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# International Transport Workers' Journal

*Monthly Publication of the International Transport Workers' Federation*

**International  
Transport Workers'  
Journal**

*Monthly Publication of the ITF*

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*Forthcoming Meetings:*

Antwerp	5-6 April 1957 Dockers' Regional Sub-Committee
Stockholm	14-16 May 1957 International Fair Practices Committee
Paris	31 May - 3 June 1957 Expert Committee
Paris	3-5 June 1957 Executive Committee
London	17 July 1957 Expert Committee
London	18-19 July 1957 Railwaymen's and Road Transport Workers' Section Committees

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*Our cover picture:* This busy scene in a West African port provides the keynote for this issue of the ITF Journal, which is largely devoted to an account by the General Secretary of his recent highly successful visit to the continent of Africa. In forthcoming numbers of the Journal, we hope to follow this up with a series of articles dealing with the problems facing trade unions in individual African territories.



# Africa - still the dark continent

by OMER BECU, General Secretary of the ITF

DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS, the ITF's contacts with transport workers' unions in the continent of Africa have been steadily developing. Regular exchanges of correspondence have been going on for some time with organizations in widely-separated areas of the continent and on a number of occasions we have been able to help them both with advice and with material assistance. The ITF feels that it has a great responsibility towards the trade unions which are now being formed in the relatively backward regions, and since the war has consequently devoted a major part of its attention to their problems. As a result, the prestige of our Federation in African territories is very high and many of the transport workers' unions there feel that the ITF is the only organization to which they can turn with confidence when faced with difficulties.

Before the war, we had virtually no contacts with African transport workers' organizations. In fact, it is true to say that there were no real unions operating in the transport field at that time. The only exception was our oldest African affiliate, the Rhodesian Railway Workers' Union, catering for European railway staff, which has been a member of the ITF ever since 1930. Today, on the other hand, the ITF already has fifteen affiliates from every corner of Africa and new applications are dealt with at almost every meeting of our Executive Committee. This extension of the ITF's activities in this fast-developing continent has made it necessary to think not only of providing a seat on the Executive Committee for an African representative, but also to consider very seriously whether the time is not now ripe for the establishment of an ITF African Regional Office, which could strengthen and develop the relations which already exist between the transport workers of Africa and our International, and provide on-the-spot advice and assistance to those unions which are in need of it. It was for that reason that, at its most



*The General Secretary addressing the conference of Ghana transport workers which was held during his visit to Accra. On Brother Becu's right is Brother Joe-Fio Myers, President of the Ghana Trade Union Congress; extreme right is Brother Golding*

recent meeting, the ITF Executive Committee instructed me to make an extensive tour of Africa for the purpose of making personal contact with both affiliated and non-affiliated unions, and of finding out how the ITF could help in the development of a strong and viable African transport workers' trade union movement.

Africa, with its total area of more than eleven million square miles, is so vast that it has become almost a platitude to speak of it in terms of size. It is a continent of extreme contrasts in almost every possible way. Grinding poverty exists side by side with luxury and wealth; illiteracy and ignorance still flourish in the midst of technical and educational progress. In most African territories, the population is artificially divided by the barrier of racial discrimination, which is strongly reflected in both the social and economic spheres. It is almost impossible to consider any problem affecting the African without at the same time taking into account the racial conflicts which exist.

My own visit to Africa, on which I was accompanied by the ITF Research Officer, Brother Golding, was only in the nature of a preliminary survey. I am

more than conscious of the fact that a journey of this kind, lasting only three weeks in all, can give only a bird's eye view of the complex situation which exists throughout the whole of Africa and in the following account I shall do my utmost to avoid generalizations and to deal simply with the facts which I was able to ascertain from personal observation. I may add, however, that thanks to the wholehearted cooperation of all those with whom I came into contact, and particularly the officials of the ITF-affiliated trade unions, I was enabled to learn a great deal about the conditions under which the workers of Africa live and work, and to see for myself some of the difficulties under which the trade unions are forced to operate in this initial stage of their development.

## Ghana - a nation in the making

My first stop was at Accra, the capital of what has hitherto been known as the Gold Coast, but which is now the independent African State of Ghana. When I arrived there, preparations for the celebration of Independence Day on 6 March were reaching their culmination and there was a feeling of excitement and anticipation in the air which was

lacking in those parts of Africa visited later.

The trade union movement of Ghana is still a young one, but it is extremely active and respected in both the political and economic life of the country. The Government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, himself a former seaman and an ex-member of the ITRF-affiliated National Maritime Union of the United States, is very much in favour of a strong trade union movement and the unions are extensively consulted on all matters concerning the welfare of their members. I had many opportunities of seeing for myself the excellent relations which exist between the trade unions and Government departments in my visits to officials and Ministers of the new State, and it was obvious that there was a genuine awareness of the important rôle which the trade union movement has to play in the future life of the country.

There are a number of good organizations working in the field of transport. Owing to the terrain of the country, communication is largely by road transport and in consequence the largest single transport workers' union is that organizing the motor drivers. This has a membership of some 10,000, with a po-

tential membership of approximately 25,000. It is worth mentioning here that, although regular bus services are operated both by private companies and the local authorities, a popular form of public transport is still the so-called 'Mammy Bus'. These are simply converted lorries with seats for passengers, who are usually packed in like sardines. A feature of the 'Mammy Bus' is that it invariably has some kind of slogan painted on either the front or the back, ranging from the semi-religious such as 'O Lord, be my guide' to something like 'Where are we going?'. The Mammy Buses are mostly owner-operated and their roadworthiness, or rather their lack of it, is a big headache for the Government Transport Department. They were first introduced in Accra in 1913 and have not changed much in appearance or in design since then. With the rapid introduction of modern, single-decker buses, however, they are certainly doomed to eventual extinction.

Another characteristic feature of the Ghana transport industry is to be found in the Port of Accra. To refer to the Port of Accra is in itself slightly misleading, since there is in fact no quayside at all, but simply an anchorage.

Owing to the heavy surf all vessels visiting Accra have to lie off the coast and their cargo is loaded or unloaded over the side into large canoe-type rowing boats manned by the local dockers, who in Accra are known as boat-boys. As can be imagined, the work of cargo-handling is made both difficult and dangerous by this situation. Even the task of rowing the boats to and from the ships is an extremely strenuous one, particularly in bad weather, and accidents to the boat-boys are by no means uncommon. That is not the end of it by any means, since all the cargo has also to be carried on the backs of the boat-boys between the boats and the storage sheds. Invariably the loads are so heavy (sacks of cocoa-beans or bags of cement, for instance) that it is literally impossible for the boat-boys to walk with them. Bowed down by the weight, they are forced to run to and from the boats – in an oppressively hot climate with an unusually high degree of humidity. These men, on whom the whole prosperity of Accra as a trading centre depends, work from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. with a basic wage of 5s. per day. Many of them are also fishermen and go back to that trade during slack periods in the port. Most of them are organized and it is to be hoped that their union will take quick action to see that both their conditions and their wages are substantially improved.

Some forty miles up the coast, a new port is now under construction at Tema, but it is not expected that this will be completed for another four years and even then will only have berthing space for four ships at a time. The task of building the new port is a tremendous one. A total of eight million tons of rock has to be transported from quarries about twenty miles away and dumped into the sea to form an artificial harbour. The construction force of 1,200 Africans and 145 Europeans has been working on the project ever since 1954.

On the second day of my visit to the Gold Coast, I was invited to attend a Transport Workers' Conference, held in



*Boat-boys in the Port of Accra unload cargo which has been carried from ship to shore by surf-boat. No other method of cargo-handling is used in the port, and the work done by the boat-boys is always hard and often made highly dangerous by heavy seas; it is also poorly paid*



*Another view of boat-boys at work in the Port of Accra. In the foreground, one sees surf-boats which have been partially unloaded and behind them crews of other boats are setting out for another trip to the cargo-ships lying outside the surf area*

the Accra Rodger Club and attended by delegates from unions catering for motor drivers, taxi-drivers, dockers and seamen, railway employees, and government transport workers. In my address to the conference, I stressed something which I was to repeat on many occasions during my tour, namely that although the ITF would do everything in its power to assist and advise the transport workers of Africa whenever such help was requested, the actual work of organizing and building up strong trade union organizations was one which could not be done by anyone but the local unionists themselves.

The Conference concluded with the adoption of a resolution calling on all Gold Coast transport workers' unions to affiliate with the ITF and proposing that a coordinating committee be formed of all ITF affiliates to act as a permanent liaison body between Gold Coast transport workers' unions and our Federation. The resolution also stated that the committee would work for the ultimate creation of a national union of transport workers.

During my stay in Accra I had the opportunity of meeting not only many officials of the Gold Coast trade union movement, including old friends like Charles Heymann of the ITF-affiliated Government Transport Workers' Union and Brother Tettegah of the Gold Coast TUC, but also a number of union representatives from other African countries who had been attending the ICFTU's

*Brother Becu and the ITF Research Officer with delegates and guests at the Ghana Transport Workers' Conference. At the extreme right of the front row is Brother Charles Heymann, General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated Government Transport Worker's Union; at the extreme left of the same row is Brother Tackie, who is now the union's President*

African Regional Conference. Among these were delegates from the Sudanese Railwaymen's and Road Transport Workers' Unions and Brother Wilson Chakulya of the Central African Road Services' Workers' Union. I was thus able to have preliminary discussions with them, which were later to be followed up when I visited them in their own countries.

#### **Nigeria – a country in full development**

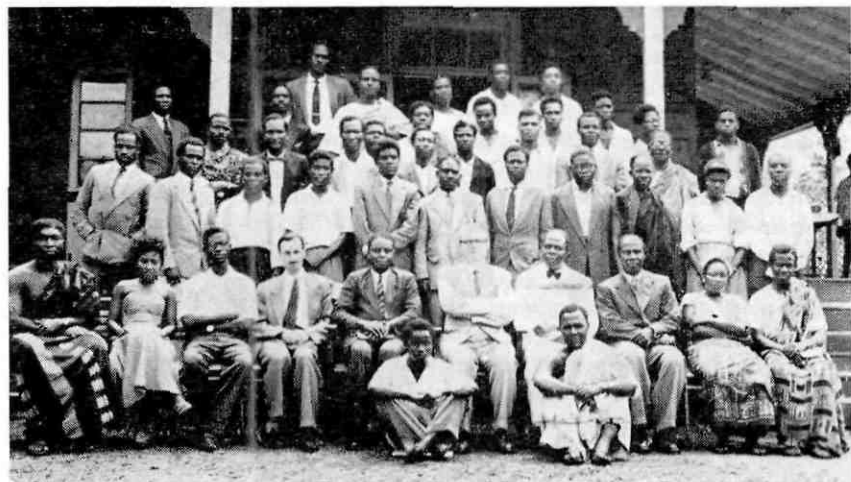
From Accra I proceeded to Lagos. I had already taken advantage of a short stop in Lagos on my way to the Gold Coast to meet a number of our friends in the Nigerian transport workers' movement and on my return I found that most of them were waiting at the airport to welcome me again. In the meantime, they had had an opportunity of arranging a very full programme of visits and discussions, and thanks to their efforts my stay in Lagos was both interesting and instructive.

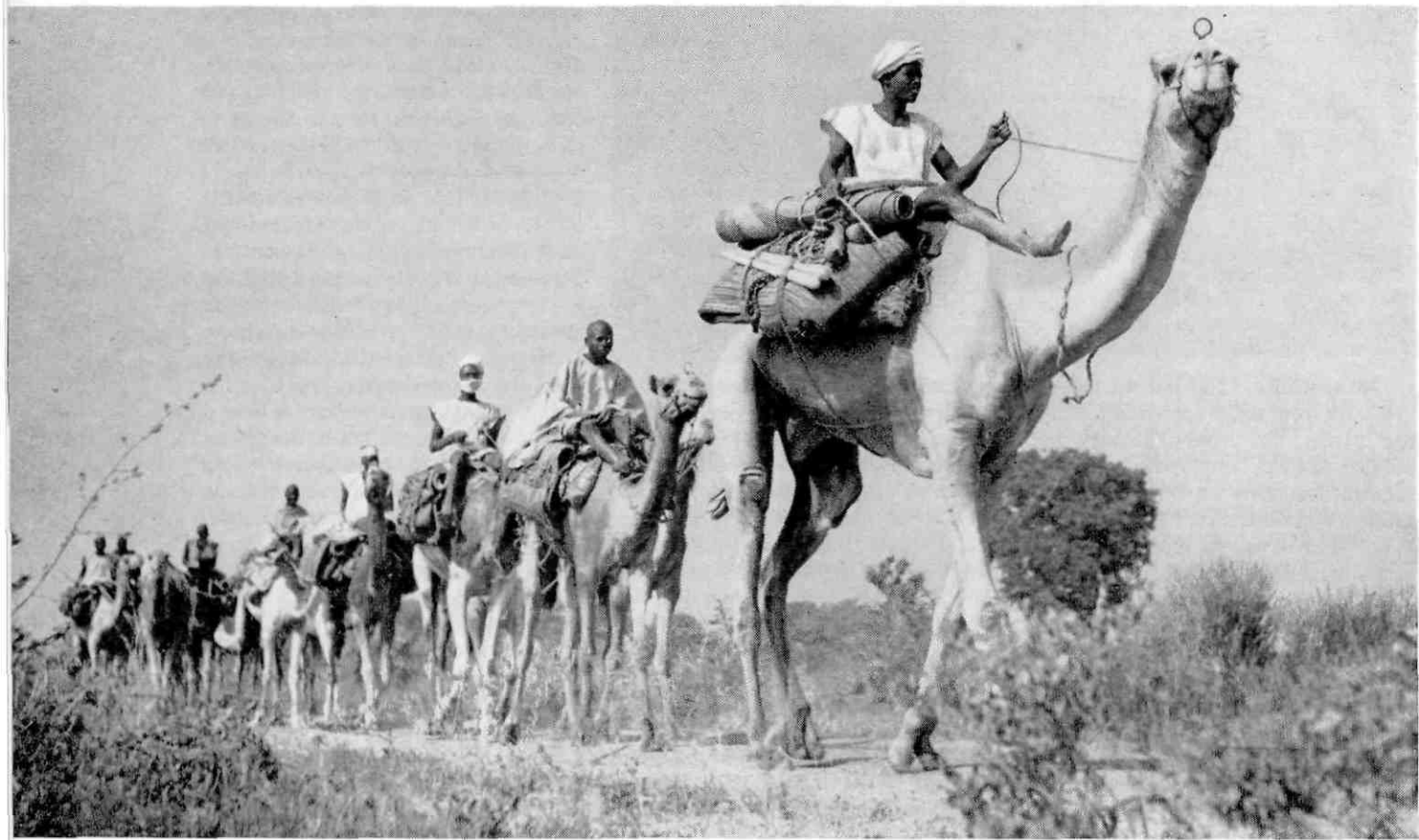
Nigeria is a country of tremendous potentialities and at the present time is in full process of development. New industries are springing up and the country's natural resources are being exten-

