

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

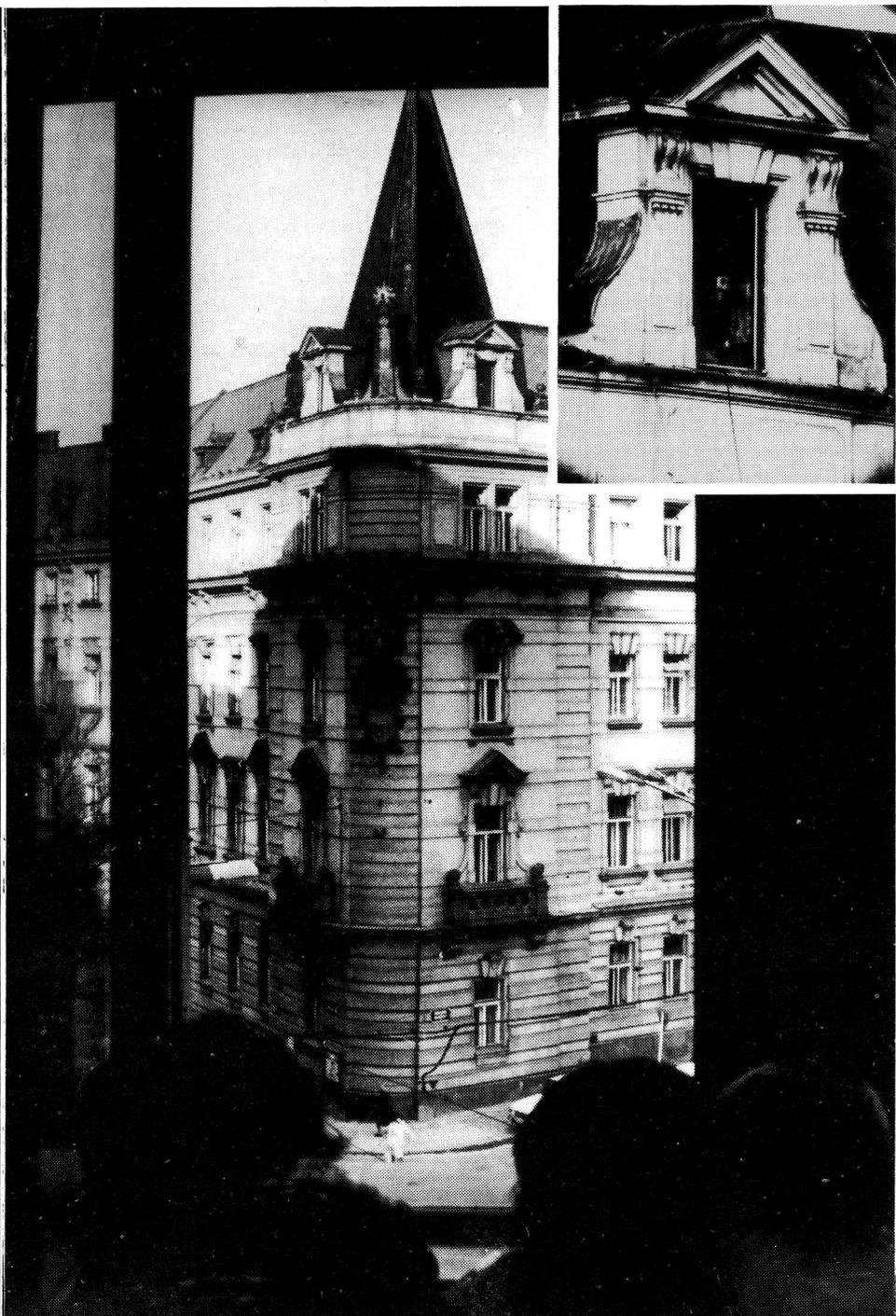
A Socialist Defence Bulletin on Eastern Europe and the USSR

CZECH TRIAL JUDGE FRAUD!

On 23 October 5 Czech civil rights activists were jailed for a total of 19½ years. The government claims its courts are ruled by the law, not the police. The accused produced documents showing the courts had acted repeatedly as weapons of police repression. For this Judge Kaspar jailed them as slanderous subversives.

These astonishing pictures tell the true story behind the Prague trial. The picture on the right shows the court building where the trial took place. It is taken from the flat of one of the accused, Vaclav Benda — by chance Benda's flat is opposite the court-house. Three of his children are pictured in the foreground. They are looking at an object in a garret window of the court-house and the inset photo shows what that object is: a political police video camera aimed into Benda's flat.

Kaspar's office is on the second floor of the court building and its window is visible two floors directly



below the video camera. transmitting its spy film
A third picture on page 2 goes ...
inside shows where the video camera's cable for (please turn to page 2).

Table of 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, 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.

Parts of this issue were prepared by the Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

All correspondence to:

**Labour Focus on Eastern Europe,
P O Box 50,
London N1 2PX.**

Residents of Canada and the USA interested in more information about Eastern Europe, USSR and solidarity campaigns are urged to write to our North American representatives: Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, P.O. Box 6574, Station 'C', Edmonton, Alberta T5B 4M4, Canada.

SUB RATES: Annual rates: UK, £3.50; All institutions, £5.50; Europe, surface 40 French francs or equivalent, airmail 46 French francs. Outside Europe, surface \$10, airmail \$15.

(Much of this issue is devoted to the October trial of civil rights activists in Prague. Items related to the trial are printed below in bold type with asterisks.)

EDITORIALS

*VONS Trial: An International Labour Movement Fact-finding Commission is Needed	1
Welcome to L'Alternative	1
*Essential Defence Information	1

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

*Czech Trial Judge Fraud!	Front Cover
*Judge Doubles as Cop	2
*The October VONS Trial -- by Jan Kavan	2
*VONS Member Jailed in Brno -- by Joe Singleton	6
New Co-operation between Helsinki Monitors and Charter 77 ...	6
*In Prague for the Trial -- by Catherine Samary	7

POLAND

Unofficial Political Life Still Flourishes -- by Peter Green	8
*Solidarity with VONS	8
Polish Socialist Group Formed	9
Documents:	
1. Founding Declaration	9
2. Platform of the Polish Socialists	10
Robotnik Editor on Unofficial Workers' Movement	11
Mining Disasters	12

EAST GERMANY

Rudolf Bahro's Views on Eastern Europe: An Interview with Günter Minnerup	13
---	----

SOVIET UNION

Document:	
The Democratic Movement in Perspective -- by P. Podrabinek and P. Abovin-Egides (Part 1)	16
News in Brief -- by Helen Jamieson:	
Left Oppositionist Jailed	21
Youth Repression in Kuibyshev	21
Free Trade Unionists	22
Appeal for Artist	22
Singer Murdered in Ukraine	22

HUNGARY

Hundreds Protest Prague Trial	22
--	----

ROMANIA

Democracy, Ceausescu Style	23
----------------------------------	----

LABOUR MOVEMENT

British Labour Calls for Fact-Finding Commission	23
Western Socialists Fly to Trial	24
Labour Movement Protests Against Prague Trial -- by Oliver MacDonald	24
Defend Fund Raises £1,000	25
International Meeting Plans Future Defence Work	25
ILO Backs Klebanov -- by Victor Haynes	26
Support for Polish Worker	26

REVIEW OF REVIEWS

L'Alternative	26
Meta	26

SPECIAL FEATURE

German Right and Human Rights -- by Joe Singleton	26
---	----

Photos on Front Cover by Ivan Barta (Palach Press).

EDITORIAL

VONS Trial : An International Labour Movement Fact-Finding Commission is Needed

By staging the October trial of 6 members of the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) the Czechoslovak authorities have started a battle which will be difficult for them to win and which has focused the attention of socialists throughout Europe: the battle to crush the civil rights movement in Czechoslovakia.

In taking on VONS, the Czech political police failed to grasp the character of the movement: it is not the last survivors of an old movement from the 1960s, despite the fact that a number of people prominent in the Prague Spring are associated with the committee. It is the start of a new wave of civil resistance, drawing support from an entirely new generation of young people, many of them young workers, others brought up in the tough school of repression faced by their parents after 1968. Such young activists are responding to their own direct experience in taking up the struggle for civil liberties; the regime has given them little to lose and will have great difficulty in intimidating them. Having jailed some VONS members simply for participating in the work of the committee, the Communist Party leadership will be driven to round up other VONS activists if it is to maintain its consistency. Yet there are enough young people in Prague ready to replenish the membership of VONS twice over, if necessary.

However, the regime may have set its sights on a more limited victory. It may, that is, be hoping to isolate the Committee from wider popular support by making people afraid to contact VONS. The trials of the Socialist Opposition between 1971 and 1972 did achieve that result. But in a lengthy analysis of the trial in this issue of Labour Focus, Jan Kavan argues that times have changed and many people see the trial as a contemptible sign of decay within the regime.

What is beyond doubt is the fact that the VONS trial has become the focus of concern within the labour movements of Western Europe over the issue of civil liberties and repression in the East. Every move against VONS brings further odium upon the Husak

government among Socialists in the West. By refusing to allow a civil liberties committee to function freely, the regime casts a sharp, penetrating light on its own inner nature.

The Czechoslovak authorities have tried to put on a show of legality and impartiality in the conduct of their repressive drive against VONS. And they claim that VONS fabricated the detailed evidence according to which the law had been violated in previous cases of repression. The claims to impartiality are shown to be fraudulent by the simple fact that the presiding judge's office was used as a centre for film surveillance of the flat of one of the accused, Vaclav Benda. As to the claim that VONS statements were fabrications, not one shred of evidence has been produced to substantiate it.

The Labour Party's National Executive Committee has now given the Czechoslovak authorities the perfect platform for proving their claims before socialists throughout Western Europe: it has called for the establishment of a fact-finding commission drawn from leaders of Socialist and Communist Parties to investigate the civil rights situation in Czechoslovakia. When this commission is established and goes to Prague, the Czechoslovak authorities will be able to supply it with any information in their possession to show that VONS has been spreading lies about the cases of repression it has taken up. And if the Czechoslovak authorities refuse to talk directly to the commission, they can simply publish the evidence on their own presses. But if they fail to prove their claim, socialists and communists throughout Europe will be able to draw only one conclusion.

We would like to welcome the appearance of an impressive and authoritative new socialist journal on Eastern Europe whose first number has just appeared. Published by Maspero, L'Alternative should quickly establish itself as an unrivalled source of information and ideas for socialists on developments in Eastern Europe. We urge those of our readers who read French to support L'Alternative — more details are on page 26.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. VONS Members in Jail

SENTENCED: Petr Uhl - 5 years in jail under a 'strict regime'; Vaclav Havel - 4½ years in jail; Vaclav Benda - 4 years in jail; Vaclav Cerny (in Brno) - 3½ years in jail; Otta Bednarova - 3 years in jail; Jiri Dienstbier - 3 years in jail; Dana Nemcova - 2 years in jail suspended for 5 years.

AWAITING TRIAL: Jarmila Belikova, now very sick in a prison hospital, Ladislav Lis, Vaclav Maly and Jiri Nemeč.

2. British Defence Committees:

CHARTER 77 DEFENCE COMMITTEE, 14 Elgin Court, 16 Montpelier Rd., London W5.

EASTERN EUROPE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN, 10 Park Drive, London NW11.

CHARTER 77 DEFENCE FUND, c/o Reg Race MP, 126 Bexley Rd., London SE9.

3. Foreign Defence Committees:

WEST GERMANY

Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee, 2000 Hamburg 13, Postfach 2648; or 1000 Berlin 30, Postfach 4147.

SWITZERLAND

Committee in Solidarity with the Opposition in Eastern Europe, Case Postale 31, 1213 Petit-Lancy 1, Switzerland.

SWEDEN

Listy, Cyrill John, Box 19048, S-750, 19, Uppsala 19.

HOLLAND

Komitee Denk aan Praag, Adrien Milderstraat 12a, 3022 NG Rotterdam.

CANADA

Committee to Defend Soviet and East European Political Prisoners, P O Box 835, Sub 11, Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta. T6G 2E0.
Charter 77 Defence Committee, c/o CDSPP, 191 Lippincott St., Toronto, Ontario.

FRANCE

Comite du 5 Janvier, Catherine Fontaine, 30 bis rue des Boulets, 75011 Paris.

International Committee Against Repression, B.P.221 - 75564 Paris Cedex 12.

BELGIUM

Comité du 1er Mai, Elie Gross, 16 Avenue du Bois de la Cambre, 1170 Brussels.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Judge Doubles as Cop

The picture on the right destroys any claims that Antonin Kaspar, the presiding judge at the October trial of the 6 Czech civil rights activists, was impartial and independent of the political police.

It shows that the cable from the police camera pictured on our front cover goes straight into the office of Judge Kaspar on the second floor of the Prague Municipal Court building.

This can mean only one thing: Kaspar is a senior official inside the political police, acting directly under the orders of the Ministry of the Interior.

The Czechoslovak media and Foreign Ministry have gone to great lengths to try to persuade foreign opinion that the trial was a fair and legal one. The Embassy in Canada gave leaders of the New Democratic Party their specific assurances on this point at the beginning of August.

But the regime overlooked one detail: the fact that the political police are not used to having their activities closely scrutinised.

And there is strong evidence that the camera was still working during and after the trial: those foreign socialists in Prague for the trial who visited Vaclav Benda's flat were quickly seized by the police and expelled from the country; those who did not were not touched.

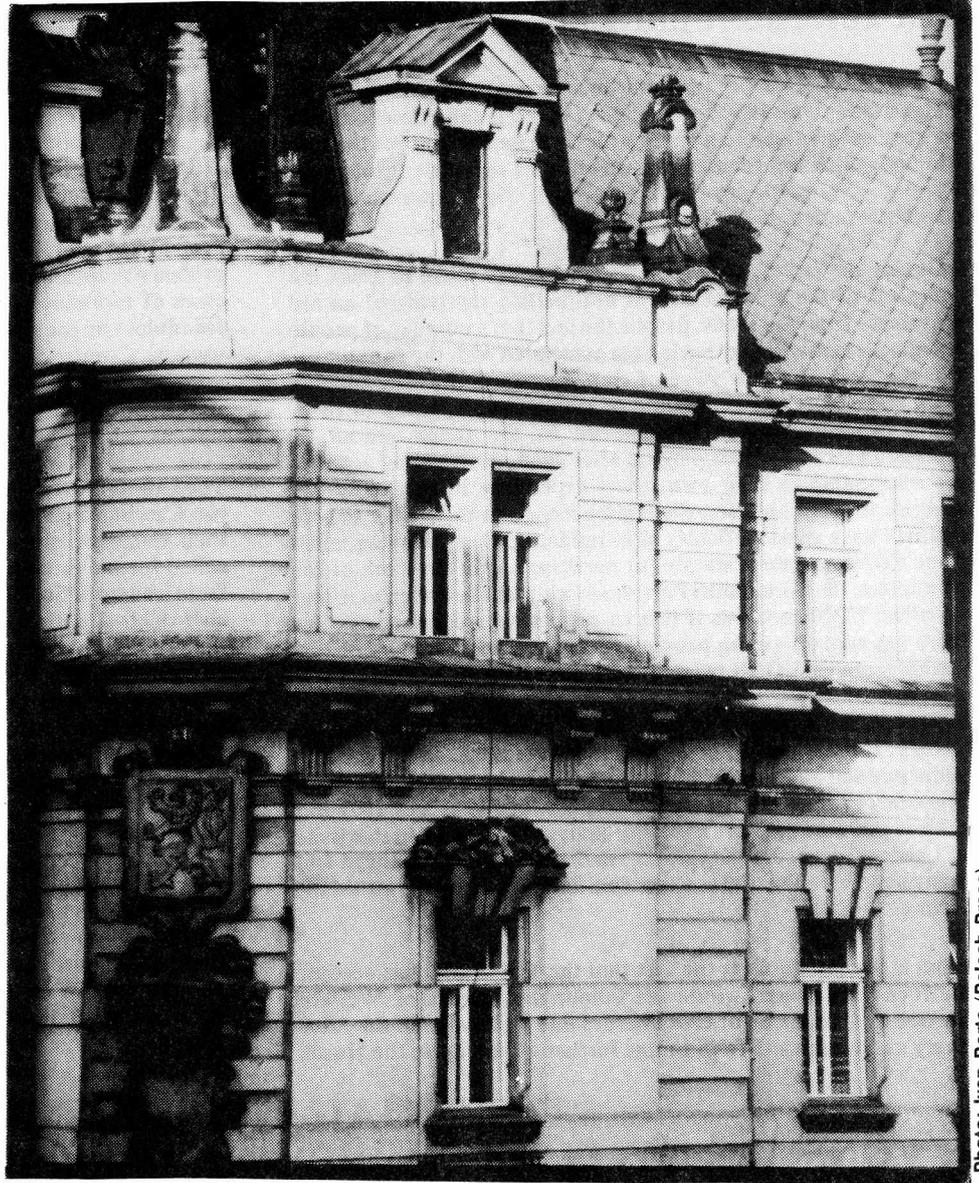


Photo: Ivan Barta (Palach Press)

The October VONS Trial by Jan Kavan

The trial of 6 members of VONS, the Committee in Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted, on 22-23 October was designed to be the culmination of three years' efforts on the part of the Government to destroy the human rights movement, Charter 77. Despite the frequent sackings of Chartists, the persecution of their children, and trials of some of the most active individuals, the movement has still survived and grown. (The latest Charter 77 Document No. 27 of 8 October lists 39 new signatories, bringing the total to 1017.) In arresting the VONS members at the end of May the regime's leaders clearly decided that they should attempt a frontal attack on the committee not only because its civil rights activity has proved too embarrassing for the authorities, but also because its members are among the most active and radical Charter signatories

whose removal could make the Charter movement less effective and eventually impotent. Such was the background to the trial of the 6 — Petr Uhl, Vaclav Havel, Jiri Dienstbier, Otta Bednarova, Vaclav Benda and Dana Nencova.

On the eve of the trial the Communist Party daily *Rude Pravo* published a lengthy article entitled 'The false and useless card'. This card, i.e. dissidents, was allegedly being played in vain by the Western bourgeoisie in the hope of creating out of them a powerful fifth column. However, they now had 'regretfully to acknowledge', as did the Trilateral Commission's report on East-West relations, (1) that 'these groups were small and have no influence on the masses'. *Rude Pravo* vigorously rejected those whom it described as 'modern

international blackmailers', who argue that for the sake of detente the Communist regimes should tolerate opposition groups and even engage in a dialogue with them. The deputy editor of *Rude Pravo*, Zdenek Horeni, made it crystal clear that 'counter-revolutionary elements, whether they call themselves Charter 77 or the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted, although small and without influence, will not be allowed to subvert the socialist state'.

The stage was set. On Monday 22 October police cars, uniformed police, and many plain-clothed Secret Service agents could be seen outside the building of the Municipal Court in the centre of Prague. One woman had the incredible courage to attempt to find out what some people at least thought about

the trial. She stopped passers-by and walked into nearby cafes, saying: 'Excuse me, I'm from Palach Press Agency and I would like to ask you how much you know about the trial of six courageous people, taking place near here.' Some knew more, some knew less (mainly from foreign radio stations), some were very afraid, and others less so, but no one denounced her and no one took the side of the prosecution. A taxi driver spoke for many: 'They will get a lot. They must do because they are dangerous to THEM. They are telling the truth on behalf of us all. Not everyone is capable of this, and many are also afraid and indifferent and believe that everything is in vain and that one just has to survive. I keep my fingers crossed for the Chartists but I am also afraid, mainly for my family ...'

