55/1996 ISSN 0141-7746 £4.00 $7.00

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

Trade Unions in East Central Europe

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a review of European affairs 55

ISSN 0141-7746
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Eastern Europe

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe is published three times yearly. First published in 1977, it is an independent left journal that deals with European politics: international relations, political currents, social-political conflicts, and the political and economic aspects of European (East-West) integration in the post-Cold War era. It has a particular interest in the process of social and political transformation that is taking place in Central and Eastern Europe and pays particular attention to the political currents and organisations of the labour movement in these countries.

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Number 55 **Autumn 1996**

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Trade Unionism in the Czech Republic

The post-Communist trade unions of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) share with unions built under totalitarian regimes the complexities of emerging from a heritage of being part of the corporatist control apparatus to a new role of workers' interest representation. Yet they differ from those which can unequivocally embrace the role of agent of democratic change from capitalist dictatorships in countries such as Spain or Portugal in having to support free market 'reform'. As Richard Falbr, President of the Czech and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS) put it, the unions found themselves 'in a schizophrenic situation' supporting their government's policies of introducing capitalism, but 'not agreeing with certain phenomena' (quoted in Myant 1993:60).

This paper addresses the question of how the Czechoslovak, and then Czech, labour movement evolved in this paradoxical situation, both at the institutional and ideological levels. Both, of course, are linked and the paper explores evidence for a union radicalisation process spurred first by the immediate post-Velvet Revolution successes of defending workers' rights at state level, but increasingly through polarisation forced by the entrenchment of a confident right-wing state. While the first five years of post-Communist trade unionism produced apparent social consensus and union quiescence, singling out the Czech Republic as an

island of 'social peace' within a much more turbulent CEE, 1995 appeared to mark a turning of the tide to greater conflict and opposition.

I. The Legacy

Politics and the labour movement

The pre-Communist Czech labour movement was rooted in an advanced urban and industrial inheritance: in 1918, 35 per cent of the population were engaged in agriculture and 40 per cent in industry, in marked contrast to Slovakia, where the figures were 60 per cent and 19 per cent respectively (Zinner 1963:11). With Czechoslovakia containing 70 per cent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's industrial capacity, the pre-First World War Czech working class was organised and politicised, (Bloomfield 1974: 24). It had a strong social democratic tradition, and while there were expressions of revolutionary socialism in the industrial militancy of the wider period of European radicalism of the 1920s, with strikes, hunger marches and the call for a General Strike in 1920, the radical left was not well rooted in the labour movement, and moderate social democracy repressed further action in defence of the Czechoslovak First Republic created in 1918. Nevertheless, there was a strong tradition of workplace democracy: workers' demands for participation in management in the 1920s - (to re-emerge in the Prague Spring of 1968) - were partly institutionalised with legalisation of workers' consultation committees (Korbel 1977: 60). There was also, however, a legacy of union divisions stemming from ethnic, political and craft differences from the era of Austro-Hungarian domination. In 1937 there were eighteen trade union centres which organised 485 unions, with a further 224 unions unconnected to any centre (Bloomfield 1974:24). As this paper argues below, although the new Czech union movement is far more centralised than others in CEE, formal institutional structures mask antipathy towards centralisation which, while a response to the Communist legacy, may also have resonance with traditional fragmentation.

A further characteristic of the Czechoslovak labour movement was the widespread support for the Communist Party (CP). Unlike Hungary, where the CP led a weak existence in exile or prison under the dictatorship of the 1920s onwards, or Poland, where it was a minority in the trade unions compared with the Polish Socialist Party, the CP in

Czechoslovakia was significant both in electoral and membership terms (Harman 1974:28). Political freedom meant it could become legally established in parliament once it became established as an independent party, which occurred, as elsewhere in Europe, after the First World War, with a split in the Social Democratic Party between the 'reform' and 'revolutionary' wings in 1921. While this support may appear to contradict the earlier characterisation of social democratic politics in the labour movement, it arguably points precisely to the *continuity* of social democratic ideology within the new CP, before its 'reformist tendencies' were eradicated under Comintern directives to 'Bolshevise' in 1928 (Zinner 1963:29). The question of the subsequent relationship between the politics and popularity of the Social Democrats and the CP during and immediately after the Second World War is too complex for this paper (see Korbel 1959, Zinner 1963, Bloomfield 1974, Harman 1974); but the complexity and significance of the rise of CP support and the decline in visibility of the Social Democrats prior to the Communist take-over of 1948 may be of increasing interest in terms of interpreting the political complexion of the post-Communist period. As this paper indicates, the first few years after 1989 saw the hegemony of the neo-classical Right. However mid 1995 figures showed a re-emergence of the Social Democratic Party (CSSD) alongside other evidence of growing disillusion with the government, such as the greater industrial unrest which will be delineated below. In the parliamentary election of May-June 1996, the CSSD won 26 per cent of the popular vote, only 3 per cent behind Klaus's Civic Democratic Party. I have written about the rise of Czech Social Democracy in a previous issue of this journal (Pollert 1996b). The present article looks at Czech trade unionism during the period prior to the 1996 election. The resurrection of the Social Democratic Party and whether it has any connections with the past would be a fruitful line of enquiry and might provide insights into the nature of trade union ideology today.

Communist trade unionism

The Second World War provided the conditions for both the rise in support for the CP and the centralisation of the scattered trade union movement in the unified ROH (Revolutionary Trade Union Movement). Within the centralised state-controlled National Federation of Employees

which the Nazi Protectorate regime forced onto all existing trade unions in 1941, the establishment of resistance groups became the embryo of a unified trade union movement. The foundations were laid in 1943 with the illegal creation of URO (Central Trade Union Council), precursor of ROH, which was formed when the war ended in 1945. The adoption of 'democratic centralist' policies by ROH, which meant increasing control by a small central apparatus of an All-Trade Union body, and removing autonomy from individual unions, established the undemocratic union model of the CP 'transmission belt' familiar to the entire Communist bloc. However, it is worth pointing out that ROH coercion met with resistance; in tune with the wave of post-war workers' radicalisation, Czechoslovak factory works councils were created in both heavy industry and finance, and only forcible subordination to ROH extinguished 'dangerous' tendencies of workplace autonomy and democracy.

For the next forty years, the system of Communist labour relations and trade unionism is a familiar story. Throughout post-war CEE this meant 'socialist emulation' of the 1930s Soviet model, in which the trade unions were to concentrate on production rather than representation. This included the organisation of 'production challenges' with 'shock brigades' and, in Czechoslovakia, the running of national productivity competitions to 'rebuild the Republic' immediately after the war (Bloomfield 1974:132). In addition, as elsewhere, their major responsibility was in the area of welfare and recreation, especially housing and holidays. Annual collective agreements were made between the union and management, but these were social in nature and centred on issues such as training, health and safety, housing, kindergartens, distribution of holidays and transport to work. Beyond this, there was no union role for interest representation in terms of job controls or any such concept as the wage-effort bargain.

The main unit of wage bargaining was the individual or the work group, within the highly codified national wage rates system. Wages were distributed from a centrally allocated wage fund and distributed by the departmental manager and foreman to individuals or collectives. As this paper indicates, this pattern remains highly entrenched, translating with little substantive change into 'new' individual pay contracts. In all CEE countries, the command economy work-incentive systems oscillated between the individualism of piecework (the Stakhanovite experiments

of the 1950s) and the cultivation of group responsibility in the brigade system, which reproduced at departmental level the 'khozraschet' system of enterprise financial accountability. It is ambiguous as to whether the brigades encouraged or debased workplace collectivity. Cynicism towards manipulative 'pseudo-participation' under bureaucratic state planning was widespread (Fisera 1978:11, Vlail 1991). Nevertheless, as with 'participation' and team-working as means of management control, which could create niches for union resistance in the West (Pollert 1996a), the brigades in the East could be the double-edged bearers of aspirations for workplace democracy. Once these ideas took hold in the summer of 1968, democratically elected workers' councils and demands for self management went far beyond the original intentions of limited workers' participation rights in enterprise management, and continued after the Soviet invasion of August 1968 (Fisera 1978). Thus, while the Prague Spring is usually associated with intellectual and artistic dissent, the evidence of strong mobilisation for workplace democracy, particularly in engineering strongholds such as KD Praha and Skoda Plze (ibid. 11), seems to testify to a thread in workplace relations which has re-emerged in several periods. The post-1968 'normalisation' imposed tight bureaucratic control once again; but in 1988 a further limited reform re-introduced some enterprise democracy and, in the few organisations which had time to implement them, such as a department store in Prague, workers used their new rights to elect a new managing director (Pollert 1995). However, there was little time to witness further development before the Velvet Revolution of November 1989 overtook events. In the immediate embrace of capitalism and the hoped-for liberating effects of privatisation, workplace democracy went off the agenda. Nevertheless, no account of emerging industrial relations would be complete without registering this legacy.

II. Post-Communist Industrial Relations

Trade union structure

Unlike in the rest of CEE and Russia, where, with most reshaped old unions still in place, conflict between old and new unions and resurgent workers' councils occurred, in Czechoslovakia the old unions were replaced by new ones in 1989 (Myant 1993, Héthy 1994). The new

trade unions in Czechoslovakia arose out of a co-ordinating body formed out of some 6,000 strike committees which organised protest strikes that helped overthrow the Communist regime in November 1989. Competition for leadership between the old Revolutionary Trade Unions (ROH) and the new body was settled at an All-Union Congress in March 1990 in which the new unions easily won, backed by strike threats from large factories, and took over the old union assets (CSKOS 1992, Myant 1993). The newly created Czech and Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions (CSKOS) became the largest union body, consisting of 63 member organisations - 21 federal, 20 Czech and Moravian and 22 Slovak unions organised on industrial lines. In addition, a 100,000 strong Confederation of Art and Culture (KUK) was formed. A 50,000 strong Trade Union Association of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, with old Communist party leanings, was formed in 1991. There was also a Christian Democratic grouping and, as in several other countries in CEE, autonomous unions for particularly powerful groups such as train drivers.

At a formal institutional level, the Communist inheritance of union centralisation remained largely intact, as did organisational structures and, at some lower regional and most workplace levels, union personnel as well (Brewster 1992). In spite of a new, democratically elected leadership, the ensuing nature of the Czechoslovak trade union movement was thus more embedded in Communist past structures and institutions than images of a 'sweeping away existing social actors and institutions' (Héthy 1994:131) imply. Membership too initially remained stable, with CSKOS claiming nearly seven million members, 80 per cent of the active labour force, in 1990, although this soon began to decline. Overall density dropped to between 68 per cent for manual workers and 50.8 per cent belonging to CSKOS in 1991 (Myant 1993).

The formal system of the new trade unionism in Czechoslovakia was a three-level structure with a top, tripartite level centred on an Annual General Agreement between CSKOS/KUK and the government, industry level bargaining, and workplace trade unionism. After the separation of the federation into the separate states of the Czech and Slovak republics, this system was reproduced at republic level in both countries, with the bulk of the Czech trade unions now in the Czech and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS).While industry-wide agreements exist for minimum wage setting, they are weak, leaving the

bulk of industrial relations highly fragmented to company and workplace level (Pollert and Hradecká 1994). This centrifugal tendency towards workplace fragmentation can be seen in the under-development of employers' associations - (indeed unions have reported their active help in creating these so that industry bargaining could take place) - and employers' preference for fragmented industrial relations. While such developments may augur democratic tendencies for workplace independence, they have left individual union centres short of funds and staffing, with around three-quarters of union dues (which continue to be 1 per cent of net pay) remaining at enterprise level. Organisational fragmentation causes inadequate communication, with the union leadership lacking feedback from the membership and having to rely on general public opinion survey organisations for information. While unions do hold conferences where experiences can be exchanged, the legacy of passivity under centralisation, combined with new operational freedom, leaves plant union branches at a disadvantage compared with the acceleration of management training in sophisticated Western techniques of labour control.

Industrial relations climate

The relative quiescence, or acquiescence, of the Czechoslovak labour movement during the first five years of economic transformation is indicated by the mere handful of industrial protests after 1989 - a strike by 1,500 bus drivers in 1992 for a clearer transport policy, a one hour strike by 7,000 of 17,000 Skoda-Volkswagen workers in 1994, and a fifteen minutes token 'General Strike' against government social policies in December 1994. This compares with an estimated 300 annual protests since 1989 in Poland (Orenstein 1994). Finally, while comparative research on subjective assessment of change in financial circumstances between 1988 and 1993 (Table 1) showed that, in all CEE countries surveyed, substantial proportions experienced deterioration, this was far less marked in the Czech Republic.

There are a number of levels of explanation for what appears a less materially traumatic transition to capitalism for the Czech Republic. The first lies in economic history, with Czechoslovakia already an advanced industrial, urbanised capitalist society as it entered the state planning regime. Despite the economic wastage and deformation of

Table 1. Judgement of financial situation in 1993 compared with 1988 (% of sample, N=27,239)

	Got worse	Same	Better
Bulgaria	71.3	21.7	7.0
Czech Republic	48.4	27.5	24.1
Hungary	62.2	26.6	11.1
Poland	62.9	19.5	17.6
Slovakia	61.7	21.3	17.0

(*Source*: Comparative Survey, "Social Stratification in Eastern Europe after 1989", *Data & Fakta*, January 1995).

bureaucratic state planning, it was the most prosperous Communist-bloc country along with East Germany, enjoying a higher per-capita income than neighbouring Hungary or Poland. It had the lowest foreign debt of CEE as it entered transition. Economic and geographic contingencies aided employment, with export or sub-contracting relations with neighbouring Germany and Austria. The explosion of tourism and a new service industry sucked in a surplus equivalent to the average industrial wage for 20 per cent of the active labour force in 1993 (Myant 1994: 10). There are also numerous historical/cultural explanations for the seeming consensus, relating to Czech 'national temperament' and values rooted partly in Germanic influence and partly in over three hundred years of national subjugation, predisposing to patience, pragmatism, materialism and caution. These culturalist insights could be explored at a more institutional level, such as the legacies of pre-war parliamentarism and the Austro-Hungarian bureaucratic and legalistic tradition.

While imperturbability and circumspection may have a role in maintaining 'social peace', more concrete explanations are required in view of the fact that the Czech economic experience of 'shock therapy' was as extreme as Poland's. The Czechoslovak (later Czech) government imposed the same IMF stabilisation package for low inflation and balance of payments deficits as elsewhere in the region. Indeed, real wages dropped further than in Hungary, although GDP less than in Poland. However, the key difference for a less painful experience was the Czech Republic's low unemployment (Table 2).

Table 2. Extent of Economic Decline in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1992

	GDP	Real wages	Unemployment
Bulgaria	52	68	13.1
Czechoslovakia	70	73	5.5
Hungary	82	94	10.1
Poland	83	65	12.6

First two columns show 1992 level as a percentage of 1989 figure. Unemployment is percentage of total workforce in mid 1992.

Source: United Nations Commission for Europe, quoted in Myant and Waller 1993:170.

To understand more fully the contribution of this uniquely low unemployment to social support for 'reform', we have to move from legacy to agency - primarily the government's shrewd combination of neo-classical ideology and corporatist intervention. This policy won hearts and minds to the cause of privatisation, while suspending its adverse effects by speeding through changes in formal property rights without a policy for economic restructuring. Whereas other countries, such as Hungary, required enterprises to restructure before privatisation, the Czech policy, informed by free-market ideology, was to privatise first, and leave restructuring to 'the market' (Frydman et al 1993). Meanwhile, state intervention included a complex bankruptcy law which suspended bankruptcy for state enterprises undergoing privatisation, heavy state subsidisation of ailing state enterprises, and a computerised system of mutual inter-enterprise debt cancellation. Wage regulation policy further permitted enterprises to keep workers on the payroll, perpetuating the low wage, labour hoarding employment policies of the shortage economy, until wage deregulation in July 1995. Other factors arguably also contributed to low unemployment, especially the role of the trade unions in the tripartite in pressing for active labour market policies (discussed below), the growth of the service sector, and employees' willingness to be mobile. Nevertheless, the paradox of a highly corporatist policy, in the name of establishing the free market, prevented major micro-economic restructuring for over five years - a long period to win political support, but finite nevertheless.

Besides the contribution of low unemployment to 'social peace', a further important component at the ideological level was the manner in which the mass privatisation programme gained popularity. Once the voucher privatisation programme took off with the inclusion of Investment Privatisation Funds (IPFs), which operated as brokers for voucher holders, offering attractive gains, the process engaged the whole adult population in market behaviour in 'buying up' the nation's assets, thus producing the illusion of a real stake in the creation of capitalism (Stark 1992). The voucher scheme was the fastest and the single largest method of privatisation, responsible for 50 - 60 per cent of Czech National Assets (UN 1994:166). Its popularity was partly based on the entry of IPFs and partly on its populist appeal, but this is likely to be short-lived. It will not produce the 'property owning democracy' implied by a mass 'give-away' privatisation. Contrary to neo-classical ideologues' fears that private property rights would be too dispersed over the populace, the entry of IPFs introduced a concentrated ownership structure. However, voucher privatisation and IPFs have brought their own problems, from the point of view of the privatisers: at company level, IPFs can only own up to 20 per cent of shares, so that dispersion does remain an issue at the micro level, while lack of financial liquidity and information transparency call into question the nature of corporate governance. For the labour movement, hopes that privatisation would solve managerial inefficiency are likely to evaporate as a range of enterprise governance problems and the real issues of micro-level restructuring emerge.

III. Unravelling Tripartite Industrial Relations

From social partnership to union marginalisation

Tripartism started in Hungary in 1988, followed by Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia in 1990, spreading to other CEE countries and Poland in 1992 (Héthy 1994). The Czechoslovak tripartite council, the Council of Economic and Social Agreement, was formed in October 1990, and made a significant contribution to social consensus in facilitating a system of corporatist industrial relations. This entailed an Annual General Agreement, first introduced in January 1991, which was a statement of intent on the minimum wage, wage indexation and social and employment

policy (Pollert and Hradecká 1994). It became the forum for the social compromise package for a low-wage, low-unemployment policy: the unions were given a seat at the tripartite table, with social policies to cushion the fall in real wages and the impact of unemployment in return for agreeing to financial 'sacrifices'.

Corporatism was established during the liberal period of the Civic Forum, but was almost immediately squeezed by the rising neo-liberal right within the government that took power in 1991. For the trade unions in the tripartite structure, the 'Thatcherite' policies of the government meant marginalisation, from a position of social partnership to that of pressure group. The unions had no role in government policy formation, and while there were notable successes, such as the crucial Law on Collective Bargaining in December 1990 (which enacted a range of ILO conventions and the UN Charter of Human Rights), as well as the establishment of a minimum wage and state commitment to active labour market policies in 1991.But the unions failed to influence the fundamental direction of state policy. Tensions within the tripartite heightened as the government adopted an increasingly cavalier approach to its commitments during 1991, with an abandonment of the indexation of the minimum wage, and repeated use of the government's constitutional right to over-ride the General Agreement in the renewal of tight wages regulations, against the wishes of union - and many employers. The unions, backed by popular concerns (more in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic) made a show of strength in delaying signing the 1992 Annual Agreement until April. The government retaliated by making subsequent General Agreements ever more vague and difficult to uphold in practice.

