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### Trade Unions in Greece

Theodoros Katsanevas

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Résumé de l'article

La contribution des syndicats grecs au développement social de la Grèce depuis la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale n'a été que négligeable à cause des conditions anormales créées par la guerre civile de 1945 à 1949 et des restrictions qui leur furent imposées par le gouvernement militaire sous le régime de dictature de 1967 à 1974. Néanmoins, les syndicats n'auraient peut-être pas été aussi vulnérables à la dissolution partielle et au contrôle presque complet du gouvernement n'eussent été leurs faiblesses congénitales engendrées par une structure et une organisation inefficaces ainsi que de longues périodes de discorde, de conflits et de corruption causés en grande partie par l'intervention politique et le patronage. Les syndicats grecs sont le produit de l'économie, de la géographie et de l'histoire politique de la Grèce moderne pour ne rien dire du tempérament de son peuple. En particulier, la structure économique, qui s'est développée en Grèce depuis le tournant du XXe siècle, était fondée sur ce qu'on peut appeler le « capitalisme périphérique » (soit le seul développement des industries secondaires, du commerce et des services), ce qui, en retour, a considérablement influencé la croissance et l'efficacité du mouvement ouvrier dans son ensemble. C'est plutôt dans de petites entreprises locales que dans les grandes organisations nationales plus efficaces que les syndicats ont dépensé leurs énergies et leurs possibilités. Mais, en dépit de ce fait ou à cause de lui, le mouvement tomba bientôt sous le contrôle politique de l'État. Les syndicats ne prirent qu'une part minime dans l'établissement de la législation sociale et de la législation du travail : les lois et les règlements visant à la protection et au bien-être des travailleurs furent parrainés par les dirigeants de la classe moyenne du parti libéral longtemps avant que les syndicats aient acquis une organisation centrale valable et une vigueur solide. À partir de 1910 et dans la suite, l'« État bourgeois », afin de garantir la tranquillité sociale, refrena l'endoctrinement socialiste et réprima les tendances rebelles des travailleurs grecs; il joua le rôle de bienfaiteur et de patron de la classe ouvrière. Les avantages, toutefois, de cette législation ouvrière et sociale passablement avancée furent viciés par les contrôles directs et indirects qui les accompagnaient et qui nuisirent à l'indépendance et à l'efficacité des syndicats. La forme et le contenu des conventions collectives étaient finalement fixés par le gouvernement lequel exerçait un contrôle considérable sur l'administration et le financement des syndicats au moyen d'un réseau de législation de taille. Ainsi, du fait que les relations du travail étaient dirigées par le gouvernement, la plupart des organisations syndicales, tant locales que nationales, devinrent de simples lobbies auprès du parlement dans les ministères. Tout naturellement, elles favorisèrent l'établissement d'un « syndicalisme paternaliste » en tombant sous la coupe des partis politiques et des politiciens qui, s'inspirant de l'adage « diviser pour régner » opposèrent les uns aux autres les dirigeants syndicaux ambitieux et les diverses factions syndicales. Cette situation survécut aux années de l'occupation ennemie et se raffermir dès que la reconstruction du pays et de ses institutions sociales fut entreprise après la guerre. Le rétablissement des syndicats fut entravé par la guerre civile qui suivit la libération, les politiques de la guerre froide tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur et, éventuellement, la dictature militaire de 1967 à 1974. En outre, plus de progrès fut réaliste sous les gouvernements conservateurs postérieurs à la dictature de telle sorte que cet état de choses persista jusqu'à 1981. Un nouvel effort de reconstruction du mouvement syndical est commencé depuis 1982, et plusieurs facteurs économiques et politiques importants s'avèreront décisifs au cours des prochaines années. L'un d'entre eux est l'industrialisation et la croissance économique. Les efforts de développement ont pour conséquence de rapprocher les uns des autres de nombreux travailleurs du même type de métiers et d'industries. Nous pouvons nous attendre à ce que les grandes entreprises, les concentrations locales de l'industrie et la perspective maintenant visible de l'augmentation graduelle des niveaux de vie changeront les mentalités des travailleurs de façon à les amener à une forme de syndicalisme qui pourra mieux satisfaire leurs besoins en ce qui a trait à la sécurité de l'emploi et l'amélioration des salaires. Cette tendance ne peut pas éventuellement ne pas avoir d'effet sur la nouvelle génération des dirigeants syndicaux mieux formés et plus conscients des besoins et des problèmes d'une société industrielle moderne et de faire ainsi des syndicats des participants efficaces dans l'aménagement et la mise en œuvre du développement social et économique en Grèce. L'autre facteur important de « changement » qui a eu lieu en Grèce, c'est la victoire des socialistes en octobre 1981 ainsi que les réformes introduites par le nouveau gouvernement au cours des trois dernières années. Ces réformes comprennent, entre autres, une législation relative à la démocratisation du mouvement ouvrier et l'établissement de la liberté syndicale, la participation des travailleurs à la direction des entreprises publiques, des mesures spéciales en matière de licenciement collectif ainsi que des dispositions touchant la santé, la sécurité et l'égalité des travailleurs sur les lieux du travail. Il se peut cependant qu'il s'écoule encore quelques années avant que les nouvelles réformes soient à point et que leurs effets se fassent sentir sur le mouvement syndical.

