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EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. DISCUSSION.

TRADE UNION PROBLEMS AND THE ATTITUDES OF COMMUNISTS

Proceedings of an International Symposium

An international symposium "New Features and Problems of the Trade Union Movement in West European Countries and the Attitudes of Communists" was held in Luxembourg on April 21 and 22, 1982, by WMR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Luxembourg. It was attended by Communists working in the trade union movement and dealing with its problems from 6 countries: Austria, Denmark, the FRG, Great Britain, Greece and Luxembourg. Below is a summary of the proceedings.

Movement at the Crossroads?

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the trade union movement faced a set of new problems determined by the current development of capitalism, its crisis phenomena, and capital's offensive on the working people's rights and socio-economic gains. This produced within the movement itself various difficulties and peculiar trends and features which require close scrutiny and a clear-cut definition of the Communists' attitude to them. Such was essentially the initial assumption of those who took part in the discussion.

Rene Urbany, Chairman of the CP Luxembourg, said in his opening speech that the point was to discuss and analyse the demands which are made on the trade unions and so also on the political movement of the working class in the 1980s. At this

point in time, just when the social and political contradictions of capitalism increasingly stand out against the background of its deep crisis, it is most important to examine the conditions and problems of the trade union struggle and to promote, through exchanges of experience, opinions and information, a better understanding of the whole complexity of this struggle so as to make an even more tangible contribution to it.

We think it is important to take account of the following: despite the entrenchment of the transnational corporations in the state-monopoly structure of the capitalist countries, we are aware that the national states continue to be the key sphere and the national organisations of the working class, the chief force in the struggle against monopoly capital. At the same time, the internationalisation processes within the system of state-monopoly capitalism, the growing international organisation of the monopoly bourgeoisie, and the framing of a common strategy both by the transnationals and by world imperialism demand, more insistently than ever before, the need to concert and coordinate trade union demands and action on an international class basis.

This puts a great responsibility on the Communists. By sustained political action, we must prevent the trade union movement from being deprived of its class functions and from being converted into an instrument for the defence of decaying capitalism. To us has fallen the important role of orienting the trade unions towards consistent defence of social gains

and social progress and efforts to effect social transformations.

The trade unions' stand on the struggle for disarmament and for peace now tends to be ever more important. The preservation of peace is the crucial issue on which depends the continued development of the material foundations of mankind's existence and social progress and, indeed, its very survival.

Consequently, the Communists are faced with a set of new problems connected with their work in the trade unions.

Hardly anything is now more important, said Bert Ramelson (CP Great Britain). Being Marxists we believe that there is no other way to transform the capitalist society except struggle, chiefly the struggle of the working class and also of its allies. The most elementary organisation which can unite the workers today (and not when we shall be able to change their consciousness in the desired direction), to unite them for this struggle against the ruling class and to learn in the course of it the lesson that there are no complete or final solutions without a radical transformation of the society, such an organisation is the trade unions. Just now, we believe, it stands at the crossroads. What do I have in mind?

The working-class movement has been developing under the impact of a number of objective factors. First of all, we live in a period with rapid qualitative changes in the development of the productive forces, a fact which has an influence both on the organisational structure and behaviour of the ruling class in the capitalist countries, and also on the organisational structure and even on the goals and forms of struggle of the

working classes. These are changes which we call the scientific and technical revolution. At the same time, there is intensive concentration and centralisation of capital, on a scale that makes the national framework too small, and transnational corporations emerge. Tremendous power is concentrated in the hands of the entrepreneurs, for whom the whole non-socialist world becomes a workshop which enables them to use the division of labour more efficiently and with benefit for themselves, while finding the ways and means for pitting the interests of workers in one country against those of workers in other countries. By using the revolutionary changes in the process of production in this way, capital is in a position to exert growing pressure on the working people. But I want to emphasise, however, that these objective processes can also be used by the organised working class for its own interests.

Under the impact of these factors, it undergoes changes. This process has many aspects, and I shall deal with only some of them which are connected with trade union problems. First of all, the social condition and characteristics of those who are known as "white-collar workers" differ less and less from those of the "blue-collar workers", as they increasingly join the ranks of the working class. This stratum is not a small one by any means, and its growth provides a broader basis for trade union activity. But it also produces new problems.

Since 1970, the trade union movement in Britain has grown by 30 per cent, and now involves over 11 million, that is, over one-half of the employed population. Where do these people come

from? Most of them are, of course, "white-collar workers", and also women. In our country just now (and I do not think that it is an exception) 40 per cent of all trade union members are not manual workers, as they once used to be.

By 1985, we expect workers by hand to be in a minority. But their role in the society does not diminish at all. They are the main force in production, which is crucial to its success, and they are the most organised contingent of the working people, and the most consistent in struggle. Here is an example: less than 200,000 striking miners can bring to a halt the mining industry of Britain and, consequently, put pressure on the whole of the economy. Or a relatively small number of railwaymen could paralyse transport, and so also production. The same could be said of some other categories of workers. At the same time, at trade union congresses the "white-collar workers" are coming to have a great influence. The level of their class consciousness is relatively low, politically they are weaker, their trade unions are new and do not have enough experience. And so the trade unions are faced with this serious task: to merge into a single movement workers by hand and by brain, and to help the latter to master the methods of industrial workers' solidarity and struggle. The "white-collar workers" must realise that they do not have the same strength in negotiating with the employers as do some categories of manual workers, that the latter have paved the way for the establishment of new unions of "white-collar workers", and that their solidarity has helped to strengthen the latter's positions in conflicts with the employers.

The crisis of capitalism is another objective factor ^{on} which exerts a tremendous influence / the working-class movement. This crisis differs from all the previous ones in depth and duration, and also--a fact that needs to be emphasised--in ideological terms. I know of no economist capable of confidently predicting when the crisis will end, and the people are beginning to realise that this is not an ordinary recession which is to be followed by a revival, that this is not a situation in which they will be without jobs for five or six months, and that everything will then change. They already feel that the crisis is a protracted and chronic one. A whole generation is coming on the scene which is losing any hope of ever getting a job. Nothing like that has ever happened before. This creates very big problems for the trade unions, but this also holds out fresh opportunities.

During the post-war economic boom, the ruling class made material concessions with relative ease, above all because economic growth ensured relatively easy profit. In the 35 post-war years, the trade unions have secured a substantial growth in the working people's living standards, together with greater dignity for the workers. The conditions were created for the workers' representatives to be reckoned with, not to be talked down to as an inferior, but seriously to negotiate with at the same table. And in the countries of which we speak here, the trade unions have grown. That is natural, because an organisation must grow if it scores successes.

The current crisis has changed the situation out of all recognition. It is a fact that the crisis phenomena have made it harder to extract profits, and so the employers are ever less inclined to make concessions. At the same time, the mass unemployment reduces the workers' strength in the fight against the employers--and we must realise this and face the reality. There is not only the fear of being sacked for protesting against the acts of the employers. The number of trade union members in Great Britain has started to decline, and that is because the trade unions have failed to create the necessary structures to retain the unemployed within their ranks when they are no longer able to pay their trade union dues. Now and again, the trade unions fail to realise that there is a need to take special measures to draw into their ranks school-leavers who have not had a job in their lives and, moreover, have no prospect of getting one in the future. As unemployment grows, the trade union membership tends to fall. Last year, according to our estimates, trade unions in Great Britain lost 5 per cent of their members.

Let us also note that the employers have overcome the fear they had felt in face of the working-class movement in the post-war period. At that time, virtually the whole capitalist world had to dig in, because the workers tended to associate the depression and mass unemployment with capitalism, and it was clear that the monopolies were responsible for nazism and the war. The employers had to agree to serious concessions to the workers, to take steps to create the impression of social stabi-

lity. They supported the idea of a "welfare state" in which the social security system had an important role to play. But forty years later, another anti-Soviet and anti-communist campaign got under way and the employers' fear of the working-class movement was somewhat moderated. They now feel more confident, although they always remember that the strength of the working class and the trade unions could grow.

I think that the main strategic line of the ruling class now is to break up the trade union movement, not physically, but only by depriving it of the possibility of exercising its functions and carrying on the class struggle. That is why I believe that the most important task facing the Communists in Great Britain at the present time is to preserve and strengthen the trade unions so as to enable them to defend the working people and themselves against capital offensive.

In Great Britain, there is a spreading anti-trade union campaign and attempts are being made to curb the rights of the trade unions. Their representatives met recently to discuss the strategy of the struggle. For the first time in our history, a £1 million fund was set up for a campaign in defence of trade union rights. But there is more to it than money. For the first time, the British trade union movement as a whole did not reject the idea that if the need should arise it would ignore the laws. It is a great thing for it to display such determination.

We regard it as evidence of the trade unions' realisation of that which is most important for them: wages, employment and social security are, of course, essential, but you will get nothing of this if the role and rights of the trade unions have

been undermined, if they are incapable of putting pressure on capital. Just now, the British trade union movement may be in the van, it is one of the most powerful in the world. And, perhaps, that is precisely why it has been selected as the first target by international capital.

It is obvious, at any rate, that the defence of the trade unions in the face of the offensive mounted against them in various countries and in various forms is, for us, Communists, one of the most important questions.

The idea that the trade unions are confronted with a serious choice was also expressed by Lothar Schüssler (German Communist Party). The experience of the FRG working class over the past several decades, he said, was in many ways peculiar. For 25 years, the forces of capital and social reformism tried to present our country as more kind of model for harmonising the interests of labour and capital in practice. Although the working-class movement in the FRG has scored major successes in its struggle, these were attained through relatively small efforts and did not call forth serious acts of solidarity by the working people. The reasons lie both in the economic strength of West German imperialism, which could afford to make financial concessions in order to maintain its dominant positions, and in the existence and activity of numerous unitary trade unions which were capable, in the virtual absence of a reserve army of industrial workers, to exert serious pressure on big capital. Those relatively easy successes continue largely to determine the thinking of workers and employees in the FRG to this day.

while the context of the struggle and the political and economic situation have undergone a complete change.

Since the mid-1970s, the conditions for the existence of West German imperialism, the conditions for the use of capital have undergone a fundamental change, the arms race^{has} been stepped up, and the funds earmarked for wages and the financing of social reforms have been reduced. Since the 1974-1975 crisis, FRG concerns have been openly striving to secure a redistribution of the national income in their favour by depressing the living standards of the working people. That is when the trade unions adopted their defensive tactics. During that cyclical crisis, they succeeded in maintaining the level of real wages, and in 1979 even secured longer holidays for a majority of workers and employees, but with the start of the following cyclical crisis in 1980, there has been evidence of a reduction in real incomes. The government has launched a resolute drive against the social and political rights which had been won over the past several decades.

The mass lockouts of recent years were designed to curb the activity of the trade unions and to undermine their finances. Increased pressure was exerted on the workers' representatives, trade union officials were put under surveillance by government agencies and electronic surveillance systems were set up in industry to monitor workers.

Mass unemployment inflicts the most brutal calamities on the working class. The existence of a reserve army of nearly 2 million markedly sharpens competition within its ranks. There are even signs of local egoism in the trade union struggle

against the closure of enterprises. Bourgeois politicians and scientists already speak of two "classes": the jobless and the "job-holders". Such competition tends to cause, in particular, a growth of hostility for foreign workers, a fact the neo-nazi groups have already been using with some success.

The central question today is what are the organisations of the working class going to do about it. The Report of the GCP Board to the Sixth Congress of the Party in 1981 said: "In a period in which big capital has gone over to an open offensive against the working people's living standards, and peace is jeopardised by the policy of confrontation and stepped up arms race, trade union struggle acquires especial importance."¹

Our trade unions now face the most serious test in their history. On how successfully they will pass the test depends the attitude to them on the part of workers and employees in the future. If the trade unions set the working people an example of steadfastness and confidence in their own strength, this will redouble the energy of the working population in the struggle for its rights. If they evade the struggle, a loss of confidence in the trade unions could begin.

"Social Partnership"--a Fiasco

For the time being, against the background of the crisis in the other countries, Austria continues to have a special status, and does not seem to fit into the general picture, said

¹ Protokoll des 6. Parteitags der Deutschen Kommunistischen Partei, Hannover, 1981, p. 80.

Rudolf Streiter (CP Austria). The level of unemployment in Austria is lower, and the growth of prices slower than it is in most other Western countries. This is due to a number of factors: a favourable energy situation, which is connected with the high level of energy generation and the long-term contracts on the supply of energy from the USSR and other socialist states; Austria's proximity to these states and its links with them, a fact which has an influence on the actions of the government and the captains of the economy; the fact that a sizable part of the Gross National Product is realised in foreign trade, while trade relations and cooperation with the socialist countries provide long-term jobs for roughly 150,000-200,000; and Austria's neutral status, which gives it advantages in the sphere of economic policy.

Let us bear in mind that in Austria there is a contradictory combination of the economic power of capital and the political power of the state resting on a system of "social partnership", which helps to institutionalise conciliatory relations between the government, business and the trade union leadership for the purpose of maintaining "social peace". They take joint decisions on all the main social and economic problems, bypassing the elective organs. In political terms, "social partnership" binds the trade unions to participation in spreading the deliberate lie about there being some kind of community of interests between capital and labour. In economic terms, it serves capital, because it imposes on the trade union leadership a renunciation of the use of the militant potential of the working

people in the struggle for their own economic interests. With the "social partnership" policy is closely connected the limitation of democracy in every sphere of trade union activity. Its main principle is the cutting short of any mass action in order to provide the leadership with the conditions for conciliatory activity.

We now have a situation in which even the parliament has no say on some issues. Negotiations on some problems are carried on only between the chairman of the Austrian Trade Union Federation and the president of the Federal Economic Chamber, and only that which these two men decide goes to the parliament. In consequence, it has become something of an executive agency for the decisions taken by these two men.

The Social Democrats seek to use their majority in the Austrian Trade Union Federation to bolster their own parliamentary positions. This means not only the integration of the trade union association into the framework of government policy, but also what could be called personal integration: three ministers are simultaneously chairmen of the three major sectoral trade unions, while the chairman of the Austrian Trade Union Federation is simultaneously the president of the parliament. A number of other state secretaries concurrently hold important posts in the trade unions.

However, this policy has been noticeably losing its popularity among ^{the} workers. The assurances that Austria already has a "welfare state", a socially balanced state, and that capitalism has been overcome are now being refuted by the growing economic

difficulties, and the working class is coming to realise that it has been simply cheated.

In the recent period, resistance to the cutbacks in social benefits, the sacking and the closure of enterprises has grown and acquired new forms. In the town of Judenburg, 10,000 people went out into the streets to protest against the dismissal of workers and the threatened closure of the VEW plant. At the paper mill in Niklasdorf and at the Felten Guillaume works, the workers blocked the streets in protest against the closure of their enterprises and drew the attention of the public to their problems. In this action, an active role was played by the Left Trade Union Bloc and the Communists.

Lothar Schüssler's rejoinder: For years, "social partnership" was a term readily used in the FRG. You will now hardly find a trade union functionary using this term in a positive sense.

