



## LABOR UNIONS

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## “Free” and “Official” Labor Unions in Russia: Different Modes of Labor Interest Representation

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### Abstract

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Russian labor movement has been divided into two continuously warring camps—the “official” unions, affiliated with the Soviet-legacy Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR) and the so-called “free” or “alternative” labor unions. Free labor unions differ from official unions in many respects, including their militant nature and conflict-based ideology, grass-roots methods of labor mobilization and organization, the economic resources that they use, and their forms of membership and leadership. Today two different modes of labor interest representation exist at the same time: the distributive mode employed mainly by the official unions and the protest mode, which is more typical for free labor unions. While official labor unions continue to dominate the organized labor scene, in recent years they have faced growing competition from their alternative counterparts. Overall, the dominance of the distributive system, based on cooperation between the employer and union, over the protest model signifies the preservation of the strength of management in labor relations, squeezing unions to the sidelines in serving workers. Accordingly, labor relations based on market mechanisms have not replaced the previous administrative system as many observers had once anticipated.

### Labor Unions after the 1990s

In the early 1990s, liberalization and economic reforms caused a tremendous wave of labor protest that the Soviet-legacy labor unions had neither the ability nor the desire to support. The alternative labor unions took the lead in the labor protests. Since that time two union camps have formed in the Russian labor movement. On the one side, there are the “official” or “traditional” trade unions affiliated with the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), a successor of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR (VTsSPS). On the other side, there are the so-called “alternative” or “free” labor unions, which are independent from the FNPR. Among the biggest associations of free labor unions at the national level are the All-Russia Confederation of Labor (VKT) and the Russian Confederation of Labor (KTR). Another interregional alternative labor union is the Trade Union Association of Russia (SOTSPROF).

Nominally Russia compares well with other countries in terms of trade union membership. About 54% of the overall workforce is reported to be organized. The FNPR retains an almost monopolistic position in Russian organized labor. It claims to represent 90% of unionized workers, 45% of total Russian employees and 75.1% of employees at the unionized enterprises (enterprises and organizations that have primary trade union organizations). According to the FNPR annual report, which remains one of the only available sources of data about labor unions, the highest rates of union membership are among workers in the transportation construction sector (94.2%), the employees of the security agen-

cies of the Russian Federation (88.4%), and among the workers in the oil and gas, mining, and related construction industries (84.7%). In geographic terms, the official trade union organizations are best represented in the Republic of Dagestan (94.9%), Kabardino-Balkaria (93.1%), North Ossetia-Alania (92.7%), Tatarstan (90%), Belgorod region (90.1%), and Chechnya (89.3%). Union membership continues to decline in recent years, from 27.8 million members in 2006 to 24.2 million members in 2010. The number of primary organizations has also declined, from 210 in 2006 to 191 in 2010.

Unfortunately there are no reliable statistics about free labor unions. According to the Federation of European Employers (<http://www.fedee.com/tradeunions.html#Russia>), the All-Russian Confederation of Labor (VKT) has about 3 million members and the Confederation of Labor of Russia (KTR)—1.2 million members. The Trade Union Association of Russia (SOTSPROF) encompasses a total of 500,000 members. Alternative labor unions are strong among the miners, airline pilots, air traffic controllers, dockers, railway locomotive crews, and automobile industry workers.

### “Free” and “Official” Labor Unions—What’s the Difference?

Free labor unions differ from the official ones in many respects. Traditional Soviet-legacy labor unions follow the ideology of “social partnership”, stressing the commonality of interests among employees and employers. They are well incorporated into the Russian system of social partnership and claim to be the sole monopolistic representative of the rights of all Russian employees.

The free labor unions are more oriented toward fighting employers; instead of emphasizing consensus, they focus on conflict. This does not mean that free labor unions refuse any possibility of “peaceful” dialogue with employers. Many strong alternative unions are successful in collective bargaining and concluding collective agreements. However, official unions often accuse their counterparts of unjustified aggressiveness in their relations with management that “screw up” the process of collective bargaining.

