

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION COMMITTEE  
OF NEGRO WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U.

ON

FRENCH SLAUGHTERING IN EQUATORIAL AFRICA

The barbarous system of colonial exploitation, slavery and oppression is still flourishing in its most brutal form. Forced labor and other forms of oppression by French imperialists in Equatorial Africa has killed off native railroad workers at the rate of tens of thousands and swept away whole sections of the native population. While the International Labor Office at Geneva, in the name of civilisation, is supposed to be investigating the conditions of forced labor among the natives, this barbarous oppression growing out of the conditions of forced labor is going on without any action on their part. During a decade the population has been reduced by six millions. For the last several months native workers have been in open revolt against French imperialist oppression. At this moment French Imperialism is crushing native workers, and carrying "civilisation" into Africa at the point of the bayonet. This raping of Africa, the bathing of the struggles of the workers in their own blood and the extermination of whole sections of the population in order that imperialism may flourish is shrouded in silence and secrecy. Only fragmentary bits of news leak out through the strictest censorship about this uprising and the consequent slaughtering by the French Imperialists. This censorship and secrecy has as its object the hiding of the barbarism of the French Imperialists.

Brothers and Workers of the World! Protest in world wide unison against the slaughtering of our African brothers and fellow workers! Unmask the Impositors!

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U. calls upon the working class movement to protest and rally to the support of the African Workers.

We appeal to the French Workers to send a Workers' Delegation, including Negro Workers, to investigate this blood curdling oppression of French Imperialism.

World Revolutionary Movement: Mobilise the Masses! Unmask the French Imperialist Cut-Throats!

With our African Brothers and Fellow Workers we struggle against French Imperialism and against World Imperialism.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION  
COMMITTEE

OF NEGRO WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U.

\* \*  
\*

THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM  
MUST BECOME A MILITANT ORGANISATION

The temporary stabilisation of capitalism and the complete desertion of the leaders of the Second and Amsterdam Internationals to the camp of the bourgeoisie have considerably strengthened the position of the imperialists and has enabled them to gain several important victories.

With the help of English, French and other armed forces, the Chinese Revolution has been smashed. The uprising of the workers and peasants of Indonesia, who raised their arms against their oppressors had been drowned in a sea of blood. The national-emancipatory movements in Morocco, Syria and Egypt have suffered defeat. North American Imperialism celebrates its triumph over the Latin American countries and the British Imperialists have succeeded in putting their hireling on the Afghan throne. Triumphant imperialism is more and more openly preparing to effect its chief aim --- the destruction of the first Soviet Republic.

The problem of organising opposition to the further attack of the imperialists and the struggle for the final emancipation of the oppressed nations fighting against the danger of a new world war, and in particular, a war against the U.S.S.R., is at the present time more urgent than ever before. It is for this reason that the Plenum of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, which was held in Cologne, on the 15th and 16th of January, was especially important. The Plenum discussed chiefly questions referring to the organisational strengthening of the League and the intensification of its influence, in particular, in the question of relations with the trade unions. These questions at the present time are most important for the further existence of the League. Organised at the anti-imperialist Congress, held in Brussels in February 1927, the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression and for National Independence, was intended by the initiators to unite "all political organisations, all parties, trade unions and persons, who are fighting against imperialist domination, for self-determination of all nations, for the national liberty of all peoples, for equal rights of all races, classes and individuals, on the basis of the recognition of the resolutions of the Brussels Congress."

The League is not without imperialist persecution and opposition. Its leaders in all countries are subjected to persecution by imperialist governments. One of its most prominent workers, a Negro, Lumine Senghor, a delegate from French Africa, and a member of the Executive, even paid, with his life for his activities in the League. Soon after the Brussels Congress he was arrested in France, imprisoned, and there died of consumption.

The governments of the imperialist States hinder by all means in their power League connections with the colonial countries, not permitting any correspondence or publications to pass. From the commencement this repressive policy of the governments has enjoyed the support of the Second International. The leaders of the Second, so-called, Labor Socialist International, have organised a veritable campaign of lies and slander, attempting to represent the League as the result of Communist machinations. The Executive Committee of the Second International, in September 1927, passed a decision in which it considered it impermissible that any of the International Sections should affiliate to the League. The hostile attitude towards the League has resulted in that many Socialists, League members, including Lanbury, its first President, have declared their resignation from the League.