Over the past two or three years, broad masses of trade unionists have come to realise more clearly that the Social Democrat-led government has failed to put forward any alternative in favour of the workers and against the effort to burden them with the weight of the crisis. Here is an example which demonstrates the trend in the changing thinking within the trade unions. On May Day of this year, the Social Democrat minister of the North Rhine-Westphalia was slated to deliver a speech in a Ruhr town. Many trade union functionaries, mostly Social Democrats in that town were against inviting him to speak. Why? Their reasoning was as follows: if the meeting were addressed by the spokesman of the government whose policy is aimed to reduce the

working people's living standards, the local trade union leaders could not be responsible for the consequences. There are many other similar examples, and these are totally new trends which have not yet assumed such an acute form. They should not be overestimated, but it would also be wrong not to reckon with them, especially from the standpoint of the possibility of cooperation with the Social Democrats in the trade unions.

This idea was continued by Aloyse Bisdorff (Cp Luxembourg) who said that what has been said about "social partnership", the "welfare state" and the involvement of the trade unions in realising such conceptions testifies that "social partnership", in the form in which it was accepted by the social democratic trade unions, was characteristic of the period when the economic outlook was favourable. This policy is now proving to be a fiasco, and the governments, even those headed by Social Democrats, to say nothing of those headed by right-wing parties, are trying to break up the network of social security built up earlier, while the trade unions which were involved in the partnership policy are being attacked. It is being said that by their demands they have habituated the workers and the rest of the population to live beyond their means. The trade unions, for their part, have gone over to the defence.

In the mid-1970s, the trade unions allowed themselves to be involved in "social partnership" the Luxembourg way, which is an institutionalised system of trilateral cooperation enacted legislatively. They agreed to a collective contract, a so-called zero contract, which is in force until the end of 1983 and

which says that until then the trade unions will not demand any wage rises, provided wages are automatically adjusted to the growth of prices. But indexation has been abolished by the government and the crisis has induced the employers to go back on these obligations. This has put the trade unions in a difficult situation and they are forced to redefine their position. There is also lack of clarity with respect to the economic policy of the social democratic circles. Some forces in their midst are prepared to go along a common way with the Communists, but they are, unfortunately, still too weak. The future will show whether they are able to gain in strength.

All these events have forced the trade union leadership to recognise the futility of the model based on "social partnership" and to resort to measures of protest, something the Communists had long ago emphasised. On March 27, 1982, a powerful demonstration was staged in the capital. It was attended by nearly 40,000 people, i.e., roughly a quarter of the whole working population. A warning strike was staged on April 5, and its scale exceeded all expectations: 80,000 persons downed tools. These two trade union acts had the following characteristic features:

- the unprecedented scope of the movement, which turned out to be the most massive since the Second World War and which involved workers not only at the major enterprises in the heavy industry, but also at the medium and small enterprises;

- the political tenor of the movement, which was directed primarily against the government policy;

- the broad intra-trade union unity which was displayed in the course of the demonstration, for the participation in which a call was issued by all the trade union organisations, including the christian, which thereby stood aloof from the Christian Social Party, the chief partner in the government coalition.

It is becoming ever more obvious that all the forms of state encouragement and stimulation of the capitalists fail to yield an economic effect unless they involve measures of coercion and control on the part of the state. In this connection, the CP Luxembourg has worked out the conception of an economic policy providing for the nationalisation of the steel industry, and its views were set forth in a pamphlet published by the Jan Kill Centre. We succeeded in starting a discussion on this problem in the trade unions. They are now engaged in reviewing the conceptions of economic and social policy and formulating alternatives which are to be shortly put up for discussion by extraordinary trade union congresses.

The discussion of this point was continued by Mogens Höwer (CP Denmark) who said that until recently the Social Democrats were at the helm in his country from 1975. The so-called incomes policy was an attempt to put through some measures in the financial sphere for the more efficient use of social resources. The government also had the goal of enhancing Denmark's competitiveness on the external market. But it also claimed that capital needed to have an incentive for investment to create new jobs.

As a result, the very tough financial policy of our Social Democrats was essentially no different from that pursued by Reagan or Thatcher. Only in the latest period of the wage-rate agreements now in effect, considerable changes were made in the wage-rate system, automatic cost of living adjustments were abolished, compensation for government officials reduced, etc. In accordance with a report issued by the Government Secretariat for Economic Affairs, from 1975 to 1981, the real wages of workers who are members of the Central Association of the Trade Unions of Denmark dropped by 12 per cent, and those of government employees, by 24 per cent.

Consequently, the characteristic thing about Denmark is that the offensive by capital was being supported and encouraged by the social democratic government.²

The ground was prepared for what is known in our country as "trilateral negotiations": the government, the trade union centre and the employers' union get together to assess the economic state of the society and agree on the framework within which the wage-rate agreements are to be modified. After that, the individual trade unions are allowed to fight for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. This policy of compromise is not yet being pursued quite openly, but one is struck by the identical statements issued by the trade union bosses, the leaders of the employers' union and the ministry of economics and its economic advisers.

² This policy has been continued by the bourgeois government formed in September 1982.

"Higher wages or new jobs"--that is how the employers' union, the Central Association of the Trade Unions and the government see the alternative on the eve of the 1983 wage-rate bargaining, but everyone knows that the restraint on wages did not help to create additional jobs and that, on the contrary, the number of unemployed since 1979 has doubled. In 1981, of the 1.5 million unionised wage workers, 700,000, i.e., nearly one-half, variously resorted to the unemployment aid fund. In 1981, the number of unemployed averaged almost 300,000, to which should be added 100,000 persons who have more or less voluntarily left the labour market.

The internal commodity market has been undermined by the super-tough wage-rate and piece-rate policy. Housing construction has virtually come to a halt. Industry is unable to sell its products because the purchasing power of the population is limited. The wage policy pursued by the government is the reason why Denmark takes the "prize" as Europe's leading country on one essential indicator: mass unemployment. This provides good evidence that the reformists' line is untenable.

Unity, the Central Problem

Following the victory of the democratic forces in October 1981, said Yiannis Theonas (CP Greece), the working-class movement in our country was faced with new and important tasks.

The deep economic crisis is rooted in the whole of earlier development. The way along which Greece has been moving is characterised by uncontrolled monopoly operations and dependence

on foreign capital. The governments of the right-wingers who ruled the country after the overthrow of the dictatorship strove to shift the burdens of the crisis on the working people and to increase the profits of the concerns. In order to achieve this, the authorities tried to manipulate the workers' trade unions. Making active use of various opportunities for intervention, of reactionary trade union statutes and establishing puppet organisations, the right-wing government managed to extend its influence on most of the associated organisations, including the Federation of Labour, whose board was infiltrated by agents of the employers.

One should bear in mind that these people have nothing in common either with social democracy or reformism. The influence of reformism in our country is limited, which is why the employers have directly intruded into the working-class movement, implanting their agents so as to split and demobilise it. After 1974, workers' organisations displaying class consciousness were expelled from trade union associations.

Just now, there are five trade union confederations in the country, but only one of them has any real importance: the General Confederation of Greek Labour (GCGL). Its activity is firmly based on class principles because of the influence of the Communist Party. It has pursued a policy of unity of the working class at the grass roots, and has coordinated the activity of the trade unions within the GCGL with that of the other trade unions. We have got down to working out the tactics for cooperation between variously

oriented trade union organisations and seek in every way to encourage this cooperation on the basis of a joint action programme.

The party now in power is the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which represents anti-monopoly and democratic traditions. In spite of some positive steps which have helped to democratise political life, it has not gone far in realising its electoral promises. In the economic sphere, the emphasis is on private initiative, no anti-monopoly measures are being taken, and no concrete initiatives have been made to end the dependence on the monopolies.

The government asserts that its policy is an optimal one, so that even if it has failed to live up to some of its promises, that does nothing to minimise the importance of its achievements. But everything that has been achieved has been done under pressure from the democratic forces. The rightists continue to have solid positions in the state apparatus and have been trying to prevent any changes in the government's policy that could deprive them of power altogether. The result is a highly complicated and contradictory situation in the country, which is characterised, on the one hand, by fresh potentialities for the development of the mass movement and for another turn towards democratisation, and on the other, by resistance to this from the ruling circles, imperialism and the oligarchy, and also by the fact that the PASOK government's policy is marked by conciliation and backsliding.

A new bill on the activity of the trade unions and workers' representation was recently put before the Parliament. It contains a number of provisions which should substantially help the working-class struggle, like the complete prohibition of lockouts, the ban on the employment of strike-breakers during strikes and judicial harassment of strikers, legislative guarantees of trade union work on the shopfloor, etc. These are important provisions being mooted in our country for the first time, and they still have to be fought for.

As virtually all the participants in the symposium said, the set of problems concerning trade union unity within each country and in the international arena is extremely broad and solutions for all these problems will not be found all at once. But these are clearly central problems, and attainment of the goal requires much flexibility, perseverance, painstaking work, and unification first of all on the most important problems which truly require common efforts for their solution.

How to Counter the Transnationals?

The drive by big capital against the working people's rights is proceeding against the background of objective processes connected with scientific and technical progress and the development of economic socialisation of production, notably in the form of transnational corporations. Remarking on this fact, participants in the symposium set themselves the following question: is it right to say that the trade unions have turned out to be powerless in the face of these new phenomena?

Among those who have suggested that the trade unions are powerless, said Lothar Schüssler, is former AGTU chairman Vetter, and that is something that needs to be considered in all seriousness. It would be absurd to resist scientific and technical progress, but it is not enough to insist only on overcoming its social consequences. The struggle must be aimed at a fundamental change in the socio-economic conditions which tend to turn scientific and technical progress against the working people. It is inconceivable to hamper the economic socialisation of production either, but the transnationals have capitalised on it and have used their growing strength against the working class, while some of the traditional means of resisting the drive by capital have, indeed, proved to be less effective than they have been in the past; this means that one of the key tasks is to find methods of struggle corresponding to the new conditions.

The strike is the trade union's chief weapon in the fight against capital, Aloyse Bisdorff continued, but it tends to be less and less effective, because in the event of a stoppage, international capital is capable of transferring production from one country to another. Here is an example: for four months we produced steel plate and no one knew where the orders have come from. When these had been fulfilled, it became known that the steel plate was to have been made by our British fellow-workers who were then on strike. That is why a highly important problem is organising international cooperation on the trade union level, and even better, also on the party level. We believe it is worth discussing.

It is the absence of global unity of the trade union movement that gives the transnationals scope for action, said Bert Ramelson. I would even put it this way: we find big capital united, but there is no corresponding unity of the workers. The trade unions recognise this, but up to now they have not managed to overcome the difficulties and conservatism within their own organisations. There are also ideological disagreements which divide the workers, and there is not yet enough desire to overcome these disagreements. Consequently, the strengthening of unity in the fight against the transnationals is an urgent problem and ways and means need to be found to overcome the difficulties which hamper its solution.

Something in this context has been achieved, and there are potentialities and examples of joint action by trade unions on the level of shop stewards and trade union leadership at the factory level. In our view, permanent organisational structures of workers' representation on an international scale should be worked out. Even international negotiations between the trade unions and the transnationals could, after all, be arranged to prevent the corporations from setting one group of workers against others.

We already have some experience. And this is not as difficult as it may appear at first sight. In particular, a struggle has been started against two multinational firms (one producing rubber, and another cars). The trade unions dispatched a group of shop stewards to various enterprises in Europe to lay the foundations of cooperation. Their mission

was a great success. For instance, solidarity relations have been established with Spanish, Belgian and French working people. Close ties between the workers of enterprises of one and the same multinational firm prevent them from being pitted against each other. That is a new problem which confronts the trade unions and which they must solve if they want to survive. Closer contacts also need to be developed on the trade union leadership level in various countries.

I have said that we are looking for new means of struggle, but new use can also be made of old ones, in the changed conditions. For instance, the takeover of enterprises. Some time ago it was frequently an effective form of struggle. When the workers took over a plant, the owners were unable to recruit strike-breakers and get into the plant. Now many are afraid to start a strike and take over a plant believing that if they do so, it will be closed down. There is good ground for such fears. Thousands of workers may find themselves without jobs all at once, and the goals of the strike may not be attained. So in definite conditions this method is simply not applicable. But there is here still a "but". If your plant is a part of a large production unit, a component of a multinational corporation, and if one or two plants are closed down, but the sense of solidarity with the workers of other countries employed at plants of the same firm is developed, the strike may prove to be an effective instrument of pressure on the employers. It is important to think through every aspect in organising such acts: to prevent the withdrawal of equipment and transfer of capital to another enterprise, to involve in the

struggle not only the workers themselves, but also the population in the locality (for this there is good ground: we had a case in which the closure of one plant brought everything around to a standstill: trade, the life of a whole town). The way to act is to make the employers understand: if production is transferred elsewhere they could find themselves losing assets worth tens of millions of pounds. In that case, the strike and the takeover of a plant will be a means of putting pressure on the employers in the course of negotiations with them. So it turns out that an old form of struggle is filled with new content.

What we are still not adequately aware of, especially from the standpoint of the forms of struggle, is, I think, that one of the characteristic features of the multinational firm is the extraction of maximum profits from the global division of labour. The product consists of components made in various countries. There is hardly a single car in the Western world that has been made exclusively, say, in Britain, Germany or Sweden. The engine is made in Spain, the transmission in Belgium, the body in Britain, while the whole thing is put together elsewhere. That is what should be made use of. I have already said that the multinational corporations are able to pit workers in different countries against each other. But concerted action can, on the contrary, disorganise the production of a multinational corporation, and this gives the workers additional strength in bargaining with the management. I think that the trade union movement should improve the use

of such means. This form of struggle is possible not only on an international but also on a national scale.

The transnational corporations have now got their hands on the whole capitalist world, and they are playing with it, using the national states as well for their purposes. But contradictions between the interests of a transnational and this or that state arise fairly frequently. In order to retain power, the state now and again makes concessions to the working class and displays a desire to put pressure on the transnational. The trade unions have to do everything to turn this to their advantage. There is also this contradiction: the United States, the strongest imperialist power, with the largest number of transnational corporations, now and again puts pressure on other states for the benefit of the transnationals. The potentialities that spring from this need to be concretely analysed by the Communists and the trade unions in each country and also on the international level.

Lothar Schüssler agreed with Bert Ramelson that joint action by the trade unions within the national framework and in the international arena was indeed the central problem. He suggested that here there is even a need for some departure from the ideological contradictions between the individual trade unions so as to jointly tackle the truly common tasks. Meanwhile, the AGTU, for instance, has displayed intolerance with respect to some trade unions. The idea of unity must be set up in contrast to local interests.

As far as I am aware, the secretariats of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) have councils for multinational concerns. At the same time, trade union representatives in industry, for instance, the members of production councils, have no real knowledge about these councils, i.e., although definite organisational forms exist, up to now they have yielded very little for the struggle against the transnationals.

Progressive trade union leaders in the FRG have been discussing these matters very actively. In our view, the strategy of the struggle must include, as a minimum, the following points: mutual exchange of information between all the representatives of the workers of the individual enterprises of transnational companies; joint programmes of demands on the scale of the transnationals must be drawn up; action in the fight for these demands must be coordinated.

Good examples are already available. Jobs are being wound up at plants belonging to a Dutch chemical concern in the city of Kassel. The working people of the enterprise have established contacts with Dutch workers at the concern's main plants. An exchange of information and delegations has been arranged and solidarity demonstrations are being staged. Thus, comrades from Holland also took part in the demonstrations in Kassel. But these are only the embryos of cooperation, and they indicate the direction for developing our activity.

