



NEWSLETTER

Japan International Labour Foundation

Office: Kinmei Building, 3-23-2, Kanda-Jimbocho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0051, Japan

Telephone: 81-3-3288-4188 Facsimile: 81-3-3288-4155 E-mail: info@jilaf.or.jp

First Field Project in Vietnam

Seminars held on "Trade unions in a market economy - Japan's experience"

Preparations under way since 2000

For the periods from December 13-14 and 17-18, 2001, in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh respectively, seminars were held jointly by the Japan International Labour Foundation (JILAF) and the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) on the theme "Trade unions in a market economy—Japan's experience." The seminars were intended for Vietnamese trade union activists. This was the first time that JILAF has implemented a field project in Vietnam.

To get the project underway, in May



▲ All participants in the Hanoi seminar

2000, a group represented by Kiyoshi Samamori, who was General-Secretary of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO) at the time, visited Vietnam and established a formal relationship with VGCL, and from July 2000, VGCL members were invited to join JILAF's Invitation Program. At JILAF's 34th Meeting of the Board of Directors and Councilors, it was decided to hold seminars in Vietnam in FY 2001 as a pilot project. Following this decision, during talks in September 2001 between a group of VGCL representatives (headed by President Cu Thi Hau, and visiting Japan at the invitation of RENGO) and JILAF, in response to a request from the Vietnam-

ese side, it was agreed to hold seminars in December 2001 on the role of trade unions in a market economy.

Presentations on "Japan's experience"

As this was the first field project in Vietnam, JILAF's President Tokumoto and Vice President Sato attended the seminars. Over 100 people (including 20 women) participated on the VGCL side at the Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh seminars combined, including representatives from VGCL Headquarters as well as officers responsible for social and economic policy from local trade union councils of Hanoi City, Ho Chi Minh City and other provinces.

At both seminars, on the first day President Tokumoto gave a presentation on the theme, "Current Situation of the Japanese Trade Union Movement and the Problems it Faces" He explained the structure and history of

Japanese trade unions, as well as labor-management relations, problems confronted during each era, and the current status of trade unions in Japan, then responded to questions from participants. On the second day, adopting the two-part theme of "Japan's labor law and social security system" and "employment policy in Japan," Vice President Sato gave a presentation on how these matters have developed in line with Japanese economic and social trends, particularly in conjunction with developments after the Second World War, then responded to questions. For both presentations, materials in Vietnamese language were distributed among participants, in addition to using

an OHP.

Enthusiastic participation

The seminars on "The role of trade unions in a market economy" have been held in Mongolia, China and some other countries and their content is tried and tested, having also been presented during each visit by union members invited to Japan. In Vietnam, the shift to a market economy has been under way since the introduction of the reform policy Doi Moi in 1986. Vietnam's trade unions, even now, are struggling to respond in terms of labor-management relations. Moreover, it appears that they face the need to address such issues as privatization of state-owned enterprises, unionization in foreign-affiliated companies, and unionization in export-processing zones. Perhaps due to such circumstances, participants responded very well to the seminars, listening intently to the presentations, and vigorously asking many questions.

High rating by VGCL

Regarding the seminars, participants re-



▲ Opening scene at the Ho Chi Minh seminar

peatedly gave a high evaluation: "Very helpful." VGCL's President Cu and the others involved expressed their appreciation to JILAF, and said they hoped that similar projects would continue in the future.

Working in Concert with Russian Team

— Four Russians visit Japan in invitation program —

Through the first such invitation since the establishment of JILAF, a team of four young Russian trade union leaders visited Japan for two weeks from November 29, 2001. The team members learned about Japan's trade union movement, labor-management relations, productivity movement, and relevant legal system. They also engaged in interchange with regional RENGO associations, and paid a visit to Hiroshima.



▲ Study visit to Nippon Steel Oita Plant. At an intake wharf for raw materials.

