

WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

**INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING
COMMITTEE OF YOUNG WORKERS**

THE WORKING YOUTH CELEBRATES

THE WFTU 65TH ANNIVERSARY

The World Federation of Trade Unions continues its history, the history of the struggles of the international working class. Studying this history is a very important lesson for every young worker. It is a heritage that shows us "from where we started and where we want to head". By studying the weaknesses of this militant journey, its landmarks and its glorious moments, the young workers, with certainty, can reach the conclusion of what to follow and what to leave behind. By honoring the historic path of WFTU with more certainty they can decide on what to dedicate their lives: **the battle to abolish the exploitation of man by man.**



This year, 2010 is 65 years since the founding of the WFTU, which was an important step for the international trade union movement. **Its creation came from a need in the new era after the defeat of fascism.** Its foundation moved workers massively into action. It highlighted the leading role of the working class in fighting not only for the immediate problems but furthermore, the necessity this struggle to be combined with the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system. The WFTU set as its first priorities proletarian internationalism and labour solidarity. It opened new roads for the Socialist construction in the Soviet Union and other Socialist Republics.

The history and goals of the WFTU are connected with the history and goals of its trade union organisations in each country. The WFTU's ideological origins and their strengthening are bonded with the ideological base of its organisations and how they solve the ideological controversies that inevitably exist in the

international trade union movement in each historic period. **An important moment in the conception of the WFTU was December of '41.** The formation of the **English-Soviet** and the **French-Soviet Committees of Antifascist Trade Union Cooperation** resulted from

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the international situation, and their shared orientation. They were joined by one of the two most important trade unions in the USA, Congress of Industrial Organisations (C.I.O.) which during that period had a progressive leadership. The Soviet and the English trade Unions, with the CIO took the main responsibility to prepare and organize a trade union conference. Their aim during the conference was to debate the possibilities of founding a new, class oriented and anti-fascist world wide trade union organisation. Indeed, between the **6th and the 17th of February the World Trade Union Conference took place in London with 204 participants from 40 nations and 15 international organisations that represented almost 50 million workers.** The main topics of discussion were the necessity for the defeat of fascism, the liberation of all countries, the analysis of the after-the-war period and the immediate duties of the Working class and trade union's movement. The con-

text of democratic, trade unions and personal freedom rights were also discussed. The decision was also made to organize the 1st World Trade Union Congress in Paris.

Following the London conference decisions, the **1st World trade union conference** was organized. It began in Paris on the 25th of September 1945 and between the 3rd and the 8th of October turned into the **1st World Trade Union Congress**. It was the most massive international labor meeting until then with 346 delegates from 56 countries, representing 67 million workers. The Soviet Trade Unions, who participated in congress, were the largest organizations in the world. They had played the most important role in the victory over fascism and the move for the construction of socialism.

The congress was held in an enthusiastic and fighting atmosphere. It spoke in the name of the working people who wanted a world free of war and free of social injustice. The working people and the democratic powers understood that victory over fascism would reveal a new future, where imperialism and colonization would retreat, and freedom, peace, democracy and prosperity would embrace all humanity. **The decision to found the WFTU was unanimous on October 3rd.** The congress voted the statutes of the organisation, which established democratic and fair rules to assist the representation of small organisations. The aims and objectives were voted on and the name and the location of the headquarters were determined. **The first resolution** was the struggle for the immediate and absolute extinction of fascism as well as the recognition that the powers of reaction did not want the total destruction of fascism. In these areas workers had to take action to ensure that those forces would not prevail. The second resolution described summarized the principles of the Chart of trade union rights such as the rights of the workers to be affiliated, the abolishment of any kind of discrimination based on race, religion, color or sex and modern demands like the right to work and for salaries that will insure a better standard of living (housing, food, etc), and for social security covering periods of unemployment, accidents and retirement. Closing the work of the Congress **the new General Secretary of the WFTU, Louis Saillant**, worker, wood-carver and member of the CGT of France said: *"The WFTU is the child of the worker's joint struggles against fascism and against exploitation by monopolies, of the struggles for the liberation of colonized people and for better working conditions for the working class"*

The Program, the aims, the Statute and the decisions of the 1st founding Congress of WFTU

were influenced by the militant trade unions. The opportunistic theories of the so called "neutrality" of trade unions and the bourgeois beliefs that "trade unions should not be politicized" had no place in the documents of WFTU. On the contrary the WFTU made progress and gained prestige from : the analysis and the decisions of the 1st World Trade Union Conference on the important, modern international issues; the resolution for the eradication of fascism and the requirement for world peace, for workers demands and democracy in workplaces, for the improvement of workers' lives; the decision against colonization and concerning the independence of colonies; the new Organization's demand to have a specific role within the U.N.

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The new Federation took action immediately.

The WFTU and its members strongly supported the national freedom movements and the struggles against military and fascist dictatorships. During the first 4 years of the WFTU action, the united trade union

movement globally showed its great potential. The WFTU's increasing number of members and its influence on the trade union movement all over the world was very important during that period. The WFTU spread to every corner of the world, wherever the working class was oppressed, wherever the working class was rising up and struggling, in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, Australia and in the Middle East. During this first period of development, national trade union organizations in each continent either joined with the WFTU or became founding members of it.