Some forces refused to have contacts with trade unions which maintain ties with the Communists, said Mogens Höwer. The printers' trade union in the FRG provides a different kind of example. Its chairman Leonhard Mahlein is simultaneously chairman of the International Graphical Federation,

and there we have met with an ever more positive attitude to ourselves over a number of years. Let me add that it was the West German trade union that initiated the contacts with us. It also established ties with an allied trade union in the socialist GDR. The cooperation has assumed such forms and scale that the International Graphical Federation has established relations with the corresponding WFTU association. They have held joint meetings alternately in the GDR, the FRG or another country.

Interaction between the trade unions yields real results. When the workers of a Danish multinational corporation in Jutland began a struggle in support of demands for higher pay, the company decided to put pressure on the working people by transferring production to Hamburg, where it had its subsidiaries. Direct contacts between the trade union delegations of both enterprises were established in order to explain the situation, and the necessary results were achieved literally within the hour. Here is another interesting example: the workers of a Danish bourgeois newspaper carried on a strike for 141 days. Its management decided to transfer production to other

countries: FRG, Holland, etc. But we were able to thwart these plans through the International Graphical Federation.

← An attempt was then made to switch the order to the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Once again, thanks to the cooperation of the International Graphical Federation and the printers' organisation of the World Federation of Trade Unions, this was prevented. So, what Comrade Schüssler spoke about has already been partially effected in our industry, the printing industry.

The development of international solidarity between the workers of enterprises of transnational corporations in different countries is now more necessary than ever before, said Yiannis Theonas. The transnationals have intensified their intrusion into the national economy. Many firms in our country are Greek only in name. Directly or indirectly, foreign capital controls more than 1,500 enterprises constituting the most modern and productive part of the Greek industry. In the metal-working industry, electrical engineering, the oil and chemical industry, international concerns control from 50 to 95 per cent of the assets. Over the past several years, foreign bank capital has intensively infiltrated the credit system and the insurance companies of Greece. The right-wing governments did not even try to affect any of the restrictive measures which are applied in other capitalist countries. What is more, the privileges of the concerns were constitutionally entrenched. All of this makes the struggle of the working class more difficult.

We believe that the development of direct contacts between the working people of different subsidiaries of one and the same transnational concern is extremely necessary and could make the workers' action much more effective. By way of confirmation, let me cite a major strike staged by ships' crews when the mobilisation of seamen's unions in various countries helped to secure broad support for the strikers. The same thing happened during the strike by radio operators.

It is highly important, we believe, to develop cooperation between the communist and workers' parties so as to have the efforts of the Communists in each country, of our comrades who are simultaneously trade union functionaries, promote international cooperation between trade union organisations. If there are contacts between parties, it is easier to establish relations between the trade unions. The CPG took part in joint action with the French Communist Party against the closure of Pechiney, a major aluminium concern with enterprises in Greece and France. Another example was last year's strike by seamen, when many European fraternal parties did much to help our struggle by their solidarity. The CPG will continue to work in this direction and looks to support from the working-class movement and the Communists of other countries.

The strike continues to be the best weapon available to the trade unions in the capitalist world, declared Fernand Hubsch (CP Luxembourg), but strikes tend to lose their effectiveness without international solidarity. It needs to be emphasised that the Communists have already actively helped to

arrange such solidarity in many cases. We maintain constant contacts with GCP organisations in Bremen, Saar, and with the French comrades. In 1978, we had a large-scale demonstration by workers in Thionville, and among those who took part were Communists from the FRG, Belgium, France, Holland, Italy, Great Britain and Luxembourg. This large demonstration also evoked a response among workers who belong to other political parties, and this gave us an opportunity to secure stronger positions in the sectoral trade union in the heavy industry. The Communists' international cooperation is, of course, the key factor in consolidating the international unity of the working-class movement.

What to Do About Rationalisation?

As other speakers have said, problems arising from the use of scientific and technical achievements and the rationalisation of production effected by big business are extremely acute and complicated. New technology, Rudolf Streiter said, is being installed at enterprises and offices at a headlong pace. With the emergence of the microcomputers and microprocessors in the 1980s, one may expect such a rapid progress of rationalisation that it will eclipse everything the trade unions have had to face in the past. This will tell not only in industry, where countless jobs will be eliminated, but also in the sphere of social and private services.

The problem is being compounded by the possibility of starting a system of collection and registration of personal data, i.e., of total control over the citizens. A man reflected

in hundreds or thousands of indicators in a sense becomes "transparent" for industrial management and so is more easily manipulated.

The following data indicate the scale of these processes: by 1990, the number of displays in Austria's institutions is expected to increase from 27,000 to 160,000, and the number of microcomputers from 17,000 to 145,000. One can easily imagine the avalanche of problems and dangers looming before us.

What can the trade unions do about it?

The major strike by printing workers in the FRG also had an influence on our country, for instance, in the bargaining for collective agreements between the trade union of employees in the private sector and the trade union of workers in the paper and printing industry, on the one hand, and the employers, on the other. Under the impact of the strike, the first contract on protection from the consequences of rationalisation was concluded after protracted discussion. It contains provisions on obligatory negotiations in the event of the installation of new technology, and on guarantees against sackings. Besides, it regulates matters like the right to use information, studies for members of the production councils and the granting of additional leave for them, and participation in the management of the enterprise. There is, of course, no need to turn all the members of production councils into computer specialists, but they must be given knowledge in this sphere that is necessary for participating in the management of pro-

duction and decision-making. The Left Trade Union Bloc issued a special pamphlet for this purpose under the title New Technologies. A Manual for Members of Production Councils. It gives the workers' representatives practical recommendations about the things that need to be given especial attention when new technology is installed, and ^{indicates} / the labour legislation that should be relied upon in the event of conflicts.

This is an extremely serious problem, Bert Ramelson agreed. It is perfectly obvious that there is no returning to the time of the Luddites, when workers destroyed machines, for it is inconceivable to resist scientific and technical progress. The trade unions must see to it that the introduction of modern technology does not lead to a loss of jobs, to unemployment, and that, on the contrary, it should improve working and living conditions. How can this be achieved?

We believe that there is a need to insist on a preliminary discussion with the trade union of the use of new technology and hardware and of the methods to be used in the process. Alongside the problem of wages, this important problem must be reflected in the bargaining on collective agreements. It is important that the trade union should understand the new role and appreciate the new importance which now belongs to workers' control. The methods by which it is effected depend on the concrete conditions, they may be different, but the idea itself is an organic component part of the trade union consciousness.

Our party also believes that the consequences of scientific and technical progress is a very important problem, Mogens Höwer said. Its attitude to the scientific and technical revolution

was analysed at a seminar in October 1981, which noted the importance of taking a Marxist approach to the problem of new technology.

question:

Lothar Schüssler's / In the FRG, wage-rate contracts on the duration of working time will expire for many trade unions on December 31, 1983. These contracts provided for the 40-hour work week. There is an intense discussion in the trade union movement just now about how advisable it is to cancel these contracts and to fight for a gradual introduction of the 35-hour work week. The Communists want a way to be found to shorten the work week, for we believe that this is one of the ways to avoid the grave social consequences of rationalisation and to turn scientific and technical achievements to the working people's advantage. What do comrades from other parties think about this?

I should like to emphasise, first of all, Bert Ramelson said, that there is a difference between shortening of the work week and, for instance, a situation in which the workers work three days a week (three days one group, three days another). This is called work-sharing. We naturally oppose this, but we favour shortening the work week while preserving wages. And, of course, there is a need to fight for longer holidays. Both would, indeed, help to use scientific and technical progress for the benefit of the working people, and not only for that of big business.

The policy of the British trade union movement comes to the following: each trade union is recommended to make demands for a shorter work week, believing that this is even more

important than the demand for higher wages. But problems tend to arise when we speak of early retirement on pension. The slogan is, of course, a good one, but only if one is able to live on one's pension. If it is so low, as it is, say, in Britain, that retirement at 60 is, in effect, advantageous for the employers, instead of the working people. Here we have a kind of latent unemployment. That is why we always tie in the demand for lowering the retirement age with the demand for higher pensions.

In Austria, said Rudolf Streiter, the question of shorter working hours has been brought to the fore in view of the economic difficulties and the problems of employment, but there is a wide spectrum of views on this matter. Some trade unions demand the 35-hour week, others oppose it. Even the members of the government have opposite views on this score. The arguments are highly diverse. On the one hand, it is said that shorter working hours is a means to ensure jobs, on the other that we cannot afford this from the economic standpoint.

There are data, however, which indicate that a reduction of the work week from 45 to 40 hours, which coincided with the 1975 crisis, helped to preserve 200,000 jobs. This means that the proposed measure is not a useless one at all. This should be taken into account, as also the fact that the current pace of production makes the shortening of working hours necessary because of the excessive intensity of labour.

Our proposal is that a 39-hour week should be introduced in 1983, to be reduced by 1 hour in every subsequent year, to 35 hours by 1987. This, naturally, with the preservation of

full wages, because any drop in incomes and so in the purchasing power of the population would have the most undesirable economic consequences. Here the view of the trade unions and the party coincide.

Mogens Höwer brought out yet another problem which is connected with scientific and technical progress and rationalisation. It is the raising of skill standards. I was first confronted with it in 1979, he said. The trade union of workers in the paper and printing industry/then put forward the demand for continuous workers' training to raise skills throughout their working lifetime, which would enable them to adapt to technical progress. (Incidentally, in the periods in which one set of working people were being retrained, others could do their jobs.) This demand may figure in the collective bargaining in Denmark this year, because it could help to reduce unemployment.

Lothar Schüssler. In the FRG, this demand has somewhat retreated into the background.

Bert Ramelson. I feel that it should be among the primary demands. As production develops and high-technology industries emerge, two contradictory problems tend to arise. On the one hand, the workers in the old industries lose their skills, and on the other, the new industries need workers with higher skills. In our country, while unemployment is large-scale, there is a shortage of some grades of workers. The trade unions demand that the installation of new technology must be accompa-

nied by retraining, and that school-leavers should be given an opportunity to receive appropriate occupational training and then skilled jobs. But the ruling class has not even tried to solve this problem.

To return to the question of whether the trade unions are or are not powerless under the transnationals' domination and their use of scientific and technical achievements for their own benefit, said Rudolf Streiter, in my view the trade unions are not powerless. I should like to note that the nationalisation of industry presents a definite alternative to the present policies of big capital and the transnationals. When the economic outlook was favourable, it was widely accepted in the working class that it made no difference where one worked, so long as one made enough money. This meant that the role of the nationalised sector and the potentialities which it presented were not yet comprehended. But the crisis situation in 1974-1975 brought about a change of views, because jobs proved to be more reliable in the nationalised industry. When production was folded up in the private sector, and at the enterprises of the transnationals, the workers came to understand that nationalisation is an important factor working for their interests. Today, in view of the changes in the working people's consciousness, fresh opportunities arise for the struggle in defence of the nationalised industry, and also against the transnationals.

The search for ways to resist big capital in its urge to turn scientific and technical progress and the advantages of the economic socialisation solely to its own advantage carries

the working-class movement to demands which variously affect the prerogatives of economic and political power.

Shift of Accent in Trade Union Demands and the Problem of
the Long Term

This question arose at the symposium: was there not in the present conditions a definite shift of accent in the workers' struggle from the purely material issues towards rights in the management of production, influence on its conditions, and control over capital? Was there frequently not to be found, even behind the struggle over traditional demands on wage rates and working hours, something that was larger and that was connected with the prerogatives of economic power? And how was all this to be related to the long-term goals, to radical transformations in the society?

Lothar Schüssler held that the traditional demands of the trade union movement--higher wages, a shorter work day, a shorter work week, etc.--continue to be effective and meaningful. But in the present conditions it is much harder to attain these, and the experience of the FRG confirms that there has been a marked increase in socio-political demands. This is due to the crisis phenomena in industry. There is a growing conviction in the trade union movement that unemployment cannot be eliminated by raising purchasing power or reducing working hours, which is why ever more far-reaching socio-political demands tend to arise.

I want to give an example which echoes the experience of the Luxembourg comrades. For thirty years now, the Metal Workers' Union has had on its programme the demand for nationalisation of the basic types of industrial production. But in that period, the trade union leaders have rarely remembered about it. Now the trade union ever more frequently stresses the need for nationalisation, indicating definite concerns in this context. In Dortmund, Hoesch has done away with several thousand jobs, and the workers and the trade unions have demanded its nationalisation. The question was discussed not only in trade union circles, but also at a meeting of the concern's workers and employees, where the demand was adopted unanimously.

How to realise it is another matter. Here we come to a broader set of questions. In the steel industry, which means in Hoesch as well, participation in management is effected within the Montan system, which provides for the parity rights of employers and wage workers on supervisory boards. On these boards, however, there is a "neutral person" who is elected from such socio-political circles that he, as a rule, turns out to be far from neutral, and casts his vote for the capitalists. The experience of struggle at Hoesch and other enterprises shows that job cuts cannot be prevented only through participation in management. The demand for nationalisation is now being ever more forcefully pressed. But it does not solve the basic problems either. Under the system of state-monopoly capitalism, trends favouring the capitalists have been

developing at the nationalised enterprises. The working class is ever more clearly aware that it is necessary to reduce the power of the concerns in the management of production and to switch it to democratic control. We, Communists, explain to the masses that nationalisation can only be meaningful if it is impossible to take decisions in the governing bodies of enterprises that cut across the interests of the workers.

The rightists in Greece, said Yiannis Theonas, are trying to distort the meaning of the swing to democratic development for which a majority of the people voted, and to split the forces involved to realise these goals. Our party believes that cohesion of the country's democratic forces is a most important matter. It seeks to force the government to fulfil its electoral promises. We are working to have the trade unions go beyond material problems and also make political demands, which is also essential from the standpoint of improving the working people's economic conditions. The CP Greece has emphasised the need to nationalise the basic industries, to give the workers a genuine say in the management of production, and in formulating a programme for the development of the whole Greek economy.

Returning to the question of nationalising large-scale industry, said Aloyse Bisdorff, I should like to describe how our proposals on this score were worked out. When the crisis situation developed in the steel industry and proved to be protracted, the danger arose that some enterprises might be closed down and the workers thrown out into the street. The ARBED concern threatened them precisely with such a prospect and demanded funds .

from the government to right the situation and ensure the preservation of jobs. The government, the trade union and the concern hammered out agreements under which the industrialists were given large government financial subsidies provided they guaranteed 16,500 jobs and carried out an employment and labour productivity programme. The Communists warned that the agreement would not be fulfilled. They stressed that this money was going to a private enterprise without any guarantees, and that the working people will subsequently have no control over these funds. That is exactly what happened: the money disappeared in the concern's strong room, and no one knows how it has been spent. We decided that the time had come to declare: if state funds are to be invested in the steel industry in such amounts, the state must itself decide how they are to be used.

Let us note that the financial subsidies are so large that they are double the concern's fixed capital--that is the kind of amounts that are involved. And the trade union leaders are also coming to realise ever more clearly that if we want to guarantee employment in the steel industry we must put an end to the present strategy of the concern, because it conflicts with the national interests. ARBED invests its capital in the industry of Brazil, South Korea and other countries, while in our country the basic industry is faced with the threat of disappearance. Considering that 20 per cent of Luxembourg's active population is employed in the steel industry, that it provides employment for 60 per cent of the railway workers, etc., one can easily imagine the serious and truly national scale of the problem.

