

The Asian-Australasian Trade Union Liaison Bureau (AATULB)

At the Second World Congress of the WFTU held in Milan in July 1949, the Congress, in its "Resolution on the Reports Concerning Trade Union Activity in the Countries of Asia, Australasia, Africa and Latin America," called upon the executive bodies of the WFTU to consider seriously the setting up of Regional Liaison Bureaus in those parts of the world where they may be considered necessary for the improvement of the conditions of life of the working class and the development of trade unions.

At the meeting of the Executive Bureau which took place in Peiping, November 1949, one of the items on the agenda was the "Creation of Liaison Bureaus in Asia and Africa, Their Functions and Program of Activity."

The Executive Bureau passed the following resolution concerning this item of the agenda:

"Considering that the conditions in which trade union activity is taking place in the countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa differ considerably from those of Europe, and considering the difficulties in maintaining liaison between the Executive of the WFTU and the Trade Union Organizations of the above-mentioned countries:

"Taking into account the need to strengthen and develop this liaison with the aim of consolidating the unity of the working class of all countries, and of improving the exchange of experiences and information and the practical assistance to be given to the trade unions meeting with difficult conditions,

"The Executive Bureau of the WFTU decides:

- "1. To set up a WFTU Liaison Bureau with the trade unions of Asian and Australasian countries and a WFTU Liaison Bureau with the trade unions of African countries;
- "2. To instruct the Secretariat of the WFTU to strengthen its organic liaison with the Bureau of the CTAL (Confederation of Workers of Latin America), which is considered, in accordance with the decisions of the Executive Committee of February 1949, as the Liaison Bureau for Latin America;

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- "3. To instruct the Secretariat of the WFTU to examine the possibility of creating, in the near future, a WFTU Liaison Bureau with the trade unions of the Near and Middle East.
- "4. The composition and methods of work of the Liaison Bureaus may be varied in accordance with the concrete conditions of trade union activity existing in the groups of countries indicated above. The Executive Bureau will adopt, for the creation of each Liaison Bureau, a resolution defining its composition and its method of work.

"The Executive Bureau will also adopt the budget of each Liaison Bureau established in collaboration with the National Trade Union Centers concerned."

The resolution then went on to state that the principle functions of the Liaison Bureau shall be as follows:

- "a. To assist the trade union organizations of the given group of countries to explain and carry out the decisions of the Congress and the WFTU Executive.
- "b. To conduct the widest possible propaganda on the aims and objectives of the WFTU, and to circulate information on its activity. To publish the WFTU Review and all other publications.
- "c. To fight against the policy of splitting the ranks of the working class and to popularize by all possible means (press, pamphlets, radio, etc.) the decisions and the general activity of the WFTU.
- "d. To establish contacts with the Trade Union Centers affiliated with the WFTU and with the progressive trade union organizations which for whatever reason, do not belong to the Federation. To recruit new members for the WFTU.
- "e. To keep the WFTU informed on the development of the trade union movement in the given groups of countries.

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- "f. The representatives of the Liaison Bureau may, in agreement with the Executive Bureau, take part in the meetings and conferences both of the National Trade Union Centers of the group of countries concerned and of the trade unions and federations.
- "g. The Liaison Bureau will report on its activity to the Executive Bureau of the WFTU. For this purpose it will submit, every three months, a complete report on its activity to the General Secretary of the WFTU. After study of the report by the Secretariat of the WFTU, the latter will forward the document to the members of the Executive Bureau of (for ?) the adoption of its conclusions.
- "h. The Liaison Bureau is a working body of the WFTU. It should not become a screen between the National Trade Union Centers and the Secretariat of the WFTU and, consequently, between the National Trade Union Centers and the Executive Bureau and Committee. Each trade Union Center will retain its right and duty to maintain and to develop its direct relationship with the leading bodies of the WFTU.

"The Executive Bureau instructs the Secretariat of the WFTU continuously to advise the members of the Liaison Bureau in carrying out their work; the Secretariat must give them all the necessary support for the implementation of the rules and tasks set out in the resolution."

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In implementation of this resolution, and taking into account the resolution adopted by the Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australasian Countries (Peiping, November 1949), the Executive Bureau of the WFTU decided:

- "1. To set up a Liaison Bureau for Asia the headquarters of which, in conformity with an agreement arrived at with the All-China Federation of Labor, will be in China and temporarily in Peiping;
- "2. To fix the number of the members of the Liaison Bureau for Asia at four, as follows:

- 1 representative of the All-China Federation of Labor,
- 1 representative of the All-India Trade Union Congress,
- 1 representative of the Soviet Trade Unions,
- 1 representative of the Australian Trade Unions, the latter to be nominated in agreement with the Trade Unions

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Internationals (Trade Departments of the WFTU).

"The designation of these members shall be approved by the Executive Bureau.

- "3. The main responsible representative in the Liaison Bureau will be the member designated by the All-China Federation of Labor.
- "4. This decision will come into force on 1 January 1950.
- "5. The Secretariat of the WFTU is mandated to take all administrative and financial steps necessary for the implementation of this decision. It will present to the next meeting of the Executive Bureau a report on its activity in this connection."

There is no concrete evidence that the African and the Near and Middle East Liaison Bureaus ever actually came into existence. The AATULB, however, did actually start functioning in about mid-1950, with headquarters in Peiping. LIU Ning-I, Vice President of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and a Vice President of the WFTU, appears to have been the principal Chinese representative, while Ernest THORNTON, who arrived in Peiping in the summer of 1950, was the Australian representative. The names of the Russian and Indian representatives to the Bureau at that time are not known to us. In November 1952, however, it was reported that KUZMENKO fnu., was the Russian representative. He was further identified as the "Propaganda Chief" of the Liaison Bureau.

While the original Executive Bureau decision stated that the Bureau would be composed of representatives from India, China, USSR and Australia, representatives from Japan, Vietnam and Indonesia, have also been reported at various times to be working in the Bureau.

As of June 1954, CHEN Yu (China), was the Secretary General of the AATULB.

During the five years of its existence, the AATULB has given very little reason to believe that it has been able to adequately fulfill the tasks originally assigned to it by the Executive Bureau. While it has engaged in the distribution of propaganda material on a limited scale, it has been only infrequently in touch with the trade union centers of the various Asian countries. Neither does it appear to have accomplished much in the way of assisting trade union organizations in the Asian countries to carry out decisions of the WFTU executive bodies.

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The WFTU, however, apparently still considers liaison bureaus to be important. At the III Congress of the WFTU held in October 1953, the resolution on the third item of the agenda, "The Development of the Trade Union Movement in the Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries," included the following statement:

"The Congress recommends the executive bodies of the World Federation of Trade Unions and the Trade Unions Internationals (Trade Departments of the WFTU):

To expand their assistance to the trade union movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries;

To help the trade union organizations in the countries to convene regional trade union conferences;

To ensure the development of the work of the Liaison Bureaus of the World Federation of Trade Unions."

We do not know at the present time what concrete steps have been taken by the WFTU to implement this resolution of the Congress. However, on 9 December 1954, the Soviet trade union publication, Trud, reported that "as a result of the expansion of the WFTU's relations with the trade unions of Asiatic countries, the Executive Committee elected two representatives (from Japan and Indonesia) to the WFTU's Bureau for liaison with Asiatic countries." The names of the two representatives elected were not revealed.

We have received no information which would lead us to believe that the AATULB is to be replaced by another organization. It is possible that the unconfirmed reports to this effect have their origin in the attempts by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions to establish an Asian Trade Union Congress, at which the various Asian trade union organizations would be represented.