

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

INTERNATIONAL CENTER
OF FREE TRADE UNIONISTS
IN EXILE

**TRADE UNIONS
IN EASTERN EUROPE**

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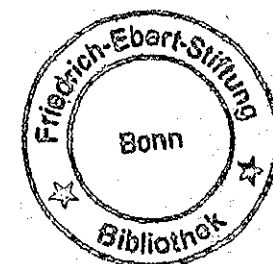


TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

CHAPTER I

History of the trade union movements in the countries today under the communist yoke.

CHAPTER II

The trade union organizations in Eastern Europe.

CHAPTER III

The Labor Code - The Trade Unions - The Work Committees

CHAPTER IV

Congresses.

CHAPTER V

Law on Labor Discipline.

CHAPTER VI

The trade unions and forced labor.

CHAPTER VII

The work day and rest - vacations - overtime.

CHAPTER VIII

The World Trade Union Federation and its export propaganda.

CONCLUSION

PREFACE

Because of the importance of the trade unions in the economic life of the Eastern European countries as well as the progress or planned industrialization, we feel that it is necessary to study the role of the trade unions in the « Popular Democracies ». For on the attitude of the ever growing mass of workers, on their spontaneous contribution or passivism, depends the very success of these plans.

According to communist theory, the workers must be the driving force of the nation and the basis of the power which is supposedly « of the people ». The role of the « unified » trade unions is to educate and mobilize the masses under, of course, the political leadership of the communist party.

The classical definition according to which the basic job of the trade unions is to defend the interests of the workers is considered incompatible with the guiding idea of building the basic foundations of socialism. According to the communists, the development of worker well-being depends on the constant rise of production. That is why the problem of work competition, the forms of its development, the modernization and rationalization of labor and the reinforcement of discipline all constitute the new style and activity of the Eastern European trade unions.

The communists fight against what they consider « conservatism », i. e., the theory that there are limits to productive capacities. In those countries where the trade unions have become « the organizations of the governing class », they must prove first of all that their chief concern is the interests of the nation according to the program and ideological principles of the communist party.

Thus, the basic aspect of the difference appears; the difference between the trade unions of the Western countries which are free from political shackles and the trade unions in communist regimes whose role has been reduced to executing Party orders.

To measure the force and influence of the trade unions in communist countries, we could just count the number of members. But our conclusions would be false. In a later chapter, we will analyze the reasons which prompt the workers to join a union. In short, membership may be explained by the financial advantages given to union members but not by the confidence which members have in their representation.

The workers have not lost their awareness of what real trade unionism means. They know all too well that their vital needs are being sacrificed for the totalitarian State. The scorn of the workers vis-à-vis the trade union organizations manifests itself in many different ways and by dangerous symptoms. The Poznan riots threw the communist élite and particularly the trade union élite into confusion. Undoubtedly, as a result of these events there will be a revision of the communist party attitude towards the trade unions and the leaders will try to give its structure at least a semblance of democracy. But even with these tricks, they will not be able to deceive the workers on the role that the trade unions are obliged to play in a totalitarian State.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS IN THE COUNTRIES TODAY UNDER THE COMMUNIST YOKE

BULGARIA

FOR five centuries, Bulgaria was a subjugated country. Only in 1879 did she become free once again.

The Bulgarian trade union movement started towards the end of the 20th century. The reasons for this late appearance may be found in the particular economic conditions of Bulgaria: the fact that national life is based on agriculture. Up to 1927, only 11 % of the population was engaged in heavy industry.

Under the prompting of the Socialist party, the first professional associations were formed. But in July 1904, the trade union movement suffered a set-back when the Socialist party split and some of the unions joined the revolutionary fraction.

After the 1914-18 war, the Bulgarian people were very poor and felt the repercussions of the Russian revolution very deeply. As a result, a part of the trade union movement embraced communist ideas.

In December 1919, the government forbid a demonstration organized by the Professional Unions. A general strike was called. It took the government two months to break this strike, followed by all the trade unions. (The two central organizations were the Civil Servants Trade Union and the Bulgarian Confederation of Labor.) Although the trade union movement emerged from the strike weakened and disorganized, this defeat mar-

ked the beginning of a reorganization of trade union methods and a revision of the trade union program. In 1919, all of the trade union central organizations merged with the exception of the communist unions. The latter felt that it was indispensable to subordinate trade union activity to the communist party.

After the September 1923 uprisings, the communist General Association of Worker Trade Unions was dissolved as was the communist party.

In 1923, the General Trade Union Association of Bulgaria (free trade unions) grouped 47 professional associations. There was also an autonomous trade union organization, the Bulgarian Union of Teachers, Civil Servants, Post, Telephone and Telegraph Workers and Railroad Workers which was of Socialist and Radical tendency. It grouped 40,000 out of 100,000 civil servants. All of the free trade union federations merged to form what in Bulgaria is called « The Union of the 19 » because it included 19 organizations.

These trade unions did not have a legal status.

In 1935, the National Union of Bulgarian Workers was formed. The communists were ordered to join this Union and to work to undermine it. In 1935, it grouped 77,560 workers; in 1936, 129,990; and in 1938, it had 150,000 members grouped into 974 organizations affiliated with 16 professional unions.

POLAND

The development of the trade union movement in Poland may be divided into two periods: the first before the restoration of Poland and the second after this date.

The First Period before the restoration of Poland

Three different systems

1. Russian

Up to 1905, there was no trade union freedom. Illegal socialist organizations assumed the responsibility of defending economic interests. These groups, for example, organized « funds

for resistance » which supported strikes. After the revolutionary days of 1905-06, the Russian government agreed to a few liberal reforms such as the freedom of association. The first trade unions that were formed reflected the different tendencies: the socialist tendency allied to the Polish Socialist party; the social democratic tendency allied to the Jewish Socialist « Bund » party; the national radical tendency allied to the « National Worker Union » party. These freedoms which had been legally proclaimed, however, did not inspire confidence. Although in part the trade unions remained illegal, their influence grew steadily. In 1908, they reached their top point and were then wiped out by reactionary Russian policy. Some of the trade union leaders were deported to Siberia, others continued to work underground.

2. Prussian

Up to 1918, the trade unions were under the same administration as the Reich. Polish workers belonged to German unions.

In 1902, the first specifically Polish trade union organization was formed in Bochum (province of Westphalia) and was called the Polish Trade Union Association. There was one important drawback: the obligation to speak German at the meetings. The same year, the Polish Professional Trade Union was created in Poznan.

From 1889 on in Silesia, there existed an organization called « Mutual Aid » whose purpose was to defend the interests of the workers. In 1909, Mutual Aid, the Polish Professional Trade Union and the Polish Trade Union Association merged into one single federation: the Polish Trade Union Association.

3. Austrian

Taking advantage of a liberal regime, the first trade unions were founded by the Polish Socialists and affiliated themselves with the Austrian trade union central organization in 1890. From 1900 on, the Christian Socialist trade unions began to take shape and formed the Polish Trade Union of Christian Workers with headquarters in Cracow.

From 1916 on, trade union activity grew and several union organizations were formed in Warsaw: the Regional Council of

Trade Unions (tendency : National Worker Party), the Central Commission of Professional Trade Unions (Socialist tendency) and the Council of Professional Trade Unions of Warsaw (tendency : Social Democrat Party).

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After the restoration of Poland, freedom of association was reestablished and the following labor organizations were formed.

1. The Association of the Professional Trade Unions of Poland (Socialist influence. Belonged to the Amsterdam International).

2. The Polish Trade Union Association (National tendency).

3. The Professional Christian Union of the Polish Republic (based on the Encyclical « Rerum Novarum »).

On February 8, 1919, the laws governing the constitution of professional associations were set down by decree. This decree applied to the « Worker Trade Unions » whose task was to defend and encourage the economic and cultural interests of the workers in a given branch of work or in connected and similar branches.

« A trade union can have rights and contract obligations (acquire buildings, received a legacy, gifts, sign collective agreements and sue in civil action). It can create mutual aid funds, cooperatives, low-cost housing, professional schools and grant subsidies to institutions ».

According to this February 8, 1919 law « THE TRADE UNION REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING CLASS ». The trade unions may take part in the signing of collective agreements and in the settlement of collective conflicts. THE RIGHT OF COMBINATION AND STRIKE WAS ESTABLISHED AND GUARANTEED.

