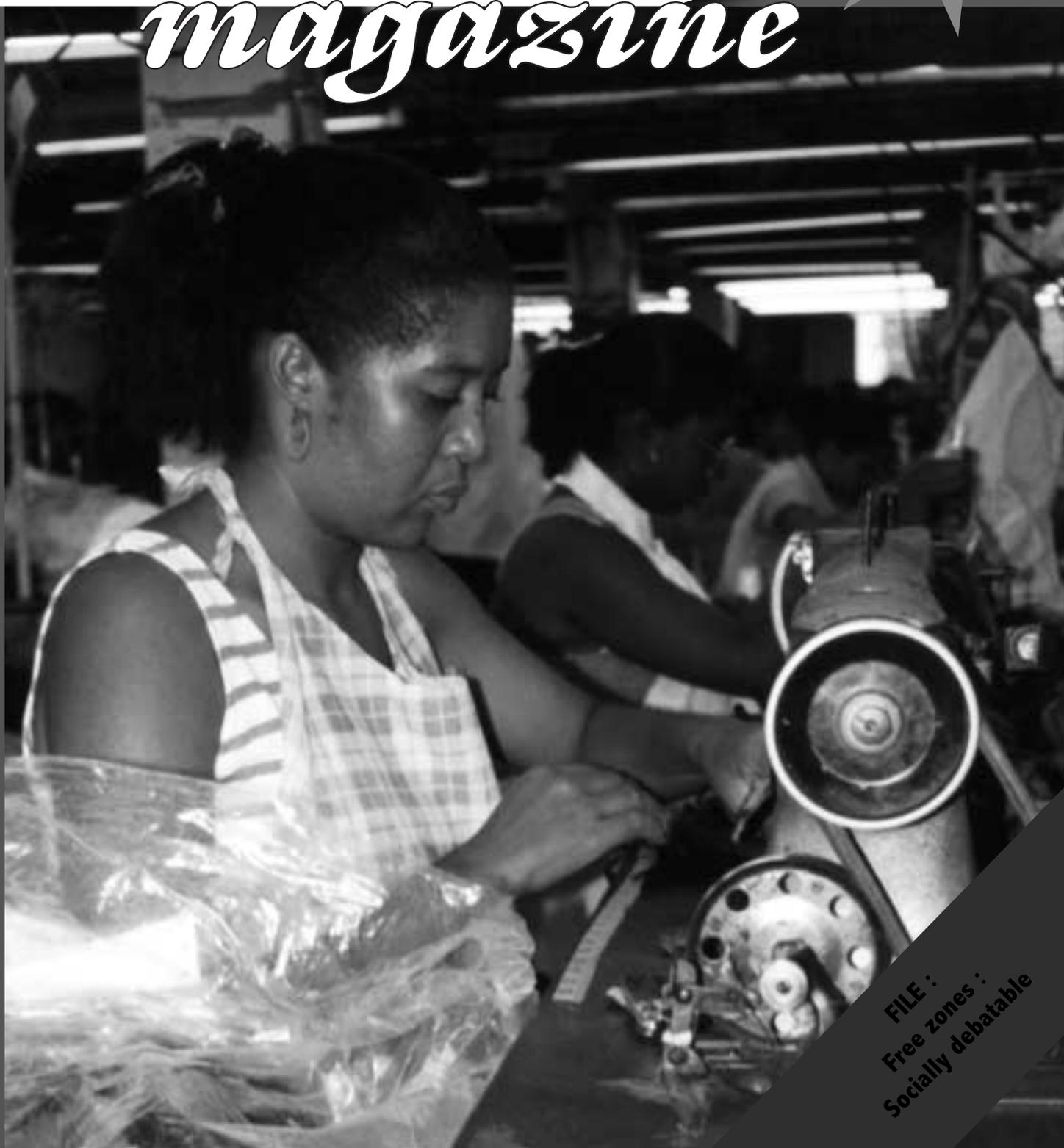


LABOR

magazine



FILE :
Free zones :
Socially debatable

78th year, number 2001/1

Responsible editor : Willy Thys

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of the World Confederation of Labour
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Editorial Address :

Rue de Trèves, 33
1040 Bruxelles
Tél : 32 2 285 47 00
Fax : 32 2 230 87 22
E-mail : info@cmt-wcl.org
Site web :
http://www.cmt-wcl.org

Editorial Board :

Willy Thys,
Eduardo Estevez,
Toolsyraj Benydy,
Necie Lucero,
Piet Nelissen,
Freddy Pools,
Kattia Paredes,
Claude Akpokavie,
Paul Tennessee
(FMI, BIRD, ONU),
Liliane Kennedy,
André Linard

Editorial office and secretariat :

André Linard,
Liliane Kennedy,
Doris Baudewijns

Graphics : Média-Animation
Imprimerie Havaux, Nivelles
Dessins: Quentin Van Gijssel

Pictures :
CMT/
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ISSN 1562-5435

Picture :
*In a free zone of the
Dominican Republic.*

PORTRAIT

“E quality begins in the home. I cannot blame others for not respecting me in the trade union if I, in the home, favour my son more than my daughter. I try to educate my children equally, but if one prepares one’s daughter to be subjected to the home, nothing will change in society”.



*Kenza El Ghali, a rare cocktail:
woman, trade unionist,
academic and Muslim*

Private life, public commitment: Kenza El Ghali, member of the executive bureau of the General Union of Workers of Morocco, works on these two principles. Married at 15 years to a trade union leader, she continued her studies and became a trade union member right from the beginning of her professional career. “I was already impregnated with it, I have always attended trade union meetings at home or in the neighbourhood. My affiliation was obvious, particularly in the education sector, where there is increasing unemployment, and a big gap between teaching and the labour market.”

SHE IS A WOMAN, UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER, MOTHER OF FOUR CHILDREN AND TRADE UNION LEADER: KENZA EL GHALI POSSESSES QUALITIES WHICH ARE NOT EASILY RECONCILABLE.

Kenza El Ghali

The UGTM, the only Moroccan trade union whose executive bureau includes three women¹ (“elected, not appointed”, specifies Kenza), is highly involved in education and health, very feminised professions. And, not only to made demands: “in my province of Taoumete, a rural area, I am participating in a trade union literacy project for women. Last year, there were 510, this year there are 1,642. Illiteracy, which affects more than 85% of women in the rural area, is one of the main concerns.”

AGONY FOR WOMEN GRADUATES

As a researcher, Kenza El Ghali devoted her thesis to Moroccan female migration, mainly to Spain. As in Asia, it is often women who go away, leaving their families and husbands behind, to whom even the road to migration is closed. During the field research in Madrid, she found out that “58% of Moroccan women in Spain were employed in domestic services. They stay and live with their employers with no opportunity to go out. Many of them are illegal and run the risk of being expelled. They sometimes have diplomas, even university degrees, but cannot work in Morocco due to unemployment. And, migration for them, becomes an agony. The lights which shine

from the other side of the Mediterranean turn out to be an illusion.”

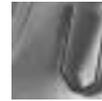
For women who migrate alone and those who become trade union leaders, on what will the role of the woman in a Muslim country depend?

“If the concepts of leaving are not well defined, there will be no solutions, because we are dealing with a society which is still traditional, with its cultural characteristics. But, at the UGTM we opted for a gradual process. Where the Koran is very clear, we do not discuss, so as not to hurt society. But, wherever there are several interpretations, one must have the courage to develop. The result is an awareness of the reality of the woman; her status, divorce, polygamy etc are henceforth discussed.”

But concludes Kenza, this is difficult. The cultural context still conveys a patriarchal mentality. To get to positions of responsibility, a woman must put in more effort than a man. “I had the opportunity of being helped and supported by my husband, just as I also helped him in his local political career.”

A.L.

¹Also the only one with a department specifically for women, of which Kenza El Ghali is vice-president.



Strong trade unions in a more difficult world

The year 2001, the first in this century, begins a new millennium. For the WCL, it is also a crucial year, the year for its 25th Congress, which will take place in Romania in October. A congress dedicated to the theme of necessary adaptation to enable the trade union world to remain an important social movement in the next decades.

