

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

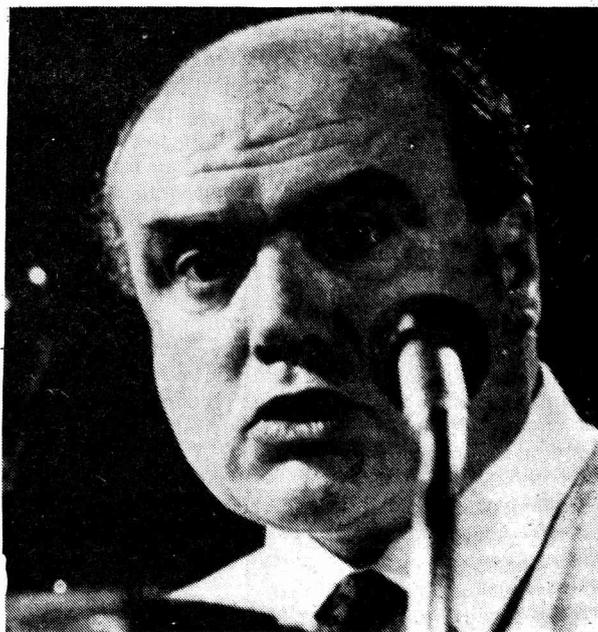
A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

Vol.1 No.2

May-June 1977

30p

**BRITISH AND IRISH
TRADE UNION LEADERS
DEMAND RELEASE
OF ARRESTED
CHARTER 77 ACTIVISTS**



NUM Secretary Lawrence Daly

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- ★ EDMUND BALUKA — THE POLISH WORKING CLASS
 - ★ EAST GERMAN MARXISTS — The situation in the GDR
 - ★ CZECHOSLOVAK OPPOSITION —
Documents from Mlynar, Patocka, Hajek, Uhl
 - ★ JIRI PELIKAN — Socialists and Belgrade
 - ★ DOCUMENTS from Romania and the USSR
-
- TAMARA DEUTSCHER — ON KHRUSHCHEV

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

Provisional Statement of Aims

A growing number of socialists and communists of all persuasions are taking a stand against the suppression of democratic rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Bourgeois claims that the British Left turns a blind eye to Eastern Europe while protesting against oppression in Chile or Southern Africa or Northern Ireland are being increasingly exposed as hollow hypocrisy.

But up to now socialists have lacked a source of frequent and reliable information on events in that part of the world. Most socialists have to turn to the bourgeois press for their information. Yet the latter reports selectively and from its own particular angle. At the same time, coverage in the papers of the Left remains scanty. The first aim of this bulletin is to help fill this gap by giving those concerned about repression in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union a more comprehensive and regular source of information about events there.

The mass media give ample space to Tory politicians and Cold Warriors on the Labour Right who seek to use protests against repression in Eastern Europe as a cover for their own support for imperialism and for withhhunts against socialist and communist militants in Britain. At the same time, campaigns that have been going on for many years by socialists in the labour movement concerning victims of repression in Eastern Europe are entirely ignored by the mass media. The second aim of this bulletin is therefore to provide comprehensive information about the activities of genuine socialist and labour movement organisations who are taking up this issue.

The purpose of this bulletin is to **inform**, not to debate the nature of the East European states nor to discuss the strategy that should be adopted by socialists in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Our aim is not to lend support to one particular trend in that part of the world but to provide information about all significant currents campaigning for democratic rights.

Wherever possible we will quote the sources of our information. Unless otherwise stated, all the material in this bulletin may be reproduced with acknowledgement.

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilise the very considerable influence that the British labour movement can have in the struggle for an end to repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

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EDITORIAL

Left-wing leaders of the British and Irish trade union movements have launched appeals for the release of arrested Charter 77 activists in Czechoslovakia.

At a public meeting at the NUR headquarters in London at the end of March [see page 24 of this issue, Lawrence Daly, General Secretary of the NUM, Dave Bowman of the NUR and Ernie Roberts, Deputy General Secretary of the AUEW, called for solidarity action in support of the Charter and for protests against the recent arrests in Czechoslovakia. The meeting was sponsored by the Labour Party, the printing workers' Union NATSOPA, and many other labour movement bodies. The British Communist Party has already come out in defence of the Charter, opposing any harassment of its supporters.

In Ireland a petition has been launched by Michael Mullen, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, Phil Flynn of the Local Government and Public Services Union, Mary Robinson, a Senator of the Irish Labour Party and Matt Merrigan, the Secretary of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union in the Republic. The petition begins with the words, "I, an opponent of repressive legislation in Ireland, particularly the Offences Against the State Act and the Emergency Powers Act...". It goes on to condemn the suppression of democratic rights in Poland and Czechoslovakia, calling for the release of Jiri Lederer, Vaclav Havel, and the trade unionists Ales Machacek and Vladimir Lastuvka.

Since the public meeting in London and the launching of the Irish petition, further arrests have taken place in Czechoslovakia. Milan Hubl, a leader of the Communist Party in 1968 and prominent

member of the Socialist Opposition since the Warsaw Pact invasion, has been arrested only a few months after his release from a long jail sentence. Venek Silhan and another prominent Charter campaigner, Petr Uhl [See his appeal to the Western Revolutionary Left on page 15 of this issue] have also been arrested in Prague.

The Czechoslovak authorities are trying to defend their suppression of elementary political rights by pretending that those they have arrested are "imperialist agents" or "Zionists", backed only by war-mongers in the capitalist world. Such absurd charges simply expose the groundlessness of the arrests.

