to their whole future. This great proletarian philosophy has been continuously developed, notably in later years by Lenin and Stalin, and now by Mao Tse-tung. Together with this immense ideological achievement, the labor movement has built a magnificent organization, in the many-millions strong Communist, Workers, and left Social-Democratic parties, in the enormous trade union movement, and in the tremendous organizations of the cooperatives, youth, women, and the general supporters of peace. The capitalists have organized many powerful trusts and employers' associations, but the workers are overtopping them with the tremendous economic and political organizations which they are irresistibly constructing. And towering among these vast world proletarian movements of today is the organized state power of the many countries that have already embarked upon the road to Socialism.

The historical achievements of the world labor movement are not to be measured alone by the many protections it has built into the life of the workers in the capitalist countries, important though these are. The ultimate gauge is the extent to which the world's workers have succeeded in putting an end to the capitalist system itself and in building in its stead a system of scientific Socialism. This revolutionary task is the supreme goal of the world proletariat, the objective to which its entire history, so rich with struggle and sacrifice, irresistibly tends. All roads lead to Communism.

Although the progress of international organized labor has at times, for decades on end, appeared to be agonizingly slow, in a historical sense its advance has been rapid. Especially is this the case during the last half-century, since the development of capitalist monopoly and imperialism. When the twentieth century began the world labor movement was still

weak; the Socialist parties were relatively small; the pioneer Communist parties were not yet born, and the trade unions, with less than ten percent of their present membership, had not yet set up their own international.

To the arrogant capitalists of those times, arbitrarily dominating the world, Socialism seemed only a minor danger, a dot hardly bigger than a man's hand, on the otherwise brilliant horizon of international capitalism. But what a vast difference now—the rising Socialist sun lights up the whole sky. One-third of the world is either in, or is heading into Socialism, and the remaining capitalist system is sinking into general crisis and decay.

Today the Socialist countries of the world are far stronger in their economic and political structure than are the capitalist countries, they are also the stronger force militarily, they are much firmer ideologically, and they are outrunning capitalism in economic, political and other spheres. Much faster than is commonly realized, the Socialist workers of the world are fulfilling Lenin's famous slogan of "overtaking and surpassing" capitalism in industry and elsewhere. The international bourgeoisie sense this great fact and they are afraid in their bones.

It is clear that this is the period in which Socialism is becoming the strongest system in the world. As the economic, political, and ideological advantage develops more and more on the side of Socialism, and as this fact becomes increasingly obvious to the peoples of the world, the tempo of world development toward Socialism will become greatly accelerated. Fast as the world movement into Socialism has been during the past half-century, it is safe to predict that its tempo will be even swifter during the succeeding years of the fateful twentieth century.

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*Chapter* 37

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*Chapter 38*

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*Chapter 39*

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*Chapter 40*

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*Chapter 41*

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*Chapter 42*

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*Chapter* 43

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*Chapter 44*

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*Chapter 45*

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*Chapter 46*

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Chapter 47

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*Chapter 48*

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*Chapter 51*

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*Chapter 52*

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*Chapter 54*

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*Chapter 55*

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*Chapter 56*

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*Chapter 57*

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*Chapter 58*

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*Chapter 59*

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*Chapter 60*

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*Chapter 61*

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# INDEX


Adler, Victor
AFL-C.IO; finances; merger;
Africa, early unionism; effects of capitalism; imperialist subjugation; Nigeria; slave trade, strikes; trade union movement; union membership; *See* Union of South Africa
Agriculture, capitalist; employment (U.S.), to 1880; farmer movements U.S., feudal society; organization of workers; sharecropping; unions in Latin America; *See* Farmers, National and Colonial question, Negro people
Albania; union growth; WFTU
American Federation of Labor, and AMU; constitution; expulsions; founded; IFTU; International Secretariat; Japan; K of L, Labor Day; labor legislation; Marshall Plan; membership; Negroes; State Department; unemployment insurance; WFTU
Amsterdam International, *See* IFTU
Anarchism, Anarchist International; general strike; spontaneity
Apristas
Argentina; early unionism; FORA; labor struggles;
Aristocracy of labor; decline; Second International
Asia, ARO; cold war; effects of capitalism; feudalism; labor beginnings; trade union movements; WFTU
Ass'n. of Catholic Trade Unionists
Atlantic Charter
Australasia
Australia; Council of Trade Unions (ACTU); dock strikes; labor party; RILU: socialist strength; Syndicalism; union growth; unemployed struggles; WFTU
Austria, General Confederation of Labor; “Austro-Marxism"; Catholic unions; clerical fascism; Communist Party; fascism; general strike; "lesser evil” theory; Revolution of; RILU; Social Democratic Party, union membership
Automation
Aveling, Eleanor