Unlike official unions that usually build their primary organizations “from above,” free labor unions typically emerge on the wave of some protest action “from below”, often at enterprises unionized by the official trade unions. In this case, the newly created unions experience double pressure—not only from the employer, but also from the official union which makes it very hard for the new organization to survive. Usually the newly organized labor unions can persist only if they get organizational and informational support from a larger local free labor union organization or association that has access to more extensive resources. Their militant character and protest ideology make free labor union activists a target for tough administrative pressure and even physical assaults.

The numerous ways that free labor unions emerge explains the high organizational diversity within the movement—from tiny, semi-formal activist groups at the enterprise level up to regional and inter-regional multi-level organizations encompassing thousands of members. The structure of primary organizations is often informal and based on networks; union leaders (activists) rely heavily on interpersonal relations and ways of communicating with their members. Sometimes such methods are dictated by the absence of office space at the enterprise that has to be provided by the employer. Sometimes, especially militant unions deliberately avoid using any formal structures and contacts with the enterprise, in order to avoid becoming vulnerable to administrative pressure. The union staff, especially at the enterprise level, often work on a volunteer basis since free labor unions cannot afford to spend much money on bureaucratic organization. Unlike official unions that can use resources accumulated by their predecessor during the Soviet era, free labor unions must rely almost exclusively on membership fees.

Both official and free labor unions experience difficulties attracting new members, even though the nature of the different kinds of unions varies. For the official unions, membership is usually formal or based on “inertia”. Joining the union is not so much a conscious choice, but an assumed norm, often carried out automatically when a new employee starts a job. As in Soviet times,

people do not expect the union to defend their rights, but to provide them additional benefits. For the free trade unions, voluntary and active membership is more typical and internal union solidarity is highly valued. These qualities are particularly true for militant unions since membership comes at a high risk for workers. Leaders of free trade unions are generally charismatic individuals, capable of mobilizing people; by contrast the leaders of official trade unions are usually skilled in working within administrative and bureaucratic systems.

The official and free trade unions differ in terms of their repertoire of collection actions. Free unions use non-institutional forms of protest more frequently, such as unsanctioned rallies, pickets, strikes, and street actions. They actively cooperate with various social movement and protest groups, organizing coalitions and participating in joint protest actions. The difference in relations with the authorities is also apparent. Despite the fact that union leaders emphasize their non-partisan character, the protest activity of the free unions *a priori* includes overt or covert opposition to the authorities. The very rise of the alternative trade unions is connected to dissatisfaction with the existing system of defending worker rights and that means coming into conflict with the status quo.

In general, the differences described here demonstrate that the official trade unions are a bureaucratic structure, while the free unions are closer to a social movement.

### Revitalization of the Free Labor Movement

Western researchers of Russian labor relations practically ignore the existence of free labor unions because of their relatively small numbers. Nevertheless, the activity and influence of the free unions has grown significantly in recent years. This has primarily manifested in the increasing number and duration of labor protest actions (mostly wildcat strikes, unregistered protest actions and stop-actions) organized by free labor unions (for a more detailed analysis, see the article by Petr Bizyukov in this issue). Another trend is the growing consolidation and organizational strengthening of the free labor movement; the intensifying attempts to unite free labor unions under a single umbrella association (KTR or SOTSPROF); the formation of strong and militant interregional and intersectional associations of free labor unions, like the Interregional Trade Union of the Automobile Industry Workers (MPRA). Free labor unions have in recent years increased their involvement in political activity (a phenomenon that is not entirely welcome by all union leaders). While, official unions seek an alliance with the ruling party (United Russia), and Vladimir Putin, free labor unions focus more on build-

ing political contacts with left-wing political parties and groups (such as, for instance, ROTFRONT), and were trying to establish relations with President Medvedev. The result is a growing political competition with the official unions. There is also increasing collaboration and coalition building with various actors of civil society—social movements and interest groups, especially at the local and regional levels.

All this activity has led some Russian researchers to describe a revitalization of the labor union movement in Russia. However, despite some successful protest actions and the growing consolidation of free labor unions, they remain less organized and centralized than official unions. Among the factors hindering further consolidation are the internal contradictions of the free labor movement related to its organizational diversity, the semi-formal character of some especially militant unions, and the ambitions of charismatic union leaders. The most important problem of the alternative unions continues to be their institutional exclusion, which is largely a consequence of the existing Labor Code.

