

"Why did the workers go to the works council, to the heads of the association and to the Party city council, but not even look in the trade union committee? Doesn't this show that the trade union committee has very little authority in the eyes of the mine workers?"

"Yes, this is in fact so. Since the works council was formed, several trade union committees have sort of lost their way; they couldn't decide how to divide up their "spheres of influence", which meant, of course, that they suffered a loss of authority. In this particular case, the trade union committee adopted a position of non-intervention, saying that as it is the miners' questions are being dealt with in the works council, the Party city committee and by the heads of the association, and no doubt they will come up with the answers. This highly significant fact is not in the trade union committee's favour".

"Have there been any times when the trade union committee has defended the workers' interests and entered into conflict with the mine and association management?"

"I don't know of any".

The events in Vorkuta and the two interviews hardly need extensive commentary. The situation is clear. Instead of real cost-efficiency and self-management, the miners had come up against formalism, severe bureaucratic pressure and the old command methods of management. All their efforts to discuss their problems had met with cold indifference, non-comprehension and incompetence. While one may not approve of the extreme measure they decided to take (and it did indeed cost the country