

restrict trade union rights or to place trade unions under government control. Thus there were instances where trade unions were banned outright - as in Thailand and in Nepal -, others where trade unions were forced by governments to disaffiliate from the ICFTU - as in Algeria and under the Nkrumah dictatorship in Ghana, and further instances in which « reorganisation » including disaffiliation from the ICFTU, was forced by governments upon the trade unions, as in Tanzania.

The growth of the ICFTU membership in the developing countries has nevertheless been spectacular. Disappointing as the pace of economic development has proved to be in large parts of the developing world, the time has been ripe for trade union organisation on a large scale in those regions and with dynamic assistance on the part of the ICFTU an explosive growth of trade unionism has been achieved.

## CHAPTER III

### **THE ICFTU'S STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

The most fundamental fight which free trade unionism has to wage all over the world is the fight for democracy and all other human rights. At the time when the ICFTU was founded, democracy had achieved great victories over dictatorial systems in some European countries, - Germany, Austria, Italy; colonial rule had broken down in vast regions of the world - in the first place in Asia; but over Eastern Europe communist rule had been imposed in the wake of the advance of Soviet troops and in giant China the communists had carried the day. At the same time the fascist regime in Spain - and a similar one in Portugal - had not yet shown any signs of weakening, while in many parts of Latin America military or fascist rule prevailed.

#### **1. The fight against dictatorship**

The ICFTU gave top priority to fighting the dictatorship systems wherever they existed and supporting democratic opposition to them. In the case of the communist regimes the ICFTU in the first place rejected their claim to be workers' regimes: it further denounced the claims of their so-called trade unions to be genuine trade unions and to represent the interests of the workers, independently of their governments. Moreover, whenever and wherever democratic forces rebelled against the tyrannical rule imposed upon them - in the uprising of the workers in East Berlin and other East German towns in June 1953; in the Polish uprising starting in Poznan in June 1956 — and in the democratic Hungarian revolution of October 1956 — the ICFTU expressed the warmest sympathies of the free trade unions of the world with these popular movements, forcefully

denounced the brutal measures of suppression which were used against them, and most generously assisted those who sought in other countries refuge against oppression. In the case of Hungary, where the democratic revolution had been victorious and was oppressed by Soviet tanks and guns, the ICFTU called with great success for work stoppages as a manifestation of sympathy and protest.

Of the utmost importance, moreover, was the ICFTU's financial action in favour of the freedom movements. First, the Third World Congress (Stockholm, July 1953) which met immediately after the East German uprisings, established a fund to assist the workers of East Germany in their struggle against oppression. Second, as a response to the Polish uprising the ICFTU Executive Board established the International Solidarity Fund, and following the Hungarian revolution the free trade unions of the world, in response to an urgent appeal issued by the ICFTU, in an unprecedented action of solidarity collected a fund of more than one million dollars - the « Hungary Fund » - earmarked for aid to the Hungarian workers and refugees.

Again when in August 1968 the Soviet Government - in collusion with four satellite governments - moved in to suppress the uprising freedom movement in Czechoslovakia by invading that country with an overwhelmingly large military force, a wave of solidarity with the Czech people and of indignation against the aggressors arose in the free trade movement; again the ICFTU took the leadership of the free trade union action of protest and of financial assistance to the Czech refugees.

No less forceful has been the fight of the ICFTU against fascist and military dictatorships. Of the numerous instances of vigorous ICFTU action two will be briefly related on account of their particular importance: that of Spain where the seizure of power by a fascist-military regime preceded the foundation of the ICFTU and that of Greece where the overthrow of democracy by a military clique is of recent date.

