

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin of
Eastern Europe and the USSR

*Polish Action Programme
Interview with Haraszti*

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S NUCLEAR SCANDAL



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STATEMENT OF AIMS

A growing number of socialists and communists are taking a stand against the suppression of democratic rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The labour movement has international responsibilities in this field as well as in the field of solidarity action with those struggling against oppression in Chile or Southern Africa or Northern Ireland.

But up to now socialists have lacked a source of frequent and reliable information about events in Eastern Europe. Coverage in the papers of the Left remains scanty, while reports in the bourgeois press are selective and slanted. The first aim of **Labour Focus on Eastern Europe** is to help fill this gap by providing a more comprehensive and regular source of information about events in that part of the world.

The mass media give ample space to Tory politicians and to some from the Labour Party who seek to use protests against repression in Eastern Europe as a cover for their own support for social inequality in Britain and for witch-hunts against those who oppose it. At the same time campaigns run by socialists in the labour and trade union movement for many years concerning victims of repression in Eastern Europe are largely ignored by the media. The second aim of this bulletin therefore is to provide comprehensive information about the activities of socialists and labour movement organisations that are taking up this issue.

Labour Focus is a completely independent bulletin whose editorial collective includes various trends of socialist and Marxist opinion. It is not a bulletin for debate on the nature of the East European states, nor is its purpose to recommend a strategy for socialists in Eastern Europe: there are other journals on the Left that take up these questions. Our purpose is to provide a comprehensive coverage of these societies with a special emphasis on significant currents campaigning for working class, democratic and national rights.

Whenever possible we will quote the sources of our information. Unless otherwise stated, all the material in **Labour Focus** may be reproduced, with acknowledgement. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial collective.

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilise the considerable influence that the British labour movement can have in the struggles to end repression in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

SPONSORS: Tariq Ali, Edmund Baluka, Vladimir Derer, Tamara Deutscher, Ivan Hartel, Jan Kavan, Nicholas Krasso, Leonid Plyushch, Hillel Ticktin.

EDITORS: Vladimir Derer, Quintin Hoare, Jan Kavan, Oliver MacDonald, Anna Paczuska, Claude Vancour.

MANAGING EDITOR: Oliver MacDonald

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE: Barbara Brown, Patrick Camiller, Susannah Fry, Ivan Hartel, Victor Haynes, Alix Holt, Mark Jackson, Helen Jamieson, Pawel Jankowski, Michele Lee, Anca Mihailescu, Günter Minnerup, Laura Strong.

All correspondence to:

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

Bottom Flat, 116 Cazenove Rd., London N.16.

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FRONT COVER: The Collage is taken from a West Germany anti-nuclear poster which carried the caption: 'Splitting the Atom Opens up Undreamt-of Possibilities for Humanity'. This poster, along with many other excellent socialist posters, can be obtained either in poster or postcard form from the following production collective: Gestaltung/Offentlichkeitsarbeit, 1000 Berlin 21, Erasmusstr.2.

EDITORIAL

THE MINERS' UNION, THE KREMLIN AND KLEBANOV

At their November National Executive Committee meeting the National Union of Miners decided to accept the official Soviet Miners' Union's version of the Klebanov affair. (See report on page 22.) This experience highlights some of the main problems faced by socialists and trade unionists trying to gain labour movement support for victims of repression in Eastern Europe.

The NUM has one of the best records in the British labour movement for giving support to workers suffering oppression in other countries. It has been active in relation to South Africa and Chile and it has been especially effective in the case of the Bolivian tin miners, where it actually sent a delegation to Bolivia to speak to the miners under attack in that country.

Miners' leaders in this country have also recognised their responsibilities in relation to workers in Eastern Europe. For some years Laurence Daly, the General Secretary of the NUM has been chairman of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists. And when news of the Klebanov case was first publicised in Britain, the NUM discussed the matter on its NEC back in March 1978 and decided to make investigations.

But here the first problem arises. Whereas the NUM sent a delegation to talk to the Bolivian miners on the spot, in the case of Klebanov they confined their enquiries on Klebanov to the level of the official Soviet miners' union. This effectively means that they depended on the good faith of the Soviet authorities themselves, for the leaders of the official Soviet Trade Unions would be the first to agree that they are part and parcel of the Soviet regime. So the NUM was asking those being accused of violating workers' rights by Klebanov and his comrades to act as judge and jury in the Klebanov case. (The Chairman, Deputy Chairman and 2 Secretaries of the Soviet TUC are members of the Communist Party Central Committee, and the Chairman of the Soviet TUC is also, along with Brezhnev, on the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR). It is a pointless exercise to ask such people for an impartial view on the complaints of a man who has been forcibly interned in a psychiatric hospital by these same Soviet authorities. The only valid means of enquiring about allegations of repression and injustice is to send a delegation that can interview people like Klebanov on the spot. If the Soviet authorities have nothing to hide, they should welcome such a method of clearing matters up.

The quality of the information supplied to the NUM by Efremenko, the head of the Soviet Miners' Union, can be gauged from the fact that he felt it relevant to mention some supposed rich relatives of Klebanov in Israel and to declare that Klebanov had left his wife and was living with a 'woman much younger than himself' in Moscow!

The only effect of such crude attempts at smears is to cast some light on the sort of information which the Soviet authorities gather on their own citizens. But the most disturbing aspect of the remarks by Efremenko is their illustration of the use of psychiatric repression against dissidents. In a perverse way, the forcible internment of opponents in psychiatric hospitals is a mark of the concern which the Soviet authorities have for international opinion. They know that British workers would be outraged to learn that a man like Klebanov was jailed for trying to campaign against abuses against Soviet workers. So instead of jailing Klebanov they send him to a psychiatric hospital with special arrangements for handling political prisoners. (The Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital where Klebanov is being held also catered for the absolutely sane Soviet Marxist Leonid Plyushch who was freed thanks to protests by the French labour movement, including the CP three years ago.)

One reason for the attractiveness of such psychiatric abuse to

the Soviet authorities is clearly shown in Efremenko's remarks to the British miners. First, he is able to say that Klebanov is not under arrest — he is simply receiving medical treatment. Second, he goes further and, according to the report to the Miners' Executive, declares that 'as far as he, Efremenko, was concerned, Klebanov was not a person who needed to be imprisoned', while carefully noting that 'there were legal clauses in the Russian system which prohibited this kind of activity' — that is, the setting up of independent trade unions.

The other great benefit of psychiatric internment is that while seeming to be 'treatment' to ill-informed people in the West, it is actually a much harsher form of repression than imprisonment and one especially used in the case of the most determined and courageous oppositionists. And yet the British miners' leaders seemed to be totally ignorant of the irrefutable evidence of psychiatric abuse in the USSR and do not seem to have considered that Klebanov has been forcibly interned and subject to the kind of drug treatment that has been practiced on other civil rights campaigners in that country.

This problem of information about the forms of repression used in the USSR needs to be squarely faced by socialists in the West. The Soviet authorities respond to all labour movement protests about repression by saying that the protesters are victims of 'bourgeois propaganda'. They try to suggest that the information put out by papers like the Guardian is a pack of lies.

It is certainly true that the mass media in this country select those facts that suit their political viewpoint and ignore other facts; it is also true that news stories are often slanted to give one overall impression rather than another. But socialists in the West are quite capable of spotting such slanting for themselves and sifting the factual information from the surrounding opinion. And in the overwhelming majority of cases the factual information turns out to be correct. In the case of psychiatric abuse in the Soviet Union some people may have been sceptical about press stories on it at first. But when these stories are confirmed by perfectly sane civil rights campaigners who have been subject to such punishment — socialists like Zhores Medvedev, Leonid Plyushch, Victor Fainberg, etc. — and when they are enlarged upon by former Soviet psychiatrists like Marina Voikhanskaya, the Soviet authorities continue to deny the whole thing proclaiming it to be 'bourgeois propaganda'. In short they use socialist suspicions of the mass media here as a way of covering up their own anti-socialist repression. The Labour Movement here should respond to this tactic by continuing to protest against acts of repression reported in the West unless and until the Soviet authorities allow responsible delegations from this country to investigate the facts for themselves on the spot. A couple of hours with the likes of Efremenko are not good enough!

The Miners' delegation that enquired about Klebanov was a very broadly based one, reflecting all currents of opinion within the Union. Responsibility cannot be shifted onto the shoulders of Communist Party members in the Union. The whole executive allowed itself to be hoodwinked by a Soviet official. Up to a point, socialists concerned about workers' rights in the USSR can put such things down to naivete and ignorance on the part of trade union leaders here. But eventually they will come to the conclusion that many trade union leaders, whatever their political views, prefer to enjoy the undoubtedly generous hospitality of their Soviet hosts rather than bothering to risk unpleasantness by showing that they are determined to get to the bottom of such scandalous cases as the internment of Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

SABATA JAILED FOR 9 MONTHS

According to the *Morning Star* of 12 January (all other dailies ignored the news) Charter 77 spokesperson Jaroslav Sabata was jailed for 9 months the day before by a court in the town of Trutnov on the Czech-Polish border. Sabata had pleaded not guilty to a charge of insulting a policeman, which carries a maximum sentence of 1 year. Foreign correspondents were not allowed to attend Sabata's one day trial. He had been held in prison since his arrest on 1 October 1978. (See *Labour Focus* Vol.2 No.5 for the details of his arrest.)

The playwright Vaclav Havel, one of the original Charter spokespersons until his release from jail in the spring of 1977 was made conditional on his relinquishing this

post, has again become a spokesperson on a temporary basis. He replaces Marta Kubisova, who is pregnant.

Havel is confined to his house by the police and shortly before Christmas he was forbidden to receive any visitors. The authorities are threatening to implement a suspended sentence of 14 months in jail which Havel received in October 1977 if he continues to act as a Charter spokesperson.

However, documents on the situation in Czechoslovakia continue to be produced. Charter 77 has recently adopted a new policy on documents, hoping to involve all people who are critical of the regime in preparatory discussion, rather than only produce documents which reflect the opinions of Charter members. The first two

documents to come out since this was decided deal with nuclear power in Czechoslovakia (printed in this issue) and the gypsy problem (which we hope to print in the next issue).

To mark the New Year, Charter 77 spokespeople Vaclav Havel and Ladislav Hejdanek issued a statement which said that despite all difficulties, '... we would like to assure you that our group is alive, working, and is not losing hope that basic civil liberties will gradually be won in Czechoslovakia, and that our fight for them has also a meaning for the future.'

By Susannah Fry

Who is Dr Jaroslav Sabata?

Born in 1927, Jaroslav Sabata joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at the age of 19. At the age of 21 he became press secretary on the Party committee of Brno, the second most important Czech city. For thirteen years he lectured in Marxism-Leninism at Brno University and became head of the Psychology Department there.

In the spring of 1968 Dr Sabata, who was one of the leading intellectual influences behind the Prague Spring, was elected head of the Party in the Brno region and became a member of the Central Committee of the Party.

Dr Sabata was one of the few members of the Party Central Committee who resolutely refused to accept the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and because of his courageous stand he was expelled from the Party in 1969 and sent to do heavy manual labour in an iron foundry.

He refused to abandon his political struggle for socialist democracy and became one of the leaders of the socialist opposition and of the resistance movement against the Soviet occupation. When the Husak regime organised rigged elections in November 1971 Dr Sabata helped to organise a leafletting campaign, pointing out to voters their right to refuse to vote or to cross out the official list of candidates on the ballot paper. For this perfectly legal activity Dr



Dr Jaroslav Sabata, Charter 77 spokesperson now in jail.

Sabata was arrested in November 1971 and jailed in the summer of 1972 for six and a half years on a charge of 'subversion'. His two sons and daughter were also jailed at that time on similar charges.

Already at this time Dr Sabata suffered from ill health. After a heart attack in 1964 he suffered from heart disease and also from duodenal ulcers. In prison he was unable to receive proper treatment for these conditions, was given food which aggravated his ulcer complaint and suffered a severe heart attack in 1972 which left him

unconscious for some days. As a result of a letter he wrote to the Husak regime in 1973—extracts from this letter, outlining his socialist views were published in *Tribune* at the time—his conditions of imprisonment were made stricter.

As a result of massive pressure from the Western labour movements Dr Sabata and others jailed with him were released in December 1976 when he had served just over five years of his six and a half year sentence. The remaining one and a half years of his sentence were not cancelled but simply suspended for a period of 3 years.

Despite his poor state of health—he retired on a disability pension earlier this year—Dr Sabata became one of the three spokespersons of Charter 77 in the spring, replacing former Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jiri Hajek. He was arrested at the beginning of October and has been held in prison ever since. If he is brought to trial it is likely that the government would try to make him serve the one and a half year suspended sentence from his previous conviction in addition to any new sentence stemming from his recent arrest.

By Oliver MacDonald

Charter Representatives Appeal to Western Socialist Leaders

Appeals for international defence of Jaroslav Sabata came first from the Polish Social Self-Defence Committee and from the Charter 77 spokespeople. (See the last issue of *Labour Focus*). These have been followed up by an open letter to the leaders of the West European Socialist Parties, including Jim Callaghan, from 52 Chartists

and non-Chartist socialists in Czechoslovakia. This new letter, signed by former Czech Foreign Minister Jiri Hajek, and former Party Presidium member Frantisek Kriegel, makes a specific request for the Socialist Parties to send observers to any trial of Dr Sabata that may take place. The letter states:

'We are turning to you for very concrete reasons: the methods used by Czechoslovak courts in recent months and years do not correspond to the principle of public court hearings although this principle is declared in Czechoslovak laws and even in the Czechoslovak constitution. At two political trials held in Brno in October 1978 only the

closest relatives of the defendants were admitted to the courtroom, which was crowded with persons whom neither the defendants nor their friends knew. Admission to one of these hearings was denied to even Dr Wolfgang Einberg, an Austrian lawyer, sent to Brno by Amnesty International. Under these circumstances we would welcome if the trial of Charter 77 spokesperson Dr Jaroslav Sabata could be attended by foreign observers and foreign lawyers, and we call upon you to support this demand. This is surely not an exaggerated demand. After all, foreign lawyers and observers were present at the Leipzig trial of Georgi Dimitrov in Nazi

Germany. The USSR offered legal aid in the case of Luis Corvalan a few years ago, thus demonstrating that the Soviet Government considered foreign participation and foreign legal aid in trials of a political nature to be correct in principle and justified.

'Only a public trial with the participation of foreign observers can contribute to providing an objective picture of what really occurred in the vicinity of the Czechoslovak-Polish frontier on 1 October 1978 and reveal the methods of the Czechoslovak State Security Service and Judiciary.'

'Only public court proceedings can contribute to making courts anywhere in the world act independently of the regime and prevent their misuse for the suppression of views and stands differing from those of the ruling circle.'

In Brno and Prague, 10 November 1978.'

Document and translation made available by Palach Press Ltd.)

Sabata on Charter 77 Perspectives

[The following interview with Jaroslav Sabata, the Charter spokesperson now in jail in North Bohemia awaiting trial, was first published in the Austrian independent socialist journal Extrablatt in August 1978. We are publishing here a translation of the Czech version of the interview published by the Charter which includes a number of notes by Sabata indicating misinterpretations of his remarks contained in the Extrablatt version. These notes are included in the text in parenthesis and in italics. The translation is by Susannah Fry. Footnotes are supplied by Labour Focus.]

Professor Sabata, since April you have been one of the three spokespersons of Charter 77. Charter 77 has existed for one and a half years. What do you think it has achieved?

Well, its greatest success is that it still exists after one and a half years. And after our recent discussions I am convinced that it will continue to exist. Of course, it has developed.

How?

We want to involve a wider range of people in the discussion process, which should become permanent. Up till now Charter 77 has published 16 documents. Our next document—the document on documents—should deal with perspectives for this development'. In the future, documents would not be produced by one or another definite group of people but should be widely discussed beforehand also by people who are not directly active in the opposition, but who are critical. These people could be a useful addition to the solution of several questions. In the wider sense, this approach should help to deepen our political perspectives in the long term. Apart from this we would also like it if, because of us, at least part of society gradually created a critical-productive climate and adopted a public stance.

But it is very difficult to conduct such a discussion in conditions of illegality.

Certainly — in practice we are working under conditions of illegality. [According to Sabata, the sense of his words was changed in several places. At this point he expanded on the difficult conditions under which Charter 77 has to work; however, he did not say that these are conditions of 'illegality' - he does not hold with this view.]

We regard ourselves as a united group of people—I say consciously, not an organisation—which works within the framework of Czechoslovak laws. This is our conception which, however, is not accepted by the other side. However, Charter 77 is respected in a certain sense. They refer to us not only as enemies of socialism but also as revisionists, opportunists, or other deviants. One can sense in this an attempt to differentiate us along those lines, and that isn't good because it is an attempt to divide the opposition. We see this quite clearly. On the other hand, the ruling power has to do some window dressing if it doesn't want it to appear that it is suppressing the struggle for human rights. It wants to show that it is we who are breaking the laws, but that's not too easy and so they have to go carefully. It is this which is neostalinism, and not Stalinism of the old type.

But don't repressive measures and the defamation of the opposition strongly remind you of the old Stalinist '50s?

Undoubtedly there is Stalinism within the apparatus, and there are also convinced Stalinists. For example, the major who interrogated me during Brezhnev's visit did not hide the fact that his opinion of Stalin's good policy was the same now as it was 25 years ago. It's an amusing story — he asked me whether I would be willing to relinquish the function of spokesperson of Charter 77. If I did, they would recompense me, my son would be able to go to university. I laughed. And then something strange happened. He laughed too, and said: 'You see, just like Stalin.' Stalin had received the news that his son had been captured quite

An Interview

cold bloodedly. 'Stalin was a good communist and you are also a good communist.' [The interrogator didn't say this, it is the opinion of Sabata himself, which he attributed to the interrogator. This is a mistake by the editor of Extrablatt.]

So I received an attestation that I am a good communist. It's a paradox. But this man is really convinced that repression is a good thing and should be intensified still further. In his own way this highly principled major understands an opponent who takes up the kind of position that I do. But he is not alone. He is an expression of the very aggressive tendencies which are gaining a foothold in the state apparatus. They are a reaction to the discontent which is prevalent in some parts of the bureaucracy, for it is not only composed of members of the police.

