

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

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35p

OPPOSITIONS SEEK INTERNATIONAL UNITY



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Charter 77 and KSS-KOR members discussing joint statements at the second border meeting. From left to right: Jacek Kuron, Marta Kubisova, Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik, and Bednar.

Bahro Speaks from Prison

Polish Peasant Movement Spreads

Contents

STATEMENT OF AIMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MANAGING EDITOR: Oliver MacDonald

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

All correspondence to:

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE
Bottom Flat, 116 Cazenove Rd., London N.16.

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EDITORIAL

Defend the Chartists and the Soviet Trade Unionists 1

CZECHOSLOVAK/POLISH SOLIDARITY

Document:

Support Human Rights Throughout Eastern Europe 2

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Document:

KOR Appeal for Sabata 2

New Drive against Charter Activists --

By Oliver MacDonald 3

Interview with Veteran communist,

Gertruda Sekaninová-Cakrtová 3

Document:

Independent Socialists Outline Their Views 5

EAST GERMANY

Document:

Rudolf Bahro: Letter from Prison 7

Robert Havemann Speaks Out -- by Günter Minnerup 8

Interview with Havemann 9

SOVIET UNION

New Trade-Union Group Formed -- by Victor Haynes 10

New Report of fate of Klebanov and his comrades --

by Helen Jamieson 10

The Human Rights Movement After the Trials --

An Interview with Leonid Plyushch 11

Soviet Paper Publishes Anti-Semitic Attack --

by Patrick Camiller 12

POLAND

The Peasant Movement: An Eyewitness Account 13

Documents:

Peasant Strikes: Resolutions and Communiques --

1. Report of Assembly 15

2. Resolution of Sbrozsa Duza Peasants 16

3. Sbrozsa Duza: Communiqué 1 16

4. Sbrozsa Duza: Communiqué 2 16

HUNGARY

The Political Situation in Hungary -- by Janet Asquith 17

ROMANIA

Regime Terror against Hungarian Activist --

by Patrick Camiller 19

Psychiatric Abuse in Romania -- by Patrick Camiller 19

LABOUR MOVEMENT

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign - Notes 20

Left-wing defence bulletins on Eastern Europe --

by Oliver MacDonald 21

ILO Investigates Human Rights Violations 22

Gays in the Soviet Union 22

LETTER 22

EDITORIAL

Defend the Chartists and the Soviet Trade Unionists

In the months since the end of the Helsinki Review Conference there has been a striking decline in the British press's coverage of repression in Eastern Europe. And after the very wide coverage given to the Shcharansky and Ginzburg trials, the same pattern of press silence has been repeated in relation to the repressive drive that continues in the USSR.

At the same time, the governments of Eastern Europe have used this period to step up their attacks on the civil rights campaigners.

The arrest of Jaroslav Sabata, one of the three spokespersons of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, is the most serious sign, among many others, that the months since the end of the Helsinki Review Conference in Belgrade have been used by the Czechoslovak authorities to increase their repression against Charter 77. They have moved beyond sacking people from their jobs towards arresting Chartists and sentencing them for expressing 'subversive ideas' or circulating samizdat material. This new wave of repression seems to be especially heavy outside Prague itself. The police may have been calculating that such repression would go unnoticed by foreign correspondents in the capital. But with the arrest of Dr Sabata the authorities seem to be pushing forward towards a direct attack on the whole Charter movement.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that the labour movements in the West take up the appeal by the Polish Workers' Defence Committee (KSS-KOR) and demand the immediate release of Dr Sabata. Letters of protest and resolutions calling for his release should be sent to the Czechoslovak Embassy, 25 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W.8.

From the USSR fresh news has been received concerning the KGB's drive against Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades in the Trade Union Association. This information, which was passed to Amnesty International from the Committee Against Psychiatric Abuse in Moscow, makes it possible for socialists to take up the cases of some of the members of the Trade Union Association in detail. The Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign is calling for a labour movement delegation to go to the Soviet Embassy in the new year to demand the release of these men and their right to organise their Association without police harassment. The news of the creation of a second trade union association in the USSR indicates the continuing pressure from workers for their own independent defence organisations and socialists in the West must demand that the new group also be able to function openly.

In order to back up defence activity around particular cases the EESC has produced a very useful pamphlet on "Oppression in Eastern Europe and the British Labour Movement" with a preface by Eric Heffer MP. The pamphlet provides a detailed account of basic political rights which are at present systematically violated in Eastern Europe, it examines many of

the standard prejudices in the British labour movement against publicly defending victims of repression in Eastern Europe and it outlines forms of activity that could be undertaken by socialists and labour movement organisations. The pamphlet should greatly help to break through the ignorance and misconceptions which are still prevalent on the Left on this issue. Copies can be ordered from: EESC, c/o Vladimir Derer, 10 Park Drive, London NW11.

In this issue of Labour Focus we have started a letters column. We hope that readers will use it to debate the many problems posed in the work of strengthening solidarity between socialists in the West and those struggling for democratic and working class rights in Eastern Europe. We hope that correspondents will keep their letters as brief as possible, because we already have agonising problems of lack of space. With every issue of Labour Focus we have to cut out about half of what we would like to publish because we cannot afford to expand our number of pages at the moment.

And with this in mind we would like to appeal to our readers to help us keep Labour Focus going and expand its size. In the last few months members of the editorial collective have had to lend us money in order to keep us afloat. Therefore we would ask all who think we are doing a worthwhile job to help us by publicising the journal, subscribing, getting their friends to subscribe and sending us donations, however small. With no full-time or even part-time staff we need all the help from our readers that we can get!

Solidarity Committees

East European

Solidarity Campaign

c/o Vladimir Derer,
10, Park Drive,
London NW117SH.

Committee to Defend
Czechoslovak Socialists

49a Tabley Road London N7

Bahro Defence Committee,

c/o Günter Minnerup,
14 Folkestone Rd.,
Copnor,
Portsmouth, Hants.

SOLIDARITY

Support Human Rights Throughout Eastern Europe!

[The last issue of Labour Focus reported that a meeting had taken place between the KSS-KOR based in Warsaw and representatives of the Czechoslovak civil rights movement Charter 77. The KSS-KOR [whose initials stand for "Social Self-Defence Committee (Workers' Defence Committee)] joined the Chartists in issuing a joint statement to mark the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. This first formal meeting between civil rights movements from different countries in Eastern Europe was followed by two further meetings. At the second meeting, whose joint communique we publish below, the joint letter to other East European human rights activists printed below was agreed. A third meeting on 1 October was broken up by the Czech and Polish police.]

A second meeting between our representatives took place on the Czechoslovak-Polish border in September 1978. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussions concerning the cooperation between the Social Self-Defence Committee 'KOR' and Charter 77, and to define more clearly the agreement reached at the first meeting. It was decided to establish permanent working groups which will supervise the swift exchange of information in order to enable us to cooperate effectively. The prospects of preparing common documents and of organising a political science seminar on the subject of independent civic initiatives in East European countries were discussed. We would wish to invite friends from other countries to participate in such a seminar.

An agreement concerning further cooperation, primarily in the field of culture and the arts, has been reached. A letter was despatched from the meeting to the defenders of human and civil rights in Armenia, Bulgaria, East Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Rumania and the Ukraine.

LETTER TO THE DEFENDERS OF HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN ARMENIA, BULGARIA, EAST GERMANY, GEORGIA, HUNGARY, LITHUANIA, RUSSIA, RUMANIA AND THE UKRAINE.

Dear Friends!

We send you our warmest greetings from the second working meeting of the representatives of the Social Self-Defence Committee 'KOR' and Charter 77, taking place on the Czechoslovak-Polish border. Unfortunately a personal meeting with you does not seem possible. This is why we wish to tell you how much we value your civic stand and your willingness to fight for the right of people in our countries to live in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity. From our own experience we know the difficulties connected with this struggle. We are convinced that we are all fighting for the same ideals. We often think about all those who suffer in prison for their convictions. We think of J. Orlov, A. Shcharansky, A. Ginzburg, W. Piatkus, A. Podrabinek, Bakhra, Rudenko, Tikhy, Shukhevych, Moroz, Chornovil, Gamsakhurdia and many others. Thank you for your support of our cause. We also wish to assure you of our solidarity with you. The common fate of our nations bind us together today more strongly than ever before. It is therefore important that those who attempt to improve our common destiny should join forces.

Charter 77
The Social Self-Defence Committee 'KOR'

20 September 1978

(Document and translation made available by the **Appeal for the Polish Workers.**)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

KSS-KOR Appeal for Sabata

[On 1 October Dr Jaroslav Sabata was arrested at the start of the third meeting between the Polish Social Self-Defence Committee, KSS (KOR) and Charter 77 on the Czech-Polish frontier. He is still being held in jail. The following international appeal was issued by KSS (KOR) from Warsaw.]

On 1 October 1978 on the Polish-Czechoslovak Friendship Path in the Krkonose mountains, the third meeting of representatives of Charter 77 and "KOR" should have taken place. Czechoslovak and Polish Security Services detained representatives of Charter 77 (Jiri Nemeč, Tomas Petrivy and Jaroslav Sabata) as well as members of "KOR" (Jan Litynski, Adam Michnik and Piotr Naimski) who were on their way to the meeting. Before 48 hours had expired everyone had been released with the exception of Dr Jaroslav Sabata. He has remained in prison and is accused of obstructing the police. Dr Sabata was a prominent participant in the Prague Spring. He was expelled from the Central Committee of the Communist Party for condemning the military intervention by the 5 member states of the Warsaw Pact in 1968 and he was later a political prisoner. Because of the pressure of international public opinion he was released in 1976.

Today we appeal to all people of good will throughout the whole



Photo: Copyright Palach Press

Charter 77 and KSS-KOR members discussing at the second border meeting. From left to right: Jan Litynski, Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik.

world to defend the spokesman of Charter 77; especially we appeal to all Poles abroad to participate in this action.

The struggle for human rights in Czechoslovakia is a struggle for the democratic future of all our nations.

Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR)
Warsaw

13 October 1978

(Document and translation made available by **Palach Press.**)

New Drive Against Charter Activists

BY OLIVER MACDONALD

On 1 October as members of Charter 77 and the Polish KSS-KOR were meeting on the Czech-Polish frontier the political police of both countries arrested all those present. After 48 hours, while others were released, Dr Jaroslav Sabata, one of the three spokespersons for Charter 77, was kept in prison.

Dr Sabata was a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee in 1968 and was one of the very few Party leaders who refused to accept the invasion and continued occupation of the country. As one of the most vigorous leaders of the socialist opposition he was arrested in 1971 and sent to prison for 6½ years. Thanks to the pressure of international labour movement protests he was released in 1976 after serving 5 years of his sentence. In the spring of this year he replaced Jiri Hajek as an official spokesperson of the Charter.

If Dr Sabata is put on trial he could be made to serve the remaining 18 months of his previous prison sentence as well as any new jail sentence that may be imposed. His arrest is evidently designed to be taken as an attack on the entire Charter movement, which has been increasingly active since Dr Sabata became one of the official leaders.

On 4 October, the Prague-based Committee to Defend Persons Unjustly Prosecuted issued a public statement providing full information about Sabata's case. On 13 October, the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) issued an appeal in Warsaw on behalf of Dr Sabata. (This appeal is reproduced on page 2.)



Dr Jaroslav Sabata, Charter 77 spokesperson now in jail.

The arrest of Dr Sabata has marked the culmination of a new campaign of repression by the political police. On 10 October Charter document No. 19, which answers in detail Premier Strougal's claim that only political means are used against the Charter, pointed out the increasing number of prosecutions against Chartists. These include the following cases:

*The jailing for 6 months this summer of Vladimir Riha, a 72-year-old professor of philosophy. He was accused of incitement for several comments expressing disagreement with the present political situation.

*The jailing for 8 months in August of a prominent Protestant pastor and Chartist Jan Simsa for allegedly assaulting a police officer during a search of his flat in Brno.

Charter document No. 20 considers that Simsa's imprisonment on such a flimsy pretext indicates a deliberate decision on the part of the regime to attack prominent representatives of Czech Protestant socialist thought. (Ladislav Hejdanek, another prominent Protestant socialist and Charter spokesperson under very heavy police surveillance at present.) Dr Simsa has been a moving spirit in the Jan Patočka free university in Brno.

*Two young people, Milan Manasek and Michal Kobal have been sentenced to 18 and 12 months respectively for allegedly distributing Charter documents.

*Three young teenagers in Brno, Petr Cibulka, Libor Chloupek and Petr Pospichal are in jail awaiting trial for Charter activities.

*On 25 October a 24-year-old member of a musical underground group, Jiri Chmel was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment in the north Bohemian town of Most. He was charged with playing a recording of the Charter founding declaration in front of the Luna restaurant in Most.

Jiri Chmel's case is in one respect unprecedented. At a first trial the prosecution produced 4 witnesses to substantiate the allegations. But at the trial all four declared that the political police had forced them to appear and that they did not know Mr. Chmel at all. The trial was then hurriedly adjourned. Two new prosecution witnesses were produced for the second trial but in court they also declared that they "had been manipulated by the STB" (the political police) and knew nothing about Mr. Chmel.