Often challenged, sometimes denigrated, the trade union organisation remains the only effective way for male and female workers to defend their rights, dignity and participation in decisions that affect them.

It is true that the trade unions sometimes have difficulty in finding new methods of operation, adapted to the current economic, political and cultural context. We are no longer in the era of very large enterprises, where trade unionisation is almost a matter of course, and where the battle of wills could easily tilt in favour of workers.

It is also true that it is more difficult to mobilise membership and convince young workers of the usefulness of joining trade unions. This could be attributed to both the dominant ideology, which favours individualism, in neo-liberalism, which hardly leaves room for workers' organisations, and to trade unions themselves, who must adapt to this situation without repudiating their own ideas. But what is the alternative? Let us assume that trade unions fold up because they are "outmoded?" Neither the innumerable associations of all kinds, nor the bilateral boss/worker relationship can ensure the defence of those, who through their work, are sort of "co-owners" of the enterprise.

The member organisations of WCL, through the material, spiritual and human values that they share, have the trump card to become or remain the main social actors. Perhaps at the price of different modalities of the past, but without ever changing this basic principle of trade action, we are much stronger together in the face of challenges and threats against social justice everywhere in the world. The Congress will be the occasion to transform this conviction into action. The challenge will be taken up, I am sure of this.



Willy Thys,
Secretary General

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TRADE UNIONS AND THE MEDIA

If you have nothing to say, keep quiet !

DOES THE MEDIA HAVE AN UNFAVOURABLE A PRIORI TOWARDS THE TRADE UNION WORLD? IF YES, WHY? IN SEPTEMBER 2000, THE WCL ORGANISED A SEMINAR TO DEFINE AN INFORMATION POLICY TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE MEDIA... AND TRADE UNIONS AS THEY ARE, WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE PRACTICES.

The reproach is frequent: when something is not going right, “it is because of journalists”. In the trade union world, one often adds: “The media belongs to transnational companies, reproducing the speeches of the business world. Our information is marginalised.” The miscellaneous events, sports, anecdote, even the new economy... would take the place of discussion of ideas or serious information. University institutions also abound in the same way. During a recent UNESCO seminar, Lance Bennett, of the University of Washington denounced the “*derivative tabloid*”, which “*replaces information on authorities, institutions and social changes, which would help the individual to understand the consequences of global changes in society (...) with a daily flow of sex, scandals, celebrities and disasters.*” (Le Monde, 24th November 2000).

At times, it is journalists who are taken to task, at other times, it is the global media system: “*reflexive journalism is in danger. The carnival culture will destroy the journalistic culture*” (Prof. Ramentol, of Barcelona, *ibid.*). This is however, an argument questioned by journalists, according to whom “*this idea of a global conspiracy of the media does not correspond to any reality*” (Leonord Doyle, The Independent, *ibid.*).

THE LIFE OF PEOPLE

The seminar organised by the WCL last December was first of all to verify if the marginalisation hypothesis of trade union information in the media is correct. A large number of participants confirmed it, and yet great differences exist from country to country. They sometimes explain it by a political will of exclusion in countries where press freedom is not guaranteed (Bulgaria, Togo etc.), more often by a mercantile logic of the press which publishes what sells (Namibia, Cyprus, Philippines, etc).

But, the essential aspect of the reflection was dedicated to the causes of this situation which is due to trade union organisations themselves, as the disseminators of information, which can thus be modified. Jean-Paul Marthoz, Director of the Information at Human Rights Watch/Europe, explained saying, “*too often, the organisations are outside the actual news, which the journalists cannot ignore to be able to carry out their occupation well. What seems interesting to them is not automatically an event. What constitutes information for the organisation is not necessarily so for the media.*” Consequence: one must know how the press works, how an item is structured, what constraints there are on journalists... An observation confirmed by Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Brussels correspondent for El Mundo (Spain) is: “*The institutional processes do not interest the press. Going to a country to cover an international congress is not very interesting. On the contrary, doing a report on the social issues in the region on the occasion of the congress could be worthwhile. It is not the organisation or the trade union policy which justifies a report, but the lives of the people.*” Meanwhile, trade



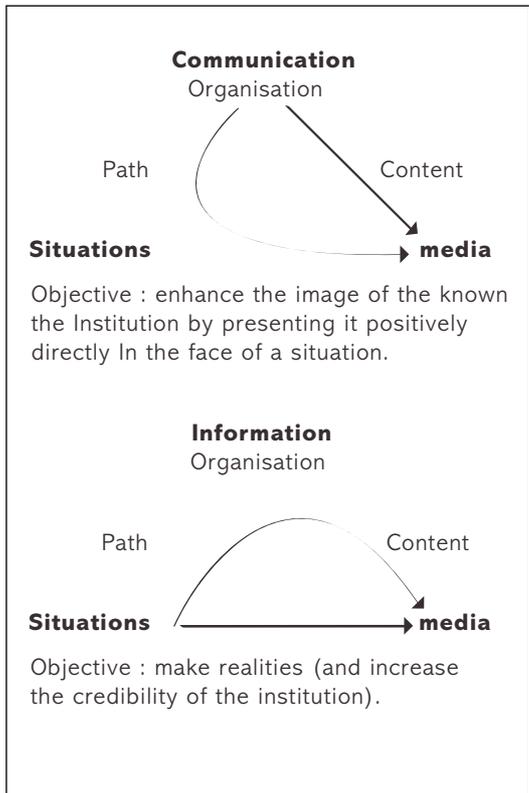
A priori, a trade union congress is not interesting to the press



union organisations often provide information on themselves, and in the long run, their communiqués go into the rubbish dump, especially if they are a lot. It is better henceforth to only address the press when one has something original and interesting to transmit and to keep quiet when this is not the case.

ONE FOOT IN, ONE FOOT OUT

Most experts speaking during this seminar emphasised the frequent confusion between information and communication. The former talk about situations, realities on which the organisation works, which serves as a channel to make them known, if they have to, without the organisation being mentioned. On the other hand, communication is part of public relation. It talks about the organisation, and serves to position the latter in the social panorama, and to enhance it, by “using” the pretext of situations experienced.



honest. He is called to “keep a certain distance (“one leg in, one leg out”) to remain credible in the face of the media . He is the journalist who transmits to the outside, information originating from the organisation.”

Confronted by the speeches of the experts, the small organisations present at the seminar however unearthed a much more down to earth problem : the lack of resources to create or maintain an Information Department.

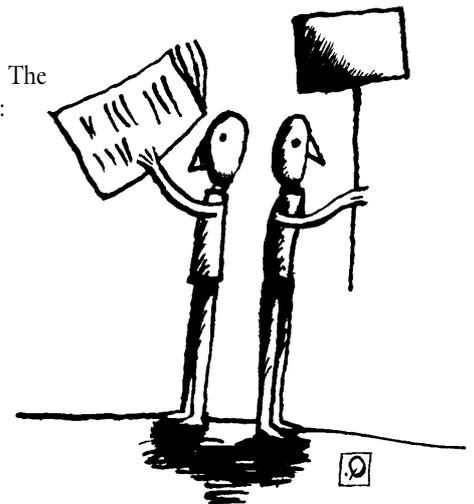
Response of Jean-Paul Marthoz, easier to state than to carry out : “When one is small, one must look for a way to be original, different, precise... Journalists are conventional and often follow the wind (the large organisations) ; the smallest must therefore be inventive in the choice of their information, in such a way as to surprise, thus interest even the indifferent journalists.”

A QUESTION IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Meanwhile, he said that trade union organisations more than others, have a wealth of interesting information, due to their presence in companies, their study of services, the international relations that they establish.... It is up to them to organise themselves to determine the good method, by considering that information is a field of action which justifies itself ; and not simply a way of saying a posteriori what one has done.

Meanwhile, the participants observed that a lot of organisations are not structurally prepared to do this, either because the information does not circulate well internally ; or because their system of decision-making limits the capacity to react rapidly to the Information Department. The strategic “demands” therefore end up in coded information, of better use in the organisation, but incomprehensible to the outside.