Nevertheless, since the foundation of the WFTU there were inevitably unresolved differences and **two main ideological currents**. These were expressing different perceptions concerning the aims of workers' struggles and how far they should go, against which forces and by which means. Since the 1st Congress there were intense debates on the WFTU's position on the trade union movements in the colonies. The British and Netherlands trade unions' representatives insisted that this was not a trade union issue and they strongly opposed the views of the trade unions living under the exploitation of colonialism. In opposition the Indian revolutionary trade unionist **S.A. Ndanze**, African trade unionists, **Lom-**

bardo Toledano from Latin America, **Lazaro Peña** from Cuba, **Lu Chang-Seng** from China and others, insisted that the new Organization should support the struggle for the freedom and independence of the colonies, in words and in actions. This position prevailed. In the late '40s the international situation deteriorated. **The anti-fascist alliance was divided and replaced by the confrontation between the 2 powerful military blocs** and the beginning of the cold war that ended with the overthrow of socialism in 1989-1991. In this situation the imperialists, who had at the time and still today 2 important allies; the Vatican and the social-democrats, took action based on 3 basic decisions: The first was the "Truman dogma" on March 1947 and was about the financial aid of the undemocratic regimes in Turkey and Greece and the financial aid to France, Italy and Belgium with the condition that the governments should abolish communism. The second was the declaration of U.S. Finance minister George Marshall, on June 1947, concerning the second program of financial "aid" to Europe, which led to the USA's excessive interference in the politics and financial development of many European countries. The third was the decision to create NATO on April of 1949, the military equipping of all countries that had accepted the "Marshall Aid" and the installation of USA army bases all over the world. It was also the era in which the neo-fascism of McCarthyism was uprising in the USA.

The debate and intense opposition

over these 3 decisions covered every aspect of life in countries all over the world, **and within the WFTU where there was a dispute which ended in its dividing on December of 1949.**

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tactic was an attack from within. They failed to have control over the WFTU's actions and over the majority of the WFTU leadership. They failed to change the current to class collaboration. The American organization C.I.O. and the British T.U.C. asked WFTU to welcome and accept the plan of its enslavement, the "Marshall Plan", otherwise they demanded the WFTU's dissolution. **The majority of the WFTU did not accept the blackmail and the**

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trade unions that served imperialism were the first to leave the Federation. Others followed later. They met in London and founded the **International Confederation of Free Trade Unions**

(ICFTU). Since its foundation and till its renaming on November of 2006 (to the ITUC), the ICFTU has lead a path determined by: its agreement with the decisions of the U.S. and their allies; its collaboration with multinational enterprises, monopolies

and governmental secret services; the buying off of trade union and trade unionists aiming to break the unity of the working class and to hinder its action.

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The WFTU predominated in numbers, ethically, politically, and syndically in all continents even after its division. It found itself in a new situation. On one side the capitalist governments in alliance with the industry owners and multinational enterprises were attacking it. On the other side was the support of the socialistic countries, the national independence movements and the progressive and left-wing political and social powers into the western world. The **2nd World Trade Union Congress** was held as planned, in Milan during the summer of 1949 with delegations from 61 countries representing 71 million members. **13 congresses** have been held since, which have contributed to the development and maintenance of international coordination between trade unions and to the reinforcement of their common and class-oriented struggles. All these important developments reflect and confirm the validity of the Milan decision in 1949, for WFTU to continue its struggle as an Organization that fights for the unity and international solidarity of workers and their trade unions in all countries. The WFTU supported workers and people that lived under undemocratic regimes in S. Africa, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Japan, India and elsewhere. It supported the people of the People's Republic of China, Korea and Vietnam against the attack of the U.S. and their allies. It supported socialist Cuba and continues to do so. It remains on the side of the Palestinian people struggle, of the peoples of Lebanon and Syria, against the Israeli aggression which is supported by the USA and E.U. governments. It took a series of coordination initiatives for the

strengthening of labour trade union movement in Latin America, in Arab countries, on the African continent and in Europe. All great strikes of world workers had the support and seal of approval of the class oriented trade union movement that acted according to the militant leadership of WFTU. In recent times of the capitalist crisis the WFTU required the plutocracy to pay for the crisis and not the world working class from the beginning.

The WFTU continues to build solid grounds in the present and to open its wings for the future having concrete demands that cover the modern needs of workers and the unity of their struggle against monopolies and imperialism. After its last congress in Havana, Cuba in 2005, the WFTU turned a page in its action whilst remaining solid to the principles of class struggle. During the last five years it has contributed through fighting initiatives of common action, to the reorganization of world trade union movement both on a regional and a sectoral level.

On April 2011 the 16th World Trade Union Congress will be held in Athens, a city with great culture with a long history of struggle and with PAME representing the class-oriented movement of the country. The organization of the 16th Congress in Europe is a new progressive step for the WFTU and will be a great trade union and political event for the world trade union movement and the people fighting against exploitation and imperialism. The success of the Congress will highly motivate the struggles of the International Working Class



WORLD TRADE UNION CONGRESS
6-9 April 2011, Athens - Greece

**LONG LIVE THE WFTU 65TH ANNIVERSARY!
LONG LIVE THE 16TH WORLD
TRADE UNION CONGRESS!**

**“CLASS UNITY AND STRUGGLES,
INTERNATIONALISM AND SOLIDARITY”**

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