Interview with Veteran Communist

Gertruda Sekaninová-Cakrtová

[Dr Sekaninova-Cakrtová was one of those Czech MPs who refused to ratify the agreement on the 'temporary' stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia after the invasion in 1968. This interview was carried out by the editors of the information bulletin of Charter 77. It appeared in an autumn issue of the bulletin. The Czech text was made available by Palach Press. Translation by Labour Focus is by Susannah Fry.]

Dr Sekaninova-Cakrtová, you are a pre-war Communist who was expelled from the Party after 1968: you have been deputy foreign minister and a member of the Czechoslovak parliament. Now you are a signatory of Charter 77, a member of the Committee to Defend Persons Unjustly Prosecuted, you have taken over responsibility for petitions made by Czechoslovak citizens against the death penalty. What kind of continuity do you see in your development?

I could write a book in answer to that question. I would say that I am still

concerned with the same human values, only my view on how to struggle for them and come close to achieving them has changed with experience. More concretely, in our pre-war legal practice my husband and I dealt with questions of political and civil rights, freedom of the press and of assembly in Czechoslovakia and sometimes abroad. For example, I myself as a lawyer followed a political trial held in Romania. After the Reichstag fire, my husband Ivan Sekanina visited the court at Leipzig where he and lawyers from other lands wanted to defend Georgi Dimitrov.

In the autumn of 1968, you voted against the agreement on the temporary stationing of troops in Czechoslovakia. What led you to do this?

My stand was a result of my attitude to the 21st of August and subsequent developments in our country. I was convinced that for the troops of the five Warsaw Pact states to cross our frontiers was a denial of the basic norms of

international law, the charter of the UN and the Warsaw alliance. I could not accept that troops who occupied our territory should be allowed to stay, for however short a period. And anyway, they have been here ten years now.

In my view, the solution to the situation lay from the beginning in a conscious and consistent attempt to renew our full sovereignty. Withdrawal of the troops was by no means the only point at issue, but it was by its very nature an important one. The agreement contained nothing about the departure of the troops. In fact, it made the occupation of 21 August concrete. In my speech, I pointed to the fundamental aspects of the question and to those apparently formal inadequacies of the agreement which revealed its true basis. No time limit was set to either the stationing of troops or the validity of this enforced agreement. The troops are supposed to be here temporarily. But the agreement is valid as long as they are here!

who last year slashed all the tyres on his car, or those who sent him anonymous letters threatening him with a violent death. Ladislav Lis fought against the Nazis; and after the war he was president of the Youth Union and a member of the leadership of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. In 1968 he was Secretary of the Prague town committee of the Communist Party, now he is a forestry worker and a signatory of the Charter. And now he has been in prison for two months, because his sheep are said to have grazed where they shouldn't; his wife cannot visit him, he doesn't receive her letters, and he still hasn't seen his lawyer.

Are there more of these cases?

A whole list, and really we should pay more attention to them. People are being subjected to force, blackmail and abduction, and there are some very dangerous signs of concocted charges, fabricated confessions, and so on. You must know about how Ivan Medek was beaten up. Someone threw a sausage poisoned with strychnine into Pavel Kohout's garden, and his dog ate it and died. But a man could have died if the poison had contaminated, say, a fallen apple. They are spreading rumours and trying to extract false confessions to prove that Petr Uhl, a member of our committee, has been advocating terrorism. That is a lie. The questions of criminal procedure are also very significant. The police are breaking strict regulations concerning the length of time for which a person may be

detained — for example, by releasing someone after 48 hours and then picking him up again immediately and holding him for a further 2 days. Another important question is the full implementation of the right of defence.

In your fundamental declaration, you say that you want to work with all who are interested, at home and abroad. Who has shown interest?

For the moment, mainly those for whom we exist: that is, the persecuted and the members of their families. I think that this is the most important response.

From the government side, 'interest' has so far been shown by the police: they have summoned several members of the committee and warned them that they are engaged in illegal activity. We could hardly call that an interest in co-operation. The committee and its activity are not of course against the law. The Charter is not an organisation; it has no statutes, organs or organised membership. The same applies to our informal group to defend the unjustly persecuted. It is in harmony with the rights and duties of citizens, as embodied in the Czechoslovak Constitution. Every citizen has a responsibility to see that the laws are respected — therefore, so do we, especially when we see that it is the government which is breaking them.

Do you see your activity as having any concrete results? Is it not better for the sake of those who are persecuted simply to keep quiet?

We know very well, even from the not-so-distant past, the disastrous consequences of lack of information, both for the individual and for society. The isolated unknown individual is powerless against injustice. The task of the committee is to obtain some definite information and then exercise some public control, the more so because the principle of public knowledge, although among the fundamentals of criminal procedure, is actually disregarded. Friends and acquaintances of the accused aren't allowed in to the courtroom, others are guarded by the police throughout the trial, and so on. The public reads nothing of the main evidence; you can learn the minimum about the verdict, but even this is usually touched up. In addition those prosecuted are often subjected to slander on the radio and TV, and have no means of defending themselves. Our reports are therefore a concrete means of defence. In some cases we hold our own parallel investigation and collect material. Of course we are interested in definite results. Thus, we were pleased when Vaclav Havel, Jaroslav Kukal and Pavel Landovsky returned from several weeks of illegal imprisonment after their arrest at the Railwaymen's Ball. But I am convinced, and I know from my own experience, that consistently active interest and solidarity are of help.

Independent Socialists Outline Their Views

Introduction

The following letter was distributed to all members of the General Bureau of the Socialist International at their Paris meeting on 28-29 September.

With this letter, for the first time since 1968, a group in Czechoslovakia has clearly defined its political views and aims, with the sole exception of former Prague Spring leaders, many of whom endorse Eurocommunist ideas.

It is illegal in Czechoslovakia at present for any unauthorised organisation to be formed. This circumstance should be born in mind while reading the following document,

At the same time, the document makes clear that this is not the reason why the authors reject any continuity with the old Social Democratic Party dissolved in 1948. They also refer to themselves as 'Independent Socialists', not as Social Democrats.

The discussion on the bureau of the Socialist International was concluded by Willy Brandt, Chairman of the Socialist International and of the German SPD, who suggested that next year one of the member organisations should arrange a special conference dealing exclusively with Czechoslovakia.

By Jan Kavan

To the General Council of the Socialist International

Dear Sirs,

We have long felt the need for political contacts between Czechoslovak socialists and the Socialist International. We are now writing to inform you about our position and endeavours. We are doing this in accordance with Art.28 of the Czechoslovak Constitution and Art.2, 19, 21, and 22 of the International Covenant on Human and Political Rights, which is part of the Czechoslovak legal norms.

Historically we do not directly link up with any political groupings as they existed in our country prior to 1948. We consider East European experience of the past thirty years to be the most decisive for us. The political objectives which we are pursuing as independent socialists are based on the values also guiding the parties of the Socialist International. At the same time we realize that the Socialist International permits the free formulation of political ideas and views without demanding strict subordination to canonised principles.

It is, of course, well known that the possibilities and conditions of our activities, just as those of socialists in other East European countries, differ substantially from your own.

I.

In our country the socialists have traditionally been among persecuted citizens no doubt because their idea of a consistent link between social justice and personal freedom has an exceptionally strong social backing. It remains a lasting paradox that at a time when the representatives of the political leadership of the State stress the need for contacts, cooperation and agreements with socialist and social democratic parties in international political relations, persecution of socialists at home is being stepped up. At the beginning of April 1978 President Dr Gustav Husák met SPD Chairman Willy Brandt in Germany. At the same time police repression was used against a number of persons in connection with the declaration "One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism" which had been drawn up at the initiative of independent socialists. We informed the Socialist International about the matter in two open letters. The joint declaration issued during the meeting between L.I. Brezhnev and G. Husák in Prague at the end of May 1978 also stressed the significance of cooperation with socialist and social democratic parties. But this was accompanied by the particularly outrageous preventive arrest of several dozen citizens. The repression of socialists and citizens cooperating with them is illustrated by the proposed detention of Rudolf Batték (53, an independent socialist), Albert Cerný (40, an independent socialist) and the detention of the writer Jirí Grusa (40), Pavel Roubal (30) and the Protestant clergyman Jan Simsa (49, a signatory of the declaration "One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism").

A factor which historically restricts our possibilities is the absence of an institution of our own and of foreign contacts which has for several decades virtually prevented supporters of a socialist orientation from getting to know each other and maintaining contacts. In this our situation radically differs from that of reform communists and of Christians in Czechoslovakia. Another limiting factor is the extremely restricted possibility of communication between politically non-conformist citizens and the public.

Our political activity is permanently restricted by the fact that independent political organisations are not allowed to be formed in Czechoslovakia. The State Security service interprets every repeated meeting of people who are known to hold

non-conformist views as organised and thus potentially criminal activity; citizens may be punished for expressing views which do not correspond to the ideas of the regime. From the point of view of current legal practice every expression of non-conformist civil activity is subject to the threat of legal prosecution and arrest.

II.

The policy of detente, the Helsinki document and the ratification of two international covenants on human rights by the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly have created a merely formal basis for extra-Governmental civil initiative. But even on such a restricted basis a certain scope for political action has been created. We believe that its preservation depends directly on the progress of international relations, on the consistency with which the Western States advocate and solve problems of human rights within the policy of detente and, naturally, on the orientation of Soviet foreign policy.

Despite the regime's efforts to limit it, civic activity within this political scope is varied and dynamic: it ranges from activities of opposition individuals and groups to the broader basis of Charter 77, the stabilisation of the non-Communist and Communist opposition and the dissemination of their statements, and the development of non-conformist culture.

III.

Under these circumstances independent socialists consider it their fundamental task to be the initiators of a new ideological orientation going beyond traditional group interests. This is assisted by the search for a common approach of socialists and democratically orientated Communists to the relationship between the political and economic systems. Closer links between Christians and socialists in assessing individual and institutional responsibility on questions of human values are of equally fundamental importance.

We consider our fundamental task to be the publication of alternative ideas on the organization of society and participation in promoting non-conformist cultural activities.

Internationally our most important objective is to establish contacts with the Socialist International as the most significant political entity of democratic socialism and with socialists in other East European countries.

Vis-a-vis the regime we are striving to ensure that it should respect legal civic initiative. As signatories of Charter 77 we participate in its offer of a constructive dialogue. Wherever human rights are not observed and civil liberties are not respected we express our legal opposition based on the Czechoslovak Constitution and the International Covenants on Human Rights.

IV.

Our socio-political stand includes the following principles:

1. Historically we are not linked to any political grouping of the past. We do not consider party affiliation or the allegiance to historical ideological sources to be of decisive importance.

2. We subscribe to the traditions of the workers' movement — to its socio-political and socialist demands. Likewise do we feel linked with present-day progressive demands of the Czech intelligentsia and its democratic representatives.

3. We maintain that efforts for a reform of social conditions towards an increasingly comprehensive democratisation of society do not require a closed ideological concept or a rigid political organisation.

4. We sympathise with ideas of direct political activity of citizens free from the omnipotent apparatus of political parties but we are also aware that in the present phase of history the function and purpose of political organisations cannot be ignored.

5. Our fundamental concept can be summed up as follows: democracy, socialism, equality, solidarity, self-management and self-determination of the peoples. We regard the restoration of simple ethical principles in politics as our task.

6. We want no more and no less than the rights and possibilities available to Communists and Communist parties in West European countries.

7. We cannot forgo the right to turn to friendly political institutions and express international solidarity to all who are victims of political, social, racial, national and religious oppression.

Rudolf Batték, Krizíkova 78, Prague.
Dr Jaroslav Mezník, Vránová 107, Brno.
Jirí Müller, Jana Babaka 3-5, Brno.

1 July 1978

P.S. We are not sending this as an open letter but do not object to its possible publication. We ourselves shall consider its publication at some future date.

(Document made available by Palach Press Ltd. Translation copyright Palach Press.)

EAST GERMANY

Rudolf Bahro: Letter from Prison

[For the first time since his arrest in August 1977, Rudolf Bahro, sentenced to 8 years in jail for espionage last summer, has been able to break through the wall of silence which the East German authorities have tried to maintain around him. The letter, evidently sent to a fellow prisoner, was first published in the West German magazine, Der Spiegel, on 30 October. The English text published here is taken from the second issue of the Bulletin of the Bahro Defence Committee. Translation by Günter Minnerup.]

Thank you for your initiative and your encouragement — the more so since you are certainly aware that our political colours are apparently rather different and I would hardly support the activities which — if my assumption is correct — have brought you here. I was and I am decidedly for the non-capitalist foundations of the GDR, which I do not view solely or mainly from the viewpoint of my present situation. Nor do I, for instance, think in terms of hostility towards the Soviet Union.

What I want to bring about is debate on the basis of that foundation, which needs a fundamentally renovated political, and above all, ideological superstructure. It needs it also because such a renovation (as intended in Prague 1968) would facilitate the anti-capitalist transformation on the other side. I write this in order to avoid misunderstandings between us.

You are right about my condition. I am as well, physically and mentally, as one could expect under the circumstances. In Berlin I shared a cell with an economist, and was lucky with him. Only during the last month before the trial was I alone, and then again grateful for that, too.

My lifestyle had already been, at least to the outside, somewhat monkish before all this. After all I had been writing my book, and also a dissertation, during the past five years (72-77) entirely in my spare time, parallel to my normal work in industry. And here, for the time being, I prefer the single cell (of course one would like to be able to talk whenever and to **whoever one wants**). I do not even need work (screws) to occupy myself.