The timeliness of the demands put forward by the Communists is confirmed by the fact that over the next few months there could be a strong shift of accent in the allocation of capital in our industry. The entrepreneurs intend to make a 30 per cent new stock issue, and these could well end up in the possession of foreigners, so that we shall have nothing to nationalise. It is this situation that induces the working class and the trade unions to realise the need for nationalisation and the support of our demands. How these appear in detail can be seen from a pamphlet issued by the party, which we regard as the basis for discussion.³

Other comrades here have said that public ownership is the alternative to the transnationals' economic strategy. I agree with this, said Bert Ramelson. We all want the public sector to grow. But I want to note that there should still be no illusions on this score. The problem of unemployment will not disappear even if industry is in the hands of the state. In Britain, our steel industry was nationalised nearly 30 years ago. However, the volume of output has dropped by roughly 20 per cent. Look at the industries which suffer most from unemployment: steel, the railways and other types of transport. But they were all nationalised. Of course, we have had some contradictory processes: nationalisation, denationalisation, renationalisation, etc. I repeat that we want the state sector to grow and expand to the maximum, because then it would be easier for us

³ See Eng nei Stol-Politik! d'Virschlei vun de Kommunisten fir d'Nationaliseierung vun der ARBED.

to put pressure on the government. But nationalisation alone will not solve the problem. There is a need to work out a programme including the points which indicate what the state has to do from then on. The Marxist classics, you will recall, said that public ownership did not provide a solution for the working people's problems, but merely held out the possibility of such a solution.⁴

Rudolf Streiter spoke / about his approach in greater detail. In Austria, he said, there is evidence of the growing influence of foreign capital. According to the latest data, almost 420,000 workers and employees, i.e., 21 per cent of wage-working Austrians, are employed at nearly 3,500 enterprises under its control. Foreigners control 71 per cent of the electric industry, 62 per cent of the insurance companies, and 50 per cent of the trade. In view of the limited scale of its own R and D, Austria tends to be ever more dependent on foreign capital. In order to obtain access to modern technology it turns out to be necessary in some industries to give foreign rivals who are in possession of the required technology the right to participate in turning out the product in our country. The result of this state of affairs is, in particular, that in 1981, 66 billion schillings were taken out of the country in the form of profits. Foreign concerns are invited to locate their enterprises here, and the advertising plays up the availability of cheap and skilled labour. These concerns are generously endowed by the government.

⁴ Frederick Engels, Anti-Dühring, p. 384.

The nationalised sector has an important place in the economy, for it offers the possibility of exerting an influence on it, to create new jobs and lines of production, and resist foreign penetration into industrial construction and research. But these opportunities are not used by our state. Instead of purposefully expanding the nationalised manufacturing industries, sizable funds are being invested in the enterprises with foreign participation. New lines of production are started mainly with the participation of transnational concerns.

The nationalised banks have an especially dangerous role to play in the promotion of private capital. They extend financial aid to Austrian enterprises only at a high rate of interest, although they have more than enough money. Instead of investing these funds directly in Austria, they use them for speculative purposes abroad.

It is not right, as other speakers have said here, to close one's eyes to the fact that the nationalised industry is a part of the capitalist economic system. The supervisory and other boards of state enterprises are packed with representatives of private capital, in whose interest it is to cut down the state sector, to weaken it or to hand it over to foreign capital. This is exemplified by the fact that with the assistance of the government and the trade unions, Austria's nationalised electro-technical industry has been largely subordinated to the West German Siemens concern.

In order to convert the nationalised industry into a real bulwark of the working class monopoly capital and its representatives must be removed from the management of its enterprises.

Workers and employees must have a real say in the management of production and the taking of responsible decisions. But what do we find in practice?

This right has been virtually brought to naught. Let us note that trade union dues are usually deducted by the accounting department from the payroll, thereby excluding direct contacts between trade union members and their organisation. Trade union conferences are frequently held in such a way as to adopt only those decisions which have been framed in advance by the majority faction, which, as a rule, means Social Democrats, without any consideration of the proposals and arguments put forward at the conference itself. The policy of the Austrian Trade Unions Federation boils down to converting the production councils, which should represent the workers' interests, into organs of control over the workers, and into an instrument for conducting the leadership's policy. Trade union members are effectively deprived of the democratic right to elect the governing body. Political decisions are taken by a handful of persons belonging to the top trade union leadership. So we have here a set of interrelated problems which require a complex solution.

Luxembourg's trade unions, Fernand Hubsch said, have succeeded in getting their delegates on the supervisory boards of major companies of multinational corporations. But there are a great many obstacles to the workers' actual participation in management. The law, in particular, binds members of supervisory boards to keep production matters secret, so that the workers' representatives are unable to use their knowledge and information to mobilise

the working people, all of which erodes the front of struggle. Nevertheless, we stand for participation in management, which we regard as an intermediate stage in the struggle, and insist on parity participation.

Consequently, present-day practices confirm the fact that nationalisation can of itself cater for capital. The same can be said about participation in management. This question arises: is not the restructuring of economic relations--both that which is connected with the prospect of democratic transformations and that which constitutes the basis of socialist transformations in the economy--a coherent process including both socialisation (nationalisation) of the means of production and an enhancement of the role of those who make direct use of these means of production? Are not these two organically connected aspects of one and the same process?

A broader approach will take us to the problem of politisation of the trade union struggle, which is an important aspect of the Communists' strategy. But let us first consider a new problem which has a direct bearing on this.

Facing the Problem of War and Peace

The attitude to the problems of preserving peace and to the mass anti-war movement which has now acquired unprecedented proportions is one of the most important issues facing the trade unions, and it was naturally discussed by the participants in the symposium.

The working-class and trade union movement in the FRG has always regarded itself simultaneously as a movement in defence of peace, said Lothar Schüssler. This tradition implies a high political responsibility, which now falls on the trade unions. The task is, undoubtedly, to remove the danger of a thermonuclear war, which could incinerate all life on the globe. That is why the prime duty of the working class in the FRG is resolute struggle against the deployment of NATO medium-range missiles on the country's territory.

A number of trade unions have passed resolutions urging revocation of the decision on the installation of such missiles in the FRG. Among them are the unions of metalworkers, workers in commerce, banks and insurance companies, printers, teachers and woodworkers. Thousands of trade unionists took part in peace marches / ^{and} the rallies on those occasions were addressed by trade union activists and leaders.

There is a growing understanding among the working people of the interconnection between the arms race and the social dismantling. Indicative in this respect is a demonstration by 70,000 workers held in Stuttgart in November 1981. It was followed by numerous demonstrations on a smaller scale across the country. However, much still needs to be done to develop cooperation between the working-class movement and the peace movement.

Elaborating on the idea, Aloyse Bisdorff said that the Communists should set themselves the task of providing more in-depth explanation in the trade union movement of the problems in ensuring peace. In that movement we still find the widespread

view that any job is a boon, regardless of whether it is a military plant or a rolling mill. It is the Communists' duty to show, on the basis of scientific analysis, that spending on the arms industry and the armed forces do not create jobs, but, on the contrary, lead to their reduction, and that the growth of employment in this sector does not create any additional product but merely generates inflation. Consequently, the trade union movement should be more actively involved in the movement for peace.

As for Britain, Bert Ramelson said, our trade unions have a high level of political consciousness. The miners, for instance, have a key role to play not only in the struggle for the solution of economic problems, but last year held for the first time an international peace conference to which trade unions from capitalist and socialist countries were invited. When the US trade unions declared that their representatives would not attend if delegates from the Soviet Union do, the miners replied: "Right, stay home. It is our business whom to invite. We shall not tolerate anyone dictating some kind of conditions to us." It is a pleasure to realise that there is such a development. A world trade union conference on the socio-economic aspects of disarmament was held in Paris, and its convocation was initiated by the British trade union leaders who took part in the World Parliament of the Peoples for Peace in Sofia. The British miners have decided to hold annual conferences in support of peace.

All the participants in the symposium spoke about the preservation of peace and it was the general view that much still remains to be done to give the trade unions a deeper understanding of the

problem and to invigorate their struggle against the arms race, and for detente and peace.

The Communists' Strategy

The communist parties' approach to the problems facing the trade unions was evident in all the statements by the participants in the symposium, whatever the subject they dealt with. But some aspects of the Communists' strategy were specifically brought out.

In the period of exacerbating crisis, the party's ideological work acquires especial importance, said Lothar Schussler. It helps the workers to understand the causes of the crisis and to put forward real alternative to capitalist development.

In the class battles of the past, the German CP has worked out a number of short-term programmes for mobilising the working people and for making their action more purposeful. In doing so, we seek to go beyond the purely urgent problems, always pointing out that the Communists tie in their solution with the struggle for their main goal--socialism.

At the same time, we, Communists, who are a part of the FRG working class, value every mark, every right which has been wrested from the employers and from the government despite the efforts of reaction. In the class battles, the workers gain experience and come to see more clearly the limitations of the present system. These battles help to raise the self-awareness of the masses and to generate the forces which will be capable of vanquishing capitalism and establishing a social system ensuring a social basis for conducting a policy of peace, certainty in the future, and improvement of living and working conditions.

The GCP's Programme declares that it opposes any attempts to use the trade unions as a "disciplinary factor" for the defence of the capitalist system and as an instrument for tying them through "social partnership" ideology to big capital and for subordinating them to government policy based on its interests. For our party, the cooperation of the political and trade union working-class movement signifies support of militant action by the trade unions and the mustering of public solidarity with their demands.

Observing the growth of the working people's consciousness, we regard it as a factor helping to intensify our struggle, a factor for joint action--including action by Communists and Social Democrats--on a common platform. It confirms our conviction that in our conditions the trade unions must pursue an autonomous policy. Autonomy is just now being hotly debated in the trade unions, and the concept itself implies not only formal independence of political parties, not only organisational independence, but also that the interests of the working class must be definitive in trade union action.

In the recent period, spokesmen for capital have once again circulated the legend of "communist infiltration" of the trade unions. They have issued warnings against the growing influence of Marxist ideas on the working class and the consolidation of the positions of those who take a consistent stand in defence of the workers' interests. A pamphlet with the characteristic title "The Legend of Communist Infiltration", issued by the Board of the Metal Workers' Union, exposes the behind-the-scene

developments in this campaign. It shows that whenever the class battles become more acute, big capital always tries to split the working-class movement. Chairman of the GCP Harbert Mies said the following in an interview about these lying accusations: "This fairy tale is not an original one at all. The enemies of the working-class movement always come up with it when they feel that their dominant positions are being jeopardised or when they want to cover up the specially tough measures which are aimed to worsen the working people's condition. For us, Communists, trade union autonomy has been not just a slogan but a real goal of our party's policy since 1968, that is, since its foundation. We believe--and this is written into our programme--that we have need of strong, united and independent trade unions in the future as well."⁵

Let us bear in mind that Social Democrats, said Aloyse Bisdorff, have the leading role to play in the trade union movement of many capitalist countries. Which way is the situation changing and how should we resist a growth of their influence? It could lead to a situation in which the social democratic parties will use the trade unions to ensure their place in government and then to continue the same policy which the bourgeois parties had conducted. In Luxembourg, it has already become something of a tradition that former trade union leaders are given ministerial posts when the ruling coalition is formed. But we are also aware

⁵ See Nachrichten zur Wirtschafts--und Sozialpolitik, Frankfurt/M., May 1981, p. 14.

of the tremendous importance of trade union unity and cooperation between Socialists and Communists in ^{the} / trade unions. Here are some contradictions and great difficulties, and they must be flexibly and circumspectly overcome in practice. The CP Luxembourg proceeds from the need for unity of action together with a principled struggle against opportunism, which does harm to the working-class movement.

We have before us a set of problems related to trade union work. In order to set forth its views concerning the various aspects of trade union activity, notably in economic policy, the CP Luxembourg has proposed to the trade union leadership to meet for a conversation. It is to be hoped that this will provide an impetus for invigorating the activity of the trade unions.

In the conditions now prevailing in Greece, said Yiannis Theonas, the Communist Party must take new steps to rally a majority of the population round our banners and to raise the working people's mass movement. This movement can put pressure on government policy and make the authorities alter their course towards genuine democracy. Relying on the more favourable starting positions, the working class now has the possibility of fighting for its economic, cultural and social demands with the use of the positive elements of government policy. We believe that the most important tasks are the following.

First, use of new opportunities, exercise of trade union and democratic freedoms on the shopfloor, more ^{vigorous} / activity by the working people and the trade unions, and political activity in industry and in the state institutions.

Second, full democratisation and a renewal of the country's trade union movement. The class-conscious forces must be mobilised for struggle against the agents of the employers and against the government's attempts to meddle in the activity of the free trade unions and against the danger of an ideological split in the movement. On the other hand, there is a need to fight PASOK's intentions to use the trade unions for its own purposes. The prime minister once spoke out against their independence and politicisation. He called on his associates to penetrate into the trade unions and there to defend the government, which wants to convert the trade unions into a mainstay of its policy within the working class so effectively establishing a governmental trade union movement. That is something we cannot accept.

Third, formulation by the working-class movement of Greece of its own policy and strategy to realise social, economic and political demands and create the prerequisites paving the way for socialism. These problems were given special attention at the 10th Congress of the CP Greece.

The Communists of our country, said Rudolf Streiter, are acting within the Austrian Trade Union Federation as a part of the Left Trade Union Bloc. They hold responsible posts on the central boards of sectoral trade unions and have their representatives on the federal board and also on the Federation's women's committee. The Left Trade Union Bloc is represented in

the Association by a secretary.⁶ Besides, members of the Left Trade Union Bloc hold elective trade union posts at many enterprises and also in district and Länder bodies. The Left Trade Union Bloc is the only group within the Association which defends the workers' interests from class positions and makes use of all the opportunities provided by the trade unions for doing so. Thanks to the initiatives and militancy of the Left Trade Union Bloc we succeeded in the past, with the support of other progressive forces, in putting through a number of reforms in labour legislation and social policy. But one has to say that the growing productivity of labour has far outstripped the achieved level of social benefits.

The Left Trade Union Bloc believes that its main task at the present stage of the struggle is to preserve jobs. It has worked out and proposed, as an alternative to the government policy and the present economic situation, a five-point programme containing demands for the solution of economic problems, above all the problem of job provision. This programme must be set forth in concrete terms in accordance with the specific conditions of each enterprise, each district and each Land, so providing the basis for joint action. The effects of the crisis tend to increase the discontent and disappointment among broad circles of workers with the social democratic government's policy. Hence the new opportunities for joint action by workers--Socialists, Communists and non-party people. Realisa-

⁶ He is Comrade Streiter.--Ed.

tion of our far-reaching demands will depend on the extent to which this unity is achieved.

In January 1982, the Communist Party of Denmark held a major conference on trade union work with the participation of Communist shop stewards representing the trade unions, Mogens Höwer said. It was attended by 1,350 delegates, and this in itself shows that it is the Communists who have proposed a constructive alternative to the reformist line of the leadership of the Danish trade union movement. The conference formulated the basic demands which are to be put forward in the course of the 1983 wage-rate bargaining. As for the party's tasks, it was emphasised at the conference that within the framework of the trade union struggle there is an alternative to the reformist and conciliatory line of the trade union leadership and the bourgeois government's policy; the Communists' main task in the trade union movement is to secure unity of action in the struggle for this alternative.

There is now evidence of a new upsurge in the trade union struggle, together with a growth of the strike movement and other action. The Communists are taking part in it on the basis of joint action. This has already yielded positive results, but there are also some difficulties.