Despite all the difficulties, however, the League has been in existence for practically two years. These two years have been years of organisational formulation and strengthening. During this period it has become clear to the League who are the friends and who are the enemies of

the struggle against war and oppression. The League is now faced with the task of becoming a real militant organisations which would undertake not only the publication, from time to time of appeals and protests, but also practical work for the mobilising of all anti-imperialist forces in a united international front of resistance to imperialism and militarism. The League must become a real mass organisation. Without losing its connections with individual petty-bourgeois organisations and workers who might bring it a certain measure of advantage, the League should direct its chief attention to the mass workers' and peasants' organisations, and chiefly to the trade unions. Only having connected itself with the trade unions, having received the support of the wide workers' and peasants' masses, can the League become a really serious weapon in the struggle against imperialism. The Enlarged Plenum correctly understood its task, decided to work by all possible means for the affiliation of the trade unions to the League and for their being drawn into the united anti-imperialist front. It is to be hoped that the basic part of this work will be carried out before the convocation of the Second Congress of the League, this year, which is to strengthen organisationally the League and draw up a militant revolutionary programme for its activities.

-----

Speech of T.W.FORD, Representing the INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION  
COMMITTEE OF NEGRO WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U., at the  
Meeting of the Executive Committee of the League,  
January 16, 1929.

Comrades,

I speak to you as a member of the Executive Committee of the League at Chicago, Ill., (USA), and on behalf of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the R.I.L.U. and the American Negro Labor Congress. I bring greetings to the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism.

#### The First Period of the League

We have participated in and watched with interest the activities of the League up to the present moment. From its beginning and up to the present moment, the activities of the League were shaped and have been determined by the necessities and objective conditions that manifested themselves during this time. The League was born almost at the height of the Chinese Revolution --- the most significant historical event since the Russian Revolution --- at a time which required quick action against the Imperialists, and counter-revolution which was setting in. It was a time of demonstrative action; at this first Congress of the League we had the unifying of our forces, a "getting together", most significant groupings in a demonstration against imperialism; this was no more warmly shown and solemnized than when the Chinese delegate HANSON shook hands with the British delegate BROCKWELL amidst stormy and thunderous applause.

But since that time much water has flowed under the bridge, much water that was muddy. We may say now that a period has closed and closed with the betrayal of the Chinese Revolution.

What have we observed?

#### Betrayal of Certain Sections

The Chinese, Indonesian, Arabian and Negro toiling masses, who form the very basis of the League's struggle against imperialism have had sad and most disappointing experiences. We are losing faith in the League, at least, in some of the supporters and backers of the League.

We have seen many who pledged themselves at the first Congress turn their backs on their pledges and on their comrades. We have seen many who pledged to defend the Chinese Revolution, murder and shoot down their comrades.

In the past we have heard and seen the capitalist and imperialist

governments under the pressure of the revolutionary upsurge of the toiling masses, in order to delude these masses and to secure their hold over them, issue radical phrases about self-determination, democracy, propose various sorts of reforms, and so on, but no sooner had they issued them than they turned around and crushed every effort of minorities and oppressed peoples to freedom; they recinded their reforms, reduced the wages and living standards of the toiling masses, and crushed their efforts in blood.

In the same manner we heard and saw social-democrats, labor governments, etc., issue radical phrases. Less have we seen them put forward any effort to carry out their slogans. We saw what the McDonald Government of England did in India, we saw what they did in regard to the Chinese Revolution, not a ship did they stop from going to China with ammunition of the British Imperialists to crush the Chinese workers and peasants. We know quite well what the Dutch Social-Democrats have done to support their government in crushing the Indonesians.

And so when we compare the actions of the Social-Democrats in issuing radical slogans, with the actions of the capitalists, we see no difference, we are losing faith in these sort of people, we have lost faith in this section of the League. We say that in the future it is facts and actions that we want, no lip service, action is what counts and means something to us.

Let us go further. What about the Transport Workers' International and colored seamen? No effort is made to organise these workers, on the contrary, dirt and slander is thrown at them by these same people. What about the organisation of a strong seamen's International, embracing all seamen? Of course, our good friends and comrades do nothing in this field. What about the ILP Labor Party and the colored and colonial workers of the British Empire, especially the Indian workers and peasants at this very moment? Whom and for what do they send emissaries to India?

