



TRADE UNION SEMINAR:

**“THE HISTORY OF WFTU 1945-2013
IS A HISTORY OF STRUGGLES”**

Speech by the WFTU General Secretary, George Mavrikos

Right To Livelihood

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FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM

All theorists agree that the capitalist system was not born suddenly through the death of the feudal system. The “merchant”, who was the “capitalist” at the time, existed in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. These elements of commodity production are the first incomplete seeds of a capitalist system that eventually appeared in Europe in the 16th century, as Karl Marx writes and analyzes in “Capital”. While in America, Australia and Africa it was the **primitive communal system** that was the dominant form, in Europe, Russia, China, India, Japan, feudalism had already become sovereign. The key feature of **feudalism** was the monopolization of land and of the wealth-producing resources by the nobility of the landlords, by feudal lords.

In each province there were local feudal lords, while at the central level, there were kings, emperors, popes and the church. **The Catholic Church was the most autocratic landowner for many centuries, owning one third of the land in Europe and half of the land in Latin America.**

The aristocracy of nobles and leaders of the church lived on the wealth produced by the work of slaves and serfs who worked without pay and lived on just a small piece of land granted to them by the feudal lord to cultivate it for living.

In North America, Latin America and Canada, large landowners, mostly from France, England, Spain, Portugal, Holland and elsewhere, stole the land from the Indians and using, on a massive scale, slave labor of black people and indigenous people exploited the abundant wealth-producing resources of the Americas. The indigenous and black people lived in absolute poverty.

In the history of the feudal system there were many wars between the feudal landlords, with the target of expanding one's land at the expense of the other lords, while the victims were always the poor slaves and serf peasants who fought for their master.

Simultaneously, around the world poor slaves constantly organized revolts for their freedom, against the brutal exploitation. Countless books have been written about numerous bloody uprisings of slaves.

The classics of Marxism-Leninism recognized the importance of the revolt of Spartacus and his special skills. Karl Marx noted in a letter to Friedrich Engels on February 27, 1861 as follows ***“Spartacus is revealed as the most splendid fellow in the whole of ancient history. Great general (no Garibaldi), noble character, real representative of the ancient proletariat.”***

Lenin described the revolt of Spartacus as a liberation struggle of the oppressed, as a just war: *“We know the majority of wars were fought in the interests of dynasties, and were called dynastic wars. But some wars were fought in the interests of the oppressed. Spartacus set off a war in defense of the enslaved class. Wars of this nature were waged in the period of colonial oppression, in the period of slavery, etc. These wars were just wars.”*

At the same time in the capitals and in smaller cities handicrafts were developed: iron, gold, leather, ropes etc. The rich cathedrals, that today are considered as works of art, reveal the level of development of handicrafts. The artisans step by step organized the guilds. One of the first guilds was the construction workers with great artisans who mainly showed their art in the construction of temples of the time.

The principles of the guild system are found in Asia and Europe in the 7th century. The organization of the guilds started the conflicts with the landowners. Many wars and social conflicts took place between the guilds and the nobility. The exchange of goods produced by the guilds increased the role of the merchants, expanded the domestic and foreign trade, the transportation and trade of raw materials. The merchant capitalists thirsted for power and profits. They are the ones that sold slaves and traded people over 4

centuries, the ones who organized the trips of Columbus, De Gama and the other explorers and adventurers. They are also the ones that created many cities by the sea and rivers for their trade, the ones that lent money to landowners and thus the banking system made its initial appearance.

Karl Marx writes: *“The transition from the feudal mode of production takes two roads. The producer becomes a merchant and capitalist, in contradistinction from agricultural natural economy and the guild-encircled handicrafts of medieval town industry. This is the really revolutionary way. Or, the merchant takes possession in a direct way of production.”*

In the late 16th century revolutionary changes started to appear within the feudal mode of production. A new (capitalist) component started to appear. This new element was the **manufacturers**. The objective conditions demanded radical changes since a) new markets were continuously being created demanding more goods b) large numbers of ruined peasants were seeking work as laborers and c) in the countries of Western Europe, there were huge amounts of capital from gold, silver and precious stones, coming from the huge profit obtained from the plundering of Asia, Latin America and the African slave trade. In these circumstances **capitalism** found fertile ground and dominated in the countries of Western Europe and their colonies. In Europe, during the initial years of capitalist development, England played a leading role, both due to its geographical position, but mainly because it had not been involved in wars, like other European countries had done, suffering huge losses. Moreover, its large reserves of coal and iron strengthened its position.

Manufacturers clashed with the guild mode of production and gradually made their appearance in the factories. Feudalism was already in decline and disintegration. Manufacturers refused to be ruled by the absolute monarchs, priests and landowners. They wanted to create a single national internal market that could get over the feudal land division and related rights of the nobility. The conflicts and contradictions between the new rising capitalist power and feudalism, which represented the old, were continuous.

The invention of textile machinery by the carpenter and inventor James Hargreaves in 1764 and the invention of new methods in melting and processing of iron gave a great impetus to the emerging new social system of capitalism. Then with the invention and construction of the first “locomotive” by Watt in 1764 this impetus became really fast.

In many countries, bourgeois revolutions, one after the other, put an end to the feudal system. The bourgeois revolutions of 1644 in England, of 1776 in America, of 1789 in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Japan etc. were in their time “progressive revolutions”. These “revolutions” significantly reduced the power of the Catholic Church, ended slavery, formed national governments, gave impetus to the arts and sciences. But we must not forget for a moment what American author William Foster says:

*“The revolutionary bourgeoisie fought against the tyrannical feudalism for freedom, but their own freedom not the masses’. They wanted such freedom to govern and they thought best, to move trade and production without barriers, to exploit the masses of workers and peasants, all these with minimal government intervention. They praised freedom in great texts such as the American “**Declaration of Independence**” and the French **Declaration of the “Rights of Man and the Citizen”**. But the bourgeoisie never took it seriously unless it served its targets; the bright democratic content of these famous texts they used it to mobilize the exploited masses in the revolution against feudalism and national wars against rival capitalist powers.*

All these developments concerned the pre-monopolist progressive stage of capitalism that ended around 1880. Since then there are the first manifestations of imperialism which is the phase of decline of the capitalist system.”

This way, the history of humanity moved to the era of capitalism and capitalist relations of production.

Capitalism would be overthrown in the 20th century by Socialism as a superior social system that releases the working class and its allies, namely the poor peasantry, self-employed workers and progressive intelligentsia, which brings the Working Class to the center of society's development, to organize and lead the new societies, abolishing private ownership of the means of production and applying their socialization, the planned organization and management of the entire social production.

In conclusion, we must note that this whole evolution of history confirms, first, that societies are progressing and moving forward through social conflicts and struggles, and, secondly, that the old dominant power will not surrender by itself its hegemony to the new society, but this new society can only come through the violent overthrow of the former.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORKING CLASS

Large factories were gradually built and made use of machines, first wooden, later metal ones. This led to a violent closing-down of the guilds that since the Medieval Ages **controlled the market mainly through the individual production of independent producers**. Now the capitalists controlled the raw materials and the means of production. Gradually all independent producers and artisans became unemployed and ran immediately to work in the factories as wage-earners, the modern "slaves" for the capitalists.

From the peasantry:

With the concentration of land in a handful of capitalists, peasants were losing their jobs. Their wives and children, who also worked in the fields, were now unemployed. William Foster writes that in Paris there were 80,000 beggars and impoverished peasants who arrived from the provinces. Millions of other poor people from the countryside were flocking to the cities and areas where factories were built to ask for a job. Men, women and children starting at the age of 5 or 6.

From Slavery:

In America, the methods to find labor force were even more cruel and barbaric. Unemployed were sent in "ships-coffins" from Europe and the colonies to the U.S. with a "work contract – indenture" requiring that the first seven (7) years they would work without being paid until they paid off their transportation. It is written that 50,000 prisoners from prisons in Europe were sold with such contracts.

But even harsher were the methods used by American capitalists and plantation owners at the expense of Indians and Africans, even with «peonage» contracts for borrowing money.

It was fifteen (15) million Africans, violently carried by boats from Africa to America, that met the worst fate of all. Du Bois wrote that five times the number of those who arrived alive in America died on the way and were thrown into the sea.

So it was in this way that capitalists and the church gathered the labor force they needed to generate their profits and wealth.

The establishment of the first Trade Unions

From the Middle Ages guilds of independent producers and apprentices had been established and played an important role. **These associations, however, did not have the form, content and character of the labor union.** They were associations of producers and sellers together, which means coexistence of both workers and bosses, which directed the raw materials, concentrated them and then sold the production of individual producers.

In the early years of capitalism after 1764, in almost all countries, workers began to establish “friendship associations”, “mutual help associations”, with a focus on solidarity and mutual help among the proletarians in times of illness, unemployment, old age or labor accidents. Such associations were created in England, Russia, Japan, Germany, Greece, Spain, France and many other countries.

Day by day the proletariat realized that the bourgeoisie, although it had adopted in its revolutions progressive declarations and programs and had voted Constitutions with references to equality, freedom and democracy, in practice, through its governments, it had imposed a harsh, unpopular and undemocratic regime.

For example, in England in 1801 the House of Commons had 254 seats that were elected not by the entire population of the country at that time (11 million), but only by 5,723 individuals who had the right to vote.

In all countries, manufacturers strengthened the exploitation against workers, women and children and obtained huge profits. Working hours were continuously increased - 12-16 working hours a day - wages were very low, the use of new machines intensified work and the quality of life for poor people was constantly declining. The contradictions grew between wealth on one side and intensity of exploitation and poverty on the other.