Our activity is made more difficult above all by the mass unemployment, which tends to produce in the working class a mood of hopelessness and despair, and also by the rampant anti-communism, which resorts to ever more tricky methods. The parties of the "left wing" made extensive use in the latest

electoral campaign of slogans for "pure socialism", "socialism with a human face", and so on, with the consequent distancing from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. In these efforts they were, of course, supported by all the other anti-communists. The CP Denmark did not tread the path leading away from the positions of proletarian internationalism for the sake of achieving a short-lived success. We believe that there are enough examples to show that those who abandon these positions very soon find themselves in a dead-end.

The CP Great Britain has formulated an alternative economic and political strategy, said Bert Ramelson. The trade union movement and the Labour Party have accepted the basic points of this strategy. But accepting the demands contained in a programme and implementing them is far from being the same thing. In contrast to many who approve the proposed course, we believe that our alternative programme is only a part of the struggle to change the balance of forces within the country and within the framework of the capitalist system as a whole. We regard extra-parliamentary struggle as the main means that could force the government to fulfil at least a part of the demands of this programme and guarantee that a left Labour government in practice demonstrates its adherence to these goals.

And here is yet another question connected with the politicisation of the trade unions and their autonomy. There has recently been a broad discussion of the idea that the trade unions could act as a political party, and the Association

of German Trade Unions is cited as an example. I came across a book about them which is called "Fourth Party?". Do we not truly find in the capitalist countries a specific situation in which the trade unions have come to put less trust in political parties and in a sense seek to take over their functions?

I think that the trade unions will never be able to become a political party. Why not? Because by nature the trade unions are open to one and all, and they have never had a common political, ideological approach, and they have never been ideologically homogeneous. But that does not mean that there is no need to politicise the trade unions, and that they should not fight for political programmes expressing class positions, programmes which direct the whole movement to supporting the revolutionary political party. There is no contradiction here. I believe that the trade unions must be independent of political parties, otherwise they will cease to be universal, and will cease to serve the interests of all the workers regardless of political or ideological orientation, something that could result in splits, disagreements and the emergence of a multiplicity of trade union centres. It is another matter that we should like the Communists working in the trade unions to convince trade union members to accept our standpoint and to induce them to accept the policy we propose.

The participants in the conference, notably L. Schüssler, M. Höwer, A. Bisdorff and Yiannis Theonas raised a number of other important problems: invigoration of the Communists' work with non-unionised working people, among unemployed, among foreign working people and others. The participants in the

symposium believe that exchanges of experience in such activity would be useful in the future as well.

Summing up some of the results of the symposium, Bert Ramelson, WMR Editorial Board member, said:

Our meeting showed how many new and complicated problems have arisen before the trade union movement in the recent period, and that it has not yet been able to find a solution for all of them. The positive thing is--and this is evident from all the speeches--that the trade unions are aware of the acuteness of these problems and are getting down to seeking solution for them.

History teaches that, far from eliminating the working people's problems, class collaboration, in effect, helps to fortify the positions and the confidence of the employer class. Class collaboration, social partnership--even under a left-orientation government, if policy is still effected within the framework of the capitalist system--tends to harm the working class, which is why the trade unions must use the most diverse forms of struggle which should help them to fulfil their basic mission. The key to this is unity of the working class and international solidarity. If entrepreneurs operate on a global scale, the working people, too, must fight back on a global scale.

What is the Communists' role and responsibility in these conditions? We all agree that their task is to accelerate the spread among the masses of the idea of unity of action, of international solidarity, of struggle. That is the only way along which effective and crucial progress of the working-class movement is possible.

PENDİKALAR

Mr 83

ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN SOCIALIST CHANGES

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The construction of the new society is a complex, multifaceted, creative process. It demands joint efforts by all classes and social groups, which participate in this process through many organisations representing their interests in it. Each new stage of a socialist change sets new tasks and this finds reflection in the activity of these organisations, occasionally in a modification of their roles. All this calls for a principled Marxist-Leninist estimation of ongoing developments and for the formulation of a correct position meeting today's exigencies.

The trade unions hold a prominent place among the mass organisations of socialist countries. They group the absolute majority of working people and exert tremendous influence on the construction of mature, developed socialism, a system characterised by real people's democracy, an advanced economy and a high living standard, a society meeting man's every material and spiritual requirement. In the German Democratic Republic they are united in the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (CFGTU), whose membership exceeds nine million, or over 97 per cent of all blue and white collar workers and intellectuals.

A militant associate of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the CFGTU defends workers' interests and strives for social progress shoulder to shoulder with the party and under its leadership.

With the Party and the State

Trade unions are seen by Marxism-Leninism as the connecting link between the vanguard party of the working class and the masses. Explaining this function of the unions, Lenin wrote that they "are a link between the vanguard and the masses, and by their daily work bring conviction to the masses, the masses of the class which alone is capable of taking us from capitalism to communism".¹

How the working class exercises its leading role in the transformation of society depends largely on the nature of relations between the proletarian party and the trade unions. This is why its class enemies would like to sever or loosen the link between the trade unions and the communist party.

It is highly important to approach this matter from a principled standpoint. The foundations of this approach were laid by Marx and Engels, who devoted much attention to the trade unions in their theoretical writings and political activity. They evolved these foundations in struggle against bourgeois and reformist concepts designed to divert the unions from the objectives of a thorough transformation of society and to restrict their activity to purely economic problems.

¹ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 32, pp. 20-21.

"If the Trades' Unions are required for the guerrilla fights between capital and labour," Marx wrote to the delegates of the Provisional Central Council of the International Association of Workers to the Geneva Congress (1866), "they are still more important as organised agencies for superseding the very system of wages labour and capital rule... Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberately as organising centres of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction."²

Marx's mandate is still valid. In examining the problem of establishing proletarian rule and the historical mission of the proletariat, Marx defined the tasks facing the trade unions in this connection as follows:

- the trade unions must be made a true mass organisation of the whole working class;
- the unity of the working class can only be achieved by enlisting the active participation of the trade unions in the struggle for the ultimate goal, the construction of a socialist society;
- the main condition for any trade union work is to combine economic with political struggles.

It is only on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist conception of the nature of relations between the party and the trade unions that the working class can accomplish its historical mission. The party of the working class equips it with the doctrine of

² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, Vol 2, p. 83.

scientific communism. It paves the way to the new society for the working people, unites them and instils socialist consciousness into their minds. This is the basis on which the unity of goal and action of the party and the trade unions forms and the leading role of the party becomes established.

Ernst Thälmann, outstanding leader of the CPG in the twenties and thirties, stressed in applying the ideas of Marx and Engels in party policy that the trade unions are the best vehicle through which the proletariat can be won over and that the Communists must regard the unions as one of their most important spheres of activity among the masses. He called on Communists not to confine themselves to formulating theoretical propositions but to work hard for their realisation.

Continuing the cause of their great predecessors and learning the lessons of history, the Communists of the GDR strove steadfastly for the unity of the working class and the communist and working-class movement. In the GDR this was achieved as a result of forming a united Marxist-Leninist party of the working class and integrated trade unions.³ Ever since then qualitatively new relations have been shaping between the party and the unions. They were finalised by the Third CFGTU Congress (1950) in programme documents recognising the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist party as the conscious vanguard of the working class. The trade unions declared their firm adherence to the

³ The SUPG was formed in 1946 by merging the Communist and Social Democratic parties of Germany on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. The CFGTU was founded in 1945.--Ed.

platform of Marxism-Leninism and stated in their constitution that their goal is to build a socialist society in the GDR, a state in which power is in the hands of the working class and whose policy is aimed at ensuring peace and democracy and safeguarding the workers' interests. In line with their explicit class position, they confirmed their loyalty to proletarian internationalism and friendship with the Soviet Union.

Those were decisions of the greatest political moment. Only five years had passed since the defeat of fascism and there still were leaders in the country who tried to serve imperialist interests. Arguing that the CFGTU must maintain "political neutrality", they wanted to distract it from the revolutionary struggle for the objectives of the working class. In fact, they used the demand for "truly free" and "independent" unions as a cover for posing the CFGTU against the party. However, their efforts fell through. It was the Leninist approach that prevailed. This approach implies that under the new system there is no room for trade unions which see their "freedom" and "independence" in dodging responsibility and refusing to show initiative when tasks in socialist construction set by the state must be fulfilled.⁴

This has always been our approach. There can be no opposition between the communist party and the trade unions in a socialist state. The policy of the party, the 10th SUPG Congress (1981) re-emphasised, is aimed at strengthening socialism and

⁴ See V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.32, pp. 20-21.

worker-peasant power, raising the people's standard of living, promoting their social security and giving them confidence in the future. In international relations, its chief aim is to preserve durable peace. This policy fully meets the workers' hopes and aspirations. Therefore the effort of the trade unions for its implementation is the most reliable and most effective way of serving the workers' interests. In turn, the 10th CFCTU Congress (1982) confirmed that the free German trade unions see the substance of their tasks in being a school of socialism, initiators of socialist emulation and exponents of the interests of the working class.

It is not without reason that our trade unions are called free. Their free status is defined by Article 44 of the Constitution of the GDR, which reads: "The trade unions shall be free. No one shall have a right to restrict their activity or raise obstacles to it."⁵ This is also the case in socio-political practice. It must be stressed again, however, that independence does not imply political neutrality of the trade unions. We stand firmly by the party and relations between us are based on full mutual confidence and understanding. The policy of the SUPG always proceeds from the fact that the unions are an autonomous organisation having responsibilities of its own. Most trade unionists are non-party people. But the party exerts guiding influence on CFCTU affiliates through the Communists taking part in their activity. In accordance with the Leninist provisions

⁵ Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin, 1974, p. 37.

of its Constitution, the party binds all its members to work actively in the unions. Their task is to spell out the policy of the party, set people an example of steadfastly putting it into practice, win the workers' confidence and invariably justify it by deeds. This work of the Communists permits of no petty tutelage or say-so.

The party is certain that socialism can only be built with the participation of strong and active trade unions and it supports all their initiatives. Close alliance with the SUPG and the party's help and guidance are an earnest of fruitful activity by/ ^{the} Confederation. This is why we heard with deep satisfaction the estimation of the trade unions made by Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the CC SUPG, in his address to the 10th CFGTU Congress. "The trade unions," he said, "hold a solid place in our socialist society and do it most efficiently... There is reason to say that the successes registered in building socialism in our country were only made possible by the active cooperation of the CFGTU."⁶

Relations between the trade unions and the socialist state, like those between them and the party, are based on a common class position, since power in the GDR and the principal means of production belong to the working people and the CFGTU is a mass organisation of theirs. Hence a fundamental coincidence of the objectives of the state and the unions and of the tasks which they must fulfil. This also explains why under socialism the

⁶ Erich Honecker, "Zu aktuellen Fragen der Innen- und Aus-senpolitik", Protokoll des 10. FDGB-Kongresses, Berlin, 1982, p. 91.

unions are not only builders of the economy but forces of the state, as Lenin put it.⁷

We are developing our system above all by perfecting socialist democracy, whose essence is steadily increasing participation of the working people in the management of all social changes. They also participate in it through the trade unions, whose right to influence economic activities and social processes in the country is guaranteed by the Constitution of the republic. In so important an area of social policy, for instance, as determination of the ratio between production results and wages, the unions play a very important role by making proposals, participating in the drafting of relevant decisions and helping carry them out. It goes without saying that the unions' ample powers are inseparable from their obligations to the state, whose fulfilment, too, benefits the people as a whole.

The workers take part in economic management beginning with the enterprise, using meetings, the discussion of plans and social^{emulation}ist/commitments, worker control over production and the sphere of social security, and many other forms of trade union activity.

Socialist democracy finds its simplest and most direct expression in what workers say at union meetings in the way of proposals, suggestions and criticisms. The large number of these and their seriousness are evidence of the members' confidence in their trade union organisation. Elected union bodies and their members heed and respect the opinion of the union rank and file.

⁷ See V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 32, p. 119.

Not one question or proposal coming from a worker must be left unanswered. To be sure, some suggestions call for more than can be done at the given moment. However, union officers must in any case explain why a suggestion is premature. Attention to the worker's opinion is an inviolable rule of our activity.

That our trade unions contribute actively to the advancement of socialist democracy is illustrated by their role in perfecting and maintaining socialist law and order. In conformity with their constitutional powers, the unions propose legislation, participate in the drafting of legal acts and organise public control over the enforcement of labour laws. Indeed, they have drafted the new Labour Code. After an extensive public discussion of the draft in which 5.8 million people joined, making over 147,000 proposals and criticisms, the Ninth CFGTU Congress (1977) recommended this fundamental document to the People's Chamber for approval. The Labour Code helps bring more working people into the process of promoting socialist democracy and the social security of the working man.

The trade unions have also contributed their share to the drafting of many other standard-setting acts on working conditions and people's everyday lives.

The solid labour legislation enacted in collaboration with the CFGTU enables the unions to effectively maintain the interests of their members primarily where they work. Socialism has given the German trade unions unprecedented powers and our fundamental position is that we must unfailingly respect all laws and legal norms. After all, every law is an expression of power, which

in the socialist state belongs to the people, hence the more strictly we abide by our laws, the more we help the people exercise their power.

The unions and the state cooperate just as actively through people's representative bodies. The CFGTU is entitled to put up its candidates for election not only to communal, district, city and area assemblies but to the People's Chamber. Its group in the People's Chamber was formed as far back as 1949, when the Chamber convened for the first time, and now ranks second in numerical strength after the SUPG group.⁸ There are 33,396 deputies and 13,450 candidate deputies to people's assemblies put forward by the CFGTU. We do our best to keep in contact with the electorate and work collectives through them, explaining the policy of the party, the state and the trade unions and deriving new incentives to improve our own work and perfect the whole system of socialist democracy.

For the People's Good, for the Good of Man

The condition of workers and other working people changes radically under socialism. Once an exploited class denied the right to dispose over the means of production, they become masters of the state and owners of enterprises and natural resources. Their view on how to seek a better life changes completely. The workers think primarily of how best to use social property, that is, their own patrimony, in order to achieve in a given set of

⁸ The People's Chamber comprises nine groups representing various parties and unions.--Ed.

circumstances maximum results benefiting all. This is the only approach if socialist society is to prosper, and the only basis on which everyone's life can improve. The trade unions of the GDR have always seen one of their key tasks in making clear that one can only consume what has been produced. They do everything to help increase the production of material values.

It is now clearer to us than ever how intimately the processes of building up the economic potential, raising material and cultural standards of life and safeguarding peace are interconnected. Pride of place in this set belongs to the problem of keeping up a high and dynamic growth rate of the country's economic power. Its solution must follow the main line of the economic strategy defined by the 10th SUPG Congress: increasing production intensification; improving the ratio between the contribution made to the common effort and the results it produces; bringing about a substantial upturn in the productivity, efficiency and quality of labour, which must be achieved primarily by rapid scientific and technological progress and competent application of its discoveries. In the process, it is most important to save raw and other materials and energy. In other words, the economy must be economical.

The 10th CPGUTU Congress said explicitly that the trade unions of the GDR consider it their vital concern to help implement the party's strategic line. We set out to contribute our share with optimism and confidence in our strength, seeing the decisive guarantee of success in the indestructible unity of the party and the people, the sustained creative effort of our people,

their initiative, the use of the advantages of socialism and close cooperation with the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries.