At 8.30 a.m. the trial was opened by the judge, Antonin Kaspar, in one of the smallest rooms of the courthouse. This courtroom, No. 81, could accommodate only about 20 people as spectators or 'representatives of the public'. The other, larger, courtrooms had been, as Dr Kaspar explained, 'unfortunately booked'. Out of about 150 people assembled outside (including representatives of six foreign embassies, all major press agencies, and two foreign lawyers — a Canadian and an Austrian), only 12 relatives of the accused were admitted to the courtroom. Also in attendance were a Dr Balas from the General Prosecutor's Office, Jiri Hecko from **Rude Pravo**, and two unknown men with the names Kabele and Blaha on their tickets. At least six seats remained empty throughout the two-day hearing although the judge repeatedly invoked Article 201, which gives the court the right to 'take measures against the overcrowding of the courtroom', when asked to allow entry. At the same time, when Uhl's lawyer requested that Uhl be allowed to appoint a 'confidante' to attend the proceedings after his wife Anna had been expelled from the courtroom, the judge rejected the request with the cynical assertion that this was unnecessary as the trial was 'open'. The joking remark made by Dr Josef Danisz (a lawyer sacked from the legal profession for his courageous defence of Charter spokesman Dr Jaroslav Sabata) in an interview filmed during the trial, that the seats were probably occupied by the ghosts of the famous trials in the fifties, sounds ominously true. **Dr Kaspar's actions were clearly in breach of Article 199 of Law 148/1973 which deals with the duty of the court to ensure that as many members of the public as possible are able to observe court proceedings.**

In the past the exclusion of the public from 'open' trials was partially offset by the fact that the relatives of the accused had been able to make notes and later inform their friends about what actually took place. In this way a transcript of the proceedings could be pieced together. At this trial the judge, after confiscating the notes being written by Dienstbier's brother, Ondrej, declared that notes of the proceedings could be taken only with the permission of the



Part of crowd opposite the court on the morning of Monday 22 October. A police patrol-car is shown on the right of the picture.

court. When Anna Sabatova, Uhl's wife, therefore asked for such permission she was told: 'We will not allow you to make notes during the proceedings; take this as a warning. Should you interfere with the conduct of the proceedings again you could be excluded from the court.' As Sabatova maintained that she had the right to take notes during a public trial, she was expelled from the court and spent the next 39 hours in a police cell. Many other relatives were searched thoroughly every time they left the court building and during the short breaks in the proceedings they were not allowed to leave the sealed-off corridor outside the courtroom. Despite all this, a thorough account of the trial, from which I will quote extensively in this article was made available to friends of the accused. It has now reached the West via **Palach Press**.

There are indications that the trial was initially intended to last for about four days. The authorities seem to have been taken by surprise by the crowd of supporters who arrived at the courthouse despite being photographed and having their identity cards checked. When the crowd dwindled during the lunch break on the first day, the police moved in. All visitors were expelled from the court building and about 30 people were detained. Later, a number of people were taken away simply because they had been hanging around in the vicinity of the court. At the same time, the court proceedings were speeded up. Most of the witnesses were not called on to give evidence and only a brief, perfunctory cross-examination of the few who were present was permitted. Breaks were few and short and the day's session lasted more than eleven hours. The speed was maintained on the following day and so the trial was concluded in just two days.

Such unseemly haste turned what was evidently intended as a show of strength into a display of nervous weakness.

INDICTMENT

The trial began with the public prosecutor reading the indictment. According to him, the accused '... out of hostility to the socialist system of the Republic, and with the intention of supporting foreign anti-communist propaganda and arousing hostility towards the socialist system amongst the population, (in the period between the spring of 1978 and the end of May 1979) formed an illegal organisation, the "Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted", and after establishing their programme and allocating tasks, they, in conjunction with other individuals and agents of foreign inflammatory centres, issued a considerable number of texts which crudely attacked the security organs, the procuracy, the courts and the penal system through the use of fabricated or intentionally distorted reports. These texts were distributed inside Czechoslovakia and also given to foreign anti-communist centres which used them in order to attack us in the Western or emigre press ...' He concluded that they had therefore committed subversive acts against the state and against its international interests, and that they had carried them out in conjunction with foreign agents and on a large scale.

A number of Western lawyers, for example the British Committee of Socialist Lawyers to Defend Charter 77 and the Canadian civil-rights lawyer Gordon Wright (who was given a visa in order to attend the trial but was not allowed into the courtroom), have noted that for the charges to be proved within the framework of Czechoslovak law three key elements in the indictment would have to be proved beyond doubt: first that the defendants did 'act out of hostility to the socialist system...' and not simply out of disagreement with the judicial and police authorities; second, that VONS was both an organisation and an anti-state body; and third, that VONS actively co-operated with

foreign anti-Communist organisations abroad.

Instead of bringing forward the evidence to prove these points, the indictment simply asserts their truth. And at the trial, the presiding judge, while producing almost 7,000 pages of preliminary investigation, filling 28 volumes, made no attempt to bring the material to bear on the key points of law. Instead he made the token gesture of reading a few titles of documents and letters from the volumes picked at random. His exchange with Petr Uhl during this exercise is illustrative. The judge mentioned that there was a statement signed by Jiri Nemec with handwritten corrections by Uhl. Uhl asked what led him to believe that it was his handwriting.

Judge: 'Look here, did you write this or didn't you?'

P.U.: 'That is something which I, of course, refuse to answer. I only want to know how you arrived at this conclusion, whether there is an expert opinion.'

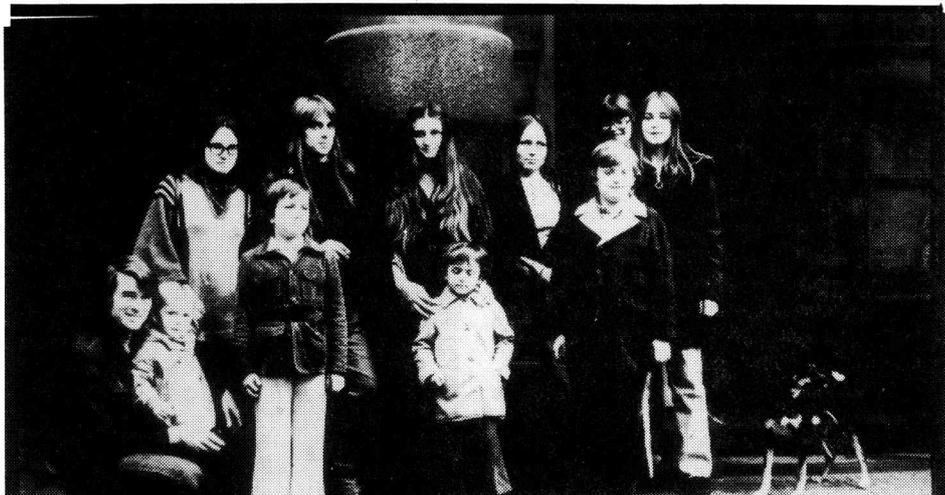
Judge: 'Mr. Uhl, I may not have an expert opinion but your handwriting is, after all, generally known.' (The general mirth among the accused and their relatives at this point was understandable.)

The judge did not review the evidence, he ignored the implications of some of the facts stated by the accused, and simply read the first page of the indictment and declared it proven. This same judge might have had great difficulty in substantiating a claim that the Czech judiciary is independent of the Party and Security services. Apart from his own infamous record there is now some interesting visual evidence. The Secret Service camera, installed in the court building and used to film the flat of Vaclav Benda, where most of the VONS meetings took place, was photographed by Chartists who couldn't fail to notice that its cable led directly to Antonin Kaspar's own private office.

CHARGE 1: HOSTILITY

The assertion that the VONS members 'acted out of hostility to the socialist system ...' was taken up by Otta Bednarova. The well-known television journalist, lately cleaner, aged 52, refused to testify during the pre-trial interrogations and also refused to testify at the trial because she rejected the indictment and the entire criminal proceedings on the grounds that the activity of VONS was not based on any hostility. The question of motivation was the only one she wanted to be heard on. The judge did not allow this on the first day of the trial and so Bednarova tried again when exercising her right to a final speech:

Bednarova: '... because at the beginning of the trial I was not allowed to, I would like to mention the motivation which led me to be active in VONS. In the sixties, as a journalist, I had the opportunity of participating in rehabilitation trials ...'



Relatives of the accused pictured outside the court. Top left to right: Kamila Bendova, Ondrej Nemec, Jana Nemcova, Anna Sabatova, Market Nemcova, Veronika Nemcova. Bottom: Jiri Bednar with four of Benda's children.

Photo: Ivan Barta (Palach Press)

The judge immediately interrupted her roughly: 'Mrs. Bednarova, that doesn't interest the court. Speak to the point.'

O.B.: 'But I would still like to say that I was a witness of how everything suddenly crumbled ...'

Judge: 'Mrs. Bednarova, earlier you completely refused to testify and now you want to tell us stories.'

O.B.: 'I am 52 years old and I would like somehow to come to terms with that part of my life when I was silent because I was too young ...'

At this point the judge tried to silence Otta Bednarova and so they are both speaking at once. Judge: 'That does not belong here, Mrs. Bednarova.'

O.B.: 'But I am in VONS precisely because I have recognised the monstrosity of sentences which have sometimes led to executions. The attempt to prevent anything like that ever happening again has become the content of my life. I simply cannot live otherwise, however much it costs me ...'

The judge did not allow her to continue and also refused to enter her words in the transcript of the trial.

Jiri Dientsbier, 42, and like Bednarova, a former well-known journalist and Communist Party member was able to reject the accusation: 'I consider it absurd to accuse me of being hostile to socialism. I come from a Communist family of doctors, I worked actively in the Communist Party, and as a reporter and commentator on foreign affairs on the radio. I am a convinced socialist, and you cannot find anything other than a socialist point of view in my private or public utterances or articles.'

He was interrupted by the judge.

J.D.: 'From my upbringing and life it follows that my actions would never be motivated by negativism, hostility or opposition. No historical reversals or changes in my personal situation can alter anything in that. I would never ally myself with anyone at home or abroad who was motivated by malice or negation. Of course, it has nothing to do with where this person comes from, what his belief or his world view is, but whether he places his responsibility to society before his own comfort and pragmatic opportunistic

considerations ...'

The judge interrupts him again: 'Your speech must be relevant to the criminal case under investigation.'

J.D.: 'If I have to express my opinion as concisely as possible, I will use universally known sentences from **The Communist Manifesto**. There Marx and Engels characterise socialism as a society in which the free development of the individual is the precondition for the free development of all. The function of a socialist state is to create the conditions for this free development. It is necessary to struggle ceaselessly for this true essence of socialism ...'

Like Charter 77, VONS is politically a very heterogeneous body. The repressive nature of the present Czech regime makes such unity possible. Uhl is a Trotskyist, Dienstbier a reform Communist, Benda a democrat, stressing his Catholicism, but none of them is anti-socialist, all are content with the socialist system, and some are convinced socialists with a long history of struggle for socialist ideals.

CHARGE 2: ANTI-STATE ORGANISATION

The indictment also simply asserts that VONS was both an anti-state body and an organisation. Again, no evidence was offered although this allegation is crucial because if VONS was not an anti-state body, the methods by which its statements were distributed—a question which was discussed at length in the indictment and during the trial—is irrelevant.

Vaclav Havel attempted to draw the judge's attention to the fallacy of this argument: 'The system is based on the a priori assumption that state organs can never act unjustly. A court decision is considered infallible ... this assumption is very dangerous. Anyone who questions it is automatically considered an enemy and his whole behaviour is qualified as hostile. From the point of view of the prosecutor, if the state organs cannot make a mistake, then criticism of their activity can logically be construed as slander, vilification, and so on. And why would anyone slander them? Obviously, from hostility, and if from

hostility, then obviously in conjunction with hostile foreign anti-socialist forces.'

Judge: 'Mr. Havel, surely you know that there is an extensive system of mutual cross-checking of court decisions? Continue.'

V.H.: 'That was, in fact, a question. Do I have to answer or can I go on?'

Judge: 'No, no, don't answer.'

V.H.: '...The prosecution does not talk about the main thing, the contents of the VONS statements ... If the prosecution conceded an analysis of the contents, it would, in fact, have admitted its own fallibility ... You see, the statements only give the basic facts, cite documents, and give the concrete activity for which people have been prosecuted. If you write that high-school student XY copied an article by Vaclav Havel and gave it to his fellow-pupils to read, it doesn't sound nearly so frightening as if you write that student XY reproduced and distributed in an illegal manner an anti-state pamphlet by a right-wing exponent ... There are certain words which recur continually in the indictment, which one would characterise as sharp; for instance, subversion, lies, malice, illegal organisation, anti-communist centres, vilification, hatred and so on. When, however, we look behind these words we can see that there is nothing there. If these words were replaced by their more sober equivalents, there would be absolutely nothing left of the indictment ...'

The judge again interrupted him but Havel later returned to the question of whether VONS was actually an organisation, the establishment of which is illegal: 'If VONS is an organisation, then so is every working group, orchestra, artistic group, in fact every chance association of people who come together in order to work ...'

If Article 98 dealing with subversion of the Republic is to be construed as consistent with Article 19 (on freedom of expression and the right to impart information and ideas by whatever means) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it cannot be limited to the dissemination of written material. This was pointed out by Petr Uhl who stressed the need to amend Czechoslovak laws to bring them in line with the Covenant which was ratified by Czechoslovakia in March 1976 and which is now part of the Czechoslovak legal code. The judge did not, however, allow him to elaborate on this. It should, incidentally, also be mentioned that the prosecution did not even prove that the accused themselves distributed VONS statements inside Czechoslovakia, let alone that they arranged for their publication abroad.

CHARGE 3: FOREIGN AGENTS

The alleged cooperation with foreign agents also serves as a good illustration of the fact that the prosecutor discarded any pretence of substantiating his claims. He didn't even try to be convincing. For example, the indictment asserts that the Czechoslovak opposition journal *Listy*, edited by Jiri



Petr Uhl and Anna Sabatova pictured before Uhl's arrest.

Pelikan—currently a socialist member of the European Assembly—is 'financed and guided by the CIA'. Reports available to date indicate that this issue wasn't raised during the trial, let alone clarified or proved. Links between *Listy* and VONS were 'established' simply by the fact that *Listy* republished some of the VONS statements. The prosecutor did not even bother to claim that the defendants passed the statements directly to the journal.

Amnesty International is presented as anti-socialist because 'it systematically spreads slander about Czechoslovakia throughout the world'. In other words, Amnesty was critical of the prosecution of people for their political beliefs in Czechoslovakia. Dana Nemcova, a psychologist, admitted that she was visited by a Dutch couple and that the man introduced himself as a member of Amnesty International. 'He explained their aims to me, saying that Amnesty is not a political organisation, that it pursues cases of people unjustly prosecuted throughout the world. I told him of the existence of VONS, which has similar aims to those of Amnesty, but on a smaller scale. I do not consider Amnesty International to be harmful.' The judge then went on to ask about the papers shown to the Dutchman without commenting on Nemcova's description of Amnesty, let alone disagreeing with it.

The judge cited a letter from the American 'Helsinki Watch' group, addressed to Dienstbier, as evidence of the link with the West which all the accused have denied. Dienstbier explained that he had received the letter only four days before his arrest, that he hadn't answered it and had had no time even to show it to anyone else. While explaining the purpose of 'Helsinki Watch', he rejected the prosecution's claim that 'Helsinki Watch' participated in an 'inflammatory campaign against Czechoslovakia'; on the contrary, he pointed out that some of the group's findings had been published in the Czechoslovak press. The judge remarked that 'Helsinki Watch' had received 400,000 dollars from the Ford Foundation, and refused to allow Dienstbier's point about the Czechoslovak press to be entered into the trial transcript.

The outcome of the trial was a foregone conclusion. Of this the defendants were well aware, as Petr Uhl made clear: 'It saddens me that today Czechoslovakia is probably the only country in Europe where such a trial could still take place. I presume that we will be found guilty and that sentences will be passed — altogether probably for some tens of years. I am not a nationalist but I like this country; I am not indifferent to its fate and I want to live here.'

He was interrupted by the judge: 'This court is not here for a discussion. It is here to judge your criminal activity.'

P.U.: 'I do not consider this a court which can pass judgement on me. I know that you, Mr. Chairman, will make no judgement; that has already been decided elsewhere.'

Judge: 'So there is no need for you to say anything at all if you don't consider us a court.'

P.U.: 'Yes, it's useless.'

TERRORISM

The day after the trial, *Rude Pravo* published a lengthy article entitled 'The law cannot be violated with impunity.' The author, Jiri Hecko, either paid little attention to what was said during the trial or hoped that his readers would never find out for themselves. He claimed that VONS, despite 'generous verbal and financial support from capitalist countries', remained a small group of a few individuals with its influence limited to Prague. Most significant were his remarks about terrorism. According to Hecko, Petr Uhl was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in 1970 because he was 'a member of a trotskyist-anarchist group whose programme included terrorist activity'. Elsewhere in the article he returns to the case of the Bares brothers and a friend who attempted last year to hijack a bus of schoolchildren in order to get across the border into West Germany. The border police opened fire and in the shooting one of the hijackers and the bus driver were killed. The brothers were sentenced to death. VONS members, together with many other people, signed a letter to the Federal Assembly protesting against the death penalty but stressing that in no way did they condone the act of hijacking. Hecko must have heard all the accused explaining this to the judge but he kept this knowledge to himself.

The trial failed to create an atmosphere of fear. On the contrary — it provoked a lot of people into making an almost public comparison between the present-day situation with that of the fifties and it stirred up greater interest in VONS and its activities. In his final speech Dienstbier maintained that 'a verdict of not guilty would show that the state power feels strong enough not to have to defend itself against its citizens with prison bars'. The verdict showed that the state does not feel that strong. Almost in desperation, the authorities seem to have decided to try to undermine the increasing support for VONS and the Charter by tarnishing the

human-rights activists with the brush of terrorism. A few days after the trial, twelve young activists of the new VONS committee, including Otta Bednarova's two sons, were detained on suspicion of terrorism. The police search warrant referred to an anonymous letter which allegedly 'stated the intention to destroy an important building and assassinate the President of the Republic, Dr Gustav Husak'. They were all released within 48 hours but a further ten people were detained on the same charge, including Dr Josef Danisz and three of Dana Nemcova's children. These were also eventually released but the criminal proceedings against the 'unknown criminal' who wrote the anonymous letter have not been quashed and therefore can be rearrested at any time. In the meantime, **Rude Pravo** hints at the new line: On 6 November, in an article entitled 'We will not be blackmailed', Zdenek Horeni deplores the decision of Mr. R.L. Barry of the US State Department cancel his proposed visit to Czechoslovakia in protest against the trial of the Chartists. Horeni adds that American imperialism is using not only the CIA in its anti-Czech campaign but also the Red Brigades. According to Horeni, the Red Brigades have threatened representatives of the Czechoslovak authorities with international terrorism. Two days later, **Rude Pravo** is even more specific and describes death threats telephoned by the Red Brigades to Czech diplomats in Bonn. An unknown criminal shot at a Czech diplomat in the USA. Outrage in the Western mass media over the trial of the VONS members is described by **Rude Pravo** as psychological warfare and as the impulse which has let loose 'the darkest forces of their society — the terrorist organisations'. **Rude Pravo** comes to the conclusion that we are witnessing a 'horifying logic': terrorism against a socialist country is not terrorism but implementation of human rights'. A horrifying logic indeed.

The main aim of the trial—to smash the VONS committee—has not been achieved. The committee, reinforced by twelve new people, is as active as it has ever been, despite increased harassment and repeated threats that if it does not cease its activity all

VONS Member Jailed in Brno

On 27 November in Brno another VONS member, Albert Cerny, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for subversion. Cerny, born in 1937 in Bratislava, was an actor in Cesky Tesin between 1960 and 1967 and a stage-manager in the Mahen Theatre in Brno until he lost his job in 1970 as a result of his political activities during the Prague Spring. In 1978 he helped to prepare the Declaration called '100 Years of Czech Socialism' and became a Charter signatory and member of VONS. He is a supporter of the Independent Socialists.

Arrested in April 1979, he was charged at his trial with subversion against the state, with being a member of 'the anti-socialist organisation VONS' and with having constituted in his flat 'an archive of

its members will share the fate of the eleven already in prison. (From its inception in April 1978 until the arrests in May, VONS produced 114 statements; between the arrests and the trial — 27, and during the last month — 12.) Equally, the arrests and the trial have not forced other Chartists and Charter sympathisers to bury their heads in the sand. On the contrary, many have been provoked into even greater commitment to the human rights struggle and, most importantly, many others are beginning to express their sympathy.



VONS activist Anna Sabatova pictured outside the court-house where her husband, Petr Uhl, was about to stand trial.

In addition, popular discontent has been strengthened by the drastic price increases levied on 27 July, especially on fuels, children's clothes, and postal services (resulting in an average increase of 28 per cent in monthly family expenditure) which emphasise the regime's failure to keep its promise to satisfy consumer demand in exchange for depriving its citizens of even those political freedoms enjoyed in other present atmosphere with that of autumn 1967 when President Novotny, sensing the

anti-state documents' and with having works by clandestine authors. He is accused of having persuaded Jiri Savrda, of the north Moravian town of Ostrava, to copy works by Charter spokesperson Hejdanek, the Czech writer Jiri Grusa and Solzhenitsyn. For this offence Savrda was sentenced to two and a half years in August.

The trial and imprisonment of Cerny represents an important escalation in state repression against Charter members. It was simply assumed by the prosecution, and not taken as something to be demonstrated, that VONS is an anti-state organisation. This could mean that from now on any member of VONS could be charged under Article 98, section I with subversion against the state.

By Joe Singleton

East European countries such as Poland and Hungary. With no carrot the stick is counter-productive.

