

WORKERS OF THE WORLD



Chileans form trade union federation

CHILE - As Chile voted "No" to army dictator Pinochet, the Chilean trade union movement also made the most of the opening of political space.

Over 1,110 delegates representing 360,000 workers met in August to relaunch Chile's national trade union federation. It will replace the one banned following the 1973 military coup.

The new trade union federation Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT) estimates that 80% of the organised working class from all sectors supports it.

In their "Programme of Struggle" the Chilean trade unionists commit themselves to "a new social order, of genuine justice, democracy and liberty for Chile".

Aquino's vigilantes attack unionists

PHILIPPINES - Trade unionists are under attack from vigilantes in Aquino's Philippines. In the last fifteen months at least five shop stewards of the union federation KMU (Kilusang Mayo Uno), have been shot dead by a vigilante death squad group called "KADRE".

KADRE and other death squads have the support of the Aquino government. President Cory Aquino has called them a "concrete manifestation of people's power". According to the independent Commission on Trade Union rights, such attacks show the increasing use of vigilantes and Latin American style disappearances as part of the Aquino government's "low intensity conflict" strategy used against opposition forces.

The KMU said the situation in the Philippines was a "undeclared state of martial law with a liberal facade". Aquino has also refused to repeal Marcos' repressive labour code and has ordered the army to dismantle picket lines.

GREAT BRITAIN - Two hundred and forty one of the hundreds of miners sacked by the Coal Board during the 1984-85 British miners strike are still out of work.

TANZANIA - Tanzania is going ahead with coal mining. A Chinese built mine at Kwira is under construction and will soon produce 150,000 tons of coal each year.

COLUMBIA - Since 1986 over 130 Columbian trade unionists have been assassinated, disappeared or gravely wounded.

On 3 April 28 agricultural workers were killed by government security forces. Columbian workers have formed an organisation called CUT to protest against government attacks.

CUT has been involved in demonstrations and days of solidarity such as the successful March of Silence against the Dirty War. Their slogan is "Better to be with fear than to cease to be because of fear".

Solidarity with Peru strikers

STRIKING mineworkers in Peru in South America are coming under attack from the government and employers.

Mineworkers have been on strike for nearly eight weeks. They are standing solid. Employers are refusing to negotiate at a national level. The government is not attempting to bring the two parties to the negotiating table, but has come in support of the mine bosses.

Their union office has been raided by police and national executive members detained.

The NUM has sent a contribution to the Peruvian mine workers strike fund to help feed miners and their families.

In a statement of solidarity, the NUM said "it was the international norm that workers be free to associate and withdraw their labour in order to advance their cause".

NUM call for international miner unity

THE NUM and the National Union of Mineworkers of America are to submit a resolution to the 46th Miners International Federation (MIF) congress in Harare next year calling on the executive committee to look at the possibility of a merger with other international mineworkers' federations like the International Miners Organisa-

tion. The NUM resolution says that it is in the direct interest of mine workers "to join forces with workers in other countries who work for the same multinational corporations in order to carry out effective joint action".

The president of the IMO is British mine worker leader Arthur Scargill.



Viva MUNI Namibian workers are impatient for their independence from apartheid

Workers of Namibia demand control

THE powerful slogan of the mineworkers of Namibia is "A people united shall never be defeated".

For the people of Namibia independence is closer than ever before. PW Botha and South Africa have agreed at the negotiating table with Cuba, Angola, America and the USSR that Namibian independence under the United Nations Resolution 435 will take place soon.

But the workers and peasants of Namibia, led by SWAPO, will not believe South Africa's promises until they see free and fair elections happen. They have suffered too long as a colony of apartheid.

Workers stayaway

On 20 and 21 June this year Namibian workers took two days of stayaway action to protest against the presence of SADF military bases in Northern Namibia. Workers - united in their federation NUNW (National Union of Namibian Workers) - demanded the removal of the SADF bases, the release of detainees and that police violence should be halted.

NUM has good relations with the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN) since its launch. As Comrade Elijah Barayi said in his speech to the second congress of MUN this year: "We are not only fighting the same racist apartheid state. In many aspects we are fighting the same employers."

On 23 November 1986 the Mineworkers Union of Namibia was launched in Katutura, Windhoek.

MUN membership has more than doubled after its launch. It

Ready for the day

MUN's general secretary, BEN ULUNGA told NUM News that by building worker democracy and control in the unions now, workers were getting ready for the future free Namibia. "Workers will have more control when we make the laws", he said.



now stands at over 9 000 signed up members which is close to 50 per cent of the entire workforce in the mining industry.

About 20 000 people are employed on the mines. The main employers are Consolidated Diamond Mines (De Beers), Rossing, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto in the U.K and Tsumeb TCL, owned by Gold Fields and a United States Company.

The chief minerals mined are diamonds, uranium, copper and lead.

Minerals dominate Namibia's gross domestic product (GDP) accounting for 40% and are responsible for the bulk of the apartheid regime's revenue in taxes.

MUN has signed recognition agreements with CDM, SWA Lithium and Salt Co and Rossing. An access agreement has been signed with TCL.

Apartheid's colony

The background to the problem of workers in Namibia is the reality of Namibia's status as a colony illegally occupied by racist South Africa. Labour legislation is conservative and racist.

The MUN came about as the miners own answer to a situation of colonialism and apartheid.

In South Africa, wages for mineworkers who do the hardest and most dangerous work in the mines are amongst the lowest in the South Africa economy. Wages for mineworkers are, on average, 20 percent below those in manufacturing.

But in Namibia, the situation is different. Miners in Namibia get more money than workers in other sectors. But wages on Namibian mines are often lower than on similar mines in South Africa.

For example the minimum wage for the A1 band at De Beers mines in Namaqualand, Kimberley and Premier is now R553 a month. Although MUN recently negotiated a 21% increase at some mines, there are workers getting as low as R90 a month.

Worker control

The MUN and mineworkers take democracy and workers control very seriously. At their special congress in February MUN resolved that the union had the crucial task of helping build democracy. Workers had the practical task of creating organs of and building "Peoples' Power".

MUN has been harassed by mine authorities and the regime.