

# A Trade Union Programme of Action for Negro Workers.

issued by the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R. I. L. U.

The Negro toiling masses are subjected both to capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression — they suffer both as members of the working class and of an oppressed race. In this respect that country the one or the other form of oppression predominates.

In the U.S.A. the Negro toilers are mercilessly exploited, on the cotton plantations and in the mines, factories and workshops of the Southern and Northern States. They are being deprived of full civil rights, and are forced to live in overcrowded houses, in restricted sections of the cities. They are a helpless victim of racial prejudice and antagonism fanned by the bourgeoisie, they are subjected to lynch-law and mob rule, and do not get even the kind of "justice" which is being meted out to their white brother toilers.

The low standard of living of Negro workers is made use of by the capitalists to reduce the wages of the white workers. The misleaders of Labour, the heads of the reformist and reactionary trade union organisations are refusing to organise Negro workers and thereby are helping the capitalist masters to drive a wedge between the white and coloured proletarians. This anti-Negro attitude of the reactionary labour leaders helps to split the ranks of labour, allows the employers to carry out their policy of "divide and rule", frustrates the efforts of the working class to emancipate itself from the yoke of capitalism, and dims the class-consciousness of the white workers as well as of the Negro workers driving the latter into the arms of the church and petty-bourgeois nationalistic societies, such as **Jim Crowism** and the like.

The Negro toilers as well as the white workers in the industrial countries must bear in mind that only united in the ranks of the general labour movement can they achieve their freedom. As to the Negro workers, their fight for emancipation from race oppression is clearly in the main a fight against capitalist exploitation. In this fight for emancipation attention should be paid to the **Negro peasantry** of the Southern States of U.S.A.; Agitation should be carried on among them against capitalism and racial oppression connecting this agitation with the economic demands of the Negro farmers.

In a somewhat different aspect is the position of the Negro toilers of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. In **Africa** the majority of the Negro population is still living a primitive tribal life. Here the imperialist invader by expropriating the communal lands, by heavy taxation and by all kinds of oppressive legislation is forcing the natives to supply cheap labour for the farms, mines and other industrial undertakings of the capitalists. This process of proletarianisation whilst breaking up the old tribal life, at the same time subjects the natives to a miserable existence under conditions which are hardly distinguished from plain slavery.

In order to safeguard the domination of the handful of white masters, the huge masses of the toilers in these colonial and semi-colonial countries are artificially divided into several social classes subject to different laws. We have in **South Africa**, for instance, the natives, the most degraded caste, then come the so-called coloured races and above them the "poor whites". The common class interests are being obscured by this colour differentiation and instead of organising a united front against their common class enemy the workers are fighting each other, strengthening in such a way the position of the capitalist class.

The struggle of the Negro workers for liberation is ineluctably bound up with the wider struggle of the international proletariat and the Negro workers must line up in the revolutionary class organisations the world over, by organising their forces for joint struggle. In order to help the establishment of such a united front between the Negro toilers and their fellow workers, in order to liberate the Negro workers from the influence of reactionary nationalistic petty-bourgeois ideologies and draw the minto the lines of the international revolutionary class movement, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R. I. L. U. issues and calls upon the Negro workers to rally to the following **Programme of organisation and action**:

1. **Equal pay for equal work:** Negro workers as a rule are working at lower wages than white workers. In South Africa

the wages of native workers are from 4 to 5 times lower than the wages of European workers in most fields of work; in America the constant lowering of the wages of Negro workers, the employment of Negro workers only upon their acceptance of lower wages than the white workers, not only means the lowering of their own standards of living, but the standards of other workers as well; in the West Indies, in Cuba, on the sugar plantations, etc., Negro workers toil for a few cents per day. In order to raise the standards of living and subsistence of Negro workers it is necessary to struggle for equal pay for equal work, regardless of race, colour or sex. At the same time the Negro workers together with all other workers must wage a common fight for higher wages, raising the general standard of living of all the workers.

2. **An eight-hour day:** In most industries and at all kinds of work, the Negro workers toil from 10 to 12, and in some parts of the world even 16 hours per day. One of the main tasks of the Negro workers must be to obtain an 8-hour day and ultimately together with the rest of the working class a 7 and a 6-hour day.