In the fight which the ICFTU has been waging, together with the Spanish workers, against the fascist regime in Spain, an important factor has been that when in the Spanish civil war the fascist troops broke the resistance of the democratic forces, thousands of workers sought refuge in France and elsewhere and rebuilt their trade unions in the host countries. Thus the UGT, the leading trade union federation in pre-fascist Spain, established its headquarters in Toulouse (France) and the Bas

que trade union centre, STV, in Bayonne (France). Both organisations, affiliates of the ICFTU since its inception have, with the active support of the ICFTU, continued regular trade union work in Spain, on a clandestine but highly efficient basis. Thus when the Spanish workers began to rebel against the official, government-imposed « vertical » (i.e. including the employers) « sindicatos » and to undertake trade union action of their own, including negotiations with employers and strikes, they did not have to resort to individual, unorganised action, but could act on the basis of an organised nucleus. And, in spite of cruel persecution and measures of oppression, in spite of a ban on strikes and any other genuine trade union work, these activities have become a regular weapon in the struggle of the Spanish workers for trade union rights and democratic freedoms. Whilst the Franco regime has not yet been broken and democratic freedoms have not yet been re-established, the heroic struggle of the Spanish workers - and parallel actions of students and other intellectuals - have not been in vain. Although the Franco regime has recently reinforced its measures of oppression, it cannot suppress any more the spirit of opposition which pervades the working population. Genuine trade union action persists and the aspirations for liberation from the fascist yoke have become irresistible.

The role of the international free trade union movement in the freedom fight of the Spanish workers cannot be overrated. The ICFTU has financially and morally supported the UGT in its uphill fight within Spain; it has given legal and financial assistance to persecuted trade unionists in Spain; it has time and time again given direct financial strike support, usually through direct appeals to affiliated organisations for financial contributions to this end; it has not tired of denouncing the Franco tyranny before the forum of the United Nations and of other intergovernmental organisations; it has submitted to the International Labour Organisation numerous complaints against the Spanish Government. In intergovernmental circles the ICFTU succeeded for a considerable time in blocking the affiliation of Franco Spain with the OECD, and afterwards the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD successfully prevented Franco's fake trade unions from attending OECD seminars and conferences. Moreover, the European Trade Union Secretariat has, through vigorous protest action, succeeded in blocking the application of Spain for membership of the European Economic Community. In its actions the ICFTU has not only enjoyed full cooperation with the affiliated organisations, but has also cooperated closely with the World Confederation of Labour; moreover, a number of International Trade Secretariats, in particular

the International Metalworkers' Federation, have also undertaken trade union work for and inside Spain.

In the case of Greece, while ICFTU action of protest against the overthrow of democracy by a military group has been vigorous and consistent, its efforts to encourage resistance movements could not count on the same favourable conditions as in Spain. Whereas in Spain the workers, organised in strong trade unions and political parties, had heroically resisted the fascist-military onslaught for a long time before the fascist regime could establish itself, the Greek trade unions were weakened by internal dissensions, and their fighting power was diminished by a vicious system - repeatedly condemned by the ICFTU - of financial dependence on funds based on a tax imposed on the workers and administered by the government. Thus when the military clique struck in April 1967, the leading trade union group - with a few commendable exceptions - submitted to the military dictators so that the ICFTU Executive Board was compelled to keep relations with the Greek affiliate in abeyance. There was, however, a number of trade unions and of local labour centres where submission to the military regime was not voluntary, but forced upon them by the government. The ICFTU began step by step to establish contacts with Greek trade unionists who remained faithful to the ideals of democracy and freedom. Through cooperation between ICFTU and affiliated organisations in countries where a great number of Greek workers are employed, successful action has been undertaken with a view to ensuring the allegiance of these workers to the democratic ideals and their opposition to the military regime.

In addition, the ICFTU has taken vigorous action to denounce the military regime in Greece before the international and European community, thereby weakening it morally and materially. Of particular importance was ICFTU intervention with the European intergovernmental organisations with which Greece is affiliated or associated, the Council of Europe and the European Economic Community. Upon a proposal made by the ICFTU as well as by member governments and other organisations, proceedings were opened against the Greek Government by the Council of Europe, resulting recently in a recommendation to the Conference of Ministers to suspend Greece from the Council of Europe if democracy were not restored in that country. Trade Union intervention in the European Economic Community resulted in an assurance by the Community that the normal functioning of the status of association which Greece enjoys would remain suspended until there were firm indications of the return of Greece to a democratic system.

## 2. The fight for trade union rights

Modern society has agreed to consider democracy as the supreme human right and as the source of all other human rights. But that does not mean that in every democratic system all human rights - and all trade union rights - are automatically ensured.