When Gustav Husak replaced Alexander Dubcek in April 1969 as the Soviet occupiers' chosen puppet, he promised two things: not to stage political trials and not to raise prices. His failure to keep his promises is a vivid illustration of the failure of 'normalisation'. Reports from Prague indicate that many people overlook the fact that major political trials already took place in 1972, and they compare the

imminent end of his days in power, began to hit out at his opponents. However one-sided this analysis may be, if it persists, it may of course become a self-fulfilling prophecy, at least in the case of Husak's own fortunes.

Footnote.

1. The Trilateral Commission is a 'think-tank' based in the United States, backed by Rockefeller and other giant capitalist corporations.

Copyright Jan Kavan

Soviet-Charter Co-operation

Nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov, along with members of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group, has proposed to human rights activists in the Polish KOR and the Czechoslovak Charter 77 movement that they co-ordinate their activities. The proposal has been welcomed by spokespeople for Charter 77, Dr Jiri Hajek and Ladislav Hejdanek, who told Dr Sakharov and his colleagues that 'together with you, we consider it our struggle to defend the rights and dignity of man everywhere in the world.' Up to now links between the Charter and the Helsinki Group have been confined to expressions of support. Sakharov's proposal envisages permanent co-operation.

In Prague for the Trial · By Catherine Samary

[Catherine Samary, whose report we print below, was in Prague during the VONS trial on behalf of the French 5th of January Committee for a Free, Socialist Czechoslovakia. For details of other French-based activity in Prague see the article on page 24 entitled 'Western Socialists Fly to Trial'.]

We went to the courthouse to request that we should be allowed to attend the trial and see the defendants. On behalf of the 5th January Committee, I also asked to be called as a witness, since our committee had published a pamphlet (entitled *Tchecoslovaquie-repression*) containing VONS documents. The rather embarrassed chief-of-police who 'received' us at the entrance to the courtroom, said that he did not have the authority to deal with our request, and that it would have to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I asked him whom I had to see and where they were to be found. He gave me the address of the Ministry and told me to ask for Mr. Vanek. Then I went to the Ministry along with Jean-Pierre Faye and Daniel Ouaki while Jean Dieudonne and Patrice Chereau stayed behind at the courthouse and Alain Chalier stayed outside to inform the press about what was happening to us.

The porter received us and we persuaded him to get Mr. Vanek, or whoever else might be responsible, on the telephone to deal with our request. It was not easy to track Mr. Vanek down. It was not clear whether he was ill or simply not there. After a quarter of an hour I was put through to an official who spoke excellent French, (although he was somewhat agitated judging by the fact that he kept on saying 'Monsieur, Monsieur ...'). According to the porter it was Mr. Houzvicka, who was in charge of consular affairs. He, in his turn, told me that he was not competent to deal with my request, since his department dealt with visas and that only the courts themselves were able to decide to whom the proceedings were open. I asked him to put his reply in writing so that we could pass it on to the court. I communicated this reply to the police official (we talked English). He seemed to be getting ever more nervous. He told me that the courtroom was too small — a reply that takes on its full meaning only if we recall that the courtroom was full of police, and that it was therefore reserved for people with a direct interest in the proceedings. I pointed out that our committee was in fact directly implicated in the trial since we had published VONS documents .. He then changed the direction of his argument and said that he could not interrupt the trial and that he did not have the power to intervene in our favour. I then proposed to him that he should simply transmit our requests to the President of the court and we would put them down in writing for him to take. He accepted, and we all wrote down our requests.

Here are mine (I also sent a copy through the post):

'Mister President,

The 5th January Committee for a Free and Socialist Czechoslovakia is composed of militants and personalities from the French workers' movement and takes up the defence of democratic rights from the point of view of socialism and of the human rights which are recognised by your constitution and which are defended by VONS.

We are implicated in the trial of the 6 members of VONS because we have reprinted some of its documents in France and expressed our solidarity with its aims.

For this reason I am asking you, in the name of the committee which I am here to represent that I be able to attend the trial, see the defendants and give evidence that their activities, in the same way as our own, were carried out from the point of view of respect for democratic rights and as a part of our defence of socialist ideals.'

It was clear that nobody paid any attention to our requests.

That same evening the trial finished, although it was originally supposed to continue for another 2 days.

We then wrote a joint letter of protest against the expulsion of Anna Sabatova from the courtroom and her subsequent detention in the name of the various bodies which we represented ... We sent this letter to the Ministry of the Interior and to the President of the court.

Knowing that the trial was over, we decided to wait for the families of the accused outside the courtroom. The exit was well protected by numerous police of various types. Several dozen people had been arrested there both on that day and the previous one, so that we six were the only people present. The police managed to make it clear to us—in 5 minutes, and by means of gestures, since they only spoke Czech—that we should keep moving. We decided to keep moving underneath their noses by walking up and down outside the entrance. We did this for about half an hour. The police got very anxious, since the trial was about to end (it was not 8.45) and so they made more gestures to suggest to us that we should stop going round in circles, and instead proceed in a straight line. We said that we did not understand them, the chief-of-police came over and told us in English that if we did not move along, they would be obliged to 'accompany' us. We moved along, crossed the road and went into a cafe. First Patrice Chereau and then myself made the crossing. Then I saw the families coming out of the courtroom, so I told the others who were inside the cafe. Jean Dieudonne and Alain Chalier said that they would wait inside while all the others would go over to the families to get the news. At that moment the police intercepted Daniel Ouaki and Patrice Chereau. I ran past them in order to get to the families and learn the outcome of the trial. Then I came back to find out what had happened to my companions and to tell those still in the cafe what was going on ... I did not find my friends who had been intercepted, nor Jean-Pierre Faye. I thought

that they had been arrested. I made my way back to the cafe to tell the two others about this, and then we separated to check at our hotels if anything could be found out about our missing friends.

The next day I met Alain Chalier at the well-known Slavia cafe in central Prague. The others, along with Jean-Yves Potel (a reporter from the French Trotskyist paper *Rouge*), who had finally managed to reassemble after the police sweep and had had supper together, had been stopped at the entrance of the restaurant and thrown out. We made a joint decision to make a statement to the press who were present of the steps we had taken. Our press conference was held at the Slavia.

I made a declaration in the name of the 5th January Committee and of the other representatives who had been thrown out in which I expressed our astonishment at the way that the trial had been carried out, the delays we had met with in dealing with our requests and the outcome of the trial. I finished by saying that trials of this sort served the interests of anti-communism, and struck a blow to the ideals of socialism. Jiri Hajek, who was present, got up and shook my hand to thank me. I asked him if he was prepared to make a statement which I could transmit. He agreed, although he had just refused one to the press agencies. He told me how important solidarity from the Left was. While he was speaking the police once again came into the Slavia to check the passports of everybody who was around Hajek or who were members of VONS. After they had taken my name, and while they were busy checking everybody else's passports, I went out to telephone in my notes. Then I went back to the Slavia in order to keep an appointment with Julius Tomin, who had invited me to come to his house for a coffee. The entrance to his flat was blocked by two policemen who were supposedly protecting Zdena Tominova from 'hooligans' who had attacked her this summer, but who in reality stopped their friends and their elder children from entering. Alain Chalier came with us. Although the police said that we could not enter, we nonetheless went in and shut the door behind us. We had a coffee and talked. When we came out, the police once again checked our passports and took our names. I then declared (Julius Tomin, who was delighted, translated) that I was amazed that in a country calling itself socialist one could not peacefully go and have coffee with a friend. I said that I was going to go back and tell public opinion and in particular the workers' movement in the West, and that I was going to invite a lot of friends to come and have coffee with Julius Tomin until there were no more police on the doors. One of the policemen then said that he did not have the right to speak, to which I replied that I did not understand how one could live without the right to speak .. It is hard to describe the joy and recognition which the remark met with from Julius Tomin ...

POLAND

Unofficial Political Life Still Flourishes By Peter Green

On 9 November demonstrations in Poland's main cities to mark the 61st anniversary of the restoration of an independent Polish state gave an indication of the growing strength of the mainstream currents in the Polish opposition. During the 48 hours before the anniversary, which is not officially celebrated, the police arrested and detained no less than 90 activists in Warsaw, Krakow and Gdansk in an evident attempt to disrupt plans for the demonstrations. Yet despite this, in Warsaw some 5,000 people marched from a mass in St. John's Cathedral to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Demonstrations also took place in Gdansk, Krakow and Lublin. *Le Monde* reported 5,000 on the Gdansk march alone, while opposition sources claimed a national total of at least 10,000 demonstrators.

The marches were backed both by the Movement for Human and Citizen's Rights (ROPCiO) and by the KOR. In a speech at the end of the Warsaw march, ROPCiO leader Andrzej Czuma declared that Poland is denied freedom and independence and therefore Poles do not have meat and houses. He also called for a boycott of next year's parliamentary elections to prove that people are against the regime.

During the last year the two human rights organisations have made anniversary marches and gatherings an important feature of their activities. These were held to mark last year's independence day, the December 1970 massacre of workers in Gdansk, the Warsaw Uprising and the outbreak of the Second World War. The latest march was the first occasion when the police attempted serious disruption, but all those detained were apparently subsequently released without charge.

In the meantime, the police are continuing their struggle to contain the unofficial workers' movement and appear to have chosen to try to make an example of the Grudziadz workers' leader Edmund Zadrozynski, arrested on 1 July (See the last issue of *Labour Focus* on the case of Zadrozynski). At the start of October his investigative detention for alleged participation in a burglary was extended for a further three months despite an appeal from 870 Grudziadz inhabitants for his release. The appeal, sent to the Prosecutor's Office and the Polish Parliament on 14 July, stated bluntly that the burglary charge was a lie and declared: 'We emphasise that we have fully trusted Edmund Zadrozynski for many years and we shall continue, together with him, to struggle for a true Poland, a Poland of workers and peasants.'

According to *The Appeal for the Polish Workers*, the police have reacted strongly to the appearance of the Charter of Workers' Rights (published in our last issue). Arrests and interrogations of signatories have taken place in Gdansk, Szczecin, Radom and Katowice. Despite this, a Founding Committee of the Free Trade Unions of Western Pomerania was established on 11 October in Szczecin, drawing its inspiration directly from the Charter as well as from similar committees already established in Katowice and Gdansk. Its founding declaration, signed by 9 workers from Szczecin and Gryfino, stresses the following grievances: 'changes in work quotas to the workers' disadvantage, discontinuity of production not caused by the workforce but

leading to a loss of part of their wages, the unjust distribution of prizes and bonuses, the lengthening of the working week, and health and safety conditions at work.'

In the countryside, the various peasant self-defence committees thrown up during the mass peasant protests against the Government's unpopular pension law last year continue to function, taking up a wide range of local issues. Their work has been assisted by a number of unofficial peasant journals providing information and debate on the problems of the countryside. And there are now the first signs of a renaissance of the political traditions of the pre-1948 independent peasant movement. On 3 June a Peasant Centre for Knowledge was established in Warsaw. Its founding programme, called 'A New Platform for a Better Understanding Between the Old and the New Peasant Activists' is signed by 22 people drawn both from the new peasant committees and from former peasant leaders. Its central aim is to work for organs of peasant self-government independent of the state administration.

In the intellectual field, last spring the authorities made a serious drive to weaken those centres of activity which they regarded as possible points of mass support. The police and official organisations launched a brutal assault on the Flying University in Warsaw and also victimised the leaders of one of the strongest local Student Solidarity Committees (SKS), that operates in Wroclaw. It is still too early to gain a clear picture of the strength and activity of the SKS in the new academic year. The Flying University began its new term in Warsaw on 2 November, but it seems that the government is still bent on disrupting the work, trying to persuade potential students that the repressive consequences of attending the lectures outweigh the intellectual value of the courses: the Warsaw city authorities have threatened criminal proceedings against those going to the lectures.

In the political field one of the most significant developments has been the appearance of a very lengthy analysis of the present crisis in Poland, entitled 'Report on the State of the Republic and Paths leading to its Reform'. Some 5,000 copies of the text have been circulating since July. It comes from an influential group of intellectuals with the name 'Experience and the Future' that was formed towards the end of last year. Its first meeting was held in a conference room at the Academy of Sciences and was attended by such prominent figures as Central Committee member Rakowski, who edits the Party weekly *Polityka*. Subsequently, leading Party figures withdrew, probably under pressure from elements in the top leadership, and the group turned its attention to producing the Report, drawn up from questionnaires sent to reform-minded people inside and outside the Communist Party. The document gives a very gloomy view of the present situation and proposes a wide measure of reform within the framework of a continuing 'leading role' for the Communist Party. Amongst these reforms are suggestions for liberalising the electoral arrangements for the Parliament and handing over the direction of the economy to experts not swayed by the immediate political concerns of the Party leadership.

Another potentially very significant development

has been the re-emergence of a political current adhering to the traditions of the Polish Socialist Party of the pre-1948 period. Its May Day political platform, published below, suggests that the group, known as the National Committee of Polish Socialists, has gone a long way towards defining its own comprehensive, positive programme though its actual influence and organisational strength is still not clear.

Meanwhile, out of the corners of their eyes, all political forces noted an incident in Gdansk: workers in department K2 in the shipyard struck for two days in October. A Central Committee representative rushed north to negotiate a settlement. Unnecessary jitters? Perhaps. But with workers' living standards falling many nerves are strained in Warsaw at the thought that the subterranean giant of Poland's politics may again move out and stamp its will on the country's history.

SOLIDARITY WITH VONS

Between 3 and 10 October leading human rights activists from the KOR and ROPCiO held a hunger strike in Warsaw in solidarity with the 6 VONS members awaiting trial in Czechoslovakia and with other political prisoners both in Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The hunger strike, held in the Church of the Holy Cross involved Andrzej Czuma, Antoni Macierewicz, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, Anka Kowalska and 9 others. During the course of the strike, thousands of leaflets explaining its aims were distributed in Warsaw and messages of support came from many individuals and groups.

In a telephone interview with *Palach Press* on 12 October Jacek Kuron said that the joint hunger strike was part of a continuing co-operation between human rights activists in the two countries. 'I consider that we are now creating the beginnings of future peaceful co-operation between the peoples of this part of Europe,' he said.

On 7 October a number of civil rights campaigners in Czechoslovakia joined the hunger strike for the same aims as those of the group in Warsaw. Among the Czechoslovak strikers were Evzen Brikcius, David Nemeč, Pavla Nemečová, Josef Refler, Pavel Smida and Petruska Sustrava.

On 18 October a statement signed jointly by the KOR, VONS and Charter 77 was issued condemning the trial of the 6 as illegal.

On 22 October, 15 students from Krakow travelled to Warsaw to demonstrate against the trial in front of the Czechoslovak Cultural Institute. They were detained by the police and forcibly sent back to Krakow.

These solidarity actions followed many other Polish protests over the VONS arrests during the summer and autumn (see the last issue of *Labour Focus*, page 4).

Polish Socialist Group Formed

[October's announcement of the formation of an open opposition party, the PKN (Confederation for an Independent Poland), reported in our last issue, though the best publicised, was not necessarily the most significant sign of political crystallisation amongst non-Communist currents in Poland. Just beneath the surface of legality and below the threshold of fully-fledged party organisation other currents are beginning to define themselves.

On 15 October, a group of Socialists centred in Warsaw decided to seek to establish links with the Socialist International and to ask the Polish Socialist Party in exile to represent them within the international body. We publish here two documents from the group, issued in Warsaw on May Day.

While the main-stream of the opposition in Poland, led by KOR, acts openly the National Committee of Polish Socialists, along with other groups like the PPN, has not yet made public a list of members. But Polish Socialist circles in London, who made the document available to Labour Focus, indicate that the group includes people who were members of the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) in the years before the fusion with the Polish Communists in 1948. There are also indications that some members of the group are members of the Communist Party.

The documents are striking for their internal coherence and their stress on an historical continuity stretching back to the post-war PPS that fused with Poland's Communists in 1948. Some explanation of the history of the PPS may be useful. Before the

war, the Polish Communist Party was banned and the PPS was overwhelming dominant in the Polish working class. During the war, under the name of 'The Movement of the Working Masses', W.R.N., it played a leading role in the 'Home Army' resistance movement, reverting to the name PPS in 1944. When the 'Lublin Government' supported by the Soviet Union was established at the end of the war, the PPS leadership refused to support it and the party's organisation was banned. A small break-away group called the Workers' Party of Polish Socialists, RPPS, supported and helped to create the Lublin Government. After the banning of the old PPS, its name was adopted by a new socialist party composed of those who were prepared to work within the framework of the Lublin government. This new PPS became a mass force between 1944 and December 1948 when it fused with the Polish Communists to form the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) which rules Poland today. The post-war PPS was the most powerful Socialist Party in post-war Eastern Europe and before 1948 it had a greater influence inside the Polish working class than the Communist Party, known at that time as the Polish Workers' Party, PPR.

Former members of the PPS are today active in many organisations of the opposition, including the KOR. A second group claiming adherence to the PPS tradition has also been formed in Krakow and it appears that discussions are now taking place between the Krakow group and the Warsaw-based group whose documents we publish here.]

1. Founding Declaration

We, the Polish Socialists, along with our publications, the Socialist Publishing Agency ('Socjalistyczna Agencja Wydawnicza' — formerly 'Wydawnictwo SAM') and Wydawnictwo 'Wolnosc' ('Freedom' Publication), are in the ranks of the opposition groupings that have emerged in Poland since 1976. In contrast to many of the groupings that act semi-legally, we do not reveal the names of our leadership and our activities. In principle this should be understandable to all those who actively participate in the social and political life of our country. Nevertheless, in view of the widespread interest in our activities and the numerous questions about our programme and tactics that have not been fully clarified in our publications hitherto, we declare:

1. Although the unification of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Polish Workers Party (PPR) within the new Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) in December 1948 was carried out under strong political, and even police, pressure, and despite all reservations and doubts which such methods must have produced, members of the PPS wanted to join up with the PPR on a basis of honesty, sincerity and trust, because they believed that their acceptance of the principle of unity of the working class movement would be advantageous for the working class, for the toiling masses and for the whole Nation. Many party workers, however, already at this time, accepted this decision critically.

2. At the time we still believed — and we stressed this in many declarations and resolutions — that the emerging united party of the Polish proletariat should combine in its day to day ideology and practice, the joint principles and programmes of Polish Socialists and Communists that had been accepted jointly at the Unification Congress, and which took into account the best traditions of both working class movements and the current and future realistic, true interests of the Nation and the State. We believed the assurances given by the Communists that they would erase their mistakes of the past, and we were ready to erase our own mistakes as well.

3. Yet not long after unification investigations and purges within the PZPR took place, during which under various pretexts expulsions from the PZPR were imposed virtually en masse from

the war-time resistance WRN wing, but also from the Workers Party of Polish Socialists (RPPS), which had been more conciliatory to the PPR. This took place in an atmosphere of calumny and intimidation, with fabricated accusations about 'enemies of the people', and accompanied often by both expulsions from various posts and arrests. By in this way transgressing the decisions made at the Unification Congress and by giving the lie to their own pre-Congress commitments, the PPR men themselves destroyed and invalidated the agreement between the two independent parties about their decision to unite. That is why centres of Social-Democratic opposition arose and remained active, coming as they did from members of both the WRN and the RPPS sections, and continuing the ideological link with the Polish Socialist Party in exile. These centres of opposition have continued to exist in Poland in various forms up to this very day.

Both in its programme and its day to day practice the PZPR transformed itself exceptionally quickly into a Communist party, based on the Russian example and methods. The PPS legacy had been eliminated. Delegations of the PZPR participated in conferences and congresses of various Communist parties, but they never participated in conferences and congresses of Socialist parties. The recent attempts in the last few years by the PZPR to make contact with Socialist parties of the West are of an insincere nature and are only a temporary tactical manoeuvre.

The direction of our country's development after 1948 was ostensibly under the banner of Socialism, but in fact the direction was Communism of a Soviet type, totally dependent on and even subservient towards, Russia, mainly in the economic and cultural sector, and often directly in opposition to Poland's interests. The mass expulsions from the PZPR of Socialists and of Socialist ideals was accompanied by examples, alarming for the future, of the systematic liquidation of democracy and its replacement by totalitarian principles and methods of government, which have led Poland to its present economic state and to a similar deterioration in other aspects of political and social life.

4. The Socialists decided to manifest their critical stance towards the oligarchic methods of ruling the country just at the time when,

in the face of the principles of democratic socialism, the PZPR declared itself the leading force of the Nation, a move which the Socialists recognised as an ominous forecast of various effects harmful to the country which could spring from this or that act of lawlessness. The events of June 1976 confirmed these fears — the power apparatus in Poland had finally revealed itself as hostile to the working class, repudiating socialist democracy in theory and practice. These events were also the signal to constitute a grouping of Polish Socialists with a National Committee.

