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What is the Red International of Labour Unions

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TO ALL LABOUR DELEGATIONS VISITING MOSCOW

Dear Comrades,

The Fourth Congress of the R.I.L.U. will be held in March 1928 in Moscow, with the following Provisional Agenda:

1. Report of Executive Bureau.
2. Problems confronting the International Trade Union Movement.
 - a) Capitalist rationalisation and the working-class;
 - b) The Rightward tendency in Amsterdam trade union bureaucracy and the Leftward tendency in working class masses;
 - c) The United Front and the unity of the world trade union movement;
 - d) The breakdown of trade union capitalism;
 - e) Attitude to Pan-Pacific Secretariat of trade Unions, etc;
3. The struggle against imperialism and a now imperialist war.
4. The Chinese Revolution and the tasks of Chinese trade unions.
5. Problems confronting R.I.L.U. supporters in England.
6. Organisational structure of trade unions.
7. Struggle against Fascism and Fascist Trade Unions.
8. The trade union Movement in colonial countries.
9. The R.I.L.U. and working class youth.
10. Social legislation.
11. Elections.

Four sections will be formed at the Congress: Organisational, Social-Economic, Cultural-Educational, and Colonial. In addition to this commissions will be set up: for finance and individual countries.

The above agenda will show you that the R.I.L.U. Congress will discuss all the most important questions interesting the international labour movement.

To aid you to form a conception of the R.I.L.U. and what distinguishes it from the Amsterdam International, the Executive Bureau wishes to draw your attention to a short summary of the fundamental principles of the R.I.L.U.

The Executive Bureau tools sure that your organisation will in one way or another take part in the work of the Fourth R.I.L.U. Congress, sharing your experience with the workers in other countries.

With fraternal greetings,

R.I.L.U. EXECUTIVE BUREAU.

October 21, 1927

What is the Red International of Labour Unions?

I

On this Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution we shall not merely summarise what has been accomplished on the territory of former Tsarist Russia, but will outline in brief what has happened throughout the world. Jubilees have always been utilised to summarise events, and especially must this be done on this Jubilee of the October Revolution. During the past ten years transformations have occurred not only inside Soviet Russia, but great changes have also been made outside its boundaries. Indeed, many changes have occurred inside the working class itself and in its international organisations. The press of the various countries has written and is still writing on what occurred in the largest countries during these ten years. We, however, shall dwell mainly on what occurred during this period in the field of organising the working class on an international scale and outline the position of existing trade union Internationals, now that we have arrived at the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution.

II

It should be noted first of all that in 1917, when the October Revolution occurred, there were no labour Internationals whatever. Both the Socialist International and the Trade Union International had been destroyed by the war. They expired in August, 1914. True, Vandervelde and Huismans, the former Chairman and Secretary of the Socialist International, claimed that their International was still a factor to be reckoned with, but this had as much truth in it as Karl Legien's assertions that the Trade Union International was still functioning. The leaders of the Socialist and Trade Union Internationals identified the Internationals with their own personalities and with the seals in their pockets. Both these Internationals completed their organisational and political existence in 1914, for the simple reason that various sections of these Internationals, mutually hostile, were preoccupied with mobilising the masses to fight to the last, to fight until victory had been achieved for their "own" bourgeois fatherland. Thus, the October Revolution found the international labour movement completely disorganised. Old connections had been destroyed, while new connections were just beginning to be formed at Zimmerwald and Kienthal in the years of 1915-1916. All the Socialist Parties and Trade Unions were linked up with their respective Governments and never a word did they want to hear of international working class solidarity.

III

Not only did the war destroy the Socialist and Trade Union Internationals, but it was responsible for a completely new ideological outlook on the part of the Socialist and Trade Union leaders; it gave birth to a new ideology. Whereas previous to the war the reformists spoke furtively of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, during the war and after its conclusion, the question of collaboration with the bourgeoisie became the corner-stone of the whole policy of the Socialist Parties and the reformist Trade Unions. The tactics of collaboration and "sacred unity," which had formed the basis of trade union activities during the war, outlived the war years, and became the guiding principle for the leaders of the European trade union movement. These tactics of "sacred unity," spread outside the boundaries of various States, and after the Versailles Treaty had been signed the International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam) which had been organised anew, upheld, as part of its constitution and its activities, collaboration with bourgeois governments on an international scale through the League of Nations, its Commissions, and likewise through the International Labour Office that it had created. Thus, this reborn Trade Union International from the very outset renounced the class struggle, and this could not do otherwise but lead to the formation of another new International and to the unifying of all elements and groups who still upheld the class struggle—who still consider the class struggle to be the basic force in the history of mankind. Thus, after the Amsterdam International had been organised (1919), arose the Red International of Labour Unions (1920), whose growth and development has been closely bound up with the growth and development of the October Revolution.

