

# THE RESPONSIBILITY IS ON THE AMSTERDAM INTERNATIONAL

"The working class has sufficient forces at its disposal to beat back the offensive, to defend its interests, and to prevent the outbreak of a new international bloodbath. But to achieve this, what is needed is its united efforts in the struggle against the common enemy, what is needed is that all trade union organisations should undertake united action against the bourgeoisie so as to realise the direct and general aims of the working class movement, what is needed is that the trade union movement, which has been split, should have its unity re-established."

**T**HIS is the main point of the most important document that has appeared in the international trade union movement in recent years, namely, the appeal made by the Executive Bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern) to the Amsterdam International of Trade Unions. The Profintern (R.I.L.U.) made the proposal to the leaders of the Amsterdam International that a joint discussion take place about the conditions, methods and forms of unifying the world trade union movement, about joint demonstrations on May 1st, etc., and particularly about concretely proceeding to re-establish the free trade unions in Germany and unifying the trade unions in France and Spain.

The leaders of the Amsterdam International who have tied the trade unions to the chariot wheel of capitalism by their policy of class collaboration, have on this occasion as well, one so full of importance to the international working class, decisively rejected this proposal made by the Profintern — thereby continuing the split in the ranks of the working class and collaboration with the bourgeoisie, while ignoring the mighty urge for the united front and trade union unity in the ranks of the millions of members of their own organisations.

The bourgeoisie are rallying all their forces so as to cast the whole weight of the crisis on to the shoulders of the toilers. The exploitation of the workers has increased to an extraordinary degree. In spite of two and a half years of depression, the standard of living of the masses is being ever worsened. In spite of the fact that there are 17 million more unemployed than there were at the beginning of the world economic crisis, inroads into social insurance still continue. The youth of the working class, deprived of all prospects for the morrow, are being driven into the forced labour camps, become declassed, and become an easy prey for fascists and those engaged in recruiting cannon-fodder for a new imperialist bloodbath. In a number of capitalist countries, and in Germany first and foremost, the split in the ranks of the working class due to the policy of class-collabora-

tion pursued by the Social Democratic leaders, has made it possible for the bourgeoisie to deal heavy blows at the working class, to establish a bloody fascist dictatorship, to smash up the trade unions and to transform them into pariahs without rights in capitalist society. The workers must expect hunger, poverty, fascism, and to be completely deprived of their rights, they must expect a new imperialist bloodbath if they stand silently by and watch how the capitalist offensive develops, if they do not unite their ranks for joint action. The example provided by the Austrian Shutzbundlers and the miners of Asturias in Spain is an indication to all workers that the fascist offensive CAN be beaten off, and at the same time points to the means to be adopted, and the path to be taken in the struggle against fascism. This is, first and foremost, united action by the working class.

The Communist International has been carrying on an intense struggle since the time when the fascist dictatorship came into being in Germany, to bring about the united front of the proletariat against the capitalist and fascist offensive, against the military gambles of the imperialists, and has approached not only the Social-Democratic workers but also their organisations, both national and international. The leaders of the Second International, to whom the Comintern directed its proposals regarding a joint international struggle to liberate the proletarians of Germany, to give freedom and life to those held prisoners by German fascism, to give freedom and life to those who defended the barricades set up by the Austrian Schutzbund, and to the heroes of proletarian Asturias, have invariably replied in the negative. On the other hand, the real united front of the proletariat has been built up in the fire of class battles. And it was only when taking this mighty urge of the workers towards unity of action into account, and the fact that the united front was being established in various countries with a view to carrying on a concrete struggle, that the leaders of the Second International, while rejecting unity of action on an international scale, were compelled to make at least partial concessions to the demands made by the masses of Social-Democratic workers, and to withdraw the ban on the establishment of the united front between the individual sections of the Second International and the Communists. For the fact that the united front has been brought about in France and Spain, in Austria and in the Saar, showed very wide