In 1938, there were roughly 780,000 trade union members.

It is a fact that the trade unions in Poland increasingly won the confidence of the working class. Since the beginning of what we may call « the class struggle », since the birth of association « for the defense of the interests of the workers », the Polish worker

has always been aware of the role he plays in the development of labor.

In all the struggles of the Polish working class, the dominating theme is the defense of justice against social injustice. The people fought against all sorts of oppression for labor freedom. This struggle continues : the fights of 1905 like those of 1956 are the spontaneous reactions of the worker who has been deprived of his freedom but who is deeply aware that must necessarily win in the end.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The first trade union associations appeared between 1867 and 1870. In 1893, these groups affiliated with the Austro-Hungarian Trade Union Association in Vienna.

In 1897, the first independant Czechoslovakian trade union federation was formed under name of The Federation of Czechoslovakian Trade Unions (O.S.C.), with a membership of roughly 7,000. In 1913, this federation had already won more than 100,000 members and worked closely with the Social Democrat party. In 1902, the National Socialist Trade Unions and the Christian Social Trade Unions were formed.

After the formation of the Czechoslovakian Republic in 1918, the labor union movement developed rapidly. Already in 1918, 370,000 workers were organized in 1920, there were more than 2,000,000, mostly members of the O.S.C. Apart from the Czechoslovakian unions, the German workers organized a German-language trade union, the Deutsche Gewerkschaftszentrale (D.G.K.) in Liberec. In 1926, the Czechoslovakian and German trade union federations created the Federal Union which was represented at the International Federation of Trade Unions in Amsterdam and Paris.

In 1921, the International Trade Union Association was formed which belonged to the Red International of Trade Unions. But in 1929, it broke with the communist party and joined the Federation of Czechoslovakian Trade Unions (O.S.C.). The Christian Social Trade Unions had one federation center in Bohemia, one in Moravia and one for the Christian German workers in Zwickau.

Membership figures in the three chief trade union organizations is as follows :

1. Confederation of Free Trade Unions	1928	1930	1936
a) Federation of Czech Trade Unions (OSC)	376,600	391,400	489,400
b) Trade Union Commission of German Trade Unions (DGK)	197,100	184,500	139,400
Attached to the I.T. U.F.	573,700	575,900	628,800
2. National Socialist Trade Union Federation (C.O.D.)	287,600	288,200	336,800
3. International Trade Union (MVS)	180,000	113,700	152,300
4. Christian Workers Trade Union Federation			
a) Czechoslovakians ...	112,600	102,700	119,000
b) Germans	23,100	31,100	40,000
Attached to the Christian Trade Union International			

During the occupation (1939-45), the trade union movement was united into the National Federation of Czechoslovakian Trade Unions. After the war, the Czechoslovakian trade union movement was taken over by the communists and its name changed to The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (R.O.H.), with a centralized administration. The federations were no longer autonomous. In 1955, it had 3,650,000 members.

HUNGARY

The right of professional association rested in Hungary on a system of ministerial decrees. Professional association had no legislative nor constitutional guarantee. In order to create an association, particularly a professional association, special authoriza-

tion of the government was necessary. This preliminary authorization was, thus, a determining factor of the tendency of the future professional organization.

A special decree, moreover, regulated the provisions of the statutes. These statutes had to mention the right that the minister had to suspend or dissolve an organization. They could not include any clause which would permit the decision to strike or the organization of a strike nor could they mention the possibility of aiding strikers.

Under the Peoples Republic, the salaried workers were forced to join a union. After the downfall of the « dictatorship of the councils », an attempt was made to attract the workers into organizations which had been hastily formed with the support of the new government. Officially the task of these new organizations was to respect « economic peace ». These were the « yellow » unions. Actually, what the government wanted was to have a weapon to use against the Social Democrat trade unions which were growing in influence. During this period, many free trade unions had to dissolve.

In order to keep the unions within the framework defined by the laws, the authorities supervised their activity carefully. To belong to this type of a trade union, a person had to be of Hungarian nationality. And while the « yellow » unions had a fairly large field of action, the free professional associations only had a very restricted part in labor work. In the domain of conflicts, their activity was even more limited because the statutes clearly stipulated that the organization of a strike was forbidden.

With the occupation of Hungary in 1944 by the armies of Hitler, the trade union movement suffered still more. The more well known trade union militants were deported, imprisoned or even assassinated.

The release from Nazi oppression was only the beginning of another oppression. A short time before the occupation of the Soviet army, graduates of Moscow trade union schools were parachuted into Poland, contacted the local resistance, particularly the communists. They drew up a plan to get the worker movement « going » and the Bolshevization of the labor movement began. They took over the watchwords of the free trade unions.

For, the idea of the communists was to capture the interest of the workers through trade union unity. The socialists who could still say something at that time found a large audience among the workers. But little by little, all of the non communist trade union leaders were eliminated, imprisoned or deported.

ROMANIA

The Romanian trade union movement appeared briefly around 1880 under the form of worker or mutual associations and professional defense associations. But the numerical weakness of the working class, the result of the lack of industrial development and the persistence of artisanal traditions, made these organizations fail. It was only at the beginning of the present century, after 1905, that, led by an avant-garde team, the trade union movement succeeded to root itself in the country despite the government attempt to reintroduce its cooperations.

On August 31, 1906, the trade union movement was founded on a national basis. It quickly grouped thousands of members but its real period of success came after the first War and the constitution of great Romania through the addition of Transylvania, Banat, Bucovina and Bessarabia.

On the eve of the great labor struggles of 1920, more than 25,000 people belonged to the Romanian trade unions. The failure of the general strike, called by the communists in 1920 caused a sharp drop in membership.

In 1923, a split took place between the free trade union majority, grouped in the General Confederation of Labor and the communist minority which formed the General Council of Unitary Trade Unions. This split slowed down the development of trade unionism but after the harsh government repression ended, the unions started to reorganize once more.

The free trade unions succeeded in winning the membership of almost all of the miners of the large coal districts, the metal workers of Banat, the book trade workers as well as the minority women workers in other industrial branches.

The free C.G.T. tried to use the legal possibility of concluding collective contracts in order win social improvements. In 1923,

for example, 329 collective contracts were signed covering 90,500 salaried workers. In 1926, when the effects of the split had diminished, the C.G.T. obtained collective contracts for 82,635 workers. Out of a total of 500,000 workers, this represented an appreciable percentage.

The legal existence of the Romanian trade union movement ended with the military dictatorship of Antonescu, backed by the Iron Guard fascist movement in the fall of 1940. The workers were exposed to military supervision during the war and all demands were severely suppressed. The militant socialist and trade unionist, Stefan Mohanescu, typographer at the National Printing Press in Bucharest, was shot because he tried to organize trade union groups illegally. Likewise, militant metal workers from the worker center of Rechitza in the Banat province were condemned by a military court to long prison terms because of illegal trade union activity. In both cases, the subjects were free trade unionists and socialists.

The socialist trade union militants were able, however, to regroup their men clandestinely on the national level and prepare for the return to legality which seemed more and more imminent with the increasingly numerous Nazi defeats. The communists also started to regroup and discussions took place between the free trade unionists and the communists on the political and trade union level, and even with the old liberal and national peasant parties, on the subject of the liquidation of the military dictatorship.

In Avril 1944, an agreement was reached between the free trade unionists and the communists. A common manifesto which copied the free trade unionists' plan of organization and claims word for word was distributed in the factories for May Day. This manifesto called for an immediate increase in wages based on the rise of the cost of living, liberty of trade union and political organizations, freedom of thought, press and word, and liberation of political prisoners, etc...

The General Confederation of Labor was reconstituted on September 1, 1944, at the same time when Soviet troops were reaching Bucharest. Despite all their promises, the communists started to take over the trade unions, first by taking away the

responsible posts from those militants who refused to bend to their will. The equality between free and communist trade unionists which had been agreed to in the underground proved to be a pure communist hypocrisy. Resistance immediately was organized in the work committees and in the individual shop trade union groups where socialist influence prevailed against this bureaucratic and totalitarian control of the trade union machinery from above. This was one of the reasons why the communists, increasingly discredited as a result of the misdeeds of the Russian occupation, opposed all the requests of the workers for free trade union elections on all levels.