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# *Trade Unions in Greece*

**Theodoros Katsanevas**

*This paper examines the main economic determinants and related factors which have influenced decisively trade union growth in Greece and the development of the highly complex organizational structure of Greek trade unionism.*

International experiences indicate that the growth and effectiveness of trade unions depends on a variety of economic and political factors. In the case of Greek trade unions, the peripheral nature and unbalanced growth of the Greek economy, combined with certain historical and political developments unfavourable to unionism, have been responsible for the overall weakness and the unbalanced growth of the Greek labour movement, which resulted in its inability to help raise the living standards of the wage earners to more satisfactory levels.

The first part of this study examines the main economic determinants and related factors which have influenced decisively trade union growth. The second part examines the development of the highly complex organizational structure of Greek trade unionism, and more specifically, the historical-political and related factors which have been responsible for the formation of the present-day union structure. It examines also the role of Government intervention in industrial relations in general, and in trade union functioning in particular, which has in fact contributed to the development of a type of «paternalistic unionism» in Greece.

## **THE ECONOMIC FACTORS**

Greek economic development has been marked by the dominance of a low-productivity agricultural sector, an early developed and largely parasitic service sector, and limited industrialization mainly confined to light and consumer good industries<sup>1</sup>. Such development, a basic component

\* KATSANEVAS, Theodoros, Governor of the Greek Manpower and Employment Organization.

<sup>1</sup> On this see N. MOUZELIS, *Modern Greece, Facets of Under-development*, London, The MacMillan Press, 1978, p. 27.

of what may be called «peripheral» capitalism (compared to the «metropolitan» capitalism of the advanced industrialised countries of Western Europe), has affected the distribution of the labour force accordingly — a distribution hardly favourable to unionism.

In 1971, the total of the economically active population (TEAP) was 3,284,000 persons, that is only 35.8 per cent. of the country's total population of 9,165,000 people<sup>2</sup>. In the same year, the share of employees — white and blue collar workers — (1,372,000 persons) in the TEAP was particularly low compared with the industrialised countries: it amounted to only 41.8 per cent. Thus the scope for unionism in Greece was considerably limited in comparison with other Western countries, where the employees' share in the TEAP reaches 70-90 per cent.

The industrial base of Greece has always been small. Industrialization was slow and concentrated mainly on manufacturing of light and consumer goods. This emphasis resulted in a size and distribution of industrial development which depended on small-size firms, vulnerable to economic adversity and in employing mainly unskilled and easily replaceable labour. Such a situation was unfavourable to union strength, since not only heavy industry but mining too were reduced to roles of limited importance. Therefore, industrial blue-collar workers and miners, the early vanguard of other countries' labour movements, played only a minor role in the development of Greek unionism. Seamen, though numerically strong, remained for a variety of special reasons organizationally weak.

Ever since the crucial initial period of trade union formation at the beginning of this Century, due to the early expansion of the tertiary sector, a number of white-collar unions were established but remained in the rear-guard of organized labour because of unfavourable conditions to collective action (mainly the small size of work units and the negative attitude of both employers and the State towards unionism). During the same initial period, the blue-collar workers were in a minority position because of the limited manufacturing activity. They could not, therefore, play the pioneering role they did in other countries in the development of a powerful labour movement.

After World War II, however, certain white-collar unions rose to exceptional strength, mainly in banking and the public utility corporations. The unions of teachers and some technical grades in the civil service also gained considerable strength. The great majority of labour organizations in the private sector on the other hand, and a considerable portion of those in the civil service, remained weak with a very low membership density.

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<sup>2</sup> Official figures from the ESYE (*National Statistical Service of Greece*) censuses.

In the early years of industrial development, some strong craft unions appeared, especially in printing, ship-building, leather-working and raisin processing. Most of these craft unions were eventually weakened by the introduction of modern work methods and techniques. This applies also to the case of the tobacco workers, who in the «twenties» and «thirties» had enjoyed relatively high unionization strength and played an important historical role in organized labour activities.

After World War II, blue-collar unionism made inroads into the construction industry, primarily as a result of the post-war boom in housing<sup>3</sup>. More recently there have been signs of increasing unionization strength in manufacturing, especially in some large modern firms which have grown up since the «sixties». None of these trends continued, however, during the period of the 1967-1974 dictatorship, since freedom of association, a necessary precondition for union activity, was virtually non-existent.

Greece's pattern of economic development left its marks on two other basic conditions of labour employment, a) small average size of establishments and/or enterprises, and b) chronic lack of adequate employment opportunities. Both of these particularly important factors have had a strongly negative influence on unionism as a whole.