Workers gradually followed more active methods to struggle against capitalists. Around 1810 the Luddite movement was developed in England. For two years, 1810-1812, workers led by Ned Ludd, broke machines and threw them on the streets, because they thought machines were to blame for their poverty. These moves show the despair of proletarians and simultaneously reveal their inability to explain the essence of the new capitalist mode of production.

Despite all these difficulties, in the period 1800-1820, there were large strikes in England with workers getting killed because of the attacks of employers and the police. For example, in 1813 many workers were killed in Hork, in 1816 in South Wales, in 1818 in Scotland. In these strikes printing workers, construction workers, textile workers, metal workers gave heroic battles. Many battles took the character of a virtual civil war and generalized conflict. Through such class conflicts, the young and still inexperienced working class in each country gradually acquired experience. Only theory was missing, the revolutionary theory. So sometimes workers turned towards utopian thinkers, like Robert Owen, who believed that through joint activities and initiatives of workers and employers capitalism could become more humane; other times they supported the “Chartism” movement, calling for a “People’s Charter” to be voted-in by parliaments. All these initiatives were positive, but they had inside them the element of utopia. The role of Robert Owen was important for the founding of the Grand National Consolidated Trades’ Union (GNCTU) of Great Britain and Ireland in 1834. In fact, he was elected President. This movement quickly had 500 thousand members. The positive aspect of this move was that it united and coordinated all local, individual and independent trade unions existing until then. The government of England accused GNCTU of being a criminal, conspiratorial organization and it arrested many of its leaders. Having its activities prohibited about a year after its inception, the GNCTU dissolved. From a theoretical point of view it is important to note that within the “Chartism” movement collided two radically opposing lines. Although all of them accepted the “Charter” which was drafted in 1838, the Workers Union of London disagreed on strategy and tactics of the movement. On the one hand, the trade unionist Loberr and his team promoted “*peaceful persuasion and education*” and on the other hand, trade union leaders such as Brien, Konnor, Harney claimed that the working class must use “*violent means, and a general strike because the opponent is ruthless.*” **Eventually the two sides agreed on a common motto: “by persuasion if possible, by force if necessary”.** We are about a decade before Karl Marx drafted the Communist Manifesto and it is quite logical that the lack of theory led to confusion, utopias and illusions.

The revolution of 1848 in Europe embraced the greater part of this continent and

greatly influenced trade union and labor initiatives. Such initiatives were:

Germany: In the industrial centers of Germany appeared the “Associations of Workers’ Friendship” for solidarity and protection of their members from exploitation and employer and state violence. Germany was divided into 36 independent states and the whole country was under Austrian domination. The first two unions that operated nationwide were the union of printing workers and the union of tobacco workers. Stephan Born, friend of Marx and Engels, organized in 1848 the first Labour Congress and founded the organization “Workers’ Brotherhood” which acted both as a union and as a political movement. On May 23, 1863 a nationwide Labour Conference in Leipzig founded the General Union of German Workers (Allgemeine Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein) under the leadership of Lassalle. In 1869 the organization was split because of serious ideological differences.

France: Since 1791 a law had been passed declaring illegal any action aiming to increase wages. In the period 1800-1830 workers destroyed many machines. The central slogan of workers in the printing industry, textile industry etc. was “down with the machines”. The most important strike of this period was the strike of 40 000 workers in the silk industry in the city of Lyon, where the strike turned into a riot and strikers occupied the city of Lyon for three days. In 1863 the anarchist, printing worker, Pierre Proudhon founded in Paris the “Workers’ Mutual Bank.”

Italy: in 1859 Italy was under the control of Austria. The first attempt to establish a union in 1848 was in the printing industry and it was called “resistance group”. From 1791 to 1890 strikes were banned by law.

In 1853 a labor conference was held and in 1861 the first historic national assembly of workers took place. In this meeting Mazzini became the head. However, he had bourgeois perceptions and quickly the working class of Italy pushed him away from the leadership position.

Greece: In Greece, the first trade union was founded in 1879 in the shipyards of Syros. It was followed by the printing workers in Athens that founded their own association on July 11, 1882. In Greece, the first major strike was organized in November 1873 in the mines of Lavrio. The miners staged an occupation of the factory and there were bloody clashes with police. In 1883 another big strike followed again in Lavrio and in 1896 in the same French mining company the workers’ strike quickly turned into an armed rebellion that lasted 18 days. Six striking workers were killed in the clashes, as well as eight policemen and men of the employers. The main demands in all these mobilizations were increases in wages, houses for workers, establishment of a hospital and a pharmacy because many workers died helplessly in the underground tunnels.

Other countries: In **Spain**, the first union in the textile industry was established in 1840. Mutual Benefit Associations operated in **Russia** since 1838. In **Belgium** the trade union of printing workers was founded in 1842. In **Ireland** in 1824 there were trade groups. In **Canada** the trade union of printing workers was founded in 1827. In Sydney, **Australia** the trade union of printing workers was founded in 1833 and in 1850 the organization of mine workers in the gold mines owned by big capitalists.

In the U.S.: By 1776, American capitalism had already developed under the rule of British colonialists. The majority of the workers were from among the poor working classes of Europe and African slaves in the plantations of the South. Big revolts of slaves were drowned in blood. In 1827 the “Mechanics’ Union of Trade Associations” was founded in Philadelphia. It was the first union. By 1836, 13 such associations had been established in other U.S. cities. In 1834 the General Confederation of Labour was founded in Philadelphia, but within three years it was dissolved. Most unions forbade Negroes, women and unskilled workers to join their ranks. Racism pushed forward the development of the large and heroic

Negro movement against racism and slavery, with outstanding great Negro leaders such as Frederick Douglass.

It is worth noting that over 5 million immigrants reached the U.S. in the period 1820-1860, mostly from Europe. In 1860, according to local records, 47% of the population of New York, 59% of St. Louis, 49% of Chicago and 50% of Pittsburgh were recent immigrants (having been born in another country). Many Irish, Germans, Jews, Greeks played a role in the development of the trade union movement and the struggles that followed. In 1857 German immigrants in New York founded the "Communist Club of New York."

After the U.S. civil war in the country there were about 80 unions. In June 1864, there are records that report that there were 200 trade unions.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL (I.W.A.)

The First **International Workingmen's Association (IWA)** was founded on September 28, 1864 in St. Martins Hall in London. Until then, although some progress had been made, the trade union movement, at the national and international levels, was still at an infant stage. The number of unionized workers was still small, dominated by ideological confusion and ambiguities. Some workers in their desperation were breaking machines, others ran to the capitalist employers to plead for a solution to their problems by showing understanding, still others believed that workers had to compete among themselves. Spontaneity and spontaneous initiatives led to failures. The labor movement had neither strategy, nor tactics. All these difficulties and delays do not reduce the heroic efforts of all those workers and trade unionists that paved the road and prepared the steps for the future.

With the **IWA** things changed for good. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, having published in January 1848 the "Communist Manifesto", had already prepared a revolutionary program for the working class and so the main axes to firmly support the **IWA** existed.

For the program and constitution of the IWA there was ideological and political confrontation. There were "chartists", "utopians", anarchists, nationalists and even some supporters of capitalism at the Conference. Marx and Engels gave countless battles against the anarchists and the opportunists who sowed confusion and required either "neutrality" from the political struggle, or pure "economic struggle", or proposed strategies that were not targeted towards the abolition of exploitation of man by man. The first three proposed project plans were rejected. Eventually the plan prepared and presented by Karl Marx was accepted and adopted. Marx was representing Germany at the 55-member **IWA** General Council. Thus, he became the theoretical and organizational leader of the First International.

Marx and Engels analyzed capitalist society and were instrumental in clearing up the confusion that existed until then. They put things in proper sequence showing that:

1. The capitalist society is divided into **two hostile camps**; in **two basic social classes** that are at war with each other. On the one hand is the bourgeoisie and on the other the proletariat and its allies.
2. Through the appropriation of the **surplus** value produced by workers, capitalists become wealthy at the expense of workers. The theory of surplus value is the basis of the Marxist economic analysis.
3. The capitalist state is not a charity organization - a neutral body, but a **collective capitalist** that formulates its policies at the expense of the proletariat and in favor of the big bosses.
4. The working class and its allies must struggle to resolve their financial demands and other immediate claims, but they also have the duty to give **political characteristics to**

their struggles and aim to overthrow the capitalist system and emancipate humanity from the chains of exploitation. The tactics of the trade union movement should support and serve the strategic objective of the working class.

5. The unions are a necessary **organizational cell** of the economic and political struggle of the working class and to achieve their goals they should unite workers based on their class features and follow the path of class struggle. Scientifically analyzing the historical development of the class struggle, they emphasized that **“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”**.

It is worth emphasizing that the “Inaugural Address and the Provisional Rules of IWA”, written and presented by Karl Marx, are a necessary tool for each class fighter of the trade union movement.

The First International, on the basis of its program and its objectives, was not only a political organization, but an International Trade Union Organization. The world’s first international trade union organization had in its program among others the need to assist in the establishment of National Trade Union Centrals and then to affiliate them to the IWA. It had **one leading body**, the General Council, and the highest body was the annual Congress.

The activities of the IWA included the support of strikes in sectors and countries, the establishment of unions, the formation of the first ever platform against child labor and against discrimination against women. It also elaborated and adopted in the Geneva conference in 1866 the decision written by Karl Marx on “Trade Unions: their past, present and future.”

