

ICFTUE

FROM COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY

A FREE TRADE UNION PROGRAMME
FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

C93-0858

NATIONAL CENTRE of FREE TRADE UNIONISTS in EXILE

NOV
1965

A free trade union programme for the central and eastern European countries

Issued by

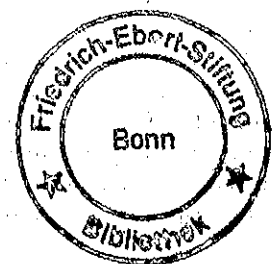
The International Centre of Free Trade Unionists in Exile

PREFACE

WE of the International Centre of Free Trade Unionists in Exile represent all the peoples of eastern and central Europe now living under communist dictatorship. We represent their faith in democracy and free trade unionism. We express their hope that one day their foreign rulers will be forced to recognise their right to self-determination in a free and truly democratic society. We voice their conviction that this emancipation and national independence lies in the unavoidable trends of the future.

We look at the future with confidence and pride. We want this future to be one of democratic liberties and social justice. The communists and all those who have betrayed our labour movement may look back at the past, allies and accomplices as they are of the most reactionary forces.

We are looking ahead !



C93-0858

INTRODUCTION

We live in an age of change - technological, as well as social, economic and political. We live in a world which is slowly but surely evolving towards a society based on the principles of individual freedom, social justice and political and economic democracy. We also live in an era of political self-determination - the right of independence for the peoples. Those of central and eastern Europe are as much entitled as any other to benefit from those basic principles.

The peoples of central and eastern Europe have a proud tradition - dating back many decades - of struggle for political and economic democracy and social justice. With the defeat of Hitler in 1945 those aims seemed within their grasp, but their hopes were dashed by the communists. One-party dictatorships were set up in all the countries of central and eastern Europe occupied by the Red Army at the end of the second world war. (I)

The communist rule was based primarily on a reign of terror and the progressive forces were its main victims. The peoples of central and eastern Europe have in general been deprived of all their basic rights and liberties. In particular the workers have been stripped of their political and economic power. The old exploiting classes have gone, but they have been replaced by a new, much more powerful and much more effective exploiter - the totalitarian communist state. The workers have lost not only their political right through the suppression of their democratic socialist parties, but also the means of economic self-defence through the subordination of their trade unions to the communist party.

The process of de-Stalinisation, which began after 1956, has modified to a certain extent the outward appearances of the communist dictatorship. The forced labour camps have given way to more subtle methods of administrative and economic pressure. Basically, however, the system itself has not changed. Its political, social and economic institutions - all essentially totalitarian in character - remain intact. Nothing short of a truly democratic system will satisfy the working masses of central and eastern Europe. They want a society free from class domination and class privileges, but based on the essential political rights of the individual.

The purpose of this small brochure is twofold : firstly, to describe briefly the economic, social and political situation of the countries of central and Eastern Europe; and secondly, to outline a free trade union programme designed to restore to them democratic liberties together with social justice. In the absence of any freedom of association and expression in these countries, the free trade unions of the democratic world have the moral duty to act as spokesmen for the workers behind the iron curtain. It is the sincere hope of the International Centre of Free Trade Unionists in Exile that this programme will help to restore the faith of those workers in the possibility of social progress; to show them that the real alternative to communist dictatorship is not a return to capitalism in industry or a semi-feudal system in agriculture, and, in this way, to contribute perhaps to speeding up the process of the economic, social and political emancipation of eastern and central Europe from communist domination.

(I) Albania, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) which were annexed outright by the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

The last twenty years.

Twenty years ago the peoples of central and eastern Europe rejoiced at the end of the Nazi terror and the terrible destruction of the second world war. They believed they were on the threshold of a new era of freedom. The situation was ripe for radical, social and economic changes. The fact that these changes took place in the shadow of the Red Army, which turned out to be a conqueror rather than a liberator, cannot change the historical fact of the spontaneity and the mass character of these popular aspirations. They were built upon the traditions of their own democratic and socialist movements.

