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General Secretary of the ICFTU

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

Inter-Section Conference on Containerization, London, 18-19 April

A special ITF Inter-Section Conference on Containerization was held in London from 18-19 April. 40 delegates, representing all the ITF sections affected by containerization, attended the meeting, which was conducted under the able chairmanship of R. Dekeyzer, President of the Belgian Transport Workers' Union.

The meeting had before it a draft report prepared by the ITF Committee of Experts on Containerization, which served as a basis for discussions. The meeting was particularly concerned with the social and trade union aspects of containerization. Delegates felt that while containerization affected all branches of transport, it affected each section in a different way and to a different extent. It was emphasised that every effort must be made to maintain employment in the transport industries at the highest possible levels, particularly among dockworkers, where the danger of redundancy is most imminent. It was felt that there should be coordination between different modes of transport and that workers should be consulted in good time at every stage of management's modernization plans. At the same time, delegates felt that there should be trade union action to ensure that the workers benefit from increased productivity brought by containerization, that when the work-force has to be reduced, this should be done as far as possible by natural attrition; and that, where redundancies are unavoidable, there should be suitable retraining of redundant workers, bearing in mind available jobs in the transport industry and outside.

The experts' draft report can now be amended and expanded to cover social and trade union aspects, in the light of the discussion that took place. Copies of the report will then be presented for the information of delegates at the forthcoming 29th Congress of the ITF. A brief statement on the social repercussions of containerization and ITF policy for dealing with such repercussions is to be submitted to Congress for approval.

Committee of ITF Unions in the EEC, Villingen, 10-11 April

The Committee of ITF Unions in the EEC has stressed the need for an integrated European transport market, capable of meeting the transport needs of the Community, ensuring an end to all discrimination based on nationality, and designed to eliminate the danger of cut-throat competition and the mis-use of market dominance in specific sectors of transport. This was the view expressed at the meeting of the Committee held in Villingen (Germany) on 10-11 April 1968 under the chairmanship of Ph. Seibert, President of the German Railwaymen's Union.

A statement issued after the meeting confirmed that in order to achieve rational organization of the transport market, there must be coordination of investment, regulation of capacity and access to the market, the problem of the allocation of infrastructure charges must be solved, and steps must be taken for the harmonization and coordination of conditions of competition, and, above all, the working and social conditions of workers in the different transport industries.

The Committee welcomed the proposal of the EEC Commission for the setting up of a committee for supervision of the market, and demanded that unions be adequately represented on such a committee.

The Committee once again expressed its concern at the considerable delay in the work of the Community in the field of social harmonization in road transport. It is more than a year since the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee made a recommendation on the subject, but the Council of Ministers has not yet reached a decision on the first draft. The Committee of ITF Unions in the EEC urgently requested the Council to adopt the proposed regulations on this matter, and to set a date for their implementation at its next meeting at the end of April.

The Committee also urged the various organs of the EEC to intensify their collaboration with the trade unions concerned, and to take, without delay, the necessary steps for the harmonization of social conditions in the different transport industries of the EEC.

APPEALS FOR RELEASE OF EUSTAQUIO TOLOSA

The ITF have sent a cable to President Onganía of Argentina urging the immediate release of Eustaquio Tolosa, President of the Argentine Dockworkers' Union (SUPA), and Member of the ITF Executive Board. Tolosa has been sentenced to five years' imprisonment, some fifteen months after his arrest. In the cable, the ITF General Secretary urged Tolosa's immediate release as a convincing token of the Argentine Government's regard for trade union rights. A similar cable has been sent by the ICFTU.

TRANSPORT

SOUTH EAST ASIA

South East Asian nations plan joint merchant fleet

A joint merchant fleet is to be set up in the near future by the Association of South East Asian Nations, according to the Foreign Minister of Thailand, who considers that such a fleet would be useful to member countries because private shipping lines now operating between them could indiscriminately increase freight rates.

UNITED STATES

US Maritime Labour and Management join to pursue common goals

The AFL-CIO Maritime Committee has announced the formation of a Joint Unity Committee of maritime labour and management to pursue common legislative goals. In addition to the Executive Board of the Maritime Committee, which represents 268,000 maritime workers, the Unity Committee will include officials of major US steamship companies and representatives of tramp-ship owners. Thomas W. Gleason, President of the ITF-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association, called the new committee "a healthy and significant development in the relationship of maritime labor and management."

