

LABOR



magazine



DOSSIER:
TRADE UNIONS, NGOs:
FRIENDS
OR ENEMIES

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Picture :
Trade unions and
NGOs together in the
street, against child
labour

PORTRAIT

The beginning of the trade union commitment of Juan or Johnny Tan dates from his secondary education at Ateneo in Manilla. At the time, only children like him from privileged families, could pursue studies in such institutions, run by Jesuit fathers. A brilliant pupil, he was taken under the care of Father Walter Hogan, who opened his eyes to the condition of workers. This Irish priest, inspired by the encyclic *Rerum Novarum*, helped young Tan to establish the Institute of Social Order, in order to transmit the social message of the Catholic Church.



Juan Tan: trade unionist, rather than minister

Juan Tan in effect, declared he was very much influenced by the Encyclicals, including *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, as well as by the message of Jesus Christ. But he realised that the word was not enough. Immediately after the second world war, he became a consultant to what was known as *Labour and Capital* (Employees) at the Philippine Congress, and realised that the situation of workers was bad (an euphemism, he says today). Thus he created the FFW

JUAN C. TAN WHO WILL SOON BE 78 YEARS, IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ASIAN TRADE UNIONISTS AND PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF THE FEDERATION OF FREE WORKERS (FFW) OF THE PHILIPPINES. VERY ACTIVE IN HIS COUNTRY, HE WAS ALSO PRESIDENT OF THE WCL FROM 1981 TO 1989.

JUAN C. TAN

in 1950, with a group of other young leaders, idealists, sincere, devoted, all inspired by the Christian teachings of Reverend Walter Hogan and the social doctrines of Christianity.

The FFW was established to "build a human community of freedom and democracy, justice and peace, and progress and prosperity". It believed in the fact that the achievement of the human being has a spiritual as much as material content. At that time, two attitudes dominated the trade union movement in the Philippines, namely trade unionism of corporation and unionism of the type which serves as a driving belt of power.

The establishment of FFW was in order to seek an answer to the increasing oppression and marginalisation of labour. Besides, for fifty years, the FFW has developed its activities under the slogan "libre des racketteurs, libre de la corruption, libre de contrôle de dirigeant et du gouvernement."

NEVER A MINISTER

It is not surprising since then, that Johnny Tan has been attracted by an organisation which was then called the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), the future WCL. Since 1956, almost every year, he attends the International Labour Conference in Geneva, where he meets delegates from other countries and continents. He sympathises with George Meany, President of the AFL-CIO of the United States, who tried to convince him to join the ranks of the ICFTU. But another meeting was a determining factor, that of August Vanistendael, Secretary General of the IFCTU. Filled with deep emotion, Juan Tan recalls that moment: "*August Vanistendael was an imposing man, tall and very pleasant. He spoke several languages*". He even wanted to learn an Asian language. The Philippine unionist and leader of the IFCTU then kept regularly in touch and thought about the possibility of establishing a regional organisation in Asia. This was the birth of BATU (Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists). *Batu* means *stone* or *rock* in Malaysian.

J. Tan could have opted for finance or politics, since his social environment prepared him for that. He was also offered the post of Employment Minister under different regimes, but he always refused. The last offer was during the presidency of Fidel Ramos. "*It is the hazards of the meeting with father Hogan which has led me to where I am*", explains T. Jan, who concludes: "*Now I am old*". The baton is there for the taking.

Liliane Kennedy

BEING PRAGMATIC AT TIMES

One should not compromise on the issue of Human Rights violation, in particular, that of trade union freedom. But, the essential is not to take pleasure in making numerous accusations. Whenever possible, the objective should be to improve the situation. It is therefore better to opt for less spectacular measures, which are also more uncertain, than a public denunciation, which stops a speaker ready to interfere.

This is the attitude that the WCL adopted, on its return from an important mission in China. In China, there are undeniably attacks on workers' rights, defined by international standards. The Chinese authorities admit this, when they request, as they did at the last meeting of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, to be given the necessary time to adjust.

Time... This could be an alibi. But, we have decided to accept the challenge to take our Chinese counterparts at their word, and believe in their ability to develop. Dialogue does not in fact mean a prior agreement. The WCL and the ACFTU, the Confederation of Chinese Trade Unions, have agreed to jointly organise a seminar on labour standards, under the auspices of the ILO, for regular exchange, and to collaborate for the promotion of trade unionism in the private sector, Free Zones, and technical co-operation.

If this step gives concrete results, it will be justified.



Willy Thys,
General Secretary



Just a word...

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CURRENT EVENTS

ILO : beware, danger

ILO STANDARDS ARE AIMED AT PROTECTING WORKERS. BUT NOW, THEY ARE IN DANGER : ON ONE HAND, EMPLOYERS AND SOME GOVERNMENTS WANT TO REDUCE THEIR SCOPE, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE IS EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS WITH THEIR COMPLIANCE.

“The reason for the existence of the International Labour Organization (ILO), namely to protect workers, is threatened. However, this role is still very important in the current world economy which favours deregulation. Therefore, everything must be done to defend the ILO and make it more efficient.” This is the message that the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) sent out in Geneva last June, at the very moment when the ILO was evaluating the follow-up on the Declaration on the fundamental labour principles and rights, unanimously at the workplace, adopted two years ago.

The WCL made two significant criticisms about the normative role of the ILO. On one hand, employers and some governments show a tendency to favour the non-binding instruments to the detriment of the conventions, deemed to be mandatory upon ratification, on the other hand the mandate of the International Labour Office (ILO) does not permit it to enforce compliance to these conventions by States which have ratified them.

The WCL cited many examples which, in its opinion, show the tendency to attenuate the binding nature of ILO instruments. Thus, according to Claude Akpokavie, Director of the Labour Standards and Human Rights Department, *“behind the technical discussions these days for example, on the protection of maternity at the workplace, a trend is emerging, to reduce the binding nature of ILO conventions in favour of declarations of intentions or other codes of conduct whose implementation is not mandatory for States and enterprises”*.

Likewise, a group of employers submitted a resolution (rejected in the end) to the International Labour Conference, which under the pretext of improving the work of the ILO, actually aims at limiting the scope of application of the conventions in favour of declarations of intentions, codes of conduct, recommendations...

A TRAP

Too often, stressed Will Thys, Secretary General of the WCL, States and employers present an alternative:

one must choose between binding conventions, ratified by few countries, or on the contrary less binding texts likely to be ratified by more countries. In the view of the WCL, *“this is a trap. The European countries, for example, have condemned the convention on night work by women because it was discriminatory. But only six countries have ratified the new convention on night work for all.”* Another example is that many countries complain about the treatment meted out to their nationals who have migrated abroad, but have themselves not ratified convention 143 on migrants.

The international trade union movement recalls that it is precisely in order to protect workers, create a social law in the face of competition and social dumping, that the ILO was created. Undoubtedly, this goes against the current trend to be flexible, liberalize and deregulate. But, the WCL adds, *“between the strong and the weak, it is liberty that oppresses and the law that liberates. The ILO must go against the trend.”*

The second threat, that the WCL touched upon is the lack of real power, on the part of the ILO, to put pressure on governments and enterprises which do not respect the conventions, and therefore its structural inability to enforce the latter. Côte d'Ivoire is a blatant example of this: for close to ten years, the regime overthrown last December had received complaints, inspection missions and very critical reports from the ILO following attacks on trade union freedom and unlawful dismissals, without ever doing anything about it, due to constraints. Basile Mahan Gahé, Secretary General of the Ivorian Trade union movement, Dignité, recounted how he himself got out of prison through the intervention of the ILO, and that his trade union movement was systematically marginalised in favour of the government-backed trade union. Without the interventions of the ILO making any difference whatsoever.

