

The Rhenish-Westphalian Shop Stewards to the International Proletariat

The Committee of 23, of the Rhenish-Westphalian Shop Stewards has issued the following appeal to all the organizations named below, and to the proletariat of France, Belgium, England and Germany: To the Red trade unions of France (Unitarian Federation); the French Trade Union Federation, Paris; the German General Federation of Trade Unions; the National Committee of the German Shop Stewards' Councils; the Union of Hand and Brain Workers, Gelsenkirchen; the Socialist Party of France; the Communist Party of France; the Socialist Party of Belgium; the Communist Party of Belgium; the English Labour Party; the English Independent Labour Party; the Communist Party of England; the United Social Democratic Party of Germany; the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (Ledebour); the Communist Party of Germany; the Committee of Action of the Communist Parties of France and Germany; the Amsterdam Trade Union International; the Red International of Labor Unions, Moscow; the Second Socialist International, London; the Third Communist International, Moscow; the Working Union of Socialist Parties, Vienna.

Comrades!

The military occupation of the Rhine has initiated an economic war, which threatens to undermine Rhenish-Westphalia and to destroy the proletarian masses. The economic life is paralyzed and the railroads are dead.

Want and misery are the order of the day. Prices are rising enormously. Every new order issued by the German government forces the workers to fresh acts of sabotage, and drives them nearer to ruin. Every new order of the French military authorities, robs the proletarian masses of their liberty and works further havoc. It may last five years, says Poincaré. A struggle to the death, answer the German nationalists. The French military is being further mobilized and reinforced. In the unoccupied regions, the Fascist bands are continually arming. *A Rhineland Republic*, is Poincaré's slogan; *a Fascist coup*, is the slogan of the German nationalists.

The economic war threatens to develop into a military war, with hand-grenades, poison gas and bombs. The destruction of the Ruhr basin will mean the destruction of Europe and the complete enslavement of the German and French proletarian masses. In the meanwhile, negotiations are going on between the French and German industrial barons, at the expense of the proletariat. The representative of the Left French bloc, *Herriot*, announces his approval of *Hugo Stinnes' program*. Stinnes and Loucheur are aiming at an "understanding". But should this "understanding" come about, and should the program of Hugo Stinnes be adopted, then the working masses will be thrown on the street, production reduced, the incentive to work undermined, the economy ruined; profits however, will increase.

Thus the Rhenish-Westphalian proletariat is threatened by these two dangers, — an imperialist war or a capitalist understanding, both of which spell misery and ruin for the proletariat.

The peace of Europe is in danger, and its economy threatened by the brutal capitalist offensive on both sides of the Rhine. And in the face of all these dangers, a large section of the proletariats is looking passively on.

Where are the strong trade unions with their millions of workers? Where is the defensive action against German and

French imperialism and militarism, and the French and German capitalist offensives? The disappointed masses are driven into the arms of the National Socialist agents and provocateurs, because they see that large labor organizations refuse to fight. On the 24th of January, immediately after the forcible occupation of Rhenish-Westphalia, a conference of the Miners' Shop Stewards put up demands for the organization of the defensive action against the outrage perpetrated upon the Rhenish-Westphalian proletariat, and for the common defensive action of the German and French proletariat. These demands are as follows:

1. Fight along the whole line against every nationalist war;
2. Withdrawal of the Allied occupation troops;
3. Overthrow of the Cuno government; formation of a workers' government, which shall immediately conclude a defensive and offensive alliance with Soviet Russia and pursue a policy of proletarian reconstruction, together with the proletariat of the Entente countries.
4. Immediate disarmament of counter-revolutionary bands throughout Germany and the arming of the organized working class.
5. Immediate introduction of the six hour shift for the increase of production in the mines. No infringement of the eight hour day in the remaining industries.
6. Adequate wage increases, the provision of large quantities of cheap food, the immediate payment of a hundred thousand mark bonus to all workers, officials, war invalids and social dependents in the same way as the state employees have received it.
7. The abolition of the 10 % wage tax.
8. The immediate release of all proletarian political prisoners in Germany and France.
9. Full payment for time lost through strikes.

The Committee of 23 of the Rhenish-Westphalian Shop Stewards, appeals to you, Labor Organizations and Labor Parties, in the hour of greatest danger, and calls upon you to convene immediately

a conference of all the above mentioned organizations which shall formulate a series of concrete measures towards the realization of these demands, combatting Poincarism and Fascism, organizing the struggle against the capitalist offensive in France and Germany, and protecting the proletarian masses against the threatening ruin. The great masses behind these organizations represent a force which, in the fight, is capable of solving all questions.

The defensive struggle must be taken up at once!

Whoever refuses to join in this defensive struggle is a supporter of the bourgeoisie and will have to shoulder the full responsibility for the final destruction of Central Europe, which will drag the whole world into the economic abyss. This would mean the downfall and the complete enslavement of the German and French proletariat.

We await a prompt answer and rapid action. This is the need of the hour.

**The Committee of Twenty Three of the
Rhenish-Westphalian Shop Stewards.**