The government's policy of union marginalisation did, however, have a radicalising effect, as illustrated by grass roots union pressure on the tripartite to boycott the General Agreement in 1993 and 1994. We can contrast this with 1990-91, immediately after the Velvet Revolution, when the union leadership was clearly fearful of alienating the public and showed no signs of wishing to challenge the economic reforms. It concentrated on bold, public pronouncement and a practice of responsible, conciliatory partnership, arguably modelled on the German DGB (Myant and Waller 1993). Two years later, union threats to social peace became sufficient to force concessions from the government. An example was the unions' response to the government's failure to honour the 1993

General Agreement pledge to legislate the broadening of industry-wide agreement coverage to enterprises which were not themselves signatories to them (Orenstein 1994). When the unions refused to sign the 1994 General Agreement until the government proposed legislation on this issue, a compromise was reached which gave limited broadening of branch agreements. Similarly, a compromise was reached over threats to take away trade union rights from civil servants and other public sector employees. It was clear in 1995 that the government was increasingly keen to dismantle the tripartite structure further. Not only was the General Agreement vague, but the state announced eventual withdrawal from future ones, once it ceased to be a major employer, leaving a bi-partite structure. In the meantime, while marginalised in terms of tripartite partnership rights, the unions entered an increasingly oppositional political role.

Government attacks on employment rights

Radicalisation was furthered by disagreement over industrial relations and employment law. This became evident in one area in which the unions had made no imprint on the legislature within the tripartite framework: government policy to raise the pension age and deregulate employment (lowering severance pay to two months, allowing repeated use of short-term contracts and allowing night work for pregnant women). In March 1994, a peaceful national demonstration of 40,000 in Prague's Old Town Square was the first public protest since 1989. Klaus attempted to undermine the action, describing it as an 'irresponsibly extremist movement' and comparing it with Gottwald's 1948 demonstration prior to the CP take-over. His attempt actually backfired, offending Czech pride in democratic participation. While no in-depth analysis of consciousness was conducted at this time, we can speculate about the beginnings of a revival of the social democratic legacy. A subsequent opinion poll showed that 57 per cent of respondents approved of the unions demonstration, with only 23 per cent disagreeing (*IVVM* 18 April 1994).

The March 1994 demonstration could well have marked a turning point in the attitude of the union leadership. CMKOS appeared to recognise that its conciliatory stance had little effect and the April CMKOS Congress elected Richard Falbr, regarded as a more radical

figure, as new chairman. Still proceeding cautiously, the union confederation took on a bolder stance. In late 1994 the issue was a further government proposal to erode state benefits, in a move to privatise pension schemes and introduce means-tested child benefits. Following a carefully worded appeal to the government by the CMKOS on December 13, a fifteen minute general 'warning strike' over the issue was held on 21 December. On March 25 1995, almost exactly one year after the first demonstration, a second, larger national rally of 90-100,000 people took place in Prague's Old Town Square, under the slogan 'Trade Unions for a Dignified Life'.

The rally (which the writer attended) was peaceful and patient, with no sign of political slogans and deliberately called a 'meeting' rather than a demonstration. Impressionistic observation suggested a general tone on the ground of disillusion with Klaus, with the government, and with a transition which seemed to be benefiting the old-guard or a new stratum of manoeuvrers, but not 'ordinary, honest citizens'. In other words, while the rally was about specific social policy, it appeared to harness wider discontent. The key-note speech, clearly avoiding the demagogy of the orchestrated 'mass rallies' of the past, was marked by three political reference points: the desire for dignity and a return to Czech democratic roots, the desire to join the standards of the rest of the European Union, and a statement that the 1989 revolution had not been in order to join the Third World. This indicated a clear attempt by the Czech trade union leadership to re-position itself both in terms of a historical legacy of social democracy and within the global economy as an advanced industrialised member of Western Europe.

How do we interpret the relative social peace of the first five years up to 1994? At one level, it would appear that the government succeeded in pursuing its policies, with little regard for union pressure, and fully exploited the unions' fears of appearing ideologically aligned to the discredited 'left' or 'extremism'. On the other hand, low unemployment and a gradualist approach to restructuring, despite the free-market rhetoric, could be attributed to an astute and pragmatic concession to union pressure. Quiescence, then, cannot be attributed simply to union timidity, but to a negotiated testing of strengths on both sides. Some, indeed, have argued that the maintenance of the low-wage, low-unemployment compromise was what the unions wanted and marked

a victory in their tripartite role (Orenstein 1994). This view, however, underplays the increasing antagonism of both sides at state level, and does not address the question of the instability of both halves of this compromise.

IV. Changing Role of Trade Unionism 1989-1995

Pressure on the government and the regional dimension

The mass rallies of 1994/5 suggest not only cracks in the 'social peace', but also the fact that the principle means for unions to protect their members' interests has been pressure on the government, rather than negotiations with employers. At times, this type of activity has involved forming alliances with employers against the government, in raising demands for subsidies to bail out ailing enterprises, and thus continuing elements of 'plan bargaining' for scarce resources from the command economy heritage. On the other hand, it has also meant more political, and less purely economistic issues have been raised as, for example, the rural bus drivers' strike in 1992, which was a protest against the lack of a coherent transport policy for the sector.

Regional union pressure on the state is likely to continue if the new government leaves areas of industrial decline, such as northern Moravia and Ostrava-Karvina, to free market policy. There is clear evidence that the economic restructuring of the Czech Republic is producing marked regional inequalities, with the north and eastern areas suffering as they lose eastern trade, while Prague and central, western, and southern Bohemia enjoy economic regeneration, largely because of their proximity to Austria and Germany. Support for trade unions is strong in the 'iron heart' of northern Moravia and Ostrava, both because of the inheritance of strong political muscle among the bastions of the Communist working class of steel workers and miners, and because it is precisely this formerly politically privileged and developed sector which has suffered most from the collapse of the CMEA.

Local union alliances, such as the Association of Trade Union Organisations in Northern Moravia, were formed from below in such regions to put pressure on the government to honour delayed pledges to invest in industrial regeneration projects. Miners were also one of the

major pressure groups behind mobilisation against the threatened deterioration in pensions leading to the 1994/5 national union mobilisations. They also illustrate, at regional level, the union fragmentation discussed earlier as one characteristic of emerging trade unionism. The regional trade union associations tended to be more militant - the Northern Moravian union publicly attacked the national union confederation for lack of militancy (Neporová and Kyloh 1994:25). At the same time, these regional strongholds have also demonstrated union ability to confront employers: the local Moravian branch of the metal workers' union, KOVO (the largest and most powerful in the country) entered into dispute with one of the large steel enterprises in the region over lack of information on managerial salaries and general managerial prerogative (ibid.). A more extreme example of autonomous workers' action was a strike without the union by machinists at the Ferrum plant in Ostrava against a threatened wage cut (*Prague Post* October 5 1994).

Labour and multinational capital

Multinational companies have been cautious regarding foreign direct investment in CEE, most of which has been concentrated in Hungary and the Czech Republic (UN 1994, Radice 1995). The major investments have been in economic 'crown jewels', such as Volkswagen's 31 per cent stake in Skoda in 1991, increasing to 70 per cent of all Skoda operations, including suppliers, in 1995, with the automotive sector accounting for 22.5 per cent of all foreign direct investment in the Czech Republic (*Financial Times* 1995). Developments in industrial relations in the automobile sector are significant both in economic terms and in terms of illustrating the position of the best organised union, KOVO, in an elite industrial group, (VW-Skoda workers earning 40 per cent above the Czech national average).

The muted dispute at Skoda of October 1994 - a one hour stoppage by 7000 of the 17,000 direct workers - was triggered by the laying off of 850 indirect workers, the company's refusal to find them internal re-deployment, and increasing use of non-union sub-contract labour, which undercut rates by one quarter (*Prague Post* October 5 1994). The wider background to union frustration was the fact that Skoda had reneged on the earlier agreement; this involved labour rationalisation from 21,000 to 17,000, on the basis of promises to raise production to 450,000 cars

by the end of the decade with DM 7.1 bn. investment and a loan of DM 1.4 billion for Skoda's expansion. This 'gentleman's' agreement' had no contractual basis and, following the crisis in the motor industry in 1993, including the slashing of 9000 jobs in the Spanish SEAT plant, VW's Czech investment commitment was halved to DM 3.8 billion with no loan for a new engine plant. German engines were now to be used instead of Czech, and supply costs (60 per cent of company costs) were to be squeezed by insisting on Western firms joining local suppliers, on the calculations that they would provide cheaper bulk orders and be tougher on wages.

Moderate though the one hour strike was, management aired the usual threats of mobile global capital, arguing that Mexican wage costs were the same as Czech and production could move there. With Prime Minister Klaus chiding the unions for attempting to intervene in the company's long-term strategy, both the government and the unions gave in to the company's breach of promise to develop the local economy and skill base. The defeat testifies to the extreme weakness of organised labour even in this profitable division of VW, where skilled Czech workers still get only one tenth of the average German VW wage. It highlights the role of cheap labour in the region, in terms of the international division of labour, and the fears of union leaders of becoming another 'Third World' to the advanced West (Radice 1995).

The VW-Skoda dispute was the only confrontation with multinational capital in this period. Nevertheless, despite failing to achieve its objectives of job security, it confirmed the wider turning of the tide of union acquiescence in 1994. Declining 'social peace' does not, however imply rising union power; CMKOS's membership had declined from 3.5 million in 1993 to 2.7 million in 1994 and unions reported increasing difficulties in organising members, both because of anti-union employers and the fragmentation of former large state companies into small units (*Prague Post* 18 January 1995). Nevertheless, by mid 1995, public service workers were still able to confront the state as employers.

Wage threats in the public service sector

With public sector workers' earnings having fallen far behind many private sector rates, wages emerged as an issue once it was realised that

the national wage regulation policy would be abandoned in the summer of 1995. However, although wages became the central union platform, wider political demands concerning the restructuring process continued. In June 1995, the rail workers threatened an all-out strike for higher wages and called for the resignation of senior management for mismanagement. Doctors and teachers likewise threatened strike action if the government did not increase its 10 per cent pay offer for public sector workers; 5,000 teachers held a rally in Brno on 29 June 1995 for a 20 per cent wage rise (*OMRI* June 1995). There are thus indications that the wage side of the low-wage, low-unemployment social compromise was being challenged from the public sector.

Public opinion research surveys on trade unionism

From 1989 the IVVM (Institute of Public Opinion Research) and STEM (Centre for Empirical Research) have conducted surveys on social and political issues, including the status of trade unions. Unfortunately, longitudinal analysis is not possible, since many surveys cover topical issues and thus cover different questions. In addition, part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) covered trade unions in November and December 1993 (*Data & Fakta* April 1994). With the caveat that opinion polls are superficial and are not the most reliable mode of attitude research, they remain all that is available at an aggregate level on labour force and union members' expectations and perceptions of trade unions.

Union density estimates from these surveys vary: the ISSP 1993 arrived at 40 per cent of the economically active, while IVVM found 53 per cent in 1994. Five months later IVVM findings resembled the ISSP's, with 42 to 45 per cent membership density (*IVVM* September 1994). Disaggregation from all three polls found similarities in terms of the relationship between union membership and age, occupation, gender and type of enterprise, with older workers (45-59), manual workers, men and workers in large state enterprises with highest membership ratings and with women and private sector workers less well organised.

The problem of declining employment in large enterprises also emerged. In September 1994, the IVVM found only 17.5 per cent of sample respondents were employed in large enterprises (over 500) where 72 per cent of workers were unionised. 46.7 per cent of the sample worked

Table 3. Union Membership Variation (IVVM April 1994)

Variable	Density in % of economically active
45-59 year old	51
Manual workers	60
Men	40
Women	33
State enterprises	67
Private enterprises	22
Enterprises with over 500 workers	80

in medium sized enterprises (25 to 500), which had a union density of only 48.4 per cent, while 35.8 per cent worked in small firms of below 25 employees, where union density dropped to 16.2 per cent. The size factor was closely paralleled by whether enterprises were state or privately owned: the ISSP study (1993) found over 80 per cent of workers in state enterprises were unionised and 40 per cent in private companies (*Data & Fakta* April 1994). A year later the IVVM found 63.6 per cent and 18.6 per cent in the state and private sectors respectively. While only 36.4 per cent of this sample worked in the better organised state sector, 44.4 per cent worked in the poorly organised private sector (*IVVM* September 1994).

A further clear cause for union concern in the findings was respondents' evident vagueness about union membership, and lack of information as to whether a collective agreement existed or not: thus while 47 per cent knew they belonged to a CMKOS affiliated union, the same proportion thought they belonged to a union but did not know which one, and a further 6 per cent stated they belonged to another union (*IVVM* September 1994). The survey also detected the drift of workers, especially the skilled, to the non-union sector, finding 51 per cent of 'highly qualified' respondents and 35.1 per cent of unskilled manual workers worked in the non-union sector. On the other hand, the only major group who were non-members in unionised circumstances were (not surprisingly) managers (69.3 per cent), while almost half of technical/ administrative workers and manual workers belonged to unions.

Turning to subjective perceptions, the poll findings suggest that

in 1993, substantial numbers (69 per cent) had considerable confidence in the workplace trade union, and almost half (46 per cent) in the CMKOS leadership (Table 4). The ISSP study found greater support for union leaders in 1993 than in 1992 (*Data & Fakta* April 1994) - all of which contrasts with the seeming indictment of the unions in 1990, when a quarter of sample respondents 'did not trust them at all', a quarter 'had little faith' and half 'trusted them somewhat' (Group of Independent Social Analysis, Prague 1990). Confidence in union leadership decreases as one goes up the hierarchy - in spite of the fact that it was the higher echelons which were replaced by non-Communist figures in 1989. This perhaps suggests deeply ingrained dislike of oligarchy which transcends ideological boundaries and confirms other findings of widespread, strong views that the unions ensured high pay mainly for their own officers (ISSP 1993, *Data & Fakta* April 1994).

Table 4. Confidence in Union Leaders (%)

	Definitely Yes	Moderately Yes	Moderately No	Definitely No	Don't Know
Workplace representatives	21	48	16	5	10
Union leadership	13	45	21	5	16
State all-union leadership (CMKOS)	10	36	32	7	15

(*Source*: *IVVM* April 1994: 'Trade unionists and their evaluation of unions').

Local support for workplace trade unionism may reflect confidence in the continuation of its welfare and recreation provision, now that party control is removed. In 1993, this certainly seemed the case: 41 per cent of a sample valued their union most for running children's recreation, 42 per cent for its wider recreational and cultural activities and only 33 per cent for upholding labour law and working conditions (*IVVM* 14.6. 1993;

the ISSP 1993 findings were similar). This confirms case study evidence (below) that this welfare union legacy remains an important element in worker representation. On the other hand, it also appears that this situation began to change in 1994: 58 per cent of a poll reported they found union membership useful as 'support and defence for problems at work' with only a minority interested in subsidies and benefits (*IVVM* 21 April 1994) and a later survey found a total of 73.1 per cent judging unions necessary for defending workers' interests (*IVVM* September 1994).

Considerable vagueness surrounds the question of 'workers' defence' in these polls. Unemployment probably figured more in some regions than in others. However, the dominant grievance which emerged from the surveys was dissatisfaction with pay (Fisera and Kadava 1994). Union members and non-members shared the view that unions should have 'some influence' on the workplace, with a majority (61.2 per cent) holding that unions should have 'partial influence', 29.3 per cent wanting 'large influence' and only 3.9 per cent believing they should have 'no influence' (*IVVM* September 1994). However, there seems a big gap between ideal and reality: 41.7 per cent said unions actually had 'no influence' on the workplace, 36.7 per cent 'partial influence', and only 4.5 per cent 'a big influence' (*IVVM* September 1994). What the survey evidence does highlight is the unfulfilled aspiration of a large majority for greater union influence. The survey evidence indicates major problems for trade union organisation in terms of economic restructuring but a marked improvement in subjective assessments of trade unionism. This coincides with the threats to social consensus marked by the few industrial relations disputes which began in 1994 and were increasing in 1995. However, there remains little information on the quality of workplace trade unionism.

V. Case Studies of Workplace Trade Unionism

In this section, I review briefly some of the main themes which emerged on workplace trade unionism during field work on enterprise restructuring and marketisation in the Czech Republic (Pollert and Hradecká 1994, Pollert 1995). Case studies comprised three to four days in each enterprise, with follow-ups allowing longitudinal analysis in several. Semi-structured interviews of between half an hour and one hour were held with senior

managers, middle mangers, trade union officers (usually the union chair but sometimes shop stewards), and rank and file workers. These were conducted in Czech, allowing nuance and considerable discretion for open-ended development of subject matter. The cases reported here (not using real names) are: a plant belonging to *Czech-Engineering*, one of the largest heavy engineering conglomerates of the Communist era; *Shop* and *Supershop*, two department stores, one Czech owned, the other a US multinational acquisition (for details Pollert 1995); *Joint-Beer*, a British-Czech joint venture and *Joint-Food*, a Swiss/French-Czech joint venture. While access in the first four enterprises was very favourable, in *Joint-Food* it was limited, and I draw on secondary material to supplement primary analysis.

Shop floor legacy and transformation

The informal shop-floor legacy of the shortage economy has been well documented for Hungary and the USSR. The Czech legacy since 1948 followed the same patterns of the shortage economy (Kornai 1992), with the imperative of plan fulfilment in the context of irregularity of supplies, poor quality materials and antiquated equipment breeding a complex system of informal bargaining, both between enterprise managers and their ministry, and between workers and managers. Apart from the period of workers' councils in 1968, which was suppressed for the next twenty years, for workers, lack of real interest representation via the union and lack of political freedom fomented social atomisation, with individualism the chief means of survival and resistance both politically and in the workplace. While the brigade system operated in some firms, in many, individualism was encouraged by the popularity of individual payment-by-results and the celebration of 'worker-heroes'. National tariff scales, differentiated first by the social importance attached to individual sectors (with heavy industry and mining at the top of the scale and the food industry at the bottom), were individually constructed as personal grades, according to qualification and experience (Adam 1984:80). However, in reality, formal differentials were low and the complex and politicised construction of bonuses meant that neither individual experience, qualifications or effort had a transparent relationship with earnings.

The former role of the trade union at enterprise level has already been addressed as one of managerial control, together with the

disbursement of welfare and recreation, with little or no involvement in work regulation or pay. Since the establishment of new, capitalist norms of workplace union activity, the one legacy of union enterprise involvement which could have assisted contemporary influence - enterprises co-determination - has been abolished as 'inappropriate' to market economies. As in Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria, workers' former rights of formal participation in management via union co-determination rights have been withdrawn in the Czech Republic, with financial participation through enterprise share-ownership posited as the alternative, although this is limited by the Commercial Code in the Czech Republic to 10 per cent (UN 1994:165). Workers do have the right to one third representation on company supervisory boards where there are over 200 employees but these are formal institutions and have little power. With this severe union weakening, the adoption of a new role of worker representation at workplace level faces forty five years of embedded traditions - the more so as few union officials at this level were replaced by new incumbents after the Velvet Revolution.

