

Labour Focus on **EASTERN EUROPE**

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**HUNGARY: VOICES OF
THE REVOLUTION**

**CHERNOBYL ● EAST GERMAN ANTI-
NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN ● REYKJAVIK**

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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 organizations 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 materials in *Labour Focus* may be reproduced, with acknowledgement. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the view of the editorial collective.

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilize the considerable influence that the British labour movement can have

in the struggles to end repression in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

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THEMES

"Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

Thus Karl Marx hailed the Paris Commune of 1871 as one of those momentous events in modern history which, while ending in bloody tragedy for those involved and appearing through their defeat to have confirmed the futility of "premature" rebellion against "hopeless" odds, offer a first glimpse of the shape of things to come and serve as the inspiration for the struggle of future generations. In this issue of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, we celebrate another of those "glorious harbingers of a new society", the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary. As with the Paris Commune, detached historians whose professional ethos is to be wise after the event may argue that its defeat was inevitable: how could the poorly-armed and ill-organised workers, intellectuals and peasants of one of the smaller European countries hope to defeat the might of the Red Army at a time when the entire continent was locked in Cold War between two hegemonic powers equally hostile to the ideas of socialist democracy and national self-determination?

Yet it is impossible to deny that in all its essential features, the Hungarian October has set the agenda for the future of socialism in Eastern Europe and beyond. Preceded as it was by the working-class rebellions of East Berlin 1953 and Poznan 1956, and followed by the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Polish eruptions of 1970, 1976 and 1980, it remains the most advanced example we have of Stalinism in its death throes, the most tantalisingly close to a resolution of the permanent crisis of "actually existing socialism" by a true regime of workers' power. The public break of a Communist-led government with the Warsaw Pact and the emergence of a centralised structure of Workers' Councils are monuments to the fact that once released, the dynamic of self-determination — national, political and social — cannot be contained within mere adjustments of the inter-and intra-state relations bequeathed by the Stalin era.

The unprecedented joint declaration by 122 opposition activists from four East European states demonstrates that the spirit of the Hungarian revolution lives on. As they themselves point out, times have changed since the early 1950s in the sense that the Kádars, Jaruzelskis, Honeckers and even the Husaks of today employ more flexible methods than the Rakosis, Bieruts, Ulbrichts and Novotnys in dealing with dissent. To a large extent, the show trials, firing squads and labour camps have been replaced by what the Hungarian oppositionist György Dalos has termed the "Goulash Archipelago" — an attempt to pacify the workers and isolate the dissidents through consumerism and the depoliticisation of social relations, coupled when felt necessary by a more selective and refined recourse to repression. This has bought time, but not solved anything. It has, in fact, created a new headache for the ruling bureaucracy: how to maintain its consumerist social contract under external (recession in the capitalist world market, astronomically high interest rates, the pressures exerted by the arms race on the state budgets) and internal (the chronic weakness of the agricultural sector, technological backwardness, low labour productivity) conditions which are making it ever harder to deliver the goods.

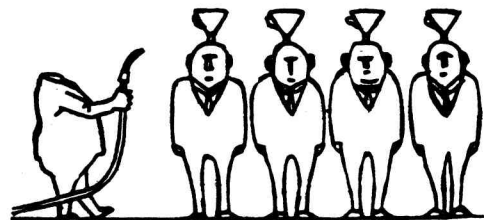
Thirty years after 1956, a new generation is confronted with new problems within the confines of essentially the old system. Will this constellation produce new responses? While there is considerable debate over the nature of the new Gorbachev leadership of the CPSU — following our interview with Zhores Medvedev in the last issue, we now present two further and contrasting views on this in our reviews section — there is also evidence of the emergence of new social and political currents challenging the sta-

tus quo. The German Democratic Republic, the most open to Western influences of all East European societies, has been leading the way here with the increasingly self-confident articulation of independent peace, ecological and women's movements whose voices are again well represented in this issue. The nuclear disaster at Chernobyl may prove to have been a watershed as far as public consciousness of the implications of atomic energy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe — where hitherto the uncritical apologists of "technological progress" have held unchallenged sway — is concerned. The article by Taras Lehkyj, drawing largely on accounts in the local Ukrainian press, reveals just how unprepared the Soviet system (and the population) was for such an event, and the East German petition for a referendum on nuclear power, circulated publicly and attracting thousands of signatures, could well be a portent of a future "greening" of public moods in the Soviet bloc.

At any event, the Chernobyl cloud was a powerful symbol of the common fate of Europe, making it even less possible now than it has ever been to contemplate the future of either Western or Eastern Europe in isolation from each other. Issues of foreign policy have quite rightly dominated the recent European agenda in this era of renewed Cold War confrontation, international economic crisis and increasing regional fragmentation of what used to be a bi-polar world. *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* acknowledges this reality by providing a regular opportunity for discussion of the problems arising from this for the Left in the "East-West" section of the journal, with contributions in this issue from Oliver MacDonald and Eric Heffer MP. This section will be expanded in future issues and contributions are invited from any position of the broad spectrum of socialist politics East or West.

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We have to inform readers that due to factors beyond our control the collaboration with the London publishing house *Verso* has been terminated and our journal is therefore once again published independently by ourselves. The delayed appearance of this issue, for which we apologise to our subscribers, is a result of this changeover. Editorial and production arrangements have now, however, been sorted out and we will be back in February 1987 with an issue around the theme of "Human Rights and Socialism", as well as the usual documentation from Eastern Europe, East-West discussion and review articles.



We gratefully acknowledge financial donations received from the Lippman Trust and the "Hungarian October" Freepress.

If the Reykjavik summit proved one thing, it was that the leaders of the two superpowers are brooding over big issues concerning how the world should be organised during the next couple of decades. Both sides are seeking to appeal to peace sentiments, but behind the talk of plans to scrap large numbers of nuclear weapons lie cold assessments of how to gain advantageous power relationships for themselves in the years ahead.

Oliver MacDonald

THINKING BIG AFTER REYKJAVIK

The left in the West has a responsibility also to move beyond programmes for altering military policies — scrapping this or that weapons system or missile — and consider what overall plan for reorganising power relationships it has. And since the second most important item at the summit — after SDI or in other words, overall world power — was the regional issue of power in Europe, the West European left should come up with its long term ideas in this field. In fact, the Labour Party leadership, along with other social democratic leaders in North Western Europe do seem to have an integrated set of ideas about how they would like the affairs of the continent to move over the next decade or more, and the purpose of this article is to critically assess this Euro-Socialist plan.

But the starting point for any assessment must be a brief survey of the existing situation — Europe's present place in the world system — about which there is a good deal of myth-making. In reality Western Europe does not exist at all as a solid entity in international politics. It is not an actor: it has no army, no central bank, no police force, no home or foreign office, so it is not a big power at all, any more than Eastern Europe is a big power. Instead, it is, of course, a gaggle of medium-sized and small states and what distinctive unity does exist between these states concerns purely domestic economic and social relations and some aspects of external trade. This division of Western Europe is one of the reasons why the USSR is relatively so powerful and why the USA is so overwhelmingly powerful.

Division of Europe

If the fundamental fact about relations between the USSR and the USA is their mutual antagonism, it is also true that they do find some important co-incidences of interests in Europe, coincidences beyond the obvious one of wishing to avoid their mutual annihilation. They, for example, agree about the undesirability of a united Germany and therefore to that extent agree on the division of Europe. But they also agree on the undesirability of ending the division of Western Europe: despite all the American rhetoric (far weaker anyway now than it was even ten years ago) the US is strongly opposed to a genuine fusion of the region into a new state that would challenge its own power in the world.

The myth that Western Europe exists as a mighty force in international affairs derives from the fact that the region is a very important economic region with a big share in world GDP (roughly the same as the USA and double that of the Soviet Union) and from the fact that it has a very big weight in world trade (bigger than the USA's). For starry-eyed believers in liberal international economics who believe that the world is governed by the laws of pure economic competition in a non-political and non-military environment this may make "Western Europe" seem mighty, but realists know better.

During the first half of the 1980s, the affairs of Western Europe have been dominated by four key trends that have been anything but welcome to the left. The continuing crisis of industrial capitalism and the rising power of global finance and the rentier; the collapse of Keynesianism, the attack on the welfare state, increasingly heavy unemployment and rises in arms spending and military sectors of the economy; the second Cold War and a new aggressive posture on the part of the USA; and finally, the rise of the New Right into governments and grow-

ing authoritarianism and attacks on civil liberties. It is perfectly obvious that all these trends are interlinked and any social democratic programme and strategy has to seek to reverse them.

The corner-stone of the social-democratic counter-strategy is the power of industrial capitalism in West Germany where, unlike in Britain, the door has largely remained closed to the rentier and to those money capitalists wishing to subordinate industrial capital to short-term speculative gain. German industry dominates the region and its exchanges within the region are stabilised by the European Monetary System. social democratic leaders, seeking to improve conditions for working people within capitalism must always turn to industrial capital for support. The time was when this meant turning to the American North-East and mid-West. Today that region is a hot-bed of protectionists trade war programmes, so the centre of gravity has become the Ruhr. The Social Democrats (along with the Italian Communists) are now strong supporters of European industrial strategy, European economic co-operation and co-operation in high technology (eg. Esprit) with plans for adapting



The end of the summit

Americanism in these fields to the requirements of European trade unions. The Labour leaders, as the most recent converts are the most enthusiastic for all this.

Welfare state

On the basis of a German-led industrial revival easing unemployment and the fiscal strain on state finances, the welfare state could be preserved and even revived. This would in turn strengthen social democratic forces against both those to the left of them and those on the authoritarian right, restoring social peace and "consensus politics". But to achieve this turn it is, of course, necessary to return to détente, throwing back the forces which favour military confrontation between the blocs, which favour military capital and which favour an aggressive struggle against the welfare state in the name of the Soviet threat and anti-communism. Up to now all these anti-labour forces have had strong support from Washington, where the cocktail party circuit has been enlivened by debates over whether or not to scrap the welfare state in Western Europe and step up confrontation between the blocs there, or pull back US forces from Europe, or both.

Finally, the social democratic strategy involves advancing a pan-European programme: this consists of the gradual easing of tensions between the two halves of Europe, starting in both the economic and the military fields. Economically, this involves expanding trade between the two halves of Europe (including the Soviet Union). Militarily, it involves taking such measures that it is impossible for either side to pose a convincing threat of a surprise attack against the other with the aim of victory in a "limited war" in Europe. Hence the ideas for a nuclear-free Eastern and Western Europe (including a non-nuclear strategy on NATO's part); the creation of demilitarised zones in central Europe, and the phased reduction of conventional forces on both sides. The result of all this would be the gradual coming together of Eastern and Western Europe economically and politically and a corresponding reduction in the leverage of the USA and the USSR in their respective halves of Europe. As far as the superpowers were concerned, they could pursue their rivalry in the rest of the world, but Europe would be decoupled from this struggle. Eastern Europe would become an economic hinterland for West European (above all West German) capital; the Soviets would be increasingly secure from attack on their Western flank and thus they would accept an increasing dependence on the part of their satellites on West European states. We would be travelling down a road towards the reunification of the East European satellite states with the West European states that dominated them in the pre-war years. There could be an easing of travel restrictions in Eastern Europe, greater political experimentation in the states there, and perhaps some genuine liberalisation, going beyond Kadarism. And at the end of this long — perhaps endless — road there would be some sort of

social democratic reunification of Western Europe and the Soviet satellite states (in a mixed, capitalist economy).

Is it realistic?

There is a good deal that is both humane and down-to-earth in this social democratic strategy. It offers a better life for most people in both halves of Europe than what is available at the moment. It is anti-militarist and seeks to weaken the obscene forces of racism and fascism in favour of democratic rights. As for realism, it offers something to both the superpowers: in the first place, it opposes the creation of a West European super-state; integration would be industrial and economic under West Germany's hegemony, but not military. Secondly, it offers the Soviet leadership a number of benefits: first and foremost the ending of a military threat from Western Europe, but also of political-territorial claims on Eastern Europe from West Germany and the prospect of economic and technological benefits through dealings with Western Europe. For the Americans it offers both the continuance of capitalism in Western Europe and the region's openness to American capital: secondly it offers the long-term prospect of the opening-up of the East European and Soviet economies to Western and thus American capital. Thirdly, it offers a stable socio-political regime throughout Western Europe and one that would not be necessarily anti-American.

But is the social democratic programme realistic enough? And is it, so to speak, "humanistic" enough? As to the benefits it offers to the peoples of the continent, these are strictly within the limits of what the established powers East and West find may find acceptable to grant. The programme in Western Europe involves seeking to persuade capital that various improvements in employment conditions, welfare and civil rights are in its own best interests: what is possible is what capital can be persuaded to accept. And similarly in its relations with Eastern Europe, this programme offers only a quantitative development of the existing Helsinki process. The really major change that the Social Democrats are seeking to make is in the military field: genuine military détente in Europe, based upon a switch to a non-nuclear strategy in NATO and balanced troop reductions.

More doubtful are the programme's claims to realism. In the first place, the programme's assumed compatibility with the world capitalist economy must be questioned. If one lesson has been learned from the last decade it is that economies run on capitalist lines must dance to the tune played by the dollar, a tune orchestrated in New York and Washington. They can dance in different ways to some extent, but they can't choose the beat or the melody. The EMS has

helped to ensure that under West German leadership the West European economies have to a degree danced together, but the open, capitalist nature of their economies has meant that American interest rates, the US budget deficit and the movement of the dollar have defined the situation for West European capital. There is an increasingly conflictual relationship between the big US capitalists and the West European and the Japanese capitalists, there is not the slightest indication that the world capitalist economy is moving out of crisis into a general boom. Therefore the idea that the West European economies can return to full employment, fast growth and expanded welfare is wishful thinking. The wishes may come true, but there are no solid reasons for thinking that they will.

And in such a climate of uncertainty in the ranks of capital — to put matters no more strongly — it is highly unlikely that industrial capital will eagerly seek a new domestic alliance with labour. If inter-capitalist rivalry is going to intensify, it is much more likely to seek to boost profit rates by further attacks on labour rights, trade union and welfare rights and civil liberties. A glance at the attitude of West German big business in the run-up to the federal elections confirms this view and the pattern is even stronger in Britain.

Détente

Moreover, any serious defence and expansion of welfare rights depends upon serious military détente between the blocs in Europe. The entire approach of social democratic leaders is to seek to achieve this through persuading Washington that such a détente is in its interests. But is it? At first sight Reagan's zero option on intermediate-range missiles looks like a big step towards just such a détente. Yet in reality, Washington's aim is to push the West Germans into greater military spending to ease strains on the American military budget and allow the US to pull some troops out of Western Europe. Linked to this is a conscious drive to undermine the welfare state system in Western Europe.

West Germany could, of course, pursue an independent course of détente with the East, under the banner of Deutschlandpolitik, and Willy Brandt's effort to negotiate various draft agreements on military matters with Honecker is an example of this. But beyond a certain minimal threshold, this will raise strong hostility in French and British ruling circles as well as in Washington. They are permanently haunted by the double threat: a rapprochement between Bonn and Moscow re-enforced by growing economic interdependence; and a reunification of Germany. Even without these supposed nightmares, Washington's project of reorganising the international division of labour to fit all

its trading rivals into a new pattern under US hegemony involves preventing West Germany from reaching a new level of economic exchanges with the Soviet Union — getting, for example, key raw materials from there rather than from the dollar area. Thus the social democratic strategy is likely to rouse anger without being in a position to defeat its opponents on the right by being prepared to take socialist measures.

The final problem with the strategy lies in its minimalist attitude towards political change in the East. There is no sense of urgency in the social democrats' stance on political freedoms — never mind democratisation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They justify their complacency in the name of realism and "non-interference", but the real basis of this posture lies in their loyalty to capitalism and NATO: because they are not prepared to challenge these forces in the West, they do not believe they can ask for, or expect, significant political change in the East.

While many of the particular demands and objectives raised by the social democratic leaders can be supported, the left should explore an alternative strategy for Europe. As for economic programme in Western Europe, socialist measures should be advanced to break the power of money capital, socialise industry and plan a full-employment economy. The social democrats oppose this mainly on the grounds that in the age of multinationals and economic interdependence in Western Europe, you cannot pursue economic autarchy in one state. They are right about autarchy, but socialisation of industry does not mean autarchy — it simply means non-capitalist trade with surrounding countries. Furthermore, socialist economic policy must be an international policy to replace the EEC framework with a genuine economic unification of Western Europe on a socialised basis. The left must raise the banner of West European unification along socialist lines. This also is

the only serious basis for reorganising Western Europe's relations with the Third World — breaking the power of the banks and the European multinationals over relations with the Third World.

Socialist neutralism

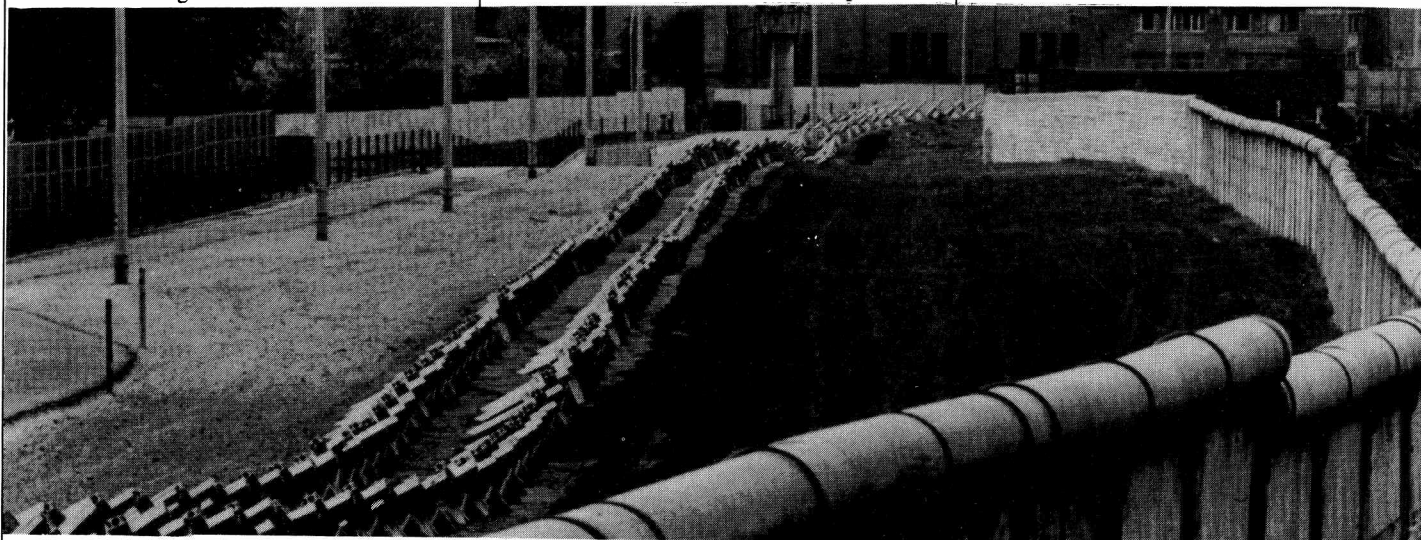
Combined with this economic programme, the left should advance a neutralist policy for the region's relations with the external world. Such a policy simply means a repudiation of alliances of a military sort with either Washington or Moscow, seeking stable political and economic relations with both. And against this background, we should advance a new socialist and democratic platform for the Helsinki process: a radical programme of military détente in Europe, a major package of measures for trade and technological co-operation across the continent and serious steps to transform social, civil and political rights East and West. A first demand in this field is for political liberty in the East — no repression for freedom of speech or freedom of the press or freedom of assembly. But beyond that, steps towards democratic power. The socialisation of the economy and the media in the West would be one major step towards democratic power, but no less important must be the struggle for free elections, political pluralism and democratisation of the mass media in the East.

Where does this leave power politics? The answer is that this is a programme for reuniting the whole of Europe to the Urals (and beyond) and for opening the way to German reunification. If, as seems likely, national rivalries and tensions would not disappear, there would be a regulating element in the form of the two really large national groups on the continent: the Germans and the Russians. Why should this be a less stable balance than that between the USA and the USSR at the present time? Furthermore, the common social basis of life in Europe would

provide the foundation for a supranational legal, state authority to regulate the behaviour of the leaders of the big nations and create a genuinely democratic international life in Europe.

The USA's role in the world would, of course, be enormously weakened by this development. Insofar as socialist forces advanced in Western Europe, the US would do everything possible to persuade Moscow to help it sabotage West European socialism, and Moscow could be very strongly tempted by such offers — one reason why socialist neutralism in Western Europe should be genuine and not based upon naive notions of automatic international socialist fellowship. But in any case, the left in Western Europe should seek alliances (inevitably strongly minoritarian) in the USA and it would of course in no way threaten the sovereignty of the USA or the security of the American people.

This programme and strategy may seem a tall order for the left in Europe. It is. If we are on the verge of a new world economic boom like that of the 1950s and on the verge of a new stabilisation of relations between the superpowers and the blocs then, of course, this programme will stand no chance whatever of broad support. But if we are heading in the opposite direction towards increasingly severe crises, ever greater violence and misery in the Third World and ever greater confrontation between the superpowers with the threat of global war looming, this programme, or something like it, offers a realistic path forward. Within the socialist parties and other mass parties of the left in Western Europe, while supporting positive elements in the strategy of the social democratic leaders, a genuine socialist programme and strategy for a united socialist democratic Europe should be advanced and we should seek allies and a dialogue with sympathetic currents of opinion in Eastern Europe and the USSR as well.



Divided Europe — divided Berlin

PEACE, NON-ALIGNMENT, AND DEMOCRACY IN EASTERN EUROPE



An interview

with Eric Heffer

You have recently been involved in discussions on the labour left about the development of a non-aligned foreign policy for Britain. At the same time you have a record of involvement in activity in support of democratic rights in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as president of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign for example. To many people these two things might seem to contradict one another.

Well, it is quite clear that the people who came together to formulate or to begin the campaign for a non-aligned foreign policy were a somewhat divided group in the sense that while all of them were against American policy in Nicaragua and Latin American, or British involvement in NATO, there were clearly some people at that meeting who were not particularly critical of either the internal regime in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and tended to be dismissive of criticism of Soviet foreign policy. When I talk about a socialist policy independent of both the Soviet bloc on the one hand and of the Americans on the other. We need a distinctive foreign policy of the left, which we should fight for a Labour government to put into practice, which does not involve lining up either with American imperialism or with Soviet expansionism — although I would admit that Soviet expansionism has up to now been largely defensive, but this doesn't justify what has happened with regard to the East European countries.

Yes, but isn't the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe a secondary question compared to the fundamental struggle against the threat of war?

The two things go hand in hand. I don't think you can talk seriously about fighting for a democratic foreign policy without arguing that the rights of people inside any country, including the Soviet Union are fundamental. You can't have double standards; you can't say we want peace with the Soviet Union, but that means that we can't be critical and support the fight of the people within the Soviet bloc for their rights. Otherwise you have a doublethink policy. The fight to overthrow rightwing dictatorships

in Latin America is part of the same struggle as the fight for the democratic rights of the people in the Soviet bloc. The objective is the establishment of democratic socialism. This doesn't mean a rightwing policy. Many people have either never read or forgotten the works of Rosa Luxemburg. Nobody could suggest that Rosa Luxemburg was a rightwing social democratic hack. She was killed by the rightwing forces in Germany after the first world war because she was a revolutionary socialist. But she made it absolutely clear that in a socialist society there had to be pluralism and that the individual had to have the right to disagree if they were in the minority. I read these words many years ago when I was young and had been thrown out of the Communist Party. It was like a revelation; here was somebody who was a revolutionary socialist but who understood that in a socialist society you had to have rights for the individual; you had to have the right to independent trade unions, the right to a free press, and the principle of free elections. If you didn't have that you have an increasingly bureaucratic setup which ends up via the dictatorship of the party in the dictatorship of individuals.

But here you are associating with pro-Soviet forces over non-alignment. A rightwing critic might say that whatever your personal views you have given yourself to those currents, and abandoned the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe.

That's not true. If you look at the people involved in establishing the non-alignment committee, only a minority were in favour of giving a privileged importance to the views of the Soviet Union. Of course they have the right to be in there and to argue their case, but they didn't dominate the proceedings and are in a minority within the committee. In any case, you have to admit that if there were a nuclear war then all the arguments about democratic rights would be academic anyway. People who believe that there would be some kind of future after a nuclear war are barmy. I think it was Koestler who said that the dropping of the atomic bomb was a fundamental change in the whole concept of

war. You are now talking about the future of mankind as such.

Do you think that there is more sympathy on the left of the labour movement for the struggle for democratic rights in the Soviet bloc than before? What is the evolution?

The recent miner's strike was a very good example of people learning lessons from experience. People who had illusions in the Eastern European trade unions and governments discovered that the Jaruzelski regime was only too happy to send coal to this country in the middle of the strike when the miners were being attacked in much the same way as Solidarity was attacked in Poland. Scargill said at one stage that he thought he owed an apology to Lech Walesa. Clearly lessons were being learnt and people began to realise that the unions inside Eastern Europe were not free democratic organisations.

That is a response to a particular situation. Do you think the Labour Party should adopt a formal policy on democratic rights in Eastern Europe? At the moment the thing is dealt with issue by issue. There is a resolution on the invasion of Czechoslovakia...

...and then one on Poland or in support of Shcharansky. But there is no thought out, cohesive policy towards Eastern Europe. When I was much more influential on the NEC than some of us are at the present moment we were moving in that direction, but the momentum has been lost now. There is always the danger, without a thought out policy that the right will use the issue to attack the Soviet Union...

Such a policy would presumably have a pan-European emphasis. I believe you were the party's spokesman on Europe at one time.

Yes. I was not — and am not — in favour of the EEC as it stands, because it is there to develop and defend European capitalism. That is the simple truth. But I also support a wider European unity of all European socialist forces, both trade unions and political organisations, with the objective of a united socialist Europe...

But when you talk about "forces" who does that mean; just the social democratic parties?

To work towards a socialist Europe you have to involve all kinds of other people than the social democrats. Lots of the social democratic parties are by no means socialist in my opinion. The Italian Communist Party has moved almost into a Fabian situation. You can't say that we have to restrict ourselves to alliances with particular groupings. There will be criticism and discussion and a variety of forces. In West Germany for instance the Greens have much more radical positions in an number of areas compared to the social democrats, although I am glad to see that the SPD congress which is now being held shows signs of moves in a radical direction.

The forces you mentioned are all in the west, which brings us to the thorny question of relations with the ruling parties and official organisations in the Soviet bloc.

I met Rudolf Bahro when he came out of prison and I asked him how he felt about delegations from the labour movement in this country to meet the official parties in Eastern Europe. I was quite surprised when he said that he thought it was a good thing. His argument was that there were many people in the levels below the top echelons who are very critical and would like to see an opening up towards democratic policies. I don't know whether that thing in *The Guardian* was genuine, but if it were true it would underline what Bahro said. Maybe these people would not want to go as far as I would like, but it is possible for delegations to do some good, provided they don't go in a creepy crawling

manner, saying how wonderful everything is; if they openly and honestly discuss matters it can do some good. If they go a sycophants then that does a lot of harm, and such delegations should be frowned upon. My experience of talking to quite high up officials of Eastern European Communist Parties is that there is a lot of worry about the danger of a nuclear war and that gives the possibility of opening up discussions with them.

Have you met people who have ideas as bold as the ones in The Guardian manifesto, and who would think in terms of a serious political project to implement such ideas?

Yes, one or two, but they wouldn't be totally open even with people like myself. But as long as the danger of war and the arms build up continues, such people inside those countries are inhibited. The old guard and the old concepts are much more likely to continue to have the dominant position on the basis of fear. Thus the fight, in alliance with the contacts we have and can work with in the east, for peace, in the effort to dismantle NATO and the Warsaw Pact and for the removal of all foreign troops from all the countries of Europe is also a part of the struggle for democratic rights in the east. Of course there are forces both in the West and the East who are only too happy to use the argument that if you do this you are assisting the enemy and this presents us with problems. But that can't be allowed to stop us.

One last question: in this issue we are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the events in 1956, especially the Hungarian uprising. What impact did this have on you personally at the time?

Until I was expelled from the Communist Party in 1948, like all young communists I was a supporter of Stalinism. We fought the CP leadership in this country because we thought they were revisionist and were moving away from Leninist concepts. We thought that if only we could get some comrade to go and talk to Stalin he would understand what we were trying to do; we thought that the leadership in Britain were against the concepts of Stalin. What a fantastic illusion! Once I was out of the CP I started to read wider material. I discovered another world. I discovered that there had been forces inside the Soviet Union who had been put into camps, that the trials had been phoney. Among other things, I read Trotsky seriously — although I have never actually been a Trotskyist, I thought Trotsky was wrong about Kronstadt or the militarisation of the trade unions — but I read widely and my ideas developed rapidly so that by the time the Hungarian revolution took place I had a clear position. I had already taken the side of the East German workers in 1953. I was a construction worker and they were building workers fighting norms. If I had been a building worker there I would have been fighting them too. Of course in Hungary there were rightwing groups who took advantage of the situation, and they were supported by American money, but how could you avoid that? But that did not mean that the Hungarian revolution was anything other than a genuine revolution of the mass of the people for democratic rights. As in every other upsurge in Eastern Europe the position of the workers has been for democratic management of production. The same was true in Poland; not the restoration of capitalism but the right of the workers to run and control industry. For this reason all the upsurges in the Soviet bloc have had a tremendous positive effect on me as a socialist.

The interviewer for Labour Focus on Eastern Europe was Mark Jackson.

The following special feature is the transcript of a cassette, entitled the "Voice of the Hungarian Revolution", lasting 90 minutes and published in 1982 for the 26th anniversary of the revolution. It was produced by the samizdat "*Hungarian October*" Free Press and distributed in the usual manner for illegal material. Although there were several hundred copies made it soon became a rare item.