The IWA held six (6) Congresses besides the founding conference in London. Geneva in 1866, Lausanne in 1867, Brussels in 1868, Basel in 1869, The Hague in 1872 and the last one in Philadelphia (USA) in 1876, where its dissolution was decided.

The Vatican at the Unions

The urgent need of the working class around the world for international coordination and international organization failed to have any tangible result. Although in 1909 an “International Federation of Trade Unions” was founded, this effort had no activity and no success.

On the contrary, the Catholic Church, upon the initiative of the Vatican, promoted the cooperation between “religious associations of workers,” created mainly in European countries. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII, called the “Pope of Workers”, ordered the establishment of Catholic (Christian) Trade Unions. Such unions were founded in Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, France, Switzerland and elsewhere. All these unions founded the “International Secretariat of Christian Trade Unions.” The general principles of these unions were the collaboration between classes, anti-communism, refusal to strike as a form of struggle. Their goal was the “partial reform of capitalism”.

The biggest strike

Meanwhile a great figure of the global labor movement was born in the city of Simbirsk on April 10, 1870, a figure that was to change the history of mankind, Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin). The young lawyer Lenin, with his famous book “What is to be done”, opened new paths for the trade union movement and also gave practical value to the processes of Marx - Engels for scientific socialism. Lenin not only established the revolutionary party of the working class in Russia (Bolsheviks-later renamed the Communist Party), but also made important contributions to the trade union movement by fighting the opportunist theories and giving clear guidance on the role of unions in the period of imperialism, as well as their role and responsibility in the period of socialist construction.

In his works he repeatedly denounced the bourgeois theories on the supposed

neutrality and independence of the trade union movement; he made a profound criticism of the theories on “spontaneity” of the masses, on the organizational and theoretical field; he fought against the “economists” (the proponents of a pure economic struggle of the working class) and he developed the tactics for achieving working class unity and its leading role in society. He stressed the need for the working class to conquer more and more revolutionary theory.

From the very beginning it became clear how decisive the role of Lenin would be in the development of the labor movement. In addition to the importance of his ideological and organizational positions in London in 1903 at the second conference of the then illegal Social Democratic Party, the contribution of Lenin unfolded in full on the political scene during the 1905 revolution in Russia and the events that followed.

The strike movement in Tsarist Russia was growing as the Marxist-Leninist theory was gaining ground within the working class and poor peasantry of the country. In 1890, 40 000 weavers were on strike in Petersburg, with the central demand of 8 hours work; in 1902 there was a great rail strike in Rostov; the great strike of oil workers in 1903 in southern Russia; the general strike in 1904 in Odessa, followed by another strike in Baku. So the events of 1905 did not come out of the blue. They had been prepared during the previous years and they were accelerated by the Russo - Japanese War and the humiliating defeat of tsarist Russia.

On January 25, 1905 over 150 000 strikers gathered in front of the tsarist palaces in Petersburg and clashed for hours with the tsarist police. One thousand strikers were killed and two thousand were wounded. So that day became known as “Bloody Sunday”. The metal workers of Petersburg had the most victims. Immediately a wave of strikes spread throughout Russia. Lenin writes of about 2,800,000 strikers in 1905. Peasants entered the struggle by burning plantations and livestock facilities of landowners. Students followed the revolutionary working class. With continuous and repeated strikes and demonstrations strikers adamantly claimed three demands: 1) 8 working hours 2) abdication of the Tsar 3) Constituent Assembly. The maneuvers of the Tsar in August to call off the assembly did not succeed and the movement became stronger. This movement culminated in the December armed uprising in Moscow. The tsarist army eventually defeated the armed workers and drowned in blood and terror this struggle, correctly named by Russian and international researchers and historians as “the largest mass strike the world has ever known.”

This revolutionary strike movement, led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, although it did not reach its final goal, was the main rehearsal for the triumph of 1917, which would change the history of social revolutions and the history of humankind.

THE AMSTERDAM INTERNATIONAL

At a global level, the efforts for cooperation and coordination of Trade Unions not only did not stop, but on the contrary, international meetings and discussions were frequently organized. Some sectors had opened important paths for a successful coordination among them to exchange experiences on issues related to their branches. Tobacco workers were the first since 1871 by establishing the “International Federation of Tobacco Workers” and miners followed. In 1913 in Zurich, Switzerland an “International Federation of Trade Unions” was also created, but it was unable to get a program or platform of demands.

The situation in the field of international trade-union coordination was drastically altered following the Great Socialist Revolution of October 1917. Its success gave new impetus and dynamism to the modern labor union movement in all countries of the world. At the same time, it brought together the reactionary, pro-capitalist and anti-communist forces.

In 1919, nearly two years after the revolution of October, the opportunist forces that were active in the trade union movement of the working class felt the need to coordinate against the "Communist danger". Governments of Western European countries supported this effort, because they feared that the trade unions of their countries could be influenced by the example of Soviet Russia, which was making remarkable progress in all areas. Political and social forces from the colonialist countries, terrified by the positions against colonialism supported by the Soviet power, also wanted a trade-union coordination controlled by them. In addition, the preparations that had already begun to coordinate class unions increased the global concerns of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, many governments tried to stop the visits that National Trade Unions were making to the Soviet Union, upon the invitation of the Soviet Trade Unions, to see the first achievements of socialism..

Under these conditions, in 1919, the "International Federation of Trade Unions" was founded in Amsterdam and became known under the title of the Amsterdam International or the Yellow International. Although the declarations and program of this organization professed in words that it was "not controlled by parties" and that it was "independent", it is known that ideologically, politically and socially it was a trade union front of the supporters of opportunism, reformism and class collaboration. Simultaneously, through its actions, it proved that it a vehement opponent of the Soviet Union and socialism, that it undermined the struggle of national liberation movements and the struggle against colonialism undertaken by the people of the colonies.

That same year, in 1919, the League of Nations was founded in Geneva, together with a "permanent organization for the protection of workers at global level", that is the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**.

THE RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOUR UNIONS (RILU)

In March 1919 in Moscow, at the initiative of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Third Communist International was founded with the participation of representatives of 52 communist parties from 33 countries. Among the issues discussed by the Third Communist International and elaborated in the adopted decisions were the strengthening of the class-oriented trade union movement, the development of working class struggles in the capitalist countries and the colonial countries, the establishment of trade unions and the intensification of the struggle against capital and opportunism.

Based on all these guidelines, the following year, in 1920, the "First World Congress of Revolutionary Unions" was organized with the participation of large delegations from 41 countries. This way the **Red International of Labour Unions (RILU)** was founded. The invitation was open to any trade unions that wanted to take part. That same invitation was sent immediately after the establishment of the RILU to all organizations.

The RILU not only did not hide its relations with the Communist movement, but openly and publicly wrote that it accepted ideological and political guidance from the Third Communist International, in stark contrast to the International of Amsterdam, that pretended to be supposedly independent, but was actually part of the Social Democratic International and worked with key Western European governments and the U.S. government. The Red International of Labour Unions clearly and honestly showed, with words and actions, its nature and face. **From this period on, we will constantly come across such hypocrisy, which is the main feature of opportunism. Always trying to convince that they are supposedly independent, supposedly neutral!**

Since its founding declaration, the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) stated that the working class, together with its struggle for its immediate problems, had to also struggle for socialism. It also declared that it accepted as members all unions that accepted the principle of class struggle, supported the national liberation movements and the movements fighting against colonialism. It also made strong public criticism of the Amsterdam International, while at the same time extended appeals to it for joint action against the attack of capital, appeals which were repeatedly refused.

A few years after its foundation, the Red International of Labour Unions had 20 million members, while at the same time the Amsterdam International had 12 million.

Another issue that gave prestige, moral and political superiority to the Red International of Labour Unions was its firm position against the fascist regimes that began appearing in Europe. The Amsterdam International essentially paved the way for fascist regimes. The RILU fought against them until the end. Thus, since their foundation, the two international trade union centers expressed two completely different strategies that coexist and clash with each other in the labour trade union movement since 1864: one expressing the fundamental interests of the working class for its emancipation, the other subjugating these interests to the interests of the capitalists. Since the two main opposing classes continue to exist in the modern capitalist society, the confrontation of the two trends in the trade union movement will objectively continue. In whatever form, name or numerical strength, these two poles will be in ideological and political conflict.

The Red International of Trade Unions, having achieved its primary goal of helping to develop class-oriented trade unions in all corners of the world and of promoting their international coordination, was dissolved in 1937. Hence, its cycle of life ended. The new conditions required new decisions and new steps. The fascist danger forced new initiatives to be taken.

The International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) since its foundation was never interested in the development of the trade union organizations in the countries colonized by the West. Actually, the IFTU supported the policy of the colonizers since the labour aristocracy in Europe was benefiting from the exploitation of the colonies. It openly argued that the colonies were essential to secure raw materials for the capitalist countries of the west. This practice of IFTU confirmed Lenin's stable position that: "the labour aristocracy of the imperialist countries, which was the base of the social-democratic parties and their trade unions, participated in the distribution of the super-profits which came from the exploitation of the colonies". Lenin's position is still valid today, as the large trade union organizations and their leaderships in Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, Netherlands, Australia and, especially, the USA, directly or indirectly, support the policy of their countries' governments and in many occasions align themselves with the positions of their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs in significant international issues, such as the war in Iraq, the conflict between Georgia and Russia in the Caucasus, the break-up of Yugoslavia, the issue of climate change, of biofuels etc.

Contrary to the opportunists and the social-democrats, the Red International of Labour Unions, from the first day of its foundation in 1920, expressed in its program and objectives, complete solidarity in the struggle of the working class and the people of the colonies against colonialism. With special emphasis and attention on China, India, Philippines, Indochina and the entire area under the occupation of British, French, Dutch, Japanese, Portuguese and American.