Are these only tendencies, or is there a general stepping up of repression?

I must say that the suppression of the opposition is increasing. For example, very stern measures were taken against **Padlock Publications**. A few weeks ago three young people who co-operated with **Padlock** were arrested here in Brno. I am emphasising this because in the West the position of underground publications is sometimes seen in a somewhat rosy light. Until now this activity was a tolerated, semi-legal thing.

Does this increasing repression have anything to do with the approaching anniversary of the Soviet invasion?

Of course. But it seems that the anniversary will be an opportunity for them to turn the screws of repression even more. There are fears that the 21st August will be used as an excuse for still harsher moves.

Is the general public familiar with Charter 77?

There is no easy answer to that. The symbol of Charter 77 is very well known. In Czechoslovakia not just hundreds of thousands but millions of people know that Charter 77 exists and is doing something or other. People are sympathetic, but when it comes to its effects they are more sceptical: 'It's probably no use anyway'. The sense of one's own powerlessness is very strong in this country. But Charter 77 has certainly contributed to the fact that, all the time, more and more people are becoming less and less afraid.

You have talked about the fear on the part of 'those below'. The famous underground group, the Plastic People, had a song about the hundred things feared by the bureaucracy. What about the fear on the part of 'those on top'?

Yes, yes, it's important to know that there are these two kinds of fear. I think we ought to try to reduce the fear on both sides. We don't want to polarise society. It is necessary to differentiate. The Communist Party isn't only composed of the bureaucracy. In certain circles Party members are still motivated by ideological rather than purely personal or unworthy concerns. The ruling Party still has the support of groups which are significant and which can't be classified as purely bureaucratic. Certainly, many people belong to the Party solely for pragmatic reasons, but pragmatic thinking can and will radicalise itself. We can and must, therefore, allow for reforming tendencies within the Communist Party.

Does that mean you envisage the possibility of change, the possibility that the Communist Party can be reformed?

That is something we discuss a lot. Frankly, I'm not a reform communist. I don't want to awaken the illusion in any quarter that the Party could reform itself — and certainly no longer as a result of its own inner processes. [*According to Sabata's additional spoken comment, this passage should express his view that in no case is the Party 'reformable' - capable of rebirth - of itself but, on the contrary, that it is reformable through the inner pressure of a certain type of social development. The editor missed this point.*] I no longer think this at all. But when we say that we are for constructive dialogue, we really mean it: it's not simply a tactic on our part. I don't want to say that the bureaucratic forces are capable of dialogue, but you can't reduce the Party merely to bureaucratic forces. A little example: The assistant in the shop where I usually do my shopping, a Party member, said at a meeting of the ideological commission of the Youth Union that surely a dialogue with the Chartists should be initiated. He's rather a Schweik type², and he wanted to liven up the boring deliberations of the commission a bit. He also said my name. The first sharp reaction of the secretary was: 'How do you know Sabata?!' And then: 'The most that

Sabata's allowed to be here is a cleaner: We're not going to initiate any dialogue with him.' This young shop assistant can't read *Rude Pravo*. 'It turns me off,' he said to me. He would be really glad to have a dialogue with us. And there are many like him in the Party.

The regime considers the Chartists to be the enemies of socialism. What do you think the Chartists really are, politically?

The Chartists mirror the political structure of our country. Naturally, it's a very diverse structure. But beneath the outer diversity—despite the differences in thought processes and starting points—quite a firm unity is emerging. Common to all is a longing for democracy, a strong democratic feeling. And so we have this peculiar situation developing where communists, non-communists, and possibly also those who are psychologically anti-communist, but who have nothing in common with reactionary anti-communists in the West have joined in a common front. There is a great deal of solidarity.

And which various political currents are these?

We have a wing of 'Prague Spring' reform communists. They keep a certain distance from what in their circles is understood as radicalism. In a few cases it would even be possible to say that their position is socially influenced, for it is not only political-ideological factors which play a part. They are former university professors, high Party functionaries ... It's a paradox, on the one side are these reform communists, the moderate wing, and on the other side are the 'infantry', radical and strongly proletarian. Thus, for example, people from the cultural underground are mostly workers. Many of them, moreover, do not have a communist past. It is therefore possible roughly to distinguish between 'moderates' and 'antibureaucratic radicals'. But one must be careful. Politically it's not so simple, and one can't say, this one or that one is right. Things are much more complicated. The process of Charter 77's political maturation isn't yet complete. It's still fermenting.

And where are you in this spectrum, Professor Sabata?

I have already said that I am not a reform communist. The orientation which I support is based on the premise that an independent political force must be established. Most of Charter 77 shows a healthy tendency to unity. And it is not a question of some kind of pragmatic and tactical effort to co-operate on a certain issue but a real movement for a new political formation. This was also apparent in the manifesto 'One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism'. This document was not signed only by socialists in the narrow sense of the term but also by ex-communists, and by members of the opposition with the greatest authority, like Dr Frantisek

Kriegel. Under these names are those of Christian socialists and of 'lone wolves' like Vaclav Havel. The front is quite large and includes the greater part of politically active and thinking people in Charter 77 and the opposition. The radical left in Charter 77, the Trotskyists, didn't sign the text but Petr Uhl told me that he was sorry he wasn't asked to do so. He thought that, as a revolutionary Marxist, he would have been able to sign.

At the same time, there is great dispute over the basic question: what should be the socialist alternative to 'real socialism'? We have agreed on the phrase 'democratic self-government'. [*Extrablatt's conversation with JS was entitled 'Self-government versus "real socialism"'*; JS was sorry *Extrablatt* didn't call it 'Democratic self-government versus "real socialism"'.] This idea has a strong tradition in our country: in all the revolutions and revolutionary crises after the first and second world wars, and also after the collapse of bureaucratic socialism in 1968 a picture, although often unclear, has always emerged — self-governing socialism.

And isn't there a definite contradiction between these great aims and the weaknesses of the Czech opposition and Charter 77?

If we think in terms of power politics, we are weak. We are up against a huge repressive apparatus. But although we are weak in this direction, we are very strong in the moral sense, and that is also power. For a Marxist the idea that one can only counter physical force with physical force does not hold good.

Footnotes.

1. The 'document on documents' refers to the new process of producing 'discussion documents' involving, on occasions, non-Chartists.

2. 'The good soldier Schweik' is probably the most famous character in Czech literature: an innocent whose (sometimes intentional) failure to grasp that people don't always say what they mean causes disaster everywhere.

PLASTIC PEOPLE RECORD OUT!

A record of the underground rock group called **The Plastic People of the Universe** in the period 1973-4 along with a 60-page booklet dealing with the whole Czech underground movement have recently been produced in the West without the knowledge of the artists, using texts and home-made tapes smuggled out of Czechoslovakia. Today, Ivan Jirous and the drummer Jaroslav Vozniak are still in prison along with others who have recently been condemned either for supporting Charter 77 or for circulating musical tapes, etc. The record and booklet may be obtained for £4.50 either from bookshops, eg. The Other Bookshop and Bookmarks, or from the Plastic People Defence Fund, BM 1415, London WC1.

Polish KOR interviews Charter 77 representatives

[In the summer of 1978, two meetings took place between members of the Social Self-Defence Committee 'KOR' and signatories of Charter 77. The interview, published below, was carried out during the second meeting, in September, on the Polish-Czech border. Taking part in the discussions were from Charter 77: Maria Kubisova, a singer and former spokesperson of Charter 77, Vaclav Havel, author and dramatist, current Charter spokesperson, Ladislav Hejdanek, philosopher, evangelical theologian and Charter spokesperson, Pavel Landovsky, actor, and Petr Uhl, youth activist in the period of the Prague Spring and afterwards. For one of the participants we shall only mention the first name, Jiri. The interview was carried out by Jan Litynski and Antoni Macierewicz. The interview was first published in the Information Bulletin No.23 of the Social Self-Defence Committee 'KOR' in Warsaw, 11 September 1978. Made available by Na Lewo. Translation by Pawel Jankowski.]

Charter 77 is not an association, committee or political grouping. It is a committee demanding that human rights be observed. How did it come about that you all met, how did Charter 77 come into existence?

Hejdanek: It began from the trial of the musical group 'Plastic People' in the spring of 1976. An understanding was reached between some intellectuals and the former communist activists removed from the Party after 1968. Cerny, Kriegel, Mlynar, Patocka and Seifert jointly addressed a letter of protest against the trials. This was the first public action since the 'normalisation'. Naturally, prior to that the repression was met with protests from Western public opinion, eg. Böll, Grass, Durrenmatt. Yet inside the country silence reigned.

Havel: This was the first trial of people not connected with political activity, people without a political past. In a system such as ours a crisis occurs when the regime is forced to deal with non-political opponents. So it was in this case. Here it wasn't a question of ideological differences, these were disputes of the past. Young people were brought before the bench and their life style and artistic activities attacked. This fact was to lead to the forging of an understanding between former activists from 1968, Christians and intellectuals and caused them jointly to undertake protest activities. The action was successful. In the first trial people were sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment but following the protests 23 people were released and the remainder had their sentences cut by a year.

An understanding was therefore reached between groups and opposition milieus already in existence. Wasn't this phenomenon, though, grounded on deeper social processes?

Hejdanek: Certainly. In 1976 there was a definitive change in the social and intellectual atmosphere. Something broke within society. The trial of the 'Plastic People' acted like a catalyst of this change.

Havel: Following the years '68-69 the entire society was overtaken by apathy. People didn't want to have anything to do with any kind of opposition. They didn't even want to read typewritten novels. They were afraid. The beginning of the '70s was the period of worst depression. But then suddenly people wearied of weariness and breathed a new life. It's from this that the current climate has emerged. Various isolated groups felt the need for mutual contact, for unity. These people were joined by the need for a mutual witness to truth. This moral need formed the plane on which people so ideologically different as the Eurocommunist Mlynar, the singer Kubisova and the phenomenologist Patocka could meet.

Was the initiative to create the Charter linked to any concrete milieu or group?

Havel: There is no way in which any group could be distinguished. It was a joint initiative taken by certain persons.

The idea of creating the Charter took shape at more or less the same time as the workers' strikes in Poland and the formation of the Workers' Defence Committee. What influence did the events in Poland have on the situation in Czechoslovakia?

Uhl: In order to reply to that we have to return to earlier events — to events which occurred in 1968. Our student movement was greatly influenced by both the Warsaw March events and the Parisian May events. Initially, up to the intervention, the student movement in Czechoslovakia was weak and disorganised, only later did it become a mass movement.

And the student demonstration at the Strahov hostels in Prague in October 1967?

Uhl: Naturally, there were manifestations of student discontent. But these were spontaneous in character, without any organisation. Only after March 1968 did the student movement begin to organise. The influence of the Polish experience could be discerned especially on the philosophy faculty. Much later, because it was in November 1968, the great student strike in Prague was modelled on the strikes by Polish students in March. It appears to me that the events of December 1970 equally had a large measure of influence on the Czechs and Slovaks. It is difficult for me to say anything concrete on the subject as I was in jail at the time. Where the workers demonstrations of June 1976 or the formation of the Workers' Defence Committee are concerned, then in practice we had no information about the course of events in Poland. Clearly information about the formation of the KOR reached us, but that was all. When the Charter was formed, I regretted that it didn't concern itself with such concrete matters as did the KOR.

Hejdanek: I think it was generally felt that a lot more could be achieved in Poland than here. The coming into existence of the KOR undoubtedly had great significance. Because of the different traditions the KOR could not become a model for our activities. Also the fact that the KOR initially gave itself limited aims played a certain role. Following its transformation into the Social Self-Defence Committee and the undertaking of a wider field of activity we published a selection from 10 of the communiqués.



Pavel Landovsky

Vaclav Havel

Havel: For me the June events and then the formation of the KOR had a very great significance. The KOR became for me a programme for action. I believe that the formation of the KOR played a big role for all those who initiated Charter 77. It is difficult to say though whether this was a universal feeling.

It is often said that the opposition in Czechoslovakia is more unified than in Poland. Is the Charter really united in its ideas or is it possible to distinguish various currents?

Havel: Primarily we must emphasise that of the 1000 plus signatories, 600 do not undertake any political activity. They want to bear witness, to live with the truth.

Uhl: As only truth is revolutionary.

Havel: We can, however, talk about three main political currents. The first is formed by the Eurocommunists, that is former members of the CPCz, to whom the ideas put forward by the Spanish and Italian CPs are very close. Among them are Jiri Hajek, Jiri Dienstbier, Jaroslav Sabata or Frantisek Kriegel. Complete ideological unanimity unites these people, but it's difficult to talk of them as a homogeneous grouping. They should not be confused with former communists who find themselves within various ideological currents dependent on their current point of view. Within the second current I would include revolutionary Marxists who represent ideas of workers democracy, people like for instance Petr Uhl. In the main these are young people not connected with the Prague Spring events. The third current comprises the independent socialists like Jiri Müller, Rudolf Battek, Jaroslav Meznik. They are inspired by ideas of social democracy and are advocates of a parliamentary system.

There also exist groups which are impossible to define in political categories. I have in mind above all others those who have become engaged in the Charter as a result of Christian inspiration. They include evangelists, like Ladislav Hejdanek, as well as Catholics such as Jiri Nemeč and Vaclav Benda. There are also politically independent intellectuals, for example, Jiri Grusa, Pavel Kohout and Ludvik Vaculik. I would include myself in this last group. An enormous role is also played by the totally apolitical youth movement termed the 'underground'. The divisions between groups and currents are fluid; under no circumstances should the above list be treated as a fixed and exhaustive schema. For instance, the Marxist Frantisek Kriegel can be located in any group with only great difficulty. One thing is certain, there are no reactionaries amongst us.

And whom do you regard as reactionary?

Hejdanek: I would regard as reactionary all supporters of the steering of society from above, all opponents of ideas of self-government, and all those for whom a tiny elite of the wealthy is more important than the rest of society.

From what we know Charter 77 groups together mainly Czechs. How would you explain the relatively small participation of Slovaks in the Charter?

Jiri: That's a difficult question. The Charter began in Prague; there was rather little propagation of it in Slovakia. Some influence must also have been exerted by the traditional mistrust by Slovaks of Czechs, a certain Slovak conservatism. In Slovakia there was hardly any underground activity, which had formed a natural base for the Charter.

Landovsky: I think that a certain role was played by the fact that in Slovakia there were relatively few former members of the CPCz.

Havel: Slovak society is less structured because the struggle for a national identity was longer and harder. For that reason the national question remains to this day the main problem taxing Slovaks while the struggle for democratic freedoms takes second place.

Charter 77 speaks primarily of the rights of human beings and citizens and the necessity for their observance. Does that sum up the aim of your activities?

Havel: I like the differentiation denoted by Hans Brock. He states that there exist two types of social organisation. Some have pragmatic aims. The Charter can be placed in the second category. It has no immediate aims, it doesn't seek to replace one clique of rulers by another, but it does tend towards social change. The Charter is not therefore a classic opposition.

Is this achievable without political change?

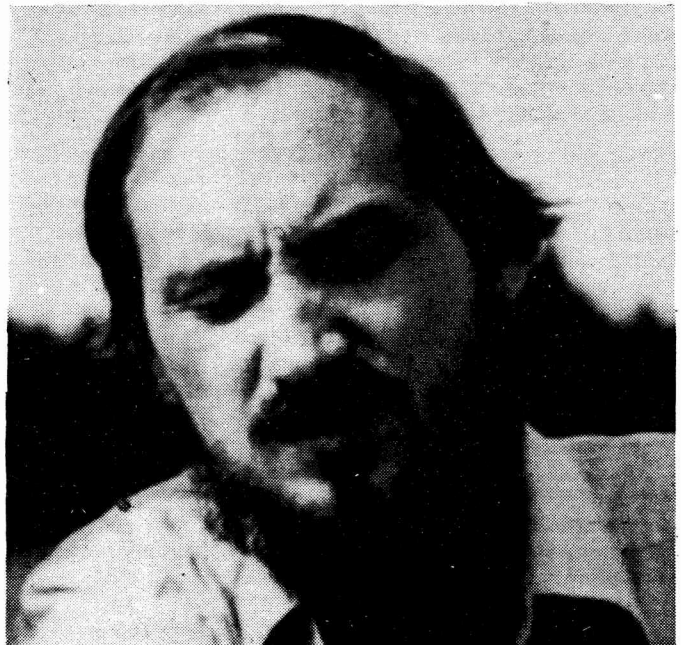
Hejdanek: First and foremost our actions have a moral character, the point of departure for us is humanity. Our aims are therefore in the first place humanitarian and only then political. Changes ought to begin from moral change and then political change can follow. On numerous occasions political changes were carried out but fell on an unprepared society and so were not effective. We want to avoid this in the future.

Do you count on political change in the near future?

Hejdanek: Yes, we have a perspective of about a decade.

Would this be a return to the ideas of the Prague Spring?

Havel: That is not enough today. Even the Eurocommunists consider that the reforms of the Prague Spring were insufficient and that they ought to have gone further. Such is the position of J. Sabata.



Antoni Macierewicz, one of the KSS-KOR members who conducted the interview with the Chartists, and editor of Głos.

Let us assume that a transformation were to take place. Would the Charter come out in favour of any group in the CPCz?

Hejdanek: No, we would continue doing the same as we are today.

While on the subject of the future, do you think that the nations subjugated by the Soviet Union will regain independence?

Hejdanek: I'm convinced that the future does not belong to nations. There ought to be a European federation consisting of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, White Russia, the Ukraine and also Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Are those among you who are religious not apprehensive that, in the event of a change in the political situation, the Eurocommunists would become enemies of religion?

Hejdanek: Mlynar would like to present all the Charter's successes as the victory of the Eurocommunists. But that is a political error: the Eurocommunists are on the defensive every time there is a change in the status quo. There is a danger that people will call for the communists to withdraw from the political arena. But that would not be to the good, either.

We non-communists wish to co-operate with the communists. We have to know how to distinguish between the various communists, working with those who really wish to act for democracy. Only the communists who give up plans to establish their own hegemony can be our partners. Under conditions of democracy, the communists may be in power at one moment, but afterwards they must become just one party among others. Otherwise they will disappear from the political stage.

What led you to become involved in an activity which exposes you to continual trouble, when you could have gone on quietly practising your non-political professions?