The four-person team consisted of two people (one woman) from the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), which is the successor to the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU) of the USSR era, and one person each from All-Russian Confederation of Labour (VKT) and the Confederation of Labour of Russia (KTR). Their ages ranged from 22 to 34 (average: 29.5), and they constituted, as JILAF intended, a "young team." Culture clashes resulting from insistence on home-country culture (regarding time, commitments, awareness of objectives, etc.) did not arise between the team members and the JILAF Secretariat.

After identifying the items from the official schedule that interested and concerned the team members, activities were focused on the following:

1) Status of trade union commitment to the process leading to establishment of legal systems, collective agreements, working conditions, etc., and methods for those concerned to check compliance after establishment.

2) Unionization methods, union dues, collection methods, union management, and responses to the needs of young workers.

3) Labor-management relations

1. Particularly strong interest in labor-management relations within individual companies

2. System of labor-management consultation system as a means of mutual understanding between management and labor

3. Strong concern about the employer side regarding collective agreements

4) Regarding social dialogue, ideal venues for dialogue in the context of Japanese government, labor and employers, labor-management relations in individual industries, and labor-management relations within individual companies.

5) The productivity movement and the Japan Productivity Center that have contributed to Japan's economic growth since World War II.

6) Strong impressions obtained from the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Museum regarding the tragic consequences of a nuclear weapon.

In addition, the team commented on the possibility of establishing a productivity center in Russia.

Finally, the team's comment in the course of interchange with RENGO Oita came close to summing up their study, as follows.

"During the shift to a market economy since the break-up of the USSR, the Russian labor movement has learned mainly from European industrial unions, but there have

been many problems. On this occasion, we have found labor-management relations within individual Japanese enterprises extremely pertinent. In the Soviet era, all industries were state-run, and even since the break-up, Soviet-style labor-management relationships within individual enterprises have continued to exist. Within such relationships, we intend for labor and management to cooperate in order to increase productivity through labor-management consultation system, and we recognize the need for social dialogue among government, labor and management, in political, social and



▲ Hiroshima visit. In front of the Ground Zero monument.

economic terms. We consider that we should have productivity organizations."

In my previous occupation, for five years from 1990, the writer worked as a field consultant in charge of a special aid project organized by the Japanese Government for Eastern European nations. As one who actually experienced the confusion of the shift to a market economy during that time, I believe that the thoughts and actions of this team of young Russian leaders will bring a breath of fresh air to the Russian trade union movement.

(Kichinosuke Yamazaki, JILAF Project Adviser)

FROM JIMBOCHO

“Poverty Anywhere Constitutes a Danger to Prosperity Everywhere”

Although I have never been to Afghanistan, the summer before last, accompanied by an armed scrutiny, I traveled from Peshawar in Pakistan to a tribal area where numerous Afghan refugees reside. The huts, made of hardened mud, were covered in dust. Children were raggedly dressed and barefoot. Shops where guns were for sale stood side by side. It was a world of extreme poverty.

That same year, I had the opportunity to visit Israel and Palestine. Although the region's natural and economic environ-

ments were harsh, at the time, labor union members on both sides had high expectations regarding the progress of peace agreement. Now, however, incidents of bloodshed are reported on a daily basis. Here as well, I believe that due to loss of opportunities to earn a living under such unstable, dangerous conditions, the spread of poverty throughout society as a whole underlies the region's problems.

Given such conditions, I am painfully aware of the gravity of the words in the ILO constitution and the Philadelphia

Declaration in the context of today. In other words, I firmly believe that “universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice,” and that “poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.”

(Reported by Yamada)

ICFTU report on development cooperation by trade unions

In November 2001, the Report on Development Cooperation by Trade Unions was presented to the ICFTU's High-Level Partnership Meeting on Development Cooperation by Trade Unions. The report was based on questionnaire surveys regarding the activities of 1) ICFTU member unions and organizations for their development cooperation, 2) the ITS, and 3) regional organizations of the ICFTU. RENGO and JILAF also cooperated in the survey.