In Africa

Before the First World War the movement in the African continent was very under-developed, since the barbarity of the colonizers made very difficult the emergence and the development of trade union activities. Actually, only in the African Union there were major militant initiatives. In 1887 the first union was founded in Cape Town by carpenters. At the Johannesburg Mines the black workers would gain 1/10 of the salary of a white worker for the same work performed. The newspaper "Times" of New York published on September 13th 1955, the wages of the black and the white workers in South Africa. The black worker in the copper mines of Rhodesia would be paid \$21 per year. The white worker in the same mines and the same work would be paid \$5,600 per year! And all these in agreement with the trade unions controlled by the white workers.

The British colonizers were ruthless. Barbaric! They plundered the unimaginable wealth of the gold-mines and the diamond mines. They would beat and murder in cold blood the black workers. The trade unions and the associations of the workers would be banned from organizing black workers. Only white workers had the right to become members in unions. The indignation of the black and the colored workers was rising and in 1913 a

general strike turned into an armed rebellion and Johannesburg was occupied.

They kept the city under their control for several days, until the British troops reached the city, with General Smuts as their commander, to beat down the rebels. Ten thousand strikers were arrested and imprisoned. The chauvinistic views that the white workers had were systematically cultivated by the British Labour Party who even expressed openly its position against the right of black people to vote. The whites were keeping the black workers out of the unions, they prevented them from getting specialization in their work and thus made it difficult for an anti-colonialist class-oriented movement to grow. These anti-labour, racist positions were consistent with similar views elsewhere, such as the well-known "White Australia" and the chauvinist positions of the American trade unions. All in all, they supported and enhanced the apartheid regime.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (WFTU)

In the first years of the 1930's the rise of fascism became an important issue for the class-oriented trade union movement, which immediately started to take measures for the development of a broad antifascist front in the international trade union movement. At the same time, the strengthening of the young Soviet Union, the decisive steps forward in the socialist construction in two first 5-year plans, the global prestige that it fairly gained, provided to the Soviet Unions' All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU) the necessary prestige to take important initiatives in Europe and at a global level. Furthermore, the Marxist-Leninist theory offered the Soviet unions the background to analyze the situation in time and to see the near future clearly, but also made them the most consistent and resolute antifascist pole. No other union in the world at that period met all of these conditions and therefore the role of the AUCCTU was decisive.

Hundreds of trade union organizations from all corners of the world were invited to Moscow for discussions and acquaintance with socialism. Bilateral relations and relations of friendship were developed with the trade union leaders from all continents.

Through these contacts, in December 1941, the British-Soviet Antifascist trade union committee was founded. In the same terms, the Soviet-French Committee was created with the same orientation. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) participated in one of those committees. The other American trade union organization, the AFL, had lost the essence of anything relating to real trade union characteristics and had completely been transformed into a yellow trade union, under the command of the US government and was richly paid for these services.

So the Soviet and the British trade unions, as well as the CIO, assumed the primary responsibility to prepare a trade union conference and to discuss the possibilities of a new, class-oriented and antifascist broad international trade union organization. This lasted for 2-3 years. In this period, the American CIO had a progressive leadership. Later it made a 180 degree turn and merged with the AFL. Indeed, in the period 6-17 February 1945, the World Trade Union Conference met in London with the participation of 204 delegates from 40 national and 15 international trade union organizations that represented approximately 50 million workers. The main topics of discussion concerned the defeat of fascism, the liberation of all countries, the analysis of the postwar period and the immediate tasks of the Working Class and its trade union movement. There was extensive discussion regarding the content of the democratic, trade union and individual liberties. It was decided that a world trade union congress was to be organized in Paris.

Despite the spirit of enthusiasm and the general spirit of unity that seemed to emerge in the discussions, the ideological, political and trade union confrontations were obvious. Two lines and two groups of forces emerged in the London Conference when the debate began for the establishment of a new world trade union federation that would bring together in its ranks the trade unions of the world.

The first group was the group of conservatives, social-democrats, other bureaucrats and opportunists headed by the unions of Britain, America, Netherlands and some other

European countries. The second group was the group formed out of communists, democrats and progressive trade unions which at the given conditions aligned themselves with the communists. This group was headed by the Soviet Unions, the All-China Trade Union Federation and India, followed by the trade unions of Latin America, France, Italy, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Australia etc.

The first serious confrontation occurred on the issue of whether there was actually a need for a new world federation or whether the **Amsterdam International (IFTU)** could be revived. The first group was persistent in the revival of the IFTU, because it believed that in this way it would have a dominant role on issues of strategy and tactics. The second group was from the beginning until the end unyielding in the necessity of establishing a new world organization, with specific militant and internationalist characteristics.

This confrontation may at first seem as a simple organizational difference. But it is not at all like that. It covers inherent theoretical and ideological differences for the role and the character of the trade unions and at the same time it reveals the anti-sovietism of the social-democrats and the opportunists. A third fact that this contradiction reveals is the battle for hegemony that the British were trying to impose at the international level. This position of the British officials is not superficial. It confirms the longstanding historical experience, that they are ruthless, without principles and values when it comes to serve their interests.

Thus, the confrontation between the two opposing ideological currents became more intense and more open. The British leaders, headed by Walter Citrine, were in agreement with the American Federation of Labour (AFL). When they saw, however, that the antifascist wind and enthusiasm of the times and the determination of the militant block of forces were so strong that they would lead anyway to the foundation of a new organization, they took a step back temporarily, they changed their tactics and agreed to the establishment of the new organization, but asked to be put in charge of the leading posts. Their aim was to control the new organization, to lead it in the line of class-collaboration or inactivate it and if necessary to dissolve it. It did not take long for these goals to appear openly. Immediately after the foundation of the new organization they demanded posts, they put forward various terms and blackmailed in every unacceptable and undemocratic way possible.

THE FOUNDING CONFERENCE OF THE WFTU

The decisions of the London World Trade Union Conference were indeed put into practice, and the biggest and most massive international workers' conference until that time was organized. This conference was held in Paris, from September 25th to October 8th, 1945. 346 representatives convened from 56 countries, representing 67 million members.

The largest trade union organization that took part in the meetings was the Soviet Trade Unions, with 27,124,000 members. In terms of numbers, this was the largest organization in existence in the world. It had played a leading role in the victory over fascism and in the efforts to build a socialist society. On October 3rd the Paris Conference turned into a congress, and the congress ran until October 8th.

All the trade unions from all the countries in the world were invited to the congress. Only one organization refused to participate in the congress. That was the American A.F.L. On the first day, October 3rd, the establishment of the WFTU was unanimously decided.

The congress took place in an atmosphere of excitement and militant exaltation. The British and their allies were evasive. They also tried to affect the formation of the constitution and the objectives of the organization, but without any major results. The most significant and revealing confrontation at the congress was the one over the position that the new organization should adopt regarding the trade union movements in the colonies. The British, Dutch and their allies wanted no mention of the colonial regime. They claimed that it was not a trade union issue. That point of view was fiercely attacked by the trade unions of the countries that were under the plundering of the colonizers. They were led by the famous Indian revolutionary syndicalist S. A. Dange, the African trade unionists, Lombardo Toledano

from Latin America, Lazaro Peña from Cuba, Liu Chang-Sheng from China and others with solid arguments. They argued that the new organization had a duty not only to talk about liberation of the colonies, but also to have a leading role in the solidarity with the struggle for freedom and self-determination. Finally, they managed to impose the correct point of view and thus the congress took a special, separate resolution on that matter.

"It would have been an incomplete victory if the peoples of the colonies and the territories of all countries were deprived of the rights of self-determination" says the fourth resolution of the Founding Conference concerning the position of the WFTU about colonialism.

The constitution that was voted on established democratic and proportionate rules so that the representation of small organizations could be strengthened. The objectives and the program of the organization were voted. The name of the organization was decided to be 'World Federation of Trade Unions' (WFTU). It was also decided that the headquarters of the federation would be in Paris, France.

The goals of the WFTU were outlined as follows:

"The WFTU has the following objectives:

- To organize and unite the trade unions around the world regardless of racial, ethnic, religious or political differences.*

- To help the workers in the countries which are socially or industrially less-developed to form their own trade union organizations.*

- To fight for the elimination of any fascist form of government, no matter what kind of activities it takes and no matter what kind of a name it uses.*

- To struggle against war and against the causes of war, to struggle for a stable and lasting peace.*

All this should be done by supporting the widest possible international cooperation in the socio-economic sector; taking measures for industrial development and the wide use of all possibilities and resources available in the less-developed countries; leading the battle against reactionism and fighting for the democratic rights and freedoms of all peoples.