1945 saw the end in central and eastern Europe not only of the war and Nazi dictatorship but also of the old system of economic and political oppression. Power slipped out of the hands of the ruling classes. The conditions for the building up of a new society based on economic democracy and social justice had been created. Agricultural reforms, public ownership of big banks and of the key sectors of industry, comprehensive social security schemes and the democratisation of education - these were demands shared by all progressive forces, some of whom were hoping to work together with the communist parties for their implementation.

The totalitarian tactics of the communists, however, frustrated the efforts of the democratic forces. The former wanted a monopoly of absolute power. And through police terror, forged elections and coups d'état backed by Soviet military might, they soon had it.

The trade union movement was among the first and the principal victims of the communist terror. Labour leaders were imprisoned or forced into exile. So too were leading members of the democratic political parties and tens of thousands of ordinary people. The unions were taken over by the communists or crypto-communists and became mere tools in the hands of the government. Power was vested in the hands of small cliques of local communists, totally subservient to Moscow. The masses were reduced to a semi-colonial status. Politically, militarily and economically, these countries were forced to pursue policies which were often detrimental to their national interests. The communist parties of central and eastern Europe proved to be docile instruments of these new forms of imperialism.

The workers, in whose name but without whose consent power was exercised by the communists, soon realised that under the new regime they had lost their freedom. The peasants soon woke up to the fact that their land, whether acquired through the land reform or inherited from their forefathers, was to be collectivized. The intellectuals found themselves shackled by a stricter censorship and ideological control than anything ever imposed by the most despotic governments in human history.

The individual in these countries has been robbed of all his basic rights and liberties. True, new "socialist" constitutions everywhere guarantee formally the exercise of fundamental human rights. In practice, however, there is no freedom of speech, no freedom of the press, no freedom of association.

Under the communist system, judges have no independence. The party often determines in advance the guilt or the innocence of the defendant. The courts often violate even laws adopted by communist legislative bodies. The only criterion of justice is the political expediency of the moment. Under this system tens of thousands of innocent people have perished, including labour leaders of long standing and communists who have revolted against the corruption of the system.

Communist dictatorial rule has been excused as a so-called historical necessity without which industrialisation and economic progress would not have been possible. It is true, of course, that the majority of the countries of central and eastern Europe have been transformed under communist rule from agricultural into mixed

agricultural and industrial societies. In the post-war period, large-scale industrial development has not been the exclusive privilege of the countries of the Soviet bloc. The rate of economic growth has increased everywhere in the world and certain countries have reached a comparable level of industrialisation without imposing such heavy sacrifices on their populations.

In central and eastern Europe the original healthy trend towards a socially and economically justified degree of public ownership was soon submerged by a ruthless, doctrinaire wave of outright nationalisation for nationalisation's sake. Experience has shown that this type of nationalisation is not economically justified and that it produces a maze of economic bureaucracy. The capital needed for rapid industrial development was obtained by forced savings which artificially depressed the living standard of the population. Billions thus extorted from the people were squandered on capital projects dictated by obsolete economic concepts and an outdated doctrine.

During the last twenty years the numerical strength of the working class in central and eastern Europe has considerably increased but economically and politically, its influence has declined. The traditional exploiting classes have been replaced by the totalitarian state as the universal employer. The state arbitrarily fixes salaries and wages without any pretence of collective bargaining. Output quotas, wage scales, overtime pay and piece-rates are laid down by bureaucrats of the planning department. Another form of exploitation is the arbitrary distribution of national income. The party leadership spends a large share of it on investment projects, the main justification for which are the outdated concepts of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, or on foreign aid for political purposes.

The working class, deprived of all means of self-defence - genuine trade unions, democratic political parties and a free press - has no say in decisions which are vital to its interests. Indeed, the worker in central and eastern Europe is today much more defenceless than he ever was under the old capitalist system. He compares his stagnating wages and the rising prices of consumer goods with the growing prosperity of workers in the free world. It is of little comfort to him to be told that the surplus value of his labour is no longer appropriated by private owners of the means of production; he sees it wasted instead by an anonymous, self-perpetuating bureaucracy - the new ruling class of communist society.