TRADE UNIONS

SPAIN

Spanish clandestine trade unions prepare May Day demonstration

Hundreds of thousands of leaflets, calling upon the workers to take part in the May Day demonstrations sponsored by clandestine trade union organisations in various towns all over Spain, have been distributed in factories and mines. They were prepared by the General Union of Workers (UGT), a clandestine trade union national centre affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The leaflets call for democracy, social justice and for the right to strike, for the immediate release of arrested workers and students, for trade union rights and freedom of association. They demand full employment and the adaptation of wages to the cost of living index, a minimum daily wage of 300 pesetas (US\$ 4.30 or £1.16s.0d.) a 40-hour working week without loss of wages, four weeks' paid holiday per year and better social insurance and old age pensions.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRALIA

Flight stewards strike

550 flight stewards employed by the Australian Overseas Airline, Qantas, and members of the ITF-affiliated Flight Stewards' Association of Australia, went on strike on 2 April in protest

against the use of inadequately trained T.A.A. hostesses on Qantas aircraft, and the alleged lack of safety in Qantas' aircraft.

FRANCE

French airline union strikes for qualified cabin attendants

The ITF-affiliated French Cabin Attendants' Union (SNPC) have carried out a three-day token strike in protest at a special permit granted by the Government to the private airline, UTA, to fly aircraft with only one member of the cabin crew qualified in emergency procedures. The ITF-affiliated Airline Pilots' Union (SNPL) has also protested. The unions consider that the special permit is "contrary to official regulations and to plain common sense".

GREAT BRITAIN

British union proposes "Fisherman's Charter"

The life of a fisherman is one of casual labour, long dangerous hours of work, and low security of work and earnings, according to a preliminary statement submitted by the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union to the Board of Trade Committee of Enquiry into Trawler Safety. Working on the assumption that improved safety methods alone are not enough to bring safety at sea, the union proposes a new "Fisherman's Charter" - a 12-point plan to transform life at sea. It calls for a legal minimum of 12 hours rest in any period of 24 hours (Iceland already operates a 12-hour rest period), and a minimum of two days on shore, payable at normal average earnings, for every five days at sea, irrespective of agreed holidays, with a minimum period of six days ashore between trips. At present, men often spend as little as 60 or even 48 hours ashore between trips. The union also calls for a reform of methods of payment, based on Merchant Navy provisions for a 40-hour week, with basic pay and overtime, supplemented by a "straight forward incentive, not related to value of catch but to tonnage". Skippers should be paid an annual salary - the present system of payment based on results is a "particular incitement to dangerous fishing". The charter also calls for improvements in training of crews in trawler equipment and methods of work, and proposes that there should be crew representatives in all ships, and that no youth under 17 should be engaged to sail in a distant water trawler.

Committee recommends earlier retirement for dockers

The present retirement age for dockers should be reduced progressively from the present age of 68 to 65 by 1970, according to a committee set up by the British Ministry of Labour. The committee also recommends a scale of compensation for men retiring compulsorily between January 1969 and January 1970.

On the matter of severance payments for dockers made redundant after decasualization, the National Association of Port Employers has decided that, as a matter of urgency, each port should prepare its own arrangements for voluntary severance payments. This is a result of the Minister of Labour's decision not to give financial aid for a severance payments scheme.

Interim pay rise of 3 1/2% for NUR members averts strike

Members of the ITF-affiliated National Union of Railwaymen employed by the British Transport Docks Board gained a pay rise of 3 1/2% after threatening a strike which would have hit 16 British ports. The rise, which is within the Government's incomes policy, is an interim one pending the settlement of a pay and productivity agreement.

London tally clerks claim £8 a week increase

Fifteen hundred London tally clerks, mostly members of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), are claiming an £8 a week increase on their basic rate in return for full mobility of labour and the removal of restrictive practices.

GUATEMALA

Railwaymen's strike ends in Guatemala

The ITF has been informed that the Guatemalan railwaymen's strike over arrears in wages (see Newsletter No. 2, p. 13) has ended. We understand that the railway company (International Railway of Central America) has been taken over by the Guatemalan Government.

JAPAN

Pay rise for Japanese seamen averts strike

New contracts negotiated by the employers and the ITF-affiliated All-Japan Seamen's Union have averted a national seamen's strike which was to have been called if agreement could not be reached.