Colombia and Myanmar, appearing before the ILO this year, have intensified moves to stall for time in order to prevent or delay any condemnation, even if purely moral. The former with relative success, but the latter to no avail, has been condemned.



But even when there is condemnation, nothing or very little changes on the ground, as in the case of the Dominican Republic, twenty years after an ILO condemnation of terrible working conditions on the plantations.

SOLUTIONS EXIST

The WCL suggests that the ILO responds to these threats first on the level of ideas: according to the WCL, the ILO must *“clearly point out that binding conventions are indispensable as instruments of law”*. It is then that improvements can be made in the different action areas by putting more “pressure” on States that have delayed ratification, for example.

And also by reviewing technical cooperation methods to actually help the countries to ratify and enforce the conventions. This can sometimes be attributed to political unwillingness, but also in some cases, to human or technical reasons, especially in countries of the South. Also, something as common as the simple reproduction of documents for parliamentarians could at times pose a problem. In the same way, labour inspection, which must play a crucial role in the protection of workers, has been affected by structural adjustment programmes and needs support to become functional. Meanwhile, there is still the issue of sanctions against countries that contravene the

conventions they have ratified, an issue which is obviously agitating the minds of journalists accredited to the United Nations, and which in their opinion mars the image of the organisation. Of course, Claude Akpokavie has stressed the point that ILO pressures are not only moral - depriving a State of technical cooperation can be painful.

No doubt, the trade union organisations could play a much bigger role, in their countries to push for the ratification of conventions, and then to supervise their enforcement for example, by periodically questioning the ILO on the compatibility between a national legislation and international conventions. But currently there is no really restrictive mechanism.

The idea of a sort of international labour court, similar to that for human rights, is being bandied about, without emanating officially from the WCL. In the meantime, it would probably be important to impress upon States that convention 144 which envisages a tripartite control mechanism in each country, be enforced in the 88 countries which have ratified it.

André Linard



ILO: behind technical debates, a political stake



“Lomé”, it is finished

A.C.P.?

ACP for Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific. In 1975, 45 countries of these three regions of the world, ex-colonies of EU members, were grouped under this acronym. Today, they are more than 70 very different countries (what is there in common between the small Solomon Islands and giant Nigeria?). Nonetheless, it was functioning credibly with a general secretariat, a parliamentary assembly of common positions. The whole established regional assembly led to more individual relationships, which were more dependent.

AND THE TRADE UNIONS?

The Lomé Conventions were the deciding factor for States. The other stakeholders could hardly intervene without their endorsement. Gradually however, the demands of the State of law, respect for human rights and democracy were introduced, with the possibility to suspend application of the convention to a country that did not respect these requirements. This was the case of Nigeria, some time ago.

The new agreement adds a condition of good governance; an ambiguous term which refers as much to the rejection of corruption as to a neo-liberal economic model. ACP governments paid lip service to it, as well as the active involvement of non state stakeholders, businesses and civil society. It was a trade union requirement. There can therefore be an opening for workers' movement, even if "there is couched in the agreement, clauses which can allow States to block the participation of civil society", declares Gordon Deuchars, of the European ONG liaison Committee.

For 25 years, European Union countries have granted a certain number of economic, political, trade and financial advantages to a group of developing countries. It was the “Lomé Convention” : in actual fact, four successive conventions which covered the period 1975 to 2000.

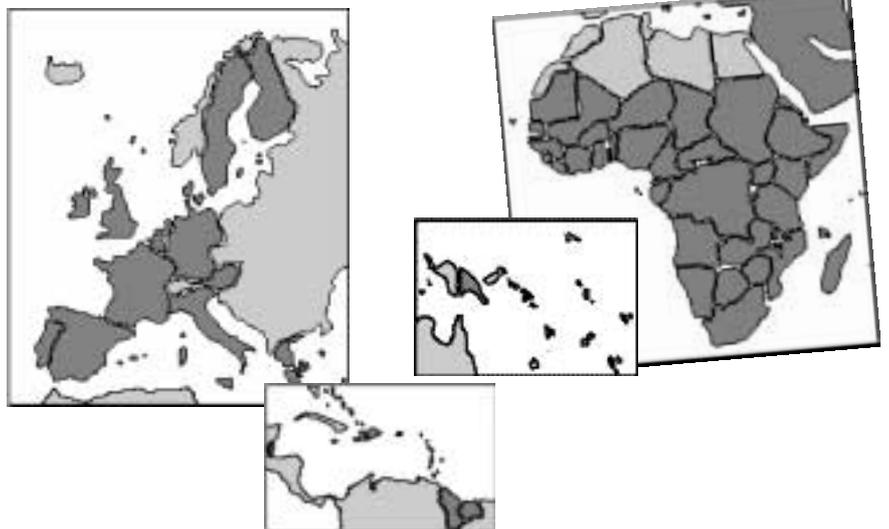
At the time, "Lomé" was a novelty: a correction of market mechanisms by systems like STABEX (against the fall of commodity prices); preferential access to the European market, a block-to-block relationship, with at least formal participation of the South in decisions; industrial cooperation.... Everything had to be read without naivety, of course: the EU was pulling the strings of the purse which portrayed contradictions between their trade policies and cooperation.

But "Lomé" revealed the big "mistake" of not yielding to the primacy of free market, thus going against both WTO principles and the gradually dominant EU ideology. Therefore, exit the Lomé conventions and in comes a new accord,

more in line with WTO regulations. Its basic regulations are: reciprocal trade advantages (favourable to European products), replacement of structural mechanisms such as STABEX with additional financial resources, but depending on the current economic climate; classification of ACP countries into regional sub-groups, which will receive different treatment. From 2002, free trade agreements will be negotiated between Europe and some existing regional regroupings among the ACP countries. The latter aimed at liberalizing trade relations, after a transitory period.

The Europeans defended themselves against it, but ended up by imposing their views on the ACP countries which depend on the Union for a portion of their exports and their financial resources. The Lomé conventions were inspired by different North-South relations; hence, the market is above development, even if the worse has been avoided.

Letter culled from the bi-monthly "Le Courrier UE-ACP."





China

Trade union limits, economic opening

"The Chinese trade unions are popular organisations of the working class placed under the management of the Chinese Communist Party which workers join according to their free will ..."

46 conventions ratified by Hong Kong before this territory reverted to China in 1997, are still in force, according to the principle, "one country, two systems." Thus applying specifically to Hong Kong are

The first sentence of the general principles of trade unionism in China sets the tone: a theoretical principle of freedom, but limited, contained within the system of the party-state.

The law governing trade union representation confirms this tendency: it mentions the possibility of independent trade unions but the adhesion of trade unions to marxism-leninism is compulsory, as well as their regrouping under a single national federation, the Federation of Trade Unions of China.

China has been a member of the ILO since its creation in 1919. Eighty years later, 17 international labour conventions have been ratified by it and are in force. Many of these concern equality of men and women and sailors.



The WCL in China (May 2000) in order to promote freedom of association

ILO REMINDS...

The Freedom of association Committee of the ILO requested China, in June, to take measures to free, without delay, imprisoned trade unionists, and to examine the possibility of receiving a "direct contact" mission of the ILO. According to the committee, "several clauses" of the Chinese legislation on trade unions are "against fundamental principles" on the right of workers to establish independent trade unions. The ILO also reminds China that the right to peaceful demonstration must be granted to workers, and that force should be used by the authorities only when law and order are seriously threatened. The question is who is the judge ...

