

FOREWORD

The publication of this book, "British and Russian Workers," by A. Lozovsky, General Secretary of the Red International of Labour Unions, comes at a very opportune moment; and just when the General Council is endeavouring to kill the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, the workers will have presented to them a reasoned statement of all the events which led to the formation of this Committee, and a merciless exposure of the reasons why the General Council has taken up its present attitude towards the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee.

It will be remembered that Lord Curzon delivered an ultimatum to Soviet Russia, and the central point of his ultimatum was the British Government's refusal to allow the Russian Government to interfere in the internal affairs of the British Empire.

It would appear that since the Bournemouth Congress, when the receipt of the now famous telegram from the Russian Trades Union Congress to the Bournemouth Trades Union Congress aroused the ire and wrath of the men who betrayed the workers last May, the General Council is now offering a shoddy and cheap imitation of Curzon and can only reiterate his capitalist dogma of "no interference in our affairs."

The workers should not be misled by this attempt to bolster up the insularity and nationalist outlook of the leaders of the trade union movement. These phrases about "autonomy" and "non-interference" are being made by leaders who simply use them as a smoke-screen to hide their real policy: that is a policy not of class-solidarity with the 8,500,000 trade unionists of Soviet Russia, but of class collaboration with the very capitalists who this year have used the entire resources of the State to beat down the miners to the lowest possible depths.

That this policy of class collaboration is no figment of a lurid imagination is proved by the speeches made at the recent dinner organised and paid for by the "Westminster Gazette," a capitalist newspaper representing the oil interests of the Pearson-Cowdray group. One has only to read the weekly Sunday articles by prominent trade union leaders, in

every capitalist paper, urging co-operation between employer and workmen or talking about the folly of the General Strike, etc., to understand quite clearly the reluctance of this type of leader to participate actively with the leaders of the workers of Soviet Russia, who have thrown off the yoke of capitalism and established the rule of the working class.

The policy of the trade union leaders in resenting interference is farcical, and the absurdity of it must strike every worker when he realises that the General Council, which, at Bournemouth and since, has been so concerned to stand on its dignity and resent what it calls the "internal interference" of the Russian trade unionists, never lifted a finger during the whole of the seven months of the lock-out to stop the "internal interference" of the yellow Amsterdam leaders who consistently encouraged the importation of coal into England in order that they might help to defeat the miners. Apparently while revolutionary support is not wanted, reformist interference of a strike-breaking character is welcomed, and we wait with interest to read the first speech or article protesting against the policy of the Amsterdam International in encouraging the importation of coal into this country on the one hand, and on the other, offering to lend money at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to the very miners this coal was intended to defeat.

For our part we see clearly that international action is impossible unless workers of the various countries understand that the cause of the workers has no State or National boundaries; it is the duty of the workers to help one another not only morally, but materially, and we are thankful to the Russian workers for the splendid financial support they organised for the British miners, and which they are organising now for the victimised miners, and for their honest criticism of the action of our leaders—criticism which is the result of their own rich experiences in the struggle against the reformists.

Perhaps we should not be too much surprised however, when we remember that the General Council is led by prominent members of the Privy Council. This fact explains in a sentence why it is that the General Council in relation to class solidarity with the Russian Trade Union Movement finds itself in the same camp as was the late Lord Curzon and the rest of his capitalist satellites who are also Privy Councillors.

It is clear now that the workers are beginning to analyse very clearly the treachery of the leaders of the General Council last May, and the fact that the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives is to be held in January makes the publication of this book all the more timely because it will show the workers what the actual position is and what is involved in a real alliance between the workers of Britain and the workers of Russia. It will help to clarify the present position and to reinforce, by an argument and indictment that cannot be denied, the absolute necessity of the workers once more forcing the immediate opening up of negotiations between the Russian and British Trade Union Movements.

There are one or two points which comrade Lozovsky has not dealt with at sufficient length in his book, which must be mentioned in order to make quite clear to the workers the sequence of events leading up to the formation of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee.

We believe that he under-estimates the feeling of solidarity amongst the British workers after the November Revolution in 1917, which consistently grew in volume and was largely responsible for the sending of the first Labour Delegation to Soviet Russia in 1920. It must also be mentioned that the sending of the General Council Delegation in 1924 was preceded by the Hull Congress at which the representatives of the Minority Movement put up a strong fight for International Trade Union Unity. This found a big response in the Congress itself and a still bigger response amongst workers all over the country. Of special significance is the fact that comrade Tomsy, who headed the delegation of the Russian trade unionists at Hull, had taken a very prominent part in the negotiations with the MacDonal Government which had aroused the interest of the British workers towards Russian questions in general and the Russian Trade Union Movement in particular, as this was the first occasion in the history of any diplomatic negotiations when the trade unions had a direct representative participating on their behalf.

Further, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress only approved the action of its Delegation in forming the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee after the Trade Union Unity Conference organised by the National Minority Movement on January 25th, 1925. At this Conference, 617 delegates were present representing 750,000 workers and when

the General Council met on January 29th, 1925, it could do no other than give expression to the feelings of the mass of the workers by endorsing the action of its Delegation in Russia. This fact stands out in direct contrast to the attitude of the Delegation itself, which, in point of fact, had kept absolutely silent on the whole question of unity from the time it left Russia in December until the meeting of the General Council in January.

We hope that this book will have a large sale as it appears at a most critical period in the history of the British Trade Union Movement when the full lessons of the General Strike have yet to be learnt, and when the future of the whole movement is at stake. The book will do much to bring together in a closer bond of class-solidarity and fighting unity the workers of Soviet Russia and of Great Britain.

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