Greek work units were very small and particularly so in industry and mining, for which relevant statistics are available. In 1958, of the total number of 413,642 persons employed in manufacturing, about half (i.e. 211,111) worked in establishments of less than ten persons each<sup>4</sup>. In 1973, out of the total 642,478 persons occupied in both manufacturing and mining, only 198,684 were engaged in establishments of over 100 persons<sup>5</sup>.

Since unionization can hardly flourish in a low concentration of employees<sup>6</sup>, a large segment of Greek wage and salary earners were very little, if at all, susceptible to organized labour activities.

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<sup>3</sup> During the post-war period, construction (housing included), absorbed a much higher share of investment than any other single branch of economic activity. Employment in construction also developed at the same impressive rate. The number of construction workers rose from 75,000 (2.6% of the TEAP) in 1961, to 255,000 (7.7%) in 1971, that is an increase of 240% between 1951 and 1971.

<sup>4</sup> ESYE, *1958 Census of industry*.

<sup>5</sup> ESYE, *1973 Census of industry*.

<sup>6</sup> This hypothesis has been satisfactorily tested by a number of studies. See for example J. DUNLOP, *Industrial Relations Systems*, New York, Holt, pp. 44-47. A. STURMTHAL, G. SCOVILLE, *The International Labour Movement in Transition*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 127, p. 232. Sherill CLELAND, *The Influence of Plant Size on Industrial Relations*, Princeton University, 1955. G.S. BAIN, *The Growth of White Collar Trade Unionism*, London Clarendon, 1979, pp. 73-81. D. LOCKWOOD, *The Black-Coated Worker*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1958, pp. 82-87.

The Greek economy has been characterized by a chronic lack of adequate job opportunities, as witnessed partly by the high level of emigration during the post WW II years<sup>7</sup>.

This becomes especially serious when viewed in relation to the low and consistently decreasing national birth rate. The chronic lack of adequate employment opportunities in Greece is a consequence of the inability of the urban sector of the economy to absorb the redundant agricultural labour force. This in turn is due mainly to limited industrialization, a basic characteristic of peripheral capitalism.

As well established by a number of studies, a shortage of labour generally favours trade unionism and collective bargaining. On the other hand, unions in labour surplus economies are in a weak bargaining position, and thus can be expected to turn to some form of political unionism<sup>8</sup>. In the case of Greece, the chronic lack of employment opportunities has had a considerable weakening effect on the country's independent labour movement. This factor has also been partly responsible for Greek unions becoming vehicles for political rather than economic action.

There are also some other economic factors which appear to have influenced trade union growth and strength.

The strategically placed occupational groups of skilled and specialized workers, have enjoyed exceptionally high union strength, mainly because of their strong bargaining position. In Greece, this is illustrated by powerful unions mainly in transport and the public utilities. Market considerations have also been responsible for variations in union strength. The growth rate of the product market, its limitations and nature (antagonistic, oligopolistic or monopolistic) have been features affecting union power<sup>9</sup>. This is exemplified by the strength of unions in public utilities, which is partly due to

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<sup>7</sup> According to some moderate estimates, during the first three decades of this Century, more than 400,000 people emigrated abroad most of them to the U.S.A. See C. TSCOUCALAS, *The Greek Tragedy*, London, Penguin, 1969, p. 37. During the year 1960, when emigration reached a peak period, the total number of emigrants, allowing for the few thousands who have returned, amounted to as many as 1,364,436 people.

Most of these emigrants settled in Western Europe, especially in Germany. On this see ESYE, *1971 Statistical Yearbook of Greece*. See also D. GERMIDIS, Negreponi-Delivani Maria, *Industrialization, Employment and Income Distribution in Greece*, Paris, OECD, 1975, p. 96. G. MANTZOURANIS, *Greek Workers in Germany*, Athens, Gutemberg, 1975 (in Greek).

<sup>8</sup> A comprehensive presentation of studies discussing this point may be found in G.S. BAIN, F. ELSHEIKH, *Union Growth and the Business Cycle*. London, Blackwell, 1976, Ch. 2. See also A. STURMTHAL, G. SCOVILLE, *op. cit.*, p. 19 and H.B. DAVIES, «The Theory of Union Growth», in McCarthy, *Trade Unions*, London, Penguin, 1972, p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> For a further discussion of these points as well as of job content, see J. DUNLOP, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-50 and pp. 64-82.

the monopolistic nature of the sector, and by the weakness of organized labour employed in small antagonistic firms in private industry.

As in other peripheral economies, the Greek labour market consists of a considerable number of casual employees<sup>10</sup>. Since trade unions are «continuous associations of wage and salary earners»<sup>11</sup>, the negative impact of this factor on unionism is quite obvious.

The consequent result of the above mentioned combination of factors was the limited growth and effectiveness of trade unions in Greece.

The proper statistical analysis of union membership in this country is very difficult if not impossible, because the actual number of unionised wage and salary earners cannot be accurately enumerated. This is due to the lack of reliable analytical data and, more generally, to the deliberate confusion around the whole subject<sup>12</sup>. Official information on union membership often overstates the actual situation. It is an acknowledged fact that many organisations knowingly inflated the number of their members, mainly in order:

- to enhance their prestige,
- to secure their electoral dominance in the secondary or tertiary organisation
- to collect the compulsory dues system funds from ODEPES (Organisation for the Administration of Union Finance), which were allocated according to a union's membership and voting strength in the Greek Confederation of Labour congresses.