- To represent the interests of the international labor movement in all international bodies responsible for resolving the problems in organizing the world and are based on agreements or conventions concluded in the UN or any other international organizations that the WFTU decides to participate in.*

- To unite and organize the trade unions of all the countries in the world in a common struggle:*

- *Against violation of economic and social rights of workers, violation of democratic freedoms.*

- *For satisfying the need of workers to be secured through full employment.*

- *For progressive improvement of the wages, working days and working conditions of the workers.*

- *For full and adequate social security coverage that would protect workers and their families from unemployment, illness, accidents and in old age.*

- *For the taking of any other action that is aiming to raise the social and economic status of workers.*

- To organize the enlightening of unionized workers on the issue of international labor unity and make them realize their own personal responsibility for carrying out the trade union objectives and targets.*

In its effort to achieve these purposes, the World Federation of Trade Unions' work is based on the following principles:

- Absolute democracy within the unions in each country and close cooperation between them.*

- Permanent contact with the trade unions that have joined the WFTU, militant support and assistance in their work.*

- *Systematic exchange of information and experience in trade union work with the objective of strengthening the solidarity of the international labor movement.*
- *Coordination of the activities of workers' organizations for the realization of international goals and decisions.*
- *Successfully defended interests of workers moving from one country to another.*
- *Use of all available means for popularization of the purposes for which the World Federation of Trade Unions was established, of its goals and program for the realization of these goals, popularization of the decisions of the WFTU about different issues”.*

The following Charter of Trade Union Rights was also unanimously adopted at the congress:

- *The workers would be free to get organized in trade unions and take part in all the usual trade union activities, including collective bargaining.*
- *The workers would be free to establish associations and any other collective organizations.*
- *There would be freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion and political organization.*
- *Any form of political, economic or social discrimination based on racial criteria, beliefs, color or sex would be repealed and therefore equal pay for equal work would be applied. In cases where young people have the job of adults, the former would be paid the salary that an adult would have got for such a job.*
- *There would be equal opportunities for education and regular training for all.*
- *There would be suitable employment available with appropriate payment for everybody who needs a job.*
- *There would be sufficient protection in all circumstances of life where this is required to ensure the social and economic security of every citizen”.*

The congress also decided to establish branch trade union federations in all the main sectors of production. According to the chart of the Founding Conference, these federations were obliged to follow the line of the WFTU and obey its decisions.

Overall, it seems that the militant trade unions had the final say in the program, the goals of the WFTU, in its charter and the decisions of the first Founding Conference. The well-known opportunistic theories about the so-called “**neutrality**” of the trade unions and the bourgeois views for “trade unions away from politics” cannot be found in the documents of the WFTU.

On the contrary, in the composition of the leading bodies the consistent forces made significant concessions in order to achieve trade union unity. At the General Council, the Executive Committee and the Secretariat the numerical composition did not reflect the balance of forces. The criterion of the balance of forces, which is always a safe and objective measure, was not applied. The compromise in this criterion can be seen throughout the history of the class-oriented current, which, in its effort for “unity”, gave out key positions and kept for itself secondary positions, while it was always first in action.

The composition of this first Executive Committee of the WFTU which was elected by the Congress was as follows:

President: Walter Citrine – Britain
 General Secretary: Luis Saillant – France
 Vice-President: Hillman – USA
 Vice-President: Jouaux – France
 Vice-President: L. Toledano – Latin America
 Vice-President: Su – China
 Vice-President: Di Vittorio – Italy

Vice-President: Coopers – Netherlands

In his closing remarks to the Congress, the General Secretary L. Saillant said: *“the WFTU is a child of unity for unified struggles of the workers against fascism, against exploitation by the monopolies, against the liberation of all the colonies and for better living conditions for the working class”*.

The establishment of the WFTU constituted a great qualitative step for the world trade union movement. The processes and the resolutions of the Congress for the great, contemporary international issues, the voted objectives for the eradication of fascism, the necessity of world peace, the labour demands and the democracy in the workplaces, the improvement of the living conditions of the workers, the special resolution against colonialism for national independence of the colonies, the claiming of a role for this new organization in the UN, offered great impetus and prestige to the WFTU.

Its establishment reflected the needs of the day and it activated the labour masses. It indicated the leading role of the working class in the struggle for the immense problems existing and, at the same time, its ability to connect this struggle with the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist system. It elevated proletarian internationalist and working class solidarity. It opened new paths for the socialist construction in the Soviet Union and in the other countries of the People's Democracies.

At the same time, both through the works of the London Conference, as well as through the 1st Congress in Paris, the class-oriented forces gained experience in ideological, political and trade unions issues of confrontation, which would become useful from the very first steps of the WFTU.

The Indian fighter Debkumar Ganguli, in his book **“the History of the World Federation of Trade Unions 1945-2000”** reports that the first actions of the WFTU after the end of the Congress was to send delegations to Spain, Greece, Iran and to the colonized countries. These actions indicate the orientation of the WFTU towards countries and regions that lived under real dictatorship regimes.

Spain lived under the darkness of the long dictatorship of Franco. In Greece the civil war was about to start in 1946-1949 which ended with the defeat of the heroic Democratic Army of Greece. In Iran, the government had banned the trade union activities and had imprisoned many trade unionists. South Africa was under the slavery of the white minority and the predatory exploitation of the rich wealth-producing resources of the country.

These actions and initiatives steadily increased the prestige of the WFTU. All the trade union organizations of the world, except of course of the AFL, followed the directions and the resolutions of the WFTU Secretariat. In Europe a new impetus to the WFTU was given by the large, massive and pioneer trade unions that were being strengthened in the countries of Eastern Europe, which through their people's struggles and the contribution of the Soviet Union had turned away from capitalism and were developing in the direction of a new political and economic system without exploitation. These were the Peoples' Democracies of East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, Yugoslavia. All these countries together with the Soviet Union constituted a large percent of the European continent. In the end of the 1940's, the trade union power of the unions of the socialist countries in Europe presented the following image: USSR 34,000,000 members, East Germany 5,135,000, Poland 4,100,000, Czechoslovakia 3,500,000, Rumania 2,350,000, Hungary 1,650,000, Bulgaria 900,000, Albania 76,000, Yugoslavia 1,800,000.

With such important forces working for the socialist construction and at the same time helping, leading and supporting, with concrete actions, the movement of the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, the power of the WFTU gradually started to worry the imperialists and primarily the governments of USA and Britain. The achievements of

the countries of Eastern Europe in all fields, their rapid progress, the solutions that were offered to the big problems of the Working Class had a great impact to the movements in the capitalist countries.

Unemployment was eliminated, free housing was provided, social security included everyone, everyone had the right to vote, they had free medical care, all attended free compulsory education from the first classes until the university, there was 8 hours of work, summer vacations, equal rights for women, cultural rights. All these were solid proof in these countries and a motivation for the trade unions of the West.

At the same time, the exchange of delegations, the visits of hundreds of trade union cadres from the west to the socialist countries and the vivid contact with their great achievements and their progress intensified the faith to the value and the effectiveness of the struggle for social justice and progress.

This new trend would be strengthened with the recognition of the WFTU by the International Organizations and the general consultative status it gained in 1946 at the UN and the ILO; status that it keeps until today.

The world trade union movement emerged after the antifascist victory with a tremendous growth rate in all continents. The establishment of the WFTU offered an extra boost. The new class-oriented forces, having given a self-sacrificing struggle against the German-Italian-Japanese fascist axis, came out with increased prestige, contrary to the forces of social-democracy that determined their tactics opportunistically.

THE COLD WAR AND THE WFTU SPLIT

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USA, S. Wallace, writes, before the start of the World War II: *"In those pre-war years, the representatives of the major financial circles in the west democracies and the USA strongly believed that the war between the Soviet Union and Germany of Hitler would be favorable for their interests. Russia would definitely be defeated and Communism would be eliminated."* S. Wallace is not the only one mentioning this information. Many serious essays have been written on this subject.

The assessments of the capitalists were mistaken. The Red Army defeated Hitler's armies and wrote the most glorious pages of humanity's war history. The battles of Stalingrad, Sevastopol, Moscow etc. will for centuries continue to be a subject of study for the students of the military academies in all continents. No matter how many times the imperialists will rewrite the historical books, the truth is one. The Red Army defeated fascism, liberated Europe from the Nazis and, in the presence of the Soviet General, Zhukov, Hitler's Generals signed in Berlin in May 8th, 1945 a "treaty and unconditional surrender".

This success had a heavy price: the Soviet Union gave more than 20 million dead. The following comparative table with the official published data confirms the offer of each country in the struggle against fascism:

Comparative data:

Soviet Union	20,5 million dead
Britain	375 thousand dead
USA	405 thousand dead
France	600 thousand dead

The desires of British, American and their allies were not only proven wrong, but they also lost half of Europe and their colonies; they witnessed a victorious movement in the

western world, the strengthening of the communist parties and the boom of the WFTU in all continents with an anti-capitalist program and a great action. This situation was a fatal threat against the imperialists. They were forced to organize their counter-attack. They worked without delay. The secret services, the capitalists, their political and military representation formulated the strategy and tactics of their counter-attack. In this strategy and tactics they utilized many elements of the politics and practice of Hitler. This is how they planned and organized the Cold War.

In 1955, describing the real goals of the Cold War the historian William Foster wrote: *"The American attack goes further: Its aim is to subordinate the whole world, not only the socialist but also the capitalist, under the economic domination of the monopolists of the Wall Street. This counter-revolutionary counter-attack has many historical similarities with the policy of Hitler and his allies. Its final aims are to destroy the global socialism and democracy, to replace these systems with a new form of fascism and to establish the world domination of the American monopoly capital, though a war that this time would be atomic."*

"More specifically, the American imperialism tried though the Cold War to achieve the following:

- a) to overthrow the socialist governments of the USSR, of the People's Republic of China, the European Peoples' Democracies and to restore capitalism in those countries.*
- b) To arm Germany and Japan, transforming these countries into satellites of the USA.*
- c) to penetrate and to force its domination in the European markets.*
- d) to undermine the colonial regimes of Great Britain, France and Netherlands for their own benefit.*
- e) to further strengthen the American ties in the Latin America,*
- f) to transform the Mediterranean into an American lake and to establish complete control of the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean.*
- g) To dominate the air communication of the entire world.*
- h) to degrade the United Nations in a subsidiary body of the US government and*
- i) to make the USA the industrial center and Washington the political capital of the whole world.*

Many great powers, forced the American imperialists in the adoption of such and aggressive policy. The USA – the most powerful capitalist country of the world- always cultivated systematically the dream of the world domination. The American capitalists believe that with the formation of a gigantic military mechanism, they will always be able to maintain the current huge profits and they will be able to cover up the morbid manifestations of their economy thus avoiding the outbreak of a devastating economic crisis. They also believe that only with them, with their superior technique and their synchronized methods, are able to save the global capitalism, the fate of which they have begun to seriously worry. This fascist dream which is more similar to the visions of Hitler is doomed to the same and worse failure".