The cassette reproduces selections from Hungarian radio broadcasts between October 23, the date of the outbreak of the revolution, and November 7. These selections are interwoven with the narrator's comments on the history of the revolution. The selections themselves were compiled from the recordings made at the time by Western radio listening services and re-broadcast several times during the past decades.

The narrator's text was written by György Krassó and translated into English by Vera Magyar. There are some discrepancies in the times — the most important of which have been corrected — and a number of omissions from the original broadcasts. The actress who spoke on the tape subsequently lost her job at the theatre.

"HUNGARY CALLING" THE VOICE OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION



Radio Kossuth

October 23

On October 23, 1956, for the first time in the history of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe, the Hungarian people rose up against their oppressors. Without knowing the past we cannot understand the present or foresee the future.

Radio Budapest, in Hungarian to Europe

1830 National flags, young people with rosettes of the national colours singing the Kossuth song, the Marseillaise and the Internationale — this is how we can describe in colours and in the titles of songs how Budapest today is bathed in the October sunshine and celebrates a new Ides of March.

This afternoon a vast youth demonstration took place in our capital.

This was how radio Kossuth reported the mass demonstration on October 23. For years the anger of the people had been simmering. The promised new world had not arrived. Instead of peace there was unbridled rearmament, instead of well-being there was poverty, instead of freedom there was terror and instead of independence there was occupation of the country. Industry had been ruined by unrealistic planning and bureaucracy. Agriculture had been ruined by the fleecing of the peasantry and forced collectivisation. After the death of Stalin, Imre Nagy, as head of the government, announced a reform programme but less than two years later the hated regime of Rakosi returned. Now writers and journalists too spoke out against the despotism of the powers that be. In the end, even the Soviet leaders withdrew their support for Rakosi, but replace him with the no less hated Gerö. The whole nation demanded changes — the young party intellectuals in the Petöfi Circle as well as the workers. Newspapers wrote about subjects previously considered taboo; even party meetings became scenes of sharp political debate. On October 6 tens of thousands attended the funeral of Laszlo Rajk and marched through the city demanding the punishment of his killers. Students left the official "Alliance of Working Youth" and re-established the independent student organisation, the "Alliance of Hungarian University and High School Students".

Poland was in turmoil too and rumours spread about threatening moves by the Soviet Union. The students of Budapest Technical University announced a peaceful demonstration for October 23 to express solidarity with the Polish people. They also drew up a list of 16 demands.

Radio Kossuth continued its broadcast:

Although at noon today the Ministry of the Interior banned all demonstrations, the Politburo of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party changed the decision. Scholars, students of technological faculties, students of philosophy, law, economics, together with students from other university branches, took part in the march led by their professors and leaders of the university Party organisations.

At first there were only thousands but they were joined by young workers, passers-by, soldiers, old people, secondary school students and tram and bus conductors. The vast crowd grew to tens of thousands. The streets resounded with these slogans: 'People of Kossuth, March Forward Hand in Hand', 'We Want a New Leadership — We Trust Imre Nagy', 'Long Live the People's Army', and so forth. The shouts reverberate, the national colours flutter in the air, windows are open. The streets of Budapest are filled with a new wind of greater freedom...

From the balcony of the Parliament building the young actor, Imre Sinkovits, read out the "National Song" by Sandor Petöfi,

the poet of the 1848 democratic revolution. Hundreds of thousands repeated "We won't be slaves again". Imre Nagy made a short speech to the demonstrators asking them to remain calm and promising democratic changes. But at the party headquarters Gerö remained in charge.

Radio Jossuth and Petöfi, Budapest speaking. Dear listeners, we broadcast the speech of comrade Ernö Gerö, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party.

(Gerö's voice:)

1900 Dear Comrades! Dear Friends! Working people of Hungary!... The main purpose of the enemies of our people today is to undermine the power of the working class ... to shake the people's faith in their Party ... to try to loosen the close and friendly ties between our country ... and the other countries building Socialism, particularly between our country and the Socialist Soviet Union. They try to loosen the ties between our Party and the glorious Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Party of Lenin, the Party of the Twentieth CPSU Congress. They heap slanders on the Soviet Union.

This speech was only oil on the fire. Hungarian workers topped the symbol of oppression, the giant statue of Stalin, while the students tried to broadcast their demands. The political police fired on the crowds. Budapest flared up. They broke into arsenals and the siege of the radio station began. Demonstrators broke into the headquarters of the party newspaper, Szabad Nep, while others occupied public buildings and army barracks. A foreign observer had described the scene: "This was a real revolution, without complexes and obstacles. The crowd forgot about everything, they were running and fighting. Everyone was in some sort of euphoria, like a genius during the act of creation".

The radio building was taken at dawn with dead on both sides. The defenders, officers of the political police and soldiers, were given a safe retreat and the wounded were taken to a nearby hospital. The broadcast continued from the Parliament building. Soviet tanks began streaming into Budapest.

October 24.

(the speaker was a well-known sports commentator)

12.30 What have the misled youths and the counter-revolutionary bandits hiding in their ranks, done with the beautiful patriotic thoughts? Shooting in the streets accompanied by our National Anthem! The plundering of the slaughterhouse accompanied by the waving of red, white and green banners! ... Robbing, plundering, the shedding of workers' blood under the cover of the sacred ideas of national independence and sovereignty. These are no patriots! They are black scoundrels or misled adolescents. The soldiers and workers who come to disarm them are the true patriots. We greet them and the Soviet soldiers rushing to help them.

Martial law was announced at dawn.

13.54 Attention! Attention! In a few minutes it will be two o'clock (1300 GMT). Those who surrender before that hour will be exempt from martial law. Attention! Attention! We request that our listeners put their radio sets in their windows. We want to inform counter-revolutionaries and those who were misled that, if they surrender before the deadline, they will be exempt from martial law.

But the insurgents did not surrender their arms. Barricades went up throughout the city. Mikoyan and Suslov arrived from Moscow and approved Imre Nagy's appointment as Prime Minister. Martial law was again postponed to 6 pm that evening.

But no one was listening to the radio any more. The first armed

resistance centres were established and the first workers' council was formed at the Egyesült Izzó works. Gerö was ousted on the morning of October 25 and Kadar became the First Secretary of the party.

October 25

1133 A communique from the Party Politburo:

At its first meeting today the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party relieved Comrade Ernő Gerö of his post of First Secretary of the Central Committee. The Politburo appointed János Kádár as First Secretary of the Central Committee. Following the Politburo meeting, Comrade Kádár and Comrade Imre Nagy will broadcast statements. (The communique is repeated several times, followed each time by the words, "Hungarians, put out the national flag on your houses".)

1418 Now Comrades János Kádár and Imre Nagy will address you. Comrade János Kádár, First Secretary of the Central Committee, is speaking:

Hungarian workers, dear comrades! The Politburo of our Party has entrusted to me the post of First Secretary in a grave and difficult situation. The grave situation in which we are involved is characterised by the fact that various elements are mixed up in it. The demonstration march of a section of our youth, which started peaceably in accordance with the aims of an overwhelming majority of participants, degenerated after a few hours, in accordance with the intentions of anti-democratic and counter-revolutionary elements which joined them against the State power of the people's democracy...

1425 You will now hear the speech of Comrade Imre Nagy, member of the Politburo and Premier:

As Premier I wish to announce that the Hungarian government will begin talks with the Soviet Union concerning the relations between the Hungarian People's Republic and the Soviet Union, and, among other things, concerning the withdrawal of the Soviet forces stationed in Hungary. These talks will be carried out on the basis of equality and national independence between Communist Parties and Socialist countries.¹

A day earlier, perhaps, this promise might have been enough. A few hours before these speeches, on the morning of Tuesday, October 25, the political police had opened fire on the demonstrators in Parliament Square. Three hundred people died.

Colonel Pal Maleter went over to the side of the insurgents. Gerö, Andras Hegedüs and Laszlo Piros, Minister of the Interior, were whisked away to safety in the Soviet Union. New revolutionary newspapers appeared and workers' councils were organised outside of Budapest. A general strike was announced. Students occupied the town of Szeged. In Mosonmagyaróvár 100 demonstrators were killed by the political police and in Miskolc 16 people are shot by police.

On October 26 the government announced a new deadline for martial law, but not in a begging manner.

October 26

1406 Armed young people, we appeal to you who are still fighting. Precious Hungarian blood is flowing on the streets of Budapest. Avoid this senseless bloodshed! The new government will consistently satisfy your demands. Young patriots, enough bloodshed. We Hungarians are so few. Let there be no more shedding of patriots blood. Lay down your arms and the People's government will not put you before a summary tribunal.

But the fighting continued as the revolution spread to the whole

country. The streets of Budapest now belonged to the insurgents. No one was misled by announcements like this one at 10 pm on October 27th.

October 27

The Ministry of Defense has issued the following communique: The town council of Baja called the Ministry of Defense this afternoon and asked for information about the following rumour: 'Misleading rumours have spread in Baja about Soviet troops being engaged in large-scale military operations in Budapest. Are these rumours true?'

The Minister of Defense informs the inquirers that this rumour is not true. The bulk of the armed groups was liquidated by this morning. Military action (is now) confined only to a few nests. It is true that Soviet troops helped, and are helping, greatly in liquidating groups which have attacked the workers' power. In many places, however, insurgents trapped in larger buildings asked if they might lay down their arms before the Hungarian People's Army units. This request has been fulfilled.

As military activities subside, the formations of the Hungarian Army are gradually taking over everywhere the task of maintaining order. If those few (armed groups) still resisting do not lay down their arms after being summoned by Hungarian Army:my units to do so, they will be completely liquidated.

October 28

At dawn on Sunday, October 28, the Stalinist leaders of the Ministry of Defence wanted, with the help of Soviet army units, to mount a general assault against the insurgents but they were prevented by Imre Nagy. The Security Council of the UN began to discuss the Hungarian question in spite of Soviet objections. The morning issue of the party paper, Szabad Nep, took the side of the revolution in its editorial.

Dear listeners. We shall read the editorial of today's issue of Szabad Nep.

1103 Szabad Nép editorial:

We do not agree with those who summarily dismiss the events of the past few days as a counter-revolutionary Fascist attempt at a coup d'état...

The events started with the demonstration by the students but it would be more correct to see this as a movement of the youth in general. The young people of Budapest expressed a feeling which came from the heart of the whole nation.

In the course of the morning there was a meeting of the party Central Committee and it appears that it began to listen to the voice of the people. At 5.30 pm Imre Nagy spoke on the radio.

Speech by Premier Imre Nagy:

The government rejects the view of the formidable popular movement as a counter-revolution. Of course...this movement was exploited by criminal...and reactionary, counter-revolutionary elements...with the aim of overthrowing the people's democratic regime.

But it is also indisputable that in this movement a great national and democratic movement, embracing and unifying all our people, has developed... The grave crimes committed during the historic period just past released this great movement...

The situation was further aggravated by the fact that, up to the very last, the leadership did not decide to break finally with its old and criminal policy.

The Hungarian government has come to an agreement with the Soviet government whereby Soviet forces shall withdraw immediately from Budapest and simultaneously with the for-

mation of our new Army, shall evacuate the city. The Hungarian government has started negotiations to settle relations between the Hungarian People's Republic and the Soviet Union with regard to the withdrawal of Soviet forces stationed in Hungary.

All this in the spirit of Soviet-Hungarian friendship and the principle of the mutual equality and national independence of Socialist countries.

After the re-establishment of order we shall organise a new and single State police force and we shall dissolve the organs of State security.

October 29

The government ordered a cease-fire but the battle continued at certain places. On October 29 the Ministers of Defence and the Interior ordered the organisation of new armed forces in which the insurgents would have their place. The term "comrade" as a form of address was replaced by the term "citizen" and national colours were to be worn. Other army leaders, however, were still waiting for some miracle and that same evening the following announcement was made.

1717 In accordance with an agreement reached with leaders of the Budapest resistance groups, the insurgents are beginning to hand over their arms to Hungarian troops relieving Soviet units. Within 24 hours after they hand over their arms, the withdrawal of Soviet units from Budapest will begin.

At the time of this broadcast, however, Soviet troops were beginning to leave Budapest and the insurgents had not surrendered their arms.

October 30

On October 30 the headquarters of the Budapest party committee fell. During the siege of the building the defending security police had shot even at the wounded and at the ambulancemen. The revenge of the crowd was merciless. There were between 80 and 100 people in the building. 25 of them, among them 18 members of the security police, were lynched by the angry crowd. This, however, was the last mob execution, and action which was condemned by every newspaper and organisation.

1520 Radio Free Miskolc.

Since October 6 there has been no end to funerals. Today we are having a funeral in Miskolc too. We are burying the innocent youth who longed for justice and freedom and were killed by the security police, the dirty-handed oppressors of the people.

Death and resurrection walk hand in hand. On the afternoon of October 30 the last insurgents arrested during the revolution were released and the prison gates were opened for the political prisoners of the Rakosi regime. Mindszenty, the Primate of the Catholic Church was released from prison.

Now, revolutionary committees, similar to the Workers' Councils, began to be formed in the civil service, in cultural and medical institutions and in military units. The Kossuth emblem became the national emblem and 15 March was declared a national holiday. Independent newspapers appeared and the democratic parties were re-established. Suslov and Mikoyan arrived from Moscow and announced that the Soviet Union was prepared to negotiate about the principle of equality of the socialist countries. In an address on Radio Kossuth on the afternoon of October 30 Imre Nagy asked all citizens to refrain from any provocative acts and to facilitate the peaceful withdrawal of the Soviet forces.

It seemed that the revolution had been victorious and that the creation of a truly democratic and truly socialist society could

now begin. Imre Nagy then spoke on the radio.

1428 Premier Imre Nagy and members of the government will now address the Hungarian nation. Here is Premier Nagy:

Hungarian workers, peasants, intellectuals. As a result of their revolution...and mighty movement of democratic forces our nation has reached the crossroads. The national government, acting in complete agreement with the Presidium of the Hungarian Workers' Party, has arrived at a decision vital to the nation's life...

In the interests of further democratisation...the Cabinet has abolished the one-party system and has decided that we should return to a system of government based on the democratic cooperation of the coalition parties as they existed in 1945. In accordance with this decision, a new Cabinet has been set up within the national government. Its members are Imre Nagy, Zoltán Tildy, Béla Kovács, Ferenc Erdei, János Kádár, Géza Losonczy and persons to be nominated by the Social Democratic Party. The government will submit a proposal to the Presidential Council...to appoint János Kádár and Géza Losonczy Ministers of State.

The national government appeals to the headquarters of the Soviet Command to begin the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.

In the name of the national government I wish to declare that we recognise all the autonomous democratic local authorities which were formed during the revolution, that we rely on them and want their support.

The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party is in complete agreement with the aforesaid. Minister of State, Janos Kadar.

Fellow workers, working brethren, dear comrades. I want you to know that all the resolutions passed today by the Council of Ministers have been fully approved by the Presidium of the Hungarian Workers' Party and I want to add that I fully approve of all that was said by the speakers before me — Imre Nagy, Zoltán Tildy and Ferenc Erdei.

The victorious revolution was being celebrated in the countryside too. Confidence in Imre Nagy, previously shaken, was re-established, especially after the important radio announcement at 6.30 pm on October 30.

(Voice of the announcer)
Hungarians. The cause of this pain and shame, of this intense passion, were two measures which cost the blood of hundreds and hundreds. One was the invitation to the Soviet troops, the other the declaration of martial law against the freedom fighters. In the face of history, and fully conscious of our responsibility, we declare that Imre Nagy, President of the Council of Ministers, did not know about these two resolutions. He did not sign these resolutions. They weigh on the conscience of Andras Hegedüs and Ernő Gerö.²

Hungarian radio was now speaking with the voice of the revolution. The era of lies was at an end. The changes were described by the revolutionary council of the radio.

1506 Dear listeners, we are beginning a new chapter in the history of the Hungarian radio. For many years the radio has been an instrument of lies; it merely carried out orders. It lied day and night; it lied on all wave lengths. Not even at the hour of our country's rebirth did it cease its campaign of lies, but the struggle which...brought national freedom also freed our radio. Those who spoke those lies are no longer among the staff of the Hungarian radio, which will henceforth bear the

name of Kossuth and Petöfi. We who are now at the microphone are new men. We shall tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

October 31

On October 31 the army too was under new management.

1700 Attention, attention! You will now hear an important announcement. The Presidential Council of the People's Republic has relieved Lajos Toth, First Deputy Minister of Home Defense and head of the Army General Staff, of his office. At the same time the Council nominated Pál Maléter as First Deputy Minister of Home Defence, and Istvan Kovács as head of the Army General Staff. The Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic appointed Maj. Gen. Béla Király as military commander of the capital.

The Parliament of Workers' Councils was now convened. In its clear concise resolution the Councils formulated the basic principles and structure of the workers' leadership. A national guard was formed from groups of freedom fighters. A revolutionary police council was formed for the defence of the revolutionary order and a Revolutionary National Defence Council was established for the defence of the realm. The Hungarian people, as so often in their history, felt that they had finally won their freedom and independence. The atmosphere was still euphoric but they were already beginning to get ready for a new and peaceful life. The revolutionary authorities allocated flats to the needy. Rubble was being cleared away and tram rails were being replaced. There was no need to strike any more. There was a consensus of opinion that work should resume on Monday, November 5. if there had been any who dreamed of restoring the old order of the pre-war period, they were disappointed. At Györ, the workers in the railway factory chased away political adventurers. In Budapest the national guard disarmed a smaller group which had occupied the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a few hours. The military leader of

Imre Nagy on the eve of the revolution

the revolution, Pal Maleter, declared that Hungary would not allow a single Western volunteer to enter its territory. The real danger threatening the revolution, however, came from elsewhere. The first alarming rumours were already being heard on October 30.

October 30, 1956

Attention! Attention! This is the Workers' Council of Szabolcs-Szatmari county. While the Council of Ministers conduct or don't conduct negotiations with the Soviet command, and while it is announced that Soviet troops are withdrawing from Budapest, large units of Soviet troops are seen moving towards the centre to the country. We can see the events with our own eyes. If they are really negotiating withdrawal, and if they are really willing to give us our freedom, what are they doing here?

Israel attacked Egypt because of the nationalisation of the Suez canal and occupied the Gaza Strip and the Sinai peninsula. Two days later the English and French air forces intervened, bombing Egyptian cities. The attention of the world was turned towards the Near East and the Soviet Union was given a free hand. On October 31, at 9 pm, the Borsod county workers' council made the following announcement over Radio Free Miskolc.

2125 Dear listeners! ...We were the first to announce to our listeners Marshall Zhukov's order on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. Also, we were the first to report that the Soviet Army was carrying out operations in the Záhony area which amounted to going around in circles. At the same time...we had made contact with our present government.

Imre Nagy didn't want to believe the threatening rumours. He believed in the just cause of the Hungarian people and trusted the peaceful declarations of the Soviet government. He believed the promises made by Andropov, the Soviet ambassador, But the aim of the Soviet military manoeuvres became clearer and Nagy no longer hesitated to take the step which the whole nation wanted him to take. This was at 6.12 on November 1.



HUNGARY 1956

November 1.

Free Radio Kossuth Budapest. Attention! Attention! We shall now read an announcement of great importance. Imre Nagy, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs this morning, November 1, called Mr. Andropov, ambassador extraordinary of the Soviet Union, and informed him that the government of the Hungarian Republic had received news about more Soviet troops entering Hungary. He demanded the immediate withdrawal of these troops. He declared that the Hungarian Republic will immediately leave the Warsaw Pact and declare Hungary's neutrality. The government will approach the country's neutrality.

An hour and a half later, Imre Nagy, in his radio speech, informed the nation of the government's decision.

Radio Free Kossuth. Dear listeners. Imre Nagy, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic and Foreign Minister speaks to the Hungarian people. Imre Nagy at the microphone.

People of Hungary. The Hungarian national government, imbued with profound responsibility towards the Hungarian people and history. The revolutionary struggle fought by the Hungarian people and its heroes has at last carried the cause of freedom and independence to victory. The heroic struggle has made it possible to implement...our fundamental national interest — neutrality. We appeal to our neighbours to respect the irrevocable decision of our people... Working millions of Hungary, protect and strengthen...the consolidation of order in our country — free, independent, democratic and neutral Hungary!

The Hungarian Workers' Party, until recently counting millions of members, was now dissolved and Janos Kadar announced the formation of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. The members of the preparatory committee of the new party were: Janos Kadar, Imre Nagy, Zoltan Szanto, György Lukacs, Sandor Kopacsi, Geza Losonczy and Ferenc Donath. Janos Kadar, in his radio broadcast, greets the Hungarian communists as "ideological and organisational leaders of the glorious uprising of our people".

2200 Dear listeners, János Kádár will now speak to the Hungarian people:

Hungarian workers, peasants and intellectuals. In a glorious uprising our people have shaken off the Rakosi regime. They have achieved freedom for the people and independence for the country, without which there can be no Socialism. We can safely say that...those who prepared this uprising were recruited from our ranks. Communist writers, journalists, university students, the youth of the Petöfi Club, thousands and thousands of workers and peasants and veteran fighters who were imprisoned on false charges fought in the front lines against Rákosi's despotism and political hooliganism. We are proud that you have stood your ground honestly in the armed uprising... You were permeated by true patriotism and loyalty to Socialism.

On the evening of that same day, however, Kadar disappeared from the parliament and together with Ferenc Münnich went to the Soviet Embassy and from there further rumours about the movements of Soviet troops.

2330 The Soviet Legation in Budapest announced that airfields of the Hungarian Air Force have been surrounded by Soviet armoured forces to secure the air transportation of members of families of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary...

The Hungarian Air Force, in full complement, is ready to defend itself against overwhelming odds. However, the government, in full realisation of its responsibilities, has prohibited

shooting. Thus, the Hungarian Air Force has maintained discipline and is...waiting for the departure of Soviet troops.

November 2

On November 2 more troops continued to enter Hungarian territory. Three times Imre Nagy protested to the Soviet Embassy and he sent a message to the Secretary General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld.

To Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the United Nations New York:

On November 2 the government of the Hungarian people's Republic received new important information, Army reports, according to which considerable Soviet military formations have crossed the country's frontier. They are advancing toward Budapest, occupying railway lines, railway stations, railway traffic installations and so forth on their way. Reports have also been received about Soviet troop movements, in an East-West direction, in western Hungary.

Krushchev and Malenkov secretly flew to Yugoslavia to discuss the planned invasion with Tito. Together they nominated Janos Kadar as the new leader of Hungary. Publicly, however, Moscow continued to deny military manoeuvres and pretended a willingness to negotiate.

November 3

Free Radio Kossuth, November 3

1518 Important announcement:

The mixed Committee of the Hungarian and Soviet Army Commands met this morning and both parties have explained their points of view as regards the technical problems of the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The mixed Committee has agreed to study the mutual explanations and to meet again at 2200 tonight.

Meanwhile, the Soviet delegation has promised that several trains carrying Soviet troops will not cross the Hungarian frontier.

A new, more broadly-based government was now formed with the participation of all the coalition parties. Istvan Bibó joined the government as representative of the Petöfi Party, formerly the National Peasant Party. That evening, at 8 pm, Cardinal Mindszenty, the primate of the Catholic Church in Hungary, spoke on the radio.³

Our position and future now depend on what the Russian Empire, consisting of 200 million persons, intended to do regarding its military forces within our frontiers. Radio reports say that this military force is increasing. We are neutral. We did not give the Russian Empire cause for bloodshed. But has the idea ever occurred to the leaders of the Russian Empire that we would respect the Russian people far more if they did not oppress us?

Usually it is the attacked that hurls himself against the enemy. However, we did not attack Russia, and we sincerely hope that Russia will withdraw her armed forces from Hungary soon.

At the UN Security Council the Soviet Union asked for a postponement of the discussion of Hungary. The sitting was postponed until Monday, November 5. The fate of the revolution was decided on Saturday and Sunday. The Soviet troops, in large numbers, occupied Budapest and other towns. On November 4, at 5.20 am, Imre Nagy spoke on the radio for the last time.

November 4

Radio Free Kossuth

0520 Attention! Attention! Premier Imre Nagy will address

the Hungarian people:

This is Premier Imre Nagy speaking. Today at daybreak Soviet troops attacked our capital with the obvious intent of overthrowing the legal democratic Hungarian government. Our troops are in combat. The government is at its post. I notify the people of our country and the entire world of this fact.

(Announcement repeated in English, Russian, Hungarian and French.)

Then Imre Nagy calls on the member of the delegation which, on the previous evening, had gone to negotiate with the Soviets.

0658 Imre Nagy, Premier of the national government, appeals to Pál Maléter, Defense Minister, István Kovács, Chief of the General Staff, and the other members who went to the Soviet Army Headquarters at ten o'clock (2100GMT) last night and have not yet returned, to return at once and take charge of their respective offices.

The members of the delegation were unable to obey this order. They had been trapped and made prisoners of the KGB. At 7.14 am the radio appealed to the Soviet soldiers not to shoot the Hungarian people.

Attention, attention, important announcement: The Hungarian government appeals to the officers and men of the Soviet Army not to shoot. Let us avoid bloodshed. The Russians are our friends and will remain our friends.

(Repeated in Russian)

At 7.57 am the radio broadcast an appeal for help by Hungarian writers.

(The speaker is Gyula Hay)

This is the Association of Hungarian Writers. We appeal for help to all writers, scientists, writers' associations, academics, learned societies, and intellectual leaders of the world. Our time is limited. You know the facts. There is no need to repeat them. Help Hungary. Help the Hungarian people, the Hungarian writers, the scientists, workers, peasants and intellectuals. Help, Help, Help! (This is then repeated in English, German and Russian.)

The Soviet tanks soon reach and occupy the Parliament Building. Imre Nagy, with several others, has asked for asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy. Istvan Bibo, a minister in the government, remains at his post in the Parliament Building. He sends a message to the President of the United States and asks him to demand the immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces. He declares that the revolution was justified. The Hungarian army was given no command to resist but there was military resistance in several places. Ferenc Munnich and then Janos Kadar spoke from an unknown radio station. They announce the formation of a new government and asked the Soviet forces to defeat the "dark forces of reaction". The insurgent groups in Budapest fought to the end. There was also armed resistance in the provinces. At 8.30 am on November 4, the Budapest radio having already been silenced, we heard a broadcast of the Dunapentele National Committee.

Radio Free Dunapentele

0830 This is the free radio of Dunapentele National Committee.. The treacherous occupation forces have attacked Budapest and several other cities in the country. The battle is on in Pécs, Székesfehérvár, Dunaföldvár, and Veszprém.

At 2pm the same radio asked for help in English and asked for paratroopers.

This is Hungary calling. This is Hungary calling. The last remaining station. Call to the United Nations. Early this morning Soviet troops launched a general attack on Hungary. We



No socialism without women's liberation...

are requesting you to send us immediate aid in the form of parachute troops over the transdanubian provinces. It is possible. For freedom, help Hungary!

The Dunapentele workers and soldiers continue to fight.

11.12 Radio Rakoczi

Attention! Attention! An appeal to the UN! An appeal to the UN! In Egypt the UN resolution was carried out... We ask for similar measures in Hungary. We emphasise that similar measures must be taken immediately in the Hungarian affair.

(Three hours later)

Radio Free Rákóczi

1305 We are asking for immediate armed help... Please forward this appeal to President Eisenhower. Please forward it to

Anna Kéthly. We are fighting against overwhelming odds. Possibly our radio will soon be annihilated. We shall continue to fight a partisan war. We ask for urgent...help, we ask for armed help for Hungary. Attention! Attention! We ask you to forward the above call for help to President Eisenhower and Anna Kéthly. We ask for immediate intervention, we ask for immediate intervention, we ask for immediate intervention. Continue to listen to our broadcasts. As soon as we have time to come from the firing line...we will continue...

(There follows, on the cassette, a number of similar appeals from various radio stations around the country.)

The resistance was defeated by the overwhelming forces of the Soviet army. Houses were reduced to ruins and there were many dead on the streets. The workers continued their general strike. Istvan Bibó made a last attempt at a compromise solution of the Hungarian question but in vain. On November 22 Imre Nagy and his collaborators were arrested and taken to Romania while trying to leave the Yugoslav embassy although their safe conduct had been guaranteed by the government. On December 8, at Salgotarjan the police fired at demonstrating miners. More than 80 were killed. In many other towns the police were able to restore order only with the use of force. Sándor Rácz and Sandor Bali, the leaders of the Workers' Councils, were invited to the Parliament Building for talks and were arrested on arrival. Thousands were executed. Tens of thousands were jailed or interned. Hundreds of thousands were forced to leave the country. On June 16, 1958 Imre Nagy was hanged, together with Pal Maleter and Miklos Gimes. The Hungarian people received no help from anywhere. On November 14, at a press conference following his reelection, President Eisenhower had the following to say about Hungary: "To the bottom of my heart we sympathise with the Hungarians. But the US government did not suggest, and could never suggest, that an unarmed population should go into an open fight with a power it cannot possibly defeat". Yet the Hungarian revolution, as Istvan Bibó said in the spring of 1957, not long before he himself was arrested, was — although it was un-

organised and unprepared, and although it was a reply to a merciless bloodbath — "surprisingly sober, humane and moderate.

If, after the event, the revolution was declared as hopeless from the start, then this was true not because the revolution was foolhardy, but because it was let down. Not only the meaning and prospects of Western politics (referring to moral and ideological points of view) became doubtful, but in the eyes of many their honesty, too. The adherents of socialism had a painful loss, too, since it was one of the most exciting socialist experiments that was destroyed by Soviet tanks". The Hungarian cause perhaps might have been the last chance to call a halt to the spreading of force leading to catastrophe.