Attempts to evaluate the actual number of trade union members objectively have proved difficult not only in developing countries, but also in Mediterranean Europe. Comparative international statistics, it is said «are notoriously hard to analyse since methods of counting heads vary from place to place and unions have a habit of exaggerating their numbers in order to make their strength seem the more impressive»<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Certain relevant data, but concerning a limited sample, are to be found in Kyriaki KASSIMATIS, *Labour Mobility in Greek Industry*, Ph. D. Thesis, Imperial College, University of London, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> According to the classical definition of the Webbs, «trade unions are continuous associations of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives». S. and B. WEBB, *Industrial Democracy*, London, Longmans Green, 1920.

<sup>12</sup> As noted in an ILO report: «Under Greek Law, all trade unions must be registered with the court of first instance in their locality... In theory, therefore, it should not be difficult to compile exact trade union statistics. Owing, however, to the deep disturbances within the Greek trade union movement ever since the liberation, such statistics are at the moment completely lacking». ILO, 1949, pp. 252-253.

<sup>13</sup> E. JACOBS, 1973, p. 39.

In general, different criteria apply to different countries when determining union membership and density. This should be attributed to the differentiation of trade union reality prevailing in each country, which is a product of particular economic and political developments. In Great Britain and Germany, the figure on unionised employees usually applies to the registered union members. The same holds true for Italy, but there is some serious suspicion that the data provided by the unions themselves exaggerate the actual situation for obvious reasons<sup>14</sup>.

In Greece, in order to limit such exaggerations which can assume great dimensions, it has been the rule that the strength of a union is determined by the number of its voting members. This same rule is the main criterion when determining the representative ability of unions from a legal point of view. However, the resourceful Greek unionists frequently succeed in finding ways of bypassing these rules. It is no secret that by means of various electoral malpractices the true member of voters may be inflated. In any case, there can be no accurate comparison of trade union density with other countries, because different methods of computation are used in each particular case. These reservations should be taken into account with respect to the data of Table 1 which shows the degree of trade union density in European countries at the beginning of the 1970's<sup>15</sup>.

**Table 1**  
**Trade Union Density in the E.E.C. Countries**  
**at the Beginning of the 1970's**

	%		%
Belgium	67	Holland	41
Germany	37	G. Britain	49
France	22	Ireland	48
Italy	55-60	Denmark	70
Luxembourg	55		
	<i>Average E.E.C.</i>	42	
	Greece	31-36	

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*Source: Social Situation in the Community, 1972, Brussels, E.E.C. (1973).*

<sup>14</sup> With reference to unions in Italy, Kendall points out that «The membership figures claimed have usually owed more to romantic imagination than statistical accuracy», W. KENDALL, 1975, p. 174.

<sup>15</sup> For analytical data of trade union membership in the E.E.C. countries, see Margaret STEWART, 1974, and S. BARKIN, 1975. In both publications see chapters referring to membership figures.

According to data supplied by the higher-level union organisations, the total number of registered union members in Greece in 1980 were a little below 1,000,000. Thus, if at the same time there were approximately 1,400,000 employees, the corresponding trade union density would have to be about 76 per cent.

However, such large figures should not be taken seriously. In calculating union density, the number of voting members seems to be rather more objective. This number, according to union estimates, is about 600,000. If the previously mentioned reservations are taken into account, it would be realistic to claim that the overall number of union members in Greece stands approximately between 400,000 and 500,000. It follows from the above estimations that about one-third of the 1.4 million employees in Greece are trade union members, i.e. trade union density is between 31 and 36 percent.

Trade union density varies greatly among the various branches of the economy and/or different occupational categories. In public utility companies, the banks, the transport and mining industries, as well as in some relatively large manufacturing enterprises, trade union density usually exceeds 80 per cent. For white-collar employees in the private sector and in small enterprises, trade union density is extremely low or even non-existent. While such great variation in trade union density is also noted in other countries<sup>16</sup>, its extreme extent in the case of Greece should be attributed mainly to the phenomenon of unbalanced union growth.

The slow pace and the unbalanced growth of the Greek economy is considered partly responsible also for the generally inferior social status of women. This is indirectly reflected in the low unionization propensity of female wage and salary earners, who in 1971 amounted to 341,000 or 25 per cent of the total number of employees<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned trend is now changing and some all-female unions, such as those of the Athens central telephone operators and Olympic Airways hostesses, seem to be quite strong. This recent development is a result largely of the occupationally strategic position, and the satisfactory educational background of those two groups.

In conclusion, it may be said that the particular employment conditions which have resulted from the country's development process, have had a weakening effect on the majority of Greek unions and on the labour movement as a whole. All the same, certain unions operating under economic (or employment) conditions particularly favourable to collective action, have

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> ESYE, 1971 *Statistical Census*,



been able to reach a high degree of organizational cohesion and bargaining strength. These differences in union strength and unbalanced union growth, are due primarily to the peripheral nature of the Greek economy and the industrial relations policies of the State.