sively exploited. As in the Gold Coast there is no colour bar and Africans play an important rôle in industry, performing every kind of skilled work, as I was to see for myself when I visited the port installations and the railway workshops. Unlike many other African territories, there is a well-developed apprenticeship system for industrial workers with as a rule a five-year period of training.

The transport trade union movement in Nigeria is, like the country itself, developing rapidly, but still suffers badly from a multiplicity of small organizations operating in the same field. This is particularly true of the port industry, which has nine separate unions. Eight of these, however, are linked in a body known as the Maritime Federation of Nigeria, which has a total membership of approximately 5,000. Outside the Federation is the Nigerian Port Authority Workers' Union, with a membership of about 2,000. I was informed by officials of the Federation that the potential membership in the port industry is about 20,000.

Another important union in the maritime transport field is the Nigerian Union of Seamen, which was formed in 1947 and has a membership of some 2,000. There is a rotary hiring system by job card and so far as Nigerian-owned vessels are concerned an Africanization policy is gradually being introduced. The majority of the union's members, however, still serve on ships





*Older forms of transport still continue to be used in the Northern Territory of Nigeria, the home of the Hausa people. Here a camel train is seen approaching Kano, the ancient walled city which was once known as the centre of a flourishing and evil slave trade*

owned by British companies. Wages paid to Nigerian seamen are high by African standards. I was told, for instance, that on foreign-going vessels an A.B. earns £19 15s per month. Rates in the coasting trade, on the other hand, are much lower.

On the railways, the situation is rather similar to that which exists in the port industry. There are ten individual unions catering for railway workers, but the majority of these, including the very strong Association of Locomotive Drivers, Firemen, & Allied Workers, are members of the National Union of Railwaymen. The General Secretary of the NUR is Brother Lewis Agonsi, who heads the ITF-affiliated Railway Technical Staff Association.

I had many opportunities, during my time in Lagos, of meeting both port workers and railwaymen on the job as well as having long discussions with their union representatives. In addition, I was invited to address two mass meetings of port workers and to bring them

a message of encouragement and solidarity from their brothers of the international trade union movement. I also paid visits to the offices of a large number of transport workers' unions and met both officials and staff members. Judged by European or American standards, the majority of union offices might seem extremely primitive, consisting very often of a single room. It must be remembered, however, that in many respects the trade union movement in Nigeria, as in most other parts of Africa, is now in the stage through which our Western trade unions passed some 50 or 60 years ago. The problems with which they are faced – the apathy of many workers, the difficulties of collecting dues, the hostility of most employers, and the existence of restrictive legislation – are also strikingly similar to those against which the early European and American trade unionists had to struggle. At the same time, however, they have this advantage over our pioneers: that they can profit from the experience

of the older trade union movements, learn from the mistakes which were made by them, and thus be able to make more rapid progress than was possible for the workers in our part of the world.

Finally, a word about the general trade union situation in Nigeria. There is in existence a national centre of sorts, known as the All-Nigerian Trade Union Federation (ANTUF), but this now seems to be in process of disintegration. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Federation's affairs and its leadership is alleged to be very largely under Communist influence. During the ITF mission's stay in Lagos, a strong attack was launched on the Federation's top officials by Brother H. P. Adebola, the General Secretary of the Railway and Ports Transport Staff Union, who shortly before had resigned from the ANTUF executive on the grounds that it was Communist-inclined.

In addition to this Communist influence, there is also evidence of considerable activity by Moral Rearmament,

particularly in Lagos. The movement has three full-time organizers there, and I was informed that most Nigerian trade union officials had been contacted by MRA at one time or another and were regularly bombarded with propaganda literature.

### **The Union of South Africa – racialism rampant**

My stay in Johannesburg, where I stopped off on my way to Southern Rhodesia, was an extremely brief one and I consequently did not have a chance of seeing for myself what effects the bus boycott was having. However, I did have an opportunity of talking with officials of both our own affiliate, the South African Council of Transport Workers, and of the South African Trades Union Council, and of discussing with them the problems facing the trade union movement there as the result of Government racial policy.

South African apartheid legislation prohibits the formation of trade union organizations by Africans, who within the Union are referred to as Natives to distinguish them from the Coloureds, i.e. persons of mixed race. Trade unions do still exist which group both European and Coloured workers but these too are being restricted by the Nationalist Government. To all intents and purposes, therefore, the only trade union organizations permitted to function freely are those catering for European workers. I should perhaps mention here that South Africa differs from many other African territories in that it has a genuine European working class. This is particularly true of the transport industry and one finds in Johannesburg, for instance, that taxi drivers and the operating staff on buses and trams are mainly European.

Even in the transport industry, however, the policy of apartheid is begin-

ning to have its repercussions. Our own affiliate in Johannesburg is facing a problem of this nature at the present time. Buses and trams in the city are, of course, segregated, but until recently both European and Native vehicles were manned by European staff (of which there are some 1,200). Now, on the other hand, the Johannesburg Municipal Council, acting in conformity with Government racial policies, has begun to replace European staff on the Native trams and buses by Africans, paying the latter a fraction of the rates won by our union. To its great credit, the South African Council of Transport Workers is fighting hard against this development and is insisting that where Africans are employed they should be paid exactly the same rates as their European counterparts. I was told that this same problem exists in other South African cities and towns, and that it is even more complicated in areas like Cape Town, where there is a very large Coloured population.

### **Rhodesia – a new South Africa?**

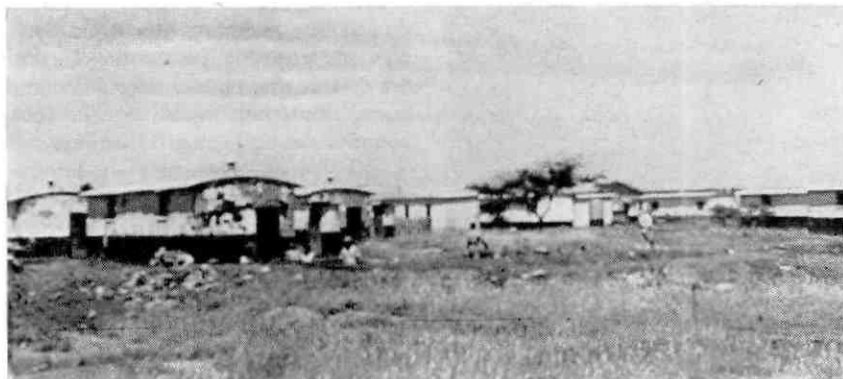
The racial situation in the Rhodesias is strikingly similar to that which exists in South Africa. There is strict segregation. It is virtually impossible for Africans to enter European hotels (except as servants) or to take a meal in a European restaurant. A European is forbidden by law to buy any kind of intoxicating drink for an African, and it is difficult to find a place where one can meet with Africans to discuss their problems. Thanks, however, to the courtesy and liberal outlook of Brother Went, General Secretary of the Rhodesia Railway Workers' Union, who placed his own office at our disposal, I was able to have a preliminary discussion with our friends of the ITF-affiliated Railway African Union and to learn from them a great deal about what has been going on in the

Rhodesian railway industry. Later, I also visited them in their own office in the African Railway Location, just outside Bulawayo, and had further talks with them.

Brother Maripe, the General Secretary of the African Union, explained to me some of the difficulties of organizing the African workers employed on the Rhodesian railway system. He said that the total African railway labour force was approximately 22,000 as against 9,000 Europeans. Since they are spread all over Southern and Northern Rhodesia the problem of keeping contact between them and the union is no easy one, particularly as the union cannot afford to employ full-time officials throughout the Federation. As a result, the organization has to rely very largely on local people working on a voluntary basis. Brother Maripe pointed out that there was considerable fluctuation in the membership of his organization, which goes up when the railwaymen have a grievance which they want settled and begins to fall off again once the union has taken action.

I also was able to get a great deal of information on the background to the strike of African railway workers which took place in September last. Brother Maripe told me that at the union conference held in 1956, it was decided to put forward a claim for an increase of at least £3 per month for the lowest-paid workers who at that time were earning only £2 10s per month plus a ration allowance of 45s and a family allowance of 22s 6d per month. The conference agreed that if the railways did not offer at least half of what had been claimed, the union would call a strike.

When the claim was submitted, the employers replied with an offer ranging from 10s to 15s per month, plus an increase in ration allowance to 48s. This was rejected, and as a result a special railway wages tribunal was set up, consisting of two representatives each of the railway administration and the union, plus a chairman appointed by the Government. The award made by the chair-



*A general view of the Railway African Location in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. This is fairly typical of the whole Location, which consists almost entirely of this type of building. There are no made-up roads or paths in the area. The general impression is rather similar to that of Army barracks (and not the best)*

man in September amounted to only 12s 6d for the lowest-paid, rising to £2 5s for those in the highest grades plus increases in the ration and family allowances totalling 10s 6d per month for those railwaymen with less than four years' service and 30s 6d for the others.

Since the increase for the lowest-paid workers was much below what the union had claimed and the maximum increase applied to only 185 of the 22,000 African railwaymen, the union called a strike in protest against the award. In reply, the Government declared a State of Emergency and arrested nine of the union's officials, including Brother Maripe, who was however released two days later. Police also broke up a mass meeting of railway workers held in No. 5 Railway Location on 25 September, using tear gas.

Before leaving Bulawayo for Broken Hill in Northern Rhodesia, the ITF mission attended the final stage of the trial of some of those who had been arrested during the strike. I am happy to report that, as a result of the excellent handling of the defence by two local Europeans, all but one of the defendants were acquitted. The latter, who was actually not a member of the union, was sentenced to four months' hard labour, after the magistrate had given him a lecture on the evils of 'agitation'.

Perhaps one of the best commentaries on the difficulties of organizing African railway employees is provided by the staff regulations on discipline. Among the punishable offences are, for instance the following:

'Inciting, causing or joining in any subversive activity calculated to interfere with Railway working. Making or spreading reports calculated to cause unrest, alarm or despondency (sic) among Railway African employees.'

The penalties for these and other offences can range from a reprimand to dismissal, the choice of punishment being the sole prerogative of the Railways.

The Rhodesian Railway Workers' Union, catering for European railwaymen, is, as I have mentioned earlier in this article, the ITF's oldest African affiliate. It is also one of the very few genuine trade unions organizations of European workers which exist in the continent. In the main, Europeans where they are organized at all, belong to Staff Associations and not to registered trade unions. The Rhodesian Railway Workers' Union was formed shortly before

the First World War and can probably thus claim to be one of the first trade unions to be established in Africa. It has a membership of some 5,000, and is one of the most powerful and respected unions in the whole of Rhodesia. Its fine new headquarters building in Bulawayo will stand very favourable comparison with the offices of most European trade unions, and provides many recreational and social facilities for the membership. In addition, the union has local branches throughout the Federation.

If anything the situation with regard to the colour bar is worse in Northern Rhodesia than in the South. It was here that the ITF mission encountered for the first time a noticeable degree of hostility on the part of Europeans in the railway and road transport industries and I will have some more to say on this subject at a later stage.

On arrival in Lusaka, the ITF mission was met by Brothers Konkola and Manza of the Railway African Union and Brother Chakulya of the Central African Road Services' Workers' Union. Brother Konkola, the President of the Railway African Union, is prohibited by the Government of the Federation from entering Southern Rhodesia, and he therefore has his office in Broken Hill, which is about eighty miles by road from Lusaka. The ITF mission left for Broken Hill on the following day together with our African friends and went straight to Brother Konkola's office, which is on the outskirts of the African Railway Location. After a brief discussion there, Brother Konkola offered to show the ITF representatives round the Location in order that we could see for ourselves the conditions under which the railwaymen lived.