Resolutions and telegrams demanding the release of the political prisoners in Czechoslovakia should be sent to the Czechoslovak Embassy by trade union branches, Labour Party and Communist Party branches and other political organisations on the Left. Via Labour Focus or the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, Czech socialists in exile can be invited to labour movement meetings to explain what is happening in Czechoslovakia and what can be done about it here. As we have seen when oppositionists have been arrested in the past, the voice of the Labour movement in the West can force the Czechoslovak authorities to retreat from their repressive campaigns.

Send telegrams to Czechoslovak Embassy, 25 Kensington Palace Gdns., London W.8.

Address of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists:
49a Tabley Rd., London N.7.

FORUM ON BELGRADE

Jiri Pelikan on

Socialists and Belgrade

In the summer and autumn of this year the governments of all the countries of Europe as well as the governments of the USA and Canada will be holding meetings in the Yugoslav capital, Belgrade, as a follow up to the Helsinki Conference on European Security and Co-operation two years ago. The purpose of the Belgrade conference is to monitor progress towards the full implementation of the Helsinki agreements. One section of these agreements, the so-called "Basket 3" is concerned with the defence of human rights throughout Europe. In a number of East European countries, notably various republics of the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Romania, committees have been formed to try to enforce the provisions of the Helsinki agreements as well as other international pacts. The Belgrade Conference is therefore becoming an event of great prominence in European politics raising a number of important questions for the working class movement. In this issue of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, we are initiating a discussion on some of the issues involved in Belgrade with an interview conducted by Labour Focus with JIRI PELIKAN, a leader of the Czechoslovak Socialist Opposition in exile. We hope to print further contributions to this discussion in future issues of Labour Focus and we would welcome letters from our readers on this issue.

What do the Helsinki-Belgrade conferences signify for European politics? Do they represent something of fundamental importance or are they simply secondary and momentary aspects of the policies of East and West?

The Labour movement must have its own, autonomous attitude towards all state and diplomatic conferences, and this applies also to the Helsinki and Belgrade Conferences. The Helsinki 'summit' was con-

ceived and planned by the Soviet leading group as the confirmation of the political status quo, created by Yalta and by the results of the Second World War, and thus confirming the division of Europe into two blocs or spheres of influence. This aim was de facto accepted by the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger administration and its Western allies. But socialist forces in Western and Eastern Europe cannot accept such a conception of peaceful coexistence and co-operation, although they will surely agree with all measures which may prevent

Appeal to Our Readers

For decades, repression in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has been both a blind spot and a source of weakness to the labour and socialist movement in this country. We think Labour Focus can contribute to changing this situation. But to do it we need your support, particularly your money. We need it if we are going to survive and we need even more if we are going to expand, and go monthly. And we need to publish more often both because we are leaving important

material out, and because a monthly will be more effective as a campaigning journal.

So we ask you:

- (1) to subscribe and get other people to subscribe (£3.50 for 9 issues)
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armed conflicts and the return of the cold war. Therefore, it was only thanks to the initiative of oppositional forces in Eastern Europe that the principles of Helsinki were taken up as an instrument for obliging governments to respect laws and constitutions which guarantee all the required liberties but which up to now have been treated as mere pieces of paper by the leading groups in Eastern Europe.

So the alternative is not peaceful co-operation and detente or cold war, as Brezhnev would like us to debate, but rather **what kind of detente**: is it to be agreements between governments and business between businessmen in order to maintain the present political order in both parts of Europe, or is it to be a real co-operation between peoples, a dialogue between citizens and their organisations with the aim of opening new paths of development in Europe in accordance with the needs and aspirations of peoples: a Europe independent of America and the USSR.

Is the Belgrade Conference something that the Left can build upon and try to strengthen, or is it mainly a negative development for the Left in both Eastern and Western Europe?

The Belgrade Conference has limited aims: to supervise the implementation of the Helsinki Agreement. Therefore the Left and the peoples of Europe in general should not expect too much, otherwise we shall create illusions. But Belgrade can contribute to the strengthening of the movement for civil rights in Eastern Europe by insisting that these principles be implemented in the daily life of all countries and by criticising violations of these principles by certain governments. The Belgrade Conference should not be a public tribunal with propagandistic speeches, but a serious discussion on these and other problems. It should end with a compromise which will further oblige East European governments - as well as others - to respect civil rights and international conventions. A break-up of the Conference, or acceptance by it of the present stage of European development would constitute a set-back for Eastern Europe. The West European Left, then, should maintain permanent pressure in relation to both civil rights and possibilities of change leading to the democratisation of the regimes.

Why are the Carter Administration and other governments in Western Europe taking up human rights in Eastern Europe and the USSR at the present time? And what position should socialists in the West take towards these initiatives?

Although they may have different reasons, socialists in the West should support any initiatives in the direction of civil and human rights, insisting that they should be applied to

all countries and regimes of Europe and the world. Where they are in a position to take independent action, socialists should show that they are the best fighters for these popular aspirations.

Should 'Basket 3' be a central part of the Belgrade Conference? Is this the most important part of the conference, or are other matters more urgent?

Although the Belgrade Conference should discuss all sections of the Helsinki Agreement, it is "basket three" which is the most urgent and which should therefore form the central part. All "border disputes" between states have already been resolved and international trade is developing independently of the conference. The problem of disarmament and reduction of troop levels in Europe was unfortunately removed from the agenda and is now stagnating in Vienna with no hope of progress. In fact, lack of liberty in certain countries and the consequent explosive situation may seriously endanger all co-operation (and hence peace) at a European level. It is therefore in relation to this point that attention should be focussed and that socialist forces should put pressure on their respective governments, both East and West.

Should violations of democratic rights in Western Europe be taken to the Belgrade Conference?