The agreement gives a pay rise of nearly 4,000 Yen* per month for oceangoing seamen and 3,200 Yen for coastal seamen. Negotiations are to continue on two other issues - revision of the annuity system and the size of crews for different types of ships.

(* 87.25 Yen = £1)

UNITED STATES

US rail union wins national wage rates after 5-month strike on Interstate Railroad

After a strike on the Interstate Railroad lasting nearly five months, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen (BLFE) have attained their objective, standard wages and conditions for Interstate employees, such as prevail on US railroads generally. Under the new agreement negotiated as a result of the strike, all wage increases negotiated nationally since January 1964 are to be applied retroactively to firemen, hostlers and helpers on the Interstate. For engineers, the agreement provides a \$1.75 increase per basic day backdated to 18 January 1965, and another 6% backdated to August 1966. The agreement also includes improved vacation and welfare provisions.

OBITUARY

Dr. Martin Luther King

The ITF shares the grief and horror felt by the trade union movement in the United States and the world, at the tragic and brutal assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in Memphis, Tennessee, on 4 April. Dr. King was a life-long believer in the principles of the free labour movement and was always aware of the close links between it and the negroes' struggle for civil rights. In an address to the 1961 AFL-CIO Convention, he said that the interests of the trade unions and Negroes are so tied together that "any crisis which lacerates you is a crisis from which we bleed".

CORRECTION

On page 15 of the ITF Newsletter No. 2 (February) 1968, the date for the forthcoming Meeting of the Executive Board was mistakenly given as 8-10 March. It should have read 8-10 May 1968.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Executive Board	-	London, 8-10 May 1968
29th ITF Congress	-	Wiesbaden, 28 July - 3 August, 1968
Inland Navigation Section Conference	-	London, 29 & 30 August

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING
FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY
ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY
OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST FROM
THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF.

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SUPPLEMENT TO NEWSLETTER No. 4

We reproduce below the text of a message issued by the ICFTU on the occasion of the first anniversary of the military coup in Greece:

MESSAGE TO THE WORKERS OF GREECE

FROM HARM BUITER, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

On the first anniversary of the usurpation of power in Greece by the clique of fascist colonels, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, representing 65,000,000 organized workers throughout the free world, renews its message of solidarity with the oppressed Greek workers and reiterates its determination to strive unceasingly for the restoration of democracy to their country, including their unfettered freedom to form and join genuine trade unions which can effectively defend their interests. We salute the courageous militants of the underground Democratic Greek Trade Union Movement, created in defiance of the reign of terror on 27 April last year, and pledge ourselves to lend that movement every possible moral and material aid.

The reaction of the ICFTU to the colonels' coup d'Etat was immediate and unambiguous. Without hesitation we condemned the military dictatorship and the suspension of the vital provisions in the Greek Constitution safeguarding democratic and trade union rights. Together with our European Regional Organization we called upon the European intergovernmental bodies, of which Greece is a member, to exert their influence for the restoration of democracy in that country. We urged them to suspend all relations with Greece until democratic rights, including full trade union rights, were restored and the political prisoners set free. They were bound to do this, we said, because the presence of a military dictatorship in their midst was incompatible with their avowed aim of forming communities of free nations.

At the same time we appealed to our affiliated national trade union centres to endeavour to line their countries up in support of Greek democracy.

Our efforts were not fruitless. The Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands not only refused to recognize the colonels' government, but also brought charges against it for violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Human Rights Commission of the Council of Europe has accepted these charges as receivable and has set up a sub-commission to ascertain the facts; the case will then be heard before the Council of Ministers.

Meanwhile, the Council of Europe itself adopted a resolution on 31 January calling on the Greek government to restore democracy under pain of expulsion from the organization. As in all international bodies this procedure is agonisingly slow - and the ICFTU has appealed for swifter action before the Greek dictatorship can crush all democratic opposition - but the colonels have already suffered a resounding moral defeat with the failure of their efforts to stifle this expression of support of the freedom-loving nations of Europe for the oppressed Greek people.

As for the European Economic Community, with which Greece has a treaty of association, under strong trade union pressure, it stopped payment of the balance of \$25,000,000 on a loan of \$125,000,000 granted by the European Investment Bank and broke off negotiations for a new loan which had started before the colonels' coup. Apart from murdering Greek democracy the colonels' regime has thus dealt a serious blow at the country's economy too, by depriving it of badly needed international aid from the industrially advanced countries of Europe.