But, the method and the quantity are not all. The question was openly asked and remains open: “For the past twenty years, what has the trade union world got to offer as direction, as myth, as utopia, in the face of the neo-liberal myth ? Could one give direction again to news without first of all being able to give direction to solidarity again?”



André Linard

The discussion testify to the fundamental difference between logic and these two functions : the head of communication must give a positive image by avoiding what tarnishes this image. He must be particularly persuasive, even lie by omission. The head of information, on his part must be credible, therefore



Peking +5 or Peking -5?

PROBLEM COUNTRIES

Topics concerning women give rise, each time to reactions based on cultural and religious conceptions. Nine States stood out especially by their intentions to block what the majority of women call "progress", and even to go back on the Peking commitments. They are: Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Nicaragua and the Vatican. Without being too radical, Argentina also showed several attitudes considered as "conservative".

THE (LONG) WORLD MARCH FOR WOMEN

Nearly everywhere, women marched during the year 2000, against violence perpetuated against them, against poverty which affects them first and foremost, and for active measures for greater equality. Results? In terms of awareness, information of opinion and mobilisation, it was a success. There was a feeling of solidarity among women of the whole world, the perception of the same problems whatever the country. In terms of pressure for changes, on the other hand, the result is still negligible. The (long) march continues

The year 2000 should be a good year for women: a world march in all the continents over several months (see framed text) and a conference, known as Peking +5, aimed at consolidating the gains of the 1995 Peking conference.

THE YEAR HAS ENDED, WHERE DO WE STAND?

No progress, no regression, could be the summary of the New York meeting in June 2000.

On the positive side, is the theme of violence against women. Not that it is on the decrease; a Spanish judge recently stated that women are often heard saying: "my husband beats me, but not more than usual" (sic).

But there are more legal instruments to combat this violence. Domestic violence is increasingly becoming a crime.

Also on the positive side is an important decision, and more definite than Peking: the commitment of governments to facilitate access of girls and women to professional positions often reserved for boys and men. Positions which are still often better paid. This remains to be translated into action.

On the other hand, the simple protection of the gains in Peking, in reproductive and sexual health of women required a lot of energy, in the face of obstacles from some countries (see framed text).

OBVIOUSLY NEW YORK IS NOT PEKING

There were few known personalities in June 2000, whereas the 1995 conference was full of big names. Less obvious, but more important is the fact that, unlike other international meetings, that of June 2000 was inadequately and badly prepared. There was hardly any consultation among participating countries, nor preliminary work... To the extent that some were talking of Peking - 5.

Perhaps it is partly due to a certain fatigue of international "large gatherings" that were held successively by the United Nations. But economic conferences continue to attract a full house.

Of course
I am against
the capitalism
that exploits us



Extract from (and with the permission of)
Noticias Obreras, Madrid, 16-11-2000



Morocco

What about social change?

Politically, Morocco has changed. But what about the situation of workers? And what about the unemployed? Unemployment continues to wreak havoc, especially among young graduates, and the informal sector is growing; it represents about 45% of the national economy.

The society, according to the Union Générale des Travailleurs Marocains, (General Union of Moroccan workers), is *“hemiplegic, half of us being illiterate. Basic services such as access to water and electricity benefit only half of our population.”* A national survey on the standard of living of households in 1998-1999 shows that 67% of the rural population are illiterates, out of which 67% and 62% lack potable water and electricity respectively (Al Bayane, 27/10/2000).

In an interview at *Assabah*, the Minister in charge of Economic Forecasting and Planning, Abdelhamid Aouad admitted that in nine years, from 1990-1991 to 1998-1999, poverty has increased from 13% of the total population to 19%, but affects 72.2% of rural families.

The 2000-2004 Five Year Plan has allocated an amount of one billion dirhmas to the fight against poverty but the Al Bayane newspaper regards as inadequate, this *“constant and resolute policy to mitigate the effects – and not the causes! – of poverty on large sections of the citizens.”* And asks: *“What is the importance of individual or family wealth accumulated in national and foreign banks and not made available for progress and development?”*

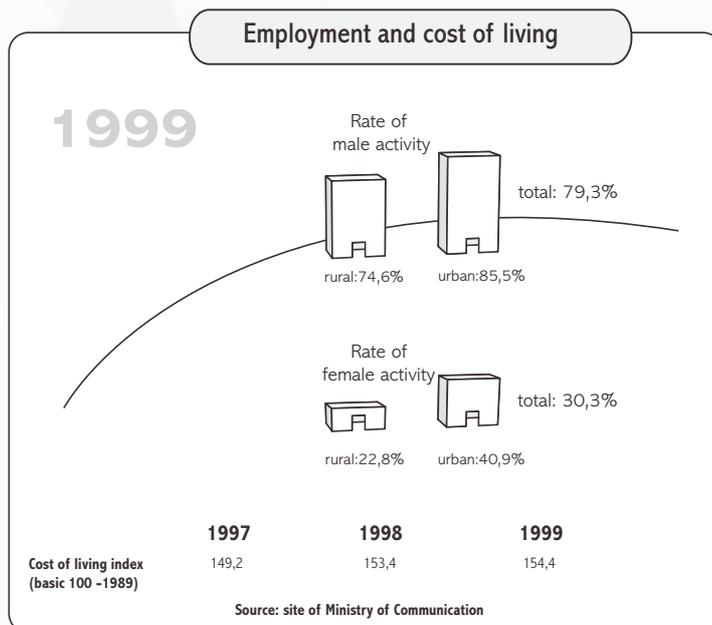
Salaries sometimes go as low as the equivalent of \$100 (± 110 euros) per month, which led to significant social movement at the beginning of the year 2000. On 19 *moharram* (23 April), a social agreement was signed with some, but not all trade movements. It envisages an increase of the guaranteed minimum salary. But, the daily newspaper Istiqlal immediately asks: *“This agreement helped defuse a social crisis (...). Will the measures taken improve the living conditions of large sections of the population...?”* Moroccans are waiting... or emigrating (see p.21.)

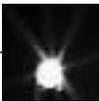
THE COUNTRY

Population: 28,238 million inhabitants; area: 710,850 sq. km; urban population: 54.5%; GDP/inhabitant (in parity with purchasing power): US\$3,305; Human Development Index 0.589 (rating: 124th – Algeria: 0.683; Tunisia: 0.703); human poverty index: 38.4%; adult illiteracy: 47.1%; ratio between incomes of the richest 20% and the poorest 20%: from 7 to 1.



At a vocational school. Illiteracy is a national scourge.





National seminar for teachers in Pakistan, with the participation of the WCT (November 2000)



National Congress of the SPKP, in Jakarta (Indonesia)



Willy Thys and Mukhtar Pakpahan with the president of Paraguay, during the WCL Confederation Board session

BIG BROTHER AT WORK

Since the end of October, the law allows British employers to intercept electronic mail and telephone calls received by their staff without warning them. Henceforth, companies find they have "routine access" to communications to find out if they have any connection with work. Trade unions intend to use the law on human rights to counteract this decision. According to the ATTAC Association, in France, two banks blocked the reports of the organisation sent to employees.

In the United States 45% of companies access the telephone and E-mail communications of their employees, while 70% of salaried workers acknowl-

ged having sent or received personal E-mails about sex, at their work place.

In Germany and Austria, the *Big Brother Awards* (in reference to the Book "*Le Meilleur des mondes*" (*The Best of Worlds*) by Aldous Huxley, who predicted that everyone would be permanently watched by a *Big Brother*) rewards companies or institutions which distinguished themselves in intruding into the private life of people via the Internet. The laureates are not in a hurry to receive their prizes.

Source: *Le Monde, Libération and Business Week*

LATIN AMERICA : the opinion of Trade Unions

Trade union participation and the social dimension of the integration processes in Latin America (Mercosur and the Andean Community of Nations) are of concern to workers' organisations, which fear groupings for the exclusive benefit of the business world. Trade union organisations of the ten countries invol-

ved have since then asked to be involved in the process and for a joint committee to be set up where social partners could give their opinion on the processes of integration currently going on.