All violations of these rights and principles in any European country should be criticised and discussed.

Should socialists participate in creating so-called 'Helsinki monitoring groups' in preparation for Belgrade? Should we support such groups in the East?

The answer to this question follows from my previous point: socialists should be in the forefront of the struggle for civil rights and thus participate in any initiative serving that aim. The formation of Helsinki monitoring groups in the East should be supported, since this is the only way in which it is possible for public opinion to exert control and influence over the various governments. The same is true for the West, but here the participation of socialists should depend on the aims or composition of monitoring groups, which should be really broadly-based and not the instrument of one particular tendency.

What attitude should we take towards Soviet demands for the closing down of Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, etc.?

If the Soviet and East European governments made it possible for their populations to gain access to all necessary information, such radio stations would become superfluous and automatically lose

their influence. But no concessions should be made to the leading groups in the USSR and Eastern Europe on this question as long as they maintain the present situation of one-sided official propaganda and impose a growing censorship in order to isolate the population from their brothers and comrades in the West and to crush their fight for civil rights and justice.

What role should the trade unions in Western Europe play in relation to violations of human rights in Eastern Europe?

The one of international solidarity with the oppressed and exploited - as is the tradition of the trade-union movement. In particular they should protest about the fact that workers in Eastern Europe do not have the right to form independent trade unions; that they are unable to elect genuine representatives; that they have no control over the result of their labour in the enterprise; and above all that those who are fighting for civil rights are persecuted, dismissed from their job and expelled from their trade union, and obliged to live under a sort of apartheid. They should also give material support to those East European workers who have lost their job or who are in prison.

What forms of labour movement defence activity are most effective?

Every form of activity is effective ... except silence, under whatever pretext. First of all, public expressions of solidarity with those fighting for civil rights and of protest at acts of victimisation directed against them. The first demand must be for the immediate release of all political prisoners; until this is realised it is necessary to support prisoners' families and to send lawyers to speak with prisoners and assist at their trial. The authorities will try to prevent this, but it is possible to put pressure on them and to succeed (even in Pinochet's prison, Corvalan was able to receive Italian and other foreign lawyers). Delegations should be sent to Eastern Europe both to express their solidarity and to allow left-wing fighters for civil rights to express their problems and needs without fear of being manipulated by some right-wing journal. Delegations should also be sent to East European embassies, informing them of the reaction of public opinion. Scholarships should be offered to those students who cannot continue their studies for political reasons; and the Left press should be open to oppositionists to give their point of view and break the barrier of silence behind which the present regimes wish to confine them. Finally, all those general forms of solidarity activity which the labour movement has been using for some time in relation to Chile, Vietnam, Iran, Brasil, Uruguay, etc., should be applied in the case of Eastern Europe, taking into account the specific situation of each country.

POLAND

Party, Workers and Opposition

Oliver MacDonald, recently returned from Poland, reports on developments there.

Polish politics is reaching the end of the period inaugurated by the June strikes last year. The extremely delicate balance of forces established in the weeks and months after the June crisis is becoming increasingly unstable with the main active political forces being pushed towards new and possibly momentous initiatives.

As a result of the activity of the Committee for the Defence of the Workers (otherwise known as KOR), set up in Warsaw last autumn, a broad campaign by the Polish intelligentsia began to press the Party leadership for an official enquiry into police brutality against workers involved in the June strikes. Growing demands were made for the release of workers jailed in Radom and Ursus -- two centres of the June movement -- and for the re-instatement of workers sacked in various parts of the country for participating in strikes. In February, Gierek, the General Secretary of the Party, attempted to regain the initiative by calling for the release of all those workers in jail who were genuinely sorry for what they had done. This resulted in a number of successful appeals from jailed workers to the Supreme Court, and it also laid the basis for the Party leadership to put considerable pressure on KOR to disband. However, KOR has continued to campaign for its basic demands, circulating fresh information about the workers still in jail and attempting to expand its network of activists throughout the country.

SIGNS OF NEW REPRESSION

During March and April the actions of the various branches of the Party leadership have presented a picture which is, at first sight, highly contradictory. There are pointers both to increased repression and to a further relaxing of controls. In March the Supreme Court confirmed the sentences on workers still in jail, and the police followed this up with a campaign of harassment against workers in Radom who had publicly protested against police action last year. On Easter Saturday, *Zycie Warszawy*, the daily of the Warsaw Party Committee, carried a major article claiming that two prominent Polish exiles abroad, Adam Michnik and Leszek Kolakowski, had made links on KOR's behalf with *Nazional Zeitung*, the paper of the West German neo-fascists. The story was, of course, a fabrication but its implications for the Party's attitude towards the KOR were

menacing. At the Central Committee plenum during the week after Easter, Gierek personally declared that he would work to expose elements like the members of KOR, and the rector of Warsaw University hinted at the need to start repression against oppositional students. Two days later it emerged that reprisals were going to be taken against over 700 students who had signed an appeal for a public enquiry into police brutality during the June events. And simultaneously, Jacek Kuron and other members of KOR were arrested, though they were subsequently released.

Nevertheless, decisive repression of the intellectual opposition has not yet started. Indeed, the general view within opposition circles is that the Party leadership is at present divided as to how to tackle the situation. Many of Gierek's collaborators of long standing within the leadership like Babiuch, Szydlak and Jaroszewicz - the last named being probably the most unpopular political leader in Poland at the moment -- have apparently been urging a tougher line towards opposition currents, and they have undoubtedly been strongly supported by the East German Party leadership, and probably the Soviet one as well, which are seriously concerned by developments in Poland. It is probable that these currents would also like to reduce Poland's very heavy dependence on trade with the West and that they would be prepared to face the uncomfortable economic consequences of cutting back these trade relations. On the other hand, Gierek himself is reputed to have urged an extremely cautious approach towards both the working class protests and the intellectual opposition, and at the same time to have insisted on continuing the basic economic strategy of using trade links with the West to retool the Polish economy in the hope of an export boom to pay back debts during the next 18 months or two years. So far this approach has held sway in the Party leadership, but the evolving political situation in the country and the Party apparatus increasingly requires either new concessions to the opposition or a swing back to repression.