masses of proletarians what a force united action by the working class represents, and what could be achieved in the struggle against fascism and the capitalist offensive, if the united front of the proletariat were brought about in good time, and if all those who participate in it carry on the struggle to the end. WHO is there who could now CONVINCE the Socialist workers of France that unity of action with the Communist workers in February, 1934, did NOT inspire the ranks of the proletariat with a mighty enthusiasm to give a victorious repulse to the fascist offensive, and that the united front pact did NOT strengthen the proletarian front against the offensive of the French bourgeoisie? WHO could PROVE to the Austrian Schutzbundlers who, at the initiative of the Communist Party, re-established their fighting proletarian organisation on the basis of a united front with the "Revolutionary Socialists," that the united front did NOT prove to be a mighty lever for re-establishing the fighting power of the Austrian proletariat the very next day after the Schutzbund was defeated in its first open battle? WHO would dare to DENY that the united front was an INEXHAUSTIBLE SOURCE OF ENERGY for the proletarians in Spain who rose up in arms against fascism, and that their struggle would have achieved greater success had not only the Communists and the revolutionary trade union organisations unswervingly fulfilled their united front obligations to the end, and had the entire class collaboration policy pursued by Social Democracy in the preceding period not placed tremendous obstacles in the way of the establishment of a complete united proletarian front and of rallying the anti-fascist people's front around the proletariat? Fundamentally only the first steps have been taken towards establishing the united front of the proletariat. But these first examples of united front action by the working class have infused new life into the international working class movement. They have scattered the defeatist legends spread by certain theoreticians of the Second International about a "counter-revolutionary situation" and about an "epoch of reaction" to the winds. These legends allege that it is useless to organise active resistance to the capitalist and fascist offensive, and that the working class have only one thing to do—namely, retreat, cast themselves without a struggle on the mercy of the victors, and to implore a softening of the bourgeois régime. These first actions have already shown that the united working class front is incompatible with the policy of class-collaboration, and that only the bourgeoisie and those who strive to secure unhindered collaboration with the bourgeoisie are interested in the working class being split.

It is not for nothing that the international bourgeoisie as a whole were alarmed by the appeal made

by the Communist International regarding the united front. It is not for nothing that *The Times* was highly indignant at the very thought that the Labour Party might participate in a united "Communist Front" to defend the Spanish workers. "One thing is absolutely clear," wrote this pure-blooded newspaper of the exploiters, "anyone who unites with the Communists extends the Communist front." *The Times* scares the labourites and gives them the threatening warning that:

"The Marxian theory is so widespread that if you scratch the continental Socialist who thought he was a Democrat, you will find a Communist . . . The British Labour Party is the most powerful section of the Socialist International, and it must, in correspondence with the declarations made in its own country, come forward unequivocally for an alliance only with the friends of democracy."

In other words, "Down with the united front with the Communists!" This is the line which the *Diehard Times*, the "friend of democracy," advised the British Labour Party to adopt. *The Times*, by the way, seems to have been needlessly disturbed . . .

A gigantic struggle between the classes is taking place, for the capitalist or the revolutionary way out of the crisis. From the very beginning of the world economic crisis, the leaders of the Second International undertook the thankless task of DOCTORING CAPITALISM. We all remember how the British trade unions took part in the Ottawa Conference, and the memorandum issued by the General Council of the T.U.C. to the National Government in regard to the International Conference held in 1933, a memorandum which evoked Chamberlain's flattering estimate that it "almost expresses the policy of the Government." We all still remember the resolution adopted by the Brussels Congress of the Amsterdam Trade Union International, which called on all countries to follow the famous "Roosevelt Plan," and also the declaration made by Jouhaux that he "congratulated the American Federation of Labour on their support for the efforts" being made by President Roosevelt. Now, when the bourgeoisie throughout the world are exerting unbelievable efforts to bring about capitalist prosperity anew, at the expense of a reduction in the standard of living of the masses, when wages and social insurance are being reduced throughout the world, or when such reductions are being prepared on a wide scale, when the cost of living is being artificially raised, and when in a whole number of cases united action by the trade unions has secured success in the struggle of the workers against the capitalist offensive, the reformist leaders of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals are calling on the masses of workers to prepare themselves for the struggle "for socialism," are calling on them "not