5. We are not a prey to illusions, we remain political realists. We are well aware that Poland finds itself in a specific system of international treaties, which ties it by a signed alliance with its neighbours to the east and on the other bank of the Oder!⁹ On the strength of those treaties, we would like to see the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic as our allies, but as allies who really, *de facto* and not merely *de jure*, respect our independence and sovereignty, and who understand that all our relations must be based on principles of real equality for each

2. Platform of the Polish Socialists

Despite unremitting efforts by the whole nation, Communist rule in Poland has led to complete economic bankruptcy. The political system is also bankrupt, based as it is on the totalitarian dictatorship of a parasitic bureaucratic class. A division into those ruling and those ruled, exploitation of the urban working masses, economic ruin of the countryside, pillage of the national wealth and of common property to ensure a life of luxury for the bureaucratic oligarchy, the rapacity and arrogance of the 'red princelings'; nepotism, corruption and bribery reaching the scope of a national calamity; the destruction of all authentic social initiatives; the disruption of national, social, organisational and family ties; a monstrosity developed police network, the choking of truth by a system of political censorship, the total falsehood of official propaganda — all this dug a chasm between the regime and the nation and its working masses. This chasm cannot be bridged.

The system of political power still has sufficient strength to persecute individuals or even whole groupings of the democratic opposition, but it is no longer in a position to withstand a mass movement. The economic structure is paralysed by confusion, waste and disorder at every level.

This state of affairs gave rise to passive national resistance manifested in universal criticism of the regime, a lowering of the tempo, output and quality of work, strike actions and a decrease in social activity. This defensive struggle was taken up and is spreading in the conviction that a dialogue is no longer possible between the ruling structure and society, and the sequence of experiences of the years 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976 have proved that the oligarchy has no desire for such a dialogue, while society at present no longer wishes it. What is required is not a renovation of the regime but profound democratic changes, whose aim would be the removal not of the symptoms of evil, but of its causes.

Those who have compromised themselves must go. This will not raise the country from its crisis, it will simply create the possibilities for proceeding towards that goal. To lead the country out of the catastrophic situation in which it now finds itself, many years' effort will be required with a universal voluntary effort of the masses in that direction. Only a system of democratic socialism, based on an alliance of peasants, workers and white-collar employees, on a respect for all civil rights, on the choice of a government by the Nation and on control by the Nation over its government, would be able to ensure such a voluntary mass effort and direct the political economic and social reconstruction of the country.

Nor should we lose sight of the fact that even within the limits of the present-day Communist system imposed on the Nation and never accepted by it in free elections, even on the principles of the present constitution of the Polish Peoples Republic and within the confines of today's system of international treaties, it is possible and vital to carry on the struggle for freedom of conscience, of

partner. Those should be the principles within the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, which would make it possible for Poland to conduct its own independent foreign policy and international economic relations in a way that would be advantageous for the country and which would terminate the present semi-colonial exploitation.

6. As the PZPR has long since rid itself of former PPS members and of the programme and principles of that organisation, we wish to indicate to all those who hold dear the ideals of democratic socialism, the way to make it materialise in Poland, despite the obvious difficulties. That is why we are active, raising the consciousness of the Polish working masses, and making them realise that a strong independent and sovereign Poland can only be built with the support of the principles of democratic socialism. And it is in this spirit, in the face of the critical political and economic situation in the country that we present here our political platform as the basis of our actions.

beliefs, of assembly, of speech, of the press and of publishing, for respect for the political and economic rights of the individual.

The June struggles of the working class in 1976 caused a fundamental change in the situation in Poland. As a result half-secret organisations of opposition of the employed intelligentsia, as well as organisations which concealed their own membership, broke through the state monopoly of information in the press and publications, in scientific research and education, and at the same time they took up a series of actions in defence of respect for the law and for civic rights. But the full realization of these rights and the establishment in Poland of true democracy and true socialism will be possible only through struggle by the masses. For it was not a democratisation process in the management of the system that made possible the existence of an opposition in Poland, but, on the contrary, the struggle for civic rights and freedoms that forced the authorities to make concessions of a democratising nature.

This struggle can be conducted successfully only by the working masses, whose greatest strength is a worker-peasant alliance. That is why on the democratic opposition front in Poland, the decisive role is reserved for those activities which, like the peasants' freedom movement as expressed for instance by the Peasants' Self-Defence Committee, or the workers movement, making its external appearance through formations, such as the Free Trade Unions, factory committees and Teams of Three, or the addressing of letters, demands and citizens' resolutions to Parliament or other authoritative bodies. In other words the key role is that of ideological, political and organisational activities by the working class and its representatives.

In representing the interests of the working masses, the democratic socialist movement in Poland is guided by the following principles:

1. Polish Socialists, faithful to PPS's traditional adherence through many decades to national independence, consider as the most elevated and unshakeable right of all the principle of Poland's national independence and sovereignty.
2. Polish Socialists, faithful to the principles of democratic socialism declare that the supreme authority belongs to the Nation, while all legislative authority belongs to Parliament elected in free, secret, universal, direct and proportional elections.

The highest order of representation and the supreme executive authority is the Council of State and the Government, summoned, recalled and controlled by Parliament. It must serve the interests of the nation as a whole, and this requires unconditional compliance with the principle of a separation of the state from every party, and of every party from the state. Within the scope of the authority of an independent judiciary must lie the control of the conformability of legislative and administrative acts with the Constitution and the

revocation of acts and decisions inconsistent with it.

3. Polish Socialists, faithful to the principles of democracy, declare that the fundamental source of power in the nation is the working masses, whose interests are expressed by political parties and groupings, trade unions and social organisations, formed on the basis of freedom of conscience and assembly.

The overriding source of strength of the urban and rural working masses is the worker-peasant alliance, based on mutual sincerity, loyalty and trust between the two equal partners of this alliance.

4. Polish Socialists, faithful to the principles of scientific socialism declare that Poland's economy must be based on the harmonious co-operation of the socialized and private forms of ownership of the means of production in a model that would preclude the restoration of capitalism, namely:

— common ownership: state, municipal and co-operative, should include banks and insurance companies, natural resources, forests, large-scale and middle-sized industries, foreign trade, products of the sea, domestic wholesale and in part retail trade, the basic framework of communications, local government services and standard setters, particularly the large model rural livestock holdings;

— private ownership: guaranteed by legislation, should include rural family holdings, small-scale industry, skilled individual trades and services, small-scale retail trade, a section of restaurants and all those spheres of the economy where it would be in the public interest to turn it over to private enterprise.

The goal of the economy of a Socialist Poland should be the efficient and earnest satisfaction of the needs of society, a constant rise in living standards and in each citizen's quality of life. It should be based on economic principles, including the principle of planned and well-balanced development and the laws of a market economy.

5. Polish Socialists indicate, as the most concrete and urgent task today, the struggle to carry into effect the political and economic

rights of the citizen, guaranteed by the Constitution of the Polish Peoples Republic, the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference and the International Conventions on Human Rights, which from the moment of ratification by Poland on 3 March 1977 are by law constitutionally binding in Poland. Specifically this struggle entails:

— the struggle for freedom of assembly in democratic organisations and their freedom to carry out their own activities and to publish, along with conditions for operating legally as a democratic opposition,

— the struggle for an independent judiciary, irremovability of judges, and judicial control over the constitutional validity of statutes, and the legal validity of administrative decisions,

— the struggle for free, secret, universal, direct and proportional elections to Parliament and to local Councils, instituted on the basis of a democratic electoral law, guaranteeing pluralism in the presentation of electoral lists and candidates,

— the struggle for the basic right of workers to set up independent trade unions, and for independent Workers Councils as organs of workers' self-government and their management of production,

— the struggle for autonomous elected bodies to be restored wherever they have been violated, especially territorial autonomy, co-operatives and social organisations,

— the struggle for a rural policy in line with the interests of the working peasants and the Nation as a whole,

— the struggle for an open unconcealed social and political life, based on freedom of speech and of the press, guaranteed by a new press law,

— the struggle for freedom in education and for restoring the autonomy of colleges of higher education,

— the struggle for price stability and fair acceptable wages.

These demands point the way to an independent, free, democratic and Socialist Poland, in accordance with the world-wide slogan of the socialist movement: 'In the struggle you will define your rights'.

**National Committee of Polish Socialists
1 May 1979, Warsaw**

'Robotnik' Editor on Unofficial Workers Movement

[Below Jan Litynski, editor of Robotnik, explains the origins and development of the unofficial workers' movement and discusses the situation within the working class, breaking down many simplistic notions current in the West. The Workers' Charter mentioned by Litynski was published in our last issue. The interview is taken from L'Alternative no.1. Translation is by Patrick Camiller.]

Robotnik has the widest circulation of all opposition papers: today the print-run fluctuates between ten and twenty thousand. Among all the dissident movements in Eastern Europe, it is also, as far as we are aware, the only workers' paper with a national audience. Could you outline the origins and history of Robotnik?

Its origins go back to spring 1977, when the KOR movement launched in solidarity with the workers after the June 1976 revolt had attained its immediate goals and was beginning to run out of steam. A new form of action had to be found. Our first idea was to set up workers' discussion circles which would provide a framework for

job-related and political agitation. That project was a failure, first of all because there had been a misunderstanding. We expected the workers to tell us what needed to be done for them, while they expected from us ready-made plans and precise instructions. This experience with circles—which had the same negative result when it was repeated in early 1978—taught us that the initiative for cooperation has to come from the workers themselves, and that it must come from workers who are genuinely decided on action. (Victims of repression are not necessarily the most highly-motivated militants.) Besides, the police repression unleashed in early 1978 had a lot to do with the failure of the circles: many workers, especially those who had been hit by repression in June 1976, wanted to go back to 'normal' life. Finally, we also have to recognise that circle activity did not exactly correspond to the workers' aspirations. Of course, they quite liked to discuss with us, but many were burning to throw themselves into direct action — indeed, to take up arms. It was then that our friend Henryk Wojec, who was active in a factory circle in Ursus, said: 'Instead of giving them grenades, let's give them a paper!' Now that we accepted the need to abandon the idea of a workers' political

organisation, the formula of a nation-wide paper made it possible to undertake concrete actions without any vertical structure at all.

Did the workers share this reticent attitude to formal organisation?

No, on the contrary. They would have preferred to be part of an organisation in which everyone had his place and a task to perform. For them it was a question of security. Obviously it is very reassuring to know that there is a leadership which has a plan of action, which knows the path towards achieving it, which assigns to everyone a clearly-defined role ...

Was not the founding of the free trade unions precisely such an attempt to create an organisational framework?

The Free Trade Union of Silesia, which was founded towards the end of 1978, is an initiative parallel to, but independent of, **Robotnik** and KOR. Personally, I am still sceptical about this attempt to create an organisational framework and then to expect it to be 'filled out' with a spontaneous will to action. The low level of the trade union's activity seems to vindicate

this reticent attitude of mine. The organisers of the Free Trade Union of Silesia were not sufficiently well implanted among workers or capable of formulating concrete tasks. The Free Trade Union of Gdansk, however, which was founded a few months later, is functioning much better: it has been able to organise a demonstration commemorating the December 1970 revolt; it has a paper of its own in **Robotnik Wybrzeza (Coastal Worker)**; and above all, it has succeeded in attracting genuine worker militants. By 'genuine militants' I mean workers who have been active for years in the work-place or trade union, without waiting for the emergence of the opposition. In fact, the opposition has merely opened new perspectives on a path they chose long ago. Thus, it is significant that our movement had virtually no contact with members of the 1970 Szczecin strike committee. But in my view, the main reason with the fierce repression that hit the committee. But in my view, the main reason lies in the motives of those workers who mobilised to defend their interests, yet were not attracted by oppositional activity. The fact that they are now coming to join us is a sign that we are going beyond the stage of a self-enclosed opposition group.

In these conditions, what do you see as the most suitable form of workers' organisation?

We were greatly influenced by the example of the Spanish workers' commissions — by their role in the transition from dictatorship to a democratic regime. Of course, we did not think in terms of a mechanical transposition: we do not overlook the differences between Franco's Spain and Poland. Still, the workers' commissions seem to us the best formula for genuinely working-class organisation: that is to say, decentralised, non-clandestine organisation, acting within the workplaces in response to precise problems and leaving behind the official trade unions.

Do you also make reference to the workers' councils experience in 1956?

No, not at all. We don't think that the slogan of self-management can mobilise the workers' movement today, or even that it is a valid slogan. Under the system existing in Poland, it seems laughable to call for self-management in the absence of genuine workers' unions. What is more, the workers show absolutely no urge to manage production. This problem doesn't interest them. Obviously, if such aspirations were to appear, we would not be opposed to them. But for the moment, that is a completely theoretical hypothesis.

What is the place of the official unions in the workplace? What are the limits of their independence, and in what cases do they come out in defence of the workers?

Wherever repression is carried out for political reasons, the official unions take

the side of management. They are an absolutely dead organisation, their officials being paid functionaries at the disposal of management. You join them automatically at the same time as you sign the work contract; and subscriptions are deducted at source. For the workers, the union is just one body among others at the service of management: it concerns itself with social questions in the factory (holiday camps, rest-homes, festivals, etc.), but absolutely not with defending their interests.

So, the unions are as compromised as the Party in the workers' eyes?

Much more. We can see that the most active and socially-committed workers go towards the Party rather than the unions. Why? Because the Party is both more powerful and has a greater presence in the workplace. The union is just a docile tool. But in the Party things happen: meetings, discussions, decisions ...

Is the Party, then, seen by workers as their genuine representative?

Certainly not by the non-Party members. But it should not be forgotten that the Party membership of two-and-a-half million includes 40% genuine workers. They therefore represent some 10% of the working class and cannot be considered as vulgar opportunists. The examples of 1956 and 1970 show that, in specific conditions, workers who belong to the Party are capable of supporting the protest movement. Such workers are marked by a kind of double consciousness: as Party members they proudly repeat the formula 'We, the working class' and look down upon the 'mass' of workers; Party membership gives them a certain self-assurance corresponding to the career prospects opening before them that may lead, in the best of cases, to the Central Committee. They are convinced that it is the workers who rule Poland — the term 'rule' expressing both their need for prestige (workers sit on the executive committee) and a genuine feeling of responsibility for the fate of the country. However, they feel really tied to the cause of the working class, not hesitating to show their solidarity with strike movements, and even to take the head of such movements by turning to account the organisational experience they acquired in the Party. We cannot allow ourselves to reject these workers; on the contrary, we must convince them that they were wrong to join the Party and win them to the opposition. This being said, and even though it is very important for us to win over this type of worker, the great majority of workers who contact us do regard the Party as the symbol of arbitrary power, repression and national betrayal.

How does Robotnik function at a practical level? How does it organise its channels of distribution and information? What is its circulation?

To a large extent the paper is distributed by

our local sympathisers, each one of whom chooses the method that seems most effective and least dangerous. Factory-gate distribution, for example, is very little used, since it generally results in a forty-eight hour stay at the police station or in an appearance before the factory disciplinary committee. And then, workers are at first distrustful of such open propaganda. Another illusion of the opposition was its belief that it is enough to offer people the possibility of expressing themselves for them to jump at the opportunity. Information reaches us largely through people who distribute the paper. But we always try to confirm it through means of our own. The most difficult problem is at editorial level, since the information reaching us is often fragmentary and repetitive. Our task is to find a formula that is both sufficiently general to inspire a mobilising slogan, and sufficiently concrete to reflect workers' specific concerns.

The **Robotnik** print-run varies between ten and twenty thousand, according to our technical possibilities and the quality of the number. Each copy is read by an average of three persons — so, its circulation is of the order of forty thousand.

What are your plans for the future?

Our plans go in three directions: first, to develop our publications, improve their editing, strengthen the technical infrastructure and set up a Workers' Library. Secondly, given the catastrophic economic situation, we are preparing for a 'hot' autumn in the official unions. In fact, the authorities seem to have the same forebodings, since they have postponed the self-management council elections that were due to take place in the autumn. Two articles recently published in **Robotnik** — 'The unions are afraid of elections', and 'Stay in the game' — have already made known a change in tactics: we think it important that if a protest current appears in the official unions, we should be ready to link up with and support it. Thirdly, and in the same general perspective, we shall bring out a **Charter of Workers' Rights** in the autumn. It is a kind of minimum action programme which, we hope, will give new energy to the oppositional workers' movement.

MINING DISASTERS

The safety problem has become a burning issue in the coal-mines of Upper Silesia following three serious mining disasters in the area within a few months killing more than 30 miners. These disasters come as no surprise to the miners themselves. In their desperate efforts to boost coal production for export, the authorities have trampled on safety regulations over the last few years. A report from the Silesian mines published in **Labour Focus** as long ago as September 1977 stated that 'the number of accidents is rising at a frightening rate ... Following a blast at the coal face, the regulation half-hour wait in gas free corridors is rarely observed: five minutes is sufficient. The corridors are never whitewashed. Materials are lowered onto unsecured inclines and miners have to work with tools in a cramped space. The concentration of carbon dioxide is not checked ...'

EAST GERMANY

Rudolf Bahro's Views on Eastern Europe

[Rudolf Bahro is free. The East German Marxist, author of *The Alternative*, sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment for 'treason' in June 1978, was released as part of an amnesty marking the 30th anniversary of the GDR after a big international labour movement campaign on his behalf. Five days after his release he came to West Germany. His decision to emigrate was taken freely and was motivated by the belief that this would allow an even greater influence and spread of his ideas in the GDR. His ex-wife, his companion and his two children emigrated with him. At the border crossing he was offered a bouquet of flowers by a representative of the right-wing Springer Press of West Germany, which he refused to accept. In West Germany he plans to work at building a political movement to the left of the SPD. He has been offered a professorship at the Free University in West Berlin. Below he discusses his ideas in an interview with Günther Minnerup of Labour Focus.]



Rudolf Bahro on his arrival in West Germany.

I would like to take the opportunity of this interview to ask you to clarify a number of points arising from your book, for instance, concerning your attitude to the ruling bureaucracy in Eastern Europe. There are formulations according to which the ruling parties cannot be reformed, that they stand as a whole in opposition to society, as obstacles on the road to socialism. On the other hand you sometimes reduce the bureaucracy to its 'Polit-bureaucratic' top and—as you did just now again after your release—speak of people sympathetic to your views in the Party hierarchy. Is your perspective one of reform emanating from the top of the apparatus, or of a radical break with the apparatus?

I would rather say now where in my book the clue to solving these contradictions is to be found. I have explained in Chapter 11 how apparatus interests and emancipatory interests oppose each other within the individuals. From that point of view, if one assumes the hegemony of the apparatus interests over the individuals serving the apparatus, then indeed prospects in Eastern Europe are hopeless. The domination of apparatus interests, however, is today only still being upheld on the political, even military, level, while ideologically the positions of the apparatus are already lost, so that this problem of hopelessness or non-hopelessness is becoming—if one speaks in a general sense and does not identify the word 'revolution' with specific forms—a problem of the revolutionary situation. If the hour strikes, as in Prague 1968, if, as they themselves say, they drop their guard for a single moment, if for one decisive moment the military and security apparatus can only be neutralised, then that

opens up other possibilities. In such a situation the emancipatory interests would make themselves felt right up as far as the high ranks of the apparatus among an as yet atomised, unorganised and—in my view—none-too-small section of individuals. These interests would then have to be conceived politically, would have to be based on a programme of action which does more than to pose the question of general emancipation abstractly. But since this depends on constellations which may or may not emerge, I in fact consciously exposed myself to this ambivalence in my exposition. On the whole, however, I stress my conviction in the book that we will succeed, that an evolution along the lines of the Prague Spring—even if not in the same form—is already underway within the social structure and political superstructure alike.

One could perhaps say that Prague has shown how differentiations within the leadership and the apparatus can spark off developments, but that it also showed the limitations of such a process. Looking at other examples—such as Hungary 1956—is it not clear that, once this process matures, a confrontation arises that looks more like a classical revolutionary clash in the streets rather than an evolutionary development?

As far as Prague is concerned you seem to read something into my position that I did not wish to suggest. Of course the leadership did play a decisive triggering role: there was a majority in the Politbureau in December 1967 for bringing about a change. The essence, however, was a long ideological process of preparation, which worked its way up from below—'below' in this case not necessarily being the factories—from the thinking party membership up to the top. This ideological process was temporarily blocked by the invasion of 1968, but it is so deeply rooted in the needs of the societies of actually existing socialism. The GDR, for instance, was long regarded as the most backward country in this respect. And what

does one find now?

Still, it is the case that we have lost ground since 1968 — 'we' in the narrow sense, however. We see in Charter 77 how—and I don't in any way intend this as a value-judgement, but merely for our own clarification in the traditional categories—the ideological counter-potential has shifted to the right. There has been a kind of rightward shift in the perspective of change ...