Source: *Información sociolaboral, Lima, 20/2000.*

MULTINATIONALS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Among the first 100 transnational companies in the world, only one is in a country considered as "developing": the *Petróleos de Venezuela* company, placed at the 91st position. This is what came out of the *2000 World Investment Report*, of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The report however confirms that contrary to ideas received, these countries are also

the headquarters of big companies. The 50 largest among them are put in a distinct category. China is at the top with the lion's share, of 14 companies 9 of which are in Hong Kong (excluding two in Taiwan). Singapore, Korea and Brazil follow China. Three African companies, all in South Africa, are in this category.

THE CONVENTION AGAINST CHILD LABOUR IS IN FORCE

ILO Convention No. 182 on the worse forms of child labour adopted in June 1999 came into force on 19th November, twelve months after the second ratification by an ILO member. It will be applied in each country twelve months after the registration date of the ratification by the Director General of the ILO.

As a reminder, this Convention concerns slavery, prostitution, jobs which by their nature or condition in which they are carried out, are likely to harm the health, security or morality of the child... At the end of October, 43 countries had ratified the Convention.

TRADE UNIONISM : a dangerous occupation

At least 140 trade unionists were assassinated, disappeared or committed suicide after having been threatened for defending male and female workers' rights throughout the world in 1999. This is what *the Annual report on the violation of trade union rights*, published by the International Confederation of Free

Trade Unions reveals. The report indicates fundamental violations of trade union rights in not less than 113 countries for the year 1999: arrests, injuries, tortures, harassment and death threats. Latin America remains the most dangerous continent for trade unionism.



Priority to the client. And do the workers submit themselves?

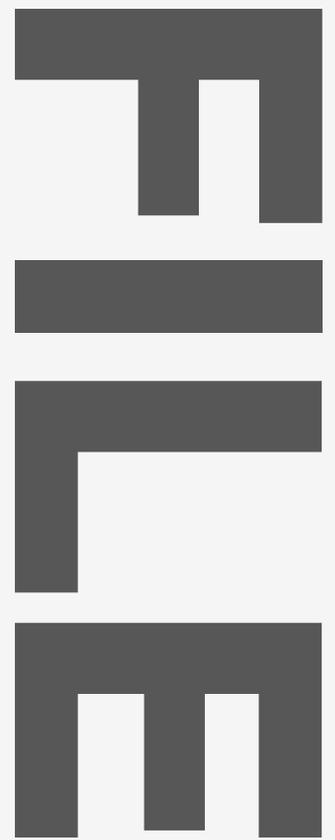
The Anglophones talk about "Free trade zones", a name which straightaway embodies an idea of liberty. In French too, "free" can mean "liberal". By their very nature, the free zones are zones of liberty for businesses, places where the application of tax, trade, social and even environmental laws are less restrictive, more liberal.

Freedom? For businesses perhaps. But not for trade unions which, even when they are not formally banned, generally come up against so many obstacles that they find it difficult to operate.

The following pages show that the existence of free zones is a response to a coherent economic concept. They also make mention of a study

requested by the WCL in six countries, which indicates that after some years, things are slightly better. Even if there is still a lot to be done.

*File compiled by
Florence Degavre and André Linard*



SUMMARY

STUDY
For a slight improvement and for worse

OVER VIEW
Free zones, "liberal" zones

ASSESSMENT
Sri Lanka : globally negative

OPENING
For further information... : WCL publishes



STUDY

For a slight improvement and for worse

FEW CHILDREN AT WORK, SALARIES SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE, THE FEAR OF JOINING TRADE UNIONS EVEN WHEN IT IS ALLOWED... THESE ARE SOME OF THE TRENDS OF A STUDY IN THE EXPORT FREE ZONES OF SIX COUNTRIES. IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, THE SITUATION IS IMPROVING.

“Is there a trade union organisation in your company?” Yes, replied 64% of Indonesian workers in free zones. “Are strikes legal?” No, replied 70% of them. And 75% were afraid of the army’s intervention in case of a strike.

These responses were the result of a statistical survey carried out in Indonesia by the SBSI trade union. They were confirmed in 6 other countries, namely Mexico, Honduras, Senegal, Madagascar, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, where a study on the free zones, yet to be published, has just been undertaken, at the request of the World Confederation of Labour.

The situation of trade union freedom appears less appalling there than in the past. Formally, the trade unions are generally authorised and they do exist, but everything is done to destroy their activities. The result is that workers are afraid to join or undertake trade actions. There is a kind of repression through fear, which results in self-censure.

That is the trend. The modalities vary from country to country: the tendency towards trade union monopoly linked to political power (Mexico), systematic attacks on trade union freedom (Honduras), fear of becoming a member (Indonesia), pressure

from employers (Sri Lanka), lack of motivation for young and untrained manpower (Senegal and Madagascar). This paradox was observed in Madagascar, but is widespread: *“Considering their plight and awareness of problems confronting them, workers know that they need trade union management. However, they are hesitant to organise themselves into trade unions.”*

HIGH TURNOVER OF STAFF

The six studies also showed characteristics similar to that of employed manpower. Workers in the free zones are generally young (in Sri Lanka, 90.5% of women in the FTZ are less than 25 years, in



In the free zones the women workers are under permanent surveillance

Mexico 83% are less than 35 years); they are engaged for a very limited period, even a day, especially in Senegal); they are poorly trained; *“they do not know the dynamism of the labour world, nor that of the trade union movement”* (Madagascar). Finally, the majority absolutely need their salary to survive and are therefore hesitant about running the risk of dismissal.

Majority of these workers are women, who are known to be more productive but also more docile, and therefore the practice of sexual harassment is more frequent. We however notice a process of male domination in Mexico, where women represent not more than 58% of non-specialised employment. This trend could be explained by the fact that more advanced technology is being used.

The turnover of these workers is very high, due mainly to voluntary departures. The main criticisms are on working hours, strict control during working time, security etc... In the case of Mexico, the turnover could be explained by both bad working conditions and the attraction of migration towards the United States. In Sri Lanka, 67.5% of workers in the free zones say they are dissatisfied with their jobs. This instability in different countries, has at the same time, produced consequences, at the economic (cost to the business), social (it hinders trade unionism and professional training) and policy level (difficulty in carrying out an employment policy).

The study report on Senegal, is the one that stresses more on resorting to very short-term contracts.



FEW CHILDREN, HIGHER SALARIES

The studies did not show an extensive use of child labour in the free zones, except in Indonesia, where 79% of workers in the three free zones confirm that children aged below 16 years are made to work. In contrast, one notices in Senegal, *“the absence of child workers due to the vigilance of the Labour Administration and to the fact that in more and more impoverished families, the offer of employment goes first to the adults”*. Whereas in Madagascar, only an unconfirmed rumour alludes to this in one company, the two Latin American studies do not mention it.

Another observation, perhaps a departure from the clichés, appears in most of the studies (but not in Mexico), namely, *“salaries paid in the free zone are slightly higher than what is paid outside the zone for the same type of companies”* (Senegal report). This observation

is made almost in the same words for Sri Lanka, Madagascar and Indonesia. This does not mean that salaries are sufficient for people to live decently. Most families of workers in the free zones remain poor.

Finally, most of these studies mention the progressive expansion of the regime of free zones to companies, sometimes individuals, established anywhere in the countries concerned. What was in the beginning an exception gradually risks becoming the rule, for better or for worse.



OVER VIEW

Liberal zones, “free” zones

THE IDEA OF FREE ZONES IS NOT BORN IN A MACHIAVELLIAN ANTI-TRADE UNION SPIRIT, BUT IN ECONOMIC THEORY. IT IS LOGICAL AND COHERENT AIMED AT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WHICH NEVERTHELESS NEGLECTS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

The first free zones aimed at allowing enterprises to import raw materials and then export processed products without paying taxes. In order to achieve this, a demarcated geographic zone was chosen, close to the means of communication (ports, airports etc.), which was then officially not considered as part of the national territory; rules in force everywhere else were exceptions there. It was in Ireland that the initiative generally began, with the creation of the Shannon zone from the 1960s.

