

## CHAPTER V.

### THE OUTLOOK

The brief survey of the history. of the activities of the ICFTU which has been given in the preceding chapters shows that while the tasks which the ICFTU has set itself to fulfil have varied from time to time and while their centre of gravity has shifted here and there, they have been, on the whole, growing steadily. Although successes have been gained and battles won on many fronts, the ICFTU's tasks are by no means over. A glance at the world situation to-day will quickly dispel any illusions on that score.

To begin with, universal peace, one of the supreme goals of the international free trade union movement, has not yet been brought closer to realisation. The ICFTU has always pleaded for peaceful relations between all nations and the settlement of conflicts by negotiations. During the past twenty years the ICFTU has pursued this policy wherever open warfare broke out. However, there are wide areas of the world where a state of war still exists and negotiations for ending it are creeping along at an appallingly slow pace, as is the case in the Vietnam conflict, or where a precarious, frequently violated armistice exists, as is the case in the Middle East, or civil war, as is the case in Nigeria. In all those cases the ICFTU has pleaded for a start to effective negotiations with a view to ending warfare and establishing peaceful relations.

The ICFTU has repeatedly raised its voice in favour of nuclear disarmament, but aside from the agreement on the partial discontinuation of nuclear arms tests which was concluded between the major nuclear powers, no real progress has been achieved. Even the non-proliferation agreement which has already passed the stage of United Nations approval is still waiting for ratification. The international free trade union movement still has a tremendous job to do: that of continuously exerting itself in

the cause of peace; in favour of a rapid end, through serious negotiations, of warfare where it still exists today; in favour of the establishment of truly peaceful relations between all nations, in favour of the effective resumption of disarmament negotiations. If all this were achieved, peace would not only be more secure in the world, but the savings resulting from a reduction in military expenditures could and should be used to take better care of the urgent social tasks which every country faces at home and to increase substantially financial assistance to developing nations.

The free trade unions of the world more than ever before need an effective instrument to fight for human rights. As has been shown in preceding chapters of this survey, this fight has by no means been won as yet. In the huge area of Southern Africa the vast majority of the population still lives in a state of servitude. The ICFTU is a support for those people in that region who are fighting for freedom in Portuguese Africa or who are struggling to keep their trade unions operating, in the face of harsh measures of oppression, as they are doing in Rhodesia. In Europe, the Franco regime, abandoning the last pretence of liberalisation and of respect for human rights, has resorted to the most cruel measures in order to suppress the steadily growing liberation movement of the people. The international free trade union movement is an indispensable support for the Spanish workers who continue to wage their fight for freedom and trade union rights in spite of relentless persecution. In Greece and Portugal, the opposition to the dictatorship regimes which tyrannise these countries is growing and the ICFTU is making strenuous efforts to help those trade union elements in these two countries who are ready to take up the freedom struggle. In this area too a tremendous job still remains to be done for the ICFTU.

Indeed, the promotion and defence of human freedom as the foundation of a just and democratic society constitutes one of the tasks for which the ICFTU was created. More than ever the ICFTU will continue to fight dictatorship - be it of the fascist, military, racist or communist type - which is the negation of everything we stand for. The solidarity actions taken by the ICFTU in the face of dramatic events such as the popular uprisings in Berlin, Poznan, Hungary and more recently the Czechoslovakian tragedy amply demonstrate the unique role of the ICFTU as the tangible expression of the conscience of the workers of the world.

As far as trade union rights are concerned, the survey has shown that the situation is, to say the least, very patchy: there

has been progress in some countries, regression in quite a number of others. In any event, there is no reason for complacency about successes which have been achieved; on the contrary, what is needed is firm determination to regain the territory which has been lost and steadily to widen the area of full trade union rights. There again, international action must be intensified.

In another area of human rights, have the rights of the working woman made decisive progress? True, the principle of equal wages for work of equal value has in theory gained international recognition. It has been secured in an International Labour Convention; but that does not mean that it has been implemented everywhere in the World. Even in the most progressive countries there is still discrimination by sex sometimes in a very subtle way, not only with regard to wages, but also in other respects. Against all these forms of discrimination the ICFTU will continue to fight.