In Berlin I had already caught up with or re-read about 160 books, mainly world literature. For eight weeks now I have been learning French. At the moment I am, at last, reading the bible from beginning to end. My material requirements are habitually so modest that, in principle, I can make do with what I am given. What I really miss is music (instead of that dreadful loudspeaker), i.e. chamber music of the 17th to the mid-18th centuries. In the case of Czech music even a bit later. Well, and who would not miss female beings here (I really am no ascetic).

All in all: I can survive the "outstanding" seven years halfway productively here, if it does not get worse (I, too, have heard this threatened, albeit more cryptically, but I believe it to be "mere" (bad enough) psychological pressure). In any event I have formally been treated correctly.

Throughout the whole committal proceedings I suffered no breakdown whatsoever and did not withdraw from any of my positions, not even the one on which the fire concentrated: my readiness to use the "sealed" train, that is to say, the bourgeois mass media to have my ideology "conveyed". I have left no doubt before the court and generally that I will continue to follow my path straightforwardly.

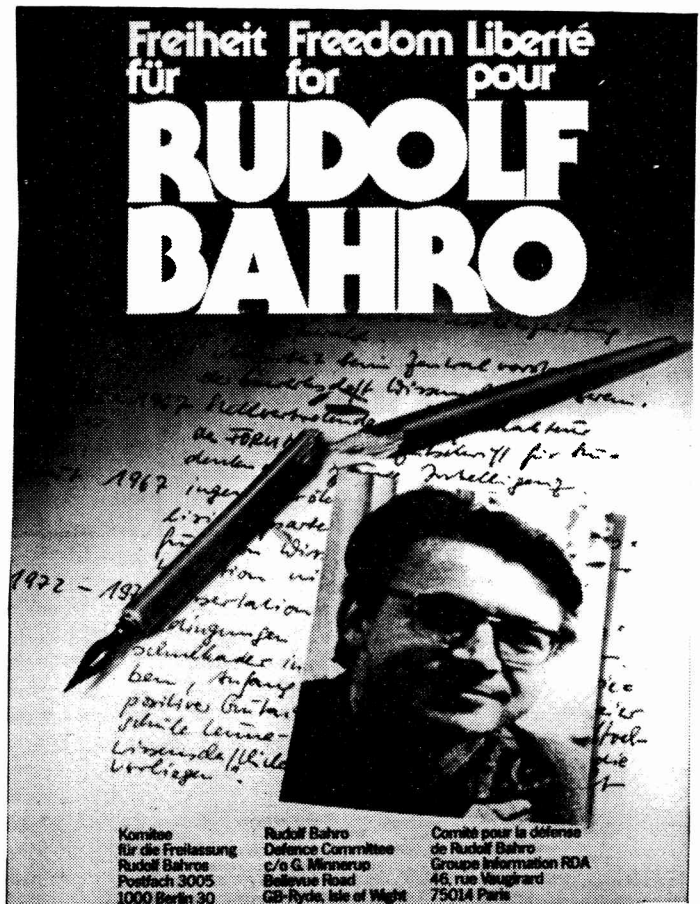
All in all they have helped to organise the success of my book. The DM 200,000 (1) they have come up with because the Stern (2) wrote that 80,000 copies had already been sold. Meanwhile there

is the paperback edition also. Before the end of the year there will be translations into five or six languages. My song goes around the world — what more should I want! And with regards to the effect — I had so far only known of the reaction of bourgeois circles in the Federal Republic and of some "ultralefts". Is it really true that the leaders of the most important Eurocommunist parties have commented **officially**? When? After all the ADN [official East German news agency] lies about my trial? Have they indicated a position on the **substance**? Do they regard me as a communist in whose company one can be seen?

I have always hoped, but was not sure that they would say it. "To discuss my theses publicly" — that was precisely my demand, and that is what they are trying to save themselves from at a high price by condemning a book of a theoretical-political nature as an "intelligence dossier".

I have, however, uncovered the politico-economic nature of socialism as it actually exists in a more thoroughgoing manner than previous attempts. I have explained the inherent obstacles preventing a breakthrough to real socialism. The book has the following structure:

- I. The phenomenon of the non-capitalist road to industrial society
 1. the communism of Marx and Engels and the practice of socialism as it actually exists
 2. the origin of the non-capitalist road
 3. (Russia resp. the SU): From agrarian to industrial despotism (analysed as an inevitable and necessary process)



This poster calling for the release of Rudolf Bahro can be obtained from the Bahro Defence Committee, c/o G. Minnerup, Bellevue Rd., GB-Ryde, Isle of Wight, price 50p plus postage.

II. The Anatomy of socialism as it actually exists

4. summary of the basic concepts
5. social organisation on the basis of the old division of labour (we have "productive relations of the old division of labour and the state" — the relations of domination in the productive process are the kernel also to be found on the other side still if one strips off capitalist private property)
6. social stratification under socialism as it actually exists
7. the non-concept of the working class beyond capitalism
8. driving forces and restraints (deriving from the bureaucratic structure)
9. party and bureaucracy (since mass control from below did not materialise — party control of the state machinery from above; thus the party became the controlling bureaucracy, a super state apparatus, with the result: domination of the party apparatus within the party, total loss of the "spiritual" inspirational power)

III. The Strategy for a Communist Alternative (almost half of the 500-page book)

10. (the axis of it all) problems and perspectives of general emancipation today (revolution not only of the capitalist relations of production but of the whole civilisation grown since 1789 which "brings no fortune", e.g. sacrifices the unfolding of individuality in favour of "growth", in favour of qualities (3))
11. the social potential for a new transformation of society (how can one organise the "emancipatory interests", the "surplus consciousness" against the absorbing structures of the hierarchical organisation of labour?)
12. the organisation of the communists (to be re-formed for the emancipatory process!)
- 13-14. on the economics of the cultural revolution (I and II not in the Chinese, but in the general Marxist sense)

I have attempted to analyse socialism as it really exists in the same way that Marx analysed capitalism: as a social formation, an entire system which arose inevitably, "functions" and has to be overcome. The idea developed in the late 60s, the decision was made on 21 August 1968. Since then I have consciously moved towards the clash.

Only as late as autumn 1977, when the book was nearing completion (4), did I indirectly make contact with the West (only with the publishing house **Europäische Verlagsanstalt**, EVA, which is owned by the DGB [West German Trade Union Federation]. Nobody on the outside had any influence on the smallest comma. When I was ready for publicity, EVA organised for me, about 1½ months before publication, contact with the **Spiegel**, ZDF and ARD (5), with their correspondents accredited here in the GDR. These are all the facts of the case. Everything else is entirely my own work, which of course touches all too precisely the spots where it hurts most and where discussion is impossible (no effective arguments!).

What has happened since the book appeared also stems from the nature of the book as visibly a "book of belief". I was born in 1935 in Lower Silesia, in the **Isergebirge** (now of course in Poland). From 1954-59 I studied philosophy, then worked on magazines (**Forum**) (6), where I was deputy editor, and which I crashed voluntarily in 1967. Also I spent a few years in the trade union apparatus (science), since 1967 worked as a specialist and latterly as a middle functionary in industry, plus — my own work.

You will use this information in a way that they cannot come down on us.

Footnotes.

1. A reference to the payment Bahro was accused of having received from "Western intelligence agencies"
2. West German news magazine
3. This is probably a spelling error and meant to read 'quantities'
4. This is probably also an error, since **The Alternative** was published in August 1977, should probably read 'spring'.
5. ZDF - 'second' West German TV channel; ARD - 'first' channel
6. The SED's journal for students and young intellectuals. By saying that he 'crashed voluntarily' he is referring to his deliberately unorthodox editorial decisions leading to his being dismissed.

Robert Havemann Speaks Out

BY GÜNTER MINNERUP

Just over a year after the publication of Rudolf Bahro's **Alternative** the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) in East Germany is faced with another important challenge: the appearance in the West of the latest book by Robert Havemann, the oldest and most prominent of its internal dissidents. **A German Communist. Reminiscences and Perspectives from Isolation** (Published by Rowohlt-Verlag, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 160 pages, DM 16.80) is a transcript of Havemann's tape-recorded replies to 120 written questions put to him by a left-wing West German political scientist, on subjects such as Havemann's past and experiences, Eurocommunism, Bahro's ideas, the future of communism, and proves how unsuccessful the regime's attempts at silencing this particular critic through massive intimidation have been.

For since 26 November 1976 Professor Havemann has been under house arrest, following his public protest against the expulsion of his friend, dissident singer Wolf Biermann. Since then, around 200 policemen have been positioned around his

house, his telephone has been cut off and all contact with the outside world (except his close relatives) prohibited. The "People's Police" are even patrolling the lake behind Havemann's garden in small boats and have recently established a permanent look-out in the garden shed! All this, officially, to "protect him against kidnap attempts"....

But Robert Havemann is not one to be easily silenced. His first experiences with state repression date from the "Third Reich", which sentenced the communist resistance fighter (he had joined the KPD in 1932) to death in 1943. Saved by Germany's military defeat in 1945, he first met today's SED general secretary, Erich Honecker when they were both inmates in Brandenburg top security prison.

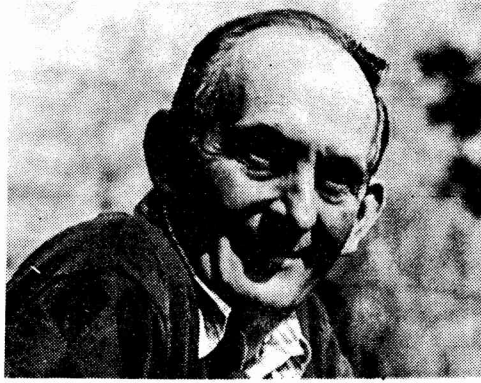
During the 1950s, Havemann, now professor of physical chemistry at the Humboldt University of East Berlin, was a respected member of the GDR establishment, receiving some of the highest orders the "first German workers' and peasants' state" could award. But the

revelations of the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the ensuing process of "de-Stalinisation" shocked him out of what he now admits were his orthodox Stalinist views at the time, and a painful process of self-clarification began. By 1964 his international reputation could no longer protect him, and he was expelled from the party for a series of lectures in which he had stated: "What is necessary, a vital condition of socialism, and what has been lost in the period of Stalinism, is democracy. Socialism cannot be put into practice without democracy." Soon afterwards he was banned from further practising in his profession, and has since become the most prominent representative of the intellectual opposition in the GDR.

Unlike his close friend Wolf Biermann, however, he has not been expelled from the country (yet?), and unlike the lesser-known Rudolf Bahro has not been jailed. He himself puts this down to a certain amount of backing from circles in both the SED (his acquaintance with Honecker) and the Soviet party (Havemann contributed substantially to their nuclear research and

development), but there must now be increased concern for his personal safety. He has been ill for some time, and the publication of his latest book (two previous ones were *Dialectics Without Dogma* and *Questions, Answers, Questions*) could easily provoke harsh reactions from a regime increasingly nervous about internal dissent since the Bahro affair.

Like Biermann and Bahro, Robert Havemann has remained a Marxist and criticises the SED regime from the left. He declares himself largely in agreement with Bahro's views, and draws a picture of GDR reality in far blacker terms than in his previous books: "One can observe daily how the regime loses all credit and has lost it already, and how it really needs only a few external knocks for the Politbureau to be sent to the devil". He is obviously alluding to the possibility of another widespread popular revolt against the party leadership, as happened on 17 June 1953, and describes the Politbureau as obsessed with the fear of "another June '53":



Robert Havemann, pictured recently in East Berlin.

"Their terrible fear of something as unexpected by them as that happening again is still there. That is why they are sitting in Wandlitz surrounded by walls, barbed wire and watchtowers, that is why their cars have splinter-proof glass screens and armoured plates, that is why half the

city is cordoned off whenever one of these gentlemen is moving about in the streets. Never has the distance between the people and its government been greater in Germany, neither under Wilhelm II, nor the Weimar Republic, not even the Nazis ... The communists have not been able to benefit from the enormous credit they enjoyed after Hitler's downfall. That is the tragedy of the GDR."

Havemann's book comes at the right time. His most outspoken challenge yet to the Honecker leadership — which took over from Ulbricht among widespread illusions of imminent "liberalisation" — cannot but encourage an opposition whose other most prominent representatives have been jailed or expelled to West Germany. The international labour movement must keep a watchful eye on further developments in the Havemann case and, through its support for Havemann's right to free speech and personal liberty, ensure that he does not suffer the same fate as either Biermann or Bahro.

Interview with Havemann

[*The following interview with Robert Havemann was published in June this year by the West German magazine Der Spiegel. Translation is by Günter Minnerup.*

Professor Havemann, you have been under house arrest for one and a half years now. How do you feel?

Personally I feel quite well. During the past few weeks I have been feeling a bit worse, as far as my health is concerned. But that is over again. I am in good condition again. And nothing else can worry me apart from that.

Do you believe that the sanctions against you will ever be removed?

Everything in the world is bound to change sometime. The only problem is, when. The visible signs do not indicate imminent change. After a while one adapts to the given conditions and finds what one needs.