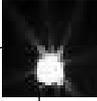
(Source: Agence France-Presse)

conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, 29 and 105 on forced labour, etc.

On the ground, the right to go on strike is not recognised, and independent trade unionists have been imprisoned. But China is no longer keeping to herself. An important part of the economy is now regulated by the market and implemented by private businesses, although under the control of the State. Economic adjustment has been undertaken according to the modalities considered necessary by the Chinese government, without the pressures of the Bretton Woods institutions, and the dramatic results elsewhere. Modernisation of the industry especially brought about restructuring and protests from workers to which the regime today shows more flexibility.

THE COUNTRY

Population: ± 1,300,000,000 inhabitants. Actual GDP per caput: US\$3,130; human development index: 0.701 (Hong Kong: 0.880). 1997 Human poverty index: 19% (USA: 16.5%). Report 20% richest /20% poorest: 7.1 (Hong Kong: 8.7; USA: 8.9%). External debt: 16.6% of GNP; external aid: US\$1.8 per caput. (1997). According to the World Bank (1997), 200 million Chinese have come out of the poverty situation in 20 years.



Meeting of the WCL European Section, Lisbon (March)



After 10 years, Toolsyradj Benydin ended his term of office as Confederal Secretary in the WCL to go back to his work in Mauritius (June)



Latin-American press meeting in Geneva on freedom of association (June)

● WORLD : Protect rural workers

The International Labour Organisation began initial discussions in June, on a convention to be adopted in 2001 on the health and safety of agricultural workers. A lot still needs to be done, but it has been decided that the text would specify the risks posed to health

through the handling of chemical products, looking after animals, the use of machines etc. As a matter of principle, women's rights, seasonal and temporary workers must be taken into consideration.

● CHINA – GREAT BRITAIN :

58 Chinese, including 4 women were found suffocated in a truck, in the English port of Dover, with two survivors. It is a question of real international trafficking. It was a Dutch truck, but could have been Belgian or German The victims were Chinese nationals but could have come from India, Kurdistan, Europe and the East. And international criminal organisations are those pulling the strings, including the famous Chinese triad: they promise employment and income in industrialised countries, demand insa-

ne amounts from prospective clients for the journey, and then bribe the truck drivers. The clients, for entry into Great Britain, for example, board the trailers or containers of trucks at night in a motorway parking on the continent.

It appears that the former Yugoslavia has become the hub for the entry of Chinese nationals into Western Europe.

● MYANMAR, SUDAN, COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA : all condemned

Several countries were condemned to various extents, during the recent International Labour Conference. Myanmar (Burma) has six months to produce proof of reduced forced labour, in default, strict sanctions would be automatically applied. Venezuela (for attack on trade union freedom, among others) and Sudan (for abductions and forced labour) were mentioned in a "special paragraph", which is a moral sanction imposed by the Commission for application of

Standards. With regard to Colombia, where 60% of assassinations of trade unionists in the world has occurred in recent years, they escaped mention in the special paragraph and the committee of inquiry thanks to the benevolence of employers. But the Governing Body of the ILO decided to nominate a special representative to follow-up on measures taken by the government against violence towards trade unionists.

● INTERNATIONAL : YCW in a celebration and at work

Founded in Belgium 75 years ago, the "International Young Christian Workers" held its 10th Congress at the beginning of May, with the theme Fair work for all and an important seminar on 40 years of the history of international YCW. In all the continents, a work to retrace the history of YCW has been done. It brought out especially, the close links which have united the

organisation to the trade union movement – many officers of the latter earned their first spurs at the YCW. This is especially true of Emilio Maspero, Secretary General of the Latin-American Confederation of Workers and the Vice-President of WCL, who died last 31 May.



Bamako (Mali): women who have become dustwomen because men had not done the work properly, with the support of a NGO

There is no need to bury one's head in the sand: at times, there is mistrust between trade union organisations and other associations, such as NGOs. The former wonders about the true representativeness of the latter (anybody can form an NGO), especially since the latter mostly intervenes in what is at the heart of the trade union struggle: the defence of workers. On the contrary, NGOs sometimes consider trade unions as difficult

bodies, excessively institutionalised and overtaken by socio-cultural development.

The next WCL Congress in 2001 will tackle the issue of the place of trade unions in societies in the North as well as in the South, and their relationship with other social actors. A working document, the "Mouvement des travailleurs du 21^e siècle" (The workers' movement in the 21st century), already provides the direction for reflec-

tion. This is not new, since from about 1960, the IFCTU from which WCL was born, underlined the importance of associations.

It is therefore the opportunity to further clarify the respective roles, especially, of this very ambiguous notion of "civil society", commonly used, but which many trade union leaders are wary of. Is this due to ignorance or is it for a reason?

SUMMARY

OVERALL VIEW

Trade unions: no more than 10 years?

INTERVIEW

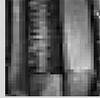
Mateo Alaluf :
Trade unionism has always required reconstruction

DEBATE

Civil society:
Ambiguous and necessary

OPENING

In agreement or not in agreement?



OVERALL VIEW

Trade unions : no more than 10 years?

"INTERMEDIARY BODIES, BEGINNING WITH TRADE UNIONS, ARE INCAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO THE MAJOR CRISIS OF THE INDUSTRIALISED SOCIETIES - FLEXIBILITY. THEY HAVE CONTINUED TO FUNCTION IN A VERY RIGID ROUTINE. THEY HAVE, IN A SORT OF FREEZE FRAME, FIXED COMMON IDENTITIES."

The preceding observation, made by various people during the Social Week of the Belgium Christian Workers Movement, is clear, direct, forceful and more and more frequent. It would be an era for flexible organisation, networks, spectacular actions, and in step with post modernity and the media. But, is this an accurate observation? That is yet to be seen.

In any case, the challenge has not dealt a backhanded blow to trade unions. The rise in power, throughout the world, of organisations of all kinds grouped under the word civil society (see pages 14 – 15) forbids one to bury one's head in the sand.

Several analyses show a general trend, in the international labour world, of a reduction in (industrialised countries) or a problem with (the South) trade union membership and the influence of these organisations on the stakes in society.

International campaigns such as *Clean clothes*, that against child labour or the so-called equitable trade process, show a more visible commitment on the part of organisations called non-governmental than from workers'

movements. Meanwhile, at the 10th session of UNCTAD, "The NGOs became the counter-power" (*Libération*, 19.02.2000). But, for all that, should one agree with the summary conclusion of the French lecturer, Jacques Marseille, according to whom, "In ten years, associations will replace trade unions"? (*Libération*, 10.01.2000). Exit trade unions, long live NGOs?

