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Secretary PEO, CYPRUS

Speech to the WFTU General  
Council Moscow

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*Andreas*

Dear comrades,

I have asked to be one of the speakers at this solemn meeting of the General Council held in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Paris Conference and Congress at which the establishment of the WFTU was decided. I am grateful to the Presidium for satisfying my request.

Dear comrades,

I had the privilege to be one of those trade union leaders who participated in the efforts to overcome the divisions which for decades have weakened the trade union and labour movement of the world and thus made it easier for the enemies of the working-class and of the people, to attack and destroy most of their social economic and political achievements.

I was a very young trade union leader when the news came across that at last the leaders of the most influential Trade Union Centres in the World, agreed to forget their differences and concentrate on the points and problems that could bring them together and unite them in common struggles. This news caused joy and enthusiasm among the trade unionists of all ranks and the workers in general. The Second World War was approaching its victorious end. Fascism had been smashed and defeated together with its ally, the Japanese militarism. Now the people expected the realisation of the declared aims of the antifascist war: The elimination of nazism and fascism and the destruction of the fascist military machine. The restoration of freedom, of the social and democratic rights of the people. The denazification of the economy, of education, and of all aspects of life. The national liberation and the exercise of the right of self-determination by all the colonial people; the elimination of colonialism. The protection of the right to work and the elimination of unemployment and hunger. The recognition and protection of the right to organise and all the Trade Union freedoms and rights.

The establishment of a complete and comprehensive Social Security system that would offer protection to the unemployed and the sick, to old-aged people, to disabled people, to children and women, and finally the establishment and protection of a just and lasting peace.

For the politically matured and class-conscious workers and Tradeunionists, it was clear that the realisation of the declared war aims was not an easy exploit. In addition to the preservation and strengthening of the unity of the allied antifascist nations, the unity of the International Trade Union and labour movement was also imperative. Thus, we may say, that the London World T.U. Conference in February 1945 and the Paris Conference and Congress in October of the same year and the decision to establish the W.F.T.U. as the united single organisation of the trade unions movement of the world, was the expression of the will of the world working-class to unite its forces and contribute in the creation of a new peaceful and happy world. If indeed the establishment of the W.F.T.U. in 1945 was the expression of the will of the international working class for unity-and I believe it was-a question may arise as a result of the events that led to the split of the W.F.T.U. three years later. How was it possible for the enemies of the working class to split the W.F.T.U. in 1948 so soon after its establishment?

Our answer to this question is that the will for unity expressed by the London and Paris meetings was not strong enough to overcome the remnants of ideological suspicion enmity and the lack of confidence that were prevailing within the labour and Trade union movement for nearly half century before.

We remember that when unity was achieved in 1945 many comrades spoke about the bitter experiences of the working class and its Trade union Movement from the divisions of the 1920s and the 1930s. Nearly everybody was ready to admit that those divisions in the labour movement reduced the strength of resistance against the advance of fascism. That was a bitter experience. But again, that experience could not prevent the split of the WFTU in 1948.

The split in the thirties reduced the resistance of the working-class and the people against the advance of fascism. Today the existing split and the activities of the enemies of unity is reducing the strength of the resistance of the working-class and the people against the war plans of American imperialists and their allies.

Dear comrades,

There are great similarities between the prewar period of the thirties and the present time. As in the years 1935 to 1939 we witness an unprecedented armaments race which at present extends into space. As the cynics openly declare they are engaged into research work for the preparation of the Stars War. Chemical war is also being prepared and new generations of powerful missiles are being manufactured and deployed in strategic points ready to strike at any moment against the peaceful nations of the world and mainly against the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. As in the thirties we witness an unprecedented upsurge of anticommunism and antisovietism, this time coupled with a more intense intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, in particular in the internal affairs of people fighting for their national independence for their social freedom and their economic emancipation. The situation in the Middle East and in Central America is characteristic.

I said that there are great similarities between the prewar period of the thirties and the present time. These similarities are not confined to the aggressive policies of imperialism, to the armaments race caused by their policies and to their anticommunist and antisoviet plans. The similarities of the two periods extend into the field of Trade Union politics. At that time, in the thirties, in the years of the appearance and advance of fascism, and in the years of the preparation for the Second World War the trade union Movement was sharply divided along ideological and political lines. An ideological war was waged between the two major trends of the movement. All the efforts of the revolutionary and class based movement to achieve unity of the working class and set up an antifascist

front failed. They met with the stern refusal of the anticommunist and antisoviet leaders of the reformist Unions.

This is what, is again happening in the Trade Union field, today. For over 35 years the World Federation of Trade Unions is working for the achievement of the international Trade Union unity and for over 35 years the right wing leaders of the ICFTU undermine these efforts and prevent the realisation of unity.

I am not alleging that in the field of the struggle for peace things are all along similar to the situation existing in the prewar years in the 1930s. There are important differences to-day which are functioning in favour of the peace forces. Now, the Soviet Union as the champion of peace is not alone. The Socialist camp stands solid and all powerful in defence of peace supporting the initiatives of the Soviet Government. This is not the only support for the Soviet initiatives. The non-aligned movement is another source of support for the cause of peace.

Turning now to the W.F.T.U. as a source of strength and support for every peace initiative, we confidently believe that inspite of the division and the attacks by our enemies we are a much stronger and more influential Federation than the whole Tradeunion movement of the 1930s. We believe that the influence and impact of our policies is extending far beyond the limits of our affiliated national centres.

The W.F.T.U. leadership and the W.F.T.U. affiliated National Centres never forgot what has been written in one of its resolutions at the Paris Congress. That "it was the solidarity of the people of the united Nations displayed in the struggle against the common enemy, which ensured victory on the battlefield" and that "the only guarantee of stable and lasting peace lies in the continued cooperation and friendship among the people of the United Nations and the unshakeable unity of their governments". The Paris Congress declared its dedication "to the task of preserving and strengthening this unity".



In another resolution the Congress in Paris declared its deep consciousness "of the need of increasing cooperation and friendship between Nations and of preserving the firm and unshakeable alliance of their governments in making and maintaining a just and enduring peace".

We believe that during the 40 years of our existence and our activities as a World T.U. organisation we remained faithful to what we have decided and declared in London and Paris.

My intervention has concentrated on the question of peace. Nobody should assume that the activities of the WFTU were confined solely in this political field of peace. As it was guided and instructed by the London Conference and the Paris Congress the WFTU never failed to direct its attention and its activities towards the social and economic problems of the workers. I could mention unemployment, social security, safety and health at work, working environment, the problems of youth, the problems of women, the Tradeunion and democratic rights, the consequences of the activities of the multinational corporations, the effects of the scientific and technological revolution on the life of the workers, the economic and social consequences on the life of workers by the frenzied armaments race.

I would not say that in the course of all these activities we made no mistakes or that we had no weaknesses. But we can confidently declare that the WFTU, its TUIs and its affiliated centres remained faithful and consistent with the principles and the declarations of the London Conference and the Paris Congress.

At this solemn celebration of the 40th anniversary of our WFTU we have only one pledge to take: that we shall continue to be faithful and consistent with the ideas the principles and the tasks set by our great Federation, that we shall be faithful to the principles of solidarity and internationalism.

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