It was only in the summer of 1947, at the time when the communist control over the State apparatus, thanks to the Ministry of the Interior and Security, was complete that the communists set the date for the trade union elections. And simultaneously to sow terror in the factories and plants, they started firing personnel under the excuse of an economy drive. The real aim, however, was to get rid of the free trade union militants who might be possible competitors to the communists in this election. More than 100,000 salaried workers, mostly highly skilled, known for their socialist and trade union ideas were let off. It was only after this psychological operation had been completed that the communists allowed the elections to take place but even then they mobilized their shock troops and called in the political police to deal with stubborn resistance. It was a real farce. Yet despite their pressure, the workers of many plants did not give in. For example, in the region of Brachov, in the steel center of Rechizta, the vote had to be taken over seven times in order to obtain a small communist majority.

This marked the end of democracy in the work committees, the last organized rampart of worker defense against totalitarian arbitrary action.

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Before the war, the strength and influence of trade union organizations varied from one country to another. The degree of industrialization was not the same in Czechoslovakia and Poland. If, moreover, we compare the economic structure of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, for example, the differences are even more striking.

The problems which the trade unions faced were both numerous and difficult because of the economic situation in these countries after the 1929-1935 world crisis which shook fragile economies and particularly hurt the working class.

Despite particularly unfavorable economic and social conditions, the labor movements of the countries of the East progressed considerably. Hunted down and persecuted by reactionary governments, often forced to fight underground, the workers went forward and, in many cases, the trade unions won out in their struggles. The labor movement and the trade unions, apart from Czechoslovakia, crossed difficult periods and experienced a great deal of persecution.

The trade union federations were free trade union federations in which the communist influence was non-existent. Yet « fractional » work was the job of those communists who infiltrated into the free unions. There were not many of these communists but each had his specific job. Those who were chosen for « trade union » work got their orders in their cells (underground or not, according to the country). These were the active prewar communists who had been sent to special schools in the Soviet Union and who then returned to their country armed with their speciality. This was the way that after the war, these « specialists » from Moscow (with the help of the political police and the Red Army) were able to break the free trade unions, take over the controls and impose Kremlin orders.

Many trade union leaders were deported by the Nazis. The number of the working class martyrs, men who were shot, adds up to thousands.

In 1944-45, when the troops of Hitler were chased out of the countries of Eastern Europe by the Allies, the working class hoped that freedom was theirs again and that social justice would reign.

But these were but fleeting dreams...

CHAPTER II

THE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

THE TRADE UNION AFTER 1945

SINCE 1945, trade unions in Eastern Europe have been set up on the model of unions in the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. has only applied in the countries she wants to colonize the methods of trade union organization, tested for thirty years vis-à-vis the Russian working class.

The activity of the trade unions is synchronized, their structure is similar, their tasks are the same. The economic plans of the countries under the communist yoke complement each other on an ever growing scale. This uniformity does not serve the interests of the workers of these countries but those of the Soviet Union.

The workers and peasants as well as a part of the intelligentsia hoped for a radical change in social and economic conditions, a change which would raise the living standard of the working masses. The workers, however, were not at all attracted to the communist doctrine. They did want, however, agrarian reform, at least a partial nationalization of industry, an economic plan, the organization of social progress, and a real democratization of the public powers. But the end of the Nazi oppression was but the beginning of another oppression : that of the communists.

« Trade union » experts, trained in special Soviet schools, returned to their respective countries in 1944. These « experts » made contacts with the local communists who had been in the resistance. It was these communist « experts » who drew up the

plan to form cells within the free trade unions and the socialist parties. For the influence of these two groups had grown after the years of Nazi oppression and they constituted the greatest obstacle and the No. 1 enemy of the communist party. The communist party, backed by the army of occupation and the political police, got to work fast. All of their tactics were put into action: on one hand, « the stretched-out hand » to the union brother; on the other, the lying accusations, the spying, the discrimination. And also, the systematic elimination (even by deportation if necessary,) of all those who did not prove that they were more communist than the communists.

The liquidation of the bourgeoisie was never a problem for the communists. For them there was only one method: get rid of them.

The orders received by the communist party were, therefore, relatively easy to apply by the trade unions invaded by these « experts ». The last few real free trade unionists who wanted to resist their control were imprisoned, deported or had to flee the country.

Many of the important companies had been requisitioned by the Nazis and on these grounds were immediately nationalized without any thought of compensation.

From 1945 on, some trade union representatives became ministers, secretaries of State, deputies, etc...

After the war, trade union unity was achieved. The trade unions were all affiliated with the World Trade Union Federation. According to the statutes, the workers were not « obliged » to join a union, but if they wanted to remain outside of the trade union organization, they had to give up eating. Only with a trade union membership card was a person allowed to obtain a food ration card. This is the reason why between 1945-47, union membership rose so high. This fact alone explains why those industries which before the war were very weak from the point of view of union membership now embraced most of the workers.

In short, it is not possible to compare the figures of trade union membership before the war and those of the period 1945-47.

It was easy, given this obligation to have a union card to get a ration card, to organize professional unions in all industrial branches. But it would be false to say that some industries where pre-war trade unions had little influence succeeded to win union membership in the 1945-47 period. For (communist) planning developed industrial branches in certain countries which were underdeveloped before the war.

One may say that it was in the years 1948-49 that the communists « legalized » the situation that they had in a few years ended by imposing.

CHAPTER III

THE LABOR CODE — THE TRADE UNIONS THE WORK COMMITTEES

AS the purpose of the trade unions is to protect the rights of the worker, the two basic pillars of trade unionism are the freedom of organization and the freedom of action. The workers must be able to join the trade union of their choice freely. The duty of the union is to set down and improve the conditions of work in all its aspects. The work committees must enjoy complete independence.

The (free) trade unions permit the workers to express their needs and hopes openly. It is through their unions that they become aware of their strength.

The conception of social peace is not incompatible with labor conflicts.

As the fundamental job of the trade unions is to defend the working conditions and life of the workers, the basic condition is their independence, not only vis-à-vis the political parties but also vis-à-vis the employer.

The spirit of collaboration between employer and worker demands a conscious effort on both sides. The human factor, therefore, must pass to the forefront in the organization of production.

However, in the « Popular Democracies », the worker (the most precious wealth) has lost the feeling of his dignity, his human value and his basic rights. He is not free to express himself, his efforts are not rewarded. While he should have the feeling that he is playing a useful role in society, he has the conviction

that he is only, as the communist unions put it so well, a TRANS-MISSION BELT between production and the Boss State.

The basic instinct of every worker and every man is that of survival. This is an instinct which man feels before the social instinct. For him, there is first of all the need to obtain what is essential for his life and that of his family : food, clothes, housing, all the elements which will ensure him a normal standard of living.

In the countries under the communist yoke, the worker has become just a productive machine in which any independent control of working conditions has been suppressed. If he does not carry out his norms (and does not top them), if he does not get along with the trade union leader (who is at the same time a communist party member) in his shop, it means the loss of his job or that « educational » work awaits him.

The worker feels constantly in danger, he lives in insecurity, he hardly dares think of a better life. Coercion reigns in all domains. The infallible character of all the orders coming from above gives him the same feeling as slaves must have had. Passivism has taken the place of enthusiasm in the worker. He represents a production percentage for his factory and he works without joy.

The Trade Union.

Article 1. of the Trade Union Statutes reads : « The trade unions carry out their task under the leadership of the communist party which is the avant-garde of the working class and the guide of the forces of the nation. »

The trade union in Eastern Europe enjoys a « monopoly » of association. There is only one trade union and it is totally controlled by the communist party. It is the communist party, through the Central Council of Trade Unions, which regulates the organic structure of the trade union movement and sets down the general lines of the organization, functioning and activity of the trade unions.

Here is how the tasks and activities of the trade unions in the countries today under communist domination are defined by

law. These tasks from the point of view of application, are the same in all of the so-called Popular Democracies because their structure has been copied from the model of the trade unions in the Soviet Union and because they are all under the control of the communist party. Although in each country, the wording of the « Labor Codes » is different, the general policy of labor remains the same. The laws and decrees on the trade unions, promulgated in 1949 and 1952, are still in force. We will also study the few changes that have been made since that date.