The visit caused something of a stir



and we were informed that very few Europeans were ever seen in the Location. One thing at least is certain: if the Location is inspected at all by the health authorities or the railway administration this must be done in a very perfunctory way, for the conditions under which the railwaymen and their families live are depressing in the extreme. Although more modern housing is being provided in the newer sections, a number of families visited were living in buildings which were little better than mud huts consisting of one very dark room, with the bare earth as a floor. Even the improved type of house would be rejected by all but the poorest of workers in our part of the world, and the great majority of them lack both electric light and proper sanitary facilities. Piped water was available at a central point near most groups of houses, but so far as could be ascertained was not laid on in the houses themselves. There are, of course, no proper roads in the Location, and a rain-shower soon converted the paths into muddy tracks. We were also shown what was described to us as a cess-pit in the centre of the Location. Many of the children appeared undernourished and were suffering from skin diseases and eye troubles. The only reasonable accommodation seen was that provided for the teachers at the local school.

Later, an attempt was made to have a look round the railway yard in Broken Hill and to meet some of the African railwaymen on the job. The European railway officials there said that they had no knowledge of the arrangements which had been made for our visit by Brother Konkola, and told us that we would have to contact someone in authority before they would allow us to look round the yard. Mention of the fact that we were trade unionists from Europe seemed to make them even more suspicious.

Our experience at the workshops owned by Central African Road Services was rather similar. Brother Chakulya told us that he had already secured permission from the Manager to look round these, but on arrival we were met by the Manager's assistant who inform-

*This photograph was taken in the Railway African Location in Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia. It provides a telling illustration of the primitive conditions under which some railwaymen's families on the location are still having to live*





*Ibrahim, the mate of a local dhow, snapped in the port of Dar-es-Salaam. Dar-es-Salaam (it means 'Haven of Peace') is the chief port and capital of Tanganyika Territory. Approximately 100 dhows engaged in local trading call at Dar every month, as do also a number of larger dhows from as far as Arabia and India*

went by and to thank us for coming. In fact, royalty could not have been more enthusiastically or more touchingly received.

There had been a great deal of industrial unrest in the port and the situation had only recently improved as the result of assistance given to the Tanganyika Federation of Labour by the British TUC and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, both of whom had sent representatives to help the unions in their negotiations with both the employers and the Government. These were Brother Walter Hood, head of the TUC's Colonial Department, and Brother Albert Hammerton of the ICFTU West African Office, and it had been largely owing to their efforts that a satisfactory settlement of the dispute had been reached and a general strike averted. Among the improvements which had been won in the settlement were recommendations for the establishment of permanent negotiating machinery, the introduction of statutory wage-fixing machinery where normal collective bargaining proved impossible, and the setting-up of a Joint Standing Industrial Relations Committee, meeting at regular intervals. Also proposed was a Joint Industrial Council for the port industry and the introduction of an Inter-Territorial Advisory Committee for the railways. The Government had also undertaken to introduce a statutory minimum

ed us that his superior was away and that there was a standing instruction that no persons were to be allowed in the workshops in his absence. He also said that if the ITF representatives did go round them he was afraid that 'the boys might get excited'.

From Lusaka, the ITF mission flew on to Dar-es-Salaam in Tanganyika. On the way, however, a short stop at Blantyre (Nyasaland) afforded an opportunity of having a short talk with representatives of the two ITF-affiliated unions there, catering for African and Asian railwaymen respectively. The Railway Asian Union has about 120 members, almost the entire Asian railway staff, while the African union has approximately 4,000. Relations between the two organizations were said to be very good and the possibility of a later amalgamation was mentioned. The railways in Nyasaland employ only sixty Europeans, who are not organized. We were told that there is great deal of racial discrimination in railway employment.

#### **Tanganyika – trade unionism on the march**

The reception given to the ITF mission on its arrival in Dar-es-Salaam was a very heart-warming one. Several hundred dockers and other transport workers were waiting at the airport to greet us and afterwards we drove into the town in a long procession of taxis and buses which had been specially provided by members of ITF unions. In addition, we had a large escort of cyclists who rode ahead of us as we drove slowly through the African estates on the outskirts of Dar-es-Salaam. Many people came out of their houses to cheer as we

*The General Secretary snapped at a reception given in his honour by the transport workers' unions of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika. Second from the left (standing) is Brother Akena, the General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated Dar-es-Salaam Dock Workers' Union*





*The Port of Mombasa serves not only Kenya and Uganda, but also the Northern Province of neighbouring Tanganyika and part of the Belgian Congo. It provides the finest land-locked harbour on the East Coast of Africa and has modern facilities*

wage for Dar-es-Salaam, although at the time of our arrival no date had been set for this.

There are three transport workers' unions with headquarters in Dar-es-Salaam and I was able to have talks with officials of all of them. The largest is the Dock Workers' Union which became a member of the ITF earlier this year. Their General Secretary told me that they now have a membership of 2,500 out of a total port labour force of 5,000, which is made up of 3,000 permanent stevedores and 2,000 casual workers. The present shift rate in the port is 7s. 6d.

Next in size is the Railway African Union, which is also affiliated to the ITF. This union has a paid-up membership of 1,000, members paying dues of 1s. per month with an entrance fee of 5s. In addition to its main branch in

Dar-es-Salaam, the union has also eight other branches in various parts of Tanganyika. It is worth mentioning here that although there are Railway African Unions in all three East African territories (i.e. Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda) it is impossible for them to amalgamate because there exists legislation forbidding the formation of inter-territorial unions.

The third union is the Transport & Allied Workers' Union, which has also recently affiliated with the ITF. The greater part of its membership consists of motor drivers, who are employed by oral contract on a day-to-day basis. This method of employment creates a major problem for the union, since any driver can be summarily dismissed at any time so long as the employer pays him any wages which are due.

Shortly before leaving Dar-es-Salaam

I was invited to address a mass meeting at which the results of the recent negotiations were to be formally announced. As I had learned, during my conversations with officers of both the transport unions and the Tanganyika Federation, that they still feared there would be considerable delay in introducing a statutory minimum wage for Dar-es-Salaam, I took the opportunity of raising this matter at an earlier meeting with the Member for Social Services. I pointed out that the phrase 'in the very near future' used by the Government in its statement was very vague and had aroused misgivings among the workers. He agreed that this was so, but gave an undertaking that the new minimum wage would be introduced within a month, and also authorized me to announce this at the meeting I was to address on the following day. The meeting

itself was a wildly enthusiastic one, attended by some 10,000 workers, and the information which I was able to give them on the minimum wage was given a tremendous reception.

### Kenya — recovering from the Emergency

My next stop was at Mombasa in Kenya. On the way there, however, I also managed to meet briefly with officials of the very flourishing dock workers' union in Tanga, the small port a few miles up the coast from Dar-es-Salaam. At 8s. per shift, the union's members have the highest rate of pay in any of the East African ports.

Mombasa itself is the port which serves the whole of Kenya and Uganda. It gives employment to just under 5,000 dock workers, of whom 2,700 are casual workers. A three-shift system is worked, but I was told that one of the problems in the port is that many men who succeed in getting work on the second shift also work on the night shift as well — a total of fifteen hours — in order to earn the extra money. Existing shift rates are shs.6.75 (i.e. 6s 9d) for shore-handling and shs.7.25 for stevedoring. A new attendance-money system has just been introduced in the port, the normal rate payable being 3s., with 4s for tindals, serangs and winchmen.

Hiring is done by foremen on the 'first come, first served' principle. There is no hiring hall, the hiring being carried out in a long compound rather like a big cage. I was informed that many of the casual workers sleep in the compound area in order to make sure of getting employment on the following day. I was also told, by officials of our ITF-affiliated Dock Workers' Union, that one of the difficulties in the way of introducing a rotary hiring system is that the majority of the port workers are illiterate and cannot even read numbers. The union itself has about 1,300 paying members, who pay their union 1s. per month with an entrance fee of 2s.

*The General Secretary with officials and members of the ITF-affiliated Kenya Railway African Union during his stay in Nairobi. On Brother Becu's right is the union's President, Brother H. Oduol. Seated next to Bro. Oduol are Miss Maida Springer (AFL/CIO representative) and Brother Tom Mboya, General Secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labour and Legislative Council member*



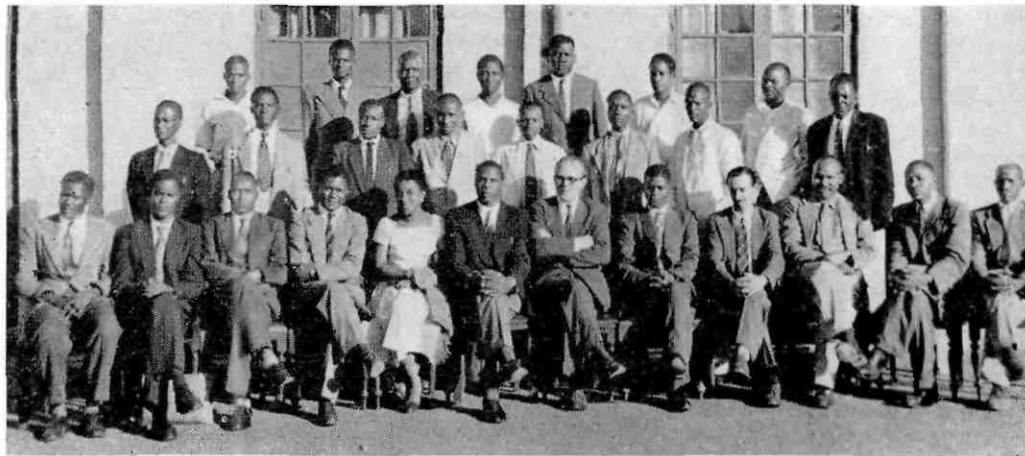
The Dock Workers' Union is the only transport workers' organization which has its headquarters in the port. However, there also exists a strong branch of the ITF-affiliated Kenya Transport & Allied Workers' Union, with a membership consisting mainly of road and passenger transport workers. The union has been concentrating on the task of organizing workers employed on the city buses and about 50 per cent are now members. The union recently called a strike for higher pay in the bus industry and succeeded in winning an increase of 10s. per month, which has given a considerable fillip to its organizing campaign.

*The face of the new Africa. Many Africans have adapted themselves to the techniques of a modern industrial society and now do many skilled jobs which were once the exclusive province of Europeans. This locomotive driver comes from Kenya*

The two Kenya railway unions, catering for Africans and Asians respectively, and the Transport & Allied Workers' Union all have their headquarters in Nairobi and I was able to have meetings there with their officials and members, as well as to meet the officers of the Kenya Federation of Labour, including its General Secretary, Brother Tom Mboya, who is probably the outstanding personality in the contemporary African trade union movement.

On the whole it can be said that the trade unions in Kenya are still suffering badly from the effects of the Emergency and the existence of restrictive labour legislation, which gives the Government a wide measure of control over the activities of trade union organizations and the holding of public meetings. Brother Minya, the General Secretary of the Transport & Allied Workers' Union, told me, for instance, that many workers were still afraid to become members of the union, and that the financial position of the union had deteriorated badly owing to the difficulties of operating freely during the Emergency. A further problem is that in Kenya a very wide range of industrial activities are officially classed as essential services and the workers engaged in them are to all intents and purposes subject to compulsory arbitration of any dispute which may arise.

Racial discrimination is still rife in employment, particularly on the rail-



ways. Although, in theory, the report made by the Lidbury Commission on Civil Service salaries has resulted in the introduction of non-racial scales, in practice the position seems to be that there are still three separate grades – A, B and C – which correspond to Europeans, Asians, and Africans respectively. Our friends of the Railway Asian Union told me, for instance, that the selection committee dealing with vacancies for executive posts consisted entirely of European officials and that so far as they knew only one Asian had been promoted to such a post. The usual reason for refusing promotion was that the candidate was 'unsuitable'. I was also told that the training grade system recommended by the Lidbury Commission to enable Africans to qualify for higher posts had not been implemented to date.

#### **Uganda – a country with a future**

My last journey in East Africa took me to Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Uganda is again a country with tremendous potentialities and its resources are only just beginning to be tapped. A land of great natural beauty, it also creates an immediate impression of prosperity and tranquility. There is no colour bar as in other parts of East Africa, although there is still a great deal of racial discrimination in employment. Another distinctive feature is the existence of a thriving African business community, a large number of employers being Africans.

Our union there is the newly-affiliated Railway African Union, a small but

flourishing organization which was started in 1955. Its membership is still only 1,500 out of a total African railway labour force of 30,000, and its officers have to struggle hard against the twin problems of illiteracy and ignorance of the need for trade union organization. The job of organizing railway workers in a country as vast as Uganda is a difficult one in itself, but it is made doubly so by the fact that the union is not yet in a position to employ full-time officials. However, if enthusiasm for their task is any criterion at all, I am certain that the officers and members of the Railway African Union will be able to make rapid headway with their organizational campaign. As in other parts of East Africa, the wages of African railway workers are still extremely meagre, with the lowest-paid receiving only £3 10s. per month. On the other hand, the housing provided by the railway administration for its workers is a vast improvement on that visited in other territories.