However, if confrontations occur in other countries, then, of course, we are not kind of people to say: It's not our affair, we didn't want it. Of course, confrontations of this kind do not come about by accident and we cannot act as brakes on history ...

Because Charter 77 operates solely on the basis of democratic rights, and because divergent forces are involved in it? Because it has no clear socialist perspective?

Yes, and that of course shows that there are fewer people now who believe in the possibility of a socialist renewal. That was the chief counter-revolutionary effect of the intervention.

But must we not expect a transitional stage similar to Charter 77 even in the GDR, in order to gain initial room for manoeuvre? Will the question of democratic rights not assume a dynamic of its own?

I believe that in the GDR Marxism is more deeply rooted. I don't think there is another country in the socialist camp where Marxism is so widespread. The party intelligentsia there—including many people outside the Party—thinks in Marxist terms.

But beyond the intellectuals, what's the picture there? One hears a lot about the depoliticisation of the masses in the GDR, about the retreat into private life ...

Well, all that's not 'intelligentsia' in the old sense tends—as far as the mood of the masses is concerned—hopelessly towards the image of the Federal Republic.

Does that not raise difficult problems regarding the linking-up of your ideas and those of other oppositional intellectuals with the spontaneous interests of the masses? Is it realistic to expect that your and other comrades' ideas will immediately be in a position of ideological hegemony? Is it not more likely that, as is the case in Czechoslovakia and other countries, the democratic struggle becomes important in itself, since the masses are first of all interested in regaining their freedoms before they contemplate the ideas you present in your book?

On my arrival here I at once spoke on television to my friends and comrades in the GDR. I said: Since I happen to be a German, I have landed the GDR—which has the greatest problem of ideological stability—with my critique, and if I have now left, my decision is to some extent based on my view that we should not now proceed from ideological to political activity in the GDR. In the GDR as such, that is. We should rather start to pose political questions to the rest of the socialist camp, as has been done in Czechoslovakia. It is to be feared that the GDR would be subject to even stronger outside pressures than Czechoslovakia.

If one has to wait with open political activities, what is it that one should wait for?

I have told them: Continue reading my book, without too much caution, continue thinking, and when you debate in your groups, rely on the course of history. In short, I have insisted on further ideological preparation, on forcing the ideological discussion onto the Party apparatus. The Party still has such great authority in the relevant circles that such a turn towards debating out the issues might be possible. But that presupposes a far-sighted Party leadership of people who do actually dare to face a theoretical discussion. It is possible to see that as a controlled process. When I speak here of a controlled process, I do so with reference to concrete historical conditions, in the sense that one cannot deprive the addict of his drug overnight. We must not—and this is the gist of my argument—jeopardise the stability of the GDR as a state. There is a great risk that the GDR would collapse if we risked a political confrontation, since the spontaneous desires of the masses are for the bourgeois way of life. Here in Europe a slight shift in the relationship of forces could jeopardise the entire process of detente. My intention is for us to pursue ideological hegemony in the whole socialist camp. The case has to be won in Moscow, and after the Czech experience we have to aim at change coming from there. If, however, it should come to confrontations in these countries, then of course we cannot say that it's not our fault, that we didn't want it. We cannot act as the brakemen of history.

Could it not be the other way round, that developments in the periphery speed things up in Moscow?

I am coming on to that now. Of course, I am still talking on the level of political action. Politically we can only initiate real changes via Moscow. This general perspective does not rule out the fact that should anything happen in specific countries we must show ourselves to be revolutionaries and not act as brakes. I am not saying that therefore we must do nothing. But what I do believe to be wrong — and this is also one of the reasons why I left: it is no use artificially forcing

political action in the GDR, nothing is gained by it. They will simply defeat us outright, they have to, and they even have, as it were, a superior right to do so: The argument that we must preserve the GDR. They have now made a film over there which documents the history of the GDR since 1945 and in which a functionary states in a discussion that the 13 August is about not being devoured. We are still living under the compulsion of 13 August, even though today the problem of fugitives from the Republic is no longer the same. The relationship of forces here in Germany is such that viewed from this ideological standpoint it has consolidated itself at the level of 13 August.

And now your question becomes valid: on the level of the ideological process, the periphery has the upper hand vis-à-vis Moscow, the process is accelerated by experiences such as 1968, experiences such as that of my book, which has fortunately become international and is brought to their attention by practically the entire left-wing intelligentsia in the West, even—although they do not say so publicly—by the Eurocommunist Parties—experiences such as the developments in Poland. They, as I wrote, will lose the periphery if they do not overcome this problem productively, and to that extent there is a dialectic emanating from the periphery. But we must not play with fire in the GDR out of revolutionary subjectivism and voluntarism.

Is there not a strong streak of a paternalistic attitude to the masses in those parts of your book where you insist on the need for a one-party system, your lack of any reference to the Soviet tradition, your claim that the working class was incapable of becoming the ruling class?

I think my attitude to this problem is only realistic. One has to distinguish between the aim of overcoming subalternity, and the real paternalist tendency emerging as an unavoidable response to present subalternity. And as long as such subalternity exists, one cannot translate the necessary ideal into immediate practice.

But who decides what is practicable?

That can only be decided by practical criteria.

In what structures, by whom?

We should have learnt from the whole history of our movement that one cannot translate some guiding principle into immediate tactics. On the one hand, I started from the assumption that several different parties should, in the last analysis, reflect class differences ...

That, to put it bluntly, sounds like old Stalinist hat. There are enough examples in the history of the workers' movement to show how political differences in one and the same class are crystallised into different

parties.

I have consciously spoken out against that idea, and argued that really only class differences justify separate parties. What is reflected in a whole spectrum of political parties — these conflicts of interest which are of a less fundamental nature than class conflicts, and which naturally do exist in societies as complex as the East European — should find pluralistic expression within the one communist Party.

Why? It does not seem at all contradictory to your overall model to have a soviet structure of councils within which the various parties fight out their differences.

The needs of social organisation necessitate a convergent ideological and information process which has to be pluralistic, but must also come to decisions. We cannot fully benefit from the advantages of such a system if decision-making is similar to bourgeois parliamentarism, sometimes suspended for years because there exists a relativistic equilibrium of different concepts which prevents anyone from governing. In short, this process has to be guided.

But why does the decision-making centre have to be in the Party, as opposed to the state?

No, no, I did not say that. The ideological process will culminate in the party, in a dialogue with the whole of society ...

What form will that take?

Just a minute — in this dialogue with the whole of society the programme which is to be fed into the state apparatus is worked out ...

But by whom? That is the crux of the matter. A political decision-making monopoly of the party.

When we see the reactions of the masses in the GDR for example — who are condemned to a non-reflective existence by the nature of their work process, how they react — then one is absolutely forced to say at some point: here is the party, there are the masses. That cannot be overcome in one leap.

In my book I used an image from an old workers' song: 'Look at the column of millions marching endlessly out of the darkness ...'. The light into which the column is marching does not, however, illuminate them all to the same degree. In short, the cognitive process, the hegemony of emancipatory interests, the acquisition of the ability to think in abstractions and everything that is necessary to really have a voice in society: that is precisely the main content of the historical progress we have yet to make. All I say is that we cannot assume that they are all illuminated already; it is not their fault if they are still in the dark.

If one acknowledges the reactions of the masses, in the GDR for example, who are still condemned to an unreflective life by the nature of their work processes, then it is unavoidable that there should still be a justification for saying: Here the party, there the masses. We are aiming for an abolition of, as Marx said, the counterposition of educators and educated; but that cannot be done in one leap forward.

But is the existing subalternity not more than just a product of the work processes and a lack of education; is it not also a subalternity enforced by the existing political structures, often through the open use of violence? And if you now accept that such subalternity will continue to exist ...

But I am not saying that I accept that ...
In one respect you do ...

You completely ignore the tremendous progress that an organisation of the Party along the lines suggested by me with regard to the League of Communists would represent. Given the political constellations in the GDR it would certainly work out that way, and it would be a great step forward.

I would argue that it will not happen that way. The bureaucracy in the GDR and in the entire Eastern bloc has an overriding material interest in keeping the masses in a state of political subalternity.

The bureaucracy, yes — that is true, but the content of the political evolution in the GDR ...

But who is going to be the agent of that process? And in particular, who is going to push it through in a power-political sense?

There is an ideological process underway which will lead to such changes as those during the Prague spring. Within the already illuminated part of the population, and especially the Party membership, the conditions for the struggle to subordinate the apparatus, to constitute the ideological process as the dominant process, are maturing. We will not rid ourselves of the problem immediately; even in Czechoslovakia it would have been totally wrong to do away with the apparatus at once. We might have had real chaos then. It is a matter of initiating the process by subordinating the apparatus to ideology. A state in which the party apparatus no longer commands the masses through the state machine, but in which the party as a movement, as an ideological process, as the collective intellectual communicates with the masses and the guidelines for the programming of the state apparatus are thus collectively hammered out. The party that I am counterposing to the masses is not the apparatus, but the party as an ideological process. That remains, and that you can criticise. It is the party in the role that it wanted to play originally, and I have shown why that was impossible then. If only as an educator; that would be tremendous progress. Of course the educator has to be educated himself, and that would also happen in that process. But you cannot

immediately eliminate these inequalities.

No, you probably cannot do that, but as long as there are no political checks against the real concentration of political power in the hands of the party, of a vanguard; as long as the decisive power does not lie with organs directly representing the masses, which the party has to win politically rather than control administratively ...

If you now want a guarantee that there will not be another authoritarian structure emerging on a more developed plane — such a guarantee is impossible. There may be a series of minor new convulsions through which a new authoritarian structure will repeatedly have to be smashed. I would concede that. But if I ask you, given our consensus about the real situation in a country like the GDR, how you imagine progress to be brought about — so you want more, more than my conception seems to have to offer you: 'serve the masses', in short. But in this respect the situation is rather similar still to the one in 1921 when Lenin said that whoever speaks of the proletariat now, mobilises the counter-revolution ...

In totally different circumstances, however ...

Are they? No, the GDR could crash ...

But there is without any doubt a proletariat in the GDR — even if you reject this category for your model of the cultural revolution — which is quite unlike that of Kronstadt or the Soviet Union in 1921! You cannot possibly say that the GDR workers are recent recruits from the peasantry, that they have no political traditions and can therefore be easily manipulated by the counter-revolution ...

The way I look at these problems, the situation is completely analogous. In the GDR the question of power is posed very immediately, and it is posed as either for or against the presently existing power, which is not proletarian. A question of power in the sense of either the presently existing power in the GDR, or the power of the other side — the power here. I just cannot ignore this GDR experience.

I would like to raise the national question in Germany which represents a notable gap in your book and in most of the recent writings of left-wing dissidents in the GDR. You have already mentioned the attraction of the West German model for broad sectors of the masses in the GDR, and the resulting ideological instability of the East German state. How do you see the significance of the national question for the revolutionary process in both German states? And what bearing do developments in the one have on developments in the other?

The present stalemate on the national question certainly acts as a block on social progress in the two German states. I had an interesting debate with Biermann on stage

yesterday — it was the first time I had spoken in front of students, at Biermann's concert — and we immediately had a public argument over this question. My starting point is this: The national question — at least as far as its immediate solution is concerned — remains in suspension, due to the fact that the frontier between the two German states is the frontier between the blocs, where the two world systems confront each other. It cannot be posed in practical political terms for the time being. This differs from the view according to which the national question has been resolved once and for all through the emergence of two German nations, which is the rather defensive position adopted in the East. Biermann said yesterday that the GDR was the reason why nothing happens in the Federal Republic, and I said that we must not adopt such a position here in West Germany. One cannot demand changes in the GDR as a precondition for the constitution of a socialist movement in the West. We are here, and cannot declare the GDR the decisive link in the chain — Biermann instantly quipped: 'as Rudi Bahro has just put it in Leninist terms' — for our tasks here. I have left my book over there and have declared that I remain at home in the GDR, too, and I have left the GDR in order to facilitate the discussion of my theses there, because there are individuals right up to the apparatus who do not want my continued presence to inhibit the discussion of new proposals. If I were to succeed now in establishing myself over here politically—and not just as a theoretician and ideologist—then such influences would be increased still further. We have to initiate a progressive dialectic towards change in both German states, and I stressed in my opening remarks on stage with Biermann yesterday my hope that change is indeed possible in both German states. If we can build a socialist movement here, I have already committed myself to building one outside the SPD, the influence of alternative conceptions in the GDR would be boosted. Conversely, a positive evolution in the GDR would facilitate our work here, although we cannot hope that the changes now already possible in the GDR would be sufficient to break the mutual stalemate. Such momentous changes are not possible in the short term in the GDR. That has to come a long way ...

...the international situation ...

via the Soviet Union, détente and so on. The national question, today more than ever, depends on social changes, primarily in the ideological sphere, on ideological changes in both German states. Here in the Federal Republic, faced as we are with the division of the masses by right-wing conservatism and social reformism, we will not be in a position to engage in politics immediately either. The most we can hope for in the coming period is to provide a left support for the SPD for a more decisive reform policy in the SPD's parliamentary-reformist way. The same in the GDR: An initially mainly ideological evolution there, and here, too, an ideological breakthrough towards a socialist movement to begin with.

SOVIET UNION

The Democratic Movement in Perspective

[The article which follows is the first part of a long document on the Soviet opposition written by Pyotr Abovin-Egides and Pinkhos Podrabinek, two editorial members of the independent discussion journal Poiski (Searches), founded, according to Zhores Medvedev by Old Bolsheviks. Since June 1978 five issues of Poiski have appeared, the most recent one containing over 500 pages of material on political, economic, literary and historical questions, on the activities of the democratic movement, and on various problems of everyday life in the Soviet Union. The journal is open to all points of view, except those of a 'racist, totalitarian or anti-human' character; and its contributors do indeed express a range of socialist, Eurocommunist, nationalist and religious positions. In January 1979 the KGB began a series of repressive actions against Poiski editors: Abovin-Egides lost his job as a philosophy lecturer; Raissa Lert, a CPSU member since 1926, was expelled from the Party; and Valeri Abramkin has been subjected to a number of threats and police interrogations. Although

Pinkhos Podrabinek is still at liberty, his two sons, Kirill and Alexander, were both sentenced in 1978 for their work in exposing psychiatric abuse.

Apart from a short introduction explaining the scope of the article, we print this long document in full (part two will appear in the next issue of Labour Focus), because the authors give a remarkable insight into the present debates and concerns of the Soviet opposition, a subject on which people in the West tend to have firm views and shaky information. The article is remarkable for its attempt to make a comprehensive survey of the conditions and problems facing the democratic movement as seen from the vantage point of Moscow. It also suggests a perspective for future development. Extracts from the document have appeared in the journal L'Alternative. Translation is by various Labour Focus collaborators.]

Part One.

After the flowering of 'petitions and open letters', many liberal intellectuals became frightened of the authorities and returned to the bosom of the regime. Paradoxical though it may seem, this phenomenon was assisted not only by the programmatic positions of Solzhenitsyn, which appear as a particular reaction to nightmares of those long years of mass terror, but also by Roy Medvedev's diametrically opposite position. A number of writers, human science specialists and technicians who had supported Solzhenitsyn's just protests, turned away from him when it became clear that he was not only a protester but also an anti-socialist and, in a certain way, half-democrat, half-autocrat. This served as a justification for their cowardly exit from the democratic movement. As for Medvedev, he completely disarmed and undermined these same intellectuals when he declared that socialism really does exist here, and that the only problem is to develop socialist democracy. Since, as he argued, we are witnessing constant 'improvements', which will carry us to glorious heights by the year 2000, what is the point of fighting now, of clashing with the authorities, provoking them, risking their anger, drawing down their thunderbolts? Is it not preferable to go back into the state of customary servility, in which things are not so bad after all and one can enjoy a certain tranquility? And this is how many a 'prodigal son' has found his way back to the fold.

Thus the democratic movement has become concentrated in a few small groups. They are composed of staunch defenders of human rights, who have remained loyal to the movement and are often tied to one another by bonds of friendship. A series of human rights defence committees have made their appearance (the human rights defence committee, section of Amnesty, then the Helsinki groups and the working commission on psychiatry). A parallel development was the appearance of the review *Twentieth Century* — which quickly disappeared, however, for reasons that one of us has analysed in the *Open Letter to Roy Medvedev*. A number of committees have virtually ceased to exist as a result of the arrests that hit one after another of their members. Those which have maintained a certain level of activity, despite numerous arrests, are essentially the Helsinki Group and the Working Commission on Psychiatry.

New Currents

Does this entail that the democratic movement has been reduced to a mere handful of individuals, however strong? No. Today new currents are appearing, of which only a part has so far emerged. Although they are still difficult to make out, they do exist none the less. They appear as the necessary result of definite social processes, forming an inexhaustible reservoir for the democratic process fraught with social consequences. Such worker-intellectuals, at first on the margin of dissidence,

from the liberal intelligentsia who left the movement in the late sixties and are now to be found inside the system.

We are referring, first and foremost, to the economic resistance of the working masses. Khrushchev used to implore the workers to 'free' the reserves of energy, but of course no one responded favourably to such permanent, hysterical appeals to work conscientiously, with responsibility and enthusiasm. People do not want to work without a suitable reward, just to boost the special privileges of the ruling elite. An Italian-style general strike is constantly taking place in the country — a strike with not only an economic but also a political significance, since it feeds the ferment of people's minds. This 'Italian-style' general strike is not yet Gandhi's civil disobedience, but it is the ante-chamber of it. The 'dialectic' is as follows: on one side, and however paradoxical it may seem, this is a factor of stability (people are content that they are allowed to work as they see fit, and they do not rise up against the system); but on the other side, this leads to economic stagnation, which in turn gives rise to dissidence. The stability, then, is illusory, mere appearance. Standing before us is a clay-footed colossus.

A growing number of people show deep repulsion or just simple disgust at the thought of collaborating with this colossus-state. They put up a quiet, passive resistance, even if they do not dare or do not know how to make a clear break with the state. And nor is this phenomenon limited to the economic field. It creates a kind of unofficial **second culture** of an anti-totalitarian character. It is hard to weigh up the small groups of people with an oppositional mentality, but they are numerous and highly diverse. Discussion clubs (like *The Torch* club from which many dissidents have come), and groups for theatre and cinema enthusiasts have grown up and, in some cases, are really active. 'Special interest clubs', which the editors of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* have unsuccessfully demanded from the authorities, are being set up openly and 'spontaneously', causing quite a few headaches for the state security organs. At present, they are trying to keep such clubs within the limits of what is 'tolerable' — above all, those with the greatest numerical importance (like the K.S.P., the Students Song Club).

The most radical 'independents' are the intellectuals, both young and mature, who have become workers. They are, for example, historians, geologists, chemists, psychiatrists or biologists who do not wish to work in their specialist field if it forces them to lie and be hypocritical. They therefore do manual work (as drivers, masons, lumberjacks, watchmen or labourers) which may be unpleasant and pay less, but does not make it impossible for them

to be free in the face of official ideology, or to oppose the anti-democratic regime in an ever more open manner.

In short, the process we are now witnessing involves not the raising of workers to the level of intellectuals, as the official slogan has it, but the lowering of intellectuals to the level of workers. And that is a process fraught with social consequences.⁴ Such worker-intellectuals, at first on the margin of dissidence, eventually become avowed dissidents and participants in the democratic movement. Although they remain partially (i.e. formally) within the system, they are to a significant degree already outside it in practice. Many may write *samizdat* under a pseudonym and not sign protests. But they do go to court and express their solidarity with the accused, and they support the movement in a number of other ways.

Next, there are the various manual workers, white-collar workers and engineers who have become aware that, in order to defend their socio-economic interests at work and in everyday life, it is necessary to create free trade unions independent of the state. Attempts have been made to form such unions both in Moscow and in the provinces.

The border-line between these forces and human-rights militants is becoming less and less distinct. Even a significant layer of pensioners, and invalids from the war and industrial accidents, are now becoming dissidents, having been close for some time.

Among the creative intelligentsia, and particularly members of the Writers' Union, a new layer is beginning to feel the need to create an uncensored review, completely independent of the state and the Party. If these writers act in a resolute way, it is not out of the question that they will win a lot of things. Fearing that they might join 'the ranks of dissidents', the authorities may find themselves compelled to make concessions that would signal the beginning of freedom of thought — a freedom beyond the *Glavlit* (2) of a kind that Tvardovsky's *Novy Mir* (3) was unable to achieve. For all this would be too little if it resulted only in another *Novy Mir*. Today, the literature of allusion is not enough: only a free and uncensored journal, one open to unfettered discussion and serious dialogue, would mean that a new era has begun.

Among writers and artists who have never been, or have ceased to be, members of the official unions, the idea is forming of a Free Union of Creative Artists that would be independent of the state.

