

Article 32

REPORT TO THE STEWARDS COUNCIL - ILWU LOCAL 10

Some Soviet Union Longshoring

**Herb Mills
Secretary- Treasurer**

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Secretary Treasurer -- ILWU Local 10

The Trip to the USSR.

... I was one of sixteen American trade unionists invited on a two week tour of the Soviet Union in September of 1978. Now, I could say a lot about that - it being a heck of a trip - but briefly put and having departed Los Angeles on Friday, September 1 -- we arrived in Leningrad on Sunday the third. We departed for Moscow on what is said to be "the famous midnight train" -- it being the one which Trotsky took when returning to Russia from his imprisonment in Germany during the first World War -- and it there arrived at 8 AM on Friday, Sept. 7. Having been on the ground for three or four hours, we flew to Stalingrad - the name of which was changed to Volgograd in 1961 -- arriving there at 1 PM that afternoon. We then flew to Odessa on Sunday, Sept. 9 and had a tour of its harbor that afternoon. Having also had a tour of the city in the morning of the following day, the group was driven southward some 25 miles so as to tour the container port of Odessa -- the Port of Iljichevsk. This it did with a secretary of the Odessa Trade Union Council and a translator.

Having arrive at the main gate to the port area we were joined by a longshoreman who then was serving as the Secretary of the Black Sea Seaman and Waterfront Workers Union . He was very friendly and also spoke a little English. I quickly learned the following from him. There were 87,000 men and women in the maritime industry of the Black Sea and that the port of Odessa and its facilities are part of the Black Sea Shipping Company -- as is its very nice International Seamen's Center. . I also learned that the company has 250 vessels, 3 shipyards, maintenance and repair shops, and training centers. And in its sister port of Iljichevitsk , which is located to the south on a large and natural estuary, it also has a container manufacturing plant and is presently building railcar ferry facility. That port's construction, which began in 1957, is recorded in an Odessa city museum. It took about eight months before the first ship was berthed. It is now one of the largest ports on the Black Sea and mainly handles foreign cargoes. Ships which berth there call at 140 ports and 47 countries. Machinery, coal, and iron ore are the main exports. The training centers train dock labor, crane and forklift drivers, and associated crafts and trades. Some 65,000 people live in town. Their families are mostly those of the company's waterfront, seafaring, maintenance and ship building personnel. There are about 7,500 port authority employees. The director of the port is responsible for all aspects of its management -- including catering service, day care for children, housing, and recreation. The union also plays a part in its management. Having had a brief tour by boat of the port of Odessa which - despite the opening of Iljichevsk - is still used for some conventional longshore operations (break-bulk and bulk) and all of the area's auto ferry and passenger service , we stopped at the Seamen's Center for a lunch and talk by the Odessa trade union secretary. On p. 6 there is a postcard photo of what with building of Odessa's new container area, the port of Iljichevsk, is now called "the

Old Port". On that page there is also such a photo of the "Odessa Steps" made famous by Sergei Eisenstein's scenes of them in his film of the 1905 Odessa revolt - The Battleship Potemkin. And after that lunch and talk we returned to Odessa.

Having so returned, I told the Odessa TU secretary that I had not seen enough of Iljichevsk and - with that - he arranged another visit for me on the following day (Sept. 11) - at which time the rest of the group would be seeing a collective farm. I was sorry to miss that, but was much more interested in meeting some dockers and seeing some work being done. A different driver, a different translator, and I made the trip with a different sec. of the Odessa TU Council. A beautiful day with one very interesting and surprising event. The driver, translator, and sec. got confused on the road and stopped to get directions from a man working a field on a tractor. They did that by having the driver pull off the road and stop and then blow his horn and by the secretary - who was in the front passenger seat - rolling down his window and with his hand extended motioning the man to come to the car. As he did that I was thinking that - given the "Black Maria " which we were in - he would know that the Secretary was some sort of official. In any event, he hopped off the tractor and got to the car in a hurry with a smile on his face - which prompted me to also thank that such would not happen in the rural parts of the U. S,

Photos on pp. 3 - 4 show something of the rural area between the two ports -- and the traffic on the two lane, hard surface road which connect them.

We were met at the main gate by a trade union officer. And since he was very friendly, I asked him if I could take some snaps with my camera. He said that was not permitted inside the part area, but I could from outside it. So, in return, I said I had also learned that from the US State Department, but still was disappointed since I had come a long way to see some of their work-- and that my fellow San Francisco dockers would also be disappointed -- which got me nod and a smile and a shrug of the shoulders.