People wanted to live. Power strengthened. In 1963 the Hungarian case was removed from the agenda at the UN. The majority of the 1956 political prisoners were freed, but many hundreds continued to serve in Hungarian prisons. Those executed were only dust, anonymous, buried in sacks in the cemetery of Rákospalota. The intelligentsia turned its back to the radical ideas of the revolution, and gave its trust to the reforms from above. The people worked and kept silence. Discontented youth gave its trust to Mao, Guevara, or worked for the humanisation of Marxism.

Footnotes

1 Imre Nagy actually began his speech by denouncing the uprising as a counter-revolution. The full text of the first part of this speech was as follows:

A small group of counter-revolutionary provocateurs launched an armed attack against the order of our People's Republic, an attack which has been supported by part of the workers of Budapest because of their bitterness over the situation of the country. This bitterness has been aggravated by the political and economic mistakes of the past, the remedying of which has been made absolutely imperative by the situation of the country and the general desires of the people. The new Party leadership and the government under my direction are resolved to draw the fullest lessons from the tragic events. Soon after the restoration of order the National Assembly will be called. At that session I will submit an all-embracing and basic program of reform.

This program will embrace all important problems of our national life. This program demands the reorganisation of the government on the basis of the unification of broad democratic national forces represented by the reorganised Patriotic People's Front. For the realisation of this program it is absolutely necessary to stop the fighting immediately, to restore order and peace, and to continue production.

2 According to Andras Hegedüs, who was Prime Minister at the time, Nagy did indeed know about the invitation to the Soviet troops. In a book recently published in Vienna, this is how Hegedüs describes the event (The book is an extended interview with Zoltan Zsille):

"Zsille. Another important event was the calling in of the Soviet troops. How did that come about?

Hegedüs. A chat on the phone between Gerö and Andropov. Its possible that Gerö suggested it. The crowd had already started pulling down Stalin's statue. We saw the role of the Soviet tanks as preventing too much bloodshed.

Zsille. Did anyone ask if everyone was agreeable to the Soviet troops coming in?

Hegedüs. No. But everyone seemed to agree. They asked Nagy if he, as Prime Minister, would sign a statement that he agreed with the intervention of the Soviet troops. But he didn't sign. Gerö followed him with the paper to sign. But Nagy nearly ran away from him."

Hegedüs signed the letter of invitation later on October 26, having been asked to do so by Gerö and Andropov. According to Hegedüs, "Nagy was afraid that if he signed it might be used against him". (Hegedüs, Andras *Élet: egy eszme arnyékában* Vienna 1985).

3 Cardinal Mindszenty's role in the Hungarian revolution is somewhat controversial. Bill Lomax, in his book *Hungary 1956*, says that Mindszenty was "the one person who perhaps could have succeeded in uniting the many and diverse conservative, Christian, Horthyite and neo-fascist parties into a reactionary clerical coalition opposed not only to the socialist regime but also to the democratic coalition parties" (p. 135) In the speech from which the above selection is taken Mindszenty begins by stating that he has not changed any of his ideas.

Nowadays it is often emphasised that the speaker breaking away from the practices of the past is speaking sincerely. I cannot say this. I need not break with my past. by the grace of God, I am the same as I was before my imprisonment. I stand by my convictions physically and spiritually intact, just as I was eight years ago, though prison has tired me sorely...

He refrained from actually opposing the Nagy government but described it as an heir of the fallen regime which had been imposed on Hungary in 1945.

In 1945, after a lost, and for us, a pointless war, a regime was forced on us which now disgusts its heirs and they condemn it wholeheartedly. This regime was swept away by the entire Hungarian people, and its heirs should not ask for a proof of this.

He was likewise ambiguous on the question of capitalist restoration.

However, I must stress that we have a classless society and a State where law prevails. We support private ownership which is rightly and justly limited by social interests. This is the wish of the Hungarian people.

ILLES EGYÜTTES: TE KIT VÁLASZTANÁL - SÁRGA RÖZSA - HA EN RÖZSA VOLNÉK

A MAGYAR FORRADALOM HANGJA

RÁDIÓADÁSOK, 1956. X. 23 - XI. 7.
 A FORRADALOM TÖRTÉNETE
 ILLYÉS GYULA: EGY MONDAT
 A ZSARNOKSÁGRÓL
 PETRI GYÖRGY:
 A KIS OKTÓBERI
 FORRADALOM
 24. ÉV-
 FORDULÓ
 ÉNEK
 ILLÉS
 EGYÜTTES
 A VERSEKET
 ELMONDJA:
 ILLYÉS GYULA
 ÉS PETRI GYÖRGY
 1956

„M. O.”, Budapest

A XI. KERÜLETI Munkástanácsok HATÁROZATAI:

A XI. kerületi üzemek dolgozóinak munkásképviselei egyhangúlag elhatározták azt, hogy a munkát Magyarország szocialista építésének és a nép jövőjének érdekében felvesszük az alábbi pontokban foglalt

Demands of the Workers' Council of the 11th District, Budapest, November 12, 1956.

The representatives of the factory workers of the 11th District have unanimously decided that, in the interest of the construction of socialism in Hungary and in the interest of the future of the Hungarian people, they are ready to resume work if the following conditions are met:

1. We insist most strongly that the revolutionary workers regard the factories and the land as the property of the working people.
2. The Workers' Parliament recognises the Kádár government as a negotiating partner on the condition that it reorganise itself to ensure its legality in accordance with the wish of the people.
3. The people have placed their trust in the workers' councils as a way of ensuring that the wishes of the nation will be respected in the future. We demand an extension of the authority of the workers' councils and their recognition by the government in the areas of the economy, culture and social life.
4. In the interests of maintaining order and re-establishing peace we demand that the government set a date for free elections. Only parties which recognise and have always recognised the socialist order may take part in those elections. The socialist order is based on the principle that the means of production belong to society as a whole.
5. We demand the immediate release of the members of the government of Imre Nagy who were elected by the revolution. We also demand the release of the freedom fighters.
6. We demand an immediate cease-fire and a rapid withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest. The Hungarian authorities are capable of securing public order by means of the workers' power. We demand further that the Hungarian government begin to negotiate a gradual and orderly withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungarian territory as soon as the working people have returned to work and we demand that the public be kept informed about the course of these negotiations.
7. The police must be recruited from among the factory workers and from among the army units which have remained loyal to the people.
8. The government should publish the above demands in the press and on the radio.

Conclusion. We will begin immediately to restore food distribution and transport. Everything else, however, must await the recognition and fulfilment of our demands.

Workers' Councils of the 11th District Budapest, 12 November 1956.

felvesszük, további munkát azonban csak követeléseink elismerése és biztosítása esetén vesszük fel.

A XI., kerületi ÜZEMEK MUNKÁSTANÁCSAI

Budapest, 1956 november 12.

It was undoubtedly the Workers' Councils which were the most important creative act of the Hungarian workers during the revolution of 1956. The workers, in the councils, continued the resistance against the Kadar regime for months after the second Soviet intervention on November 4. They not only were the main defenders of the revolution of October 23 but, by creating their own institutions and organs of power they attempted to create a new system of political power in Hungary. In the recording of those events, the voice of the workers is not often heard.

F e r e n c T ö k e

THE WORKERS COUNCILS IN 1956

In a previous issue (No. 7, Summer 1984) we published a long interview, made in 1983, with Sandor Rácz, President of the Budapest Central Workers' Council in 1956. The following article is a shortened version of an account given by Ferenc Töke, who was Vice-President of the Budapest Central Council. It originally appeared in Review, quarterly journal of the Imre Nagy Institute in Brussels, in April 1961.

I entered the Orion Radio factory as apprentice, worked up to journeyman toolmaker and did better and better as time went on. I didn't have much schooling, so I attended evening classes, a grown man. I was a worker, so was my whole family, and I was familiar with the mentality of the workers. I went to college, at night of course, and became a technologist and norm-calculator. Norm-calculators were not exactly popular in Hungary in those days and still, when it came to Workers' Council elections, I was leagues ahead of all other nominees. This occurred at the Telephone factory employing three thousand workers. When the permanent Workers' Councils were being elected I wanted to resign; my nerves were in pretty bad shape. By then I was member of the Central Workers' Council as well, as temporary delegate. At the tool shop, where I worked and was well known, they wouldn't hear of my resignation. They simply refused to permit it. I was a worker — they said — one of them. And, though I was to do different work, I knew I belonged to them. I had joined the Social Democratic Party at the age of sixteen and had always remained a convinced Social Democrat. I was member of the Hungarian Working People's Party.

I shall now try to tell all I know about the Workers' Councils and Hungary.

On the 25th of October, after participating in the revolutionary fighting, I went to the factory. Of the three thousand workers some eight hundred had assembled in the culture hall. The director, the party secretary, the head of the factory committee and some of their subordinates were standing on the platform, facing the workers. These officials were telling the workers that the SZOT (National Trade Union Council) had issued an appeal, approved also by party headquarters, that Workers' Councils be constituted in the factories so that in the future the workers

should have a say in the affairs of the factory and manage it themselves.

The workers interpreted the appeal not quite in the way the SZOT and party headquarters expected. They took it seriously. They proceeded to elect workers, their own representatives to the council and not the men suggested by the leadership. In our factory nobody was asked, although, sensing the mood of the workers, the above mentioned officials thought it advisable to resign. The director asked the assembled workers to allow him to remain in the factory and work as a toolmaker, as he had done before being appointed director. The workers agreed.

We elected a Workers' Council consisting of approximately twenty-five members and immediately resolved to strike because, owing to the confused decrees it issued, we refused to acknowledge the Nagy government. It was proposed that the Workers' Council should elaborate a Memorandum of Protest to be forwarded to the government after the workers of the factory had approved it. Our first demand was that the Soviet troops be withdrawn from Hungary, that is, the country's independence, and the second, that after the Soviet withdrawal a government headed by Imre Nagy but consisting of members enjoying the confidence of the people should manage the affairs of the nation.

Each shop delegated two or three members into the Council and so did the administrative departments. As a consequence, nineteen or twenty of the twenty-five Council members were workers.

Approximately half of the Council members were young, between the ages of 23 and 28. They were, in our factory, the representatives of Hungarian youth. They had participated in the actions preceding the revolution, the demonstrations, the pulling down of the Stalin statue, in the fight in front of Broadcasting House; some of them attended the university and with their youthful, revolutionary spirit could carry away the older workers who felt like them but left the initiative to the young. The older workers, among whom, particularly in the Telephone factory there were many old trade union members, and many who had been in prison during the former regime or even in the communist regime, considered that the young should

take the lead. They said that, if the young had been good enough to start such a glorious fight, they were good enough to be our representatives. It didn't count whether or not one had been a communist party member. Approximately 90 per cent of the Workers' Council members in the Telephone factory belonged to the party, some had even been active communists, but the workers trusted them because they had always stood up for them. We were very careful that only men whose hands were clean should be elected into the Workers' Council.

As far as I know, all Budapest enterprises elected Workers' Councils and I should like to mention here that the Hungarian workers were aware of the fact that there were Workers' Councils in Yugoslavia, too. We thought that, if the Yugoslav workers could have Councils to manage the factories, there was no reason why this should not be possible also in Hungary. This, apart from political considerations, was the reason why the Hungarian workers wanted to elect representatives whom they really trusted. The workers intended to mould these Councils, so to say, to their own image, not only in Budapest but throughout the country, and not from one day to the next but slowly, gradually. This state of affairs lasted until November 3rd. By then the Workers' Councils were functioning in all the factories and the time had come to replace the old directors. The Councils demanded the decentralisation of industrial production, as a result of which the factories would, in fact, be owned by the workers who, in their turn, would let the state share in their profits.

In our factory we went about it in the following way. I and a few of my fellow Council members went to the Parliament building, talked with Zoltan Tildy and forwarded a Memorandum to Imre Nagy. This was on October 30th, or 31st, on a Tuesday. The day when Imre Nagy, Tildy and Kadar spoke on the radio. It seemed to us that the government was at last its own master. We went back to the factory and decided to start work. We made it known over the radio that production would begin on November 5th, Monday morning. But already on the 2nd and the 3rd many of our workers came in, mostly to repair the damage. They went to work with the feeling that they were now

working in their own plant. Many said to me that until now emulation had been obligation but, if things remained as they were today, they would launch their own campaigns of emulation and achieve a level of production unequalled in the history of the country.

Well, work should have begun on Monday but Sunday brought the second Soviet intervention and the workers needed no meetings and resolutions to decide that the strike, their only weapon, should continue. They applied the same instrument against the Kadar government, imposed upon them by the Russians, that they had applied against the Imre Nagy government until its attitude was clarified.

On November 4th, many of the workers appeared at the factory to obtain information because it was impossible to find out from the radio what was really going on. The new government was helpless. It appealed to the workers to resume work, but in vain, because the workers were disinclined to work for the Kadar government. At the same time, it was impossible for them to remain idle for long because the Hungarian working class, and the population in general, was not in a position to keep going for several months without wages. Besides, working together at the factories as they did, they could stop work whenever they wanted and thus exert pressure on the government. They also believed that they could convince the Soviet army that it was acting against the wishes of the entire Hungarian people. At the same time they wanted to settle their relationship with the government in the best possible way.

During the strike no reactionary trends manifested themselves in the factory. The idea that the former owners could return was never even mentioned. The attitude of the workers was that only men of unimpeachable character and unblemished political past should be elected to office, that is, men who were not radical in their thinking. In brief, the workers wanted something that had never existed before. They did not want to imitate Yugoslav conditions, or the American or any other Western system. They wanted something entirely new. And this aspiration was the driving force that made it possible for the Central Workers' Council to be formed in spite of the Russian bayonets.

We, at the Telephone factory, elaborated our programme at the first meeting of the Workers' Council, and our programme conflicted with that of the government, namely that the Council should fulfil only economic functions. We knew that this was the first Hungarian workers' organisation that was called upon to fulfill not only economic but also political functions. Therefore, our programme contained also political tasks which, however, would have ceased as soon as the working class had its own political representation.

The Council had but two full-time offi-

cial, the chairman and the secretary. The members had to do productive work and fulfill their tasks connected with the Council after working hours. One of their tasks was to report to the workers every day on the political situation and other important matters because information was scarce and unreliable in those days.

At the Council meetings the members reported on the wishes of their fellow-workers and then we proposed resolutions, among others that none of the former owners should be brought back to the Telephone factory. The workers wanted to keep the factory in their own possession. The form of this worker ownership was still to be found; we did not know whether we should issue shares or find some other solution. It was also decided that no political organisational work should take place in the different shops. Not even the workers' parties to be formed later were permitted to organise, only the trade union which was above parties. They wanted no trend to develop that might have resembled a one-party system. The general wish was that only the parties of the coalition existing from 1945 to 1947 should take part in the elections, that is, parties that had no intention of restoring capitalism but strove to create a democratic society. These parties recognised the land reform, certain forms of socialist economy in industry, democratic rights, individual freedom and human dignity. They were also for neutrality which, however, could not be achieved at that period.

Nobody proposed that the Workers' Council itself should be the political representation of the workers. The workers knew very well that the factory, as an employer, could not represent the political interests of the workers. One of the more absurd features of the communist regime had been that the employer was also the political representative of the working class. The workers considered it a temporary arrangement that the Council should also have political functions.

Concerning political representation, two views prevailed, one during the revolution and one afterwards. During the revolution, particularly after the composition of the Imre Nagy government seemed to offer sufficient guarantees, it did not appear necessary that the Council should fulfill political functions. It was obvious that this role would be played by various political parties. After the defeat of the revolution, however, it seemed necessary that the Workers' Councils should fulfill political functions because there was no organisation that could have been entrusted with the representation of the workers. When the Workers' Councils were formed great care was taken that no party-political views should prevail but that exclusively the interests of the factory, suitability and technical skill be taken into account.

In the days prior to November 4th, the idea of a Central Workers' Council never

arose. Only in the chaos following the second Soviet intervention did the idea come to the fore.

The workers saw that there was complete confusion, production had completely stopped and even maintenance work was forgotten and, therefore, the workers of the large industrial plants attempted to work out regional cooperation. When we heard that the Workers' Councils of the neighbouring district had met, we too organised a meeting and this is how the District Workers' Councils were formed. Cooperation made things easier, we could exchange information and harmonise our resolutions. We all wanted the same thing so why should we have passed conflicting resolutions? And because we all opposed the new government we felt that a large organisation would wield greater power.

The workers felt that something had to be done; the country had no responsible leaders. True, there were about 200,000 Russian troops in the country and there was also the Kadar government, but Kadar was master only in the Parliament building and nowhere else in the entire country. They dared not come out of the building because they were met by the hatred of the whole nation. Owing to the senseless actions of the Russians many people had become homeless. These had to be helped. Social assistance also required cooperation. True, the District Workers' Councils discussed their resolutions but, as the tasks accumulated, it became from hour to hour more urgent that the representatives of all Budapest industrial plants should get together. The Workers' Council of Ujpest passed a resolution that the representatives of all neighbouring districts be convoked for a meeting. This meeting was held on November 13th. Previously, I went to the meeting of the Telephone factory. There were approximately eight hundred workers there and they approved the composition of the Workers' Council elected during the revolution as well as its resolutions. They demanded that the Workers' Council stand fast by its original demands, declared that they did not recognise the Kadar government as Hungary's legal government and would continue to strike until all Soviet troops had been withdrawn from the country. Then the workers elected me to represent them because they knew me well. The meeting of the representatives of the district Councils was held at our factory. The district meeting again elected me to represent it at the Ujpest meeting. The election of the representatives was done democratically; it was the workers themselves who chose one member of their Council to represent them, and not the Council that delegated one of its members.

After the district election we proceeded to the Ujpest meeting but by the time we got there the Soviet troops had already occupied the building. The Workers' Council of the

Ujpest Incandescent Lamp factory offered their own premises for the meeting. We went there in small groups, secretly, and held our first meeting with the representatives of the most important industrial plants. It was a common aspiration that there should be a Central Workers' Council to organise the work of the district and factory Councils but we came to no agreement how this was to be achieved. This occurred on November 14th at four o'clock in the afternoon. Sandor Bali, representative of the Belojannis Works, rose and told the meeting that he and representatives of the Hungarian Steel Works, the Csepel Vegetable Oil factory and the Csepel Iron Works had just come from Parliament, where they had talked to Kadar and had handed over their demands. It has to be pointed out here that the resolutions of all factory and district Councils were almost identical. They all demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest and the entire country, free elections, a multi-party system, socialist ownership of the industries, the maintenance of Workers' Councils, the restoration of democratic trade unions — and, naturally, all the demands of the revolution: the right to strike and to assemble, freedom of the press and religion, etc. It was interesting that, though the participants of this meeting all came from different places, their demands were so much alike as if they had previously discussed them. True, they were all sent by workers and workers, everywhere, demanded the same things. There were delegates also from the country-side who said that Workers' Councils had been formed everywhere as soon as they learned about the Budapest initiative.

When Bali told the meeting that they had informed Kadar of their demands, everyone was glad that the government was now familiar with the resolutions of the workers, but they agreed it was a pity that the initiative had not come from a representative central body, because it would have carried thus greater weight. The meeting decided that the central body to be created would begin its work on the basis of the above mentioned demands.

Kadar's reply to Bali and the other delegates had been: "You have a right not to recognise me and my government. I don't care; the Soviet troops are not my side; you can do what you please. If you won't work, you won't work. Here, in Parliament, there will always be food and electricity."

There had been several delegations to see Kadar but he refused to receive them because their Memoranda always began with the words: "We do not recognise the Kadar government." In those days this was a nationwide slogan; all Memoranda began with the same words.

At the Ujpest meeting all delegates demanded that we create a National Workers' Council. I, too, was in favour of it but I was compelled by the view of my factory,

namely that we should create a Greater Budapest Workers' Council. The delegates had no right to voice their own personal opinions. This meeting was really democratic; it wouldn't have hurt Kadar to participate in it *incognito*. The participants and organisers came mostly from Ujpest and Angyalfold factories, all leftwing workers. I knew many of the older ones; they were all old trade union men and working class movement militants.

After extensive discussion we resolved to create a Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest (...)

After the formation of the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest we decided to set up a National Workers' Council. If we wished to negotiate in the name of the country we could do so, democratically, only if all the workers of the country were represented in the Workers' Councils.

We had talks in Parliament, also, on the 19th and the 20th of November but these served only to mark time. It was a tremendous loss of prestige for Kadar that work was resumed at our request and he resented it.

The conditions of negotiation were not favourable to him: the members of the government were ready to meet us only at night. We worked all day in the factory, spent our afternoons in the Central Workers' Council and went to the Parliament building at eight o'clock in the evening (...)

They wouldn't even listen to the delegates but cut us short, were rude, particularly Kadar and Marosan. "Listen here, you this and that, (Marosan even called us "rotters") you want to teach us our job? You call yourselves proletarians? What makes you think you represent the workers?" — Here they would pick on someone and take him to pieces. Because they knew all our names and had us all investigated. If someone was an engineer, they attacked him because he was an engineer and not a worker. A worker was told that he was not educated enough to hold such a position. They did everything in their power to embarrass us, to make us feel unsure of ourselves. They were rested and well dressed; it was easy for them to exert psychological pressure on tired, unshaven, badly dressed men. They never entered into serious talk with the delegates except when they saw that the latter were too exhausted to think. Then they settled things unilaterally, by force of power. The delegates told Kadar that they intended to form a National Workers' Council but had no intention of doing so behind the government's back (they said "your back" because they intentionally never used the word government) and wanted the Kadar government to send its representative also. Apro was indignant. "Are you crazy, men? Do you want a counter-government? Is it another counter-revolution you want to start here?" (...)

[When the workers' delegates arrived at the meeting on November 21st, called to discuss the formation of a National Workers' Council, they found the building surrounded by Russian tanks. The Council immediately called a 48-hour general strike and its delegation then met with Kadar and the government on November 25th at a special meeting in the Parliament building]

Kadar attacked us like a madman: "What? You had just decided to work and already you are striking?"

We explained that we had every right to protest; after all, it was at the request of the government that the Soviet tanks had been sent out against us and not in self-defence. Kadar shouted that he was not a play-thing, he was the Prime Minister of the country; he would prove that the communists were masters and not we. He didn't give a damn for what we were saying; what the workers wanted didn't always count; the leaders (he!) knew better what was right. He was not obliged to do as the masses wished.

In those days the country's economy was in bad straits indeed because of the decrease of production. Kadar called a meeting in Parliament attended by the directors of the large industrial plants, Kadar, Marosan, Apro and the other top men, and also members of the Central Workers' Council: Bali, Kalocsai and Karsai. All three of them spoke (...)

After this event the Central Workers' Council issued an information bulletin concerning the results of the negotiations, which were nil also about this meeting. At the meeting Kadar said: "The Worker-Peasant government has a difficult job, because there is confusion in the heads of the workers and they don't know the right road to follow". He said there had been counter-revolution in Hungary because 241 communists had been killed. Thereupon, Bali rose and told the meeting who he was, from where he came; then he continued: "Well, in the head of the workers there is no confusion; so it must be in your — he pointed at Kadar's men — heads. I have been a communist for ten years but I had nothing to fear when I went out in the street during the revolution or went among the workers. Nobody wanted to hang me!" Kadar turned purple with rage and struck the table with his fist. "Provocateur! Throw him out!" — he screamed. But he could do nothing against Bali because his speech had made too deep an impression on the 200 people present. Bali, an old social democrat, had become a communist in 1945, and although he had been very active the workers liked him because he was an honest man (...)

The Kadar government liquidated us on Sunday, December 8th, when we were least able to defend ourselves. In the evening Kadar announced over the radio the dissolution of the Central Workers' Council but the members of the Central Council had been

arrested already in the morning and during the day. At six in the morning police arrested several members of the Council who had spent the night at MEMOSZ headquarters. I was arrested at noon. At police headquarters they made me listen to a tape recording of my speech at the secret meeting, and reproached me for having proposed to appeal to the international working class for solidarity strikes. I replied that I had studied Marxism-Leninism and knew that the working class was one and indivisible in the entire world. The detective remarked that one must not take everything that is taught seriously (...)

I should like to add a few words concerning the role and plans of the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest:

The overwhelming majority of the Central Council members were educated workers. Among them were four or five engineers. We set up seven departments and the heads of the departments were at the same time vice-presidents of the Central Council. This body was to elaborate the programme of the Workers' Councils.

Their idea was that the ultimate task of the Workers' Councils was to direct production, manage the factories on behalf of the workers and work independently of any other organisation, trade union, party or government. We thought of some kind of two-chamber system which would, in a consolidated situation, direct the affairs of the country. One chamber would be the regular Parliament, fulfilling legislative tasks, the other a democratically-elected worker representation growing out of the Councils, that would take care of the economic tasks.

We did not want to take on political tasks because we believed that this required experts. All we wanted was to control our own fate.

When we discussed the organisational problems of the Central Workers' Council, one of the subjects of discussion was the future of the Council. In order that it may fulfill its real task, the direction of production, it was necessary to liquidate the existing communist state-capitalism. The trade unions must also be reorganised. We decided that, by January 1st, 1957, all factories and enterprises should have their new, democratically-elected trade union leaderships as provided in the statutes of the International Federation of Free Trade Unions. Nobody could be a Workers' Council member and trade union leader at the same time. The Central Council decided that the Hungarian trade unions would withdraw from the World Federation of Trade Unions and join, instead, the International Federation of Free Trade Unions. The task of the trade unions was to protect the interests of the workers against the government and, should they at any time become anti-worker, also against the Workers' Councils. The principal aspiration, however, was that the trade unions and

the Workers' Councils should cooperate as far as possible, even if their interests in production conflicted. The future role of the Workers' Councils was to be determined by the economic and political committees of the Central Council. How would the production committee to be formed from the Workers' Councils have participated in the work of state administration? To be perfectly sincere, I don't know; time was too short to form a definite opinion.

We did not want to maintain the system of governing by decree. Let the National Assembly pass good laws. But in economic questions the National Assembly could have passed resolutions only with the approval of the production committee. As we saw it, the country needed a new Constitution to determine what political parties could function, what kind of government we should have and how it was to guarantee the survival of a *socialist society*. The production committee would also have functioned according to principles laid down in the Constitution, as the body entrusted with economic legislation. In the existing parliamentary systems, political and economic problems are not separated. True, economic problems were discussed in Parliament, but by politicians and without taking into account the interests of the workers. Any political personality who carried sufficient weight could settle any question according to his own wishes.

The production committee would have been a novel guiding body in the life of the country. The two chambers, or two Parliaments, would naturally have complemented one another. Neither would have been permitted to pass resolutions hindering the work of the other. Naturally, we did not consider these plans final, although, when they fell into the hands of the police, they were used as a weapon against us. The government would have been subordinated to the two chambers; its members would have been elected from the chambers. Certain positions requiring experts would have been filled by experts from the two chambers. Either of the two chambers could have overthrown the government, which would have been responsible to both, and could have worked only if supported by both. In the new democratic Hungary we would have separated the legislation from the executive power.

We also discussed how to distribute the net income from the profitable enterprises. The profit would have been divided into three parts: one for the state, one for investment, one to the workers. The form of distribution among the workers would have been decided by the Workers' Council. The idea, so fashionable in the West, of a people's capitalism, of the workers as shareholders, occurred to us too, I don't know how things would have developed had there been time.

We lived in a revolution and we had to fight. Perhaps we did not see quite clearly

how our future would shape up but we felt — not only I but all my fellow-workers — that we were on the right road, that this is what we, the country, the socialist society needed.

And this is what the Russians and the Kadar government crushed under foot.

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Istvan Bibó was a Minister of State in the government of Imre Nagy. When the Russians entered Budapest for the second time on November 4 Bibó remained in his office in the Budapest Parliament Building. The Soviets occupied the Parliament Building but, for some reason, did not disturb this lonely figure, this "sole representative of the only legitimate Hungarian problem which was later accepted by the Central Workers' Council of Budapest on November 14. Although this draft had no real practical significance at the time, it has since assumed an importance for the Hungarian opposition because of the type of solution which Bibó proposed. Below right, we reprint in full Bibó's draft plan and below left *Gus Fagan* looks at the man and his politics. He quotes large extracts from an article written by Bibó in early 1957, just before his arrest and imprisonment. The article, in which Bibó explains his general political outlook, was first published in a Viennese newspaper, *Die Presse*, in September 1957.

An English translation appeared in *Facts About Hungary*, by Imre Kovacs (ed), New York 1959.

THE POSSIBILITY OF COMPROMISE: ISTVAN BIBÓ AND THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

In their book, published in 1983, *Hungary 1956 Revisited*, Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller say that Istvan Bibó was "perhaps the greatest post-war leftist (non-doctrinaire socialist) political theorist of Eastern Europe".¹ This is very strong praise indeed and would perhaps come as a surprise to many on the left who perhaps hadn't, until then, heard of Istvan Bibó. There is no doubt, however, that Istvan Bibó is, now, a very important figure for the Hungarian opposition.

Who was Istvan Bibó and what did he represent in 1956?

Gus Fagan

THE POLITICS OF THE "THIRD ROAD"

Istvan Bibó died in Budapest in 1979 at the age of 69. In the period immediately after the Second World War Bibó was a member of the National Peasant Party and an important writer and theoretician of Hungarian democracy. He was critical of the communists, but, as a representative of a "third road" policy in Hungary, he did not reject them as partners in the task of building a democratic Hungary. His article "The Crisis of Hungarian Democracy", published in the magazine *Valóság* in 1945, aroused opposition in communist circles.

By 1950, after the communists had effectively silenced their opponents and there erstwhile coalition partners, Bibó had to find work as a librarian. In the final days of the Hungarian revolution Bibó, as a representative of the National Peasant Party (now renamed the Petöfi Party) became a member of the Imre Nagy government. It was in this capacity that he drafted a memorandum to the Soviets suggesting a compromise solution. The memorandum, of course, had no effect and in

early 1957 Bibó was arrested and given a life-sentence. He was released from prison in 1963 after which he returned to his job as librarian. His views of 1956 had an attraction for the democratic Hungarian opposition in the 70s and a book of essays, dedicated to Istvan Bibó, was published in Budapest in 1981, two years after his death.