### The Second Phase --- the New Period of the League

These are some of the facts, these are some of the questions that supporters of the League must answer.

And the future? We say frankly that we have lost faith. Yet the League has a chance to reorganise itself, readapt its programme, realign its forces to carry out a militant programme of action and struggle against imperialism. In the first place it must decide and outline a programme of determined action against British and Dutch imperialism. It must determine who will go with the League to the end in its programme.

In regards to the Negro workers and peasants. What must the struggle be? The Negro workers and peasants are interested in three main points at the present moment for a determined struggle against imperialist oppression, namely, (1) the war danger and use of Negro troops, (2) political self-determination, and (3) against the reformist actions and programmes of certain Negro organisations.

First, it is clear that the contradictions amongst the imperialist for control over the territories of parts of the world where there are Negro workers and peasants as well as the redivision of the colonial areas of the world, are surely leading to war. Also the imperialists are designing a war against the U.S.S.R., in either case millions of Negro troops will be used by all the big imperialist nations. Not only then but now British Imperialism is planning to send black troops into China to "protect" foreign settlements "against" the Communists, in other words to crush the Chinese Revolution, to crush the efforts of the Chinese workers and peasants, to set up hatreds and misunderstandings between Chinese workers and Negro workers. British imperialism in the past has sent Indian soldiers to all parts of the world. America has sent colored troops into the Philippines and Mexico. France at the present time has almost a million African troops trained. She at least has 500,000 trained and another 400,000 ready to be trained. She is building a railroad across the Sahara to transport these troops to Europe. America called 2,000,000 Negro troops to arms

in the last war, and will continue to depend upon Negro troops and labor battalions. These facts are of tremendous importance and concern to us, Negro workers. They should be of tremendous significance to the League.

Secondly, after the last war there was much talk about self-determination for national minorities and oppressed peoples. Many national minorities and oppressed peoples took these slogans seriously. At the present time it has got through to the Negro workers and peasants in all parts of the world. In South Africa the native workers and peasants are demanding a workers' and peasants' government. Here it is not the cry of a minority, it is the demand of the great majority of the population for political freedom and self-determination, a great bulk of people, workers and peasants who are suppressed by a handful of imperialists and their agents. In the West Indies, Haiti, etc., there has been a long and determined fight for self-determination. It was in the West Indies that the most determined and militant demonstration was made against the agent of American Imperialism, the flying Eagle, Lindberg. In the Southern part of the USA the oppressed Negro peasants and workers have a basis for a struggle for self-determination, and the setting up of an independent workers' and peasants' government. Certainly, the League must support these struggles against imperialism for national independence, for workers' and peasants' control.

And finally, the Negro workers are concerned with the reformist character of such organisations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Garvey Movement, the Pan-African Congress, the Negro Intellectuals, etc. An examination of the programmes of these groups will show that their programmes and their efforts offer no real and fundamental resistance to imperialism. In all cases they only ask for reforms under imperialism, for support from imperialists to help build a government of Negro capitalists to further exploit the Negro toiling masses, for a share, in other words, in the exploitation of the Negro toiling masses. This is the whole trend of thought of Negro intellectuals in and outside of America. The League must support a fight against reformism in all its forms. We could point to a whole series of events that show this among these groups: the capitulation of the NAACP and the Negro intellectuals to American Imperialism in the last presidential election, the attitude of some in the West African Student Union in London. The capitulation of Garvey before the K.K.K. and for imperialist support, the demands of the programme of the Pan-African Congress, etc.

Workers' and Peasants' Basis

So the League faces a new period, the second period, a period not of demonstration and betrayal on the part of certain elements; the second period must be an organised, systematic campaign against Imperialism. I believe with my Chinese Comrade who spoke last night that the League must have a strong workers' and peasants' basis, a strong trade union basis. We must draw wide masses into the League. In this connection I would like to make some suggestions. I call the Executive's attention to the following Conferences which will take place very soon: (a) the Latin-American Conference in May, (b) the Pan-Pacific Conference in August, and (c) the Conference of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers which will take place in the early Fall.

It is our plan in the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers' Conference to bring together the Negro trade unions to discuss their problems and align them with the world workers in a fight against Imperialism. It is our hope to have broad masses of Negro workers represented.