THE LABOR CODE, A NEW INDUSTRIAL FEUDALISM

The communist definition reads :

« The Labor Code regulates everything concerning workers and employees in the enterprises, establishments and organizations as well as the State social security system, with the object of inculcating, achieving and consolidating the socialist principles (sic) of work organization, in order to ensure the increase of productivity, the over-topping of the quotas, the improvement of the well-being of the workers, as well as to preserve their health and guarantee their livelihood in case of temporary or permanent unfitness. »

Practice, however, is far from these theories. Would the workers need to revolt if the Labor Code gave them real guarantees ?

Each Labor Code contains several chapters. However, the first one is that which concerns the trade unions. All that is connected with work is tied up closely with the trade unions.

In second place come the Labor Relations, including :

1. collective agreements
2. labor contracts
3. the work day and leisure time
4. vacations
5. payment for work done
6. bonuses
7. hygiene and labor security
8. labor discipline
9. litigation

In third place comes the State Social Security system.

THE PROFESSIONAL TRADE UNIONS

An analysis of the role of the professional trade unions shows us that the union is largely responsible for putting into practice the tasks enumerated in the Labor Code.

However, when the Labor Code claims that the « liberty of organization of the workers and employees by profession is guaranteed » and that « the professional unions are social non-party mass organizations, united voluntarily », this is false.

For there can be no « liberty of organization if there is only one single union which enjoys the monopoly of association. Union membership is « voluntary », but actually it is quasi obligatory because only union members may obtain special advantages (various reductions, priority for vacation housing, etc...)

The advantages of being a union member

a) Priority in the rest homes. The union member gets on the top list of candidates for the sanatoriums and health resorts.

b) He has priority for his family in institutions for the protection of the mother and child, in vacation camps, preventoriums, nursery schools.

c) He receives financial aid for cases of birth in the family or if he falls ill.

d) He can be a member of the Aid and Loan Fund.

e) He may take part in all the tourist and cultural projects of the trade unions.

f) He has access to the legal offices of the trade unions.

g) Bonuses. The basic dues of the trade union mount up to 1 % of the salary. Part of these dues go into the trade union aid fund.

The trade union birth bonus equals the sum of dues paid for a three year period. However, a worker must have been a member and have paid his dues for at least three years to be eligible.

In France, for example, a worker, unionized or not, may get a reduction of 30 % for himself and his family for his vacation railroad fare.

All these advantages aim at obliging the workers to join the union.

When one calculates how much money the trade union treasury must have to pay for all these advantages, we arrive at enormous figures. It is quite certain that the State pays for some of the expenses. It allots high subsidies to the trade unions in the name of « educational and cultural action ».

The worker who has the courage to remain outside of the union pays taxes like every other citizen. He pays indirectly, therefore, for the advantages granted to union workers. We may say that it is the workers who are aware (of their disadvantages) and who want to mark their disapproval of the present trade union organization, who do not join the unions. In Poland, the no. 1 man of the communist hierarchy, Ochab, first secretary of the communist party, admitted that 1,800,000 workers remained outside of the unions. This figure is probably far lower than the true one. And disaffection is growing day after day.

The fact of not being unionized constitutes in itself an act of resistance. Not only does the worker know that he is losing his material rights but he is likely to become suspect in the eyes of the trade union hierarchy, his bosses and the shock brigadiers (who are becoming less and less numerous).

It takes courage to remain outside of the unions.

The Central Council of Trade Unions represents the workers and employees on all questions concerning labor and the State social security system. It is this group which proposes projects concerning its field to the Council of Ministers.

However, it is very important to remember that the Central Council of Trade Unions is made up of tested men, authentic communists who have the confidence of Moscow.

The Central Council of Trade Unions sets up the commissions on labor protection and labor inspection. It organizes their election and names the worker inspectors of labor. It organizes councils and commissions and chooses delegates to the State Social Security system. Through these groups it sees to it that the obligations

are met with regard to the Labor Code and it watches over the application of the Code's clauses.

It is the Professional Unions which represent the workers and employees vis-à-vis the State services and also before the courts.

When we know how the leaders are chosen on every level of the trade union hierarchy, from the top down to the bottom, from the Central Council right down to the local trade union committees, and when we learn that the latter are chosen from a single list by raised hand, we may be sure that the orders of the communist party are strictly applied. The duty of every good militant communist is to defend the party first of all and then consider the workers' interests.

In addition to the tasks mentioned above, the trade unions must also conclude collective agreements with the different companies, present demands in the name of the workers and employees, and apply them.

Can one claim that the collective agreements are presented in the name of the workers when it is known that all the trade union delegates do is to apply the orders they receive? It would be more correct to say that the collective agreements are presented to the workers in the name of the communist party. All that the worker can do is to accept them with enthusiasm (sic).

The same is true for the other tasks of the trade unions :

- To form arbitration committees and take the necessary steps to make these committees work.

- To supervise the measures of labor protection and to advise labor inspection on infractions.

- To contribute to the normal working of production. To give an opinion on the elaboration of the plan. To mobilize workers and employees to carry out the program and organize socialist competition.

« TO CARRY OUT THE PROGRAMS ». This means that the worker must meet and top the quotas set by the plan. However, these quotas are originally set by the output of the « shock brigades », the « stakhanovites » and the other « labor heroes ». These quotas are changed often but always rise.

The worker must meet these quotas if he wants to get his basic wage (average salary). And for a normal person, this is becoming almost impossible to accomplish.

It is only when the worker has topped the quotas that he gets a bonus which is in proportion to the percentage he went over.

The trade unions must organize « socialist competition ». Going over the quotas and voluntary work are connected with this phrase. On certain anniversaries and holidays, the workers are asked to do voluntary work.

- The trade unions take care of the cultural and material life of the workers.

- They have a legal status.

- They can constitute « leisure time and culture » funds. The purpose of these funds is to allow the workers and employees to use their leisure time and vacations more profitably to develop their physical and moral forces ».

What is behind these responsibilities?

« To allow the workers to use their free time and vacations more profitably ». « To develop their moral and physical forces ». These phrases often mean sending groups of young workers from the same factory into the country to help on the collective farms. There is no pay for this but the young worker is fed and housed. From the communist trade union point of view, one may say that these young people « are developing their physical forces » as work on the land is just as tiring as work in the factory. It is hardly possible to turn down the suggestion of a communist trade union committee official to allow the workers to use their free time more profitably and to develop their physical forces. For if one fails to accept these offers, one runs the risk of getting punished for having « violated the established discipline and the socialist rules of life in common ».

To carry out these tasks, the trade union cadres had to be strengthened. As a result, « shock workers » and « competitors » are found on both the levels of the local trade union administration and at the head of the work committees.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TRADE UNIONS

The power of the trade unions is guided by the principle of so-called « democratic » centralism. This means that the bottom submits to the authority of the top. The Labor Code reads : « At the National Congress of Trade Unions, a majority vote is sufficient for a decision. The minority must yield. The resolutions are binding on the members ».

The National Congress elects the Central Council of Trade Unions. There is no binding rule stating how often these National Congresses should meet. They may be called at the end of two, three or four years depending on the decision of the Central Council (and the communist party).

Between meetings, always several years apart, it is the Central Trade Union Council which is the top authority over all and every trade union. It « only has to reply for its activity (strictly on the trade union level) before the National Congress ».

Let us look at the organization of the trade union machinery from the bottom up. Remember that it is the Central Trade Union Council which settles questions, decides, and punishes :

— The union members in a company meet to form a company trade union group. The leaders are proposed (therefore chosen in advance) and approved by the members of the group. We do not need to add that no one dares object to the person named.

— When the company is small (less than 30-50 workers, according to the country), several of them join together to form a local trade union group. The method of choosing the leaders remains the same.

The company (or local) group may be dissolved by the decision of a general assembly of the group, or by a decision of the Central Trade Union Council.

— The intertrade union leaders form intertrade union district committees which choose the District Trade Union Council in the same way as above.

The District Trade Union Council carries out the decisions of the higher trade union bodies. With the approval of the Regional Council and the Regional Committees of the Federation,

it gives regular instructions to the different company and local groups. It helps them carry out their job.

This means that the local groups must make reports to the higher bodies regularly and also apply the « advice » given to them to the letter.

— The Trade Union District Councils form the Regional Trade Union Committee which chooses the Regional Trade Union Council.