In the provinces, a ferment is also developing in people's minds. Groups are appearing which are sympathetic to the democratic movement, and which try to establish links with it and read *samizdat* and *tamizdat* [published abroad] literature.

To these should be added the major sections of believers—mainly from the persecuted denominations—who are close to the movement or are themselves dissidents. There is a similar development among the national minorities, above all those which suffer particularly clear discrimination.

Lastly, there are those who think that it is necessary to build and keep one's forces for the day a mass movement appears; and thus to help the masses become aware by various means, rather than openly support the actions of dissidents. (This 'yes but' attitude is of course self-contradictory, and in our view inconsistent, but it exists none the less.)

To the dissident sections of the population, we might also add the significant number who vote against official candidates or abstain during elections. According to official statistics — and everyone knows how they are established — these represent about 0.2% of the population, or 200-250,000 people. And that is more than the Bolsheviks had at the beginning of the October Revolution ...

Five years after the October Revolution, Lenin distinguished three types of slave: 1) the valet-slave, who drools at the thought of being a slave; 2) the slave who wears chains by force of habit; and 3) the

slave-revolutionary, who has become aware of his oppressed situation and strives to break free from it. Lenin did not imagine that his classification would retain all its meaning after the socialist revolution, to the extent that the revolution does not follow the democratic road. But we could also mention a fourth type of slave: the one who does not fight because he is afraid (and not because he is happy to be a slave). Whereas, under Stalin, the people was essentially composed of types 1 and 4, we are now witnessing a significant change. Type 1 has virtually disappeared, type 4 is still with us, and type 2—the slaves from habit—has grown and become a factor of inertia. Lastly, type 3—slave-revolutionaries—has made its appearance and undergone a certain growth. These people who are capable of resisting constitute a factor in the overcoming of inertia.

Divide or Unite?

All the currents we have mentioned as being close to the dissident movement need to establish relations among themselves — and that need is a unifying force. However, the democratic movement is currently going through a stage of demarcation. This 'demarcation-virus' spares no one: many are those who are affected both among liberal dissidents and among the radicals.

In our opinion, this is explained by the fact that people who have for a long time been silent and whose ideas have been suppressed, who direct all the force of their love of freedom into freedom of the spirit, run the risk that any unity among various ideologies, any search for a general platform (even one which preserves the differences between various currents) will make them lose their individuality in a system of 'ideological monolithism' or 'moral-political unity'. This is why it is so difficult for an agreement to be reached between civil rights campaigners, liberals and democrats, religious believers, national minorities and socialists, Marxist democrats, Western-style democrats and native democrats — even though all of them crave **one and the same thing**, the chance to breathe freely. This differentiation is painfully obvious in the emigration, in as much as these people completely break with the principle of totalitarianism.

If this period of demarcation lasts for a long time, it could really involve the ruin of the movement. For carefully-demarcated groups of people will find it impossible to resist the mighty Leviathan, which may crush each of them in their corner. The difficulties which the authorities have in finishing off the dissident movement in Poland and Czechoslovakia stem from the fact that—owing to a number of historical circumstances—the various currents are acting in unity with one another rather than seeking to demarcate themselves. Catholics, socialists and neo-communists, workers and intellectuals, liberal democrats and radical democrats are all united around a platform of the type of Charter 77. In Poland, it is true, the intellectuals and students did not support the workers in the past, and nor did the workers support the intelligentsia. But today, a clear alliance has taken shape between three forces: the left intelligentsia, the workers and the Church. Also an alliance is forming between dissidents in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. None of this prevents each and every dissident from retaining his or her own personality — quite the contrary ...

As pointed out above, both the revolutionaries of the past and the dissidents of today are people who—in the midst of an impersonal society—become individuals without permission, challenge the anti-individual machine, call by their very existence for others to do the same, and struggle for a universal freedom of the individual. Herein lies their greatness (notwithstanding the various inadequacies of each tendency). But the main problem of the current stage of the dissident movement stems from the fact that, having wrested ourselves from the spiritual captivity of totalitarianism, we sometimes begin to reduce the aspiration for personal independence either to isolationist coquettishness or to extreme individualism, or—unnoticed by ourselves—to a replacement of old idols with new ones.

Personal freedom does not mean rejection of the unity of forces. On the contrary—and this should be underlined—only in such a union can personal freedom be defended and strengthened. It is not a question of organisational unity, but of overcoming that disunity which, following the example of **Kontinent** (4), has turned into a wrong-headed dogmatism (expressed in illustrious demands for ‘**absolute** idealism’, ‘**absolute** religiousness’, and in practice ‘**absolute** anti-socialism’.)

Recently, a commentator from the Deutsche Welle radio station, referring to a journal **Russian Renaissance**, in which the editor Prince Obolensky dreams of bringing back the Tsar, made the reasonable observation that the problem with the Soviet dissident movement is its lack of a platform capable of organising the **majority** of the people.

It is not possible to analyse here the platforms of the various oppositional and dissident movements in our country. But we would just like to stress our firm conviction that the only way in which serious movements can emerge in the life of our society, movements capable of opening the road to pan-individualism, is through the unity of all currents which, independently of ideological differences, accept the aim of a **universal** human rights movement. Such a movement should take up the defence not only of political, religious and national rights and freedoms espoused by a number of existing human rights groups, but also of social, economic, cultural and domestic freedoms — which, under present conditions, would amount to the defence of the rights of individuality.

However, unity cannot be solid or stable if it is based on flight from, rather than thoughtful examination and deep understanding of, the differences between these social platforms: in other words, if it is embarked upon with the aim of not having to think too much about them, rather than with the aim of conscious rapprochement with the supporters of other platforms on the **important things** that seem basic to all of us.

Many people in our dissident movement paradoxically combine the temptation to be a ‘lone wolf’ with a lack of attention to even the platform which they support (sometimes under the influence of fashionable idols) — not to mention a desire to learn about the platforms of other dissident currents. If a specific unity emerges in such conditions, it is frequently superficial and quite fragile. This could be observed particularly in the first stage of the dissident movement. A number of its participants have little interest in each other’s socio-economic opinions, still less in the finer shades of these opinions.

At this stage, it is true, there are many sympathisers who ask: — And what precisely is your goal? What socio-economic system are you aiming for?

They are given a thoroughly reasonable reply:

— To create a situation in which people can defend their views openly and without fear of repression. It will be time to pose the question of aims, of the socio-economic system, once basic human rights have been won. In an open struggle of opinions the one which can win the most supporters will triumph. But at present that time is still ahead of us.

For a long time, however, many sympathisers have not been satisfied with such a reply. This is understandable: it is human nature to want to know the direction in which you are moving, even when you are only taking the first step. People don’t want to buy a pig in a poke, and so a negative attitude to serious discussions, to profound consideration of the different socio-economic programmes, stops many people from joining the movement.

As dissident forces get stronger, definite differences in opinion appear which find expression in books and articles. But since this has been done in a rather light-minded and unsystematic manner, most dissidents have not yet made a choice, or have not yet decided

to ‘constitute themselves’. However paradoxical it may be, this is the main obstacle to unity. Not being deeply aware of the content of differences, some do not even know what they have in common, what is the basis of unity. This prevents sympathisers who want to know what lies beyond the struggle for civil rights, from actually joining the dissidents. And finally, it prevents the world public from understanding the dissidents better and increasing its assistance.

MPs, defence committees as well as individuals from the West can actively help the dissidents on the question of civil rights. But the Western parties and trade unions will be of real help only if the dissidents clearly formulate their socio-economic programme. Of course, the socialist and Eurocommunist parties will not start supporting a capitalist platform, and the democratic parties will not start helping dissidents with a monarchic slant or people such as G. Shimanov and K. Lubopytno. But oddly enough it is at a time when thoroughgoing self-definition is necessary for a serious link that we have mistakenly started to think about the fashionable call to tolerance. Behind the word ‘patience’ is often hidden a wish to protect oneself from criticism, to avoid a thoroughgoing debate; the wish to seek and find compromise, the desire to isolate oneself, to disperse oneself into various stale movements. Although patience (i.e. a willingness to acknowledge other people’s right to their own opinion) is the first and foremost requirement for a normal relationship between people, it is not sufficient for concerted actions: for that, some kind of compromise is necessary, within the limits of certain common principles.

THE PROBLEM OF THE CENTRE

Historically speaking, it is the Helsinki Group (5) which has turned out to be the centre for the defence of human rights in the last ten years. This group, composed of very bold people, has done a tremendous amount to inform world opinion about the crying infringements of human rights in our country; to help free many political prisoners from the camps, prisons or psychiatric hospitals; and to soften the inhuman regime of detention. In spite of the fact that a whole series of active members have been arrested — from the Moscow-based ‘Helsinki’ group as well as provincial groups—their activities have gone on regardless of very difficult conditions.

Precisely because of the internal and external conditions of the democratic movement, and of the activity of the Moscow-based Helsinki group itself, this group has become the nucleus around which both the Helsinki groups from various republics and a few working commissions have been gathering. Many members of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and of the Soviet section of Amnesty International have either been arrested or emigrated. But those still at liberty keep in touch with participants in the struggle for national minority rights and religious freedom.

As a result of all this, the Moscow group could become the centre to cement the different currents into a single democratic movement. But, in the meantime, the Helsinki group does not carry out the mission that such a movement could.

If this mission is not carried out, it is not that the members of the Helsinki group have committed the ‘errors’ to which R. Medvedev refers in his answer to Egides’ open letter. On the contrary, what Medvedev considers to be errors and shortcomings on the part of Helsinki Group members actually bears witness to their dignity and nobleness: it is their openness (i.e. their refusal to go underground), their positive rather than cowardly attitude towards searches and arrests. It is also their scrupulous attitude towards the financial responsibility on the part of those who allocate the aid funds to political prisoners. If this mission is not carried out, it is because of circumstances of a different kind. What are these circumstances in our view?

1. The central position of the Helsinki Group has entered into contradiction with the **limited** character of the problematic in its field of vision, which stems from its narrow comprehension of the 'third basket' of the Helsinki Accords, i.e., the section on the defence of human rights. By human rights coming under the scope of defence, the Helsinki Group until recently used to understand only the civil rights of the individual (freedom of speech, of thought, of the press, of conscience, the inviolability of personal freedom and of correspondence, the right to emigrate, demonstrate, protest and strike, and the right to national self-determination). As for economic, social and cultural rights, and the interests of workers, all that fell outside their scope. Our official press and propaganda took advantage of this and tried to prove that these rights and freedoms are guaranteed.

Such a narrow approach towards human rights feeds a definite misunderstanding between the Moscow-based Helsinki Group and the nascent free trade union (6): at first, the latter said that it did not welcome the dissidents and expressed dissatisfaction that the Helsinki group did not take a great enough interest in them. Only recently has the group given attention to a broader range of human rights; and on its initiative a group has been formed to defend the interests of people injured at work. But this, of course, is extremely little. The range of problems it covers will have to be considerably broadened if it is to encompass the totality of human rights and freedoms.

Once the term 'human rights' is given its full meaning, there is no longer any distinction between the movement for the defence of human rights and the democratic movement. What is more, the democratic movement itself can then be more deeply understood, in so far as one is not speaking only about political democracy, but also about economic and cultural democracy. It is only then that the Helsinki Group can encompass both the activities of the free trade unions and the activities of creative associations.

2. So far, the achievements of the dissident movement have largely been the result of 'exposure' activities, revealing our not-so-distant past, the absence or violation of civil rights and freedom today, the lack of democracy, and the curtailing of religious freedom and national rights. But the movement cannot carry on living through a negative function: it is now time to seriously work out a **positive platform**. Quite recently, in connection with the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Group made an appeal which, judging by the fact that signatures had been collected throughout the year, was thought of as a kind of platform document or charter. In our view, however, the appeal cannot play such a role: it does not encompass the whole complex of socio-economic, political and cultural problems that interest a wide layer of workers. It is, thus, very bad when someone initiates a similar, parallel appeal, since it divides the forces and lessens the number of signatures under each document.

Apparently, members of the Helsinki Group do not have a clear position on whether demonstrations should be held on 10 December (Human Rights Day). And this, in its turn, divides forces. On such serious questions (including one's attitude to the 1980 Olympics, to free trade unions, provincial dissident groups and the most important appeals and documents) it would be advisable to discuss them in this circle; and in any case, not having sought advice it is of doubtful use to make personal statements if they do not affect the interests of the whole movement.

Moreover, even the Moscow events of 10 December 1976 were not reported at length on the radio, and the world to this day does not know exactly what happened. The BBC carried a short announcement, merely saying that a silent demonstration had not been stopped by the authorities, and that only 9 people had been detained. But, in fact, 52 people were arrested and some beaten that evening; Pushkin Square was enclosed with a fence for two days, and compressor-machines were turned on in order to drown people's voices out. All that happened on the Day of Human

Rights, on its 30th Anniversary! The late and inadequate account of events gives the impression that there is only a 'handful' of dissidents. If the journalists had reported that 52 people had been detained and a number of them beaten, some radio listeners might not have believed it. Therefore it would have been a good idea to give the names and patronymics of all the people concerned, not regretting the time so spent. On occasions, the radio people feel that they have nothing much to report, and so they broadcast third-rate material. But, at the same time, they often leave out what is significant for the democratic movement and interests the population. Of course, one shouldn't forget that the authorities could at any moment institute the practice of jamming foreign broadcasts ... About all of this one could perhaps raise a question at a broadly-organised press conference. (In fact, it would be advisable not to hold press conferences in a secret manner, notifying only a narrow circle of people. This is undemocratic, since it contradicts the democratic goals of the movement, its very essence and name.) The population should know that the democratic movement is alive and well, not falling asleep. Hence, everything that happens within it should, whenever possible, be fully explained, instead of being reported in the shallow, hasty, quickly-spoken items which the 'voices' often do. Usually the statements, appeals and protests are read out not in full, but in a shortened version of two or three sentences — which means that their whole effect is lost. Moreover, some aspects of dissident life, some demands and statements remain for a long time completely unknown to wide circles of the population. Of course, no one is obliged to anybody for anything. It is just a question of people's wishes.

3. Besides issuing factual information, protests and demands, the Helsinki Group should, in our opinion, pay more attention to making **constructive proposals**. It seems, for example, to be completely constructive to propose to the governments of the USA and USSR that they conclude an Agreement for Mutual Control of the Observance of Human Rights. It might, for example, read as follows:

'Seeing that the governments of the USA and USSR attack each other for violations of human rights; that the oppositional public opinion in each of these countries attacks its own punitive organs for meting out sentences based on fabricated, falsified 'cases', false evidence, in violation of its own criminal codes and international pacts signed by the governments of these countries; and seeing also that the same organs are attacked for placing sane people in psychiatric hospitals and forcibly keeping them there, even though they are not dangerous to other citizens;

Both parties agree:

— in the very near future, to send competent commissions to each other's country in order to investigate disputed cases, and to submit petitions for the review of those which the commissions consider to be without foundation;

— during the review of such cases by the investigative and judicial organs of a given country, competent persons from the other country should be allowed to attend;

— with the aim of preventing future falsification of court cases, to give the right to legal advisers and psychiatrists of both countries to attend court trials and examinations in the other country, and to do so in their capacity as lawyers and experts;

— to allow competent persons and representatives of public opinion from the other country to inspect the conditions under which prisoners serve their sentences, as well as the conditions under which people are interned in psychiatric hospitals;

— it is necessary to publish in the press of each country all the materials by the lawyers and psychiatrists, making mutual criticisms of the judicial codes, the practices of the legal proceedings and the detention of prisoners.'

If the American government were to accept such an agreement, and our government were to refuse to sign such an agreement, then this would prevent our press from speculating that human rights are violated not only here but also in the democratic West, and that it is not up to the West to teach us anything. Such an agreement seems to be of infinite importance for the defence of human rights

throughout the world. The campaign in the USA for the signing of such an agreement would genuinely help our defenders of human rights in their mission to defend rights.

The Helsinki Group should, in our view, turn to the serious and urgent problem of the 1980 Olympics. True, this group has already produced a document, but for some reason it has gone unnoticed and unheard. Subsequently, the only thing to have been communicated is A. Sakharov's private opinion, which on this issue does not concur with the sounder views of the Helsinki Group. It is indeed inadmissible that world opinion should allow this great international sporting event to be used as a means of 'purging' Moscow of dissidents; that the Olympic festival should be held through the tragedy of people whose only 'fault' is that they **think**; that the **democratic** world should with its own hand assist the liquidation of the democratic movement in our country; and that we should not be able to find, anywhere in the world, forces that can stop the Moscow Olympic Committee (M.O.C.) from participating in the historical crime which—to judge by the arrests and searches so far conducted—is being prepared by our government. If these are merely false rumours (though the Western press is writing a lot about them), why on earth has our government not once denied them and so calmed down world opinion? Why are the M.O.C. and its president, Lord Kilanin, not interrogating our government on this question? As patriots, of course, we would very much like an international sporting event to take place in our country; but the interests of sport must not be placed above these of universal morality. It is inadmissible that the happiness of some should be paid for with the grief of others. It is worth reminding Lord Kalinin about that.

4. If we think that activity on legal questions should continue within the Helsinki Group, it is necessary not only to make a theoretical or logico-ethical analysis of the shortcomings of our judicial norms, nor only to analyse the disjuncture between our criminal code and constitution and the international conventions signed by our government. It is also necessary to analyse the practice which violates even the present (bad) norms.

It is noteworthy, for example, that when a Western government bars people from certain jobs on the grounds that they have tried to overthrow the constitutional bases through force, our press interprets these protective measures as ... anti-democratic, as illegal and arbitrary. Yet when our government throws people into torture-chambers just because they demand real implementation of the constitution, then our press and propaganda raise their hands in desperation: 'Every government, every state **defends** itself — and rightly so.' Yes, it is necessary to defend oneself, but with adequate constitutional and democratic measures. There are

There are quite a few similar issues that call for critical analysis.

Obviously, we must reanalyse and define more accurately (and, thus, more flexibly) our attitude towards the present constitution. When the discussion of the new draft was under way, we disapproved of it as being much worse than the Bukharin Constitution of 1936, which was itself far from perfect. Today, we can and must go on expressing our criticisms and insist that, in accordance with the constitution itself, the constitution should be changed. But so long as it is not changed, we must also demand that the present one be implemented, and point out the ways in which it is not actually being implemented. In it there are a series of articles which proclaim the existence of freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and association — **provided** that such freedom does not damage the interests of socialism, society, the people and the state. The government has resolved that this unprecedented, illegal, anti-constitutional and anti-democratic 'provided' allows it to deal impudently with dissidents, oppositionists and upholders of the law: to put them in prison and pass sentence on them. Nothing of the sort — after all it is not laid down **who is to judge?** The criteria are not defined of what is in the interests of socialism, the people, society and the state, and what damages those same interests? We must stress that, **in direct contrast** to what is said, all the activity of the movement to defend human rights, all its declarations, statements and documents, as well as the activity of

the free trade union, the propaganda of religious groupings, the demands for a guarantee of minority rights, and even the propaganda of non-socialist viewpoints — that all these **do not contradict or in any way damage the interests of socialism, society, the people or the state (i.e., the country)**. Real socialism presupposes a free dialogue. And here the authorities—in prosecuting the civil rights defenders and the dissenters (i.e. those who think for themselves)—are directly harming socialism, society, the people, the state. It is they who are acting unconstitutionally. But we are not demanding that they should be put on trial for this, we are demanding only that such unconstitutional, undemocratic activities cease.

One or another civil rights defender or member of the Free Trade Union will perhaps even be non-socialist in his beliefs, but his activities, in so far as they are aimed at defending elementary human rights, will not conflict (and by definition cannot conflict) with the interests of socialism; real socialism does not and cannot exist without these elementary rights.

We profoundly believe that, for the Democratic Movement, this is the correct and most fruitful way of approaching the question. Obstinance and, worse still, fanaticism, are poor counsellors.

5. Since the Helsinki Group arose as a group for monitoring the implementation of an agreement between 35 governments, it directs its communications as a rule only to governments. However, we think that when basic human rights are being trampled on, it should primarily address itself to **public opinion at large**, both within and outside the country. It is also important to appeal to the world trade-union organisations and to the democratic, socialist and Eurocommunist parties. It is rather strange, for instance, that there is nothing like an adequate level of communication between journalists working for the socialist, Eurocommunist press and our Democratic Movement; this obviously holds back the great task of democratising Soviet society, the necessity of which is recognised by both Eurocommunist and socialist parties.