The workers' lack of political and economic influence is in no way compensated by any amount of formal enhancing of their social status, nor by the zealous lip-service paid to the working class as "vanguard of the new society". Nor can it be offset by expanded free educational facilities or additional social security schemes. Those who have benefited most from the increased educational opportunities - the young generation - are in fact in the forefront of the system's most bitter opponents.

The era of de-Stalinisation

Since 1956, the winds of change have been sweeping over central and eastern Europe. Their origins are well known: the death of Stalin; internal struggles for power among his successors; the renunciation of the worst Stalinist methods by the new rulers in the Kremlin; growing economic difficulties; pressure exerted by the rising middle class and the new generation. At the same time, the ever deepening rift between the two biggest communist powers, the Soviet Union and China, has resulted in a gradual disintegration of the Soviet bloc. The individual communist parties have gained a certain independence in their relations with

the Soviet party. The open admission and condemnation of the crimes perpetrated by Stalin has created an atmosphere of disillusion reaching right into the leadership of the communist parties. The top leaders have been attempting to appease the internal opposition by making concessions in the economic sphere and by allowing a certain measure of individual freedom.

No one should minimize the effects of these changes. They are very important for the peoples who have to live under communist rule. The mere fact that anxiety and fear have given way to mixed feelings of relief, disillusion and hope is significant. None of these changes are fundamental, however. The basic institutions of the totalitarian state - the ideological monopoly of Marxism-Leninism, the rigid centralism labelled "democratic", the one-party system, the strict economic control by an uncontrollable bureaucracy, the politically inspired system of justice - have everywhere been preserved. The trend towards greater diversity of political, economic and even ideological standpoints within the communist bloc, affects only external relations between the communist states. It has not changed the nature of the communist system as such, nor altered its essentially totalitarian, undemocratic character.

There is no doubt, of course, that if the process of de-Stalinisation continues it must bring about important changes in the super-structure of the communist system as it exists in central and eastern Europe today. The basic question which remains unanswered is can such modifications of the super-structure influence or even change the nature of the system itself? Will they result in a radical reform of its totalitarian and anti-democratic institutions? And if so, to what extent?

There is however no guarantee that de-Stalinisation will continue. It did not start in all the countries at the same time, or progress everywhere to the same extent. In Poland, for instance, where it began earlier and went further than elsewhere, regressive neo-Stalinist tendencies have reappeared in some fields.

Impressed by some aspects of de-Stalinisation certain political, academic, cultural and press circles in democratic countries have felt that the time has come to work for world peace by entering into more negotiations, wider economic relations, multiplied exchanges of visits and broader political compromise. But new doubts have been created by the removal of Khrushchev, and the method by which this was effected.

The free trade union movement - as the moral spokesman for the workers in eastern Europe as well as in the free countries - is bound to expose the weakness of an approach which applies democratic criteria to developments in totalitarian countries. Our movement has to keep public opinion informed of the real significance of the changes and, in particular, of the difference between actual facts and the fiction of propaganda claims.

Those who call for an extension of political, economic and cultural relations with eastern and central European countries forget, perhaps, that these relations can be established only with the official party and government agencies. Non-governmental democratic representatives will never find free and independent counterparts in such contacts and discussions.

The objectives of free trade union movement.

The exact extent and the real meaning of the changes which are now taking place in central and eastern Europe remain to be seen. Come what may, however, the free trade unions believe that nothing short of a truly democratic system,

consistent with their traditional social and economic aims, will be acceptable to the working masses of this part of the European continent. The future free nations which the ICFTUE wishes to see in this region, must be dedicated to the ideas of freedom, equality and social justice. Those ideas should permeate and embrace all political, social and economic activities.