A sort of enclave was thus created in a country, oriented almost exclusively towards the external market. The walls and fences that still surround some zones in Asia testify to the breakaway that the free zone generally implies, compared to the rest of the country, since in principle the separation from the territory subject to “normal” legislation must be clearly distinguished. Sometimes even at the price of strict police or military control.

The second basic idea is the prospect of attracting foreign investments there for example, legal exemptions and in offering them favourable installation conditions, rather than to see them set up elsewhere. The States are trying therefore to offer to foreign capital infrastructure, tax reductions, even well trained and docile manpower, according to some advertisements broadcast by the States

themselves. A competition is going on between countries, with regard to trade regulations and also tax, and then social and environmental regulations...

It is possible that foreign investors are attracted by the possibility of exporting to an industrialised country from a country whose products benefit from reduced import tax. This is the case, especially, with textile products from Nicaragua to the United States.

WITH A CERTAIN LOGIC...

The free zone is not a diabolical invention of a mind bent on destroying the rights of workers. On the contrary, certainly not all its effects are negative in terms of access to employment, income etc. Taken individually, many men and women hope to find employment there, that agriculture, cottage or small-scale local enterprises do not offer in adequate quantities.

The idea of free zones is inscribed in the evolution of the economic theory of development. It is based on two arguments. First of all, the theory of “*vent for surplus*” which, since the 19th century, pushed for investing in a country from outside, so as to add value to hitherto unused factors of production for the purposes of export, especially land. This is the origin of banana plantation enclaves or West Indian sugar plantations, for example. All or almost all comes from outside (capital, technology..., but not manpower) and products are exported.

LET'S COMPARE OUR ADVANTAGES

The other point supporting the promotion of free zones is the famous theory of “comparative advantages”, according to which each country has an interest in specialising in productions for which they find themselves relatively well endowed, due to available factors of production.

Initially this concept gave way to specialisation in the export of primary, agricultural or mining products. Then, emphasis was put on the export of less sophisticated industrialised products resulting in the initial processing of primary products (export substitutions).

If one translates “factor of production” by “work”, one notices that these different theories lead to the creation of free zones. As a matter of fact, the most remarkable “comparative advantage” prevailing today in a number of developing countries is the existence of abundant, cheaper and sometimes well qualified manpower². And tax, trade and less demanding social laws can strengthen this advantage.

The notion of free zones did not thus fall from the sky: it emanates from a capitalist vision of international trade advantages for the development of countries.

From the beginning of the 1970s, the failure of import-substitution policies and the parallel debt of countries from the South have led

to a reversal in industrialisation policies, strongly encouraged by the IMF and the World Bank. From import-substitution, countries of the South have turned to export-substitution, a policy centred on an industry producing for the world market. This policy relies on the integration of the country in an international free trade system (which implies the elimination of custom barriers) and on attractive conditions for establishment for multinationals, already well set up on the international market. After protectionism, comes the opening up of borders, after "protected" industrialisation, comes immersion in competition, where it is not necessarily the best who is victor, but certainly the strongest.

FREE ZONES, A PROSPERITY FACTOR?

Like the North, reduction in productivity, which occurred from the 1970s (running down of the ford model), necessitated changes in the mode of capitalist production. The principle of de-locations and sub-contracting respond partially to this need. By moving a part of production abroad at less cost, hitherto undertaken in "developed" countries, the companies make a substantial profit margin. The problem was to "*increase production, but at a cost allowing the accumulation process to be put back, obviously to the detriment of the work*"³. Businesses in the North are therefore interested in gaining access to manpower in the South and to practices attractive for investments geared toward exports.

The movement was launched by Mexico. Close to the United States, it shows obvious comparative advantage in terms of the cost of manpower, an advantage, which

was to increase between 1980 and 1994 giving the salaries levels in the two countries. This is thus how the maquiladoras emerged.

Today, the free zones are considered as the main tool for the creation of employment and growth in numerous countries. The State recognises that, if it gives tax exemptions and discounts on export and import, in other words, if it eliminates its resources in shares, economic development is possible. But at this price, is it still development?

¹The actual trend however is expansion to the whole of the territory. In Senegal for example, "*outside the zone, free points and free export enterprises are increasing*", according to a recent UNTS trade union study.

²This formula can meanwhile lead to confusion. Social legislation can be less demanding than international standards, but they are not necessarily less than what is practised elsewhere in the country outside free zones.

³*South Alternatives*, p.8, vol. VI, 1999/1



Workforce, new comparative advantage



ASSESSMENT

Sri Lanka : globally negative

AT THE END OF IT ALL, AND BEHIND IDEOLOGICAL DEBATES, ARE FREE ZONES FAVOURABLE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED? THE EXAMPLE OF SRI LANKA LEADS TO A RATHER NEGATIVE RESPONSE ECONOMICALLY, AND IS VERY CRUCIAL SOCIALLY.

During the inauguration of a new free zone in Sri Lanka, the President of the country gave the assurance that this zone “*would bring prosperity to the population (...). It will give employment to 7,500 people and to 12,500 indirectly*”¹. Now, among the workers’ representatives, one offsets these figures with those of lack of income that a “passive” State represents: income from duties keep falling (from 17.2% GNP in 1994 to 14.5% in 1998), and it is the same with income from taxes (from 2.6% in 1994 to 2% in 1998) so also VAT (from 5.6% in 1994 to 3.9% in 1998). This decline is the direct consequence of the promotion of foreign private investments

through the free zones and is done clearly to the detriment of public investments in health, education, irrigation or agricultural infrastructure that rather generate development.

For five years, public investments in these rather essential sectors have reduced, in relative and absolute part, which made *the Islander* comment: “*the simple maintenance of social and economic services has suffered from the financial constraint imposed by the reduction in taxation. (...)* However, it adds, *the State cannot simply attribute the task of economic development to free market and wait patiently for the magic wand of the private business to supply the goods, as deman-*

ded by globalisation. In a developing economy like that of Sri Lanka, where private enterprise is very unequally developed, the State has the responsibility to directly take charge of a good part of economic development”.

VOLATILE CAPITAL

The fundamental question about free zones is that, will this model bring a type of useful development to the population of the countries concerned? This could be so through the distribution of investments in the country, training of a class of national managers, the creation of employment and purchasing power etc.. to the extent that salaries are, in several cases (Senegal, Mexico and Sri Lanka),



In Sri Lanka, the working conditions in the free zones of Colombo are better than outside them.



slightly higher in the free zones than in other enterprises.

In reality, Sri Lanka has not benefited greatly from the liberalisation they embarked upon twenty years ago. The increase in GNP remains modest (4.7% on the average per year between 1980 and 1998) and foreign investments, which the exceptional conditions in the free zones should attract, only account for 0.75% of GNP and 3% of the total investments in the country, being 46 times less than in Malaysia for example (before the crisis).

Main foreign investments in the country have been in the export industry, mainly in textile due to extremely low salaries existing in Sri Lanka and to the fact that the country does not use its entire export quota to the United States. In effect, the multifaceted agreement provides for a certain textile export quota to the United States for almost every country in Asia. Sri Lanka having been a priority beneficiary of this agreement attracted many companies from countries that had already reached their quota, which established themselves in the Sri Lankan free zones. This is the case with Korean textile industries. Besides, the latter are well known for establishing themselves very quickly and clearing out just as fast, without paying benefits to workers. Wherein lies the prosperity in the face of such volatile businesses?

Other adverse aspects indirectly linked to the free zone are also to be taken into consideration, such as the obligation to supply cheap agricultural food products to workers in the free zones. Farmers' income is thus pushed downwards, which increases the availability of abundant and cheap man-

power. In reality, it is very difficult to make a global economic assessment of the free zones phenomenon. And in any case, one must look out for the social record.