THE WORKING CLASS

It is, of course, extremely difficult to gain a picture of the different currents of opinion within the Polish working class, but some trends can be indicated. In the first place, the most disturbing aspect of the events in June 1976 from the Party leadership's point of view was not the violent clashes in

Radom and Ursus but the very extensive strike movement, most of which did not develop into mass street demonstrations at all. It evidently took the Party leadership entirely by surprise: out of 49 regions (voivodships) only one regional Party committee had warned of likely protests before the measures were announced. Yet, if the price increases had not been withdrawn within twenty-four hours, the initial strikes would almost certainly have broadened out into a vigorous working-class struggle right across the country. Secondly, the movement was particularly marked in the largest factories and amongst the more highly paid sections of workers. And this was so in spite of the fact that the government's proposals gave much greater compensation to the higher paid workers than to the lower paid. Even the international lorry-drivers in Poznan struck. The only exception to this general pattern seems to have been the miners of lower Silesia who have long been given special economic and social privileges, but even there a number of work stoppages took place.

There is no doubt that the June events are seen by wide sections of the working class as a great victory for, and proof of, the efficacy of, collective workers' action. One confirmation of this is an unpublished sociological survey of workers' political attitudes - commissioned after the June events by the Party Central Committee - and based on interviews of 2,800 workers in the largest factories in Poland. It showed that only a tiny minority believed that conflicts with the authorities at work could be resolved through formal channels like the trade unions. Instead, 40% said such conflicts should be resolved through strikes, 20% said through absenteeism, 11% said through a go-slow, and 9-10% said through industrial sabotage (damaging machines etc.). Just under 50% considered that they were exploited by an exploiting group; and the main function of the trade unions and the Party was seen as mobilising people for work. When asked in whose interests the Party ruled Poland, just over 20% replied: the Peoples' Militia (ie. the police); while less than 20% said that it ruled in the interests of the workers. The workers listed the following as the main changes they would like to see: first, freedom of speech, and second, free and equal access for their children to high schools. Very significantly, the most critical of the workers interviewed were also Party members: the survey found that there was a correlation between high levels of skill, high income, Party membership and critical attitudes towards the authorities -- a

particularly disturbing conclusion for the Party leadership. There also seems to be no strong antagonism between members and non-members of the Party within the working class today: Party membership no longer offers any strong career prospect to workers, as it used to in the 1940s or 1950s. The real political division is between those workers who belong to the para-militia organisation and those, whether inside or outside the Party, who do not.

The growing confidence of the working class in its own collective strength is a feature of Polish politics not found to anything like the same extent in other East European societies. The June events also indicated how those sections of the working class that had been most directly involved in the revolt of 1970-71 remembered that earlier experience: for example, workers at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk used the same meeting places and some of the same techniques in their protests last June. And there are indications that the Silesian miners, who have so far not played a prominent part in opposition to the regime, are growing increasingly dissatisfied by the deteriorating conditions in the mines as the government tries to rapidly expand coal export to pay foreign currency debts to the West.

STRENGTH OF OPPOSITION

At the same time, there still seems to be a wide gap between the organised opposition groups within the intelligentsia and the working class. The Polish authorities have not made the same mistake as their Czechoslovak counterparts, whose massive press campaign against Charter 77 made it famous throughout the country. The Czech authorities even went so far as to try to force large sectors of the population to publicly denounce the Charter, thereby actively stimulating a political polarisation around the initiative of the Czech opposition. The Polish authorities have been much more circumspect and press attacks on the KOR have been both more muted and more vague, while the official censorship has, of course, prevented the mass of the population from hearing about the KOR's activities or its views. The only readily available source of information is therefore radio Free Europe, and it is likely that a very large majority of the population has no definite information at all about KOR. The present writer spoke to one experienced working class oppositionist in the provinces who thought that KOR was a committee of bishops in Warsaw; others had simply not heard of the defence committee at all. Strenuous efforts are being made by various currents within the intellectual opposition to strengthen contact with the working class: KOR has developed links with workers in Radom and Ursus. About 30 workers' commissions, modelled on the Spanish example and initiated largely by workers expelled from the factories after June, have been repu-

tedly established in Warsaw. In addition, nuclei of KOR activists are now operating in a number of provincial cities. But the overwhelming weight of the organised opposition is concentrated socially in the cultural intelligentsia and the students, and geographically in Warsaw and Krakow.

The numerical strength of the active opposition must run into many hundreds, and its base of sympathetic support amounts to many thousands of people. In addition, a number of the more prominent people are nationally known figures with high reputations as public personalities in Poland. A serious round-up and a public trial of the leaders of KOR would undoubtedly create a major political crisis in the country. For this reason no such move by the regime has been attempted. On the other hand, the activities of the repressive apparatus have been concentrated on limiting the scope of KOR's activity to Warsaw and breaking any potentially strong links between the intellectuals and the working class.