IV

Before outlining the characteristics of the R.I.L.U., we must give a brief description of existing International organisations. To-day, in 1927, there are the following International organisations; 1) International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam); 2) Red International of Labour Unions (Moscow) 3) Pan-American Federation of Labour (Washington); 4) International Workingmen's Association (Berlin); 5) International Confederation of Christian Unions (Utrecht); 6) the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat (Hankow). Such are the organisations that comprise the whole of the organised international trade union movement to-day. The smallest of these organisations is the International Workingmen's Association (about 100,000 members) which embraces only small anarcho-syndicalist and dissident groups. As far as the International Confederation of Christian Unions is concerned it must be said that although it federates about three million workers, it has so far played no role on the international arena, and indeed can play no such role, as its sole aim is to influence the most backward elements of the workers under the banner of Christianity. The Pan-American Federation of Labour, which embraces about four million workers, and is composed of only the Trade Unions of America and Mexico, is an attempt to set up a Continental International and to utilise it in the interests of American imperialism. This International is no factor in international politics and furthermore it plays a very small role in the American Labour Movement itself. The Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, which embraces 14 million members, is however, no international. This federation of workers of the Pacific countries has the aim to unify the whole world trade union movement, and therefore fore we shall also leave out this organisation from our survey. Thus, two Internationals are left: The Reformist and the Revolutionary Internationals, i.e., the Amsterdam International and the Red International of Labour Unions. These two organisations are the strongest. It is the aspirations and activities of these two organisations that clash in the main, and the history of the last few years has been full of the bitter struggle being waged between Moscow and Amsterdam. We shall therefore dwell on the struggle of these two Internationals, on their differences, and on the correlation of forces between them, so as to focus attention on what, in effect, is this reformist International and this revolutionary International, which are competing and struggling with each other.

V

What is the basic difference between the Red International of Labour Unions and the Amsterdam International? What distinguishes one organisation from the other? First of all, it is class collaboration or class struggle. This is the root question. It is this basic difference in view point that engenders all the other differences. Whoever upholds class collaboration, upholds bourgeois democracy and opposes the dictatorship of the proletariat, supports reformism against the revolution, bolsters up the League of Nations and opposes the U.S.S.R. Furthermore, these individuals support the imperialist policy of their Governments and oppose the independence of the colonial peoples, they stand for industrial peace against general strikes, and are definitely against any emancipatory movement among the oppressed peoples, and so on. It is precisely these features that characterise the theory and practice of the Amsterdam International, which,

throughout the eight years of its existence has never lost an opportunity to make hostile demonstrations against the October Revolution and the revolutionary methods of the class struggle. On all these questions the Amsterdam International is the complete anti-thesis to the Red International of Labour Unions and this is precisely the reason why the struggle between these two international organisations is so sharp and acute.

VI

The aims and aspirations of the R.I.L.U. and the Amsterdam International do not only clash on the questions enumerated above. They likewise widely differ on the question of why an International is necessary, and what must be the tasks of an international organisation of workers. The Amsterdam International is an assembly of National Federations each of which can do whatever it pleases, even if this militates against the interests of the rest of the organizations. During the social conflicts and gigantic strikes of the last few years we saw how organisations affiliated to the Amsterdam International not only failed to assist their fellow members in the International, but, unmoved, continued to blackleg and thus were the strikes of the struggling workers disrupted and undermined from the start. This was the position of things during the 1921, coal strike in England, when French, German, Belgian and American coal was being sent to England. So it was during, the 1922 miners' strike in America, when British coal was being sent to America. The same thing was observed with regard to many other countries. Neither should we forget the latest example when during the 1926 strike of British miners German, American, Belgian, French and Polish coal was being produced by the members of the Miners' International which undermined this great struggle and helped the British coal owners to defeat the miners. The basic principle of the Amsterdam International and its International Secretariats is that national interests should predominate over international interests. The R.I.L.U., however, is based on a principle pointing completely to the opposite direction: international interests come before national interests. This has been the guiding principle of the R.I.L.U. and, thanks to this, it has steadily grown and increased its ranks.

VII

The R.I.L.U. was founded in the middle of 1920, a year after the Amsterdam International had been brought to life. It arose as an organisation unifying the revolutionary elements of the world trade union movement. Furthermore, since its establishment, the R.I.L.U. has ruthlessly struggled against all attempts to destroy the trade unions. Throughout its existence the R.I.L.U. has supported and defended the slogan, not of destroying, but of winning the unions, despite the fact that reformist bureaucracy in many countries has expelled not only individual workers from the unions, but whole organisations of tens of thousands of workers; and that as result many revolutionary workers have been brought to a frame of mind favouring the desertion of the unions.

How have these Internationals progressed throughout all these years? When the Amsterdam International was organised in 1919, it embraced 24 million workers—to-day it has only 13 millions. When the R.I.L.U. arose it embraced 10 million workers—to-day it has over 16 millions. The outstanding characteristics of both these Internationals are the following: The Amsterdam International is four-fifths an European organisation. Of the 22 organisations affiliated to the Amsterdam International, only four (Palestine, Argentina, Canada and South Africa) are outside the limits of Europe. The R.I.L.U. however is a completely different organisation. The R.I.L.U. embraces organisations on all continents, and due to its size and scope, can indeed be called an International, whereas the International Federation of Trade Unions at best is an organisation of a section of the workers of only one of the continents.