WOMEN IN DANGER

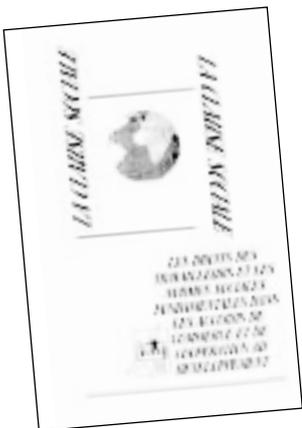
At the *Friendship House* of Katunayake, Lalita, Co-ordinator of the three free zones of Colombia, explains that the main problems are from within as well as from outside of the free zones. The exploitation and the lack of respect for workers' rights are present, as in other companies where trade union work is made difficult even impossible through acts of intimidation from management. But for women, the risks are high when they leave their work to return home. The emotional misery of workers whose families are far away, not to mention promiscuity in the shacks where they live, pave the way for sexual crimes. Sexual harassment on the way home, incidents of rape and fondling are frequent. Women, who constitute 90% of the free zone manpower, know nothing about contraception and sexual diseases. They do not know the dangers of urban life. Overtime work undertaken by women workers means that many of them return home after the bus service has ended. Companies rarely provide transportation in case of overtime. Majority of the women return home alone using badly lit streets. One of the first struggles of *Friendship House* was to request for lights around the zone and to solicit the collaboration of the police to conduct night patrols.

According to the newspapers however, working conditions in the three free zones of Colombia are better than in the industries outside the zone. Workers have their allowances paid more regu-

larly than elsewhere. According to the trade unions, degrading working conditions exist, they are identical to the working conditions in small factories that do not enjoy duty or tax rebates because they produce mainly for the local market. The only fact that makes a difference there is the combative spirit of workers due to trade union presence. At Katunayake, trade unions are also beginning to be recognised, after 20 years of work and latent or open repression.

From then on, should the struggle be against free zones or the capitalist manner in which development is established? Whilst working conditions will improve in Katunayake, and in all the other free zones in the country, salaries will increase, and what will the companies do? If the textile quota granted to Sri Lanka reduces in favour of China (as industries strongly predict), will they not set up elsewhere?

¹Daily Newspaper, 11 May 1999.



OPENING

Questions to W. and D., in a Sri Lankan free zone.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WORKERS' RIGHTS?

W: I know the rights concerning working conditions, maternity and what I am entitled to receive as salary, but otherwise, this does not interest me much.

HAVE YOU JOINED A TRADE UNION?

W: I do not wish to respond.
D: Neither do I.

ARE THERE TRADE UNIONS IN THE FTZ?

W: There is a *welfare* association, which takes care of the well being of workers. It is a committee that negotiates with management. We do not really have a trade union in the factory, we have a *worker's council*.*

IS IT EFFICIENT, ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH IT?

W: Yes

IF THERE WERE A STRIKE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

W: Run home, I would follow the example of others, whatever they do is what I would also do.

WHY DID YOU COME TO WORK IN THE FTZ?

W: My parents are not very well off financially, and I decided that after elementary school, I would work. My sister is a trainer in the factory and she helped me to come in.

D: We had financial problems in the home. My brother is unemployed; he could not get a job in the FTZ. He is

looking for work, but cannot find one. I went to Star Garment, and asked whether they had a place for me and they employed me.

WHAT WOULD YOU PREFER, TO CONTINUE TO WORK IN THE FTZ, RETURN TO THE VILLAGE OR WORK ABROAD?

W: I want to stay here. I would in future like to start a small *self-employed* project, I want to work and be engaged in a profitable activity. But if I leave the zone, I would have to set up in my husband's village, which is located in a rather dry and infertile zone. If I start something there, I will look for a suitable activity. I realise that it is easier to continue the work I am doing at the moment

Report put together by F.D.

* It is an "in-house trade union", solely authorised by the company's management. They do not have legal power, nor are they affiliated to any national trade union and therefore do not have any money to organise a strike. According to a representative of the Sri Lankan Labour Commission, they have access to management and, since they do not incite any agitation, they are in a very unfavourable balance of power to negotiate better working conditions in the factory.

For further information... : WCL has published

- "Effect of globalisation on international labour standards"; *Report one trade union rights in the world 1996-1997*, p. 64 (in French, English, Spanish).
- *Globalisation and fundamental social rights*, report of the international seminar organised by the WCL in October 1996, 67 p. (in French, English, Spanish)
- *The social clause. Rights of workers and basic social standards in trade and development corporation agreements*, 1998, 58 p.
The expansion of free zones and its consequences on the rights of workers mark the strong points of these studies.
- Yet to come out: a field study commissioned by the WCL, on working conditions in the free zones of six countries (see pp. 10-11).



TEXTILE

Forced labour, modern slavery

November 2000: the Board of directors of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) took exceptional sanctions against Myanmar (Burma): States, as well as private companies are requested to restudy their relations with this country, in order to avoid strengthening the practices of forced labour currently going on there. The measures announced by the Rangoon regime (once again) just before the debate at the ILO were considered too weak and too late.

Forced labour... One would have thought this practice had disappeared, since the official abolition of slavery in the last century. Or, at worst, limited to some "archaic" sectors, such as the Brazilian plantation which used people permanently indebted to their boss, and forced to work in unimaginable conditions.

However, this practice also exists in industry, including those that have their products daily on the shelves of our shops.

RENOWNED BRANDS

From 16th to 22nd October 2000, a meeting was held at the ILO, in Geneva on "work practices in the leather, shoe, textile and clothing industries". The report submitted for discussion dealt in particular with issues of servitude for debt and forced labour in illegal workshops and *sweatshops*.

What is slavery, what is forced labour? The first is generally considered as a labour relation based on a personal dependence between the boss (the master) and the worker. It is such a person who is totally taken in a relationship, which goes beyond merely doing "forced labour".

A salaried worker undertakes to provide X hours, then is free the rest of his time; free also at least in theory and according to the procedure, of ending his job. The slave on his part does not have this freedom; he is not an employee, but a property of the employer.

The indebtedness of the worker or his family could play a big role in this dependence.

Forced or compulsory labour is defined closely but more precisely in ILO Convention 29 (see frame). The term refers to all work or service demanded under the threat of pain and in which the individual is not engaged on his own will.

Reading the ILO report, one notices that no part of the world is free from forced labour in the industrial sectors studied. In Europe, it is particularly the illegal workshops, which are targeted, where a lot of illegal immigrants work, thus bound hands and feet to employers. Since they have no papers, these workers know that by complaining, they risk being expelled from the country.

SLAVERY HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY ABROGATED, BUT FORCED LABOUR HAS NOT DISAPPEARED. THE ILO NOTICED THIS AGAIN LAST OCTOBER IN THE TEXTILE, SHOE AND CLOTHING SECTORS, WHERE CODES OF CONDUCT NEVERTHELESS EXIST.



Clandestine textile workshop in San José (Costa Rica)



According to the report, “*it is in the clandestine workshops that infringements on human rights at work are most frequent and serious*”. It is the same observation and the same type of victims in the United States, where the report points to the sub-contracting workshops (*sweatshop*), which produce for famous brands. In Saipan (North of the Marianas Islands, under the jurisdiction of a united state), “*more than 50,000 young immigrant girls [...] are working in conditions close to imprisonment in enclosed and barbed work-*

shops”. They are kept by the obligation to reimburse the exorbitant “recruitment rights”.

A CAPITAL INSTRUMENT

The study continues that in developing countries, “*several small companies, as well as micro enterprises in the informal sector, resort to black labour*”, which is not synonymous with forced labour, but opens the door to a lot of abuse. Forced labour itself is present in the clothing, carpet and sports equipment industry in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, etc.

Some of them - Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Morocco etc - have instituted programmes to eliminate child labour, which is often forced because of indebtedness. Servitude for debt, generally that of parents, is one of the main explanations for the exploitation of children. It also affects immigrants, who must reimburse the “smugglers” who facilitated their relocation, and considering the low salaries, they have to work for years before settling their debt.

This report, like others, such as televised reports, show that forced work is not marginal, but constitutes a component of the industrial process in the targeted sectors. This kind of labour exists not only because some employers are immoral, but also because it enables reduction in the cost of production and increase in the profitability of capital. It is common for the national authorities to turn a blind eye on such practices, even when the law forbids them. And, at the international level, the ILO’s ability to impose sanctions is too weak, in several cases.