The intellectual opposition has, since last autumn, been united in action around the initiatives of KOR. At the same time, of course, there are a number of different currents of opinion within it. Ideologically, the opposition is differentiated most markedly in its attitudes towards nationalism on one side and Marxism on the other. Politically, there are currents within it who hold a perspective of persuading the leadership of the Party to introduce gradual reforms, while others envisage a growing, independent mass movement forcing reforms from the existing leadership on an increasingly wide front. The former current is, of course, less concerned with the problem of broadening links with the working class than the latter. But both currents are united around the need for common action for democratic demands and the differences over perspectives are by no means clearly defined.

Some members of KOR have linked up with other oppositionists to form a Human Rights Committee in Warsaw. The idea of such a body was already a topic of discussion within KOR but the committee itself did not take the initiative: the people who formed the new group appear to lay greater stress on the national question than other sectors of the opposition and they are looked upon with scepticism by some members of the opposition.

DIVISIONS IN THE PARTY

The Party itself and the official youth organisation have been considerably shaken by political developments since June of last year. Many different currents of opinion can be found, even in such unsuspected places as the political police. In Warsaw, at least in the intellectual branches of the Party, it is now possible to put forward resolutions criticising various

aspects of Party policy, and within the higher reaches of the Party apparatus some currents are talking about the need for more radical measures of liberalisation: an article was prepared for Nowe Drogi suggesting the right to form factional platforms within the Party; although the article never appeared it was supposed to have had powerful support from some sections of the Party hierarchy. Another sign of the impact of the June events and of the KOR initiatives on the Party hierarchy is an extraordinarily film now showing in 3 Warsaw cinemas. The film, by Wajda, is called "The Man in Marble" and it recounts the struggle by a young female film director to piece together the life of a young Stakhanovite of the 1940s and make a film about it. We see how the young man, Birkut, was chosen as a Stakhanovite: because of his good physique and photogenic features. We see his politically more advanced friend, Vittorio, a Spanish Civil War veteran, explaining to him that his role is to force work norms up to fantastic heights. We watch the way that his career as a bricklaying sprinter is ended by some workers passing him a red hot brick which destroys his hands. His friend Vittorio is arrested and made the victim of a show trial in the early 50s. Birkut disrupts the trial and both men are sent to prison. In 1956 they are released and Vittorio eventually becomes a technocratic Party boss in Katowice -- Gierek's home base -- while Birkut disappears mysteriously. Eventually the young film director tracks down Birkut's son who is working in the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk. The film ends with repeated shots of workers coming down the steps of the railway bridge in Gdansk where about 300 workers were shot down by the police in 1970 during the workers' revolt: the audience is expected to infer that Birkut was one of the workers shot on those steps. During the film we see the young film director interviewing the highly successful Polish film maker who first made his name through a Stalinist film about the 'heroic' Stakhanovite Birkut in the 1940s. The interview takes place in the palatial residence where the middle-aged film director is surrounded by servants. The young woman also questions the former policeman who had to tail Birkut while he was a Stakhanovite. We see him today as a sleek, sun-tanned official busy auditioning budding strip-tease girls in the Palace of Culture. The young female director is in the end unable to show her film of the real biography of Birkut. "The Man in Marble" is playing to packed houses in spite of the fact that it has not been reviewed by the national press at all. When three literary pundits mentioned the film in a literary journal during the course of a discussion on new trends in the arts, Zycie Warszawy violently denounced the three critics, while avoiding any mention of the film itself.

These tensions within the Party apparatus are tending to transform the normal infighting between various bureaucratic

empires into rivalries between different factions with distinct political positions. There is no sign of any current as radical as the Dubcekites within the Party hierarchy: the "liberalizers" are in reality concerned only to create a series of small safety-valves and shock-absorbers throughout the system while trying to avoid any open head-on confrontation with either the working class or the intellectual opposition. But there is no doubt that the infighting within the leadership will take on more acute forms during the months ahead. A document signed by 600 people is already circulating within the Party denouncing the Central Committee for being "weak" and also criticising corruption - a rampant disease as officials begin to feel that their days in office are numbered. The latest Central Committee meeting seems to indicate that

these "hard-line" elements are gaining strength.

The opposition also is increasingly faced with choices, in particular the question of what more permanent forms of action and organisation should be established out of the experience of KOR whose demands are strictly limited.

The labour movement in the West is an important factor in the political situation in Poland. The Party leadership has been continually trying to brand the opposition as agents of Western imperialism and present them as linked to rightist and even neo-fascist circles in the capitalist world -- an utterly false charge, which has required the most crude attempts at forgery of opposition documents in order to give the semblance of credibility. The Party leader-

ship's sensitivity to labour movement criticism can be illustrated by the fact that the secret weekly new bulletin of the Central Committee considered a small picket by about 15 members of the revolutionary left when Prime Minister Jaroszewicz visited Britain important to discuss. It claimed, rather grandly, that such protests were kept to a minimum thanks to the close co-operation between the British and the Polish political police during the visit. In reality the reason for the smallness of such protests lies in the fact that the Left within the British labour movement has not yet taken up its responsibilities and raised its voice in defence of the workers still jailed or still out of work for protesting last June.