Another human right, that of the young workers to general and vocational education is likewise far from being realised. Even in economically advanced countries there is still much actual discrimination against working youth, particularly as far as access to higher education is concerned, while in the developing countries, in spite of undeniable progress which has been made in the fight against illiteracy, there are still formidable obstacles, many of them of a financial nature, to the realisation of the right to general and vocational education.

Among all the tasks which the international free trade union movement faces, that of assisting trade unions in the developing countries in their development and consolidation is of prime importance: here the progress that has been achieved in the barely twenty years of ICFTU activities is truly impressive. In some of the developing countries strong, stable and efficient trade unions have developed where twenty years ago hardly any rudiments of trade unions were in existence, and the achievements of the ICFTU in the field of trade union education are unparalleled, but in many countries of the developing world trade unions are still struggling against tremendous odds and are urgently in need of international assistance in their uphill struggle. This assistance must be given, and it can only be hoped that the method employed in one particular case - that of Indonesia - can be used also for the benefit of free trade union development in many other countries.

The difficulties against which trade unions have to struggle in many developing countries are to a large extent, if not enti-

rely, the result of the low degree of economic development. If the ICFTU has concentrated so much attention and so many efforts on the goal of fostering economic development in the developing countries, this has primarily been done with a view to bettering the lot of the millions and millions of people, workers on the land and in the towns, who inhabit these countries; but it has also been done with a view to creating more favourable conditions for the growth and strengthening of the trade unions of these countries. Certainly these efforts of the ICFTU have not been in vain. World opinion is aware of the urgency and magnitude of the development tasks and the means for doing the job as efficiently as possible have been worked out. It is also true that, as a result, there has been economic progress in many developing countries, in agricultural production and techniques, improvement in the infrastructure, a certain degree of industrialisation even; but this progress has only to a limited degree been reflected in the living standards of the working population. In any event, as has often been stated, the gap between the economically advanced and developing countries has kept growing. There too the task of the international free trade union movement to foster all efforts to assist in maximum economic development in the developing areas is growing, not diminishing.

Nor is there any lessening of the task of the international free trade union movement in the economically advanced countries. On the contrary, as been shown in preceding chapters of this survey, these countries are still far from having achieved economic stability and a dynamic equilibrium, the prerequisites for stable and full employment and social progress. They are still periodically plagued by economic recessions, balance of payments difficulties, deflationary policies, monetary crises, with disastrous consequences for employment and the workers' living standards. Again the ICFTU, which has done so much to foster full employment, economic and social stability, and social progress, cannot and will not tire of emphasising the need for practising on national and international levels, policies which will ensure economic growth, full employment and an ever-increasing standard of living, based on a dynamic progress.

The building and strengthening of free trade unions, as cornerstones of democratic societies, as well as the vigorous defense of basic trade union rights whenever these are threatened, will certainly remain the very core of the ICFTU's activities. The ICFTU will continue to act as the international spokesman of free labour before world-wide public opinion, governments, the UN, its specialised agencies and international

or regional bodies. It will also continue to provide the link of international solidarity between free trade unions as well as the forum where they assemble at international level to formulate policies necessary to meet the manifold challenges free labour is facing in view of rapidly changing world patterns.

Trade unions have to cope with many problems of modern society: problems arising from the transformation of traditional economic structures or created by the rapid expansion of multinational firms, as well as general problems of economic and social development only to be solved by evolving strategies which transcend national interests. All these tasks can most effectively be met within the framework of an international body uniting free labour on a world-wide basis.

The ICFTU has been waging an untiring war for bread, freedom and peace and remarkable successes have been won so far; yet a struggle of this kind and of these dimensions is never finished. When certain tasks have been fulfilled, others arise anew. In fact, the situation which confronts the free trade unions of the world today compels them to intensify their activities and to strengthen their militancy.

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