Although these assessments were expressed half a century ago, unfortunately for the progressive movement, they have been highly confirmed by reality.

On March 5th, 1946 Winston Churchill, in his speech at Fulton, USA, proclaimed for the first time some aspects of the capitalists' plans, speaking about an "Iron Curtain", about a psychological war and military equipment.

The first known decision of the reactionary forces was the implementation of the "Truman doctrine" which was announced on March 12th, 1947 and concerned an aid of \$200 million to the undemocratic regimes of Turkey and Greece. This was followed by financial support towards France, Italy, Belgium, provided the communists would be expelled from the governments. The same was what they tried to achieve by giving money for the resignation of 17 Ministers of Czechoslovakia. These were the first interventions in the European developments.

Soon after came the announcement, on June 5th 1947, by the American Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Marshall, of the second economic program of "aid" towards the countries of Europe of \$ 12 billion dollars, which led to the dissolution of the antifascist alliance and the extensive involvement of the USA in the political and economic developments in many countries.

The third step in the plan of the USA was the creation of NATO in April 1949. This started the growth of military armaments in all countries that were tied to the "Marshall aid" and the establishment of American bases in the entire world. Inside the USA themselves a new type of fascism was developing, known as "McCarthyism". Many reactionary circles world-wide and especially in the USA, demanded the "solution" of the Soviet Union "problem" via an attack with atomic bombs. The trial had already been made with the undue dropping of the atomic bomb on August 1945 to Hiroshima-Nagasaki, destroying and killing millions of innocent people.

The battle for the "Truman Doctrine", the "Marshall Plan" and NATO affected all fields of life in all countries. The controversy was sharp and determined.

For the attack against the WFTU, F. Kota mentions: ***"the split occurred after a long and detailed preparation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USA with the collaboration of the CIA"***. The tactic they chose to follow was a blow from within. They had already failed to control the line of the WFTU. They had failed to drive the WFTU to the line of class collaboration. They had failed to seize a majority in the leading bodies.

The last details of the plan were configured in June 1947 in a special meeting in Switzerland. In November 1947, at the meeting of the Secretariat of the WFTU, the representatives of the American organization CIO introduced the proposal that the WFTU should greet the Marshall plan. The majority refused to bow to this blackmailing. Twice in 1948 the TUC of England sent written ultimatums to the WFTU, asking either for the acceptance of the Marshall plan or for the temporary suspension of the operation of the WFTU. That whole year the secret services of Britain, USA and France were in close collaboration with the disintegrators. They would in common, study, plan and implement their moves. However, the majority of the organization and the leaders of the WFTU were uncompromising. The last scene was played out on January 1949 at the WFTU Secretariat Meeting where the British President of WFTU, Arthur Deakin, demanded the dissolution of the WFTU, because, according to him, it had been transformed into an "undemocratic and communist-controlled organization".

The meeting was stormy. Both sides remained adamant. The Soviet trade unionists revealed the true plans of the disintegrators. The claim that the WFTU was undemocratic was exposed by the mere fact that in the Secretariat, the USA, Britain and Canada with 13,500,000 members all-together had five votes, while the Soviet Union with 27,000,000 had 3 votes. The analogy was the same in the General Council and in the composition of the Congress where the USA, Britain and Canada had in combination 235 votes, while the Soviet Union had 205!

Finally, after all these, the majority proposed to lead the WFTU to an extraordinary congress which, as the leading body, would allow the representatives worldwide to decide if they would back up the Marshall plan or if they would decide on the dissolution of the WFTU or whether they would reject these blackmails.

The "democratic" British and American representatives rejected this proposal for an extraordinary congress and insisted on the dissolution of the WFTU. Their proposal came to a vote and it was rejected. Immediately the three agents of Imperialism: the British Deakin, the Dutch Coopers and the American Carey, left the meeting. A few days later unions from Germany, France, North America, Italy and Asia announced their withdrawal from the WFTU. Immediately after that, the French government banned the functioning of the WFTU Central Offices in Paris and asked for their removal from France. This action of the French government exposes all the teammates of this anti-trade union plot. The Central Offices moved to Vienna, the capital of Austria.

This is how the split of WFTU occurred on the occasion of the Marshall plan but with even deeper causes. Many authors, trade unionists and historians provide other reasons for the split, such as differences that really existed regarding issues of the TUIs', the branch organizations of the WFTU. It is true that everything could have an impact. But the existing differences about the TUIs' could not have split the WFTU on their own. The real causes can be found by observing that **in the interior of the WFTU there were two basic ideological currents. Two large groups that had unbridgeable differences.** The trade union unity that the WFTU had achieved in the London Conference and in its Founding Congress in Paris, was **organizational** unity. With this organizational unity, which was a result of the political circumstances of 1945, it could form, for a period of time, minimum plans of action, it could formulate some platforms on secondary issues, but it could not plan and, especially, it could not implement strategies for the abolition of the exploitation of man-by-man.

The WFTU after the split, was dominant in numbers, in moral, political and trade union level in all continents. The vast majority of the organizations remained under the umbrella of its influence, its activity continued more dynamically and with a clearer labour platform, its class-oriented characteristics were enhanced and the great victories of the people of China, Korea and Vietnam gave it new prestige and impetus.

Against this clear, workers' tactic of the WFTU, the new international organization that was created by the organizational split of 1949 brought in the workers' trade union movement methods, tactics and practices that gave birth and continue to give birth to great obstacles in the development of class-oriented struggles.

The ICFTU, since its establishment and its renaming in November 2006, has been characterized by **a) a close alignment with the decisions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USA and their allies, b) a close alignment with the multinationals and the monopolies, c) cooperation with the state secret services and d) the buying off and bribing of trade unions and trade unionists, always aiming for the disintegration of the unity of the working class.**

This is the heritage of the ICFTU to the ITUC, which ITUC continues more consciously, with more modern methods in the same footsteps. The existing countless documents confirm these allegations. (Annex No2, at the end of the book).

The worst thing that the ICFTU did and ITUC continues today is to corrupt consciences. They sow disappointment to the ordinary working people that everybody can be sold-out and that everyone in the trade unions is being bought off. They generalize the buying off of people and ideas, resulting in the debasement of most of the trade union organizations in the USA, Britain and other countries. Another result of these practices is that many workers abandon the trade unions.

THE FOUNDATION OF ICFTU

The American Federation of Labour (**A.F.L**) greeted the organizational split of the WFTU and immediately put in action a scenario prepared long before in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USA and the CIA. They had already examined which would be the name of this new international organization. About a hundred agents of these services travelled in all countries where trade unions existed at that time and distributed money and invitations to the world congress they were preparing. The preparatory committee took place on June 25-26, 1949 in Geneva, Switzerland. The organizers stated that it was attended by trade unions that represented 40 million members. That was, off course, a lie. The number was much smaller but the propagandist tactic they followed made lying a precondition. In the Geneva Meeting the serious differences between the British and the Americans for the leadership of this new organization surfaced. Both sides claimed for themselves the first role in the split of the WFTU. These differences were also expressed in the founding congress which took place in London in the period between November 28th

and December 9th of 1949. For the ideological and trade union platform and the program there was total convergence of views. The issue of the leadership, on the other hand, was terminated with the interference of the ministries of foreign affairs of their countries.

In the founding congress of London, the organizers claimed that they represented 48 million workers. The reality was that from the organizations that participated in it the real number adds up to about 35 million. Brussels was chosen as the seat of the organization. Three regional offices were also defined at the London Congress: the ERO of Europe, the ORIT of Latin America and the ARO for Asia.

Resolving the battle between British and Americans, in the position of the General Secretary they elected the Dutch social-democrat Oldenburg, as a temporary, compromising solution. The truth is that in the first period of life of this new organization the dominant role and the control was in the hands of the Americans, either directly or via their subordinates. Later they gave the first role to the British.

The organization was decided to be given the name “free” to create the impression that the WFTU was not a free organization but a controlled and dependent one. Feasibility and propaganda purposes led to the name “International Confederation of Free Trade Unions” (ICFTU).

Financial bribery

The money spent for this purpose was astronomical for the time. Over the table, the US government gave funding to the AFL from the state budget and the AFL, in its turn, would fund, with donations, grants or “loans”, trade union leaderships and trade union organizations. Under the table, the US government was providing money through the state budget to the CIA and it would buy off cadres and organizations through “labour attaches” that existed in all the US embassies.