The ILO report will henceforth study “*private voluntary initiatives*” taken within the framework of “*social responsibility of business*”: codes of conduct, spelling out of job specifications to suppliers, social label, etc. initiatives where the textile sector is pioneer, because the companies which produce popular consumer goods, are sensitive about their public image. The report, while promoting them, however estimates that “*the emergence of a social role for the company corresponds to a significant displacement of economic power, from the State to the company*”. And, these initiatives “*provide a complement which would not be replaced, but could strengthen the application of the national laws and international labour standards.*” In other words, reducing the influence of the law is to facilitate abuse.

André Linard



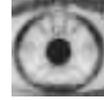
Labour inspection, key to improvements

A NEW CONVENTION SINCE 1930

It was in 1930 that the ILO adopted Convention no. 29 forbidding forced labour. The organisation then completed it in 1957 with Convention no. 105.

The first text stipulates the general abolition of compulsory work, while maintaining some exceptions, including penitentiary labour. The second stipulates five situations where forced labour must be eliminated, as punishment for prisoners of opinion, as a measure of racial, religious or other discrimination, as a method of mobilisation of labour towards an economic goal...

As always, some limited cases exist for example, implicit or explicit obligation, to do overtime. This obliges an unemployed to provide certain services for remuneration. Or again the Food for work method, consisting in granting food aid to deprived populations in exchange for work of common interest, but these situations cannot hide the fact that real forced labour still exists.



GLOBALISATION

Dialoguing without loosing the spirit

The notion of *social dialogue* spells out the mechanisms for consultation among the actors involved in labour

issues. These mechanisms can take different forms, depending on the context, whether at the international or national levels, or even at the lower levels such as sectors or companies. But the above-given definition raises a number of questions, notably on the meaning of the terms *consultation*, *actors* and *labour*. The questions raised by the WCL are in a text to be published in *Education ouvrière*, a journal published by ACTRAV, the action office of the ILO.

CONSULTING, YET AGAIN?

The importance of setting up and ensuring the functioning of mechanisms for consultation among bosses, workers and governments are due to two main reasons. First, they are consultation methods to either deal with the response to certain problems or where necessary, resolve tensions where consultation is generally preferable to confrontation. Secondly, establishing such mechanisms lead to the recognition of the legitimacy of trade unions as mouthpieces. Meanwhile, this combat is never won in advance, and always has to be started all over again. Social dialogue involves recognition of the right of participation, which proceeds from labour, and not only from ownership, including the company¹.

Again, it must be a question of effective participation. In Latin America, a number of social "dialogue" experiences enabled governments to communicate decisions and guidelines already taken to a tripartite body, certainly, but which had no influencing power. The "intangible" Structural Adjustment Programmes

often imposed by international institutions and willingly accepted by governments serves to justify these practices.



In Asia, social dialogue is a good concept in most countries, which benefit from the advantages of democracy, but it is at different levels according to the scope of the democratic processes.

A number of conditions are in fact required for the mechanisms of dialogue to be effective. First of all a demand for **information**: dialoguing on an equal footing supposes that

the actors have complete information, meant only to help obtain a correct understanding of the issues. Secondly, **regularity** of time and a **legal status** on organ(s) where the dialogue takes place. These two conditions are meant to avoid the high-handedness of governments or employers, who would only consult as they please, case by case.

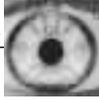
In the strict sense, *consulting* means *asking for an opinion* and nothing more and it is not obligatory to take it into consideration. However, the idea of participation goes beyond this purely simple interpretation to understand consultation in its broad sense. It is therefore a matter of real influence on the content of the decisions to be taken, which involves the right of initiative to discuss, the right to propose guidelines and the right to see one's opinion taken into account, subject to the general interest, which in democracy, is to the advantage of the policy (see *infra*).

It is true that this necessitates the existence in each society of a culture of participation and of power sharing, which too often offends another culture, where

WOULD SOCIAL DIALOGUE BE A TRAP? NO, IF THE TRIPARTITE DEBATE IS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE STRUGGLE IN THE DISCUSSION.

YES, IF IT IS A QUESTION OF WEAKENING. THE LABOUR WORLD'S ABILITY TO MAKE DEMANDS.

The three keys, symbols of the tripartism at the ILO



The annual ILO Conference must not emasculate the capacity to make demands

power is seen as a means to impose a point of view to the exclusion of others. Training of workers, employers and even government officials, could contribute to the blossoming of such a culture.

“ACTORS” BUT WHICH ONES ?

Governments, employers and workers are three indispensable poles of social dialogue. But this tripartite concept is threatened.

It is so when taken within the dominant ideology of privatisation, the private actors think they can do away with the political pole. No doubt, such an attitude is not without argument since the principle of being a subsidiary could lead to trusting only in an external institution, as it turns out, public power, which cannot be regulated between actors directly involved. It is however forgotten that in democracy, the State represents, or ought to represent, the general interest, and that employers' and trade union organisations represent interests which remain in spite of all peculiarities, even when this peculiar characteristic affects a large number of workers. The political pole therefore remains indispensable.

This leads to a second threat which weighs on the tripartite aspect of social dialogue, and which is a corollary

of the issue of representation. What in fact represents employers' and trade union organisations, which in a given case are seated around a table? This question certainly goes back to the stakes in internal democracy, but it is on another element that we would like to place the emphasis here, that of freedom for workers to be represented by the organisations of their choice, neither nominated by governments nor employers, nor monopolistic.

Finally, there is the issue of subjects to be dealt with. ILO Convention 144 envisages the establishment of tripartite social dialogue mechanisms on International Labour Standards as defined by the ILO, in all member countries. This is certainly a minimum to be achieved. It however falls within the notion of participation to extend this objective to all aspects of the economic and social policy, which concerns employers and workers. It is however to be noted in this perspective – and to be translated into practice – that a number of other ILO Conventions, on specific aspects explicitly envisage resorting to tripartite mechanisms.

IS SOCIAL DIALOGUE, A TRAP ?

The recent development of capitalism, carefully hidden under the name of *market economy*, tends to make believe that traditional oppositions between capital



and labour have disappeared. It is true that a number of recent developments, such as the profit-sharing scheme for workers in their company or the privatisation of social security, throw dust in the eyes. But, the “*employers, workers, same combat!*” is obviously a myth. Recently, during a summer University for French officials, MEDEF, the European parliamentarian Daniel Cohn-Bendit observed, obviously amidst murmurs from the audience, that “*capitalism functions well for some, but not for others*” (*Le Monde*, 2nd – 3rd September 2000).

Does social dialogue arise from the same logic? For workers, does participation in the resolution of labour issues within tripartite institutions not constitute a trap? By co-managing the economic system, do trade union organisations not risk forgetting their primary role of asking for a transformation of this system in favour of workers, and that this occurs, not necessarily by open conflict, but in any case through social struggles? Is social dialogue a trap?

No and yes. No, when the tripartite discussion constitutes a follow up to the struggle in the discussion arena rather than that of hard confrontation. Negotiating is not entering into the thinking of the adversary, but the battles of wills directed in a constructive manner. In this condition, one can consider that the existence of social dialogue mechanisms constitutes an advancement in “civilisation”, in the direction of resorting to popular methods of regulating discussions, always preferable, of course, to violence.

On the contrary, when it means weakening the capacity of the labour world to make demands by involving trade union organisations in the areas, where they are stuck, social dialogue could be transformed into a trap for workers. In such cases, trade unions

would seem to be part of the decisions taken, which would later on be difficult for workers to disclaim even if they are unfavourable to them. This is far from being just a theoretical hypothesis, even if in the permanent strategy of choices, which are to be made, the distinction is a delicate issue.