Landovsky: Every person wants to be honest — to think while he is working. When the occupation made that impossible, I felt that I was doing something that was not real.

Kubisova: I used to sing protest songs, and people had confidence in me. Although I had had no political education, I could tell what was black and what was white. I did not want to sign any declaration of loyalty. During the seventies I travelled in Western Europe, and it was there that I learnt of the mental 'contortions' undergone by my friends in Czechoslovakia. I wanted to be free. I could have continued my tours and had numerous engagements, but I decided to be a real representative of the Czechs. That is why I do what I am doing now.

Havel: That is how you become a dissident. You want to be free, to

Havel: That is how you become a dissident. You want to be free, to be yourself, and you become a dissident.

Are you free?

Kubisova: Yes, I have been free for ten years ... I have always been free.

Charter 77 Exposes Nuclear Power Scandal

[The document we print below describes two serious accidents at Czechoslovakia's main nuclear power station, and exposes the horrifying situation which exists there due to mismanagement and inadequate observation of safety regulations. It drew an immediate reaction from the Austrian Initiative Against Nuclear Power Stations, an influential group in the hitherto successful movement against nuclear plants, which called on the Austrian government to take action against the construction of such plants in neighbouring countries. The Czechoslovak government has issued a 'categorical denial' of these allegations. As the authors state below, however, all nuclear information in Czechoslovakia is kept completely secret, and in view of this policy a denial is inevitable.]

This document is the first document to be produced as a 'discussion document', intended to stimulate wide public discussion, rather than reflect any definite attitude within the Charter. It does not necessarily echo the view of all Chartists. The

Part 4. Nuclear power in Czechoslovakia.

The construction of nuclear power stations in Czechoslovakia has several specific problems. The first of them is the difficulty of finding a suitable place, owing to the density of the population. There is a requirement that it should be at least three kilometres (25 in the USSR) from the nearest habitation; further, the site has to fulfil certain geological and meteorological conditions (it has to have impermeable foundations and be in a well ventilated situation). The construction of nuclear power stations, the conditions of their operation and especially the safety of their operation are not, however, the subject of legally binding regulations (for the so-called atomic law has not been passed) and the conditions of construction and operation are determined by the instructions issued by the International Atomic Energy Authority. A further specific problem is the dependence of Czechoslovak nuclear energy on the USSR monopoly of imports. This dependence can be seen in the restricted choice of installations and also in questions of safety. Something which in the USSR is seen as adequate, also taking into account the density of the population, does not suit Czechoslovak conditions. For example, until recently the question of containment was explained by saying

authors of this document are all experts on nuclear power.

In the first part they describe the dangers of radioactivity to health. Then they go on to talk about the movement of opposition to nuclear power in the West. One positive result of this, they say, is that intense public interest in the question has forced governments to respond to public opinion and concern themselves more with the safety of nuclear installations. They describe the risks inherent in the operation of nuclear reactors, the dangers of contamination from escaped radioactive material and waste and the measures which can be taken to prevent this or at least limit it. They point out that the best safety arrangement is the 'containment' system, but that it adds 30% to installation costs. We are printing the last two thirds of the document, which deals with the experience of nuclear power in Czechoslovakia and the authors' proposals about what should be done. Translated from the Czech by Susannah Fry for Labour Focus.]

that it was a means by which capitalist construction firms could artificially raise their income. This point of view was only changed after several accidents. Another specific problem is the senseless concealment of basic data, even from experts. This data is frequently incomplete and so the plans are changed and augmented right up till the last moment. This state of affairs hinders the preparation of the valuable safety report, which is an analysis of safety conditions and regulations under normal operation and in the case of certain types of accident. 'Cadre politics', which led to the dismissal of a number of leading experts in the years 1969-1970 has had an equally unfavourable effect on the situation in the nuclear energy field.

At the moment there are four nuclear reactors in Czechoslovakia. In Pilsen a small experimental reactor SRI has been installed, which is working with zero output. At Reze near Prague there are two reactors: TRO, with zero output, and VVR, a research reactor with a low output. The fourth installation is the nuclear power station A.1 at Jaslovske Bohunice in West Slovakia, near the spa of Piestany. In view of the fact that this is the only nuclear power station on Czechoslovak territory we will devote our attention primarily to it.

Part 5. The nuclear power station A.1. at Jaslovske Bohunice.

A.1. works with a heavy-water reactor cooled by carbon dioxide. The project was started about twenty years ago. According to the original idea, it was to be a semi-experimental operation with an output of approximately 50 megawatts; later in view of the critical energy situation the plans were changed to provide for full operation with a planned output of 150 megawatts. The power station was put into operation in December 1973; three years and two months later, in February 1977, production was stopped. However, for a large part of that time it was out of action as a result of frequent accidents, some big, some small. Actual output amounted to at most 100 megawatts. A.1. is not equipped with containment. Safety in case of accident is ensured by shields over the critical parts of the primary circuit, from where escaping radioactive material can drain into four emergency gas containers. From here the radioactive materials are to be released through filters into a chimney after they have ceased to be radioactive. The problem of radioactive waste has not been solved satisfactorily: all waste was stored within a special area inside the perimeter of the power station, where it still is today. Recently the possibility of adding it in small doses to the building materials in those parts of the structure which are underground has been considered. According to long-standing international conventions, spent fuel elements have to be taken away to the producer for reprocessing. There is a similar agreement between the Soviet Union as producer and Czechoslovakia as operator. So far, since A.1 came into operation no elements have been taken away. Spent fuel elements are stored in a tank which was more than half full at the time when A.1 was closed, in February 1977. It was assumed that, should the tank become full—if the Soviet side did not remove the elements—a further one would be built.

The best Czechoslovak atomic experts participated in the preparation of the A.1 project. At this stage A.1 was comparable with contemporary projects abroad, including as far as safety of operation was concerned. However, in the course of construction, and especially in the course of operation the situation changed rapidly. During construction serious organisational inadequacies had already appeared — at a certain period no complete technical documentation existed. The automatic charging apparatus for fuel elements was never put into operation; the reason given was that building material had not been cleared away from the space required. Similarly, safety arrangements were renewed sporadically during operation, usually after an accident and then only in the part directly connected with it.

A disturbing state of affairs reigned especially in the organisation of work and interpersonal relations. In an operation whose safety depends to a considerable extent not only on the expertise but on the psychological and moral qualities of the employees, on their willing co-operation and on the quality of psycho-social relations, these factors were simply ignored. The nuclear power station offered good pay and bad working conditions. This was also reflected in the employment structure: the good experts did not stay long and only those who were interested in the good pay remained. Alcoholism spread, and there was theft, even of radioactive objects.

The reactor operator has a crucial position for the operation and safety of the reactor. This work has been evaluated as psychologically one of the most demanding that exist. However, neither the criteria of choice nor the working conditions corresponded to this evaluation. Applicants for the job of operator were not subjected to any psychological examination. In developed countries the working day in similar professions have been reduced to 6 hours or less, while at A.1 16-hour shifts were commonly tolerated. In addition the reactor operators at A.1 were exposed to further psychological strain because of the preference given to requirements of production over those of safety; for example, small infringements of operational parameters above the permitted value were tolerated as long, of

course, as this did not result in an accident; when there was an accident the operational and radiation regulations were of course the starting point for investigation. On the other hand, a reduction in output or stopping the reactor—unless it was absolutely necessary—resulted in moral and financial sanctions. A similar approach to the radiation regulations was also common. Czechoslovak radiation regulations are some of the strictest in the world; in practice, however, they are some of the least respected.

Another important thing was the pressure on employees to work in the radiation area. As a result of various faults it is occasionally necessary for a certain operation to be performed within a radioactive environment. These operations are distributed among a number of people so that none of them receives more than the permitted dose of radiation in a certain period ... At A.1, as a result of frequent accidents, it came to the point where all the employees whose job it also was to work in the radiation area, had exceeded the safety limit. In such a case other employees were forced to do this work. Refusal was punished with sanctions, for example, depriving them of premiums.

During the operation of the power station there were two major disasters. The first, on 5 January 1976, was caused by a technical fault. According to the official account a washer got into the charging mechanism, which prevented the safe assimilation of a new fuel element. A mistake by personnel was suspected but nothing was proved. At a pressure of 6 MPa the element was expelled from the reactor, and behind it, highly radioactive coolant (carbon dioxide) escaped into the area of the reactor under the same pressure. The order to leave the site was given. At this two employees who were not at their workplace at the moment of the accident rushed to the emergency exit which, however, was closed in order to prevent thefts. Before they could run to the next exit they were asphyxiated by escaping carbon dioxide. The radioactive gas was sucked up into the emergency gas holders and after a short expiry time was released into the atmosphere through filters. This accident should be counted as the equivalent of the maximum possible accident, the probability of which is given as small enough to be disregardable (once in 1026 years) for it caused a direct leak of gas from the primary circuit. The capacity of the emergency gas containers and filters was understandably inadequate to cope with a disaster of these proportions and consequently the radioactive gas was partially released into the atmosphere. Details of the amount of this radioactivity are strictly concealed even from the employees, who have been given only the incredible information that the permitted values were not exceeded.

The second serious accident occurred as a result of negligence in assembling a fuel element and a mistake in charging it. The primary circuit overheated, the fuel element was damaged by heat and the caisson piping was affected. As a result carbon dioxide and deuterium penetrated and thus contaminated the primary circuit. Overheating damaged the tightness of the steam generator and part of the secondary circuit was contaminated. The escaping radioactive tritium was sucked into the operating rooms by the airtight mechanism. When the reactor was stopped part of the radioactive vapour from the secondary circuit was released into the atmosphere. Through carelessness a certain amount of neutralising fluid was also released into the drainage system, and as a result a stream in the nearby village of Zikovec was poisoned. The stream was fenced off for a time.

Since this disaster A.1 has been out of action because of serious damage to the reactor. The question of what to do with it is still unanswered. Its operation was singularly unprofitable and unreliable, to repair it would require a disproportionately large outlay and it would be necessary to carry out a relatively large amount of assembly directly within the radioactive zone of the reactor. The simplest thing would be to demolish the power station. The problem, however, would be to explain the demolition, because the disaster has not so far been officially

acknowledged and information about it is concealed. For example, in a television shot of A.1, taken at a time when the power station was out of action following an accident, the television crew switched pocket torches on and off behind the control panel to imitate signals. There are even serious doubts about whether the Czechoslovak side has provided the International Atomic Energy Authority with the real details of the nature and extent of both accidents, which is its agreed duty as a member.



Part 6. The construction of further nuclear power stations.

At the moment further nuclear power stations of the more modern Voronezh type with light water reactors are at various stages of construction or planning. They are the following: Jaslovske Bohunice: VVER.1; one reactor nearly finished, a second under construction. VVER.2; the site is being prepared. There will be four reactors in all with an output of 4 x 440 megawatts. Dukovany in South Moravia: VVER.3 and VVER.4, similarly 4 x 440 megawatts; the earthworks have been completed. Project for a 1000 megawatt reactor in South Bohemia is at the planning stage.

Part 7. Conclusions.

In view of the experiences of A.1, which one cannot describe as anything but terrifying we are putting forward a few proposals and demands about which the Czechoslovak and foreign public—and especially the public of neighbouring lands—should be informed. Our proposals and demands should be judged especially by qualified experts, both in Czechoslovakia and within the International Atomic Energy Authority. The responsible economic and state bodies and institutions—in harmony with national and international law—should then decide on them. Our basic assumption is that 'man has a basic right to freedom, equality and pleasant conditions of life, which facilitate a dignified and healthy life' and that in addition 'he has a serious responsibility, which consists in the preservation and improvement of the environment for present and future generations'. (Quoted from the first principle of the Declaration of Principles of the UN Conference on the Environment, Stockholm, 15-16 June 1972). We feel this responsibility with great urgency and we refer especially to these elements of national and international law. [They here quote a number of articles of domestic and international law.]

In view of the cited provisions in law and agreements we are justified in suggesting that experts in various fields should put forward their views on the need for the development of nuclear energy and its risks in a public discussion, supported by state institutions and social organisations and assured by the mass media. We consider it urgent that the population of the areas surrounding nuclear power stations be informed of the nature of the operation and aspects of its safety and that information on previous accidents, their causes and effects be immediately published. Only on the basis of public opinion, possibly in the form of a plebiscite, is it possible to decide the basic problem; should Czechoslovakia continue to develop nuclear energy or look for alternatives (the introduction of technologies which demand less energy, the cessation of unprofitable operations, the use of other sources of energy, including solar power). We think that if it is decided to continue with the development of nuclear energy, society—to the extent that public opinion functions within it—will continually return to this basic question, especially to the question of the optimal degree of this development.

Under present conditions, when society is not informed about the risks of nuclear operations, and in the event that it is decided in future to develop nuclear energy we consider it necessary to:

—Inform the public about all the aspects of safety in the operations of nuclear power stations and include this question in school curricula.

—Ensure that complete basic material and plans are handed over and make them accessible to the wider informed public so that there would be an independent control over safety. (It is senseless to keep these materials secret for strategic reasons, because the level of contemporary projects is higher in the developed countries.)

—To insist, unconditionally, during the planning and construction of new installations, on the use of all possible effective safety measures, including containment, even if it is necessary to buy them for hard currency.

—To devote maximum attention to the compilation of valuable safety reports which would lay down, among other things, the safety measures which would follow on a mistake of one of the personnel and which would pay sufficient attention to the prevention of serious damage to the fuel elements resulting from boiling or melting of the fuel, a type of accident which has occurred in similar installations in East Germany and possibly also in the USSR and Bulgaria.

—To safeguard operations on the organisational and personal side and from the point of view of working conditions, so that personnel failure as a result of lack of expertise, psychological unsuitability, exhaustion, diminished responsibility due to the use of alcoholic drinks, or other drugs, and further, the influence of a tense social or working atmosphere or of disproportionate or conflicting demands, should be eliminated as far as possible. To this we add the removal of political discrimination in all professions and employments in nuclear energy and the introduction of strict psychological criteria, the employment of an official work psychologist (possibly a sociologist as well) with extensive powers, in each power station. Further we demand systematic care for the social conditions of the employees, and finally the strict implementation of the principle that the individual who is making operational decisions (especially the reactor operator) has always, when uncertain, the right to decide in favour of safety, even when this is not objectively necessary.

—In the interests of the thorough upholding of operational regulations, to introduce and implement the principle that where a certain regulation is unnecessarily strict, no-one has the right to break it or infringe the statutory limit until a new binding revision of those regulations relating to this limit is adopted.

(Document made available by Palach Press Ltd.)

POLAND

Rising Tensions in Poland by Peter Green

During the last quarter of 1978, in worsening economic conditions and amid signs of renewed political tension, there are some indications that the Polish Party leadership may be attempting to prepare the ground for a shift in political tactics.

The most overt signs of political tension were two demonstrations involving thousands of people in Warsaw and the northern port of Gdansk. The Warsaw demonstration took place on 11 November, the 60th anniversary of the creation of an independent Polish state in 1918. After the celebration of Mass by Cardinal Wyszyński in front of a crowd of many thousands, a large number of the participants marched, apparently spontaneously, through Warsaw to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The *Daily Telegraph* (13 November) reported that a crowd of about 5,000 participated, repeatedly singing the national anthem and shouting religious and nationalist slogans. The *Times* of the same day reported chants of 'Respect Human Rights', while an account given to *Labour Focus* mentioned frequent references to Katyn, the place in the Soviet Union where thousands of Polish officers were massacred, apparently by the Soviet security police, during the Second World War.

The second, and in some ways more remarkable, demonstration took place in Gdansk on Monday 18 December. The Social Self-Defence Committee (KSS-KOR) and the Movement for Human and Citizens' Rights (ROPCIO) had called this demonstration to mark the 8th anniversary of the gunning down of hundreds of striking shipyard workers by the Gomulka regime in 1970. According to *Le Monde* of 20 December, some 4,000 people marched to the shipyards and laid wreaths at the place where the first killings of workers occurred. After the participants had dispersed peacefully some 20 people were detained by the police and 15 house searches were carried out, but there has been no news of anyone being brought to trial. Although the demonstration was not a response to any current policy of the regime's it was a very significant event, indicating a degree of influence on the part of the civil rights opposition which must give cause for concern in ruling circles.

A further political development that must be worrying the regime is the continued peasant resistance to the new pension laws. These laws, which amount to an additional tax which bears heavily on the poor peasants, have provoked widespread refusals on the part of peasants to pay the pension contributions. In the last two issues of *Labour Focus* we have reported the creation of peasant defence committees in

the central and eastern provinces of the country. On 14 November the KSS-KOR reported the creation of a further self-defence committee in southern Poland. At the same time the number of peasants refusing to pay their contributions has risen from a quarter of a million in May to 480,000, or 15% of the total number of farmers in October 1978, according to *The Times* of 5 October. The tradition of an independent peasant movement remains strong in Poland and the authorities must fear the link up of such a movement with working class action in the future.

These political events have been taking place against a background of increasingly severe economic difficulties. Regular travellers to Poland report that the supplies of meat and other consumer goods in Warsaw have deteriorated markedly since a year ago and that consumer shortages are reminiscent of the last period of Gomulka's rule. The special 'commercial' shops established two years ago to sell meat at higher prices than the subsidised normal outlets increased their prices at the beginning of June by 20%. Despite this shortages subsequently became severe in these shops also and the authorities instituted yet another, third tier of food retailers with even higher prices. Frustration with the consumer shortages is being more openly expressed within the better-off sections of the population and there seems to be no end of the crisis in sight.

The government has failed to solve the country's balance of payments deficit and it now faces a critical shortage of hard currency with which to repay Poland's very substantial credits from the capitalist world. 1979 and 1980 are the years when a large part of the credits gained in the early 1970s are due for repayment and there has been talk in Western financial circles of Poland having to seek a rescheduling of its debt repayments. According to the *Financial Times* of 30 November, Poland's hard currency balance of payments deficit this year will be 1.1 billion dollars and the Polish Ministry of Finance estimates that the deficit will still be running at between 500 and 700 million dollars in 1979.

If the government does have to seek a rescheduling of its debt payments then the normal practice in the capitalist world would be for international financial circles to require the defaulting government to impose stringent measures of domestic 'retrenchment', in other words attack working class living standards. And this would mean risking the sort of confrontation with the Polish working class which the Party leadership has desperately tried to avoid since the strike movement of June 1976.