to scatter their forces" on the "petty exhausting" struggle for day-to-day demands. There was a time when these very leaders identified the struggle for day-to-day demands with the struggle for the ultimate aims of the working class. Every success in the day-to-day struggle, they said, is a "slice of socialism." Now, just as then, these slogans of the reformist leaders represented and now represent their rejection of the struggle to abolish the capitalist system. But whereas the policy pursued by the reformist leaders of the trade unions was at that time directed towards satisfying the day-to-day needs of the masses of workers to a certain extent, now, on the other hand, their slogans imply that they are abandoning even this as far as the workers are concerned. Such slogans can never become the slogans of united class battles. Their starting point is the privileged position of certain sections of the proletariat OUTSIDE of the general united front of the proletariat, and implies that they are seeking their own way out along the lines of compromise with the ruling class.

The same is true with regard to the question of TRADE UNION UNITY. This is one of the sorest questions facing the international working class movement since the end of the war. The Profintern (R.I.L.U.) was established because the reformist leaders of the trade unions, in helping the bourgeoisie to beat off the proletarian revolution after the war, and in working hand in glove with the world bourgeoisie to defeat the mighty proletarian October Revolution, expelled the revolutionary workers from the trade unions, mercilessly suppressed all democracy in the unions, left the trade unions and split them if they, the reformists, proved to be in the minority, and ignored the interests of the very wide masses of unorganised workers, thereby deepening the split in the ranks of the working class. The entire history of the Profintern (R.I.L.U.) is a history of the struggle for the unity of the trade union movement. As against the whole of international Social-Democracy, the Communists have never split up the trade union movement. WHERE is the revolutionary trade union which has EXPELLED Social-Democratic workers from its ranks for being Social-Democrats? WHERE is the revolutionary trade union that has demanded that Social-Democratic workers should sign documents renouncing association with the Communists under the threat of unemployment and of depriving them of their benefits? Who split the ranks of the railwaymen of France in 1921, when the revolutionary workers obtained an overwhelming majority at the railwaymen's Conference? Who split the ranks of the Social-Democratic workers of Czecho-Slovakia, in spite of the fact that only an insignificant minority

declared in favour of the reformists? Who split the trade unions in Rumania?

From the very first days of its existence, in face of the capitalist offensive, the R.I.L.U. issued the slogan of a united trade union front. And from the very first days of its existence, the R.I.L.U. declared at all its Congresses that it was ready to unite with the trade unions organised in the Amsterdam International to carry on the class struggle, on the one condition only that there should be proportional representation at the unity congress, and that trade union democracy, in favour of which the leaders of the Amsterdam International are so fond of uttering wordy declarations, should be strictly observed. But it is precisely because the united front hindered the policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, and made immediate concrete action necessary, that the reformist leaders turned it down, and in opposition to this advanced the demand for "the unity of the movement" and "unity of organisation." But in actual fact, they also turned down unity of organisation, by interpreting it as meaning subordinating the entire world trade union movement to the reformist leaders of the Amsterdam International. "WE are the trade unions," declared the reformist leaders of the Amsterdam International.

We need only cast our mind back to the history of the trade union movement in the biggest capitalist countries in recent years, to convince ourselves of the extent to which the need for the united front and for trade union unity has matured, and what obstacles lie in their path.

In FRANCE the united front pact concluded between the Socialist and Communist Parties also served as a tremendous stimulus in the struggle for the unity of the trade union movement. Here the period of the propaganda carried on by the Communist Party in favour of the united front, which served to rally the masses on a wide scale for the struggles which came to a head last year, is passing to the state where the united front is being established in the mass battles of the proletariat. But the struggle for the unity of the trade union movement has met with tremendous difficulties as the result of the open resistance offered by the reformist leaders of the General Confederation of Labour (C.G.T.) to the unity of the trade union movement. But the urge towards trade union unity is so great that in spite of this resistance it has been possible in France for the first time since the reformists split the trade union movement in 1922 to bring about concrete forms of unifying various trade unions. It is sufficient to point to the example of the railwaymen's unions, three-quarters of whose members were already united in January, 1935. And this is not merely

a gathering together of the members of the Railwaymen's Trade Unions, but at the same time represents a real strengthening of the trade union as a class organisation where the masses have a clear sense of the idea and importance of this unification.