In the preceding part of this study, an attempt has been made to identify the historical-political factors which have influenced union growth and are in part responsible for the overall weakness of the Greek labour movement. The phenomenon of the unbalanced union growth has also been further analysed.

### THE POLITICAL FACTORS

The pattern of economic development, the various economic determinants and related factors already examined, cannot by themselves explain trade union growth. Political systems too have certainly had a decisive influence on labour movements, given that they determine the fundamental conditions under which labour is employed and trade unions operate.

Industrial relations, as these are known in the market economies, are of course completely different than those of the Communist World. However, even the capitalist economies of the West show notable differences between individual countries' industrial relations. These are not only a product of dissimilarities in their respective patterns of economic growth, but also of differences in their historical-political evolution.

In general terms, trade union growth is shaped by the interrelation of economic and political processes. These two basic determinants form a historical pattern, the net outcome of which for Greece has been mostly unfavourable to trade unionism. The same economic and political developments which confined Greece to the periphery of the capitalist system also account for the general weakness and the unbalanced growth of the country's labour movement<sup>18</sup>.

An element of fundamental importance for trade unions and industrial relations in general, is the initial period of their formation, normally coin-

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<sup>18</sup> This analysis accepts the basic arguments of the recently developed theory which stresses, amongst other things, the differences between peripheral and metropolitan countries of capitalism. Our term «unbalanced trade union growth» has been borrowed from the relevant notion of «unbalanced economic growth» — a notion which has been used by some scholars of this theory. For a representative work on this topic, see S. AMIN, «Unequal Development, An Essay on the Social Formation of Peripheral Capitalism», N. York, *Monthly Review Press*, 1976.

ciding with a country's first stages of industrial development<sup>19</sup>. This period is decisive for trade unionism in much the same way that an individual's childhood experiences shape his adult personality. Just as an individual is affected by external factors, so industrial relations and the growth patterns of trade unionism in any given country, are influenced by national and international political developments.

The initial period of trade union formation in Greece was in the years 1880-1936, i.e. from the beginning of the slow industrialization process, up to 1936 when the Metaxas dictatorship was imposed. Within that period, the most crucial years were from 1909 to 1936, when the foundations of basic trade union structure, labour legislation, and industrial relations institutions were laid<sup>20</sup>. The outstanding feature of labour legislation established during this period, was — as in other periphery economies — the broad powers it gave to government intervention<sup>21</sup>. Despite its otherwise comparatively progressive character, it introduced and entrenched a paternalistic system of State jurisdiction in the industrial relations system. Given this basis, State paternalism and government intervention were bound to increase under the pressure of later historical-political developments.

The 1909-1936 formative period of industrial relations in Greece was conspicuously marked by intense political instability. Continuous wars and political instability during those crucial years, strongly marked the infancy of the Greek labour movement. Such developments should be held largely responsible — together with the lack of employment opportunities already discussed above — for the intense politicization of unionism in Greece.

The politicization of the labour movement was aggravated by the influence of international ideologies and political developments during the broader formative period of unionism, i.e. during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Progressive ideologies were introduced into the Greek political scene before a corresponding maturity of the country's industrial base and a respective strengthening of trade unions. The success of the Bolshevik revolution in Tzarist Russia had a decisive impact on the first steps of the official labour movement, the GSEE (Greek Confederation of

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19 The importance of the initial period for industrial relations has been stressed by several scholars. See for example, J. DUNLOP, *op. cit.*, ch. 8, A. STURMTHAL, J. SCOVILLE, *op. cit.*, p. 74, H.A. CLEGG, *Trade Unions Under Collective Bargaining*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1976.

20 Beginning in the first decade of this century, a number of labour centres were established, and the GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Labour) was founded in 1918.

21 This point is also given attention by C. JECCHINIS, *Trade Unionism in Greece: A Study in Political Paternalism*, Chicago, Roosevelt University, 1967, p. 29 and D. DERTOUZOS, *The Greek Labour Movement: Its Role in the National Industrial Relations System*, Ph. D. Thesis, Rutgers University, 1962, p. 136.

Labour) and its affiliated organizations. The continuous quarrels and rifts between the communists and socialists in the «twenties» and early «thirties» were to a considerable extent, the result of communist attacks against all political parties and unions they considered to be bourgeois or bourgeois-influenced. This strife ruined the first historic chance for the unification of the Greek labour movement.