Babeuf, François
Bakunin, Michael, general strike; International Alliance of the Social Democracy
Baltimore and Ohio Plan
Bandung Conference
Bauer, Otto
Bebel, August
Belgium; franchise; organizing women; Revolution of; Socialist strength; unemployed struggles; union growth

Berger, Victor
Berlin International (IWMA)
Bernstein, Eduard
Blanqui, Louis A.
Blum, Leon
Bolivia
Bose, Subhash
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bourgeois revolutions
Branting, Hjalmar
Brazil
Bridges, Harry
British West Africa
British West Indies
Bulgaria, General Workers Union; Communist Party; craft unionism; early labor movement; fascism; Syndicalist unions; WFTU
Burma; Trade Union Congress

Caballero, Largo
Cabet, Etienne
Canada, AFL; Communist Party, feudalism; first union; IFT'U; Socialist Party; syndicalism; unemployed councils; union growth
Carey, James
Catholic Church
Central America
Ceylon
Chartism
Chiang Kai-shek
Child labor
Chile; early unions; general strike; strikes; unemployed struggles
China; Association of Labor (CAL); Boxer rebellion; Chinese Revolution; Communist Party, Federation of Labor, handicrafts.; Labor Conference; Liberated Areas Trade Union Federation; North China Federation of Trade Unions; Revolution of; RILU; strikes; Taiping rebellion; union development, unemployed struggles
Chinese Democratic Republic; unions; Quemoy and Matsu; UN; Christian (Catholic) unions; Catholic Labor International
Chu, H. F.
Churchill, Winston
Citrine, Walter
Civil War (U.S.)
Class Struggle, Theory of
Cold War
Colombia
Communist International

Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO); delegation to Soviet Union; Flint sit-down strike; Japan.; membership; peace policy; program; split, State Department, WFTU
Connolly, James
Corn Laws
Costa Rica
Crisis, economic, program
Croatia
Cuba, Confederación National Obrero; early unions
Czechoslovakia; Central Council of Trade Unions; Communist Party; RILU, strikes; syndicalism; unemployed struggles; union tasks

Dange, S. A.
Das, C. R.
Deakin, Arthur
Debs, Eugene V.
De Leon, Daniel
Denmark, living standards; social-democracy
De Paepe, Cesar
Diaz, Jose
Dimitrov, Georgi
Di Vittorio, Giuseppe
Dobashi, Kazuyoshi
Dominican Republic
Douai, Adolph
Douglass, Frederick
Dulles, John Foster

Ecuador
Egypt; RILU
Eight-hour day
Eisenhower, Dwight D.
El Salvador
*Encomienda* system
Encyclical *De Rerum Novarum*
Engels, Frederick, anti-slavery struggle, U.S.; aristocracy of labor; British capitalism; British factory system; Chartism, conditions British workers; dialectical materialism; English strikes; English working class; German Social Democratic Party; Italian labor movement, on Marx; Revolution of 1644; Revolution of 1848; spontaneity in strikes; trade onions' role; Utopians; war; workers in imperialist countries
England; Anglo Soviet Trade Union Committee, class collaboration, Corn laws; crisis; Dockers' strike, early factory system; Fabianism; factory legislation; feudalism; general strikes; Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, - ICFTU; II.P; Industrial Syndicalist Education League; labor conditions, Labor Party, "Lib-Lab" Alliance;  May Day; "Mondism,"; National

Association for the Protection of Labor, National Minority Movement; overseas investment; rationalization; RILU; Revolution of 1644; right to organize campaign; Shop Stewards Movement; skilled workers; Social-Democratic Federation (SDF); Socialist movement; syndicalism; Ten Hours Bill, Trades Union Congress; "Triple Alliance,'' unemployed movements; union growth; unions in World War II, white collar workers; women
Erfurt Program
Europe, early trade unions, manufacture; primitive; accumulation of capital, “pulling out" system; Revolution of 1848
European Recovery Program (ERP)