In the post-war period Bibó had been a member of the National Peasant Party, a small radical democratic "populist" party which won 7% of the vote in the first election in 1945. A strong radical tradition existed among the peasantry especially in the south east corner of Hungary and the NPP was quite well organised there. Local committees were set up in the countryside after 1944 and the NPP openly advocated a new type of state based on these organs of local power. The communists opposed this and the Provisional Government issued a decree in January 1945 which ruled that the local committees could not take on administrative tasks.² The NPP, however, was close to the Communist Party on many issues and many NPP members

THE BIBÓ PLAN

The second Soviet occupation of Hungary has caused a difficult, and for those who brought it about, nearly impossible situation. The reasons are as follows:

1. Soviet troops occupied Hungary under the pretext of restoring order. The fact is, however, that due to the country's resistance and revolutionary fighting spirit, the consolidation of the country is impossible so long as Soviet troops remain in the country. At various points, unorganised resistance may continue to flare up for weeks, in fact, even for months.

2. The Soviet-installed government maintains that after restoring order they will conclude an agreement to withdraw Soviet troops. Being fully aware, however, of the political strength of the people of the nation, we may surely assume that the present government with its pro-Soviet foreign policy, and the Soviet methods with which it tried to enforce its Socialist achievement, would collapse.

3. Essential conditions under which the Soviet troops would withdraw, after having attained their aims by the methods they used, do not exist and, in fact, cannot exist. Simultaneously, the international situation imperatively requires Soviet troop withdrawal.

4. The maintenance of Socialism in Hungary by a one-party system is no longer possible, particularly because the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) called the Soviet troops in the first place and the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Kádár's government) alleged second invitation to the Soviet Union destroyed the authority of any government relying on Soviet support. Therefore, Hungary cannot be governed without a serious, authoritative multi-party system, the more so since the only Communist who still enjoys authority with the Hungarian people, Imre Nagy, has also advocated a multi-party system.

5. The Soviet Union and the government put into office by it are afraid, and quite rightly too, that withdrawal of Soviet troops and general elections will bring about a situation which ultimately would lead to an orthodox capitalist restoration, to dismissal of all former Communists from civil service and key positions, to a serious and decisive reactionary takeover and that finally it would make Hungary a Western wedge driven into the East-European Socialist bloc. That all this would have been true under the Nagy regime is not evident. The above-mentioned symptoms did appear, however, but the government as organised at that time would have enjoyed sufficient authority and strength to amend those mis-

and leaders became renegades to the CP. The Ministry of the Interior, controlling the police and security, was usually in the hands of the communists. But in the first coalition government the Interior Minister was Ferenc Erdei, an NPP leader sympathetic to the CP. He remained a minister of state in the government of Rakosi. Ferenc Vali, in his book *Rift and Revolt in Hungary*, says that the NPP "could muster the greatest number of renegades and Communist Party stooges among its ranks".³ When, on October 30, 1956, the Imre Nagy government abolished the one-party system the NPP reorganised itself, voted to expel Ferenc Erdei and elected Istvan Bibo to its Executive Committee.

Istvan Bibo was firmly in the tradition of radical peasant movements in Eastern Europe throughout this century. The twin pillars of radical peasant policy have always been the expropriation and redistribution of the big landed estates and the control of the power of monopoly capital. Ground between the two stones of capitalist underdevelopment or Stalinist collectivisation these radical peasant movements were never given a chance. Now, in Hungary, their time had come. In an article written shortly before his arrest in early 1957 Bibo states that the hour of NPP policy has come at last.

Until now, the simple trick-like solution offered by the East-European radical peasant movements, snubbed, exploited, and discarded after having been exploited by both sides, has had no chance of becoming a historical reality: the radical expropriation of large estates and big capital, paralleled by the bold introduction and/or strengthening of the political techniques of freedom and the proper regulation of free enterprise. And behold, the solution of the Hungarian issue, which could not succeed against the two defective alternatives of the major historical forces now presents itself as the only possible solution.

Bibo continuously emphasises that he wants to preserve "socialism" in Hungary. We can leave to one side, for the moment, the question of

whether what existed in Hungary under Rakosi could be called "socialism". Bibo, however, was willing to accept that this was so and was willing to accept the communist party (reformed) as a partner in this task.

The Revolution's prime movers had no intentions of destroying Socialism's real achievements, and they had the strength to prevent such attempts. They simply could no longer tolerate the techniques and results of oppression, the violence and lies that warped every facet of life, and turned toward those social techniques which give institutional guarantees against such practices.

During the early days of the Revolution the question of how to achieve this goal was not clarified, but the fact that this was the aim was perfectly clear. In fact, shortly after the Revolution's defeat, the nation's almost homogeneous public opinion crystallised its position with regard to the method by which Socialism could be maintained, yet combined with Western techniques of freedom: by means of a multi-party system limited to those parties accepting a common platform of Socialism.

Bibo, basically, wanted to continue the Nagy experiment and that was why, after the Soviet intervention, many of the reformist intellectuals came together around support for his draft plan. Even Kadar, in his discussions with the leaders of the worker's councils, suggested that he was willing to work with parties that "accepted socialism". Of course the Soviet Union had no time for any revamped version of Nagy's "exciting socialist experiment".

When, after Stalin's death, his successors began to liberalise Stalinist political practices, and later frustrated any further attempts at establishing personal power, and at the 20th Congress even broke with a few characteristically Stalinist theses and began to criticise Stalin personally, some Communists cherished the hope that there were forces in the Soviet Union, and primarily in the Communist Party there, that were able to turn back to a more correct road for building Socialism.

takes within a few days. It is, therefore, cynical and irresponsible to maintain that the only answer to those phenomena was Soviet occupation, which actually came about because of Soviet presumption of a change in the international situation. One thing is certain, however, that the state of mind of the Communists, frightened by the domestic situation, encouraged and prompted the Soviet Union to come to a decision. In a different foreign political situation, on the other hand, when the most rapid withdrawal of Soviet troops is necessary, we can well imagine that a well-formulated and internationally-guaranteed agreement that a capitalist, anti-Communist and reactionary restoration would not take place might influence Soviet decisions.

6. We must not forget that the aversion of an orthodox capitalist, reactionary, anti-Communist restoration is the concern not only of the Soviet Union and the Communists, but also of the youth, workers and soldiers who carried out the Revolution and shed their blood for its victory. The majority of them were not Communists but the great majority consider themselves Socialists. It would be ethnically impermissible, as well as impossible from the point of view of evolving a free Hungarian domestic policy, for the restoration to be made the beneficiary, by the votes of the older generation, of that freedom won by the blood of the revolutionaries.

7. We must further consider that a restoration which would make Hungary a wedge in the Communist bloc would, on the one hand, constantly foment further aggressive plans, and on the other, discourage freedom-loving Communists in the other People's Democracies when the time for liberalisation of their own regimes came and whereas, a solution that links socialist achievements with a guarantee of freedom would give an encouraging example worth following.

The following draft proposals are aimed to solved the problem by equitable compromise without making concessions of

principle.

I. *The governmental starting point* is the last legal Hungarian government as constituted on November 3 under the Premiership of Imre Nagy. This government's legality derives from the Hungarian Revolution of October 23, 1956 and not from the Rakosi Constitution of 1949.

II. *Alternative A: Foreign Political Solution* would be for Hungary to break out of the military clauses of the Warsaw Agreement, while still observing the consultative agreement referring to European peace and security, provided that Yugoslavia joins the agreement under the same stipulations.

Alternative F: Foreign Political Solution would also be for Hungary to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and to conclude a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union.

III. *Guarantee for the Positions of Communists.*

A. —Amnesty for all crimes and for all acts which can be established to have stemmed from political conviction. The abolition of the death penalty.

B. —A reorganisation of state and industrial apparatuses shall take place by means of qualitative selection, with institutional guarantees that such reorganisation will not be directed against Communists, nor generally against people not holding diplomas, or against those holding short-cut diplomas (See 5e).

IV. Military evacuation shall be carried out parallel to political consolidation, in 7 to 10 stages, within one to two months, as, for instance:

a. —First stage of withdrawal: Soviet troops withdraw from Budapest and five to six Southern countries. Simultaneously, the free Hungarian government takes office, regulates the position of the Revolutionary Committees and the Workers' Councils and begins reorganisation of the administration.

b. —Second stage: Soviet troops evacuate five to six Western countries and Pest County. Simultaneously, Hungarian troops shall temporarily seal the Western border and for the time being prevent

This hope, however, was mortally wounded by the events of November 4, and afterwards, in Hungary. What the real reason for the Soviet action was — a realistic assessment of the situation caused by the attack on Suez, or the consternation caused by the Hungarian situation itself — we do not know. One thing is sure: the realistic assessment proved to be false and the consternation was exaggerated, because free development of the Hungarian situation would quickly have shown that not only was it harmless to the cause of Socialism, but that, in fact, it could have served as an example for it. At the time of the Soviet intervention, the situation had already begun to clear. Mob rule ceased, serious and authoritative voices were heard in defense of socialist achievements, and a national coalition government was formed which had no reason whatever for following rightist zeal or weakness. Anyone who witnessed, or came in touch with the resistance after the defeat of the Revolution, even in the slightest degree, must admit willy-nilly, at least to himself, that what had been destroyed by Soviet tanks had been the beginning of one of the most exciting Socialist experiments of this century.

Bibo argued strongly for a combination of Western structures of freedom and a commitment to

entrance of immigrants. On concluding the second stage of evacuation, the Constitutional Revolutionary Assembly might convene in Budapest as stipulated under paragraph 5.

c. —Third stage: Soviet troops evacuate the remaining Eastern counties with the exception of Borsod and Szabolcs. Simultaneously, as stipulated under paragraph 5, the Revolutionary Assembly in Budapest shall constitutionally establish the necessary acts.

d. —Final stage: Soviet troops shall evacuate the remaining two counties at which time the foreign political agreements, as stipulated under paragraph 2, shall be included.

V. *Constitutional Solution:* Prior to the general elections, a revolutionary constitution-giving assembly, composed of the Revolutionary Councils and Committees, shall convene which will define the basic constitutional and social principles of the new Hungarian democracy by force of a constitutional law. Further, it will eventually elect a head of state and will legislate an electoral law. The constitutional law will contain the following stipulations:

a. —Hungary's constitutional form is a Republic as under Act 1, 1946.

b. —Hungary's form of government is based on an independent, responsible government, representatives of the

people, on basic freedoms and parliamentary democracy.

c. —Hungary's social shape is based on the principle of prohibition of exploitation (socialism) which means:

1. to maintain the 1945 land reform with a maximum of twenty to forty acres;

2. to maintain nationalisation of mines, banks and heavy industry;

3. to establish communal ownership of existing factories through workers' management, workers' shares or profit-sharing;

4. the possibility of free individual or cooperative enterprise, with guarantees against exploitation;

5. freedom of private ownership within the guarantees against exploitation;

6. general social security.

d. —Making amends for those economic and moral injustices which have been committed shall by no means be made by restoration of the *status quo*. All compensations shall be made according to the principle prohibiting exploitation, not in terms of property seized, or economic power lost, but only to the extent that it affects a ruined home, destroyed status and the results of one's own personal work.

e. —The reorganisation of Hungarian administration shall be based on a low-numbered, qualitative and selected expert

management and elected secular leaders, or local self-governing bodies managed by committees. The functions of the latter will be carried out by the revolutionary organs until election of permanent organs. The status of people holding administrative jobs, or jobs with the armed forces and the police, who do not hold diplomas, or hold short-cut diplomas only, shall be institutionally established, but also on a selective principle, eventually by setting up a proportion of these to the whole.

f. —Among the basic freedoms, full freedom of religion shall be emphasised particularly. The state shall in no way interfere with the life of the Churches. The status of the Churches shall be regulated according to the principle of complete separation of Church and State. The state shall respect the Churches' social work, including educational activities, and shall, under agreement, subsidise them.

g. —The above proposals have the force of a state law, meaning that they can be changed only by a two-thirds or three-quarters majority of the National Assembly. Further, a constitutional court shall see that no political party be permitted to be active without observing these rules.

VI. The need for United Nations troops of police will arise only if withdrawal of Soviet occupation troops is not carried out according to the agreement, or should serious incidents occur elsewhere. They are by no means necessary in connection with the elections to be held after a few months of calming-down, subsequent to the withdrawal of Soviet forces. At present, Hungary after the Revolution is at a pitch of moral and public spirit as it has not been for a thousand years. The withdrawal of Soviet troops and measures issued by a government enjoying political and moral authority are ample for the maintenance of public order.



the elimination of exploitation, which he saw as the aim of "socialism". This was what constituted for Bibó the "third road" between capitalism and communism.

Amidst these phantoms stands the prejudice shared by orthodox capitalists and Communists alike: that socialism, i.e., a society free of exploitation, cannot be achieved without first discarding Western concepts of freedom for a long period of time. Opposing this view are all those third-roaders (taking what is actually the only possible road) who believe that Socialism's aim — the elimination of exploitation — is but one stage in mankind's evolution toward other freedoms, and thus, that the fight against exploitation cannot mean or even tolerate repudiation of the political and social freedoms previously discussed. The entire structure of freedom, which makes the Western world so humane and preferable despite its shortcomings — separation of powers, free elections in a multi-party system, human rights, particularly freedom of the press and public opinion, judiciary independence and a constitutional State — is not merely a 'bourgeois' superstructure. It is simply an objective technique, the most highly-developed and superior technique, of freedom, and its superiority must be acknowledged sooner or later and can be without endangering the cause of Socialism. It was during the Hungarian Revolution, if anywhere and ever, that a constructive third road policy was about to be born.

This combination of limited free enterprise, socialist achievements and capitalist freedoms was not only something promised by the Hungarian revolution but was in fact in the process of being achieved in the capitalist west.

The Hungarian Revolution represents hope for the 'Third Road' forces and their policy too. As we have seen, the central problem for many nations throughout the world at this moment is that of making use of the opportunities which freedom offers them.

The Western world has the most developed freedoms, a representative system of parliamentary democracy based on liberty, and by and large accepts a universal moral philosophy which is the basis and condition for the functioning of free institutions. Moreover, it has an economic system called capitalism, the principal components of which are free enterprise, the desire for profit as a regulating principle, and an individualist civil law. This system though repeatedly pronounced dead for over a century periodically shows

surprising evidence of its efficiency and flexibility, though it has lost much of its original structure. Yet, even in its present amended form, it cannot erase a feeling of moral deficiency it produces in a large percentage of the people. The focal point of disgust is not free enterprise itself, for it is a very significant achievement of human rights, but the fact that capitalism through its institutions not only preserves the society's capital but also opens new possibilities for those ancient forms of accumulating large fortunes which had been known for thousands of years, long before the birth of capitalism, free enterprise and the constitutional state. The forces of a free society and of a peaceful social reform are, however, strong enough in the West to supplant, very slowly and gradually an antediluvian social phenomenon of large fortunes and especially of the accumulation of great fortunes. In other words, in the West, slowly but surely, the poor are getting richer and the rich are getting poorer.

Whatever hopes Bibó had for the democratic control of monopoly capitalism, and the intervening three decades have passed a harsh judgement on his naive optimism in this respect, his assessment of the prospect of "unreformed communism" have been shown to be very realistic.

On the other hand, there is the Communist solution which, through seizure of total political power, carries out almost completely and radically the expropriation of all kinds of great fortunes, yet along with them also expropriates the greater part of small fortunes, thus eliminating the Western 'bourgeois' techniques of freedom, as well as most of the economic forms of free enterprise, which leads to an extensive bureaucratisation of the society and of the economy. In reality, the rule of the bureaucracy over economic life hinders raising the living standards of the people, just as capitalism does when it evades democratic control. The entire world of semi-colonies, ex-colonies and colonies is now being tossed to and fro between these defective solutions.

In the gloom of his office in Parliament Square, with Soviet tanks in the streets outside, it must have been difficult to remain optimistic about the prospects of a compromise with the Communist Party, a compromise on which all his hopes for a "third road" rested. But Bibó was optimistic, and as the "sole remaining representative" of the new Hungarian democracy he still held out hope for "world communism".

The Hungarian Revolution also holds out hope for World

Communism at the very moment when the Hungarian events have provoked more intense hostility to Communism's intellectual content, sees its guiding spirit as nothing more than a fascist-like will to power. A deeper examination of the factors leading to the Hungarian and Polish upheavals shows that the decisive impetus was the growing internal conflict felt by Communist intelligentsia and youth, which stems from the contradiction between the professed Communist goal of emancipating mankind and the means it employs, which have resulted in corruption and demoralisation.

This is one of Communism's basic differences from fascism, where no such crisis took place. It could not because the fascist idea itself was that of exerting brute and naked power, and thus, there was no contradiction between its stated goal and the means employed to achieve it.

Without wishing by attributing a new moral capital to it to increase the moral prestige of the Soviet regime which crushed the Hungarian Revolution, we must realise that we face an overall and international evolution, and the contradictions within the Soviet state should be understood and criticised with this in mind.

Whatever compromise Bibó was willing to make in Hungary's internal or international relations, on one point, the crucial one, he was adamant. As he stated clearly in the draft memorandum, "the maintenance of socialism in Hungary by a one party system is no longer possible". But what guarantees would there be that a multi-party state with a liberal market economy would defend or maintain "socialist achievements"?

He saw the solution in some form of constitutional limitation on the kind of parties that could take part in the multi-party system. The workers' councils also expressed a similar idea, that only those parties would be acceptable that "based themselves on the socialist order" or "accepted socialism".

A multi-party system so confined will at first meet with suspicion from both sides. The Western 'bourgeois' spectator says that if anti-Socialist parties have no chance of running, then there is no freedom. However, in reality, every historical democracy began its life by having the previous consent of the country's overwhelming majority on certain common basic principles, and the views which questioned these basic principles had no chance of forming parties. The Dutch, British, American and French parliamentary freedom once began with an act of partial or total exclusion of the

followers of royal absolutism from the parliamentary arena, and even more, some inequitable personal restrictions were imposed. Yet, real freedom could still begin this way because the compulsory common platform was so defined that it embraced the overwhelming majority of the country. The very same situation would apply in an Hungarian multi-party system confined to recognising Socialist achievements.

Feher and Heller express the view, in the book already mentioned, that the proposals for compromise put forward by Bibó in his draft memorandum "expressed the view of most — perhaps even a vast majority of — sections of Hungarian society"⁴. While this may be true of the intellectuals and the politicians of the coalition parties, it is doubtful whether the working class shared Bibó's ideas. Bibó's hopes for a democratic development depended on the coalition parties in the context of a deal with the Soviet Union. For the working class, organised in the councils, however, the real guarantee lay in their control of the factories.

Neither Nagy nor Bibó paid much attention to the workers' councils. Bibó came from the tradition of peasant radicalism and Nagy, a reform-communist in the Stalinist apparatus, had been Minister of Agriculture and an agricultural expert and had a greater understanding for the peasantry than for the working class. It was only afterwards, during his asylum in the Yugoslav embassy that Nagy gave any recognition to the importance of the councils. Bibó's draft memorandum simply proposes that the Hungarian government would "regulate the position of the Revolutionary Committees and the Workers' Councils". In the article written in January 1957, from which the above selections are taken, an article which was written after the councils had emerged as the main defenders of the revolution, Bibó doesn't even mention the workers' councils. At this late hour he doesn't seem to have been aware of the significance of the councils. The workers demanded independence and free elections in a multi-party system but based on the new social structure thrown up by the revolution, the Workers' Councils.

Ferenc Donath, another Nagyst in the party, likewise released from prison in 1960, in an article in the Bibó memorial collection, writes that "the thing that was fundamentally new in 1956 was not that the working class, by its mass actions, expressed its desire to exercise power directly, but rather, with the creation of popular organs of power, they set about

fundamentally changing the production and ownership relations which were the basis of the system". Unlike Bibo, who placed his hopes in the belief that the old coalition parties of 1945 would feel constitutionally bound to respect "socialist achievements", the working class, according to Donath, "no longer trusted the parties to represent their interests. And this mistrust didn't apply only to the Communist Party".⁵

Why have intellectuals in Hungary today renewed their interest in the ideas of Istvan Bibo? Mihaly Vajda, a leading oppositionist among the intellectuals, attempts to answer this

question in an essay in the Bibo memorial collection. "The draft plan of Bibo is absurd", he writes, "because Bibo assumed it was credible after November 4 to believe that the Soviet Union might be interested in some kind of compromise. The only realistic thing about his proposal is that it contains a *possibility in principle*. What is realistic is the recognition that it is not absurd in principle to believe that a socialist system based on a limited multi-party system and limited sovereignty is possible in the countries of Eastern Europe since this would not disrupt the equilibrium established after the second world war and would not,

therefore, threaten the Soviet Union."⁶ In other words Bibo is now recognised as the prophet of internal compromise and what is known as "Finlandisation". "The content of the Hungarian compromise", say Feher and Heller, "from the perspective of foreign policy, was precisely the Finlandisation of Hungary".⁷

Seventy six authors contributed to the Bibo memorial collection and they included opposition figures as well as established intellectuals. The book itself, perhaps, symbolised the kind of will to compromise of which Bibo had so eloquently written in 1956. It also symbolises a kind of continuity with the struggles of

1956. But it is a continuity with and within the traditions of intellectual opposition. Where the working class fits into all this remains to be seen, for these were, as Miklos Haraszti, another oppositionist, has written "the true defenders and the true losers of the revolution".

Footnotes

1 Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 Revisited*, London, 1983, p.10

2 The text is to be found in *The Liberation of Hungary — Selected Documents*, Budapest, 1975, p. 96

3 Ferenc Vali, *Rift and Revolt in Hungary*, London, 1961, p. 298

4 Feher and Heller, op. cit. p.12

5 The Donath article is printed in the Austrian journal, *Gegenstimmen*, No. 6, December 1981

6 Quoted in *Gegenstimmen*, December 1981

7 Feher and Heller, op. cit. p. 10

POLAND 1956: THE POZNAN UPRISING

by Andrzej Choniatko

Hungary was not the only East European country in turmoil in 1956. All over the "socialist camp", in fact, Krushchev's attack on Stalin in his secret speech to the closed final session of the 20th Congress of the CPSU caused a deep political crisis throughout the communist world. The "secret" soon filtered out, and everywhere workers and intellectuals demanded radical political change and the punishment of those responsible for the Stalinist terror. The rehabilitation of the victims of the post-1948 purges provided alternative leaderships for the reform-orientated members of the party apparatuses and the intelligentsia, whose increasingly open dissent in turn gave the popular masses a voice and rallying point.

Only in Hungary, though, where the Rakosi-Gerö leadership was particularly inflexible and hated, did the crisis unfold into full scale revolution. In most other countries, cosmetic reshuffles of the leaderships, limited amnesties, temporary cultural relaxation and economic concessions to the workers succeeded in containing the dynamic of "de-Stalinisation". But Hungary was very nearly joined in revolution by Poland, where the economic grievances of the workers, nationalist resentment of the strong Soviet presence in the state apparatus, and intellectual dissent constituted a highly explosive mix. In June 1956, a working-class insurrection in the industrial city of Poznan threatened to light the fuse which could have set Poland ablaze in open confrontation with the Soviet Union.

But here, the party leadership managed to douse the flames through a skilful manipulation of Polish nationalism and what appeared then as bold reforms. The old Stalinist leader Bierut, who died while in Moscow for the CPSU congress, had already been replaced by the less provocative figure of Ochab, who in turn gave way to Wladislaw Gomulka — a recently-rehabilitated "national communist" with a popularity comparable to that of Nagy in Hungary. The military and police apparatuses were "de-Sovietised", Polish agriculture de collectivised, concessions made to workers, intellectuals and the powerful Catholic Church, and even workers' councils recognised and institutionalised. The gradual withdrawal of some of these reforms — especially those concerning workers' rights — and the ossification of the Gomulka variant of national reform communism into an increasingly sterile and repressive regime eventually led to the student unrest of 1968 and the workers' rebellions of 1970, 1976 and 1980.

The June 1956 events in Poznan can thus be seen as the beginning of a chain leading directly to the strike in the Gdansk shipyards and the emergence of *Solidarnosc*. The following eyewitness account, taken from the proceedings of a conference of the Institute of History *Wydarzenia Czerwcowe w Poznaniu 1956* (Poznan 1981), appears in English translation for the first time. Cegielski's is the ZISPO railway works, ZNTK the Communications Centre, and MPK the tram depot.

Günter Minnerup

As early as 6.00 that day a group of workers in the number 8 section at ZNTK went on strike. Gradually the strike spread to the whole section. Sometime after 9.00 the workers all got together in the works hall and demanded a meeting with government representatives. The first secretary of the Regional Committee and the leader of the National Provincial Council both came to the mass meeting. There were demands that the Minister for Communications should also attend the meeting so urgent decisions about increasing wages and lowering prices could be implemented. Manual workers in the foundry and boiler sections had lost 20-30% of their earnings when the new plan was implemented in June.

The atmosphere at the mass meeting was very tense. Stasiak's speech was constantly interrupted by whistling. He proposed the meeting should elect delegates to have talks with the government but this was knocked back. People were afraid the delegates would be arrested. That evening in Szamotuly the police stopped Czeslaw Rutkowski, a young outspoken activist. The incident had quite an effect on what happened the next day.

Strike

The workers did not go back to work after the mass meeting and the strike was solid on the second shift as well. A group of young workers took up the strike call at the afternoon changeover and tried to stop people working. By the third shift there were only

about sixty workers left on number 8 section.

The executive of the Regional Committee met in Poznan that afternoon. They discussed the situation in the town and particularly what was happening at Cegielski's and ZNTK. They were sure things would improve once the delegates from Cegielski's came back from Warsaw. They never imagined there would be a strike, or that workers would take to the streets. That same day Edward Gierek, the party secretary, and Wiktor Klosiewicz, the trade union chief, both came to Poznan.

The next day was Thursday 28th June. Urged on by the workers who did general coach assembly, the whole of W3 shop at Cegielski's decided not to work. Instead they waited for a report-back about the negotiations. Tazzer spoke to the assembled workers. He told them that talks were still in progress. Fed up, the workers on W3 decided to take to the streets. Other workers came out with them. About 6.30 Bogdan Marianowski, who wrote in the works newspaper and was a trade union activist, set off the work's siren. When they heard it, first the W3 workers, then workers from other shops at Cegielski's left the factory and began to congregate outside near the power station. People were carrying placards demanding higher wages and lower prices.

Demonstration

Less than 200 people stayed behind in W3 shop, 120 of them party members. Of the 89 executive members of different sections of the party organisation at the factory, only 43 stayed behind. About 80% of the workforce took to the streets. In Dzierzynski Street they formed a demonstration several thousand strong and set off for the town centre some three kilometres away. W5 shop was the only place where a large proportion of workers stayed behind. As workers left the factory, they took down the notice over the entrance which said "Joseph Stalin Factory, Poznan" (ZiSPO).

From Dzierzynski Street, the demonstration marched down Przemyslowa, Rpzbozna and onto the Dworcowy bridge. From there it turned to Zwierzyniecka, along Kraszewski, Dabrowski, Fredra, 27 Grudnia, Ratajczak and Red Army streets before ending up in front of the Castle, the headquarters of the Town Council. As they marched along the pavements groups of young workers got workers from the shops to join in. The marchers sang *Boze Cos Polske*, *Rota*, and other religious songs. They shouted slogans demanding higher wages and lower prices.

Rumours

At Traugutt Street the secretary of the Regional Committee tried to stop the marchers. He had been at ZNTK since about 5.00

because after what happened the day before, that was considered the most important place for him to be. He only went to Cegielski's afterwards. His attempt to stop the demonstration failed.

The most determined workers formed groups and went to other workplaces calling on people to stop work and take to the streets. One of their arguments was that top people from the government and the party were coming to the square in front of the Castle, and would speak to people directly without going through the party bureaucrats first. In fact no such meeting was ever arranged.

Also there were rumours that the Cegielski delegates to Warsaw had been arrested. A great many workers, including a large number of party members, sympathised with the economic demands being made. They left work in solidarity with the demonstrators. At Wiepofam, where they built engines for goods trains, there were outbreaks of violence. This happened in other places too. The director of MPK was beaten up when he tried to talk to the demonstrators.

Party members

The number of workers who stayed behind varied, but it was generally 20-30%. Party members put on a better show of resistance to the pressure to strike. About 40-50% of party workers stayed behind at work that day. The only factories that remained working normally were those where nobody went from outside. They included Pomecia, Lechia, the Poznan Glassworks, the Car Repair Depot and the No. 8 Railway Workshop. They carried on thanks largely to the efforts of party members. The same applied to a large number of workplaces outside the city centre, though even there many workers left early. They included many women workers who were worried about the children they had left in playgroups and creches. But there was no work anywhere on the second and third shifts that day.

The first stoppage was at ZNTK. A mass meeting outside the works at 7.00 was addressed by Jozef Popielas, the deputy Communications Minister. While he was still speaking a group of workers from Cegielski's broke down the gates and came into the factory. As a result a majority of workers left to join the demonstrators.

The mass meeting was rapidly brought to an end. There were only 300 400 workers left. Nobody worked on that day anyway.

Tramworkers

When the Cegielski workers took to the streets they were strongly backed by the tramworkers. Only 48 out of the 1420 of the first shift at MPK stayed behind. Next to the Cegielski workers and those at ZNTK, the tramworkers were the most active group in getting other workers to join in the demon-

stration. As other workers joined in, they in turn sent groups of workers to other places which had not yet stopped work. This process went on for several hours. Meanwhile other things were going on.