AN UNFAVOURABLE CONTEXT FOR TRADE UNIONS

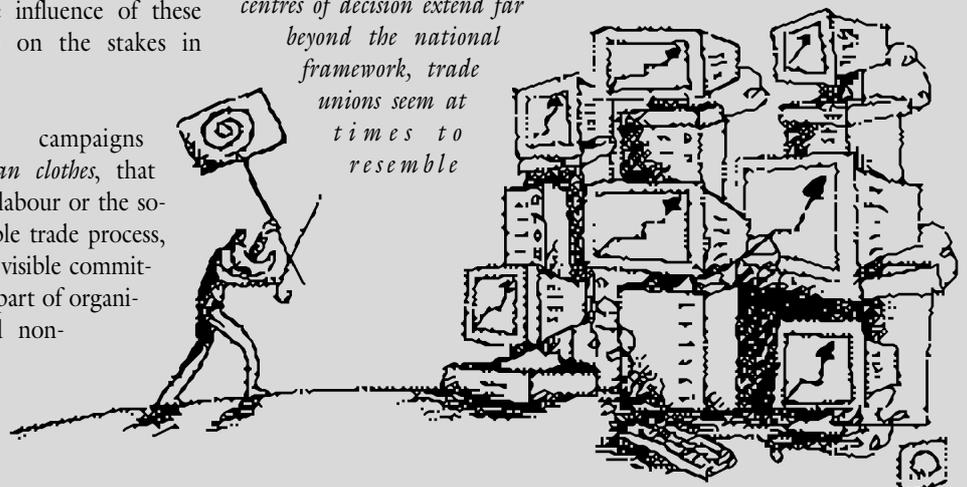
One knows that the economic context is not conducive to strengthen of the trade union movement, but rather to weaken it. Capitalism in its present form breaks traditional solidarity, through unemployment and ideology.

First and foremost, it is the issue of globalisation. In the face of big transnational companies "whose centres of decision extend far beyond the national framework, trade unions seem at times to resemble

boxers in the ring, throwing punches in the air, facing an adversary out of their reach." (*Imagine*, Belgium Ecological review, March 2000). Or yet still: "The international trade union is a generation behind that of capital" (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1998).

The second common explanation is the increase in labour forms, laws and contracts, as well as the division of large enterprises into distinct and more mechanised units of production. All these factors bring about a reduced sense of belonging to a group, which reduces the desire for joint activity. Individualism and the cult of projecting self, through the dominant ideology make up the rest, including societies where traditional solidarity is vibrant.

This trend is even more pronounced by the phenomenon of sala-





Home work weakens trade union commitment

ried shareholders, which make the role of each person totally vague. Not to mention of course, the repression against trade unions and their militants, as the last resort. Direct repression, through violence towards people; or indirect, through fear.

But there is more. Richard Sennet, of the London School of Economics, makes a comment on the passage of "from class capitalism to the current system of flexible capitalism." The latter requires of the worker, permanent change, innovation, short-term plans in eliminating the value of job stability. "It has henceforth become impossible for workers to find a moral identity, which causes indifference as a defence weapon " in place of a class feeling on which trade union organisations are built.

Labour as it is, occupies a relatively less important place in the life of people and in society discussions. Trade union organisations are therefore confronted by other actors, more diverse problematic issues and by the sense of belonging on the part of individuals.

Manuel Antonio Garretón, Chilean sociologist, explains that in Latin America, the matrix, which constituted social actors, has for a long time been the association between development, nationalism, modernisation and

industrialisation. State, enterprises and urban workers were the actors in it, to the detriment of rural, ethnic and female considerations.... He adds that currently, the reference is no longer the process of development, but rather identity. One no longer identifies by what one does (job), but by what one is (woman, Indian, Black, youth, etc.). There is henceforth an explosion of identities, which changes the panorama of social actors. The State and the institutions surrounding it are no longer seen as the places, which provide answers to problems in real life. Meanwhile, the more trade unions are established in public life, the less they appear as agents of protest, and the more they can be absorbed into these institutions. Hence this challenge: what attraction do trade unions have for potential members, especially the youth? What services can they offer members? A real influence on political and economic decisions? A democratic set-up? An area for increased commitment?

On the contrary, what is called an NGO seems more flexible, more accessible, more effective due to media coverage, more open to undertakings on one-off basis rather than over a period of time, more pleasant, less constraining and less political. One can go wild in a Greenpeace demonstration but never in a trade union negotiation.

ARE TRADE UNIONS STILL USEFUL?

Are trade unions really as less useful as they are perceived to be? It is not uncommon for the dominant objective reality to differ from the subjective perception. In another area, that of urban insecurity, the Belgian Sociologist, Christine Schaut, observes that our towns have never been as safe as they are today, but that the feeling of insecurity is very high.

It is perhaps the same for trade unions: objectively necessary, even if not perceived as such. "My reply to a youth who asks me why he should join a trade union, is first of all that it is in his interest, because he cannot always defend himself alone before his employer", explains Willy Peirens, ex-President of the WCL. "I will add as well, that trade union commitment is also for others, for all workers, in a liberal society, which has an individual character. The trade union is necessary to give equal opportunities to everybody." (Labor, 99-04). "Labour agreements in enterprises and public and private services, continue to regulate our life, even if we do not perceive all the dimensions, and their repercussions", wrote B. Francq and X. Leloup (see page 16).

Whether public opinion is aware or not, would one therefore still need a form of workers' organisation, called trade union or not? The need to organise oneself perceived increasingly in the informal sector, seems to confirm this response. The issue would therefore be for trade union organisations to find forms adapted to the current context, without renouncing the essence of their role.

André Linard



INTERVIEW

Mateo Alaluf : Trade unionism has always required reconstruction

MATEO ALALUF IS A LABOUR SOCIOLOGIST AT THE BRUSSELS FREE UNIVERSITY. FAR FROM JOINING THE GRAVEDIGGERS OF TRADE UNIONISM, HE BELIEVES ON THE CONTRARY, THAT THE LATTER HAS NEVER CEASED HAVING TO PROVE ITS LEGITIMACY. NOT MORE SO NOW THAN IN THE PAST.

Labor : *Is trade unionism an out-moded form of social organisation?*

Mateo Alaluf : Not at all. Since its existence, right from the first group of workers, trade unionism has always had to justify its legitimacy. Today, as at any other time, one has to assert oneself as interlocutor, which is a condition for the existence of the trade union. Trade unions must get recognised, and this recognition is still challenged. In so far as society is changing, the recognition is changing in form and level. This is a permanent struggle. Trade unionism is even a channel of modernity, especially through direct democracy, delegates, militancy, etc.

Q. *The very existence of trade unionism is nevertheless challenged...*

M.A. Today, this recognition is in actual fact questioned. Trade unionism is in the form of a workers' movement organisation located first and foremost in the big industries, and among skilled male workers. On one hand therefore, it is very modern, but also quite archaic because of its representation of the male worker. It is an organisation modelled on the labour of man. Meanwhile, from this point of view, important changes have taken place. First of all, in terms of activities: delabourisation of industry, development of the tertiary sector of the economy etc. Services are taking an

increasingly greater part and even in industry, the place of employees is becoming increasingly important. Furthermore, the feminisation of activity is an essential transformation. Trade unionism has therefore gone through a period of revision at the level of its forms of organisation, on the basis of new sectors and female labour.

Q. *Will the diversification of the types of contracts and regulations reduce the support of the group at the workplace?*

M.A. Gradually, work that was a factor of insecurity has become a factor of security, first of all by the gradual extension of social security, and also by social legislation and labour rights and the forms of contracts. In any case, it is true for salaried jobs, the model for which is an indefinite period and full time contracts. Meanwhile, in industrialised countries in any case, one notices (this is different elsewhere), an increase in part time, temporary or fixed period of work. This is mostly applied to new entrants into the job market, the youth and women, but is gradually affecting all workers. The precariousness is common. At the same time, the vertically concentrated big enterprises, the foundation of workers' movement, use other forms. This weakening of labour contract also means greater

precariousness for workers. All these changes should bring about new forms of trade union representations, for example in small enterprises, in the workplaces. But, there, the employers are least flexible.

