

LABOUR IN PALESTINE

According to the International Trade Union Confederation, a significant agreement was reached on Aug. 6 between the Israeli trade union congress, the Histadrut, and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU). The agreement involves protecting the rights of those Palestinians who work for Israeli employers.

Included will be the reimbursement by the Histadrut to the PGFTU of legal and union representation fees that have been paid by Palestinian workers with Israeli employers since 1993. In the future, at least 50% of such fees will go to the PGFTU to enable both organisations to provide representation and legal services.

Implementation of this agreement will be overseen by a joint committee of both organisations. Both organisations also pledge to base their future relations on dialogue, negotiations and joint initiatives to advance "fraternity and coexistence between the two peoples."

The 250,000-member PGFTU, close to Fatah, has been criticised by many Palestinian labour activists, like those of the Democracy and Workers' Rights Center (DWRC), for a lack of internal democracy. Up to 50,000 workers in the West Bank and Gaza were represented last year at the founding of a new independent labour coalition, the Federation of Independent Unions-Palestine. Unions represented ranged from education, medical, and financial workers to the Unemployed Workers' Federation. This new coalition operates outside the structures of the existing political parties.

The new coalition had advocated an agreement like the one just signed by the PGFTU. As Hasan Barghouti of the DWRC has noted, freedom of association and the right of workers to organise has been expanding, and a vibrant labour movement is growing up among Palestinians.

Gerry Emmett,
Chicago

CARNIVAL OF REACTION

The present conflict between Russia and Georgia, to use James Connolly's prescient phrase when he warned of the partition of Ireland, stems from the "carnival of reaction" that inevitably followed the break-up of the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union existed, the South Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples enjoyed self-determination as autonomous soviet socialist regions within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, itself a component of the mighty USSR.

From the standpoint of the right to self-determination, their arbitrary transformation, without consultation or consent, from free and equal citizens of a multinational socialist state, with their own autonomous region, into second-class citizens, or aliens, within a bourgeois republic, and puppet state of America, has no legal validity.

The South Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples have the right to self-determination. They have made it clear that they wish to exercise that right

either by forming independent states or by becoming members of the Russian Federation.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and especially since the CIA-scripted and choreographed so-called 'Rose Revolution', Georgia has been a particularly reactionary puppet state of America, its veritable bridgehead in the entire region. It has sent large numbers of troops to join the US-led occupation of Iraq; forged close military ties with the United States and Israel, which include massive weapons supplies, training and the provision of large numbers of 'advisers' and mercenaries; aspires to join the European Union (EU) and NATO; and has engaged in constant provocations against Russia as well as against the Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples and other minorities.

At the NATO summit in Bucharest, a green light was given for Georgia's future membership. This represents an intolerable provocation and a mortal danger to the Russian Federation, particularly in view of other developments, such as the plans by the US to site its 'Missile Defence' systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

CPGB-ML, London