In an interview with the French newspaper Le Monde last November you were very pessimistic about the present situation in the GDR. Have you changed your views since? Do you now see things in a more optimistic way?

The situation has not changed substantially since, say, a year ago. I do not, at the moment, have any reason to expect major changes. In this sense one could regard my comments as pessimistic. But generally I am not that pessimistic at all.

In West Germany the manifesto of an oppositional group in the SED has caused some uproar earlier in the year. Was this the case in the GDR as well?

No, in my view the manifesto has hardly

made an impression here. It has really been forgotten within a very short time. And that simply because it shocked people and demanded too much from them.

Demanded too much - how?

On the one hand with the question of German unity and then again with questions concerning our system. That manifesto was too ill-defined in relation to pressing problems.

Also with regards to the personal attacks on sections of the SED leadership contained in the manifesto?

That aspect was discussed the least, funnily enough. I would even say that one should not believe that that paper was debated much at all. I was, of course, when it first appeared, asked by all sorts of people what I thought of it. People always wanted to know what I thought. But interest quickly waned.

And what does the dissident Havemann think of the manifesto?

I don't know. Right at the beginning I was very sceptical. Then again I thought it possible that such things could be the product of a heterogeneous but after all naively activist group. In the meantime, however, I have become very suspicious again, about the purpose of it all.

Herr Havemann, until the summer of last year you were the only dissident in the GDR with an international reputation. But now there is Rudolf Bahro, whose book *The Alternative* has met with a lot of interest in the West, including the Eurocommunists. What do you think of Bahro?

I regard Bahro as a very important man and his book as very important and of great theoretical significance. The political effect of his criticism of GDR socialism cannot, of course, be that of a thunderbolt. Bahro's criticism works slowly. But there is no doubt that his voice is an important one in the history of the modern labour movement.

A voice which has some resonance in the GDR, too?

It certainly has an effect on a large number of people with the necessary political qualifications. Bahro's book is not something for mass agitation.

If the pressure on you continues, do you consider leaving the GDR voluntarily one day?

Me? No! Under no circumstances. Why? I cannot see any reason at all.

There would be reasons, such as isolation into which the state has been driving you for one and a half years.

That is a funny thing, the idea of isolation. I really am not isolated. There are, of course, a number of people who have to be cautious about talking to me. In reality, of course, that is not isolation, but it isolates these people in an embarrassing manner from what they are frightened of, not from me. You must consider that all the fear caused is fear which is directed against whoever provokes it. And that is not me.

As far as public reputation is concerned, the echo I find in the population, that was never better than today. That is the surest sign that there can be no question of isolation.

SOVIET UNION

New Trade-Union Group Formed

On 28 October, according to Western journalists in Moscow, a group of Soviet dissenters announced the formation of an independent labour association to replace the workers' trade union disrupted by the KGB in February of this year. The new group, whose formation was reported in the *Guardian* of 29 October, calls itself the Free Inter-Trade Union Association of Workers (FITUAW) replacing the Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers of the Soviet Union (AFTUWSU).

In documents handed to Western correspondents, the group of eight said they had founded the FITUAW, because Soviet workers' interests were not represented by any organisation which was not part of the state apparatus. The FITUAW, which already had 100 members, would attempt to function like the AFTUWSU which was founded earlier this year by workers from several Soviet cities who wanted to voice grievances against their employers, the organisers said. The AFTUWSU was disrupted by the KGB by arresting several leading activists, including Vladimir Klebanov. (For information concerning their fate, see article on this page).

The organisers of the new group, which addressed appeals to international bodies and to the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free trade unions (ICFTU), include one member of the AFTUWSU — the former biologist and active dissenter since 1970, Yevgeny Nikolayev. Nikolayev was released in september after being held in a psychiatric hospital since 15 February 1978. Other members include Vladimir Borisov, a worker who since the age of 18 has been involved in strikes and protest activities and has been confined to psychiatric hospitals (see 'The Case of Vladimir Borisov', *Labour Focus* Vol.1 No.1).

Another founding member is Lyudmila Agapova, the wife of the Soviet exile, Valentin Agapov, a merchant seaman who left his ship in Sweden in 1974.

In the new group's manifesto, they state that Soviet workers are afraid to press their claims because they lack any independent channel to do so and were intimidated by repressive measures from the authorities. And despite the promises of their official trade union and of the Soviet Constitution, trade union officials take the side of the

authorities, thus betraying the interests of the workers. Their activities are in fact an extension of the government apparatus, the manifesto said.

The organisers handed out a 75-signature appeal to Amnesty International, on behalf of one of the eight founding members, Vladimir Svirsky, who was seized by the KGB on 12 October. The 48-year-old biologist is reported to have been charged with stealing library books. The other four founding members are Lev Volkhonsky, Albina Yakoreva, Alexander Ivanchenko, an engineer, and teacher Valeria Novodvorskaya.

The KGB reacted swiftly to the group's creation. According to a Reuter report in the *Guardian* on 3 November, the security police arrested three more members of the newly formed independent trade union association, after searching the flats of other members. The three who were arrested were: Vladimir Borisov, Lev Volkhonsky and Albina Yakoreva. Yakoreva was later released.

BY VICTOR HAYNES

New Report of Fate of Klebanov and his Comrades

Very little information has reached the West as to the fate of the members of the AFTUWSU. What little has trickled through has come from Vsevolod Kuvakin, a labour lawyer who had lost his job, and who came to join the AFTUWSU at a later date. In August 1978 he claimed that although the AFTUWSU seemed to have been neutralised, he wished to form a 'commission' which would study and publicise the role of labour in the Soviet Union. He was concerned with, for eg., the Soviet pension system—which he said gave many retired workers an inadequate income—and the way the 'parasitism' laws enable authorities to manipulate workers through the granting or denial of employment.

The latest information concerning the whereabouts of leading members of the AFTUWSU has been compiled by the Moscow-based unofficial Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes. This was published in their latest Information Bulletin, No.10 of 10 August 1978.

VLADIMIR KLEBANOV

At present Vladimir Klebanov is being held in the Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric

Hospital (address: Denpropetrovsk, Chicherin St., Building 101, Institution YaE-308/RB). He was transferred to this hospital from the Donetsk psychiatric hospital after a trial in Donetsk. Neither Klebanov nor his relatives were notified of the court trial; neither did they participate in the hearings. Up until now his wife has still not been notified of the court's decision.

GAVRIL YAN'KOV

Gavril Timofeevich Yan'kov was arrested on 12 March 1978 in Moscow at the Psychiatric Hospital No.1, Kashchenko, where he was accompanying the wife of Yevgeny Nikolayev on a visit to her husband. Yan'kov was taken to the Moscow Police Station No.70, where he was searched and then transferred to a Special Detention Centre, and placed in a prison cell. On 15 March, Yan'kov was transferred to a prison cell in 'Sailor's Retreat' [Moscow Psychiatric Hospital No.3] and charged with violating the passport regime. On 16 March he announced a hunger strike. After a few days he was beaten by his warders, who demanded he stop his hunger strike.

On 25 April Yan'kov was sent for an

examination to the notorious Serbsky Institute. Here on 8 May he stopped his hunger strike. At the end of May the examination occurred, which apparently diagnosed him as not responsible for his actions and recommended compulsory hospitalisation to a psychiatric hospital of a general type.

On 12 June, Yan'kov was transferred to the Butyrski prison, and on 22 June to the Psychiatric Hospital No.7 in Moscow. Then on 4 July, Gavril Yan'kov was transferred to the Orlov Regional Psychiatric Hospital, where as far as is known, he is still being held.

When his trial occurred, or what the results were, Yan'kov was not informed.

VALENTIN POPLAVSKY

He is currently serving a one year term of imprisonment. He was tried on 18 May 1978 and found guilty of 'parasitism'.

BY HELEN JAMIESON

The Human Rights Movement After the Trials

An Interview with Leonid Plyushch

[Following the trials of Shcharansky and Ginzburg the Helsinki Monitoring Groups have continued to function in the USSR and have even recruited new supporters. Labour Focus asked the Ukrainian socialist exile, Leonid Plyushch to assess this situation of the human rights movements in the USSR after the trials. The interview was conducted by Helen Jamieson and Oliver MacDonald. Translation from the Ukrainian is by Helen Jamieson.]

Do you think that the trials have seriously weakened, or even broken, the Helsinki Monitoring movement in the USSR?

First of all, we should not equate the fate of the dissident movement as a whole with the preservation of any single organisational form within it. Before the Helsinki groups there was our Initiative Group for Human Rights (1). The regime smashed this organisation in the arrests and trials of 1972-73. But this meant little because within a few years new forces emerged and the democratic movement became even stronger with the formation of the Helsinki groups in 1976. I think now it is quite likely that new forms of struggle for human rights will be discovered. The movement will continue to base itself on the Helsinki Agreements but it will also use other international agreements and other ideas.

Sinyavsky has a rather witty definition of the dissidents: "They are not people who fight against the Soviet authorities, but those against whom the Soviet authorities fight". The democratic and oppositional movements are a reaction to the crisis in Soviet society; they are not the originators of this crisis, but its product. Thus, even though sections of the movement are smashed, the crisis itself is not suppressed and therefore new oppositional currents are bound to emerge and organise themselves.

Were the trials, in your view, mainly dictated by domestic considerations — to stem the human rights movement — or was their real purpose to act as a demonstration of intransigence to Western governments and to the Western labour movement?

I don't know which of these considerations was more important, but both played their part. The trials were meant to show domestic critics that upon struggle for civil rights was futile, regardless of international support for the opposition.

In addition, Brezhnev's recent visit to France indicates his new posture in the face of criticism from the Western labour movements. When there was a big left-wing campaign in France for my release, Brezhnev still wanted to show that he was sensitive to labour movement opinion and he therefore responded to the CP's pressure for my release by freeing me from the psychiatric prison and allowing me to

emigrate. But this time (2) when Brezhnev came to France he wished to adopt an attitude of indifference towards the left. He demonstratively met only Giscard and Chirac. And recently when he was in West Germany he again wished to demonstrate that he was only interested in government representatives and in Strauss. The German press reported that at one of the gatherings, when a CP member tried to approach him, Brezhnev plunged into a long and friendly conversation with Strauss, treating the CPer in a very offhand fashion. The idea was to give the impression that Brezhnev cares only for governmental forces in the West and not for the workers' movement. This corresponds with the Soviet Union's foreign policy posture. Although in Africa and Asia Brezhnev may support various revolutionary movements when convenient, here in Europe he demonstrates that he is not a revolutionary, and that the Soviet regime is as 'statesmanlike' and 'responsible' as the Western governments.

How does the repression against the Helsinki groups compare with previous drives?

Some people have been comparing these trials to the terror of the 1930s, but obviously Stalin was destroying the lives of millions and whole nations who had not even opposed the regime. Now it is a question of the regime trying to deal with its own crisis and to defeat those who are actually struggling against its policies.

But in my view the recent trials are more serious than the repression in 1972.

But surely the arrests and trials of '72 encompassed much larger numbers of oppositionists?

Yes, but at that time they thought it would be enough to imprison about 20 oppositionists and this would finish the movement. Now the trials are simply the spearhead of a whole assault on the movement as a whole. Unlike in 1972 there is an attempt to attack the democratic movement ideologically, to make the

masses feel that these dissidents are traitors, enemies of Russia, etc. The accusations centre on their being Jewish, that they are trying to sell out the state to the West, that they are trying to destroy the state.

Still, anyone and everyone was arrested in 1972, whereas now various people are still free, Kandyba for example. The Ukrainian group has new open members and so on.

This is true, but they are using other methods, not just imprisonment. They use provocations to create dissension among the dissidents — for example using the Jewish question in the Georgian group.

Attention in the Western press has been focused overwhelmingly on the Moscow group. How do the groups outside Moscow differ from the Moscow group?

All 5 groups were formed on the same basis — the Helsinki Accords and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The only specific difference between Moscow and the other four groups is that the latter raise the question of national rights and therefore place a marked emphasis on the struggle against Great Russian Chauvinism.

In my opinion the regime deals more harshly with the Helsinki Groups outside Moscow. The harshest persecution takes place in the Ukraine because, after all, the movement there has historically had the most support. More than 50% of Soviet political prisoners are Ukrainians. The only Ukrainian dissident to have been let out to the West is myself (Pyotr Grigorenko was let out as a Russian as he himself says). The national question is the issue which is least understood in the West. Here most attention is still focused on the Moscow opposition and on Jewish emigration. This is partly because of the presence of embassies and journalists in Moscow, making information about events there more accessible. In the Ukraine there is nothing of this sort. Many people here are taken in by Soviet propaganda on the situation in the Ukraine.



Leonid Plyushch and others protesting against the erection of the Shevchenko monument in Paris by the USSR government.

For example, the Soviet government has just erected a monument to Shevchenko (3) in Paris — on the face of it everything seems fine, the regime seems to cherish the works of the great giant of Ukrainian literature. Yet last year, when a new edition of Shevchenko's writings appeared in Ukraine, 8 of his works had been cut out, censored. Furthermore, the Shevchenko monument in Paris has been erected opposite the Ukrainian Catholic Church there, a Church banned in the Ukraine since the end of the War. This reminds one of Trotsky's remark:

"The Stalin bureaucracy erects statues to Shevchenko but only in order more thoroughly to crush the Ukrainian people under their weight." [The Ukrainian Question', April 1939, in 'For A Free Independent Soviet Ukraine' by Leon Trotsky.]