The early history of the trade union movement shows that even in the great democratic countries, such as Great Britain and the United States, the trade unions had to wage a long fight before freedom of association was firmly established. Thus democracy is not an absolute safeguard for the achievement and maintenance of full trade union rights. And the history of the ICFTU is full of instances of assistance to trade unions of democratic countries in fighting against restrictions of trade union rights. The most outstanding case is that of Japan, where for many years trade union rights of public employees were very precarious. The Japanese trade unions waged a vigorous fight against these restrictions and submitted complaints to the International Labour Organisation. These submissions were forcefully supported by the ICFTU and the International Trade Secretariats concerned; but it took six years - from 1958 to 1964 - during which the ILO repeatedly admonished the Japanese Government to revise its labour legislation - until the government agreed to have the case submitted to an ILO Fact Finding and Reconciliation Commission. (It was, incidentally, the first case in which a government agreed to this procedure.) After a thorough investigation by the Commission in which the ICFTU actively participated, the Japanese Government and legislature yielded and in April 1965 Japan ratified the ILO Convention N° 87 concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organise.

If it is true that even under democratic rule trade union rights are not automatically secured, this will obviously hold true infinitely more under authoritarian rule, whether of communist, fascist or military nature. The cases of Spain and Greece have demonstrated how closely lack of political freedom is connected with lack of trade union rights. The fight of the international free trade union movement for the one freedom has therefore been closely connected with that for the other freedom. It is one of the tragedies of our time that so many, particularly of the politically youngest nations have so far been unable to establish firmly rooted democratic systems. Where in this group of countries authoritarian systems have prevailed or supplanted democratic rule, trade union rights have generally

either been lost or severely restricted. In cases of violations of trade union rights the ICFTU, according to the situation, made representations to the governments concerned or appealed to the international community, mainly through complaints submitted to the International Labour Organisation.

In some countries where the ICFTU has very actively assisted in building up and strengthening free trade unions, the fight for trade union rights has been lost. Algeria and Tanzania have been the most spectacular, but not the only cases. Thus in Thailand and Nepal, in both cases after political changes in an authoritarian direction, the trade unions - all of them affiliated with the ICFTU - were banned and active trade unionists were imprisoned. The ICFTU gave financial support to all trade unionists who were imprisoned in Thailand and had at least the satisfaction of securing their release, for after the ILO had supported the ICFTU position that the detained trade unionists should be released or brought to trial, the government at last consented to do this and as a result of the trials all trade union detainees were acquitted and released.

It is, on the other hand, gratifying to note that losses were sometimes matched by gains. The most successful case was that of Venezuela, where a strong trade union movement, affiliated with the ICFTU, was destroyed by the cruel tyranny of the dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez, who seized power in November 1950. Seven years later, in January 1958, a revolution, in which workers played an important part, ousted the dictator and restored democracy; the trade union movement was revived and the re-established CTV reaffiliated with the ICFTU in July, 1962.

Another case of restoration of trade union rights is that of Ghana. While political democracy has not yet been re-established in that country, the overthrow of the dictatorship entailed the immediate collapse of the whole apparatus for the subjugation of the trade unions to the government which Nkrumah had erected. The trade unions were again allowed to function freely and the Ghana TUC re-established a democratic structure.

Another favourable change has taken place in Indonesia. Under the dictatorship by Sukarno and the communist forces which had assumed control over the country, their trade unions enjoyed a quasi-monopolistic position although non-communist trade unions were still tolerated. When the Sukarno regime was overthrown and while the establishment of democratic rule is still in a preparatory stage, the non-communist trade unions have greatly expanded and either reaffiliated with the ICFTU or

reaffirmed their affiliation, with the effect that free trade unionism in the second largest country of the developing world (outside of communist China) is now firmly allied with the ICFTU.

