

RFE EVALUATION AND
ANALYSIS DEPARTMENT
Rumanian Section

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News BackgroundR U M A N I ADRAFT OF NEW TRADE UNION STATUTESIntroduction:

Munich, September 20 1960 (CNR/Rum. Eval. & Analys)- The Trade Union organ "Munca" carried in its September 14 1960 issue the draft of the new statutes of the Trade Unions which will have to be approved at the Fourth Trade Union Congress (to open on October 26 1960.)

The old statutes approved at the Third Trade Union Congress in January 1953 provided for a four-year interval between general TU congresses. (Art. 23). Article 17 of the new statutes extended this limit to five years. No official explanations were provided for the repeated postponements of the Fourth Congress which is to take place now in October, seven years and nine months after the Third Congress.

Although the old and new statutes specify that it is the task of the Trade Union (General) Congress to approve, respectively approve and amend the statutes (Articles 22 b and 18 b respectively), major changes in the structure of the Trade Unions have already been decided on at the plenary sessions of the Central Council of the Trade Unions (CCS) held in August 1958 and January 1960, particularly affecting the Branch Trade Unions (Transport and Communications, Consumer Goods Industry, etc.)

The new statutes reveal, when compared to the old ones, a series of details regarding these structural changes, which have so far been only outlined in brief communiqués issued after the a/m CCS plenary sessions.

The general trend reflected by these changes points to a reduction of the attributions and competences of the Branch Trade Unions and also to a simplification and streamlining of the Regional and Local Trade Unions the purpose of which appears to be a closer control of the Trade Unions by the Party, particularly on regional and local levels. This trend can also be interpreted as a consequence of the decentralization of the economy and particularly of industry started in January 1957. It cannot be overlooked however that the decentralization was paralleled by an increase of the power and competences of the Party in economic affairs, particularly on regional level. This implied a simplification of the chain¹⁵ of command and the reduction of the power and competences of some over-powerful or too independent intermediary Trade Union organs. These measures led also to

the strengthening of the authority of the CCS which appears to have frequently been questioned. Numerous reports submitted by refugees indicated that apart from the basic conflict between Party and Trade Unions and the struggle for competences between the two organizations, there was also bitter fighting over competences between basic TU organizations belonging to a certain branch (Agricultural Institutes and Enterprises, Consumer Goods Co-operation, etc) and the Regional or Central Council of the Trade Unions, because the leaders of the said basic organizations wanted to report only to their over-powerful branch organizations. There were even examples when the local or regional conflicts involved a third power, the people's councils. It can be taken for granted that these pains of growth of decentralization were not the only reason for the repeated postponement of the (Fourth) Trade Union Congress, but that the Party drive for increased control over the Trade Unions, particularly on regional level complicates the system of chains of command within the Trade Unions, despite the urge for increased "democratic centralism" reflected by the August 1958 and January 1960 plenary session of the Trade Unions' Central Council (CCS) and the consecration of this trend laid down in the new statutes.

It is said that, although a member of the Politbureau, the present Chairman of the CCS Gheorghe APOSTOL is annoyed by too much Party interference in Trade Union matters and the indirect reduction of his independence and power of control over this mass organization numbering 2,700,000 members.

Such conflicts within the Trade Unions, in which the Party plays a major role are seldom reflected in the press ("Munca" of September 24 and October 11 1957-see Weekly Information Letter Nos. 243 and 246-reported on severe criticism levelled by the CCS Secretariat against the "Munca" editors.)

Whereas in the preamble of the old statutes the role of the Trade Unions as transmission belt of the Party was defined as an operation of "gathering the ranks of the working class around the Party", the new statutes speak in their preamble bluntly about the "activities of the Trade Unions carried out under the political and ideological leadership of the Party." However the formulation of "the guidance of the Rumanian Trade Unions by the great experience of the Soviet Trade Unions under the glorious leadership of the CPSU" used in the old statutes was dropped in the new ones.