This Regional Trade Union Council sees that all the trade unions in its region carry out the decisions made by the higher federations and bodies. It directs and supervises, through regular orders, the district councils, helps them in their jobs. We see, therefore, that the unions « supervise one another » from the top right on down.

However, the Central Trade Union Council, or another body named by it, has the right to suspend the execution of resolutions adopted by the general assembly of the group or by any other organ of this group whenever the resolution is contrary to the decrees or directives given by the Central Trade Union Council.

Only the Central Trade Union Council can make any changes in the rules of the company or local trade union groups.

It is the Central Trade Union Council which « has the right of decision in all the problems concerning the personnel and set-up of the trade union ; it recruits, transfers and fires all its employees, sets their salary and pay in accordance with an established scale ».

DIVERSE ASPECTS OF THE CENTRALIZATION OF POWER

The mechanism of coercion on the workers is one of the most perfected. Even within the trade unions, the workers are bound to their superiors. The trade union officials take every precaution to forecast any « wayward movement » that the union member may intend to make.

The company trade union groups are organized on the basis of « a job an organization » (stipulated in the rules on organization). The worker is, therefore, supervised in his trade union by

the same people who supervise him in his work. How then could a worker refuse to belong to a trade union group? Often « activists », whose job is to recruit, go into the factories and plants where the management gives them a list of all the personnel. The worker then realizes that he has become a member of a union because his union dues have been withheld from his pay check. No one has asked him for his opinion.

THE WORK COMMITTEES

The law states « that the representation of the interests of the workers is ensured by the work committees ».

According to the various decrees, the work committee must defend the general economic interest first of all and then only defend the interests of the workers so long as these are reconcilable with the general interest...

« The members of the work committees must be elected by direct and secret vote from a list of candidates presented by the trade union organization. The candidates are named at a meeting of the company trade union group. The work committee must receive 80 % of the votes of the members of the personnel taking part in the vote ».

Thus, the lists of the candidates are always prepared in advance, with, in other words, the consent of the communist party. (The lists are prepared in the cells).

The presidium of the Trade Union Central Council gives, moreover, precise orders on this list of candidates :

« A proposing commission elected by the plenary meeting should meet immediately. The job of this commission is to prepare the list of candidates for the work committee, in accordance with the principles guiding the choice of leaders following the policy adopted in this matter. The list will be presented at the plenary meeting. Vote will take place by raised hand. The proposal is adopted if it receives a majority of votes, with only affirmative and negative votes counting. A secret vote will only be used if half of the members present demand it. In this case, ballots will be distributed. These ballots will carry the words : « I approve » or « I do not approve ».

For the citizens of the « Popular Democracies », the formula according to which the list of candidates must be established « in accordance with the policy adopted in this matter » means a great deal. The people know that behind this formula hide the records of the secret police, the black lists of the communist party, etc...

These orders calling for a vote by raised hand in the choice of candidates are revealing. We must not forget that only 80 % of the personnel members count in the election of the work committee. It is evident that those who vote FOR the list of candidates approved (by raised hand) by the trade union assembly will be the same ones who will be present at the « meeting of the personnel » and who will support their candidates. Those who are against the list will abstain since the candidates they would have chosen will not be on the list. It is, therefore, very easy to obtain 80 % of the votes.

We may see what the character of these work committees, basic executive organs of the unions, is.

The work committees may be dissolved by a decision of the union. Likewise, the trade union can take away the mandate of a work committee member.

In short, all real representation of the workers in the factory and plant is fictitious and theoretical.

In conclusion, the duties of the work committees according to the decisions of the Congress may be summarized as follows :

« As a guide of local trade union organization it must.

- Organize productivity among the workers.
- Reinforce « socialist » work discipline.
- Develop work competition.
- Fight for increased output.
- Watch over the quality of production.
- Raise the professional qualifications of the workers.
- Organize schools for professional training.
- Fight against waste.
- Fight against bureaucracy.
- Develop criticism and autocriticism.

- Train the workers in the fight against negligence.
- Guard against the activity of the enemy.
- Conclude collective agreements and see that they are carried out both for the workers and the administration.
- Fight to meet the production plan.
- Establish the work quotas.
- Establish the wages justly in accordance with the quotas.
- Supervise hygiene and labor protection.
- Lead work inspection.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

The collective agreement is concluded between, on one hand, the trade union committee of the company as the « representative of the workers and employees » and, on the other, the employer (the State).

The collective agreement sees first of all that the production plans of the State are carried out and topped. Only secondly does it provide for « the improvement of the working and living conditions of the salaried workers ». (Labor Code).

All wage earners benefit from these collective agreements.

The Council of Ministers, with the Central Trade Union Council, sets the length of the collective agreements. The Central Trade Union Council must see that the clauses of the collective agreement ensure that the State plan will be met and topped and, if it includes clauses which are contrary to the Labor Code, they will be annulated and replaced.

The trade union organs and the administration of the company see that the collective agreement is executed. It is always with an eye to the execution and topping of the plan that these agreements are drawn up.

THE LABOR CONTRACT

A work contract must be signed. The worker is paid for his work. He must first do a trial period, the length of which varies according to his qualification.

The wage earner can be switched from one company to another or sent to another locality, temporarily or permanently, according to the needs production. It is with this clause of the contract that there is a great deal of abuse.

If a worker does not please his superior (boss, trade union delegate or anyone else), he is named to be « detached » elsewhere. It does not matter if he is separated from his family which must remain. If he refuses his change, runs the risk of « hindering the accomplishment of the plan » and in this case; he is liable to heavy penalties. It also arrives (always under the same pretext) that agricultural workers are sent into the mines after a short adaptation period.

If the worker is really stubborn and refuses to be « detached », his work contract can be broken. He loses all his rights to sickness and family benefits for several months. It is written into the Labor Code that « the contract of the worker ends in those cases permitted by law ». This means that the worker cannot make any departure from the law. But the employer (the State) has the right to break the work contract if :

— the wage earner has not regularly accomplished the obligations imposed upon him by the labor contract or internal rules ; in other words, if he has not accomplished the quota.

— if the wage earner has been punished by penal law in relation to his work. (Further on, we will see how and why a worker can be punished by a special law).

— if the wage earner has been a prisoner for more than two months.

— if the wage earner is absent for more than three months as a result of the loss of his capacity to work.

It is, therefore, forbidden to be ill under the danger of being fired. The doctor, who is equally liable to disciplinary action, does not admit the illness of a worker easily. For the doctor is also under the supervision of the work committees. In order to be valid, his prescriptions must be approved and countersigned by the secretary of the trade union work committee.

All the statistics prove that illness is on the increase in the « Popular Democracies ». Those whose illness is not recognized continue to work, but as their physical state is poor, accidents soar.

It is the communist regimes which have instituted the « night sanatoriums ». The TB worker works during the day and « rests » at night in a special institution.

The woman worker who is absent more than three months after the end of her pregnancy leave can be fired. A woman, therefore, cannot be sick after her baby is born. If she is ill, she loses her job and all her allowances, which are very low in any case.

For the cases mentioned above, dismissal is pronounced by a « ruling commission on labor disputes ».

THE LABOR BOOK

When a worker finishes his job, the work committee gives him a salary book and a labor book in which all the particulars contained in the decisions of the Council of Ministers are included.

In order to get a job, the worker must have his labor booklet, which is then turned over to the administration. If he is fired due to a long illness or punishment, this is all carefully noted down in his labor booklet. If he leaves his job on his own initiative without the authorization of the trade union, if, in other words, he breaks his own contract which ties him to his employer (the State), he runs the risk of staying unemployed for some time. For in this case, his labor booklet will not be returned to him and few companies would dare to hire a worker who is not in order with the unions, unless the worker is very skilled in his profession or unless the factory lacks workers of his category.

CHAPTER IV

CONGRESSES

After the occupation of the countries of Eastern Europe by the Soviet army and the installation of the communist regime — with the exception of Czechoslovakia up until 1948 — the communists strengthened their control over the leadership of the trade unions. Commissions made up largely of communists and a few chosen former trade unionists, were set up and their job was to draw up the ideological statement and statutes of the trade union. The social changes, the nationalization of industry and agrarian reform had created among the workers a current of optimism which was cleverly exploited by the communists during the first trade union congresses.