Q. *In your view, is the situation of trade unionism perhaps difficult today, but not necessarily more so than at other times?*

M.A. . The situation has been very difficult in the past, especially during the 1930 crisis, when the existence of trade unions was strongly debated on. Trade unionism is based on a foundation: it is only ownership, which gives the rights to the production and distribution mechanism and to the economic and social aspects of society. Democracy depends on two pillars: political democracy based on citizenship and universal suffrage, and social citizenship based on economic rights. The latter proceeds essentially from our societies, from labour. Labour gives rights. Why are we indignant about closures, relocations etc...? Because there is not only the logic of those who possess, but also those who work. The tendency to say that to obtain rights, workers must become shareholders is contrary to trade union logic. In so far as there exists legitimate labour rights, trade unionism is justified.



Work loses its youth, provided with schooling for a longer time. And less motivated by trade union?

Q. *Is that the specificity of the trade union movement?*

M.A. In pluralist societies, there are political parties, and other social movements based on other concerns such as ecology, the defence of the survival of the human race, opposition to certain forms of globalisation, local life etc., which brings about political as well as social representations. Trade unionism should be able to link up its actions with other movements, as it did in the past with political parties. It maintains its specificity, which is a result of a citizenship based on labour, but its concerns are also general: political, ecological, peace, etc. Its action is justified in so far as it links up with others.

Q. *But does a problem not arise when these social movements involve themselves with issues relating to labour, such as campaigns on workers' rights?*

M.A. Competition and complementarity co-exist. It is through

contradictions that things develop. Trade unionism is privileged in the area of labour, but it has great difficulties, which proceed from its origins. It takes responsibility for workers' problems in the strict sense. Confrontation with other issues enables it to develop gradually. This does not make it doubtful as a movement, but in so far as other associations are able to bring forward labour issues, trade unionism could contribute. There is not idyllic co-operation. Every form of co-operation is subject to conflict.

Q. *Are such coalitions possible, not only to oppose something, as in Seattle, but also to establish a different project?*

M.A. The prime objective of trade unionism, contrary to political parties, is to express demands. The primary function of a party is to rule and it is more legitimate for it to rule well. A trade union bases its legitimacy on its capacity to express demands; management

comes second place. Proposing solutions is difficult, but the primary function of the trade union is to affirm demands. If it abandons this, then democracy loses a fundamental step. If trade unionism wants first and foremost to rule, it will no longer be playing its role. One must not propose a solution to a problem to be able to denounce it. Resistance is fundamental in trade unionism.

Q. *Employers strongly recommend the rigid forms of trade union representations. Is there not also some resistance from trade unions to change?*

M.A. There are forms of rigidity within trade unions, but this is not new. There is a mythic vision of the past. Having said this, trade unions have their organisational difficulties, but not in all areas. For example, they press as much as possible, to be represented in small enterprises, whereas the big ones

continues in page 16



DEBATE

Civil society : ambiguous and necessary

THE NOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY WHICH IS FREQUENTLY USED IS VAGUE, AND AT TIMES CREATES EXCESSIVE CONCERN OR ENTHOUSIASM. THUS A HIGH RANKING AFRICAN TRADE UNION OFFICIAL RECENTLY EXCLAIMED: "IN AFRICA, WIVES OF PRESIDENTS CREATE THEIR OWN NGOS. IF THIS IS CIVIL SOCIETY, I WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT." THE TERM IS IN FACT AMBIGUOUS, BECAUSE THE REALITY IT DENOTES IS VERY MIXED.

Civil society is often defined as the entirety of all forms of organisations of a population outside the state ones: trade unions, students' associations, NGOs, co-operatives, area committees, farmers' movements, etc.

Institutions and organisations created by and for the state, are excluded – political parties, armed forces, both official and unofficial... Civil society therefore brings together all areas of private interest. In the strict sense, enterprises are also part of it; this is the liberal vision. But, civil society and the ordinary society are thus confused. Let us consider therefore that there are three poles: the State, the economic sector and civil society.

BUT, WHAT IS IT?

Civil society comprises very diverse associations, and this diversity has an influence on their representativeness. The first category is made up of institutions or quasi institutions born out of an initiative outside the population concerned. This is often the case, of local offices of foreign agencies, organisations linked to external religious structures, or even NGOs working "for" farmers, for example.

Secondly, one finds associations of civil society born out of the initiative of people who want to achieve something for others (the most

frequent case of NGOs). Finally, the third category comprises groupings of individuals, who at a given point in time, think that their interests are better defended collectively than in isolation (trade unions, farmers' movements, co-operatives, etc.). This is where one encounters the real peoples' movements.

The first two categories are different from the third by a key element: acting for others (NGO style), or for oneself (peoples' organisations). It is important to bring out the distinction. An NGO of solidarity which supports farmers, the poor and child workers etc.. in a country has no representativeness other than the people who create the NGO. It is all the more so, a ques-

tion of eminent people linked to power. This is the same as a consumer association, which has a lot of members, but they do not make the policies nor choose the leaders of the association. On the contrary, the farmers', fishermen's, workers', women's movement just like the area association, are the representatives, since the stakeholders are also the beneficiaries of the association.

As important as their activities may be, NGOs which demonstrate against globalisation must realise that they are rarely representatives of a large number of members, and in any case, not of their donors or buyers, who are not represented on decision making bodies. "Talking for workers" is not synonymous with "being the expression of workers".

In fact, representation is also a function of the process of internal participation, and constitutes a basic criteria.

Besides, a number of authors think that the notion of civil society is too vague, because it is too heterogeneous. They try from then on to determine more specific realities and the differences between them: social movements, popular movements, alternative movements, etc... Collaboration is possible when the ambiguities are removed from the real representativeness of each of them.



WHAT PURPOSE DOES IT SERVE?

Civil society is the place to practice participation. This consists in the possibility for each one to desire and to be able to participate in taking decisions, which concern them. Civil society is called upon to intervene in all the policy-making areas (in the broad sense) of the organisation of society.

It is a matter of modifying the rules of the democratic, economic, cultural game, etc. "from the bottom" either by creating a relationship of forces with the State, or economic power by adopting "alternative" initiatives.

The modification of the relationship of forces is through the emergence of counter-powers. Peoples' organisations are among the most capable groups (extract from the 1993 UNDP report, Page 32). It is the same with trade unions.

Any society, which puts the individual and the State in direct relationship, prevents the existence of intermediaries in participation. This is the case of fascism. This term is derived from the Italian word *fascio*, which means, "beam." It indicates a direct vertical relationship between the overall head and each of the individual members of the society, without an autonomous intermediary association.

Civil society associations can be created to:

- make up for the absence of the State in one area or the other; they thus play a role of substitution (for example, healthcare in areas or sectors not covered);
- in reaction to State attitudes or policies considered as unaccep-

table (defence of human rights...);

- to occupy areas which do not interest the market economy (for example, credit to micro enterprises);
- or in reaction to attitudes or policies of economic stakeholders considered as unacceptable (co-operatives, trade unions, farmers' movements, etc.).

NOT IDEOLOGICALLY NEUTRAL

Underlining the "importance of civil society" goes back today, to persisting in stating the obvious. However, ideologically it is not neutral. The concept of civil society as described here in fact emerged at a precise moment in the history of Western ideas: at the end of the 18th century (when the legitimacy of the State was placed under society, and not under external principle) and the 19th century. Alexis de Tocqueville, a liberal thinker, affirmed then the need for associations to be the counter-power to every State, even democratic ones. He wrote, "*there is no country where associations are more necessary... than those where the state is democratic*".

It is therefore logical that the communist regimes of the 20th century be wary of this "civil society", since they see in the State, the unique instrument of transformation of society "in the name of proletariat". They reproach it of being class conscious, a-political, and consider society in the form of partial, sectarian debates (women, shantytowns, ecology etc.), and not global. In short, reinforcing bourgeois hegemony by weakening the State.