VIII

The following figures show the correlation of forces between the two organisations. The Amsterdam International has the following affiliations to-day (end of 1926):

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Austria | 807,515 |
| Argentina | 82,574 |
| Belgium | 552,094 |
| Bulgaria | 14,803 |
| Great Britain | 4,365,619 |
| Hungary | 125,024 |
| Germany: General Federation of German Trade Unions | 4,182,511 |
| Germany: General Federation of Employees (AFA) | 399,855 |
| Holland | 189,683 |
| Denmark | 239,704 |
| Spain | 235,007 |
| Italy | 234,520 |
| Canada | 106,412 |
| Latvia | 16,679 |
| Luxemburg | 13,398 |
| Memel | 1,401 |
| Palestine | 18,663 |
| Poland | 224,423 |
| Rumania | 33,093 |
| France | 605,250 |
| Czecho-Slovakia | 356,386 |
| Sweden | 384,617 |
| Switzerland | 149,997 |
| Yugoslavia | 27,156 |
| Total | 13,366,387 |

The figures drawn from official sources exaggerate the membership in many countries. First and foremost the British trade unions lost over 200,000 members and Italy certainly does not contain 234,000 organised workers. An illegal Confederation of Labour does exist, but as is well known it is not recognised by the Amsterdam International. The social-democratic trade unions in Bulgaria have not more than 1,000 members altogether and certainly not 14,000 as claimed for them.

Taking into consideration these amendments it will be seen that there are less than thirteen million members in the Amsterdam International.

Further, there is one outstanding feature of the position that should not be forgotten: there are very concrete and solid minorities that are affiliated to the R.I.L.U. inside all these reformist organisations. Thus, R.I.L.U, adherents inside the German trade unions comprise no less than one million. In England there is also approximately a million supporting the R.I.L.U. All told about three millions of the 13 million organised workers in the Amsterdam International uphold the viewpoint of the R.I.L.U. are carrying out its policy and at the direct instructions of the R.I.L.U., are not seceding from the reformist organisations, as the R.I.L.U. is definitely opposed to splitting the trade union movement.

What organisations are affiliated to the R.I.L.U.?

A. The following are the countries in which general trade union centres are affiliated to the R.I.L.U.:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Austria | 130,000 |
| Belgium | 8,000 |
| Holland | 14,000 |
| Indonesia | 25,000 |
| Ireland | 22,000 |
| Canada | 10,000 |
| China | 2,500,000 |
| Columbia | 50,000 |
| Korea | 20,000 |
| Lithuania | 5,000 |
| Mongolia | 5,000 |
| Persia | 20,000 |
| U.S.S.R. | 9,500,000 |
| Uruguay (seamen) | 2,000 |
| France | 525,000 |
| Czecho-Slovakia | 220,000 |
| Chile | 150,000 |
| Japan | 40,000 |
| Total | 13,246,000 |

B. Countries where there are affiliated R.I.L.U. revolutionary minorities inside reformist and independent unions:

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Austria | 15,000 |
| Argentina | 20,000 |
| Belgium | 40,000 |
| Brazil | 40,000 |
| Hungary | 40,000 |
| Great Britain | 9000,000 |
| Germany | 1,000,000 |
| Greece | 54,000 |
| Denmark | 15,000 |
| India | 20,000 |
| Spain | 30,000 |
| Canda | 30,000 |
| Cuba | 50,000 |
| Luxemburg | 3,000 |
| Mexico | 30,000 |

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Norway | 30,000 |
| Palestine | 2,000 |
| Poland | 100,000 |
| Portugal | 24,000 |
| United States | 200,000 |
| Uruguay | 15,000 |
| France | 60,000 |
| Czecho-Slova | 70,000 |
| kia Sweden | 80,000 |
| Switzerland | 20,000 |
| South Africa | 10,000 |
| Japan | 60,000 |
| Total | 2,958,000 |

THUS, ALTOGETHER THERE ARE 16,204,000 AFFILIATED TO THE R.I.L.U.

Attention furthermore would be drawn to the position of the trade union movement in several countries where labour organisations are unable to take up a definite political attitude owing to the prevailing police terror and repressions or owing to various other reasons. These organisations are not affiliated to the R.I.L.U., but in so far as they uphold the class struggle they are in fact the allies of the R.I.L.U. in its struggle against the onslaught of capital and fascist reaction and in its efforts to set up international trade union unity. What countries are these and what is the strength of these organisations? Here are the figures on the organisations in this category:

| | |
|--------------|----------------|
| Bulgaria | 8,000 |
| Bolivia | 10,000 |
| Egypt | 25,000 |
| Italy | 10,000 |
| Latvia | 5,000 |
| Panama | 600 |
| Rumania | 21,000 |
| Peru | 25,000 |
| Salvador | 2,000 |
| Turkey | 20,000 |
| Philippines | 35,000 |
| Finland | 50,000 |
| Yugoslavia | 20,000 |
| Esthonia | 25,000 |
| Total | 256,000 |