I think these three conferences will bring together millions of workers who want to, and will fight against imperialism. I beg the Presidium to give consideration to the postponement of the world Conference scheduled for July 1929, until after these conferences have met so that we may have the opportunity to draw these broad masses into the League.

In conclusion I say with my Chinese Comrade: in the second phase of the League, we must be for MILITANT STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

CRYSTALLISATION OF THE NEGRO RACE PROBLEM IN CUBA

(Reprint from "The Nation", Jan. 9, 1929)

Some of this traffic was even too crude for the Cuban Government, which otherwise permits and favours this means towards fostering the national industry, and it was forced recently to expel an American citizen, Harry Hackleton, from the territory for having disregarded the formalities by importing more slaves than required and selling them at only \$15. each. This business netted him according to the Cuban newspapers "a fabulous fortune" in the few years he was engaged in this time-honoured pursuit of his forefathers.

Some of this traffic was even too crude for the Cuban Government, which otherwise permits and favours this means towards fostering the national industry, and it was forced recently to expel an American citizen, Harry Hackleton, from the territory for having disregarded the formalities by importing more slaves than required and selling them at only \$15. each. This business netted him according to the Cuban newspapers "a fabulous fortune" in the few years he was engaged in this time-honoured pursuit of his forefathers.

Thought Negroes and dark Mulattoes are not admitted in the "aristocratic" society of Cuba, there is no segregation or discrimination in jobs, in industry, in government employment, in schools or colleges. Often Negro officers command white soldiers; some of them hold high positions in the army and in the Government. They work in all skilled trades, are treated as equals in all trade unions. No Cuban restaurant or theatre would think of refusing them entrance or service, which is all contrary to the custom in the United States.

This state of affairs is slowly being changed by the Americans, whose number and economic influence increase continuously. Though it is expressly against the Cuban law, the hotels owned by Americans or catering for Americans will not admit Negroes or Mulattoes. The Americans in their industrial enterprises make their own laws, disregarding the Cuban laws, and are establishing a kind of industrial extraterritoriality in this respect. The large sugar mills owned by the United Fruit Company, have erected whole towns for their various employees on the territory owned by the company; thus, in the town of Banes, situated on land owned by the United Fruit Company, the firm has introduced the "American" regime, absolute prohibition for all races, and complete segregation of American whites, Cubans and Negroes. In some special streets only white Americans live, in other streets only white Cubans live, and in others only the "colored". No Negro man, woman or child is allowed to enter the streets in which the white Cubans live and, of course, still less where the Americans reside. But even the white Cubans, who are generally the skilled workers and foremen in the mills and plantations, are strictly forbidden --- in their own country --- to enter the streets reserved for the white Americans. At night barriers are lowered and the three different districts, harbouring the three different races and classes, are locked against one another.

But the Negro problem is also becoming an acute problem with the Cuban natives. The probability and the hope of many Cubans that in time the Mulattoes and Negroes will be completely absorbed, and thus make the Cuban nation a homogeneous race, is fast vanishing. The cause of this is found in the condition of the sugar industry. Seeking to reduce the cost of production, the sugar barons found that it would be impossible further to reduce the wages of the Cuban workers. Their wages were already so low, so

near the limits of bare existence, that any attempt at reduction would have caused wide-spread revolt, particularly as the workers are well organized. The sugar companies, therefore, decided upon the experiment of importing inarticulate blacks, as was done in the days before slavery was legally abolished. It was easy to circumvent the law by the legalization of labor contracts, with absolute illiterate Negroes who did not understand the language of the country. These were imported both from Haiti, where the Negroes speak a French dialect, and from Jamaica where they speak English. Thus, these imported Negroes do not understand each other nor the Cubans who speak Spanish. This "black ivory" trade was allowed by a special decree, promulgated in 1912 by the then President, Jose Miguel Gomez.

#### Americans Increase the Atrocities of the Slave Trade

The Americans who carried their competition against the Cuban sugar growers right into Cuban territory, by establishing there large mills and plantations improved upon the slave-trade methods.