The emphasis was once again put on civil society from the 1970s.



Civil society, to claim and participate. In Costa Rica, victims of bank failures defend themselves together

After a period of withdrawing from the "micro" (Small is beautiful), the need to regroup into national and especially international networks (corresponding to globalisation of areas of power) was affirmed, forgetting that some (like trade unions), have been practising this for the past hundred years.

Today, the idea of being citizen-stakeholder continues to make headway, but the role of politics is again underlined. The State remains the place for the democratic expression of general interest through the political process. If civil society is substituted for the State, there is the risk of specific interest prevailing over general interest. But, if the State denies the place of peoples' participation, the risk of dictatorship will be great.

A. L.



comes from page 13

are divided into small and medium units. It is the same for multinationalisation of production. Trade unions try to organise themselves at this level. They do not do this enough due to their national difficulties, but the obstacle is from employers. Trade unions are interested in having an interlocutor, someone to negotiate with, but employers are not interested in that. This has been overcome within national frameworks, but not at the international level.

Q. *Do you share the view that there is a growth in individualism as compared to an era of more solidarity?*

M.A. This is part of the myth. Solidarity is yet to be built, it has never pre-existed. During the crisis of the 30s, people joined for the purpose of obtaining food, rather than by conviction or solidarity. The wage earner is first and foremost the rival as compared to small-scale industries where those who were employed controlled their rivals through training. With salaried work, since workers were competitors in the same jobs, there was interchangeability. Since then, the trade union movement has become a form of building solidarity, which is still threatened and still reconstructed in a community of rivals. In a period of

unemployment, crisis and rivalries become acute, and the capacity for intervention of trade unions is reduced, working conditions degenerate, because individualisation increases. This is not the first time in history. There is no pre-existing solidarity, which would be destroyed with time.

Report by A.L.

IN AGREEMENT, OR NOT IN AGREEMENT?

- *"A few years ago, labour disputes occupied the centre stage in social life (French). Today, conflicts are more a result of the issue of identity and a willingness for democratisation."*

Didier Lapeyronnie, *Sciences Humaines* review,
No. 26, September – October 1999.

- "The free play of supply and demand on the labour market puts the methods of action promoted by the trade union movement and based on solidarity through a severe test.

Placed in a competition, which exerts pressure on the fall in their working conditions and threatens their stability, workers are under pressure. (...) In the face of individualisation and the fragmentation of labour relations, trade unions are asking themselves these essential questions: can we still motivate people on essential values such as solidarity?

Are activism and trade union militancy still possible? Are we still an organisation capable of mobilising our members?

Some consider that the changes brought about by the third industrial revolution no longer allow "active trade unionism" and that the trade union movement should only work on the identity of trade union organisations, by offering specialised

services to their members and abandoning "action" which was originally the specific characteristic" of the trade union.

WCL, *Workers' Movement of the 21st Century*, background document for the 25th Congress, May 2000.

- In a recent survey by the World Bank on poverty in the world, a South African replied: *"someone who is well off in society has one job; the poor has several jobs."*

- "Like a metronome, they came everyday. Some hundreds of Thai farmers, in sandals, tee shirts and sarong. They demonstrated against the *inhuman face of globalisation*. (...) They call themselves the *Forum of the poor*. (...)

Established five years ago, initially with 90% farmers, today, the Forum has 7 areas of activity, and with its 100,000 members, it is far ahead of the following of trade unions or local NGOs. (...) These new protestors want to be "grassroots" and popular. Free from traditional structure, less attached to ideologies and more pragmatic".

Libération (France), 19th February 2000.



One of the great number of studies which have been published recently on the development of trade unionism



INDUSTRY

Free Trade Zones : a slight improvement

“Is there a trade union in your enterprise?” Yes, replied 64% of Indonesian workers in the Free Zones. “Are strikes legal there?” No, affirmed 70% of the workers. And, 75% of them were afraid of military intervention in the event of a demonstration.

These replies are the result of a statistical survey conducted in Indonesia by the SBSI Trade Union. These replies are confirmed in five other countries where a study (yet to be published) on the Free Zones, has just been conducted, at the request of the World Confederation of Labour: Mexico and Honduras, Senegal and Madagascar, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The issue of trade union freedom there is less alarming than in the past: formally, the trade unions are generally allowed, and they exist in some cases, but every attempt is made to suppress their activities. The result is that workers are afraid to join or to carry out trade union activities.

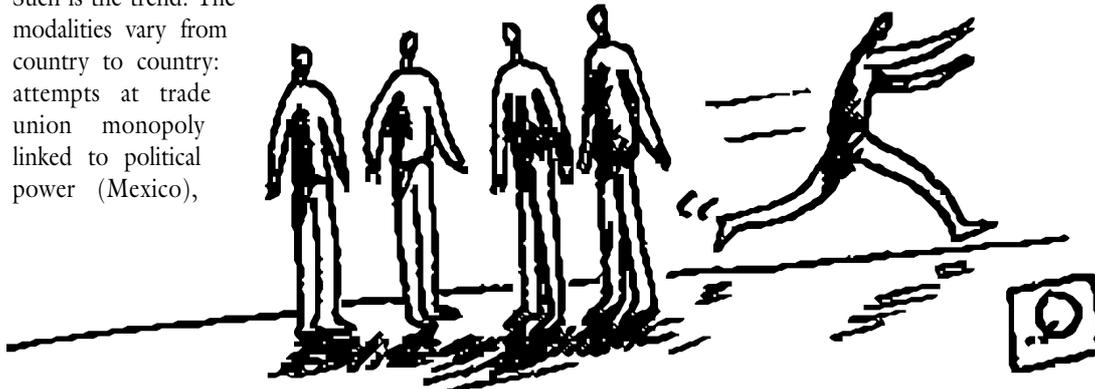
Such is the trend. The modalities vary from country to country: attempts at trade union monopoly linked to political power (Mexico),

systematic attacks on trade union freedom (Honduras), fear of joining trade unions (Indonesia), pressure from employers (Sri Lanka), lack of motivation for young and unskilled manpower (Senegal and Madagascar)... This paradox attributed to Madagascar is generally applicable: “Considering their situation and awareness of problems confronting them, [the workers] know that they need trade union management. However, they are unwilling to organise themselves into a trade union.”

HIGH TURNOVER

The six studies also show similar characteristics of employed manpower. Workers in the Free Zones are generally young (in Sri Lanka, 90.5% of the women in the Export Free Zones are less than 25 years old; in Mexico, 83% are less than 35 years old); they are recruited for a very short period, even for a day (especially in Senegal); their level of training is low; “they know neither the dynamics of the labour world, nor of the trade union movement” (Madagascar).

Most of these workers are women, who are reputed to be more productive and also more submissive; cases of sexual harassment are frequent. One will notice however, a process of male domination in Mexico, where women represent “only” 58% of unskilled labour.



THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS, DURING ITS CONGRESS LAST MARCH, DECIDED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL GUIDELINES PROPOSED BY THE ILO AND THE OECD, FOR MULTINATIONAL FIRMS TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF WORKERS' RIGHTS AND THE RESPECT OF CODES OF CONDUCT BY ENTERPRISES. IS THIS CONTRARY TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE FREE ZONES?



In an export processing zone in Costa Rica...

This development could be attributed to the use of a slightly more advanced technology.