These figures better than anything characterise both Trade Union Internationals. The Amsterdamites, of course, try to refute this; they are loath to recognise that their semi-continental International is losing its significance every year. They are still imbued with the psychology of pre-war days when Europe enjoyed the financial and industrial hegemony of the world, and they fondly suppose that Europe and the European trade unions still hold the world hegemony in regard to the labour movement of other countries. Indeed, this is far from being the case. The Amsterdam International has no hegemony of the world labour movement. It represents organised reformism and has the least right to be called an International because in the first place it does not embrace organisations outside the European continent, and secondly, even within the boundaries of the European continent itself international interests are superceded by national interests. But quite independent of the political outlook, or the aims and aspirations of the Amsterdam International,

even from the point of view of its organisational structure and the number of its members, it can make no claims whatever to represent the world movement. Meanwhile, among the leaders of the Amsterdam International, boasting speeches are heard that the Amsterdam International is the “only” trade union International. They intentionally forget that outside this “only” International stand the labour movements of such countries like the U.S.S.R., China, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, India and the United States, not to speak of a host of smaller countries.

IX

The Red International of Labour Unions, as indicated above, was founded in 1920. What was the line of its development during this period? In the first place it is important to notice that all the countries with young labour movements (China, Indonesia, and elsewhere) where the working class is hard put to it to struggle against imperialism and their own bourgeoisie; the trade unions in toto have affiliated to the R.I.L.U. In a word, the R.I.L.U. became the gravitating centre for all those trade union organisations which found it imperative really to struggle against the home and the foreign bourgeoisie. Why is it that the young labour movement of China affiliated directly to the R.I.L.U. and did not even seek to enter the Amsterdam International? The reason is very simple. Ever since it was founded, the R.I.L.U. has always defended and put into execution the slogan of independence for the colonies. The idea of liberating the colonial peoples has been foremost in all its agitation and propaganda, has been the centre of all its activities, whereas the Amsterdam International never has as much as passed one resolution upholding the independence of the colonial peoples. In brief, the Amsterdam International has never adopted a decision to put squarely in front of the working masses the question of a real struggle against imperialism and its policy in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. The Amsterdam International has never done anything whatever to help the revolutionary struggle of the workers in these countries. Naturally enough, the workers therefore are gravitating to Moscow and not to Amsterdam, and it is no less clear that while the ranks of the R.I.L.U. are swelling, those of the Amsterdam International are dwindling.

X

Another distinguishing feature of the R.I.L.U. is the fact that it has unswervingly and constantly struggled against imperialism and the danger of war. Where lies the difference between Amsterdam and the R.I.L.U. on this question? In order to answer this question, we must recall the famous International World Congress of the Amsterdam International held in the Hague in December 1922. Several resolutions referring to the struggle against war were adopted at this Congress. However, when French troops occupied the Ruhr, three weeks after this Congress, the Amsterdam International did nothing whatever to commence a campaign against the occupation.

How can war be combatted? The Amsterdam International tries to “struggle” against it by sending representatives to the League of Nations’ Commissions. These representatives are preoccupied with the debates, and it would appear that they do not notice that during these discussions that the participants in the Commissions are continuing imperialist policy. When the French troops suppressed the Riff rising in Africa, Jouhaux, the representative of the French reformist trade unions, said never a word on these bloody crimes of his Government. He made no mention of them either in the League of Nations, the International Labour Bureau, or in the Disarmament Commission. When French troops raided Syria, carrying havoc and devastation into the land, burning down whole towns, this representative of the reformist trade unions of France did not even think of raising this question in the League of Nations or in the International Labour Bureau, or in the Disarmament Commission. When the troops of the imperialist powers had increased their strangle-hold on the throat of China, not a single reformist leader thought it necessary to raise this question in the League of Nations, or in the International Labour Office or in the Disarmament Commission. Thus, each time a genuine struggle had to be waged against war, against intervention, against the strangling of weaker peoples, the reformist leaders have simply backed out.

Can an active struggle be replaced by discussions against war? Of course not. Then why have the leaders of the Amsterdam International failed to take measures to counter the war danger? Simple enough, they are unable to do this, for upholding collaboration with their own bourgeoisie, they must aid it in all its crimes; as they oppose the independence of the colonial peoples, they must support all who aspire to strangle their independence.

The position of the R.I.L.U. on this vital question has been entirely different. Whenever the war danger has loomed up large, or whenever an imperialist power has trampled down the rights of weaker nations, whenever the imperialists have stretched out their bloody hands in China, the R.I.L.U. and its affiliated organisations have carried out widespread campaigns and spared no resources to avert a new clash of the nations and to prevent intervention. Plainly, in this struggle the R.I.L.U. not only had to counter imperialists, but also had to struggle against their henchman, against those, who having promised to struggle against war, had done nothing whatever in this respect.

