



Trade unions in Central Europe: fighting the market

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In the old Stalinist states trade unions were a prison house for the workers they claimed to represent. Lesley Day charts the changes capitalist restoration has made.

Nowhere in Central Europe during the last seven years has the working class consciously risen up to obstruct the restoration of capitalism. Having played its role in the removal of the demoralised Stalinist parties from power, the labour movement gave its confidence to pro-capitalist parties of one kind or another.

By then the working class was completely alienated from the so-called 'socialist' pretensions of these states, due to the fact that the workers had played no role in the overthrow of capitalism after the war. This inevitably deepened their democratic and nationalist illusions in those opposed to the bureaucracy.

Voted into office in the early part of the decade the region's restorationist governments proceeded to carry out policies that created mass unemployment, destroyed savings and lowered the value of wages and pensions. Fragmented and sporadic struggles against this calamity occurred but not with the perspective of reversing the process of capitalist restoration.

The working class did not confront this unique historical event bereft of organisation. The vast majority had been forced to be members of state-run trade unions before 1989; a tiny minority had been in illegal or informal trade unions. Many more thousands joined newly independent ones after 1989. Workplace councils, admittedly under the aegis of enterprise management, also existed. Workers fell back on these to resist the inroads of capitalism but have been gradually undermined or destroyed by privatisation and closures.

The trade unions by contrast have weathered the storm, which included internecine struggles between them. Most governments refrained from stripping the old unions entirely of their accumulated assets lest they thereby destroyed a much needed mechanism which could disarm any widespread resistance to their plans.

Every union promoted the market to their members as the only economic nexus in which they could operate; the minimal amelioration of exploitation was the bureaucracy's maximum programme. The mass of rank and file workers, expelled from the labour force entirely or burdened with the onerous job of surviving the maelstrom of the market have not rediscovered long lost traditions of self-organisation. Meanwhile, the trade union bureaucracy has succeeded in becoming an independent social layer. It has severed its compulsory legal ties to the state while preserving its social base in the heavily restructured working class.

Capitalism is strengthening its grip in Central Europe. A new generation of workers is being formed, one that will not easily accept the deprivations of the present because the memory of Stalinist oppression is burned into their psyche. They will be forced to seek to transform their trade unions into fighting organisations against capitalist exploitation. But for that they need to know what these trade unions were before 1989 and how they have been changed by capitalism's victory.

The role of trade unions under Stalinist control

In January 1921 Lenin criticised Trotsky's attempt to allocate to the unions a solely production management role in the

new Soviet State, insisting that:

? . . . the trade unions no longer have to face the class economic struggle but the non-class ?economic struggle?, which means combating bureaucratic distortions of the Soviet apparatus, safeguarding the working people?s material and spiritual interests in ways and means inaccessible to this apparatus, etc. This is a struggle they will unfortunately have to face for many more years to come.?1

Lenin?s argument was faultless. The unions, as mass organisations of the industrial workforce, should play a role in the defence of those workers, even against the ?distortions? of the workers? state itself. He conceded that they could and should also play a role in the management of production, but to turn them into instruments of management would be to negate the very purpose of their existence as separate organisations.

Trotsky eventually conceded that his position was wrong. However, the bureaucratic Stalin faction triumphed over Trotsky?s Left Opposition in the 1920s and destroyed every vestige of workers? democracy in the USSR. In transforming the state machine into a bureaucratic dictatorship over the working class Stalin did not spare the trade unions.

Along with every other element of working class organisation, the unions were turned into extensions of the bureaucratic apparatus. In every plant and workplace the unions became transmission belts for the bureaucracy?s goals into the workforce. The union leaders were invariably party members and frequently managers. The union organisation had no role to play in ?defending? the working class. At best they became the administrative organs for the distribution of social welfare, holidays, childcare and such like. At worst they were informers for the bureaucracy in the plants, spying on workers, fingering dissidents and maintaining ?discipline? in the drive to fulfil the five year plans. As Boris Kagarlitsky and Renfrey Clarke noted:

?The leader of the trade union at an enterprise level was in effect an unofficial deputy director with responsibility for social matters.?2

And this became the lot of every trade union federation in every Stalinist state after the Second World War. The model Soviet trade union was replicated throughout Eastern Europe and today prevails in China, Cuba and the other remaining degenerate workers? states.