The unity of the trade union movement would have faced the leaders of the C.G.T. with the necessity of breaking with their whole line of class collaboration. Herein lies the source of all their resistance to unity. Leon Jouhaux, the leader of the C.G.T., in his speech made at a meeting of the National Federal Committee of the C.G.T. in October, 1934, openly declared the following:

"As regards an increase in the membership of the trade unions as a result of unity . . . allow me to say that I don't believe in it . . . Do you think that you will gain much by uniting with your opponents of yesterday, and by parting with your friends of to-day and yesterday! . . ."

It is for the same reason that the leaders of the C.G.T. altogether reject the united front with the unitary trade unions (the revolutionary C.G.T.U.). In exact line with the exhortations of the *Diehard Times* they reject the proposals made by the C.G.T., they reject joint action on the anniversary of the February events, their argument being that "the workers and the masses of the people in our country are firmly convinced of the superiority of the régime of freedom over the régime of dictatorship, irrespective of the nature of the ticket with which this régime covers itself."

This provocative method of drawing comparisons between the dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. on the one hand, and the fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie on the other (to prepare which the reformist leaders did not a little by the policy of class collaboration they pursued), has become the common property of all the reformist leaders of the international trade union movement who wish to undermine the great cause of uniting the trade unions of the proletariat. Did not Coopers, the representative of the Dutch trade unions, declare at the Brussels Congress of the Amsterdam International, that "the Amsterdam Trade Union International must come out precisely and clearly against the Communists: we make no distinction between Communism and fascism"? Did not Citrine, the chairman of the Amsterdam International, repeat the same thing at the recent congress of the American Federation of Labour? The reformist leaders of the C.G.T. prefer to maintain contact with the "neo-Socialists" and with the "social minister" Flandin, to the united front pact between the Communists and Socialists, against which they are carrying on undermining work, by instilling the idea into the minds of the French workers that the fascist danger in France "has been postponed," and by diverting the discussion away from the inconvenient question of

class collaboration, pursuing instead a FORMAL discussion about the independence of the trade unions. For what can be the nature of the "independence" of the C.G.T. when its leaders support all the measures adopted by the ruling parties of the French bourgeoisie? Do not the reformist leaders of the trade unions in each capitalist country support the Social Democratic leaders? In France itself, do not the leaders of the C.G.T. call on their followers to vote for the Socialists at the parliamentary elections? It can only be a question of one sort of independence, namely, that of the class trade unions of the proletariat being independent of the bourgeoisie and its state.

In England the General Council of the T.U.C. has unwaveringly pursued a policy of open class collaboration over a period of nine years, following the general strike and the miners' strike. The General Council of the T.U.C. plays a leading part in the Amsterdam International. The German free trade unions which, in the period of the relative stabilisation of capitalism, attempted once again to win the position they formerly held in the International Federation of Trade Unions, have been smashed up by fascism and, in fact, do not exist. And so, in order to re-establish the shaken equilibrium, the leaders of the British trade unions, instead of raising the question of bringing about INTERNATIONAL UNITY IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT so as to increase the fighting power of the working class against fascism, which has destroyed the trade unions in a number of capitalist countries, are directing the whole of their energy towards drawing the American Federation of Labour into the Amsterdam International. And they COUNTERPOSE the A.F.L. to the mighty army of 20 million members of the trade unions of the U.S.S.R., and are still further intensifying the slanderous campaign against the Soviet trade union movement for the benefit of the ultra-reactionary leaders of the A.F.L.