Edmund Baluka

Myths and Realities of the Workers Movement

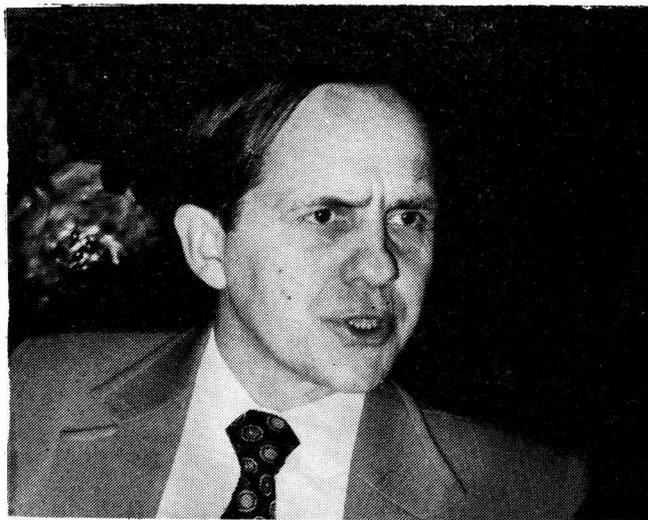
There has always been a great deal of interest in the British labour movement as to the life of workers in the countries of Eastern Europe and the USSR. We heard absolutely contradictory accounts of working class rights in these countries, particularly in relation to trade union and political rights. "Labour Focus" plans to run a series of articles on the situation of the working class in a number of East European countries to try to provide some reliable information on this subject. And we begin by talking to EDMUND BALUKA, the Chairman of the Strike Committee in the Szczecin shipyards during the revolt of 1971, delegate to the Polish Trade Union Congress of November 1972, and now living in exile in the West. The interview was conducted by OLIVER MACDONALD; translation from Polish by PAWEŁ JANKOWSKI.

More information about the workers' revolt of 1970-71 can be found in an article by Edmund Baluka and Ewa Barker in *International Socialism Journal No.94: "Workers Struggles in Poland"*. An edited version of the famous discussion between Party leader Gierek and the Szczecin shipyard workers is in *New Left Review No.72*.

How did the leaders of the strike committee emerge? Why were you singled out for leadership?

Before December 1970 I had been a foreman for a year and three months in a department not related to my trade -- I had taken the job simply for money after a friend of mine who was a director had suggested that I take the post. I worked with a group of 35 workers and in August, a few months before the revolt, my group of workers went on strike, refusing to work on one particular Greek ship.

The story is complicated. Some years before, the Greek government had ordered some ships from Poland but in the meantime the Colonel's putsch took place. The people who had ordered the ships were put in jail and the orders were cancelled. Attempts were made to hush up this cancellation and the Lloyd's Register, which was due to receive the ship, instead tried to fool



Edmund Baluka Speaking to Czech Solidarity Meeting in London

about finding faults in the workmanship in order to refuse to accept the ship. The cancellation did not affect me because I was on a fixed salary, but my workers, who could normally earn 140 or 150 zloty a day, were reduced to 20 to 30 zloty. So they downed tools. Negotiations were organised and the strikers found themselves confronted by the entire management, the Party Secretary in the yards and the Regional Party Secretary. When these people began to shout and threaten the workers, they froze so I spoke up and demonstrated to the management that with their system of payment it was impossible to carry out the work. As a result of this the management carried out a review of the norms and the workers' basic pay was increased by 280%. Work then resumed, but I was called in to see the production manager who thanked me for my work in the yards, gave me three months notice and suspended me from all work. If I wanted to I could receive my three months advance pay and not come back. However, another manager advised me to hang around in the

yards and they might be able to find me something else to do. So when December came I was working in a small store that handed out paint. It was because I had been sacked from my previous job that I became well known among the workers. People in the yards would point to me; others would come up and criticise the other workers for not standing up for me. In town, shipyard workers who were almost total strangers would offer me drinks. That was why, at the mass meeting, when one of the workers put forward my name, it was accepted and as early as December I was put onto the strike committee. It was really an accident.

In 1956, in the same kind of way, fate intervened with Gozdzik in the Zeran car factory. A similar 'accident' thrust Edmund Pacher into the forefront of the Poznan revolt. There must always be these accidents because it is impossible to develop rank and file leaders who are known for their militancy in standing up for workers rights. The moment such people become known they are removed.

What role did the trade unions and Party organisations amongst the workers play during the revolt of 1970-71?

In 1970-71 in Szczecin, Lodz and other towns the trade unions were viewed very critically by the workers, as was the Party, and their buildings were attacked and burnt. The various functionaries just disappeared together with the local Party bureaucrats. In the shipyard, the trade union organisation and the Party committee just evaporated overnight. Before the revolt, out of 12,000 workers in the shipyards there were 2,000 Party members. During the revolt you would have been hard put to find 20 people prepared to admit to membership of the Party. There were a few workers who said they believed in Marxist Leninist ideology, and there were a couple of Party members in the strike committee. In the elected 5-person departmental committees there were Party members who had to some extent been critical of the Party's policies and, by electing them the workers showed some confidence in them. But the vast majority of those elected were non-Party members.



Polish Army taking over central Szczecin Dec. 1970

The first reflex of Party members was to throw their Party cards into the burning Party headquarters. Immediately after the revolt there were perhaps some three hundred Party members but gradually Party membership was rebuilt until today the Szczecin shipyards again have nearly 2,000 Party members.

I believe that the workers of the shipyards organised numerous meetings with workers from other factories in the area and that attempts were made to set up an alternative trade union.