Jailed worker activist Kazimierz Switon (left)

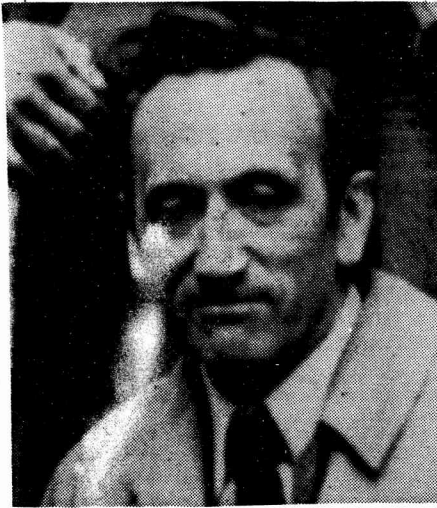
On 1 November the *Morning Star* reported that Gierek, in a major speech to senior Party and government officials, had predicted serious economic difficulties and called for tough austerity measures. Opposition circles in Warsaw speak of important differences within the Party leadership over economic policy, and these are presumably connected to the political implications of the various options open to the government on the economic front.

There have been some signs of the possible direction of the thinking of circles around Gierek, suggesting an attempt to win the tolerance of at least sections of the intellectual opposition for a tougher line over working class living standards. The authorities seem to be adopting an increasingly differentiated policy of handling intellectual opposition currents in Warsaw on one hand and working class activists in the provinces on the other. These distinctive approaches can be symbolised in the cases of two men who participated in a hunger strike in May 1977 demanding the release of workers still in jail after the strikes of June 1976. Among the hunger strikers in St Martin's Church, Warsaw, were T. Mazowiecki, the editor-in-chief of the Catholic monthly *Wież*, and Kazimierz Switon, a worker from Katowice. In November Kazimierz Switon was in jail after suffering repeated harassment and brutalities from the police for his activities as a co-founder and leader of the Free Trade Unions Organising Committee in Upper Silesia, while T. Mazowiecki was being invited to participate in discussions on the country's problems with leading Party officials in the Gierek circle.

The police have been remorselessly hunting down and harassing working class activists involved in the production of *Robotnik* (The Worker), a fortnightly workers' paper, and participating in the trade union

committees that have been functioning in Katowice and Gdansk. Between January and October 1978 Switon was detained for 48 hours by the police on no less than 12 occasions, and in August he was jailed for 5 weeks on the trivial pretext of failing to renew the licence for his air-gun. On 14 October he was seized by the police and beaten up when coming out of church with his family and was charged two days later with 'causing a crowd to gather', getting 2 months in jail for it. Similar acts have been committed by the police on Wladislaw Sulecki, a miner from Gliwice colliery in Upper Silesia and a member of the editorial board of **Robotnik**. His wife and children were driven to leave Poland and go into emigration in West Germany. The police tried to force Sulecki to do the same, but he has refused. Similar tough action has been taken against peasant activists involved in organising peasant resistance to the Government's new pension laws which are in effect an extra tax on the poorer peasants. (See the last two issues of **Labour Focus**).

At the same time, meetings took place in November and December in Warsaw between leading Party figures and currents within the intellectual opposition which the authorities no doubt feel to be the more 'responsible' critics of its policy. At the first meeting in November about 100 people discussed the social and economic problems



Editor-in-chief of *Wiesz*, T. Mazowiecki

of Poland. According to *Le Monde* of 21 December, the participants included Rakowski, the editor of the Party weekly *Polityka*, S. Zawadzki, one of Gierek's advisers—both of whom are on the Party Central Committee—and such opposition figures as the film director Andrzej Wajda, T. Mazowiecki of *Wiesz*, Wozniakowski of the Catholic University in Lublin and an editor from the Catholic publishing house, *Znak*. The second meeting, scheduled to take place in December, was apparently likely to involve a representative of the Catholic hierarchy. The circles around Gierek no doubt hope to reach a modus

vivendi with the official Catholic opposition thus isolating the more radical wing of the opposition movement at a time when more stringent measures against the working class are contemplated. Before Christmas, *Polityka* was running a lively debate on the need for greater work discipline and allowing correspondents to raise the suggestion of creating a pool of unemployment as a means of disciplining the working class.

There are indications that some sections of the opposition may be winnable to some measures involving a cut in working class living standards. An analysis of the economic crisis produced unofficially by some economists in opposition circles and introduced by Professor Lipinski, a member of KSS-KOR, accepted the need to reduce working class living standards to meet the crisis. However, this does not appear to be an official KOR position and the programmatic statement from the KSS-KOR which we reproduce in this issue gives a central place to defending the social and economic interests of the working class. This marks a definite development of KSS-KOR's concerns, beyond the field of civil and democratic rights and it runs parallel with a very vigorous defence of working class activists suffering repression at the hands of the police.

A Programme of Action

[Many socialists in the West are puzzled as to what the KSS-KOR (often known in English as the Workers' Defence Committee) stands for in political terms. The document which we print below is the fullest statement of political position so far made by the organisation. First established in September 1976 under the name of KOR (the Polish initials of 'Workers' Defence Committee') the organisation confined itself to one concrete case: defence of workers who suffered repression after the nationwide strikes of June 1976. In the summer of the following year, the KOR had changed its name to KSS-KOR, meaning the Social Self-Defence Committee and began to concern itself with cases of civil and political rights affecting all sections of the population. With the publication of this document, under the title of 'Appeal to the Nation', KSS-KOR recognised an expansion of its concerns to general economic, social and political problems.]

The workers' protest in June 1976 revealed the deep crisis in the economic and social life of the country. The period of two years which has elapsed since that time was long enough to allow one to expect that the authorities would at least give an outline of prospects for solving the crisis. Unfortunately the causes of the outbreak have not been removed in those two years, new sources of tension have arisen instead. Growing disorganisation and torpor ravage the economic, political, social and cultural life of the country. In this serious situation we consider it our duty to turn to the Polish people with an assessment of the situation and an attempt to indicate remedial measures within their reach. We would also wish our statement to be a warning to the authorities against continuing the policy of consciously ignoring genuine social problems and shirking solutions. The results of such a policy have many times proved fatal to the people and all responsibility for them must rest on the authorities.

1. The increase in food prices rejected by the people in 1976 was replaced by a covert increase. The method of putting onto the

market more expensive articles under new names and withdrawing cheaper articles is practised on a wide scale. This tactic is used in the case of many industrial articles and most foodstuffs, not excluding even bread and pastry. The rise in prices in the nationalised trade is reflected in the private trade causing a considerable increase in the price of vegetables and fruit. It is difficult to estimate the scale of this type of price increase but there is no doubt that if official changes are added, inflation is much higher than it would appear from official data.

The supply difficulties are growing steadily both in the case of industrial articles and foodstuffs. It is impossible to buy many articles in the shops without queuing up, without an enormous waste of time, without connections or bribery.

The problem of meat supplies has not been solved. It is difficult to accept the development of a commercial shops network, in which a kilo of sausage costs roughly the daily wage of an average worker (150-200 zlotys) as a solution. Lately meat rationing has been introduced in some industrial plants (for example: Nowa Huta, Rosa Luxemburg factory). We do not know whether rationing of meat products is necessary at present. It is impossible to form an opinion until the authorities publish a full balance sheet (production, export and consumption of meat). It is certain, however, that if rationing is introduced it should apply to the whole country and the decision should be approved by the people. The covert increase in prices and the supply difficulties result in a drastic increase in the cost of living which hits first of all the poorest classes.

2. The Health Service is in a desperate state. For many years not enough has been invested in it and as a result the number of hospital beds, insufficient to start with, has decreased (psychiatry, maternity wards: Statistical Year, 1977). Owing to the lack of space and to the technical state of the great majority of hospitals which have not been renovated since before the war,

the sanitary conditions in many hospitals are a threat to the patients.

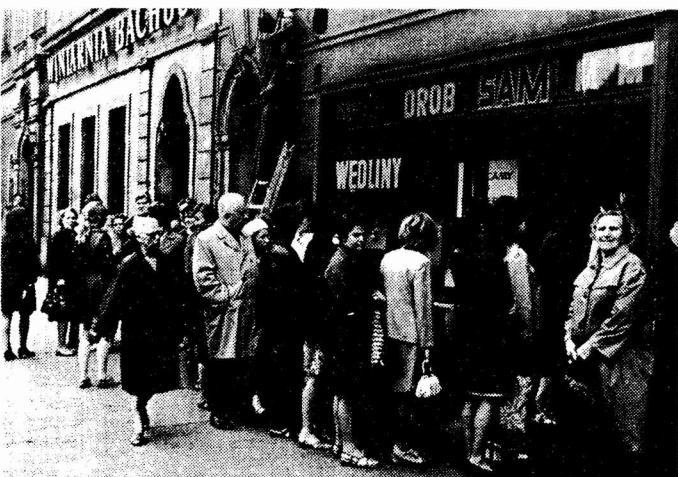
Poor diet and shortage of medicines both in hospitals and on the market are an additional obstacle to treatment.

Against this background, the fact that a special, modern hospital for dignitaries is under construction in Miedzylesie and medicines are specially imported for it can only mean that the authorities are fully aware of the state of the health service and collecting premiums for the Social Health Fund is a cynical abuse.

3. There has been no improvement either these last years in the dramatic housing situation. The waiting lists grow longer from year to year and so does the waiting period. At the same time the cost of housing increases steadily burdening to a considerable degree the family budget (the rent plus the repayment of loans from the housing cooperative amount to 3000 zlotys per month).

4. The authorities try to make up for the economic disorganisation by increased exploitation of the workers. The working day for many groups often grows longer. Drivers, miners, workers in the building industry and in other professions work 10-12 hours a day.

Depriving the miners of compensatory days for working on Saturdays, compulsory work on Sunday and the wage system, in which one day's absence even if more than justified (illness, death in the family) results in about 20% lower monthly wages, is something which may be compared only to the exploitation of the workers in the early days of capitalism.



A familiar sight in Warsaw, shoppers queuing.

5. Comparison of the daily wages of the workers with the prices in commercial shops reveals another disturbing fact: an increase in the stratification of society. There are too great wage differentials (not related to qualifications) and in retirement pensions. We have in Poland families which live under extremely difficult conditions and a few families which have no material worries. An additional factor which increases social inequalities is the existence of privileges for groups connected with those in power: extra supplies, special health service, housing allocation, building sites allotment, foreign currency allocation, special rest centres — are but a few of the facilities enjoyed by the ruling group. As a result they become alienated from the community and do not see the real problems facing it. When we learn that the funds assigned to the development of agriculture are used to put up a governmental centre in Bieszczady and that in this connection the local people (village of Wolesate) are resettled somewhere else, we must take this as proof that the authorities have lost touch with reality.

The material collected by the CDW/CSS Intervention Bureau and published in the Documents of Lawlessness are proof of the militia and security service impunity. Even functionaries guilty of murdering arrested people do not suffer any consequences for their action. In the case of Zbrozyna both the investigation and the trial which ended with the death of the main witness in prison and a long prison sentence for two people whose guilt was not

proved were fabricated in order to protect those responsible for his murder. The Courts of Misdemeanour which were given wider powers at the expense of the judiciary, do not even try to keep up appearances of observing the law. The Prosecutor's Office, contrary to legislation, does not react to the complaints it receives while the Council of State, the Sejm and the Ministry of Justice remain blind to all signs of growing degeneration and anarchy in the police force and administration of justice.

8. The usurpation by the party of the exclusive right to lead the nation without having to render account, to impose judgments and decisions in all spheres of life are particularly dangerous to Polish learning and culture.

The drastic restrictions on the scope and freedom of academic research and the publication of its results, especially in humanities: in philosophy, economy, sociology, history, the rigid demands of an imposed doctrine which has long lost its ideology and consists of a collection of dogmas and arbitrary regulations dictated by the authorities, the appointment to academic posts of incompetent but docile performers of the instructions of the political apparatus — all this has done irreparable harm to Polish culture; not only does it check its development, it makes the preservation and cultivation of its past achievements impossible. Literature, theatre, films—the branches of culture where the word dominates—are particularly vulnerable when the freedom of thought is arbitrarily stifled and all creative activity frustrated. Culture withers away in such conditions. Literature, a vital factor —although its influence cannot be measured—in the spiritual life of a nation, is either reduced to the role of the performer of the instructions of the authorities and forced to break with the truth about the reality we live in or it is tolerated as harmless and absurd. Culture can only defend itself by means of the public initiative taken up a couple of years ago to publicise works outside state control and to engage in studies free of deforming mendacity.

The system of preventive censorship does not only strike at culture and learning but at the social and economic life as a whole. Censorship stifles not only all criticism but all authentic information which, against the wishes of the party, might allow the people to judge the situation for themselves. The Book of Annotations and Recommendations (GUKPPiW) published by the CDW/CSS reveals the extent of the censorship's interference in all spheres of life. The ever widening area of silence produced by discrimination of the living contemporary culture is taken over by a substitute product — blown up to monstrous proportions and omnipresent — entertainment in all its forms, numerous pop festivals, a poor second-best culture which is popularized and which stifles the deeper cultural aspirations of the nation and lowers systematically the level of its spiritual needs.

More and more often we find that children inherit the privileges of their parents. The principle of an equal start for the young is an illusion.

In a situation where the whole society is going through an economic crisis and the poor suffer the most, special privileges for the ruling group provoke moral indignation and anger.

6. The basic element of the economic, social and political situation in the country in recent years is the deepening crisis in agriculture. The results of a policy of discrimination and of destroying family farming conducted in the last 30 years have now become evident. Despite that, more is produced on one hectare of land in family farming than on one hectare of land in socialized farming. But huge investment means continue to be directed to the State Farms and production cooperatives despite the fact that the cost of running the State Farms exceeds the value of their products.

In the last years the difficulties connected with the general economic crisis, such as the shortage of coal, fertilizers, fodder, agricultural machines and building materials are particularly felt. This radically restricts the investments of individual farmers and it is the reason for the young people leaving the farms.

Bad organisation and corruption in the state procurement centres result in the waste of agricultural products ready for the market. With the recent introduction of the pension scheme individual farmers' payments to the state often exceed half of their incomes. Their refusal to pay premiums, which was done by more than 250,000 farmers in the country, is the best indication of their attitude to the state agricultural policy.

7. Violation of the principles of the rule of law, which became apparent during the June events, appears to be common practice. The beating up of arrested people by the militia is not confined to a few isolated cases, but is a form of militia law sanctioned by higher authorities.

The works of the most outstanding representatives of science and culture are banned from publication. The more ambitious films are not allowed on the screen, whole periods of earlier history are omitted or falsified. The Polish Primate, the highest moral authority in the country, warned against this phenomenon considering it a threat to our national and cultural identity. The threat of censorship to culture and art was the subject of the Polish Union of Writers' Congress and of the letter of the Polish PEN Club.

The system of disinformation is a vicious circle which also takes in the authorities who have made it. According to **Zycie Warszawy** 65% of statistical entries received by the Main Statistical Office are false and even this assessment should be taken as optimistic. It is not possible to make right decisions on the basis of false information. Paralysis will spread across the country.

The authorities afraid of their own people cannot tell them the truth about the situation. The so-called 'economic manoeuvre' propagated as a way out of the crisis turned out to be a collection of temporary, arbitrary and uncoordinated interferences in the economic life of the country. Progressive economic disorganisation ensued:

- lock-up of investments brought about losses amounting to millions, resulting from the interruption of building projects;
- drastic restrictions of imports caused a stand-still lasting many weeks in factories throughout Poland;
- large exports of food rob the home market;
- disintegration of the planned economy system, accompanied by the rejection of market economy and continuation of the anachronistic system of controlling industry and business by means of central directives and orders has deprived the economy of any regulating mechanism.

The system of arbitrary and irrevocable decisions of the party-government authorities who claim infallibility has wrought havoc beyond measure in the social consciousness of the nation. Opposition to all independent views, insistence on unreserved obedience to all directives form an hypocritical attitude devoid of ideals and promote conformism, servility and careerism. These traits are a recommendation when it comes to filling executive posts. People who are competent, enlightened and capable of independent thought are barred from promotions and often from obtaining a job. The spreading nihilism within the society has yielded heavy drinking, cunning, corruption and contempt for honest work.

Basic economic reforms are essential. However, even the most thought out, the most consistent reforms will not bring any improvement if they come up against a barrier of social indifference and discouragement.

The Conferences of the Workers' Self-Government at the PUPW service will not liven up the economy. The Committees for Social Control whose members are appointed by the authorities and are subject to them, will not get at the source of wastefulness, corruption and lawlessness. The only result will be a further disorganisation of the life of the country.

II.

There are enormous reserves of initiative, action and energy which can bring the country out of its crisis. They will be released only under the condition that all social spheres are truly represented. Publication of true and full information concerning the economic and social situation is also an essential condition. Only when these conditions are fulfilled (cooperation between the rulers and the ruled) will it be possible to work out a detailed programme to improve the economic system and the social situation. The programme should be drawn up on the basis of wide discussions, with the participation of independent experts. If these conditions are disregarded all attempts at establishing a contact with the people will only result in a dialogue of the rulers with the rulers.

1. The December 1970 and June 1976 experience has shown that it is possible to obtain concessions from the authorities by means of social pressure. However, the results proved to be short-lived. In no time the authorities took back from the disintegrated society what it had obtained. Only a steady, wide and organised pressure can bring positive results.

Towards the end of 1975 the project to amend the Polish Constitution advanced by the authorities was under discussion. The proposals put forward by the citizens in their letters and



Edward Lipinski KSS-KOR member

petitions may be considered as a new approach to the way the objective of independent social action may be obtained. The objective is to secure the freedom of convictions, freedom of speech and information, the freedom of assemblies and meetings, the freedom of the press, the responsibility of the state authorities towards the society. Action aimed at attaining this objective should create social links, consistently destroyed in a system of a monopolistic, centralised rule. It should be taken up independently of the official organisational structures. But it is not by helpless despair that the society can regain its rights and set the way to improve the situation — this, it may achieve only through a consistent, determined and dignified insistence on its rights. This conviction found its expression in the Declaration of the Democratic Movement, published in October 1977, worked out in association with the CDW and signed by more than a hundred people (Glos No 1). The programme for self-organised groups drawn up in the Declaration is an alternative to the growing danger of a spontaneous social revolt which would result in a national catastrophe.