3. **Forced labour:** Close to the struggle for an 8-hour day is the question of Forced Labour. In many parts of the world Negro workers are forced to toil, in some cases, for no wages at all, "for community improvements". In the **West-Indies**, at point of the bayonet of U.S. marines, native workers have been forced to build and upkeep roads. They have been driven from Haiti into Cuba to work on the sugar plantations; in **South Africa** forced labour takes the form of contract labour, natives being conscripted and recruited in Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa) and transported long distances to work in the mines of South Africa; they must live in compounds and cattle pens. This system is legalised through the so-called "Mozambique Treaty", which exists between Portugal and the South African Government. In French Equatorial Africa the system of forced labour is so brutal — that it resulted almost in the complete annihilation of the native population. In the U.S.A. forced labour does not exist in the same form, but in the Southern part of the U.S.A. many agricultural workers work under a system of peonage; in some States of the South of the U.S.A. Negro convict are forced to work in the coal mines and on plantations. It is against this system of camouflaged slavery that we have to wage an incessant fight. We must do away with the "Mozambique Treaty", with peonage, forced and convict labour, "Corvee Labour", contract labour or under whatever other name this modern slavery is being disguised.

4. **Labour legislation (insurance, etc.):** As one of the means of raising the living standard of the workers we must demand the adoption and enforcement of insurance laws that provide for the care, at the expense of the employers, of all workers in case of unemployment, accidents, sickness and also the paying of old age, pensions and death benefits.

5. **Protection of women and youth:** The I.T.U.C.N.W. demands adequate protection for women and young workers, equal wages, equal benefits and proper working conditions. Vacations for expectant mothers before and after confinement, with full pay and leave periods during the working day after returning to work for nursing the babies.

6. **Freedom of trade unions:** We fight for the right to strike, for the right to organise in trade unions, for the right of free speech, wherever these rights do not exist.

7. **Against class collaboration:** We must wage a militant fight against government coercion, compulsory arbitration, company unions; against all reformist class collaboration.

8. **Against racial barriers in trade unions:** The first requisite for a victorious struggle is a hundred percent organisation of all Negro workers in trade unions. We must therefore conduct a relentless fight against racial bars in some of the existing white unions, the opening of the unions to all workers regardless of race and colour.

9. **Special unions of Negro workers:** Where special bars are not removed and where white unions refuse to admit Negro workers, special unions of Negro workers must be organised. Also, in white unions where Negroes are admitted but are treated as second class members with unequal rights and privileges, special unions must be organised.

10. **Against white terrorism:** We must carry on a resolute fight against terrorism in all its forms — against lynchings, police and soldier terrorism, against the assassination of trade union leaders and social workers, against their arrest and deportation.

11. **Housing and social conditions:** The housing and social conditions of Negro workers in the industrial centres are among the worst in the world. We must demand that adequate attention be paid to the protection of the health and well-being of the Negro workers and their families and that better houses and social surroundings be provided for.

12. **Agricultural workers:** Worst of all is the condition of Negro Agricultural Workers. Agricultural workers must be organised into trade unions which must fight for the special demands of agricultural workers including shorter hours social legislation, protection for women and children and the workers, etc. etc.

13. **Against the confiscation of peasant and communal lands, against poll and hut taxes, against per capita tax, etc.** A special problem is the land question and particularly the agrarian policy of the South African Government. The confiscation of the land of the natives and its reservation for white settlers in different parts of Africa and confiscation in the West Indies tends to create a landless peasantry which is forced to seek work on the white farms and in the cities. The position is yet more aggravated by the policy of levying hut and poll taxes, making the competition for work more acute and the level of wages lower still, and bringing about a worsening of conditions in general. We must therefore fight against confiscation of native land and for the restitution of all land confiscated in the past to the native communities, as well as for the abolition of all special taxes and laws which result in the driving of the peasants from the land.

14. **Universal education:** To reduce the amount of illiteracy among the Negro workers and their families and to raise their cultural standards, free universal primary and secondary education for the children of the workers and special courses for adult workers must be provided for. At the same time we must demand the abolition of racial segregation in educational system.

15. **Civil rights:** As a basic task for agitational and organisational activities as the first step in our main struggle against imperialism, it is necessary to achieve the abolition of all racial discriminations, abolition of "Pass Laws", and all other laws and regulations abrogating the rights of the Negro workers, and to achieve universal suffrage, freedom of speech, freedom of workers' press. All "Colour Bar" and caste systems existing in South Africa and the West Indies which tend to split the ranks of the workers must be abolished wherever they exist.

16. **Self-determination of Negroes:** In South Africa, in the West Indies, and in the Southern part of the U. S. A., the trade unions of the Negro workers must become the central organs and transform the economic struggles of the Negro workers into political struggles, into a combined economic and political struggle for power and self-determination.