### Free and Official Unions after the Adoption of the New Labor Code

Adopted in 2002, the new Labor Code finally solidified the three-sided multi-leveled system of social partnership. Although the basic idea of social partnership is borrowed from the Western model, its Russian version has specific features. The poorly developed institutional base, the specifics of the Russian economic situation, and the post-Soviet legacy preordained that this model would be ineffective. Thus, the absence (or poorly developed nature) of collective representation institutions for the employers at the sectoral and regional levels makes the conclusion of sectoral and regional salary agreements impossible or simply formal. In the sectors where such agreements are nevertheless reached, they frequently do not work since the salary levels agreed to are much lower than in the leading, or even middling, enterprises in the sector. Preserving the dominance of the state in the development of social policy at both the federal and regional levels makes the basic principle of equal partners a fiction—the leading role in collective bargaining belongs to the state, then management, and only then, the labor unions.

According to the unanimous opinion of experts, the new Labor Code as a whole worsened the position of labor unions in their dialogue with employers:

- The union is deprived of the right to a “veto” when workers are fired at the initiative of the administration. Now the union can only state its opinion.
- Time limits were introduced in conducting collective bargaining at an enterprise, after which the employer

can sign only several insignificant points and the agreement will be considered concluded. Agreement on the most important, and therefore most conflictual, points can be postponed indefinitely.

- The most radical change affected the possibility for labor protests. The union lost its right to announce a strike; now a decision must come from a meeting of the workers’ collective. The number of sectors in which strikes are outlawed was increased and more obstacles were put in the way of adopting a decision on starting a strike. Solidarity strikes focusing on social economic policy were prohibited. The number of conditions required to be present before a strike can be announced was increased (as was the number of obligatory tasks which must be completed during a strike).
- In addition to the general anti-union provisions, the new Labor Code impacted on the conditions of free labor unions in particular. Among the key features were:
- New difficulties in registering a labor union, especially for a new union that seeks to break off from an official labor union and become an independent organization.
  - New difficulties in concluding a collective agreement. Membership requirements for conducting collective bargaining and resolving collective labor disputes limit the participation of free labor unions, which generally have fewer members than the official unions.
  - New difficulties connected to the lack of protection for labor union activists. These included changes in the legislative norms that previously forbid the firing of union activists, moving them to other work, or disciplining them without the agreement of the union cell.
  - New difficulties in conducting legal protest actions, particularly strikes.

The result is an obvious contradiction between the Labor Code’s officially declared idea of providing a pluralism of representative possibilities for hired labor and the de facto official monopolization of the right to provide such representation by the official trade unions. The absence of free competition among trade unions in the area of protecting worker rights and the limited institutional opportunities for alternative representation of labor interests leads, on one hand, to a enforced politicization of free unions which seek to be heard by the high-level authorities and, on the other hand, to the radicalization of protest actions.

### Unions in Enterprises—Distributive and Protest Models of Representing Worker Interests

At the firm level, the main problem hindering the social partnership model is the remaining (and even grow-

ing) power disbalance in relationships between trade unions and employers. Labor unions are not considered by employers as an equal and respectable partner. According to the expression of one trade union committee chairman, today it is not possible to speak about a social partnership in Russian enterprises, but about a “social coexistence if the employer wants it”. Unions are viewed by the employer as a subdivision of the human resources department, the job of which is to motivate and support worker morale, or to help in distributing social benefits. As a result, most unions are involved in distributing resources, as in Soviet times. They do not deal with worker-management relations; rather they organize social work during workers’ free time, vacations, sports, and cultural and educational work. The unions have the job of helping “weak” or “problematic” workers while strong workers, in the opinion of management, do not need such intermediaries in dealing with their bosses. Such a distributional model of representing worker interests is more characteristic for official trade unions and is dominant today. Nevertheless, it would not be correct to draw a direct analogy between

today’s redistributive model and the situation during the Soviet period. Since then there have been changes in the sources, size, and content of the goods that are distributed and the unions are constantly seeking new types of services and support for their members (for example, credit unions, special insurance systems, etc). As a result, there is great diversity in the distributive models, ranging from “mutual help” to “business services”.