Just before 9.00 thousands of people gathered in the square in front of the Castle. The number rapidly swelled to about 100,000 as demonstrators and spectators, among them people from abroad who had come to the Poznan Fair, crowded into the square. The crowd sang *Rota*, the national anthem and various religious songs. A few banners were hastily put together in the decorator's on Szamarszewski Street. They carried the slogan "Bread and Freedom". There were shouts calling for higher wages, lower work targets, and price cuts. There were groups of non-workers among the demonstrators who chanted political slogans "Down with Bolshevism", "We want free independent elections", as well as insults directed at the police. People threw away their party cards and these were publicly burned. Groups of children in the square were urged to shout slogans demanding religious education in schools.

Foreigners

Foreigners in Poznan for the Trade Fair took photographs and filmed what was going on. Because they were there nobody on either side behaved violently. The only exception was the requisitioning of private cars by the police. Many Westerners expressed their sympathy with the demonstrators, who returned the good wishes. Apart from helping carry the wounded, Westerners did not interfere in the events in any way.

Western journalists who had come to Poznan for the Trade Fair interviewed those taking part in the demonstration as well as passers-by. They also took photos. The first reports appeared in the Western press the next day (Friday 29th June).

At 9.00, the Town Council leader, Frackowiak, spoke to the crowd in the square. A delegation was formed to continue negotiations. A student who had found himself in the square by accident got onto the delegation. Tadeusz Bienek, a party member and a Youth Movement activist, spontaneously took on the role of leader. In Frackowiak's office, the delegation put forward its demands for wage increases, price cuts, and lower work targets. These demands were not just for Cegielski's. They were general demands. Frackowiak only said he was not authorised to deal with them. So the delegation demanded a meeting with Ochab, the Party Secretary, and Cyrankiewicz, the Premier. They said one of the two should come to Poznan immediately and speak to the crowd.



"OUR COMMON HERITAGE AND INSPIRATION"

East European Opposition Commemorates Hungarian Revolution

Tense atmosphere

Then a more aggressive group of demonstrators rushed into the building. They urged the municipal workers to leave their desks and join the demonstrators. One worker who did not want to leave was beaten up. Here, and in the Kolegium Orzekajacego, windows and lamps were broken and other property damaged.

A white flag was hoisted above the Castle to show the absence of government representatives.

At 9.30 a loudspeaker van drove into the square by workers from Cegielski's, ZNTK and the Communications Centre. There were speeches and slogans calling for higher wages, lower prices and freedom. Speakers urged the crowd to stay in the square until someone from central government arrived to discuss their demands. They called on the demonstrators to behave peacefully, not to damage public property and even not to tread on the grass. Kraski, the secretary of the Regional Committee, came out and for the second time tried to reason with the crowd. He spoke from the loudspeaker van. He was greeted with shouts and whistles and was eventually dragged down into the crowd where people attempted to beat him up. He was rescued by a group of workers and journalists, comrades of his.

The atmosphere in the square grew tenser all the time. When the demonstrators saw the municipal workers throwing party banners out of the fifth floor windows of the Castle, a crowd of them rushed into the building. Glasses, towels and table-cloths were destroyed. Propaganda leaflets, books and magazines were thrown out of the windows. They tried to smash a bust of Lenin. The worst hit area was the canteen, which was completely wrecked.

A policeman got caught up with the crowd of demonstrators. He argued with them not to go into the building, but was insulted and beaten up.

A teacher started shouting slogans over the loudspeakers calling for the overthrow of the state and the government as well as opening the prisons. He said similar demonstrations were being held in Szczecin, Gdansk, Krakow and other towns.

Translated by Anna Paczuska

Preamble

On the Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution thirty years ago, on the 23 October 1956, workers, students and soldiers, stormed the building of the radio in Budapest because they were fed up with the official lies and wished to hear the truth and to voice their demands. They destroyed Stalin's statue and the credibility of the regime, which called itself the dictatorship of the proletariat and the republic of the people. The struggle made it clear that what the Hungarian people really wanted was independence, democracy, and neutrality. They wanted to live in peace, in a free and decent society.

The Hungarian revolution, as well as the uprising in East Berlin and the Prague Spring and the social movement of the free trade union, Solidarity, in Poland, were suppressed either by Soviet intervention or domestic military violence. Over the past 30 years life has become easier for many, some people speak up without being thrown into jail. But the basic demands of the revolutionaries have not been realised.

Appeal

On the day of the anniversary, we appeal to our friends around the world to join us in commemorating the 1956 revolution in Hungary. We declare our joint determination to struggle for political democracy in our countries, their independence and democratic integration, as well as for the rights of all minorities.

We emphasize support for one another in our current attempts for a better, free and decent life in our countries and the whole world.

The tradition and the experience of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 remain our common heritage and inspiration.

*Budapest, Berlin (GDR), Prague, Warsaw
23 October 1986*

Signatories:

Hungary

Iván Bába, Antal Bogád, Péter Bokros, Géza Buda, Sándor Csóri, István Csurka, Gábor Demszky, Olga Diószegi, István Eörsi, György Gadó, Árpád Göncz, Béla Gondos, Judit Gyenes, Aliz Halda, Miklós Haraszti, János Kenedi, Zsolt Keszthelyi, János Kis, Károly Kiszely, György Konrád, Csaba Könczöl, Ferenc Köszeg, György Krassó, Zsolt Krokovay, Gabriella Lengyel, Sándor Lezsák, Fruzsina Magyar, Imre Mécs, Miklós Mészöly, Tamás Mikes Tamás Molnár, András Nagy, Jenő Nagy, Tibor Pákh, Róbert Pálkás, Gyula Perlaki, György Petri, Sándor Rác, Sándor Radnóti, László Rajk, László Rusai, Ottilia Solt, Miklós Sulyok, Jenő Széll, Sándor Szilágyi, Pál Szalai, Margit Szécsi, Józ-

sef Talata, Gáspár Miklós Tamás, Mihály Vajda, Domokos Varga, Lajos Vargyas, Judit Vásárhelyi, Miklós Vásárhelyi

Czechoslovakia

Rudolf Battek, Václav Benda, Jan Carnogursky, Jiri Dienstbier, Miklós Duray, Jiri Gruntorad, Jiri Hajek, Václav Havel, Ladislav Hejdánek, Eva Kantúrková, Jan Kozlik, Miroslav Kusy, Ivan Lamper, Ladislav Lis, Václav Maly, Anna Marvanová, Martin Palous, Jiri Ruml, Jaroslav Sabata, Anna Sabatová, Libuse Silhanová, Milan Simecka, Frantisek Stárek, Petr Uhl

GDR

Martin Böttger, Bärbel Bohley, Rainer Dietrich, Werner Fischer, Peter Grimm, Monika Haeger, Ralf Hirsch, Herbert Mislitz, Lutz Nagorski, Gerd Poppe, Ulrike Poppe, Wolfgang Rüdtenklau,

Nico Schönfeld, Regina Templin, Wolfgang Templin, Mario Wetzky

Poland

Konrad Bielinski, Marian Brandys, Jacek Czaputowicz, Marek Edelman, Jacek Fedorowicz, Jan Andrzej Gorny, Janusz Grzelak, Zbigniew Janas, Jan Kielanowski, Wiktor Kulerski, Wladyslaw Kunicki-Goldfinger, Zofia Kuratowska, Jacek Kuroń, Jan Józef Lipski, Jan Lityński, Barbara Malak, Wojciech Maziarski, Adam Michnik, Leszek Moczulski, Piotr Niemczyk, Zofia Romaszewska, Zbigniew Romaszewski, Krystyna Starczewska, Stefan Starczewski, Aniela Steinsbergowa, Klemens Szaniawski, Jacek Szymanderski, Henryk Wujec.

The time has come to start piecing together the fragmentary evidence of the Chornobyl disaster (in Russian Chernobyl*) at our disposal, and in the attempt to disclose what actually happened in the first forty days after the April 26 explosion, to draw some initial conclusions. Little else can be done at this moment because we still know so little about that terrible drama and because its consequences in death and injury, ecological and economic damage, social dislocation and political repercussions are only just beginning to reveal their magnitude.

T A R A S L E H K Y J

CHERNOBYL: THE FIRST FORTY DAYS

This article, then, will describe on the basis of government statements and the reports of republican and all-Union newspapers, radio and television the course of events at the Chornobyl Atomic Electricity Station and their immediate consequences. While Soviet media reports available in the west provide a mass of detail on the subject at hand (provincial and local newspapers are not available outside the USSR), they are subject to the constraints of official censorship. Therefore, we encounter puzzling gaps in the press, particularly with regard to the recorded levels of radiation, the number of people still in hospitals both in Kiev and Moscow, and the evacuations from the zone around the Chornobyl AES. Many statements by government leaders and specialists have been vague, misleading, and in some cases simply dishonest. Only when the people who suffered this disaster first hand have had the opportunity to describe their experiences can the official version and the censored reports of journalists, upon which this article of necessity must rely, be evaluated properly.

Avariia

The Soviet government's report to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna attributed the explosion to gross violations of safety regulations by AES workers conducting experiments on one of the plant's turbogenerators. During these experiments, the No. 4 reactor experienced an energy surge that



Damaged reactor (arrow) in Chornobyl

the AES workers were unable to control or suppress. It heated up to an intolerable level, turning water in the cooling system into steam and finally rupturing the pipes. The steam shot out over the zirconium alloy casing of the fuel rods and the graphite blocks packing the reactor core, reacting chemically with them to produce hydrogen. The hydrogen gas accumulated and at 1.24 am

on April 26 exploded, sending tons of fuel and radioactive graphite particles through the roof. Exposed to the air, the graphite packing began to burn fiercely. The fire leapt up into the reactor hall, onto the walls and surviving part of the roof, and then over to the roof of the adjacent machine hall. It now threatened to spread to the adjoining roof over Chornobyl's No. 3 reactor.

SOVIET UNION

The explosion and rapidly spreading fire took its first casualties. Volodymyr Shashenok, an adjutor of the reactor's automatic systems died from massive burns to 80% of his body surface. Valerii Khodemchuk, a senior operator of the steam boiler section, was killed by falling debris. Senior engineer Leonid Toptunov, operator Anatolii Kurkhuz and electrician Aleksandr Lelechenko died in hospital within days. Kurkhuz was radiated severely as he struggled to close firedoors around the reactor. Lelechenko took it upon himself to shut down gas valves in the electricians' workshop after the explosion sent graphite tumbling out over its floor. According to his workmates, "Lelechenko took care that none of his lads got a dangerous dose of radiation. He literally drove them from the workshop, but did not leave himself. And then, scarcely able to stand, but seeing our condition — probably from our faces — he started telling jokes."¹

The firefighting crew on duty at the power station heard the explosion roar. They were informed seconds later by telephone and raced to the scene, arriving at the crippled reactor at 1.30 am. Volodymyr Pravyk, leader of this crew, could see from the ground that the flames over the reactor roof were spreading in several places onto the roof of the machine hall. He ordered his men to attack the fire from all sides. He did not yet know the extent of the damage caused by the explosion.

Another firefighting crew stationed in the town of Prypiat, the AES workers' settlement nearby, arrived on the scene at 1.35 am. Its leader, Viktor Kybenok, took a search team into the reactor hall where they learned that the core was burning and that its water systems for both reactor cooling and fire fighting had been wrecked by the explosion.

Pravyk and Kybenok were joined at 1.56 am by Leonid Teliatnykov, the commanding officer of the power station's fire fighting forces. He had been on leave at the time and was six kilometres from the station when the explosion occurred. Teliatnykov took control of the whole operation and worked out a strategy to contain the roof fires and protect reactor No. 3 from possible damage.

At this point there were only 28 firemen at the scene. Pouring water onto the reactor proved completely ineffective because the high heat of the burning graphite simply vapourised it on contact. The firemen's efforts had to be limited to controlling the blaze on the structures above the reactor. The men on the ground were being showered continually with radioactive graphite being spewed out of the reactor core. Their boots stuck in the molten bitumen and impeded their work. The firemen on the ladders and rooftops were in an even more dangerous position, in the direct path of billowing clouds of poisonous gas as well as the radioactive dust.

It was not until 4 am that Pravyk and Kybenok's exhausted crews could be replaced by fresh firefighting teams brought in from the neighbouring towns of Chornobyl, Polissia, Ivankiv, Rozvazhiv and Vilcha districts, as well as from the city of Kiev. The roof and building fires were brought under control by 4.50 am and were extinguished finally at 6.35 am. The reactor core, however, continued to burn unhindered. Seventeen of the original 28 firemen were rushed to hospital. Those who stayed behind, and particularly those who had worked on the ladders over the fire, began feeling the effects of radiation only later in the day. They had to be hospitalised too.

Like all nuclear power installations in the Soviet Union, the Chornobyl AES and its vicinity within a 2.5 kilometre radius is under the control of special departments of central government ministries and the military. The administrators of the station, its firefighting forces and medical personnel report directly to Moscow and have little, if anything, to do with local, district or republican officials in Ukraine. They bear no formal responsibility for the state of the environment or the health of the population outside the 2.5 kilometre zone.

The explosion which sent the cloud of radioactive debris out over the town of Prypiat, into the surrounding countryside and up into Byelorussia clearly had not been anticipated in such a compartmentalisation of responsibilities and lines of command. The scale of the disaster forced the republican Ukrainian and Byelorussian, as well as the central governments into immediate action over a wide area of northern Ukraine and southern Byelorussia. The telephone operator who had summoned Pravyk and

Radiation control at road block



Kybenok also phoned immediately to the republican ministry of internal affairs in Kiev which despatched fire brigades, ambulances and thousands of militia into the area. Kiev undoubtedly informed Moscow: the central government ministries certainly knew of the disaster from their own direct line to Prypiat. The Politbureau began assembling its government commission on the day the explosion occurred and called in the military, specifically the air force under Major General Nikolai Antoshkin, to help fight the reactor fire.

At first an attempt was made to cool the crippled reactor with water. A special team assembled by the Kiev city division of the internal affairs ministry built a large metal circular sprinkler hose designed to fit over the shell of the reactor and pour water continually down its outer sides. Air force helicopter pilots tried to lower the metal noose with attached feeder hoses down over the reactor, but even the slightest gust of wind set it swaying out of control and the plan had to be abandoned.

It was then decided to send the helicopters over the reactor with payloads of lead, sand, clay and boron to plug its crater and prevent further emissions of radioactivity into the air. Barge workers plying the Prypiat River began to dredge its bottom for the sand. Local truck drivers dug clay at a nearby quarry and drove it into Prypiat for six days before they were hospitalised. The pilots devised special nets to carry up to ten tons of material and attached them to trigger locks which allowed them to drop their payloads more accurately and without pausing over the crater. Aleksandr Serebriakov, an experienced pilot, pioneered the bombing run between the station's chimneys that was

repeated hundreds of times in the following two weeks. Guided to their target by a radioroman perched dangerously close to the burned out reactor hall, the pilots eventually were able to make their approach at 140 kilometres an hour and to bomb the crater from a height of 200 metres. By May 12, they filled and capped the reactor with more than five thousand tons of material.

The plugging operation progressively diminished further radioactive emissions. But the growing burden bearing down on the reactor threatened to crack its foundations. The heat from the incandescent core could travel only downwards, and if this core broke through to the "bubbler pool" below, or worse still, reached the flooded basement of the power set, it would cause new explosions of such tremendous intensity that the entire Chernobyl AES would have been blown into the sky. The human and environmental casualties of such an eventuality for the whole of Central Europe were too frightening to contemplate.

The water in the bubbler pool was drained by three AES workers — B. Baranov, shift foreman, V. Bepalov, engineer, and A. Ananenko, engineer mechanic. They reached the pool's slide valves in wet suits along flooded corridors. The drainage of the basement proved to be a more complicated task. Because the air ducts leading out of the basement (which cooled the reactor during normal operations) were submerged under three metres of radioactive water and their slide valves were jammed shut, the water there had to be pumped out. This task was accomplished by five firemen from the town of Bila Tserkva, just south of Kiev. Led by Heorhii Nahaievsky, a renowned fighter of unusual and complicated fires, they drove a pump truck right into the basement, primed and set its pumps, returning periodically to restart them when they broke down. After 15 hours of almost continual pumping, the water was drained out of the basement.

The danger of the ultimate nightmare — a meltdown to the water table — had not yet been averted, but the workers grappling with the reactor could breathe a little more easily. Radioactivity around and underneath the reactor remained high and all further work was conducted in strictly controlled shifts, ranging from 5 to 30 minutes in the most dangerous locations. The next stage of the rescue operation involved boring tunnels under the reactor to draw off subsurface water, laying down a network of pipes through which liquid nitrogen was pumped to draw off heat from the reactor and freeze the surrounding soil, and finally, inserting a huge concrete dish lined with lead underneath the power set to prevent further radiation of the soil. The dish was designed as a base for a concrete sarcophagus that would enclose the entire reactor permanently. The tunnelling, piping and concrete work was begun by miners from the Donbas and Tula

province and by Kiev metro construction workers.

On May 11, a member of the investigating commission of the Soviet government declared that the critical period had passed.

Evacuation

"She stood at the crossroads holding a bundle with one hand and waving the other. The driver stopped the car. 'I'm looking for my husband' she started, dropping to her knees and clutching the treasures to her breast. 'Yes, I'm from Prypiat. We both worked at the station. We live in a building from which you can see all four power sets!'"²

This young woman, not identified by name in the May 23 issue of *Radianska Ukraina* where her story was told, was finishing her laundry on the night of the explosion. Her children were asleep and her husband, a driver, was at work. Suddenly she heard a dull roar and went out onto the balcony of her flat. The illumination in the sky — where was it coming from? Possibly some festival lights being turned on in anticipation of Mayday. Thinking little of it, she finished her laundry and lay down to sleep next to her children. Heavy footsteps woke her in the early morning. A neighbour told her of the accident. Cars were raing by on the street outside. The woman grabbed her children and whatever she could take from the flat and drove off to a distant village. Only later, when she tried to return to Prypiat to find her husband, did she learn that the militia was blocking all roads and that the population was being evacuated.

The Soviet press has provided scant details about the situation in Prypiat in the first 36 hours after the explosion. It stressed repeatedly that there was no panic and that the evacuation, which began only on April 27 in the afternoon, took place in an orderly manner. Yet there have been other articles such as the one cited above which have disclosed that some people tried to escape on their own as quickly as they could. They included management, foremen and workers at the Chernobyl AES. The flight of Yuri Zahalsky, secretary of the construction organisation's Komsomol Committee and of several other workers was discussed at a meeting of the Prypiat town Communist Party Bureau after its evacuated members reconvened in the town of Poliske. "Komsomol members saw no sign of Zahalsky during the days of the accident" reported *Pravda* on May 17. "Nor was he helping in the workers' camp. He was concerned with personal matters ... He is not alone. Halyna Lupii, secretary of the power station's supply departmental Komsomol organisation also fled. Only on the ninth day of the accident was it possible to summon her by telegram from her relatives. The supply department also let down people on a big scale. Some of its workers attempted to get away."

News of the accident travelled fast to the surrounding settlements. The first people to hear about it were those with telephones, invariably the officials and staff of state and Communist Party institutions. In some places, these officials fled the area with their families. In others, they evacuated as many people as they could before the republican government's forces arrived to take control. For example, Aleksandr Zenkovych, school headmaster in Zymovishchany, a village seven kilometres from the power station, said that no-one in the village heard the explosion, but "on the first day, almost half of the pupils in our eight grade school left with their parents to get further away from Prypiat. The rest of them were taken on the buses into Borodiansk district."³

As well as despatching fire brigades and ambulances to Prypiat, the ministry of internal affairs sent in thousands of *militia* (police forces) to take control of the towns and roads. It was necessary to clear the roads for the incoming firemen and medical teams and to retain political control of the situation. As Hryhoriy Revenko, first secretary of the Communist Party in Kiev province, was to note later, the authorities did not want "any undirected processes to unfold". General Berdov left Kiev with one thousand militiamen immediately upon learning of the explosion. He ordered several thousand re-inforcements from the districts of Chernobyl, Ivankiv and Polissia. In the early morning hours Berdov set up headquarters in Prypiat police station and ordered his men to take control of the town and all traffic in and out of it. The head of the internal affairs ministry's political department, Major General A.I. Borovyk, and the minister himself, General I.D. Hladush, arrived later to take charge of operations.

Major General V. Ia. Pitsura, a deputy minister of internal affairs, commented afterwards about the chaos on the roads before the militia moved in. "I remember those first days when many families were temporarily divided. I understand those people who were trying to get to their families. I understand them and our own workers, too. Had not the officials of the state automobile inspection department been firm and patient, there could have developed some gigantic incidents on the roads that would have practically paralysed the firefighting and rescue work."⁵ Pitsura's remarks were either deliberately vague or were censored before being published. He gave no indication about how many people were trying to get in (it was the weekend, and some people were away fishing, camping, etc.), and how many had got their children out and were trying to get back to find their spouses and pick up belongings. Similarly, Berdov spoke to the press in vague terms about a confrontation with a delegation of Prypiat residents after the town's evacuation had been announced. He said that residents were angry because

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they were not allowed by the *militia* to move out earlier.

For it was not until 36 hours after the explosion that Prypiat was evacuated. Its residents were followed by people living in the nearby villages of Andriivka, Zalissia and Cherevach, and then by inhabitants of the entire 15 kilometre zone around the power station. A full six days after the explosion, the evacuation zone was extended to a 30 kilometre radius, and as press reports from Ukraine indicate, people were still being evacuated on May 4 and 5. In all, over 135,000 people were moved south to the districts of Polissia, Ivankiv, Makariv and Borodiansk. This number does not include the wholesale evacuation of Ukrainian schoolchildren after May 15 from parts of Kiev, Chernihiv and Zhytomyr provinces and the evacuations in southern Byelorussia.

The urban settlements were evacuated on buses, and in some cases by riverboats. People left with few belongings. For the farming communities, the evacuation proved more difficult because collective and state farm workers took with them their livestock, poultry and farm machinery. They moved slowly along the southbound roads, many of them on foot with their animals. Spring floods on land between the Prypiat and Dnieper Rivers hampered the evacuation of many villages: pontoon bridges had to be built to get them across.

Ignorance of the danger posed by radioactivity, less pronounced in the vicinity of atomic power stations, but pronounced nonetheless among Soviet citizenry as a whole, was the main reason why some people refused to leave. There was the much publicised case of two elderly women from Prypiat who hid in their homes and ignored the calls of the *militia* over bullhorns and the radio to prepare for the evacuation. They subsisted in their homes for more than a month on preserved food and bottled water before being found.

The managers of the V.I. Lenin collective farm, whose fields and villages of Hubyn, Hornostaipil and Strakholissia lie on the border of the 30 kilometre zone, were ordered by the district government to evacuate. But they refused. Anatolii Dunaienko, a 30 year old agronomist and head of the collective farm recalled how that decision was taken:

When I saw the map delineating the borders of the evacuation zone and realised that all three of our village-brigades, all our farmland, orchards and sowed fields were outside these borders, but I had been ordered to take to the road, evacuate our people, cattle, poultry and equipment, I phoned the district committee and said "We are staying put!" I won't say that the district committee agreed with this right away. "Anatolii Yevhenovych", they said, "weigh the situation carefully. The whole district is evacuating in an orderly way. Perhaps its

better not to take any risks." But what are we risking, I asked. We're staying on the outer side of the zone perimeter and we believe in those learned people and state officials who set up the perimeter. In case of danger, I'll take all the necessary measures to evacuate. But why make haste when there is no need?⁶

Dunaienko's farm did not evacuate. In fact, its numbers started to grow as people from just inside the zone who were supposed to leave for Makariv and Borodianka came to ask for work and shelter. They wanted to be as close to their homes as possible and to be ready at a moment's notice to return.

Higher authorities contributed to popular illusions about the gravity of the disaster by promising people a speedy return to their homes. Such promises undoubtedly made it easier to convince most of them to leave. But some people took this to mean that there was little reason to leave at all. Within three weeks of the evacuation, however, I.S. Pliushch, chairman of the Kiev provincial central executive committee and a member of the government commission investigating the disaster was forced to admit publicly that the situation around Prypiat was worse than originally described and that it would be a long time before the displaced people could return there. State and party officials then began visiting each household and explaining that not only would they not be returning, but that the four districts which had accepted them could not sustain them economically for very long. They would have to be resettled once again over a broader territory of the province. The Ukrainian government had ordered emergency construction of new housing for them and was mobilising resources from all over the republic. The children from the zone, together with thousands more from outside it, were already being sent away for the summer to safer parts of the Ukraine. Only then did the gravity of the situation begin to sink in for many of the evacuated and their hosts.

The Soviet authorities have not provided an adequate explanation for the timing of the evacuations. Which factors contributed most to their commencement well after the radioactivity had invaded Prypiat and the surrounding area — disorganisation, hesitation by the authorities, popular resistance? We do not have an answer yet on the basis of the all-Union and republican media, but the situation in Kiev, about which there have also been reports by western news agencies, is instructive. When the explosion occurred at the Chornobyl AES, the wind was blowing northward. Weather reports in *Radianska Ukraina* indicate a drop in barometric pressure and variable winds (whose direction was not given) in the following four days. By May 2, however, the weather report clearly indicated that the wind direction was turning decisively to the south. At that point, there was great consternation in Kiev and thou-

sands of families rushed to get their children out of the capital — on trains, buses and by private transport. The authorities in Kiev gave no indication whatsoever that the changing wind posed a hazard to the population's health (see below). In fact, they ordered armed *militia* in great numbers onto the streets and the roads leading out of Kiev to prevent the spontaneous exodus. There must have been all kinds of protest against this show of force, and most likely an aggravated tension within the republican government. Because soon afterwards, the republican ministry of health started to issue recommendations about personal hygiene, washing down dwellings, streets and trees, etc. And then it was announced that all children would be taken out of Kiev by May 15. Was this the pattern of developments also in Prypiat, Chornobyl and other towns close to the reactor? And who was responsible for the tardy evacuations — the all-Union or republican government, or both?

The government's credibility

Both levels of government tried to deny the gravity of the situation and kept the population in the dark for far too long. The central government admitted the disaster to the Soviet and international public on April 29 after being presented with evidence of a plume passing over Sweden. On the following day, as helicopter pilots started bombing the reactor fire into submission, the Ukrainian Council of Ministers issued a statement assuring people that "the radiation situation at the Chornobyl AES and in the adjoining vicinity is improving. The state of the air basin over the remaining territory of Kiev province and the city of Kiev evokes no concern. The quality of drinking water and of water in the rivers and reservoirs is in keeping with the standards".⁷ The All-Union Council of Ministers issued a similar message on the same day.

Moscow television news (broadcast all over the country) reported on April 30 that "the work of enterprises, collective and state farms and establishments in the locality is proceeding normally". Special correspondents covering the disaster in Ukraine and Byelorussia reported on May 5 on the same evening news programme that "in the south of Homel province, between the Dnieper and Prypiat Rivers, basic fieldwork has been completed and potato planting is now underway on the last hectares... Great quantities of milk are being produced at this very moment".

A report from the Vatunin state farm, forty kilometres north of Kiev, which supplies the capital with milk and vegetables, noted that "just everywhere today, we saw normal work going on. The farm is proceeding in its normal rhythm of work. The only

unusual thing, perhaps, is the radioactivity and chemical monitoring stations... So far, nothing in excess of the permitted norm has been registered." The director of the Vatunin farm disclosed in an interview what the authorities expected from farm workers in the wake of the disaster:

"Everyone understands the need to work very well just now in order, well, for everyone at his workplace to be seen as a model of shock work. The point is that, of course, we all understand that the accident at the Chernobyl AES has caused losses to the state. And so our task now is to make up for those losses".⁸

While the government's angry response to hysterical reports in the western media is understandable, one should remember also that the government used the exaggerations and polemicised with them to avoid giving a precise account of the actual danger to its own citizens. Interviews with foreigners in Kiev that were broadcast on the daily news were selected to convey their trust in the authorities and their anger with western papers and radio stations that issued unverified horror stories. "If there was any danger to health" said one Canadian woman on May 2, "the children would have been evacuated from Kiev".⁹

To drive its message home, the central government declared that an international bicycle race in Kiev would go ahead as planned on May 6. In the Ukrainian press, photographs of cyclists in training ran alongside short and vague reports about the situation in Prypiat with new assurances that the radioactivity there had fallen "by one and a half to two times". Even the river excursions along the Dnieper to Kaniv, Cherkasy and Chernihiv, 40 kilometres from Prypiat, were resuming normally as they do each year in tourist season.

But even as both levels of government maintained a public attitude of business as usual and continued to propagate the view that only the 30 kilometre zone was contaminated, Ukrainian republican and provincial authorities began quietly to adopt special measures against radioactivity on farms outside of the zone. The news of these measures found its way into the press only later. On May 14, Pliushch, chairman of the provincial government admitted in the trade union newspaper *Robitnycha Hazeta* that cattle in four districts bordering the evacuation zone were being kept indoors and given winter fodder. Romanenko, the republican minister of health announced a set of safety measures to all farmers in Kiev, Zhytomyr and Chernihiv provinces which included the introduction of tractors with airtight operating cabins, special clothing to which dust does not cling and regular washing down of workplaces, trucks and tractors. When asked about the danger faced by fieldworkers outside the 30 kilometre zone, Kostiantyn Sytnyk, vice-president of the Ukrainian

Academy of Sciences urged that "regional recommendations, depending on the state of radioactivity, should be drawn up in all regions adjacent to the zone. It is well known," he said "that people are continuing to work in the fields, in orchards and pastures. Inasmuch as this work is approved by scientific, medical and sanitary organisations, it is quite alright. However, one should remember that although the increased level of radioactivity is declining progressively, it does not mean that one can abandon advice concerning personal hygiene and a temporary abstinence in some districts from fruits and milk products that have not been monitored."¹⁰



Soviet radiation protection instructions

At the same time, republican officials remained concerned that the disaster not disrupt economic production and went to great lengths to assure people in Kiev that the food they received from the countryside and the drinking water taken from the Kiev Sea reservoir above the city were safe. The public's fear of radiation, however, was not alleviated. First, the republican minister of health had been issuing conflicting statements. On May 22, he advised people not to swim in open reservoirs and to limit their stay on beaches and in woods. A week later, he changed his position and said that it was safe to swim in the Dnieper and other rivers and reservoirs. But he added that people should sit only on towels and blankets, not play football or volleyball on the beach so as not to raise any dust, and to eat at a good distance from the water!