The individual must have the right to express freely his opinions, to develop his personality, his skills and his interests. He must have the right to organise, in order to promote collectively his political, economic and social concepts. It is imperative too, that all the important political, social and economic components of society be represented both in the legislative organs, as well as in economic, administrative, social and cultural institutions, by freely elected representatives. This is the only way to ensure a true and lasting democracy in a society which has abolished class domination and class privileges.

Even in such a society, there is no substitute for the free expression of the political aspirations of the people in the form of various alternatives. This implies the restoration of the multi-party system and a genuine and freely elected representation on all levels of state and economic administration. This system of political and economic democracy, based on the broadest conception of social justice, must provide proper guarantees for the fundamental freedoms of the individual. It goes without saying that this system of political democracy must provide proper guarantees for freedom of thought, freedom of creative artistic and scientific activities, freedom of the press and freedom of religion.

The process which began in central and eastern Europe after the second world war has abolished once and for all the old social structure. Although some of these changes were implemented within the framework of the communist dictatorship, the basic concepts of a society based on the ideas of social justice were worked out during and just after the war by genuine democratic and progressive forces with national and social roots among the peoples of central and eastern Europe. Thus the general trend of these changes, in contrast with the actual economic and political institutions which the communists have set up, is consistent with the wishes and aspirations of the broad masses of the population of this area. These changes in the social structure neither can nor should be reversed. But the fact remains that a new social status of the working masses can have any real meaning only within the framework of a truly democratic political system and after the establishment of economic democracy.

Under communist rule the justified demand for public ownership of all key branches of industry, as well as of the banking and transport systems, has degenerated into indiscriminate nationalisation of all forms of private ownership, just for the sake of nationalisation. This dogmatically negative attitude towards any kind of private property is not consistent with the popular will of the nations of central and eastern Europe. It is also contrary to the needs of this area which requires the establishment of a mixed and multi-sector economy for rational economic development. Outside the key branches of industry, transport and distribution, there are many forms of economic activity providing a legitimate and socially useful sphere in which private initiative would prove its worth.

Public ownership of the means of production must, nevertheless, remain the basis of central and eastern Europe's economic structure. Whether it will be straightforward state, municipal, public corporation or cooperative ownership, will be ultimately determined by the specific conditions and requirements of given sectors of industry or trade. But every form of public ownership must provide for direct participation of workers' representatives in the basic functions of planning and management.

In all the countries of central and eastern Europe, the greatly increased productive potential has been created from the forced savings imposed on the whole population. For nearly 20 years, the living standard of the working masses has been artificially depressed in order to squeeze out the money necessary for financing large-scale industrialisation. Even expropriated pre-war private enterprises have generally been expanded far beyond their previous size with the help of capital provided from forced savings. For this reason, the existing nationalised industrial potential in any country of central Europe belongs by right to society as a whole. In certain marginal cases small portions of this industrial potential could, for the sake of economic efficiency, be sold or leased to private entrepreneurs. But the great bulk of it should remain under the public ownership.

Under communist rule the economic development of central and eastern Europe has been rather one-sided and unbalanced. Many consumer goods industries and services, as well as housing and social investments, were badly neglected. It is in these areas that private or genuinely cooperative enterprise can play a useful part by complementing the existing economic structure of this sector of the economy with new enterprises catering for the satisfaction of that part of consumer demand which has been wilfully neglected.

National economic planning, based on economic incentives and making full use of market mechanisms, should be substituted for the communist type of planned economy, operating on the basis of arbitrary directives from above. Rational planning is essential in all developing countries to ensure harmonious economic growth and proper priorities in the use of economic resources. This will entail the harmonisation of a number of different and occasionally divergent economic and non-economic objectives.

Broadly speaking, rational economic planning should have the following main objectives : (1) full employment; (2) the maximum social product; (3) a just distribution of national income; (4) partnership or equal rights in industry; (5) monetary and market equilibrium; (6) a properly modernized economy able to compete effectively on the world markets.