Pay systems, individualism, collectivism and bargaining

A unique problem for the re-establishment of workplace collectivism is precisely the ideological denigration of this term, together with the rest of the vocabulary of working class interest and solidarity. The embrace of individualism is a natural response to forced and artificial collectivism, and simultaneously a continuation of the legacy of workplace atomisation. This legacy would cause problems even where the employer, as was the case with *Joint-Food*, was habituated to a largely French influenced model of social-partnership. But where the managerial strategy is premised on individualisation, via individual communications, personal pay contracts and the broad hostility to 'old industrial relations' of the HRM practitioners, the weight of the atomised workplace inheritance is twofold.

It was clear from the case studies that managerial strategy was either broadly informed by the diffusion of HRM techniques, or continued with the old system - or, as was usual, created a new hybrid of both. Its chief expression was individualisation of pay systems with increased discretion to line management. In all case studies visited, while the minima of industry-wide pay rates were upheld, the new national tariff (grading) system devised during early industrial relations legislation to replace the

state planned one had never been adopted. Companies either had their own grading scheme (*Joint-Food*, *Joint-Beer* and *Shop*), with major elements of individual bonus appraisal, or, as in *Czech-Engineering*, grading was abolished and all workers had individual pay contracts established between the foreman (mistr) and the worker (Pollert and Hradecká 1994). In *Czech-Engineering*, individual pay contracts were accepted in exchange for replacing the erratic piece-rate system for stable time rates. In *Supershop*, the US inward investor disrupted the tradition of age- and qualification-based grades and brought in grades assessed on 'competence to do the job' as well as a potential 20 per cent monthly individual bonus.

At neither enterprise were there major objections from the shop floor or the union; however, at *Czech-Engineering*, workers were initially suspicious in 1993 and follow-up interviews in 1994 detected growing unease. In general though, neither workers nor unions appeared to regard anything sinister in individualising pay. At one level, it was the familiar practice: the foreman had major discretion over individual pay in the past - hence the old systems of authoritarian paternalism in the case of 'peripheral workers' or indulgence with core workers. In addition, the opportunity to influence pay by effort or ability was welcomed as a break from political criteria. Legacy and innovation thus formed a continuum very convenient to a transformation strategy based on individualisation.

For the trade unions, the emergence of collective bargaining without a collective wage-effort bargain did not seem a problem in any of the case studies. Indeed, pay bargaining was largely a continuation of past bargaining with the centre for the enterprise 'bag of money', which was subsequently distributed by the foremen. Now, the union bargained with management, but ultimately, an aggregate percentage increase was all that was demanded and its distribution across the plant left to management. It may be that pre-occupation with aggregate percentage increases is a rational and predictable response to capitalist transformation, when price deregulation and removal of subsidies makes wage indexation the priority union goal. But the absence of union involvement in the wage-effort bargain went deeper than this. Several union chairs expressed surprise at interview questions on union involvement where an individuals' pay might fit in within an overall wage structure, replying that they should not meddle when a person's

pay was a private matter between him/her and the supervisor or foreman. At both *Czech-Engineering* and *Supershop*, pay individualisation went as far as a rule of secrecy, both between workers and between each worker and the union.

Multinational joint ventures and industrial relations

As the earlier discussion of the Skoda-VW joint venture suggested, multinational capital controls some of the economic 'crown jewels' of the economy: while VW-Skoda dominates the car industry, *Joint-Food* dominates confectionery and *Supershop* has taken a major slice of department store retailing. The question arises about the role of these companies in diffusing managerial ideas and practices.

It appears that foreign direct investment in the Czech Republic follows a number of business strategies; *Supershop*, for example, located in the Czech and Slovak republics, where it took over thirteen of the former state department store chains, because of home market saturation. *Joint-Food*'s interest in the area is partly to expand its Western product market to the East, and partly to develop the market for local produce. *Joint-Beer*'s activity in the area is to utilise the Czech expertise and name in brewing, and to expand this product west into its existing markets. Needless to say, however, the fact that the Czech Republic offers a cheap, skilled workforce is of paramount interest to multinational capital, and keeping costs down is likely to be a major priority in maintaining comparative advantage in this East European location. In general, it appears that MNCs seem very content with state hostility to trade unionism and union inactivity at the workplace; *Supershop*'s union has been unable to exert much influence on management (confirming survey evidence on low union influence), while *Joint-Beer*'s British managers have expressed relief at the inactivity of the union.

The union in the workplace

The strength of the command-economy legacy and lack of union experience in intervening in the production process in workers' defence, was a widespread case study finding. When *Joint-Food* invited the union to participate in a new job evaluation scheme, the union (not surprisingly) had no expertise in bargaining over such issues as skill or responsibility. Nor was it present to defend workers from the routine continuation of

intimidatory shop floor controls. Action research by the company's in-house sociologist revealed that new work pressure and insecurity had allegedly bred a climate of fear in one investigated plant.

However, there were cases of the union adopting a stronger role of workers interest representation. *Shop* was a rather distinctive example of enterprise democratisation which had occurred in some organisations during the 'Perestroika' days of the 1988 State Enterprise Act, which permitted workplace elections of management as well as greater financial autonomy in a few select organisations. This case offered the most promising scenario for workplace trade unionism evolving as a genuine interest representation system. It appeared that the former brigades or collectives left a culture of group identity. The shop floor still used the language of the 'work collective', workers stated they valued their group, and departmental union shop stewards were known. While management followed a policy of encouraging worker motivation and productivity through individual bonuses, in practice supervisors divided these among the collective. Reports by senior managers, the trade union chair and shop floor workers, as well as observation of union records, testified to the gradual separation of the union from its past as partner in management to defender of workers' interests. It must be acknowledged that even here, however, the union was weak in the pay bargaining sphere in terms of concern for pay collectivities: shop-floor rates were very low and the major union pay campaign was for the introduction of individual pay contracts for departmental managers and section supervisors.

Nevertheless, the case study testified to an active union recruitment and shop floor representation system, union grievance handling, and the maintenance of enterprise welfare and recreation benefits which many privatised enterprises had abandoned as excessive burdens on profit. The existence of workplace trade unionism and its grass-roots support were based, however, on the continuation of its Communist welfare legacy. While this may not mitigate against broader defence of worker's interests in terms of job controls and employment levels, there were no instances at the time of research, April 1994, that such issues had been put to the test.

In other cases, union officers stressed the growing importance of their presence in an increasingly hostile industrial relations climate. At *Czech-Engineering*, despite the union's acceptance of individualised pay,

to have achieved an overall percentage increase in the wage budget was regarded as a victory. Officers also reported that workers did not yet appreciate that pay increases had to be fought for, believing that they still had 'a right' to their pay, and that employers 'had to' pay, as in the state planning system. In *Supershop*, particularly the provincial store of Pardubice, a system of shop-floor representatives existed, and there was growing support for its necessity as workers' defence. And in *Joint-Beer*, although workers had little faith in the union chair, who was a relic from the Communist past, shop-stewards were popular - (even those who were also supervisors) - and had managed to recruit a young non-member to the union, mainly on the grounds of welfare advantages, and reported a desire to make the union more active. Senior supervisors who had been de-recognised from the union for pay purposes, refused to leave because they identified more with their worker collective than with the management to which they were now supposed to belong. Informal worker allegiances, particularly between skilled workers and their supervisors, may carry over from the shortage economy legacy, and create constituencies for worker representation. Whether these remain inside the official union, or become an unofficial force is a matter of speculation for now.

Wider interviews with workers concerning there views on union membership broadly tallied with the range of views found in surveys: some remained in the unions for habitual reasons, some felt they need not belong (particularly as both members and non members benefited from collective agreements), some were apathetic, a few were hostile. What is of more interest, at the qualitative level, was the ambiguity and state of flux among workers. Group interviews at *Czech Engineering* in 1993 and *Joint-Beer* in 1995, turned into lively debates concerning the purpose and need for a trade union for pay and welfare purposes, with some believing they were needed for pay rises, and others denying their effect. When the question of what unions should influence was probed, pay, traditional welfare matters and health and safety appeared the main issues, suggesting that, with the exception of pay, the traditional role of the Communist unions was still regarded as paramount. The issue of employment and unemployment was highly ambiguous: in 1993, most workers regretted the country's low unemployment as hindering labour market change and motivation, yet not when it came to their own enterprise

and employment. In 1995, older workers in particular seemed worried about their jobs, but had little confidence in defence from their union. When it came to job controls and work intensity, these were still seen as workers' and supervisor's territory, not the union's. However, this can partly be explained by the relative lack of change in production systems in view of the little micro-level restructuring since 1989. In this context, discussion tended to veer back to wider issues of economic restructuring, social issues, general living standards and politics, reflecting, perhaps, the direction of the trade union leadership in this early phase of transformation, as a political, rather than workplace, actor.

These preliminary and tentative survey and case study findings suggest a complex and uneven picture. Some case studies highlight the limitations to workplace union bargaining skills and the way in which the legacy of shop floor social atomisation is hindering the establishment of collectivism. They also show how this meshes with new Western management techniques of individualisation of the employment relationship. On the other hand, there is also evidence of collective identity, desires for greater workplace influence which has not been harnessed to trade unionism, but which might arguably be a potential base either for informal rank and file activity, or for the transformation of hitherto passive workplace union leaderships.

Conclusions

The preceding discussion has raised two questions: first, whether the apparent quiescence of Czech Trade unionism in the first five years after the overthrow of Communist control marked a uniquely crisis-free and consensual route to capitalist transformation. Second, if the economic and political conditions which sustained the low-wage, low-unemployment social compromise disintegrates, what is the state of the labour movement to challenge the likely ensuing attack on labour in terms of a declining social wage, continuing low pay, and growing unemployment?

The material basis for the underlying relative economic success and stability of the 'velvet transformation' appears shaky, and there is now evidence of a shift both in the industrial relations and political climate. Although IMF-dictated macro-economic stabilisation has been maintained, there is little to suggest that the economic disarray left by

forty years of economic stagnation and distortion is being resolved through privatisation. Much needed new capital is lacking, with MNCs highly cautious in terms of their investment. The major economic chance for recovery is as provider of cheap goods and services to the West, under dependent conditions of sub-contract relationships, or in attracting Western capital to a skilled, cheap labour base. The shrewd use of state subsidises to buoy up ailing enterprises and delay bankruptcy and unemployment is unlikely to be maintained by a government committed to free market reform: only a genuinely corporatist and/or social democratic government would attempt this. Given the likelihood, now that formal privatisation is almost complete, that real capitalist restructuring will commence, major closures, rationalisation and redundancies seem unavoidable.

With such a perspective, it would appear that the Czech Republic seemed to offer a 'velvet' route only temporarily. If one part of the three 'party-forming' elements which helped consolidate the right - the ability to 'deliver the goods' - begins to fail, it is likely that the country's uniquely strong right-wing support may shift or fragment. Furthermore, the orientation towards Western capitalism as an element in the unequivocal rejection of the Communist past which formed a further strong 'party-forming' element, may itself backfire on the government, as the contradiction sharpens between the Czech Republic's Western European spatial location, culture and aspirations, and its economic insertion into the world economy as a 'Third-World' production zone.

However, beyond suggesting the possible economic dynamics of the future, such speculation can only point to the contradictions and instability underneath surface appearances, and turn to more concrete evidence of declining social consent. This has been pointed out in terms of the weakening of the already precarious tripartite consultation system and a rise in political labour movement mobilisation and in industrial disputes since 1994. The question now turns to the record and potential of the trade unions as the conduit for a new assertiveness of wage labour. The union confederation's record has arguably given trade unionism in general a new legitimacy. The institutional marginalisation of trade unionism as a voice at state level may be a popular mobilising factor which gives the unions further potential to move beyond the political arena to direct interest representation versus the employer. However,

judging by declining union density and the very low number of strikes, there seems a long way to go. While survey evidence suggests the problems of union organisation are structural and due to poor communications rather than to ideological antipathy to trade unionism, these remain major obstacles.

Union mobilisation to date suggests a regional dimension, which may cause disunity as economic restructuring becomes spatially polarised and may be further exacerbated by fragmentation to enterprise level. Poll evidence suggests that low pay is emerging as a major issue of dissatisfaction and, with the abolition of wage regulation, the public service sector unions were already confronting the state in the summer of 1995. However, the structural problem in terms of the gap between union centre and periphery is likely to make concerted action difficult; industry bargaining appears to deliver very minimal sector wages and enterprise level bargaining is weak. In spite of the country's relatively high skill base relative to the rest of CEE, unions have not been able to use this as a bargaining counter, as the record of Skoda-VW's intransigence illustrated, and failure to influence policy may be a strong disciplining factor in the future. Previously powerful groups, such as miners or steel workers, who have mobilised regionally, may be major supports to the labour movement, but with their industries suffering depletion, they too are in a weak negotiating position. Finally, changing employment composition likewise augurs badly for the time being, with workers leaving the large state enterprise where union density has remained high and moving into the mushrooming private service and small-firm sector, which are difficult to organise.

Case study analysis points to a fundamental problem: the hang-over of past workplace atomisation and the embrace of new individualism. Recent public service sector wage claims do suggest that in aggregate, the collective wage-effort bargain is central to industrial relations. However, as long as collective regulation of the labour process, job controls and pay structures remain perceived as alien to the 'proper' sphere of unions at the workplace, as the case studies suggested, then any resurgence of collectivity as a basis for trade unionism will be restricted. To add a further twist to these difficulties, transition is taking place precisely at a time when collectivism is under threat in developed capitalist industrial relations systems, and the techniques of

individualisation of the employment relationship are being diffused east via management training and other modes of managerial mediation. For the unions this makes the challenge of breaking with the past and developing social dialogue doubly difficult.

However, despite the material and ideological barriers to developing an effective role for trade unions, both in terms of democratic freedom and a system of industrial relations, a longer view of historical legacy also points to democratic and participatory traditions both in the pre-war period and at the high-point of the Prague Spring self-management movement. One cannot predict in advance to what extent such earlier generations' experience remains embedded in the workplace or has been erased, nor how successfully the unions or other grass-roots groups can mobilise this past as a resource for reconstituting trade unionism. Nevertheless, a historical perspective provides the basis for analysing what is now an open, indeterminate period of change. Just as a long view of the country's social democratic tradition makes the recent electoral success of the Social Democratic Party less surprising than the blinkered discourse of the success of the free market could have predicted, so an awareness of the buried layers of aspirations for workplace democracy may make more comprehensible a re-appearance of labour movement activity in what appeared the CEE's most complacent and conservative area.

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Acknowledgements
I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the E.S.R.C East-West Programme (Grant L309253051), in which I conducted the research project, 'Marketisation and Work Restructuring in Four Czech Enterprises' and on which this paper is based.
I would like to thank Dr. Irena Hradecka and Dr. Marie Cermokova of the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences for their collaboration with field work in this project. I would also like to thank many people in CMKOS, for valuable discussion and for their supply of documentary material.

Julian Bartosz

Polish Trade Unions: Caught up in the Political Battle

In the early 1990s the Solidarity trade union made very little in the way of protest against the "Solidarity" government. Today the OPZZ likewise appears to have called a truce with the Social Democratic government. Then as now, there is no sign of a common front of the two big union organisations against the neo-liberal policies of the Polish government.

Jerzy Kawalerowicz's film from the 1950s, *The Thought of Cellulose*, based on a book by Igor Neverly, has scenes of a woodworkers' strike in the 1920s. The seasonal workers have organised a demonstration where they are attacked by thugs, beaten up and driven from the square. As they flee they have to run between two rows of men on either side, behind whom are rows of police who are having a good laugh at what's happening.

The striking workers were members of the red trade union, the thugs were members of the yellow union and the rows of men were from the "normal" union. The police were enjoying the scene because all three groups were workers and the police's job was being done for them without their having to lift a baton. The workers were egged on by the priest, the police inspector, the starost and the local commander. At the end of the story there was a big celebration at which a well-dressed respectable man with a foreign accent, the owner of the forest, the mill and the cellulose factory, congratulated the local notables for having restored order.

This scene is symbolic of contemporary Poland. After fifty years of Communist rule we now have the best social order, a democratic, market-oriented capitalist order. The workers today, as in the scene portrayed by Kawalerowicz, are organised in different unions, hostile to each other, quite incapable, except perhaps occasionally at local level, of jointly defending their common interests.

Unity versus pluralism

Poland had a unified trade union federation from the end of the 1940s. But this unity was a deceptive one. The union was organised on the Leninist "transmission belt" principle and was never allowed to go beyond the limits set by the party. In the 1980s I had conversations with Ignacy Loga-Sowinski, now deceased, who had been chairman of the Central Council of the trade union (CRZZ). He had been a friend of Gomulka and was a Communist already in the 1930s. He told me that in the 1960s, when he was a member of the Politburo, he had to carry on ideological battles with his Politburo comrades to win a few concessions for the union. We know from the Kruczek files in the Communist Party archives and from Jan Szydlak, head of the union under Gierek, that the Politburo leaders assigned to head the union, under severe pressure from the base, tried to win more rights for the unions - real rights, on paper they already had them. All the major crises in post-war Poland - 1956, 1970, 1976, 1980 - were a direct consequence of the arrogant manner with which the authorities treated the trade union and social-political demands of the workers.

It was this situation which led understandably, from the end of the 1970s, to the demand for trade union pluralism, a demand which was initially voiced only in limited circles. Illegal free trade unions had begun to be active on the Baltic coast and in Upper Silesia from the mid-1970s. This demand for union pluralism led, during the strikes of 1980, to the formation of the "independent self-managed trade union Solidarity". Solidarity grew overnight to be the biggest worker organisation in Poland, with millions of members. As a popular social movement, which it declared itself to be, it had around 10 million members. But the old "branch unions" remained (around 4.5 million members), from which the Autonomous Union split in 1981 (almost 1 million members). The Autonomous Union was made up mainly of skilled workers who didn't

want centralised unions.

However, trade union pluralism came to an end with the proclamation of martial law on 12 December 1981. All trade union federations were dissolved. General Jaruzelski's plan was to set up a single worker organisation. But this didn't happen. First of all, Solidarity refused to just go away - Jozef Pinior, for example, carried on illegally as trade union leader in Lower Silesia until his arrest and imprisonment. Secondly, the new union didn't turn out exactly as Jaruzelski had planned. When Alfred Miodowicz, chairman of OPZZ from 1984 to 1990 and one-time member of Solidarity, set about organising the Lenin Works in Nowa Huta near Krakow, he set a pattern that others could follow: the "Social Committees" at section and factory level set themselves up independently of management, as independent branch trade unions, something quite contrary to what Jaruzelski had intended. But the authorities, already engaged in a bitter struggle with the banned Solidarity union, had to come to terms with this development in the factories. When the formation of trade unions "only at factory level" was officially permitted, the newly-formed "class unions" were already organised through regional conferences at branch level. The later formation of OPZZ brought a new element into the already complex situation.