After the traumatic experience of the Civil War (1944-49), the victorious political Right was far from sympathetic to a labour movement associated with the Left. Democratic trade unionism was readily identified with communism or socialism and vice-versa. Under government auspices, an elaborate system of bureaucratic labour organizations appeared, which had very little real contact with the actual rank and file. Nevertheless, in the late «fifties» and early «sixties», the supremacy of the Right was challenged as a result of the impact of various national and international political and economic developments. The trade unions grew stronger, not only because of a certain improvement in the political situation, but mainly due to economic conditions increasingly favourable to collective action. This situation, which bears some resemblance to the historical developments of 1922 to 1936, suggests the hypothesis that even during periods of parliamentary regimes in Greece, which allowed some freedom of association, certain unfavourable political factors (such as negative government policies or employer hostility to unionism), may in the short run succeed in curtailing the organizational and bargaining strength of the labour movement. In the long run, however, positive economic factors (such as the broadening of the country's industrial base) are increasingly more important than political ones, and may overcome the latter's negative impact upon unionism.

In 1967, another military coup put an abrupt end to such positive developments in Greek trade unionism and, as in 1936, retarded the Nation's political and economic progress for the next seven years. The 1974 restoration of democracy, coupled with the broadening of the country's industrial base, has helped the development of organized labour which began to acquire new strength. Development has been slow, however, because the obstacles to progress are difficult to remove. For a variety of historical reasons related to both national and international events, the nonprivileged population segments, and the workers in particular, participated very little in the country's political and economic decision-making<sup>22</sup>. This was for a

22 «That the contribution of Greek trade unions to the social development of Greece since the end of the Second World War has been negligible may seem to need little explanation in view of the abnormal conditions of the civil war of 1945 to 1949 and the restrictions imposed upon them by the military Government during the dictatorship of 1967 to 1974. Yet the trade unions might not have been so susceptible to partial dissolution and near-complete government control had not their own inherent weaknesses been perpetuated by an ineffectual structure and organisation, and by long periods of disunity, conflict and corruption, due largely to political intervention and patronage». See C. JECCHINIS, «The Role of Trade Unions in the Social Development of Greece», in *The Role of Trade Unions in Developing Societies*, E.M. Kassalow and U.G. Damachi Eds., I.I.L.S., Geneva, 1978.

long time the domain of a ruling class strongly oriented towards trade, shipping, and service activities, and whose economic well-being depended on the industrial interests of the metropolitan centres of Western European and North American capitalism.

In the final analysis, it is the peripheral nature of Greek capitalism, linked with an economic and political evolution unfavourable to organized labour, which lies behind the underdevelopment of the country's trade unionism. In particular, it is the internal contradictions of Greece's peripheral economy, as well as government intervention in industrial relations, which has been responsible for a situation described here as unbalanced trade union growth. This imbalance has resulted in sharply divided areas unfavourable and favourable respectively to union growth. Group A concerns the labour movement as a whole, and especially its official spokesman, the GSEE. It also includes unions which function under conditions unfavourable to collective action. Such unions are generally weak, ineffective, and vulnerable to outside interference, mainly from the government. Their wage levels and working conditions are largely determined from above by statutory government regulations rather than by direct negotiations between unions and management.

Conditions more favourable to collective action (except during dictatorship periods) have prevailed in the unions of Group B (unions in the public utilities, banks, local government, hospitals, mining, unions in relatively large enterprises, school teachers, some technical grades in the civil service, etc.). As a result, these unions enjoy high organizational cohesion and bargaining strength, and are capable of resisting outside interference. Wages and conditions of work are determined from below, i.e., through collective bargaining as known in the more developed market economies.

A concomitant of such unbalanced union growth are the significant wage and mainly fringe-benefit differentials in favour of Group B. These are not only result of Group B's greater bargaining power; they should also be attributed to the fact that intervention from above and the consequent suppression of union demands is successful only in the case of weak labour organizations (Group A).

On the whole, State intervention in industrial relations have definitely contributed to the creation of anarchic wage and fringe-benefit differentials; more important, such intervention should be largely held responsible for the creation of high income-inequalities between the upper and the lower income groups. These are partly due to the weakening of the GSEE, the organization which officially speaks for the entire Greek working class — a weakening which results in its inability to demand and secure a greater

share of the increase in national income, especially for the lowest-paid employees. Contrary to expectations, the immediate post dictatorship governments and the GSEE leadership (1974-1981) did little to correct the situation<sup>23</sup>.

There has not been to-date any thorough study of wage differentials in Greece, nevertheless, the existing data provide an adequate indication as to the sharp wage differentials that have developed between the skilled and the unskilled workers. The former having their wages boosted not only by favourable market conditions, but also by stronger and more effective trade unions. Data provided by the E.E.C. in 1980, show that in the 1970's, the ratio of the unskilled workers' wage rate to the one of the skilled in Greece was 1 to 10 in the private sector. Comparatively, the ratio in France was 1 to 5.4, in Italy 1 to 4.8, in Holland 1 to 2.4, and in Denmark 1 to 2.3<sup>24</sup>.

As other studies have concluded, the overall ineffectiveness of trade unions has contributed to the lower living standards of Greek workers, compared to those of the major Western Countries in the last two decades<sup>25</sup>. Table 2 gives a fairly accurate picture of the low average wage and salary rates situation. In fact, one of the important contributory factors to the rather high external emigration that took place in the 1950's and 1960's, was the wage differentials that existed between Greece and the receiving countries.