Thus the General Sugar Company stimulated the trade in blacks by paying \$25. for every Negro delivered on its reservations. Here the Negroes remain virtually prisoners until after the crop is gathered. The Haitian and Jamaica Negroes are induced to come to Cuba under promises of high wages, unknown in their own islands. Once in Cuba, they are led, surrounded by armed guards, to the sugar plantations and housed there in large, wooden barracks, in which many couples live and sleep without any partitions between them, and without any sanitary provisions, except a hole in the ground at the end of the structure.

As they cannot get out of the enclosure during the entire time of their contract, they must buy all the provisions in the company stores, and usually, at the end of the crop are indebted to the contractor. Many remain in Cuba and mix with the native Negro population. Some remain on the plantation over the dead season and shift for themselves as best as they can. The masters, however, are often kind enough to allow them to remain in the barracks without exacting rent from them during the off season, thus saving the expenses of any payment for new slaves. In the enclosure the Negroes are "protected" by armed company guards, equipped with rifles and rubber whips, who shoot at any one attempting to escape.

Their pay is rarely more than 50 or 60 cents per hundred arrabas (2,500 pounds of sugar cane cut) and as the most skilled workers are able to cut only about 200 arrabas per day the average earnings of these men are about 60 to 80 cents per day during the few months of crop gathering. There were protests and revolts against bad treatment. They were settled by the guns of the guards. Some of these repressions went so far that the British Government found it necessary to protest against the maltreatment of its subjects and requested compensation.

The influx of the Haitians and Jamaicans has increased considerably since the inception of this modern slave trade. Thus, from the total number of 709 Jamaicans and 233 Haitians who arrived in Cuba in 1912, the number rose to 27,088 Jamaicans and 35,971 Haitians in 1920, i.e., an influx of 63,000 foreign Negroes into a population of less than three millions. The number of imported Negroes decreased, however, to about 25,000 in 1921, and dropped suddenly to 5,000 in 1922, the year of the sugar crisis.

#### Spanish, Polish and Jewish Immigrants

The importation was later resumed and in 1924 the number of Negroes imported from Haiti and Jamaica was again 26,000. Since 1921 the number of Jamaicans has been steadily decreasing, probably partly due to the protection and warnings of the British Government, and partly because Jamaicans are much less illiterate than the Haitians. In 1927, the number of Haitians who arrived in Cuba was 14,312 and of Jamaicans only 2,248. These, together with a few hundred other black Antillans, make about 17,000 new Negro arrivals in 1927, out of a total immigration of 31,515 persons. The next largest contingent of immigrants consisted of Spaniards - 8,755; Polish and Russian Jews - 984; Palestinian Jews - 285, and Syrians - 296.

The black immigration is larger than the total of white immigration.

Many Negroes from Haiti bring with them the Voodoo cult and keep alive among the Cuban Negroes the traditions of nanegismo, the religious, medicinal, and witch practices, sometimes even accompanied by cannibalistic rites. At the beginning of 1928 it seemed as if an end would be made to the slave traffic and the "Negrification" of Cuba, when the Government decided to restrict the output of sugar to 4,000,000 tons per year. It was announced that from now on the imported Negroes would be sent back to their countries. But in the meantime the International Conference for the restriction of sugar-production failed, Cuba declared that consequently it would remove all restrictions on the sugar output, even at the risk of driving the price of sugar still further down. More sugar means cheaper sugar and cheaper sugar requires more Negro labor. And quite recently the United Fruit Co. alone obtained from the Cuban Government the permission to import 9,600 Negroes for work in its plantations.

The imported Negroes are not looked upon with friendly eyes by the native workers, as they are used as strikebreakers and in general are lowering the standard of living of the native workers, colored and white alike. The American supermasters of the Island are by no means anxious to prevent this slow Africanisation or "colorisation" of their large autonomous sugar plantations Island. This Africanisation is only partly offset by the immigration of whites from Europe, who, due to the American immigration policy, are stranded in Cuba.

It is not improbable that this white immigration may be stopped in the near future, because many of the white immigrants, particularly the Spaniards and the Jews, are suspected of being susceptible to radical ideas. Many Jews are, in fact, active in the local labor organisations as soon as they arrive on the Island, and therefore white immigrants are not so welcome as the willing, submissive blacks from Haiti.

\* \*  
\*

110  
200



**Collection Number: AD1715**

**SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation*

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

©2013

**LEGAL NOTICES:**

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.