The trade unions make their chief contribution to the advancement of the economy, in line with the policy adopted by the party and the state, by organising socialist emulation, a movement which goes on under a tried and tested slogan showing everyone the aim of his effort and ways of attaining it: "Achieve a high growth level of the economy by raising the productivity, efficiency and quality of labour. Everything for the good of the people and peace."

The new demands made of economic activity induce us to respect the Leninist principles of socialist emulation still more strictly, to carry it on in a lively and concrete manner and without formalism. This presupposes exacting yet realistic commitments and provision of the prerequisites of meeting them. The latter depends largely on the management. Comradely cooperation between the trade union committee and the management--a cooperation that does not shun constructive, business-like arguments between the two sides--is necessary if the emulation movement is to be organised effectively, and so are publicity and the possibility of comparing results and repeating the best achievements on a mass scale. Material and moral inducements for winners and the provision of proper working and living conditions for participants in the emulation movement mean a great deal. All this is needed to achieve big and results in production; it encourages innovation and is a spur for effort to maintain order and discipline and for the enforcement of safety rules at every work place.

We make a point of ensuring that young people use their energies in socialist emulation. The formation of youth teams and the assignment of construction projects to these teams (the trade unions collaborate with the Free German Youth League in this matter) have proved to be an exceptionally valuable initiative. They help the younger generation evolve a creative attitude to their work, show perseverance in labour and approach it with a sense of responsibility, all of which is part of communist morality. Based on mutual confidence and the party's ideals, cooperation between old and young is one of the lasting traditions of the German revolutionary working-class and trade union movement. We want every trade union organisation to be a school of socialism and communism for youth, with its every member contributing his share to the communist education of young people.

Socialist emulation makes it possible to foster the working people's economic initiative and extend their participation in economic planning and management in an all-round and effective way. Consequently, it helps carry forward socialist democracy and strengthen the leading role of the working class in society. It is also an important means of inculcating a conscientious attitude to labour and the property of the people, encouraging a committed approach to life and inducing readiness to give the country all one's energies, that is, doing what is typical of the new man, a member of socialist society.

Economic development in our country is inseparable from fulfilment of our social programme. This unity is a powerful motor of social progress. The working people satisfy themselves

by experience that conscientious work benefits society as a whole and every one of its members and that economic progress is dialectically connected with better working and living conditions and a rising standard of life. The greater the achievements of the economy, the more the people's working and living conditions improve and the more their material and spiritual requirements are satisfied. All this, in turn, prompts them to work better and show more initiative. It is not for nothing that the proportion of initiatives, rationalisation proposals and discoveries contributing to the economic strength of our state has been growing.

The chief meaning of the social programme of the GDR is to give people greater social security and confidence in the future. People are guaranteed--with deeds and not with words alone--the right to life, work, education, participation in the planning and management of all social processes, rest and leisure, a stable income and medical care. Mothers and children, old and sick people can rest assured that they will be cared for.

The trade unions regard fulfilment of the social programme as one of their duties. The CFGTU approaches this task with a keen sense of responsibility. It influences the fulfilment of every provision of the programme, doing this in strict accordance with principle.

Take, for example, the problem of wages. We consider that the socialist principle of payment according to work must be fully respected. People's standard of living should rise primarily on the basis of earnings provided by labour, according to the contribution made to the effort of the whole country.

We believe the role of wages as an incentive should be increased if they are to help us influence more noticeably qualitative factors for economic growth, productivity and discipline.

Application of the principle of payment according to work for educational ends is a highly topical matter but an equally topical question is how to join together material incentives and moral and ideological inducements. We invariably adhere to the principle of solving problems of pay together with the workers themselves (this must be pointed out specially). Our approach is clear: we must proceed in a way benefiting society in general and every worker in particular.

The unions are prompted by similar considerations in distributing housing. Homes are built on a large scale in the republic. From 1971 to 1980, one in every four inhabitants improved his housing conditions. Needless to say, people's housing conditions influence many things, such as their work, their desire to acquire higher skills, their commitment in public life and their family relations. Trade union housing commissions have a big say in the distribution of housing. They make recommendations, supervise adherence to existing regulations and see to it that better housing is assigned primarily to workers' families.

Our state does much for its citizens' health, which it considers a great asset. In this matter, too, the trade unions are its foremost assistant. They direct the system of social insurance, which encompasses 90 per cent of the population. Under people's rule this system, being carried forward according

to plan, has become a socio-political institution through which the working class socially insures all working people and pensioners as well as their families, giving them confidence in the future. The socialist state guarantees appropriations for social insurance. In the 1971-1982 period they increased from 4.6 to nearly 14 billion marks and as for social insurance services, their volume grew more than two-fold. Yet the amount of working people's contributions to the insurance fund is the same as 30 years ago.

The CFGTU is the chief organiser of holiday facilities. In 1982 the unions distributed 4.7 million health resort vouchers among their members. The number of family boarding-houses and Young Pioneers' camps is growing. We see to it that holidays and recreation also help people extend their horizons and add to their general culture. The unions carry on large-scale cultural education and do much to promote physical culture and sports.

The activities of socialist trade unions are varied but their chief object, common to the policy of the party and the state, is expressed by the formula "Everything for the workers' good". We strive to bring the policy of the party--the policy of the working class--home to everyone, to ensure that the majority of our people join actively in implementing it. The CFGTU assists the party in its ideological and political education work. The unions' entire effort in the workers' interests is, in effect, proof of the correctness of the road chosen by the party. Nevertheless, life constantly raises new, very acute problems and what is more, each of these problems, however ordinary,

has to do in one way or another with key problems of home and foreign policy. This means that to find the right solution, we must have a proper insight into the objective laws of social development and into the connection between the future and today's requirements. The trade unions use every means at their disposal to impart a socialist world view to their members and to encourage them to adopt an active attitude to life. Ideals become a motor of social advance only when translated into reality.

The welfare of peoples and of every person today depends primarily on whether humanity will succeed in preventing a nuclear disaster and preserving world peace. This is a problem affecting the existence of the present generation and, indeed, of future generations.

There are now two clear-cut approaches to the issue of war and peace.

The United States and other NATO countries persist in the arms race, blocking in every way talks on the limitation and banning of nuclear arms and preparing to deploy medium-range and cruise missiles in Central Europe. US imperialism is pursuing a policy of sharp confrontation with the socialist states; it is obsessed by the idea of world domination and tries to perform a gendarme's role towards peoples fighting for liberation and social progress. The current crisis of capitalist countries is a consequence of the deterioration of economic and social contradictions inherent in the capitalist system and expressing themselves only too clearly in mass unemployment, inflation and poverty. This crisis is aggravating the international situation, which is now fraught with nuclear war.

In contrast with imperialism, the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist community advocate the preservation of peace, detente, international cooperation and disarmament on the principle of equal security. They are loyal to the policy of peaceful coexistence with all countries irrespective of their social and political systems. The initiatives of the Soviet Union and its allies in favour of disarmament and the preservation of peace are constructive. They have now been crowned with the proposal to sign a Treaty on the Mutual Non-Use of Military Force and on the Maintenance of Relations of Peace between the Warsaw Treaty and NATO countries. The proposal was made by the leaders of the socialist countries at the recent conference of the Political Consultative Committee in Prague.

This is the only road leading humanity to the prevention of a nuclear catastrophe. The trade unions of the socialist countries are deeply convinced of this and we hope that, in accordance with the demands of reason, trade unions on all continents will resolutely support the socialist peace strategy by their actions.

In common with the trade unions of the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries, the CFGTU does its best to contribute to the prestige of the World Federation of Trade Unions in the struggle for peace. Last year, on September 1 (date proclaimed Peace Day by the Tenth World Trade Union Congress), members of the CFGTU declared that they were resolved to fight with devotion for the preservation and safeguarding of peace. We seek greater cooperation in this field among all trade unions irrespective of their ideological orientation or their affiliation to this or that federation.

Socialism today is the chief factor for lasting international relations. By contributing to its strength, the working people of the GDR help consolidate peace. The creative labour of trade unionists for the good of their socialist state is, now as in the past, the most important contribution of the CFGTU to the solidity of the class positions of socialism--the antipode of the capitalist world--to the struggle for detente, against war and the arms race. By building up the economic potential of the GDR and improving the life of our people, we heighten the international prestige of the republic and increase the appeal of existing socialism.

The trade unions of the GDR are faced with inspiring tasks. We know that they will not be easy to accomplish. However, the CFGTU tackles them with confidence in its strength and with revolutionary vigour. The welfare of peoples, the welfare of man, and peace on earth have always been, and remain, the paramount aim of our effort.

FOR UNITY OF ACTION

Objectives of the International Trade Union
Movement TodaySandor Gaspar

President,

World Federation of Trade Unions

Never in the nearly forty-year history of the World Federation of Trade Unions had a meeting of workers been looked forward to with such interest, nor had it had so wide an international echo as the 10th World Trade Union Congress (Havana, February 10-16, 1982). And it was symbolic that this time the review of the largest mass organisations of the labour movement took place on the soil of the western hemisphere's first socialist country, on a continent where the workers of many countries are carrying on a grim struggle against exploitation and against imperialism, which flouts the interests of peoples.

The Congress owed its significance primarily to a tense international situation. Delegates' speeches and the documents adopted by it showed that the trade union movement realises the gravity of the war danger and the concomitant threat to the workers' socio-economic condition and that, on the other hand, there is reason to hope for the success of the fight against militarism.

An open and democratic debate furnished new evidence of approval of the Federation's consistent policy of organising joint actions by trade unions of different orientations. While there are still many obstacles to this, delegates put

it on record that a beginning had been made of real, solid unity of action based on working-class solidarity. The Havana Congress drew differing views on important issues closer together and proved that the WFTU is a mighty force in the world-wide movement for the interests of the workers and other employees, intellectuals, farmers and students.

The Congress demonstrated the Federation's ability to meet the economic and political challenge of the eighties. Its decisions gave the trade unions new strength and provided a guide to solving economic and social problems. They will enable us to curb the domination of transnationals, those international exploiters and contribute to social and economic progress in a way satisfying the people's everyday needs to a greater extent, and will help us put an end to the insane arms race.

Joint actions by the trade unions as a militant contingent of the world labour movement are the path to follow in order to eliminate poverty and hunger among millions, deliver the exploited in capitalist countries from social insecurity and defend the world from the threat of a nuclear war that would destroy all material and spiritual values and life itself throughout the planet. Hence the fundamental conclusion of the Congress, which decided that trade unions everywhere must search in common for solutions to the workers' common problems.

The delegations of the socialist countries were the most consistent in formulating the tasks of trade union organisations. Nor was this surprising, for the unions there have

achieved indisputable successes in defending the interests of the working people and their families, contributing to the construction of the new society, organising the masses and educating them in a socialist spirit. They have also done much to promote international relations on the basis of solidarity. All this gives their position weight even though the development of the countries where they are operating is not exempt from problems and the unions themselves will yet have to do much for effective defence of the working people's interests.

In socialist countries, the governments and the agencies in charge of the economy look on the trade unions primarily as partners enjoying equal rights with them. The state expects them to support its initiatives aimed at serving the good of the people and to help mobilise the workers for the fulfilment of plans. And it must be stressed that the goal of the governments of these countries is to continue perfecting the new, just society.

There is no ignoring, however, that economic difficulties may arise and socio-political stability may be upset even under socialism. Therefore, the interests of international trade union unity demand an answer to the following question: What new features does the trade union movement acquire in building socialism and what are the conclusions to be drawn from this?

The socialist world has the objective prerequisites of harmonious interaction of the state and its citizens as two components of the social system. To be sure, these prerequisites do not operate automatically, nor is the harmony complete. The extent of the latter depends on the specific aspects of the social and economic development of the country concerned.

Socialist society is not free of objective contradictions. But unlike previous social formations, socialism can cope with these contradictions and overcome objective and subjective difficulties.

An issue under discussion in the international trade union movement is that of the character of relations between the trade unions and the state in socialist countries. Experience has shown, however, that the phenomena which occasionally give rise to criticism are not a product of the principle of solidarity between the trade unions and the state but of mistakes in choosing ways and means of achieving it.

Thus the point at issue is not only the prerequisites of such solidarity but the actual ways of bringing it about. The important thing is that the trade unions, being well familiar with the condition, sentiments and aspirations of the working people, should formulate as autonomous organisations their own opinion on every specific question relating to socialist construction, correctly reflect the working people's interests, embody these interests in economic and social

programmes and effectively defend them at every level of public life. The purpose of trade union programmes is to find solutions to economic and social problems enabling the working people to enjoy to a maximum degree the benefits of putting state plans into practice.

As regards industrial capitalist countries, trade union work there goes on amid insoluble contradictions between exploited and exploiters. At present it is influenced by a critical situation in the economy. Besides, the pressure of unemployment and the rigid stand of the employers compel trade unions now and then to be careful in formulating their demands and choosing action methods.

The trade union movement in the capitalist world is undergoing big changes. It reacts to new developments in the social system (the accentuation of state monopoly forms, changes in the composition of society, etc.) by devising new working methods to resist the monopoly offensive and defend the interests of labour more effectively.

While defence of the working people's interests centres, now as in the past, on the enterprises, trade union activity cannot confine itself to the shop floor. It is now a question of the unions taking part in the formation of the productive forces, which are the basis for social policy. Their first duty in this respect is not merely to back or reject government measures but to work out programmes of their own proceeding from the workers' interests and capable of competing in realism and concreteness with the proposals of governments.

The social role and influence of trade unions have always depended on the degree of their militancy. In capitalist countries the employers seek an interrelation of the struggle between labour and capital, on the one hand, and their cooperation, on the other, such as will enable them to intensify exploitation. The workers resist this as they defend their positions. Many of them know that their "participation" in management, whatever its form, cannot eliminate the fundamental causes of social and economic tension, which affects their condition. Nevertheless, they do not reject this "participation", for it determines the scope of trade union struggle and creates greater opportunities for it.

Pressure on the trade unions in capitalist countries has increased of late; it is reminiscent in many respects of the pressure exerted in cold war years. In expressing and defending the interests of the employers--whether private monopolies or the capitalist state--the authorities want the unions to "swear allegiance" to the bourgeois system. A psychological war is unfolding against the left on the pretext of combating "terrorism". Greater efforts are made than before to discredit the WFTU and limit its sphere of influence.

With an eye to undermining the prestige of unions in which communist influence is considerable, bourgeois propaganda centres try to compromise communist ideals and activity. They misrepresent the place and role of the trade unions in socialist countries. While ignoring the indisputable achievements of these countries, they gamble on their real or alleged internal

problems. As for mistakes made in building socialism, they attribute them to what they describe as the "irremediable evils" of the social system.

A slander campaign is going on in the capitalist world against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as well as against progressive political alignments. By fomenting anti-Sovietism, defenders of the capitalist order want to prove that socialism has "failed" and that Marxist-Leninist thought has "worn out" its effectiveness. What they are after is to divert the working people's attention from the general crisis of capitalism, cause disappointment with socialism and rob the peoples fighting against backwardness and exploitation of the hope they derive from their faith in socialist ideals. It is regrettable that some leaders of the labour movement objectively help reactionary forces by making ill-advised statements.

Lackeys of the capitalist system stint no effort to undermine the trend towards the unity of the working people, whom they set on one another to split their trade unions and encourage the formation of so-called autonomous unions. Reactionary international and national trade union centres, primarily the AFL-CIO, are out to bring into being an alignment opposed to the revolutionary trade union movement and to use it for subversion against socialist countries and countries following a progressive path.