For free unions, the protest model is more typical. They represent labor interests by focusing on defending worker rights, rather than distributing various benefits. Nevertheless, even the alternative unions, especially the large and well-established ones, engage in social work in response to the traditional expectations of workers. Although the protest model is better suited to the market economy and the market mechanism of regulating labor relations, its practical application, as already noted, is difficult. The domination of the distributive model demonstrates the preservation of the administrative system of regulating interactions between employers and employees and the absence of market mechanisms in representing collective labor interests.

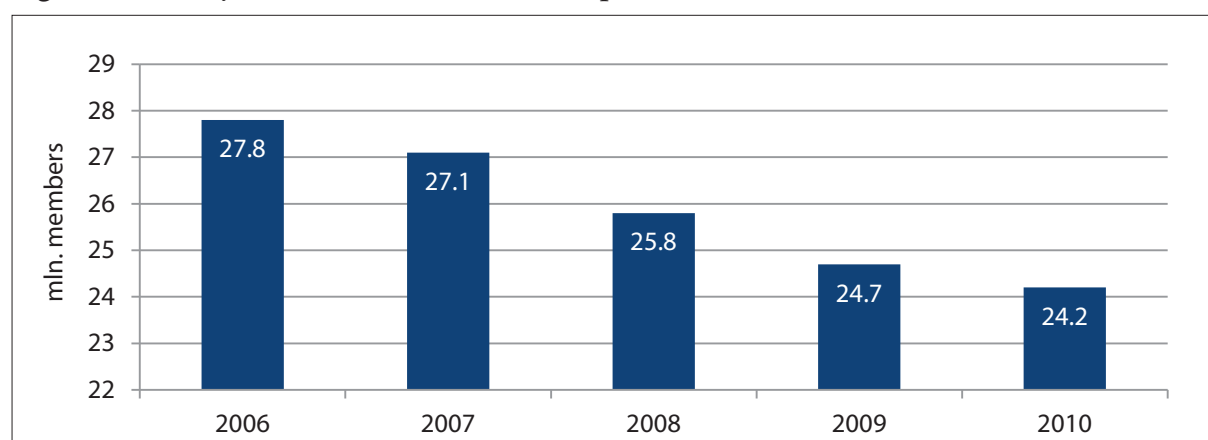
#### *About the Author*

Irina Olimpieva is a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University’s School for Advanced International Studies.

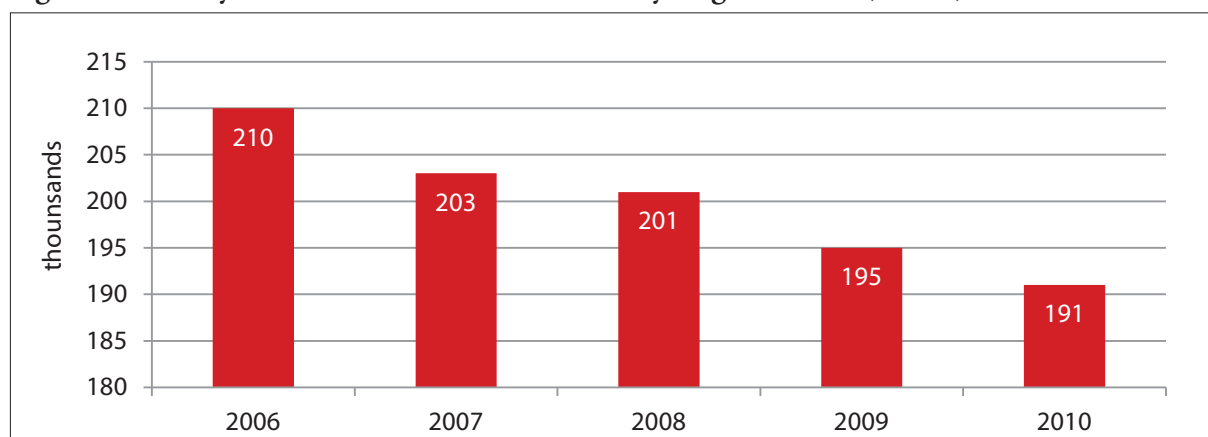
#### *Further Reading*

- Kozinói, M. (ed.), *Profsoyuzy na predpriyatiyakh sovremennoi rossii: vozmozhnosti rebrendinga* (2009)
- Olimpieva, I., *Rossiiskie profsoyuzy v sisteme regulirovaniya sotsial’no-trudovykh otnoshenii: osobennosti, problemy i perspektivy issledovaniya* (Moscow: Moscow Social Science Fund, 2010)