17. **Fighting the influence of the church and of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas and movements:** We must combat the influence of the church, of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies and movements. The church by offering to the Negro worker and peasant for the miseries they are enduring in this world compensation in heaven, are befogging the minds of the Negro workers and peasants, making them a helpless prey to capitalism and imperialism. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas and movements, such as Garveyism, etc., detract the Negro workers from their fight hand in hand with the international working class, for their emancipation from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism.

18. **The war danger:** The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers directs the attention of the Negro workers of the world to preparations for the next world war, which are now being made by the imperialists, on the one hand against the Soviet Union — the fatherland of workers and oppressed peoples, at the same time, it goes without saying, that the imperialists are in armament races for a war amongst themselves for a re-division of the colonial and semi-colonial spheres of influence. This not only means unheard of economic burdens upon the backs of Negro workers but also the terrible destruction of the lives of Negro soldiers recruited from among the workers and peasants. To understand what Negro workers must pay in the next war one only has to recall the last war with the consequent killing of hundreds of thousands of black troops who were fighting in the armies of the imperialists. The black troops had nothing to gain by fighting for the imperialists, and after the war was over, Negroes not only suffered most terrible oppression in the imperialist countries and colonies but whole colonies of Negro people were placed in virtual enslavement. At the present

moment the imperialists are training "black armies" for the next war, and are utilising black troops to suppress the struggles of workers (in France) and against the Chinese workers in China (by Great Britain).

The Negro workers of the world must struggle against the menacing war danger; they must mobilise their forces against the imperialists using black troops against the workers.

**We must rally to the support of our fellow workers!**

**We must defend the Soviet Union!**

## IN THE CAMP OF OUR ENEMIES

### German Social Democracy's Preparations for the Threatening War.

By G. Zinoviev.

The ordinary Party Congress of German Social Democracy will be held in Magdeburg in May. The most important question at this party congress will be the problem of German armaments. In reality, this title will serve to cover a discussion of the famous question of the "defence of native country" in times of wars and also the question of the present foreign policy of the bourgeois German Republic of to-day. For the purpose of working up theses on this question the Central Committee of German Social Democracy has set up a programme commission. The chairman is the notorious Dittmann; Breitscheid, Stampfer, Ströbel, Crispian and a number of other well-known leaders of the S. P. G. are members. This commission recently published its project, which was accepted almost enthusiastically by the whole of the German bourgeoisie.

In the first place: what do the theses of the programme commission omit to treat of? There is not a word in them about the Soviet Union, about the peace policy of the Soviet Union, nor, you may be sure, about the disarmament proposals made by Litvinov. One of the best-known members of the programme commission of the S. P. G., Stampfer, brings forward in an article, as commentary on the theses, evidence of the necessity of increased armaments for Germany, pointing out that the "statutes of the League of Nations require that under such circumstances Germany should take part in sanctions" and to "employ military force—naturally against the Soviet Union" (*Vorwärts*, Nr. 612.) And under such circumstances the S. P. G. now publishes in connection with the programme a document on the questions of war, armaments and the foreign policy of the German Republic, without a single reference to the existence of the Soviet State.

This silence is all that the German and the world bourgeoisie require. For the present this suffices...

"The S. P. G. rejects war as a political instrument. It demands peaceful solutions of all international conflicts by means of obligatory courts of arbitration, democratisation of the League of Nations and its development into an effective instrument of peace" — that is the first solemn point of theses. But that alone enables us to recognise that, at the very best, we have to do with a bourgeois-pacifist "Labour" party.

What is the meaning of the first sentence of the above thesis? It will be seen that Social Democracy only "rejects" war as an instrument of policy. With the same result the gentlemen might also say that they "reject" the capitalist system of production, the system of squeezing surplus value out of the workers, that they "reject" the class struggle.

War is inevitable under capitalism — and particularly in that phase of capitalism known as imperialism. Only complete and devoted support of the first proletarian State, as represented by the Soviet Union, only the proletarian revolution in the capitalist countries can prevent a fresh imperialist war. That is how the Communists put the question.

In response to this attitude the social-democratic leadership pretend to be simple and say: If you yourself say that war is inevitable, why do you fight against the inevitable, and why do you call upon us to fight against the unavoidable? A social-democratic "leader" actually gave this answer recently to the Communists in the "left-wing" "*Leipziger Volkszeitung*". How critical buffoons! They pretend not to understand what we say, inevitable, if the working class does not prepare for the proletarian revolution and carry it through.