In the newly free countries, the working class is still weak. In those countries that have chosen a socialist orientation, the trade unions developing there concentrate on ending economic backwardness, solving social problems and resisting

imperialist intrigues. As concerns new independent states remaining within the capitalist system, trade unions under Social Democratic influence have lately been winning stronger positions there. This is a result of the growing effort of parties of the Socialist International to bring the labour movement in the Third World under their banner.

It follows that the trade unions are operating in a complicated situation all over the world. However, this does not prevent them from realising more and more that they must not restrict themselves to problems of everyday politics. They need to think in terms of the historical perspective, extend their activity beyond the economy, to all other public spheres, react seriously to criticisms and mark positive estimations of their work. This is an earnest of loyally serving the workers' interests.

The trade unions should, of course, not abstract themselves from the international political situation irrespective of whether they are operating under capitalism or socialism. In other words, they should adjust their tasks to the actual possibilities of accomplishing them in the situation shaping in the world and its various regions and countries. Every step, however small, towards meeting the working people's legitimate demands requires sustained struggle.

We must follow world developments more closely. The trade union movement should counter every attempt at an offensive against labour by strengthening its unity nationally and internationally, stopping internecine rivalries and organising joint actions.

Global problems are becoming more acute with every passing day. They affect the whole of humanity directly or indirectly. We cannot afford to stay indifferent, well knowing that innumerable people are literally starving. We register with anxiety the effects of wasteful use of natural energy resources. The environment, which is being destroyed, calls for help.

But the paramount issue is that of war and peace. In the early eighties, the problem is whether the process of detente will continue or whether the new round of political confrontation and arms drive begun by imperialism will cause a chain reaction fraught with unforeseeable consequences.

All sensible people, whatever their ideology and political likes or dislikes, declare for peace and mutually beneficial international cooperation. By campaigning against the war menace, they are defending their inalienable right to a life of good hope, a life free of poverty and ignorance, hunger and disease, a life fit for human beings. World opinion is increasingly alarmed by the deterioration of relations between socialist and capitalist countries, imperialist attempts to back up neocolonialist policies with gross pressure and the growing threat to world peace.

The uptrend in international tensions is a direct result of the renunciation of detente by extremist monopoly capitalist forces in the United States and other NATO countries, by a desire to extend imperialist influence in the world and teach the "recalcitrant" a lesson. Washington's stubborn attempts to gain military superiority over the socialist world are most preoccupying.

It is an open secret that every new round of the arms race is imposed on the Warsaw Treaty Organisation by NATO, and yet militarist quarters blame the Soviet Union for a worsening international situation. Advocates of "Cold War II" distort the peaceful nature of the foreign policy of the socialist countries, which are prompted by the peoples' desire to live in a climate of cooperation and mutual confidence.

Members of the older generation have gone through the icy atmosphere of cold war. They are concerned about the similarity of the current policy of bellicose monopoly capitalist circles to imperialist policy after World War II.

However, there is also a powerful encouraging factor at work. The balance of world forces has changed radically in favour of peace supporters and social progress. Besides, millions upon millions of people have satisfied themselves of the benefits of detente. It has given them a sense of security and a better life and rid them of the fear of war. To countries with different social systems, peaceful coexistence means expanding economic, scientific, trade and cultural relations and opening frontiers to tourism, which helps nations know each other's lives and induces them to look on neighbours far and near with trust and goodwill. Also, the disastrous effects of the arms race and a militarised economy have become more evident. People are more aware than ever of the apocalyptic consequences of a nuclear conflict.

Trade unions played an important part in the past in easing international tensions. Even before the Helsinki Conference, they came out at national level against the policy and propaganda of cold war and joined in initiatives serving detente. And when, at the threshold of the eighties, imperialism launched a new offensive, the trade unions which in the climate of detente had concentrated on defending the immediate interests of labour and its union rights joined at once in the campaign against militarism. Champions of a durable security system in Europe are becoming more vocal. We hear ever stronger warnings to the effect that the renunciation of the policy of detente injures the working people's living conditions and is apt to drag humanity into a nuclear holocaust.

To remove the war menace and curb the arms race is an urgent necessity. We believe all trade unions should realise this irrespective of their policy line or international affiliation. There is no defending the workers' fundamental economic and social rights without defending peace. The international trade union movement has no loftier task than to frustrate the bellicose ambitions of monopoly capital in common with other peace forces.

Unquestionably, the struggle against unemployment and inflation is an important matter for the trade unions in capitalist countries. However, the problem of problems for them, too, is to stop the arms race. Our path lies through a demilitarised economy to extension of the workers' social and economic rights and to a better material and spiritual existence

for them. The trade unions have real possibilities of following this path.

Unity of the trade union movement is a historical imperative today. Only by uniting can we bring about an improvement in the social and economic condition of labour and promote peace. Conversely, discord will enable our enemies to set the workers on one another and reduce our militancy in battles with monopoly capital.

Is it, however, possible to achieve the unity of diverse, often so heterogeneous organisations? Sadly enough, there are many people even in trade unions who doubt this. Besides, quite a few people outside unions offer advice that foments distrust and drives labour unions to confrontation. We certainly must not dismiss so important a matter. But neither must we speak of only what divides us. It is much more useful and promising to ascertain what we are agreed on.

First and foremost, we must take account of the effects of the historic change which set in with the rise of the family of socialist countries and the emergence on the world scene of dozens of countries that had won freedom from colonial dependence. It provided new opportunities for joint defence of the interests of the working class and other working people.

At the same time, we must not forget that in recent decades the trade union movement has become much more varied both internationally and nationally. Trade unions today group people of the most diverse views and convictions. They differ in militancy and political orientation as well as with regard to the nature of their relations with parties.

The foregoing explains why the international trade union movement is taking no organised form today and is, indeed, unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. Besides, on joining in political activity, which is inevitable in present-day conditions, trade unions often find themselves opposed to one another.

And yet, while contradictions and the resultant difficulties are considerable, unity of action is possible even now. Its prerequisites are realisation of the community of goals arising from the community of interests, the incorporation of these goals in programmes and struggle to attain them.

Obviously, no unity of views can be sought in the ideological sphere, for ideology is predetermined by the interaction of philosophical, political, social and other factors. What predominates in this case is probably disuniting and not unifying factors. And this means that it is unadvisable to seek unity of views among trade unions of different trends on this or that social system. Such attempts merely narrow the basis for cooperation on practical issues.

However, the question arises: Would not trade union cooperation in that case be reduced to pointless declarations guaranteeing no unanimity in estimating the situation, no unity of programme and no joint action? Would it be anything more than a naive wish?

Our answer is: It would certainly be something more than a wish. We are equal to bringing about solid and lasting unity provided it takes into account the community of interests of millions of workers and their everyday and long-range needs.

Of course, the unity we are championing will not be "global". It will not cover all problems and in some cases, not even most of them. This kind of cooperation necessitates neither a change of view, nor a renunciation of principles. Unity is not surrender but joint implementation of what unites organisations of different orientations.

The character of the given social system and the social and economic development levels of the countries involved have their effect on the specific goals and forms of trade union activity. But even so, the experiences gained by individual unions merge into a common pool of experience to one degree or another. In spite of the diversity of conditions in which the unions are operating and the dissimilarity of their concrete tasks, there are problems which concern them all.

Whatever the divergences and contradictions, the chief goal of the trade unions is invariable. They must defend the interests of each worker in particular and workers' collectives in general. Employment, the distribution system and income policy are the main spheres in which unions formulate specific demands day after day and seek their satisfaction.

The Fourth European Trade Union Conference, held in Geneva late in November 1981, may be an indication of the realistic character of the trade union movement's quest for new paths and of its readiness to engage in united action. On carefully discussing problems arising from the impact of modern technology on working conditions and employment, the delegates, who represented organisations of 27 countries, reached agreement on

measures that should make it possible to use the positive potential of production rationalisation in the workers' interests and reduce its negative aspects to a minimum. The conference demanded that governments should contribute to international detente and promptly work out measures for controlled disarmament.

The conference furthered mutual understanding among trade unions of different orientations and demonstrated their common desire to solve key problems for the workers' good. The very fact that leaders of national trade union centres affiliated to both the WFTU and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions attended the conference was an encouraging sign of the ability of unions to achieve mutual understanding even against the background of bitter political confrontation.

The 10th World Trade Union Congress urged the WFTU and the national trade union movements of the socialist countries as well as the Communist-influenced trade unions of capitalist countries to advance new initiatives in favour of closer relations with trade unions of a social-democratic, christian-democratic or other orientation so as to bring about cooperation. A task of paramount importance is to ascertain common interests making it possible in spite of ideological, political, personal and other considerations to take joint steps and advance in one and the same direction, with every participant in cooperation retaining his identity. We are convinced that there are ample opportunities for this kind of activity.

Thus, a search could be made for more effective ways of defending trade unions. We mean struggle against the restriction of their rights in developed capitalist countries as well as against their persecution in developing countries and in less developed capitalist countries oppressed by dictatorial regimes. This struggle would benefit from realising the WFTU proposal to establish a common international service supplying information on persecution for trade union activity and offering relevant legal advice.

It would be useful to organise support for persecuted unions, seek the release of active trade unionists from prison or an easing of their lot as well as improve the condition of prisoners' families in the capitalist world. Such manifestations of working-class solidarity could count on the support of all progressives irrespective of political allegiance, for they would fit entirely into the framework of defending democratic freedoms and human rights.

There are also many common tasks in regard to improving occupational safety. It would be a good idea to exchange information on safety laws, on methods of providing safety and on aid from the trade unions of socialist countries to miners and factory workers who had suffered an accident. We think it would be advisable to formulate general safety standards under the aegis of the International Labour Organisation or at least to help evolve them.

Vast opportunities exist for a more extensive comparison of notes on labour legislation. It would help improve the principles of regulating working conditions in capitalist and socialist countries alike. Among other things, it would be worth while to examine facts relating to the right to strike existing in the capitalist world and to its actual exercise. This could help, in particular, dissipate fairly widespread illusions. It would also be useful because the trade unions of some socialist countries have yet to take an explicit stand on the problem of strikes.

It is very important to extend cooperation with various trade unions of a non-Marxist orientation to anti-war actions. We have said that this is a field in which joint actions can be taken on practical issues, with each participant retaining its organisational independence and its views.

The vital importance of the struggle against the war menace calls for cooperation on a broader basis and a higher level. However, it is essential in each particular case to take account of realities and possibilities and have a clear idea of their limits. Contacts are useful in themselves, since they open up channels for bringing viewpoints closer together.

There is also scope for joint action on environmental protection. Effort on this basis, especially in industrial areas, where pollution is worst, could provide a platform for further actions of various kinds.

Everyone knows that all international trade union centres and certain national centres contribute to the organisation of trade union movements in developing countries. They want to

acquaint these movements with their own programmes and activities and to win them over. In view of the danger of setting the various contingents of the relatively small and weak working class of these countries against each other, trade union centres affiliated to the WFTU and the national centres associated with it should promote unity of trade union action in newly free countries and form united trade unions if possible.

Material aid to children and the starving population in developing countries offers an extensive field for action. Many international and national charity organisations, religious groups and some governments render such aid already. It is now the turn of workers' organisations. By emphasising humanist principles, we could win massive support for this cause and draw trade unions closer together on this basis.

It would be advisable to intensify exchanges of information on the activity of trade unions affiliated to the WFTU and organise the acquisition of such information from unions belonging to other centres. The media and lecture tours could be very helpful.

We should generalise the experience of trade unions, analyse the workers' gains and draw lessons from their struggles. Also, we should work out principles and methods of international trade union diplomacy. The need has arisen to carry out scientific and political research in our sphere. The WFTU is willing to make its research facilities available for all these purposes.

In developed capitalist countries and developing countries as well as, indirectly, in socialist countries, we come up

against the problem of counteracting transnationals. It is becoming necessary to jointly analyse the effects of their growing strength on the working people. The results of such an analysis would make it possible to evolve a dynamic programme of defending the interests of labour against the offensive of international capital.

Effort to bring about unity of action and cooperation on a wide range of issues is the main line in the work of WFTU member unions. In defining our position, we are prompted by a desire to steadfastly defend the interests of the working people of all countries. The labour movement cannot stay within national boundaries. It is international by nature and should concern itself with the problems of workers all over the world. This is one of the important lessons of history.

International working-class solidarity is one of our most valuable traditions. The Havana Trade Union Congress, for its part, launched an appeal to establish extensive relations with labour organisations of the world. There are increasing opportunities for this and I am convinced that joint action is destined to become a decisive factor in the development of the trade union movement.

Labour leaders should not quarrel among themselves, for this injures the interests of labour. Let them compete in efficiency and stop ignoring one another.

Only by building up their unity can the trade unions of the world meet the challenge of the eighties, overcome eventual dangers and use favourable conditions. Being the oldest and most

numerous organisations of the working people and having gained vast experience in struggle, they strive to express and defend their interests. The trade unions will be equal to the exigencies of life provided they use specific forms of struggle and combine loyalty to principle with tactical flexibility and resolute action with reasonable compromise.

I need hardly say that we are not trying to impose our views on anyone and that this is not why we seek joint action on a larger scale. The problems engendered by our epoch cannot be solved unless the trade unions draw closer together and cooperate internationally. There is no organisation now which could cope with these increasingly complicated problems by itself. All that trade unions of different orientations have done together in the past decade shows that the common goals and tasks uniting us outweigh and are more important than the disputed issues dividing us.

Haluk B.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AFTER THE WORLD CONGRESS

Ibrahim Zakaria

General Secretary, World Federation of Trade Unions

The working class movement in various countries is now developing under the strong impact of the results achieved at the Eleventh World Trade Union Congress held in Berlin (GDR), from September 16 to 22, a congress which was unique in many respects.

First, it was the most representative world trade union gathering held so far, with the participation of 1,014 delegates from 432 national, regional and international organisations representing an organised trade union membership of 296 million workers from all continents.

Second, it was a congress of world trade union dialogue bringing together a broad cross-section of trends in the international trade union movement--452 participants from WFTU-affiliated organisations and 562 participants from trade unions belonging to other international associations and from autonomous unions.

Third, despite differences in political and ideological orientation and the fact that the WFTU which sponsored the congress did not have a majority of delegates, the congress reached unanimous conclusions. It approved all major documents reflecting the common approach of all trade unions to the principal problems now facing workers in different countries.

The congress thus demonstrated the possibility of uniting the forces of the working class and all workers and of mobilising world public opinion in favour of the ideas of peace and international cooperation, in favour of the "new thinking" and norms of international behaviour so essential in this nuclear

age, bringing workers to act in defence of their interests, for democracy and social justice.

Of great significance was the composition of national trade union delegations. Despite political and ideological differences and even rivalries at the national level, virtually all national trade union organisations from a large number of countries were eager to participate in the congress. This showed that they were all extremely concerned over the worsening international situation, the war danger, the economic and social consequences of the arms race and the severe impact of the world capitalist crisis, all of which demanded global joint action on the part of the workers and trade unions.

Our forum was convened at an extremely tense and difficult juncture which can even be described as decisive. On the one hand, revolutionary gains and progressive transformations have broadened and the peoples that have freed themselves from colonial and imperialist domination have consolidated their national independence. On the other hand, the reactionary imperialist forces that refuse to accept progressive change on the world scene and oppose the overall trend of independence and social progress become increasingly active.