The many independent social initiatives which have arisen recently have proved the programme right:

- the defence of the workers' interests was taken up by the fortnightly **Robotnik**,
- the official trade unions being discredited, founding groups for Free Trade Unions have emerged in Gdansk and Slask,
- towards the end of July 1978 the Provisional Committee for Farmers' Self-Defence was set up in the Lublin Region and at the

beginning of September in the Grojec region. These committees are independent representatives of sixteen villages in the Lublin voivodship and twenty villages in the Radom voivodship. The fortnightly *Gospodars* deals with the problems of the farmers.

—the reason for the emergence of the CDW/CSS Intervention Bureau was to reveal the violations of the law and help those who were wronged,

—the student committees set up at colleges throughout the country aim at breaking the monopoly of the official Socialist Student Union and at reviving an independent movement to protect the interests of the students and higher education,

—the emergence of the Society of Academic Courses was a reply to the subjugation and mendacity of scholarship. A group of outstanding scholars organised last year a series of lectures for the whole semester at which several hundred students were able to take up studies in an atmosphere of gravity and truth unchecked by censorship and not tortured with political phraseology.

—the state monopoly on publishing has been broken by the ever developing independent press. The socio-political papers, the Independent Publishing House which publishes authors condemned to silence by the authorities,

—all this, indicates the revival of cultural life.

It is not much but sufficient to show that independent, organised, effective social action is possible. The larger the independent organisations, the lesser the danger to its members being exposed to reprisals and the more effective their activity.

III.

Independent social action in recent years consists of organising genuine public opinion, of defence against reprisals, formulating realistic demands of the people and breaking the state's monopoly on information. Everyone can join in this action.

1. It is imperative that there should be the widest possible discussion on the social and economic situation in the country. It will not be started by the authorities, but:

(a) every citizen can and should voice his opinions at public meetings, present facts known to him and insist on receiving information from the authorities, put forward his suggestions and get them passed by the meeting. It is in this way that the workers in several factories managed this summer to obtain the payment of an average salary for the stand-still at work due to the fault of the management. It is in this way that in 1956 the Polish society took part in a nation-wide discussion and compelled the authorities to make far-reaching concessions.

(b) Every citizen can and should inspire among the people he works with discussions on the living and working conditions and the economic and political situation in the country. These discussions should lead to the formulation of demands for changes in the place of work and initiate the work on the programme of improving the general situation. They should also be the beginning of action within the official structures and beyond them.

(c) Every citizen can and should take part in breaking the state monopoly on information. He can do so by, for example, distributing independent papers and informing independent institutions of the problems facing his colleagues, of their postulates and demands.

2. It is imperative to be organised in order to defend one's rights. Only people who are organised can choose their real representatives. All citizens who are members of the trade unions and official farmers' organisations have the opportunity of choosing their real representatives at all union levels and drawing a programme in defence of the workers' interests. For example, the miners, waiting in vain for compulsory work on Sundays or a 12-hour working day to be abolished, could make this into a postulate at the union elections, voting only for those candidates who will pledge themselves to fight for the realisation of this postulate. Citizens who cannot work through the official organisations, ineffective as a rule, can call to life new ones, like the farmers from the Lublin and Grojec regions did — setting up committees for Farmers' Self-Defence to protect their interests. Such action is possible in all social spheres.

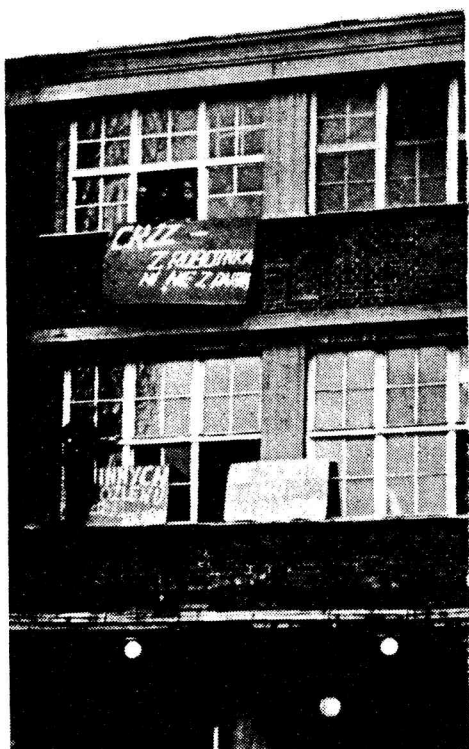
3. It is always easier to fight in an organised way. Every strike, every group petition by factory workers or farmers will be effective if we act in solidarity and in a disciplined way. This is particularly important at the time when the use of force by the authorities provokes indignation, anger and despair. Those who take part in a common fight should be defended with more determination than the demands that were put forward. Without organisation and solidarity we shall achieve nothing.

4. The International Pact on Civil and Political Rights declares in Article 10: Every citizen has the right to hold his own views without impediments; Every citizen has the right to express freely his opinions, this right includes the freedom to seek, obtain and impart all information and opinions by word, letter in print, in the form of a work of art or any other way he choose; Article 22: Every citizen has the right to freely unite in public organisation including the right to set up and join trade unions to defend his interests.

The Pact was ratified by the Council of State in March 1977 and is legally binding on all. When the Polish society is able to organise itself in defence of its rights the process of overcoming the social, economic and political crisis will have started. The deepest cause underlying the crisis in our country is that the citizens are deprived of their rights and the state of its sovereignty.

The Social Self-Defence Committee

**Warsaw
10 October 1978**



Workers on strike. Placard at top says, 'Trade unions — with the workers, not with the party'.

(Document and translation made available by the Appeal to Defend the Polish Workers).

HUNGARY

Hungarian Profiles — An interview with Miklos Haraszti

[The Hungarian poet and socialist, Miklos Haraszti, at present in the West, is well known in this country for his book *A Worker in a Worker's State*, published by Penguin last year. Below Haraszti talks about his experiences in the Hungary of the 1960s, about the writing of his book, which is a study of the life of workers in a Budapest engineering factory, and about the new samizdat movement in Hungary today. Miklos Haraszti spoke in English to Oliver MacDonald from Labour Focus.]

Before discussing your book, *A Worker in a Worker's State*, I would like to ask you about your earlier experiences and outlook during your student days. I noticed that when you left school you spent a year teaching in a village school before going to university. Did this decision have the same kind of social commitment behind it as your later decision to work in a factory and write your book?

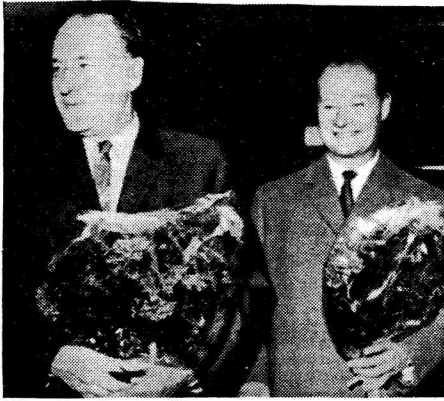
Yes, some type of commitment played a role. I was a young poet in the tradition of Hungarian and international socialist poetry: the tradition of Atilla József, M. Radnóti, Brecht and so on. Within that type of aesthetics, discovering 'reality' and 'serving the people' was an inherent part of being a writer. Since I had in any case to wait a year before going to university, I decided to occupy it by teaching.

That year in a village was an important experience for me. But my thinking was at that time too ideological to take the warnings of reality seriously enough; while it was ideological enough to paralyse my fantasies. Official Marxist-Leninist ideology is no friend of reality and even less of fantasy. Still, I wrote some nice sentimental poems, as did many others—they were an expression of a generation disappointed by reality.

At university, I studied philosophy and literature, and this was enough to make me forget those few warnings. But my second contact with reality was perhaps more serious, because I tried to free myself from preconceptions when I went to work in the factory. I wanted, if possible, to do the whole thing without any previously elaborated framework.

But in the meantime, at university you had lived through the political ferment among the students in the late 1960s.

Yes. I went to university in 1964 and was thrown out during 1966-67 because of my membership in the semi-legal Vietnam Solidarity Group. After returning to University in 1968, I was once more expelled in 1970, just as I was completing my course. At that time the police were unable to go ahead with a trial, but the hint of one was enough to get me expelled.



'The Czechoslovakian events brought a great interest in politics ...' Hungarian Party leader Kádár with Czechoslovakia's Dubček during the Prague Spring.

In the late 1960s there was great interest in politics, thanks especially to the Czechoslovak events and the French and German student movements. In 1969 there was a democratic explosion at the Budapest Faculty of Philosophy, something which students today know nothing about. There was a flourishing of wall posters; the police came and pulled them all down. The students created a General Assembly, and then this too was prohibited.

The Vietnam Solidarity movement was less general, being organised by young students who found or felt themselves to be Maoists. There was a great ideological excitement, but looking back it was not genuinely pro-Chinese: it was a mirror of the Western student movement. After the beginning of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, this 'deviation' covered the same needs in Hungary as Trotskyism and other anti-Stalinist ideologies did in other socialist countries. It may sound paradoxical: students adopted a Maoist ideology that was not particularly libertarian or anti-Stalinist, yet the real feelings of the people involved were libertarian. The real message was: 'You can overthrow the bureaucracy; you have the right to criticise it and fight it, for the bureaucracy is an obstacle to real socialism'. By 1968 every young Maoist was already cured of this infantile disorder, and most were already sympathetic to the Czechoslovak events. Our horizons were much broader, more anarchistic and realistic at the same time. The turning point was 1967-68.

I was at the Sofia International Youth Festival in 1968 as a tourist, and the event made a deep impression on me. Western delegations brought their own printing machines, issued their own leaflets and demonstrated at the US Embassy in Sofia, where the Bulgarian police beat them up. The very fact that the Czechoslovak delegation contained representatives from 10 different organisations was a new experience for us, who had been used to

single youth organisations. The official Hungarian delegation naturally expressed its shock at this.

We followed the news from Czechoslovakia very closely and discussed events thoroughly.

Did you consider yourself to be on the fringes of this political ferment and more oriented towards cultural and poetic activity?

It was not possible to make this distinction. The cultural activity was a kind of substitute for a free political movement and the politics was a kind of *l'art pour l'art*, a substitute for a free poetry. Perhaps in conditions of political freedom I would be just a mad, happy poet. But in Hungary and the rest of Eastern Europe there is a long tradition of the writer or poet acting as the agent of non-existent political forces. My poetry was a victim of that tradition, which is obviously still alive today in the present unfree political situation.

And in planning to write a book on life in a tractor factory, I think I was turning the same impulses behind my poetry towards more objective genres. I also found that it is almost impossible to exist as a lyric poet when one is cut off from any possibility of an audience in one's own language.

Turning, then, to your book, I believe you went to work in the factory with the idea of writing it. Was there a basic continuity between your motives for writing *A Worker in a Worker's State* and your libertarian outlook during your student days in the 1960s?

Yes. In deciding to write the book I wanted to touch the basic taboo. I entered the factory without any preconceptions, but I was sure that the basic dogma of the system—that power belongs to the working class—was an empty myth. But I did not know how workers themselves reacted to this myth and to the factory system itself.

One thing that the book doesn't bring out is the attitude of your fellow workers towards you. Presumably they saw you as an outsider?

They did, of course, although in a friendly way. Some said: 'We know your type of people. You come down here, but in a few years you will climb out again. Your kind don't stay here long.' And in spite of my outlook I could not but be an unsuccessful careerist for them, because of my education. This was interesting because it showed that for the workers, education was a class definition.

Did they know you were writing a book?

No. I was officially under police surveillance at the time; the factory Party organs knew about this and warned me to keep quiet. But I was very open in my questions, and it was clear to the workers that my interest was more than simply practical. They looked on me as 'the guy who's always asking questions', and many times, they found my questions quite interesting.

Did they know about your past?

Yes, I had to tell them something about it. It was during this period that I took part in a 25-day hunger strike against police surveillance; and when I returned from it to the factory, the police had cut off my hair. It was obvious to everyone, without my having to explain, that I had been arrested. Interestingly enough, the workers regarded it as something absolutely normal. 'So,' they said to me, 'you've had a bit of trouble, eh?' But they showed no excitement at all.

Why did you choose to work in that particular factory and why did you focus attention on the workers' lives in the factory, saying little about their lives outside?

I chose that factory simply because it was the nearest big factory to my flat. And I deliberately concentrated on the situation in the factory because I only had a few friends among the workers — not enough to gain a really deep knowledge of their life outside. So in order to avoid being superficial, I decided not to write about it.

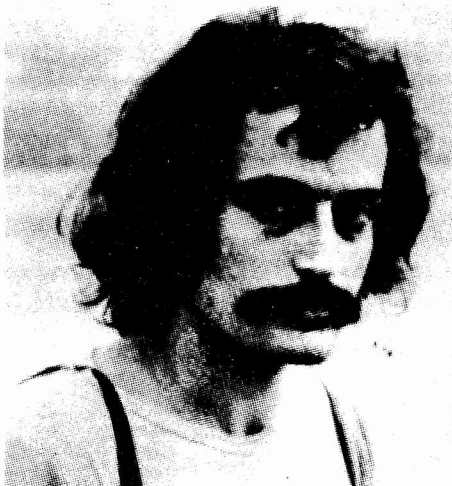
After you left the factory and after the trial, did you have any contact with the workers and were you able to gauge their reactions to your book?

I had less and less contact. Their prediction about me was right: I decided to be a writer and not a factory worker, and of course, it was not a difficult decision to make! I still have two friends from the factory and we used to meet from time to time. I eventually showed the book to one of them and he was touched by it — that was a good reference for me. He said that there was nothing much new in it, but it made a big difference having it down on paper. He thought everyone should read it. At the trial, the court considered as an extenuating circumstance the fact that I had not shown the book to the people it was about, only to other intellectuals.

Your picture of life in the Red Star factory gives a very different impression from the traditional view in the West that work rhythms are much lower and less highly organised in Eastern Europe.

I didn't intend it as a comparison with any other factory. For me it was a high tempo. But I'm now sure that in socialist countries, the tempo is generally slower than in the West, and that this is not just because of underdevelopment. It is a feature of a

totally state monopolistic system: workers are deprived of their rights but have a certain job security. Very crudely put, the lack of unemployment is a basic factor causing a slower tempo of work, whatever economic analyses one might make of hidden unemployment. The technocracy has paid a big price, in terms of a slower work tempo, for integrating the working class into the super monopolistic factory system. My factory was run on the piece-rate system—in fact, *Piece-Rates* was the original title of my book—and such workers face one of the highest tempos of work. Semi-automated workers perhaps face an even higher tempo, but in general piece-workers have a higher tempo than time workers. The piece-rate system was very prevalent in the Stalin period, and it is once again being re-introduced.



Miklos Haraszti

You mention a gypsy worker who said he was going to join the Party to make one of the female clerks who had been insulting him 'lick his arse'. But did many of the workers in the milling section where you worked belong to the Party? What was their motive for joining? And what was the attitude of non-Party workers to them?

Yes, naturally some of them joined, but for two quite different kinds of reason. One group belonged to the Party in order to be a little better informed about what was going on inside and about what was in the offing — price rises, etc. Such members would then pass the information on to other workers. But a second group—about half of those who joined—did so because they saw it as the basis of a career and as a way of freeing themselves from manual labour. They were more active and hypocritical than the other workers, and they had the hope of either a small career inside the factory itself, or even of a political career. They quickly began to use the language of the bosses, losing the concept of 'them' and beginning to speak of 'we'. Such people were clearly marked out by the rest of the workers. But if a worker joined the Party without careerist reasons, the general attitude was: 'He is a Party member, but a good guy.'

One very surprising feature was the fact

that the older workers considered that things had got worse over the years.

Yes. This was partly a myth and partly a question of harsher work tempos. But obviously living standards had not fallen; and according to one's energy, wages could still be raised from year to year.

Despite the fact that the book had originally been commissioned by a publishing house, it was not published and you were eventually arrested for having distributed copies of it to a handful of intellectuals.

Yes, the book was branded as 'anti-socialist' and I was arrested. But I was released after 16 days, partly because I had gone on hunger strike and partly because of protests from the intelligentsia.

But your arrest and subsequent trial in 1973 seem to have been more than just a response to the book itself. They appear to have been part of a general crack-down on dissent within the intelligentsia in Hungary. Is that right?

Yes. The main internal motive for my trial was the authorities' desire to demarcate more clearly the frontiers of criticism. But despite this attempt to intimidate critical intellectuals, Konrád and Szelényi, both of whom were witnesses at my trial, finished their book on the intelligentsia and the authorities had to arrest them as well.

Can we turn to the development of the human rights movement in Eastern Europe? The impression one gets in the West is that a very dramatic development of open civil rights opposition began in Eastern Europe in 1976.

This also seems to have been a watershed in ideas — the beginning of a trend away from explicitly socialist movements within the intelligentsia towards this purely human rights concept, very roughly speaking. How are we to explain this development, which is remarkable also for its international character, affecting critical intellectuals in many East European countries within a very short space of time? Was it simply a surface response to Helsinki or does it reflect some deeper changes in Eastern Europe?

No, I don't think it is just a response to Helsinki. Basically it is a genuine social development within the East European societies. It is connected with both economic and cultural changes.

In the socio-economic field, these industrialising societies are changing from what are called extensive to intensive methods. In other words it is no longer possible for the system to make the economic targets a strictly political task to be carried through by terroristic mobilisation. As you can already see even in China, the political élite has to involve and satisfy the new middle class generated

by state-run industrialism and culture. The monolithic system cannot survive unless this compromise is carried through; this is the social background to all kinds of de-Stalinization. A certain legal security, consumer incentive and decentralization are the price to be paid for further participation by this new, organized middle class, constituting the state machinery, in the exercise of total control over the working classes.

But connected to this there has been a cultural change as well. The impossibility of consistent de-Stalinization, the system's incapacity to fulfil promises of democratization given in and about 1956, the simple fact that they had to admit that these systems were anti-humanist, the hopeless inadequacy of the state-socialist framework for more noble aims — these are the concerns of the idealistic 'cultural workers', radicalized by the decline of old-type Stalinism. Maybe the external agreements of the state were a good occasion for making the demands in this form, but they were inevitable by this time anyway. However, these demands of 'cultural' dissidents are joined by 'technocratic' dissidents only in those countries where the social compromise was not carried through.