Inevitably, independent trade unions ? ones that actually organised serious numbers of workers ? were intolerable as far as the Stalinist bureaucracy was concerned. The monolithic political power of that bureaucracy was incompatible with trade unions that had the capacity to meet separately from the bureaucrats and plant managers, formulate workers? grievances and petition for those grievances by either political or industrial means. Such elementary workers? democracy always and everywhere collided with the political power of the bureaucracy. Because that bureaucracy claimed to rule in the name of the working class organisations such as unions, workers? councils, tenants committees, consumer committees, that were not controlled by it and subordinated to it threatened its political monopoly, directly and immediately. In 1980, in Poland, the most graphic illustration of this fact was revealed with the birth and rise of Solidarity, then a genuine mass working class trade union, independent of the bureaucracy. The Stalinists moved to destroy it through military repression.

Rebirth of trade unions

The collapse of Stalinist bureaucratic rule in the USSR and Eastern Europe, following on from the experience of Solidarity in the early 1980s, signalled the potential for the rebirth of independent trade unions. In particular the developments in Russia?s coalfields during the 1989 miners? strikes suggested that the ?Solidarity? road ? of establishing mass alternative trade unions to the old federations of the Stalinist states ? would be followed everywhere. Out of the strike committees that the miners set up came the Independent Union of Miners (NPG) ? a new Solidarity in the making. In Hungary the workers? councils seemed set to play the same role, establishing a federation of Workers? Councils in December 1989.

In both cases, and in many other similar ones, the old unions were by-passed by the workers. Or so it appeared. In fact, the process was more complicated. The old unions, though they lost members during the collapse of Stalinism, were not challenged on anything like the scale that the early Solidarity had challenged the Stalinist unions in Poland and in the course of the last eight years, not only have they survived, but everywhere they seem to have eclipsed the challenge of the new independent unions,

most significantly in Russia and Poland. In Russia the NPG ? which relied heavily on CIA money channelled through the AFL-CIO, then rightist leadership (personified by Lane Kirkland) and which was increasingly politically identified with Yeltsin and the neo liberal shock therapists ? is losing ground to the old state run miners' union, Rosugleprof. In Poland Solidarity was transformed by its reactionary leaders into a political party set against the working class ? the instrument of austerity rather than a bulwark for the workers against its effects ? with the result that the old Stalinist OPZZ has grown in numbers and influence.

The task facing every socialist in the former Stalinist ruled states is the rebuilding of the workers' movement and politically re-arming it. Years of Stalinist atomisation and repression make this task enormously difficult. But the failure of the new independent unions to grow ? and their political support for some of the worst results of capitalist restoration ? poses a key question for socialists as they set about rebuilding the workers' movement. Can we start, or should we start, by fighting within the old Stalinist unions that have not only survived but have, as Kagarlitsky and Clarke put it, ?proven viable when other institutions have collapsed, and when times have not exactly been favourable for the labour movement in the West.??3

Of course, to some extent this ?viability? owes a great deal to the way in which the unions ?voluntarily? transformed themselves. The official unions went through a process of reform which paralleled that of the old communist parties: they declared their independence from party and state apparatus, sought international recognition and support and tried to find a new role at national level. They have gone on to reforge their political links with the reinvented social democratic parties.

In many cases these reforms have been driven through by a new generation of union leaders, men and women who now openly identify with the drive towards a market economy. Richard Falbr president of the Czech-Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions is a typical example, a lawyer by training he became a union bureaucrat back in 1970 and recently explained that ?Trade unions were always natural reformists . . . We support liberalisation [marketisation] in principle.?4 But at the same time he issues calls ?balancing support of reform with defining the acceptable social limits?, defining those limits with ?even legal strikes?. This balancing act by the old unions did give them an advantage over many of the more unqualified supporters of neo-liberalism in the independent unions. But is this ?balancing act? an indication of the trade unions' fundamental uselessness from the point of view of rebuilding the labour movement, or does it provide revolutionary socialists with an opening we can utilise to build unions that are working class in both membership and political content?

The Hungarian experience

The case of Hungary, and the evolution and nature of the unions there since 1989, can help us provide an answer to this question.

The trade unions in Hungary went through an initial period of fragmentation and rivalry following the events of 1988/89. The old official union centre, SZOT, dissolved itself in March 1990. Several different groupings came out of it. The confederations that emerged by 1993 were MSZOSZ, the main successor federation, together with SZEF which was the successor in the public sector and some others notably ASZOK, strongest in the chemical industry. The independent unions were grouped in the LIGA (Democratic League of Independent Unions) and MOSZ, the inheritor of the workers' council movement which moved rapidly to the right.