6. All that has been said is linked, paradoxically enough, with the quite remarkable absence of ideological diversity, with the 'one-party' nature of the Helsinki Group. This is, in our view, its basic weakness, and its effects are felt throughout the Democratic Movement. It is completely reasonable that it should regard itself as a non-party, non-political association which selects members simply on the basis of their personal qualities. But we must repeat our view that this kind of argument no longer holds water now that the Helsinki Group, by dint of circumstances and its own hard work, finds itself at the head of the whole Democratic Movement. If the Democratic Movement is to survive and develop, the Helsinki Group must provide a forum within which a variety of socio-political and ideological tendencies may be represented — otherwise it will find itself looking like a mirror-image of the very totalitarian, dogmatic system which we (of course) criticise. Thus, there is a clear logical contradiction present: it is impossible both to struggle for elementary human rights which depend on tolerance towards various shades of opinion, and, at the same time, to be intolerant, to isolate oneself from other tendencies involved in the same struggle. The strength of the dissident movement in Czechoslovakia and Poland, we stress again and again, consists in the fact that the different committees are pluralistic — this is after all consistent with the demands being put forward. An absence of ideological variety only serves to make liberals, semi-dissidents and workers antagonistic towards the Democratic Movement. Thus the **civil rights** defenders risk degenerating into **self** defenders.

Lack of ideological variety leads to a certain exclusiveness or isolationism. This does little to encourage activism among the remaining dissidents, many of whom are reduced to being mere consumers of information, although they would like to, and could, do more.

We feel that some people will want to say to us: Why intrude on the harmony of the Helsinki Group? Let representatives of other

tendencies — for example, socialists, democratic Marxists or home-grown democrats — found their own committees; there is room under the sun for all of them, there is immense scope for action.

Yes, it would be possible to follow this path as well. But from such a dispersion the democratic movement as a whole would only lose; it is still not sufficiently strong and large to have several centres. Each ideological tendency is able, of course, to unite as an independent group: there can be groups of Christian socialists and Christian non-socialists, democratic socialists and non-socialist democrats or simply liberals. But the civil rights defence groups, committees and associations, insofar as they actually defend civil rights, defend the rights of people of any ideology. They must therefore include representatives of all tendencies. Just as no one would think of setting up separate medical units for Christians, atheists, socialists and non-socialists, so we think that one civil rights defence-unit cannot be formed for one section, another for a second, another for a third, and so on.

To put it differently, diverse ideological associations should be able to exist within the Democratic Movement but they should all be connected to a single centre. We have in view here not an organisational, not a formal centre, not a directing, guiding, regulating, managing centre ('democratic-centralist' in current parlance), but an information centre, a centre for contact, a centre for defence, a legal defence centre. Without it the movement is doomed to fall apart.

The best way, in our view, is to preserve and strengthen an already existing centre, i.e. the Helsinki Group. If the democratic forces in the West are more and more receptive to the idea of a 'historic compromise' (the idea that without an alliance with socialist and Eurocommunist organisations a serious democratic movement in the contemporary world is not possible), then it should be all the more obvious to democratic civil rights activists in our country. Human rights are opposed here by a powerful totalitarian regime, and any progress in these conditions requires the unity of the whole Democratic Movement — as well as serious support from the democratic, socialist and Eurocommunist forces of the West. And when democracy comes into being, it will be open to each tendency to demonstrate to the people the advantages of this or that socio-economic system. The supporters of socialism are confident that under a genuine democracy, the people will freely choose socialism. If they do not, then the socialists will stay in opposition until the people are convinced — by words, not by force, not at gunpoint. The important thing for all of us is to achieve **democracy**. This we can only do by intelligently joining forces on the basis of a clearly and consciously established platform.

We would be very pleased if the Helsinki Group would listen to our suggestions, overcome both its 'isolationism' and its excessive modesty reflected in a reluctance to assume the leadership of the

movement. Of course, sooner or later the movement could give rise to new centres, although not without serious and painful crises, unnecessary suffering and needless expenditure of its resources, which are scanty enough as it is and rendered less effective by the absence of coordination between units.

The Helsinki Group is constantly being faced with new problems: it is forced to define its relationship to the persistently developing free trade unions, to a variety of socio-political tendencies, and to various strata of workers. In our difficult conditions some people who have already actively participated in the movement over many years may begin to weary of the struggle. Do they have the moral right to take a rest, withdraw from active participation? Yes, of course, **but** in our view on one condition: continuity must be secured — otherwise, each time their successors will have to keep starting from scratch, and there will be chaos in the movement...

Some frivolous and irresponsible individuals and adventurers driven by hypertrophied ambition propose a 'rebellion' against the 'Moscow nucleus' (the Helsinki Group and Amnesty). This is an extremely dangerous idea. But the status quo is also impossible: definite changes and shifts in the situation are imperative.

To sum up, we firmly believe that in the interests of the work of the Democratic Movement, the Helsinki Group must not only continue to exist but also develop and broaden out into the real centre of the movement. Without a serious, solid, reliable centre any movement is doomed to crumble.

(To be concluded in the next issue.)

Footnotes.

1. Also rich in such consequences is the psycho-sociological phenomenon of a relatively surplus education. Young people who leave school after 10 years to become workers carry within them an unutilised charge of knowledge or intellectual energy which arouses in them a certain dissatisfaction and social maladjustment. Their need to defend and assert themselves often takes the form of delinquency, which is a particular form of protest. This surplus energy, this feeling of dissatisfaction, and this need to assert oneself could be channeled in a different direction.
2. **Glavlit** is the official censorship department.
3. **Novy Mir**. Throughout the late 50s and 60s it was the most outspoken journal for the liberal intelligentsia. The editor, A. Tvardovsky, finally resigned in 1970 after years of being under constant attack.
4. **Kontinent** began to appear in 1974 as an emigre journal led by Solzhenitsyn.
5. The Moscow-based Group to Monitor the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords was set up in May 1976. Shortly afterwards similar groups were created in Ukraine, Armenia, Lithuania and Georgia.
6. The Free Trade Union Association, organised by V. Klebanov, was created in January 1978 and had a membership of about 200. By March 1978 most key leaders had been imprisoned or put in psychiatric hospitals.

News in Brief | By Helen Jamieson

LEFT OPPOSITIONIST JAILED

Alexei Khavin, a 20-year-old student at Leningrad Medical Institute, was arrested on 19 April 1979 after refusing to testify at the trial of Aleksandr Skobov, a fellow-comrade in the left opposition youth group. After his arrest, Khavin was taken to militia headquarters and searched but nothing incriminating was found on him. He was then made to undress, and in his absence, drugs were 'found' in 4 places in his clothing. He was charged under Article 224 of the Criminal Code with 'making or marketing narcotics', and in August was sentenced to 6 years hard labour. This is Alexei Khavin's second imprisonment for political reasons: in 1977, when still a school-student, he was forcibly confined to a Leningrad psychiatric hospital for distributing works by Kropotkin, a pre-revolutionary Russian anarchist.

Khavin's comrade, Aleksandr Skobov was

sentenced to an unlimited period of psychiatric detention and is currently held at the Skvortsov-Stepanov Psychiatric Hospital No.5, Section 8, 39 Lebedev Street, Leningrad. Another leader of the group, Arkadiy Tsurkov, was sentenced on 6 April to 5 years in a strict regime labour camp and two years exile. He is currently in Perm Camp No.37.

For two years, the left opposition group had operated a commune in Leningrad, which was used as a central meeting place for an apparently quite extensive network of leftist youth stretching as far as Moscow, Gorky, Ukraine, the Baltic Republics and Belorussia. The group put out three issues of a journal called **Perspektivy** and were making final plans for an all-Union conference of left youth when the group leaders were arrested in October 1978.

YOUTH REPRESSION IN KUIBYSHEV

Vladislav Bebko, a second-year student at the Kuibyshev Technological Institute, was arrested on 7 November 1978 for destroying an official banner hanging from a building. During a subsequent search of his own house and that of a friend, M. Ryaboviy, the KGB seized tapes of radio programmes as well as personal notebooks. On 15 November Bebko was charged with taping radio programmes for the purposes of 'oral propaganda', and with distributing the Czechoslovak Charter 77 declaration. Bebko refused to give evidence and demanded the status of political prisoner. He was given a psychiatric examination by the out-patients' clinic, but was declared sane. At a hearing in March, it was decided to send him to Cheliabinsk for another examination, but once again he was declared sane. When his trial finally took place on 12-14 June, he was sentenced to 3 years in a labour

camp for hooliganism and anti-state propaganda and agitation.

On 28 March 1979 Anatoli Sarbayev (b.1956), was forcibly hospitalised on 29 March in a Kuibyshev psychiatric clinic and treated with stelazin. He had worked as a legal adviser in a VD clinic.

The arrests were apparently linked to plans for another youth demonstration on 1 April 1979. On that day at 2.00 p.m., police detained about 30 people as they assembled. However, they were all later released.

FREE TRADE-UNIONISTS

Valeria Novodvorskaya, a member of the Free Inter-Professional Trade Union Association (SMOT) since October 1978, was recently interviewed by the French press. Although she has been interned and tortured in a psychiatric hospital, she said that the unofficial unions 'must act publicly...The people don't react anymore. They have lost the habit of discussing and debating. We must remind people that they have rights, and they must exercise them.' When asked how many people participate in the unofficial union she said: 'We organise meetings for a few people at a time, and debates are taped and then passed on—illegally—to about a hundred workers.' In addition to such activity, the unofficial union distributes its publication to approximately 200 people.

Also interviewed by French reporters was Natasha Volokhonsky, whose husband has been imprisoned since June. She said that 'free trade unions also exist in Leningrad, but it is impossible to say how many members there are since all their activities are underground'.

When these women were asked if they had any hope, they said: 'Our action is a form of resistance and protest. The people will eventually wake up, but we cannot accelerate history. There is still so much torture here; citizens have every right to be afraid.'

Another SMOT member, Nikolai Nikitin, a 31-year-old Leningrad driver and poet, was hauled in by the KGB for questioning on 1 June 1979. On 4 August he was arrested and charged under Article 90 of the Criminal Code, and taken from Moscow back to Leningrad on 12 August. That same morning he had a heart attack and went on a hunger strike lasting thirty days. His trial took place on 25 October 1979 in Leningrad, when he was sentenced to 18 months' labour camp for anti-Soviet slander. Nikitin's wife, Alexandra Nikitina, may be contacted at the following address: Leningrad, Lunacharsky Prospekt 80, Corp.5, Flat 61.

Anatoly Pozdnyakov, a member of the Free Trade Union Association founded by Vladimir Klebanov, was arrested in Moscow on 10 September and put on trial on 30 October, when he was ordered to be detained in a psychiatric hospital. No further details are as yet available. Another member, Nikolai Ivanov, reported that Klebanov is still being held in a psychiatric prison hospital in Dnepropetrovsk.

APPEAL FOR ARTIST

46 painters, poets, writers, philosophers and art experts in Leningrad have issued an appeal on behalf of Georgi Mikhailov. Mikhailov was sentenced to four years' detention after he had organised in his own flat an exhibition of non-conformist artists. The trial lasted for more than three weeks.

The court also ordered the confiscation of his property and the destruction of his art collection. This collection, which contains over one hundred oil paintings and a large number of drawings, lithographs and so on, is considered the most representative collection of present-day art in Leningrad. The 46 signatories to the appeal denounced this court action as officially sanctioned cultural vandalism and called on UNESCO and the International Society of Museums to establish an International Commission of art experts and lawyers to take up the case of Mikhailov and to save the valuable art collection which is in danger of destruction. Information about the case was provided in the West by the Paris-based International Committee Against Repression which has organised a campaign in defence of Georgi Mikhailov.

SONG-WRITER

MURDERED IN UKRAINE

The well-known Ukrainian song-writer, whose song Chervona Ruta was an enormous popular success in the early 1970s, was found brutally murdered near Lviv on 18 May 1979. The body was found hanging with the eyes gouged out. The authorities claimed it was suicide. Ivasiuk's murder resulted in a demonstration of some thousands at his funeral, and demonstrations have continued to occur at the graveside.

The authorities have continued their drive against the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group. Yuri Lytvyn, who has already served a 10-year political sentence between 1955-65, and a 3-year hard labour sentence from 1975-78, was arrested in July last year. He only joined the Helsinki group on his release in 1978.

HUNGARY

Hundreds Protest Prague Trial

In one of the most important unofficial political actions seen in Hungary for more than a decade—some hundreds of Hungarian intellectuals have signed public protests against the VONS trial in Prague.

The largest number of signatures—186—was attached to an appeal on 29 October sent to the Presidium of the Hungarian People's Republic and to representatives of Charter 77 in Prague. It reads simply: 'We protest against the Prague trial of Charter 77 representatives and against the sentences handed down at the trial. We demand the release of those arrested.'

An earlier appeal, dated 26 October and signed by 121 people was sent to Communist Party leader Janos Kadar. After giving details of the arrested VONS members its brief text reads: 'We are deeply concerned when we see people, anywhere in the world, being sent to prison because of their beliefs or because they have said what they think. We regard it as essential for the defence of human rights and democracy that you intervene at the highest level to demand the exoneration and release of those arrested.'

At the same time, the two radical philosophers Gyorgy Bence and Janos Kis, together with the forcibly unemployed journalist Janos Kenedi, addressed an letter to the signatories of Charter 77. Its complete text is as follows:

'As East Europeans, we cannot remain indifferent to the persecution of people struggling for civil and human rights anywhere in Eastern Europe. As Hungarians, that is, as citizens of a country which took part in the occupation of Czechoslovakia, we feel a particular responsibility for all that has happened since 1968. Since we belong to a generation which has only been able to appropriate the lessons of 1956 through the experiences of 1968 and thus owe our political maturity to 1968, we feel in a very real sense that your cause is also ours.'

'Along with many others in the countries surrounding your own, we have drawn from the brutal crushing of the Czechoslovak development the conclusion that democracy can only come into being in Eastern Europe through the united struggles of the people of the region. It is necessary to remember that at that time only a very small minority of the population of Hungary shared this opinion. The majority reasoned that democracy was only an illusion for us and that it was stupid to risk our relative well-being and security for such an illusion. The only hope which the majority had was to make things better little by little within the given political system. Such a perspective did not demand international cooperation — quite the opposite. It led to a selfish response and meant that it became a principle to avoid committing oneself.'

'For a whole period this line of reasoning appeared to be justified. Living conditions in Hungary continued to improve and the state policy on cultural questions became more sophisticated. It was only later that the limits of this evolution became apparent. And the more clearly people became aware of these limits, the more they felt dissatisfied with the results which had already been achieved. Numerous people began to make it plain that this was too low a payment in exchange for real democracy.'

'And so ever larger numbers of Hungarians have decided that we cannot shut ourselves in behind our frontiers. 600,000 Hungarians live in Czechoslovakia and have progressively lost the meagre concessions which they had previously been granted. Thus we have been made aware, as Hungarians, of the direct importance that democracy in neighbouring countries has for us. Dear friends, there are many of us here in Hungary who are watching your struggle for democracy in Czechoslovakia with sympathy and with hope. When, in difficult moments, you review the support you have in Eastern Europe, you can include us in the balance.'

The texts of the letters and signatures are available in Hungarian in Magyar Füzetek No.5, 12, Rue Drouet-Peupion, F-92240 Malakoff, France.

ROMANIA

Democracy, Ceausescu Style By Patrick Camiller

On 23 November, the last day of the Twelfth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, the unthinkable happened. The week had passed normally enough: each 'debate' had been the occasion for speaker after speaker to make the ritual glorification of Nicolae Ceausescu, 'the most beloved son of the fatherland', 'one of the main political figures of the contemporary world', and so on **ad nauseam**. Then, on the morning of the 23rd when it came to nominations for the new Central Committee, an eighty-four-year-old founder member of the RCP, Constantin Pirvulescu, called on the delegates not to vote for Ceausescu and denounced the procedure whereby the Party leader is elected by the Congress in plebiscitary manner rather than by a meeting of the Central Committee.

At first the delegates sat in stunned silence, unable to believe their ears. The Secretary-General turned to his consort, Elena Ceausescu, sitting next to him on the platform, and no doubt pondered the dark forces behind this unprecedented disruption. And then the well-oiled congress machine, originally perfected during Stalin's rise to dictatorial powers, passed its first test in thirty years with flying colours. Those same 'cadres' who had managed the clockwork 'standing ovations' every ten minutes of Ceausescu's report now led the delegates in a torrent of abuse and frenzied

howling. Pirvulescu seems to have been on the point of turning to a criticism of RCP policy under the Ceausescu leadership. But he knew from his own life-long experience that he might as well be facing a volcanic eruption. Order returned. A motion was proposed and duly voted that the offender be stripped of his delegate's credentials. And so, in the twinkling of an eye, Pirvulescu had become a non-person. Since he had never 'really' been a delegate, it was almost as if nothing had ever happened.

However, the Secretary-General first had to explain the significance of the event. Reputed to carry in his head a whole filing-cabinet about leading Party members, Ceausescu lost no time in referring to Pirvulescu's implication in the crimes of the Stalin epoch. 'It is certain,' he continued, 'that Constantin Pirvulescu does not like the democracy now reigning within the RCP, and he probably dreams of the time when the fate of the Party and people was decided not here but elsewhere.' It does not seem to have occurred to Ceausescu that the 'democracy now reigning within the RCP' — and so strikingly demonstrated a few minutes earlier by his men on the congress floor — appears to the non-Party masses as virtually indistinguishable from the autocracy that reigned in the good old days.

Of course, Pirvulescu's speech was not an expression of the new working-class

opposition that exploded in the 1977 Jiu Valley miners' strike and continues to smoulder just beneath the surface of Romanian society. Pirvulescu is certainly no champion of democratic rights and no friend of the Romanian workers. Nor does it seem likely that his action at the congress was part of a concerted drive by one section of the apparatus to unseat the Party leader. Whatever his links may be with anti-Ceausescu forces, this rather tarnished octogenarian can hardly have seen his spectacular gesture as more than a shot in the dark. In a rather oblique way, however, it does testify to the fact that Ceausescu's cult leadership, with its flagging nationalist rhetoric, no longer inspires the bureaucratic apparatus with supreme confidence in its own future.

Notes

1. Constantin Pirvulescu, who was first elected to the Central Committee in 1929, was RCP Secretary-General for a short time in 1930 and part of the transitional three-man leadership in 1944. A member of the Politburo and, from 1953, Chairman of the Romanian Parliament, he was disgraced in 1961 and accused of complicity with the Chisinevski group that had been purged in 1957. After the death of Gheorghiu-Dej in 1964, he was reintegrated into the Party apparatus and given a succession of minor posts.

LABOUR MOVEMENT

British Labour Calls for Fact-Finding Commission

On Friday 19 October the Charter 77 Defence Committee held a large press conference in Fleet Street for the Canadian socialist lawyer Gordon Wright who was passing through London on his way to Prague. Jan Kavan also issued to the press the complete text of the indictment against the 6 VONS members exposing the fallacies, distortions and contradictions in the document. On the morning of Monday 22 October, the opening day of the trial, Eric Heffer MP, Hon. Chairman of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign and a member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee led a delegation of Labour MPs to the Embassy to present an appeal for the release of the VONS members signed by more than 55 Constituency Labour Parties. The Charter 77 Defence Committee simultaneously organised a picket of the Embassy. Both events gained wide publicity on television and in the press.

On Wednesday 24 October the Labour Party's National Executive decided unanimously to call for the establishment of an international labour

movement fact-finding commission to investigate the civil rights situation in Czechoslovakia. The full text of the resolution, proposed by Eric Heffer in the light of the previous day's trial verdicts, is as follows:

'The National Executive notes:

1) that the Czechoslovak authorities have ignored the views of Western Socialist and Communist Parties and have pressed ahead with the trial of Charter 77 leaders which opened in Prague on Monday.

2) that by holding this trial, the Czechoslovakian government has flouted both its own earlier verbal assurances that it would not take judicial measures against Charter 77 human rights campaigners and its own international agreements concerning such rights as freedom of information and of expression (eg. the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights and the human rights clauses of the Helsinki Agreement).

3) that the Czechoslovakian authorities have proceeded with the trial despite the fact that such

a blatant breach of international agreements takes place at a particularly critical juncture in East-West relations: a time when forces in the US Senate are opposing the ratification of SALT 2, and when the Tory government is trying to whip up a Cold War atmosphere to destroy any chance of negotiating military force reductions and to re-start the arms race. In such a context, the drive against Charter 77 can only strengthen the hand of opponents of detente in the West.

4) that the case brought against the detained Chartists implies that the Czechoslovak authorities will be drawn into further arrests and trials in the near future.

The National Executive Committee therefore resolves:

1) that a thoroughgoing and objective labour movement investigation of the civil rights situation in Czechoslovakia and of the Czechoslovakian authorities' attitude towards it is necessary.

2) that the Labour Party should therefore approach other European Socialist Parties and

also the French, Italian and Spanish Communist Parties with the proposal to establish an international fact-finding commission to carry out such an investigation in Czechoslovakia.

3) that the Socialist International be approached to support such a commission and provide it with financial assistance.