**Figure 1: The Dynamics of Union Membership (FNPR)**



Source: Statistical evaluation of trade union membership and trade union organs in 2010. Federal Independent Trade Unions of Russia website, <http://www.fnpr.ru/n/2/15/187/6378.html>

**Figure 2: The Dynamics of the Number of Primary Organizations (FNPR)**

Source: Statistical evaluation of trade union membership and trade union organs in 2010. Federal Independent Trade Unions of Russia website, <http://www.fnpr.ru/n/2/15/187/6378.html>

## ANALYSIS

### Labor Protests in Russia, 2008–2011

By Petr Bizyukov, Moscow

#### Abstract

In Russia, both the media and experts in the area of labor relations ignore the problem of labor conflicts. A key factor in explaining this situation is the current system of keeping statistics which counts only legal strikes, even though under the existing labor code it is almost impossible to carry out such a strike. Independent monitoring of labor protests, conducted according to a methodology developed by the Center for Social and Labor Rights, shows that even though the financial crisis is over, the overall number of protest actions is not dropping and the intensity of the actions (the monthly average number of strikes) is growing. At the same time, the form and causes of labor protests are changing. The lack of mechanisms for regulating labor conflicts within the framework of the enterprise means that labor protests spill out of the factory gates and merge with other types of social protest.

#### Are There Labor Conflicts in Russia?

The issue of labor conflicts in contemporary Russia is complicated. There is almost no research on this question. The leading media outlets only occasionally pay attention to protests, typically covering the most extreme cases. Top labor relations experts usually ignore this issue, apparently hoping that if they do not discuss the problem, it will not exist. State agencies also prefer to close their eyes to this problem as seen by the way that the state collects data about labor conflicts. According to Rosstat reports, in 2008 there were only 4 strikes, just one in 2009 and none in 2010! Rosstat came up with such low figures because it counts only legal strikes, namely those that take place as part of collective labor

disagreements as defined by Russian legislation. Holding a legal strike requires an extremely complicated procedure, requiring a considerable amount of time, the completion of a large number of documents, and carrying out complex warning measures. Almost no one can meet the requirements of the law, so the majority of strikes are spontaneous and therefore not recorded by the official statistical office.

In fact hundreds of protest actions and strikes are taking place. A stable practice of conducting strikes has developed in Russia that advises participants how to avoid repressive measures and minimize instances of law-breaking. However, these practices have not entered into the public discussion and their influence on the devel-



opment and formation of labor relations is not widely understood. Worker protest actions could become the trigger for significant social-economic and even political turmoil. Such was the case in Poland, where in the beginning of the 1980s the Solidarity trade union's actions led to the beginning of the downfall of the socialist regime first in Poland and then in the rest of Eastern Europe. Similarly in the Soviet Union, the miners' strikes in 1989 pushed the process of further democratization and then the collapse of the USSR. Among more recent events, the most important are the spontaneous worker actions in the cities of Pikalevo (May 2009) and Mezhdurechensk (May 2010), which required the country's political leadership to intervene in order to stabilize the situation and therefore to violate its general rule of not giving into demands and pressures from below.

Since official statistics do not provide the data necessary to analyze the real scale and dynamics of labor protests, the Center for Social-Labor Rights (TsSTP, <http://www.trudprava.ru>) developed a special methodology to monitor protest actions, which it has implemented since 2008. We<sup>1</sup> define "labor protest" as an "open form of labor conflict, in which workers at an enterprise (organization, corporation) or a labor group take actions directed at standing up for their social-labor position by influencing their employer or other subjects serving as employers, with the goal of making changes". Our main source of information are reports about protest actions published on news web sites, in internet newspapers, and information portals devoted to social-economic themes. These reports are extremely timely and usually appear on-line the same day as the strike.

