

provision of food and items of urgent necessity, 15% of coal output to be the miners' collective property.

The striking miners went from Shakhtinsk to Karaganda, the capital of the mining region, and picketed the building of the coal-mining administration. They had negotiations with the administration representatives who told the miners that their demand to receive a part of the extracted coal was not to be met and other questions concerning food and goods supplies have no relation to the administration. After that the striking miners met the workers at other mines. As a result miners from "Kazakhstanskaya" mine, "Shakhtinskaya", "Saranskaya" etc. mines went on strike. The membership of the Independent Miners' Union is growing from day to day, and the strikers are getting many cables expressing support.

SUM TOTAL

KARAGANDA. A meetenig of representatives of ten striking mines was held on January 10th. The Central strike committee was formed with the aim to involve in the strike all the mines of the association "Karagandaugol" and to coordinate the strikers' actions.

On January 16th the strike ended since the government met the chief demand of the strikers - it gave 15% of the extracted coal to the miners as their collective property.

But despite the end of the strike the Central strike committee is continuing its activities. It consists of 20 members who will see to it that all the demands of the miners are met.

Now the administration fails to meet the demands of the miners to pay all the money earned by them in cash and to conclude a tariff agreement with the Kazakhstan government. A conciliatory commission is working now. If all the demands are not met the miners will stick to all the procedures provided by the law on labour conflicts and will resume the strike.

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Editorial

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"LIBERALIZATION" IS SEWN. WHAT SHALL WE REAP?

This is a month of expectation. Awaking on January, 2nd the inhabitants of Russia understood that shopping would become like going on an expedition, exactly as the vice-president Burbulis had stated. The prices of the majority of foodstuffs and industrial goods rose 5-10 fold as compared to December 1991 and 10-15 fold as compared to the spring of 1991. The shock was so strong that people were thrown into complete apathy.

The country held its breath feeling that it was a lull before a storm. The majority of enterprises had to prolong vacations, making use of a recently reintroduced Christmas leave. After the vacations the first visits by the workers to their canteens led to work stoppages. Administrators had to urgently seek compensations.

It seemed that a blow was unavoidable when "liberalization" of prizes shook other republics. The situation was worsened by the fact that the Congress of the Independent miners' union had decided that miners of all the republics would begin a strike if their governments would not begin negotiations with them before January 25th. As of today such negotiations have been held only with the Russian government. Despite this the miners of the coal-producing regions are not on strike because it will lead to the paralysis of the economy. In the Ukraine the miners also fear the closing of most of the mines by the government in the case of a strike.

The situation is becoming that of a dead-lock since according to medical men the Ukrainian miners have to get from 11 000 to 20 000 roubles per month to restore their strength and to support their families. (As of today they get 4-5 thousand roubles.) Plant administrators have to close them down or force the whole personnel to go on leave because of the final disintegration of economic ties and mutual failure to fulfil agreements. The chaos in the country has increased since the personnel of a number of enterprises can not endure the situation and go on spontaneous strikes. In such circumstances the organized independent workers' movement is left aside as well as the official Trade Unions, part of which plays a directly provocative role. Thus, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (former official unions)

on the one hand calls unprepared and consequently doomed acts of protest, and on the other hand follows on anti-labour decree by President Yeltsin on social partnership and creates a three-sided commission (Trade Unions, employers, the state) thus admitting that workers have no right to strike. Alternative Trade Unions also have joined the commissions, for instance, the Sotsprom and the Independent miners' Trade Union of Russia. But this Trade Union uses the real opportunity to continue the negotiations with the government while the Sotssprom states that it supports and agrees with the government policy.

In this complicated situation the influence of radical pro-communist organizations in the workers' movement is beginning to grow. The slogan "Return to Socialism" is heard more often. And it finds a response. People are becoming convinced that the new "democratic" bureaucrats are no better than the old party nomenclatura.

The foodstuffs accumulated before the prices rise will be exhausted very soon. The working people will get a salary, which will be just enough for two visits to a shop and then a powerful social blow-up will be inevitable. It is difficult to say today who will rise on this wave of indignation and seize power.

RUSSIA

On the order of the Moscow Trade Unions Federation, the Moscow city statistics committee analysed the minimum living wage in Moscow, taking into account prices as of the 8th of January. The average for such a basket of goods and services is 1944 roubles monthly, and with the prices of tobacco and alcohol added, it costs 2072 roubles. The Moscow Trade Unions are going to use these figures in negotiations on collective agreements and wages.