At the 12th Conference of the Szczecin shipyards on 12 February, a number of proposals were put forward suggesting the creation of a trade union of shipyard workers. (Up to that time we had belonged to the metalworkers' union, the largest trade union in Poland.) From the conference, delegates were sent out to the shipyards of Gdynia and Gdansk and the same proposals were put forward there. It was very easy to communicate between the shipyards because the yards themselves only assemble the ships: they do not manufacture the various installations like furniture, engines, cables, etc. These are produced in over one thousand different work places throughout Poland and therefore dozens of vehicles travel daily from various regions of the country to all the different shipyards. In addition, some skilled workers must travel to all the shipyards to install refrigeration equipment and so on. Such people stay at one of the yards for a couple of days, install whatever is needed and then move on. (The vehicles which left Szczecin after the strike, by the way, had slogans printed on them like "General Strike", "Gierek the same as Gomulka", "Down with the Party", and many others. Neither the militia nor the Party could prevent this.) So we were able to communicate with the other shipyards without difficulty. But the attempt to start a new shipyard workers union did not get off the ground for material and technical reasons. The new union would not have had the holiday resorts, the rest homes and the other social services which the other unions administer. The 12,000 workers in Szczecin, 18,000 in Gdansk and 12,000 in Gdynia would together have made up the smallest and poorest union in the country without, of course, any of the central funds which the Metalworkers' Union possessed. Common sense told us that it would have been too difficult an enterprise for us to accomplish on our own. Furthermore, others suggested that if the democratisation in the metalworkers' union would continue after the revolt it would be as good as a new union. We could have as much control over our affairs in either. But, of course, things returned to the old pattern eventually in the metalworkers' union. The attempt to form a new union could be seen as an attempt to seek new solutions to the workers' problems. But in the end the 800 shipyard delegates decided to shelve the proposals for a new union and remain in the metalworkers' trade union.

What methods did the Party apparatus use to regain its control in Szczecin after the end of the strike?

It would be impossible for me to mention all the methods, but I will single out some typical ones. The primary aim was to buy off and win over those workers elected to the 5-person departmental committees and the members of the workers commission. As a leading member of the workers commission I was approached by the new Party 3rd Secretary for Szczecin in the early days of February. First he addressed the whole workers commission giving it assurances that he would work jointly with it for the benefit of the workers. Then he approached me, with no witnesses present. He said, "Mr. Baluka, you sailed once. Wouldn't you like to go sailing again? We could arrange everything. All you would have to do is to present yourself to the Director in Gdynia, he would be aware of your circumstances, and you would get a position as a senior engineer." In other words he offered me immediate promotion and an improvement in my material situation on only one condition: my speedy removal from the shipyards. If I had accepted all the offers made to me in this period I would have had enough posts to provide the personnel for a local council in a county town!



Szczecin demonstrators outside sacked Party building

Of course, this kind of thing happened to all the workers who were active in some way during the revolt. Some were offered jobs as foremen and began to be sucked into the hierarchy; others were offered better paid jobs in factories away from the shipyards; still others were simply moved into different departments. But on the whole there were not many people who accepted promotions or transfers and among those who did, many continued with their militant activities.

On the other hand the Party apparatus did not forget the humiliation that it had suffered and it began to repay the workers for it. Some members of the strike committee were moved out of the yards to other parts of the country through no choice of their own. By now there are hardly any members of the strike committee who are still working in the shipyards. Also a number of new workers were taken on who, we knew, were drawing two salaries -- one as a worker, another as an informer -- but by then our strength had been sapped to such an extent that we were in no position to resist such moves: the workers were not prepared to react. The workers were temporarily satisfied by their wage increases, and the freeze on prices. Their militancy was dampened. In May or June of 1971, when a meeting was held in any department, it would overflow with people not only from that department but from others as well, because the workers were interested in what was happening. But in 1972, when you asked a colleague, "Are you going to the meeting today?" more often than not he would reply that he was too busy. In these ways the number of activists fell and by a mixture of carrot and stick Gierek was able to re-assert his authority.

Between the end of the open confrontation in early 1971 and the 7th National Congress of the Trade Unions in November 1972 you remained in a prominent position in the shipyard. In fact you were elected as a delegate to the 7th Congress. How was it possible for you to remain in this position for so long? And was it possible to achieve anything at the Congress?

This whole experience was a fairly complicated occurrence which has not repeated itself. One of the demands that Gierek was forced to accept was the organising of legal, free elections in the trade unions, Party organisations and the socialist youth organisation by the 12th of February in Szczecin. In all 36 departments of the shipyards these elections had to be supervised by members of the old strike committee, which now transformed itself into a workers' commission. It was a very paradoxical situation: Party members were coming up to us and complaining that we, non-Party members, were supervising free elections within the Party! A shipyard Congress was held on 12 February 1971 and the workers elected myself and others as delegates to the regional trade union conference in Szczecin, to the national conference of the Metalworkers' Union and to the national Trade Union Congress which was to be brought forward. The workers who elected us most probably believed that we would carry out their wishes at these conferences. At that time people were also beginning to believe that Gierek would rule differently and that there was a possibility of transforming the trade unions. Gierek had told us at the meeting with him that "the Party should be the Party, the Government should be the Government and the trade unions should be the trade unions" implying the independence of each from the others.

The shipyard workers elected me and the other delegates -- there were 50 delegates to the regional conference -- in order that we would use our mandates to gain the implementation of our demands. There were over 4000 demands from Szczecin alone. And in general, a lot of demands were carried out. Wage rises of 30% were demanded -- wages were increased by 40%. We demanded that prices be brought down and prices were decreased.

But, of course, Gierek did an about turn, and partly by bettering the material situation of the workers -- and in the process massively indebting Poland to the West and the Soviet Union -- the Party had managed to rebuild its ranks and regain control.

The rises in living standards gave the workers a false sense of security, but in the first 2 or 3 years of Gierek's rule people thought that things in Poland were really changing for the better. People who were at all engaged politically could sense that this situation would not last, but the broad mass or people did not see clearly how Gierek was going back on many of his promises. The Party was still the Party, but the government had ceased to be the government and was ruled by the Party, while the trade unions continued not to be trade unions. If Gierek had not gone back on that promise I would still be a trade union activist in Poland today.