While calling upon the governments and international bodies to take political and economic measures against the colonels' regime, we for our part did not neglect setting our own trade union house in order. The defence of labour rights wherever these are threatened has always been one of the basic tasks of the ICFTU; the fostering of independent workers' trade unions, free from government and political-party control, has been another. We had always denounced the compulsory system of trade union dues' collection by the authorities which for years had held a large part of the Greek labour movement in thrall to the government.

It was consequently only natural that we stepped in to defend the Greek trade unions from the vicious attacks of the fascist junta. On 11 May we filed a complaint with the International Labour Organization (ILO) against the violation of labour rights in Greece, citing the banning of a great number of trade union organizations, the arrest of many trade unionists and the suppression of the rights of free speech and assembly. When the ILO held its annual conference in June in Geneva, we challenged the credentials of the Greek workers' delegation, led as it was by Fotis Makris, the man who telegraphed the junta only two hours after their treacherous coup d'Etat to assure the colonels of the "support" of the Greek trade unions.

On the grounds that it was unable at that time to ascertain all the facts, the ILO credentials committee did not invalidate the credentials of Makris and his henchmen; it nevertheless warned the Greek Government of the danger of infringing the constitutional principles which must be observed in appointing workers' delegates to ILO conferences. In response to our earlier complaint, the ILO governing body had already decided to call the Greek government's attention to the basic principles of freedom of association which Greece had bound itself to follow as a signatory of ILO international conventions.

As a workers' organization the ICFTU is not tied to the lengthy, cumbersome procedures which are binding on inter-governmental bodies. At the first meeting of our Executive Board after the April coup, we again denounced the terror regime and the abolition of political and trade union freedom in Greece. But we also declared that certain officers of the GSEE and some of its affiliated bodies had submitted to the dictatorship without the consent of their members. The Executive Board therefore decided to hold the rights and privileges of the GSEE as an ICFTU affiliate in abeyance until genuinely democratic forces were again in control of the organization.

The ICFTU Executive Board furthermore expressed its solidarity with those Greek trade unionists who had been imprisoned or removed from office by the dictatorship; and appealed to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to seek the release of the political prisoners and invited the International Red Cross to investigate the conditions under which they are detained.

Since then the ILO governing body has taken further action on the ICFTU complaint. At its meeting in November 1967 it decided: to call the attention of the Greek government to the importance which should be attached to the independence of the trade union movement and especially to the principle that trade unions should not be liable to be dissolved or suspended by administrative authorities and that the property of trade unions should enjoy adequate protection, and to the principle that freedom of expression, in particular through the press, is an essential aspect of freedom of association; to request the government to indicate whether the measures taken in virtue of Royal Decree No. 280 of 21 April 1967 are still in force and to indicate precisely the rules that govern, in law and in practice, military tribunal procedure, the right of workers to form organizations of their own choice and the right to strike; to draw the attention of the government to the right of arrested persons to a prompt and impartial trial by an independent judicial authority; and to answer without delay the ICFTU charges that the authorities had forced trade union leaders to give up their activities and that existing trade unions are only instruments of the regime. When the governing body met again - at the end of February 1968 - the ILO had still received no reply to these very clear questions.

All these actions of the ICFTU against the Greek dictators have been consistently supported by the whole international labour movement - by its affiliated organizations and by associated international trade secretariats. In Germany and Belgium, where large numbers of migrant Greek workers are to be found, as well as in the Scandinavian countries and the

USA, mass demonstrations have taken place either under the aegis of the national trade union centres or committees for democracy in Greece in which the unions take an active part.

Workers of Greece! Now is the time to forget past differences, to unite and regroup your forces within the clandestine Democratic Greek Trade Union Movement and thus to place yourselves in the vanguard of a mighty movement for the liberation of the Greek people.

Be of good courage! The international free trade union movement is supporting your struggle:

- for the release of all political and trade union prisoners;
- for free elections, for freedom of assembly and of the press;
- for the rebirth of a free and independent trade union movement deriving its sole authority from the workers;
- for the speedy return of democracy so that Greece may once again take its rightful place among the freedom-loving peoples.

The tiny clique of colonels who usurped power last year cannot much longer cling to office. The cause of the people is bound to prevail.

Long live free labour in a free and democratic Greece!

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