Second, it has since been learned that Kiev is preparing to change over to a new supply of potable water, specifically to over 50 artesian bores drilled into the bedrock

underneath the capital and to the Desna River which flows from the east into the province. Simultaneously, chemically treated barriers that apparently will filter out radioactive particles are being placed downstream from the Chernobyl AES into the Prypiat and Dnieper. Again, these are called preventative measures, but to many people they amount to an admission that the Dnieper is already contaminated.

Dnieper water

A mere glance at the map shows what lack of foresight Soviet energy planners displayed when they sited the Chernobyl AES on the banks of the Prypiat River in the southern reaches of a large water catchment area known as the Prypiat Marshes. The Marshes extend northwestward into Byelorussia, the initial path of the radioactive plume. Hundreds of tributaries flowing out of them feed the Prypiat, which in turn joins the Dnieper about 20 kilometres south of the power station. The Dnieper, Ukraine's largest river, runs the full length of the republic to the Black Sea.

The explosion, fire and plume scattered radioactive isotopes around the station and over a broad territory to the northwest. They have settled on roads, buildings and farmland. Around Prypiat, where the contamination is the greatest, chemical crews are making strenuous, if largely unsuccessful efforts to mop it up. Dykes have been built along the river banks to hold back spring and autumn runoff. Polyvinyl film is being laid down on the most contaminated farmland to prevent the wind from scattering the dust farther afield or the dew and rain from taking it deeper into the soil. Buildings have been covered against the rain.

While such measures may retard even greater pollution of soil and water, how can they reverse the damage already done? As far back as 1946, the US Navy at Bikini Atoll found that wood, metal and concrete exposed to radiation fallout could not be decontaminated. Washing with water simply drove the isotopes further into these substances. One had to strip away and discard their surfaces to a considerable depth. How shall that be done, for example, to the concrete apartment blocks in Prypiat? Moreover, the terrain around Prypiat, a heavily wooded marshland, poses insurmountable difficulties for any cleanup operation. Rather, the marshes will sponge up the radioactivity, pass it on to the Prypiat and then to the Dnieper.

The long term consequences of the disaster are evident when one considers the importance of the Dnieper to the population and economy of the republic. Once a mighty and fast flowing river, the Dnieper was conquered in the 1930s by industrialisation, dammed at six points along its route and

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harnessed for hydroelectric power. Behind these dams are large reservoirs of potable water for Kiev, Cherkasy, Kremenchuk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Kherson and many more towns and cities. In all, more than 10 million people, or one fifth of the Ukrainian population, depend on the river for drinking water.

Canals such as the one running from Dniprodzerzhynsk to the Donbas draw off additional water for cities and industries further inland. The river irrigates private plots, orchards and fields of huge farms all along its banks and inland. Near its mouth, for example, water is pumped from the Dnieper into the North Crimean Canal and the Kakhivka irrigation network which sustain agriculture in three southern provinces.

Each year, the river sends 53.5 cubic kilometres of water through the republic, far surpassing the 9.3 cubic kilometres provided by the Dnister, Ukraine's second largest river. In the north, its waters are relatively clean. But as they flow south and are held up by the dams, are pumped through millions of homes and thousands of farms and factories, often without the benefit of purification before being returned to the river, they turn grey and sluggish. The river grows shallow, it warms up to spawn weeds and algae and loses much of its oxygen. So much water is taken from it that the river barely flows at its mouth into the Black Sea. As a result, its southernmost hydro-electric station at Khakhivka now operates at 10-15% of its capacity.

What, then, happens to the radioactive pollutants? Rather than flushing them out swiftly into the sea (and this is hardly a welcome solution) the Dnieper will collect the radioactivity in its reservoirs, its fish and plant life and will dish it out for years to come to all who depend on it for their livelihood and recreation.

The future

Who will be held responsible for the deaths and injuries, for the damage to the living and unborn, to the ecology and economy? The answer lies in an investigation not only of the events after the explosion on April 26, but also of developments leading up to that unhappy day. Why was the Chernobyl AES sited in a most ecologically unsound location? Why was the town of Prypiat situated on the windward side of the power station? Was anyone listening to Liubov Kovalevska, the Prypiat journalist who revealed two months before the disaster that the entire station continued to be built, as before, with inadequate raw materials, on the basis of unsatisfactory blueprints, and by a demoralised workforce? Why were there no emergency procedures to guide local authorities in case immediate evacuation was necessary, as it was on April 26?

Every effort will be made to lay blame for the disaster upon lesser officials and the workers. The report to the IAEA by the central government has already blamed AES workers and deputy ministers who, it is alleged, did not exercise proper control over their departments.

For three months now, various government spokesmen have been hinting that local officials were to blame for the delayed evacuation. It is likely that this charge will soon be laid at the doorstep of the republican government. The visit to Chernobyl on May 2 by Politbureau member Ligachev and Soviet Premier Ryzhkov and the concurrent decision to extend the evacuation zone to a 30 kilometre radius now appears to have been a set-up, designed to imply that the central government had to move in because the republican government was dragging its heels. But such reasoning is absurd because the investigating commission of the central government had its members on the scene the day the accident occurred. Moscow hospitals had a "hot line" to Prypiat on the same day. Moscow knew as well as Kiev the extent of the danger. It was the central government which had the power to delay the evacuations, not the republican, as well as the motives: its international prestige, concern for domestic stability and production targets.

Undoubtedly, there was a faction in the Ukrainian government which agreed with Moscow's directives and carried its line of business as usual for more than a week after April 26. Nothing was said from the podiums at May Day parades in Kiev or Moscow about the disaster. And still today, the silence of government leaders on many important unanswered questions is deafening. Sooner or later the silence will be broken. Behind the deputy ministers who have fallen from grace hide the ministers and behind them the central government whose Premier spoke out so passionately at the CPSU Congress in March about the inadmissibility of delays in the expansion of the Soviet Union's nuclear power industry.

There are also people in the Soviet Ukrainian government who had and continue to have grave misgivings about the way in which this disaster was handled. The Ukrainian government is now carrying the major burden in labour power, economic and political resources for cleaning up the contamination, resettling the evacuated thousands and making up for the losses in electrical power, water sources and agricultural produce. These strains make it vulnerable to attacks from Moscow and from its own citizens. It is still too early to say who will seize the initiative and against whom new charges will be levelled. But one thing is already clear. While the entire Soviet population is more apprehensive about the Soviet state's nuclear power ambitions and more sceptical of the officially propagated distinction

between the "military" and "peaceful" atom, Ukrainians feel they have already suffered from this rebellious atom, in part because their republican government is a subordinate and unequal partner in the Union and has no control over the nuclear power industry on its territory. This feeling came through clearly on June 5, forty days after the explosion, at the congress of the Ukrainian Writers' Union in Kiev. In his opening speech to the delegates, the prominent writer Oles Honchar warned that the destruction of nature in Ukraine today goes hand in hand with the destruction of its language and national heritage:

Our days are harsh ones. No-one would understand us if we, the writers of our people, tried to pretend that the tragedy of Chernobyl has not impressed itself upon our entire world view. Some values have collapsed before our very eyes while others have been raised above all else. Human self sacrifice has been elevated. The tragedy of existence, which has spread beyond the borders of the zone has become for many a pain, a deed, and a thought — a burning desire to understand. No-one is indifferent. We were and we remain inseparable from our people. We accept praise from on high for our defense of our cultural heritage and of nature. Then, is it not time to question with all the power of the law who is culpable for the irresponsible destruction of a monument of history, of culture, architecture, or of any artificial reservoir thoughtlessly situated above the city...¹¹

August 20, 1986.

Footnotes

* All place names and proper names have been transliterated from their original Ukrainian, Byelorussian or Russian spelling

1 *Pravda*, 16 May 1986, as reported in *Soviet Analyst* 28/5/86.

2 *Radianska Ukraina*, 23/5/86.

3 *Radianska Ukraina*, 23/5/86.

4 *Radianska Ukraina*, 7/5/86.

5 *Literaturna Ukraina*, 22/5/86.

6 *Radianska Ukraina*, 1/6/86.

7 As reported by TASS 1713 gmt, 30/4/86.

8 Soviet television 1700 gmt, 5/5/86.

9 Soviet television 1430 gmt, 2/5/86.

10 *Radianska Ukraina*, 3/6/86.

11 *Literaturna Ukraina*, 12/6/86.

Kevin Ball

NEW VOICES FROM EAST BERLIN

The East German party and state leader, General Secretary Erich Honecker, likes to portray himself as concerned to raise the well-being of the German Democratic Republic's citizens and, in particular, to cut through the dense undergrowth of bureaucracy which is choking relations between his administration and the people. To further this image, a law guaranteeing the right of individuals to petition the authorities and, especially, their right to a written reply within a maximum of four weeks was introduced in 1975, and as recently as June this year, Honecker reminded his Central Committee of "the special obligation...to swiftly and conscientiously deal with petitions and submissions and to safeguard the legitimate interests of the citizens. The well-being of the population demands that their rights be strictly observed." There are no statistics available on this point, but it is quite likely that most such submissions from below have indeed been replied to with Prussian efficiency as long as they raised the sort of matters that officials are accustomed to dealing with in the kind of constructive manner these officials expect and can cope with. Recently, however, a new breed of petitions has begun to arrive in the republic's top "In" trays which even Honecker himself has found it impossible to deal with inside the statutory deadline. Their authors are well-known to the authorities for their unorthodox views and activities, and they often bear the signatures of hundreds of supporters from all over the GDR.

Until this year, such petitions from these people tended to be confined to single issues directly connected with the concerns of the independent peace movement linked with the Protestant church: the 1982 petition against the conscription laws and the 1983 petition against the promotion of military toys (signed by 9000 citizens), for example. But in April this year, just before the 11th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), its Central Committee received a lengthy submission from 21 activists of the peace movement, based mainly but not exclusively in the capital East Berlin, which amounted to a comprehensive challenge to all the main planks of the party's policy (see below). Among the signatories were Hans-Jochen Tschiche of the Protestant Church Academy in Magdeburg; Annedore Havemann, the widow of the late Robert Havemann, veteran communist and father figure of the GDR's left dissidents; women peace cam-

paigned Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe; and Wolfgang Templin and Peter Grimm, spokespeople for the "Initiative Peace and Human Rights" which had made its first public appearance in January (cf. *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* No.2/86, p.18). Then came the Soviet nuclear reactor accident in Chernobyl and the widespread concern over the radioactive clouds from the Ukraine and another, even longer, submission signed by 141 individuals (including most of the above 21) with a detailed critique and analysis of the reaction to Chernobyl in East and West and the dangers of nuclear energy in general, demanding the decommissioning of the GDR's existing two reactors and the abandonment of its ambitious atomic energy programme ("Chernobyl is everywhere", this issue of *Labour Focus*). This was accompanied by another petition for the East German parliament, the *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber) to hold a referendum on the continued use of nuclear power, which has since been circulating in the GDR and has already attracted well over a thousand supporting signatures (cf. the text of the petition in this issue).

Petitions

The two organisers of the referendum campaign are Martin Böttger, a 38-year-old physicist who was also among the initiators of the appeal to the Party Congress, and Ralf Hirsch, a 25-year-old employee of the Protestant Church who is also a spokesperson for the Human Rights Initiative. Then, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the construction of the Berlin Wall (13th August 1961), the three Human Rights spokespersons, together with Pastor Eppelmann, emerged again with an appeal for the relaxation of the travel restrictions between the two German states.

All this is hardly what the Honecker leadership has in mind when it talks of improving the dialogue with the GDR's citizens. How little the latter are really expected to exercise their rights in any more than a token fashion is revealed by another example: East German electoral law provides for a two-week period during which the results of local or national polls can be challenged. Yet it was barely eight days after this year's elections to the *Volkskammer* that the new session of East Germany's "parliament" was opened with a public declaration that there had been no challenge to the poll's validity. Three days later, on 19th June and thus still

within the legal limit, an unprecedented and certainly unexpected challenge appeared from Human Rights Group speaker Ralf Hirsch, on the grounds that he and others had not received their ballot papers and that the results, in his electoral district at least, were therefore invalid.

Peace Workshop

But Honecker and the SED leadership are not the only ones to feel uncomfortable with these new challenges. In the Protestant Church, which during the last few years has provided much of the "space" for peace and ecology groups and a variety of unorthodox cultural and educational activities and discussions, there clearly exists growing unease about recent developments, and increasingly attempts are being made to curtail the scope of "unofficial" activities. At the annual "Peace Workshop" in Berlin-Lichtenberg this year — a public open-air event attended by nearly 2000 visitors — the stalls of the various initiatives and groups and their materials were vetted and both an account of Ralf Hirsch's election challenge and the information prepared by the "Peace and Human Rights" initiative experienced resistance from the organisers. A planned Human Rights seminar has had to be postponed following strong pressures from the state authorities.

Clearly both the regime and the conservative wing of the Church hierarchy are worried that a section of the peace movement is slipping out of control and beginning to develop into an organised political opposition, particularly in Berlin where the leading activists now have several years' experience of operating at the margins of official tolerance and enjoy close contacts with the West German peace and Green movements. Church services on the theme of "swords into ploughshares" and discussions within the confines of church structures are one thing — although by no means welcome to the authorities either — but public initiatives on sensitive political issues such as human rights and elections, comprehensive critiques of party policy addressed to the SED Congress, and organised campaigns for a referendum on nuclear power quite another.

Flexible

Why then has there not simply been a wave of arrests, prison sentences and expulsions to West Germany? One answer to this

question is provided by Wolfgang Templin, one of the spokespersons for the Human Rights initiative, in his essay printed below: "Our rulers have become not more humane, but more flexible and resourceful. Their addiction to international prestige and increasing economic dependence on the West have made the most brutal forms of oppression recede, at least temporarily. The direct threat to one's physical existence and juridical persecution are increasingly being replaced by social repression". While Templin and others still face continuous *Stasi* (State Security) supervision and regular harassment, it is obviously considered inopportune to resort to more heavy-handed methods because of the wave of bad publicity this would entail. Good, or at least reasonable, relations with the Federal Republic are increasingly essential to the political, econ-

omic, and social strategy of the SED leadership (which clearly has Moscow's support in this), and West Germany will have a general election in January which could easily lead to the replacement of the current conservative Kohl Government by an SPD-led cabinet, perhaps even involving some kind of arrangement with the Green Party. Not surprisingly therefore, the SED is keen not to fan the flames of right-wing anti-GDR propaganda at the moment, nor does it wish to upset either the SPD or the Greens. An official Green Party parliamentary delegation was recently received by *Volkskammer* president Sindermann and leading Politbureau member Hager, but took care also to visit Pastor Eppelmann and other independent peace movement activists while in East Berlin. Therefore arrests are unlikely until at least the West German elections, and per-

haps beyond that. The same does not, however, necessarily apply to less prominent young people falling foul of the authorities in the provinces, as the prison sentences for Andreas Richter and Lars Matzke, both of Jena, for "publicly ridiculing the state" this October remind us.

A "window of opportunity" may therefore have opened for the increasingly self-confident and assertive articulation of alternative voices in the German Democratic Republic: not an underground *samizdat*, but the voices of East German citizens publicly claiming their right to be active participants in, rather than passive victims of, the political life of their country. The documents translated below will give readers of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* some idea of what they are saying.

"CHERNOBYL IS EVERYWHERE"

APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE GDR FROM THE INDEPENDENT PEACE AND ECOLOGY MOVEMENT AND OTHER CONCERNED CITIZENS

The reactor accident in Chernobyl has caused insecurity and a feeling of being threatened among us. Our sympathies are with all those killed and damaged in their health in the Soviet Union. There is reason to fear that the number of victims is yet to rise further and that the real extent of the damage, perhaps even beyond the Soviet borders, will only be able to be gauged after years. But not only the threat from crashed nuclear reactors has become evident, but also the consequences of an irresponsible and socially dangerous information policy in the East as well as in the West. A policy of tutelage, disinformation and confusion - and not only since Chernobyl but already before then. The reasons for that is not incompetence at all, but deliberation out of motives that can be traced.

For over ten years now a coalition of nuclear power station builders, their political lobbyists and the rulers of some capitalist countries using nuclear energy has been confronting, sometimes violently, mass protests against nuclear electricity, and has behaved with ignorance and in consequence in the face of competent warning voices with regard to the safety of the reactors.

The real dangers of running these reactors have been underestimated in the socialist countries and, especially in the GDR, blatantly minimised and swept under the carpet to avoid public discussion. Critical voices were hardly able to make themselves heard: sceptics were hardly able to gain sufficient information. Nuclear accidents in the West and the anti-nuclear movement there were only mentioned insofar as the safety and economic viability of atomic power in the socialist countries did not have to be raised in that context.

Gorbachev has rightly stated that "the accident at Chernobyl... has once again illuminated the disaster confronting humanity in the event of a nuclear war". The Soviet offer to the USA in the form of the nuclear test moratorium now again extended until 6 August as

well as other proposals by the Soviet Union are to be welcomed as whole-heartedly as the American attitude is to be condemned. But we oppose any interpretation of such statements according to which the dangers of nuclear power stations are defined relative to the atom bomb (and thereby identified as "harmless"). That would be a demagogic trick to legitimise such means of energy production, a trick employed by the GDR scientists Lanius and Flach.

The Soviet readiness now to intensify the "security partnership" between the countries operating nuclear power stations, however, leaves no doubt that the nuclear energy road will continue to be followed.

The reasons for the inability to do without it are to be found in the economic and the political spheres. In the West, profits and economic expansion foster the building of nuclear power stations, too. The increasing debates over inadequate reactor safety and the unsolved problems and enormous social costs of waste disposal have hardly acted as a brake on this. The competition between the two political systems is to be decided by accelerated economic and thus also energy growth, with the time factor playing a crucial role. Indeed no single-issue protest against nuclear energy or nuclear weapons can ignore this problem, for the very foundations of the existence and the survival of the two systems appear to be affected here.

Dangers

The accident at Chernobyl shows clearly that the often quoted statistics concerning the relatively small risk of a nuclear power accident are missing the point. We fear that a serious accident could occur - for different reasons, of course, but equally unexpectedly - at either of the nuclear power stations at Lubmin (near Greifswald) or Rheinsberg. We know that those in charge of any nuclear power station attempt to cover up emerging difficulties. We fear that we are subject to radiation from the nuclear power stations in the GDR without being told. We realise with horror that because of a nuclear power station 1200 kilometers away, we have to consider whether it is safe to give our children milk to drink and whether it isn't dangerous to be caught out in the rain.

As a comparison: Berlin-Lubman 175 km. Berlin-Stendal 100 km (nuclear power station in construction planned to commence generating in 1991).

Nuclear power and national defence

Nuclear power stations, as well as other large power stations, are the energy nerve centres of our highly industrialised economy. As a result of the military technological development of high accuracy weapons they would become high priority targets in the event of imperialist aggression. Possible consequences of such action would be:

1. The collapse of the economy and the transport system (increasing electrification of the railways).
2. Radioactive contamination of the GDR as well as other neighbouring states as a result of the use only of conventional high accuracy weapons. The defensive capabilities of the GDR would therefore be severely limited and the pressure, in a crisis situation, for a preemptive strike against the other side would grow, increasing with it the chances of war breaking out.

Nuclear power and the conflict of systems

Socialism is supposed to be a system which, as well as providing for the security of the material existence of the members of society, also "guarantees the complete free development and application of their physical and mental abilities" and where "the self-socialisation of mankind... now becomes their own free activity" (Anti-Dühring, Marx-Engels Works Vol. 20, p. 264). The myth of ever increasing energy demand was already being rejected by scientists in the FRG in the early eighties. According to their calculations, the FRG, with the implementation of energy efficient technology, could secure their present standard of living in the year 2000 using only 35% of present energy levels. For the GDR this ratio could be even more advantageous as its production is more energy-intensive than in the FRG.

The competition between the two systems should not be predominantly about a competition of growth for growth's sake, whilst ignoring the incalculable growth in resulting hazards and long-term damage. Socialism must be a society that is conscious of its responsibility for the future of the earth and its habitability for coming generations. The measure of that responsibility cannot be simply the horizon of the next five-year-plan. If in the coming months and years the number of people killed and injured by cancer, leukaemia, malformation and other illnesses should grow as result of the accident at Chernobyl, we should not try to justify it with arguments such as "Progress must have its victims" or "We have solved the housing problem as a social question" or "The waiting list for a car is now only three years". It is not that we are against a solution to these problems. We are not looking for a sort of stone age communism. But the price is too high if it is at the cost of life or its quality, which cannot be measured solely in terms of the accumulation of material values.

The development of socialism means to us the application of different concepts of the terms progress and growth and not to use the insanity of capitalist wastefulness as our own yardstick. Social progress and growth are not only expressed in the increase in the production of consumer goods but can also be shown in the reduction of the working week and working life, in the increase in the amount of yearly holiday or the introduction of educational sabbaticals from work. Growth does not have to mean "more cars" but can be a radical improvement of public transport, making it free for all, even in rural areas. There are many more examples which one could add.

As long as nuclear power stations continue to function the objective education of the people about the dangers and consequences of nuclear power, the publication of measured radiation dosages as well as independent, decentralised measurements undertaken by various social interest groups will all be necessary. But what above all will be necessary is a wide public discussion about the quality of life and expectations in a socialist society so that those concerned in the future will be able also to consider and determine what sort of progress they are prepared to accept and at what price.

PETITION TO HOLD A REFERENDUM ON THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWER IN THE GDR

Translated for Labour Focus on Eastern Europe by Peter Thompson.

June 1986

(Addressee of this petition is the People's Chamber of the GDR)

Contact addresses: Martin Böttger Ralf Hirsch
Am Zirkus 6 Leninallee 38
Berlin Berlin
1040 1017

The contact persons have undertaken to count the number of signatures collected and to regularly inform the People's Chamber of the result. We would ask that you sign this petition, distribute it to others and return it to the contact persons.

PETITION

After the catastrophe at Chernobyl the worldwide discussion about alternatives to nuclear energy has increased. At the XIth Party Congress of the SED it was decided to considerably increase the proportion of nuclear-generated energy for our country. We are disturbed by the risks and fatal hazards that could result from this decision and feel called upon to exercise our responsibility as concerned citizens.

The constitution of the GDR, in articles 21 and 53, provides for the possibility of holding a referendum. The power to decide on such a referendum lies with the People's Chamber. In order to prepare for a referendum it is absolutely necessary that there be both wide discussion and the provision of comprehensive information about the advantages and dangers of nuclear energy. This discussion should result in alternative concepts being put to the vote alongside already existing ones.

I support with my signature the wish that the People's Chamber of the GDR should hold a referendum on the further use of nuclear energy.

Signatures:

Poster reads: "Make peace against NATO weapons"



SUBMISSION TO THE ELEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE SOCIALIST UNITY PARTY

The following extracts are from a long written submission to this year's congress of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED), the ruling party in the GDR, dated 2 April 1986.

- In the *economic policy* of the SED a decisive role is played by the annual growth rates for industrial production and the gross national income. Social progress is measured against these and all efforts are concentrated in this direction... Its traditional economic strength and its special position as a silent participant in the EEC have allowed the GDR to fare reasonably well in terms of export opportunities and Western debts by comparison with the other socialist states. But a growing hunger for foreign currency and an exclusive orientation towards Western technology led to a series of risky foreign trade manoeuvres when, in 1982/83, economic growth suffered a pronounced dip. This was reflected in the markets as acute supply problems and could only mean that everything possible was being thrown into the export markets at short notice and at special conditions and dumping prices. Cheap GDR labour power represents a particularly macabre export hit.

- The high energy and pollution intensity of many branches of GDR industry raises the problem of present and future *ecological damage*... The GDR is among the leaders in Europe in terms of air and water pollution and the contamination of the soil. This, too, is a process which those affected by it are consciously kept in the dark about... possible alternatives to ecologically destructive industrialisation and private transport are suppressed. The dangers of a rapid development of nuclear energy, too, are absolutely taboo... The simple slogan "Everything for the well-being of the people" serves to obscure the question of who decides about whose well-being and how he knows what is good for the others. It is not the consumption greed of the people that makes the party build hard currency hotels, exclusive shops and prestige palaces, but its own notion of tranquillising and politically disenfranchising the population through increased individual consumption. An unspoken social contract with the

consumer which works only as long as there is enough dropping into the open hand and no shortage of goods for distribution.

But this has nothing at all to do anymore with social responsibility, let alone a "socialist perspective", for the problems of desolate new towns, spoilt landscapes and broken family relations will hit the next generation.

- The efficacy of *science* as a decisive bearer of progress and a productive force in our society remains an unsolved problem... Since the decision-making processes in the party and state leadership remain hidden from the public and it is always only the results of decisions already arrived at that are published, their real theoretical foundations are hard too make out. At most one can speak of an influence of privileged scientists on the policies of the party. A scientifically-based policy cannot be achieved if it is not simultaneously exposed to scientific criticism. At the same time, science in our society will remain incapable of criticism so long as the access to the scientific community is regulated and the people who dominate it refuse to face up to scientific debate.

In the field of the social sciences the demand to reach world standards is not even raised seriously. Progressive tendencies, critical discussions of traditional positions as they have increased enormously in the last twenty years with the democratic and anti-imperialist movement in the developed capitalist world especially, are hardly taken note of... Even the slogan "Learning from the Soviet Union means learning to win" occasionally has to give way in GDR publications to censorship of the speeches made by by the General Secretary of the CPSU.

- Many young people withdraw very early into petty-bourgeois family life and a consumer mentality. The youth and education policy of the GDR holds the youth under tutelage. Their total experiences lead many youths into an attitude of resignation which is reflected in the number of those who apply for permission to emigrate or attempt an escape to the West; it is reflected in the increased misuse of alcohol, in attempted suicides and a rising crime rate. Not least one has to observe a worrying increase of neo-Nazi activities...

W o l f g a n g T e m p l i n

MANY THANKS, PROFESSOR

Earlier this year a former adviser to the East German leadership — Hermann von Berg, who had played a significant role in negotiations between the two German states in the early 1970s — defected to the Federal Republic in a blaze of publicity. His recently published book "Marxism-Leninism. The Poverty of the half-Russian, half-German Ideology" was reviewed in the 15 September issue of the leading West German magazine "Der Spiegel" by Wolfgang Templin, a well-known activist in the independent East German peace movement and one of the three spokespersons for the "Peace and Human Rights Initiative". Templin, 38, is a former researcher at the Central Institute of Philosophy of the East German Academy of Sciences and was a member of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) until his resignation in 1983 because, in his words, "as a communist and Marxist I can no longer share responsibility for the policy of the party".

The following translation for *LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE* is based on Templin's original manuscript rather than the abbreviated and altered version of "Der Spiegel". Although few readers outside Germany will be familiar with Hermann von Berg or his book, we publish this essay because it gives a good impression of the political thought of a current in the independent East German peace movement.

The erstwhile adviser to Willi Stoph (the East German Prime Minister, *Transl.*) and then professor at the Humboldt University of Berlin, now in the West, arrives at a clear verdict on the GDR: Economic mismanagement, the rule of an incompetent party and state bureaucracy, privileges for creeping and servility, a society full of “deceitful sneaks and bent characters”. Vivid descriptions from the intellectual milieu, the service and supply sectors, agriculture and the internal life of the apparatus lend colour to the picture. In a book about “Marxism-Leninism, the poverty of the half-German, half-Russian ideology” von Berg summarises the results of his theoretical deliberations and political experiences of over three and a half decades.

The decisive factor in his break with the party and his emigration is his realisation that not simply Marxism-Leninism but all of Marx’ thought is no science but an “idiotic, meaningless bla-bla”. The whole misery of the GDR is, for him, rooted in the attempt to apply Marxist thought. Its whole social system is institutionalised ideology. The functionaries and protagonists of the ideology, the party apparatchiks, are, so to speak, a crystallisation of this false consciousness. Their parasitic existence and their privileges are derived from the ideology.

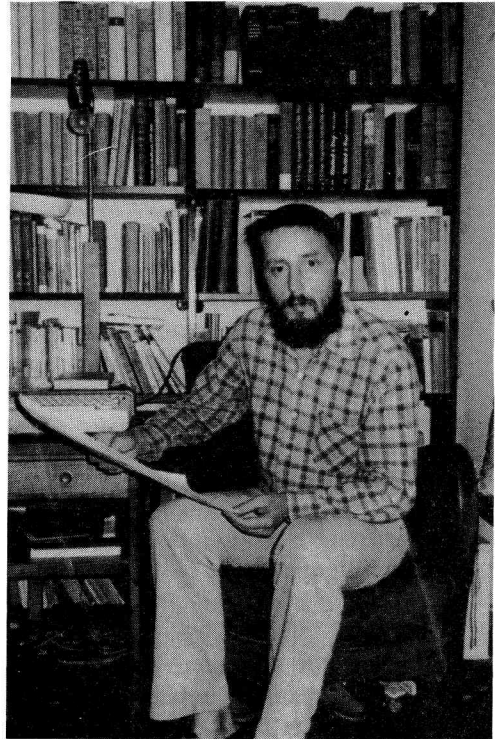
Having understood all this, one can cynically continue as before, try to forget it again, or “commit active resistance” and “break the rules” as von Berg did — that is, getting on a train. Otherwise he would have had to “mobilise his students against the state”.