Fabians
factory Acts
Factory system; beginnings, women and children
Farmers; independent political action; proletarianized
Fascism, Austria; birth in Italy; defined; France, set back; general crisis; labor organizations; Social Democracy; unions against; World War II
Feudalism
Fimmen, Edo
Finland
Fourier, Charles F. M.
Frachon, Benoit
France; Anti-Combination laws; *Confederation Generate du Travail* (CGT), Communists in government; Communist Parly; Communists and unions; Declaration of the Rights of Man; fascism set back; *Federation des Bourses du Travail;* General strike; labor conditions; National Federation of Labor Unions; overseas investment; People’s Front; Revolution of 1789; Revolutions of 1830 and 1848; RILU; Socialist Parties; strikes; skilled workers; syndicalism; union growth; Unity Confederation of Labor (GGTU), women organized; WFTU
Franco, Francisco
Franco-Prussian War

Gandhi, Mahatma
Garibaldi, Giuseppe
General crisis of capitalism
Geneva Conference
George, Henry
Germany, Anti-Socialist law, *Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (ADGB); Bismarck and trade unions, ”co-determination," Communist Party; crisis, economic; *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB), early trade unions; fascism, General German Workers Association; general strikes; Federation of Labor Unions; guild system; IWA; Kapp Putsch; labor conditions; monopoly capital; Nazi labor front; Revolution of 1848; Revolution of 1918; serfs; RILU; skilled workers, Social Democratic Workers Party; Social Democrats in government; strikes; syndicalism;

union growth; Weimar Republic, white collar workers; women organized; WFTU; German Democratic Republic (East Germany), United Socialist Party; trade unions
Gompers. Samuel; capitalism; “pure and simple" trade unionism
Gotha Program, G
Gramsci, Antonio
Greece; fascism, U.S. intervention,
Green, William
Guaranteed annual wage
Guatemala
Guesde, Jules
Guild system

Haiti
Hara, Toraichi
Hardie, Keir
Haywood, William D.
Hillman, Sidney
Hillquit, Morris
Hitler, Adolph
Holland, general strike; Socialist strength
Honduras
Hungary, Centra] Trade Union Council; Communist Party; early unions; fascism; Hungarian Revolution, Socialist Party; Trade Union Council
Huysmans, Camille
Hydrogen bomb
Hyndman, H. M.

Ibarurri, Dolores (Pasionaria)
Iglesias, Pablo
Immigration
Imperialism; defined; Lenin on; Second International
Impoverishment and capitalism
Independent political action; Farmers; Marx
India, Communist Party; independence; Meerut trial; National Federation of Labor, National Trade Union Congress (INTUG); peasant uprisings; RILU; “Sepoy Rebellion”; strike movements, Trade Union Council; unemployed struggles; union growth
Indo-China, U.S. intervention; Viet-Nam Trade Union Congress; wars
Indonesia, Central Organization of Workers (SOBSI), Federation of Trade Unions
Industrial Revolution
Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); international secretariat; syndicalism
International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU); cold war, formed, ORIT; RILU; strength

International Congress of Working Women
International Cooperative Alliance
International Federation of Trade Unions (IFI'D); (Amsterdam International); AFL; expulsion policy, membership; program, reorganization
International Labor Office (ILO);
International Secretariat of Christian Trade Unions
International Socialist Bureau
International Trade Union Educational League
International Trade Union Secretariat
International Workingmen's Association (IWA); British unions, Civil War (U.S.); dissolved; general strike; Marx, NLU, Negro slavery; Provisional Rules, U.S.
Iran, Revolution of 1906
Ireland; Easter Week; IWA, Labor Party, Trades Union Congress
"Iron law of wages"
Israel. General Federation of Jewish Workers (Histadrut)
Italy, Communists in government: Communists in unions; Communist Party; *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* (CGL); (CGIL); (CISL); fascism; fascist unions; Federation of Italian Labor Councils; general strikes, labor conditions; Marxist trade unionism, elections; Socialist Party; strikes; syndicalism; union membership; *Unione Sindicale Italiana*

Japan; Cold War; Communist Party; crises, early labor movement; Fascist labor organizations; ICFTU; Labor federations; lefts in unions; RILU, Revolution of 1868; rice struggles, Socialist Party; strikes; syndicalism; unemployed struggles; union growth; white collar workers; WFTU; World War II
Jouhaux, Leon

Katayama, Sen
Kato, Kanju
Kautsky, Karl
Keynes, John M.
Kibunomi, Katsumi
Kienthal Conference
Knights of Labor, and AFL
Korea, Federation of Trade Unions of North Korea; RILU; War
Kotoko, Denjiro
Kuomintang (KMT)
Kupers, E.
Kuznetsov, V. V.