### 3. The fight against racialism

For all genuine trade unions the issue of trade union rights is of vital importance, but it is by no means the only aspect of human rights of concern to them. It has been mentioned above that in another field of human rights, that of the elimination of discrimination, the ICFTU from its inception has taken a clear and unambiguous position. It soon became clear that the issue of discrimination was to be one of the most serious problems which the ICFTU had to face. In the Declaration on Economic and Social Demands, which was adopted by the Founding Congress, the ICFTU pledged itself to « seek to eliminate everywhere in the world any form of discrimination or subjugation based on race, creed, colour or sex ». The ICFTU has had to tackle this problem on many fronts. In the United Nations the ICFTU cooperated intensively in the work of the Commission on Human Rights and played its part in the preparations for the two Covenants on Human Rights, which constitute a comprehensive code of political, civic and social rights and are combined with a machinery of complaints comparable to that which the International Labour Organisation has built up in the field of trade union rights.

The most serious form of discrimination and subjugation against which the ICFTU has been fighting is that by race and colour. There again, democracies are by no means guiltless of this form of violation of human rights. In the United States for instance, where the Negroes - about 10 per cent of the population - emerged from slavery barely a century ago the fight for genuine racial equality is an uphill one, in spite of progressive legislation and administrative measures. The AFL-CIO is a key factor in this fight and has always had the support of the ICFTU.

The issue of racial discrimination and subjugation has, however, assumed its most tragic dimensions, after the liquidation of colonialism in most parts of the world, in the colonial type countries of Southern Africa, South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies.

When in the Union of South Africa the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Daniel F. Malan came to power in 1948, it

established, in brazen disregard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its infamous apartheid policy. Through diabolically systematic measures of oppression, which were intensified from year to year, including a ban on residence of Africans in cities, trade union legislation which deprived them of almost all trade union rights, a policy of job reservation which restricted their opportunities, segregation in education, and abolition even of indirect parliamentary representation through white deputies, the African - and other non-white - population has been virtually reduced to servitude, and every attempt to fight against this brutal violation of human rights has been relentlessly suppressed through detentions without trial and brutal police force, which culminated in the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960 when 69 Africans were killed and 178 injured.

The ICFTU has always been in the forefront of the international fight against apartheid. It has submitted complaints to United Nations bodies and the International Labour Organisation, given financial aid to victims of the apartheid policy, supported actions undertaken by special United Nations committees and made frequent appeals to the United Nations and to governments for effective economic sanctions against South Africa. The ICFTU was the only international organisation which organised direct boycott measures. The Sixth World Congress of the ICFTU (Brussels, December 1959) called upon the affiliates to organise a consumer boycott against South Africa. This boycott was proclaimed in May 1960 for a duration of two months.

Rhodesia's racialist policy came under the spotlight of world attention when the white-settler government of that country in December 1966 unilaterally declared its independence. In fact there had been for a long time before a steady build-up of racialist policies, which were vigorously opposed by the international free trade union movement. While Rhodesia — under the name of Southern Rhodesia - was still part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland - (an attempt by the British Government at an artificial amalgamation of three colonies - Northern Rhodesia- (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi) - under white hegemony, which the ICFTU steadfastly opposed before its establishment in March 1953 and over its whole existence), Southern Rhodesia from 1959 on enacted « emergency » legislation which enabled the government arbitrarily to dissolve organisations and to detain persons without trial. The government used these powers to destroy the existing trade union federations and to detain opponents, among them a steadily increasing number of trade unionists, for practically unlimited periods. The ICFTU has countered by

denouncing this policy of racial oppression, by calling for effective sanctions, by giving financial and educational support to the imprisoned trade unionists and by stationing permanently - together with certain International Trade Secretariats — a representative in Rhodesia who works with the African trade unions in that country and gives support to the trade union prisoners.

The third great racialist power in Southern Africa, Portugal, with its huge colonies Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea, has been shaken by armed uprisings in her colonies, which started in Angola in 1961 and spread to Mozambique. Portugal, being a poor country itself with very low living standards for its own workers, has to finance a comparatively large and costly military establishment in order to keep its colonies subjugated - and still it is unable to keep the entire territory under effective military control. A large number of refugees from Angola having settled in Congo-Kinshasa, an Angolan trade union organisation in exile was founded in that country, as part of the liberation movement; it affiliated with the ICFTU in 1961. A parallel trade union organisation in exile was established in Senegal covering trade unionists of Portuguese Guinea (Bissau). The ICFTU supports these trade unions actively.