Yet in Hungary, expressions of open dissent have been up to now limited and very much confined to what one might call humanist circles — writers and so on. Does this suggest that in Hungary after the NEM, the intelligentsia does in fact have more possibilities for untrammelled intellectual activity?

Yes, although in a directed and self-centred way. Perhaps that is the secret of the relative quiet in Hungary. Exiled to humanist circles concerned with overall social values, discussion and criticism of the system became more and more abstract because of the lack of support from the broader intelligentsia. This does not mean at all that these broader circles are entirely satisfied with the existing possibilities, but it does mean that they are reluctant to engage in open protest because they wish to preserve the given margin of semi-freedom, or—to speak more pragmatically—their appointed privileges. The contrast with the neighbouring countries also has an effect on people's thinking: it does not encourage more radical demands — on the contrary, it gives rise to a new, more sophisticated ideology of 'just' involvement by the state intelligentsia.

It is paradoxical that at the very moment when these open civil rights oppositions have appeared, there also seems to be a great deal of pessimism about the possibilities of really significant change within Eastern Europe in the near future. Is this the case in Hungary?

Yes it is. The memory of 1956 is still with us, and there is the feeling that the choice is



'The memory of 1956 is still with us.' Hungarian partisan machine-gun post in a Budapest street during the second Soviet invasion in November 1956. A knocked out Soviet tank opposite.

between pragmatic acceptance and a hopeless idealism. 1968 re-confirmed this feeling, showing that both the violent way from below and the peaceful way from above were ruled out. People look upon Kadar as an enlightened monarch and wait uneasily for the unknown crown prince.

And is this also your view: that there is no possibility of either change under pressure from below or ...

I don't have hopes; but I have some interesting facts. The young generation of intellectuals (I don't know well enough the thinking of the younger generation of workers) those who have no experience even of 1968 do not find that this liberalism means very much. They did not experience the post-1956 terror, and the situation is simply very boring for them. Conditions which may be bearable for the older generation are for the young a system full of lies, full of hypocrisy, full of very civilised, everyday oppression. And if there is a new wave of samizdat in Hungary today—you cannot call it an opposition, not at all—it is a natural reaction to the lack of openness of the system. All the warnings of the older establishment people are not enough to stop them.

In Hungarian terms it is a big event that this samizdat does exist and has not died out since it began two years ago. When I left Hungary in February it was even not as strong as it is today. And now a much greater part of the younger generation is involved than was the case in the late-sixties wave of ideological excitement. This is

because it is a fresh source of free speech.

Samizdat focusses more and more on human rights; and people are more and more aware of the barriers to free speech through their practical experience with the samizdat.

The samizdat publications discovered areas of the system which the ruling establishment was not even aware of — for example, the continuing repression and the continued jailing of political prisoners. Every year, about 300 people are arrested for speaking their political views freely.

After the 1973 repression, the leadership did not want any well-known people to be arrested because they wanted to avoid scandals. But the police every year pick up young workers and students who have spoken out.

The samizdat publications also discovered the case of the repression of Methodists. Those who distribute the declaration of the 12 Methodist pastors are by no means necessarily religious; but they want this kind of information to become known. They are committed to free speech for everyone. However, this informative aspect is not an overwhelming feature of our samizdat, as it is of the Soviet one. If we take into account translations of Polish and Czech oppositional documents, and 're-translations' of Hungarian authors published abroad, then purely informational material constitutes the lesser part. Sociological, theoretical and other professional writing makes up the majority, according to a Hungarian tradition. Of course, this tradition is not too appealing to the broader public lying outside the humanist intelligentsia; and I hope that, in the future, the samizdat will break with this self-restricting tradition of Hungarian libertarian thought.

Without saying that this represents a move towards a political opposition, I can say that it is an intellectual movement which does not expect the system itself to evolve towards democratisation. This conviction, combined with the autonomous activity, is a new phenomenon in post-war Hungary.

So far, there has been no major repression against the samizdat movement. Many of those involved in producing samizdat were thrown out of their jobs, but they were not arrested. So the fate of the movement is a question of the future. If, because of pressure from the police, the cultural leadership allows a major repressive drive against this movement, it would abolish the pale contrast between 'liberal' Hungary and her neighbours. People today are satisfied with the fact that they are not arrested; but they are determined to keep this samizdat going because of the lack of freedom of expression.

The journalistic catch-phrase about dissent in Hungary is that its political position is that of the 'New Left', and that it is

ideologically more or less Marxist-oriented. On the other hand, since the start of this year, a number of leading Lukács-school writers have left the country; and when one looks through the contents of the samizdat material, it would appear at the very least that the term New Left needs to be given a more precise definition. How would you characterise the currents of dissident thought in Hungary today?

I would say that they are more seekers than representatives of some definite trend of thought. The written discussion which has already taken place among samizdat writers gives a good indication of their outlook. Everybody is socialist in a very natural way. Nobody can imagine any change in Eastern Europe that could lead to a reprivatization of the big units of production.

The differences between them are theoretically political — not, of course, practically political because there is no basis for such practical politics. Hegedüs's position is that samizdat discussion was the starting point of the debate. He thinks in terms of a kind of one-party system with a pluralism of other organisations, not party-like but pressure-making organisations; he thinks this is good enough as a form of democratization in a socialist society. Other publications, by G. Bence, J. Kis and others, discussed this view and considered that a plurality of parties and political life is a minimum basis for socialist democracy in order to achieve workers' self-organisation and self-management. If the term 'New Left' also involved a philosophical utopian level of negation and demand, then it is certainly over in Hungary. Theories there still are: Rakovski's book, *Towards an East European Marxism*, or the book by Konrád and Szelényi, *Towards the Class Power of the Intelligentsia*, are no less systematic critiques of state socialism than were the writings of the Lukács School in the sixties. But they are oriented against utopias, including Marxist ones. The same may be said about the attitude of most new samizdat material.

I would say in general that people have a big appetite: they would like to experience everything in the way of democracy that has been achieved in European history this century, and then see what comes out of it. But all these trends are in a very natural way anti-capitalist. It is taken for granted that the dictatorship of money is as bad an alternative to state socialism as the latter is to capitalism. This is the real basis for discussions.

Do you think that one of the important tasks of dissidents in Eastern Europe is to provide a vision of the alternative type of society and political system that they would like to achieve? To put it another way: there has been the emergence of a human rights opposition in Eastern Europe, but human rights can mean very different things to different people — the concept is very elastic. It can, for example, simply

mean the observance of legality on the part of the state, and obviously in many countries that is an important struggle. But human rights can also involve a vision of the potential alternative form of social organisation inherent in the present resources of Eastern and Western Europe. Do you think it is important for the intellectual dissidents to put forward such an overall vision regardless of whether the present political conditions seem to offer much hope of bringing such an alternative into being? Your own book, in a negative way, was doing that in that it was showing how human needs really require the abolition of the wages system, and in fact at one point you virtually say that.

You can certainly observe a lowering of utopian concerns, but this does not mean that emancipatory aims have been forgotten. I would even say that really emancipatory socialist alternatives to the existing system can be expressed more clearly and more consciously after such a 'human rights' change in attitudes. And it is a fact that more socialist oppositional views have been expressed throughout Eastern Europe and even in Hungary since human rights demands appeared.

But I think that outspoken, total, definite utopias are not current today because the main question is what to do in our circumstances. And a growing understanding of possible changes also works against utopias. The working class, which does not have the ideological illusions of the intelligentsia, will not allow the established order to go on in the event of a major economic crisis. Warnings of 'chaos' could be enough for even the leading strata of our state industrialism and culture to discover that it is much more 'rational' to get rid of the one-party system. They will 'choose' democracy if their own progenitor, the post-Stalinist state, is no longer able to feed them. Then human rights will be accepted as an empty legitimization, and we will face roughly the same problems that radical democrats face here, confronted by all the immense forces of an industrial society tending to restrict freedom.

I think many people have understood that state socialism in no way offers better chances for radical utopias than other forms of modern society. There can be no great leap from an underdeveloped society deprived of rights of self-determination to a new society freer than any that has ever existed before. Such utopias can be thought through once we are allowed to think at all: this point carries more force in our circles today than the instinctive drive to utopias.

I was thinking especially of Bahro's book, which is evidently written from classical Marxist premises. And as its title suggests, Bahro's project was to spell out an overall alternative to the present system, based on the real possibilities inherent in today's society. He obviously considered this task to be of fundamental importance for any

further advance against the system in the East.

Because of the very strong presence of West German capitalism, the opposition in East Germany gives more emphasis to its Marxist character than those of the other countries of Eastern Europe. But the very fact that Bahro openly expressed his overall positions may prove more important in the future than his precise views and historical projections. For while it is already more common in other East European countries to express oneself without self-censorship, this represents a big step forward in East Germany.

But there seems to be a strong current of Hungarian samizdat that would go further and argue that the opposition must break from Marxism in order to advance. Is this an accurate impression?

That impression comes from a samizdat volume, *Marxism in the 4th Decade*. This was one particular project, looking at the relationship of the generation in their thirties towards Marxism: it consisted of replies to a questionnaire. The volume really did show that this generation is more or less moving away from Marxism, although many still considered themselves to be Marxists. But the real importance of the enquiry lay not in the particular labels that people attached to themselves, but in the fact that the interests mirrored in the questionnaire were shifting from purely abstract ideological values to more burning and concrete needs of society. To put it more brutally, some people are fed up not only with official Marxism-Leninism, but also with the search for a 'real' Marxism. They are looking for their freedom now, rather than for the science of their freedom tomorrow. Afraid of becoming once again 'ideologists' of the working class, they think that workers should be liberated from professional defenders of their 'long-term' and 'real' interests, in order to be able to defend themselves. Many look with great interest at the Polish example, as an alliance of a new type between self-organising workers and intellectuals.

What kind of relationship would you like to see developing between socialists in the West and those campaigning for greater freedoms in Eastern Europe?

If the left-wing parties in the West concentrated only on persons or groups outspokenly close to their own aims, a very paradoxical situation would result. For they would then be acting in exactly the same way as the monolithic state — defining who was truly socialist and letting the others go to the devil. Besides, this is not a good practical approach: the real basis for socialist freedom in Eastern Europe is an increasing number of people who seek freedom not only for themselves but for others as well. Nobody can impose from outside what kind of socialism a society needs, or even whether it needs

socialism at all. So I think that western socialists can best help the societies of state socialism in Eastern Europe by giving support to the experiments in creating freedom. These are not at all subjective experiments: everyone who speaks freely has created freedom in a certain sense. And the big turn to a human rights standpoint is nothing but the realization that freedom can be created — that one must not wait endlessly for it to appear.

Support from the western left must not be simply a matter of tactics against the conservative forces in the West who are naturally interested in a conservative change in our societies. For efforts and

experiments tending towards freedom in our societies are sui generis not conservative, and thus, in reality, they will not be supported at all if the western socialists do not support them.

I would say that the greatest support the western left can give a free socialist society in Eastern Europe is to defend the right of people to express and define themselves — to defend their right to create the freedoms lacking in our societies, and not to restrict their support to one or another tendency. I know from experience that, strangely enough, even when some socialist tendency here thinks that it has found its ideological comrade in the East, it all turns out to have

been a very big mistake. The questions which we face are not understood in the same way in the East and the West, and a common understanding can best be achieved through those in the East gaining the possibility to express themselves.

Moreover, the masses in the East are all too familiar with the method of restrictively defining who should have freedom of speech. It is important to show in practice to the masses who are very disappointed with the ideology of socialism that the socialist point of view does not mean support only for this or that tendency's right to speak.

ROMANIA

Ceausescu's Nationalist Card By Patrick Camiller

Last November, the long-standing tensions between Moscow and the Ceausescu regime in Romania flared up in the sharpest incident since the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders, which sparked off the crisis in Soviet-Romanian relations, did not itself express any fundamental change in respective positions. The Soviet leadership, pointing to the growth in NATO defence spending, argued for a corresponding increase in the contributions of all Warsaw Pact states and, not for the first time, the creation of a more powerful supra-national military command. According to some reports, a proposal was also made to include Vietnam in membership of the hitherto European pact — a move which, together with Vietnam's entry into Comecon, would have more closely aligned the East European states with the pro-Soviet and anti-Chinese forces in South East Asia. Not surprisingly, the Romanian leadership both maintained its total opposition to any structure transcending its own national authority, and refused to accept any increase in its defence spending.

Undoubtedly the Romanian position was seen in Moscow as an extremely irritating, but not decisive obstacle to plans for greater 'unification' of Eastern Europe under Soviet control and for a solid front against the international strategy of the new Chinese leadership. However, this stand took on an altogether different dimension after Ceausescu returned to Bucharest. For the Romanian leader decided to carry these differences into the public political arena, such as it exists in that country. In two major speeches delivered in the space of a week, Ceausescu reaffirmed the constitutional position that only the Grand National Assembly can commit Romanian troops to military actions; he argued that, in the present world situation, 'it would be a big mistake to increase defence spending'; he explicitly stated that Romania's defence

obligations applied only 'in the case of an imperialist attack in Europe'; he referred to the possibility of creating a 'zone between the two blocs' that would be 'without armies, arms and manoeuvres'; and, repeating an implicit charge against the Russians first made in the 1960s, he said that the differences between socialist states become all the more disturbing 'when they lead to support for internal movements directed against the states'.

Ceausescu's speeches, while filled with the extreme nationalist rhetoric current in Romania for many years, did not go beyond the positions developed during the first few years of the present regime. The concept of balancing—between East and West, between Russia and China, between North and South—remains at the heart of strategic thinking in Bucharest, and nothing indicates that Ceausescu has decided to replace this by a perilous rush for 'total' independence. How then are we to explain the dramatic development in relations between Bucharest and Moscow that took place last month?

As we have seen in previous issues of **Labour Focus**, the Romanian leadership has for some time been faced with a many-sided challenge to its absolutist control over the life of the country. First, although there has been little evidence of a coherent milieu of oppositional intellectuals since the arrest and subsequent emigration of writer Paul Goma, it is clear that Party ideological control over the arts, which became even tighter following Ceausescu's noisy 'abolition of censorship' in 1977, is arousing greater and greater resentment among wide sections of intellectuals. Thus, at a writers' seminar held in Cluj in June of last year, official Party spokespeople found themselves under attack from speaker after speaker not previously known for oppositional views: indeed, an edited report of speeches

at the seminar was published in the literary weekly **Romania Literara** — a fact which suggests that gaining the at least passive support of intellectuals is becoming a major concern of the regime.

Secondly, the August 1976 Jiu Valley miners' strike brought a major section of the working class into open conflict with the authorities to a degree unprecedented in post-war Romania. Wide-scale repression restored order in the Jiu Valley, and according to some reports from oppositional circles, one of the main leaders of the strike has since been killed in a 'road accident'. However, the Party leadership has been forced to raise the targets for living standards originally projected by the five-year plan, and there can be no doubt that the dubious bureaucratic schemas for industrialization will henceforth have to take into account the pressure of a proletariat that has grown enormously in size and self-confidence. Thirdly, although we have little information about recent developments, the awakening of the two-million strong Hungarian national minority, expressed in support for Party dissident Karoly Kiraly, has become a further element in contributing to the instability of the Ceausescu regime.

All these factors seem to have found a reflection within the Communist Party and even within those leading strata that are the real organisers of all political life. The defection of Ceausescu's personal adviser, Ion Pacepa, the purge within the Ministry of the Interior and the shifting of CP leaders from post to post are all signs that the crisis is biting deep into a Party and state apparatus previously loyal to Ceausescu.

In the 1960s, Ceausescu and his predecessor Gheorghiu-Dej thought that it would be possible to gain the support of the

population through a campaign of strident nationalism directed above all against outside interference in the country; and indeed, at the high-point of 1968, the Communist Party enjoyed considerable popularity among both workers and intellectuals. But during the last ten years, the leadership has been quite incapable of grounding its rule on a stable political basis. Stalinist shock-methods remain the principal weapon for the mobilization of productive resources; and the endless talk about workers' self-management, stepped up since the introduction of greater managerial responsibility last year, conceals from nobody the fact that 'workers' power', in the factory as elsewhere, is merely a code-name for the increased supervisory powers of Communist Party officials. In the official ideology, nationalism has been closely intertwined with authoritarian rule by the 'representative of the nation', the Communist Party, and more and more by its General Secretary, Ceausescu himself. In fact, there is no clearer expression of the instability of the regime than the Ceausescu cult, which has reached proportions unseen in Europe since the death of Stalin.

Generally speaking, therefore, the latest public assertion of Romanian independence should be seen above all as an attempt by the Ceausescu leadership to strengthen its domestic authority in the present troubled

times. In particular, the refusal to raise Romanian defence spending, which is already among the lowest in Europe, was imposed not only by the need to raise living standards, also among the lowest in Europe, but by the political need to demonstrate that the leadership is defending the population against foreign dictates. Even more than in the sixties, however, the 'nationalist card' cannot indefinitely cover over the growing social and national contradictions within the Romanian state. And the greater the contradictions within Eastern Europe and the international communist movement, the less room there will be for the combination of domestic nationalist campaigns and international balancing on which the present regime is founded.

The Kremlin can see no easy solution to its Romanian problem. On the one hand, it perfectly understands the value of nationalism in maintaining the Romanian regime: it has no interest in destabilizing the situation in the Balkans, so long as there is no readily available alternative and so long as the Romanian leadership respects the rules of the game of compromise. On the other hand, however, the very dynamic of nationalism periodically pushes the Romanian leadership into adopting positions that threaten Soviet hegemony within Eastern Europe as a whole. Thus, Hua Kuo-feng's visit to Romania and

Yugoslavia last summer, and now the public opposition of Bucharest to Soviet-inspired military measures keeps alive a focus that threatens to encourage centrifugal forces within the bloc. Given the Kremlin's concern about developments in Poland, East Germany and elsewhere, and given its drive to counteract Chinese strategy, any expression of public dissent by Bucharest is becoming less and less acceptable to the Soviet leadership.