#### **The Sudan – the new Middle Eastern Republic**

My final visit was to Khartoum, the capital of the new Sudanese Republic. Here I had hoped to have talks with Brother Hussein El Sayid of the Railway Workers' Union, whom I had already met whilst in Accra, but owing to a misunderstanding about the duration of my stay, Brother Hussein was unable to get to Khartoum from his headquarters in Atbara before I left. I did, however, have an opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with Brother El Jack

Moussa, President of the Road Transport Workers' Union, and of having discussions about the Sudanese trade union movement with both him, officials of other trade unions and of the Government Labour Department.

The Railway Workers' Union is one of the strongest in the Sudan. It has some 20,000 members and is a member-union of the Federation of Government Employees, which is the only real central organization existing in the country. Until fairly recently, the Railway Workers' Union was very largely Communist-influenced, but at its last conference the Communists were heavily defeated and now have only six representatives on the union's 27-man Executive. The union is divided into seven sections or departments which are situated in various parts of the country. Each of these has its own President and has three members sitting on the central union Executive.

In addition to operating the railway network, the railway administration also has its own hotels, its own dockyards, and is responsible for the pleasure-boats which ply up and down the River Nile. The staff of all these undertakings are considered as railwaymen and are organized in the Railway Workers' Union. The staff of my own hotel in Khartoum, for instance, were all members of the union.

The membership of the Road Transport Workers' Union is approximately 1,500, but Brother Moussa told me that only some 800 pay dues regularly. He promised that he would raise the question of his union's affiliation to the ITF at the earliest opportunity, and also undertook to have talks on this subject with representatives of the Railway Workers' Union. He said he would also try to encourage other Sudanese trade unions, including the Federation of Government Employees, to seek affiliation with their respective ITS and with the ICFTU.

In discussions with the Head of the



*Uganda has a growing lake fishing industry, with a yield of some 25,000 tons per year. The greater part of the catch is consumed in the country itself, the remainder being exported to the Belgian Congo and other parts of East Africa. Our photo shows the crew of a lake fishing canoe setting out on a trip. On this lake fishing is often also carried on during the night by the light of torches*

Government Labour Department, I found a keen desire that the trade unions of the Sudan should become members of the free labour movement. The Government's attitude is that affiliation to our movement would not only help to develop and strengthen the country's trade unions, but would also enable them to throw off Communist influence.

When visiting the workers' districts, I was struck by the contrast with what I had seen of workers' housing in other areas of Africa. By Arab custom, groups of families live together in separate enclosures. Each enclosure contains twenty-four families. The houses themselves are mostly built of mud, but an increasing number are being constructed in brick.


Finally, I went to have a look at the Khartoum Workers' Club, in which the trade unions and the Federation have their offices. This is a large, single-storey building conceived mainly for recreational purposes, with a bar, terraces and a few rooms reserved for office accommodation. Apart from purely trade union activities, the building is also used for workers' education, the main subjects taught being reading and writing, English, and arithmetic. Courses last for three months and classes are held every night. When I visited the Club, there were four classes in progress. Even children attend them, and they are open to all workers regardless of whether they are trade union members or not. The students, who pay 5s. per month, are very eager to learn and no-one ever drops out once he has enrolled.

I have entitled this article 'Africa - still the Dark Continent' because I feel that it accurately sums up the present situation in the continent. It is true, of course, that one does not meet there the abject poverty and actual starvation which still exist in many parts of Asia. It is true too that sincere attempts are being made to improve the lot of the African by some Government officials and even by a few enlightened employers. Even so, there are still too many features of life in the African colonial territories of which we in the West have good cause to feel ashamed. Wages are still deplorably low, working hours are much too long, and life is largely lived at or near subsistence level. Much legislation is still heavily weighted against the African and against his freedom to organize and improve his conditions. The wide-

spread existence of racial discrimination, whether open or disguised, remains a blot on our Western civilization.

Many of the improvements which are so urgently needed will have to be won by the workers and trade unionists of Africa themselves. In the final analysis, that is a job which no-one from outside can do for them. But the trade unions of the continent are still in their infancy; they are weak and lack experience of even the fundamentals of trade union practice. They have still to educate their members, teach them the lessons of unity and organization, develop leaders and skilled negotiators who can speak on their behalf. In that task they need advice and assistance from those who are best qualified to give it. That is why we in the old-established trade union movements have a great responsibility towards the workers of Africa, who are crying out for help in their struggle against very heavy odds and who look to us for that help.

### **Greek owners' large share of world shipping**

 A GREEK SHIPPING PAPER estimates that Greek shipowners own forty-five per cent of the world's tramp cargo vessels and fifteen per cent of the world's oil tankers. They have on order vessels worth £1,200 millions or twenty-four per cent of the total world value of tonnage under construction. Greek-owned vessels in service are said to have a total gross tonnage of 10,425,813 as against under 3,000,000 tons before the Second World War, during which just over 1,000,000 tons were lost.


Five companies account between them for over half the tonnage in service and under construction. Stavros Niarchos heads the list with 76 ships and 2,096,329 tons (all the figures include ships on order), followed by Petros Goulandris with 84 ships and 1,818,500 tons. The other three are, Kouloukoundis, 90 ships, 1,633,969 tons; Aristotle Onassis, 65 ships, 1,582,711 tons; and Stavros Livanos, 79 ships, 1,478,574 tons.

Perhaps it should be emphasized that the paper was dealing with Greek-owned shipping and not Greek-registered. But whatever the flags (and much of the tonnage is 'Panlibhonco') earnings seem likely to keep the wolf from the owners' door. About £43,000,000 were earned in eleven months of last year.


Events in Africa are moving very rapidly indeed. There is a new spirit of national consciousness among its peoples, a realization that they have been treated as second-class citizens for too long. The movement towards national independence and freedom from outside domination is spreading rapidly and can no longer be stopped. Racial overlordship, whether it be called apartheid or the 'defence of civilization', is a doomed concept, a blind alley which leads nowhere.

Our task at this time is to convince the African worker by our actions that the workers of Europe and America are his brothers, and that they have nothing in common with the handful of racialists, who represent no-one but themselves and their own selfish interests. That will not be an easy task, for the African has a natural distrust of the white man, born of long and unpleasant experience. Only sincerity and understanding will overcome it.

### **Tankers to get television sets**

 THE 'NEW YORK TIMES' recently reported that the Esso Shipping Company plans to instal television sets in its oil tankers operating off the American Atlantic and Gulf coasts and in the Caribbean. The sets, two in each of thirty-eight tankers (one for officers and one for ratings), are to be placed in the dining or recreation quarters. They will have special rotating antennae designed to pick up programmes when the vessels are some distance at sea; the company has explained that the ships are rarely outside a receiving area on their normal runs.

### **No Saturdays off in East Germany**

 THE EAST GERMAN 'TRADE UNION' PAPER 'TRIBUNE' has explained to its readers that the introduction of an extra free day in the week 'would cause serious economic difficulties.' Apparently the five-day week would jeopardize the economic 'plan'. Against this gloomy home-truth the decision of the 'People's Chamber' (whose decisions never count for anything in any event) to promote the gradual introduction of the forty-five-hour week seemed more futile than ever.

The denial of work-free Saturdays has provoked a wave of discontent.

## Havelock Wilson - my guide and model



*This is how Johan Brautigam entitles one of the chapters of his recently published memoirs – 'Langs de Havens en op de Schepen'. These memoirs of the seventy-nine year old champion of the seaman's and dock worker's cause take us from his early days, when he went to sea as a trimmer on a British boat at the age of twenty, up to the events in Rotterdam in 1918. Unfortunately these memoirs of J. Brautigam of whom the foreword says: 'No figure in our land, in sixty years of continuous political, social and diplomatic activity, so clearly rounds off a period as Johan Brautigam', are written in Dutch – a language with which only a limited number of our readers throughout the world are familiar. Bearing this in mind, we have thought it preferable not to give our readers a conventional review of this work, but to offer them a translation of one of the chapters. If our choice fell on the one dealing with the author's encounter with J. Havelock Wilson, it is because he too, like Johan Brautigam, stands in need of no great introduction to all those to whom the stories or memories of the struggles of these great champions of the workers' cause constitute a vivid and living inspiration today.*

IT WAS QUITE BY CHANCE that, at the beginning of 1906, I made the acquaintance of the President and General Secretary of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland. We had gone to Rotterdam and turned into a cafe on the 'Boompjes', the proprietor of which was a friend of ours of long standing.

In the years between 1890 and 1900, the leaders of the English dockers' and seamen's union had been active in the ports of the Continent making propaganda among and organizing the workers. They were motivated by thoughts of international solidarity – with just a slight, concealed flavouring of English self-interest which may be summed up as: what a nuisance these low wages and bad working conditions on the Continent are when we try to take action in England!

Ben Tillett of the dockers and J. Havelock Wilson of the seamen, the latter usually accompanied by Ed. Cathery, were the prime movers in the great strikes of 1900 and 1906 in the ports of Hamburg, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp. They had not been here for years, however, and no wonder seeing that the majority of the English unions were going through rather a bad time at the beginning of the century. The English employers were conducting a relentless war against the unions – and not without success. The majority of the employees had grown apathetic towards the need for organizing. The unions themselves were being run on out-of-date lines and were in urgent need of new ideas and rejuvenation. Inborn conservatism however constituted a real bar to change.

The National Sailors' and Firemen's Union in particular was hard put to it in its dealings with the English ship-

owners. The latter, associated in the Shipping Federation, had themselves set about the task of organizing the seafarers and were offering all sorts of advantages, financial and otherwise, in return for very low contributions. In this fashion had they pretty well pumped the National Union dry . . .

In other fields too, Wilson found himself violently opposed by the owners. He had been elected Liberal member of Parliament for Middlesborough on one or two occasions. When another General Election came round the owners spared neither time nor money to secure the defeat of their hated opponent – in which they were successful.

During the conversations we had with Wilson and Cathery it came out that they were thinking of establishing a branch in Rotterdam and just wanted to spy out the land. But that was not all, although it was not until later that we found out what else was on their minds.

There were perfectly good reasons for the English union's attempt to gain a foothold in Rotterdam. There was much for them to do there in the way of organization. In the first place, two British passenger lines were operating Atlantic services from Rotterdam and their vessels were not touching at ports in Great Britain. Rotterdam was the home port to all intents and purposes, and all mustering and discharges took place there. Furthermore, many vessels



*Johan Brautigam, the 79 year old veteran of the Dutch dockers' and seafarers' movement, whose early meeting with J. Havelock Wilson, one of the pioneers of the ITF, is described in this extract from Brother Brautigam's recently-issued autobiography. Brother Brautigam himself was closely associated with the work of our Federation for a great many years*

of the extensive British tramping trade had Rotterdam and other major continental ports as their terminal port of call whence they again put to sea. The crews of these vessels were taken on under a clause which laid down that the voyage would end in a port of Great Britain or in a continental port between and including Brest and Houtenau.

As a consequence, there was always considerable mustering and discharging

activity going on in connection with British vessels in the ports of Hamburg, Rotterdam and Antwerp. As a rule the officers were British, but there was hardly ever anyone of that nationality to be found amongst the deck and engine-room ratings. These vessels were manned by crews of all nationalities. I myself served on such a ship and was the only Dutchman among eleven nationalities. Those who were discharged in a port on the continent made their way to the seamen's hostel or sought shelter in a seamen's lodging house run by a so-called doss-house keeper. Normally it was not so long before they got their jobs back on the same or another vessel.

In Rotterdam the seamen's hostel and doss-house were always full of foreign seamen – Scandinavians, Germans, Spaniards, Italians and Greeks, as well as unmarried Dutchmen – who depended on finding a job on one of these ships. The unlucky ones, or those who were broke, found themselves a bench in the park to sleep on at night and waited for happier days to come. In Hamburg, Antwerp and Rotterdam, the recruiting of crews was in the hands of so-called shipping masters. For acting as intermediaries they usually received half of an AB's monthly wage from the shipping company. They charged seamen they had found jobs five shillings as hiring fee which was deducted from the advance note given to the seamen on mustering. Payment was made by the shipping master when the vessel had left the last European port.

The shipping masters were invariably surrounded by the doss-house bosses who did their best to ensure that their clients got a job especially if they were broke or 'had something on the slate'. In that case, the doss-house keepers could levy a distraint on the advance note. The seamen got a sack filled with straw, some tobacco and soap and, if there was any credit left to him, something in the way of kit. The doss-house keeper then took good care that the seaman appeared on board in good time, otherwise when the note became due for payment, he could whistle for his money.

There were also a number of people who did business in advance notes as a form of bill of exchange. This was a very risky business, for, if the seaman failed to sail with his boat, the note was as much use to them as waste paper. The

system of advance notes was also in operation in Rotterdam in the case of Dutch vessels with Dutch crews, whereas in Amsterdam the custom of paying half a month's wages in cash on mustering had been observed by owners since 1900. Naturally the brokers took a good percentage off the value of the note and paid the seaman considerably less than the note was worth.

Wages were fixed by the shipping master. If there were few seamen waiting for a ship and a good demand for crews, seamen's wages might go up by five shillings a month. If there was a lull, however, or wages in nearby ports went down, then wages sank as the result of competition.