Our first stop was "first level" repair and maintenance machine shop staffed by some forty workers -- of whom half or so were women. Having been warmly greeted and then shown around , we departed after a stay of forty-five minutes or so and entered one of the port container yards. And with that I right away spotted what I told my hosting longshoreman we also used in San Francisco -- a Clark container stacking lift. And - in response and with a wide smile he said I could take some photos -- which surely came as a big surprise -- partly since I didn't think I'd ever do the same when taking a visitor to the Oakland Army Terminal. In any event, the snaps I then took are on pp. 8 and 9. What also then came as a still much bigger surprise was how quiet the Clarks were as they went through the hoist and transport and lowering of a dozen containers or more. And quiet, that is, as compared to the Clarks which Matson had in SF -- and each of which I had to stop as they were first being used so as to have their 115 decibel level reduced to our safety code upper limit of 90.

Continuing on our tour, we then spotted a conventional vessel with its five hatches being loaded with cargoes for Cuba. So, having stopped, I first got some snaps of those who were working out on the dock. These are on pp. 10 - 12. Having got permission to board the vessel, the the cargo officer and the crew were also very welcoming. See the snaps on p. 13. And then I saw that in three of the hatches the longshoring was far from the best. And, in fact, as a Business Agent on the SF waterfront I would have stopped the first one I saw for being a lousy stow of rebar and

pipe since -- having failed to land each load on a proper layout of dunnage - the securing of them for discharge would pose a real problems for the Cuban dockers. And that was because they sure were going to have some work when trying to safely get hoisting slings beneath them - for which see the snaps on p. 14. So, course, I'm thinking, too, like, "Where's the solid-arity with workers of all nations?" And the context of that thinking was this: - when the west coast dockers said they would no longer work coffee sacks weighing over one hundred and fifty-five pounds, they also sure helped those who loaded coffee. And when they got a swing load limit for every cargo worked, whoever did the loading or discharge at the other end also had an easier and safer day. So, those are good examples of worker solidarity -- and it don't take being a Communist to also figure that out.

And then I saw two hatches which I would have stopped on safety and -- had the problem gone to arbitration - I also would have won. So - at the second hatch - and as can be seen in a snap on p. 15 -- they were hoisting pallet boards of a paper-bagged pesticide. Now, once in the hatch, that cargo was being depalletized and a very good stow being fashioned - as can also be seen in the snaps on pp. 16 - 18. But as you can see in the p. 15 photo of the slingload about to be lowered into the hatch, it could not be safely hoisted. And at the third hatch - which as seen in the snaps on pp. 18 and 19 -- the dockers were loading and stowing rope slingloads of five rear tires for locally built farm tractors which then were landed and "stowed" however they had come down. Now, what for all of the then required climbing around on those tires, their thus being loaded and discharged would clearly be very hazardous.

... But with these examples of lousy longshoring having thus been encountered, I also should say what you, of course, could guess: I have sometimes seen much worse in the ports on San Francisco Bay.

Having flown from Odessa back to Moscow on the following day (Sept. 12), we departed that city on Friday, Sept. 15 and arrived in San Francisco *via* Seattle on Sunday, Sept. 17.





On the road between Odessa and the port of Iljichevsk.







"The Old Port of Odessa"





Odessa is situated on terraced hills overlooking a small harbor north of the estuary of the Dniester river on which located the Port of Iljichevsk.



"The Container Port of Iljichevsk."