The R.I.L.U. is further distinguished from the Amsterdam International in that it always shielded revolutionary workers and defended the revolution. What has been the attitude of the Amsterdam International to the October Revolution? Its attitude has been one of profound hostility; in fact, the Amsterdam International to-day is the worst enemy of the U.S.S.R. labour movement. Why do the leaders of the Amsterdam International speak of the U.S.S.R. with such hatred? Has the working class of Soviet Russia ever violated working class solidarity? Has not the U.S.S.R. working class shown in practice and deed that it is aiding, and ready to aid, all struggling sections of the working class movement?

The Amsterdam International hates the labour movement of the U.S.S.R. because it renounced and condemned the whole theory and practice of the Amsterdam International. In point of fact, the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the capturing of power, the nationalisation of factories and plants, the expropriation of the land without compensation, the building up of a Socialist State, and the relentless struggle against the whole bourgeois world are matters diametrically opposed to the policy of the Amsterdam International. Naturally enough, they come out decidedly against such a program, for the enemy, in their eyes, is no other but the working class of the U.S.S.R. The leaders of the Amsterdam International feel they have far more in common with the bourgeois Governments and the employers than with the working class of Soviet Russia.

The attitude and policy of the R.I.L.U., however, has been entirely different. The R.I.L.U. has always supported the October Revolution, not because its headquarters are in Moscow, on the territory won by the October Revolution, but because the basic policy of the R.I.L.U. coincides with the line of action upheld by the working class of the U.S.S.R. The R.I.L.U. stands on the platform of the class struggle and considers that there is no other way out for the working class but to forcibly overthrow the bourgeoisie and set up the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. All talk that bourgeois democracy will be outlived peacefully is just so much hot air to dupe the working masses. It is precisely this reason that has always prompted the R.I.L.U. to assist the working class of the U.S.S.R. and to share no effort to help the struggle of revolutionary workers no matter where it is waged and irrespective of the reason why, so long as it is directed against the ruling classes. And here, too, as on other questions, we are in complete opposition to the Amsterdamites; our views and outlook differ completely. In short, there are two policies in the world to-day and a choice has to be made between them.

XII

Another point of difference between the R.I.L.U. and Amsterdam is upon methods and means to struggle against the capitalist offensive. That the capitalists for many years past have been attacking the working class can hardly be doubted. But the question is how to repeal the onslaught. Can we content ourselves with fine declarations, trying to persuade the capitalists or petitioning the International Labour Office; or, must we organise the masses to ward off this attack?

Should we scrutinise the activities of the Amsterdam International during the last few years, we see that this organisation has never thought of organising any resistance whatever to the capitalist attack. This question has never impressed the Amsterdam International. It has been preoccupied with "high politics;" it has deliberated on problems of currency stabilisation, the distribution of raw materials, Reparations, the Dawes Plan, etc.; it has been far too busy to take up such questions as the capitalist onslaught or the fact that all the social gains of the workers in reality have been filched from them.

Why has the Amsterdam International been too preoccupied to give these matters attention? Why has its reaction to the capitalist offensive been so weak? Why has it failed to organise resistance against the enemy's attack? Because the only real way to resist is to appeal to the masses. Entreaties must not be made to the employers, supplications should not be sent to the International Labour Office, but direct appeal must be made to the rank and file—they must be organised and they must be led to struggle against the encroachments of Capital. The Amsterdam International was unable to do this for it meant leading the workers against its own ally.

On this question the R.I.L.U. was again diametrically opposed to the position of the Amsterdam International. All the efforts of the R.I.L.U. during the last few years have been turned to organise the masses to resist. It may be asked how can such resistance be put up? That depends on the country, the degree of organisation among the working class, the strength of its organisations and depends likewise on a number of other factors. Let it be said at once, the work of the R.I.L.U. in this regard has met with big obstacles indeed, for each time revolutionary workers have striven to organise their fellow-workers, to organise a counter-offensive against the employers, they have run up against the blunt resistance of the reformist trade union leaders. Thus, the struggle was undermined from the outset, and the work brought to a dead stop. We see, therefore, that on the question of the capitalist offensive there are two different policies; one, the reformist policy, defending the employers' interests; the other, the revolutionary policy, completely hostile to the former both in tactics and in policy.

XIII

Serious differences between the Amsterdam International and the R.I.L.U. likewise exist on the attitude to capitalist rationalisation of industry. The R.I.L.U., of course, does not object to the introduction of more modern methods of production, but is decidedly opposed to those methods of rationalisation carried out completely at the expense of the working class. Should we look at the rationalisation of industry introduced into Germany during the last two or three years, we can truly say that the working class there has had to shoulder the whole burden of its adoption.