THE TRAMS' BLIND ALLEY

PERM. Frustrated tram-drivers held a strike on several routes at the end of the last year. They demanded independence for the tram-park and allocations for repair of the broken-down vehicles.

JUDGE NOT, AND YE SHALL NOT BE JUDGED

NOVOSIBIRSK. On the 25th of December 1991, the administration of the city cotton plant appealed to the Regional Court not to bring a case against six workers, organizers of the so-called "tobacco" strike in September 1990, (caused by absence of tobacco in the shops). Igor Korchuganov, a workers' movement activist and a Sotsprom member, compelled the administration to do so. He was penalized after the strike but succeeded in annulling the decision. Now he is seeking for the whole case to be re-examined so his mates can be fully exonerated. They were penalized by an unlawful decision of the administration proclaiming the strike "unlawful". The first session of the Court took place on December 24th. The administration pleaded the next day to consider the strike unlawful. The case will be considered by the Regional Court.

THE STICK AND THE CARROT

SAMARA. The strike of the ball shop of the ball-bearing plant (see digest M12 1991) ended on December 25th 1991. The administration partially satisfied the demands

of the strikers, their wages were increased by 60%. But the strike committee has not been dissolved, its function being to ensure the fulfilment of the administration's promises.

The situation is different at the thermo-power shop whose workers joined the strike without arranging the formalities. So the Court ruled their strike unlawful. As the shop did not work the whole plant was paralyzed, the damage costing of 40 000 roubles. At the end of December the activists of the strike committee were dismissed. Anatoly Esaulenko, a member of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of the Dictatorship of Proletariat among them.

"CONDUCTOR, PULL THE BRAKES!" (from a song)

MOSCOW. A working strike at the locomotive depot "Moscow-2" took place from 10 o'clock p.m. on the 26th of December till 5 o'clock a.m. on December 27th. Electric trains on the Yaroslavl section of the railway were stopped. Among the demands of the workers: a wages rise, free meals during working hours, allocation of flats to those who need them, prolonged vacations of 45 days, a 36-hour working week, improved conditions for work without breakdowns of the electric trains. During the negotiations with a vice-Minister and a deputy director of the railway, the latter were told that an indefinite strike would be called if these demands were not met.

A meeting of locomotive teams took place on the December 29th, attended by Sergey Stankevich, the State Councillor of President Yeltsin. The administration promised to increase wages and ensure that breakdowns of the locomotives do not occur and also to reinstate two conductors who were compelled arbitrarily by the administration to work as metalworkers.

During the negotiations on January 3rd it was decided to form a conciliatory commission.

SMALL WAGES IN A BIG ECONOMY

VORKUTA. The auxiliary workers of the "Yur-Shor" mine stopped work on January 8th not satisfied with the wages of 1400-1800 roubles a month. They demanded a recalculation of their wages for December and from then on payment at 75% of the miners' salary (4000 roubles). The miners alongside with the administration tried to work out a new system of wages which would take into account the personal effort of each worker and would stimulate labour. But the miners hold the opinion that this problem cannot be solved now because there is no unified financial policy in the country.

The miners are concerned with the first vice-Premier, Y. Gaidars' decision to turn mining enterprises into holding companies with 100% control belonging to the State. A delegation of "Yur-Shor" is going to visit Moscow to present its own programme for mines' development based on worker's participation in their ownership to the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) and the Innovation Council of Russia. The rest of the miners of the region are looking upon the developments at "Yur-Shor" attentively and the situation at the coal-mining enterprises will depend on the results.

THE SECRET TRIAL

MAGNITOGORSK. On January 10th, a head of the screw shop of a hard-ware plant read aloud to the workers his decision to deprive ten organizers of the November strike of a part of their wages (a so-called 13th salary) because a court decided that

the strike had been illegal. The workers were surprised since not one of them was called to the hearings and did not even know that their case was being investigated.

THE SCIENCE OF STRIKE

PERM. The conference of the city's doctors decided on January 14th to support the all-Russian medical personnel strike called for January 29th. Before the strike the Trade Union passed through all the proceedings provided for by the Law, but neither the conciliatory commission nor the court of arbitration could solve anything. A regional conference of the Trade Union, administration and chief doctors of hospitals was held. The medics' main conclusion was that it was impossible to go on as before because more and more often they have to state: "The patient died because of the lack of the medicines." Mortality is growing while the birthrate is declining.