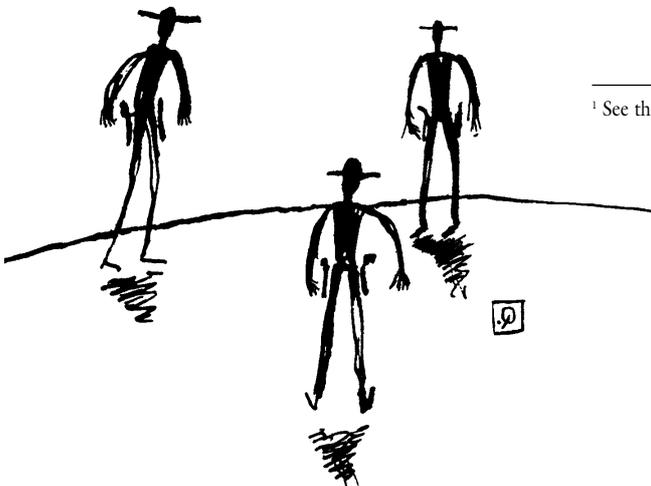
In several western European countries, for example, trade union organisations participate in the management of the economy and social relationships, or they distribute the unemployment benefits to their affiliates and negotiate – and therefore make concessions – for collective bargaining.

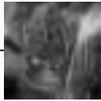
Two historic currents of the workers’ movement in fact run through these organisations. One is the notable characteristic of Northern Europe, which has the tradition of co-management and dialogue within the socio-economic system in place; the other, mainly from the South, is geared rather towards contesting the system, which leads to a higher frequency of actions, strikes, demonstrations etc... The international trade union movement must henceforth oscillate between the two complementary currents, at the risk of being reproached for being too integrated into the system, even of being an accomplice, or too critical and “ideological”.

The issue is complicated by the fact that intentions, even completely sincere ones, do not constitute the only criterion. Due to lack of analysis or for other reasons, one can “objectively” be an accomplice whereas subjectively, one thinks he is resistant. Whereas on the contrary, it is often the presence at the heart of the system which gives access to information enabling one to contest the latter and to resist some of its perspectives. Henceforth, one must of necessity broach the issue of strategy. Between radical confrontation and step by step advancement, it is impossible to absolutely settle this once and for all.

André Linard

¹ See the interview with Mateo Alaluf in *Labor-Magazine* 2000-03





PRESS REVIEW

TO THINK ABOUT...

"*The Best of Worlds* describes a civilisation where history no longer exists. To preserve its domination, under the pretext of benefiting man, the ruling caste system has as its main objective, social stability obtained through the love of servitude. The proclaimed aim is to "get people to love the social destiny from which they cannot escape". The method: audio-visual entertainment, which neutralises the critical mind and "soma" a drug, which gives euphoria without becoming addictive."

"Since it is useless to hate, it is necessary to constantly resist and oppose pockets of personal and interpersonal existence of flood tides of abusive normalisation, be they economic, social or connected with the media. (...). If there is a hope, it can only be in man and in every man, beginning with oneself and those we meet here and now. (...)

The real anti Big Brother is the "ordinary man", the fear of whom diminishes and progress increases. (...).

Wherever Big Brother threatens, rebellion is the only way to remain human".

François Brune, in *Le Monde diplomatique*, (*The Diplomatic World*), October 2000, proposed George Orwell's 1984, and Aldous Huxley's *Meilleur des mondes*

• DISMISSAL, METHOD OF EMPLOYMENT AND PATERNALISM

Swisscom envisaged axing 4,300 of its 18,000 full time jobs. The management put a "Programme of action" on its internal network for officials responsible for informing workers concerned about their dismissal. "*First phase: go quickly to the point; write up the information in your own terms. Objective: find employment again as quickly as possible, with the help of experienced specialists. Second phase: give the floor to the fellow worker; allow reactions to come out, without defusing them, this is not so serious; be understanding and upset but do not pretend; know how to listen and reply to questions. Third phase: finally give permission to the worker to go on leave to think over the meeting; do not make promises; interrupt a discussion without reason.*"

La Tribune de Genève (Switzerland), 1st November 2000

• NÉPAL

Of the thousands of Nepalese girls kidnapped to work in brothels across Asia, a brave few have returned to the country. The women now stand guard at checkpoints along the border shared with India to stop traffickers and rescue other girls about to be spirited out of Nepal. Since 1997, they have caught 70 suspected traffickers and save 240 girls. Miss Katuwal, 19 ans, scans the faces of the girl as they came through: "*It's in their eyes*", she said.

Herald Tribune (USA), 29 juin 2000

BOOKS AND DISCUSSIONS

INCOME WITHOUT WORK?

"*Population excluded from the labour market*" is defined as "*dependent or inactive*". Thus, the impression is that the population is not working. However, the reality is different, especially in less developed countries, and also in almost all OCDE countries. With the exception (and again, not always) of the retired formerly active population, the rest of those excluded from the market spend a lot of their time working, that is to say, dedicate their efforts towards the transformation of their environment.

Imanol Zubero (Bilbao, 1961) a sociologist and lecturer at the University of Basque, wrote a book on employment and labour within the framework of "neo-liberal globalisation", comparing the "American model" and the "Rhenish model". The work expresses a strong reticence about considering as a worker only those who "produce" for the market. His analysis, which is very interesting, is based on a study of the synthesis of 120 authors of 141 books, articles and documents.

His central point is the proposal to dissociate the right to basic income sufficient to live in dignity, from labour related activity. This is an important reflection, which requires analysis and discussion and concerns the trade union movement.

Imanol Zubero: *El derecho de vivir con dignidad: del pleno empleo al empleo pleno*, Ediciones HOAC, Madrid, 2000, 309 p.



NEGATIVE

Stop on picture



In 2000, this photograph received the World Press Photo award. Title : Jordanians mourn for King Hussein. The picture was taken by Tim Zielenbach, USA, Contact Press Images, for Stern

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

It is not so much the fact shown in the photo which touches me, but the picture of proud Arab men, united and mobilised behind a flag. And this, at a time when violence has erupted again between Israel and the Palestinians. It is sad to see two people occupying the same land continuing to kill one another. People try to term as religious, this struggle, which is political, and when people are considered in a context other than the reality, this hurts man even more.

What will the future be, if people spend the prime of their life condemning and insulting one another? When all human dignity is offended, it is difficult to salvage the image, and then erase the prejudices that are being sown in the two clans. Killing a citizen, who has nothing to do with the war, is terrible. Women and children are increasingly the victims of these wars, which threaten humanity. Behind the conflicts, there is first of all the human being. I believe in Islam built on tolerance and

conviviality, mutual respect... Where the innocent are victims, it is up to the leaders to say *stop, that is enough*.

Photograph chosen and commented on by Kenza El Ghali, member of the Executive Bureau of the General Union of Moroccan Workers a few days after the eruption of violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

trade union activities

Maya the Mexican in the country of the cinema



Discovery of trade union action by a young immigrant

Maya, a Mexican from Cuernavaca, clandestinely goes to the United States Border, escaping the checks on smugglers. She joins her sister Rosa, who has for a long time been sending money to the rest of her family from Los Angeles. Rosa is employed as a cleaner in a big company and got Maya a job in the same company. But soon afterwards, a female colleague was unjustly dismissed, and the reactions of the two sisters were divergent. Rosa, whose husband is handicapped, did not want to get involved, and be dismissed. Maya on the other hand, could not remain indifferent and inactive. All the more so as her heart is torn between an American trade union leader and a Mexican who was trying to improve his lot, by studying. Dilemma.... It would have been just simple if life did not intertwine different threads in the heart of each individual.

Follow-up... to the film. The preceding is in fact the scenario of *Bread and Roses*, the last film of Ken Loach, the English filmmaker known for his social commitment (*Land of Freedom*, *Carla's Song* etc). Not really a masterpiece, but a good film, in any case another view is, as wrote the editor of the Swiss daily "Le Temps", "a sacred snook to the cinema industry. The

reality is worth hundreds of fictions". This is because one needs courage to make a heroin of an ordinary expert, and a good dose of irony to show this film in Los Angeles, just a few steps away from Hollywood.

Los Angeles is the second largest Mexican city, in the State of California where migrant workers are very much needed, because they are cheap, very badly treated, and also where the Spanish language has become as common as English. After all, did the United States not deprive Mexico in the last century of more than half of its territory? And has globalisation not abolished the borders, for goods and capital... and people?

This film is the everyday story of real people, at the heart of a world of illusions.