Among the seamen available for service on the British boats there were in Rotterdam some eight to nine thousand Dutchmen, for the most part living in the town. They were thus not in the toils of the doss-house bosses. The Dutch Seamen's Union (Algemene Nederlandse Zeemansbond) however was not interested in organizing these men. It held the view that the flag under which a seaman served should determine the union to which he belonged. In this case, the union concerned was the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Considering the large number of British vessels using the port of Rotterdam and the consequent high rate of discharge and mustering, there was every chance there of setting up and operating an appropriate branch of the union.

Wilson and Cathery made repeated visits to Rotterdam in the space of a short time. Then efforts were made to arrange a meeting with the seamen waiting to sign on British ships. These efforts were not without some success. On the occasion of these visits however I was struck by the fact that Wilson always seemed in a tearing hurry and anxious to get away as soon as possible – usually by way of Antwerp or Hamburg or by some route to England other than the customary one. Whenever he was in Rotterdam, I was invariably warned not to tell anybody or let anyone learn he was there. I also had to let him know right away if any one was asking for him or making enquiries about him. The reasons for this deep secrecy were a complete mystery.

It was not until years later that I discovered that Wilson, or more properly the Union, had lost a court action

against the Shipping Federation. The shipowners' organization had from that day on considerable claims on Wilson (the Union) to which were added the costs of the action. The Union was a non-registered organization and its chief officer was therefore liable, but the Union had no means with which to meet the burden. The Shipping Federation, of course, was not hard up for the money. It was merely concerned with serving the order for payment on Wilson. He had to be declared bankrupt, but the order had to be served on him personally. And so Wilson was constantly on the run before the bailiff. But the latter never caught up with him. Years later the tale was duly paid. I shall leave the tale of the settlement until a later page.

To return to the thread of our story, round about May 1906, about the time of the strike against Lloyds, things began to move. A house had to be rented if the British union was going to establish a branch and open an office in Rotterdam. The office would have to be in the vicinity of the consulate and the seamen's hostel. And then came a startling piece of news: a British shipping company operating from Rotterdam to North American ports had been bought up by Furness. And now Furness were coming to Rotterdam to open an office and operate the former service with the ships they had bought, to which they proposed adding a number of new vessels of the shelterdeck type. Furthermore, Lord Furness had entered into an agreement with the Union that it should act as agent for any crews needed to man these vessels. Furness had made a break with the shipping masters!

It did not take long for plans to take shape. A house was rented in Calandstraat in which the British union was to establish an office on the ground floor whilst the Dutch Seamen's Union was to take over the first floor as a branch office. It was an excellent site for us too – quite near the office of the shipping master.

Came the great day. The first boat was due to have its crew supplied through the union. Cathery and the other union officials working in Rotterdam were to take charge of proceedings whilst I was in attendance in case I was needed. Immediately there was quite a tidy gathering of seamen, shipping masters, doss-house bosses and their hangers-on. They had been working up

feeling among the seamen. 'The Union is out to drive wages up and then keep the boats for English crews', they were saying. 'If they get away with that, you'll be out on the street'. Abuse and threats were hurled at us from outside the office.

After the row had lasted for about an hour and not a man had signed on, Catherly was for giving the thing up. The master was getting impatient. It looked as if the whole business would end in a fiasco. Not if I know it, I thought. 'Man, you must sign the ship. Let me go and have a try.' So saying, I went outside and asked the policeman on duty at the door to clear the crowd away as they were preventing us from getting on with our work. He cleared a space. Shortly after that police reinforcements arrived. I went up the road again and spoke to seamen I knew, coming back with two or three. I repeated this manoeuvre until the ship had signed on a full crew. They were practically all Dutchmen although many of them had regularly been sailing on British boats.

The battle had been won. Furness paid thirty guilders as agent's fee. The British seamen were asked if they were members of the British or Dutch union and if they were not they were required to join. No 'hiring fee' was charged.

Things went a lot more smoothly with the second and third ship, particularly as we were able to man these vessels with strikers off the Sindoro of the Lloyd company. But the shipping masters and doss-house bosses were, if anything, even less friendly disposed towards me. Going to and from the office in the late hours was far from being without its dangers and a number of unsavoury characters had let it be known what they thought of me. For months afterwards I walked around with a loaded revolver in my hip pocket and my hand never far from the trigger.

We had no further trouble in finding crews for the boats but experienced some difficulty in getting just the kind of crew the masters or officers wanted. Most of them wanted a mixed crew; others had a particular liking for Scandinavians, Germans, or 'only Dagoes'.

In the summer of 1907 Wilson came over to inform us that he had decided to close down the Rotterdam branch of the union. It was just as simple as that. The president of this seamen's organization had almost absolute powers.

The union's statutes laid down for example that 'the President opens up branches and closes them down. He appoints officers and dismisses them.' Wilson thus had full powers to close down the Rotterdam branch of the union. He asked us to take over the crewing of Furness boats in consultation with the management of the line. We had no great mind to take this job on, but in the circumstances we felt we had little choice.

It so happened that about that time there was a strike against the introduction of grain elevators in our ports. Shortly after we had taken on the job of finding crews for the Furness boats, we had occasion to send out a manifesto to crews calling on them to do no work which should by rights be done by dock workers. This gave the Furness Line the chance to tell us that they had decided to break with us. It was a relief to get rid of a job about which we had never been keen.

This period during which we worked together with the English was very instructive for me. I acquired a profound respect particularly for Havelock Wilson, a great man and a highly skilled trade union leader. My memories of him are of the pleasantest. He was one of my teachers and my model and guide.

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#### **ITF affiliate aids Uruguayan maritime strikers**



AN ITF-AFFILIATED UNION has recently organized another successful boycott in support of their fellow workers on the other side of the world. On this occasion, the action was taken by the Dockers' Section of the Belgian Transport Workers' Union to aid Uruguayan seafarers' and port workers' unions who had come out on strike to back their demands for wage increases and the redress of long-standing grievances.

An appeal for supporting action was sent to both the ITF and the ICFU by the Uruguayan Confederation of Labour after it had become clear that the authorities were not prepared to grant the just demands of the unions. The response was immediate. Dock workers in the Port of Antwerp stopped work on the 'Punta del Este' from 7 to 24 February, whilst arrangements were made to give another vessel - the 'Tacoma' - the same treatment as soon as

she made port. This ship, one of three operated by the Uruguayan National Ports Authority in overseas trade, had been manned by naval personnel after her regular crew had been discharged in Montevideo. A third vessel was strike-bound in Montevideo, its entire crew, including the officers, being solidly behind the strike which had been called against the Ports administration.

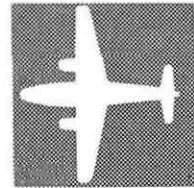
The boycott undertaken by our Belgian affiliate was completely successful and was ended only when a cable had been received from the committee representing the Uruguayan maritime unions reporting that they had won their fight.

This international action, resulting from the close collaboration between the Uruguayan Confederation of Labour, the ITF and its Belgian affiliate, and the ICFU, presents a number of significant aspects. It once again conclusively demonstrates both the will and the ability of the free trade unions belonging to the ITF to organize and bring to a successful conclusion sympathetic action in support of their colleagues in other countries. A point of interest is that on this occasion the Uruguayan unions concerned were not in fact affiliates of the ITF. The ITF, however, has never adopted the view that international action should only be taken if its own affiliated organizations are involved. It claims to represent the interests of all transport workers throughout the free world and the aid given by our Belgian dockers to their colleagues in Uruguay serves to underline the truth of that claim.

The boycott of the 'Punta del Este' also served to prick the empty boast of the Communist-dominated Uruguayan Port Workers' Union that the Communists control the international seafarers' and dockers' movement. This organization, from which the four Uruguayan maritime unions had previously disaffiliated because of its totalitarian leadership, had done its best to break the strike, even to the extent of supplying blackleg labour to the Ports Authority. When it became likely that the four maritime unions would appeal for international support, the Communist organization assured the Ports Authority that no such action was possible since they (the Communists) controlled the international movement! The Ports Authority presumably now knows better.



Last year the American Air Line Pilots' Association (ALPA), an ITF affiliate, celebrated its Silver Anniversary. ALPA was founded in 1930 at a secret meeting held in a hotel room attended by seven air line pilots who were staging a spontaneous revolt against the excessive hours which they were called upon to work and the poor pay with which they were rewarded. The first official meeting of the Association was in 1931. As the following review of ALPA's fight for better pay and working conditions will show, early progress was difficult to make and recognition was not easily granted. But despite all the difficulties, ALPA, under the leadership of its first President, David L. Behncke, and his successor, Brother Clarence N. Sayen, won through and for that the air line pilots of the USA have good cause to be thankful.



## The American Air Line Pilots' Association - a pay and conditions success story

by A. P. HOLMAN, ALPA Research Department

THE WORKING CONDITIONS, rates of pay, working rules, safety procedures and facilities for US pilots have continually improved during the quarter of a century in which ALPA has participated in pilot labor relations and has appeared before government boards, the Congress and legislative representatives. It is the purpose of this article to outline these accomplishments and to demonstrate that the air line pilot of today is the recipient of the efforts, foresight, and achievements of his predecessors, who for twenty-six years have labored industriously on his behalf.

### Poor pay

In the 1920's, the only regulation of pilot earnings was the requirement set by the federal government, that one of the conditions for the granting of an air mail contract to a carrier would be conformity with the minimum pay scale set by the Post Office Department.

A study of the wages and working conditions of 721 pilots on the domestic routes for the month of July, 1933, was made under the direction of the Federal Coordinator of Transportation. There was no such thing as an employment agreement at this time. Some of the revelations of this survey were:

The 'full-time' pilots averaged nine-

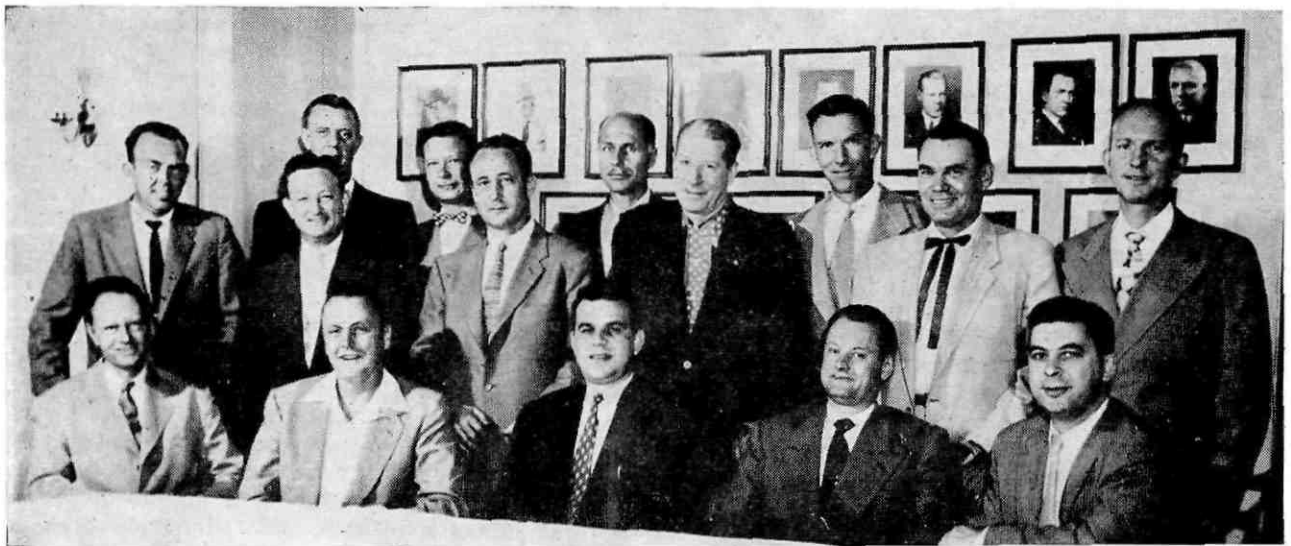
ty-three flying hours for that month but twenty-five cent per flew at least 100 hours and ten per cent flew at least 110 hours.

The average total on-duty time during this month was 163 hours but twenty-five per cent of the pilots were on duty at least 190 hours and ten per cent were on duty for at least 209 hours.

The earnings of first pilots averaged \$680 for the month with a range from \$200 to \$1,150. In terms of a meaningful picture of annual earnings, this monthly average is over-stated because there were no non-monetary wage items, eg. paid vacations and sick leave and minimum guarantees, and July is



Members of the ALPA committee which negotiated the union's first collective agreement - with the American Airlines in 1939. Up till then the union had had to rely on legislation for minimum guarantees for wages and working conditions. The agreement with American Airlines was followed by many others and today ALPA has collective agreements with thirty-eight airlines



*Members of ALPA in Washington in 1954 protesting against the waiving of the eight-hour limit on continuous flights. A strike lasting twenty-five days took place against American Airlines on this issue. The reduction of working hours to reasonable proportions has always been one of the union's main aims. In fact, ALPA was founded partly because of wide discontent on this issue*

not necessarily a typical flying month.

Although ninety-four per cent of the pilots flew for carriers which had air mail contracts, two-thirds of the pilots employed by other lines earned less than \$350 and the pilots of some of the smaller companies not included in the study earned less than \$100 during July, 1933.