There is a very high turn over of workers, especially due to voluntary departures. The main complaints are about working hours, strict control during working hours, security.... In the case of Mexico, the turnover could be due to bad working conditions as well as the attraction to migrate to the United States. In Sri Lanka, 67.5% of workers in the Free Zones are dissatisfied with their jobs. The consequence of this instability in different countries, are economic (cost to the enterprise), and social (it halts unionisation and professional training).

FEWER CHILDREN, MORE SALARIES

The studies did not record the extensive use of child labour in the

Free Zones, apart from Indonesia, where 79% of the workers in the three Free Zones affirmed that children less than 16 years old work.

On the contrary, in Senegal, one notices the *“lack of child labour, due to the vigilance of the Labour authorities and to the fact that in the poorest families, job offers interest, adults first and foremost”*. Whilst in Madagascar, only an unconfirmed rumour makes mentions of this, in only one enterprise, which the two Latin American studies do not talk about.

Another observation, perhaps a break from the normal situation, appears in most of the studies (but not in Mexico): *“salaries paid in the Free Zones are slightly higher than those outside the zones for the same type of enterprises”* (report

from Senegal). This observation is made in almost the same terms, about Sri Lanka, Madagascar and Indonesia. This does not mean that these salaries are sufficient to live well. Most of the families of workers in the Free Zones remain poor.

Finally, several of these studies show the gradual extension of the Free zone concept to enterprises, sometimes individual, established everywhere in the countries concerned. What was originally an exception is gradually becoming the norm, for better or for worse.

André Linard



History of a trade union movement with principles

The history of the International Christian trade union is not that of the WCL, which no longer has any religious claim. It rather covers the origins of the WCL, from the founding of the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) in 1920 until about 1968. The least that can be said, after reading the study that Patrick Pasture has conducted on it, is that this history is full of pitfalls, internally and externally. Moreover, the author talks of “eventful development” of a Confederation that is sometimes on the verge of disappearing: “*The international action of the IFCTU had a very hard time surviving*”. (1957 p.332). However, even as the smallest of international trade unions, “*the IFCTU always stood out, as an international organisation by its independent and sometimes radical stand which gave it great morale authority*”. (p. 14).

DELIBERATELY ANTI-FASCIST

The Christian trade union movement has for a very long time, been inspired by a pre-modern vision of society: nationalism (at the risk of a contradiction with international action), corporatism (several social bodies, endowed with specific rights and liberties), conviction that society had to respond to an external divine design, preference for the housewife (yet still pointing to the demand for equality for women who are “unfortunately” obliged to work)... Before the second world war, these characteristics lead certain national member organisations of the IFCTU to burn their hands in a very close relationship with right-wing and even fascist governments. Which was never the case of the Confederation as such.

On the contrary, the IFCTU has always been intransigent towards the fascist temptation, which certainly lead to internal discussions, virulent at times but

THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF AN ORGANISATION IS OFTEN DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IS RECOUNTED BY HISTORIANS. HENCE THE INTEREST IN A STUDY DEDICATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN TRADE UNION. ADVANTAGES: LESS RESOURCES, INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS AND FIRMLY ROOTED IN PRINCIPLES.



Congress in Luxembourg (1968). The IFCTU becomes the WCL, particularly under the influence of delegates from the developing countries



which lead the IFCTU to exclude certain organisations in Italy, Austria and German due to fascism even though the professional sectors had a different attitude. *“Since the beginning of the rise of fascism in Italy, the IFCTU has vehemently opposed this new ideology”* (p.156).

This is because the IFCTU quickly realised the threats posed by fascists regimes to trade union freedom, through non representative organisations. Besides it has always shown resistance to the idea of trade union monopoly: *“If trade union unity must be welcomed with satisfaction when it is the result of an agreement reached between free trade unions, an imposed trade union unification policy should be considered not only as an infringement on the rights of association and trade union freedom, but as a fundamental blow to democracy.”* (IFCTU office, 1964 p.398).

Another lesson of the past: in the 1950s, the IFCTU was concerned, well before others, with ensuring the autonomy of colonial countries (p.153) and that the locals were responsible for the trade unions in these countries.

In the same way, the personal attitude of the IFCTU clearly distinguished it more as *“the unlimited individualism of economic liberalism”* than socialism and communism.

The history of the IFCTU recounted by Patrick Pasture also clears up current tensions through certain aspects, such as those concerning the importance of trade union action and the inter-professional confederation respectively. It also explains why, in countries

like Austria, there is a Christian faction within the unified trade union.



QUESTIONS TO THE AUTHOR

Patrick Pasture

Labor : *What surprised you the most, during this study?*

Patrick Pasture : I discovered, with surprise, that the Christian trade union movement had more complex origins than I ever thought. I was struck by its non-denominational nature, characterised by a desire to prevent the Churches from getting a hold over the Christian movement (whilst this trade union movement is sometimes accused of being the expression of the Churches). The Christian trade union movement was born within the workers' movement. This general trend did not prevent differences among countries nor big internal discussions on the subject.

Q. *Your book covers the period 1919-1968. Is there any particular reason for the existence of a specifically Christian trade union movement?*

P.P. It is difficult to say. The IFCTU, I would say, could not be identified as denominational, but at the same time, its member organisations had only a small place in the social panorama because of the anti-clerical environment of the socialist trade unions. In theory, in the absence of a place for the Christian trade unions, there was room for Christians in other trade unions. But in practice, during the inter-war



**INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE POOR**

Insistence on trade union liberty was more a question of opportunity, since the international Christian trade union movement has constantly had to face attempts at being marginalised (at the ILO for example) or absorbed by other international unions aspiring towards monopoly: “If the Christian workers keep to themselves, we will fight against them”. (Irving Brown, IFCTU, *Le Figaro*, 9 Dec. 1949, cit. P. 250).

One will finally notice the chronic lack of resources experienced by the IFCTU, in the face of suitcases full of dollars that the big organisations of industrialised countries bring to “buy” membership of trade unions of the South to other international unions, to the extent that it was sometimes impossible to maintain representatives in otherwise important international organisations.

The sidelights of history even retained the name “International union of the poor”, stuck to the WCL, heir of the IFCTU, with reference to its acronym in Dutch: WVA, translated as Wereld Verbond van de Armen”. “From a pejorative epithet, it became a title of glory”, notes Patrick Pasture, who concludes with the following observation: “No matter how little its importance in quantitative terms and whatever the mistakes or errors it has or has not committed, the movement has in any case, through its existence portrayed a rare and impressive testimony – that of a true trade union commitment for the benefit of the poorest and weakest workers”. (p.422)

A.L.

Patrick Pasture: *Histoire du syndicalisme chrétien international*, L’Harmattan (Paris), 1999, p.422.

years, the reality of socialism was such that there was very little room, in any case in Western Europe. After the war, that did not really change. One must not overestimate the overtures of socialists towards Christians, even if a lot depends on concrete circumstances.

Q. *IFCTU organisations have often been called “yellow” trade unions. What was it about?*

P.P. As a matter of fact, this image has stuck, but it is incorrect. They are real trade unions, not “yellow” organisations, but they portrayed a more conservative image because they rejected the class struggle and spoke about understanding, even nationalism. It is another political ideology different from socialism.

The IFCTU trade unions rejected socialism, capitalism and fascism, for another non-capitalist, more co-operative vision of society.

Q. *Was it that which led to the attempts to flirt with fascism before the second World War?*

P.P. Fascism gripped Catholic and Protestant circles especially due to the rejection of communism. Many Catholics, individuals or associations, found themselves in fascist environments, including the labour sectors. And it was

not easy for Christian to oppose this. For the IFCTU also, the temptation was there, in the positions taken by certain organisations. But despite these risks, the IFCTU had always towed an intransigent line of conduct.