Responsibility and solidarity

At this point, if not before, even the most generous listener or spectator from the GDR will have had too much. One finds one’s own experiences reflected in the descriptions of everyday life and the social relations and asks oneself what such a well-qualified intellectual and long-serving insider has made of all this. On offer are a demolition of the ideology, recipes for German unity and a relaxed approach to the own biography. As long as you don’t know better, you take part, and once you do know better, you unfortunately have to go. There can be many good and serious reasons for an individual to leave the GDR, but the problem starts when leaving is seen as responsible and an act of resistance rather than staying. Not resignation and passive improvisation are meant here by “staying”, but the acceptance of responsibility and a personal engagement against the pressures of the situation. The real problems and obstacles only begin where von Berg arrogantly puts a full stop. Critical engagement in the GDR has never been limited to intellectual circles and pubertarian groups as is suggested by his view. Robert Havemann and Wolf Biermann as communists became the inspiring force behind an existential resistance. They represent many unknowns who, over the entire history of the GDR, as workers, students or employees, out of Christian or democratic traditions or simple human responsibility, fought for social rights and political freedoms. For them, there was almost always the fateful chain — referred to by von Berg — of imprisonment, escape and exile. For him, that means the impossibility of actively pursuing change at the present time. He overlooks or suppresses a real, albeit rather macabre progress. Our rulers have become not more humane, but more flexible and resourceful. Their addiction to international prestige and increasing economic dependence on the West have made the most brutal forms of oppression recede, at least temporarily. The direct threat to one’s physical existence and juridical persecution are increasingly being replaced by social repression. The loss of the academic career or post in the state apparatus and of the related privileges are often sufficiently threatening. If such disadvantages are accepted, however, it is perfectly possible to continue to live “normally”. In Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia there is a lot

of experience of refusing to submit to the poor choice between resignation and purely intellectual conspiracy on one hand and emigration on the other. Intellectuals, employees and workers in those countries realise their own responsibility and put their knowledge and their abilities to use even under difficult conditions. It is in this everyday practice, which for many non-privileged remains normality, that solidarity can grow and a process of intensive learning develop which is not solely confined to a detached sphere of intellectual communication.

To roundly exclude such a development for the GDR only betrays an inability to climb off the academic perch. Von Berg’s vantage point distorts his entire perception. The essence of our society is not the idiocy of Marx and a blind faith in him, but the very real social interests of the rulers which are linked with a broad spread of privileges. Resignation, disciplinary measures and



Wolfgang Templin

structural incorporations into the political power bloc must be added to this. The interests and needs underlying all this are rational and calculated: ideology’s task is to legitimise these and endow them with an exalted blessing. The pursuit of material interests and the production of ideological incense are usually well distinguished from one another, and Herr von Berg has been a participant in both for long enough.

Late capitalism

The more belated an insight, the more dramatically it articulates itself. This does little for the substantial issues, as the claims to uninhibited frankness and a popular style degenerate into cheap populism and verbal posturing. Sarcasm and irony turn into easy cynicism. “Charlie Murks (Murks: German for shoddy work, *Transl.*)” and his theory cannot be dismissed as lightly as von Berg does. Not only for Greens and Socialists does the productive discussion of Marx, in which neither the person nor his work are mere objects of uncritical adulation or the extraction of quotes,

remain fundamental. To declare Marx a dead dog and to simultaneously burden him with the responsibility for all the sins of actually existing socialism constitutes a cheap suppression of the responsibility of today's politicians and their advisers. More than anything else, the failure of the much-praised planning and regulation mechanisms and the global dangers of a profit-oriented growth have led even bourgeois thinkers in the highly-developed capitalist countries back to Marx.

Von Berg can only laugh at such "idiocy". As an economist he starts with healthy commonsense and a few simple truths. Where there is production there is a division of labour and long may it continue. This demands the exchange of products and the determination of their exchange values. Prices as expressions of value and the exchange of products as commodities in the market are the immutable foundations of any developed economy. Profit, exploitation and competition are logically inescapable and the issue can only be the amelioration of the wolfish laws and ills of this society through welfare state measures. The upshot of all this is a pure capitalism stripped only of its unfortunately existing and by now deadly potential for crisis and conflict. Von Berg does admit to seeing a threat here, but it does not occur to him to question the fundamental structures. In relation to capitalism he suddenly sees ideology as something positive; the chance of progress, freedom, peace and social justice being derived from the ideals of classical humanism and the community of intellectuals. Here, it would be Marx' and the multinationals' turn to laugh. The majority of those humanist intellectuals were already celebrating the First World War before the hangover and the debtors' bills arrived. However large the share of Soviet great power policies and of Stalin's excesses in the break-up of the international workers' movement may have been, fascism and the catastrophe of World War Two had their roots in late capitalism and not, as von Berg suggests, the megalomania of two psychopaths. From the ruins arose the boom and apparent stability, until Marx became topical yet again in the crisis of the 1970s.

What then are the prospects for a society which overcomes the fundamental economic competition and profit mechanisms without ending up in state-bureaucratic restrictions and new structures

of domination? For von Berg all this is idiocy and phantasy, with Charlie Murks as the negative crown witness. Here he could easily leave Marx alone and declare all those he praises so much — the worker communists, early socialists and social democrats up to Bernstein — to be dangerous idiots. The struggle for social justice as the emancipation of the producers, not as their welfare-state alimentionation, and for the extension of political democracy is the common denominator of Bebel, Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Gramsci. Equally they share a rejection of the social reformist road, of submission and integration into the system.

Repulsive russophobia

Neither economic rationality nor the cultural conquests of civilisation need to be risked in the replacement of competing private interests and calculated egoism with a practice — not pious desire — of cooperation and social solidarity. As far as today's green, alternative and socialist aspirations have a common denominator at all, it is in their thinking and acting in that direction. The military, political and ecological threats emanating from the continued existence and "continuous functioning of the great machinery" are too large to not seize any chance of an alternative.

Von Berg has only contempt for all this and preaches his unbroken faith in the self-cleansing abilities of the market economy and the positive effects of supranational associations. It is on this basis that he then proceeds to recommend the political unification of all friends of progress. It looks, however, as if those would have to be found to the right of the SPD.

Particularly repulsive and odourous is the primitive Russophobia employed to saturation point by von Berg. After Marx, it is the Russians and substitute Russians who are held responsible for all evils. The responsibility of our own bureaucracy beyond its real dependence is briefly recalled and then again suppressed, so that the hurling of curses and pathetic appeals to the reason of the leading comrades are merrily interchangeable. "Germany to the Germans, the Gulag Archipelago to the Russians and all substitute Russians", this slogan is complemented by a demonstrative and utterly empty claim to the great German traditions. Many thanks for such impositions, professor.

In January 1986 some two hundred prominent Belgrade intellectuals signed a petition to the Yugoslav and Serbian national assemblies of an obscurantist, nationalist and anti-democratic character. The petition effectively accuses the authorities of national treason in Kosovo: "Everyone in the country who is not indifferent has long ago realised that the genocide in Kosovo cannot be combatted without deep social changes in the whole country. These changes are unimaginable without changes likewise in the relationship between the Autonomous Provinces and the Republic of Serbia. Genocide cannot be prevented by the gradual surrender of Kosovo and Metohija — to Albania: the unsigned capitulation which leads to politics of treason"

M i c h e l e L e e

THE END OF AN ERA

Quite apart from the absurdity of its charges of genocide, surrender of the Albanian-inhabited areas of Yugoslavia to neighbouring Albania and so on, the petition is remarkable for its failure to relate national tensions in Kosovo to any social or economic causes. Instead, they are viewed as part of a supposed centuries-old feud between Serbs and Albanians — presented, what is more, as a transcendental struggle between good and evil. Evoking

"the right to spiritual identity, to the defence of the foundation of Serb national culture and to physical survival of our nation on its land", the petition demands "decisive measures ... in order to stop the Albanian aggression in Kosovo". The petition then goes on to call for support of the 15 demands raised in another petition, signed a few months earlier by some two thousand Serbs from Kosovo, which sought fundamental alterations to the present political

system and parallel changes in the constitution: notably, doing away with the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, making Serbo-Croat the official language throughout the republic of Serbia, expelling all immigrants from the People's Republic of Albania (claimed to number 200,000 whereas official statistics shows only 2,000) and purging the party of all those who disagree with such policies.¹

Particularly surprising was the fact that the

January petition was signed by three former editors of *Praxis*: Zaga Golubovic, Mihajlo Markovic and Ljuba Tadic — joined subsequently by Milan Kangrga, another well-known former *Praxis* editor, who gave an interview to the Belgrade literary and oppositional journal *Knjizevne novine*, once again overtly anti-Albanian in message.² This unexpected, indeed astonishing, alignment of *Praxis* editors with nationalism has aroused considerable dismay among their friends and sympathisers for it delineates a complete break with the political and philosophical tradition represented by the journal. It is the latest example of the increasing

This process of internal differentiation of the intelligentsia on a national basis goes back to the early 1970s but has accelerated in the 1980s. More complex in origin, it also reflects strains induced by severe contraction of the economy, an increasingly uneven development of the regions, and a considerable loss of morale in the party. The latter's inability to cope, in any but a passive manner, with the elements of real crisis in recent years has particularly affected the generation to which the *Praxis* editors belong. There has been a somewhat disingenuous feeling that the party has betrayed them (most evident in the preoccupations of the novelist Dobrica Cosic, another signatory) and a search for alternative ideological shores. The appearance of *Praxis* signatures on the Kosovo petition, signalling a *de facto* absorption into the nationalist bloc, thus represents not only the final denouement of the *Praxis* venture but also a generational rupture within Yugoslav Marxism. The importance of the petition, however, goes well beyond this. The fact that it was signed by a highly representative section of the Belgrade intelligentsia and professional middle class (including Orthodox priests and retired army officers) suggests the consolidation in the Yugoslav capital of a political gravitational centre outside the party and to its right, promising a rerun of the nationalist upsurge in Croatia in the late 60s — but now in the very different context of the mid-1980s.

The Politics of Realism

To be sure, the country as a whole has up to now suffered from the lack of any but a purely administrative policy (largely ineffective at that) to deal with its accumulated social and economic problems (a dramatic index of which is an inflation rate of close to 100% this year). Faced with apparently intractable economic stagnation, the party leadership is visibly on the defensive. Unsure where to look for allies, it is increasingly inclined to seek "purely" economic solutions, which in practice involves giving greater power to enterprise managements, which in turn means remodelling Yugoslav self-management as it emerged from the social and political battles of the 1960s. The last, 13th, party congress, held in June 1986, has firmly postponed all plans to regenerate the

socialist content of the system until after the end of the economic crisis (!) and has instead ushered in an era of political and economic "realism". Lip service continues to be paid to self-management yet at the same time the new government under Mikulic, soon after it was constituted, introduced a law (an unprecedented and unconstitutional measure) to regulate wages; and right now it is planning to amend the Basic Law of Associated Labour in a manner that will radically curtail workers' rights in the enterprises in favour of those of managers.³ The workers, for their part, having already suffered a cut in living standards probably unsurpassed anywhere in Eastern Europe except in Romania, have resorted to the classical weapon of the strike: the last two years have witnessed a qualitative increase in the number, duration and scope of strikes right across the country. The new law on wages, moreover, gave the increase a strong upward push.

The mid-1980s situation in Yugoslavia thus exhibits many of the features of the mid-60s: economic stagnation, mass unemployment, rising inflation and labour unrest. Each of these trends, however, is more strongly present today than twenty years ago. But whereas in the 1960s the working class found support in a radical student movement — a combination of forces powerful enough to end further planned liberalisation of the economy — this time things are different. Party and non-party intellectuals alike have largely trimmed their reactions to the perceived interests of their own republics or provinces; even those on the left, mesmerised by economic indicators, have largely remained silent in the face of this latest attempt to make workers pay the price for bureaucratic incompetence.

The new climate of "realism" is propitious to opportunistic, ad-hoc decisions. These, not surprisingly, have extended also to the national domain. In this multinational state, official attitudes to the national problem have always had a high degree of visibility and the Belgrade petition has made its own — by no means insignificant — contribution to opportunistic decisions made over the past months regarding national policy on the territory of the republic of Serbia. The Serbian wing of the League of Communists for Yugoslavia, squeezed between its federal responsibilities and the nationalist ferment at its base (though not in the working class: there is little evidence of nationalism among Serbian workers) has for several years now avoided anything but cosmetic changes in the formal relationship between the republic and its provinces laid down in the 1974 constitution — despite considerable pressure to do more. Its recent decision to sail closer to the nationalist wind reflects not only the increased agitation on the issue of Kosovo, but also the incapacity of the LCY as a whole to act as a united party, providing a

commonly agreed alternative. The recent party congress seems to have done little to put a brake on the tendency of the republican and provincial parties to seek separate answers to the problems of "their" regions.

Irrational Passions

Many of the recent decisions of the Serbian government — like, for example, the restriction it has placed on the sale of land and the movement of population in the Kosovo province — are said to be of limited duration only. Others — such as building a factory in a Serb-only village, in a predominantly Albanian province which suffers one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe — can be seen as one-off gestures, acts of desperation. But one recent decision could have more serious implications, for it relates to those sections of the penal code that deal with "hostile intentions against the state". According to reports in the Belgrade press, the Serbian government has now adopted a draft amendment to the republican penal code that would allow acts of common crime (such as theft, damage to property, assault, rape, murder, etc.) to be treated as anti-state activity, in instances where the ethnic origin of the victim differs from that of the perpetrator. There has also been a drive by Serbian representatives urging similar changes in the federal penal code. Juridical experts — such as Ljubo Bavcon from Ljubljana — have publicly remonstrated against this further subjectivisation of the criminal law, pointing to the strong possibility of its "misuse according to momentary political need". Such a change, he has argued, will "unavoidably add fuel to the fire of nationalist and chauvinist conflicts, unnecessarily creating "martyrs" and "heroes", instead of calming irrational passions with common sense, patience, and above all with suitable measures of political, economic and social policy".⁴

The proposed amendment — aimed once again at the Kosovo problem — is in direct conflict with the Yugoslav constitution, which states that citizens are equal before the law irrespective of their ethnic, religious or sexual membership. The adoption of this draft amendment to the Serbian penal code by the republican government suggests that the Serbian party has decided to ride the tiger of "irrational passions" — as it Croatian counterpart did so disastrously at the end of the 1960s. At that time the editors of *Praxis* condemned nationalism in Croatia and elsewhere in the name of an all-Yugoslav vision of democratic socialism. This time, in contrast, some of them have decided to support a political stance that elevates "the destiny of the nation" onto a supreme political and moral imperative: in the petition which they have signed, "socialism" appears not once among its 3,500 words.

Footnotes

1 *Mladina*, Ljubljana, 28.2.1986

2 *Knjizevne novine*, Belgrade, no.700. Kangrga's interview was followed by a lengthy reply from the Kosovo Albanian writer Rexhep Qosja. 4 *Delo*, Ljubljana, 7.6.1986

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Czechoslovak regime has at least one thing in common with the Conservative government in Britain — neurotic anxiety about the moral condition of the younger generation. According to Slovak Education Minister Juraj Busa, students at the country's elementary and secondary schools "succumb to the ideology of pacifism (and) do not understand the complex phenomena of international developments and our international aid to countries struggling for their liberation". Such attitudes, Jan Fojtik, a member of the Communist Party secretariat believes, result from "various influences from the West, the cult of violence and disrespect for social values". He feels that some of the responsibility for this generation of pacifist hooligans may lie at the door of their families, who transmit religious ideologies and whose stability is undermined by a high divorce rate.

Mark Jackson

THE KIDS ARE NOT ALRIGHT

The cause of this concern is twofold. In the first place, the Czechoslovak regime is committed to obtaining its social and economic goals through party-directed mass mobilisation. Personal identification with the regime's ideology is therefore of crucial importance if plans are to be implemented. But young people in Czechoslovakia have no such identification. A study by schoolteachers in Brno revealed that only 4% of the students in secondary vocational schools who were enrolled in the official youth organisation were motivated by political enthusiasm. The vast majority were members on account of the social and career benefits, while the remaining 18% joined because everybody else had.

The second problem is that the ideological deviance of young people has taken the form of a wide range of independent cultural activity, in particular through the creation of an "underground" musical culture capable of

rock concert in Pardubice. "At 7 pm police officer Jan Kasic banned the performance, stating that the group did not have permission to perform. After some argument Kasic stated that while the performance could not continue, those present could stay in the restaurant until closing time (11 pm). Those present agreed to this, behaved in a law-abiding fashion and entertained themselves. At about 10 pm several police officers stormed the room with dogs and proceeded to clear it. When asked the reason for this action the police responded by getting out their truncheons and evicting everyone by force". Six young people received prison sentences — some suspended — of up to fifteen months, on charges arising out of this incident.

It has been anticipated that the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev would herald a lightening of the atmosphere in Czechoslovakia, and the officially-sponsored "Rockfest" held in Prague's Palace of Culture in June 1986

involving eighty bands, some of whom had previously been refused permission to perform, appeared to give evidence of the reality of these hopes. This impression was contradicted, however, by the arrest on September 2nd of seven leading members of the Jazz Section of the Czech Union of Musicians. The Jazz Section has been a thorn in the flesh of the authorities ever since its formation in 1971, when, as a result of a perhaps not entirely accidental oversight, the Section was allowed to affiliate to the Union as a semi-autonomous entity. With some 3,000 full and 2,000 candidate members, the Jazz Section's "internal" bulletin and annual "Jazz Days" festivals provided an official channel for otherwise proscribed cultural activity in the late seventies and early eighties. In 1983 the Union of Musicians disbanded the Jazz Section under official pressure, but it instantly re-formed as the Jazz Section of the Prague branch of the Union. In July 1984 the Ministry of the Interior suspended all activities of the Union of Musicians and threatened to dissolve it unless the Jazz Section was dealt with. In the opinion of the authorities the Section ceased to exist in October 1984. In the opinion of its members, however, it has continued to exist and in reality to function to the best of its ability despite the harassment.

Because of their refusal to accept their liquidation the Section's arrested committee members are now facing charges of illegal commercial activity and illegal publication and distribution of printed material — charges which carry sentences of up to eight years' imprisonment. In the present climate of political uncertainty following the appearance of the new leadership in Moscow and its evident lack of enthusiasm for the present Czechoslovak regime (Gorbachev has not visited Czechoslovakia), the "Committee of Activists of the Jazz Section" which was set up immediately after the arrests may become the rallying point for a wide coalition of forces optimistic of their ability to make the Husak regime retreat over this case.

JAZZOVÁ SEKCE



producing such incidents as a 1000-strong demonstration on the fifth anniversary of the murder of John Lennon at which a declaration against the stationing of nuclear missiles in both West and East Europe was read out.

The authorities have responded to the threat to their monopoly on collective activity with repression. The Charter 77 human rights initiative arose out of a defence effort made for members of the *Plastic People of the Universe* rock band who were put on trial in 1976, while the Committee for the Defence of Those Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) has produced numerous statements outlining cases of repression against young people. They describe one typical incident from 1983, which took place after 100 young people gathered together to listen to a

Dear President Husak,

I/We appeal for the immediate release of Vlastimil Marek, Karel Srp, Josef Skalnik, Tomas Krivanek, Vladimir Kouril, Cestmir Hunat, Milos Drda and Vlastimil Drda, for the return to the Jazz Section of all material confiscated from its premises and for the Jazz Section to be allowed to operate freely and openly as a full member of the Musicians Union of Czechoslovakia.

Yours respectfully

Name

Address



On the 30th anniversary of the revolution, Hungary faces a deep social, political and economic crisis. The days of the "goulash paradise" are over. More than two million Hungarians live below the poverty level, the declining economy is burdened with an eleven billion dollars debt and a restless young generation demands an end to the old taboos.

Sticker by "Inconnu", Budapest

I ♥ 56

G y ö r g y K r a s s ó

A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING BUDAPEST

One of these taboos is the truth about 1956. For three decades, the state has imposed silence about those events, by first using the gallows and prisons, later threats and manipulation. But despite all this the revolution has not been forgotten. Its real aims, the democratic and socialist character of the uprising have been rediscovered by a group of dissidents and older people — surviving participants of 1956 — have started to recall their experiences ever more loudly. Some Communist parties, such as the Italian CP, have modified their evaluation of the character and class content of the Hungarian mass movement of thirty years ago. The suppression of the more peaceful Czech and Polish reform movements has turned attentions again to the real possibility of revolutions in the Eastern part of Central Europe. In recent years even some high-ranking Hungarian officials have vaguely attempted to give a new and more sophisticated interpretation of 1956, but were foiled in their cautious revisionism by the hard-liners.

Nervous authorities

During the period leading up to this year's anniversary, a number of dissidents were summoned to the police and threatened with jail and other repressive measures. A few ex-prisoners, surviving participants of the revolution, were offered treatment in exclusive sanatoriums and at least one young man — László Rusai — was confined to a mental

hospital. Armed police forces were concentrated in Budapest and even people wearing cockades or rosettes in their buttonholes were arrested and taken to police stations. The personal documents of anybody trying to approach Plot 301 of the Rákoskeresztúr cemetery, where the unmarked graves of those executed are to be found, were examined. Foreigners entering or leaving the country were subject to unusually severe checks, their books, manuscripts, tapes and even plain papers, envelopes, address books and private letters being confiscated. Programmes about the crimes and atrocities allegedly committed by the "counter-revolutionaries" were broadcast by radio and TV stations and new propaganda books with the same old contents appeared. In punishment for writing about 1956, the cultural authorities silenced István Csurka whose works will not now be published, and banned the monthly literary journal *Tiszatáj*.

The foreign journalists and TV reporters coming to see spectacular mass meetings or demonstrations of the opposition did not find any because no such events had been planned. There was, however, the appeal by 122 dissidents from four East European countries — later joined by three Rumanians — declaring "the tradition and the experience of the Hungarian revolution of 1956...our common heritage and inspiration" (see the full text in this issue of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*).

Commemorations

New issues of the samizdat journals *Beszélő* (The Talker), *A hirmondó* (The Messenger) and *Demokrata* (The Democrat) were published and distributed in more than a thousand copies each, dedicated to the events and victims of the revolution.

On the evening of October 23 an illegal commemoration was held in a private flat, even though the tenant, Jenő Nagy, had been threatened by the police with eviction from Budapest if the meeting was to go ahead. The first speaker was Sándor Rácz, President of the Central Workers' Council in 1956, who had served a life sentence from 1957 until his release in 1963. The audience also listened to the first parts of a tape-recorded commemoration series consisting of speeches by 48 persons (which will be reviewed in the next issue of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*).

János Kádár may have kept his place as General Secretary of the Hungarian CP, but the Kadarist era is coming to an end. The terms of the social contract between the state power and the people can no longer be maintained. In the party leadership, at least seven pretenders are vying for Kádár's throne. But irrespective of whether the "hard-liners" or the "reformists" win the succession, one thing is sure: they will have to confront the spectre of the workers' revolution which is once again haunting the battle-scarred streets of Budapest.

Advertisement

THE FIGHTING CITY

Inconnu, an independent art group, and Arteria, a samizdat publisher in Hungary, are sponsoring a fine arts competition to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The theme of the competition is: The Fighting City. Art works (no dimensional limits) can be submitted in person, or sent by registered mail. They may bear the real or working name of the artist. The art works — photographs, paintings, graphics, mail, montage, collage, etc. — will be judged by a special jury. First prize is 5,000 forints. Art works will be documented and exhibited. An album of the exhibition will be published by ABC-Arteria.

Deadline is September 30, 1986. Entries should be mailed or submitted in person to one of the following addresses:

Peter Bokros. Izabella 92/II.17/a. Budapest, 1067. Hungary. Tamás Molnar. Lajos 142/7em. 39. Budapest, 1036. Hungary. Jenő Nagy. Kalaszi ut 48. Budapest, 1039. Hungary. Robert Palinkas. Paták 8. Pilisborosjeno, 2079. Hungary. Sándor Szilagyi. Danko 38/III. 32. Budapest, 1086. Hungary.

Announcement 1. The members of the "Inconnu" group were summoned to the police station on September 26th 1986. There they were told that they would be banned from Budapest if they were to go ahead with the exhibition, scheduled

to open in October. 2. There is reason to suppose that some of the artworks sent through the post were never delivered by orders of the authorities. 3. The only artworks received from abroad by the stated closure date for the competition were the following: Jessica Gwynne, London, GB; Judith Roberts, Oxford, GB; Glenn Helm, Arizona, USA; N. Rubington, New York, USA; Sophie Rivera, New York, USA; Stephen O'Harrow, Honolulu. Under the circumstances, 1. We have extended the closure date for entries to the competition till November 30th 1986. 2. We would like to ask everyone who entered a piece of work, but whose name does not appear on the above list, to make an official complaint to

the Hungarian Embassy in his or her country. 3. Any new works should not be posted, but rather sent by hand through personal contacts to our published addresses. 4. Any new competitors and anyone whose artwork has not been delivered to us, should notify the following person: G. Krassó, "Hungarian October" Cultural and Information Centre, 24D Little Russell Street, London WC1 Tel. (441) 430 2126. 5. All artworks sent to us will be recorded, exhibited and will be included in the catalogue. 6. The works from the competition will be handed over to SZETA, the Foundation for the Poor, to be auctioned, and the money from this will be used for the benefit of the poor in Hungary.

Christian Schmidt-Häuer, *Gorbachev. The Path to Power* Pan Books 1986
 Zhores Medvedev, *Gorbachev* Basil Blackwell 1986.

REFORM IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

by Oliver Macdonald

One reason why the argument over Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist credentials can never be resolved is because the protagonists in the debate want quite different kinds of reform within the Soviet Union. For Reaganite ideologues, the only genuine reformer is someone who is ready to dismantle the Soviet system. They therefore warn us not to be charmed by Gorbachev because behind the pretty face there lies a Communist. They are obviously right. Gorbachev is not willing to give capitalism a "window of opportunity" in the Soviet economy.

Zhores Medvedev, whose "Gorbachev" remains by far the best book on the Soviet General Secretary, is also very sceptical about claims that Gorbachev can be seen as a reformer, but for him this title applies to reform communists, leaders ready to try to combine a socialised economic system and Communist Party rule with some degree of political liberty, if not democracy. Dr. Medvedev demonstrates that there is nothing in Gorbachev's record up to the spring of 1986 to suggest that he is ready to take that path at the present time.

The German journalist Christian Schmidt-Häuer — Moscow correspondent of the liberal weekly *Die Zeit* — on the other hand, presents Gorbachev as very much a dynamic reformer. Yet his assessment of Gorbachev's trajectory differs very little from those of either Dr. Medvedev or the Reaganite ideologues. His disagreement lies in what he himself wants.

Useful background

Schmidt-Häuer realises that Gorbachev's over-riding concern is to rejuvenate the Soviet economy. To achieve this, the Soviet leader desires a revived détente with the West, based on sweeping arms control agreements. He then wants major economic and technological exchanges with the capitalist world, not least with West Germany. This, for Schmidt-Häuer and for many middle-of-the-road West German liberals, makes Gorbachev a very attractive reformer and from his angle he is certainly right. Schmidt-Häuer would like the West to strike the bargain Gorbachev is offering, thus helping Gorbachev to modernise the Soviet economy without major structural changes while achieving a more secure relationship between East and West (it may not be completely irrelevant here to point out that the editor-in-chief of *Die Zeit* is the former social-democratic West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt).

Schmidt-Häuer's book provides useful background both on Gorbachev's career and

on the most recent events in Soviet politics. It also has a useful appendix on some of the other main leaders and advisers in the new Soviet leadership. But his perspective on the last ten years of Gorbachev's career is both cruder and shallower than Medvedev's treatment. Thus he asks us to believe that since the early 1970s in Stavropol Gorbachev has been committed to a particular programme for agricultural reform involving decentralisation of decision-making and of work units. He then explains the switch Gorbachev led in an opposite direction in 1977 as an example of his tactical realism in the face of Politbureau conservatism. Since Gorbachev's record in agriculture provides the main clue to his political inclinations, incidents such as this are important. Yet Medvedev's treatment of this and other incidents in the agricultural field is far more detailed and convincing. He shows how the use of concentrations of heavy combine harvesters in the Ipatavo area of Stavropol in 1977 made sense for that type of land and was not necessarily in conflict with other decentralised work arrangements being pursued in Stavropol *krai*. And he also presents Gorbachev not as the leader of some tendency with a definite long-term programme up his sleeve, but as a very skilful professional politician, operating pragmatically within the orthodox codes of the CPSU. Schmidt-Häuer's implicit assumption that from 1978 to 1984 Gorbachev had a definite conception of what Soviet agriculture needed and was prepared to implement an entirely contrary plan offers us an amalgam of radicalism mixed with Machiavellian cynicism which is hard to credit.

Divisions

The second weakness in Schmidt-Häuer's account is his unargued assumption that the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev is strongly united on policy. He presents Ligachev, Ryzhkov, and Chebrikov as Gorbachev's followers (page 132) and thus suggests that Gorbachev has a fairly free hand within the top leadership for pursuing his plans. Resistance, on this view, would come only from the middle levels of the bureaucracy. There are strong general grounds for doubting this view. As Dr. Medvedev reminds us, the Soviet élite has long ago clipped the powers of the General Secretary. If the Politbureau has more power than the British Cabinet, its General Secretary has very much less power within it than Thatcher

has within her Cabinet. People like Ligachev are very powerful figures in their own right. Secondly, there is evidently a very deep division on major issues of policy — we might rather say basic programme — within the broad Soviet leadership today. A glance at the speeches of Gorbachev himself or at the discussion before the 27th Party Congress makes that perfectly clear. Since these debates continue, is it likely that one side has taken complete control over the Politbureau?

