SELECTED REFERENCES
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTION
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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE NEW EASTERN EUROPE

I. GENERAL


Experts from eastern Europe (excluding Albania) analyze the transformation of industrial relations in their respective countries. In addition, each essay underscores the distinctive and contrasting strategies of change employed by each country. Topics include: legal and political restructuring; general frameworks for the reframing of industrial relations and trade unions; new forms of management and labor, including self-management; and the effects of technological developments.


The reports in this irregular series describe and analyze labor trends in different foreign countries. Each covers significant labor developments, including: labor management relations; trade unions; employment and unemployment; wages; and the economic and political background. Of the eastern European countries, the following reports have been published: Russia (1991-1993); Czechoslovakia (1991-1992); Yugoslavia (1990); and Hungary (1991-1992). There is also a special issue (1988-1989) entitled “A look at worker rights in Eastern Europe.”

II. FORMER SOVIET UNION


This volume posits that the former Soviet republics face a two-pronged problem: 1) Marketization, which requires the restructuring of labor market institutions so that managers, workers, and trade unions can respond appropriately to market signals rather than post-industrialism. 2) The need to come to terms with the burgeoning information and communications technologies implemented by post-industrial economies. This collection of articles, written by authors from both the former Soviet Union and the United States, seeks to explore the labor dimension of this “double shift.” Included here is Richard B. Freeman’s study “What direction for labor-market institutions in Eastern and Central Europe?”

*Prepared by Audrey Wright, Assistant Librarian, Industrial Relations Library.

*Items on this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

These 15 papers focus on systemic changes underway in the former Soviet Union, including: the emergence of an independent labor movement; the impact of the transition to a market economy on labor relations and work organization; and the difficulties and opportunities workers might confront while adapting to a labor market liberated from the constraints of central planning. Authors offer perspectives on labor conflict; a mixed economy and an independent labor movement; worker participation and self-management; employment problems and the labor market; and American views on the transformation of the Soviet system.


Mandel emphasizes his view that workers are the only true agents of change, and that they are “the only social force with both the interest and the political potential for carrying through the consistent democratic transformation of the Soviet state and society.” He examines relations between workers and managers in Soviet factories, the effect of perestroika on women workers, and the state of Soviet trade unions. He also analyzes and contrasts the 1989 Coalminers’ Strike and the strike wave of 1991. For another interesting treatment, see Mandel’s “A view from within: interview with a Soviet auto worker.” (in Labour in transition: the labour process in Eastern Europe and China, edited by Chris Smith and Paul Thompson. Routledge 1992. pp. 149-179.)


The reports in this volume are written by researchers from various Russian public institutions and private research centers. Each focuses on different facets of the new social dynamic emerging from the transition to a market economy. The following topics are addressed: labor conflicts due to increasing privatization of state property; the development of a tripartite industrial relations system; economic and personal problems resulting from rising unemployment; and the effects of price liberalization on wages and salaries.

III. POLAND, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HUNGARY


This paper examines how trade unions, collective disputes, strikes, and workers’ participation have influenced the political situation in Poland. Solidarity’s impact is discussed, as is the new role of trade unions and their importance for the future development of democracy in Poland.

The chapters on Czechoslovakia and Poland, by Maria Matey and Tomas Jezek, respectively, provide concise overviews of current industrial relations in these countries.


Lonti and Kervin describe the recent changes in Hungarian industrial relations in the context of Hungary’s current political and economic situation, with the aim to provide a basis for further analysis. For a detailed analysis of LIGA, the largest of the new independent trade union federations in Hungary, see Stephen Hughes’ “Living with the past: trade unionism in Hungary since political pluralism.” (Industrial Relations Journal, Winter 1992, pp. 293-303. $3.00).


Swiatkowski maintains that in order to understand the fate of state government in industrial relations it is necessary to examine the role of the socialist state historically, from both political and economic viewpoints. He presents a concise analysis of post-World War II industrial relations in eastern and central Europe, concluding that the state should play a minor role in industrial relations.

IV. ROMANIA, BULGARIA, YUGOSLAVIA


Jones describes changes in Bulgaria’s trade unions, which are continuing to shift away from the old communist model. He describes the birth of plural unionism, transformations in the structure and functions of unions, and changing relationships between unions and political parties. These developments demonstrate that unions formerly under strict state control are capable of successfully implementing labor reforms and eventually broader social changes.

Fundamental changes in Bulgaria are reported and analyzed, primarily for the 1991-1992 period. Jones believes that the changes in Bulgarian labor markets are similar to those of other eastern European countries, but that the extent of change is qualitatively different than elsewhere. He cites the fact that the new CITUB unions have nothing in common with the old BTU unions, can act independently of socialist parties, and thus contribute to broader reform. See his 1993 working paper "Trade union membership in Bulgaria: 1989-1992" (working paper #93/3, Department of Economics, Hamilton College, Clinton, New York 13323), in which he adds to the body of empirical data.


Written after the social disintegration of the Federation had begun, Kavcic juxtaposes the old labor relations system with the new. He poses the question of whether the new social order will be closer to the modern welfare state capitalism or to the liberal capitalism of the turn of the century, and maintains that the present situation is more similar to the latter. Changes already in progress such as nationalism, multi-party politics, and privatization are outlined. In addition, Kavcic discusses the prospects for and difficulties of a total renovation of labor relations, detailing the 1990 Act on Labor Relations and the newly introduced mechanism of collective agreements.


This study, the first of its kind in Romania, focuses on issues surrounding Romania's transition to a market economy. Recent trends of labor allocation and compensation are discussed, and recommendations for labor market reform are offered. Also discussed in detail are: social insurance and assistance; education, training and scientific research; health care delivery and financing; and population and family planning.

**V. EASTERN GERMANY**


Based on interviews conducted with labor representatives and managers from eastern German manufacturing firms, the authors conclude that both risk and opportunity lie ahead for German unions and industrial relations. Though the surges of privatization and open markets is weakening the influence of worker representation, the spread of Western German institutions such as centralized region-level collective bargaining, and codetermination law structures are creating possibilities for stronger unions in the east. The outcome will depend largely on actor strategy. For statistical analysis of labor market transition in eastern Germany, see Bellmann, et al. "Gross flows in a labour market in transition: panel data estimates from eastern Germany." (IRR 44th Annual Proceedings, Summer 1992, pp. 567-577. $20.00).