None of these objectives should have an absolute doctrinal priority over the others. Objective economic conditions, and to some extent the play of market mechanisms, should determine which of those policy aims should be emphasized at any given moment. This implies that the planning machinery, as well as the whole economic policy, must be elastic and pragmatic.

Experience has shown that economic planning cannot be a substitute for a free market economy. Nor can a market economy be consistent with the ideas of social justice without some degree of economic planning, especially in economically less-developed countries. It is necessary, therefore, to combine the principle of public control and long-term planning with the essential features of a free market economy by giving sufficient play to the mechanism of the market, both in the process of planning and especially in determining the assortment of actual output.

The ideas of social justice and equal opportunity for all cannot be implemented without a comprehensive system of social services. A certain degree of progress in this field has been achieved in central and eastern Europe in the last twenty years. The social services introduced or enlarged under the communist system, however, should be complemented and expanded. Free medical service must become a comprehensive social health scheme. Housing should become a social service for all those who need it. But at the same time the rights of the owners-occupiers should be respected. Social security schemes should involve

old-age pensions for all, expanded maternity benefits and family allowances. Since no economic system can provide valid safeguards against temporary loss of jobs, adequate unemployment benefits based on the principle of "work or maintenance" should be introduced. The aim should be not only to ensure equality of treatment but also, and above all, to abolish poverty.

In the establishment, administration and eventual further improvement of these comprehensive social security schemes, the right of freely elected workers' representatives to be consulted at every stage must be fully guaranteed.

In the whole system of social services, free education up to and including the university level plays, perhaps, the most important role in securing equal opportunity for all. But free education should not mean only that society takes upon itself the financial burden of educating its youth. It ought also to mean free access to education, with the selection based exclusively on ability and not on reversed class distinctions. But first of all, it must also mean the freedom to learn and to teach without the artificial limitations of an established dogma and ideological monopoly. The autonomy of the universities must ensure full freedom for all scientific discussion and for all creative and cultural activity.

The development of agriculture and its level of economic efficiency affects to a significant degree the standard of living of the workers. It is obvious that forced collectivisation has been a complete failure throughout the whole of central and eastern Europe. Collective farming is clearly unable to increase the productivity of the land and, what is much more important, it is contrary to the wishes and aspirations of the peasants. The basic problems for the future are : (1) What portion of its population can a modern society afford to employ on the land? (2) Should not this agriculture, in view of its specific climatic and soil conditions in large parts of central and eastern Europe, change from mixed farming to a more specialised one ?

Agricultural self-sufficiency is an out-of-date idea, and there is no place for subsistence farming in a modern economy. It seems, therefore, that the future of agriculture in central and eastern Europe lies in evolving more specialised and highly capitalised larger holdings, with a suitable superstructure of genuine producers' and marketing cooperatives. At the same time, the right of private ownership of land, up to a specified limit, should be guaranteed.

The problem of the rural over-population, which had been one of the insoluble pre-war economic problems of most central and eastern European countries, has already lost much of its acuteness because of mass migration to the towns. It can be expected that, with the development of complementary consumer industries and of the service sector, the process will continue, thus providing a necessary condition for the evolution of larger specialised farms. Only a drastic reduction of the percentage of population employed in agriculture, combined with this trend towards larger, specialised and highly capitalised individual holdings, could create conditions in which a rough equality of agricultural incomes and industrial earning will eventually be achieved.

It is self evident that the right of association implies the notion of free workers' representation through trade unions. In a system where public ownership prevails, however, the temptation may be wrong to minimise the importance of such independent workers' representatives and to deny the workers this most essential right on the pretext that, "the means of production being publicly owned, the workers are the proprietors and therefore cannot raise any claims against their employer, as these would be claims against themselves". This is a dangerous fallacy, propagated and exploited skilfully by the present communist governments.

We believe that the system in which public ownership of the means of production predominates will be accepted as a permanent solution in the countries of central and eastern Europe. Yet, under this system the need to protect the legitimate interests of the workers is just as imperative as in a capitalist society. The workers must regain the right to organise in trade unions of their own choice which are completely independent of the political and administrative apparatus of the state or of political parties, and exercise an unrestricted right of collective bargaining as well as the right of strike.

