

WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

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PRESS COMMUNIQUE

On September 22, Louis SAILLANT, General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, was interviewed by A.D.N., the Press Agency of the G.D.R.

Question: What is your opinion on the proposal for general disarmament made by the Soviet Union to the United Nations, and how can the workers help to make this proposal a reality?

Answer: Since the cause of peace between the peoples and of the security of nations is of such cardinal concern, the proposals made by Nikita Khrushchov at the United Nations' General Assembly, are of exceptional importance. The colossal reception they have received everywhere in the world, is a measure of the peoples' desire for peace. Only persons of ill-will can maintain their obstructive attitude in this matter.

It seems that it will be possible to break the deadlock on disarmament that has existed in recent years. With the Soviet plan for universal disarmament, the governments will have to say yes, or no, to disarmament; the western governments now have no other alternative. They may try to give a 'no' that looks like a 'yes' or give a 'yes' so trammelled by reservations that it will amount to a rejection. It seems to me that this double-talk is becoming more and more difficult now. The peoples are publicly showing their growing concern about the problems of peace and, in addition, the Soviet initiatives have provided real and genuine openings in relation to the delicate problem of disarmament.

The workers, as a distinct social class, are leading the fight for peace. They realise all the economic and social advantages that they can obtain in every country as a result of an effective disarmament policy. The financial burden of the arms policy is a heavy load on the workers in general. That is why they support any proposal that could lighten or remove this burden. That is why they will help to implement this plan for general disarmament, by organising, to taking an active part in an irresistible demonstration of public opinion that will help to remove the obstacles that still form a stumbling block to peace between the peoples.

Question: As General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, which represents the interests of 95 million workers in all parts of the world, what do you think of the opinion expressed by N. Khrushchov in his speech, when he said that a lessening of international tension also partly depended on the elimination of the remaining vestiges of World War II, on the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany and on the establishment of a normal situation in West Berlin?

Answer: We have already replied to this question at the time of the European Trade Union and Workers' Conference for a Peace Treaty with Germany, Disarmament and a Ban on Atomic Weapons, held in Goerlitz last May. The conclusions set out in the Memorandum adopted by the Conference are still valid. Every breeding-ground of war in the world must be eliminated by way of negotiation. The opinion expressed by N.K. Khrushchov in front of the United Nations' General Assembly, that the present situation in West Berlin remained a source of tension and that the city was potentially the most dangerous area of Europe, signifies that the causes of this tension must be removed by constant and patient negotiation. It also means that a new situation assuring security and peace must replace a state of affairs which is a potential threat to peace. Should the plan for universal disarmament within a period of four years be taken into consideration, this would also imply settlement of disputes

that block or delay disarmament. And the question of West Berlin is one of the foremost of these delicate problems.

If I am to believe the news that comes to us from the five continents, the trade unions and workers of the world appreciate the boldness shown by the Soviet Premier in his speech, and the clear and concrete terms he used. The concept that general disarmament is possible has become the idea that, from now on, will predominate at mass rallies and workers' meetings throughout the world. And if obstacles are presented, then the workers, men and women alike, will understand more clearly where to place the blame.

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