What happened in the early 1980s is important to understanding the present situation in the Polish trade unions. It may be true that the Jaruzelski government wanted to use the OPZZ as a weapon in the fight against Solidarity. But what was on the minds of the activists in the "class union" OPZZ in 1982/83 was not a fight to divide the workers but a fight to defend their interests against the IMF- and World Bank-inspired "reform".

The role of Miodowicz is still a puzzle for me today. Was he a Trojan Horse in the workers' movement or was he politically corrupted by his membership in the Politburo? Privately he was in favour of the legalisation of Solidarity in 1987/88 but, as Politburo member, he defended quite a different concept of "pluralism". It was clear at the time of the Round Table discussions in February/April 1989 that Jaruzelski had come to terms with legalising Solidarity. But this was the last trump he had in his game to hold on to power. Jaruzelski's "pluralist" solution was: whichever union was the strongest in the factory should, following discussions with the other unions, represent the workers. This

was the solution argued by Miodowicz in a television debate with Walesa in the autumn of 1988. This tactical manoeuvring in the "pluralism" conflict wasn't half as bad for the unions as what happened on the question of union property. All union property was seized by the state at the time of martial law and later given to OPZZ. Although Solidarity was "compensated" in 1889/90 in the budget of the labour ministry, led at the time by Jacek Kuron, it is still an unresolved conflict today and one of the most important bones of contention between OPZZ and Solidarity. It is not just a dispute about money but about property (union centres, holiday resorts, etc.) that once belonged to the old CRZZ.

Trade Unions in 1996

The trade union organisations active in Poland today are:

* **Solidarity**, led by Marian Krzaklewski, who succeeded Lech Walesa when the latter became president in 1991. It is based on the new constitution legally registered in April 1989. It has, according to its spokesperson, Andrzej Zak, 2.3 million members.

* **Solidarity 80**, which ignored the ruling of the Round Table and continues to base itself on its constitution of 1980. It was led initially by the Szczecin leader, Marian Jurczyk and, until 1993/94 was active on the western Baltic coast, in Upper Silesia, in the Wroclaw region and in the armaments factories in eastern Poland. It held on to its support because of the opportunist behaviour of the Solidarity trade union leaders in their relations with the governments of Mazowiecki, Bielecki, Olszewski and Suchocka, all of which were led by Solidarity figures. Solidarity 80 won significant support in its opposition to the Balcerowicz Plan, which imposed social and economic reforms according to the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank. Its high point was in 1993 during the struggles of the miners of Upper Silesia against the reform. In their fight against the rationalisation programme which aimed to close many mines in Upper Silesia, the miners didn't get enough support from the union leadership on the Baltic coast. A front was formed against Jurkiewicz which led eventually to a split in the union. After a number of expulsions on both sides, the Solidarity 80 leadership went to Jerzy Poltorak of Wroclaw. The organisation is radically anti-capitalist and protests strongly, at sparsely attended press conferences, against the economic and social policies of the "left-wing" government. It is unable, however, to muster

more than a few hundred members at its demonstrations.

* **The Free Trade Unions** were set up already in the 1970s. One of their leaders was Andrzej Gwiazda, one of the early leaders of Solidarity who came close to Walesa in the union leadership election of 1981. The Free Trade Unions re-emerged in 1989/90, led by Gwiazda, but he told me recently that the Wolne Zwiazki Zawodowe no longer existed. With his wife, he still published, though not on a regular basis, the journal *Poza Ukladem*. He is well aware, however, that his critique of Polish lumpen capitalism is meeting deaf ears.

* Alongside the two big centres, Solidarity and OPZZ (which I'll deal with later), there are a number of union organisations that can be divided roughly into two groups. The first group consists of a number of "**independent self-managing unions**" in different branches covering, at most, a single large enterprise, for instance in the copper mines in the "copperpot" around Legnica and Glogow. One trade unionist from this area, Zdzislaw Zbrzyzny, explained it to me this way: We don't need any smart alec on top; we can think for ourselves and we're strong enough to defend our own interests. Basically, said Zbrzyzny, it's everyone for himself.

* The second group consists of small, autonomous, loosely organised **associations of highly skilled specialists** who have organised together to defend their common interests, for instance, train drivers, mine managers and university lecturers. They are frequently involved in wage negotiations both at local level and in the "tripartite commission" established in 1993 while Kuron was labour minister and which brings together employees, employers and government.

* There are two other rather special cases that deserve mention. The right-wing nationalist KPN (Confederation for an Independent Poland), set up by Kazimierz Moczulski, established its own trade union in 1992/93. Known as the "**Kontra**" it was able to win some support in disputes where KPN members of parliament attempted to mediate, for instance in the big strike wave in Upper Silesia in 1992, in the strikes in the copper mines and in the strike in Huta Luchcini in Warsaw in 1993/94. It is both anti-capitalist and bigoted. It will probably continue to be a significant union but its existence does depend on the now declining parliamentary role of the KPN. The second special case is the **Samoobrona** (self defence) trade union, led by Andrzej Lepper. Although

it hasn't carried out any spectacular actions in the recent period, such as blockading of roads, it is militantly active among farmers heavily indebted to the banks and it continues to make uncompromising declarations against the agricultural policies imposed on Poland by the EU. Although it calls itself a trade union, it is really a farmers' association, as are the two Solidarity rural unions.

OPZZ

It is very difficult, since 1993, to give a clear and unambiguous answer to the question, what has become of the 4 million-strong OPZZ. The OPZZ, led by Ewa Spychalska, was one of the 35 organisations that, in 1991/92, set up the quasi-left wing alliance, the SLD (Democratic Left Alliance), which was the main base for the SdRP (Social Democracy of the Polish Republic), the successor organisation of the Polish Communist Party. The trade union was able to maintain a labour defence posture as long as the SLD sat on the opposition benches. But this changed in the autumn of 1993, when the SLD emerged as the victor in the elections, an event which had a profound effect on the union, on its structure and apparatus. To express it in perhaps crude terms: with 70 seats in parliament, the trade union OPZZ was open to political corruption.

Although the union candidates, chosen from the central, regional and branch officials, declared during the election campaign that they would keep a sharp eye on "the people in their own camp" and that they would enter parliament in order to defend the interests of working people, the post-election period produced what could perhaps be considered a "normal" situation. OPZZ representatives acknowledged "economic necessities", agreed to the dismantling of social services and reductions in pensions, and declared that they were in favour of "capitalism with a human face". Mrs Spychalska and others were frequently to be seen in television interviews where they talked about "the difficult situation of the working class and the problems of the social services", occasionally there were verbal fisticuffs, they threatened "serious consequences for the Alliance" and demanded "close consultation on the part of the government". But that was as far as it went.

It may very well be that, in the various parliamentary committees, they prevented even worse from happening. But this marriage of convenience between the OPZZ and the SLD has condemned the trade

union to impotence. It has brought the union's regional officials, bombarded with criticism from the base, to the verge of despair and it has crippled the union officials in the factories. All of this makes very little difference to the trade union leaders in high government positions, on the boards of directors of the privatised enterprises, or in the consortiums running the National Investment Funds.

It is my view that the OPZZ top leaders, along with their hangers-on, have compromised themselves more in the past few years than they ever did in the 1980s. The similarities today are more with the CRZZ days of pre-1980. In 1988 the union brought down the "Communist" Messner government with its protests against the dismantling of social services that was part of the radical reform programme being pursued at the time. Today the union is again loyal to the government, doing everything necessary to help it hold on to power. At the base of the union, where the workers are both shocked and resigned, resentment burns, but on a very low flame. What keeps the team together is the sharp opposition, even hostility, from the other side, from Solidarity. Although there are often common actions at the base of the unions, especially in small enterprises in defence of jobs, the two union centres remain deeply hostile to each other.

Although Solidarity itself, in its present form, was a fruit of the "rotten compromise" reached at the Round Table negotiations, in other words, the product of a gigantic political manipulation and, in its newly registered form, the expression of an instrumentalisation in the service of the "democratic (bourgeois) opposition", it presents itself as something superior, something more "genuinely Polish" than the "martial law bastard", the OPZZ. Contrary to the objective interests of the wage earners threatened by economic reform, a dividing line is being drawn between the two big trade union organisations, a dividing line that is becoming characteristic of the whole of Polish society - the "patriotic camp of independent Poland" against the "post-Communists".

Solidarity

There's not a great deal new that can be said about Solidarity. The union sees itself as the protector of the holy grail of national and christian values. It also claims for itself the tradition of all the dramatic and heroic workers' struggles of post-war Poland: the "black Thursday" of July

1956, the Polish October of that same year, the workers' revolt on the Baltic coast in 1970 and, of course, the strikes of August 1980.

Personally, I have no objection to their appropriation of this tradition. What I find problematic is that the union distances itself from the bloodily repressed workers' demonstrations of 1923, 1930/31 and 1938. What is at fault here is the union's ideological one-sidedness: the memory is suppressed of the brutal attacks of mounted police on the workers in pre-war Poland, the many deaths, and the concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska. The only victims they are interested in are the victims of Communism; the climate in Solidarity doesn't allow for a more objective view of all systems of exploitation (among which I would include so-called "really existing socialism").

This ideological prejudice has resulted in the fact that Solidarity, in the period between 1989 and 1993, operated as if it had a stillstand agreement with the government. It welcomed and supported the restoration of the capitalist social order. It was enthusiastic about the Balcerowicz Plan, which carried out initially a completely wild and then later a somewhat moderated privatisation of Polish enterprises, until it became obvious to everyone that the burdens it imposed were just unbearable. It was the Solidarity faction in the Sejm, the Polish parliament, that proposed the motion that was to bring down the Suchocka government.

The defeat of the Suchocka government by one vote in a vote of confidence on 28 May 1993 was actually an "accident", but the Solidarity leader, Marian Krzaklewski, used it to demonstrate Solidarity's oppositional credentials when it came to the new SLD-PSL government - we brought down "our own" government and now we'll fight the post-Communists! This was made easier for Solidarity by the fact that the "left-wing" government has also completely adopted the neo-liberal reform programme of its predecessors. Its concern about social justice is only for cosmetic purposes. The "Programme 2000" of the "left-wing" finance minister, Grzegorz Kolodko, is just a repackaging of the Balcerowicz Plan.

The main emphasis of Solidarity activities is political. After 1994 it concentrated its activities on the re-election of Lech Walesa as president. By 1996 the trade union is well on the way to degeneration into a political party. This became clear at its congress in Posnan. Its only problem is whether it can go it alone electorally, drawing in parties and groups from

the right-wing and nationalist camp, or whether it will enter into an alliance with the Olszewski block. The declared goal of Solidarity is to sweep away the post-Communists in next year's parliamentary elections.

Solidarity wants to form a government around itself. Even normal trade union struggles, for instance the struggle to defend the bankrupt Gdansk shipyard, has become a "political struggle" against the "post-Communist government", although it was the policies of the Walesa administration that led to the decline of the shipyard. The struggle is to be waged not against neo-liberal economic policies but against the "post-Communists"!

On both sides of this dividing line, trade union work and the struggle of labour, more necessary now than ever before, are being sidelined by political hostilities and ideological rigidities. I don't know what has to happen to get away from this tragically degraded "pluralism" and to achieve common action and unity among the organisations of the working class in Poland. Of course, trade unions can't step outside of the political spectrum of their country. We still have a long way to go to reach some kind of quasi-normality in which trade unions devote themselves to their proper task. As long as everything remains subordinate to the conflict between the many-layered right around Solidarity and the verbal left around OPZZ, then real trade union work will remain in practice a second rate affair for both sides.

This article first appeared in *Ost-West Gegeninformationen* (Graz), No. 2, 1996. Translation is by **Gus Fagan**.

Rainer Girndt

Hungary's Trade Unions: Division and Decline

The fragmentation of the Hungarian trade union movement and declining union membership have resulted in official structures that are inefficient and a material infrastructure that is inadequate to respond to the needs of the workers, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises.

At first sight, everything would seem to be fine. There is hardly a decision taken by the government today where the unions are not first consulted. The government is now paying much more heed to union opinion on privatisation than was the case previously and the unions are also drawn into the discussions about the budget. The Tripartite Council is constantly at work and all parties sing the praises of social partnership and social dialogue. The unions have become players in the political field; they have major influence in the boards that manage social security and, at the macro-economic level, they enter into agreements on wages, prices and reforms. At the same time, however, they are losing influence in the factories, institutes and offices, in their own home sphere. This was also the view of the journalist, Katalin Bossányi, in an article on the present situation of the Hungarian trade unions on 2 May this year, published in *Népszabadság*.

More than 1.5 million jobs have been lost in Hungary in the past few years. Most of these jobs were lost in industry, mining, trade and agriculture. The textile and clothing industry is a dramatic example of

this decline: 60 per cent of jobs were lost in this branch of industry in the past six years. Public sector jobs are also no longer safe, as a result of recent budget reform and austerity measures. Experts estimate that the general level of unionisation is 30 per cent, around 60 per cent in the public sector.[1]

The collapse of the single-party state in Hungary put a question mark over the continued existence of the centralised trade union federation, SZOT, the branch organisations of which organised over 90 per cent of Hungarian workers before the political transition of 1988-90. A more pluralist trade union structure has emerged since then, with six main federations. Employees are represented in the Tripartite Council by these six federations.

The six trade union federations

The National Trade Union Council (SZOT) dissolved itself in 1990. Four reformed successor organisations were formed, the biggest of them being the **National Federation of Hungarian Trade Unions** (MSZOSZ), with about 500,000 active members, as well as an almost equal number of retired workers and apprentices. The unions affiliated to MSZOSZ are organised mainly in industry and to some extent in the service sector (trade, post office and rail).

The second strongest federation is the **Co-operative Forum of Trade Unions** (SZEF), with 380,000 active members and 170,000 retired. The SZEF organises most of the workers in the public sector, especially teachers, health workers, workers in the cultural sphere, government and local government employees.

Major groups of workers in the infrastructural sector and in public services are organised in the **Federation of Autonomous Trade Unions** (ASZSZ). It has 210,000 active members, mainly in unions in the chemical and electronic industry, transport and train drivers. The **Trade Union Alliance of Academics** (ESZT) has around 100,000 members in the universities and academic institutes.

The fact that SZOT broke up into four successor federations had a lot to do with the different tempo at which the various unions undertook reform in response to the changing political and economic circumstances, moved away from democratic centralism and devoted themselves to the interests of their members. The Co-operative Forum of Trade Unions

(SZEF) and the Trade Union Alliance of Academics (ESZT), for instance, were set up because many workers in the universities and in the public sector thought that the SZOT was too slow to represent their interests and concerned itself mainly with the interests of traditional manual labour. A common feature of these four federations is the fact that they are proceeding with their own reform and the task of adapting to the new conditions within the framework of their already existing traditional structures.

The **Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions** (FSZDL or Liga) and the **National Association of Workers' Councils** (MOSZ), on the other hand, set themselves up as alternatives to the traditional trade unions. The Liga was the first independent trade union to be set up in Eastern Europe after Polish Solidarity. The national Association of Workers' Councils attempts to link up with the tradition of the workers' councils of 1956. Its programme called for self management in the enterprises and workers' ownership. While changes in the traditional trade unions were introduced as "reform from above", the alternative trade unions had an orientation towards democratic renewal from below and kept their distance from the state, the employers and the Communist Party.

The Liga trade unions formed their federation in December 1988 while the Workers' Councils organised themselves nationally in August 1989. The alternative trade unions had their greater successes in those enterprises and work places where the workers were particularly disillusioned with traditional trade union practice. Except among rail workers and teachers, the alternative unions have failed, however, to develop efficient branch structures. In the spectacular privatisation of Hungarian industry, for instance in the energy sector, they played hardly any role whatever.[2] The Liga claims to have 700,000 members while the membership of the Workers' Councils is put at between 60,000 and 70,000. The Workers' Councils are found mainly in industry and only occasionally in the service sector. The Liga was set up by intellectuals but the main influence today comes from its working class affiliates.

International contacts

The Hungarian trade unions linked up relatively quickly with the European and international trade union organisations. They were helped in this by

the fact that they already had good relations with the West European and Scandinavian trade unions before the change in the political system. Almost all the major branch organisations of the traditional trade union federations are part of their respective international federations and their European sections. This is also true of the Liga.

MSZOSZ and the Liga were both accepted as full members of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in 1993; at the same time the National Association of Workers' Councils (MOSZ) became part of the Christian World Organisation of Labour. These three federations were also accepted as full members of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1995. The Co-operative Forum (SZEF) and the Autonomous Unions (ASZSZ) were given observer status. In the case of the ASZSZ there was some doubt as to whether it was really more than a loose association of independent branch unions. The SZEF will have to be more active on the international level. Apart from a few bilateral contacts in recent years, it has remained rather unknown.

After an initial phase of wait-and-see inactivity, the past three years have seen increasing contacts with the trade unions in the countries of the old Communist bloc. There has recently been an intensive exchange of information and sharing of experiences in the areas of labour law, privatisation, negotiations with government and employers, and other problem areas. For the Hungarian trade unions in general, European contacts take priority over broader international links.

The Tripartite Council

A new labour code was introduced in Hungary in 1992 and modified in 1994 and 1995. The trade union federations are intensely concerned about and interested in the further development of labour law, as demonstrated by a series of conferences and publications.[3]

The labour code regulates not only individual workers' rights and conflicts but also collective rights, in particular the functioning of the Tripartite Council, the role and function of the trade unions and their representation of workers' interests, the negotiation and signing of collective contracts, and the rights of workers to participate in the enterprise councils.[4]

The Communist government under Károly Németh established the Tripartite Council (OÉT) in 1988; its main function was to regulate

wage payments nationally. The first democratically elected government under Jósef Antall decided in 1990 to maintain the Tripartite Council, on which now sit representatives of six trade union federations, nine employer associations and the government.