At the same time the General Council of the T.U.C. has decisively rejected all proposals regarding the united front, in spite of the growing efforts of the masses of the British proletariat to bring about fighting unity. For the establishment of a united front would signify the growth of the economic struggles of the British proletariat, a point which possibly does not enter the calculations of the leaders of the General Council, who are clearing their way for ministerial posts, in view of the forthcoming parliamentary elections, and who do not wish to "annoy" the British bourgeoisie. The Scottish Mine Workers' Union has made the proposal that the Scottish miners' revolutionary and reformist unions be amalgamated—WITH NO RESULTS. The Communist Party of Great Britain advanced united front proposals in

connection with the movement of the unemployed, WITH NO RESULTS. The leaders of the General Council preferred to give a guarantee of their loyalty to the British bourgeoisie, by publishing in October of last year their famous "Black Circular," according to which no local Trades Council will be recognised by the Trade Union Congress

"if it allows delegates into its ranks who are in one way or another connected with Communist or fascist organisations, or with organisations subordinate to them."

and in its last letter threatens to expel those trades councils from its ranks which do not subordinate themselves to the General Council and begin to operate the Black Circular.

But here as well the idea of trade union unity is making its way not only to the masses of trade unions, but is also occasionally covering entire trade union organisations.

The question then arises, Who is against the unity of the trade union movement?

In the U.S.A. after the splendid strike in San Francisco, Green, the chairman of the A.F.L., issued a general circular regarding the expulsion of Communists, which met with resistance from the wide masses organised in the trade unions affiliated to the A.F.L. Even the Socialist *New Leader* had to recognise the extent of this resistance. In the U.S.A., where company unions are so widespread and where even the A.F.L. unions have to fight for their mere recognition, the establishment of a united front and of trade union unity would play a tremendous rôle in helping the trade unions to penetrate all enterprises and all branches of industry. Only a few weeks ago the Central Committee of the C.P.U.S.A. made the proposal to the leaders of the A.F.L. that they jointly prepare the struggle for the economic demands of the workers and for the recognition of the trade unions in the automobile, textile and steel industries. WITH NO RESULTS! Here also the idea of trade union unity can already record symptomatic successes, for instance, in the steel industry.

In CZECHOSLOVAKIA where the reformists split the trade union movement 13 years ago, the leaders of the revolutionary trade union federation made a proposal to unite the trade unions in Czechoslovakia during the recent congress of trade unions belonging to the Amsterdam International. WITH NO RESULTS!

In POLAND the struggle of the revolutionary trade union opposition for the unity of the trade union movement on a class basis, and for the unification of parallel trade unions, has met with the determined resistance of the leaders of the P.P.S. and of the Bund. It is only very recently that the leaders of the so-called Landrat, which is led by

the Bund, have agreed under the pressure of the masses and of the development of the united front by the revolutionary trade union opposition, to engage in negotiations about establishing trade union unity. But concrete facts showing that the unity of the trade unions is being brought about by the organisations themselves in the localities (in Tomashev, etc.) such cases becoming more and more numerous.

In GREECE the unitary trade unions are carrying on a splendid struggle for the united proletarian front, and when the reformist leaders split their own reformist unions, the leaders of the unitary trade unions protest energetically AGAINST splitting the reformist unions into REFORMIST groups.

Who, then, stands for the unity of the trade union movement?

In fascist AUSTRIA where the reformist leaders in the days immediately following the February battles left the free trade unions to their fate, the Communists took the initiative in re-establishing the organisations which had been destroyed, and in continuing their activity underground. Some of the former leaders of the trade unions, under the guidance of the Amsterdam International, then began in their turn to establish new PARALLEL organisations. Hitherto, all proposals regarding the unification of both organisations made by the Central Commission of the Trade Unions, which has by its courageous revolutionary work in the enterprises achieved important successes in re-establishing the free trade unions, have met with no positive results.

In SPAIN, the unity of the Asturian miners, rendered secure by the blood shed in the heroic October battles, immediately led to the unification of the miners' union in Asturias. A similar movement from below is going on throughout the country, one which has embraced a section of the officials of the reformist unions and even certain of their leaders who are beginning to recognise that their only salvation from fascism lies in bringing about the united front on the widest possible scale, and in rallying all the forces of the proletariat for the struggle, and primarily in securing the unity of the trade unions.

