

TRADE
UNIONS
IN
PEOPLE'S
CHINA



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I. BRIEF SURVEY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN CHINA

China's trade union movement began after the First World War. Ever since its first days, it has developed under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Communist Party of China, after it was founded on July 1, 1921, established the Chinese Trade Union Secretariat, openly to lead the working-class movement of the country.

Under the auspices of the Secretariat, the First All-China Labour Congress was held in May 1922 in Canton, attended by 162 delegates, representing 200,000 workers organized in more than a hundred trade unions in twelve cities. The Congress discussed ways of eliminating the craft outlook among union members and the differences between local groupings in trade unions, educating the workers in socialism, drawing them into the democratic revolution; and other questions. The Congress adopted such slogans as "Down with imperialism" and "Down with the war-lords," and passed resolutions to strive for the 8-hour working day and to give support to strikes. It was also resolved that until a national federation of trade unions was established, the Chinese Trade Union Secretariat was to be recognized as the liaison centre for the trade unions of the whole country.

From 1922 to February 1923, the tide of the workers' struggle rose all over the country. More than a hundred strikes were called involving 300,000 railway workers, dockers and seamen, factory workers and miners. The majority of these strikes were successful, and during the strikes new trade unions were organized. Fearing the growing strength of the trade unions, the warlords embarked on a policy of suppression. On February 7, 1923, workers on the Peking-Hankow Railway came out to fight for their right to form a union, but were crushed by a massacre in Hankow and Changhsintien. Trade unions in all areas controlled by the warlords were closed down and driven underground, resulting in a temporary decline in the movement.

In Kwangtung Province in South China, however, trade unions still kept their legal status and the movement continued to surge ahead.

In May 1925, sponsored by the trade unions of railway workers and seamen and workers of other branches of industry, the Second All-China Labour Congress was held in Canton, attended by 277 delegates, representing 165 trade unions with a total of 540,000 members. The Congress resolved that an All-China Federation of Trade Unions be set up, that the working class of the country take an active part and lead the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and feudalism, and that the workers unite with the peasants and revolutionary forces within the country. In order to link up the struggle of the Chinese workers with that of the workers of the whole

world, the Congress voted to affiliate with the Red International of Labour Unions.

Shortly after the Congress textile workers in Japanese-owned mills in Shanghai came out on strike in defence of their union, and during the strike one of their leaders was killed. On May 30 a demonstration of the Shanghai workers in support of the textile workers was fired on by the British police of the international "settlement." This led to the nation-wide demonstrations against imperialism known as the "May 30th Movement." In Canton and Hong-kong, the general strikes which aimed at imperialism had the sustained support of the workers and people throughout the country and lasted sixteen months. This movement laid the foundation for the Northern Expedition carried out later by the revolutionary government in Canton.

The Third All-China Labour Congress was convened in Canton in May 1926, attended by 502 delegates, representing 699 trade unions with a membership of 1,241,000. The Congress pointed out that the immediate task of the Chinese working class was to support the National Revolutionary Army to carry out the Northern Expedition, and to unite with the peasants, who constituted 80 per cent of China's population, in the common struggle.

After the Northern Expedition was launched in July 1926, workers all over the country organized transport teams to support the expeditionary army. Workers in Shanghai, in co-ordination with the northward drive of the army, staged three armed uprisings and occupied Shanghai. The trade union movement

developed rapidly with the victorious advance of the expeditionary army. Never before had the All-China Federation of Trade Unions enjoyed such high prestige among the nation's workers and office employees. In June 1927, the Fourth All-China Labour Congress was convened in Hankow. It was attended by 420 delegates, representing 2,800,000 members, an increase of nearly 1,600,000 over the previous year. The Congress condemned Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal of the revolution, and called upon the workers of the whole country to carry on the struggle. Following the failure of the First Revolutionary Civil War (1924-1927), the trade union movement fell to a low ebb under the reign of terror of the reactionary Chiang Kai-shek clique.

After the betrayal of the revolution by the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communist Party set up revolutionary bases in the countryside. Here the workers were accorded broad democratic rights, and they organized their own trade unions and actively supported the revolutionary war. In areas controlled by the Kuomintang, the broad masses of workers waged unremitting struggles against the reactionary rule for democratic rights and better living conditions.

In November 1929, the Fifth All-China Labour Congress was held secretly in Shanghai, attended by a hundred delegates. The Congress called upon the workers to oppose the reactionary rule of the Chiang Kai-shek clique.

In July 1937, the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression broke out. Leaders of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions went to the liberated areas in the enemy's rear, and to areas occupied by the

Japanese and the Kuomintang, to wage the struggle against the Japanese invaders.

In the fight against the enemy, the workers of the liberated areas demonstrated their courage and determination, vigorously carrying on production in order to support the war. At the same time they formed many trade unions. In 1945, the Preparatory Committee of the Workers' Federation of China's Liberated Areas was set up which comprised organizations covering 920,000 members.

In September 1945, the World Federation of Trade Unions held its constituent congress in Paris. Teng Fa, representing the workers in the liberated areas, and Chu Hsueh-fan, President of the Chinese Association of Labour in Kuomintang-controlled areas, together formed a delegation to attend the congress on behalf of all the workers of China. The Chinese trade unions formally joined the World Federation of Trade Unions.

In the nineteen years after the Fifth All-China Labour Congress, workers in Kuomintang-controlled areas were no better than slaves. They had practically no freedom or rights whatsoever, and suffered from the ruthless exploitation of bureaucrat-capitalists and groaned under the joint rule of terror of the imperialists and Chiang Kai-shek clique. But, undaunted, the workers persisted in their heroic struggles. During the years of the War of Liberation, the workers in Kuomintang-controlled areas waged struggles against foreign aggression, against starvation, persecution and civil war. In co-ordination with the People's Libera-

tion Army, they dealt telling blows to the reactionary rule of Chiang Kai-shek.