In an atmosphere of restraint which paralysed the efforts made by men faithful to the idea of free trade unionism, the communists succeeded in winning a large majority which allowed them to solidly install themselves in the presidium, in the executive committees of the trade unions and in the trade union central organizations.

The following congresses were called according to the whim of the leaders. In Poland, for example, the second congress of the Trade Union Central Organization took place in June 1949 and the third in May 1954.

Delegates to the congresses are chosen by the regional committees and federations. The method of the « election » of the candidate is easy : the workers approve by raised hand the choice of the candidate who has already been named from above. Nevertheless, in certain companies, the workers refuse to accept this procedure. And they succeed in imposing a candidate who

has been freely chosen. The very composition of the delegates, a large number of whom are Government officials and deputies, shows that the outcome of the debates is known in advance.

The congresses, particularly those of the central trade union organizations, are very spectacular. The chief leaders of the central committee of the communist party and representatives of the army are invited and elected to the presidium. The agenda is vast. Problems concerning the material and cultural conditions of the workers are given large coverage. These problems of camouflage are :

1. The settlement of and increase of salaries.
2. The settlement of the hours of work.
3. Rest.
4. Labor security and hygiene.
5. Housing.
6. Social action.
7. Medical care.
8. Pensions.

Drawn up in this way, the program satisfies the delegates as well as deceives them. For the problems of productivity, work competition, achievement of the production plan have the priority. As, according to communist theory, the improvement of the conditions of work and life contained in the eight points listed above, depend entirely on productivity increase, this question is on the top of the agenda. It is discussed during most of the debates. The chairman analyses the weakness and errors of ideology as well as productivity. Autocriticism is considered as the very essence of the strengthening of the trade union movement. One characteristic fact is that during the discussions of the problems tied up with productivity, the various speakers try to outdo each other, to such an extent that these speeches take on the aspect of a « mea culpa » tournament.

It has been remarked, however, that during these last congresses, a silent opposition has built up with regard to these debates on productivity. More and more, delegates are bringing up questions on labor protection and conditions of hygiene, connect-

ing them closely to the problem of productivity, in spite of the obstruction of the congress bureau.

This tactic bears its fruit. A great deal of time is devoted to the grievances submitted by the delegates. But these delegates are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. If they criticize, they expose themselves to the anger of the top men of the trade unions but if they are passive, they expose themselves to the anger of the workers who demand a serious discussion by the congress of their demands. Criticism grows to such a point that the unions have to yield before pressure coming from the bottom.

The congress takes its decisions unanimously. The bureau submits its projects to the different committees appointed by the congress. In certain cases, the congress can even adjudicate upon a draft bill. Such was the case at the second congress of the Polish trade union central organization. At this congress the draft bill on the trade unions was submitted to the delegates. Approved by them, it was then submitted to parliament by the worker deputies. This method has been presented as a precedent in the history of the labor movement, as an expression of the consideration and very favorable attitude that the State has towards the trade unions. Actually, this was only a clever maneuver to accentuate the role of the unions in the « Popular Democratic » system. As the law states that the unions themselves will define their statutes, their tasks, their objectives and their field of activity, presented in this way the law on the trade unions aimed at showing off trade union independence as well as the power of the congress. However, no matter what the projects submitted to the congress of trade unions might be, they are always drawn up by the central committee of the communist party. For several leaders of the central committee also sit in the Executive Bureau of the trade union central organizations as well as the other different unions.

To-morrow ?

The critical phase resulting from the late political events in the countries of Eastern Europe will probably accentuate during the next congress and future ones because the whole trade union structure is undergoing a deep reorganization. This will have repercussions on the system of election of the delegates to the con-

gress since the interference or rather the pressure from the trade union summit in this field will be replaced by a relative independence. Decentralization could entail a certain autonomy of the trade union organization in a company, including the delegation sent to the congress. There is no doubt but that the future congresses will be different from earlier ones from the point of view of atmosphere.

CHAPTER V

THE LAW ON LABOR DISCIPLINE

While writing this chapter, we have just learned that the law on labor discipline was abolished by the Polish government on September 10, 1956. Coming after the events in Poznan, this decision may be considered as a very important victory of the workers. The other « Popular Democracies » will probably take similar decisions in this field. Nevertheless, we still want to give the reader an idea of what this law of coercion, approved by the trade unions, was and, therefore, we reproduce it in its entirety. Even abolished as a result of worker pressure — for once the roles are reversed — the communists will surely try to win back their former position by other means.

THE worker does not feel only bound (according to the expression of the Labor Code, to his company but also a prisoner. Arbitrary action is common practice on the part of the work committees and the trade unions vis-à-vis the workers who are not pliable enough.

The worker who is suspected of not being in agreement with the orders of the communist party or who shows proof of too much independence is immediately put on the index by the trade union « activists ». He then becomes a « perpetrator of sabotage », an « enemy of the people », or an « imperialist agent » and falls within the provisions of the law on labor discipline.

This law obliges the wage earners to furnish the maximum of effort under minimum working conditions from all points of view, including work security and hygiene. The law rivets the worker to his job, it abolishes all freedom. Here we have proof of the

way that the communists interpret « the dictatorship of the proletariat ». This is a shocking document on which the communists avoid comment, and with reason.

Article I

Every manual or intellectual worker, without regard to the post he occupies or the type of work he does, in a place of work, institution or office, violates discipline if his absence is not justified and must be prosecuted according to the provisions of the present law.

Article II

Workers who distinguish themselves in their work by irreproachable conduct for three consecutive years should be named by the administration of the place of work, institution or office where they work in order to be decorated. Prizes and distinctions are established each year by the Council of Ministers.

Article III

The Council of Ministers will define the circumstances, conditions and modalities justifying absence from work.

Article IV

a) To miss a part of the work day means to be absent without a justified reason.

b) To miss a part of the work day over the limits established by the Council of Ministers is equal to an entire day of absence.

Article V

Disciplinary penalties imposed for violation of labor discipline are as follows :

1. reprimand with warning
2. deduction of one or two days salary for each day of non-justified absence
3. dropping the worker to a less important post for a period not over a month.

These disciplinary penalties are noted in the personal file of the worker.

Article VI

The disciplinary penalties are imposed in the following ways :

1. For one day of absence a year, a worker is reprimanded with a warning, or even has one day of salary deducted from his pay for each day of absence.

2. For the second day of unjustified absence in a year, or two consecutive days, the worker loses one day of salary for each day of absence.

c) For a third day of unjustified absence a year or three consecutive days, two days of salary are deducted for each day of absence, or the worker is dropped to a lower post.

3. The average daily earning is calculated according to principles defining the sum due for days of leave. The worker who gets a monthly lump salary in addition loses, for each day of unjustified absence, the amount which comes to him for the days he has missed.

Article VII

When labor discipline is violated in a willful and malicious manner, legal sentences may be applied, notably :

a) for an unjustified absence of four working days in a year or more,

b) for an unjustifiable absence of four or more consecutive working days.

Article VIII

a) The legal sentence includes the obligation to stay at work for a period not over three months and simultaneously, a salary reduction of from 10 to 25 %.

b) The judge pronounces judgement in matters of unjustified absences.

Article IX

During the length of the disciplinary penalty (Article 5, clause 3), or legal sentence (Article VIII), the worker does not have the right to break his work contract or service.

Article X

The head of the place of work, institution or office is responsible in matters of unjustified absences for the application of disciplinary penalties or to communicate to the courts the demand for prosecution. The head of the place of work makes his decision after he has heard the workers' explanation and after he has consulted the worker council (the delegate or the representative of the union).

The decision defined in paragraph 1 must be made in writing at the latest seven days from the absence of the worker, according to the method adopted in the given establishment.

Article XI

All notations in the file of the worker concerning penalties incurred by him may be struck out after one year of exemplary work.

After a year of exemplary work, the worker has the right to demand that the legal sentences imposed upon him be struck from the conduct book.

The fact that work has been accomplished in an exemplary manner must be approved by the head of the place of work, institution or office in agreement with the worker council, delegate or representative of the trade union.

Article XII

The head of the place of work who justifies absence from work counter to the truth, who knowingly and despite his duty does not apply disciplinary action or does not communicate to the courts a demand to prosecute is liable to a prison term of three months or a fine of... (150 zlotys for Poland) or both at the same time.

He who knowingly makes a false declaration in order to justify an absence is liable to the same punishments mentioned above.