The Soviet government erects a monument to Shevchenko in Paris, the better to be able to crush cultural life in the Ukraine today. What people in the West refuse to recognise is the fact that so long as there is national oppression by Russia nothing will change for the better in the USSR.

Did the demonstration in Tbilisi, Georgia this spring over the new status of Russian in the proposed Constitution surprise you? How significant do you think it was?

Yes, I was surprised, both by the capacity for spontaneous organisation and by the level of national awareness that it indicated. Of course, the national consciousness of the Georgians as well known, but this degree of organisation and mass participation seems to have taken the

authorities by surprise and forced them to back down. This event will undoubtedly influence the movements in the other non-Russian republics.

In comparison with the politically active recent exiles from the Soviet Union, the open opposition seems remarkably united inside the country at present. How far is this impression accurate?

This is more or less correct: there is a great degree of unity inside the country on the basis of the struggle for democratic rights. Sometimes the democratic movement will even defend individuals in anti-democratic currents against harsh repression from the regime.

When people emigrate ideological differences come to play a much greater role. Inside the USSR the pressure of the common enemy pushes these differences into the background to some extent.

Another factor tending towards unity, especially in relation to the national question, is the experience of the activists who have been imprisoned in the camps. This has especially helped to clarify the ideas of Russians who had not understood the point of view of those from the non-Russian republics before their arrest. Another important development has been the extension of the movement beyond intellectual circles. In recent years up to the most recent wave of repression, support has come from wider strata of the society: to some degree workers have joined the opposition and have attempted to organise themselves in the Free Trade Union Association; the non-Russian democratic movements have begun to co-ordinate activity more closely, and the involvement of Petro Vins and the Baptists is an example of greater involvement by popular

religious currents. In the past the Baptist movement kept strictly to its own demands without linking up with the wider democratic movement.

This involvement does not seem to apply to the Orthodox Christians.

This is a very complicated problem. There is a long tradition in the Orthodox Church of religious life being subordinated to the state: historically, this tradition goes back to Ivan the Terrible and Peter I. The Orthodox Patriarchate and hierarchy have continued to subordinate themselves to the Soviet state. This puts Orthodox believers in a bizarre situation: if they recognise the Church they should recognise the authority of the hierarchy; but if they support the hierarchy then they also find themselves supporting the regime. This produces a very complicated psychological and religious problem for such Christians.

They try to resolve the problem in various different ways. Some recognise the Church but not the hierarchy. For example, the Orthodox Youth Club contains sections which formally recognise the Church but don't go to it, setting up their own services. Others see a solution in Orthodox unity with Catholicism; and yet others have continued to support both the hierarchy and the regime. As a result there is now a crisis within the Orthodox community, with some going over to reactionary positions while others are tending towards the democratic movement. It's a very complex situation.

Footnotes.

1. Set up in January 1969 by Pyotr Yakir
2. Brezhnev visited France earlier this year.
3. Shevchenko, the giant of Ukrainian literature, was a poet writing in the 19th century.

Soviet Paper Publishes Anti-Semitic Attack

BY PATRICK CAMILLER

One of the stock official responses to questions about dissidents is that these are all reactionary, anti-socialist elements from whom the Soviet public has to be given protection. However, as C. Levinson showed in an article in *Labour Focus* Vol. 1 No.3, anti-semitic propaganda of the crudest kind has more than once appeared in the official Soviet media. (1)

An article by *Le Monde* Moscow correspondent Daniel Vernet, which appeared in the issue dated 17-18 September, describes the growth of a particular kind of conspiracy theory with a long tradition in European reactionary politics. 'One Valeri Emelyanov, a university lecturer, economist and member of the Soviet Communist Party, has for two years been arguing in semi-public talks ... that there is a Jewish-masonic plot to establish Jewish world domination by the year 2000!' In a long letter written to the Central Committee early last year, Mr Emelyanov 'shows' that the plot is already far advanced: 'It is well known that the

Zionist-masonic **konzern** controls 80% of the economy and 95% of the mass information media in the capitalist world.' The Carter administration has itself become a den of Jews and free-masons — as Mr Emelyanov shows by listing all its members beside the comment 'Jew', 'married to a Jewess', or 'member of a lodge'. Eurocommunism, that recent phenomenon which has been the object of so much discussion and analysis on the Left, holds no mysteries for Mr Emelyanov: it too is the result of masonic infiltration, as may be seen from the history of the French Communist Party in particular. Amnesty International, various human rights defence committees ... all the work of Jews and free-masons.

It is revealing enough that the Soviet university system should find a place for such an evidently diseased mind. But there are signs that, in the context of the ideological gloom of Brezhnev's last period, it is beginning to find an echo in the official press. Thus, a recent article in

Komsomolskaya Pravda, the Soviet youth daily, sees Zionism and freemasonry as the twin forces standing behind big business and seeking to establish 'undivided sway over the "free world"'. Their methods, in the words of Vernet's summary, are the traditional ones of 'infiltrating top spheres of civil power, collecting information with a view to increasing their influence over presidents and parliaments, and secretly manipulating the economy'.

It would appear that the more isolated the Brezhnev regime becomes in the labour movement internationally, the deeper it will dig in the barrel of reactionary ideas in order to give itself a domestic ideological cover for its anti-democratic policies.

Note.

(1) In a future issue of *Labour Focus*, we hope to publish an account by Ukrainian socialist Leonid Plyushch of the alarming rise of anti-semitic and semi-fascist ideas and forces in the Soviet Union.

POLAND

The Peasant Movement: An Eyewitness Account

[For some months a mass movement of resistance to a new pension law has been spreading in the Polish countryside. This very significant social and political development has been almost totally ignored by the daily press in Western Europe. In our last issue we carried documents about the first upsurge of peasant resistance in the Lublin area. Below we reprint a slightly shortened version of a remarkable eye-witness account of the movement by a journalist from Paris. It was originally printed in Liberation of 2 October 1978. We also publish a number of documents from a second centre of the movement, Sbrozsa Duza. Translation of the eyewitness account is by Mark Jackson for Labour Focus. The documents from Sbrozsa Duza and translations were made available by the Appeal for the Polish Workers.]

“The committee will meet at 8pm in the parish hall.”

These are the concluding words of a sermon given by Father Czeslaw Sadlowski in the church of Sbrozsa Duza, a village situated a few dozen kilometres from Warsaw. The faithful, consisting of thirty peasants, mostly women in wide, coloured skirts and black shawls, raise their heads, cross themselves and leave the church.

For three days now, the 1,200 inhabitants of Sbrozsa Parish have been “dissidents”. The region is blockaded by the police, strangers are forbidden to enter, and peasant militants are threatened and arrested. The administration has been sending in bailiffs, harassing the taxpayers and persecuting the faithful. Just as in many other Polish villages, however, the peasants of Sbrozsa don't give a damn, they have nothing more to lose.

Things began on the evening of Saturday, 9 September, when 70 peasants met in the parish hall, situated in the basement of Sbrozsa's brand new church. The meeting went on for most of the night. There was no lack of things to complain about: the chief topic was the new pension law which came into operation at the start of the year, and which in practice compels old peasants to give up their land to the state. However, other things were also discussed, including the poor supply of goods in the countryside, the difficulties in obtaining agricultural materials, and the decline in general living conditions. At the end of the meeting, the peasants elected twenty or so of their number to a “Committee for Peasants' Self-Defence”. After mass the next day 200 peasants signed a declaration which was then sent to the Diet (Parliament), the Council of State,

Cardinal Wysinski and the clandestine organisations of the opposition—the KSS-KOR (Social Self-Defence Committee) and Ropcio (Committee in Defence of Human Rights).

A month before this committee was set up, another had been established in the Lublin region.

This movement threatens to spread quickly throughout Poland, and is a source of concern especially for Party First Secretary Edward Gierek. He announced in a recent speech that the pension law will probably be ‘re-examined’. But will this be enough to silence the discontent of the peasants?

A PEASANT NAMED ROZECK

The first peasants' self-defence committee was established in July in Ostrowek, a village in the Lublin region. At its origin was a peasant called Rozeck, the owner of a small farm. Since the committee was created, it has been almost impossible to see this peasant. The authorities first threw him into jail, then released him and attempted to isolate the region to stop the disease spreading.

A member of the underground Polish opposition, more precisely, a member of the KSS-KOR, has several times been to Rozeck's village, Kolonia Gorna. Just as he was telling me about the peasants' story, the telephone rang and we were told of the appearance of a second self-defence committee, this time just a few miles from Warsaw.

‘Rozeck's action really began after the Diet adopted the law on peasants' pensions in October 1977. The Party organised a campaign in order to explain this law among the peasants. At one of the campaign meetings, Rozeck spoke up and

criticised the authorities. The peasants there supported him and the meeting broke up in confusion, with the Party members leaving.’

A law on old age pensions sounds rather progressive to me. Why do the peasants oppose it?

‘Progressive!’ exclaimed the other man, roaring with laughter. ‘The aim of the law is to collectivise the land of old peasants.’

‘In principle, each male peasant over 65 and each woman over 60 will have the right to a pension. That's OK, but there are certain unbelievable conditions attached: they cannot draw their pensions until 1980; and they have to sell at least 15,000 zlotys (400 dollars) worth of goods each year to the state, and pay certain contributions based on the area of their land and their age. Finally, only one pension will be paid per couple, even though both will have to contribute.’

What share of Polish agriculture is privately owned?

‘More than two thirds. The government has never really been able to collectivise the Polish peasantry. According to the most recent statistics, from 1976, 71.1% of the land is privately farmed, 17.7% is collectivised and 2.1% is owned co-operatively. These figures are significant if one considers that over the last 30 years, more than 20% of the population has left the countryside for the city. More people now live in towns than in the countryside. It is, of course, the young people who have left — hence the importance of this law on old-age pensions. There are already more than 700,000 peasants in the countryside who are old enough to be collecting pensions.’



A farm in Karolyn

What happened when the law was passed?

'Several thousand peasants refused to pay their contributions. The response varied widely from region to region, but overall some 300,000 peasants refused to pay. It was a spontaneous movement. For the most part the peasants did not pay because they could not afford to. There is enormous poverty in the countryside.

'For the first six months of the year, the authorities took no steps, because they wanted to assess the extent of the boycott movement. Since July, however, they have been sending in bailiffs to carry out seizures of property. Although this has persuaded some people to pay up, it has also caused the discontent to grow. The bailiffs have been thrown out of some villages, so they have come back with the police.

'In the village and region from which Rozeck comes, the boycott movement became very significant in extent. Rozeck was already something of a celebrity, owing to the fact that he had been denouncing the law since October (77), and had even been prosecuted by the authorities for an "administrative offence" and for hooliganism. He was acquitted, and continued his campaign by organising meetings and travelling round the entire region to talk to peasants. He even managed to get some leaflets printed, which is quite an achievement under Polish conditions.'

How was the self-defence committee created?

'In the Lublin region, where the boycott movement was particularly strong, the bailiffs carried out a massive number of seizures of property. The peasants reacted by throwing out the bailiffs. Then the police suddenly tried to arrest Rozeck; the peasants opposed the arrest physically, and decided to call a milk strike which lasted three days. Finally, on Sunday, 30 July, over two hundred peasants met together in Ostrowek, electing a provisional self-defence committee of 16 members, one for each village, and sending a resolution to the authorities.'" [See last issue of Labour Focus for the documents from the Self-Defence Committee.]

The response was not slow in coming. The police invaded the region, put pressure on the peasants, and arrested Rozeck. This was a decisive test for the government. The members of the new committee turned up at the police station and freed Rozeck — a spectacular action which caused people to think in high places. The authorities confined themselves to encircling the rebellious area and preventing contact with the outside world. Two German journalists were forcibly taken back to Warsaw after they breached these regulations.

In spite of such precautions, however, information is still being received, thanks especially to the underground oppositional journals.

KOR spokesperson, Jacek Kuron, told me

two days ago: 'Rozeck is on his way to becoming the peasant leader of the opposition. When I go to prison, it takes two months to get me out; but the peasants did not wait even 24 hours. The government has ignored the peasants for 30 years. They have done nothing since then. Now the discontent has reached the point where the movement spreads like wildfire.'

The announcement that a second self-defence committee has been formed seems to prove him right. More than 200 peasants recently sent a resolution to the authorities after a general assembly. On this occasion, the village concerned, Sbrozsa Duza, is 40 kms. from Warsaw, not far from Grojec.

'THERE IS NOTHING WORSE THAN BAD OR UNJUST LAWS.'

It is not easy to reach Sbrozsa Duza. After travelling along bumpy, deeply-rutted roads, one sees a number of farmhouses scattered about the countryside, and then a brand-new church. In the basement, a parish hall has been fixed up. It is here that general assemblies and committee meetings take place.

Father Czeslaw Sadlowski greeted me with a broad smile. This 40-year-old son of a peasant already spent ten years struggling to have his church built. 'In those years I had to say mass in private houses. Then we celebrated it in the open air, come wind or rain, summer or winter. The peasants attended every day. We began to build the church without permission. People were imprisoned. Two years ago, we finally succeeded: the authorities gave way.' Father Czeslaw, a thin man in a black cassock, led me quickly into the presbytery: 'The police must not see us.'

