

THE MONOGRAPH ABOUT TRANSPORT TRADE UNIONS

REVIEW OF THE BOOK: Zubkov, S. A., Krainov, G.N. *Transport unions as part of the international trade union movement. Monograph.* Moscow, INFRA M publ., 2017, 297 p.



ABSTRACT

The book, published in the series «Scientific Thought», is devoted to the study of transport unions as components of the international trade union movement. The authors draw attention to the history, current state and problems of the international trade union movement, the processes of

globalization, cooperation and coordination of the actions of international transport unions. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the trade union movement in rail transport, the participation of the Russian trade union of railway workers and transport builders in the international trade union movement.

Keywords: trade union, transport unions, international trade union movement, International Confederation of Trade Unions (ITUC), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), International Workers' Association (IWA), Global Federation of Trade Unions (GUF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF), International Committee of Transport Workers' Propaganda (ICTWP), Profintern, International Confederation of Trade Unions of Railway Workers and Transport Builders (ICRW), Russian Union of Railway Workers and Transport Builders (ROSPROFZHEL).

Trade unions played a key role in the formation of modern society, especially its Western European model with broad democratic political participation, collective negotiations between major social forces, protection from risks and commitment to the idea of universal employment. To a large extent, thanks to their efforts, the concept of citizenship was extended to the social and economic sphere. Along with the state and large corporations, they actively participate in the determination of public priorities and have a direct impact on the process of making political and socio-economic decisions.

In the domestic and foreign scientific literature, the activity of the world branch trade centers – international production secretariats, which are now renamed into the Global Federation of Trade Unions (GUF) – has been poorly studied. In this connection, the publication of a monograph by D.Sc. (Philosophy), professor Zubkov S. A. and D.Sc. (History), professor Krainov G. N., which for the first time separately in the scientific literature is devoted to the study of the role of transport unions in the international trade union movement, came in right time. It should also be emphasized that this research work is a step forward in the transition to new forms of trade union activities in the context of active globalization and the movement of centers of activity of the trade union movement.

The methodological basis of this monographic study was systemic, structural-functional and comparative analyzes, as well as historical and dialectical approaches. One of the leading methods of research was a comparative analysis of the political role of trade unions in various countries, which makes it possible to clarify the nature of the mutual influence between the socio-economic structure and the political organization, on the one hand, and the relative strength of trade unions as political actors, on the other.

The study of the role and place of trade unions in the political system of society is based on a systematic approach that allows the trade union movement to be viewed as an open system in the

complexity and inconsistency of its relations with the external environment.

The monograph consists of an introduction, three sections, ten chapters with paragraphs, conclusions, a bibliographic list.

In the first section «Trade unions as participants in the world political process» two chapters are highlighted: 1. The international trade union movement and its dynamics; 2. Modern international trade union centers. They deal with the nature, essence and evolution of the international trade union movement, the impact of globalization on it, and the current state of the trade union movement. It is noted that at the present stage there is a weakening of the positions and influence of the trade unions. For example, the membership of Americans in trade unions was the maximum in 1954 – 35 %, now they are 11 % of workers (2014). In the EU countries, the average percentage of unionized workers is 22 %, in Japan – 19,8 %, Australia – 18,5 %. At the time of the breakup of the USSR in 1991, there were about 60 million members in trade unions, in Russia today there are about 30 million. The main reasons for the crisis of the trade union movement are:

- increasing international competition due to economic globalization, when transnational corporations (TNC) make extensive use of the labor of non-union migrant workers or transfer production to third world countries where trade union positions are weak;

- change in the structure of the employment of the population, the decline of old traditional industries with a large concentration of production and workers in the era of scientific and technological revolution, the growth of employment in small businesses, services, the emergence of «white» and «golden collars» (highly skilled workers) who do not seek trade unions;

- strengthening the influence of neoliberal, anti-union policies in the activities of the governments of the United States, Britain and other countries;

- breakup of the USSR and other countries of the world socialist system was a heavy blow to the



entire international labor movement, including the trade union movement;

– legal trade unions have largely become bureaucratized, trade union bosses have grown together with the corporate system of the state and have lost direct contact with ordinary workers, members of the trade union.