So far, the response has been relatively mild. A long article in *Pravda* on 16 December 1978 recognized the 'supreme rights of the leading Party and state organs of each fraternal country in relation to their national army', but it went on to justify the creation of a unified command which would 'more effectively' integrate the forces of the Warsaw Pact. However, we can expect the Soviet, and especially East European press to keep up a continual pressure over the coming period, in order to prevent a shift in the balance of compromise with Romania. Certainly, the Kremlin must have been deeply concerned about the unscheduled visit made by President Carter's envoy, Michael Blumenthal, to Bucharest to assert the importance attached by the American government to 'the independence of Romania and American-Romanian friendship'.

SOVIET UNION

By Helen Jamieson

'LEFT OPPOSITION' GROUP IN Leningrad

At the beginning of October 1978, house searches were conducted of members of the 'Left Opposition', a Leningrad-based youth group. Samizdat was confiscated and a leader of the group, Aleksandr Skobov, was arrested. 20-year-old Skobov had also operated a commune in Leningrad for one and a half years where youth from Leningrad, Moscow, the Baltics, Belorussia and Moldavia participated in wide-ranging discussions on philosophy, politics, art, etc.

On 14 October, two more members of this group were arrested on charges of 'hooliganism' as they departed from trains in Leningrad. They were: Andrej Besov (from Moscow) and Victor Vladlenovich Pavlenkov (from Gorky). (*Les Cahiers du Samizdat*, No.2)

ARMENIAN HELSINKI GROUP MEMBER SENTENCED

On 2 December 1978, Robert Nazaryan, a leading member of the Armenian Helsinki Monitoring Group was jailed for 5 years in

a labour camp, to be followed by 2 years internal exile. His 'crime' was the standard one against Helsinki Group members, that of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.

CRIMEAN TATARS DEPORTED, THEN EVICTED

According to dissident sources in Moscow, a new campaign has been launched to expel Tatars who have resettled in the Crimea and to prevent others from returning from exile. Police in Uzbekistan (where the Crimean Tatar nation was deported after World War II) had been instructed to refuse to issue the necessary papers to Tatars who wish to return, according to Mustafa Dzhemilev, a leading Crimean activist who was released last year from a labour camp after 3 years' imprisonment. At the same time in Crimea the authorities have launched a campaign to locate Tatar families living there without permission. Police are rounding up people, bulldozing houses, and waging a propaganda campaign which includes asking children to

write essays 'depicting the treachery of Tatars during the war'.

The Tatars claim that 200,000 Tatars were deported to Central Asia and Siberia, yet even though they were exonerated in 1967, only 2000 families have been allowed to return and register as residents. Some 700 other families have resettled illegally.

Last June, 46-year-old Musa Makhmud, a leading activist, burnt himself to death in front of police who came to collect him from his home. And in October police broke up a meeting of 200 Tatars in Belogorsk who had gathered to protest against moves to evict them. The day before some people had been evicted and arrested. (*Times*, *Guardian*, 16 Nov 1978)

PHOTOS OF GEORGIAN DEMONSTRATION LEAD TO JAIL

Avtandil Imnadze has received a term of 5 years forced labour and four years' exile for 'producing and distributing anti-Government material'.

Imnadze, a cameraman, was arrested on 15 April in Tbilisi for filming street demonstrations in the capital on 14 April, which protested against official efforts to remove from Georgia's constitution the clause guaranteeing Georgian as the republic's official language. (New York Times 8 December 1978)

HELY SNEHIROV DIES

Hely Snehirov, a Ukrainian dissident writer, died while in KGB security police custody in a Kiev hospital on 28 December 1978. His wife was informed several hours later that he had died of cancer.

Snehirov first became known as a dissident in the spring of 1977 when he renounced his Soviet citizenship. He was arrested in September 1977 and detained in prison until he was transferred to a hospital in March 1978 for a serious operation. Just after the operation a 'recantation' by Snehirov appeared in Soviet Ukrainian newspapers. Once Snehirov had recovered from his operation he claimed that the recantation was false and he proclaimed a hunger strike which lasted for 15 days and which greatly deteriorated his health condition.

IMPRISONED SOVIET TRADE UNION ACTIVISTS

The following members of the two trade union groups formed last year in the Soviet Union are known to be either in prisons or psychiatric hospitals:

Vladimir Klebanov - in Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital

Gavril Yankov - Orlov Regional Psychiatric Hospital

Valentin Poplavsky - in jail for 'parasitism'

Vladimir Skvirsky - in Butyrki Prison Moscow for 'failing to return library books'

Yevgeni Nikolayev - in a mental hospital

Valeria Novodvorskaya - in a mental hospital

Lev Volokhonsky - apparently arrested on a traffic charge

Mark Morozov - in Lefortovo prison for 'propaganda against the state'

EAST GERMANY

Letter on the Current Situation in the GDR

[The following remarkable analysis of the state of the opposition and of working class consciousness in the GDR arrived in the West last year in the form of a letter signed with a pseudonym. Recent socialist exiles from East Germany have confirmed the document's authenticity. We print a substantial excerpt from the text below. Cuts from the original are indicated by means of dots (...). The expulsion mentioned in the first line refers to the ban on Wolf Biermann's return to the GDR while he was on tour in West Germany in the autumn of 1977. Reiner Kunze, expelled from the Writers' Union in December 1976 and now living in the West, was one of the GDR's most outstanding novelists. Translation for Labour Focus is by Günter Minnerup.]

The petition campaign after the expulsion was ill thought-out and conducted in chaos. Reiner Kunze's expulsion from the Writers' Union should already have been a warning signal. To Wolf Biermann's and Jurek Becker's honour, it must be stressed that they were, to my knowledge, the only ones to publicly protest against Kunze's expulsion within the territory of the GDR. It wasn't until the blow was struck against Biermann, that fears of a return to Stalinist methods were roused and passivity and indolence overcome. Thus the petition, which nevertheless exceeded all previous protests against the rotten conditions in this country's 'real socialism'. But the number of signatories were, apart from well-known personalities, some unknown to the political public, personal friends of Wolf Biermann. There is, of course, nothing wrong with the signatures of these 'non-prominents'. But there were many more persons unknown to the public who were either known to the initiators of the petition or could without difficulty have been identified with the help of friends. None of these were approached! Had the initiators of the petition acted with more thought there would probably have been as many signatures as for the Czechoslovak 'Charter 77'!

Even those whose understanding and conscience did not permit them to withdraw their signature could not be moved into further steps after this one-off affair. Nobody thought of protesting against the arrest of the many 'little people', even though the shocked state organs' thirst for revenge was especially turned against those little or not at all known to the public. And so a legal committee for the defence of those arrested, an obvious possibility in view of the Polish example, was also never founded.

...It seems to me that the GDR is today in a stage in which the objective possibility of a development towards socialism 'as such' is existent, but in which the consciousness of the necessity of transforming this possibility into reality is lacking in the working

class as well as in other layers of the population. Much has been written about the structural changes in the working class, and I need not go into that in detail. Neither mythical appeals to its 'mission' as the 'leading class' nor the populist entry of intellectuals into 'proletarian life' can make any difference to the fact that this class is today no longer the same as the one on which Marx and originally Lenin wanted to base the realization of socialism. The haemorrhage in the pre-revolutionary struggles before 1923, in the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War as well as decimation through the post-war misery; fascist and Stalinist liquidation of revolutionary cadres; the assimilation of other social groups through the infusion of alien class elements after the collapse of Nazism and through newly emerging groups as a result of the technical-scientific revolution; transfer of revolutionary workers into the bureaucratic apparatuses of the institutions and integration in the privileged caste (**Bonzokratie**); the natural changeover of generations—all that has speeded up social mobility to such an extent that literally nothing—not even the remnants of revolutionary memories—is left over of the old working class and its consciousness. The structural changes have not by-passed the objective class position. Insofar as the remains of the old class position are preserved for today's recipients of wages and salaries—free of ownership of the means of production—it would be wrong to deduct a parallel consciousness from these remains. One cannot either synchronise or separate class position and consciousness. It is not by chance that among Wolf Biermann's and Robert Havemann's circle there are hardly any workers. The arrested Jena fitter, Gerd Lehmann (called Johnny), an intellectually and culturally active, self-confident worker, is an honourable exception.

...The spiritual make-up of the working population in the GDR is characteristic of the particular phase the GDR is currently going through. The aspiration for an 'affluent society' similar to 'the West', which has been approached most closely in this country—if one compares it with the other states of our system—is not just the ambition of the rulers anxious to perpetuate their power, but also corresponds to the **immediate interests of the ruled**. One could call the GDR citizens with some justification the 'Federal Republicans of the East', with the exception of the old-age pensioners and some low-paid occupations. The attempt by many Poles, Romanians, Czechs and Soviet citizens to use tourist trips to participate in the relative affluence of the GDR is well known. Citizens of the CSSR, the traditional centre of the shoe industry, are today buying their shoes in the GDR because the economic development of the CSSR after the restoration following the illegal invasion in 1968 leaves much to be desired. The economic advantages of the GDR citizens in relation to the citizens of the 'fraternal countries'

favours the survival of repulsive traits of the German national character such as conceit, arrogance, blind incomprehension for culturally still backward peoples, disrespect for their customs and habits, as can be observed on holiday visits to neighbouring countries. These negative characteristics are vitalised through feelings of envy and the continued existence of the inferiority complex in the face of the still higher standard of living in 'the West'. The result is a strange **social schizophrenia**: on the one hand a petty, tense, 'GDR consciousness' (but by no means GDR **national** consciousness!), on the other hand the permanently stimulated addiction of the affluent philistine to 'Western' consumer goods, the eyeing of the 'West' with all the vile consequences like greed, commodity fetishes, compulsive consumption, theft of the 'people's property', etc.

...This schizophrenic consciousness, which releases its dissatisfaction in the **private sphere** by consuming 'Western' information, secretly circulated books of unwelcome content or Biermann records, but which in the **social sphere** accepts the ruling system, apathetically tolerates its ideological outpourings or acclaims them and under pressure even participates in filthy acts against dissenters, produces a type of personality which is hard to mobilise for ideas of liberty and with which the leadership of party and state can be content. 'Not philosophers, but amateur woodworkers and stamp collectors form the backbone of humanity', Aldous Huxley sarcastically wrote in 1932 in his anti-Utopia **Brave New World**.

...Dear comrades, do not believe that I am painting too black a picture. I am no pessimist and I have not lost hope.

... Even if the Biermann-Havemann episode may be over, there are nonetheless new symptoms that deserve our attention. Above all there is the gradual loss of fear of the security organs. Many of those arrested hurl their views into the faces of the interrogators or refuse to answer despite reprisals such as the banning of visits or writing. That is a minority, of course, but even in the population, in the factories, people warn each other today of spies and informers and hit back spontaneously with disrespectful comments against the newly-constructed personality cult of the respective general secretaries. Many young Christians who react to the established church hierarchy with aversion, are approaching communist ideas in their own way and seeking contact with democratic communists.

There is today, in the GDR as in other transitional societies on the road to socialism, no more progressive, more revolutionary demand than the demand for freedom and democratic civil rights. All activities in this direction, whether they take the Final Act of Helsinki or the Declaration of Human Rights as their starting point, are always a potential danger for the ruling bureaucracy. There is no other explanation for the hysterical, angry, hateful, irritable, frightened reaction against libertarian-democratic aspirations and the tendency to fall back on Stalinist methods...

EESC Notes

*The EESC is starting a regular broadsheet in January. 10,000 copies of the first issue, with material on the jailed Soviet trade unionists and the Sabata case, will be sent to every local Labour Party branch, trade unions and left groups.

*The EESC is campaigning for a labour movement delegation to go to the Soviet Embassy in the spring to appeal for the release of the Soviet trade union activists.

*EESC Hon President, Phillip Whitehead MP and Hon Chairman, Eric Heffer MP wrote a letter to the *Times*, along with Labour MPs Audrey Wise and Stan Newens, calling for the release from jail of Jaroslav Sabata.

*EESC London members held a fund raising social at the Camden Labour Party rooms before Christmas, with East European food and music.

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign

THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND OPPRESSION IN EASTERN EUROPE

FOREWORD BY ERIC HEFFER MP



Socialists demonstrating in London on 20 August 1978, the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign 30p

NUM Drops Klebanov Case

According to the *Observer* of 17 December, the National Union of Miners' Executive has decided to accept the official Soviet story that Vladimir Klebanov, a founder of the unofficial Trade Union Association set up in Moscow a year ago, is mad. The *Observer* reported one Miners' Union official as saying: 'What is the NUM expected to do? If we took an opposite view, we would be saying that Mr Efremenko (leader of the Official Soviet Miners' Union) is a liar.'

An NUM delegation led by Joe Gornley had met Mr. Efremenko during a trip to Poland. They were to discuss the Klebanov case with him because, in the words of their subsequent report to the NUM Executive, Klebanov was 'allegedly confined in a psychiatric hospital in the Soviet Union against his wishes'. Mr. Efremenko declared that he 'did not know whether Klebanov had elected to go there voluntarily for treatment or if he had been sent there by a Medical Commission'. Although he had not been able, apparently, to find out this crucial fact, he did declare that Klebanov was Jewish and had rich relatives in Israel — Klebanov is not in fact Jewish. He was also in a position to say, in the words of the delegation report, that 'all Klebanov wanted to do was to live in Moscow with a woman much younger than himself', having separated from his family. Efremenko also said that Klebanov had not wanted to work. The delegation's report to the executive states that 'the discussion closed on a friendly note'. The NUM Executive apparently accepted the

delegation's report and considered the matter closed. It is noteworthy that the 8-man delegation spanned the entire political spectrum of the NUM.

The NUM Executive's refusal to call for the release of Klebanov and the other members of the Soviet Free Trade Union Association who were arrested along with him contrasts strikingly with the stand taken by the largest French trade union federation, the CGT. At the 40th Congress of this Communist-led trade union federation, which includes the French miners, a resolution of support for Klebanov and his comrades was passed. Similar support has come from many other trade unions throughout the Western world. The Soviet authorities will, however, certainly use the NUM Executive's acceptance of Klebanov's internment in a psychiatric hospital as a means of discrediting the other miners' unions in the Western world which have protested against such repression.

Klebanov is being held in the notorious Dnipropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital where Leonid Plyushch and other political prisoners were held and subject to forcible drugging. Plyushch, a Marxist, was released 3 years ago after public protests by the French Communist Party.

The Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign is continuing to campaign for the release of Vladimir Klebanov and other trade union activists now in prison or special psychiatric hospitals.

By Oliver MacDonald

French CGT and Canadian Labour Back Klebanov

Held at the end of November, the 40th Congress of the largest French trade union federation, the Communist-led CGT passed a resolution supporting the Soviet Free Trade Union Association and demanding the release of Klebanov and his comrades. (Rouge 29 November 1978)

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has recently undertaken the defence of repressed Soviet trade unionists and dissidents.

Having read some of the evidence concerning the Klebanov group the CLC decided that there was enough to warrant serious investigation. One of the first acts of the new CLC President, Dennis

McDermott, was to instruct the CLC representatives to the ICFTU to support the idea of an ICFTU complaint to the ILO on behalf of Klebanov and the Trade Union Association.

At the same time, the CLC sent a telegram to W. Shibayev, President of the official all-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR, asking that body to apply pressure on the Soviet government to grant Shcharansky and Ginzburg permission to emigrate. After both dissidents were convicted last summer, the CLC registered its protest by cancelling its exchange programme with the Soviet labour organisation. (Information Bulletin, Edmonton, November 1978)

U.S. SCIENTISTS BOYCOTT SOVIET CONFERENCE

Eight senior American scientists have withdrawn from an important international symposium on macromolecular chemistry which began 17 October in Tashkent. They protested against the recent trials and persecution of scientists in the Soviet Union. (Times, 17 October 1978)

SOVIET EMBASSY IN PARIS REFUSES TO SEE FRENCH TRADE UNIONS

A delegation from the socialist-led CFDT trade union federation was refused a meeting with Soviet embassy officials. The delegation wanted to present officials a declaration protesting the arrest and imprisonment of Podrabinek. Podrabinek is a Soviet dissident who compiled a 200 page dossier on psychiatric repression.

Berlin Congress Launches Powerful Drive for Bahro's Release

Between 16 and 19 November thousands of people attended a conference in West Berlin in solidarity with the jailed East German Marxist Rudolf Bahro. This Congress, which was by far the most successful event of its kind to have been held in Western Europe, became a focal point for West European socialist and labour movement solidarity with those struggling for civil rights and socialist democracy in Eastern Europe.

More than 3,000 people attended the four days of workshop discussions and plenary sessions on various aspects of Bahro's book, *The Alternative* (just published in English by New Left Books, price £9.50). One of the plenary sessions drew a crowd of more than 3,500 people, the majority from West Berlin but many hundreds travelling from West Germany for the occasion.

The congress was organised by the Committee to Defend Rudolf Bahro, set up in West Berlin in February 1978, with participation from such socialist groups as the journal *Das Neue Lange Marsch*, The Socialist Bureau, the Socialist East European Committee, the GIM (German Section of the Fourth International) and independent socialists. The West German trade union publishing house, EVA, which had published Bahro's book in West Germany, also have considerable assistance to the organisation of the congress. And a big part was played by various socialists recently exiled from the GDR, such as a group of workers from Jena (see *Labour Focus*, Vol. 1, Nos. 5 on their case) and Wolf Biermann. In October 1978 Biermann gave a concert in West Berlin before 6,500 people to raise money for the Bahro Congress.

Messages of support for Bahro and for the Congress poured in from all over Europe. Three messages came from the GDR itself, one being signed, 'A Communist Group in

the GDR'. It said, 'The socialist opposition that is rising up everywhere in the GDR, and of which we are a part, has gladly taken up Bahro's ideas, discussed them, and is ready to spread them. We greet and support your initiative toward winning freedom for Rudolf Bahro and towards a discussion contributing to the unity of the left in Western Europe.' Messages of support came also from Charter 77 and from VONS (The Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted) in Czechoslovakia and from the KSS-KOR in Poland.

