



WFTU Event to honor and commemorate Louis Saillant and Pierre Gensous,
General Secretaries of WFTU, France, Paris, Saturday 6 October 2018

Speech of comrade G. Mavrikos, General Secretary of WFTU

We honor the past and we build the future

Dear comrades, brothers and sisters,

We thank you all for your presence at this honorary event in the memory of the two first General Secretaries of WFTU, who were both French: **Louis Saillant** and **Pierre Gensous**. We particularly thank the wife of Pierre Gensous, comrade Alena, as well as the daughter of Ibrahim Zakaria, who travelled from Prague so as to be with us v, and we inform her that for her father, who was also an elected General Secretary of WFTU, we will organize a similar honorary event of commemoration and respect.

Dear friends,

We started these honorary events last year, in 2017, in Foggia of Italy, by honoring there a militant personality of the International class oriented trade union movement, the Italian Giuseppe Di Vittorio, President of WFTU, and we will continue.

Why are we doing and will we continue these events?

- Because we want to honor the heroes of the working class, the pioneers militants who opened new ways with their ideas and most importantly with their action.
- Because we want, by utilizing the positives and negative points of each time period, to learn and to build the present and the future of the trade union movement with contemporary materials.
- Because we want the young generation to know the real history of WFTU, the world trade union history, so that through the knowledge to be able to judge and decide by



themselves, without the lies of the bourgeoisie and of the governments who write and re-write the history according to their own interests.

- Because us, the WFTU, we are proud of our history, because everywhere and always the WFTU has been with the Peoples, with the workers, against Imperialists, against the capitalist barbarity, against the founding of NATO, against the Marshall plan, by the side of Vietnam, of the Cuban revolution, of Chile of Allende, of Spain, of Portugal, of Greece, always with the peoples, against dictatorships, against colonialism. In Iraq, in Libya, in Yugoslavia, in Syria, in Palestine, always with the peoples.

The yellow trade unions hide their history because until today it is a history of shame. Always with the Imperialists and with the mechanisms of the Capital.

The History is a window to the future

Dear comrades,

By reading, by studying the life and action of Louis Saillant and Pierre Gensous, I think that some timely and useful conclusions for the present emerge. Allow me to highlight some of them.

1. They were Leaders born within the working class, they were workers themselves, they themselves had experienced the capitalist exploitation, they loved their sector and respected the workers. They were not bureaucrats of the elites.
2. They believed in the principles of the class struggle, they fought for the overthrow of capitalism, they came into conflict with the opportunists who wanted the make-up of the capitalist system. They fought against the reformists.
3. They were protagonists in the general political developments of their period as well. They were anti-fascists, present during the war against the Nazis, they were internationalists and anti-imperialists. They fought the Marshall plan, the founding of NATO, the anti-socialist hysteria. They did not pretend to be neutral.
4. They opened new ways in their epoch, by establishing new trade unions, by coordinating the struggles in every continent, by analyzing the developments of their times.



5. They were selfless, honest, sincere, they placed the group above themselves. They had morality and dignity. They had courage and patience. They had values and sensitivity for the ordinary people.

With these basic characteristics from this first period of WFTU, the moral, political and ideological superiority of WFTU and of the class-oriented trade union movement over the yellow trade union leaderships and the instruments of the capital began to be built.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

They did their duty. Louis Saillant, Pierre Gensous, Henri Krasucki, Vice-President of the WFTU who wanted the CGT to have an active and leading role inside the WFTU, Ibrahim Zakaria, General Secretary of WFTU, they did their duty, they opened new horizons to the trade union movement in their epoch. They defended and gained rights for the workers, they improved the lives of the ordinary people, they achieved trade union and democratic freedoms, we will always honor them.

Now, it is our own duty as trade unionists of today, to respond to the modern needs of our times.

We live in a world with two most basic characteristics: the first one is **the barbarity of the capitalist system**, that generates poverty and unemployment. In the framework of a profound economic crisis of the system, the achievements of the workers are under fierce attack. The second basic characteristic is **the aggression of the imperialists**, the intra-imperialist rivalries and the harsh consequences on the peoples.

In Europe, where all of us live, the situation is even more complicated because of:

- A. International Mechanisms such as the European Union, the IMF, the WB, NATO, who process the most extreme anti-labor policies in all European countries.
- B. Governments who implement anti-labor policies and dissolve labor relations, social security, salary rights, who privatize everything, having the "**social dialogues**" as their basic instrument.
- C. Dangerous rise of racism, xenophobia, populism and of neo-fascist political parties.



D. But at the same time, a strong trade union bureaucracy has been formed in Europe, totally cut off from the base, who has a reformist line and controls big trade union organizations. This reformist trade union bureaucracy objectively, shares responsibility for the suffering of the workers of Europe today, since with its position, it undermines the workers' struggles. For example, the positions and role of CFDT in France, CGIL and UIL in Italy, DGB in Germany, LO in Norway, of trade unions in Denmark, Turkey, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, TUC of England, are the most typical examples of such reformist, compromised trade union leaderships, who are soldiers of class collaboration, and funny figures of the "social dialogues". Moreover, they have evolved into powerful mechanisms that "export" their reformist theories to other continents.