The attraction of fascism must not be underestimated. It is portrayed as reactionary, but one must not forget that between 1920 and 1930, fascism also had a modern appearance, that it embodied a transformation image which especially explains its attraction.

Q. *Your book bears a sub-title: In search of a third route. Has the International Christian trade union movement found it?*

P.P. Yes. The IFCTU is not first defined by the negative (not socialist, not yellow...), but by positive opinions. The interests of workers and other social classes are taken into consideration, but by showing a certain personalism, value and dignity of the worker as a person, not as a mere member of a social class. Furthermore, in certain cases, at least, it has adopted proper positions, for example with regard to the Soviet Union during the inter-war years and towards the United States in Latin America in the 60s. But in daily trade

union practice, I must confess that the differences with the so-called “free” trade unions were often minimal.

Q. *After the Second World War, it was the relationship with the IFCTU that marked the history of IFCTU. Did resistance to a unified structure have an ideological or opportunistic basis?*

P.P. Strangely, ideology and pragmatism are sometimes wider apart than we think. Some members of the IFCTU could have joined a single European trade union with socialist inclinations, but one thing, among others, blocked their membership: the will that others had, which they rejected, to create single trade unions in individual countries as well.

Insistence on pluralism has been the battle cry of the IFCTU, and on hindsight, I realise that the existence of trade union pluralism at the international level has anyway permitted to safeguard trade union liberty in certain countries. A single trade union movement is not necessarily more efficient.

Report by André Linard



PRESS REVIEW



To children of the year 2000

“At the back of the workshop,
There is a little bench
Where I worked
Until this year
And there, like many others
For the past fourteen years
I submitted
To earn my day's wages
I would have done without it
If I could;
They say that it is better to
Like what one has.
There is only one group
of people
Who do what they want;
Those who choose,
It is always the same.
I remember last summer
very well
When we found the paper
With our two weeks' wages:
Well liked workers,
You will be unemployed,
We are going to Brazil to set up
another factory.
Yes I see them again, this band
of thieves.
But, if I have one thought
Of that time,
It is for you others,
Distant brothers:
Very soon, they will take away
The best of your life.
But why should we
As many as we are
Serve them
With our mouths shut
And how come
Poor fools that we are
We do not make them pay
For their deception.”

Extract from “*Enfants de l'an 2000*”, (Children of the Year 2000), A book of messages from former workers to their grand children,
Ed. FGTB, Brussels, 2000.

• LIFE BEFORE DEBT

“The Jubilee 2000 campaign launched in London in 1996, collected 17 million signatures which were sent (...) to representatives of the G 7 (the seven most powerful countries on the planet). Objective: debt cancelling for the poorest countries. The South mobilised itself well: in Peru for example, on the prompting of the Catholic Church, and with the slogan *Life goes before debt*, not less than 1.8 million signatures were collected”
Echo Magazine (Switzerland), March 23, 2000.

• BRAZIL: WORSE THAN IN 1940

“The minimum salary in Brazil has fallen to 28% of its 1940 value, when it was fixed, whereas the GDP of this giant Latin American country has increased 5 times since then. The minimum salary has ceased to be a factor for the redistribution of wealth and the guarantee of a decent standard of living for workers. It rather reflects the social inequalities existing in

Brazil. More than 90% of those who are paid the minimum salary, work in the private sector. Out of all salaried workers in the formal sector, 21%, that is 14.9 million people, earn only the minimum salary.”
Inter Press Service, (Brazil), February 22, 2000.

• EDUCATION: PROMISE KEPT THIS TIME AROUND?

“Delegates from 181 countries adopted a plan of action urging their governments to provide good basic education for all, especially girls. They pointed out to institutions and donor countries, that none of these countries wishing to fulfil this commitment can do so due to lack of resources. (...) The participating countries will prepare overall National Plans for education for all by the year 2002, after consulting civil society.”
Child Labour News Service (Senegal), 1st May, 2000.

BOOKS AND DEBATES



ILO reports abound. Those prepared each year for the Standards Application Commission contain a mine of information. But, very little is known about them. Your Voice on labour World Report, published last May, ought to have been received by all trade union leaders. It is a tool for strong advocacy for nominal trade union freedom, pluralism and denunciation of several countries that do not respect them. According to the report, it is a priority “to see to it that all workers form trade unions of their choice and join such trade unions without fear of intimidation or reprisal...”. This is enough reminder that the ILO exists first and foremost to protect workers....

World Report on the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on fundamental labour principles and rights, Geneva, 2000. This exists in English, Spanish and French. Website: www.ilo.org/voice@work.

NEGATIVE

Stop on picture



The WORLD PRESS PHOTO Foundation offers annual awards to the best photographs appearing in the world press. This selection confers an award on photographers whose works capture current events in the world with vividness and emotion.

This photograph won first place in 2000 as World Press Photo, under the title: Kosovo woman and her baby in Albania. It was taken by Claus Bjorn Larsen, Denmark, Agence Berlingske Tikende.

In Asia, we have experienced the Vietnam war, several families were displaced, there were deaths, displacement....

It is true that we have not experienced any war for a long time, however it could rear its head... considering the numerous risks of explosion. Therefore, this photograph is important to me, at least to remind us that we could be confronted with this in the future,

perhaps very soon. There are tense situations, for example, in Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia (a country with little experience of democracy), and where Christian and Moslems attack each other. This picture is a warning to us.

Despite everything, even if this woman remains frightened, there is still hope in her eyes. Perhaps all is not lost.

She carries her child, she looks

ahead. In Asia too, we still have hope. Certainly there is population explosion, which could pose problems, but look at the eyes of the child: For me, I see more hope than difficulties.

Photo selected and commented on by Juan C. Tan, President of the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists.

TRADE UNIONS ACTIONS

trade unions actions

FRANCE

Tour de France : Trade Union in the race

Every year, the Tourmalet, the streets of the North, the Champs Elysées, the high places, witness the most beautiful cycle race in the world, the Tour de France. It is undoubtedly a peculiar place for a trade union presence. And yet... for the third year running the CFTC was in the publicity caravan of the Tour.



A golden opportunity to visit the regions

"CFTC on the Tour"? Of course it is a good idea, exclaims a militant. Every one is happy, it is a very friendly atmosphere.

The stopover points are also opportunities for the authorities and CFTC trade unionists to meet each other by region, and to discover their common commitment. And for the national authorities, it is to gain a better understanding of the situation in each region, to establish new contacts (around regional culinary specialties?), to find companies that have prospered or are in difficulty. Alain Deleu, President of the CFTC, sees in it, the opportunity to "visit towns that otherwise we would never have visited but for this meeting. All these meetings, are part of life and we trade unionists, are part of this life." This is what the experts would term "internal communication" of the movement.

Then, the Tour is also a communication machinery to the external world. Is sports not one of the most powerful communication channels (communication support). Millions of spectators line up along the roads, in a festive mood. They often wonder about the pre-

sence of a trade union in the publicity caravan, and often make attempts to question the militants whom they meet. In a country where the rate of trade union membership is low this is significant.

Finally, the CFTC presence in the Tour also gives us a chance to remember that beneath their costumes, the cycle racers are workers. Not all of them are stars, who get well paid for an extremely hard work. A lot see their health affected by the quasi obligation – in some groups however- to take banned substances to win the race and keep their jobs. For many, the sport is also a means of social advancement. At any cost?