Their chief demands are: to speed up the adoption of the Law on the status of medical workers, to revise pension ages and the amount of pensions, to adopt the Law on labour protection, to finance medical care according to new norms and factual spendings, to raise wages up to 15 % above the wages of industrial workers.

BON APPETIT !

CHELIABINSK. Up to 400 people will be given free dinners at a city cafe beginning in the 2nd half of January. This has become possible as a result of an agreement reached by the city workers' union and a businessman. Nowadays many of those who are ready to give money for charitable purposes are not doing so, being afraid that the money would not be received by those who need it. In this case the workers' union guarantees that the dinners will be served to those in need and an anonymous businessman provides the financing.

TO PART WITH STRIKE-BREAKERS

VORKUTA - INTA. A regional conference of the Independent miners' Trade Union was held on January 17th. It was decided to unite the Vorkuta (about 6200 members) and Inta (1600 members) organizations into a regional one. The conference decided to begin a strike if no positive steps are made for the conclusion of the general tariff agreement before January 25th.

Anticipating the strike the regional Trade Union made an amendment to its statute. If a member does not take part in a strike called by the decision of the Trade Union he is automatically denied membership.

A TRADE UNION FOR ARMY OFFICERS

SALTYKOVKA, Moscow region. The constituent conference of the Independent Trade Union of Army officers was held at the premises of the Trade Unions Personnel Institute. More than 60 delegates from Russia, the Baltic States, Belarus, Central Asia, the Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus took part in it. The Conference solved all the problems very quickly, army-like. A Declaration of the rights of the army officers and the Trade Union statute were adopted. It was stated in the report made by Andrey Goptar, a co-chairman of the organizing committee, and in the documents adopted by the conference, that the Trade Unions' foremost tasks are to secure the safety of the army service, and to safeguard the rights and health of the officers. The new Trade Union declared its independence of the commanding structures and

regional prices will inevitably lead to a fight between coal producers and is meant to cause a split both among the directors and the coal-miners as well.

The coal-miners rejected the Governments' suggestion to abolish taxes for coal-mining enterprises because this measure, to their minds, would lead to the devastation of the cities' and towns' budgets.

JUST WALK!

KIEV. The city buses did not appear in the streets of the Left Bank district on January 15th. The drivers demanded an increase in their wages, better social conditions and the resignation of the government. That same evening the government promised to fulfil all the demands except the last one, and the strike was stopped.

FOR THE GOVERNMENTS' RESIGNATION

KIEV. On January 28th, the day of the opening of the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) session the All-Ukrainian Union of Workers' Solidarity and Solidarity Trade Unions of the Ukraine organized a picket at the Parliamentary building. Their chief demand was the government's resignation, for it turned out not to be ready for the transfer to a market economy and did nothing to lessen the hardships of that period. On the demand of the participants of the rally Alexander Ivashenko, the Union's chairman, was given five minutes to address the Parliament. He stated the position of the Independent Unions. The Parliament did not support the resignation of the government but agreed with the proposition made by President I. Kravchuk to partially reorganize the Council of Ministers.

A STRIKE A LA' KIEV

KIEV. Many enterprises have stopped production in connection with the "new" economic situation and have forced their workers to go on unpaid leave. But according to the law on forced leave, the administration has to pay the workers two thirds of their wages. Independent Trade Unions insist that the law be implemented. Thus the association of the Solidarity Trade Unions of the Ukraine threatened the administration of the "Promsvyaz" plant that the 5000 workers now forced to go on leave would return to the plant and would pretend to be working. The due money was paid to them.

BELARUS

A LONE FIGHTER

MINSK. The administration of the Minsk Production Association named after Lenin (Belvar) continues to persecute Sergey Andrushin, a City Strike Committee member and a member of the Independent Interprofessional Association of Working people. Sergey Andrushin, a radio-controller spoke against the conclusion of an extremely unjust collective agreement proposed by the administration. After that he was told he would be sacked "in connection with personnel reduction".

Cables of support to him can be sent to the following address: V.D. Mumay.

General Director, MPO imeni Lenina, Francisk Skorina prospect, 58; 220050 Minsk, Belarus.