In a 1989 survey, the official trade union federation had topped the poll as most unpopular organisation of the old regime. However, it still claimed over two million members in 1991, compared to 130,000 for the LIGA and 160,000

for MOSZ. It is of course possible that there was a huge gap between 'real' membership and paper membership. After all, the bureaucrats who inherited the old state union had not lost their skills at manipulating the truth to serve their own interests simply because the old regime had fallen. And while in-fighting over assets damaged all the unions involved 'the assets being the not inconsiderable property, resources and money that were the sole preserve of the state unions under Stalinism' the new unions suffered in membership terms and in the eyes of many ordinary workers from their ties to the parties of austerity.

Yet by the time workers came to vote in the works council elections, and again in the social security elections of 1993, MSZOSZ was a clear winner. Despite generally falling membership figures, MSZOSZ remains the largest federation. Its latest figures which are probably rather more accurate than the old ones, show 500,000 active and 400,000 retired members.

While Hungary did not experience the full force of 'shock therapy' in the same way as Poland, it certainly underwent a period of falling living standards and sharp differentiation between sections of the working class. An estimated 1.5 million jobs were lost in the first few years of transition. However, this did not lead to outright opposition to the restoration process. The legacy of the previous decades of repression and atomisation ensured that the pro-market political forces remained dominant. In the first years of the transition during the Antall government, the inheritors of the old Hungarian Socialist Workers Party were marginalised and in any case they too embraced the market, merely calling for a different approach to the transition. The political forces ranged against the whole process of capitalist restoration were tiny.

In 1991 there were a series of confrontations between trade unions and the government including a threatened general strike over fuel prices and a widely supported two-hour 'warning strike' over austerity measures called by the main federations. While this response was fairly mild by comparison with the strikes that swept Poland in the early 1990s, it did contribute to a degree of recovery on the part of the national unions. The existing leadership, which had largely survived the reorganisation of 1990, was able to present itself as defending workers' interests. Sandor Nagy, who had been a leader of the communist youth organisation in the 1970s, was re-elected as president with 99% of the vote at the 1991 congress. In 1992 the federation was confident enough to carry out 're-registration' as 'proof' of reform.

The 1991 campaigns and strikes were the first signs that the established unions could not be written off as dinosaurs from the past. As Tamas Krausz of the Left Alternative put it in an interview:

'We tended to forget the old trade unions. This was a mistake because many workers expect and can obtain real help from them'.⁵

The new unions continued to insist that such 'help' primarily rested on the possession of huge assets and other privileges which enabled the established unions to carry through a welfare role. The assets question became the central aspect of the 'trade union war' of the early 1990s. In the end, the threat from the administration to solve the question from above, and redistribute assets according to a general franchise vote forced the federations to an agreement in September 1992. Assets were distributed according to the results of the Works Council elections of 1993 which gave a clear majority to MSZOSZ (which had 72% of its members in the industrial sector and 13% in the civil service), and these proportions were broadly confirmed in the elections of 1995 with MSZOSZ polling 63.5% in the industrial sector.

The significance of these results for the debate on the role and nature of the old unions is that the 'new' unions cannot claim that it was simply the material advantages accruing to those old unions that ensured they retained members. Further confirmation of union identification came with the elections to the Social Security boards when MSZOSZ took 50% of the employees side of the Pensions Insurance Body and 45% in the Health Insurance Body. These elections had a huge turnout. In one sense the results were a response to the actions of the administration which removed control of distribution of social security from the sole hands of the trade unions, and chose instead the French system of co-determination.

Hungarian workers responded with a clear message that whatever their opinions about the effectiveness of the

established trade unions, they still expected them to be the best representatives of their interests on these official bodies.

If the simple possession of assets was not enough to explain continuing loyalty to the established unions, what was? What other 'real help' could the unions give to their members?

Analyses of labour relations in Hungary in the period of transition all acknowledge the significance of the framework provided by the state together with the legacy of enterprise level relations 'tripartism'. In Hungary this began as early as 1988 with the creation of the National Council of Interest Reconciliation (NCRI), later the CRI or ET. A Chamber of Commerce was added as the third partner to the existing bilateral body, making it a fully fledged tripartite structure. The CRI can discuss macroeconomic strategies, social policy, taxation and budgets. At the same time, the recognition of the right of free association opened the road for the pluralisation of the trade unions.