Amongst the most widely-known facts that confirm all these events, we indicate the following: for the case of France and the founding congress of the Confederation “Force Ouvriere” (Labour Force), Lorwin says in his book “the French labour movement” (p.246), that the AFL provided them with a “loan” of 25 thousand dollars, as well as to the French trade unionist Leon Jouhaux (who sat at the Secretariat of the WFTU before the split) a “grant” of 40 million French francs. For the split of CTAL in Latin America, O. Foster writes in his book: “this disintegrating campaign was decided upon and organized in the congresses of the AFL in 1946, 1947, 1948. The main delegate of AFL in this “campaign” was Serafino Romualdi, a former state employee of the USA. It is not precisely clear how much money the State Department spend to subordinate this vital area for the American imperialism. But it seems that it had to do with millions of dollars. The bourgeois media were generously paid to propagate the split in the whole Latin America, even gangs tramps and adventurers were paid to destroy the offices of the trade unions and they would help the success of the American plots in a thousand different ways. This disgraceful activity was continuously applauded by the AFL in its congresses. At that time, the CTAL left the International Labour Organization accusing it of favoring the disintegrators.”

About India, in his book “the world labour movement matures” (p.34), Wallace mentions that an Indian trade union leader M. Roy received a monthly allowance of \$ 1000 from the British government.

The Labour Aristocracy

By examining this period one can observe that in the trade union movement there was a layer of people who were ruthless in achieving their goals. These people, in the first phases of the trade union movement, originated from the working class, they were overwhelmed by the ideology of the capitalist class, they were bought-off with financial funding and finally were transformed into conscious organs of the capitalist system. They lived like capitalists and had nothing in common with the working class and the popular strata.

Bribery, in a direct or indirect manner, was a major problem. For example, according to the financial data published in 1952, in the USA the annual earnings of the basic trade unionists were:

- Harrison (Federation of Railway) \$ 76,000
- Louis (Federation of Miners) \$ 50,000
- Mac Donald (Steel-workers) \$ 40,000
- Meany (President of the AFL-CIO) \$ 50,000
- Marcy (Construction) \$ 30,000
- Dubinsky (Garment) \$ 23,000

All of them had also been receiving equally large sums as “entertainment expenses”. The same year according to the facts of the Labour Ministry of USA the general annual outcome in the USA was \$ 1,453, in Britain \$ 773, in Belgium \$ 582, in Italy \$ 235. (The average annual labour income was off course much lower).

The same year the British trade union leadership received:

- Tewson (General Secretary of TUC) \$ 5,600
- Tiffin (Transport) \$ 4,700
- Campbell (Railways) \$ 4,600
- Horner (Miners) \$ 3,000

Additionally “entertainment expenses” were providing them as well with extra incomes.

At those times, the “modern” forms of buying off, like “committees”, “working groups”, “institutes”, “training seminars”, “training trips” and all the kinds of seminars, had not been discovered yet.

In the period that followed until today, the labour aristocracy and its people obtained more capabilities than their “ancestors”. They are more educated, they appear more progressive, ecological, humanist, sympathizing with the suffering of the workers, feeling the poverty etc. The majority of these people have never worked in their lives, not one day, in a factory or a productive sector. They are “in vitro” trade unionists, created in the schools of the various ministries, of the institutes of class-collaboration. They all have heavy paychecks. The burden of the workers is strange to them. The labour aristocracy forms around it an impervious, deeply undemocratic and ruthless trade union bureaucracy which transforms the trade unions from massive organizations of the working class to mechanisms and servants of the capital. Their main mission is to manipulate the working class, to defuse and to disorient its struggles, to propagate the make-up of the capitalist system and to reject the role and the mission of the working class. For all these reasons they feel deep hatred for the class-oriented movement and its militants. They fabricate various fake theories to present themselves as great and useful. They build connections with the Mass Media, they buy off journalists. They fabricate news and utilize the new scientific electronic achievements for these purposes.

These terrible conditions within many trade unions disappoint many working people, send them “home” or to individual solutions. The greatest impact of the damage caused by the Labour Aristocracy is on the new generation. When young people witness these phenomena, their first logical feeling is despair and frustration. Disgust and anger.

In each country the true militants struggle against the labour aristocracy and the

trade union bureaucracy. They expose its role and its goals. The examples are plentiful.

AFTER THE SPLIT

After the split in the WFTU and the foundation of the ICFTU, these two International trade union Organizations followed different and opposite courses.

The WFTU moved under the influence of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the ICFTU was a servant of policies of the USA, the NATO and other imperialists and anti-people's mechanisms.

At the 2nd World Trade Union Congress that the WFTU organized in June 29th until July 9th, 1949 in Milan, Italy, two were the main characteristics that dominated. The first was the organizational enhancement of the WFTU with the foundation of the International Sectoral Organizations (TUIs-UIS) and the foundation of the Regional Offices in all regions.

Based on these decisions of the 2nd World Trade Union Congress the following Sectoral Trade Union Organizations belonging to the family of the WFTU, were founded:

1. Metal and Mining
2. Textile, Clothing and Leather
3. Agriculture and Plantations
4. Food, Tobacco and Hotels
5. Mines
6. Chemicals, Oil and Allied
7. Commerce
8. Construction and Wood
9. Teachers
10. Public Services and Allied
11. Transport

In the same period began the founding of the Regional Offices, first in Asia, in Africa, in Middle East, in Latin America.

This organizational process highlights the priority WFTU was giving to be grounded within the basic sectors of the production, to strengthen its presence in the work places and to support the base. It also brought in the surface an effort to decentralized the coordination since the founding of the TUI's and the activity of the Regional Office would transfer responsibilities to the regional, the national, the sectoral level.

With these criteria, the resolutions of Milan facilitated the enhancement of the trade union activity in countries where delay was observed in the progress of the trade union movement.

The **Second** characteristic of the 2nd World Trade Union Congress were the continuous deliberations and appeals to the leaderships of the trade unions in USA and Britain to return to the WFTU, to unite with it, not to split the WFTU, not to move into the foundation

of another organization etc.

Such appeals were formed by the WFTU and send:

- a) In July 1919 as a resolution of the 2nd World Trade Union Congress entitled: "open letter to the workers and the Trade Unionists of USA and Britain and other countries whose leaders declared withdrawal from the WFTU.
- b) In July 1951 from Vienna, the leadership of the WFTU addressed a second appeal to the leaderships of the ICFTU and the WCL.
- c) In November 1951 the leadership of the WFTU addressed a third appeal to the leadership of ICFTU.
- d) In April 1953, another open letter was addressed to the ICFTU.

By reading all these letters and by observing the course of the developments that followed in the decades from 1950 up to now, we can safely conclude that the leadership of the WFTU at that time obtained many illusions for "unity with the ICFTU". Some in the WFTU leadership continued to believe that they could bring back in the "straight road", trade unionists who served the agenda of the Imperialists and the bourgeoisie.

Persecutions against the WFTU

The seat of the WFTU according to its founding Congress in 1945 was located in Paris, France. However, after the split of 1949 and the foundation of the ICFTU, the French government started a series of slanders and attacks against the WFTU. The "Cold War" had already started and the French bourgeoisie, the French social-democracy and the Reformists didn't want the WFTU to exist and to be active. A government regulation banned the functioning of the WFTU in France. Following long debates, decision was taken to transfer the seat to Vienna, capital of Austria. Hence, from 1950 to 1956 the seat was transferred to Austria.

Vienna was the city where the **3rd World Trade Union Congress took place from 10-21st October 1953**. The Congress amongst others took a resolution for the founding of a **International Solidarity Fund**. Through this fund, the WFTU would materially and practically support the class-oriented trade union movements in all Continents. In every corner of the planet, the proletarian internationalism of the WFTU would support those in struggle for the creation of Trade Union Organizations, those in struggle for the liberation of the Working Class and the poor peasantry. The Internationalist activity of the WFTU was annoying for the global bourgeoisie, therefore in 1956 the Austrian Government looted the WFTU offices, stole the archives, confiscated the documents and the fund and in February 6th, the police sealed the offices, occupied the space, placed a guard and asked from the leadership of the WFTU to leave the country.

The protests towards the UN and the International community brought no results and following discussions, the seat of the WFTU was transferred to Prague, the capital of the Socialist Democracy of Czechoslovakia. There it would remain from 1957 to 2005. After the overthrows of the period 1989-1991, the WFTU was victim of many attacks in Prague, legal persecutions, confiscation of its belongings and many restrictions. There was a very negative attitude towards the class-oriented trade union movement in Prague. Therefore, in January 2006, the seat was transferred to Athens, capital of Greece.

All this course, shows the difficulties, the efforts, the struggles of the militant international trade union movement to overcome the obstacles which capitalism and the monopolies place before it. The WFTU course reflects the course of the International Trade Union Movement.

Against Colonialism

The **4th World Trade Union Congress** took place on 4-15 October 1957 in Leipzig of the German Democratic Republic. The main slogan of the Congress was “the national liberation movements and the duties of the trade unions”. Key speaker was the Indian trade union leaders, S.A Dange. Important experience was gathered beforehand by the WFTU though:

- The Panafrican Trade Union Congress in Dakar, Senegal
- The foundation of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions in Damascus, Syria in 1956.

At the 4th Congress, specific decisions were taken for the support of the trade union movement in the countries of the Third World. The resolutions were calling for struggle against colonialism and against apartheid. They were falling short however, in proposing a perspective and a way-out since they limited the objectives to the issues of the democratic, trade union and constitutional liberties. These objectives were correct but failed to make the necessary connection between the politics and the economy. They did not bring to the forefront the necessity for a change the socio-economic formation.

The 5th Congress of the WFTU was held on 4-15 December of 1961 in Moscow with the participation of 1000 delegates from 97 countries representing 142 million members. Main slogan of the Congress was “the action plan of the trade unions for the Defense of the labour interests”.

N. Khrushchev was present and addressed a greeting at the opening ceremony. The Congress voted the resolution with the title “open door policy”. A decision which was not in harmony with the needs of the International Working Class.