The most important role of the Tripartite Council, within the new labour code, is in influencing the decision about the level of the minimum wage. It also plays some role in the discussions and implementation of wage policy, social policy and labour relations. It is the opinion of one writer on this subject that "the influence of the Council on government policy is minimal. It also has very little influence on the problems of transition, for instance, privatisation."[5]

There is an intense debate at the moment in Hungary about restructuring the role of the Tripartite Council. Nobody seriously questions the need for such a body. What is disputed is its sphere of competence, the criteria for determining representation and the extent to which its decisions should be legally binding.[6] The trade unions want a reform of the system so that agreements reached at the Tripartite Council should have greater binding force. They also want the role of the Tripartite Council to be made part of the constitution, which is due to be amended in the near future.[7]

Enterprise Councils

The enterprise councils, introduced as part of the new labour code in 1992, have met with rejection almost everywhere. There was no tradition for enterprise councils in Hungary and, in setting up these new bodies in 1992, the conservative government of the time took its model from Western Europe. The government made no secret of its intention that these enterprise councils should take the place of the trade unions, which the conservatives saw as a relic from the socialist past. The trade unions, as a result, regarded these unfamiliar bodies not only as superfluous but as a rival; there was certainly very little reason to co-operate with them. But employers also had very little interest in the enterprise councils. They established the necessary conditions for the councils to function but didn't work together with them in any realistic or constructive way. In fact, they were more inclined to play the councils and the unions off against each other. The workers themselves kept their distance from the new bodies, in general preferring to rely, as in the past, on individual

rather than collective measures to solve their problems with the employer. There have now been two elections to enterprise councils, in 1993 and 1995 (in the public service sector they are described as personnel councils). Gradually the trade unions are beginning to react more favourably to the new bodies. The unions have discovered, for instance, that the enterprise council's right to receive information about economic circumstances and decisions is useful to them in their own work.[8]

Critics of the new labour code maintain that "enterprise co-participation in Hungary is little more than a formality and actually works against the interests of the workers".[9] The co-participation rights of the enterprise councils, in reality, extend to little more than the use of social facilities and other services that the workers previously had free access to. In all other areas, unlike similar councils in France and Germany, the Hungarian enterprise councils only have the right to listen and to be informed.

The battle over property and legitimacy

The two issues of property and legitimacy created an unusual and explosive mixture in Hungary. The battle among the union federations over these two issues prior to 1992 has often and correctly been described as the "trade union war".

The new alternative unions claimed that the traditional union federations had effectively lost their members in the factories and enterprises and that the only basis for their continued survival was their large apparatus of paid officials and the large amount of property inherited from the old state union. The traditional unions responded with the counterclaim that the alternative unions had failed to win members and that they were surviving only on the basis of external funding, mainly from the United States. The real goal of the alternatives, it was claimed, was to destroy the unity of the Hungarian trade union movement, a unity that still existed in spite of the efforts of such outsiders.

There was an element of truth in the rather large claims made by both sides. The traditional unions had indeed lost a lot of their members, but these lost members had not turned to the alternative unions as the latter had assumed they would. It was also true that the alternative unions, because they did not have funds of their own, turned to external, mainly foreign sources for the finances necessary to organise their activities,

but the traditional unions tended to overstate the level of such foreign funding.

These divisions among the trade union federations suited the conservative nationalist government whose aim, in any case, was to deprive the unions of their property and wealth and thus to deny them the necessary means of survival. It must be said, in all fairness to the six union federations, that they recognised this danger on time and, on 10 September 1992, signed an agreement about the distribution of union property previously owned by SZOT, valued at 4.2 billion forinths. There was resistance to this deal from some small groups but it was agreed and implemented. A much larger amount of property previously owned by the old branch unions, valued at around 10 billion forinths, is still in the process of being argued over. The legal basis for the distribution is the elections to the enterprise and personnel councils in May 1995, in other words, the proportion of votes won by the various federations in these elections. Obstacles are still being raised in the various branch unions but it is hoped that a final settlement of this dispute will be reached in the near future.[10]

The final act of this intense debate over trade union legitimacy was the election to the Social Security Boards (that manage pension and health insurance funds) on 21 May 1993, in which the entire population had the right to vote. The alternative unions announced, prior to the election, that they would regard the results as a final vote on the issue of union legitimacy. In the event, the elections were to prove a major disappointment for the Liga and the Workers' Councils; together, both alternative federations won only 25 per cent of the vote, much lower than they had anticipated. The turnout in the election was unusually high, around 40 per cent, and two-thirds of the electors voted for the "traditional" federations, especially for MSZOSZ, which received almost half of all votes cast.[11] In the elections to the enterprise and personnel councils, the traditional unions did even better, a position confirmed by the second round of elections to these bodies in May 1995.

Following the agreement about SZOT property in September 1992, relations between the federations improved. The "trade union war", at any rate, was over, although differences of opinion and tensions still remain.

Trade unions and politics

The six trade union federations agree on 80 per cent of all political questions that come before the Tripartite Council; this, at any rate, is what the unions themselves have claimed. There are differences, however, when it comes to political parties and the government. The Liga opposes in principle the fact that trade union candidates stand in elections on party lists and that there are trade union representatives in parliament. The function of the trade union, it maintains, is incompatible with a political role in parliament. During the pre-89 period, however, when the Liga was in political opposition to the Kadarist system, it established very close links with the social-liberal Association of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), who are today junior partners of the Hungarian Socialist Party in government.

The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the leading party in the previous conservative coalition, had attempted to turn the Workers Councils into a MDF organisation in the factories. The chairperson of the National Association of Workers Councils (MOSZ) had been an MDF MP in the first freely elected parliament. He has, in the meantime, joined the Christian Democrats (KDNP). The Workers' Councils are, in fact, quite close to the Christian Democrats.

Although a number of party political platforms have been formed inside the major trade union federation, MSZOSZ, in practice it is regarded by the public as being close to the Socialists. The tensions between the union federation and the Socialist Party following the Socialist's drastic austerity budget introduced by finance minister, Bokros, as well as the increasing criticism from all levels of the union of the link with the Socialists have done very little to alter the situation. During the parliamentary elections in May 1994, in which the Socialist Party won a major victory, almost all the prominent leaders of MSZOSZ were candidates on the Socialist Party list, including the federation president himself, Sándor Nagy.

In the leadership of two other traditional federations, the Co-operative Forum (SZEF) and the Alliance of Academics (ÉSZT), there is certainly support for the Socialist Party but these two federations do not want to have too close a link with the Socialists. The general secretary of the teachers' union, an affiliate of SZEF, is a Socialist Party MP. The Autonomous Trade Unions (ASZSZ), the fourth of the traditional

federations, tries to maintain a party political neutrality but the values it expresses are unambiguously social democratic.

MSZOSZ and SZEF are both accused of making secret agreements with the government and of combining their resources as the two biggest federations in order to exclude the smaller federations from effective policy formation within the Tripartite Council. The MSZSZ, it is claimed, is tied by its responsibilities to the Socialist Party group in parliament, while the SZEF, which organises civil servants and other public sector employees, is already in close contact with the government in discussions about the reform of the state budget. Both federations signed a co-operation agreement in December 1995.[12] The co-operation agreement gives a guarantee to the SZEF that the MSZOSZ, the other big federation, would not enter into an agreement with the government on budgetary reform without first reaching an understanding with SZEF. The agreement also deals with regional and local joint activity of both federations. It opens up the prospect of jointly organised services for their members as well as shared use of offices and infrastructure in the regions. A similar co-operation agreement was reached between SZEF and the Alliance of Academics, which are the two main federations in the public sector.

The Autonomous Unions are prepared to co-operate with other federations but have not been prepared to enter into written agreements. The newly elected leadership of the Liga announced, immediately after its election, that it would be limiting its co-operation with the union federations "loyal to the government" on the Tripartite Council while intensifying its co-operation with the Autonomous Unions and the Workers' Councils.[13]

Where trade unions insist, as does the Liga, on union pluralism, then it becomes all the more necessary to be open to new forms of co-operation. Only one in three workers are now part of a union and the drain of members has by no means stopped. The financial resources needed to build or re-build a functioning leadership apparatus, to develop a layer of professional functionaries and a material infrastructure are drying up. The services offered to union members are therefore becoming more and more limited and external links, essential at every level, are becoming more difficult. Mass unemployment and privatisation have had the effect that the trade union apparatus, an essential element in trade union stability and strength, is in a very weak state.[14]

Joint action among all the federations is necessary to improve this situation because no federation on its own has the necessary resources or strength. What members want from their unions is not just a militant stand for collective interests but also, and perhaps mainly, practical help in dealing with day to day problems in the workplace.

The main issues for trade unions

Privatisation and enterprise restructuring confront the trade unions in Hungary with a number of challenges. It must be made clear, however, that the unions basically support privatisation, although the Third Congress of MSZOSZ, in May 1995, voiced concern about foreign majority ownership in the public services sector. The unions do not want any direct influence on the privatisation process but are demanding legal controls and a trade union say in questions of labour market and wage policies. In other words, they are demanding that contracts be respected, if necessary by legal sanctions, and that jobs be maintained.[15]

What is a much more threatening situation for the trade unions is the break-up of the big industrial enterprises in which they previously had a high level of union organisation. The increasing bankruptcies among state-owned enterprises and the emergence of smaller non-unionised enterprises are having a drastic effect on trade union presence in the economy. Collective agreements and wage bargaining at branch level are in a bad state.

In 1991, 40 per cent of enterprises had over 300 workers; the proportion of "big enterprises" today has sunk to 1.4 per cent. In 1992 there were 24 branch level agreements that applied to 850,000 workers. In the spring of 1996 there were only five such agreements. In 1992, at enterprise level, only 25 per cent of the workforce in the business sector had a valid wage agreement; in the spring of 1996 this had declined to 20 per cent.[16] For the trade unions in the business sector, overcoming their organisational weakness in the new small and medium-sized enterprises has become a matter of survival. The federations have been making serious efforts to deal with this problem in the recent period.

The two major federations, MSZOSZ and SZEF, have elaborated and publicised a common response to the government's austerity and stabilisation programme. Their alternative proposals accept cuts in jobs in the public sector as long as these do not exceed 10 per cent of the

workforce and are achieved by means of ordinary retirement and voluntary redundancies.[17] Almost all the federations by now have elaborated alternative proposals in economic and social policy. These alternative proposals deal mainly with labour market strategies, measures against unemployment, the reform of social security, protection of jobs and the environment, and the specific problems of women workers and youth.

This article first appeared in *Ost-West Gegeninformationen*, No. 2, 1996. Translation is by **Gus Fagan**.

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A Ukrainian Trade Union in the Transition to the Market

Interview with Vladimir Zlenko, President of the Union of Auto and Agricultural Machine-Construction Workers of Ukraine

David Mandel *Tell me about your background.*

Vladimir Zlenko I was born in 1937 in Chernigov, one of the most ancient towns in Rus'. After high school, a group of us decided to go to the Urals. I entered the institute there, where I met my wife, and after graduation I worked as a technologist in a factory. But we had problems getting housing and decided to go back to my home town in the Ukraine, where I got a job at the auto-parts plant. There I ran into trouble with my immediate superior, the chief technologist, and I wanted to quit. But the director persuaded me to shift temporarily to trade-union work, since the chief technologist would soon be leaving on pension.

I thought I'd work with people for a couple of years, for one term. That sort of experience is always useful in life. We were still young, we had our dreams and careers ahead of us. But when I wanted to return to my profession, I was refused. In those days, they'd just say: "You have a party card, don't you? The party put you there - so work." And I remained six years as president of the plant committee, and thirteen

as president of the Chernigov regional committee, and finally, when we formed a national union in the Ukraine, I was elected president in 1991.

Why do you think you were elected to that job?

I had already been involved in struggles in Chernigov. We had conflicts with the president of the regional trade-union council - I don't have to tell you what sort of conservative bodies they are. We had differing views on union work. He had spent his whole life until 1987 as a party functionary and then he was appointed to this union position. In those days, the party still controlled cadre appointments. The idea was for him to sit out the time until he could collect his pension - no work, no struggle. At that time, I was taking radical, militant positions. We had a lot of problems - especially concerning housing and wages. When Perestroika began, I understood that we needed to change our way of working.

The union in the Soviet period

Did you have conflicts with management before Perestroika?

I always tried to carry out my duty scrupulously. For example, there were cases when I refused to allow the director to dismiss people. We had a single mother with two children, a teacher in the personnel training department. They were reorganizing the department and wanted to cut her job. This was in the middle of the year, when it was impossible to find other teaching jobs. So I persuaded our union committee to refuse. The director got very angry and even brought in the public prosecutor and the courts. But in those days - this was before Gorbachev - the laws were nevertheless still functioning to a degree.

Didn't the party committee intervene?

No, it wasn't a matter for the party. It was a union matter. And we won. The court didn't even take up the case. Wherever the director turned, he was told: You have to resolve this with your union committee. And if the committee refused to agree to the dismissal, that ended the matter. In another case, in 1978, when I was still plant president, they sent us a

colonel who had been dismissed from the KGB. They made him assistant to the director for personnel and for work conditions not directly related to production. His behaviour was very interesting: he had a notebook for every manager and social activist in which he wrote down our activities; he was keeping his eye on us. But he wasn't doing his real job. When summer was approaching, it was necessary to make sure there was drinking water in the shops, that the ventilation system was in order; whwn winter was coming - he had to check the heating system, repair the insulation. He did nothing. When I talked to him about this, he said: "Vladimir Ivanovich, these are our common problems. Let's fix them together." I refused, saying: "Your getting paid. Do the job."

Finally, we invited him before the union committee and voted a censure. This happened twice, and still without result. By now, everyone already knew what sort of man he was, and the committee decided to apply Article 45 of the Labour Code that allows the union to request the dismissal of managers for violating the collective agreement or the Labour Code. This is a collective decision, but the law makes the union president personally responsible.

Does that law still exist?

Yes, and it also covers private enterprises. Actually, the director himself was dissatisfied with this guy but he was simply afraid of him. So I went for broke. He reacted by writing long letters to Brezhnev; he brought the Prosecutor's office into the affair. I stood my ground: the man wasn't doing his job; why cover for him? I had the support of our regional union committee, whose president I later replaced. We did get rid of him, but he didn't pick up his work book for another two years.

And the party didn't get involved?

I had the tacit support of the plant's party committee. But the regional committee tried to persuade me to rescind the decision. The strongest pressure came from the Prosecutor's office. In his letters to Brezhnev, he played on the fact that he was a "deserving Chekist" [Cheka - the political police in the Leninist period], and that, of course, carried some weight.

Were these two cases characteristic of the times or exceptional?

Article 45 was definitely not widely applied. That's why I came under so much pressure. You needed party approval to apply it, and I didn't bother to get it. We decided on our own in the union committee.

What about the union's right to stop work if it considered it harmful?

Yes, that was quite effective. Until 1993, the unions' inspectors could fine the director, shut down machinery that didn't meet the norms and even shut down whole departments and even factories. We did have such rights. And our legal inspectors had them too. If a union legal inspector saw a violation of the Labour Code, he could fine management.

But to what degree were they really independent of management?

They weren't subordinate to management because they were employees of the regional or national union committees. When I was president of the regional committee, my inspectors answered to me. Incidentally, when I was elected national president in 1991, I had 28 technical inspectors, almost one in each region. Since the state took over the inspectorate, we are left with seven.

But wasn't the priority in those days always for plan fulfillment?

Of course. And we had a lot of pressure from the party organs, especially towards the end of the month: "Let the shop work and be included in plan report at the end of the month; after that you can shut it down." There were a lot of problems starting up new industrial plant. Any new object required approval of the union's technical inspector, who refused it if he wasn't satisfied that it was safe and met standards. But there was a construction plan.

I remember when our inspector refused to approve the opening of a technical school in the town of Nezhin. There were a lot of health-and-safety problems. I got called to the regional party committee: "Sign. We'll take it under control, and all the problems with be corrected in January." They really turned up the heat, but we insisted that the problems

be corrected first. Without our signature, the object couldn't appear as completed in the regional plan report for capital construction and they'd look bad.

We didn't budge. They nearly got the inspector fired, but he stood his ground and he's still working today. They called in our union's main technical inspector from Moscow, but he supported us. In those days, the national union had a very big health-and-safety department. They said that they wouldn't allow children into unsafe facilities. We won that battle but we didn't win them all. There were also a lot of defeats.

So it wasn't a black-and-white picture of union subordination to the state, or as they like to quote Stalin - the unions weren't merely "transmission belts" for state policy?

That's nonsense, pure nonsense. It was all much more complicated. We defended our members, and over wage issues too. And even though it was very hard to do at that time, I managed to keep my office in the plant and to remain a member of the plant's party organization even after I became regional president. I wanted to stay close to the life of the factory. I felt that if I knew what was happening on the ground in one plant, it would be easier to understand the others. All the other regional committees worked out of a big building in the central square of Chernigov, cut off from the enterprises.

What was the significance of remaining in the plant's party organization?

A non-party person couldn't become president of a regional union committee. I was elected to the post at a union conference, but prior to that my candidacy needed the approval of the Chernigov regional trade-union council, the Chernigov regional party committee, the Ukrainian republican trade-union council and our own union's Central Committee in Moscow. They all had my file and gave their "OK". But I didn't want to be in a party organization of bureaucrats. I wanted to attend party meetings where there were workers. And it took a lot of effort to stay in the plant's party organization.

How do you account for your positions? They often say that under the old system union jobs were where they sent failed party functionaries.

Yes, we all used to say that, but that doesn't mean that it was 100 per cent true. I never worked in party organs. I moved from production into the union and up the union hierarchy. True, that wasn't very usual. There were only individual cases like mine. Most people in higher union positions came from the party apparatus. And if you look at the Federation of Trade Unions of the Ukraine (FTUY) today, you'll see a lot of former party functionaries. And they get elected and re-elected.

I've thought a lot about how I developed my world view. When I was young, I was an orthodox Communist. I believed strongly in the party and wanted to do party propaganda work. I was a propagandist in the Komsomol political network, and when I returned to Chernigov, I was a propagandist in the system of economic education. It wasn't political propaganda, but in those days everything was politicized, and political economy was taught from a Marxist point of view. I conducted seminars at the factory and I continued to give lectures even after I became president of the regional union committee. There used to exist an institution called "Lecturers of the Party Regional Committee." They existed all over the Soviet Union and used to organize monthly "political days," where we would go out to the work collectives and give a talk on some topic.

I used to think this was the best part of my work. Why? Look at our party documents, the programmes, the party constitution, Marxism-Leninism. Even today I haven't given up Marxism-Leninism, though I have given up the party. Everything in these documents is wonderfully written. What was the October Revolution? It was for the working people, to make their lives better. What does the official history of the Communist Party tell us? That the party exists for ordinary people, for the workers. We were told that it was the dictatorship of the working class, that the working class was the main group in our society.

And I was educated by the party on those positions. I didn't understand that they wrote one thing and did another. And I wasn't a hypocrite: if that is how one was supposed to act, I felt obligated to do so. And if the union constitution said that the director or his assistant should be dismissed for violating the Labour Code, then I had to do it,

and there wasn't any need to get party approval. I sometimes got into serious trouble and got myself called into the regional party committee, where they threatened: "We'll have you fired and you won't find work anywhere in the Soviet Union." It reached that point, and many times I actually believed they were going to do it. But I said to myself: "What the hell? Let them fire me. I worked as a machine-repair mechanic and then as a foreman at the same job, and I like it."

But it turned out they didn't fire me. Of course, if the party were still in control in 1991, I would never have been elected president of the Central Committee of the union. That's for sure. They would have put someone from the Central Committee of the party in there. But the party was no longer in control, and I was well-known in Chernigov and had spoken at the plenary sessions of the union in Moscow and at the congresses. I was elected from among six candidates.

Did you present a specific platform?

I can't really remember what I said, except that there were a lot of questions about unions and political activity. I remember that I said I was on the side of the working class, just as I do today. I said our struggle was to defend the working class, and even before that I had spoken and written against the union's involvement in sports and culture. Of course, it is our concern that our workers have access to those things, but not on union money.