These rights cannot be renounced even in the event of the workers participating in the management of the enterprises and sharing the profits through the institution of workers' councils or similar bodies. Workers' councils give wage-earners a share in managerial responsibilities but do not eliminate at all the influence of the state and its organs in the enterprise's policy in matters vital for the interests of the workers. Thus the possibility of their being cheated out of their legitimate rights and claims for the sake of the so-called national or higher interests remains unchanged. That is why the trade unions must insist on their traditional prerogatives also where workers' councils, or any other form of employees' representation, have been introduced.

Trade unions and workers' representative bodies can fulfil their mission as safeguards of the basic rights and welfare of the working masses only if they themselves respect the principles of democracy. Only trade unions run by officers who are elected in genuine free elections and are subject to control by the union membership can enjoy the confidence of those whom they are representing and protecting.

The nations of central and eastern Europe are far from constituting a cohesive political and economic unit. The line which today divides the continent of Europe was drawn quite arbitrarily and cannot be accepted as permanent. Politically, culturally and by historical tradition these countries form an integral part of the European continent.

Economically, however, large parts of this area are far less developed than western Europe, despite the intensive process of industrialisation which they have undergone. Besides, after so many years of production according to the requirements of the communist system, the quality of their products have inevitably fallen below west European standards. Finally, the economic structure of this area is rather one-sided and unbalanced. For this reason it is inadvisable to advocate an early economic integration of this area with the rest of Europe. Different forms of ownership and of social and economic institutions will create additional problems for an eventual union. The economies of a large part of central and eastern Europe (like those of Greece and Turkey) must pass through a long period of readjustment before they are ready for any sort of economic integration with the rest of the European continent.

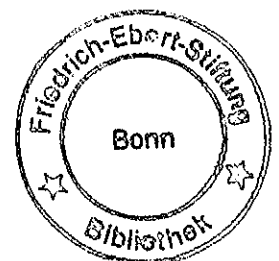
The attempt to integrate the central and eastern European economies with the Soviet economy under the Comecon scheme has failed. But, as a by-product, it has created some regional and bilateral forms of economic cooperation which could be usefully preserved and expanded. Some of these forms of regional economic cooperation undoubtedly represent a step forward from the stage of national self-sufficiency. A further strengthening of regional economic cooperation within the area of central and eastern Europe, without necessarily a more formal superstructure, may shorten the period of adjustment necessary before the countries of this area rejoin the main stream of European integration.

With the trend towards all-European unity the concept of a strong political grouping as a buffer between Germany and Russia no longer corresponds to contem-

porary political, strategic or economic realities. But in the event of an evolution towards greater independence of the countries of central and eastern Europe from the hegemony of the Soviet Union, closer cooperation between those nations could speed up such a process.

After they regain full independence the nations of central and eastern Europe would maintain friendly and peaceful relations with all other countries, including their neighbour - Russia. Once the resentment due to Soviet imperialist domination in this area were eradicated, there would be no reason why those relations should not develop in a normal way. Russia remains an important natural trading partner of central and eastern Europe and the most suitable market for many of its products. Fruitful economic relations could pave the way to a proper political relationship based on the principle of non-interference and mutual respect for essential political interests.

* * * * *



16th YEAR. —

Price per Issue, U.S.A. : 15 cents
Gt. Britain : 1 Shilling
Switzerland : 0.75 Fr.

Monthly organ of the International
Centre of
Free Trade Unionists in Exile

Editorial Offices :
198, avenue du Maine, PARIS-14e
France

Issued by I.C.F.T.U.E. Office in Great
Britain:
24 B, Clifton Gardens,
London, W.9.

labour in exile



The news published in "Labour in Exile" comes directly to you from the Eastern European countries. It is not only intended to keep you informed, but is one of the ways in which men of independent spirit in those countries can resist by spreading abroad the truth on what is happening at home.