The co-pilots included in the study averaged \$217 for the month.

The average number of flight hours for the co-pilots was 113 and the average on-duty time was known to be considerably above 150 hours.

#### **Change to 'hours'**

During 1933, the five principal carriers decided to change the basic unit of pay for pilots from 'per mile' to 'per flight hour'. The pilots who were represented by the Air Line Pilots' Association opposed this action and threatened to strike. However, there was no precedent for any federal agency to have jurisdiction in the dispute. Minutes before the strike was to have taken place, the Wagner Labor Board accepted jurisdiction. The Board appointed a fact-finding Committee composed of L. D. Seymour, then president of American Airways; Dave Behncke, President of ALPA, and Bernard L. Shientag, a justice of the New York Supreme Court. After four months, it produced a fact-

finding report on the wages and working conditions of pilots in the air line industry. The major portion of the recommendations of this committee were incorporated in Decision eighty-three of the National Labor Board. This Decision set the following conditions for the compensation of pilots of carriers who received air mail contracts:

*Base pay:* \$1,600 per year with annual increments of \$200 until the maximum of \$3,000 was reached in eight years.

*Hourly pay:* The hourly rate was based on the speed of the equipment with the range of \$4.00 per hour for speeds under 125 mph to a maximum of \$5.00 per hour for speeds of 200 mph and over. The hourly rate was increased fifty per cent for night flying.

*Mileage pay:* two cents per mile for each mile over 100 miles per hour up to 10,000 miles in the month, 1½ cents for each of the next 2,000 miles, and one cent for each additional mile. The carriers interpreted the formula to be a reverting type, i.e., a pilot who flew over 12,500 miles in 85 hours in a month would be paid one cent per mile for each mile flown (\$40) rather than 1 cent per mile for the last 500 miles (\$66). This interpretation financially penalized a pilot who flew more than 10,000 miles in a month and, as such, penalized increased pilot productivity. ALPA was

eventually successful in reversing this interpretation after many years of opposition to it.

#### **Results of Decision 83**

Decision eighty-three tended to stabilize first pilot earnings at about \$650 per month. This Decision made no mention of co-pilot pay other than to direct that the existing differential between pilot and co-pilot pay be maintained.

In the Fall of 1933, the major carriers initiated the following pay scale for co-pilots: \$190 per month for the first six months, \$210 per month for each of the next six, and a maximum of \$225 per month to be paid after the first year of service.

Decision eighty-three set the maximum number of flight hours at eighty-five per month. This limitation was not enacted into the Air Mail Act of 1934, although the pay scales of Decision eighty-three were so enacted. The Act legalized the limitations set forth by the Department of Commerce in 1931 (100 hours per month, thirty hours in a seven-day period with one day off in seven, and eight hours in any twenty-four hour period), and the additional limitation of 1,000 hours in a calendar year. As a result of ALPA efforts, the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 subsequently incorporated the eighty-five hours per month flight time limitation.

## General working conditions

In 1933, the general working conditions of the pilots were primitive when compared to present-day conditions. There was no obligation for the carrier to provide the pilots with suitable accommodation when he had to lie over away from his home base, although most lines did reimburse the pilot for 'ordinary out-of-pocket' expenses during such a lay-over. There were no vacation guarantees or sick leave guarantees, no pension or retirement allowances. A few carriers paid the additional premiums charged to pilots for insurance as a result of their 'hazardous' occupation, but the pilots had to pay the basic premium charge. There was no organized and equitable method of handling grievances.

## First agreement on American Airlines

Although ALPA had been recognized as the legitimate representative of air line pilots by the appointment of Dave Behncke to the Shientag Committee, there was no law obligating the carriers to bargain collectively with the pilots' representative. ALPA worked and fought and was finally successful in having the Railway Labor Act amended in 1936 to include air line pilots and all other air transportation employees under its jurisdiction. ALPA obtained for its members and the industry additional assurance that collective bargaining would occur within a legitimate and reasonable framework when the Civil Aeronautics

Act of 1938 was written to include the proviso that 'It shall be a condition upon the holding of a certificate by any air carrier that such carrier shall comply with the Railway Labor Act, as amended.'

The Air Line Pilots' Association negotiated its first collective bargaining agreement with American Airlines. The contract was effective May 15, 1939. The provisions of Decision eighty-three pertaining to pilot pay were included in the contract as the rates of compensation for first pilots. Co-pilot pay started at \$190 per month for the first six months with semi-annual increments of \$20, until the maximum of \$350 per month was attained. The contract provided that actual out-of-pocket expenses resulting from lay-overs would be paid to the pilots and that the expenses of moving when caused by Company orders (excluding initial assignment) would be paid by the Company in accordance with a fixed scale. Two weeks vacation with pay was guaranteed after one year of service. The minimum vacation pay for a first pilot was \$250 and the co-pilot was paid his actual salary. A monthly flight-time limitation of eighty-five hours was written into the contract and the first seniority system and System Board of Adjustment as now required by the Railway Labor Act were set up.

## Gross weight factor

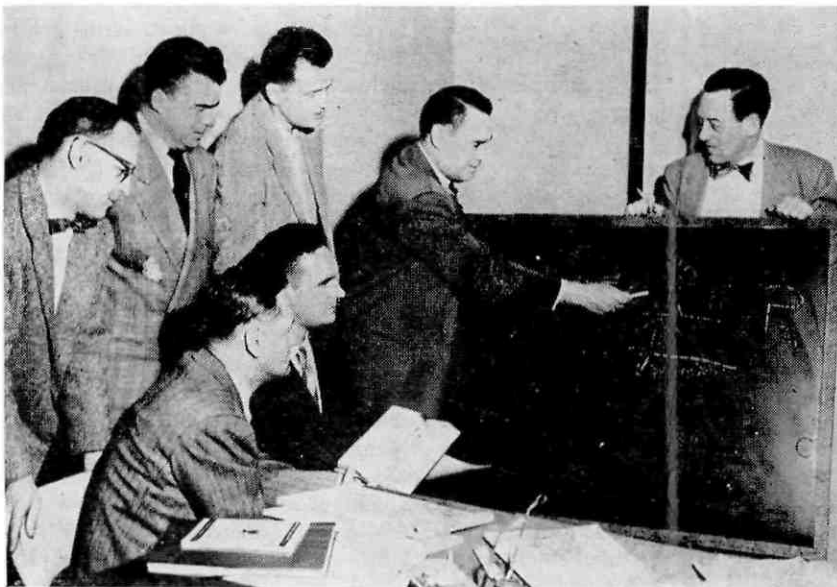
In 1947, following prolonged negotiations with a number of air carriers, including a month-long strike against

TWA, ALPA negotiated contracts which for the first time in fourteen years supplemented Decision eighty-three by providing for an additional component of first pilot flight pay - the gross weight factor. This factor, coupled with the mileage and hourly pay factors, which are keyed to the speed of the equipment, assured the pilot that he would receive some monetary recognition for his increased productivity when flying the new heavier and faster equipment. In addition, base pay was increased by an average of twenty per cent and the reverting feature in the mileage pay, in effect since Decision eighty-three, was eliminated, although pilots continued to fly the first 100 miles per hour without compensation.

Negotiations in 1949-51 saw the introduction of the new progressive mileage pay formula on most airlines - one cent per mile for the first 17,000 miles, two cents per mile for the next 5,000 miles, and three cents per mile for each additional mile. The so-called 'free miles' were eliminated. In the past, pegged speeds had been pertinent only to the determination of relevant hourly pay and mileage pay was calculated in terms of the actual airway miles flown. This common practice was reversed and pegged speeds are now used to calculate both hourly and mileage pay factors of the pilot's flight pay.

## Co-pilots win new pay scale

In May, 1951, an Emergency Board was appointed by President Truman to recommend terms of settlement of a dispute between American Airlines and the Air Line Pilots' Association. The Board recommended the adoption of an ALPA demand that the co-pilot be paid in accordance with a new pay scale and that he receive after two years' service a percentage of all the components of the first pilot's flight pay in addition to the co-pilot base pay. This type of co-pilot pay provision was subsequently negotiated by ALPA and included in most of the collective bargaining



*A 1955 ALPA retirement committee studying pension programs. Adequate retirement benefits for pilots was an objective embodied in the union's first by-laws. In recent years the union has made rapid progress in this direction and in addition to negotiated schemes the union runs specialized security programs of its own, eg. against loss of license*

agreements. By this step, all pilots were placed on the same system of pay.

Another important development in the 1951 series of negotiations was the establishment of a more realistic minimum monthly guarantee for all pilots, particularly for reserve pilots. Prior to this time, the guarantee consisted generally only of base pay, and whenever something interrupted the pilot's schedule for the month, his earnings might fall far below the general average. Reserve pilots, who were on standby duty all months and flew part-time as first pilot, might not be compensated for any more than co-pilot flying. The minimum guarantees introduced, insured the pilot that he would receive a more realistic monthly compensation if he were available to fly for the entire month but, for reasons beyond his control, was prevented from doing so.

### Gains reviewed

This is a brief and by no means complete sketch of the development of the present system of compensating air line pilots. Since it is a scale system, where the compensation of each individual pilot may vary widely but under which each pilot can measure his own progress through the years, no effort will be made to set forth averages and comparisons. Generally, however, the progress can be summarized as follows: the original Decision eighty-three pay concept developed in 1933 established a floor under pilot pay and such a minimum remained the standard for fourteen years until 1947. In the post-war cycle of negotiations, the first important revisions to the Decision eighty-three concept were made in the addition of gross weight pay and some changes in the other elements. The most important changes, however, have taken place since 1950, the pilots having been successful in modifying the system of compensation in keeping with current industry developments and in placing all pilots on the same system of pay.

The development of non-pay aspects for pilots has been similar. No written agreements existed prior to 1939 and the pilots were dependent upon governmental enforcement of Decision eighty-three to establish their minimum compensation and maximum working hours. When the pilots were brought under the Railway Labor Act in 1936, it became possible for them to begin negotiations of employment agreements with

their employers, the first being completed in 1939, others following soon thereafter. These agreements merely incorporated the minimum pay and maximum working hours provisions that had been secured through governmental intervention but established uniform seniority rules and some simple concepts of bidding, and so forth. These relatively simple agreements remained practically unchanged except for minor revisions in 1947 until about 1951. While it would be impossible in this space to trace the development of each working rule and some of the complex bidding systems which exist today, a brief summary of some of the rules which exist in present agreements is in order.

### Present agreements summarized

Minimum credit and compensation for irregular flying, call-out pay, deadhead pay and credit, sick leave, pay and credit for training time and guaranteed vacations with full pay are supplemental pay provisions which have become standard in the industry. These have been important in increasing the annual earnings of pilots. Pilots are reimbursed for lodging, transportation and meal expenses during on-duty time and at lay-over stations. The pilot is reimbursed for the costs of moving himself, his family, and his household effects, when such move is at the carrier's request or in order to maintain his flight assignment in the face of changes in the location and amount of flying time. Foreign station allowances are paid to those pilots based outside the United States.

Working conditions, which are primarily non-monetary in nature, have been established and improved. Seniority is recognized for promotion and flight and equipment assignments. Flight-time limitations have been included in the agreements and on-duty time limitations are being innovated. The pilot is protected by the establishment of a procedure by which he may appeal the unfavorable results of a medical examination to the decision of an impartial physician. A grievance procedure has been established which provides for the investigation of actions of the carrier which the pilot feels are arbitrary, discriminatory, or contrary to the contract, and which culminates in the decision of the System Board of Adjustment or in arbitration with the System Board. This is but a brief summary of some of the rules which are being devel-

oped to protect and improve the working conditions and rights of the pilot. While some of them may seem commonplace today, they did not always exist and have been laboriously developed over the years.

### Retirement

The first By-Laws of the Association stated that adequate retirement benefits for pilots were one of the continuing objectives of ALPA but despite a number of efforts nothing tangible in this direction was accomplished by the Association until 1955. Beginning approximately in 1940, some of the air carriers, however, had unilaterally established company retirement programs in which pilots were permitted to participate. These programs were generally contributory in nature and provided a fixed benefit formula, the amount of which varied from carrier to carrier. Where these programs were established, generally some past service credits were purchased for the pilot. By 1954, such programs were in effect on thirteen air lines of the thirty-eight lines with which ALPA had employment agreements.

During 1955, retirement programs were negotiated which introduced important new principles and protections for the pilot group and substantially increased pension amounts. These programs are integrated with the Association's unilateral security programs, e.g. Mutual Aid, Loss of License, Group Life, with the objective being to strike at the basic insecurity of the piloting profession and provide a realistic retirement income at a realistic retirement age for pilots. With this in mind, ALPA-negotiated pension plans include vesting rights, which protect the pilot forced to leave the industry, and provisions to provide a flexible retirement age. The programs provide for an investment of a substantial proportion of the retirement funds in a variable annuity program designed to keep the pilot's retirement income more in line with economic changes and fluctuations in purchasing power. A number of options are made available to the pilot in the programs in order that he may integrate retirement into his own estate planning. For example, practically all the programs provide for contingent annuitant options, optional retirement any time after age 50, level benefit options, and so forth. Some of the programs provide that the pilot may make


additional contributions above those required to his own retirement, if he desires.