For the CIA and the Foreign Offices of the capitalist world, the obsessive question is, of course, to grasp the precise line-up within the Politbureau at any moment in order to exploit divisions. A large industry of Sovietologists earn a good living supplying their penny-worth on such issues. But for the left in the West, the much more important issue is the character of the wider debate within the upper reaches of the Communist Party and the broader dynamics of socio-political conflict within the Soviet Union. Schmidt-Häuer has little sensitivity to trends of opinion within the Soviet Communist Party and to the inner workings of the political system. He makes up for this lack with a great deal of irritating trivia about Gorbachev's facial movements at press conferences. Medvedev is the indispensable source for grasping the psychology and modes of operation of the Soviet leadership. And his portrait of Gorbachev as a very talented product of orthodox Soviet Communism determined to modernise but without any adequate programme of reform rings true.

At present Gorbachev is seeking to demonstrate that he is on the side of those within the CPSU who have been advancing ideas for a qualitative break with the past: he is directing all his fire at the conservatives resisting domestic change. Yet at the same time Gorbachev himself has put forward no plan for any serious remodelling of the system — only piecemeal, incremental domestic changes. In style he is leading from the front, but in the substance of policy he is not. Medvedev's stress on this last point is an important antedote to wishful thinking about Gorbachev on the left. Yet his picture of Gorbachev as a bright, pragmatic professional politician who may be more responsive to pressures from below than the Brezhnev leadership leaves open the possibility that the insufficiency of his present programme may push him to more far-reaching changes. Is this too much to hope for?

Donald Filtzer
Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization. The formation of modern soviet production relations 1928-1941 Pluto Press, £25.

The transformation of Soviet society by the Stalinist elite from 1928 to 1941 — the years of the first three five-year plans — was as momentous as it was brutal” says Donald Filtzer in the introduction of his book on Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialisation. Although he does not convey the whole grandeur and horror of the “great change”, he gives a unique analysis of the process by which Stalinist Russia was whipped into modernity, from a backward semi-Asiatic country into a second industrial power of the world.

Filtzer amasses an impressive wealth of illustrative material which he derived from a survey of nearly two hundred industrial, mining, construction, and transport enterprises, all listed conveniently in the index. His method of building a general picture on the basis of a mass — an astonishing mass — of details has its dangers, yet he is so much in command of his material that although we see all the trees and even small shrubs, we never lose sight of the whole extensive forest. In Filtzer's image the individual worker, his behaviour at the bench, his fears and dilemmas, is seen as clearly as is his background — the whole countrywide process of industrialisation.

In one of the most interesting chapters, on the “Control over the Labour Process”, Filtzer gives an insight into the unimaginably haphazard and chaotic way in which the Soviet enterprises were run in the late 1920s and 1930s. “When the new shift came on, work on the mill did not begin for 20 minutes; after working an hour ... the mill stopped for ten minutes for a smoke; then went on for only 20 minutes when it was stopped for 10 minutes for repair; after working five minutes more the mill halted for 10 minutes to clear away the materials...” and so on and so on: “out of 6 hours work, the mill had worked 2 hours and 40 minutes”. This is one of the numerous examples cited by Filtzer. The proportion of “dead time”, that is time wasted or lost to stoppages to time used productively was absolutely staggering.

Lucidly, and without simplifying matters, Filtzer illustrates the whole tangled web of circumstances which conspired to make the Soviet process of industrialisation (and the process of “primitive socialist accumulation”) so tragically

complicated and costly. Yes, bureaucracy played its nefarious role. But how and why did the monster of Soviet bureaucracy grow to such frightful proportions? Filtzer's study shows to what extent this monster was rooted in Russia's primitive conditions, how it fed on the atomised working class, and then in turn impeded its cohesion and development as a class-for-itself which might have threatened the bureaucracy's domination. There was the “negative cultural inheritance”; Russia's abysmal poverty; the general demoralisation of society emerging from the civil war; the cruel rapidity with which peasants had to be transformed into urban factory workers.

At the factory there was no proper equipment, no tools or repair shops, faulty materials; the workers' canteen had 15 spoons for 900 customers; there were queues everywhere, even at the lavatories. On the shop floor the worker wasted his energy on scouring the factory for supplies or tools. No wonder he had no qualms in taking time off, for a smoke, for reading the paper, or as some reports said, for “roaming about”, or just sleeping. In such conditions the productivity of even the best workforce would have been minimal.

The “roaming about” and the general sloppy attitude to work was also the way in which the worker defends himself against the labour discipline imposed from above, against speed ups, the raising of norms and, especially, against Stakhanovite methods. And he had to defend himself as an individual — as a class the workforce had no means to defend itself through any class organisation, through any trade union which would represent its interest vis-à-vis the employer. “The Bolsheviks”, remarks Filtzer “... had failed to persuade the rank and file workforce that they could afford to surrender the defensive measures developed to protect themselves under capitalism”. Of course, in such circumstances there was no possibility of creating any work ethics. The lax use of working time, the general slackness at the shopfloor, says Filtzer became a “permanent characteristic of Soviet production”.

Filtzer's rich factual material throws a revealing light on the origins of many of the persistent ills of the Soviet economy; it is a highly informative contribution to the understanding of the difficulties which still beset Gorbachev and his team of “modernisers” whose avowed ambition is to take (not to whip!) the USSR into the twenty-

first century. Filtzer's analysis also helps to understand the present day Soviet workforce in the light of its formation and development.

Filtzer's is a Marxist analysis; for the benefit of readers who like labels, one should perhaps add that he effectively demolishes the concept of the Soviet Union as a “state capitalism” regime; nor does he believe that the USSR has, after all, “managed to preserve some of its socialist origins and nurtures beneath its brutal exterior an inherently progressive essence”. What our author fails to explain is how from all this horrendous muddle, inefficiency, ineptitude and chaos there emerged, within less than two decades, a power strong enough to defeat the best organised military machine of Europe. Maybe the “socialist origins” and the remnants of the “progressive essence” provide an answer? This is an interpretation which Filtzer cannot possibly accept. These views will provoke controversy which should not, however, blind readers to the real merits of his work.

This is an important book and should soon go into a cheaper edition from which the printing mistakes and annoying muddle with reference notes have been eliminated.

Tamara Deutscher

Craig ZumBrunnen and Jeffrey P. Osleeb

The Soviet Iron and Steel Industry Croom Helm, £25.

Steel production was always used as an example of the success of the early plan era. But today the industry is languishing and the subject of widespread rebuke and criticism. One of Gorbachev's early moves was to replace the old Minister of Ferrous Metallurgy and it is easy to see why. From the end of the second world war the industry expanded at over 6% per year, then growth dropped to 5.4% per year for the period 1970-75. But since then crude steel output has grown at less than one percent per year and the last five year plan was 8% under target or some 14 million tons of steel.

It is tempting to explain the industry's problems in terms of the familiar litany of Soviet complaints about bureaucracy, ‘red tape and foot dragging’ and fire has especially been directed at the stagnant Ukrainian industry which produces over half the ore and a third of the steel output. But the iron and steel industry even more illustrates the

way in which the Soviet leadership is imprisoned by structural constraints both on the demand and supply sides.

ZumBrunnen and Osleeb's book is primarily concerned with supply constraints. Despite the wealth of resources in the Soviet Union their distribution makes it a relatively poor country. In the early nineteenth century it could take two years to bring iron to St. Petersburg from the Urals along shallow rivers which were navigable only in the spring floods. Now the transport system is more efficient but to connect the fuel to the ore and the steel to its markets requires longer hauls than in most countries and the industry is continually being pulled eastwards.

ZumBrunnen and Osleeb attempt to build a theoretical model of the Soviet industry using the technique known as linear programming. This is a sophisticated technique which allows them to estimate the type of optimal structure that would minimise costs. They describe their book as inhabiting ‘the rigorous, but often visionary, realm of mathematical planning’ and this will deter most readers of this journal though the idea of linear programming is quite simple and forms a part of modern maths courses in schools.

But their model building is not completely without interest for general readers. For one thing they use Soviet data. While this will draw fire from sceptics it does allow us to see things as the Soviet leadership might see it. In these terms, if I interpret their results correctly, they are less pessimistic than some western accounts though they do identify a number of bottlenecks. This raises the question of the value of such planning exercises. The authors note that they have their Soviet counterparts building their own models. Soviet work of this type is often ridiculed in the west because of the sharp contrast between its mathematical sophistication and the crude methods used in real planning. But caution is necessary here for in the west too we know that there is often a huge gap between the available techniques to help maximise profits and the rules of thumb actually used. In both instances it may be more important to understand how and why the drives to minimise costs and maximise surpluses produce these efforts rather than to focus on their admitted deficiencies.

Mike Haynes

BOOK BRIEFINGS

Julia Voznesenskaya
The Women's Decameron Quartet
Books, £9.95.

I started this book with enthusiasm but ended, unfortunately, with a sigh of relief. As a novel it doesn't develop and is ultimately dull. The story cycle format becomes relentless — ten days have to pass on this Soviet maternity ward, ten women have to speak and they do, one by one. It never takes off and overtakes itself. Individual stories are sharp, often amusing, occasionally very moving, but the collection acquires no energy of its own. It lacks emotional depth — although emotion is endlessly under discussion — and the writing itself is faulty and rather stilted, although this could of course be partly the fault of the translation.

As a social document too, *The Women's Decameron* is disappointing. It does tell us about the paucity of child benefit and women's pensions, the lack of lipstick and plastic pants, about the queues and the drudgery, but I felt I learned more about the texture of women's lives in the Soviet Union from books like *Moscow Women*. These moral tales seem to 'make points' spelled out for Western consumption (Julia Voznesenskaya is now writing in exile) but they remain somehow thin and superficial.

She is at her best and most illuminating writing about dissidents, the artistic avantgarde and prison life — not surprisingly all things of which she has personal experience. There is one very touching story about a woman prisoner who supports the Decembrist slogan 'For an hour of freedom I would give my life'. A uniquely sympathetic prison guard lets her escape for an hour — she buries her face in the flowers of the forest... One of many variations on the theme of the potential heroism of femininity has a cowardly typist for the opposition forced to appear in court. She wears her most beautiful velvet evening dress, impresses the dissident she loves and implicates no one. Later she explains: 'How could I possibly lose my dignity wearing a dress like that?' Sometimes, though, all this slips over the edge into sentimentality, as in a concluding story about keeping a basket of little happinesses, special moments like blessings to be counted.

Like the *Decameron* on which it is modelled (which, amazingly, nearly all ten cross-section Soviet citizens say they have read!) or *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Women's Decameron* is bawdy, and has some frank sexual writing rare for the Soviet Union. It also matter-of-factly acknowledges male violence and

rape, though I still felt it didn't really take rape seriously. Julia Voznesenskaya is a feminist, but not in any familiar Western sense. Yet it's that, plus her persistent digs at the system, which make the book of interest to us, and I presume, to any women who manage to get hold of it back in the USSR.

Jill Nicholls

Anna Paczuska (illustrated by Sophie Grillet)
Socialism for Beginners Writers & Readers/Unwin Paperback, £3.95.

Marx and Engels, says Anna Paczuska, wrote so prolifically about so many aspects of socialism that it is difficult to summarise their ideas. How much more difficult then to explain in words and drawings the whole history of people's struggle from Spartacus' slave revolt to the Nicaraguan election. And for young people, at that. This latest in the series of *Beginners* comic books is a triumph of lucidity and wit. It has the advantage of being produced by two women who make it their business to rehabilitate the central role of women in many working class movements of protests. It is good to see Harriet Tubman, Eleonor Marx, Les Petroleuse of the Paris Commune and the textile workers of Petrograd given their due. Indeed, corrective feminism runs through the whole work, as well as a conscious anti-racism in the drawings that have blacks in ordinary roles not simply because they are black. There is a clever juxtaposition of events spanning centuries with Thatcher and Reagan appearing with the 1848 revolutions and a punk group becomes the voice of the French Revolution. Grillet's drawings, familiar to readers of the London *Guardian*, are generally a simple delight full of wry surprises. But in parts the enormity of the event seems to deaden her hand. The pages on the Russian Revolution lack her normal light finesse. Here speaks the weighty agitprop poster at odds with her otherwise light irreverence. Old Karl Marx, however, is a treat; a benign, rather puckish grandad.

David Pallister

Janina Bauman
Winter in the Morning. A Young Girl's Life in the Warsaw Ghetto and Beyond Virago, £8.95

You might assume from the title and the subject matter that this is a depressing story. You would be wrong. The facts are grim, but the book itself, unexpectedly, is full of optimism. Instead of leaving you

with a raging hatred for the Nazis and the bigots who allowed them to rise to power, this book gives a powerful impression of human strength in the daily, sometimes mundane, struggles to resist.

Janina Bauman was thirteen the year war was declared. Until then her life had been uncomplicated. She had led a privileged existence, sheltered from the worst aspects of anti-semitism by the life-style of a wealthy Jewish family in Warsaw.

In 1939 her father was called up. She never saw him again. Soon afterwards Janina, her mother and sister were forced to leave their spacious apartment and move to share a small rundown flat in the ghetto. The experience was undoubtedly traumatic, but enormous events are difficult to digest. Typically Janina recalls not simply fear and consternation, but excitement and curiosity about her surroundings. She also tells how she, in common with many others, felt safer crowded into the ghetto, than they had done outside. She recorded these feelings in her diaries which she later hid under the floorboards of one of the houses which sheltered her. Miraculously the diaries survived the war. She collected them and extracts from them are quoted in the book.

Life inside the ghetto had horrors which have been described by many writers: raids, brutal questionings, beatings, deportations, killings. The scale of these is difficult to comprehend and Janina has not opted to describe them again. Instead she has used stark facts and statistics, extracted from the Encyclopaedia Judaica, which are included at the beginnings of her chapters. She herself concentrates on the reactions and behaviour of the people around her, on feelings and emotions. Yet her observations are not marshalled into a political argument or a moralistic tirade. She presents events as they occurred, with acceptance, and that is what gives this book its great strength.

It has become fashionable to write of events in Poland 1939-45 in a self-consciously biased way to make points about the anti-semitism of the Poles, the mistakes of the left or the treachery of supposed allies. These interpretations are necessary, but they don't tell the whole story.

Janina Bauman gives us a complete picture. In telling us about all the people who helped her family escape from the ghetto she gives a human aspects to the politics. Some people refused to help them because they didn't like Jews. Some helped for love, some for politics and some for money. Even those who did it for money gave different value.

Most of the people who helped were women — of different ages,

types and inclinations, their reasons for helping "as varied as their characters". Their story, and Janina's, is a memorable one. It tells of the hardest struggle of all: the struggle to remain human in inhuman conditions!

It took Janina Bauman forty years before she felt able to write this book. I'm glad she did it at last. It is beautifully and simply written and makes you optimistic and hopeful about human beings.

Anna Paczuska

Zhores Medvedev
Gorbachev Basil Blackwell, £15

Margaret Thatcher says she can do business with him. Denis Healey says of him: "Emotions flicker over a face of unusual sensitivity like summer breezes on a pond". The entire Western press hail the new general secretary of the Russian Communist Party (and therefore the acknowledged leader of Great Russia) as something entirely different.

Zhores Medvedev goes along with quite a lot of this. On page 206 of his new biography of Mikhail Gorbachev he writes: "It seems clear that the new administration will be better than the old". More dramatically, he writes on page 243: "It is now obvious that a distinctively new era in Soviet history has begun".

For these conclusions there is not a shred of evidence in Zhores Medvedev's book. At no stage in Gorbachev's career is there the slightest sign of unorthodoxy or of bucking the bureaucracy. His actions and his words were all echoes of others. Like the former Labour Prime Minister of Britain, Harold Wilson, he simulated a fascination for science and technology without any real knowledge of it. His degree is in law, that is Russian law, which does not recognise the right of defence for those accused. Nor is Gorbachev the administrative genius which so many pretend he is. He was responsible perhaps more than any other Politbureau member for the public relations and administrative disaster which the Russian government managed to make of what should have been the opposite: the KAL 007 affair. Since he took over the leadership of the party in 1985, all his reforms are, to use Zhores Medvedev's word, "cosmetic". He still believes fervently in the "command economy". His promotions to the Politbureau have been cautious and conservative. He is committed, at least partially, to the dreadful war in Afghanistan. Even his crusade against alcoholism looks like backfiring as the revenues from one

of Russia's most lucrative consumer industries dry up. Nor is there any proof that he is a "challenger". On the contrary, his record is one of sycophancy even beyond the call of duty. In May 1978, when still a *kraikon* secretary, he wrote a tribute to the then general secretary of the Party. It ended with the memorable passage:

"Communists and all the workers of Stavropol are boundlessly grateful to Leonid Brezhnev for this truly party-spirited, literary work in which the sources of the great feat of our heroic nation, its spiritual and moral strength, its steadfastness and courage are depicted with deep philosophical penetration".

The book thus flattered, as Zhores Medvedev can tell us from his own personal experience, was about an unsuccessful attempt to capture Novosibirsk in 1943; at worst a pathetic failure, at best a minor, best-forgotten episode in the war. Flattery of this kind, Zhores Medvedev concludes, shows us just how "empty, degraded and corrupt" the Russian bureaucracy has become.

Gorbachev shines not because of his record or because of anything he has said or done, but in contrast to his predecessors, the ancient fossils of the atrophied bureaucracy, Brezhnev, Andropov and (by far the worst) Chernenko. After these, anyone in his fifties who could hold a conversation and raise his hand at a May Day parade seemed like a God. Gorbachev *did* break from some of the more disgusting forms of privilege and pageantry adopted by his predecessors. He walked the streets, toured the factories, even ate with other workers at the Kremlin. But the *content* of what he represents is the same dreary formula which got him to the top in the first place.

I cannot recommend this book for holiday reading. It is, I'm sorry to say, boring. This is not Zhores Medvedev's fault, since his subject is boring, sometimes excruciatingly so. What is specially sad about the book, however, is that Zhores Medvedev seems to have written it more with an eye to the professional Western Sovietologist than to the ordinary reader who wants to know what is going on in Russia, and, above all, what Zhores Medvedev thinks about it. I have always admired the Medvedev brothers because they have criticised the Russian regime not as Cold Warriors but as socialists with a clear view of what the Russian Revolution was about, and how it has been betrayed.

There is far too little of this in this book. Often when you are almost asleep and least expecting them, there are flashes of the old sardonic analysis, as when Medvedev argues

that a "new class" of inherited wealth and privilege, not too clear before the 1970s, became as clear as daylight after Brezhnev's new decrees on the subject; or when he calls the Russian parliament (which meets for four days in the year) "the most democratic in the world"; or, in a brilliant passage, when he contrasts the pomp and circumstance of a Russian celebration in Ethiopia with the appalling poverty of most of that country's people. The old socialist is there, still, but he is gradually being extinguished in the glare of publicity which any articulate Russian dissident attracts in the West. The book, in short, may be very interesting for the academics who follow every twist and turn in the Kremlin for their Cold War masters — but it is thin gruel for socialists who need to know more about the Russian rulers and the Russian working class (indeed, I think I am right in saying that the Russian working class is *never mentioned*, not even by inference).

Perhaps this explains the contradiction which dominates the book — the exposee of Gorbachev as another ghastly conservative on the one hand, and the "hope" that he ushers in "a new era" on the other. "Hope", writes Zhores Medvedev, is the "only one freely available commodity" which the "Soviet public" can rely on. That sounds more like despair to me: the cry of a man who has lost his faith in the power of human beings to change society, and hopes therefore that the changes may come from above, by "hoping" a little more forcefully perhaps, or by being better informed by rather dull biographies.

Paul Foot

Isaac Deutscher
**Marxism, Wars and Revolutions:
Essays from Four Decades** Verso,
£6.95.

These essays are very representative of Deutscher's writing: he was steeped in Marxist culture but often of a rather conservative frame of mind. The reader can find the most passionate denunciations of Stalinism side by side with a 'realism' which hostile commentators have seen as offering a grudging justification to the Stalinist system. The reader is struck by a sense of reading the thoughts of some last survivor of a lost civilisation (classical Marxism) at the same time as being impressed at how fresh these essays are, how little they have dated and how relevant they are to our contemporary concerns. Some of these apparent paradoxes

flow from the object of Deutscher's enquiry — the Stalinist system — and its profoundly contradictory nature: at the same time the consummation and the negation of the Russian revolution, but some of the difficulties stem from Deutscher's own standpoint. The very factors that account for the high quality of these essays — the erudite historical knowledge, the classical Marxist culture that permeates Deutscher's work — also account for the mistakes and misjudgements that sometimes appear.

'Historical analogy', writes Deutscher in *Two Revolutions* (p. 34) 'by itself is, of course, only one of the many angles from which he (the historian) ought to approach his subject; and it may be downright misleading if he merely contents himself with assembling the points of formal resemblance between historical situations'. How truly Deutscher spoke there, but also how apt a comment on some of his own writing. Leaving to one side the validity of the analogy between Stalin and Cromwell or Napoleon which Deutscher pursues in *Reflections on the Russian Problem* and *Two Revolutions*, we can see how the search for historical parallels for contemporary events plays him false in his *Dialogue with Heinrich Brandler*. This exchange is itself an enormously important and revealing document, providing a real insight into the early days of German communism and the Comintern from the perspective of an insider who was neither crushed by Stalinism nor succumbed to the siren calls of the cold war establishment. The substantive point of disagreement between Brandler and Deutscher is over what attitude to take to the June 1953 events in Berlin. Deutscher sympathised with the aspirations of the East Berlin workers but felt that their actions simply played into the hands of reactionary forces in the West and impeded a spontaneous trend towards the 'socialist democratisation of the regime' that had been gathering force since the death of Stalin. Deutscher compared the actions of the East Berlin workers to the revolt of the German bourgeoisie and peasants against Napoleon: humanly understandable but politically deplorable. Brandler's attitude was profoundly different, he saw the rising as aiming to 'carry through the plans for the economic and political construction of the Soviet Zone in a manner consonant with the interests of the workers' (p. 150). Brandler's forward-oriented political and strategic attitude contrasts sharply with Deutscher's 'realistic' powerlessness before the accomplished facts of the post-war social order.

In justice to Deutscher, it would be wrong to overlook some other, positive, consequences of his outlook. Deutscher's insistence on looking on the present as history immunised him against the political errors of many of those who left the communist movement. While *The Moscow Trial*, *The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party* and *An Open Letter to Wladyslaw Gomulka* reveal the force of Deutscher's anger against the crimes of Stalinism, he never allowed the nature of those crimes to rush him into making a premature judgement on the nature of the Soviet social system. For this reason, the essays here are wholly free of the hypocrisy and self-justification that Deutscher dissects in *The Ex-Communist's Conscience*.

Conversation with Trygve Lie is the record of Deutscher's meeting with the former Secretary-General of the United Nations who had been Minister of Justice in the Norwegian Labour Government that had given asylum to Trotsky in 1935 before

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The "HUNGARIAN OCTOBER" Freepress (Budapest) continues its activities in London. Its publications are writings and graphics about Hungary's past and present life, primarily about the true history of the revolution; they are banned and persecuted in Hungary.

Publications:

- COMMEMORATIONS OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION (in Hungary, 1986)
- LAJOS SZALAY: THE HUNGARIAN TRAGEDY (Graphics)
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- THE VOICE OF THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION (The history of the revolution — Original radio broadcastings from 1956 — Poems of Gyula Illyés and György Petri — 90 minutes tape-record cassette)
- IRODALMI UJSÁG (Literary Gazette), 2nd November, 1956 (facsimile)
- NÉPSZABADSÁG, 2nd November, 1956 (facsimile)

Samizdat publications of the Hungarian democratic opposition can be ordered.

Information: György Krassó 24D Little Russell St. London WC1 Tel. 01-430 2126

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expelling him in 1937. Lie recounts how he harrassed and then expelled Trotsky, not sure whether to be proud of his actions or not. 'Altogether a flea boasting that it once buzzed in the nostril of a lion, and even stung the lion' (p. 170) is Deutscher's acid comment on this morally pathetic individual.

Reprinted in Part IV of the book are two relatively well-known essays on China: *Maoism - Its Origins and Outlook* and *The Meaning of the Cultural Revolution*. Deutscher analyses the distinctive roots of Chinese communism which sprang not from a vital Marxist tradition but directly from the experience of the early Comintern. He looks at the peculiarities and contradictions of Chinese communism, a genuine popular revolution led by a party with a novel strategy but also with close affinities with Stalinism. He highlights the contrast between Maoism's ultra-radicalism and the backwardness of Chinese society. It is greatly to Deutscher's credit that he refused either to succumb to the appeal of Maoism or to dismiss it as simply a variant of Stalinism and this intellectual independence was to stand him in good stead when so many Western radicals were seduced by the 'cultural revolution' that was deeply hostile to culture.

The collection concludes with a series of essays and lectures on different aspects of Marxism: *The Roots of Bureaucracy*, *Marxism in Our Time*, *Violence and Non-Violence* and *On Socialist Man*. Of these, the most significant for an understanding of Deutscher's thought is *Marxism in Our Time*. Deutscher reveals that Marxism had become a habit of thought for him, which he could not rid himself of. This provides a clue both to Deutscher's greatness and his weakness. His Marxist culture enabled him to attain a macro perspective on the events of this century, but he was not the sort of Marxist who worries over and constantly reexamines the details of Marxist theory itself. This qualified him to be a figure of great stature among Marxists, but meant that he could not be a great innovator.

In *The Cold War in Perspective* Deutscher wrote that 'in our time class struggle has sunk in a bloody morass of power politics.' To be sure he expressed the hope that this would change and even detected signs of enlightenment among the Soviet and American peoples, but he nevertheless gives the impression that we must wait. We must wait for the cunning of reason once again to place the working class at the centre of the historical drama. In the meantime the crucial tasks are those of interpretation and understanding. A realistic attitude towards the facts

of a political period is no doubt necessary if socialists are to act effectively, the trouble is, however, that such a cast of mind may contrast sharply with the purposiveness that is required in the revolutionary.

Julian Sorrell

Roger Woods
Opposition in the GDR under Honecker 1971-85 Macmillan 1986, £27.50

In contrast to its neighbours Poland and Czechoslovakia, East Germany's recent history has not been marked by convulsive crises: to the casual observer, at least, it appears downright boring and uneventful since the workers' revolt of 1953. Not surprisingly therefore, the few reasonable books available on the GDR in the English language ("reasonable" excluding the various hysterical Cold War tracts and travelogues of the "There is another Germany" variety) have presented a rather static picture of relative prosperity, social security and depoliticised conformity, with opposition and dissent hardly getting a mention. Wood's book is therefore a true first as literally the only book in English (even in German there are only a small handful) exclusively concerned with those who find themselves in conflict with party and state in the GDR.

And very competently done it is too: a brief (57 pages plus extensive footnotes) introduction setting the scene, followed by forty-three documents covering most aspects of opposition and dissent during the period under discussion, a chronology of events (too brief) and a quite thorough bibliography. I found the introduction somewhat eclectic and the choice of documents too heavily weighed in favour of the literary scene (surely reflecting the dominance of literature in Anglo-American academic German Studies), but anybody could quibble with any such selection and the book's value to those without a reading knowledge of German is by no means affected by this.

Talking of value, however, it is impossible to suppress one's outrage at the ridiculous price of £27.50 for 257 pages, albeit under hard cover. You will therefore probably not buy this book and hope to find it in your nearest library. Two further criticisms, small but important: the book's cover features a cartoon from the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* which could easily be interpreted to mean that most activists in the East German peace movement see their involvement as a shortcut to an exit visa. Those to whom I showed the book were not

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign

A fringe meeting organised by the EESC during the Labour Party Conference was addressed by Eric Heffer MP, Robin Cook MP, Bob Clay MP, György Krassó and Włodzimierz Brus. "The struggles of the people in Eastern Europe for democratic rights, for free trade unions", said Heffer, "is the same battle as the battle of the South African workers against apartheid, of the workers of Chile against Pinochet, and of the people of Nicaragua against the CIA and the American government. It is an international struggle. It is essential that the labour movement in Britain realise this".

On the situation in Hungary today, thirty years after the suppression of the revolution of 1956, György Krassó said that there were, inside the ruling party, "several lobbies. There is a headline lobby which would like to return to Stalinist methods. There is also a liberal lobby which would like to move towards a more liberal market economy. But there is one lobby which doesn't exist inside this party, and that is a lobby for the workers. This system in Eastern Europe is an anti-worker system. The workers can't form trade unions and if they speak out against the system they are beaten up and put in prison."

The EESC is asking its members and supporters to take action in their Labour Party and trade union branches on behalf of the imprisoned workers' rights leader in the Soviet Union, Victor Klebanov. A vigorous defender of coal-miner rights, Victor Klebanov announced in February 1978 the formation of a free trade union. He was arrested and interned by court order in Dnepropetrovsk special psychiatric hospital, where political prisoners are held and subjected to forced drugging.

amused. Secondly, while a translation from this journal was used in the documents section, the bibliography fails to recommend *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* to the interested reader. Surely he or she has been, is and will be more likely to find good coverage of the East German opposition in our pages than in *GDR Monitor* or *Problems of Communism* (the only English-language journals mentioned)? End of commercial. **Günter Minnerup**

The case of Victor Klebanov aroused at the time a lot of interest in the Western labour movement and there were vigorous protests from many unions, including the communist-led CGT in France and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In Britain there was an appeal from Labour MPs, the AUEW sent a protest letter to Brezhnev and many other unions protested or expressed their concern to the Soviet authorities — including the TGWU, the NUR, NALGO, and the NGA.

Early in 1982 Klebanov was transferred to an unknown hospital. Nothing further was heard and many believed that he had been released. However, we have recently heard that in 1983 Klebanov was returned to the psychiatric prison, and from there via a prison in Donetsk to a special psychiatric prison in Tashkent, where he is still held.

Protests against the imprisonment of Klebanov should be sent to the Soviet Embassy in London. Trade union branches should ask their national executives to take up this case directly with the Soviet authorities. More information on the case of Klebanov can be obtained from the EESC. Klebanov's prison address is: USSR 700058, UzbSSR, g. Tashkent, uchr. UY-64/IZ-1.



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