'There is nothing worse than bad or unjust laws. We peasants of Sbrozsa Duza quote these words of Piotr Skarga. We met on Saturday, 9 September to protest against these bad laws ...' Two sides of a typed sheet of paper and a dozen sheets of signatures — this is the peasants' resolution. 'Piotr Skarga was a very famous 17th century preacher who was born here,' Father Czeslaw explains. '188 peasants from 13 villages in the region signed the resolution to the authorities and to the opposition movement and the Cardinal. A delegation has left for Warsaw to meet members of the Diet.'

'This evening there is a meeting exclusively for the peasants of Sbrozsa. The others only come on Sundays, because it's a long way on foot.'

GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT SBROSZA DUZA

By 8pm there are already some 20 peasants in the parish hall. They are seated on benches, like at school. The women have swapped their black shawls for coloured

ones. The men, in blue, or in heavy woollen trousers, twist their caps in their hands.

Their faces are serious, their shoulders sagging somewhat with weariness from the journey.

Jerzy Gorski, a member of the committee and mayor of Sbrozsa, is the first to speak. 'Marian Plotrowski, Stepan Gorecki, Marian Kostowski, Jolanta Kostowska, Zakolocz and Kazimir Wzorek have gone to Warsaw to present our petition to the Diet. We have had no news about them, and they have certainly been arrested. The self-defence committee will try to get them released. We will wait for 48 hours, the period of preliminary detention, and if they have still not been released, we will meet again in order to decide on some action.'

A woman says that they should hold a milk strike like the one in Lublin.

'We do not hand over enough milk for that to be effective. There is not much cattle-farming here — we will have to do something else.'

A young peasant suggests that they should send another delegation to Warsaw, and make contact with the provisional committee in Lublin.

'We have to prevent the militia from attacking us here. Yesterday they tried to arrest the Mayor, and today they have been going around the farms trying to frighten people.'

Numerous heads nod in agreement.

'They came to my place,' says a young woman, 'and they used the fact that my husband was not there to intimidate me. They were saying that everyone would end up in prison.'

'Winter is approaching,' complains an old peasant, curled up on the bench. 'I don't have any coal. What is the committee going to do about that?'

This remark has an effect. A long series of complaints comes out like a litany. Each peasant continues the point made by his/her neighbour: the catalogue of misery.

'No, there isn't any coal, although the government promised us some. All we get is "black stone" which doesn't burn.'

'And then there's the supply of fertilizer. Once you could buy it without any problems. Now all you can find is this "red salt".'

'We are obliged to buy 500 kgs of this "red salt" from Russia. It doesn't fertilise anything, and has run out anyway.'

'If you want to buy agricultural machinery nowadays, you have to pay in dollars. My tractor doesn't work anymore and I can't get any spare parts.'

'And you can only get corrugated iron if you've got tickets. My roof has blown off, and I can't repair it. The officials are just filling up their own pockets.'

'Yes, and they are arrogant. There is nothing to be found in the village shop, and the woman who runs it doesn't bother to open up any more.'

A woman red with anger rises to her feet: 'You only get bread every three days. And even then it is full of worms and gnawed by rats. I have to go to Warsaw if I want to buy meat. I have to take a bus and spend hours waiting in the queue. Once I spent all night queuing. By the time they get to me there's nothing left.'

'The children have to go several kilometres every day to get to school. The government has done away with school-buses.'

'The road is completely ruined. We try to repair it, but we can't get either gravel or rock. The government wants us to die.'

The peasants grow agitated: Yes, that's what they want, our death. There are now a good 60 people in the hall. A fifty year-old man stands up:

'Things began to get really worse 2 or 3 years ago. Not only the food, but also materials. You just can't find anything now. I don't know whether everything in Poland is exported, or whether Polish miners are no longer able to get coal out of the ground, but I do know that the situation cannot go on. Officially, there is meant to be one tonne of coal for each family, but this year I don't know if we will get 500 kgs, not to talk about the quality.'

'To get some machines, I had to deliver 50 quintals of corn. Well, I have delivered the corn, but I am still waiting for the machines. Now they tell me that I've got to pay in dollars!'

'We must force the government to discuss with us. We should stop paying taxes, just as we have stopped paying pension contributions.'

'We must refuse our contributions to the agricultural assistance fund as well. The machines which our money buys are used by the PGRs [collective farms] instead of by us.'

By **JEAN MICHEL CARADEC'H**
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Peasant Strikes: Resolutions and Communiqués

1. Report of Assembly

"There is nothing more harmful in any kingdom than bad and unjust laws; both for the vengeance of God who will not allow them and for damage to the people who follow such laws."

Keeping in mind these words of Piotr Skarga, the son of the Grójec soil, we, the peasants of the Grójec district, assembled here in Sbrozsa Duza on 9 September 1978 at an open meeting, in order to protest and counteract such bad laws. The following villages were represented at the meeting: Olszany, Józefów, Zbroza, Przydrózek, Trzcianka, Gośniewice, Orzechowo, Karolin, Daltrozów, Pelinów, Klin Zbaraniecki, Kozie Glowcy, Lychów, Leźne, Wierzchowina.

The following subjects were discussed: 1. the pension scheme for farmers. 2. the supply of provisions and means of production for villages. 3. self-government. 4. the social position of farmers, etc.

The meeting stated the following:

1. Our district was greatly wronged and persecuted during the struggle over the building of the church in Sbrozsa. These wrongs have not been put right yet. We do not want to suffer even more injustices now.
2. The pension scheme is unjust and has to be changed.
3. The decisions concerning the village are made without the peasants' participation (nothing can be decided without us about us).
4. The village supply of provisions and means of production is critical and there has never been such a hungry harvest time as now.
5. The social position of the peasant deteriorates every year. If this continues, it will lead to social catastrophe.

The meeting decided for the nearest future:

1. We shall not pay any pension premiums in their present form and we shall oppose any administrative attempts to enforce them.
2. We shall claim better provisions for the villages.

Independent representatives of our villages were elected at the meeting. This representation adopts the name of the Grójec Farmers Defence Committee. Its members are: [followed by a list of 22 names].

We obligate the Committee to contact the previously formed



General Assembly of the peasants of Sbrozsa Duza

Temporary Farmers Defence Committee of the Lublin District and to undertake cooperation. We fully support the actions of the Lublin Committee. We are convinced that the central authorities should start talks with us on the subject of the pension scheme as well as the agricultural situation and we demand such talks. At the same time we pledge the Committee to act on behalf of every person unjustly treated.

To: the Primate of Poland, Polish Parliament (Sejm), the Council of the State, Workers Defence Committee (KOR), ROPCZIO (Movement for the Defence of Human Rights), Temporary Farmers Defence Committee of the Lublin District, veterans of the Peasant movement.

(188 signatures were deposited with the priest of Sbrozsa Duza, Czesław Sadłowski.)

Sbrozsa Duza

9 September 1978

2. Resolution of Sbrosza Duza Peasants

In the resolution of 9 September we demanded a better provision of food and means of production for the villages. Within a week of the formation of the Committee the supplies in our areas have improved: there are enough fertilizers, fodder, wire, etc. In the village of Kozie Glowy a shop was opened whose construction had dragged on for years. In order to make up for meat shortages, we are sent ox hooves in quantities far beyond our needs.

However, the commune council officials from Prošno and Jasieniec molest the peasants in our area. They try to persuade the Committee members to leave the Committee in exchange for various reliefs, provisions, permissions and building materials. And thus, for example, Mr. Jerzy Skrzeczyński from Daltrozów, a father of seven, was promised, for leaving the Committee, the tax relief that he had been refused before.

Especially active in the campaign against the peasants are: Jan Gregolec, head of the Jasieniec commune; Leszek Golota, the party secretary of the Jasieniec commune; Tyszkiewicz, SKR director; Czech, head of the Promno commune. Our district is watched day and night by the police and security forces. On the nights of 11 September and 16 September light rockets were fired. Helicopters are flying over the villages. Members of the Committee are under surveillance. The police check identity papers of travellers and passers-by. On 11 September the police tried to take away Jerzy Górski, the Zbroza village administrator, who is a member of the Farmers Defence Committee. But the church bells rang, the fire siren sounded, people flocked together and Jerzy Górski was released. He was detained, however, on 15 September in Jasieniec, where he had gone to pay his taxes. Attempts were made to interrogate him informally. On the same day another member of the Farmers Defence Committee, Mirosław Macierzyński, was forcibly detained during work. He was taken to Grójec, where the police tried to examine him informally. But the wives and children of both men went to Jasieniec, to the police headquarters, and demanded immediate release of their husbands. Both men were released shortly afterwards.

The policemen try to persuade the peasants to give up meeting in the parish hall, under the pretext that it is a desecration of a holy place. They seem to have forgotten how a few years back they themselves had taken away the Holy Eucharist from the chapel in Zbroza Duza and abandoned it among dustbins near the church in Jasieniec. Members of the Committee have suggested meetings with the local authorities in order to discuss various village problems. Nobody, however, has accepted such an invitation.

New members have joined the Committee: Janina Janusz from Daltrozów, Andrzej Skiba and J. Marciniak from Wierzchowina, Anna Górka from Zbroza.

We demand that police and security forces be withdrawn from our district. The fact that peasants organize themselves for discussion with authorities cannot justify an emergency state. We expect that dialogue will be undertaken with the Committee. We believe that there are no problems that Poles with Poles cannot solve by means of peaceful dialogue.

Zbroza Duza

17 September 1978

3. Sbroza Duza: Communiqué No.1

On 17 September 1978 in the village of Lisów, the Radom voivodship, a protest strike was staged. On that day the farmers, as a sign of protest, stopped milk deliveries because the dairies undertook to deduct pension premiums from the payments for milk.

Signed by Henryk Kosut (Lisów) and Tadeusz Fijalkowski. Members of the Committee of Farmers' Independent Trade Union.)

Zbroza Duza

26 September 1978



Father Czesław Sadłowski and peasant woman

Photo: Jean Michel Caradec'h

4. Sbroza Duza: Communiqué No.2

On 24 September in Zbroza the Farmers Defence Committee met the local people. The open meeting was attended by over 120 people. They discussed the present situation of the Grójec region. The present local administrator of the Jasieniec commune council, Jan Grygolec, illegally instructed the dairy cooperative to deduct pension premiums (which we refused to pay) from payments for our milk deliveries. Therefore the meeting resolved to warn the authorities that, if such practices are resorted to, we shall stage a farmers' protest strike by stopping milk deliveries in our area. Security people tell peasants that if we do not stop our activity, whole families will be imprisoned and our children taken away from us and put in custody. Such a statement is in itself reprehensible and coming from members of the security forces, brings to mind the monstrous terror of the Stalin era. We demand that the supreme authorities call the members of the security forces to order and instruct them how to discharge their duties.

The meeting demands that the deputy for the Grójec region comes for a discussion. He is supposed to represent us in Parliament but we do not even know him. We expect him at the future committee meetings which take place every Sunday at 1 p.m. in Zbroza Duza in the parish hall.

At the same time we take the opportunity to explain to the members of the security forces and the lower administration officials—who object to the place of our meetings—that since we have been deprived of the possibility to meet in the Peoples' Home, at the fire station, in the community centre, we meet and

intend to meet in the parish hall. The hall was built a few years ago by us and with our own money. We treat it as the property of our village community. At the same time we express our gratitude to the Church and our parish priest, Czesław Sadłowski, for respecting our rights and allowing us to meet in the parish hall.

The meeting has elected new representatives of the Grójec Farmers Defence Committee: Władysław Krzykowski - Olszany, Tadeusz Ciesielewski - Lewiczyn, Zdzisław Ostatek - Grójec. This [This is followed by the full list of the members of the Grójec Farmers Defence Committee of 29 names.]

Zbroza Duza

26 September 1978

HUNGARY

The Political Situation in Hungary

BY JANET ASQUITH

[In this issue of Labour Focus we are starting what we hope will be a fuller coverage of events in Hungary with a survey of conditions in that country which we hope will be a useful introduction for those of our readers who are not familiar with developments there. At the end of her article, Janet Asquith has provided a list of books and articles for those who would like more detailed information.]

Readers of **Labour Focus** will be aware that Hungary has not figured very much in its columns: in the catalogue of state repression of dissidents in Eastern Europe, Hungary appears to stand apart. Why is this?

First of all, it is not because there are no dissidents to repress. The writings of the Budapest school (Heller, Márkus, Vajda and others), the sociologists András Hegedüs, Iván Szelényi and Miklós Haraszti, and more recently Marc Rakovski, have appeared widely in the West in recent years. More recently, Hungarian **samizdat** publication has become established, culminating in the two volumes **Marxism in the Fourth Decade** and **Profile**, reviewed recently in **Index** (see bibliography): these brought together essays by several dozen young intellectuals. There are signs too, that links are being made between these left-dissidents and other groups such as the dissident Methodists (1).