Article VIII

He who violates the provisions of the present law and particularly, he who avoids the legal sentence inflicted in accordance with article VIII is liable to a six months prison term.

Article XIV

The sums resulting from these disciplinary penalties in the form of fines are destined to those ends provided for by the regulations in force.

Article XV

For questions which must be examined by the court :

1. the proposal of the head of the place of work or office takes the place of the charge.
2. the case must be examined by the court of the first instance within a delay of seven days.
3. the sentence and reasons for the sentence must be presented in writing immediately.
4. the delay for appeal is set at three days from the day the sentence is given.
5. the court of appeals must study the case within fifteen days after the publication of the sentence handed down by the court of the first instance.

Article XVI

The law enters in force the day it is published.

In what countries except in countries of communist dictatorship can one see the unions becoming a party to the accusations of the mild shortcomings of the workers in the accomplishment of their jobs ? This law even includes penalties for those who do not denounce. It renders homage indirectly to spying.

However, we must stress that there is less and less spying and accusations in the factories. The spies are strictly left alone by the workers. They run up against the worker solidarity which meets and resists — in the best way possible — the anti-labor offensives of the communist party and their creatures : the trade unions.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRADE UNIONS AND FORCED LABOR

THE communist trade unions which « carry out their job under the leadership of the communist party, the avant-garde of the guide of the nations forces », and which considers in their turn that they are « the guides » of the workers at labor work closely with the « SPECIAL COMMISSIONS ». The task of these Commissions is to punish the workers and send them to « forced labor ».

These Special Commissions are solely made up of people who are « loyal » to the regime. There are three members who swear into office like judges or public attorneys. Decisions of the Special Committee are taken by simple majority.

The Special Commission is chosen by the Council of State. Each Special Commission is subdivided into « Provisional Agencies of the Special Commission ». Members of these latter groups are chosen by the President of the Special Commission in agreement with the presidents of the peoples' councils of the provinces.

The Special Commission deals with the following cases :

1. Cases of corruption or provocation of a panic aimed at harming the interests of the working people.
2. Cases in which the public attorney presents a petition demanding that the offender be forbidden to live in the province where he lived up until then.
3. Particular cases (a very vague term allowing for all sorts of abuses).

The Provincial Agencies of the Special Commission have less power. In general, they have to decide on cases such as the « mi-

use of public property, speculation, clandestine slaughtering, illegal dressing of skins or illegal distillation »...

The decisions of these commissions are without legal appeal. Execution cannot be adjourned unless the President of the Commission expressly agrees. The Code provides for two types of punishment : imprisonment and reclusion.

The motives which can send a worker before the Special Commissions are as follows :

— Beggars and vagabonds may be brought before the Special Commissions. These terms may be interpreted very loosely by the government, police and union authorities.

Actually, every citizen aged 18 to 55 (18 to 45 for women) has to declare at the local employment office his or her job. These registers are carefully kept up to date. This formality in itself can become arbitrary.

A man denounced for holding opinions contrary to the regime, thus suspect, a peasant whose lands are eyed by a « loyal communist », a worker who does not please the trade union leaders or who is accused of « waste » will not be included in the local employment office register. Thus, they will no longer have any work. And as they no longer have any work, they will be declared as « vagabonds » and brought before the Special Commission. A « vagabond » who is arrested in the morning can be judged the same day. As the sentence cannot be appealed, the next day, the « vagabond » may find himself in a « forced labor house » or in « a forced labor camp ». Just one anonymous denunciation and « educational work » will begin.

— Economic « saboteurs » are also liable to come up before the Special Commission. Economic crimes are very varied and a person can become a « saboteur » without even realizing it. A simple oversight in work will do it. Or the worker who has not met his quota.

— « Administrative internees » who have been arrested for « State security reasons » are also sent to the forced labor camps. These are the former members of the free trade unions, the socialist parties, the democrats, liberals and peasants. There are not many left as their « liquidation » has been almost total. They re-

presented a danger for the regime because the people kept their confidence in them.

Different kinds of forced labor

Forced labor is reserved for those who are unable to pay a fine. The penalty which the worker must pay in the place of a fine is the number of days that he is sentenced to forced labor.

All the funds which come from this system of forced labor are turned over to the State.

Forced labor is also the sentence for those who break work discipline and particularly for absentees.

These disciplinary measures can be made by the place of work (the work committee, trade union or administration) or by the court. The worker, condemned by a (municipal) court which has heard the representative of the union, carries out his term of forced labor at his usual place of work. (The reader is referred to the law on labor discipline).

If the worker tries to avoid disciplinary punishment, he runs the risk of going to prison.

Forced labor imposed by the administrative authorities

There are three types of forced labor in this category :

1. « Corrective » work without loss of liberty. This sentence is carried out in the usual place of work.

2. Work in a camp imposed as a sentence by the Special Commission.

3. Service of general or special obligatory work in the interest of national reconstruction. Any citizen may be forced to do such work. All that is necessary is to decree the interest of the State. This constitutes a labor force reserve on which the State can always call. The young people can always be sent to this type of obligatory work rather than do their military service.

Corrective work without loss of liberty

The Special Commission can condemn a worker to a period of « corrective » work in the usual place of work (particularly in

the mines, heavy industry and building). Twenty to twenty five percent of the wage paid for this work is withheld, although the court can sentence the condemned person to unpaid work. In this case, one day of non-paid work is equal to from three to five days of paid corrective work. However, the sentence pronounced always corresponds to non-paid corrective work. Thus, if the worker has a family and is a « free prisoner », he will ask for paid corrective work. And as a result, he will work five times as long in forced labor.

Work in a camp

It is the Special Commission which pronounces the sentence which must be carried out in a labor camp. Here are some of the crimes which lead to the « camp » :

- « he who does not like to work » is considered as an « economic saboteur ».
- misuse of public property.
- corruption.
- speculation.
- the fact of having created a panic.
- delinquents under 17 years of age.

These categories are often interpreted very loosely by the Special Commission. There is a good deal of arbitrariness, to such an extent that the worker always is asking himself if he has not committed a crime. He lives in perpetual fear and is at the mercy of his work committee and trade union.

The sentences run from days to months to years and, when the « interest of the State » requires it, the condemned is purely and simply forgotten.

CHAPTER VII

LENGTH OF WORK AND REST — VACATIONS OVERTIME

Length of work

ACCORDING to the Labor Code, the normal work day is eight hours. In order to shorten this work day, there must be a decision of the Council of ministers, on the proposal of the trade unions and in agreement with the responsible ministers.

It is specified that in special cases for particular professional categories, the length of the working day may be cut when conditions demand. We must add, however, that this decrease is rarely granted because of the possibility that work production might be compromised.

The eight hour work day, although written into law, is often very elastic.

Overtime

The Labor Code provides for modifications so that industries may let their workers do overtime if necessary. The text of the law reads :

« In cases required by the necessities of the State, additional work is authorized for specified categories of industries either all over the territory or in a part of the territory. The length of overtime is set down for a one year period but the Council of Ministers may extend this period over the following years by prolonging it one year at a time, if the economic interest of the State requires it ».

It is easy for an industry to prove that the interest of the State requires overtime. Here we have codified and planned forced labor.

« The length of work may add up to 12 hours a day and even more. The work day can be lengthened every day of the week and even Sunday ».

We could mention numerous examples of overtime in all of the countries under the communist yoke. Let us only take a few daily examples from Poland as found in the discussions of the seventh plenary meeting of the Central Trade Union Council in April, 1956. The matter under discussion was the Railroad Workers Trade Union Association, a branch which had so many overtime working hours and such a high accident rate that the Central Council of Trade Unions had to deal with the problem.

A train driver noted : « My average service runs 400 hours a month, 250 hours on the five sixths scale (five hours of pay for six hours of work). I am free eight hours out of twenty four. If the time I spend writing up by different work reports, professional training, Party instruction, etc. is deducted, I only have five or six hours a day left to sleep. When can I read a paper or book ? I have not been to the movies for eleven years. When can I devote some time to my family if I only come home every 48 hours and when one free day a month is rare ? »

Think of the infernal work of this engine driver. His global monthly salary comes to an average of 750 zlotys (including the mileage bonus). We may get an idea of what he can buy (working 400 hours per month) when we know that rye bread costs 3 zlotys a kilo, pork 27 zlotys a kilo, and sugar 12 zlotys. The annual average overtime of a railroad worker is 1,200 to 1,500 hours. In the metallurgical industry, the figures run the same. No. 2 Metallurgical Factory in Warsaw, which was allowed 3,000 hours of overtime a month, reached the figure of 10,800 hours in January. The factory « Ursus », with 80,000 hours of overtime authorized, did 313,000. The trade unions watch first of all to see that the plans are met and care little about the over-worked, exhausted workers who often do not even eat properly.