Although the main reasons for emigration were unemployment, underemployment and poor living standards, research conducted in 1970 showed that the reasons for emigration and the low rate of repatriation, were also closely related to the existing wage differentials between Greece and the Western European countries, which attracted also many urban semi-skilled or unskilled workers<sup>26</sup>. In spite of the fact that the wage rate per hour increased in Greece by 129 per cent in West Germany was three times higher than the one in Greece in 1972<sup>27</sup>.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that State paternalism in its two basic forms, i.e. extensive legislation concerning the administration and financing of trade unions, and direct or indirect government intervention not only in the settlement of labour-management disputes, but also in trade union leadership politics, has played a dominant role in industrial relations and trade union functioning in Greece. The legal framework, which prevailed until 1982 was inflated, highly complex, inefficient and oppressive in its

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *OIKONOMIKOS TAHIDROMOS*, Dec. 11, 1980.

<sup>25</sup> C. JECCHINIS, *op. cit.*.

<sup>26</sup> *Greek Centre of Planning and Economic Research Report: 1971.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1974.

**Table 2**  
**The Development of Paid Earnings to Salary and Wage Earners**  
**in Industrial Enterprises Employing 10 or More People**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Average/Monthly Rates of Salary Earners</i>		<i>Average Hourly Rate of Wage Earners</i>	
	<i>Drachmas</i>	<i>U.S.\$*</i>	<i>Drachmas</i>	<i>U.S.\$*</i>
1962	3,062	52.56	8.00	0.13
1963	3,176		8.40	
1964	3,410	57.23	9.24	0.15
1965	3,560	58.23	10.13	0.16
1966	4,137	71.45	11.41	0.19
1967	4,543		12.74	
1968	4,819	85.12	13.67	0.24
1969	5,199	92.34	15.05	0.26
1970	5,563	97.22	15.95	0.27
1971	5,959		17.35	
1972	6,470	110.29	18.94	0.32
1973	7,742	126.93	22.04	0.36
1974	9,526	154.26	27.87	0.45
1975	11,471		34.74	
1976	14,094	221.90	44.66	0.70
1977	16,882	268.27	53.99	0.85
1978	20,097	296.66	66.73	0.98
1979	23,339		80.50	
1980	29,095	419.29	102.41	1.47

\*The dollar rates are calculated on average annual rates of exchange.

application. Particularly backward was the legislation on collective agreements and compulsory arbitration, initiated from above, while it paid only token attention to voluntary direct negotiations between unions and management.

A powerful legal arsenal also existed for the restriction of strike activity. The Government maintained the right to call for the «conscription» of employees in public utility services, when it felt that a particular strike threatened its stability. During the first years of the 1967-74 military dictatorship, all strikes were forbidden, and even when — under international pressure — the military Government re-introduced the right to strike in 1971, the legislation included a provision which restricted strike action. According to the 1971 law, «any strike motivated by political or other aims alien to the material and moral interests of the workers is (was) prohibited».

The legislative and institutional reforms introduced in the Greek industrial relations system during 1982 by the new socialist government, which was elected to power in November, 1981, have given promise of bringing not only the trade unions, but the entire industrial relations system into the progressive mainstream of Western Europe. More specifically, Act No. 1264/82, «respecting the democratization of the trade union movement and the protection of workers' trade union freedoms», guarantees the trade union rights of workers according to the *International Labour Conventions* which the Government ratified. The new Act regulates the conditions concerning the establishment, organization, functioning and activities of trade unions. The various provisions of the Act come under the following subheadings; recognition and registration (certification) of trade unions; financial autonomy; organization, functioning and administration; democratic electoral procedures; trade union freedoms and rights; the right to strike.

In August 1983, the Greek Parliament enacted also, a law of special procedures for group dismissals. The new law introduces the right of compulsory prior consultation between employers and employee representatives, on the reason for dismissals, the number of employees to be affected, their age, sex and particular occupation, before any legitimate dismissals can be carried out. The law on dismissals is applicable to enterprises of at least twenty employees. Furthermore, the new five year plan of 1983-87 includes provisions for the establishment of mediation services at the Ministry of Labour and the improvement of arbitration procedures. It also provides for the establishment of workers' councils, which will work with management for the health and safety of workers at their place of work.

It will take however, a few more years before a proper assessment can be made of these reforms.

### *Les syndicats ouvriers en Grèce*

La contribution des syndicats grecs au développement social de la Grèce depuis la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale n'a été que négligeable à cause des conditions anormales créées par la guerre civile de 1945 à 1949 et des restrictions qui leur furent imposées par le gouvernement militaire sous le régime de dictature de 1967 à 1974. Néanmoins, les syndicats n'auraient peut-être pas été aussi vulnérables à la dissolution partielle et au contrôle presque complet du gouvernement n'eussent été leurs faiblesses congénitales engendrées par une structure et une organisation inefficaces ainsi que de longues périodes de discorde, de conflits et de corruption causées en grande partie par l'intervention politique et le patronage.

