

ILGWU Leadership Still Harbors Dangerous Anti-Soviet Prejudices

By Rose Wortis

1943 ushered in a New Year of great struggle and sacrifice, great hope and promise of victory over the mortal foe of all mankind, fascism. The spirit of the offensive is dominating all thought and action of the masses.

The most inspiring news that gives flesh and blood to this great promise is the sweeping offensive of the Red Army on the Eastern front. This offensive is driving back the fascists from long-entrenched positions, killing hundreds of thousands of Hitler's hordes, and destroying a mass of his war equipment.

It is this news from the Eastern front that has given stimulus to the offensive preparations of our nation, and is raising the spirit of revolt amongst the peoples of the conquered countries and in Germany itself.

The inspiring message of President Roosevelt to the 78th Congress, promising to strike at the heart of the Axis in Europe in unison with the Soviet Union, and his great tribute to the Soviet Union won universal acclaim.

FROM LABOR'S RANKS

The strongest expression of support and gratitude to the Russian people who have thus far borne the main burden of Hitler's onslaught came from the ranks of labor—CIO, AFL and the Railroad Brotherhoods. This support was backed by a pledge to intensify labor's efforts to provide the means for the offensive and to take up the battle against the defeatists and obstructionists at home.

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union in its official organ, *Justice*, of January 1st, devotes a two-column editorial and a special article by its Washington correspondent, J. C. Allen, to a review of the developments of the war on the domestic front, and to labor's perspective.

These articles have many points in agreement with all other win-the-war forces. However, there are two points to which we must take exception—one of omission and one of commission.

The title of the main editorial is "The Year of the Turning Tide." The title in itself would lead the reader to expect in the first place discussion of the battle front where the United Nations are really at grips with the enemies, but not in *Justice*. With a skill that cannot be surpassed even by the most expert

defeatist commentators, the writer of the editorial accomplishes the feat of writing a two-column editorial on "the turning of the tide," of "the dreamed and hoped for offensive strategy in motion," and further "the dishing it out with the same grit and gusto as for more than a year we had taken it," etc., without mentioning the Soviet Union or the Red Army by as much as a single word. Reading the article one would never guess that the Soviet Union had anything to do with the war.

NO ACCIDENT

This editorial is not a mere accident, a careless omission in writing, because the editorial dealt in the main with the war effort of our own nation. It is a deliberate part of a general policy. For we are not fighting this war by ourselves. Our strategy surely has some relation to the strategy and activities of our allies, especially the Soviet Union. How can we talk about the "turning of the tide" in the war without evaluating the role of the Soviet Union?

No, the editorial is not an incident in itself. It is part of the general policies unfortunately being followed by the leadership of the ILGWU. If they dare not openly speak out against the Soviet Union, they try at least to minimize its role, snipe at it whenever the occasion arises and forget the unpleasant fact—to them—of its existence. The less said about the Soviet Union, the better—is the policy of the leadership of the ILGWU.

This policy is further expressed by its uncompromising opposition to international trade union unity with the Soviet trade union movement, lukewarm support to Russian War Relief, refusal to participate as speakers at the historic Madison Square Garden Soviet Friendship Meeting on November 7th together with William Green, R. J. Thomas, Gov. Lehman, Vice President Wallace, and refusal to participate in the testimonial dinner to Soviet labor.

STILL PREJUDICED

All these incidents taken together leaving aside the occasional contributions to Soviet relief, given under great rank-and-file pressure) show that the leadership of the ILGWU has not freed itself of its past prejudices against the Soviet Union based on lies and slanders exposed as enemy propaganda.

It shows that the leaders of this powerful union have not shown the

same frankness and open-mindedness so admirably expressed by Vice-President Wallace when he stated in the 20,000 people assembled in Madison Square Garden and to the whole world that we have made mistakes in our relations with the Soviet Union, that we have much in common with the Soviet people and as much to learn from them as they have to learn from us.

Similar expressions have been heard from prominent labor leaders such as Sidney Hillman, Jacob Potofsky and countless others as well as from such men and women in public life as Wendell Willkie, Thos. Lamont, banker, Marshall Field, publisher, Dorothy Thompson, columnist, etc.

LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE

These men and women have learned from experience in the past period that the lies and slanders against the Soviet Union were well thought out enemy propaganda to sow dissension and distrust among the democratic nations so that they can be disarmed and defeated one by one.

The membership of the ILGWU is bound by a thousand ties to the people of the Soviet Union, and watches breathlessly the unfolding of the Soviet offensives. Their hearts beat faster with every advance of the Red Army of liberation. It is unfortunate that the ILGWU leadership allows its thinking and actions to be influenced by the inveterate anti-Soviet Jewish *Forward* clique. This clique places its narrow group interests above the best interests of the war, and is guided by a psychopathic fear of the Communists and the Soviet Union. It continues a vicious anti-Soviet agitation which is worthy of the best products of Goebbels.

An example of this was seen only this week when the Jewish *Forward*, following the lead of the *Journal-American*, wrote the following comment on the assassination of Treasca:

"Lately the anti-fascists in America have begun to feel that the domestic Communists are out of bounds and are ready to clean out 'left' elements as they did during the civil war in Spain."

Association with this *Forward* clique has undermined the prestige and influence of the ILGWU in the life of the nation, has alienated it from the CIO, from the best forces in the AFL, and from the general progressive movement.

(To be continued)