Of course, journalists who cover labor conflicts do not always provide all the information necessary for a full and balanced analysis. Nevertheless, they describe the majority of conflicts in a comprehensive manner. On the basis of our daily monitoring, we separate out the announcements about labor and related protests and conflicts and chose those that fit our definition of a labor protest. Most information comes from specialized internet portals that focus on labor issues and from federal and regional news agencies. The most useful sites are: The Institute of Collective Action (<http://www.ikd.ru/>), LabourStart (<http://www.labourstart.org/ru>) and Rabochaia bor'ba (<http://www.rborba.ru>). Usually, articles provide information about the place where the strike took place (federal district, region, city); the date that it started and finished; the industry of the enterprise or workers; the reasons for the protest; the forms of the protest; and the results achieved. It is also important to

know whether this is the first time that a conflict arose or if it has been repeating over time. Also we record the role played by trade unions and other organizations in labor conflicts. All the data is gathered in a database and then used for analysis.

### The Scale and Dynamics of Labor Protests

Over the last 45 months, we have included information about 767 labor protests in the database. The peak of the protests during our observation period came in 2009 (272 protest actions) and this is not by chance: the first part of 2009 witnessed the most difficult consequences of the economic crisis, namely the growth in the number of unemployed, as well as only partially employed, and the greatest extent of wage arrears. In 2010, the number of protests shrank to 205, but this number is much higher than the number for the pre-crisis year of 2008, during which there were only 96. Even in 2011, when, according to official announcements, the consequences of the crisis had been overcome, the level of protests remained relatively high in comparison with the pre-crisis level, with 194 protest acts. The 2011 figure is 9% less than the crisis year of 2009, but 23% more than in 2010.

The intensity of the protests (the monthly average of protests in a given period) reached a maximum in 2009 (22.7). The figure for the first three quarters of 2011 is very close to this level (21.6). This data suggests that even two years after the crisis, the situation in the sphere of labor relations has not stabilized.

The number of stop-actions (protests in which workers shut down their enterprises) for the first nine months was almost the same as during the first six months of 2010—67 in 2011 versus 69 in 2010. Moreover, just as the number of stop-actions decreased in 2011, the indicator measuring the level of intensity in the protests (measured as the share of stop-actions as a proportion of the overall number of protest actions for the period) also fell. In 2011 it is noticeably low—34.5, the lowest level of tension for the period we have been observing strikes. Only a third of the protest actions result in work stoppages; in two-thirds of the cases, the workers use different methods of influencing employers.

The level of geographic dispersion for the protests is calculated as a proportion of the number of regions where protests occurred in relation to the overall number of regions in Russia. Over the three years from 2008 to 2011, the index of dispersion has constantly increased. In 2008, it was 0.48. During the crisis year 2009, it grew to 0.67, and after the crisis, it increased to 0.72. This means that the number of regions where labor protests took place over the past three years grew from one-half to three-fourths—protests are spreading across the country.

1 The author works for the Center for Social-Labor Rights.

Looking at the protests by economic sector, 50% of protests take place in industrial enterprises. Among the industrial branches, the undisputed leader is machine-building. But in 2011, there was a sharp increase in the number of strikes in the transportation sector. During the first half of the year, the share of transportation strikes reached 27%.

### The Reasons for Labor Protests

Over the three and a half years that we have been monitoring labor protests, the main cause has been the non-payment of salaries or delays in these payments. Other reasons much less frequently provoke protests. The exception was down-sizing and firings during the 2009 crisis year. Then protests against such lay-offs accounted for up to 21% of all protest actions, while in other periods they were not more than 10%. Nonetheless, the vast majority of actions result from non-payment of salaries or delays. If other reasons connected to salaries are added (low salaries, disagreements over changes in the way salaries are calculated) it becomes even clearer that salaries are the main reason for labor protests. The share of protest causes connected to salaries varied from 83% in 2008, to 75% in 2009, and 76% in 2010.