Through much of the past period the state has also continued to have a decisive influence over the labour market, over the pace and manner of privatisation and over monetary policy. The 1991 Employment Law, the 1992 Labour Code and the 1993 Social Act continued the process of regulation. They lay down rights of representation for the unions at national and enterprise level. Under the 1992 Code the chair of the CRI rotates among the three parties and the Council has as its nominal goal 'co-operative equality' among the parties as a means of ensuring industrial peace.

An early example of tripartism in action was the intervention of the NCRI which helped settle the truck and taxi strike of 1991. Here the trade union bureaucracy announced its new role even in advance of a fully fledged and operative capitalist economy. Not only are they agents for promoting social peace in the workplaces and in society at large but they allow the elements of the old bureaucracy to practice their new roles and integrate the 'genuine' capitalists as well.

This opportunity is particularly important for the old trade union leadership. It needs, of course, to preserve trade union assets and the privileges associated with administering these. These assets are a guarantor that it will secure a comfortable place for itself in capitalist Hungary. But it also needs to play a wider role to convince members to remain with the union. It can find such a role in both the tripartite institutions and on the national political scene, while it searches for a way to make national and sectoral collective bargaining meaningful.

MSZOSZ reports (1995, 1997) reflect the federation's commitment to the strategy of embracing social partnership 'although these reports are in part directed at organisations such as the ICFTU and ILO which have such an outlook themselves. The reports present the electoral bloc formed with the Hungarian Socialist Party, which resulted in nine office bearers of the federation being elected, as a continuation of these policies. They also tacitly support the coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats . . . both parties of the present government coalition emphasised that they intended to carry out the programme of modernising and transforming the economy in co-operation with the trade unions and the employers.'

The federation sought an overall Social Pact to cover social and economic policies but these discussions closed in early 1995 when it became clear that the government could not deliver sufficient social incentives, but even after this failure the federation leadership continued to seek an agreement, arguing it was necessary to protect the interests of the unemployed and pensioners (who should have to bear 'only really inevitable burdens?!).

The federation has experienced mixed fortunes with other kinds of national level agreements. It claims that there is now greater co-operation on the union side but that the employers side are 'two-faced'. The real problem is that there are still few mechanisms for making bargains struck at national level stick at sectional level. Many sector level agreements do not have real content, evidence of the affiliates' weakness. MSZOSZ welcomed the abolition of wage regulation in 1992 'indeed it claims it 'took the initiative', but has yet to make collective bargaining in sectors or industries a reality. Once again it is thrown back on national tripartite institutions and in 1997 sought minimum wage agreements in the CRI. Other agreements include various form of health, safety and leave agreements. The federation has also been involved in protracted negotiations over the funding of pensions.

At national level, then, the consolations for the national leadership are considerable: chairing the social fund board,

winning rights in health and safety, creating buffer and retraining agreements to offset lay-offs. These ameliorating measures allow the trade union leadership to argue it can deliver, but evidence of real mobilising power is thin on the ground.

At plant level enterprise unionism survived the immediate impact of 1989. The expulsion of the party organisation from the workplace left the unions as the only social-based organisation in the enterprise. Their role as providers of social welfare meant that workers did not turn directly against them in the way that they did against the institutions of the party. As in Russia workers did not see an immediate alternative to the unions in ensuring the protection of their social interests. The Works Councils, which had played a role in organising strikes, did not play this welfare role and therefore were not seen as alternatives to the old unions but as supplementary to them.

In terms of formal rights, workers and their unions have retained considerable rights of participation but these are constrained in various ways. More importantly, the real bargaining power of some sections has been weakened.

In Hungary, as elsewhere, one result of the unions' self reform process was decentralisation, weakening the power and the role of the national leadership. In Hungary one effect of this process has been that the occupation-based sectors of the main union federations have been weakened in relation to enterprise level organisation. In particular, multi-employer bargaining actually fell in coverage between 1992 and 1994. The enterprise level unions also keep the bulk of union dues.

But in different firms there are different levels of effectiveness and independence of unions in the enterprises. Experience in foreign owned firms and joint ventures is variable. There are a number of instances of workers and enterprise level union representatives using comparisons with their sister plants in western Europe. This is obviously resisted by the owners who are investing in Hungary precisely because of the cheaper labour costs that have drawn them there in the first place. Nevertheless, unions in a number of these firms are in a reasonable bargaining situation and have won collective agreements. In other cases the management has persisted in effectively derecognising the unions. A frequent cause of resentment is the attitude of supervisors brought in from parent companies. In such cases workers may re-activate their old loyalties, arguing that the new managers are inefficient and are endangering the firm.

