



**ETUC CONGRESS:
EUROPE IS FACING A TURNING POINT**

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) organised its 10th Congress on 26-29 May in the Czech capital Prague; Several organisations pointed out the importance of joint trade union actions in Europe. This is only logical as Europe is facing a turning point, said our Secretary General, Willy Thys, in his speech: «*Many Central and Eastern European countries have landed in a deep social and political crisis. Ten new states will soon be entering the Union. So, it will be quite a task to constitute a homogeneous 'pool'*». In the WCL's view, forming such political, economic and social groups – like Mercosur in Latin America, for instance – is the only way to regain balance in world politics and to counterbalance almighty regimes like the United States. «*The trade union movement must encourage this trend and get organised according to the same model*», Willy Thys added. He thanked the ETUC for acting as a 'link' between the WCL and the ICFTU and praised its position in difficult issues such as the Iraq war and the Balkan conflicts. In conclusion he thanked former Secretary General Emilio Gabaglio for his twelve years of loyal service at the ETUC. Mr Gabaglio has been succeeded by John Monks, of the British Trades Union Congress (TUC).

TELE-FLASH

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G8 SUMMIT FALLS BACK TO TRADE UNION EXPECTATIONS

On 1-3 June 2003, the G8 summit met for the 28th time, in Evian (France). Though the Chairman – the French President, Jacques Chirac – had made, at the end of April, promises to the international trade unions about the course the talks would take, the results are not really satisfactory. The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD has said that not growth, employment and solidarity, but safety and the restoration of the dialogue between France and the United States were the centre of the debates on the globalisation. This dialogue had broken down since the Iraq war. This explains why more than half of the programme and the declaration of the G8 are about safety and weapons of mass destruction. Yet, we have to point out that the summit promised to pay more attention to health

issues and to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Moreover, the positions of the trade unions and social organisations seem to be gaining importance with the G8 leaders. It remains to be seen if this kind of meetings can really contribute to a sustainable development with social aims.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE IN GENEVA

On 3-19 June, the Swiss city of Geneva hosted for the 91st time the International Labour Conference of the ILO. Government delegates and representatives of the employers and the workers discussed in several 'theme committees' the observance and application of the international labour standards:

- Identification of seafarers:

the Conference adopted a new Convention, providing for a more stringent identification system that should give seafarers more freedom to do their job properly and protect them against terrorism.

- Occupational safety and health:

the Conference reached an agreement on an overall strategy and drew up a plan of action to promote a preventive safety and health culture.

- Employment relations:

on the basis of the findings of the Committee, the ILO will draw up a Recommendation on the adaptation of the employment relations to the labour market.

- Human resources and training:

the revision of Recommendation 150 (1975) was not yet finalised. The second discussion is scheduled for 2004.

- Standards:

25 cases were discussed. Luc Cortebeek, President of the ACV-CSC from Belgium and Vice President of the WCL, was the spokesman for the workers. In the cases of four countries (Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala and the United Arab Emirates) the Standards Committee ratified the decision to undertake direct contact missions to investigate forced labour practices and infringements of the freedom of association and collective bargaining. In the cases of Cameroon, Libya, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Belarus and Myanmar special paragraphs were obtained. Much to the regret of the WCL, the demand to send a fact-finding committee to Colombia was not complied with.

Besides in the committees, the WCL also participated in the special session on the occupied Arab territories. Secretary General Willy Thys reiterated that in the view of the WCL the constant violations of the UN

resolutions were the main cause of the misery and poverty in the region. During the plenary session he pointed out the importance of decent employment in the struggle against poverty and social exclusion.

BULGARIA: COOPERATION BETWEEN NTU PROMYANA AND ADS ON THE RAILS

Some time ago, the WCL went to Bulgaria with the recommendation that the two confederations NTU Promyana, affiliated to the WCL, and ADS should cooperate. The relations between both organisations are still difficult, however. Moreover, the trade union climate in Bulgaria is anything but favourable: the confederations KNSB and Podkrepa determine the social landscape, and a questionable membership counting system prevents the independent trade unions from taking part in the tripartite consultations. That is why on 4-7 June WCL Deputy Secretary General Jaap Wielen and Executive Secretary Olga Nicolae returned to Bulgaria to discuss with the executive committees and trade federations of the NTU Promyana and the ADS. *«Both organisations have every interest in combining forces, not only to play a meaningful role at the national level but also to be able to take part in the European social dialogue»*, said Jaap Wielen. Intensive talks resulted in the presidents signing a joint agreement. A form of cooperation should start within three months. The WCL promised its full support.



CLAT Secretary General Eduardo Garcia (right) with President Lula of Brazil.

CONGRESS OF THE CSD CANADA: INNOVATION AS A BASIS FOR HUMANE WORK

On 4-7 June, the *Centrale des Syndicats démocratiques* (CSD) from Canada organised in Quebec a Congress to discuss the theme 'Innovate to Humanise'. The speech of President François Vaudreuil during the opening session was very positive and progressive, entirely in line with the policy lines of the WCL. The participants discussed in workshops the combination of (trade union) work and family life, a new approach to collective closedowns, the international situation, peace... A lot of attention was also paid to free trade, particularly to the proposal of the United States to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas. The CSD is strongly opposed to this and believes that such an area would allow the multinationals full play. In his speech Willy Thys said that the WCL shares the CSD's concern for humane work. He pointed out that 'globalisation at the service of mankind' was impossible unless the market was balanced from a global perspective, in other words not around one superpower like the United States but around several poles like the EU, Mercosur and the Organisation for African Unity (OAU). *«Also the trade unions must organise themselves in accordance with this philosophy»*, said Willy Thys. The CSD Congress also re-elected Claude Faucher and Serge Tremblay Vice President and Treasurer respectively.

SOCIAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES IN PARAGUAY

On 16-18 June, the presidents of the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay) had a summit meeting. The CTCS (council of Southern Cone workers, a regional organisation of the CLAT) seized this opportunity to explain the political views of the workers to the heads of state. The CTCS and the CLAT had prepared this explanation during a large meeting of trade unions and other social organisations in Asuncion, Paraguay. The debates were about sustainable development centred on the human being, particularly the worker, and focused on employment, the environment, health care, training, social

security... The programme also included a number of international workshops, on women workers, child labour, transfrontier employment, the Free Trade Area of the Americas... Manuel Zaguirre, Vice President for Western Europe, Eduardo Garcia, Vice President for Latin America and Secretary General of the CLAT, and Secretary General Willy Thys took the floor during this social meeting.

CONFERENCE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIAN CITIZENS AND WORKERS

On 20-21 June, Lisbon (Portugal) was the venue of a conference 'for solidarity with the Palestinian people and workers' and 'against war and for peace in the Middle East'. The activity was an initiative of the 'Standing Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian People and Workers', which is composed of the WCL, the ICATU, the CGTP and other international, regional and national trade unions. The Portuguese trade union CGTP-IN hosted this event. The meeting was attended by 46 organisations, among which the WCL affiliates ACV-CSC (Belgium), USO (Spain) and ELA-STV (Basque Country). Kattia Paredes, in charge of the WCL's contacts with the Arab world, said in her speech that *«each form of state terrorism and violence is illicit and Israel is compelled to respect and apply the UN resolutions»*. She also questioned the

real aims of the so-called 'route plan' (which pledges peace and the constitution of a Palestinian State by 2005). «*But as an organisation that struggles for peace we cannot but hope that this route plan comes true*», she added. In her capacity as head of the Women and Work Department she assured the Palestinian women and children of the WCL's support. The final declaration of this conference stressed the following points: «*The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a threat to world peace; the international regulatory process must be respected, and supervision is necessary. The world trade unions have a strategic task in creating lasting peace in the region...*».

WAVE OF PRIVATISATION IN COLOMBIA THREATENS TELECOM AND ECOPETROL

While the Standards Committee and the Governing Body were talking about Colombia, the company Telecom was militarised, and thousands of workers, among them trade union leaders, were dismissed. The dispute at Telecom, one of the companies on the privatisation list, has been dragging on for some years already. Apparently the government is now proceeding very arbitrarily within the framework of the privatisation measures under Act 790/02. Ecopetrol is undergoing the same fate. Though the company accounts for 14% of the national budget, a draft decree was promulgated to split up this important national company. The trade union is under direct pressure in this process.

On 11 June, the CGTD, affiliated to the WCL, released a press statement, urging the government to opt for dialogue and not for violence. It also asked the Colombian authorities to preserve the social function of the state and to save a number of state services such as the Institute for Social Security (ISS). There are plans to restructure this institute, jeopardising so over 3,000 jobs. According to the CGTD, a number of other services (such as SENA, INPEC, INCORA and INAT) must also continue to exist.

CFTUI CONGRESS BIDS FAREWELL TO ASHOK TRIVEDI

The Congress of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of India (CFTUI), assembled in Patna (India) on 20 May with very sad feelings. Understandable, because its President, Ashok Kumar Trivedi, was killed on 15 May in suspect circumstances by four well-known Indian gangsters. He was given a touching homage, after which the foreign guests, among whom WCL Secretary General Willy Thys, insisted that the CFTUI should further develop its activities in India. The Congress then adopted the activities programme and elected Ambereesh, Ashok's brother, new CFTUI President. In conclusion it discussed and passed the resolutions. After the Congress, Willy Thys and BATU Secretary General Necie Lucero visit the head of the Intelligence Service and the Director General of the State Police to demand absolute clarity in Trivedi's murder file. They promised full cooperation



Willy Thys pays homage to the murdered CFTUI President, Ashok Kumar Trivedi.

to find the truth.

Schedule of activities

- 28 July - 05 August: 55th session of the subcommittee on the promotion and protection of human rights, Geneva – Switzerland;
- 23-28 August: international seminar of the CNV Artists' Federation, the Netherlands;
- 25-29 August: Seminar and Congress of the PFBW, regional organisation of the World Federation of Building and Woodworkers' Unions (WFBW), Lomé – Togo;
- 30 August – 04 September: WFBW Seminar, Democratic Republic of Congo;
- 01-05 September: CSC Congress Congo, Kinshasa – Democratic Republic of Congo;
- 01-12 September: International IIWE/WCL-seminar on the «*Social dialogue to prevent conflicts*», Lomé – Togo;
- 10-14 September: 5th Ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Cancun – Mexico;
- 12-19 September: International IIWE/WCL-seminar on the «*Social dialogue to prevent conflicts*», Accra – Ghana;
- 15-19 September: DOAWTU Congress, Accra – Ghana;
- 10-12 October: 90th anniversary of the NAPFE, Chattanooga – United States;
- 19-25 October: WCL Confederal Board, Jakarta – Indonesia.

For the latest annual schedule see: www.cmt-wcl.org