A CABLE

SOLIGORSK. The Independent Miners' Trade Union of Belarus sent a cable to Prime Minister Kebich on January 21st. It reminded the Prime Minister that time for negotiations with the miners is running out.

"You compel us to start anew the strike stopped temporarily in April", they wrote in the cable. Cables were also sent to the directors of mining and processing enterprises. They were warned that if the government refused to begin negotiations with miners on the basis of documents they sent to the Council of Ministers the Union would call the miners to strike. The Union underlined that such a strike would be supported by other coal-mining regions, Unions and strike committees of Belarus.

WHO WAS SENT TO US?

SOLIGORSK. The Council of workers' representatives and the executive bureau of the Independent Miners' Trade Union of Belarus held the first round of talks with the Government commission on the tariff agreement on January 27th. But the commission's lack of interest and incompetence forced the miners to halt the negotiations. They sent a cable to the government asking it to confirm the authority of the commission and to resume talks on February 3rd.

LATVIA

A NEW STATUS

RIGA. The Board of the Latvian Union of Workers decide to turn the Union into a social and political organization. Yevgeny Shelenin, the chairman of the Union, said that this would allow it to defend workers' rights not only at the professional, but also at the political level. The new status will allow the Union of Workers to take part in the Parliament (the Seim) elections and to nominate its own candidates as MPs. Thus the Union will have the possibility of influencing the process of privatization through the legislature. According to the law, only citizens of the country have the right to form political parties. The change in the status of the Union will make political activities possible for those without citizenship.

LITHUANIA

A TIME FOR CONSIDERATION

VILNUS. A delegation of the Lithuanian Union of Workers headed by Aldona Balsene, its chairman, met on January 7th with Prime Minister Vagneris and demanded the resignation of the ministers of health and social security and the merger of this ministries. According to the Unions' opinion the work of these ministries is unsatisfactory. The Union gave the Government a month to consider this demand. If it is ignored the Union will undertake more resolute actions, including calling for strikes.

RUEFUL STATISTICS

According to data from the Lithuanian Union of Workers 175 people perished and 130 were wounded at republican enterprises during 1991. The highest mortality rate was registered at agricultural enterprises (81 dead, and 27 wounded), transport, trade and cooperative enterprises (14 dead, and 11 wounded).

A. Nashlenus, chief technical inspector of the Lithuanian Free Trade Unions, pointed out that in his opinion growth of the rate of mortality and industrial injuries compared to the previous year testifies to the lack of attention to this problem on the part of Trade Unions.

SACKING IS POSSIBLE

PANEVEZHIS. 3200 workers of the local compressor plant found out on January 20th that they were forced to go on unpaid leave. The plant stands still because pig-iron was not delivered from Russia and the Ukraine. Compressors are made there for the biggest automobile plants in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Now temporary sackings may await the automobile workers of Kamsky, Minsk, Kremenchug and Nizhny Novgorod. 3000 compressors will not be sent to these plants. The situation arose because detailed agreements among the Republics were not worked out, so the licences for the export of pig-iron were not given to Russian plants.

THREAT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

PANEVEZHIS. More than 50 000 workers in the electrotechnical industry may lose jobs because of the stoppage of the Panevezhis Litkabel plant. Y. Yurjavichus, the director of the Industry Department of the Lithuanian Institute of Economics said. The Panevezhis plant was stopped because brass products were not obtained from the plants in the former Soviet Republics, although the agreements had been concluded. A new system of licensing in Russia also hinders imports. Huge piles of cargo are piling up on the frontier between Lithuania and Belarus. A foundry and mechanical plant were stopped for the same reason. The Vilnius plant "Blasta" and a plant of mineral fertilizers have 20% of former output for the same reason. Only 50% is the output of Lithuanian railways which means mass sacking of railway workers.

NO JOBS

SHAULAI. The city labour exchange had no time to begin its activity but probably will be closed because there are no vacancies. Meanwhile the number of unemployed in the city is growing. The meatprocessing factory forced 150 workers to go on unpaid leave. 40 people at a flour-mill, 116 postal workers and 250 peoples at the "Nuklon" plant will be dismissed. Dismissals are expected at other enterprises too. All these people have to hope for summer agricultural-seasonal jobs.

KAZAKHSTAN

SHAKHTINSK-KARAGANDA. A strike has been going on at the "Tentetskaya" mine for more than a month. The chief demands among the 20 put forward by the strikers are the following: wages sufficient to buy enough food to restore physical strength.