Les syndicats grecs sont le produit de l'économie, de la géographie et de l'histoire politique de la Grèce moderne pour ne rien dire du tempérament de son peuple. En particulier, la structure économique, qui s'est développée en Grèce depuis le tournant du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, était fondée sur ce qu'on peut appeler le «capitalisme périphérique» (soit le seul développement des industries secondaires, du commerce et des services), ce qui, en retour, a considérablement influencé la croissance et l'efficacité du mouvement ouvrier dans son ensemble. C'est plutôt dans de petites entreprises locales que dans les grandes organisations nationales plus efficaces que les syndicats ont dépensé leurs énergies et leurs possibilités. Mais, en dépit de ce fait ou à cause de lui, le mouvement tomba bientôt sous le contrôle politique de l'État. Les syndicats ne prirent qu'une part minime dans l'établissement de la législation sociale et de la législation du travail: les lois et les règlements visant à la protection et au bien-être des travailleurs furent parrainés par les dirigeants de la classe moyenne du parti libéral longtemps avant que les syndicats aient acquis une organisation centrale valable et une vigueur solide. À partir de 1910 et dans la suite, l'«État bourgeois», afin de garantir la tranquillité sociale, refréna l'endoctrinement socialiste et réprima les tendances rebelles des travailleurs grecs; il joua le rôle de bienfaiteur et de patron de la classe ouvrière. Les avantages, toutefois, de cette législation ouvrière et sociale passablement avancée furent viciés par les contrôles directs et indirects qui les accompagnaient et qui nuisirent à l'indépendance et à l'efficacité des syndicats. La forme et le contenu des conventions collectives étaient finalement fixés par le gouvernement lequel exerçait un contrôle considérable sur l'administration et le financement des syndicats au moyen d'un réseau de législation de taille.

Ainsi, du fait que les relations du travail étaient dirigées par le gouvernement, la plupart des organisations syndicales, tant locales que nationales, devinrent de simples lobbies auprès du parlement dans les ministères. Tout naturellement, elles favorisèrent l'établissement d'un «syndicalisme paternaliste» en tombant sous la coupe des partis politiques et des politiciens qui, s'inspirant de l'adage «diviser pour régner» opposèrent les uns aux autres les dirigeants syndicaux ambitieux et les diverses factions syndicales.

Cette situation survécut aux années de l'occupation ennemie et se raffermir dès que la reconstruction du pays et de ses institutions sociales fut entreprise après la guerre. Le rétablissement des syndicats fut entravé par la guerre civile qui suivit la libération, les politiques de la guerre froide tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur et, éventuellement, la dictature militaire de 1967 à 1974. En outre, plus de progrès fut réalisé sous les gouvernements conservateurs postérieurs à la dictature de telle sorte que cet état de choses persista jusqu'à 1981.

Un nouvel effort de reconstruction du mouvement syndical est commencé depuis 1982, et plusieurs facteurs économiques et politiques importants s'avèreront décisifs au cours des prochaines années. L'un d'entre eux est l'industrialisation et la croissance économique. Les efforts de développement ont pour conséquence de rapprocher les uns des autres de nombreux travailleurs du même type de métiers et d'industries. Nous pouvons nous attendre à ce que les grandes entreprises, les concentrations locales de l'industrie et la perspective maintenant visible de l'augmentation graduelle des niveaux de vie changeront les mentalités des travailleurs de façon à les



amener à une forme de syndicalisme qui pourra mieux satisfaire leurs besoins en ce qui a trait à la sécurité de l'emploi et l'amélioration des salaires. Cette tendance ne peut pas éventuellement ne pas avoir d'effet sur la nouvelle génération des dirigeants syndicaux mieux formés et plus conscients des besoins et des problèmes d'une société industrielle moderne et de faire ainsi des syndicats des participants efficaces dans l'aménagement et la mise en oeuvre du développement social et économique en Grèce.

L'autre facteur important de «changement» qui a eu lieu en Grèce, c'est la victoire des socialistes en octobre 1981 ainsi que les réformes introduites par le nouveau gouvernement au cours des trois dernières années. Ces réformes comprennent, entre autres, une législation relative à la démocratisation du mouvement ouvrier et l'établissement de la liberté syndicale, la participation des travailleurs à la direction des entreprises publiques, des mesures spéciales en matière de licenciement collectif ainsi que des dispositions touchant la santé, la sécurité et l'égalité des travailleurs sur les lieux du travail. Il se peut cependant qu'il s'écoule encore quelques années avant que les nouvelles réformes soient à point et que leurs effets se fassent sentir sur le mouvement syndical.

## **LE CONFLIT DU TRAVAIL STRATÉGIE ET TACTIQUE**

par Gilles PLANTE

L'ouverture d'un conflit du travail et sa conduite jusqu'à la décision soulèvent des problèmes stratégiques et tactiques. Comment poser et résoudre ces problèmes de l'action conflictuelle lorsque l'on est dans la mêlée. Ce livre propose des concepts permettant d'aborder ces questions et d'y apporter une réponse pratique. Les éléments des calculs stratégiques et tactiques y sont présentés puis illustrés avec des exemples vécus.

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