However, in 2011, the share of salary-related reasons significantly changed. While during the previous three years, half of the cases of protests grew out of wage arrears (from 52% in 2008 to 57% in 2010), in 2011 only one third of the cases (35%) resulted from salary delays as the main cause. Instead the number of protests against low salaries grew to 29%, advancing over the previous year when low salaries only caused 19% of the disputes. Also, in contrast to last year, there was a higher proportion of protests against changes in the system of calculating wages. These changes in the causes of the conflicts reflect the changing system for calculating wages adopted during the 2008–9 crisis. Workers began to strike and protest not only because their salaries were not being paid, but because their pay was too small. This situation, of course, reflects normal economic conditions, in which workers seek higher salaries than they received during the crisis, when they protested against being forced to work without pay. However, as in the past, wage arrears remains the most common reason for protests.

The shift in the focus of the economic battle is also apparent in the increasing number of protests because of such reasons as “the policy of management, reorganization, and the closing of enterprises”. Every third protest (34%) in the first half of 2011 took place, at least in part, because of this reason, whereas in 2010, it was only one out of five (22%). Against this background, in 2011

the number of protests involving firings and downsizing (16%) grew almost to the level of 2009 (21%), which appears strange, because in 2010 the share of such protests was only 7%. The explanation seems to be that reorganizations, because of which there are also more protests, is often accompanied by firings.

Overall, in the first half of 2011, there is a change in the structure of reasons for protests. The context of protests in Russia has begun to resemble those associated with a transforming economy to a greater extent than was the case two or even one year ago.

### The Form of Labor Protests

Russian legislation limits the number of ways that workers can realize their rights. Work stoppages can take place if salaries are withheld for more than two weeks, work conditions threaten life or health, or as part of a strike organized during a collective labor dispute. Additionally, workers in many sectors (transportation, health care, etc.) are deprived of the right to strike and cannot use any other methods which would lead to a work stoppage, such as hunger strikes.

However, in practice the forms of protest that workers use is much wider, mainly including the use of illegitimate forms of protest. Legitimate forms of protest made up only 11% of protests in 2008, the same in 2009, and 9% in 2010. In other words, 9 out of 10 protest actions took place in forms not allowed by labor legislation. In the first half of 2011, the share of legitimate actions practically dropped to none—just 4%.

Extreme forms of protest deserve special attention, particularly hunger strikes, enterprise take-overs, and shutting major roads. In 2008, 17% of protests were of this extreme variety, in 2009, 18%, and in 2010, again 17%. In 2011, the share of such actions dropped to 7%. If you suppose that radical protest actions are a reaction to crude violations of labor rights by employers, then the reduction in the share of radical actions in 2011 possibly provides evidence that there are fewer such violations.

A single protest action can include a simultaneous or consecutive use of various forms of protest. Thus, for example, an action might start as a public declaration of demands and then turn into a strike, a hunger strike or something else. In 2008, 78% of all actions used only one kind of protest, while in 2010, this number dropped to 50% and for the first half of 2011 only 43%. In the remaining cases, the actions were more complicated. Most frequently the reason that an action took on a more serious form was the lack of any kind of response from the employer. The use of more complex forms of protest suggests that the workers have to resort to ever greater force to start a dialogue with employers.



Another important characteristic of labor protests is the relationship between stop-actions (bringing work to a halt) and other forms of protest, such as rallies and public declarations to the authorities. Paradoxically, in 2009 the number of stop-actions was relatively small and the number of “street” actions and declarations to the authorities and society grew. A detailed study of various actions showed that the workers rejected classical strikes aimed at shutting down an enterprise because it was senseless. What is the point of stopping the work of an enterprise which is not working in any case because of the crisis?

The decision to favor street protests over strikes reflects the fact that workers lack levers within the enterprise to influence relations with their employer. If the employer rejects dialogue and takes a maximalist position, the protest spills out onto the street and becomes visible to other actors, such as the authorities, journalists, and societal leaders. Today, when Russian employers can legally violate the procedures of collective agreements, block labor disputes, and, as a result, ignore the demands of workers, protests often spill beyond the walls of the enterprise. One result of the labor protest moving beyond the enterprise is that on city squares, the workers can join with other social protesters. The shortage of means for resolving labor relations inside enterprises channels labor protest energy into the larger community with the risk of transforming labor protest into broader social protest.