In general, besides myself, no one talks openly about a workers' movement. Of course, I'm not saying we should exclude the engineers and technicians. I'm only saying that we have to solve the workers' problems, and if we do, then the problems of the engineering-technical staff will also be resolved. And we have to look at the reality: the interests of the two groups already diverge now. In the future the differences will only grow.

The engineering-technical staff is generally more dependent on management?

Without question. Every engineer dreams of sitting in an administrative chair. That's why they go to university.

But from a legal point of view, they have the same rights as workers?

Absolutely. But their professional interests aren't the same, for example, in the areas of health and safety and wages.

The union after 1991

What questions were raised about politics at the congress?

At the start of 1991, Article six of the Soviet Constitution ["leading role" of the CPSU] was abolished, and the party control of the unions ceased. Everyone thought that this meant there should be no politicization of unions, no involvement of unions in any political activity. I explained that that was a very mistaken idea. Of course, it is impermissible that unions be subordinated to a party, but they can't give up politics. Unions are organizations for the defence of the working class; their very essence is political. We won't be able to win our struggle with the government if we have no political representatives. I have read a lot about Western union experience, about the Swedes and the English, their links to parties, their political funds. We need to elect deputies who support our union platform and maybe, at some point in the future, create our own party. I said all this at the election congress and I won with 70 per cent of the vote.

Do rank-and-file workers get elected to these congresses?

The delegates are elected at plant conferences, and some ordinary workers do get elected, but few, and I'm not satisfied with that.

So I was elected in 1991 at the founding congress of our Ukrainian union, which voted me a staff of five people. But I couldn't even get an office in Kiev. The city authorities said: "What's the idea? You want to turn this town into a bureaucratic city?" I couldn't get a residence permit and I had no office, nowhere to put a desk. Our beloved union federation didn't lift a finger. It has its own building but said there was no room there for us.

In September, the city government officially refused me a residence permit. I had already found a small room for our accountant

and typist. I was living in a dormitory belonging to the Kiev Motorcycle Factory and commuting home on weekends. Bus prices were still affordable. Finally, I got help from the VP of the federation, a Kievite who had connections. According to the law, when you get transferred, you have priority for housing. But apartments were already very expensive and I barely had money for office supplies. Kashirin, then president of the All-Union Council of our union, sent the money right away and, before that, he had written letters pressing the city officials, urging them to grant me a residence permit.

My wife remained in Chernigov until May 1994. She was a designer in the metallurgical department of our parts plant and all she knew was to design adaptations for machinery. A lot of constructors were being permanently laid off then and had serious trouble finding work. So she stayed until she was laid off permanently, six months before her pension [at 55 years of age for women]. According to the law, pensions begin immediately if one is laid off six months early. Now we're here together, but my sons are in Chernigov.

How many members do you have today?

In January 1991 we had 520,000; today - 360,000. That isn't because the others left the union. They've left the factories or were permanently laid off. Ninety-five to 96 per cent of those employed in our sector are union members. In all, we have 450 plant organizations, and fourteen regional committees. There are few members in the other twelve regions.

Are there alternative unions in your sector?

Yes, but they play no real role in our enterprises. There's one at the Kiev Motorcycle Factory, where the union president, Onoprienko - you met him at the Lvov seminar - was recently elected on a revolutionary wave. The alternative union there is called "Dnepr". It has about 50 members. It doesn't participate in work on the collective agreement, but they criticize everyone and everything. They did support Onoprienko's election - he had been a simple mechanic with no union position. He offered them to work together on the collective agreement and negotiations. But they refused, saying he would pin all the responsibility on them and

blame them for the shortcomings.

They remain at about 50 members, but who knows? They have no membership roll. We don't mind. We've offered to work together. Some of the alternative unions proposed that we sign the branch agreement together. We weren't opposed but we insisted that they work on it with us. Sometimes we spend half a year putting it together and negotiating with the minister. But they say they lack the forces and only wanted to sign. So our branch agreement, which is a common one for the machine-construction unions, is signed only by the "old" ones.

How far back does this collaboration go? Is a fusion possible?

We signed the very first branch agreement together. Ours was the very first central agreement in Ukraine. The Ministry of Machine Construction, Military Industrial Complex and Conversion signs for the government. In all, we have some three and a half million members.

I was for fusion even before I became president of our union. That was also one of the points in my programme. And I write about it in our paper. I have even said that I'm prepared not to run for president. I'm 58, and we've got to push young people to the fore. I'd be glad to help, to be a vice president or just an assistant. And if not that, I'll find some other work for myself. That doesn't scare me. It would be a great help to us if we had one big union. But my colleagues don't want it.

What are their reasons?

They're afraid for their posts. They say: "Yes, it's a great idea, but a bit too early. When the economy and society stabilize, then we'll return to it."

Union organisation problems

What about the issue of union independence from management? How does it stand today?

We have very strong directors - and they're all union members! They come to us and say: "I'm a union member. You have to defend me."

Is this the idea that unions can gain more by not conflicting with management?

Exactly. They tell me: "Don't cause trouble for us with management. We need good relations with management and to work together to restore production." But it's not the director who's going to restore production. That's a question of state policy. That's the whole issue. The directors are an integral part of this state system; they have to do what the state is doing.

You might find the odd honest director, but the overwhelming majority are getting rich by all available means. They create small enterprises, commercial firms, they sell and resell the plant's output five times over through these firms and skim off big profits.

So they are not the "fathers of the work collective" any more; their path has parted from that of the workers?

Without doubt. The paths were always divergent, but a little less before. In those days, directors were privileged and could allow themselves some liberties, but if they started to steal and were caught, they were put away. There were limits. Today there are none.

What percentage of your plant union committees have been able to reform themselves?

That's hard to say, but not many. I can talk of individual cases, like the Kharkov Bicycle Factory. It's a bit early to say about the Kiev Motorcycle Factory. We still have to watch and help him; he's completely new to the union movement. There is also the Konotopskii "Motordetal" Factory in the Sumy region.

Do you have any means from here to promote the reform process?

Practically none. If we had money, we could organize an educational system. Why do you think we're putting out the paper? Do you realize how difficult that is for us? We have no means of transport, very little equipment, and I decided to forego one staff person just so that we could

put out this paper to reach rank-and-file members. I prepared four alternative plans for a paper, which were discussed at length all of last year, but we reached agreement only on the organization of courses to educate cadres. But they didn't vote any money.

What part of union dues does your national union receive?

Until our third congress, we were supposed to receive 4.5 per cent. The congress added 1.5 per cent for our union paper. I started putting out the paper before the congress to show them concretely what it meant. And they agreed. But they wouldn't give the one per cent I asked for education. In reality, 85 per cent of the dues stay in the plant committees, and we only get 1.9 per cent, not 4.5 or 6 per cent. They simply don't transfer it to us. Some regional committees do give us the 6 per cent; others, like Poltava and Volyn, give 2 per cent.

So is the problem more in the plant or the regional committees?

The plant committees, especially the big ones. But this is also the fault of the presidents of the regional committees who aren't doing their work.It's similar in Russia - the huge VAZ and Gorky auto plants give 1 per cent. What kind of behaviour is that? We have some plant committees that give nothing - they say there's no money.

But those who have don't give. Take the KRAZ truck factory. The president has twenty full time union people, and won't cut any of them. He's the big chief there. Besides that, union money supports a palace of culture and a lot of sports activities, and he won't cut any of them. He says if he dismisses these people, he'll be the bad guy. So while he has twenty full-timers, the national union has only five people plus three that are paid out of the State Social Insurance Fund.

You were president of a regional union committee and you know these people well. How do you evaluate their present role in the union?

It varies. Everything depends on the leader. You remember the regional president from Lvov at our seminar? He showed up for the opening session and slept through the rest of the seminar, drunk. And he does no

work in his region. Or take the Poltava region. Nothing was done there for our February 21 action. The president is also a former party functionary. He's very crafty. Talks up a storm and promises the moon, but does nothing. The Kharkov regional president, Vetchinkin, is the opposite. He never worked for the party. He used to be president of the Bicycle Factory union. He doesn't shy away from a fight but rushes head on into the attack. So a lot depends on the individual person. The regional president in Donetsk is similar. He's a Communist, but what difference does that make to me?

How are these regional presidents elected and the Council formed?

Regional presidents are elected at regional conferences. Each region delegates two people to the Council. They are usually the regional president and the president of a large plant. When I was president of the Chernigov committee, I was able to get a worker delegated, and to this day there is a worker on the Council from that region, Valentin Redkovetz, from my old factory. So one worker today on the entire Council - it's a disgrace. At the congress I wanted to establish a mode of representation to make sure we had workers, but I wasn't supported. And too few workers are elected to our congresses.

Would you say there is a difference between plant presidents who were workers and those who were engineering and technical people?

Definitely, although not in every case. I myself am an engineer, as you know. I had a solid job as chief technologist, but I wasn't in charge of people; I didn't give orders. When I was young, in the Urals, I worked as a department supervisor. But I never abandoned the position of the working class. I began in the working class, I studied, and I worked in the party to educate people to those ideas.

Rank and file attitudes

Do you agree that one of the main problems holding back change in the unions is that there isn't much pressure in that direction from the rank and file?

That's true. Apparently, it's a legacy of the past. People are also demoralized and believe in nothing and no one. They don't believe they can make a difference.

Was it different in the late 1980s?

The miners were active. But there wasn't much in our plants. It was different in Byelorussia, but there I think the concentration of big auto plants in the capital played an important role. Here in Kiev we've only got two small plants, and they're not working on a stable basis. Then traditionally the Belarus government was not so corrupt. That's why Brezhnev had their first secretary, Masherov, killed. [He died in a plane crash.] And then, people are afraid, afraid of losing their jobs, afraid of the KGB, even today.

But you said there was a "revolutionary wave" at the Motorcycle Factory.

The director there was 65 years old. He had worked for ten years as first party secretary in Kharkov and then a year at the Bicycle Factory, until he was forcibly removed and could no longer hold party positions in Kharkov. He asked to be transferred here and was made director of the Motorcycle Factory, where he worked for eight or nine years. He was a very authoritarian guy, listened to no one, would not hear anything about democracy - only a fist slammed on the table. He had already turned 64 and since he knew he wouldn't be there much longer, he paid little attention to the factory.

Last year the plant stood idle for long periods.It's a typical situation these days. The workers are sent on administrative leave without pay, while the top administrators come in for a few hours each day, collect a full salary and then go off on picnics or on trips abroad. Then they start up again, sell a few motorcycles, and it starts all over again.

Onoprienko had been in opposition to the union for along time, but he didn't find much support. Then last October they were sent home, and the union president countersigned the director's order to pay them only 30 per cent of their wage as "material support," that is, even less than the two thirds of base pay required by law. This man had been

elected in July. Before that, he had been party secretary and then assistant director in charge of personnel. He's an intelligent, good man, but very soft, not at all a fighter. And by countersigning that order on his own without the approval of the union committee, he had violated the union's constitution.

So on November 27, when the plant started up again, Onoprienko called a meeting. As I said, he was just an ordinary worker, but an informal leader. He had even quit the union. The meeting voted to remove the union president and the union committee, which had not defended them. Neither the director nor the union president came to the meeting. Tsekhmeistruk, one of my assistants, had gone there in the morning as soon as the news reached our office. I was attending the congress of the Union of Shipbuilders; when they found me there, I headed over.

I went to the union president and asked him why he didn't go out to talk with the workers. He said: "Vladimir Ivanovich, it's a spontaneous, illegal meeting, and I don't recognize it." I told him that that made no difference - he had to explain things. He still refused, even though I warned him that the consequences would be serious.

The meeting elected Onoprienko president of the union committee. Formally, it wasn't a union meeting, but a meeting of the work collective. Some people there weren't even plant workers. Onoprienko asked me what to do. I said: "The workers elected you. So work." Two days later he came to me for a document to show he was president. The old president refused to hand over his office or the union's stamp. He said he had been legally elected and would go to court if he had to. Of course, the union constitution had been violated. All the same, I typed up a document that said Onoprienko had been elected on October 27 but I added that this had to be confirmed at a union conference.The union conference was finally held in February and it elected Onoprienko. The old president had no choice but to leave.

The national union had prepared materials explaining how to sue directors for non-payment of wages. Onoprienko had got busy collecting complaints from workers to prepare the court case. When the director got wind of this, he got scared and immediately came up with the money to pay the two thirds base pay, and he paid it not only for October and November, but for the entire previous year.

Now the plant is working four days a week, and the workers have only received March's wages, that is, there are delays. But at least they get everything that the law requires. So how can we not support such a man? Sure, he has a certain nationalist tendency, but everybody has something. It's also true that he didn't organize anything for our February 21 collective action. He said it was a political action and would hurt the constitution. Besides the plant wasn't working at the time. I told him that there were still workers on duty at the plant and that he could get at least a hundred people together. But he didn't.

What were your demands in the February 21 action?

It was organized by our ten machine-construction unions - a two-hour stoppage, during which meetings were to be held with the resolutions sent to the government. Our demands were political, or politico-economic: that the government create conditions for normal productive activity; that wages be given first priority for enterprise funds; that the government establish the status of "partially employment"; that there be no price rises without a reform of the wage system; and finally, that state control of enterprise wage funds be ended.

By "partially unemployed" we mean all those people who are officially employed but not really working. They don't appear in the statistics and don't receive any state support. Our union prepared a draft law on that, but the government only answered: "There's no money." As a result of our action, they at least created a cabinet commission for machine construction. We made clear that we wouldn't give up. We'd call strikes, do anything needed. So they sent our draft to the ILO for its opinion.

What sort of payment do the officially unemployed get today?

It's barely enough for survival. The maximum pension is 4.3 million, while 15 million buys a minimal level of well-being. Is that survival?

How are wages controlled?

On the basis of 1990 figures and a coefficient, the cabinet calculates the

total enterprise consumption fund, that is, wages, bonuses and other payments to workers. If it is surpassed, the penalties are very high. Of course, you can pay certain workers higher wages, but only at the expense of the others. So when our unions demand wage raises, the directors say they are powerless.

I know that the Federation of Trade Unions of the Ukraine didn't support your action. What is your attitude toward the Federation?

All ten machine-construction unions are in opposition, some more, some less.

It's always puzzled me how the union federation president, Stoyan, a history professor with no union background, was elected in free elections at the federation's congress in 1991.

He had been a department head in the Ministry of Higher Education, and then a consultant to then-president Kravchuk. He had strong backing from on high. People, including myself, felt: "Well, he's a doctor of historical sciences, he has good contacts, maybe he'll help the unions find the way to reform at this stage." Of course, nothing of the sort happened. But he spoke very well at the congress: "Dear comrades, I went to visit my mother in her village. Our little family home is collapsing. I haven't any money myself, and yet, if it weren't for me, I don't know how my mother would survive. I realized that we have to defend our people. Let's defend our people." The congress was euphoric, and he got 50 per cent plus one vote. Stoyan behaves very loyally toward the government. He constantly tells us: "We don't need any collective actions. I'll go to the government, the President, and reach an understanding. Your actions won't help." We demanded early elections - in April 1996, instead of 1997 as scheduled. But the majority didn't support us, even though the opposition to Stoyan was very strong at the last congress. It is the public service sector unions that are the most conservative

The country is in a catastrophic state, Stoyan is clearly doing nothing, and yet they decide to let him go on for another year. How does one understand that?

It's called blinkers. Our people were educated for 70 years to be patient - everything will be done for you. A slave's psychology.

The political situation of labour

Has your union discussed the question of endorsing a party or creating a labour party?

Yes. As recently as our last plenum in May, the eastern regions proposed that we create a party. But you were able to see for yourself that our western regions recognize only nationalist parties. If we start to support one party, we'll split the union. But I still think it's inevitable that we will link up with a party or form our own.

How do you see the CP today?

Unfortunately, it's the same party. If this party made a confession and asked forgiveness from the people for all the bad that was done in its name, if it admitted that it needs a new programme, then maybe I would join it. I was at the second congress of the party last year - they invited me. And they wrote: "Second (Thirtieth) Congress", that is, continuity. There is absolutely nothing new in the programme. I listened and left.

How does their caucus behave in Parliament?

Well, they've been blocking the new constitution and a number of other reforms, and I can't say that they are wrong in that or acting out of narrow party interests. They do try to do some things for the people. We are used to having the right to a job, to medical care, to an education, enshrined in the constitution, but the new version has omitted these rights. At our own plenum, we decided that these rights must be guaranteed.

How do you understand the socio-political processes occurring in Ukraine today?

First of all, I think that everything is occurring according to a conscious design. It isn't the President or the Prime Minister who are doing the

planning; they have to follow behind the events. It's all planned, however, perhaps by the CIA, or by the IMF, but most of all, of course, by the Western powers. The collapse of the Soviet Union and our own collapse - they were planned, not spontaneous. Today, our Supreme Soviet, our President, are without doubt creating a class of rich people, introducing capitalism, which is, after all, what they mean by "a market economy." Of course, there can be different kinds of capitalism. It would be nice to have the Swedish kind, but we have a process of primitive accumulation supported by the government. We have three very prominent monetarists in the government, including a Vice Prime Minister, the Minister of the Economy and the Chairman of the National Bank, Germanchuk, people who are no different from Gaidar.

We are living through a change of socio-political systems, and no one is hiding that. It's a bourgeois revolution, in which the bourgeoisie is becoming the ruling class. The import of this revolution is as far-reaching as that of 1917, only then there was a lot of noise, an armed insurrection, and today it is being done quietly within the higher circles, without the participation of the people, who don't understand what is happening. We're turning back the clock on the October Revolution.

An inhuman bourgeoisie is being created that devours everything, plunders everything, uproots everything. It doesn't give a damn about the people, the state, patriotism. It lacks all human sentiment in its pursuit of wealth. Some of the right-wingers in our union don't like me talking like this. Some of our comrades at the Lvov seminar listened in silence when I expressed these views and told me later that I had taken a very left-wing position. Well, so be it. If we are to think like unions, like organizations on the side of wage labour, then we are on the left, isn't that so?

I don't really understand how these people can be nationalists and at the same time support a government and parties whose economic policies are destroying the economy and turning Ukraine into a Third World country.

Oh, you should have been at the plenum of the Lvov regional trade-union council yesterday! Its president is a certain Kender, who is also a deputy to the Supreme Soviet - he's been elected twice from the region.

He's an open nationalist, and even the Lvov unions are upset with him, since he hardly ever participates in the council meetings. He comes once every few months, looks around, and says: "Just make sure you don't let any Communists raise their heads here!"

Yesterday he told the council: "I've said many times that we don't need any demonstrations or mass meetings. We have to work calmly. Now the Vice Prime Minister has come and he'll enlighten us." So the Vice Prime Minister gets up and starts: "As my comrade, Pan Yaroslav said..." That's a union leader for you, that's a government! They're comrades, you see. A president of a regional union federation that opposes all collective actions! And our own people in the region share his positions!