Length of work for women and youth

In theory, there are restrictions for women and youth work which are written into law.

« It is forbidden to hire adolescents and women for particularly hard and unhealthy work. »

This paragraph which seems altogether normal in the West, is contradicted a little further on : « The Council of Ministers (or the communist party) can temporarily suspend some of the restrictions if required in the superior interest of the State ».

The work committees and trade unions in a given industry have the right to interpret the law on the length of work and to decide if the work is « particularly hard and unhealthy ». They can oblige women and younger people to do work which would be unthinkable for women and children in the free world.

Women and children of 16 years of age are sent into the mines. Women drive locomotives, do road and cement work : everything that is reserved for men only and forbidden to women and children by the international conventions of 1919 and 1928, ratified by 21 countries including Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Estonia and Hungary.

Rest and Vacations

After we have seen that no one rests in the countries under communist domination, we may see that, in theory at least, the law provides for weekly rest, holidays and vacations :

« Every wage earner has the right to an uninterrupted 24 hours of rest a week. The day of rest is Sunday ».

« Every wage earner has the right to a yearly vacation ».

- 12 days after one year
- 15 days after three years
- one month after ten years

« This is for a period of uninterrupted work in the place of work ».

The worker is informed of the date of his vacation by a list which is posted in the workshop or office fifteen days before the beginning of his vacation. The worker is not asked whether the date is convenient to him or not. He must accept it like everything

else. Vacations are staggered because the factories work all year long.

There are the following holidays :

January 6th, Epiphany

Easter Sunday

Easter Monday

May 1, National Holiday

First Sunday of Lent

Rebirth of the Country (for Poland July 22)

August 15, Assumption

November 1, All Saints Day

November 7, Russian Revolution

December 25, Christmas

December 26,

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORLD TRADE UNION FEDERATION AND ITS EXPORT PROPAGANDA

ALL of the communist unions are affiliated to the World Trade Union Federation.

Up until 1950 when it was expelled from France, the headquarters of this organization were in Paris. The offices then moved to Vienna until the end of 1955 when Austria, freed from Soviet occupation troops, asked them to leave the country. Now the organization is installed in Prague.

At its seventh session (December 9-14, 1954), the World Trade Union Federation adopted a « Charta of the Trade Union Rights of Workers ». Unfortunately, this Charta was not published in its entirety in those countries under the communist regime. For the subjugated workers could then compare the claims listed therein and their own lack of freedom. This Charta is an export item aimed only at serving the communist agitators in the free countries.

Only the absolutely loyal communist elements of the Popular Democracies took part in this seventh session, men convinced that the workers of their countries had other duties and obligations vis-à-vis the Boss State than the free workers. In the free countries, the rights of union members are never great enough, the demands are never sufficient enough, the undermining work of the communists are never great enough.

The oppressed worker is working for the « good cause ». If he is hungry, it is because he has understood nothing of the building of « socialism ». If his salary is cut, it is in the interest of the State which has its good reasons for making the worker pay

to make arms whose production must ever be increased. If he revolts, demanding « Liberty and Bread », it is because he is an imperialist agent, even if thousands of workers do this as in Poznan.

This « Charta of the World Trade Union Federation » was adopted unanimously. But unanimously by the communist trade union leaders present and they took care not to ask the opinion of the union workers of their countries.

We reproduce here the demands which could be accepted by the workers of our countries, bent under the yoke of communist tyranny, and ask all of the « trade union » leaders of our countries to demand them from their governments.

The rights of the workers

The workers have the right to form trade unions, to belong to trade union organizations... **WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION OR CONTROL OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES OR EMPLOYERS.**

The workers have the right in each place of work as well as outside these place, to meet, discuss and to **EXPRESS THEIR OPINION FREELY** on all questions interesting them, to read the newspaper of their choice and to carry on trade union propaganda. The workers have the right to take part in any action to defend their interests, whether this action takes the form of **STRIKES, DEMONSTRATIONS OR OTHER FORMS OF TRADE UNION STRUGGLE.**

IN NO CASE CAN THE EMPLOYER OR THE PUBLIC POWERS TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE MEMBERSHIP OR TRADE UNION ACTIVITY OF THE WORKERS, THEIR OPINIONS OR PERSONAL CONVICTIONS TO DISCRIMINATE IN ANY WAY IN MATTERS OF EMPLOYMENT, JOB OR WAGE, OR TO JUSTIFY THEIR DISMISSAL OR APPLICATION OF PUNISHMENT.

The free functioning of the trade union organizations

The members of the trade union organizations can **SET UP THEIR STATUTES FREELY AND ELECT THEIR LEADERS**

FREELY AND WITHOUT RESTRICTION... WITHOUT THE INTERFERENCE OR SUPERVISION OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES OR EMPLOYERS.

The trade union organizations have the right to call meetings and congresses without the previous authorization of the public authorities, organize trade union demonstrations **INCLUDING PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS.** Trade unions dues should be free and voluntary. Only the trade union organizations have the right to manage union funds without the supervision of the public authorities or employers.

The right to strike

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE IS THE BASIC RIGHT OF THE WORKER. Every worker, whatever his profession may be has the right to strike without any limitation. Workers and trade union organizations have the right to take all measures **TO ORGANIZE AND SUPPORT STRIKE.**

ORGANIZATION OF A STRIKE AND PARTICIPATION IN A STRIKE AS WELL AS DEMONSTRATION OF SOLIDARITY MUST NOT IN ANY CASE FORM THE SUBJECT, BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER A STRIKE, OF PUNISHMENTS, PENALTIES OR MEASURES OF REPRESSION.

International Trade Union activities

Trade union organizations have the right to belong to the international organization of their choice. They have the right to join in the common activity of foreign or international organizations as well as in the movements of solidarity with the workers and union members of other countries. To do this their representatives must be provided with the necessary visas and passports.

ALL WORKERS MAY ENJOY THE RIGHTS INCLUDED IN THIS CHARTA WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION OF PROFESSION, QUALIFICATION, AGE, SEX, RACE, COLOR, NATIONALITY, CASTE, LANGUAGE, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS OPINION.

The World Trade Union Federation also asked, in a resolution voted unanimously on the same date, its affiliated unions to fight for the following objectives :

On the question of wages and increased productivity, the resolution reads that : « in order to divert and check the struggle of the workers for salary increases, the monopolies propose to tie increases to productivity. But in actual fact, the phrase, « increase of productivity » covers a whole series of methods to intensify work which are prejudicial to the physical and moral forces of the workers. These methods lead, moreover, to the increase of work accidents, dismissals and the development of unemployment. They aim basically at increasing the profits of the huge capitalist and colonial societies ». (Authors note : We would like to replace the words « huge capitalist societies » by the words Boss State). The World Trade Union Federation is resolutely hostile to all measures which would tend to tie wage increases to productivity increase. It asks all the trade union organizations to denounce clearly and firmly all that hides behind the programs of increased productivity and industrial concentration and to develop still further the worker.

The World Trade Union Federation asks for a « campaign against work intensification, pace acceleration and other methods of over-exploitation », but for the reduction of the work day without wage decrease.

The World Trade Union Federation « recommends all the trade union organizations to distribute this charta among the workers, to submit it to the parliaments and governments and to work to include its demands in the collective agreements, to make all the affiliated organizations abide by it.

CONCLUSION

It is useless to comment on such precise demands. Communism continues to have two faces. Let it throw off its mask and let what the World Trade Union Federation (communist) demands for its organizations in the free countries be equally and totally applied in the countries now under communist domination. What is good for a trade unionist (in liberty) is also good for all oppressed workers. Let the World Trade Union Federation at least apply her « Charta of the Trade Union Rights of the Workers » in our countries. If she does not do this, it will be the workers themselves who will soon demand it. They will demand at the same time free elections, a free democracy and FREE TRADE UNIONS.