4) that the NEC will ask the Lawyers' Committee to Defend the Rights of Political Defendants in Czechoslovakia, whose formation was urged at the NEC's July 25th meeting, to produce a detailed analysis of the legal aspects of the civil rights situation for use by the NEC and by such an international fact-finding commission.'

Also on 24 October the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain sharply condemned the Prague trial and called for the Chartists' release. The statement went on to



Philip Whitehead MP (left) and Eric Heffer MP protesting at the Czechoslovak Embassy.

say: 'Continued attempts by the authorities in Czechoslovakia to respond to political criticism, arguments and actions by resort to the police, courts and prisons runs directly counter to

fundamental principles of Socialist Democracy.' The Young Communist League also issued a statement criticising the trial and stating that the court action showed that the Czechoslovak authorities had not resolved the problems created in 1968.

The editorial of the *Morning Star* on 25 October, entitled 'Travesty of Socialism' stated: 'Today we are given a different picture. That the authorities there should even consider using court actions against their political critics, let alone jailing them, is a travesty of Socialism. The five given jail sentences should not only be released. They must also be able to exercise the right to engage, along with everyone else in Czechoslovakia, in free political debate and argument. The people, not prosecutors and judges, should be allowed to decide who is right and who is wrong.'

Western Socialists Fly to Trial

The October trial was the first occasion on which socialists from a number of Western countries attempted to attend a political trial in Eastern Europe. A number of people from French left-wing defence and professional organisations went to Prague. We print on page 7 the report by one of these, Catherine Samary, who was there as a representative of the 5th January Movement for a Free and Socialist Czechoslovakia. Also in Prague were Jean-Pierre Faye and Alain Challier from the International Committee Against Repression; Professor Jean Dieudonne from the Mathematicians' Committee; the producer Patrice Chereau from the International Association in Defence of Persecuted Artists; Daniel Ouaki from the French Communist Party; and Jean-Yves Potel, a reporter on the Trotskyist weekly *Rouge*. One striking incident not contained in Samary's report is a discovery made by Jean-Pierre Faye in the police-station where he was interrogated for several hours after being arrested outside the courthouse. Hanging from the wall of the police station was a photo of someone not officially in favour these days even in Husak's Czechoslovakia: Joseph Stalin.

Mr. Gordon Wright, a distinguished socialist civil rights lawyer from Alberta, Canada was retained by the Canadian Charter 77 Defence Committee and the Committee to Defend Soviet Political Prisoners to attend the trial of the Charter members in Prague. Mr. Wright, a former Secretary of the Canadian Bar Association's Civil Liberties section and a Vice-President of the Canadian New Democratic Party, was given a visa to travel to Prague but on arrival was not allowed entry to the court. He nevertheless studied all the documentary evidence available

Labour Movement Protests Against Prague Trial

[The following survey is far from complete; readers with further information can help complete the picture in our next issue.]

FRANCE

On 22 October the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party issued a declaration protesting against the trial and calling for the acquittal of the six accused, 'the only measure that conforms with justice and with the interests of socialism'. (*L'Humanité*, PCF daily, 23 Oct.) On the same day the French CFDT sent a telegram to the Czechoslovak Government demanding the release of the accused, and 2,000 to 3,000 people demonstrated against the trial outside the Embassy in Paris. The demonstration was called by the Revolutionary Communist League (French section of the Fourth International), the

and questioned many of the VONS members still at liberty. His journey to Prague was given wide publicity in the Canadian, British and French press, and on his return he appeared on the British TV programme *Panorama*, giving an account of his experiences in Prague.

In his report, the Canadian lawyer points out that the details contained in the official indictment do not constitute the offence charged, namely, subversion. On the basis of the evidence in the indictment and at the trial it could not be proved, he said, that VONS was an anti-state organisation or that it had acted 'out of hostility' to the social system or the state. The defence lawyers appointed by the state did not act on behalf of the accused but on behalf of the prosecution. Benda's lawyer spent most of his time in court reading a car magazine, said Mr. Wright. The trial procedure was, by any criteria, both unfair and illegal. The court was obviously biased and the judge proceeded to sentencing after having read only the first page of the indictment. Among the public excluded from the trial were the international observers and journalists and even people in the vicinity of the courthouse were arrested. Even during the infamous show trial of Slansky in the '50s there was a record of the proceedings available to contemporaries; there is no such record available of the trial of the Charter members today.

Another socialist lawyer who flew to the Prague trial was Viviane Bronckaers, a member of the Belgian Association of Democratic Jurists acting on behalf of the Belgian First of May Committee. In a report on her visit to Prague, she describes the way in which she was arrested in the street on 22

October and interrogated by the political police for eight full hours. Finally, she was expelled from the country on 24 October, after being subjected to a second interrogation at the airport, during which she was accused of being 'in the pay of imperialism' and told that she ought rather to 'collaborate in comrade Brezhnev's work of peace'.

After Mrs Bronckaers' expulsion, Prague Radio broadcast a vitriolic and slanderous report, alleging that she had freely collaborated with the police during her interrogation. It was stated that 'she agreed to provide detailed information' about the purpose of her visit, and that she had on her a notebook containing the addresses of certain 'anti-socialists' (i.e., Chartists) in Prague which 'she handed to security officials of her own free will'. Further, according to Prague Radio, Mrs Bronckaers confessed how the First of May Committee is wholly financed by Jiri Pelikan, and thus by the C.I.A., and that money 'often disappears into the pockets of intermediaries'. Gordon Wright was alleged to have confirmed this latter point.

Clearly, the entire Prague Radio broadcast amounts to a classical exercise in black propaganda, the aim of which was to blacken Western solidarity committees and to discredit the observers who went to Prague in the eyes both of these committees and of Czechoslovak human rights activists. We have been informed that Mrs Bronckaers, together with three Belgian Socialist MPs, Glinne, Lizim and van Miert, are sending a strongly-worded letter to the Czechoslovak Embassy protesting at the completely fabricated radio report.

By Oliver MacDonald

such a trial'. Pointing to the exclusion of the press and the public from the trial and to the restrictions on the right of legal defence, the PCF declared that the trial 'strikes a blow against socialist Czechoslovakia, against the image of socialism and against the struggle for its progress throughout the world. You must free Vaclav Havel and his friends.' The declaration was delivered the same day to the Czechoslovak Embassy by three members of the Political Bureau, Jean Colpin, Maxime Gremetz and Guy Hermier. (*L'Humanité*, 25 Oct.)

BELGIUM

The Chairman of the Belgian Communist Party, M. Louis Van Geyt, reacted strongly to the trial, declaring that 'these practices are utilised by the enemies of socialism and of detente in Europe'. (*Le Monde*, 27 Oct.) On 20 October, the Comité

du Premier Mai, along with the Belgian Association of Democratic Jurists and the Belgian League for Human Rights, sent a socialist lawyer, Viviane Brenckaers, to observe the trial in Prague. She was arrested on 22 October after visiting the court building. (Rood, 2 Nov.)

SPAIN

On 19 October a Committee in Solidarity with Charter 77 was publicly launched in Madrid with an appeal on behalf of the 10 detained Chartists signed by the Comisiones Obreras and the UGT (Spain's two main trade-union centres), the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), the Communist Party (PCE), the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, Spanish section of the Fourth International) and many others. The defence committee's founding meeting was attended by Ferdinand Claudin, Julio Arramberi, M. Azcarate, Ignacio Sotelo and Jaime Pastor. (Combate, 24 October.) On 24 October a delegation representing the PSOE, the PCE, the LCR and the Workers' Party protested to the Czechoslovak Embassy. (Madrid Radio Home Service, 7 pm) Santiago Alvarez, secretary of the PCE Central Committee, hoped 'like millions of communists throughout the world that the accused will be acquitted and then released'.

ITALY

The Secretariat of the Communist Party declared that the trials of Czech citizens charged with subversion were 'serious and intolerable steps. The PCI firmly condemns the action by the Prague authorities as well as all practices of repression and judicial persecution for the free expression of ideas, for political criticism and dissent'. On 24 October the PCI leadership, the Social Democratic Party and the CGIL, CISL and UIL trade union federations protested in turn against the trial. In an interview that appeared in *La Repubblica* on 23 October, PCI leader Giancarlo Pajetta said that it was because Czechoslovakia's basic problems had not been solved that it was considered necessary to govern by means of coercion. Otherwise, said Pajetta, serious disturbances or confusion could result. The Federation of Engineering Workers also protested against the trial. (Rome Home Service, 6pm) On 2 November, Nicola Badaloni, chief editor of *Rinascita*, signed a leader on the trial: 'Communist workers and intellectuals in Italy greet as their comrades-in-battle those Czech workers and intellectuals who have not abandoned the banner of the Prague Spring and condemn those who still talk in the language of violence by politically hiding behind the cloak of the law'. Giaginto Militello, International Secretary of the DGIL, sent a letter to President Husak protesting the trials on 19 October.

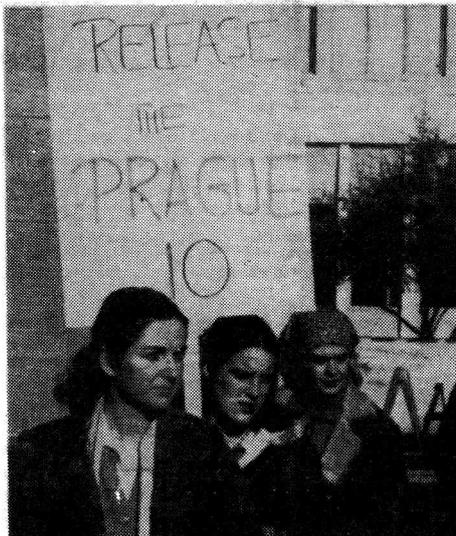
SWEDEN

On 19 October Olaf Palme, leader of the Social

Democratic Party, Guimar Nilsson, Chairman of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, and Hans Alsten, Chairman of the Co-operative Union and Wholesale Society, sent a telegram to President Husak protesting against the holding of the trial. (Stockholm Home Service News, 5pm) On 24 October Palme expressed his detestation of the sentences in a Rikstag speech. Lars Werner, Chairman of the Party of Left Communists, also denounced the sentences in a Rikstag speech. On the same day the Socialist Osteuropa group delivered a protest to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Stockholm. (Stockholm Home Service, 5pm)

CANADA

The Canadian Charter 77 Defence Committee retained the prominent civil rights lawyer, Gordon Wright, to attend the trial in Prague. Although he went to Prague, he was not allowed into the courtroom. On 24 October a demonstration was held in Edmonton when the Czech Ambassador visited the city.



Canadian socialists in Edmonton protesting against the trial.

WEST GERMANY

On 23 October the SPD Praesidium called for the accused to be released, so that they could prove their innocence beyond doubt in a fair trial under international supervision. The statement said the trial could put a new strain on the policy of detente and is in violation of the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. It added that press attacks on the accused, and the refusal to allow international observers to attend, created the suspicion that the verdicts had been decided in advance. On 22 October the Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee in Berlin held a meeting attended by 33 people in solidarity with the

accused. It was addressed by, amongst others, Osip Flechtheim, Jürgen Fuchs and Ivan Bystrina.

AUSTRIA

Some 300 socialists demonstrated outside the Czechoslovak Embassy in Vienna with a banner saying 'Socialism yes, Stalinism no'. On 20 October *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (paper of the Austrian Socialist Party) mentioned a petition by the Austrian Solidarity Committee for Democracy in Czechoslovakia demanding the release of the imprisoned Chartists. The petition contained 100 signatures, including that of Heinz Fischer, chairman of the Club of Socialist Deputies, and Johann Gassner, Vice-Chairman of the Austrian Trade-Union Federation.

GREECE

The CP (Interior) stated in its Party newspaper of 25 October that it 'emphatically protests against the Prague trial' which it considers 'incompatible with the essence of socialist legality'. It also argued that this 'effectively helps the reactionary forces'. The Athens-based Committee in Defence of the Chartists presented a petition of 2000 signatures to the Czechoslovak Embassy on 23 October. The petition, which had been initiated by the International Communist League (a section of the Fourth International), attacked the 'cruel and systematic violation of human rights' and demanded 'immediate freedom for all political prisoners'. It was signed by, among others, Theodoros Stavropoulos, a lawyer; Janis Felekis, leader of the Printers Union; Christos Gogornas, editor of *For socialism*; and Manolis Glezos, leader of E.D.A., the left movement in which the illegal Greek CP in the early '50s and '60s exerted considerable influence. The petition was signed by many other socialist and communist intellectuals.

PORTUGAL

On 24 October the Revolutionary Socialist Party made a protest at the Czech Embassy.

BRITISH CHARTER FUND RAISES £1,000

Some three months after its foundation, the British Charter 77 Defence Fund has raised about £1,000 to assist the families of imprisoned supporters of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. This labour movement fund, established in August with Reg Race MP as its Hon. Treasurer, and backed by the Labour Party's NEC, has received strong support both from Constituency Labour Parties and from individuals on the left. Donations should be sent to Reg Race MP, 126 Bexley Rd., London SE9. Cheques should be made out to the Fund.

International Meeting Plans New Tasks

On 24 November Socialist Defence Committees from various European countries which have been co-ordinating the campaign to release the imprisoned VONS members met in Paris to strengthen international co-ordination and discuss future action.

The meeting was called by the 5th January Committee for a Free and Socialist Czechoslovakia and was attended by representatives of the following committees: the Socialist East European Committee in Berlin, the First of May Committee in Brussels, the Socialist Solidarity Committee for Oppositionists in Eastern Europe in Geneva, the International Committee Against Repression in Paris, the Committee of Mathematicians in Paris, the Charter 77 Defence Committee in Paris, the

International Association for the Defence of Artists, the British Charter 77 Defence Committee and the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign. A message of support was sent by the newly-formed Spanish Charter 77 Defence Committee which was unable to send a representative to the gathering.

Many of the committee had already co-operated on an International Appeal for the release of the VONS members. The meeting welcomed the idea of an international labour movement commission of enquiry into civil rights in Czechoslovakia such as has been proposed by the British Labour Party. It discussed conditions of detention in Czechoslovakia and considered that international action to protest against the conditions of political prisoners was urgently necessary. The

meeting also considered that it was of the greatest importance to ensure that socialist representatives be sent to any future political trials in Czechoslovakia and discussed ways of making this possible. The need to gain financial support from Western labour movements for victims of repression was also discussed and it was agreed to produce an international poster that could be used by all the defence committees involved in the defence of Charter 77 prisoners.

The 5th January Committee will be co-ordinating information from the various defence committees and will convene future international meetings as the need arises. The meeting was a great step forward towards a more speedy and effective response by socialists in the West to repressive action in Czechoslovakia.

ILO BACKS KLEBANOV

By Victor Haynes

In Geneva on 16 November 1979, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) called upon the government of the Soviet Union to allow workers to form their independent trade unions. An ILO investigating committee concluded after a prolonged investigation that the Soviet government used police repression against Vladimir Klebanov and his mates for forming the Free Trade Union Association (FTUA), a Soviet trade union independent of government control. Also that similar police actions have been used against another Soviet trade union, 'The Free Inter-professional Association of Workers'.

This is an obvious embarrassment to the Soviet government for it is the largest financial contributor to the ILO. During the investigation the Soviet government claimed that the arrests

and confinements of members of the Free Trade Union were not connected with 'their real or imaginary trade union activities'.

These complaints against the Soviet government were brought to the attention of the ILO by the West European trade union movement, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The FTUA, led by Klebanov, initiated these complaints against the Soviet government in a series of documents (published in *Labour Focus* and in *Workers Against the Gulag*, V. Haynes and O. Semyonova, Pluto Press, London, 1979).

Amnesty International and members of the East European Solidarity Campaign brought the complaints of the Soviet workers to the attention of the trade union movement internationally. In Britain the TUC stated that it would delay taking a position on the complaints until the ILO

investigation was concluded. In the light of the ILO decision, British trade unionists should demand the TUC take a stand on the Soviet workers' right to form trade unions independent of the Soviet Government.

SUPPORT FOR POLISH WORKER

The Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign decided at its last meeting to launch a campaign for the release of **edmund Zadrozynski**, an editor of the independent Polish workers' paper *Robotnik*. As reported in the last issue of *Labour Focus*, Zadrozynski was the leader of a powerful opposition movement in the industrial town of Grudziadz, and his arrest on a trumped-up charge of theft has aroused a massive protest among the inhabitants of Grudziadz and Polish opposition circles.

Review of Reviews

NEW FRENCH SOCIALIST JOURNAL

With a name reminiscent of Rudolf Bahro's book, a new French socialist bi-monthly on Eastern Europe has been launched in Paris: *L'Alternative*. It aims 'to bring together information, documents and ideas from different groups taking part in struggles for human rights in Eastern Europe, or which are simply victims of repression; to give to the silent masses, the workers, the possibility of making themselves heard; to stimulate investigations, reports and studies; and to be the forum for a dialogue'. The editors further state that they believe in neither the capitalist system in the West nor the existing system in the East, and that they are 'opposed to all totalitarian, police and repressive regimes'.

The first issue of this excellently-produced journal includes in its 56 pages a dossier on workers and free trade unions in Eastern Europe, contributions to a debate on the Moscow Olympic Games, as well as many other articles and documents from most East European countries. *Labour Focus* enthusiastically welcomes the appearance of this French-language publication, and looks forward to long and many-sided co-operation. Already, the first issue reproduces two articles from *Labour Focus*, and we have translated in the present number an interview which *L'Alternative* conducted with the Polish *Robotnik* editor Jan Litynski. Single copies cost 12 French francs and an annual subscription for abroad is 70 francs. Write to: *L'Alternative*, Librairie Francois Maspero, 1, place Paul-Painleve, 75005 Paris, France.

META

The summer 1979 issue of *META*, the Canadian-Ukrainian left-wing journal on Eastern Europe contains, amongst other items, the following: a detailed survey of the Armenian national question; a study of the Czech cultural underground by Ivan Hartel; an interview with a member of the Chilean Marxist organisation, the MIR, on the problems of Chilean exiles in Romania; and an article on 'The end of reformist thought' by Hungarian socialist Mihaily Vajda. To subscribe to this interesting journal send 5 dollars to: *Meta*, P.O. Box 324, Station P, Toronto, Canada.

German Right and Human Rights

In 1978 two Czech citizens, Vratislav Cermak and Juraj Zilka, crossed into West Germany in Bavaria and asked for political asylum. Both were arrested and handed over to the Czech authorities. This action, which violates the constitution of the Federal Republic, was exposed by the West German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* in November, and has created a potentially damaging scandal around the CSU leader Strauss, who is candidate for Chancellor in the next election. Strauss's Bavarian Minister of the Interior, Tandler, originally denied all knowledge of the affair, but it is now rebounding on him in true Watergate style.

In direct response to Tandler's statement that he didn't know what was going on, the United Nations commissioner for refugees in Bonn has announced that he informed Tandler about the case of Cermak and Zilka on 7 December 1978. And a Social Assistance Organisation for Czech citizens in Germany has revealed that it informed Strauss about the same case on 21 December 1978. For Strauss, who has built up his image on the defence of individual rights, with his slogan 'Freedom, not socialism', this could be very damaging. As the Federal Minister Gerhart Baum said in the Federal Cabinet meeting on 22 November, 'Nothing worse could happen to a conservative

government than to be caught in the act of handing over political refugees to a communist state.

On 21 November Tandler finally admitted in the Bavarian Parliament that since 1976 'at least 9 other refugees apart from Cermak and Zilka' had been handed over to the authorities in Eastern Europe, including four other Czechs and one Hungarian. But, according to *Der Spiegel*, this is only the tip of the iceberg. On 9 October this year a 26-year-old Yugoslav, Adem Sahiti, a member of the emigrant organisation 'League of Loyal Albanians', was sent back to Yugoslavia where, according to the Frankfurt lawyer, Helmut Rosebrock, he has since disappeared. In 1977 a Croat, involved on the margins of an illegal Croat organisation in Germany, was handed over to the Yugoslavs and was subsequently sent to prison by them for 15 years. An even more sinister case of co-operation between the East European and West German repressive organs involves a young Ethiopian member of a group which opposed the Soviet-backed Derg in Ethiopia. He was arrested in Bavaria and sent to Budapest. From there he was to be sent via Moscow to Addis Ababa, where he faces possible execution.

That there are many other cases that have

By Joe Singleton



A cartoon of Tandler from *Der Spiegel*. The placard reads: 'We demand greater commitment to human rights — CSU'.

yet to come to light was admitted by Tandler on 17 June 1979 in a letter to the CSU member of parliament for Lindau, Klaus Henninger. In this letter the Interior Minister admits that in 1978 alone, of the 104 persons who sought asylum at the Bavarian border, 57 were handed back to the East European authorities.