In addition to removing some of the basic insecurity of air line pilots, the Association's security programs and the negotiated retirement programs will serve the purpose of maintaining the pilot's average lifetime earnings at a higher level. Where the individual pilot through the years has had to budget a large proportion of his income toward the day when he might be suddenly removed from flying and deprived of his income, these security programs now alleviate this problem to some degree, and, when added to the pilot's flying income during his working life, serve to raise his annual earnings for his productive years as a pilot.

### Building a future

Such is a brief sketch of the history and development of wages and working conditions of the pilots of the air line industry during the twenty-six-year history of the Air Line Pilots' Association. It is impossible to relate the thousands of hours of effort that have gone into the building of these standards and the frustrations and anxieties that have been attendant upon it. It would be impossible to pay tribute to all of the individuals who have contributed to it. However, such is the economic foundation on which the future of the air line piloting profession will be built.

### A training school on wheels

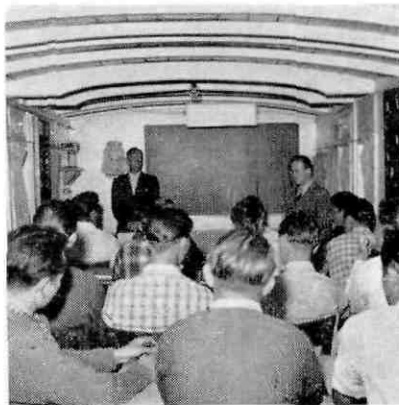
 SINCE 1945 more than 260,000 German Federal Railways staff have attended courses at staff training establishments. This is about half of the entire German railways labour force. The training centres which owe their existence to trade-union initiative, are run by an Association (the Verband Deutscher Eisenbahnfachschulen - the Association of German Railways Staff Training Establishments) which has been in existence for 36 years and on which the unions are represented. One of the most interesting of the many establishments run by the Association is a training school on wheels - the only one of its kind operated by the Association.

Attached to the service train which moves about the region carrying a gang in continuous employment on the per-

manent way, the 'school' provides facilities for instruction in this type of work to some twenty young railwaymen working with the permanent-way gang, which in all numbers about seventy. Lessons are given twice a week from seven to nine o'clock in the evening after the day's work. This just about gives the trainees time for a wash and brush-up and a meal on returning from their work. Normal hours of work of the permanent-way gang are 48 a week, compressed into five days in order to enable them to get home at weekends. Including the 'pupils' they thus work eight hours on Mondays and 10 hours the remaining four days.

Instruction is given by the engineer in charge of the entire gang and his colleague who is responsible for the payroll. With the average age of pupils in the region of 23, normal schooling lies a long way back for most of the trainees.

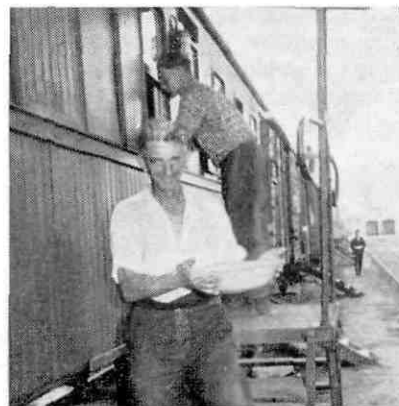
This, coupled with the fact that his class has just finished a hard day's work, makes the teacher's job no light one if satisfactory results are to be achieved. Nevertheless, with 80% of the classes successfully sitting for their passing-out examination on termination of the seven-month course, there can be little reason to doubt the usefulness of this 'training school on wheels'.



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1. The railway wagon which serves as a school-room is attached to the service train housing the permanent-way gang. Instruction is given to some twenty of the seventy-man gang for two hours on two evenings a week after normal working hours. Federal Railways employees who want to take the seven-month course of training can apply for a transfer to this 'centre'. 2. Teacher and 'pupil' stop for an informal chat. The training staff are at the same time in charge of the permanent-way gang housed in the train. All work a forty-eight-hour, five-day week which gives them a chance to travel home during the weekend. 3. The 'field kitchen' ensures a good variety of plain but wholesome food for the permanent-way crew. In spite of increased mechanization, work on the permanent way still means much hard physical labour - and correspondingly healthy appetites. 4. Laying the track under the watchful eye of a skilled machineminder. About 80% of the 'pupils' successfully negotiate the passing-out examination at the end of the course which is primarily designed to give manual training

## The aims of Panamanian seamen

by L. MARTINEZ, Director ITF Latin American Office



AS A FURTHER STEP IN THE REORGANIZATION OF PANAMANIAN TRADE UNIONS, effected with the aid of ORIT, transport workers' unions in Panama, and seafarers in particular, have resumed their activities on a more solid basis and with clear and well-defined aims. In spite of what the Director General of the Secret Police may assert, the trade union movement among Panamanian transport workers is free of subversive elements especially as regards its leading officials – as free, that is, as it is possible to keep such elements out of the movement. Nevertheless, to avoid misunderstanding, it should be pointed out that we are here concerned with democratic organizations embracing all workers irrespective of political ideology. As a democratic body, the Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation found no bar to its affiliation with the ITF.

ITF relations with Panamanian seafarers go back a good number of years, and it was not long before the seafarers' organization at that time applied for affiliation. The original body was unable to fulfil certain conditions, however, with the result that the application remained in abeyance. Renewed last year by the present union, the Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation, the application was approved.

### Its position clarified

There can be no doubt as to the claim of the Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation to be considered a democratic body on the ideological plane, whilst, on the trade union front, it has given clear proof of a thoughtful conduct of its affairs. In the interests of straightforward dealing, and to avoid all possibility of confusion, it has repudiated the Panamanian Seamen's Union (Sindicato de Marineros de Panama) which has its headquarters in New York, and has formulated a request that the former Maritime Union (Union Sindical Maritime) be considered a defunct body. It took this step with regard to the first-named union in that it shared the general conviction that the union concerned is a 'yellow' union for the benefit of shipowners whose vessels are registered under the Panamanian flag. As regards the

*Delegates of the Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation in consultation with the Minister for Labour, Insurance and Health. During this meeting, which was held in October 1956, the question of inspection of ships was fully discussed*

second union, representations to the effect that it should be officially declared defunct were made because the union, to all intents and purposes, has effectively ceased to exist.

The attitude of the Panamanian seafarers towards the authorities and the employers is equally clear and unequivocal. With the former the union maintains such contacts as are right and proper between unions and the authorities in any democratic country with a view to the improvement of the working and living conditions of its members. As regards the employers, relations are not all that they should be solely because of the lack of the indispensable bond to

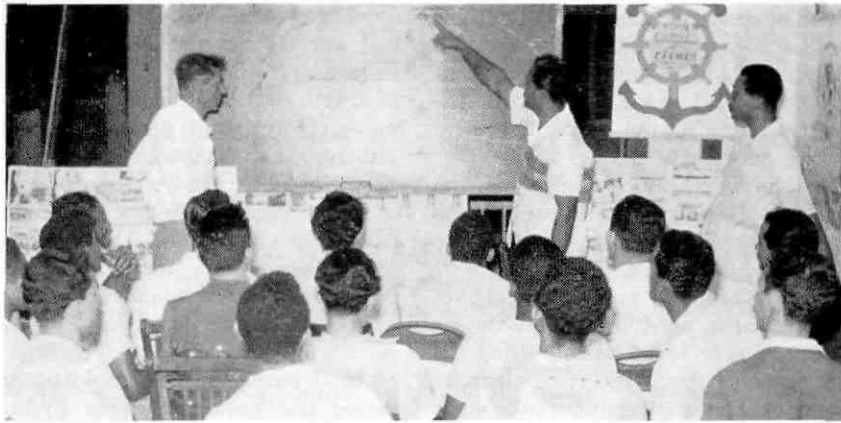
good relations – a collective agreement. It is up to the authorities to see that this anomaly is put right.

### Hiring

Last October, the Federation, having clearly formulated the course it wished to pursue, sent a mission to wait on the Minister for Labour, Insurance and Health, Sra. Cecilia Pinel (widow of Premier Remon, assassinated in 1955) with a view to presenting her with a full picture of the serious problems facing the Federation. Points raised with the Minister included the functioning of the inspectorate and the dismissal of Sr. J. A. Panay, whom the Federation felt constrained to designate 'persona non grata' by reason of his activities inimical to the interests of seafarers (He later left the inspectorate and offered his services to the shipowners for the engagement of seafarers).

The Federation considers it is imperative to have an inspectorate capable of dealing satisfactorily with the serious problem of unemployment. For one reason or another, however, seafarers' organizations up to now have been excluded from any matters connected with the hiring of crews. In this connection, it is relevant to emphasize that as a general rule unions in maritime countries have a say in the provision of crew members when vessels are first registered or to make good any vacancies occurring between trips. In Panama, however, the maritime inspectorate has been





*A classroom in the training establishment set up by the Federation in Panama. There is also a branch establishment functioning in Colon. In spite of the modest means at its disposal, the Federation hopes to carry on with this good work*

in the habit of working according to its own, not always objective standards.

### At the owners' mercy

Naturally a further aim pursued by the ITF-affiliated Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation is the right to negotiate collective agreements and thus put an end to the chaos existing today in the country's maritime industry. Apart from the problem posed by the large number of owners who register their vessels under the Panamanian flag – only a few of which vessels touch at the country's ports – there is the hard and unpalatable fact that shipowners in the country itself impose completely arbitrary conditions on the various branches and sectors of the maritime industry. The complete absence of anything like a collective contract must be attributed to a purely negative attitude on the part of the owners.

We thus find that a seaman from the port of Panama gets a maximum wage of four Panamanian dollars a day (about thirty shillings), whilst in Colon a seaman is drawing 4.40 Pan. dollars. As might be expected, one of the chief aims of the Federation is to secure uniform pay throughout the country. Before this can be achieved, however, it will have to win the right to negotiate collective agreements providing acceptable conditions of employment.

### Correlation of forces needed

For the purpose of the Federation's argument, no undue importance should be attached to the fact that Panama, whose nationals own only a small number of vessels of modest tonnage, cannot be regarded as a maritime nation in the true sense of the expression. The comparative insignificance of the country's national maritime fleet must be viewed

against the background of over three million tons of shipping registered under the Panamanian flag. True, the great majority of the owners of these vessels maintain no other relations with the country's authorities than are necessitated by the payment of taxes or when they feel their business interests are involved. In the latter event, we frequently encounter cases where this or that master or shipowner has approached a Panamanian consul with the request for assistance when faced with the just demands of the crews serving in their vessels.

It is thus clear that shipowners register their vessels under the Panamanian flag solely for the sake of the ample profits derived therefrom, counterbalanced by no or few obligations. The Panamanian seafarers view the situation from a totally different angle however. Nobody can justly deny them the right as Panamanian nationals of serving in vessels flying their country's flag and enjoying reasonable conditions of work. For this reason it is of the utmost importance to establish a due correlation of forces and influences exerted by the government, the owners and the maritime labour organizations represented by the Federation.

### What is the government doing?

The government, it should be mentioned, has gone some way to meet the Federation in enacting that at least ten per cent of the crew of any vessel flying the Panamanian flag must be Panamanian nationals. As an encouragement to owners to employ Panamanian seafarers, the Legislative Assembly recently approved a measure conferring on shipowners a rebate of ten per cent on annual taxation and other concessions of the same order with regard to consular

fees for services rendered to Panamanian vessels.

This, however, is not enough. Judging from the behaviour of the owners, the measure has merely served further to whet their well-known greedy appetite. The absence of any correlation of the influences and forces at work in the industry (or, to put it another way, the lack of social legislation, authoritative control or a powerful and respected trade union movement) will encourage owners to lower the generally unsatisfactory conditions of work even further. Contrary to what might have been expected, the government give the impression that it wishes to avoid its obligations towards its seafarers whether or not they are of Panamanian nationality. Such at least is the conclusion one must



*One of the many activities carried on by the Federation. A photograph taken during the celebration of 'Mother's Day' organized by the Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation (an ITF affiliate)*

draw from its decision to delete the Maritime Department of the Administration of Panama from the 1957 Estimates. Such was the perturbation among the country's workers on hearing this news that the Federation asked its International Trade Secretariat to consider urgent measures, including in extremity

a boycott, in order to impress the government with the gravity of its step. There are indications, however, that developments are taking a more hopeful turn and that the government may reconsider its attitude.

#### **From bad to worse**

In virtue of the above-mentioned Act, which in all its aspects may be deemed inadequate, the consular authorities will be empowered to deal with all matters affecting the registration of vessels, matters arising from the mortgaging of ships, etc. This means in effect that, contrary to the views expressed by the trade union movement and the appropriate bodies of the UN, contact between the country of registration and the owners will be practically non-existent. The Act contains nothing which leads us to believe that the Panamanian government proposes to impose its authority over the owners or that the Ministry of Labour or Maritime Department will have much to say with regard to the three million tons of shipping flying the Panamanian flag or the crews of the vessels comprising this total.