## Conclusions

Experts frequently pointed out that in Russia the financial crisis did not lead to structural transformations in economic life. However, one transformation that should take place is in the role of hired laborers, who, after the adoption of the Labor Code in 2002 became voiceless, expendable material for business, deprived not only of the opportunity to resist unfavorable initiatives by the employer but even to discuss the situation in which they

are located. Workers cannot influence the size of their salary, work conditions, or hours—they can only agree and from a position of weakness request some concessions. This is not normal for a liberal market economy. With no ability to influence the situation, workers make peace with their conditions until they are no longer tolerable and then begin to protest and seek out those forms of protest which will allow them to be heard. During the crisis, they had to do this more often because of the worsening conditions. But, even though the crisis ended for the enterprises, it has not ended for workers. They still face the majority of the earlier threats: wage arrears, firings, management reorganization games, which lead to worsening conditions. Therefore the level of conflict, and as a result, the number of protests has remained relatively constant.

Stabilizing the situation requires changing the labor legislation. However, such amendments cannot be made in the way that business representatives suggest since their proposed changes would lead to the further elimination of worker and union rights and their increased dependence on the employers. Workers need legislative opportunities to influence labor relations within the enterprises and, above all, to change the legislation about strikes. It is necessary to eliminate the disbalance in rights, which today is expressed in the spontaneous public actions of the workers. Upon their exit from the factory gates, labor protests are fed by other protests and feed them as well. When mass and radical protests can arise for any reason, various social tensions can merge into one larger protest movement. To prevent this exacerbation of social tensions, it is necessary to give the workers the means to resolve problems inside the enterprise. Such change cannot take place by turning the workers into an uncomplaining business resource, but by giving them rights and allowing them to conduct responsible and effective dialogue with employers, including in conflict situations.

### About the Author

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**Table 1: Annual (and 9 Month) Number of Labor Protests, 2008–2011**

	Annual number of actions (9 months)	Monthly number of actions (first 9 months)	Annual number of stop-actions (9 months)	Monthly number of stop-actions (first 9 months)	Share of stop-actions, %, (first 9 months)
2008	96 (69)	8,0 (7,7)	60 (40)	5,0 (4,4)	62,5 (60,0)
2009	272 (213)	22,7(23,7)	106 (89)	8,8 (9,9)	38,9 (41,8)
2010	205 (158)	17,1 (17,6)	88 (69)	7,3 (7,7)	42,9 (43,7)
2011*	194	21,6	67	7,4	34,5

\*Note: Data for 9 months

## ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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Founded in 1982, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to the interdisciplinary analysis of socialist and post-socialist developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The major focus is on the role of dissent, opposition and civil society in their historic, political, sociological and cultural dimensions.

With a unique archive on dissident culture under socialism and with an extensive collection of publications on Central and Eastern Europe, the Research Centre regularly hosts visiting scholars from all over the world.

One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular e-mail newsletters covering current developments in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public. The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, area studies, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) in public policy degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS); offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students; and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Crisis and Risk Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

#### The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, The Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University

The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies is home to a Master's program in European and Eurasian Studies, faculty members from political science, history, economics, sociology, anthropology, language and literature, and other fields, visiting scholars from around the world, research associates, graduate student fellows, and a rich assortment of brown bag lunches, seminars, public lectures, and conferences.

#### The Institute of History at the University of Zurich

The University of Zurich, founded in 1833, is one of the leading research universities in Europe and offers the widest range of study courses in Switzerland. With some 24,000 students and 1,900 graduates every year, Zurich is also Switzerland's largest university. Within the Faculty of Arts, the Institute of History consists of currently 17 professors and employs around a 100 researchers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Research and teaching relate to the period from late antiquity to contemporary history. The Institute offers its 2,600 students a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in general history and various specialized subjects, including a comprehensive Master's Program in Eastern European History. Since 2009, the Institute also offers a structured PhD-program. For further information, visit at <http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>

#### Resource Security Institute

The Resource Security Institute (RSI) is a non-profit organization devoted to improving understanding about global energy security, particularly as it relates to Eurasia. We do this through collaborating on the publication of electronic newsletters, articles, books and public presentations.

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