What have the reformist unions done to struggle against capitalist rationalisation? Did they get shorter hours? Not at all. On the contrary, they agreed to a working day that exceeds the eight-hour norm. They put forward no concrete slogans, no definite proposal and no plan of action which would have aided the workers to counter the capitalist attack. The R.I.L.U. and its affiliated organisations, however, put forward a concrete program, namely: shorter hours, rest intervals at the rationalised plants, increased hours of rest and more pay, etc. On this question, too, the policies of the Amsterdam International and the R.I.L.U. differ widely. The Amsterdam International sang pæans of joy to the introduction of capitalist rationalisation. The only proposal they made was: the employers must introduce rationalisation with the labour organizations participating. This proposal was always accompanied with unavailing protests and expostulations. But the employers did not

take the reformists seriously; they continued their drive and rationalisation was introduced to the detriment of working class interests.

Further, we disagree with the Amsterdam International on how to combat Fascism. Discourses on Fascism are frequently published in the Amsterdam press. Time and again have the leaders of the Amsterdam trade unions condemned all forms of dictatorship; moreover, they habitually group Fascism and Bolshevism together. Why do they do this? Simply to censure Bolshevism, for they acclaim the identity of Bolshevism and Fascism from the fact that both use force to carry out their policies. But the Amsterdamites are blind to the fact that Fascism used force against the workers and in the interests of the bourgeoisie, whereas Bolshevism uses force against the bourgeoisie in the interests of the workers. The difference, you see, is a pretty solid one; the Amsterdamites, however, are belittling it; and while they content themselves with verbal protest against Fascism, they, are in effect fighting tooth and nail against Bolshevism.

What have the Amsterdamites done since the Fascist regime was set up in Italy? The Amsterdam International as such made a few protests, but the Italian Amsterdamites after they had helped the fascists to smash the revolutionary unions, scattered, some of them emigrated abroad, others simply took service with the fascists. With all their apparent hostility Fascism and Reformism stand related. Why? Because both of them equally hate Bolshevism. They loathe the Revolution, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Soviet Russia.

Needless to say, the R.I.L.U. cannot support this point of view. Its approach to Bolshevism and Fascism must be from the angle of class analysis. External methods of the struggle are of least importance; the crucial question for the R.I.L.U. is against whom are the coercive measures directed? As Bolshevism utilises force against the bourgeoisie, and Fascism coerces the working class, it becomes abundantly clear why the R.I.L.U. has always combatted Fascism with every means in its power. In Italy itself it is only the adherents of the R.I.L.U. who are continuing the struggle; the Amsterdamites fled long ago.

XV

The R.I.L.U. further disagrees with the Amsterdam International on the question of the united front and international working class unity. The Amsterdam International condemns every proposal of the united front simply because such proposals are made by revolutionary workers. Why does the R.I.L.U. and its affiliated organisations propose the United Front? Revolutionary workers urge the united front to check the onslaught of the capitalists and to transform the struggle from the defensive to the offensive. Furthermore, they propose the United Front to fight jointly for concrete demands. For, strictly speaking, the proposal of the united front usually centers round concrete activities defense of the eight-hour day; the fight against fascism; the struggle against the new war danger; the battle for social legislation and the struggle to improve wage rates and labour conditions.

Although all the proposals of the united front in their very essence lead toward defending the elementary demands of the workers, the Amsterdamites categorically refuse to setup the united front with revolutionary workers. Why, it may be asked? They, of course, are logical in their policy. Once they have a united front with the bourgeoisie and the employers, they are, of course, hard put to it to link up their activities with those of revolutionary workers. In brief, if their front is united on the basis of class collaboration, how in the world can they set up a united front on the basis of class struggle.

The Amsterdamites have always preferred unity with the bourgeoisie to unity with revolutionary workers. The R.I.L.U., however, has persistently fought for the united front, and definitely opposed those who resisted its formation. During the last few years the R.I.L.U. made scores of proposals to the Amsterdam International. Joint action was urged. The Amsterdam International, however, rejected these proposals one after another, stating that it could have nothing to do with a Moscow organisation which is “dependent” on the Soviet Government. Later we shall take up this “dependence” of the R.I.L.U. and the “independence” of the Amsterdam International. But it is important to notice here that all attempts of the R.I.L.U. to unify the workers to struggle for elementary and vital demands, have been categorically and positively turned down by the leaders of the Amsterdam International.

XVI

No less do the views of the R.I.L.U. and the Amsterdam International clash on the question of trade union unity. In principle unity is upheld by the Amsterdamites, but they desire to see unity in their own organisations; that revolutionary workers should line up with them and renounce their own views and convictions. Plainly, his kind of unity is no unity, but simply a piece of fraud. The point of view upheld by the R.I.L.U. has always been that unity must be set up not on the basis of renouncing one’s convictions, but on the basis of each individual worker and every group having the right to defend their own point of view inside the united organisation.

Proposals made in this light were categorically and unceremoniously rejected by the Amsterdamites. Why did they turn them down? Simple enough. Freedom of speech inside a united trade union organisation would prove a very risky business, indeed, for the reformists. They want to be left alone: they don’t want to discuss tactical questions confronting the working class. On the contrary, they are persuading the masses to go on supporting the bourgeoisie, they least of all desire to see unity where trade unions are divided to-day, or to establish a united world trade union movement for that matter.