The MSZOSZ itself has particularly pinpointed the problem of the multinationals who want a 'union -proof', if not union free, environment and refuse to make any collective agreements. Foreign owned firms are especially difficult to organise and the road through the labour courts to enforce union rights is a long and winding one. In fact the MSZOSZ's reliance on the state institutions reveals a weakness of the unions at both enterprise and sector level. In the long run, it will be organisation on the ground and the ability to deliver action that will secure meaningful rights especially where new firms are resistant.

Emergence of joint management and workers' campaigns

In the state run sector there is widespread evidence of joint management and union campaigning, again a feature of much of Eastern Europe and Russia and a legacy of the old 'unofficial director' role of the union representatives in the plants. The phenomenon of the annual rail strikes to win central resources is a typical example of this. Co-operation between unions and management also continues in the newly privatised sectors, even extending to questions of cuts and lay-offs. Trade union representatives have been involved in negotiating redundancy terms, as well as the use of buffer institutions. This is not just a question of collusion between managers and union officers: surveys suggest that this is partly a reflection of generally and firmly held beliefs by workers in the function of the unions. While the majority of workers do not accept that unemployment is a necessary consequence of the transformation of the economy, there is at the same time the strong belief that government, employers and trade unions should work together to develop the necessary labour flexibility. These views extend across different union federations and there is still evidence that managers avoid using lay-offs where possible.

This level of emergent class collaboration is, paradoxically, a legacy of the era of the degenerate workers' state. Workers who remain in unions are reasonably loyal to them, but their loyalty to the firm has survived the transition to

capitalism and even been strengthened, based both on the need for survival and on continuing enterprise paternalism, the granting of perks and social bonuses, for example. This is hardly peculiar to the former Stalinist countries but it is particularly widespread and characteristic of the process of capitalist restoration in these states.

The 1992 Labour Code makes Works Councils obligatory in enterprises of more than 50 and allows for co-determination on welfare matters, the expression of the workers' opinions on matters such as training and the right to information on the firm's financial situation. These Works Councils differ from the Enterprise Councils of the 1980s. Whereas the Enterprise Councils were seen as barriers to the proper functioning of the market because of their potential role in decision making, the Works Councils' role is much more on the west European model, with a much more restricted role for workers' representatives. The Works Councils were introduced in response to the trade union fragmentation of the early transition and were aimed at encouraging an industrial relations system appropriate to a market economy. They were also seen as a way of integrating non-union employees. Not surprisingly, they were initially seen as a threat to the position of the trade unions at enterprise level because they provided an alternative structure of representation.

In practice however, the unions have been able to adjust to the existence of the Works Councils; the established unions in particular have been able to secure their positions in the Works Council elections. In a number of cases the position of the enterprise level union has been strengthened, although there are instances where hostile managers have sought to use the Works Councils to weaken the unions.

The independent unions appeared as alternatives to the established unions in the period of the collapse of the old regime. The Democratic League of Independent Trade Union (LIGA) was formed in December 1988, and thrived where dissatisfaction with the existing unions was particularly strong. Its leadership included longstanding oppositionists. The Workers Council movement, MOSZ, at first looked to the traditions of 1956. However, although these federations have survived they have not grown and have played second fiddle to the established unions.

The assets question was not enough to explain this failure. The new unions suffered from severe organisational weakness, developed political allegiances that antagonised many workers and tended to depend on agencies and forces outside the workplaces and even outside of Hungary. The independents gave a lot of attention to 'big politics' but little to building up an effective structure, with the result that the connection between the leadership and rank and file weakened.

And, as in Russia, the support given by the ICFTU, AFL-CIO and other international agencies was counter-productive, making the LIGA leadership dependent on these bodies. Meanwhile MOSZ was subject to political take overs by left and then right wing forces, a process that paralleled the evolution of the Sotsprof union movement in Russia, transforming it from an avowedly 'socialist' movement into a pro-Yeltsin tool for supporting austerity.

Without a clear orientation to building active and effective organisation on the ground, and with a tendency towards uncritical support for capitalist restoration, the independents were in no position to challenge the pre-eminence of the established unions.