Secondly, it is not the case that there is no repression of dissident intellectuals. As a consequence of the publication of the two **samizdat** volumes, five people have lost their jobs so far, and a number of others have been refused passports for travel to the West, or have found it impossible to publish their work. There has been sporadic police harassment, carefully aimed at the fringes of the dissident circles in order to discourage potential recruits. And quite apart from the more or less well-known figures who have either chosen exile (Szelényi, Kemény) or are currently out of Hungary on long-term passports with re-entry right (Heller, Márkus and others), there is a steady trickle of younger dissident intellectuals who decide that they can no longer tolerate the indignities and dishonesties of official intellectual life in Hungary, and do not return from visits to the West.

Thirdly, as a recent article by Rakovski in the French journal **Esprit** shows, while no intellectual of repute has been jailed in recent years, on average some 200 people are sentenced to prison terms every year for

'agitation against the state'. But these are, of course, ordinary unknown people whose plight does not concern the publicity-conscious campaigners for human rights in the White House and elsewhere.

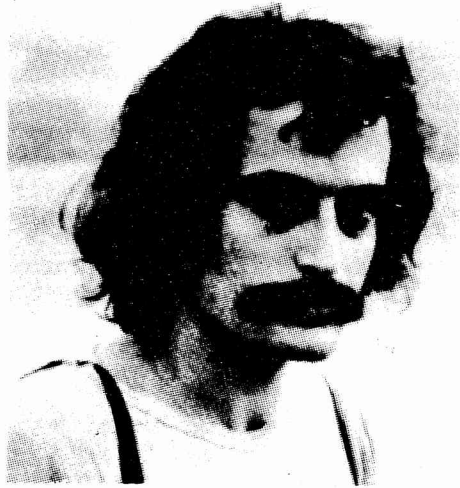
Nevertheless, there is a qualitative difference which remains between Hungary and the rest of Eastern Europe in this respect. In order to understand the specificities of the Hungarian case, it is necessary to sketch out very briefly some aspects of social, economic and political development in Hungary since 1956. The 1956 uprising has become one of the romantic, if fading legends of the Western Left. In Hungary, it remains for those old enough to have participated in it, and especially for old cadres, an extremely painful memory which still exercises a real effect on present-day politics. It is hard to convey the political damage which was caused by 1956, especially in its psychological and emotional aspects. This is not to say that those who sided with the uprising regret it, for those who have lived through the horrors of fascism and Stalinism are not given to indulging in regrets. But 1956 split the Hungarian left down the middle: it was not a matter of heroic revolutionaries versus brutal bureaucratic hacks, but a desperate struggle between people who shared common political experiences and even ideals. It is not so surprising therefore that many older Hungarians have preferred, and will always prefer, a political situation which guarantees a quiet life. The youngest generation of intellectuals, at the other extreme, are generally ignorant about 1956 and show little or no interest in it: they have been told in school what the authorities want them to think about it; which means that the usual heavy-handed presentation of 'the facts' is received with distrust and boredom, and their parents usually prefer not to talk about it. Those in between, now in their thirties, grew up in the lingering hopes that remained into the sixties: for them, perhaps, 1956 is on the agenda as part of their history with which Hungary will have to come to terms some day.

The impact of 1956 created the political conditions under which that particular form of compromise, Kádárism, could be established once the initial savage repression was over. The aim of Kádárism was not only to try to recuperate Hungary from the trauma of 1956, but also to ensure that Soviet military intervention was not risked again. It demanded the consolidation of a post-Stalinist state on the basis of acquiescence, not terror. Too slavish an

adherence to Soviet policy and practice could not be countenanced if the domestic truce was to be maintained; yet departure from Soviet policy had to be contained within carefully managed limits.

Through the 1960s, a rather stable form of 'social contract' evolved between the regime and the people, based on a number of interrelated elements. **First and foremost**, the authorities guaranteed a steadily rising standard of living and an acceptable availability of goods, especially essentials: as a result, compared to the rest of Eastern Europe, Hungary is a consumer's paradise, as the continual stream of Polish shoppers confirms. **Secondly**, once it was clear that the maintenance of this guarantee required comprehensive economic reforms, these were organised and implemented much more quickly and fully than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. **Thirdly**, both the freedom of debate among social scientists in preparing the reforms, and the differentiation of interests and powers which they created in the economy, were more or less absorbed in the attitudes and practice of the Hungarian party and its leadership: a degree of intellectual creativity and political diversity was accepted, however grudgingly, and could not but diffuse into the wider cultural realm. **Fourthly**, despite all this the party remained in tight control. Techniques of political fine-tuning were mastered — unlike, most notably, in Poland — which allowed discontents to be dealt with one by one using a judicious mixture of concessions and repression: in this the leadership's most potent weapons became the threat of what might happen if anyone rocked the boat too hard, and the constant reminders that life was easier in Hungary than elsewhere in the Soviet bloc.

This form of compromise proved acceptable not only to an older generation of managers and intellectuals who had participated in 1956, but also to a younger, more-or-less apolitical intelligentsia of educated technocrats. Those who retained their revolutionary socialist perspectives hoped that the economic reforms would generate an irresistible momentum towards more radical change. The same optimism was prevalent among those who were active in the student movement in the mid-1960s; at this time, there developed an unofficial movement against U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, and the illegal Maoist party crushed in the '60s, though small, reflected widespread dissatisfaction with the materialism and corruption of official life. The invasion of Czechoslovakia destroyed those hopes (2). Many have discarded their aspirations as a result: those that remain



Miklós Haraszti, author of 'A Worker in a Worker's State'.

committed socialists are a very small minority of intellectuals, slowly eroded in numbers by emigration or recantation, and maintaining a precarious foothold in research institutes, publishing, etc. Nevertheless, these small circles appear to be committed to a practice of intellectual work which is rigorous in its refusal to be guided by received theory, let alone official ideology: the result is, at its best, meticulous empirical analysis coupled with a refreshing unconcern with the Great Debates which obsess Western Marxists. Despite its isolation, not only from wider circles of the intelligentsia but also, and above all, from the population at large, the Hungarian left dissidents continue to carry out this work.

What, then, are the prospects for the Kádárist compromise? Because its economic aspect is so important, there is a strong temptation to look to economic problems as a trigger which could set off a progressive disintegration of the compromise and lead to a much broader opposition movement. Despite the fact that the economy has continued to perform well enough to keep living standards at least stable in recent years, this has only been possible by allowing the dramatic worsening of Hungary's terms of trade (higher prices for raw materials) to be absorbed in a very high balance of payments deficit with the West, financed by credits. In the continuing Western recession, it is proving very hard to achieve the levels of hard-currency exports which were the rationale for modernisation programmes based on Western machinery imports: and internally, the economic reform has become a charade, at least in large-scale industry, with a complex structure of state subsidies and specific interventions making a nonsense of the supposed role of the market in guiding decisions and evaluating performance.

Furthermore, the need to expand domestic energy output to avoid over-reliance on OPEC oil (there being no prospect of obtaining a higher growth in Soviet supplies) will tie up considerable investment funds in the next period: will there be enough left over to make a serious impact

on the most potentially explosive problem of the housing shortage, and to continue modernisation in the consumer-goods industries?

Despite these problems, prophesies of doom from Hungarian economists are hard to take too seriously when the same people have been making the same prophesies for years. There is no convincing evidence that the leadership has lost its grip on the economic system, or that it will not be able to continue to muddle through, making use of its new-found political capital in Washington, drawing on reserves of underemployment in industry, and squeezing the flourishing 'second economy' of the informal private sector. I am more inclined to give support to a second, rather different argument for seeing the Kádárist compromise as threatened. The problem with the granting of concessions is that it tends inexorably to disperse and undermine central power and authority, encouraging further demands — a dynamic that may prove as unstable, eventually, as that between the centralisation of power and the use of terror under Stalin. Concessions on a piecemeal basis undermine the official ideology by recognising the real existence of particular group interests in opposition to the 'social interest'. What is more of a danger is that they undermine the authority of those middle layers of the hierarchy who are made scapegoats for initially resisting demands, and then have to implement concessions imposed over their heads; leaders in these middle ranks, however, have no social or political basis for articulating these dissatisfactions. But the real problem is that the concessions made to demands for greater economic freedom, both in petty industry and in privatised consumption, create an insidious disintegration of society, making it much harder for the leadership to control and manipulate the formation of interests in different groups and strata. Should there be any reason for a broad social movement to emerge on some issue, the Kádárist techniques of political fire-fighting would be severely stretched.

As for the dissident left, they have little expectation of any dramatic upheaval. Their perspective is more one of a slow accretion of contacts with other dissident circles both in Hungary and abroad, and continued study of the realities of 'actually existing socialism'. The publication of selections from *Marxism in the Fourth Decade* and *Profile* in Poland, and shortly in France under the title *0.1%*, may lead to further repressive measures, but thus far it seems that the authorities are being careful to maintain their international reputation. In particular, they do not want to undermine their recent and quite successful attempts at wooing the Eurocommunist parties of the West.

In conclusion, while it is true that neither the dissident activities nor their repression are as widespread in Hungary as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it is important that

socialists in the West should not ignore them. Partly, this is because there is no guarantee that the stance of the authorities will change, and if it does the solidarity movement must be ready to act. But it is also because the dissident intellectuals in Hungary are making some of the most important and interesting contributions to the development of a Marxist analysis of Eastern European societies, which demands greater attention from their Western comrades.

Footnotes.

1. See *Labour Focus*, Vol.1 No.5, p.22.
2. See article by Miklós Haraszti, *Labour Focus* Vol.2 No.4, p.14.

Selected Further Reading

Books:

- Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956* (Allison & Busby, 1976)
 András Hegedűs, *Socialism & Bureaucracy* (Allison & Busby, 1976)
 András Hegedűs, Agnes Heller, Mária Márkus and Mihály Vajda, *The Humanisation of Socialism* (Allison & Busby, 1976)
 Miklós Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State* (Penguin, 1977)
 Marc Rakovsky, *Towards an East European Marxism* (Allison & Busby, 1978)
 György Konrad and Iván Szelényi, *Towards the Class Power of the Intelligentsia* (Harcourt Brace, forthcoming)

Articles:

- Section on 'Socialism in Hungary', *Telos* no. 17, 1973
 C. Cartwright, 'The Myth of the Economic Reforms in Hungary', *Critique* No.5, 1975
 Marc Rakovsky, 'Marxism and Soviet Societies', *Capital and Class* No.1, 1977
 J. Kóvacs, 'Le compromis social hongrois', *Esprit*, Paris, January 1977
 Iván Szelényi, 'Notes on the Budapest School', *Critique* No.8, 1977 (with useful bibliography)
 Stefan Mandel, 'Filling the Vacuum', *Index on Censorship* Vol.7 No.2, 1978 (on the new samizdat)
 Balazs Rab, 'New Hungarian samizdat', *Index on Censorship* Vol.7 No.4, 1978 (second part forthcoming)
 Marc Rakovsky, 'La Hongrie est-elle si différente?', *Esprit*, July 1978 (on treatment of crimes against the state)
 Gabriel Becker, 'The Left in Hungary', *Critique* No.9, 1978
 Maurice T. Maschino and Fadela M'Rabet, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1978 (useful thorough survey of present economic and social trends)

A Little Safety Valve?

Someone said that Kadarism meant allowing anything under 'the leading role of the Party'. The official journal *Hungarian Review* has now extended this Salinist principle to reproducing the following (admittedly rather stale) anti-Stalinist joke:

A Conversation among three in a cell:

- Why are you here?
 —Because I said something bad about the Minister of the Interior. And you?
 —Me, because I said something good.
 —What about you?
 —Me, I am the Minister of the Interior.

ROMANIA

Regime Terror against Hungarian Activist

BY PATRICK CAMILLER

According to information reaching the West and reported separately in *The Times* and *The Financial Times* in mid-October, a major campaign is being waged by the Romanian authorities to compel former Central Committee member Karoly Kiraly to renounce his stand in support of national minority rights. (See *Labour Focus*, Vol.2, No.1.)

Kiraly has now been subjected to two attacks, which indicate that the authorities will stop at nothing to terrorize and silence him. On one of these occasions, he narrowly escaped death when a heavy lorry was driven straight at his passenger-car. A few days later, he informed the police that his wind-screen had been shattered after he had heard what sounded like a shot.

According to the same reports, Kiraly has recently been sacked as factory manager in the remote town of Caransebes, to which he was sent soon after his letters to Party leaders were published abroad. He is now apparently back in his home-town of Tirgu Mures — a fact which, if true, suggests that his exile aroused such strong discontent in this major Hungarian-speaking centre that

only his return, as a hostage under effective 24-hour house arrest, could be expected to restore calm.

However, despite the two terrorist attacks and despite the accusations of betraying the fatherland levelled against him in Bucharest, Kiraly shows no signs of giving up his views. This is not the first time that he has clashed with the highly personalised Ceausescu leadership on major policy issues. In 1972, he was dropped from the ruling Political Executive Committee (officially 'at his own request') after the Romanian leader launched his extremely unpopular 'mini-cultural revolution', designed to reverse the relative cultural liberalization of the late sixties. But this time, although Kiraly has been expelled from the CC and, in some reports, from the Party itself, he is clearly by no means an isolated figure. Not only has he received considerable support from the Hungarian-speaking population, but at least two fellow Hungarian CC members, Professor Lajos Takacs and the well-known writer Andras Sutoe, have written similar protests about ethnic discrimination. In these circumstances, and given the periodic interest

shown by Budapest media in the problem, it will be very difficult for the Ceausescu leadership to regain control of the Hungarian-speaking minority without resorting to a high and seemingly unacceptable level of repression.