The following plan was launched by the R.I.L.U. to set up real unity among trade unionists: In all countries where trade union movements are divided, joint T.U. Congresses are to be convened on the basis of proportional representation. These Joint Congresses shall decide all questions by a majority vote, the minority to abide by the decisions taken, but retaining the right of putting

forward their point of view inside the united organisation thus formed. A similar suggestion was made by the R.I.L.U. to establish unity of the world T.U. movement, The R.I.L.U. proposed that an Organisational Bureau of representatives of the R.I.L.U. and the Amsterdam International be formed to carry out the preliminary work of convening a World Unity Congress to be held on the basis of proportional representation. Furthermore, the majority must draw up the constitution of this Joint International, the composition or its executive bodies, the Minority retaining the right to defend their point of view within the framework of the Single International.

We believe this is the most democratic way to bridge the gulf. However the Amsterdam International, which has always asserted that it has the majority, completely turned down this method of founding, a new Single International. Why this attitude? If the Amsterdamites are convinced that they have the majority then they will, in effect, control the new International. However, their assertions, apparently, have convinced no one: only too well do they know that they have no majority, that in a Single International they will be hard put to it to collaborate with the bourgeoisie. To be unfettered in their collaboration with the bourgeoisie, they refuse to co-operate with the revolutionary wing of the world trade-union movement. That is why they oppose international T.U. unity and no less the building up of united T.U. movements in each country.

XVII

We differ from the Amsterdam International and its affiliated organisations likewise on the question of trade Union Capitalism. T.U. leaders for several years past have given much attention to all kinds of banks and other financial combinations. Especially is T.U. capitalism developing in the United States. Trade Union Life Insurance Companies, etc. are being founded in the U.S.A. today. Thus do the trade union bureaucrats aspire to free themselves from the financial control of their members. This kind of enterprise is promoted and directed with the aid of capitalists and capitalist institutions and in America they are closely bound up with the capitalist world. During the last few years similar enterprises have taken root in the European labour movement, especially in Germany and Austria. Let there be no mistake about it. We condemn in no uncertain voice such usage being made of membership dues and workers' money. We categorically denounce all financial combinations with the employers, no matter what they may be. Our worst suppositions have already been confirmed. Our unqualified hostility to any combination whatever with the employers has already been amply justified. In America, labour banks are going into bankruptcy; one after another they are being turned over to the receivers. The bankruptcy of trade union capitalism has been confirmed far earlier than we ever expected. More, European reformists are beginning to imitate the Americans and ultimately we shall witness another display of financial suicide.

Our approach to this question is not merely determined by the finances involved; it is the political side that must receive our main attention. The promoting of these kind of enterprises with the capitalists leaves far too much room for graft, speculation and misrepresentation, not to speak

of financial combinations between the bureaucratic T.U. officials and the employers at the expense of the workers. Corruption and bribery are part of the routine of these institutions. Blacklegging is organised through them; workers' strikes are rendered ineffective, for labour leaders and employers have common cause, and the aftermath of such close collaboration can only be fraud and treachery all along the line. This has been clearly demonstrated in America. Again we differ from the Amsterdam International, who are dreaming of "Americanising" the whole European trade union movement.

XVIII

The question of mutual relations between leaders and masses in the trade unions themselves is another point where we fail to see eye to eye with the Amsterdam leaders. Leaders of Amsterdam Trade Unions delight to speak of democracy, but least of all should one look for democracy in reformist trade unions. The bureaucrats here have it all their own way. The officials decide everything. The masses exist to pay dues; that done, they might as well go hang. The leaders hold their jobs for tens of years on end and when they feel the tide of hostility rising among the workers, they get special resolutions passed on the impossibility of changing existing officials. A case in point was last year's Congress of the General Municipal Workers' Union in England. By no means do we consider T.U. officials to be fixtures. Efficient control of their activities must be organised. It must be alert and watchful. It must come from the bottom up and only in this fashion will trade union organisations be able to register and carry out the desires and will of the masses at any given moment. The mutual relations that exist to-day between the Amsterdam leaders and the rank and file must inevitably lead to the conservation of all the worst traditions of the labour movement. Their outcome may well be the formation of a bureaucratic caste, who will consider itself to be superior to the workers at large, who will look to the unions for their jobs and keep, and consider themselves elected for life. A relentless struggle must be waged against this kind of bureaucracy, because it usually brings about a position where the bureaucracy completely ignores the desires of the rank and file; furthermore, they are even prepared to expel the bulk of their members if they happen to disagree with the policy of the leaders. Trade union democracy on the basis of the activity, and initiative of the masses coupled with their vigilant control of their leaders, will alone turn the unions into living, real, militant weapons of the working class. Thus, will the dead weight of bureaucracy, which is strangling working class militancy to-day, be uprooted.

XIX

The reformists are fond of saying that they and the trade union organisations under their leadership are quite neutral and independent of all political parties. Whenever they speak or write about the Soviet trade union movement the celebrated "dependence" of the U.S.S.R. Trade Unions

on the Communist Party makes its appearance, affording a splendid opportunity, for the reformists of all countries to plume themselves upon their “independence.”