Labriola, Arturo
Lassalle, Ferdinand
Latin America; Catholic unions; Communist Parties; *Confederación de Trabajadores de America Latina* (CTAL), *Confederación Syndical Latino Americano,* debt-peonage; early unions, Inter-American Confederation of

Workers (CIT), ORIT; Pan-American Federation of Labor (CORA); RILU; syndicalism; Trade union struggles; WFTU
Latvia
Law of maximum profit
League of Nations
Legien, Karl
Leipart, Theodore
Lenin, V. I.; capitalism versus Socialism; class struggle; colonialism; Economists; general strike; imperialism, independent political action; intellectuals; Kautsky; labor aristocracy; "Left'' Communists; neutrality o£ unions; party of a new type, Revolution of 1905, Socialism.; Soviet trade unions; spontaneity; surplus value; syndicalism; trade unions, ”21 points”; uneven development of capitalism; union bureaucracy; united front; workers in imperialist countries
“Lesser evil theory”
Lewis, John L.
Liebknecht, Karl
Liebknecht, Wilhelm
Lincoln, Abraham
Lithuania
Lozovsky, A.
Ludd, Ned
Luxemburg
Luxemburg, Rosa

MacArthur, Douglas A.
MacDonald, J. Ramsay
Malaya
Mann, Tom
Mao Tse-tung
Marshall Plan
Martinique
Marx, Karl; agriculture; Civil War (U.S.); class struggle; cooperatives; crises; dialectical materialism; economic struggles; Engels; impoverishment; independent political action; IWA, Kriege; NLU; Negro-white labor, *New York Tribune;* proletarianization of peasantry; religion; Revolution of 1848, slavery; surplus value; ten-hour day; trade unionism; transition from feudalism
Matsuoko, Komakichi
May Day
Mazzini, Giuseppe
McCarthyism
Meany, George
Mercantilism
Mexico, *Confederación Regional Obrero Mexicana (CROM); Confederación de*

*Trabajadores de Mexico* (CTM); Constitution of; early unions; Mexican Revolution; syndicalism
Millerand, Alexander
Molly Maguires
Mondism
Monmousseau, Gaston
Morocco; General Union of Confederated Trade Unions
Munich agreement
Murray, Philip
Mussolini, Benito
Myers, Isaac

National and colonial question *See* Africa, China
Negro people (U.S.), AFL; chauvinism in labor movement, Civil War; Colored Farmers National Alliance; Colored National Labor Union, early enslavement; NLU, world union organization
Nehru, J.
Netherlands; labor unions
New Deal
New Zealand, dock Strikes; labor party; syndicalism
Nicaragua
Nieuwenhuis, Domela
Norway; Social Democratic beginnings; Socialist strength; syndicalism

O'Brien, James Bronterre
Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC)
Organizing the unorganized, AFL; Communists; CIO; problems
Oudegeest, Jan
Owen, Robert

Pakistan
Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat
Paraguay
Paris Commune
Peace; Mothers Conference; world forces; World Peace Council
Peasantry
Pelloutier, Fernand
People's Democracies; Socialism; unions
People's Front
Peru, early unions; general strike
Philippines, Communist Party; *Congresso Obrero* de *las Filipinos*; *Federación del Trabajo de Filipinos,* Hukbalahap
Plekhanov, George
Poland, Central Conned of Polish Trade Unions; early labor movement, fascism; RILU; Socialist Party, syndicalism, unemployed struggles
Pollitt, Harry

Polynesia
Pope Leo XIII
Portugal, CGT; revolution in American colonies; slave trade; syndicalism
Pouget, Emil;
Powderly, Terence V.
Primitive accumulation of capital
Proudhon, Pierre J.
Puerto Rico, *Federación Regional de Trabajadores*
Purcell, A. A.;
"Pure and simple" trade unionism
"Putting out" system

Rationalization
Reform Bill
Renner, Karl
Reuther, Walter
Revolution of 1848
Rhee, Syngman
RILU (Red International of Labor Unions); colonial countries, Cl; formation; IFTU expulsions; Korea; Latin America; membership; program; syndicalism; trade union unity; united front
Roosevelt, Franklin D., "Good Neighbor" policy; "New Deal"
Rumania, fascism; General Federation of Trade Unions
Russia (tsarist); feudalism; general strikes, Revolution of 1905; Revolution of March 1917; Russo-Japanese War; Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party; Second International; socialist voting strength; serfdom abolished; trade union development