In August 1948, a year before the nation-wide victory in the Chinese People's War of Liberation, the Sixth All-China Labour Congress was held at Harbin, then a liberated city. The Congress was attended by 518 delegates from trade unions in the liberated areas, from the Chinese Association of Labour and other democratic trade unions in the Kuomintang-controlled areas, representing altogether a total of 2,830,000 organized workers. The Congress adopted resolutions on the current tasks of the Chinese trade union movement.

The supreme task of the Chinese working class, the resolutions pointed out, was to strengthen working-class solidarity and unite with all sections of the people to overthrow the rule of American imperialism and its tool—the Kuomintang reactionary clique, and establish the Chinese People's Republic. The resolutions also defined the tasks of the labour movement in the liberated areas and in the Kuomintang-controlled areas.

The Sixth Congress decided to restore the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, amended its Constitution and elected the Sixth Executive Committee. Thus it enabled the Chinese working class to regain its unity under the banner of the people's revolution.

Following the Sixth Congress, the Chinese working class waged bitter struggles in line with the resolutions of the Congress. In spite of extremely difficult conditions, workers in the liberated areas, together with peasants, succeeded in increasing pro-

duction to support the War of Liberation. On the other hand, workers in the Kuomintang-controlled areas, uniting with various sections of the people, fought against aggression, persecution and hunger. In the liberation of various cities the workers fought to protect factories, helped the people's government to take over the enterprises owned by bureaucrat-capital and rapidly restored production. At the same time the trade unions carried out political education among the workers which strengthened their understanding of their new position as masters of the country and gave them a new attitude towards labour.

During 1949 all major cities in the country were liberated and in February the All-China Federation of Trade Unions moved from Harbin to Peking. It convened, in July of the same year, a national conference on trade union work, at which the question of organizing the workers on a nation-wide scale was discussed. In November 1949, the Chinese Association of Labour, which was affiliated as a separate organization to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, voluntarily announced its dissolution. This further strengthened the unity of China's trade union organizations. In June 1950, the Trade Union Law of the People's Republic of China was promulgated by the Central People's Government which granted extensive rights to trade union organizations. Since then the trade union movement has spread rapidly all over the country.

On May 2, 1953, the Seventh All-China Congress of Trade Unions opened in Peking. Delegates to the

Congress numbered 830, representing 10,200,000 trade union members. The Congress elected the Seventh Executive Committee, adopted a report on amendments to the Constitution and amended the Constitution. The Congress also adopted important resolutions concerning reports on the trade union work in China. These reports and resolutions summed up the experiences gained in trade union work in the four years after liberation, and defined the policies and tasks of trade union work in the period of planned national economic construction.

The fundamental tasks of the Chinese trade union organizations during the period of national construction, the resolutions pointed out, were to unite and educate the workers to steadily raise their political consciousness and strengthen their sense of organization; to consolidate the worker-peasant alliance; to unite with all sections of the people to work actively for the fulfilment of the national construction plan; to gradually improve, on the basis of developing production, the material and cultural life of the working class and all other working people; and to strive, step by step, for China's socialist industrialization and transition to socialism.

The resolutions of the Congress also made it clear that internationally the task of the Chinese trade unions was to fight, continuously, for lasting peace and for greater solidarity and unity among the workers in the labour movement of the Far East and all over the world.

At the present moment, the Chinese trade unions, which by December 1954 had a membership of 12,454,000, are leading the working class throughout the country to strive for fulfilling ahead of schedule the First Five-Year Plan (1953-57) for Development of the National Economy.

II. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TRADE UNIONS

1. The Organizational Principle of the Trade Unions

The trade unions of the People's Republic of China are organized along industrial lines, based on democratic centralism. They are under one national unified centre.

(1) Under the principle of organization along industrial lines, all trade union members in the same enterprise or office are grouped together in one single basic organization; and all trade union members in the same industrial branch of the national economy are organized in the same national industrial union. Local trade unions, whenever possible, are also to be organized along industrial lines. Thus, all the workers of an integrated iron and steel works—steel smelters, machinists, building workers, electrical workers, transport workers, engineers and technicians, and other workers and staff members—are organized in the same primary trade union body which is part of the national heavy industry workers' trade union. And the trade union members in the works coming under the Ministry of Heavy Industry are organized in the Heavy Industry Workers' Trade Union. Organizationally, this principle guarantees close unity of the workers throughout the country as an integral body.

(2) Under the principle of democratic centralism, the leading bodies of the trade unions of all levels

are elected democratically from below by the membership or its representatives. They submit reports on their work at regular intervals to the membership; the lower trade union organizations carry out the decisions of the higher trade union organizations; the trade unions of all levels carry on their work in accordance with their Constitution and the decisions made. All decisions are made by a majority vote of the members present at the meetings. The Constitution of the Trade Unions of the People's Republic of China also stipulates that the All-China Congress of Trade Unions shall be convened every four years; the national congresses of industrial unions, every three years; congresses of the provincial trade union councils, the trade union councils of those cities directly under the central authority, and provincial congresses of industrial unions, every two years; congresses of trade union councils of those cities directly under the provincial authority and congresses of industrial unions in cities and mining areas, annually; the general membership meeting or the meeting of representatives in an enterprise or institution, every year or six months. This principle guarantees democratic life in the trade unions.

2. The Organizational System of the Trade Unions

(1) The Supreme Leading Body of the Trade Unions in the Country

The supreme leading body of the trade unions in the People's Republic of China is the All-China Fed-