On the other hand, we have the optimistic picture. In contrast to all the above difficulties, we see a significant part of European workers come out on the streets, resist, show disobedience, with class-oriented spirit and with militancy, against the decisions of governments and supranational organizations.

Big strikes, demonstrations, militant activities took place and continue to take place in France, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Turkey, Spain and other European countries. These parts of workers and the trade union organizations who lead these mobilizations are the most lively and promising part of the pan-European working class. These militant activities have positive quantitative and qualitative elements and are the hope for the reconstruction of the class pole inside the trade union movement of Europe.

What should we do?

What is the alternative?

The leaders of the ITUC and CES claim that the "management" ... and, to a small degree, the trade union corruption, are the problems of the trade unions. But while the managers keep changing in these organizations, their line becomes more and more reformist. The managers change, but their support to imperialist wars, the subordination to the European Union's strategy, the engagement with the IMF and NATO remain stable.

It is obvious that the big problem of reformism is its strategy. Capitalism cannot put on make-up, imperialism cannot become humane. So, whether the manager is from Australia or from Italy, the train will move on the same rails and more and more to the right.



On the other side of the river are standing all of us, who accept and believe in the immortal Marxist theory of social classes. In the principles of the class struggle. All of us who know that societies are moving forward and progressing not with prayers but with social class struggles, as the modern history of the mankind has shown.

However, since we have a correct theory, since in general we have a good strategy, since we have existing and militant forces almost everywhere, since we organize important struggles, why the anti-labor policies of the governments and of the European Union are finally implemented?

The WFTU is really concerned about this issues. We have discussed both at our European Office and at a central level. This debate is open, long-lasting and we will take concrete initiatives for a more essential exchange of opinions.

We do not claim that the struggles are not working. All struggles have results even when there is a long distance between the sowing and the harvest. Without struggles the workers would have lost even more rights. In Greece we say "a lost struggle is only the struggle that was never carried out."

But let us point out only 3 points, which are not only issues of tactic:

- Coordination: At national and pan-European level, the strikes that are carried out even periodically, once a month, once a year, in one sector today and in another one five months later, are useful. They are useful but do not make it difficult for the bourgeoisie, they do not stop production, they give time to governments and bosses to find solutions, they do not unite the working class against the other social class. They do not strengthen the political content of the struggle.

- Concentration of forces: Some of the trade unions who accept the Marxist theory of the social classes belong to the WFTU, some others move on their own, some are "hosted" by CEC or by ITUC. So we have a division of militant forces. While we need class unity of the working class and unity within the trade unions, and all together to build the pan-European trade union movement. A pan-European trade union river, INTERNATIONALIST - UNITING - CLASS-ORIENTED - ANTI-MONOPOLIST - MASSIVE - ANTI-IMPERIALIST.

- Gap between the bases and the leaderships: There is a gap between the militancy of the base and the tactics of the leaderships. This gap is getting bigger and bigger and generates disappointment at the base, and at the same time it strengthens undemocratic



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Class oriented - uniting - democratic - modern – independent – internationalist!

practices at the leaderships. The solution is that the leaderships listen to the base. The base should be at the forefront. Class-oriented trade unions necessarily means: two eyes and two ears always open to the base. To see and to listen to the messages of the base.

Comrades, our own vision for Europe, for the trade union movement of Europe, imposes to us the necessity to meet all the militant trade unionists together, to analyze the situation in depth, to find the causes of the problems of the trade unions, to draw together our strategy and our tactics for a modern, class-oriented, internationalist, anti-monopolist and anti-imperialist European trade union movement. Such a movement, with freshness and liveliness, with respect for the base and with solid democratic functions, can bring back hope and optimistic perspective.

Since the month of May, 2018, we have sent to the leadership of the CGT France some of our thoughts, and some proposals for discussion, on these serious issues. In the same way, of course, we had invited them by written invitation to this honorary event, to come and talk. We have not received an answer until today.

In this effort, we need the CGT - France, which, with its militant history, its struggles and prestige, can and must play a leading role in the necessary effort for the class reconstruction of the trade union movement of Europe.

In 2019, we will take initiatives and try to open a sincere, fraternal discussion about the priorities of Europe's trade unions in contemporary conditions. We are open to an honest, equal dialogue with mutual respect and comradely spirit.

In such an effort, we hope that all fighters, we will move forward together for the interests of the workers and peoples of Europe.

With such initiatives, we will honor with actions, we will honor in practice and not just in words, the memory of the pioneer militants of WFTU, like Louis Saillant and Pierre Gensous.

We thank the members and friends of WFTU in France who despite the difficulties and obstacles, they managed to organize this beautiful event.

We ask from all of you to promote the values, the positions and the action of WFTU inside your country. First of all inside France. This is a basic duty of all the members and friends of WFTU.

We thank you for your attention.