#### **And what of inspection?**

The attitude of the Panamanian authorities to the problem of ship's inspection, a solution to which is being urgently sought in seafarers' circles, remains completely incomprehensible. It is urged that, on their passage through the Panama Canal, all Panamanian-registered vessels should be boarded by inspectors to ensure that the regulations governing minimum standards of work, safety, etc. are fully observed and particularly the regulation which lays down that ten per cent of the crew shall be of Panamanian nationality.

Although the problem is of recent date, much has already been said and written on the subject. Thanks to the efforts of the appropriate organs of the AFL-CIO, the government of the United States has agreed to inspection. In spite of this, it appears that a most lamentable confusion reigns in Panamanian official circles. Inasmuch as the question of Panamanian sovereignty in the Canal Zone may be regarded as involved, Panamanian seafarers have asked the country's legislators to state whether Panama has sovereign rights over the Zone. If it has not, it could still take advantage of the United States' offer to allow the inspec-

tion of vessels passing through the Canal; if it has, then nothing would be simpler than to establish a government inspectorate. Frankly, Panamanian seafarers simply do not believe that there is any problem at all.

According to notices appearing in the country's Press on 6 December 1956, the Minister of Labour proposes to dispense with the inspection service in 1957, 'seeing that the government has not yet succeeded in obtaining permission for inspectors to board vessels flying the Panamanian flag.' The Press statements add that efforts will continue to be made through the Panamanian Department for Foreign Affairs. The existing confusion on the subject could not be more clearly demonstrated!

Although for some people it might appear taking things too far, the fact remains and is worthy of note that trade union bodies in the maritime countries are able to visit vessels calling at national ports in order to ensure that internationally accepted minimum standards of working conditions are observed. Proof of this is offered by the numerous cases of boycott action undertaken by ITF-affiliated unions against Panlibhonco ships.

With or without inspectors, the most satisfactory solution would appear to be to allow a fully responsible union such as the Maritime Workers' Federation of Panama to exercise the right of inspection.

#### **Training school**


In the light of these developments, and as a proof of the go-ahead spirit prevalent among their members, the unions comprising the Maritime Workers' Federation have decided to train as large a number as possible of their members to fill posts of responsibility in the Panamanian merchant marine.

With this end in view, and by means of initial financial aid from the Panamanian government, the Federation has established a training school in Panama and a subsidiary establishment in Colon to carry out the work of training with the modest means at the Federation's disposal. The Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation feels confident that the free trade union movement will recognize the excellence of the Federation's scheme and give it the necessary aid to enable it to achieve its purpose.


Although the Panamanian Maritime Workers' Federation is fully conscious

of its small membership, it is convinced that with this aid and the sympathetic understanding of the authorities it will be able to perform valuable services towards clarifying the present situation with regard to Panlibhonco shipping, especially as regards vessels registered under the Panamanian flag. As for the Panamanian authorities, it may be urged that whatever they may do to further the interests of the country's maritime workers' trade union movement will necessarily redound to the country's benefit in raising the prestige of Panama among that world's maritime unions. We trust that this is also appreciated by the Panamanian authorities.

#### **Philippine transport workers publish monthly paper**

 AN INDICATION of the growing strength of the Philippine Transport Workers' Organization (an ITF affiliate) was the appearance recently of the first issue of the monthly 'Transport Workers' Courier'. Very well prepared and printed the PTWO has provided its members with a valuable source of information, a trade union function which is of great importance but is sometimes sadly neglected.

#### **Union membership increasing in Japan**

 FIGURES RELEASED RECENTLY by the Japanese Ministry of Labour show a steady increase in union membership in that country. At the end of June 1956 registered trade unions numbered 34,331, an increase of 2,300 or seven per cent, on the previous year. Individual union membership at 6,372,204 was an increase of 200,000, or 3.3 per cent.

Organized labour now amounts to 36.4 per cent of the total labour force, with workers in the transport and communications fields, numbering 1,490,000, constituting 23 per cent of the total union membership.

Some 60 per cent of the unions, with a total membership of 4-5 millions, are affiliated with one or the other of the four national centres; the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (Sohyo) accounts for nearly 3,250,000 members.

The National Railway Workers' Union, (Kokutetsu), an ITF affiliate, with its membership of 382,000 is the second largest union in the country.



# Upheaval in the Polish trade union movement



by J. W. BRUEGEL

IN THE TURMOIL OF THE GREAT EVENTS OF RECENT MONTHS, it was inevitable that some significant developments were not given the attention they deserve. Among these is one of the most important elements in the revolt of the Polish people against Moscow: the upheaval in the Polish trade union movement.

Regardless of how one evaluates the changes made in Poland and the future prospects of Gomulka, the elimination of the old leadership as well as the radical turning away from methods used by what in Poland used to be called, quite unjustly, the 'trade union movement' are revolutionary acts. These acts constitute unequivocal condemnation of the evil past. They make it impossible to turn the clock back, and they pave the road to a better tomorrow.

When Gomulka came to power at the end of last October, the leaders of the so-called Polish 'Trade Union Federation' – all of them staunch Stalinists – were terrified. Wiktor Klosiewicz, president of the federation and a vice president of the World Federation of Trade Unions, disappeared at once from his field of activities and was later expelled from the Politburo of the Communist Party.

But the workers were not satisfied with the exit of those who had tortured them by their demands for higher output, while at the same time posing as the sole legitimate representatives of the interests of the workers. The membership insisted upon the convocation of a plenary session of the so-called Central Trade Union Council in order to settle accounts with their Communist bosses.

The conference began on November 16, 1956. According to the original plan, the meeting was to last two days. However, since 125 out of 550 delegates had asked to speak, the time allotted to the conference had to be doubled. Radio Warsaw, which gave the debates extra-

ordinary coverage, reported that there were violent scenes almost all the time and it characterized the speeches made at the conference as 'passionate'.

## Workers press demands

At the beginning of the meeting, the delegates rejected the proposed agenda and adopted another one which called for the selection of a conference chairman, resignation of the old Presidium, discussion, and election of new officers. Wit Hanke, president of the Miners' Union, was elected chairman. Through Hanke the old Presidium announced its resignation. But the workers were unwilling to leave it at that. They insisted that the resigning officers be called to account for their deeds. They demanded

furthermore that representatives of the government and the Communist Party be present. These demands had to be fulfilled.

In their speeches the delegates severely attacked the old leadership and denounced their incompetence, 'scandalous waste of trade union funds', undemocratic methods, luxurious living, etc. At the same time, they demanded a new trade union constitution which would assure democracy within the affiliated unions and provide for the free election of trade union officials by the membership. In the meantime, representatives of the government and the Communist Party had arrived and they had to listen to these attacks and demands.

Attempts by Klosiewicz and his aides to defend and justify their activities met with ridicule and indignation. In view of the critical mood of the delegates, even the representative of the Communist



*The disturbances in the Polish industrial town of Poznan which shook the Communist world in the summer of 1956 were to herald a nation-wide revolt against Stalinism. This was Poznan shortly after the disturbances ended. A tank still patrols the street (Photo by the Keystone Press)*

Party, Secretary Wladyslaw Matwin and the Vice Premier of the government, Jaroszewicz, had to concur in the condemnation of Communist trade union policies.

At the end of the conference, a resolution was adopted which emphasized that the trade union movement could be revived only if the trade unions were completely independent from the Communist regime and were based on 'the best pre-war traditions of the trade union movement and the traditions of the first post-war years'. In other words, the resolution demanded that the trade union be organizations which are not controlled by Communists.

### Hit one-party system

The resolution declared further that the conference 'recognizes fully the ideological and political leadership of the Party, but deems necessary the liquidation of the administrative pressure exerted by Party organs on the trade unions. The trade unions ought to have their own parliamentary representation in the Sejm (Parliament), the right of legislative initiative and the right of criticism based on the opinion of the broad masses'.

The latter demand is an obvious attempt to abolish the one-party system de facto since it is not yet possible to do so de jure. Compared with these demands which, in the eyes of Communists, are sheer heresy, the hesitant and monosyllabic recognition of the monopoly of the Communist Party does not weigh too heavily. Furthermore, it is significant that the resolution urged the government to solve the unemployment problem (whose existence in the countries behind the Iron Curtain has been steadfastly denied by Communists) and to introduce unemployment insurance. At a congress to be held during the second quarter of 1957, the foundations of a new 'Federation of Trade Unions' are to be laid.

By then, many things may have happened and nobody can foresee what the international and domestic situation will be at the time the congress convenes. Already forces are at work to exploit the rebellious mood of union members (Klosiewicz spoke of a membership of 4.5 millions) for purposes quite different from the intentions of the Warsaw Conference, namely for a consolidation of the reformed Communist regime. The newly elected trade union president,

Ignacy Loga-Sowinski, is a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party and a follower of Gomulka. The policy statements issued so far by the new Presidium are much more indecisive and much less militant than those of the Warsaw Conference.

One of those recent statements declared that the task of the trade unions was to 'submit basic demands to the leadership'. This means obviously that they are not duty bound to defend the interests of the workers on all levels. Kulesza, a member of the Klosiewicz clique which was deposed by the Warsaw meeting, is again active as secretary of the Trade Union Federation. On the other hand, the new leadership has promised – and this is again significant – a programme for the improvement of the employment situation, and to increase children's allowance and sickness benefits, etc.

Gomulka, however, has already made it clear that these promises will hardly be carried out. It is evident that he is torn between the necessity to fulfil the demands of the workers and the urgency of overcoming the economic chaos created by the Stalinists. Thus, he told the miners that they cannot expect any wage increases at present. While declaring that he considered Sunday work to be detrimental to the health of the miners, he stated at the same time that the plan for 1957 still provided for twelve Sunday shifts a year. He promised to discuss in the Party their abolition – as demanded by the miners – but would the latter be willing to make up for the resulting loss in output?

The friendly tone and the fact that the Communist rulers negotiate at all with workers' representatives are steps forward, compared with the immediate past. But regarding their content, these are old Communist arguments.


### Drop Loyalty Pledge

On the other hand, it is significant that the new leadership of the Polish trade unions has ostentatiously omitted the pledge of loyalty towards Moscow, which is obligatory for all Communists, and, moreover, has completely ignored the WFTU. It has neither decided to withdraw nor to stress its continued affiliation.


Thus, trade union developments in Poland take place in twilight. One of the reasons for the ambiguous attitude of the new leaders may be the fact that

they themselves do not know how far they can go without provoking in Moscow a 'Hungarian reaction.' But one thing is clear: after this courageous manifestation of the Polish workers, after their unequivocal reaffirmation of the ideals which inspire the free trade union movement everywhere, there can be no return to a past which even the most obdurate Stalinists want to forget. (From an article by J. W. Bruegel in the AFL-CIO 'International Free Trade Union News')

### Fishing advisers bring good results in Germany

 THE USE OF TWO EXPERT ADVISERS in the German fishing industry is reported to have produced good results. They have been used for the North Sea and Baltic coasts, one specializing in ships' motors and the other in catching techniques. Their work has in many cases been carried out on the spot and much of their time has been spent in meeting the fishermen in their homes after a trip or during lay-up. The motor expert guides the fisherman as to the best boat to buy, the best motor for his ship and how to carry out repairs cheaply and well. The expert on catching techniques keeps the men abreast of new developments and research. It appears that the practical approach of the experts has succeeded in overcoming a suspicion on the part of the men that the advisers would direct their fishing from a desk.

### ILO expert helps Delhi transport services to save money

 THE DELHI TRANSPORT SERVICE is expected to achieve a considerable financial saving as the result of productivity and work study schemes introduced by a visiting ILO expert. One example of what could be done was found in the Service's Central Workshops where a short while after the expert's arrival output rose from 64 to 96 vehicles in four weeks. Describing the project, the Indian Trade Union Congress paper, 'Indian Worker', made particular mention of the good relations established by the expert between himself and the supervisory staff on the one hand and the improved relations between the supervisory staff and the workers on the other. A similar scheme in Bombay is reported to have saved the authority there thousands of rupees.

# International Transport Workers' Federation

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General Secretary: O. BECU

**7** industrial sections catering for

RAILWAYMEN  
ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS  
INLAND WATERWAY WORKERS  
DOCKERS  
SEAFARERS  
FISHERMEN  
CIVIL AVIATION STAFF

- Founded in London in 1896
- Reconstituted at Amsterdam in 1919
- Headquarters in London since the outbreak of the Second World War
- 163 affiliated organizations in 57 countries
- Total membership: 6,500,000

#### *The aims of the ITF are*

to support national and international action in the struggle against economic exploitation and political oppression and to make international working class solidarity effective;

to cooperate in the establishment of a world order based on the association of all peoples in freedom and equality for the promotion of their welfare by the common use of the world's resources;

to seek universal recognition and enforcement of the right of trade union organization;

to defend and promote, on the international plane, the economic, social and occupational interests of all transport workers;

to represent the transport workers international agencies performing functions which affect their social, economic and occupational conditions;

to furnish its affiliated organizations with information about the wages and working conditions of transport workers in different parts of the world, legislation affecting them, the development and activities of their trade unions, and other kindred matters.

#### *Affiliated unions in*

Argentina • Australia • Austria  
Belgium • Brazil • British Honduras • Canada  
Chile • Colombia • Cuba • Denmark  
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France • Germany • Ghana  
Great Britain • Greece • Grenada  
Hong Kong • Iceland • India • Israel • Italy  
Jamaica • Japan • Kenya • Lebanon  
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