Break with collaboration

The principal characteristics of the old state unions that emerge from this survey of their role in the transition period are contradictory. On the one hand they retain the loyalty of the bulk of the organised working class. They are identified not only with the transition towards capitalism and its ill effects but with some elementary defence of the workers' interests from those effects, both at the level of national negotiations in the tripartite bodies and, more particularly at enterprise level.

Together with the legacy of their role in the degenerate workers' states this has given them a more clearly defined role than the market oriented independents who for the most part are identified only with the ill effects of capitalist restoration.

On the other hand, the unions' leaders ? via their assets and their role in the tripartite structures ? are trying to carve out a role for themselves in the state of capitalist Hungary that sets them against the interests of the mass of their members. They are trying to preserve, under new conditions, the privileges they enjoyed under the Stalinist regime.

However, these contradictions are new. They indicate that the unions, and the union leaders, are not the same organisations they were and cannot simply carry on as they did under the old regime. They are faced with new problems (not least the general fall in union membership and therefore union dues) and new employers. This very fact, which increases as capitalism establishes itself more firmly in Hungary and in the other former workers' states, means that the old state unions are becoming less the ?unofficial directors? and more typical trade union bodies.

Of course the strength of tripartism is out of synchronisation with recent trends in capitalism where neo-liberalism has destroyed tripartisan relationships, Britain being a case in point. But the maintenance of ?social partner? models of capitalism in other parts of western Europe and their possible partial revitalisation in Britain under Labour, indicate that there is nothing unique about this form of class collaboration between the unions and the state.

It may have specific characteristics because of the former property relations, but its new content ? the utilisation of the union leaders as agents of social peace in such bodies ? is very much par for the course in many capitalist countries.

For revolutionaries, therefore, the old state unions should not be regarded as no-go areas simply because of their former role in the Stalinist state machine. On the contrary, where they organise the bulk of the working class socialists must seek to take the tasks of rebuilding the workers' movement into the heart of these unions. As in western unions this means a fight for union democracy ? shock therapy for the bureaucrats by ensuring they are accountable, are recallable, are deprived of their privileges and paid the same as the workers' they represent.

It means turning the assets of the unions over to the workers' themselves, buildings, printing presses and such like will prove to be invaluable resources when struggles do begin against the effects of the laws of the market.

The welfare role of the unions will come under increasing threat from those laws. The state will seek to take away any trade union responsibilities in this area and delegate it to private insurance or take it on as an obligation of the state.

The cosy tripartite negotiations, institutionalised at the level of the state will likewise come under pressure from capitalism's drive for profit at the expense of workers' jobs and living standards. The model of social partnership will face the same strains that it is currently under in Germany and Scandinavia.

The signs are that although in Russia, Hungary and even Poland, recent strike figures are low, more and more workers will turn to the weapon of industrial action as the grim logic of capitalism unfolds.

Last summer Business Central Europe reported a five day rail strike in the Czech Republic:

?But there are signs that labour unrest is heating up throughout the region, and that consensus could degenerate into confrontation.

Workers' tolerance is wearing thin, especially in the state sector which is lagging behind. And they're losing faith in their ability to achieve results through tripartite negotiations with government and industry: the strikes brought results that years of talks didn't.⁶

This report was written in anxious anticipation of the danger that the working class poses to capitalism as it is restored in the former workers' states. For revolutionaries this is not a cause of anxiety, nor a ?sudden revelation?. It is proof positive that the working class can and will act against the effects of the system that its new masters are seeking to impose on them just as it did against its old Stalinist masters. In the struggles that will unfold it is entirely possible that new organisations will emerge that will supercede the unions' strike committees, new workers' councils and so on.

It will be vital to build and develop such organisations. But part of the preparation for that will be the fight to really

renovate and reform the mass trade unions currently controlled by the former Stalinist bureaucrats. The case of Hungary indicates the extent of loyalty to those unions among the working class.

That loyalty must not be manipulated by the new leaders to carve themselves a place in the new order but as a means of driving them out and building a new leadership in the unions committed to class struggle against not only the effects of the capitalist system, but the system itself: a new revolutionary leadership. n

Footnotes

1. Selected Works, V I Lenin, Moscow, p494
2. 'Russia's Trade Union Movement', Links, April-June 1994, p20
3. ibid, p 19
4. Business Central Europe, The Annual 1996/97, p17
5. International Viewpoint, 14 September 1991
6. Business Central Europe, June 1997.

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