At the same time, the politicization of social and economic life, the desire of modern social-democracy to distance itself from its working past, turning into a universal party, objectively contribute today to strengthening the independent political role of trade unions (See: pp. 8–9). The need to strengthen the position of trade unions is associated with the emergence of new specialties in electronic direction. After all, programmers today freely cover the whole world and the possibilities of almost instant consolidation on these or those issues are limitless. This is the politics and economy of the trade union movement itself. Its role is growing, given that political parties are beginning to lose their authority and influence over the masses. The authors began to consider this aspect, but it is necessary to continue research on this issue.

The second section, «Transport Unions in the World Trade Union Movement», contains three chapters: 1. The role of the International Transport Workers Federation in the formation and development of the world movement of transport unions; 2. The Communist movement in the international movement of transport trade unions in XX century; 3. The current state of the world movement of transport unions. Based on numerous published and unpublished documents and materials, the authors show the activities of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITWF), the International Transport Workers Propaganda Committee, the communist movement of transport trade unions in XX and early XXI centuries. Special attention was paid to the struggle of transport trade unions against fascism, the implementation of the strategy of the Profintern to strengthen the united workers' front (See: pp. 69–196). The historical aspect is highlighted well and in the interesting format.

The third section of the «International Trade Union Movement in Railway Transport» consists of five chapters: 1. The global level of international trade-union cooperation in rail transport; 2. Cooperation of railway unions of European countries in the conditions of industry reforms at the beginning of XXI century; 3. Participation of trade unions in the European social dialogue on railway transport; 4. Coordination of actions of trade unions of railwaymen of the CIS and Baltic countries at the present stage; 5. The participation of the Russian trade union of railway workers and transport builders in the international trade union movement (See: pp. 197–281).

The reader will be especially interested in the paragraphs devoted to the participation of the section of ITWF railwaymen in the implementation of the strategy «Organizing globally, fighting for workers' rights!», supporting its members in

conflicts with employers and their governments, and establishing a social dialogue in rail transport (See: pp. 203–216). It should be emphasized that the problem of globalization, directly affecting the interests of trade union members, is considered in conjunction with their involvement in this process. By submitting the idea of solidarity of trade unions of all countries in the struggle for their rights, the globalizers thereby involve the unions in the creation of a global state. This happens on the principle of «Overton Window», when people in tactics are fighting for their rights with artificially created and overstated difficulties, so that after a while employers «surrendered» and fulfilled the demands of trade unions. This is done slowly, step by step, so that the workers themselves cannot understand in what political strategy they are drawn and for whose interests. But this delta was originally laid in the project. Hence the task of the members of the trade unions to unravel these plans and to warn them in time.

The authors emphasize the important role of the International Confederation of Trade Unions of Railway Workers and Transport Builders (ICWC), the Russian Trade Union of Railway Workers and Transport Builders (ROSPROFZHEL) in the implementation of the representative function in international trade union organizations and in coordinating their actions in the international trade union movement. In the general flow of the world trade-union movement, one of the prominent places has been and is occupied by international cooperation of transport trade unions (navigable, railway, airlines). Today, the main objectives of transport union organizations are to represent and protect the social and labor rights and professional interests of their members (See: pp. 244–283). We spoke about the manipulations with the rights of trade unions and the duties of employers above.

The advantage of the monograph is a wide source of research: archival documents and materials, periodicals, electronic library base, literature in foreign languages are used. The bibliographic list of literature includes about 200 titles.

The monograph is a completed scientific research work, carried out by the authors independently on a high scientific level on a topical subject. The paper gives reliable results that allow them to be qualified as a significant contribution to science. The work is based on a sufficient source base. It is written lucidly, neatly framed and qualitatively published.

The monograph is relevant for trade union activists of transport unions. The materials of the book will also be useful for leaders and specialists of trade union organizations in railway transport, teachers, Ph.D. students, Master's students and students, as well as a wide range of readers interested in the trade union movement.

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