The sharp re-emergence of the national question in Romania should be seen in the light of the clear shakiness of the Ceausescu regime and its growing unpopularity even among sections of the Party and State leadership. The defection this summer of Ceausescu's personal adviser and intelligence chief Ion Pacepa — certainly one of the most important such defections from Eastern Europe since the thirties — appears to have deeply shaken Ceausescu himself and sparked off a major reorganization crisis within the Ministry of the Interior and other state apparatuses. When, early in October, seven crew-members of Ceausescu's personal yacht chose an unguarded moment to set sail for Istanbul, it must have seemed that with this otherwise rather minor incident the ship of state was really beginning to get out of the helmsman's control.

Psychiatric Abuse in Romania

BY PATRICK CAMILLER

[In a recent interview given to the West German Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee, Romanian worker-dissident Vasile Paraschiv gave considerable information about his experiences of psychiatric repression in Romania. See also Labour Focus Vol.1 No.2. We have now received information from Amnesty International mentioning thirty known cases of people held in psychiatric hospitals for political reasons. According to this report, the three hospitals most commonly used for such purposes are those of Poiana Mare, Dr Petru Groza and Balaceanca; the prison hospitals of Jilava and Sighetu Marmatiei also have sections reserved for political detainees. We reprint below extracts from the Amnesty campaign material on psychiatric abuse.]

'Edward Mayer-Buchler, a young dentist, is a member of the 400,000-strong German minority. In the early 1970s, he first applied for permission to emigrate to West Germany, where he has relatives. Arrested for the third time in October 1976, he was tried and confined indefinitely to the Dr Petru Groza Psychiatric Hospital under article 114 of the penal code.'

'Janos Torok, a member of the Hungarian minority, was confined to a psychiatric hospital in 1975, after he had addressed a meeting of 2,000 workers at the textile factory in Cluj/Kolozsvár, where he worked as a technician. In his speech Torok criticised the election system in Romania and suggested that members of the minorities are discriminated against. Subsequently he was taken from the rostrum by members of the factory security guard, and reportedly beaten up in front of fellow workers. During internment at the Dr Petru Groza psychiatric hospital he was reportedly injected with large quantities of drugs, including Plegomazin (a strong sedative generally invoking a state of apathy and slowing down both mental and physical reactions). Torok was released in early 1978 after an international campaign was launched on his behalf. He sent a letter to Amnesty International stating that he is a "convinced Marxist", that he believes that he falsely accused the Romanian authorities and that he is convinced that "the Romanian social order is better than a capitalist system". Evidence from previous cases suggests that prisoners are pressurized to write such letters to relatives and friends abroad upon their release. Torok is at present under house arrest and ordered to report regularly to the Securitate and a local psychiatric hospital.'

'Dumitru Blidaru, a member of the country's neo-Protestant religious community, was confined to a psychiatric hospital after writing to President Nicolae Ceausescu concerning the alleged persecution of his fellow-believers. Dr Calin Apostolescu, a professor of mathematics, is similarly confined after having publicly charged that the authorities discriminate against professionals and intellectuals who are not members of the Communist Party.'

The Amnesty material also summarizes a detailed statement by non-conformist poet Ion Vulcanescu about his treatment at the hands of the police and psychiatric authorities. Arrested on 10 April 1975, Vulcanescu was subjected to intensive interrogation and on 10 or 11 May severely beaten by Lieutenant Ion Corianu and Captain Ion Manescu after he refused to sign a document saying he had committed unspecified crimes.

'On the evening of 11 May 1975, Mr Vulcanescu was sent to the prison hospital of Jilava, south west of Bucharest, after he had suffered severe head injuries caused by kicking. He was held in the psychiatric ward of the hospital until 3 June. This ward was at the time occupied by both political and common offenders who were subjected

to treatment with various drugs.

The ward ... was headed by Professor Vasile Sirbu, a psychiatrist and colonel of the Securitate [secret police] under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. The medical personnel at this time included Dr Ion Serbanescu who was responsible for treatment with drugs and a male nurse named Velicu who administered the injection of drugs ... Mr Vulcanescu was irregularly injected with doses of Plegomazin and Mezoptil — up to 400 milligrams being administered daily by Dr Serbanescu and Mr Velicu ...

After one or two months of such treatment political prisoners were sent to the psychiatric ward of Sighetul Marmati prison. Mr Vulcanescu was told ... that he too would be sent to that prison if he submitted any more written or verbal complaints to the Romanian authorities about his medical treatment. Although Mr Vulcanescu was not beaten, he witnessed some of the other political prisoners being hit after they objected to drugs being injected into them. The criminal prisoners were beaten whenever they were seen communicating with the political prisoners. On 6 June, Mr Vulcanescu was transported back to the district headquarters of the Securitate in Calea Rahovei Street in Bucharest. During subsequent interrogations Mr Vulcanescu was told by Captain Ion Manescu that he was mentally ill and that Dr Serbanescu had diagnosed

“schizophrenic paranoia”. A few days later Mr Vulcanescu was driven to the Dr Marinescu Psychiatric clinic in Bucharest where he was injected with Plegomazin again ... On 13 August 1975 he was visited by Lieutenant Ion Corianu and asked to write a statement saying that he had not been treated with drugs during his period of confinement.’

Ion Vulcanescu was subsequently tried before a military tribunal in Plevhi Street, Bucharest on charges of “spreading anti-state propaganda” and insulting President Ceausescu and the Socialist Republic of Romania. The court informed him that his mother had submitted a statement saying that he was a criminal and mentally ill since an early age. It also read out statements by members of the official writers association (Mihai Gafita and Mircea Ciobanu) and by Dan Dasliu, the director of the *Albatros* publishing house, accusing him of being a political criminal. After a hearing of less than 30 minutes, he was ordered to be confined in a psychiatric hospital for an indefinite period under article 114 of the Penal Code.

Mr Vulcanescu was then taken to the psychiatric hospital of Poiana Mare, located south west of Bucharest in the county of Dolj, about 7km. from the Danube on the Bulgarian frontier.

‘The chief doctor in ward O from 1975 to 1977 was Dr Dragu, a captain in the

Securitatea. The chief doctor of ward 1 was Dr Ion Olteanu. Mr Ion Stefanita, from Bucharest, was the medical assistant who administered drugs to Mr Vulcanescu during his confinement. The daily dosage of Mezoptil or Plegomazin prescribed by Dr Olteanu was 600 mg but Mr Vulcanescu was actually injected with between 200 and 800 mg daily. Patients often bribed Dr Olteanu and Mr Stefanita. Some political prisoners in Poina Mare were let out for weekends to visit their families after making considerable payments to members of the medical personnel. Physical resistance to the administration of drugs or attempts to escape were punished by reduction of food rations and injections of sedatives up to 8 times a day. Food was normally served three times a day: bread, marmalade and tea for breakfast; soup (potato, vegetable or bouillon) and potatoes for lunch; bread with tea or coffee for dinner. Tea or coffee was obtainable at other times during the day. Fresh vegetables were not available at all and cooked meat or eggs were served for lunch irregularly, at least once a month. The toilets and patients’ rooms in the hospital were cleaned by the patients themselves and sheets were changed irregularly, usually within one month periods.’

Ion Vulcanescu was finally released in March 1976 after signing a statement that he had not been treated with drugs. In 1977 he was granted an exit visa and now lives in the United States.

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign Notes

*During the TUC Congress in Brighton the EESC distributed information to delegates on the repression that is taking place against members of the Free Trade Union Association in the USSR, and gained many signatures for an appeal to the Soviet authorities to release those who have been put in prisons or psychiatric hospitals.

*The Campaign organised a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool. Some 50 delegates attended the meeting which was addressed by Bob Wright of the AUEW executive, Eric Heffer MP, the EESC’s Hon. Chairman, and by Nigel Stanley of NOLS. The meeting was chaired by Phillip Whitehead MP. The Campaign has decided on the basis of this encouraging response to organise a meeting at next year’s Party conference.

*The EESC’s first campaigning pamphlet, “The British Labour Movement and Oppression in Eastern Europe” has just appeared with a preface by Eric Heffer. Illustrated and costing 30p plus postage, the pamphlet includes the following sections: a detailed examination of certain basic working class and democratic rights that are under attack in Eastern Europe today, with documented examples of recent violations of these rights; a section taking up common misconceptions about the labour movement’s responsibility to defend victims of repression in Eastern Europe; a section suggesting the kinds of activity that socialists and labour movement organisations can undertake in defence of those being oppressed in Eastern Europe; and a final section on why a body like the EESC is needed. This pamphlet should be of valuable assistance to those in the labour movement concerned to acquire accurate information about repression in Eastern Europe. It could also be used as a basis for discussion and debate in labour movement organisations.

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign

THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND OPPRESSION IN EASTERN EUROPE

FOREWORD BY ERIC HEFFER MP



Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign 30p

EESC pamphlet: ‘The British Labour Movement and Oppression in Eastern Europe’

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ILO Investigates Human Rights Violations

During the month of November, the governing body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) will be considering three complaints concerning violations of human rights in Eastern Europe.

The first complaint, lodged by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour, alleges that the Soviet Union has violated Convention 87 concerning freedom of association. This is in connection with the ruthless repression that was meted out to organisers of the Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the Soviet Union. Because of their activities most of them have been forcibly confined to psy-

chiatric hospitals for an indefinite period of treatment.

Poland has been accused by the ICFTU of violating the same convention. This refers to the harassment by the authorities of workers who have become involved in workers' defence committees, or in other activities, for eg., selling **Robotnik**, a samizdat publication for workers.

Czechoslovakia has been accused by the ICFTU of violating convention 111 concerning no discrimination on political grounds. The Chartists have documented very well the many dozens of cases of Chartists who were sacked because of their political convictions.

Gays in the Soviet Union

On 25 November simultaneous pickets of Soviet embassies and offices internationally are being held to demand an end to the repression of gays in the Soviet Union. As well as the massive social oppression and discrimination that gays face, and against which they have no means of organising, there is a draconian law against male homosexuality introduced by Stalin in 1934. This has been used to victimise political dissidents such as the Georgian film director, Sergei Paradzhanov, who

protested against cultural oppression in Ukraine.

The picket, which has been organised by the International Gay Association, deserves the maximum support from all anti-sexist groups and those concerned with democratic rights in Eastern Europe.

Picket: Aeroflot Office, Piccadilly, London, 25 November, 2 pm.

***Meta:** This is a quarterly journal produced by Ukrainian socialists in Canada with a wide coverage of events in Eastern Europe, but with special emphasis on the Ukraine. The latest issue includes an interview with Polish film director Andrej Wajda, an article on the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, a detailed survey of the current political opposition in Ukraine, and a dossier on the struggle to defend workers' rights in the USSR. The journal is printed and illustrated. Write to: **P.O. Box 324, Station P, Toronto, Ont., Canada.**

LETTER

Dear Labour Focus,

While I agree with the aim and spirit of your editorial on 'Double Standards' (Vol.2 No.4), I don't think that you are getting to the root of the problem: you are being dangerously naive about the hypocrisy of the socialist and labour movements in the West, treating as a problem of the choice of political tactics, when in fact it is a much more deep-rooted question of socialist theory and strategy.

You write: "The Tories use the repression in Eastern Europe for cynical electoral reasons. But the fact remains that such electoral demagogy works — large numbers of working people actually believe it. They believe that a victory for socialism here might produce the kind of political dictatorships operating today in Eastern Europe."

But such a belief cannot and must not be attributed merely to the cynical manipulations of the bourgeois media: furthermore, this belief is held not only by the credulous and confused, but by many militants in the labour movement. If you

examine the political practice of the British left, and in particular two of its roots — Fabian authoritarianism and Bolshevik authoritarianism — then this belief may well be justified. The British left is crippled in its politics by an all-pervasive **statism**, whether of the reformist or putschist kind. Consider the politics of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'; consider the relations between leaders and rank-and-file in the trade unions or in the parties of the revolutionary left; there are surely serious grounds for believing that the democracy would soon disappear from the much-vaunted ideal of 'democratic socialist planning' in the event of your rather casually undefined 'victory for socialism'.

Part of the reason for this lies in the tendency of the anti-Stalinist, including the Trotskyist, left in the West to blame the defeat of socialism in the Soviet Union on external factors (failure of the German revolution), unavoidable obstacles (low level of development), or contingent factors (Stalin himself), as if the absence of these factors in some future post-revolutionary period would render unproblematic the 'transition to socialism'.

One does not have to adopt in advance any particular position on Leninism, surely, in order to see the merit of attempting a serious analysis of the forms of society which exist today in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the implications of these forms for socialist strategy in the West. What the labour movement must face up to is not just the lack of human rights and the 'plight of working people' in Eastern Europe, but the nature of the political and economic system which **produces** these features. There is a real danger that, in seeking to outflank the reactionaries on this issue, **Labour Focus** will forget about this fundamental task in favour of a demagogy that could be, in its methods and perhaps even its real political effects, little different from that of the Tories. It is true that **Labour Focus** has a very specific and valuable function of providing information to the labour movement on Eastern Europe, but I hope very much that its editors and supporters also appreciate the long-term tasks of political analysis and education which are presented by what is happening in Eastern Europe.

Fraternally,
A reader.