The international economic situation is deteriorating. The monetary and financial policies and the protectionist moves of the industrialised capitalist powers are actually threatening the developing countries with catastrophe. The unprecedented increase of the Third World's external debt, high interest rates and other hardships imposed by the International Monetary Fund and other financial agencies of big capital have compounded the

instability to a considerable degree. The developing countries are increasingly plagued by unemployment, underemployment, inflation, the exodus of the population from rural areas, lack of housing, transport and education opportunities, food shortages and hunger. Alarm has been recently growing over the falling living standards of workers in industrialised capitalist countries--another direct consequence of the crisis that is sharpening. More people in more countries are forced to live below the "poverty line".

Supported by bourgeois governments, capital has launched an offensive against the living standards and rights of workers--an onslaught unprecedented since the end of World War II. Not only collective bargaining and social security systems but also the very future of trade unions are being threatened. The offensive is aimed at depriving the working class of the gains it has won over long decades of struggle, at reversing social development.

With millions of people suffering from hunger, economic underdevelopment and poverty, the ruling imperialist quarters are expanding the arms race. Supported by the militarist forces of other NATO countries, the policy of the US administration kindles and stokes hotbeds of tensions and encourages aggressive moves by the Zionists in the Middle East and racists in South Africa. Washington supports dictatorships and reactionary regimes in Latin America, Africa and Asia and escalates international tensions and the threat of global nuclear catastrophe. The direct connection between the one trillion-dollar debt of the Third World and the more than one trillion-dollar US military expenditure over the past five years is obvious. The losses

in the incomes of workers in capitalist countries due to the decrease of real wages and salaries are also in the trillions. All these sums are channelled into the arms race and end up as profits of the military-industrial-financial complex.

The complicated development of the economic, social and political situation calls for effective influence and action on the part of the trade union movement and for concerted trade union leadership of the workers' struggle to uphold their vital interests. The congress has outlined three major aspects on which the international trade union movement is to focus its efforts in order to prevent mankind from either sliding dangerously towards destruction in a new world war or slowly expiring in the grip of the economic, environmental and food crisis.

First, more vigorous and broader trade union participation in the struggle against the war danger, for an ^{end} to the arms race, for channelling these resources into socio-economic development, for disarmament and for peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems.

Second, an intensified and more widespread struggle to defend the vital interests and demands of workers, against unemployment, hunger and poverty, and for large-scale socio-economic and democratic transformations that would overcome the capitalist crisis and its consequences, but not at the expense of workers.

Finally, an intensified and more widespread struggle to secure respect and consolidation of trade union rights and freedoms, to thwart the offensive of big capital against the masses' social gains and against the trade unions.

A comparison of the situation after the Eleventh Congress with what prevailed on the world scene a mere five years ago shows how at the present time, the trade unions have become ever more deeply involved in the struggle for peace and against the economic and social consequences of the arms race. The direct linkage between the struggle for peace and disarmament and the struggle for economic and social demands of workers, the linkage that was discussed at the congress, has now been proved to the hilt. The trade unions cannot remain passive in such a situation.

The congress unanimously came to the conclusion, as stated in the Main Document, that "the burdens imposed by the arms race have now become so colossal, the dangers so serious that workers, trade unions and peace-loving forces have to considerably intensify their action and unite their forces. There can be no winners in a nuclear war. There can be no winners in an arms race. Therefore, the guarantee of security becomes a political task. The urgent item on the agenda is: the establishment of a comprehensive system of international security covering the military, political, economic and humanitarian aspects. The trade unions and other mass democratic movements have an important role to play in the world-wide mobilisation to fulfil this task."

Numerous studies, including those published by trade unions, demonstrate the fallacy of the claims made by the advocates of the military-industrial complex to the effect that an end to the arms race would result in unemployment and lower living standards for workers. On the contrary, the conversion of the arms industry to civilian production will increase employment; all national economies will benefit greatly as a result. Peace and detente

will encourage economic cooperation and trade between capitalist and socialist countries, and this will create new jobs and accelerate economic growth. A climate of cooperation would contribute to the establishment of a new international economic order. An end to the arms race and the attainment of disarmament would release huge funds that can assist directly in the solution of major social problems. A ten per cent reduction in arms spending --a demand supported by the entire world trade union movement-- could finance a decade-long programme of development which would benefit millions of people deprived of elementary means of livelihood.

The Main Document unanimously adopted by the congress participants offers a broad platform for stepping up world-wide trade union involvement in the struggle for the right to life, the foremost human right. By taking concerted and vigorous action, workers and the r trade unions can avert the threat of a new and totally destructive war; they can also curb and reverse the arms race. The World Federation of Trade Unions is ready to take such action together with all trade unions, whatever their orientation or international affiliation.

Intensification of the struggle for peace implies a broadening, not a contraction, of the trade union struggle for the workers' socio-economic rights--the rights to employment, medical care, social security, education and housing. It is becoming increasingly clear not only to trade union leaders but also to the masses that an end to the militarisation of the economy is interconnected dialectically with the workers' improved socio-economic position. and with the preservation and expansion of trade union and democratic gains.


It is worth repeating that the large-scale and concerted offensive of big capital against the vital interests of workers is a salient feature of the present situation. The employers are trying to use the advances of the scientific and technological revolution and new technologies and the consequent structural changes within the working class to introduce discriminatory practices of employment and to cut wages and salaries. The norms established over long years of collective bargaining are being changed or completely abolished. We are witnessing an undisguised drive to transform collective bargaining into "concession bargaining". Resorting to blackmail and pressure, the monopolies demand that workers accept cutbacks in social services, wages and salaries and waive employment safeguards.

The governments of capitalist countries are yielding increasingly to monopoly pressure and dismantling the existing mechanism of government management, regulation and control of the economy. This policy, advertised as "economic liberalism", implies "deregulation" and "denationalisation" designed to grant capital full power and complete freedom of action necessary for securing maximum profits. In fact, "denationalisation" means the transfer of all highly profitable industries from the public sector into the hands of the industrialists and bankers and the retention in this sector of the industries plagued by crisis that often results from the blatant plunder of the national resources by the monopolies.

"Denationalisation" and "privatisation" are widespread in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)

countries and in some developing nations. The International Monetary Fund makes the granting of loans to Third World countries conditional on the introduction of these measures. Today, big capital routinely pillages national resources, public property and funds from the national budget. Government policy is turning increasingly into an anti-popular policy serving the interests of the monopolies. Degradation and corruption are becoming typical of the system itself, and it is no accident that we have recently witnessed numerous scandals over the way big corporations openly bribe and buy leaders of ruling political parties.

The massive economic onslaught is accompanied by an ideological offensive: it is claimed that only the private capitalist sector can effectively organise production and that, with a scientific and technological revolution underway, it is sufficiently flexible and prompt to be successful in managing the economy.



For many years now, the Centre on Transnational Corporations of the UN Social and Economic Council has been vainly trying to draw up an international code of conduct that would regulate and limit TNC activities. Supranational monopoly capital is openly bringing pressure to bear on the governments of those countries where it operates, opposing any attempt to adopt such norms. Moreover, the TNCs assert that only they can ensure the transfer of high technology and that they are an indispensable element of the world economy.

All this sets new and complex tasks before trade unions at different levels, before the entire international trade union movement. First, one must emphasise that the problems raised by the scientific and technological revolution highlight the irreconcilable contradiction between the rapid development of the productive forces and their public essence on the one hand and the private mode of appropriation on the other: these truly immense productive forces are owned by a tiny minority, by a handful of monopolists. Second, it is perfectly obvious that in its efforts to introduce technologies of the twenty-first century, big capital makes use of nineteenth-century economic theories and production relations--that is, theories and practices which make capitalism "totally unacceptable", as some prefer to put it.

Judging by the social content of economic policy, the introduction of new technologies in conditions of obsolete relations of production merely pushes the world backward.

The worsening crisis of capitalism is adversely affecting all workers and all peoples. To a certain extent, it effects the socialist countries too. Maintaining trade and other economic relations with the capitalist world, the socialist nations are forced to pay much more for the goods and raw materials they import. However, public property in the means of production and the democratic nature of planning and management in these countries have prevented the emergence of the ills that have become endemic under capitalism. There is no poverty, no attacks on the social gains of workers, no cut-backs in government allocations on education and health care, no soup kitchen lines that can now be seen in New York, Chicago or London. In the socialist countries, the ruling parties are working to drastically accelerate socio-economic development, to promote prosperity and to raise the cultural level of their peoples, with the full involvement of the trade unions.

The technological advances already made and about to be made in informatics, communications, automation and biotechnology not only open an opportunity to increase material production but also affect economic activity as a whole and all aspects of the social fabric. Tremendous changes are underway in the structure of the labour force, in the content of work, in lifestyles, social behaviour and intellectual development. The application of advances in science and technology provides the necessary means for meeting the needs of workers, reducing social injustice, overcoming backwardness and eliminating hunger, illiteracy and underemployment. However, new technologies

can either help to intensify capitalist exploitation or assist in promoting general welfare. They can either contribute to social progress in the interests of workers or encourage the greed of the transnationals who strive to maximise their profits. They can either pave the way for economic development that will bring about a better order or aggravate the existing disorder. All this will depend on the outcome of the social struggle.

The industrial application of advances in science and technology, the closer interdependence within the world economy, the activities of the TNCs, the concerted anti-labour policy of the TNC home countries and the demands of solidarity call for better-coordinated trade union action in defence of the workers' cause. It is becoming clearer with each passing day that no organisation can cope alone with the problems arising in this connection. It is time to act resolutely to step up international trade union cooperation and coordination, to promote joint action on important socio-economic issues. Social progress is unthinkable without democratic intervention by workers and whole peoples; therefore, the trade unions are to use their strength in favour of a democratic orientation in economic management.

Naturally, different priorities of the trade union struggle may exist in different countries, but for all the differences, it must be aimed at ending the bourgeois governments' policy of overcoming the crisis at the expense of the workers. Trade unions believe it imperative to enhance the purchasing

power of wages, salaries, assistance payments and pensions, to control prices, reduce inflation, improve the workers' social protection, specifically, to end the discriminatory remuneration of women, young people and migrant workers and to provide for the unemployed and their families. Trade unions of different orientation have broadly backed the demand for tax, democratic and agrarian reforms that would ensure greater social justice. Since the congress, there has also been a rise in the struggle for shorter working hours without reduction in earnings, for longer paid holidays, for a lower pension age and bigger pensions.

Here one can repeat that the crisis of the capitalist system and the exacerbation of this crisis affect the developing countries particularly painfully. This makes it more topical than ever to secure the establishment of a new international economic order and of fair and equitable economic relations that would stimulate the advancement of all countries, above all, of the developing nations. Workers and their trade unions have a vital stake in immediately ending the steady deterioration of the situation in the Third World and in completely removing the causes of underdevelopment. Priority steps in this direction include the elimination of the foreign debt. The foremost objective is to secure a suspension and indefinite deferment of principal and interest payments.

Since the emergence of the trade union movement, different concepts have been put forward regarding the possibility and scope of its involvement in politics. Initially, there were

disputes over whether trade unions should pursue political objectives, play a political role and share, in this form or another, in the exercise of political power, or limit their activities only to issues such as employment safeguards, wages and salaries, and working conditions. Different views on the scope and forms of trade union influence on politics persist to this day. Some want merely to "correct" the capitalist social system instead of replacing it; others hold that it is not enough to reform capitalist structures because they are now completely outdated.

The Eleventh World Trade Union Congress, attended by representatives of these trends from countries with different social systems, has demonstrated that the positions of trade unions are evolving in different ways. However, instead of debating whether this or that concept is right or wrong, it is important to emphasise joint action and a summing up of the experience attained by workers in the struggle for peace, progress and social justice. This pooling of efforts is particularly topical now that we are facing the threat of a new, totally destructive war and a policy of social revanche essentially aimed against all trade union concepts and views. As participants in the movement, we can afford the luxury of holding different views on some subjects. But as soon as the very survival of trade unions and the freedom to discharge our duties are called into question, all these differences must be relegated to the background. History will indict us if we act to appease our opponents, if we fail to rally together, strengthen our

unity and create a powerful international front to repel the internationally concerted offensive of capital.

The proposals drawn up at the World Congress concerning the action to be taken by trade unions at the UN and ILO level and the range of our demands to governments and employers will no doubt assist in further invigorating the working class movement. In order to coordinate trade union action at the national, regional and international level, the congress had proposed the establishment of an International Centre for the Defence of Trade Union Rights.

The congress has confirmed that our movement is an important social factor that must be taken into account in dealing with contemporary social development in the interest of the world's peoples. However, unity must be attained at all levels if the activity of trade unions is to be enhanced in the struggle for political, economic and social rights of workers, against repression, for national sovereignty, peace and social progress. Conditions for such unity do exist. Specifically, the positions on peace and disarmament worked out at the last congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) held in Oslo, at the Baden congress of the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and at the Milan congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), as well as the views of other regional and autonomous organisations are similar to if not identical with the position of the WFTU. Attitudes to several socio-economic and legal problems of concern to masses of union members are also similar and often identical.

The congress participants called on the workers and trade unions of all countries to find ways of further strengthening joint action and attaining trade union unity at the national, regional and international level. They urged the WFTU, the ICFTU, the WCL and other international and regional organisations to work together on the many common issues of importance to workers. The conviction was expressed that this world-wide trade union cooperation could develop fruitfully, particularly in the following areas:

- prevention of nuclear war, complete elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, prohibition of militarisation of outer space, cuts in military spending, conversion of the arms industry to the production of socially useful goods, and other measures in the field of disarmament;
- political settlement of all international disputes, renunciation of the threat or use of force, elimination of hotbeds of tensions and war;
- elaboration of a job creation programme aimed at ensuring full employment;
- application of advances in science and technology for human progress instead of for war and destruction;
- economic security and social advancement for all countries and the establishment of a new international economic order;
- defence and extension of trade union rights;
- effective coordination of international solidarity actions against racism and apartheid, against violations of democratic liberties and human rights, against colonialism and for national independence;
- labour protection, environmental protection and the elaboration of international labour safety standards concerning the manufacture of new products and the use of new processes hazardous to health.

Unfortunately, the three biggest international trade union organisations have so far been unable to discuss, at the negotiating table, how best to pool their efforts and rally the more than 500 million organised workers to joint action. The blame for the fact that such negotiations have not materialised is borne by those quarters in the trade union movement that still cling to the positions they took in the grim years of the Cold War. For example, in May 1986 President Lane Kirkland of the AFL-CIO sent a circular to the affiliated unions confirming the 31-year-old ban on contacts with the WFTU and with the trade unions of the socialist countries. The AFL-CIO continues to supply the US State Department with "reasons" for denying visas to trade unionists from the socialist nations.

As we stated at the congress, on the international bargaining table for the world's trade unions to take up are issues which affect the future of the world and the future of humanity. These issues include the crucial question of how to prevent the immense wastage and misappropriation of resources which the arms race plunders from the workers. It has become the task of the world trade union movement to mobilise the masses to win back these resources and return them to those who were deprived of them as well as to ensure their rational use in creating jobs and building a better life for all. In order to accomplish this task, we have to overcome all the obstacles which obstruct the unity of the world trade union movement.

The congress in its appeal has put forward a realistic platform for international trade union cooperation to be raised to a still higher level. And that is the need of the hour, to fully mobilise the immense forces of the world trade union movement in the struggle for the defence of workers' interests, for peace and social progress.

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TÜSTAV