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978-0-521-08969-2 - The United Front: The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928

Daniel F. Calhoun

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## THE UNITED FRONT

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RUSSIANS 1923-1928

DANIEL F. CALHOUN

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The College of Wooster, Ohio*

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*To*  
E. H. CARR *and* H. J. COPELAND

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### *Unity Song\**

Long the slaves endured their fetters  
Cowed by fear, afraid to rise.  
Till they saw the mystic letters  
Glow before their up-turned eyes

#### *Chorus*

Then unite, ye sons of labour  
Yours the world, to take and mould.  
Into plough-shares beat the sabre  
Strive for Peace, and not for gold.

Forward! With your eyes on Zion;  
Hark! The Tramping of your feet,  
Like the roaring of the lion  
Shakes the earth with thunderous beat.

#### *(Chorus)*

Hark! The dawn now fast appearing,  
Breaks the sun through blood-red sky;  
Greetings Brothers! – Home we're nearing –  
Let your banners upwards fly!

#### *(Chorus)*

\* *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* February 19, 1927,  
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## Preface

This study derives from the most elemental of human weaknesses – curiosity. I was reading Isaac Deutscher’s admirable biography of Trotsky, and it became apparent that something called the Anglo–Russian Committee played a conspicuous role in the great man’s life during the middle years of the 1920s, just before he was expelled from the Party. Since my teaching responsibilities have involved both Russia and England – and I have often found their interrelationship absorbing – my interest was piqued. The standard secondary sources, however, in both British and Russian history, had almost nothing to say on the subject, so I decided to check into it myself, and perhaps write a short article. The subject expanded, as any good topic will, into a more general investigation of the whole fascinating flirtation between the Soviets and the Trades Union Congress in the mid-20s, and of the impact that aborted relationship had on the Comintern’s doctrine of the ‘united front.’ The result is this book.

Scholars often have to work by themselves, but they never work in isolation, and I am happy to be able to acknowledge here all the help I have received in bringing this project to fruition. I am especially grateful to the trustees and administration of the College of Wooster, who supported me in the style to which I had become accustomed during 18 months of research leave. They also helped finance some of the incidental expenses any researcher encounters. Without their generosity, this book could never have been. I also appreciate the tolerance, consideration and support of my much esteemed colleagues in the College of Wooster history department, who proved, to my dismay, how effortlessly they could carry on without me while I was away. They restore one’s faith in the tenure system.

All scholars love to read books, and historians in addition are addicted to reading old newspapers and dead people’s mail. I am most appreciative, therefore, of those institutions – and those who labour in them – which preserve such treasures. The following have been particularly useful to me: The British Museum; the British Museum Newspaper Library; the Marx Memorial Library; the London Library of Economics and



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Political Science; the Trades Union Congress Library; the Library of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London; the Senate House Library, University of London; the Houghton Library, Harvard University; the Cleveland Public Library; and the Library of the College of Wooster. Material from the Trotsky Archive is quoted by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. I am especially grateful to the following individuals connected with various of these institutions: Miss M. Nesbitt, Mr W. Kellaway, Mr E. Brown, Mr R. Jones, Mr J. Williamson. I have also exploited, profitably, the resources of the Trades Union Congress Archives, the Labour Research Department, the Public Record Office, Somerset House, the National Register of Archives, and the British Museum Manuscript Department. The Institute of Historical Research of the University of London has provided me a useful reference library, a comfortable chair, an enormous desk, light, heat, and enough isolation to get some writing done. It has been a real refuge.

Many individuals, apart from libraries, have been kind enough to assist me in this effort. The late Professor Charles L. Mowat was an inspiration to me when I was doing graduate work, and a kind patron of this project in its initial stages. Baron Citrine of Wembley was good enough to clear up a number of special problems for me. Mr Andrew Rothstein and Mr R. Page Arnot were helpful on the affairs of the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1920s. Mr George Woodcock cleared my way into the wilderness of the TUC Archives. Mr B. Averlianov of the International Committee of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council responded to enquiries of mine, as did Mr O. H. Parsons, Mr Leslie H. Thomas, Mr W. D. Pugh, Mr J. Conway, Mr W. R. Drumm, and others. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor E. H. Carr of Cambridge University, who took time out from his own splendid work to read this effort in its entirety, and offer helpful comments and suggestions throughout. My meetings and conversations with him were as inspiring as they were entertaining. My students over the years at the College of Wooster have sustained and deepened my interest in Russian history by the intelligence and insistence with which they have demanded I make it all make sense to them. Finally, my deepest appreciation must be reserved for a caring and sympathetic wife and family, a collection of cheer-leaders anybody would be happy to perform for. They labelled this elephantine monster 'Spunky,' and celebrated its birth with an enthusiasm and panache that made the whole two years' labour instantly worth it all. They, and especially my wife, are singular blessings. Need-

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less to say, all the individuals listed above are responsible for all deficiencies that may be apparent in this book: I take sole credit for its virtues. Or is it supposed to be the other way around?

I will, in any event, conclude with a cheerful confession to two failings. I have sacrificed consistency to comprehensibility in matters of transliteration from the Russian. Trotsky, therefore, is Trotsky, not Trotskii; and Zinoviev is preferred to Zinov'ev. I do not think anybody who speaks Russian will have any trouble identifying the individuals named, nor I hope, will he have to strain to make out the original Russian titles of sources cited in that language. Non-Russian speakers will not care. Second, I have, solely for the sake of 'elegant variation,' used the terms 'Russian' and 'Soviet' and the terms 'English' and 'British,' interchangeably. I can only beg all Welshmen, Ukrainians, etc. to forgive my callous assault on their sensibilities. It did seem to make the writing flow more smoothly, and I doubt it will cause genuine confusion. The Soviet press did, in the 1920s, commonly refer to Great Britain as 'Angliia' (England) and the British press most generally designated the USSR 'Russia'. I am afraid I picked up the bad habits of my sources.

DANIEL F. CALHOUN

*Wooster, Ohio: March 1, 1975*