Major structural changes

Art. 27 of the old statutes defining the set-up and attributions of the Branch Trade Union Congresses, was abolished. The abolition of these organs could be anticipated since the last Branch Trade Union Congresses were held in January 1958 (the interval fixed by the old statutes was two years) and no new ones were scheduled before the Fourth (General) TU Congress.

This fact could be regarded as a symptom for the abolition of the TU Branch Congresses, since, according to the old statutes (Art. 27 g) the latter had to elect delegates to the (General) TU Congress. According to Art. 34 c of the new statutes, the delegates to the (General) TU Congress will be elected by the local TU Councils. The superior organ of a Branch Trade Union will be called in future only Conference of TU Branch (Art. 25 of new statutes.)

The CCS (Central Council of Trade Unions), the leading organ of the TUS -second only to the (General) TU Congress, will have more attributions and power of control ("democratic centralism".):

It will establish the norms of representation and election rules (Art. 17 and 30 of the new statutes); Art. 19 of the new statutes specifies that the CCS is the Unique leading organ of all Rumanian Trade Unions; the disbanding of a branch Trade Union can take place only with the approval of the CCS (Art. 16); the measures taken by TU organs become effective only after being approved by the CCS (Art. 29;) Art 21 specifies that it is the CCS which solves problems of the Branch Trade Unions "with the help of the latter."

The new trend regarding the Branch Trade Unions is best illustrated by the difference between Art. 14 of the old statutes which said that the Trade Unions are organized on the basis of the principle of the branch of production and Art. 11 of the new statutes saying that the Trade Unions are constituted on the basis of the place of production (enterprises, State farms, etc) and unite themselves according to production branches or similar production branches in Branch Trade Unions.

As a matter of fact, this trend by which the independence and attributions of Branch Trade Unions ^{are} ~~is~~ being reduced could also be observed in other captive countries (Bulgaria-1958.)

The general streamlining also affects regional, district and town Trade Union Organizations. Thus, whereas Art. 32 of the old statutes specified that the Regional Trade Union Councils were to be supported by regional, district and town TU Central Committees organized for each production branch, Art. 32 of the new statutes says that only the Regional TU Council may have an executive bureau for current affairs. All the other afore-mentioned committees are dropped.

Interesting are also the changes regarding the criteria for the establishment of TU basic organizations. According to Art. 39 of the new statutes, only enterprises having more than 100 TU members can have an own TU basic organization (this does not apply to the communes-in the countryside) called "Trade UNION." If an enterprise has not the required number of members, than a "Trade Union" will be established for a group of enterprises in the same locality belonging to the same or similar production branches.

The "Trade Union" (in Rumanian "Sindicat") holds conferences at an interval of two years, when its ~~Executive~~ committee is elected. The "Trade Union" is composed of sections and groups which have their own committees. According to the old statutes which used the terminology of TU basic organization, a membership of 25 only was required for the establishment of a committee. The TU basic organization was also composed of sections and groups.

Art. 51 of the old statutes providing for own statutes of the branch trade unions was abolished, another sign of the reduction of the importance of the branch trade unions.

It may finally be mentioned that according to the new statutes, (Art. 47, 48) the admission fees and monthly contributions (1 per cent) will not be calculated anymore on the net salary (Art. 43 and 44 of the old statutes) but on the basis of the gross salary, meaning an increase of fees and monthly contributions.

There are also two minor concessions made by the leading TU organs to the masses of TU members: one is provided by Art 17 of the new statute saying that an extraordinary ^(general) congress of the TUs may be convoked by the COS but also by a third of the attendants of the preceding congress; the other is specified by Art. 50 of the new statutes which says that a maximum of 30 per cent of TU contributions can be allocated for the administration of leading Trade Union organs.

Following a recent pattern adopted in Party and economic matters, the draft of the new statutes will be "discussed" in all TU organization in the period left until the opening of the fourth Trade Union Congress