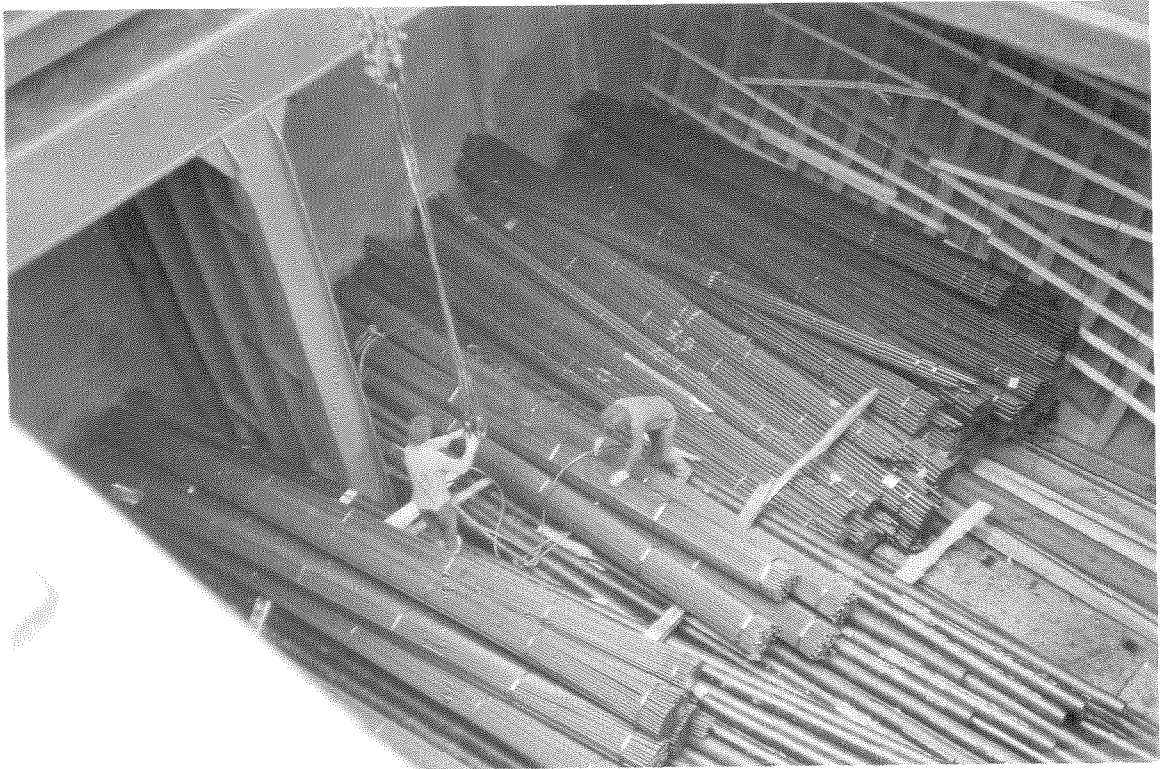












Stowing rebar and pipe without sufficient dunnage -- which, as here and as a rule -- is made up of lengths of wood -- to keep the successive slingloads hoisted and stowed separate from one another.

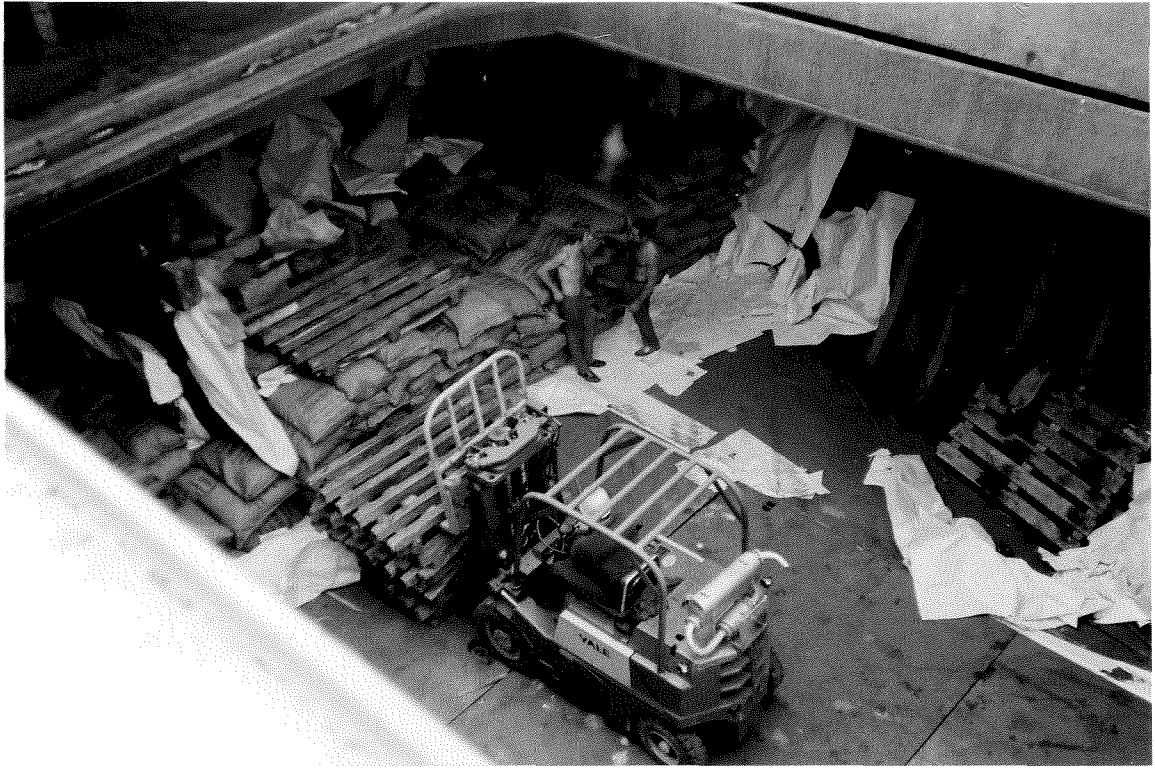




A slingload clearly too large to safely hoist.









To be properly and safely stowed tires of all sizes should either be unitized while stacked on their side with the units then being stacked and secured in stow or landed stood up so as to then be rolled to stow and then secured.