Regarding 1), looking at the report in terms of project funding, target groups, and themes:

- The total funding for the 21 responding organizations in 2000 was about 70 million USD. Most organizations had two sources of funds, namely union funding and government funding. Among European national centers, organizations with a high proportion of funding from union funds were Austria's OGB (100%) and France's CFDT (85%). In contrast, organizations with a high proportion of government funding were Holland's FNV (92%) and the UK's TUC (88%).
- The main target groups of projects were women and young workers, unions affiliated with the national centers, low-wage workers, refugees and socially disadvantaged groups, and persons responsible for industrial safety.
- Among the main project themes were unionization, human and trade union rights, labor standards, labor law, collective bargaining, women's rights, safety and health at

PROFILE



Tsutomu Arai

Representative, RENGO office in Europe, Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC-RENGO), (Stationed in Brussels, Belgium).

After working for the former General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, appointed Assistant Director of International Division, Department of International Affairs of JTUC-RENGO in 1991. Between October 1999 and August 2000, served as Director of Field Projects Department of JILAF. Appointed to present position in August 2000.

the workplace, environment, and capacity building. In particular, there was a focus on basic trade-union education and training, such as "train the trainer" initiatives and training for union officers and members in general.

The report brings together data from around the world on development cooperation by trade unions, and is apparently the first to include comparative profiles and analyses. At the High-Level Meeting, while further effort was requested to enable the report to provide more comprehensive coverage through international cooperation among trade unions, it was evaluated highly as a valuable source of information. I have high expectations of the next step in the process of this work.

JILAF 6th International Activists Training Course

"I study even in my dreams"

In November 2001, the JILAF 6th International Activists Training Course began, and the 12 trainees are currently studying hard. Here, one student reports on how the study is going.

The course is really great, as it comprehensively covers the English skills and knowledge of trade union movement and labor-related matters required of international activists. In particular, a lot of time is spent on English, and we're learning from our wonderful teachers Kunii, Hashimoto, and Utsunomiya. In class, we use a method called shadowing, and while paying attention to pronunciation, intonation, and natural rhythm from English tapes, we mainly practice speaking English at the same speed. By working to understand sentence structure and the like, the aim is to boost our English skills overall. We really exert ourselves to the utmost every day with this sort of Eng-

lish practice. Regarding pronunciation and intonation, we receive numerous instructions (of course, that's not all, but...), and practice repeatedly outside of class, and during our commute as well. The people on the train must be thinking "This guy's strange, always muttering to himself!" but we're so intent on our purpose, we can't afford to worry about that sort of thing. We do the shadowing together with our fellow students, and everyone's trying really hard. So far, several homework assignments have required us to record and submit our own shadowing, and at first, it really didn't go very well. Sometimes I threw the Walkman at the walls, and other times I dreamed I was reading aloud from the textbook (what a nightmare!). Now I'm starting to get the hang of things, but each day is demanding.

Incidentally, all the students have English nicknames, and mine is Patrick. When I was given the nickname, I wanted an English-

sounding name even though it didn't suit me at all, but in fact, the name has stuck. We all call each other by our English nicknames. Participants vary widely, from local-union executive officers to headquarters staff of industrial unions. I'm learning a lot from everybody, through their enthusiasm for English and their high awareness of the issues facing the trade union movement.

I'd like to make full use of the valuable experience I've gained through the course, and together with my 11 wonderful colleagues, I'd like to continue striving hard in the future.

Yutaka Ito, Japanese Trade Union Confederation

China's ACFTU Holds Seminar on "Unionizing Small and Medium-sized Enterprises"

On November 25th (Hangzhou), 27th (Wenzhou), and 29th (Ningbo) in 2001, an ACFTU (All China Federation of Trade Unions) seminar on unionizing small and medium-sized enterprises was held as a JILAF field project. In recent years in China, the labor force has made a major shift from provincial to urban areas, and from state-owned enterprises to foreign and private-sector companies. Furthermore, with China's entry to the WTO and the decision at the National People's Congress on October 27th, 2001 to revise the Trade Union Law, the environment surrounding labor is changing

significantly. At the seminar, a presentation on unionization, collective bargaining, and collective agreements in view of such issues was given by Project Adviser Yasuhiko Matsui (adviser of the National Union of General Workers and President of the TOKYO IPPAN of NUGW). ACFTU officers and participants from each area energetically raised questions, indicating an enthusiastic desire to absorb the experiences of Japan's small and medium-sized enterprises-based unions.