The explanation for this is a very complex one, and I can't even begin to give you all the elements. Of course, some of these union leaders are dreaming of a government job. When I go on pension, I'll get four million coupons. But even the lowliest government clerk gets 90 per cent of his salary. But that's not the main reason. The Western Ukraine is radically right-wing; the East is radically left. Why is the West so right-wing? It was annexed by the USSR in 1939, and the repression began at once, and the forced collectivization, and the mass deportations to Siberia. Even today, they tremble at the word "Siberia". I'm serious. They'll say, in ordinary conversation: "If we yield an inch to Russia, we'll end up in Siberia."

There has always been a nationalist movement in Western Ukraine. Lithuania and Poland annexed it in the thirteenth century, and from then on it was always under foreign domination. Later it came under Austro-Hungary. They always wanted to be united with the rest of Ukraine. But when it finally happened, it was accompanied by repression. Then the war broke out. A nationalist army was formed in the west that at first said it wanted to fight both the Communists and the occupiers, but finally went over to the fascists. In the west and in parts of the centre, this army isn't viewed with horror. But just pronounce the word "Benderovshchina" in the east and see how people react. There, it is synonymous with enemy, collaborationist, traitor. In the west, there are memorials to Bendera, whose army was fighting in the woods until 1957. The father of Goreneev, the organizer of the Lvov seminar, was a Benderovets, who was caught and executed.

This nationalism mixed with anti-Communism has roots in the rank and file too. That's one of the problems. But the workers receive only nationalist and right-wing propaganda, nothing else. We aren't able to reach the rank and file. You spoke and I spoke at the seminar in Lvov. Who was listening? Were there any workers listening to us? And do you think the participants from Lvov are going to tell their workers what they heard at the seminar? Only if we publish something in our paper is there a chance it might reach ordinary workers. But the paper reaches them with great difficulty. It would be a different matter if we had money to mail it to each member.

Who's most responsible for blocking the flow of information?

The regional committees; but the plants committees aren't innocent either. At the Minsk seminar on health and safety, you met the shop committee president from the KRAZ truck plant. I must have phoned them twenty times to persuade them to send a shop-level worker. So they at least sent the shop president, not in ordinary work, but at least someone from the shop level. Ordinarily the plant president won't do even that. He'll say: "It's me or no one." That's a huge problem.

I remember back in 1993, the Turks invited us to send ten people for a seminar at their expense. We had to pay only for the tickets. I went to the Zaporozhetz Auto Factory. The plant president has a luxurious office, a car, lots of money. I said: "Anatolii Ivanovich, you have a worker on your executive committee. Let's send him. You only have to pay the ticket." He answers: "No money." I know this is not true. I said: "We have 80,000 members in this region. Surely it has to send someone." He: "Well, I don't know. Who could we send?" So I finally said: "OK, go yourself." Naturally, for himself he was able to find the money. If the national union had its own money, then I'd be able to persuade our executive committee to approve sending ordinary activists.

I can only hope we will finally see the light. The reform of our union will be seriously impeded, unless we change its financial system. The central union body needs resources so that it can reach down to ordinary workers.

Vladimir Ivanovich Zlenko *was interviewed in Kiev in July 1996 by* ***David Mandel.***

Jeremy Lester

The Defeat of Zyuganov and the Communists in the 1996 Russian Presidential Elections

When Gennadii Zyuganov delivered his keynote address to the plenary session of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) in January this year (1996), he had every right to wear the smile of a self-satisfied leader. In the parliamentary elections of the previous December, the CPRF had won 158 out of the available 450 seats; 99 on the party list and 59 in single member constituencies, which together amounted to a success rate of 44.7 per cent. Communists represented 63 constituent territories of the Russian Federation (up from 27 in the last parliament). In three constituencies the party had captured over 50 per cent of the party list votes, while in 34 others the support base was over the 30 per cent level. Most encouraging of all was the fact that, wherever there was a higher than average turnout, the Communists obtained an even bigger share of the vote, contradicting the belief that only a low turnout was to their advantage. (For every 1 per cent increase in turnout, the Communists captured 0.75 per cent of the additional vote). In all, the Communists had increased their electoral base by 150 per cent.

Zyuganov also announced that centrism - that 'unscrupulous attempt to reconcile and conciliate the robbers and the robbed' - was dead and buried. 'Patriots', who had previously been duped by

Zhirinovsky's initial nationalist incarnation had now gone over (or gone back) to the Communists, leaving Zhirinovsky with nothing more than a small, if committed, section of the lumpenised masses as a backbone of support. In short, Zyuganov claimed, Russian society had now moved leftwards by a considerable degree, and the stage was now set for the ultimate showdown with the reactionary forces of Western neo-liberalism in the forthcoming presidential elections in the summer of 1996.

Zyuganov was nevertheless very eager to acknowledge that serious difficulties lay ahead. The CPRF had performed to its maximum potential, give or take a possible 3 or 4 per cent. For this reason, the party would have to find new allies very quickly, and this in turn would necessitate 'a substantial renewal of the entire strategic, tactical and ideological arsenal'. The party would not survive with the old baggage, and new approaches in everything, especially in the theoretical-ideological domain, would have to be found.

Too much support came from social strata who were 'too firmly linked with the past'. Promoting such a link would not be a viable strategy for the presidential contest. What the party most needed, therefore, was far stronger support amongst the so-called 'historically promising social groups' - the young skilled workers in the sphere of high technology production and those employed in the realms of science, culture and education. Here were the forces which would lead Russia to the 'glorious future' of a 'post-industrial society'. And here, in Zyuganov's view, was the new 'working class of the 21st century'. The political force which could best articulate and embody the aspirations of this new 'technohumanitocracy' would undoubtedly have a 'decisive' advantage in the short-, as well as long-term, political struggle in Russia. Thus, whereas the old CPSU had missed its opportunity to win such people over to its cause, the new Communist Party could not afford to repeat that mistake. What was needed, therefore, was the modern-day equivalent of the post-revolutionary plan for the electrification of Soviet Russia - something which could spark the political imagination of the 'new Russians' and revive the old sense of (party programmatic) commitment of the old Russians.

The party's recent parliamentary success also brought new problems. The victory would generate high expectations, but as 'a party of power without power' this would create tensions, contradictions and

risks. There was the well-known, but unstated, problem of Zyuganov's own personality; not in the form of a personality cult, but more in the guise of a personality deficit. Lack of 'charisma' was one factor here, but so too was the danger (alluded to at this time by Gorbachev) that a great many of those who turned out and supported the CPRF as a party in December's parliamentary elections would not necessarily support Zyuganov (the individual) in the presidential contest.

The optimism of the time, then, was rightly countered by some hard-headed realism. In the short space of three years following the overturning of the unconstitutional ban on its activities, the CPRF had undoubtedly come a long way. But there was still a long way to go before the main prize - the presidency - could be considered within its grasp. In the end, of course, those difficulties faced by the party (and by Zyuganov personally) proved insurmountable. A phoenix had indeed arisen from the ashes, but it was not strong enough to defeat Yeltsin's incarnation of the double-headed eagle - the revived official state emblem of the new Russia. In what follows, therefore, one question above all others will be the focus of attention: why did Zyuganov lose? Was he beaten (by fair means or foul), or was he himself culpable in throwing away perhaps the best opportunity a Communist will ever have in capturing the reins of power again in Russia?

The power of incumbency

In the view of Gennadii Seleznev, the Communist Speaker of the State Duma, Yeltsin's victory in the presidential elections was ultimately due to his control of the mass media, money and slander; a claim which undoubtedly has an enormous amount of substance behind it. An incumbent is bound to have enormous advantages but in Yeltsin's case the overwhelming powers of incumbency were matched by tactics of manipulation which were second to none. In the sphere of media control, for example, this was not just a case of disproportional coverage in Yeltsin's favour, whereby he received three times as much television news footage as all the other candidates put together; it was more a form of media terror designed to ensure that by means of fear and hysteria an unpopular president could at least appear as the best alternative to a range of nightmare scenarios on offer elsewhere. According to the television image of Zyuganov, a Communist presidency under his control

would mean the immediate return of the Gulag, famine, civil war, world war and many other things beside.

Equally as important was Yeltsin's control of the purse strings, and his capacity to offer electoral bribes. While many television advertisements promoting Yeltsin's candidacy were not being paid for, Yeltsin was using his control over the Central Bank to give handouts and subsidies to virtually anyone who claimed them. Between April and June, for example, Central Bank reserves fell from $16 billion to $12.5 billion and, in the days preceding the first round of voting in June, the sum of $1 billion was ordered to be made available to help offset the spiralling government deficit.

Another key advantage was Yeltsin's capacity to colonise key policy areas of his Communist opponent, for example, the sudden peace negotiations with Chechen separatists at the beginning of the campaign. Attempts to settle wage arrears in a few key sectors was another prominent form of policy colonisation, as too was the much hyped, if largely bogus, Union Treaty signed with Belarus in April. While the first two measures were largely predicted, the latter caught the Communists by surprise and stripped Zyuganov of one of his most hoped-for trump cards in the electoral campaign.

Add to this the very explicit desires of Western governments and institutions like the IMF to get Yeltsin re-elected, and the very public fears of the Russian business elite and their conjured-up visions of impending economic ruin if Zyuganov were elected, and one can certainly see how the cards were stacked in Yeltsin's favour. His own determination to ensure a victory 'at all costs' was seen right from the outset when his campaign team resorted to all manner of bribes, threats and cajoling techniques to secure the stipulated number of nomination signatures. This was followed by the temporary closing of the State Duma and, throughout the period of the campaign itself, there was barely a week when there wasn't some threat to cancel the elections if it at all looked likely that Yeltsin was going to be defeated. And, at the end of all this, of course, there was always the opportunity to interfere with the count itself. In the Republics of Dagestan and Karachai-Cherkessia, for example, the Central Electoral Commission admitted that serious irregularities had obviously taken place between the first and second round votes, where Zyuganov's support had 'mysteriously' slumped dramatically. Similarly,

in the first round poll, miscounting was found to have taken place in no fewer than 14 provinces.

The failings of the Zyuganov camp

Notwithstanding the very strong manipulative powers of the incumbent office holder, the Zyuganov camp itself was very culpable in its own defeat. A number of factors here, I think, are worth exploring.

First, despite the creation of a wide-ranging electoral bloc in support of Zyuganov's candidacy, only very lukewarm support was attained from other forces on the Communist and non-Communist Left. The Russian Party of Communists (led by Anatolii Kryuchkov) neither joined the electoral bloc nor gave Zyuganov any real endorsement. Oleg Shenin and Aleksei Prigarin (of the Union of Communists) opposed Zyuganov's attempts to unite Reds and Whites under the common banner of nationalism and patriotism. Viktors Tyul'kin and Anpilov (of the Russian Communist Workers Party) used the campaign to promote their more radical agenda of re-nationalisation and the re-introduction of a planned economy, policies at odds with Zyuganov's own economic programme. Other forces on the left generally mistrusted Zyuganov's policies and believed he wanted simply to secure for himself a lucrative position in any future regime. Indeed, by the time of the second round of the vote, there were open calls from many left-wing groups to boycott what was described as 'the Yeltsin-Zyuganov conspiracy'.

Secondly, as the electoral bloc behind Zyuganov was far more nationalist and patriotic than it was socialist or communist, the lack of support from other left-wing forces was not perceived as a major problem. More important were the big divisions within the Zyuganov camp itself. Valentin Kuptsov, for example, the CPRF's 'second in command', pursued a much stronger social democratic line. Gennadii Seleznev was removed from his post of secretary in the CPRF's Central Committee half way through the campaign because of differences over strategy. Aman Tuleev waited a long time before withdrawing his own candidacy in favour of Zyuganov. (Tuleev has since accepted the post of Minister in charge of relations with CIS countries in the new Chernomyrdin government).

Thirdly, the strongest dissent within the Zyuganov camp came from right-wing patriotic groups who remained mistrustful not so much of Zyuganov's personal commitment, but certainly of the CPRF in general.

Writing after Zyuganov's defeat, Sergei Baburin (the leader of the Russian All-People's Union) claimed that the cause of Russian patriotism had too often been sacrificed on the altar of Communist domination of the patriotic bloc. Patriots had had to put up with the ignominy of the primitive but effective anti-Communist rhetoric of their Westernised opponents. The Communists had also alienated a great many potential supporters of a national-patriotic orientation. The association with Anpilov had perhaps given Zyuganov an extra few percentage points but it had lost him considerably more from the Right. The CPRF, Baburin concluded, had become a liability. Zyuganov's underestimation of Aleksandr Lebed also lost him patriotic support. Yeltsin used Lebed to his own advantage.

All of this, of course, is not to suggest that Zyuganov should have made concessions even more than he already did to the forces of the right. Quite the opposite. But it does highlight the incompatibility of the forces he was trying to unite. From neo-Stalinists to Brezhnevite Communists, social democrats, billionaire businessmen, neo-fascists and orthodox (often openly anti-Semitic) Christians, his electoral bloc was ultimately nothing more than a mélange of incompatible groups.

Fourthly, given the nature of the patriotic ideology which was meant to serve as the one (and only) bond cementing this mélange, it was inevitable that Zyuganov's appeal remained too rooted in the past. Having declared in his January 1996 plenary speech to the CPRF that the main goal would be to win over the younger generation of Russians, he then failed to do this. According to all the post-election sociological analyses, approximately 60 per cent of Yeltsin's support came from people in the age range 18-40. A similar proportion of students voted for Yeltsin, while as many as 75 per cent of those who voted for Yeltsin came from the industrial and humanities sectors. The bulk of Zyuganov's vote came from the over-50s, with only 10-15 per cent of the youth vote going to him. Equally significant perhaps, was the fact that the two largest groups of abstainers (or those who rejected both Yeltsin and Zyuganov) were people from professional backgrounds and non-ethnic Russians.

Fifthly, a key negative turning point in Zyuganov's campaign came with his forced admittance that he had a hidden 'maximum' programme. This hidden agenda had initially been alluded to by General Valentin Varennikov (one of the anti-Gorbachev conspirators back in August 1991), and Zyuganov's reluctant acknowledgement of its existence was

of course 'manna from heaven' to all his opponents. For much of the second half of the campaign, Zyuganov was repeatedly forced to make the rather facile argument that every electoral bloc had a hidden agenda. This lent credence to the scare tactics of his opponents.

Zyuganov's explicit support and praise for Stalin throughout the campaign also left him a hostage to fortune in terms of the anti-Communist rhetoric that was in such abundance. Zyuganov's call for a coalition government and his announcement of prospective ministers was also a big tactical mistake; it had been done with little or no planning and even less consultation. Consequently, the sight of many of those he named for his government turning down his offer in public was a severe embarrassment. It also antagonised the radical Communists like Anpilov, Tyul'kin and Shenin, who were all excluded from the list while it included members of the existing government - a government previously described by Zyuganov as an 'anti-people' regime.

Finally, there doubts about whether Zyuganov really wanted to win the presidential elections. These doubts began as far back as January 1996 when the editor of Nezavisimaya gazeta, Vitalii Tretyakov, suggested that Zyuganov was content for the CPRF to be the main party of opposition with a strong base of support in the legislative arena. This, it was argued, would give Zyuganov everything that he most wanted: maximum influence at the cost of minimum responsibility. In an election post-mortem, Pravda's editor, Aleksandr Il'in, repeated the charges of lack of suitable commitment on the part of Zyuganov. He also accused him of incompetence at key moments of the campaign; not least in his failure to bring in new, interesting people into his campaign team.

A Moral Victory?

A number of analysts have suggested that, despite the outcome, the result represented a strong 'moral victory' for Zyuganov. Despite dissension and disunity, it is claimed, Zyuganov did in fact manage to keep his party and the national-patriotic electoral bloc united throughout the difficult months of the campaign. This clearly demonstrated a good deal of political acumen. When Yeltsin does eventually disappear from the political scene, all kinds of feuds are likely to break out within his entourage. The potential heirs of Yeltsin have little or no organisational base outside of the elite executive sphere, and this will put them at a

considerable disadvantage.

Second, the recent bout of electoral activity in Russia has forced the CPRF to confront the Russian people in a manner it had hitherto never experienced. This creates the possibility for a thoroughgoing reform of its internal structures. Its parliamentary fraction is better educated and younger than the party membership. Whatever the outcome, the evolutionary pace of change has undoubtedly been quickened.

Third, there is a degree of substance in the claim that Yeltsin's victory was at least partly acquired at the price of adopting many of the policies of his Communist and national-patriotic opponents. However bogus the Union Treaty with Belarus, for example, the new Russian government is keener than it ever was to pursue policies of re-integration with the other republics of the former USSR. Its opposition to NATO expansion is likewise of a different nature these days. And in the key sphere of economic policy, there is now a far greater emphasis on the benefits of keeping the factories open and stimulating production by whatever means available, irrespective of the inflationary damage this might cause. Finally, for all his so-called character deficiencies, most neutral commentators in Russia were fairly unanimous that Zyuganov's own personal authority was considerably enhanced by his presidential candidacy. The Communists will probably never have a better opportunity of re-capturing power in Russia by constitutional means, be it in their own guise or in the alternative guise of a camouflaged patriotic movement.

The 1996 Russian Presidential Elections

1st Round (June 16)		2nd Round (July 3)	
Candidate	%	Candidate	%
Boris Yeltsin	35.1	Boris Yeltsin	53.7
Gennadii Zyuganov	32.0	Gennadii Zyuganov	40.4
Aleksandr Lebed	14.7	Against both candidates	4.8
Grigory Yavlinsky	7.4	Turnout	67.2
Vladimir Zhirinovsky	5.8		
Svyatoslav Fedorov	0.9		
Mikhail Gorbachev	0.5		
Other candidates	0.7		
Against all candidates	2.9		
Turnout	69.8		

Kate Hudson

Russian Cinema After the Turn to the Market

Whatever judgement one may arrive at about the political and economic project of the Soviet Union, the cultural impact of that experiment has been very significant, particularly in the field of cinema. Whilst the political and economic impact of the Russian revolution of 1917 has clearly been of massive significance throughout the twentieth century, the revolution also changed artistic and cultural life in quite dramatic ways. In fact, for most of this same period, the film practices encouraged and developed by the Russian revolution have been regarded as some of film's greatest experiments.

The Soviet film industry

The framework within which these developments took place was the nationalisation of the film industry and its evolution within a rigid ideological framework. Its development was chiefly to underpin the economic and political programme of the ruling system and win the hearts and minds of the population to it. With the overthrow of this system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989 and 1991, the film industries of those countries have had to redevelop within the framework of a market system which has introduced a wide range of challenges and conflicting pressures for creative workers and cultural producers. These changes fall into two major categories:

1. Economic changes: the end of state funding and organisation of production, distribution and creative input which removed the box office imperative; the end of subsidised performance; the attempts at production for the international market, resulting in an increase in sex and violence in cinematic output; and Western attempts at penetration and control of distribution and theatrical space.
2. Political changes: freedom from censorship has produced a paradox - freedom of expression has resulted in a much reduced output from the creative spirits of the Communist period. The lack of state funding has also reduced many in previously secure 'art' jobs to a position of penury. This article will explore these themes in the context of the development of the Soviet film industry and the Russian film industry in these early years of the post-Communist period.