Finally, in GERMANY, where, on the admission made at the Paris Conference of the Second International, by Aufheiser, one of the former leaders of the A.D.G.B. (Reformist Trade Union Congress), the reformists "have lived through their own trade union policy, which ITSELF PROVED ON THE BOUNDARY OF NATIONAL SOCIALIST POLICY," the proposals made by the Communists regarding the joint re-establishment of the free trade unions which the revolutionary trade union opposition and the Red Trade Unions are joining, are being met with

determined opposition from the overwhelming majority of the reformist leaders.

The question then arises, **WHO IS AGAINST THE UNITY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT?**

The masses of workers throughout the whole world are following with very great alarm the Bacchanalia of the fascist pogrom-mongers, and the actions of the voracious capitalist hounds who are attempting to transfer the whole burden of the crisis on to the backs of the toilers, and who are ready, for the sake of their profits, to fill up the trenches with the corpses of millions of workers slaughtered in a new imperialist war.

The Profintern (R.I.L.U.) is convinced that its proposals received **THE FULL ENDORSEMENT OF ALL WORKERS ORGANISED IN THE TRADE UNIONS AND MET WITH A MIGHTY RESPONSE FROM THEM.** But the leaders of the Amsterdam International have remained true to their policy of maintaining the split in the international trade union movement. Their reply to the proposals of the R.I.L.U. repeats the worst arguments of the bankrupt leaders of the A.D.G.B. (reformist Trade Union Congress in Germany) who went to no little trouble so as to clear the way for National Socialism, a fact recorded by their own comrades at the Paris Conference of the Second International held in 1933.

The fact that the Bureau of the Amsterdam International has rejected the proposals made by the Profintern and the bureaucratic excuse made by referring to the decisions of Congresses and of the General Council of the Amsterdam International at Weymouth, i.e., the rejection of trade union unity under the flag of the formula "the unity of the trade union movement in the Amsterdam International," show that the Amsterdam International has completely forgotten the interests of the working class in face of the furious onslaught of fascism and that the leaders of the Amsterdam International are deepening the split in the trade union movement. They show, finally, that there is a deepening of the divergence between the millions of trade union members in the Amsterdam International who are thirsting for struggle against fascism and for united action, and their leaders who are deepening the split in the ranks of the proletariat and weakening the latter, at the very moment when their worst enemy is undertaking the offensive. The leaders of the Amsterdam International bear the full responsibility for this policy before the proletariat throughout the world.

The Red International of Labour Unions, unlike the Amsterdam International, whose influence does not extend beyond the bounds of several European countries, is a trade union organisation with world ramifications. It is not a question of liquidating the international centre of the revolutionary trade union movement, the R.I.L.U., and of clearing the way for the leaders of the Amsterdam International to carry on their day-to-day co-operation with the bourgeoisie. It is a question of bringing about trade union unity on a world scale. And this can and will be brought about only if the negotiations are conducted on the basis of equality between the two Internationals, if unity is built up on trade union democracy, proportional representation in the leading bodies and for the struggle against the capitalist offensive, against fascism and war.

This is why the Profintern (R.I.L.U.), for whom trade union unity is not a question of doing away with one organisation in favour of another, or of the petty personal pride of its leaders, but is the mighty question of uniting all the members of our class into powerful united trade union organisations so as to deliver a decisive counter-blow at our class enemy, calls on all members of trade unions affiliated to the Amsterdam International to discuss the proposals made by the Profintern at their meetings. The R.I.L.U. calls on all trade union organisations in all countries to carry through a ballot of their members on the following issues: for or against joint action by all the trade unions, for or against trade union unity. The Profintern (R.I.L.U.) calls on all the trade union organisations in all countries not to wait for the results of the ballot but to organise united action on the 1st of May.

The Profintern is ready at any time, in spite of the fact that the Amsterdam International has rejected its proposals, to discuss these proposals with it.

Time does not wait. Our responsibility is great. Let all those who are for the destruction of hated fascism, who are against oppression and exploitation by capital, who are in favour of free trade unions, and in favour of the workers living a better life, who stand for Socialism, muster their forces for united action by the working class:

For the United Working Class Front!

For the Unity of the Trade Unions!