The main Italian trade union federations, the CGIL (Communist-led), the CISL and the UIL sent a telegram welcoming the Congress, as did the Baden Wurttemberg Conference of the West German SPD. A letter was read out from the Swedish Metalworkers Union's section in the Volvo plant at Gothenburg, supporting Bahro. Car workers at the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg, West Germany had set up a study circle on *The Alternative* and published a statement of 40 workers in support of Bahro. Two West German teachers' unions sent greetings to the congress, and a leader of the West German Chemical Workers' Union spoke at the Congress, calling for discussions between Western trade unions and the socialist oppositions in Eastern Europe. The congress voted unanimously for an appeal which was jointly proposed by official representatives from the following organisations, present at the Congress: The Italian CP, the Italian and Spanish Socialist Parties, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the French United Socialist Party (PSU), the Italian Party of Proletarian Unity (PdUP), *Il Manifesto* and *Listy*. (The text of this appeal is printed in full below.)

A large number of socialist exiles from the USSR and various East European countries participated in the Congress, and on the final day a letter was received from Willy Brandt, Chairman of the SPD and

the Socialist International, saying that he would consult his friends in the organisations he leads 'to see how we can apply ourselves towards winning the release of Rudolf Bahro'. Although the Italian CP was the only western Communist Party to send an official representative—Angelo Bolaffi from the editorial board of *Rinascita*—the French Communist intellectual, Dr Adler, one of the authors of the book *L'URSS et Nous* was present, and a message of greetings was sent by Pierre Joye of the Belgian CP's Central Committee.

But the most remarkable feature of the congress was not so much its wide political backing and its superb organisation as the extraordinary seriousness and motivation of the discussions on the part of the mainly young West Germany participants. Bahro's book has made an extraordinary impact upon socialists in West Germany and has evidently re-opened discussions ranging across the entire field of socialist thought.

The Congress demonstrated what a large price is being paid by the East German authorities for their continued imprisonment of Rudolf Bahro. It also showed that with greater effort on the part of the international campaign for Bahro's release, this price can become too high for the GDR government to continue to pay it.

Text of Appeal

The participants of the First International Congress for and about Rudolf Bahro, held in West Berlin between 16-19 November 1978 renew their protest against the sentence imposed on Rudolf Bahro for his opinions at a secret trial without an effective defence. And we demand his immediate release.

Rudolf Bahro tries to apply the Marxist method and Marxist categories to the analysis of East European societies, and he tries to show the path of change towards socialism.

Regardless of whether we agree or disagree with his theses and individual positions, his book is an important scientific and political contribution, produced by a critical Marxist and communist.

His book **The Alternative** has made an important contribution to the attempt to present socialism as a real perspective and to the attempt to develop steps towards a practical change. Therefore he, like Robert Havemann, represents the hopes of many people in the East and the West.

We demonstrate for Rudolf Bahro and discuss his work because we want socialism. Socialism and democracy are indivisible.

Solidarity with Rudolf Bahro means for us solidarity with all political prisoners and those in the East European countries persecuted for their political or religious convictions.

But as the many cases of Berufsverbot and other forms of limitation of democratic rights in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin show, people thinking like Bahro also have difficulties in this country, in spreading and standing up for their ideas and conceptions of an alternative social order.

Therefore it is natural for us to oppose any kind of political repression and to fight for the realisation of social and human rights and for a general amnesty for all political prisoners throughout the world.

The participants at this international congress — trade unionists, communists, independent socialists, socialists and social democrats from the different countries of Western and Eastern Europe have, in the last three days, discussed the work of Rudolf Bahro in an open dialogue.

Despite our day to day differences we have tried to provide an example through this congress. Out of this discussion and through the exchange of experience here we commit ourselves to further and to strengthen the solidarity work in our countries.

Rudolf Bahro hoped that his book would be treated critically and would be discussed. We can only pass on this wish and appeal to the political and moral responsibilities of all left-wing organisations.

We ask democratic international public opinion, especially the various political, religious and trade union organisations, to mobilise all their efforts to increase the pressure on the GDR for the release of Rudolf Bahro.

This will be possible only if this congress is followed by other international initiatives. Here the international trade union movement has a special role to play.



The platform during one of the plenary discussions at the Bahro Congress 16-19 November. First left, Mihály Vajda, Hungarian Marxist, with Rudi Dutschke next to him; others on the platform are R. Damus of the Socialist Bureau, Jiri Pelikan, Zdenek Hejzlar, and on the far right, Rossanna Rossanda.

Photo: O. MacDonald

AMBASSADOR BEATS RETREAT

According to the Coventry **Evening Telegraph** of 29 November, the GDR Ambassador, Herr Karl-Heinz Kern, refused to speak to students at Warwick University when hecklers started interrupting him, demanding the release of Rudolf Bahro. Earlier the Ambassador had to pass through pickets organised by the local Ad Hoc Committee for the Defence of Rudolf Bahro on his way to the meeting at the University Arts Centre.

The picket had been supported by the local Labour Club, Young Liberals, Socialist Challenge Group and Socialist Workers Students Organisation. Afterwards a spokesperson for the Ad Hoc Committee said he regretted the Ambassador had felt unable to speak. 'We wanted to ask him questions about Bahro,' he said.

The Committee plans further activities and has invited E.P. Thompson and a member of the Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee to speak locally.

Any group wishing a speaker, posters or information, contact: **The Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee, 24A Bellevue Rd., Ryde, Isle of Wight.**

BAHRO SYMPOSIUM IN LONDON

About 100 people participated in a lively discussion on Bahro's ideas, organised by New Left Books in London on 2 December. The symposium, marking the publication of **The Alternative** in English, was addressed by E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Monty Johnstone of the Communist Party and Günter Minnerup of the Bahro Defence Committee. The meeting was chaired by David Fernbach, the book's translator.

All the speakers stressed the book's importance and urged a vigorous campaign for Bahro's release.

GDR BULLETIN

Information Bulletin of the Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee - Issue No. 2 of November 1978 is available from Günter Minnerup, 24 Bellevue Rd., Ryde, Isle of Wight.

CZECH C'TTEE ACTS FOR SABATA

The Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists is campaigning for the release of Jaroslav Sabata. It is working for protests from MPs and from the Labour Party NEC, as well as other labour movement bodies. Contact at: 49a Tabley Rd., London N7.

REVIEW

What Bahro Argues

Rudolf Bahro's The Alternative has been widely acclaimed throughout the left in Britain since it appeared in English before Christmas, published by NLB at £9.50. Below, Günter Minnerup outlines the book's argument.]

The astonishing impact of Rudolf Bahro's

Günter Minnerup

book goes well beyond the acclaim heaped upon it by Western Marxist intellectuals. When such disparate forces as Willy Brandt, Santiago Carrillo, Tariq Ali and Scunthorpe Labour Party all concern themselves with the imprisonment of a previously unknown East German economist on a spying charge, the remark by New Left Books that Bahro's book is a

'notable historical event' can be recognised as more than just another piece of publisher's dustjacket hyperbole.

The Alternative's impact can be explained by the confluence of several factors: the disintegration of the ideological and political monolith of Stalinism, the

enormous interest among Western socialists in the search for a model of socialism different from the East European reality, and the fact that Bahro speaks in the language of the spring of 1968 in Paris and Prague. There is also the extraordinary unity between the ideas in the book and the actions both of its author and of the Honecker regime. Bahro consciously made a practical, socialist challenge to the leaders of 'socialism as it actually exists' and the regime's response — 8 years in jail for espionage — itself revealed the urgency of Bahro's search for an alternative.

The theoretical appeal of *The Alternative* lies both in its originality and in its unashamed utopianism. For years discussions of the 'class nature of the Soviet Union' and the like have become bogged down in arid, scholastic repetitions of the same old formulas. That does not, of course, mean that these formulas were necessarily wrong, but there was always an air of stagnation around these debates. Rudolf Bahro has written the first really significant contribution to these debates to come out of Eastern Europe itself for decades, and has at the same time introduced a number of novel theoretical concepts that cannot but enrich the discussion of Eastern Europe whether it be academic or political. But he has also re-introduced a dimension into Marxist theoretical debate that was all too often absent since the early writings of Marx and Engels themselves: the utopian vision of what the 'general emancipation of humanity' promised by communism should really be about, a discussion of this utopia in terms of its practical realisation, and the merciless counterposition of the communist vision with the reality of both 'actually existing socialism' and late capitalism. The assertion that a utopian vision and a practical communist *realpolitik* need not and indeed must not be divorced from each other is a central theme of Bahro's book.

While it is impossible to reproduce the complexity of Bahro's theoretical argument within a short book review, it is comparatively easy to summarise the main ideas. The first, historical part of the book is a 'search for the origin of this non-capitalist world (the road to industrial modernisation taken by the Soviet Union - G.M.) in the legacy of the so-called 'Asiatic mode of production'. The Russian Revolution was 'the first anti-imperialist revolution in what was still a predominantly pre-capitalist country, even though it had begun a capitalist development of its own, with a socio-economic structure half feudal, half "Asiatic".' Given the objective backwardness of revolutionary Russia, its autocratic Tsarist traditions and the weakness of the Russian proletariat vis-a-vis the peasantry, the task of economic and cultural modernisation had, with historic inevitability, to give birth to a new omnipotent state apparatus imposing its centralising will on a fragmented society, just as the imperial

dynasties of China and their bureaucracies had done in the classical 'Asiatic mode of production'. Whatever their subjective intentions, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had paved the way for Stalin's 'despotic industrialisation' and all the 'practically unavoidable consequences of a definite historical progress' that the Stalinist terror entailed.

But if Stalinism was necessary and unavoidable, and therefore even progressive, the situation today is different: 'The relationship between people and leadership is institutionally the same as in the 1930s, where it functioned despite the terror in the direction of progress. But today the relationship proves increasingly ineffective. Here the inertia of the institutions plays a particularly ominous role, as it is anchored in the immediate vital interest of several million peoples, those who created the Stalin apparatus or were at least moulded by it, representing it right down to the tiniest kolkhoz village. Every time contradictions come to a head, they tend spontaneously to regress to the same 'measures', campaigns and 'structural changes', in variations that are no longer even resourceful in their senile mechanism. In its present form, the Soviet system of government is locked in a vicious circle, consisting on the one hand of the dilemma of economic competition, on the other of the social and mental regression of the party, state and economic bureaucracy. This vicious circle must of course be broken starting with this second element. The party and the Soviet State can refer to their forceful economic achievements — but these belong to history. The party will lose its birthright if it is not in a position to renovate both itself and the state in a fundamental way, i.e. socially instead of just bureaucratically.'

It is in his discussion of the direction that such a fundamental renovation must take that Bahro's utopianism comes in. Here he directly refers back to Marx's analysis of the social division of labour, and in particular the vertical division of labour into intellectual and manual labour, as the root cause of class divisions (far more importantly and historically preceding the institution of private property of the means of production), and identifies its abolition as the single most important step on the road to the 'general emancipation of humanity', i.e. communism. As long as the traditional division of labour persists, the formal nationalisation of the means of production 'the state planned economies of 'actually existing socialism', must remain an alienated form of socialisation. The individual remains in a 'subaltern' condition, unable to combine with his fellow producers in a free association and to exercise real and meaningful control his and their individual and collective development. But is this not a 'utopian' criticism in the commonly understood, negative sense of the word 'utopian', i.e. unrealisable?

'Marx's communism does in fact contain utopian elements. Marx overestimated, in a principled and unflinching manner, the maturity of the preconditions for communism, and overlooked certain unavoidable intermediate stages. He did not foresee that the universal emancipation of humanity would be blocked by a new challenge, in the form of the world-wide Gordian knot of bureaucratisation and uneven development, which is of course rendered even more acute by the still unabolished residues of capitalist private property. But this is only to say that it is no longer sufficient to be a 'Marxist' in the traditional sense. We must rather raise to a higher level Marx's own legacy, the most developed theory and method of social science that we have, and transform it into the communism of the present.' And the maturity of the preconditions for communism is today far more advanced than it was in the days of Marx and Engels: 'Today we have for the first time in history a really massive "surplus consciousness", i.e. an energetic capacity that is no longer absorbed by the immediate necessities and dangers of human existence and can thus orient itself to more distant problems. Previously, the scarceness of their means of satisfaction and development that are necessary for production and reproduction of the higher intellectual faculties always counterposed educated elites and uneducated masses. This component of the class struggle found expression time and again in a tendency to cultural regression on both sides of the social divide — exclusive arrogance on the one hand, the envious desire for destruction on the other, as major driving forces of economic and political action. Now this confrontation is losing its sharp edges, since technology demands educated masses and at the same time brings about the conditions for liquidating individual underdevelopment and subalternity ... What we are now facing, and what in fact has already begun, is a cultural revolution in the truest sense of the term: a transformation of the entire subjective form of life of the masses, something that can only be compared with that other transition which introduced humanity into class society, by way of patriarchy, the vertical division of labour and the state.'

This 'surplus consciousness' is to be organised by a new 'League of Communists' (the proposed name, of course, being another direct reference to Marx and Engels) independently and separately from the established party apparatus which is incapable of reform. A 'political revolution' is necessary to sweep away the present superstructures of 'socialism as it actually exists', to remove the obstacles in the way of implementation of the concrete action programme which Bahro develops in the third part of *The Alternative*, and which, apart from the heavy emphasis on measures designed to reduce the social division of labour (university level education for all, rotation

of manual subordinate and intellectual/responsible work, application of the latest communications technology such as time-sharing data banks to minimise the privileged possession of knowledge) not so radically different from other previously articulated anti-bureaucratic programmes: chiefly the abolition of all bureaucratic privileges and the subjection of all administrative processes to genuine democratic control. 'This is how we can conceive the order in which the conditions of genuine freedom coincide with those of genuine equality and fraternity. Communism is not only necessary, it is also possible. Whether it becomes a reality or not must be decided in the struggle for its conditions of existence', Bahro concludes.

There are a number of important aspects of Bahro's work that are missing from this brief summary, among them several highly controversial ones as several of the reviews that have already appeared in the British

press have indicated: among them, of course, Bahro's evaluation of Stalinism as historically inevitable and progressive as already indicated, his insistence on the need for only one party under socialism since political parties, for Bahro, are but reflections of class divisions no longer extant in socialist society, his dismissal of the concept of the working class as no longer applicable in its traditional meaning to either Eastern or, even more controversially, Western capitalist societies, his attitude to economic growth and many others. As with any substantial book, no number of reviews can be a substitute for the real thing, the reading, re-reading, intensive study and discussion of the actual text.

But it must not be forgotten that the author of *The Alternative* is not free to defend his views, to clarify ambiguities, to refute misinterpretations and, of course, perhaps further develop his ideas as a result of such

a free debate. He remains in Bautzen prison, in the German Democratic Republic, having served only less than two years of his eight year sentence. The impact his book has made, the enormous interest created in his Marxist critique of 'actually existing socialism', must be translated into political energy to demand and secure his release. The personal fate of Rudolf Bahro is part of the 'notable historical event' referred to, and whether or not the campaign in defence of Rudolf Bahro succeeds will be a significant factor itself in shaping future historical events: no individual in Eastern Europe has, in one single personal effort, challenged the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe more tellingly than Rudolf Bahro. A successful campaign for the restoration of his freedom would be the most effective blow the international socialist movement can strike for democracy and socialism in that part of the world.

Appeal to Western Socialists and Communists by Soviet Civil Rights Campaigners in Exile

[*The following letter from a very authoritative group of Soviet socialists and civil rights campaigners now in the West poses very sharply a series of very important questions for socialists in the West. The editorial board of Labour Focus considers that this letter warrants serious thought and discussion throughout the Left and we invite our readers to write their comments for publication in future issues of Labour Focus. Comments for our next number should be in our hands by February 20.*]

Now, before the advent of changes in the higher party-state leadership of the Soviet Union, there is, in our opinion, a possibility for people who support democratic socialism in the West to influence the direction of changes in the political life of the Soviet Union and of the countries in the Soviet bloc.

The current situation in the Soviet Union is marked by a growing crisis in all branches of life — spiritual, political and economic. Severe repression against the civil rights movement is a result as well as a reflection of this growing crisis. With a change in the leadership there are two possible turns: either a turn in the direction of democratic development, or a turn towards a more dangerous form of totalitarianism.

In our opinion, the response of left-wing circles in the West has an important influence on the consciousness of the majority of people in the USSR, including a significant section of Party workers. By protesting against the systematic violation

of human rights in the USSR and the countries of the Soviet bloc, by supporting civil rights campaigners in those countries, by putting forward new constructive ideas of democratic socialism, left-wing circles in the West increase the chances of a turn in the direction of democratic development. And the stronger the pressure the greater is the probability of a positive change in the political life of countries of the Soviet bloc.

Nevertheless, at present the pressure from Left forces abroad on the CPSU is, in our opinion, still very weak. Communists, if they are genuinely interested in a movement towards democratic socialism, should have pursued this aim by putting forward—let's not be afraid of the word—an **ultimatum** to the leadership of the 'fraternal' CPSU: either uphold basic human rights — and in the first place release all political prisoners — or face a rupture of inter-party relations.

Communists, Socialists and trade unionists should have started a struggle for a boycott of the Soviet Union and its representatives by social, trade union, academic, cultural and athletic organisations and associations in the West; for the exclusion of the USSR from all social international federations; for the refusal of workers, including by means of strike action, to carry out any work for the Soviet Union, except food deliveries. They should, furthermore, carry out a struggle for the organisation of campaigns protesting against political repression in the USSR and in the countries of the Soviet bloc. And political repression in the USSR and in the

countries of the Soviet bloc. And last, but not least, they should organise pressure on their own governments to demand that they adopt real diplomatic and political methods in response to the Soviet authorities' obvious violations of humanitarian articles and principles in international agreements and documents, which have been recognised or ratified by the Soviet Union.

In outlining the contours of such a programme we do not consider it to be maximalist. We are not proposing to demand a change in government for the USSR or the countries in the Soviet bloc—this is, naturally, a matter for the nations of those countries—but just the adherence to basic human rights, just the creation of conditions for free expression to be exercised by citizens.

By crushing the basic rights of its citizens, including the working class, the governments of the so-called socialist countries throw down a challenge, in the first place to the international socialist movement. And it would be very painful if the Left circles in the West failed to make a real response to this challenge and failed to make use of all possibilities to dislodge the 'socialist camp' from its death-point.

Signed by: Ludmilla Alekseyeva, Petro Grigorenko, Valentin Turchin, Vadim Belotserkovsky, Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov, Kronid Lubarsky, Boris Weil, Leonid Plyushch, Boris Shragin.