As far as this concerns the independence of all these leaders from socialism we are quite in agreement with them but if they consider themselves independent of capitalism, we beg to differ. After all what is the policy of the leaders of the American Federation of Labour? Is it not simple support of the imperialist policy of their bourgeoisie? Quite recently the leaders of the American Federation of Labour greeted the famous American Legion, well known to be a fascist organization. When Jouhaux, Oudegeest and other leaders of the Amsterdam International meet in the League of Nations’ International Labour Office, are they pursuing an independent policy? When Jouhaux, in the capacity of a representative of Poincare’s Government, participates in the League of Nations, is he pursuing a policy independent of the French Government? When the German trade unionists supported Noske, who together with the reactionary officers’ corps, fired upon the Ruhr workers, were they carrying out an independent policy? Hardly. The difference between the revolutionary and reformist unions on this point is as follows: while the revolutionary unions follow communist policy and in this sense may of course be said to depend on communism, the reformist unions follow bourgeois policy and thus depend entirely on capitalism and the capitalist State.

Is it possible for trade unions to be neutral? And if so how? Is it possible for a working class organisation to occupy a neutral position in the class struggle? Of course it is not. And, since a trade union cannot possibly occupy a neutral position with regard to the class struggle it is bound to choose between two policies. But it may be said, trade unions, ought to be non-political; they should have nothing to do with politics. Non-political unions have been formed in England recently under the leadership of the renegade Spencer, but everybody knows that these are merely scab organisations. There can be no such thing as a non-political trade union. Those unions crying down politics loudest of all are usually those with a bourgeois policy themselves and we are quite untouched by the shrieks of R.I.L.U. “dependence” on the Comintern, and the “dependence of the Soviet trade unions on the Communist Party.” The Amsterdam International is closely bound up with the Second International, the R.I.L.U. is closely bound up with the Comintern. Evidently one man can steal a horse where another mustn’t even look over a hedge. Accusations of this sort are mere hypocrisy and we are convinced that every sane worker will understand their true significance.

XX

The foregoing enumeration of the differences between the R.I.L.U. and the Amsterdam International clearly outlines the reasons why these two Internationals are struggling against each other. No personalities are involved in the dispute: the differences lie far deeper; their roots are embedded in two mutually hostile movements: the reformist and the revolutionary. The differences cannot be patched up; there can be no question of a middle policy. The question can only be settled

by a fight. There is no other way. For reformism and communism are two policies that inevitably must exclude each other in the fight for ascendancy.

But if a truce cannot be called, then what about trade union unity, it may be asked? Trade union unity will not bring in its wake the disappearance of ideological differences, neither does it mean peace between two hostile politics. Trade union unity means that differences will be settled inside the united trade union organisation, while the minority will abide by all disciplinary measures to struggle against the bourgeoisie. Unity means that the working masses will judge between ourselves and the reformists. Let the masses decide which is the better policy—the reformist or the revolutionary. Let them decide which program will bring them soonest to their goal. Let them decide whether it shall be reformist or revolutionary tactics. This is how we regard unity and how we understand the existence of the R.I.L.U. and Amsterdam side by side in one organization.

The question naturally arises: Can anybody who fully realises the seriousness of the differences raised—who deems them exceedingly important and values and respects his own views and convictions—support the organisation of trade union unity? Most certainly, for the question of unity is not a question of sentiment, but one of calculation. If trade union unity is set up on a national and international scale the working class will be stronger. That is why we are for unity, and incidentally, that is why the Amsterdamites are against it!

XXI

Can we determine to-day which of these two Internationals will be victorious? Yes, that is quite possible. For let us keep well in mind, the growth of each of the Internationals does not depend so much on the wishes and desires of the leaders as it does on objective conditions. If the forecasts of International Reformist on the final stabilisation of capitalism were to prove true, then the near future would belong to reformism. What, indeed, means reformism in the labour movement? It is the theory and practice of turning the working class into an instrument of capitalism. The steadier capitalism stands, the stronger are the ruling classes, the stronger is reformism also. If the World Revolution were to be simply an idle dream conjured up by Bolshevik imagination, then of course the R.I.L.U. could neither grow nor develop. We see clearly, therefore, that the growth and development of Amsterdam and the R.I.L.U. are dependent on entirely different factors. What is life to Amsterdam, spells death to the R.I.L.U., and vice versa. How is capitalism developing? Is it developing on an upward curve, or is it declining? As far as European capitalism is concerned things are pretty obvious. Even with the existing partial stabilisation, capitalism is declining, and that means that Amsterdam will fall asunder; that the R.I.L.U. will grow. Should we furthermore take into consideration that the Revolution has already control of one-sixth of the earth's surface, that the National-Revolutionary movement of the East is tearing the ground from under the feet of Imperialism, then we must admit that Amsterdam is out of the running—that the future belongs to Moscow, and to it alone