These developments mirror wider and more fundamental issues in Russian society and politics. Western penetration of the Russian film industry and the perceived undermining of national cultural values is a microcosm of the great political and economic debates within contemporary Russia. Should Russia turn to the West, to Western market economics, to Western liberal values, and risk being subordinated? Or should it attempt to plough a Russian furrow, preserving the integrity of its national economy, and redeveloping its own national values, and indeed, cultural traditions? These are the great questions, which still remain unresolved for Russia, and thus, for the Russian film industry. In short, will Russia continue to provide some of the world's great directors, developing and evolving a new Russian cinema built on the cultural and artistic achievements of the Soviet period, or will the Russian industry become a pale shadow of the worst aspects of its Western counterparts? This article argues that the answer, to a great extent, depends on the outcome of the political struggle in Russia. The best combination for the Russian film industry would be economic support from the state, regulation of the industry, and protection from external penetration, combined with freedom from censorship and ideological control.

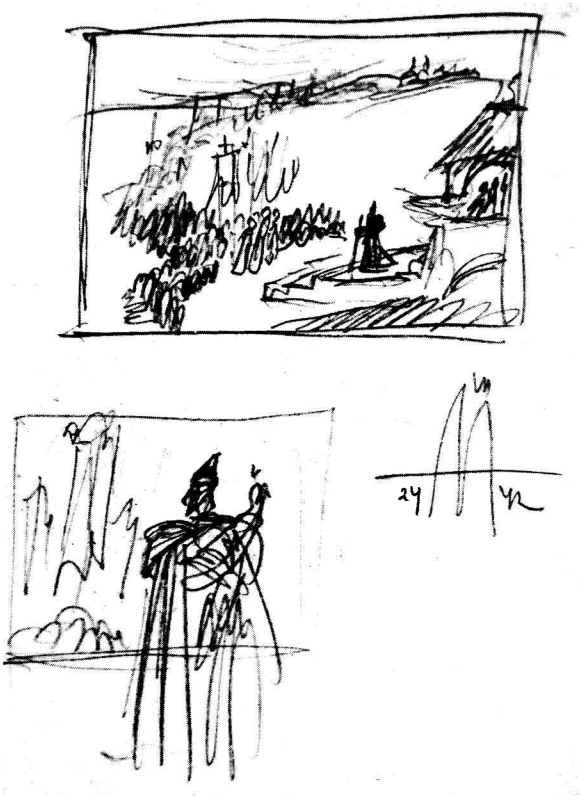
It may seem strange that a country like the Soviet Union, with a repressive political regime, should have produced a national cinema that was, for significant periods, a byword for creative and technical innovation and artistic advance. The Soviet period can not be seen in a uniform fashion: the 1930s to 1950s was a time of cultural repression and artistic

stagnation, the 1920s, and 1960s to 1980s were times when Soviet cinema produced many superb works, often path-breaking in cinematic terms. When the Soviet political environment was less oppressive - when censorship and political manipulation were not so overwhelming - the positive feature of the system (massive state support for the arts) was able to come into play and enable great art and artists to emerge. An understanding of the period of Soviet cinema is essential to an understanding of the reality and the potential of Russian cinema today.

International awareness of Soviet film stems primarily from the technical and artistic achievements of Sergei Eisenstein, particularly his political development of montage and what he described as his 'dialectical approach to film form' in the mid-1920s. Through his revolutionary approach to film he was able to develop the medium to serve the political interests of the young Soviet state. Films such as *Strike* (1924), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1928), are notable examples of this. The Soviet Communists, whom Eisenstein strongly supported, were aware of the political potential of film, and its importance as a mass communicator. Lenin said, 'Of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important'. Trotsky was more explicit about the political role of art and therefore of film: 'Bourgeois art is a mirror, and proletarian art is a hammer. We must use the hammer to smash the mirror.'

It would be wrong to imagine, however, that Russian cinema began with the revolution and with Eisenstein. Prior to the revolution, cinema was an enormously popular part of Russian life - in 1917 there were around four thousand cinemas in Russia. The first film theatre in Russia was opened in 1896 by the Lumiere company, and the film business was dominated by French companies. Pathe held a particularly powerful position prior to the outbreak of the First World War. From 1908, independent Russian production developed to reap the profits of the increasing demand for cinematic entertainment: between 1908 and 1912, 351 films were produced by Russian companies - 139 of these were dramatic, and 212 were newsreels. But the industry remained dominated by foreign companies. After the revolution of 1917, many of the private film companies moved away from Moscow and Communist-held regions to southern Russia, where they continued to make films into the early 1920s.[1]

Following positive developments in the first decade of the Soviet



Eisenstein drawing for *Ivan Grozny* (1942)

Union, there were about thirty years during which cultural development and artistic expression were extremely difficult. 'Socialist realism' as a theory, rather than its original form as realism combined with socialist commitment (as pursued by Eisenstein), dominated Soviet creative and cultural life from the first Soviet writers' congress in 1934 to the emergence of glasnost under Gorbachev. This official doctrine was opposed to formal experimentation in cinema and other arts and called for narratives and styles capable of conveying the political perspective of the ruling party in simple form to a mass audience of workers and peasants. It turned the innovative and dynamic young Soviet cinema into a ponderous machine repeating and reinforcing stagnant cultural norms.

Given the internationally-recognised genius of Eisenstein and the great talents of a whole generation of Soviet directors, how could such a transformation have taken place? In the view of Alec Nove, the dogmatisation of the earlier commitment-based approach was based on a double misunderstanding of Lenin's views. Firstly, on what he is supposed to have written about 'Party literature' in 1905, and secondly, on the basis of a conversation with the German communist Klara Zetkin, where he is alleged to have said: "Literature should be understandable by the people" (ponyatna narodu). This was interpreted, in Nove's view: 'as meaning that it should be at a level at which people would understand it without difficulty. However, it seems that what he did say was that "literature should be understood by the people" (ponyata narodom), which implies that people should raise their level of understanding, rather than that authors should lower themselves to the existing level.'[2]

Whatever the reason, socialist realism had to give a positive representation of reality, which coincided less and less with the actual, lived reality of the population. One anecdote which illustrates this disparity is recounted by Nove, as told to him by a colleague who witnessed it himself: 'In Moscow in 1952 a film was shown, *Cavalier of the Golden Star*, in which well-dressed peasants were feasting at a well-stocked table. Sitting in front of him were two peasants. When the film ended, one of them asked: "Where is all this supposed to be?" The other peasant replied: "Dunno, probably somewhere in America."'[3] The film was, of course, set in the Soviet Union.

The Stalin period had a terrible impact on Soviet cultural life, not only through the rigidities of socialist realism, but also through the arrests

and killings of many creative workers, such as Mandelstam, Babel and Meyerhold, to name but a few. Others, such as Bulgakov, were almost totally censored.

Soviet cinema under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

Under Khrushchev, particularly in the early 1960s, there was a considerable thaw. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published, and Babel and Mandelstam were rehabilitated. Soviet cinema experienced an 'artistic renaissance'.[4] A new generation energised and revitalised the film industry, breaking out of the strait-jacket of socialist realism. There was a revival of formalist experimentation, with the development of the 'poetic' style of the directors from the southern republics and the emergence of Andrei Tarkovsky. Hailed as 'one of the most striking achievements in world cinema since World War II',[5] *Teni zabytykh* (*Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, 1964), was directed by the Soviet Georgian, Sergei Paradzhanov; the style was intensely visual, folkloric and colourful, breaking with conventional narrative forms, highly symbolic and experimental in many of its techniques. *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* was strongly criticised within the Soviet Union, and Paradzhanov found obstacles placed in the way of his work. He was eventually allowed to make *Sayat nova* (*The Colour of Pomegranates*, 1969), re-edited by others prior to its eventual release in 1972. Paradzhanov himself was imprisoned in 1974 for his championing of the ethnic and national values of his native republic, Georgia. He was eventually released in 1977. Andrei Tarkovsky also experienced similar obstacles. *Andrei Rublev* (1966) was shelved until a screening was allowed at Cannes in 1969, where it won the International Critics' Prize.

This was a period of radical and remarkable renewal of Soviet film. As Anna Lawton has observed: 'Revival of film art in those years brought Soviet cinema to the attention of international audiences and critics and, as in the 1920s, it scored high marks.'[6]

Under Brezhnev, although there was some turning back of the clock, there was never a return to the rigours and extremes of the Stalin years. During the 1970s further change took place: economic stagnation and the competition from television led to commercial considerations being taken into account more, and there was a widening of the genre

repertoire. Whilst these changes catered more for wider public taste, there were, however, also some superb films made in the 1970s, which were only released under glasnost. Indeed, much of the cultural impetus for glasnost came from the Soviet artistic and creative community. The great films of the glasnost period were either shelved films made in previous years, or recent works of great Soviet directors. Such outstanding achievements as have occurred in the cinematic field since 1991 have usually come from well-established directors of the Soviet period - such as the recent *Burnt by the Sun*, directed by Nikita Mikhalkov, thus ensuring a significant level of continuity between the culture of the Soviet period and that of the new post-Communist Russia.

Glasnost

Gorbachev's policy of glasnost was much more systematic with regard to the arts than the general liberalisation under Khrushchev; it was 'a renaissance planned and sustained by the party'.[7] Two films of particular note that were released during glasnost were Alexander Askoldov's *Komissar* (*The Commissar*, 1967), set during the Civil War period. It was apparently shelved because the censors objected to a prevision of the Holocaust experienced by one of the characters. *The Commissar* became a huge international success. *Dolgiye provody* (*Long Farewells*, 1971), by woman director Kira Muratova, was suppressed until 1987 because of its negative portrayal of relations between the sexes.

Perhaps most significant of all was *Monanieba* (*Repentance*, 1984), made by Georgian director Tenghiz Abuladze. This film was briefly shelved but released in 1986 and was the first Soviet film, through surreal comedy, to explore the dictatorial aspects of life during the Stalin period.

Of the new films made during the glasnost period, a path-breaker was *Malenkaya Vera* (*Little Vera*, 1988), directed by Vasily Pichul at the age of 28, which dealt with the question of sexuality in a way not previously experienced by Soviet audiences. It was described by Nicholas Galichenko as 'a caustically depressing...modern drama of alienation...[in which]...the optimism of the Gorbachev era is offset by indifference in hellish working class life'.[8] *Little Vera* drew audiences totalling over 50 million. For Pichul, however, this proved to be a one-off success, for his second film, *Dark Nights on the Black Sea* (1989), was a massive box-office disaster.

Another outstanding film of the glasnost period was *Come and See* (1985) made by Elem Klimov. It did not break any existing taboos, but confirmed the world-class quality of Soviet film-making. The film depicts Nazi atrocities, seen through the eyes of a child, as he witnesses the burning alive of the entire population of a Byelorussian village - a fate that was shared by more than 600 Byelorussian villages.

Whilst glasnost provided the artistic freedom that Soviet directors had long hoped for, Gorbachev's other policies led to the break-up of the nationalised, state-supported film industry, affecting production and distribution as well as employment security for creative workers. There was a massive influx of American films and a proliferation of videotheques showing pornographic films. As Vasily Pichul, director of *Little Vera*, commented, unless Russian film makers could meet these new challenges, 'we'll go under and we'll be reduced to making advertisements, pop promos or television programmes. There's every chance that Russian cinema can become an important part of the cultural life of the country. That possibility exists, and if we don't make use of it, we'll lose it.'[9]

The responses to these changes have been as varied within the cultural sphere, as they have within the political sphere. Russian academic Sergei Serebriany, for example, sees both positive and negative factors in post-Soviet Russian culture:

> ...liberated from the oppressive care of the state, culture by now has found itself "liberated" also from its habitual material support and has been mercilessly thrown into the elements of a market economy, so that its fate seems to depend mostly on how soon new agencies of non-state support will develop. Thus "old" - formerly state-owned - publishing houses often go bankrupt unless they start publishing some "marketable" trash. New publishing houses have appeared, some of them rather promising. Cinema production in Russia, they say, soon may stop altogether, but now and then we see our cinema people on the TV celebrating their achievements - not to mention the fact that now we can see on our TV a lot of great foreign films which formerly we could only read about; true, we are shown a lot of rubbish too.[10]

Cinema in crisis

Writing even before the final demise of the Soviet Union, but after glasnost and perestroika had taken their massive toll, Victor Bozhovich commented in 1991:

> The Soviet film and video market is glutted with second-rate American products bought wholesale - and cheap. Whether the market can sustain trash for very much longer is beside the point: the fast buck, not artistic standards rule...With no protective mechanism to stem the flood of foreign films, Soviet culture is in mortal danger.[11]

At that time, the Soviet film industry was producing 400 feature films a year, but the vast majority of them were not reaching the screen because they were being elbowed out of the way by American films. Bozhovich is concerned about the future of the national culture: 'Cinema is not just a money-maker, it is an essential part of our culture. Art has never been, and never will be, able to pay its way. Its life-blood is the material and spiritual resources which society has to provide if national identity and social cohesion are to be preserved.' Bozhovich argues for state intervention to protect the domestic film industry.[12]

The scale of the changes since the introduction of glasnost and perestroika and the subsequent collapse of the system is reflected in cinema attendance figures. In 1983 in the Russian Federation (the largest republic within the Soviet Union), there were 2,700 cinemas and 80,000 film clubs in towns and villages, which attracted in total around 2,600 million visits in that year alone. The audiences would be watching films of predominantly Russian origin. By 1993 there were only 250 million visits to the remaining 1,600 cinemas. In other words, there had been a 90 per cent decrease in cinema attendance, with cinema audiences in major cities at around 8-10 per cent of capacity for each showing. By 1995, that figure had fallen even further to around 3-4 per cent.[13]

This decline in attendance has been matched by the decline in the number of Russian films shown on the big screen. In 1994, of every 100 films shown in Russian cinemas, 74 were American, 14 European, and only 8 from Russia and the other former Soviet republics. As Daniil Dondurel, editor of Russian film journal, *Iskusstvo Kino,* observed: 'Desertion of the cinemas has occurred almost exactly at the same time as the invasion by US films. Audience surveys show that the choice of

programmes is attracting a younger and less educated public and is starting to put older age groups off the cinema.'[14]

Dondurel believes the shift is not away from film, but towards the small screen, and indeed, the public has a large choice at its disposal. In the first half of 1994, the six major public channels between them showed 4,650 hours of fiction film and 1,850 hours of documentaries and animations. Every day Russians can choose from 33 hours of non-stop films. 44 per cent of this availability is Russian productions - a very different situation from the programming in cinemas. In addition there are broadcasts from over a hundred regional channels, and on a less legal footing, there are also 'an uncontrolled mass of small, private cable channels practising private broadcasting on a grand scale'.[15] Small screen film consumption is then doubled by films seen on video at home.

The issue of video is an enormous one for the film industry and has been the subject of much debate and many attempts to secure legislation. Video pirates offer a choice from around 10,000 stolen titles at prices legitimate operators cannot compete with. In 1995 hiring a video cassette cost around 5,000 roubles ($1.50 or ECU1.25), the price of two cinema tickets. The collapse of cinema distribution is a major blow to the industry, especially as compounded by video piracy. In Dondurel's view, however, demand for Russian films on television seems to have recovered after a temporary decline. A survey in 1994 showed that for the first time in years, 69 per cent of viewers stated a preference for Russian cinema. But of the titles mentioned in the survey, only one in ten was a contemporary production. The most popular films are comedies and dramas from the Soviet period.

The figures on the production side are also interesting. Again from Dondurel's figures, we can see that until the mid 1980s, Soviet studios produced around 150 full-length feature films a year, with an additional 40 or more films made for television. A monopoly on their distribution was held by Sovexportfilm, which also purchased a similar number of titles abroad for showing within the Soviet Union. In 1991, production doubled as newly-established companies invested in the sector, only a tenth of the total production of 375 films being subsidised wholly or partly by public authorities. However, these companies did not have a sufficient understanding of the industry or the market conditions, and paid no attention to the growth in competition from foreign productions,

the nature of public demand or the terrible audience figures in the film theatres.[16]

With new opportunities for privatisation and investment introduced under the Gaidar government in 1992, cinema ceased to be of interest to Russian business. The economic crisis meant that inflation began to destroy production budgets and increases in interest rates made it impossible for either new companies or existing studios to gain credit. It appeared that with films taking two or more years to show a return, banks preferred to make shorter term investments. In 1993, Russia produced only 136 feature films, about half with state assistance.

With production costs on the increase, it is cheaper to import foreign films. The Russian film industry desperately needs state support - a situation not so unfamiliar to even Western European film industries. Attitudes have shifted significantly in the Russian film industry themselves since the introduction of the free market; as Dondurel pointed out in 1995, 'More and more directors and producers who had enthusiastically refused government support, are now convinced that the industry will only survive with state subsidies'.[17] As Dondurel observes, there should be a workable market for Russian films: Russia has a population of 160 million, and it is surrounded by republics of the former Soviet Union where most people understand Russian.

Given the cultural traditions and cinematic output and experience of the former Soviet Union, it is possible for Russian cinema to continue and develop the same quality output, particularly if Russian art remains free from censorship and political control. What is clear, however, is that this will not take place if foreign - predominantly US - business interests are allowed to dominate the industry, and flood the Russian market with cheap foreign imports. Video-pirating is more or less the last straw for the beleaguered theatrical side of distribution. The Russian industry cannot compete financially in the free market, even were it to force its film content to conform to Western conventions, because of the global strength of US interests. What can succeed, however, is a newly-regulated and restructured Russian industry with effective state subsidies, which, operating in an artistically open environment, will allow a whole generation of new Russian film-makers to emerge, helping to fulfil the cultural needs not only of the Russian people, but of the world as a whole. ♦

Notes

1 Jay Leyda, *Kino* (London, 1983) chapters 1-3.
2 Alec Nove, *Glasnost in Action* (Boston, 1989) pp.1-2.
3 Ibid.
4 Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost* (Cambridge, 1992) p.2.
5 Robert Sklar, *Film: An International History of the Medium* (London, 1993) p.447.
6 Lawton, op.cit., p.3.
7 Ibid.
8 Nicholas Galichenko, *Glasnost: Soviet Cinema Responds* (Austin, 1991) p.111.
9 Sklar, *Film*, p.508.
10 Amin Saikal and William Maley (eds), *Russia in Search of its Future* (Cambridge, 1995) pp.161-2. On the fate of literature and publishing in Russia and the rest of Eastern Europe since 1990, see Christine Engel, 'Literature in Transition: Literature in Eastern Europe after the Turn to the Market', *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, no. 54/1996.
11 Victor Bozhovich, in *Soviet Weekly*, 8 August 1991.
12 Ibid.
13 *Audiovisual Eureka* 16/9, No.13, March 1995, Brussels, p.4.
14 Ibid., p.5.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p.6.
17 Ibid.