Team of Women Visits Korea for International Interchange

From January 20-25, 2002, women leaders selected from each RENGO regional block visited Korea. The purpose of such visits is to investigate the labor situation overseas, and to engage in interchange with labor unions in the host country. This project is held every year in cooperation with RENGO, and this time 11 people led by Kanae Okushima, Director of Gender Equality Division of RENGO, visited Seoul and exchanged opinions, primarily on women's labor issues, as well as explaining the situation in Japan. Last year in Korea, the Ministry of Gender Equality was established and the law relating to maternity support was revised. Now that efforts are being made to support women workers, women's issues present an inexhaustible subject for discussion.

The organizations visited were the Japanese Embassy, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the Ministry of Labor, Shinyoung Textile Labor Union, and Yonsei Hospital Labor Union and its associated nursery. Study tours were also made to a factory and other sites. There were many women among the staff on the Korean side, and opinions rooted in everyday experience were frankly exchanged.

Among the host organizations, the FKTU provided thoughtful assistance, from arranging visits and accompanying team members during their investigations, to obtaining lunch invitations. We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation. At each location visited, the team received warm hospitality, and lively conversation ensued. There was enthusiastic communication from both sides, as the team members were eager to learn more about Korea, while their hosts were intent on hearing about the actual state of affairs in Japan. Both sides reached a shared understanding that, irrespective of nationality, women face the same problems, and the team members came to view Korea—so close in many ways, yet distant in others—as a truly good neighbor.



▲ Meeting at the FKTU office

JILAF Calendar (December 2001 - February 2002)

1. Invitation Program

- Russian Team (November 29 to December 12, 2001)
- Central Asia/Mongolia Team (January 31 to February 13, 2002)
- Korea/Hong Kong Team (February 14-27, 2002)

2. Field Projects (Only those conducted by specialists sent from Japan)

- ACFTU Seminar on Unionizing Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in China (November 24 to December 2, 2001)
- Seminar on "Trade unions in a market economy—Japan's experience" in Vietnam (December 13-18, 2001)
- POSITIVE National Trainers' Conference in Nepal

(November 25 to December 5, 2001)

- POSITIVE Conference in Mongolia (January 19-26, 2002)
- Attendance at 3rd Anniversary Celebration of Kovilpatti Children's Learning Center and observation of learning center in India (January 26 to February 1, 2002)
- POSITIVE Seminar and attendance at conference in Thailand (January 27 to February 4, 2002)
- Attendance at Southern Africa Project Evaluation Meeting in Kenya (February 4-7, 2002)
- Seminar on management analysis and basic knowledge of production in Indonesia (February 14-18, 2002)

3. Meetings, etc.

- Industrial Federations/ITS Conference in Tokyo (February 6, 2002)
- 34th Taxation Committee Meeting in Tokyo (February 20, 2002)

4. Overseas Surveys

- Interview survey on "Labor issues and labor-management relations in Korean multinational companies advancing into China" in China (December 16-19, 2001)
- 4th Study Meeting on International Labor Issues held in Tokyo

5. Dispatches of Women's Teams for International Interchange

- Dispatches of women's teams for international interchange in Korea (January 20-25, 2002)

Inside Out

Last fall, the Chinese B team visited Japan in JILAF's invitation program. One night, we enjoyed Ping-Pong games, JILAF vs. China, at a small table-tennis hall in Tokyo. Of course, table tennis is a national passion in China. The way our opponents handled the ball

was beyond us. Balls flew too fast for the eye to see, slow balls had a tricky spin, and we couldn't win. JILAF lost all the matches "kampei". Afterwards, both sides exchanged many toasts "kampei", saying, "We're certain to beat you next year!" (I)