The resolutions of the 5th Congress were confronted by the All China Trade Union Federation (ACFTU), the Employers Association of Albania, the VGCL of Vietnam, the Confederation of Ceylon, the Confederation of Indonesia and others. The conflict over the line of the WFTU would be intensified in the **6th World Trade Union Federation that was held on 8-22 October 1965 in Warsaw of Poland** and would become an open debate. This conflict would lead to the withdrawal of the ACFTU and the Employers Association of Albania from the WFTU on December 16th, 1966.

The 7th World Trade Union Congress took place in Budapest, capital of Hungary on 17-26 October 1969. The 7th Congress resulted to important changes in the leadership of the WFTU by changing the General Secretary, Luis Saillant who was holding the position for 24 years. Many changes were also made in the constitution. Long discussion took place in the Budapest Congress over the revolt of May 1968 in France during which many trade union leaders publicly criticized the stance of the Communist Party of France and the stance of the trade union leaderships in France which they believed was “submissive”.

The 8th Congress of the WFTU was held on 15-22 October 1973 in the seaside town of Varna in Bulgaria. The Congress voted the “Charter of Trade Union Rights, Economical and social demands of the workers in the capitalist countries in the current times”.

Important protocols of cooperation were signed, according to the Congress decisions, with ICATU in the Arab world, with OATUU in the African Continent, with CPUSTAL for Latin America. These agreements provided new impetus to the trade unions of dozens of countries since with initiative of the WFTU, trade union schools were built, institutes of education, solidarity committees and support for persecuted trade union leaders as well as campaigns for the liberation of imprisoned leaders were organized, etc.

Eurocommunism

In the 50's, the 60's and the following decades, the known theory of "Eurocommunism" was initially formed in Europe and then spread to other continents. This current wanting to stray from the path of the socialist countries but at the same time to avoid projecting a common course with social-democracy, it supported an "intermediate path for socialism with democracy and freedom". With nicely phrased slogans they were hiding their real objective which was the co-management of the capitalist system along with social-democracy. In the essence the political and trade union forces that followed this current of eurocommunism renounced the vanguard role of the working class in the sociopolitical changes, they supported the strategic choice of USA-Britain for the foundation and the strengthening of the European Economic Community (EEC), they adopted the theories of the "two superpowers and the sharing of the world", they overemphasized in the "national peculiarities" and downgraded the general principles of the Marxist philosophy. Soon they projected openly as a one-way road of social overthrows the Parliamentarism and the participation jointly with bourgeois parties and capitalists in the "decision making centers".

Eurocommunism utilized real problems that existed in countries with socialist system such as bureaucracy, lack of socialist democracy, theoretical delays in the analysis of new phenomena and wrong evaluations in the analysis of capitalism. The utilization of such weaknesses, delays and mistakes brought closer in a parallel course reformists and social-democrats. In Spain, in France, in Italy, in Britain, the examples were very concrete. The course and the outcome of specific Trade Unions must nowadays become a valuable experience for the avoidance of similar theories.

The course of eurocommunism negatively affected the international and European trade union movement. Gradually the supporters of such theories abandoned the class-oriented militant path and followed initially a lonely "independent" as they claimed, road, and later found themselves allied with the line of class collaboration. This course bear confusions and difficulties in the lines of the class-oriented trade union movement and the WFTU itself.

In 1973 the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) was founded in Europe and played a crucial role in the battle against the WFTU. The ETUC was always moving in the line of class collaboration, in the support of the capitalist system and its modernization.

ETUC was joined by the "left" leaderships of the French CGT, the Spanish CCOO, the Italian CGIL with the argument that they would change the character of ETUC from "within". The ETUC not only continued in the same course and orientation, but also become faithful servant of the European Governments and the European Union. Hence, those who ultimately did change were not the ETUC but the CGT, the CGIL, the CCOO etc. and from militant trade unions became the friends and partners of the bourgeoisie.

The 9th World Trade Union Congress was held on 16-22 April 1978 in Prague of the Socialist Democracy of Czechoslovakia. In that Congress the proposals of the Italian CGIL and the French CGT were rejected. The Italians proposed the end of the "international structure of the WFTU" and withdraw from the WFTU with the excuse of their proposal being rejected by the Congress. The excuse was hypocritical. The reality was that CGIL and other trade union leaderships in Western Europe had already infiltrated into the so called "eurocommunist" current.

The 10th World Trade Union Congress took place on 10-15 February 1982 in La Havana, capital of Cuba. The Congress was attended by 810 delegates from 138 countries. The most special movement of the Congress was the speech of "Comandante" Fidel Castro. Fidel made a long reference to the role and the internationalist solidarity expressed by the WFTU to the Cuban Revolution since its very beginning.

The 11th World Trade Union Congress took place on 16-22 September 1986 in Berlin, of the German Democratic Republic with the participation of 75 countries. The 11th and 12th Congress which took place on 13-20 November of 1960 in Moscow were held in the period

of counterrevolution, when the so called perestroika destroyed in trade union level what the working class of the socialist countries was building for decades in those countries.

In the period after the overthrows and the reversal in the international correlation of forces, the class-oriented trade union movement in sectoral, regional, national and international level entered a period of a great tribulation. The WFTU entered a deep crisis.

Many trade unionists mainly from the Western Europe requested its dissolution. All the large trade union federations from the ex-socialist countries were abandoning it and were moving under the umbrella of the USA, international social-democracy and reformism. The WFTU found itself in the most difficult movement since its foundation. What the capitalist governments, imperialism, monopolies and worldwide reformists had failed to accomplish since 1945, seemed then, in 1992, closer than ever; that WFTU could cease to exist. On those crucial moments few trade unionists, trade union organizations, numerically small, a small minority stood in its feet, contrary to the current of reformism and dissolution. It was difficult to find a country to host the Special Congress since many refused such and many trade union organizations along with the leaderships of CGT of France, CGIL of Italy and CCOO of Spain requested the dissolution of the WFTU by the decision of the remaining in its leadership. They claimed that there is no need for a special congress and a mere decision of dissolution was enough.

The trade union Organization that accepted and took upon the hosting of the Congress was the General Confederation of Syrian Workers (GFTU) led by Isedi Nasir, thus though significant difficulties the **13th World Trade Union Congress was organized in Damascus, capital of Syria on 22-26 November 1994.** Two opposing lines were clashed until the end. The one led by the leaders of CGT France who demanded with undemocratic approach and slanders to dissolve the WFTU and the other leader by trade unions of India, Cuba, Syria, Palestine, Libya and others who proposed the strengthening of the WFTU and its adjustment to the new conditions with the preservation of its anti-imperialist, militant and internationalist characteristics. The ideological, organizational and trade unionist conflict was hard. In the end those who supported the dissolution of the WFTU withdrew from the congress. Two of the leaders of the militant block Pedro Ross, General Secretary of CTC Cuba and the Indian K.L.Mahendra of AITUC are worth of mentioning for the class-oriented trade union movement to remember and to honor.

Thus, without solving the problems of the WFTU the reformist forces demanding the dissolution of the WFTU were confronted and repulsed.

After the 13th Congress, the WFTU continued its limited activity and continued to shrink and lose members and friends. At that time the leading team of the WFTU remained in Prague facing persecutions, judicial proceedings and slanders from the new governments of the capitalist Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic.

The 14th World Trade Union Congress was held on 24-25th March 200 in New Delhi, India. 421 delegates from 65 countries participated in it many of whom were observers.

During this Congress a large meeting took place for the emergence of the new leadership that would take upon itself the reconstruction of the WFTU. However, the objective and subjective difficulties did not allow radical changes in the leadership. A significant contribution of the Congress in New Delhi was that it matured the conditions and formed the path for the changes that would take place in the Congress which followed.

The 15th World Trade Union Congress took place on 4-8 December of 2005 in La Havana, Cuba. It was a Congress that changed the contemporary course of the WFTU. Long before the Congress, under the initiative of Trade Union Organizations and Trade Unionists from Cuba, India, Vietnam, Cyprus, Portugal and Greece many meetings were organized where the general directions and the objectives of the 15th Congress were discussed. At the 15th Congress a complete change was made in the leadership of the WFTU. The renewal of the leadership gave birth to new hopes in the family of the WFTU. At the same time worries

and questions were formed in the minds many comrades whether all would just remain unfulfilled words.

One of the first decisions of the new Secretariat was the transferring of the WFTU seat from the hostile Prague to Athens where PAME (All-Workers Militant Front of Greece), the affiliate of the WFTU assumed to support, to allocate militants for the functioning of the new offices. And this is what happened.

Under the main slogan: "Action-Action-Action! Class-oriented, Internationalist, Anti-imperialist" the new leadership started to organized the action in all levels. In the period 2006-2011 a new large majority of trade union members and friends of the WFTU in all continents showed militant spirit. Hundreds of militant activities, initiatives, mobilizations, strikes, various struggles etc. were organized.

With great enthusiasm and optimism the 16th World Trade Union Congress of the WFTU was organized on 6-10 April 2011 in Athens, Greece. The Congress had extensive participation. 828 delegates from 101 countries were present. The official opening of the Congress was held in a large Stadium with the presence of 4,500 Greek workers. During the first day of the congress the welcoming of the trade union organizations that become members of the WFTU in the period 2006-2011 took place.

The Congress voted the main document "Athens Pact", a new Constitution and with a secret-ballot elected the new leadership of the WFTU. The 16th World Trade Union Congress was characterized as a historic Congress and it was a collective and completely positive result of the upward course that started in La Havana, on December 2005 and lasted all the period up to April 2011.