Saillant, Louis
St. Simon, Claude H.
Sakagushi, Yasuo
San Martin, José de
Santo Domingo
Scandinavia; General Federation of Trade Unions; ICFTU; skilled workers
SEATO
Second International (Labor and Socialist international); bourgeois nationalism: farm workers; foundation; imperialism; labor aristocracy; May Day; reconstruction; role of unions; skilled workers; strength
Sembat, Marcel
Serbia
Serrati, Giacinto
Shaw, George Bernard
Silvernik, N. M.
Slave trade; feudalism; IWA; US; *See* Negro people
Social Democracy, decline; fascism; "lesser evil"; rationalization of industry; social insurance; strategy; World War I

Socialism, Bernstein; inspiring power; Lenin; new social era; trade unionism
Socialist Labor Party
Sorel, Georges, on violence
Sorge, Frederick A.
Soviet Union; All- Union Central Council of Trade Unions; Anglo-Russian Committee; Communist Party; Five-year plans; industrial production; New Economic Policy (NEP).; November Revolution; piece-work; Red Army; RILU; Stakhanovites; strikes; union role; union structure; US air bases; wages; works councils; Young Communist League
Spain, Anarchist Federation (FAI); Civil War; Communist Party; *Confederación National del Trabajo* (CNT); ; early trade unions; fascist unions; "nonintervention"; People's Front; Revolution of 1848; Revolution of 1873; RILU; strikes; syndicalism; Trotskyism; *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT)
Stalin, Joseph, British General Strike; crisis (1929-32); law of maximum profit; Leninism; proletarian philosophy
Stevens, Thaddeus
Stuttgart conference
Sun Yat-sen
Surplus value
Suzuki, Bunji
Sylvis, William H.
Syndicalism; base; decline, general strike; Lenin; "militant minority" principle; Syndicalist League of North America; world movement
Syria
Sweden, franchise; syndicalism
Switzerland

Taft-Hartley law
Taiwan (Formosa)
Takano. M.
Thaelmann, Ernst
Thailand (Siam); General Federation of Trade Unions
Thomas, Albert
Thomas, J. H.
Togliatti, Palmiro
Toledano, Vicente Lombardo
Trade Union Educational League
Trade Union Unity League
Trotskyism
Truman Doctrine
Trusts, and industrial unionism
Turati, Filippo
Turkey
Two-and-a-Half International

Uneven development of capitalism
Union of South Africa; early unions; labor party; South African Trades and Labor Council; syndicalism
United front, Lenin; trade union unity
United Nations; cold war; People's China
United States, air bases; capital concentration; Civil War; closed shop; Cold War, Communist Club (NY'); Communist Party, arrest of leaders; on US role; conservatism of workers; crisis (1837); (1854 and 1857), (1929); Declaration of independence; Democratic Party; early trade unions, factory system; feudalism; guild system; Haymarket; Homestead Act; House Un-American Activities Committee; industrial growth (1830-1860); (1890-1891), (since 1929); IWA; Japan; labor conditions, labor parties; lend-lease; National Labor Union; New Deal; Railroad Brotherhoods; Revolution of 1776; RILU; skilled workers; Social Democracy, Socialist Party; strikes; ten-hour movement; unemployed councils; union membership (1873); (1920); (after 1945); unions in World War II; Utopianism; Western Federation of Miners; white collar workers; women, organizing problems; WFTU; *see* AFL, CIO, Negro people
Uruguay

Vandervelde, Emile
Venezuela
Versailles Treaty

Wallace, Henry
War, struggles against; unions against
Weimar Republic
Weitling, Wilhelm
Weydemeyer, Joseph
WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions); Africa; cold war; formation; outlook; political action; program; split, strength
White collar workers
Woll, Matthew
Women, early industry; first unions (England); International Conference for Working Women; NLU; Women's International Democratic Federation; Women's Trade Union League
World Council of Peace
World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY)
World War I, syndicalists; trade unions
World War II, casualties; trade unions; US profits

Yamahawa, Hitoshi
Yugoslavia

Zapata
Zetkin, Clara
Zimmerwald conference