

SYMPOSIUM
ORGANIZED BY
THE INTERNATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEE
OF
ENGINEERS, SUPERVISORY AND MANAGERIAL STAFFS, AND TECHNICIANS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE
ON THE
PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The structural crisis affecting the economy of all the advanced capitalist countries has significant consequences on international economic relations. These relations are still strongly dominated by Capitalist Economies and Multinational Corporations (80% of trade of the developing countries is with the major capitalist powers). The disorders of the capitalist system are thus causing disorders in the international relations under its domination.

Everything is being done to shift the burden of the crisis onto the developing countries and the workers, every endeavor is made to intensify overexploitation of the workers and pillage of the developing countries. This strategy contributes to deepening the crisis, and in particular, in the field of international relations, to unstabilizing these relations.

However, the harmful policies of the capitalist powers are not the only cause of the crisis in international relations. Another cause is the relative weakening of these powers, due to the development of the socialist countries, to the economic and political victories won by the national liberation movement, and to the struggle of the workers within the capitalist countries.

This unsettling of international relations therefore has positive aspects as well as negative ones, since it is another facet of the crisis of the capitalist system.

The present situation is the result of an unfavorable change for capitalism in the balance of forces, notwithstanding the precarious situation of the developing countries. The anarchy in international economic relations, and the pillage of these countries have devastating effects, but at the same time, the new demands which have arisen and the first successes which have been won are creating more favorable conditions. The present state of affairs and the prospects for the future are of prime interest for the workers and their trade union organizations.

These new demands and possibilities are at the basis of the requirement for a new international economic order. The type of relations implied by such an order places bilateral and multilateral cooperation between countries at the forefront.

Real cooperation cannot exist unless certain principles are respected. The purpose of such cooperation is the economic and social development of all countries on the basis of national independence and in particular, national control of development. Among other things, this implies recognition of the right to nationalize foreign-owned companies. Cooperation should not be an obstacle to national independence, but should, on the contrary, contribute to strengthening it. Cooperation should also benefit all the partners thereto and should be developed on the basis of mutual interests.

The statement of these principles makes it obvious that the present practices of the capitalist countries, with their "redeployment" strategy, are the negation of genuine cooperation. Concerning raw materials, the capitalist countries are attempting to impose mechanisms which they would control and which would operate for their sole benefit.

Concerning the industrialization of the developing countries, they advocate and put into practice the specialization of these countries in a small number of basic and labor intensive industries, thereby increasing their dependence and precluding any possibility of independent development. Concerning technical progress, they are tightening the control over selective transfer of new technologies.

Since they are encountering difficulties, they are now attempting to give token satisfaction to the demands which are arising by imposing a pseudo-cooperation, abusively called "new economic order", which would enable them to continue exploitation and pillage under new forms.

This is why the new international economic order and its concrete implementation through genuine cooperation is an objective of the struggle which must be imposed.

Cooperation can and should play an important part in the development of relations in areas neglected by imperialism. For example, a wide range of possibilities exists for the establishment of mutually beneficial exchanges between the developing countries. However, owing to their economic level, the developing countries will have to maintain their economic relations with the capitalist powers. Cooperation must therefore be imposed on these powers, by developing both general and specific contractual relations ^{between states} outside the circuits dominated by the multinationals. Cooperation, to be efficient, must fully engage the responsibility, especially financial, of the advanced capitalist countries.

The multiplication of contractual procedures between states, with medium or long term regulatory agreements governing relations in all the major fields of mutual interest would be a strong contribution towards the stabilization and harmonious development of international exchanges.

The workers, and in particular, the Engineers, Managerial and Supervisory Staffs and Technicians, have a specific role to play. Economic cooperation in the framework of a new international economic order is obviously an affair of States. But the workers must take part in the struggle to impose this order, by exposing the imperialist strategy of unequal development, pillage, worsening of the crisis. The trade union organizations can reach an agreement to refuse the policy of redeployment, which results both in pseudo-industrialization of developing countries, based on overexploitation and low wage rates and in de-industrialization of advanced capitalist countries, causing unemployment.

They must bring all their weight to bear in favor of establishing genuine cooperation. They must also ensure, and no one can do so better than they, that such cooperation takes their interests into account and has the most advanced social content possible.

It must be realized that cooperation between states with different, and often conflicting, economic and social options entails a risk of agreements which are detrimental to the workers.

The primordial place of technological cooperation, especially in industrial relations, and the fact that the workers on temporary assignments to other countries for an industrial project are mainly Engineers, Supervisory and Managerial Staff and Technicians gives these workers and their trade union organizations a special responsibility.

Technological cooperation, closely related to that established in production, is also related to scientific relations and adult education.

The Engineers, Supervisory and Managerial Staff and Technicians must struggle to ensure that the content of this cooperation is such as to satisfy the real needs of the economies of the countries concerned. Access to existing technologies, for countries which do not yet possess them, must not be provided under the wrong conditions. Many processes should be simplified to bring to an end the overvaluation practices by the vendors. In a very large measure, technologies belong to the heritage of mankind and should no longer be considered rare products.

The qualified personnel sent by the vendor country must largely contribute to making the processes accessible to the workers of the host countries. The Engineers, Managerial and Supervisory Staffs, and Technicians must use their influence to ensure that the industrial cooperation agreements do not neglect personnel training for the host country but on the contrary, guarantee this training. In order not to be confined to the role of "commercial mercenaries", the workers of the vendor countries responsible for the execution of projects must act in common with their counterparts of the host countries, for training but also for technological adaptation and even for the joint elaboration of new technologies. The establishment of new, advanced forms of cooperation - for instance, industrial coproduction - cannot but contribute to such joint action.

In the framework of genuine cooperation, a satisfactory solution to the problem of "brain drain" could be found. Obviously, the multiple constraints engendered by underdevelopment would remain a disadvantage for the developing countries for a certain time. But cooperation, although it could not completely eliminate such a deeply rooted phenomenon, would make it possible to transform this form of pillage into a means of scientific and technological development for the country of origin, by application of the "balanced interests" principle.