As to the 7th Party Congress of Trade Unions, most of the delegations were hand-picked. In no other work-place was there a workers' commission so well organised as the Szczecin one. In many towns the Party either remained virtually unscathed or was able to regroup quickly, so most of the delegates were Party members. So in these circumstances there were relatively few opposition voices outside the port cities. And at the Congress itself, the opposition -- centred in Szczecin, Gdynia and Zeran (the motor-car works in Warsaw) -- could raise its head only in the 14 various commissions dealing with specific problems. During the 3 days of the Congress there were only two plenary sessions so it was in the commissions that numerous demands were raised: the right to strike, no interference by the militia in workers demonstrations, even demands to change certain articles in the Constitution.

At one of the commissions I stated that the people who chose me to be their delegate do not hold to the view that the trade unions should be directed by the Party, or, for that matter, by any other party. I presented a detailed proposal indicating that no trade union should be subordinate to any Party organisation or to any administrative branch of the state. The unions should independently look after the interests of the workers in various spheres.

These proposals were confined to the commissions and were then locked away and forgotten, while the speakers at the plenary sessions were chosen for their known loyalty to the Party line. Gierek himself spoke to the Congress, saying that "The Party will not permit the trade unions to move away from itself". The Congress ended with a resolution full of the usual myths and fictions of the official line.

Out of 2830 delegates I was the only one who voted against the statutes of the trade unions. After returning home from the Congress I ceased to be the workers' representative.

How, then, would you sum up the role of the trade unions in Poland?

Over the years, a trade union cell may have somewhere taken up the defence of workers interests, but if so, it must have been either a very minor matter or a case where such action fitted in with the tactics of the workers' committee of the Party. In none of the big crises affecting the Polish working class have the trade unions come out independently in defence of the workers' interests.

The trade unions exist to mask the real position of the workers and to disorientate public opinion at home and abroad. They are also a transmission belt for the Party, carrying out production directives and fulfilling some administrative tasks like the handing out of kindergarten places, places in union holiday resorts, giving preference to the so-called 'activists'.

The statutes of the PUWP state that "the Party directs the political line of the trade unions" and the statutes of the trade unions in turn state that "the trade unions carry out the correct line of the PUWP in the interests of the working class and the Polish nation". So these statutes really explain the situation without any mystification.

EAST GERMANY

Marxists analyse the new crisis in the GDR

[In the last issue of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe Gunther Minnerup gave a brief political biography of Wolf Biermann. The Biermann affair evidently shattered the apparently monolithic clam of the German Democratic Republic and brought to light the existence of left-wing opposition in East Germany perhaps more strongly Marxist in its outlook than the opposition movements in other East European countries. Labour Focus has now received a document from Marxist oppositionists on the impact of the Biermann affair in the GDR. We publish it below. This text was written at the end of March for circulation in other East European countries -- an action which reflects the development of international links between the opposition movements in various East European countries today. The editorial collective of Labour Focus can vouch for the authenticity of the text. Translation is by Gunther Minnerup.]

If a man on a train pulls the emergency brake for no good reason then responds to the embarrassing questions of other travellers by claiming he was provoked by the work of the Devil, no Marxist would believe him. And if a state punishes an individual by

withdrawing his citizenship and then, shocked by the embarrassing consequences of its action, claims it was provoked by the work of the Devil -- in this case, the counter-revolution -- no Marxist should believe this either. The individual in question is Wolf Biermann, 40 years old, a son of Communists -- his father was killed in Auschwitz. Biermann moved to the GDR in 1953 as a member of the SED, studied philosophy and became a popular singer and poet. In fact, he became too popular because he became too political, failing to suspend his Marxist criticism in the face of the conditions in his own country. Even after he was expelled from the Party and banned from public performances, he remained an embarrassment to the Party leadership. Biermann and Professor Havemann, the anti-Fascist resistance fighter, communist and scientist, have been the only Marxists in the GDR over the last decade who have tried to comment critically and publically on internal and external developments such as the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Shortly after Biermann's appearance in the Prenzlau Church in September 1976 became known, he was permitted to go on a concert tour of West Germany at the invitation of the Youth of the Metalworkers' Union. His first concert took place on 13

November 1976 in front of 6,000 people in Koln. Here he expressed himself again unambiguously in support of socialism and the GDR as the greatest achievement of the German workers' movement. But he also stressed that the path to socialism leads through eliminating the bureaucratic deformations of the revolution, through the "transformation of socialist state property in the means of production into genuine people's property", and through abolishing the rule of "monopolistic bureaucratic reaction" in favour of "socialist democracy".

On 16 November Biermann was denied "further residence in the GDR". On 17 November we learnt through the Western media that 13 of the most famous authors and artists had written a protest letter to Honecker asking him to "think over" this measure, referring to Marx -- "proletarian revolutions are permanently critical of themselves". In the days that followed, this letter gained a wide resonance and 170 prominent personalities added their signatures to it. The East German author Jentzsch's open letter to Honecker, reprinted in the **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** of 24 November makes clear that the measures against Biermann were simply part of the general climate of repression against critical authors, although the expulsion of Reiner Kunze from the Writers' Union in October 1976 is the only case to become known publically. The example set by this poet produced many further declarations of protest from the population. Officialdom reacted to what it called this "counter-revolutionary assault" by expelling from the Party or taking disciplinary measures against the more prominent people, and by inflicting arrests, interrogations, dismissals from work, house searches, etc., against the less well-known protesters. The extent of these repressive measures, which were carried out all over the country and which still continue is still not possible to gauge.

We must go back a bit to explain the timing and political meaning of these events. By the 8th Party Congress in December 1971, social contradictions within the GDR had called forth a new grouping in the Party which was able to get its views accepted as official Party policy at the Congress and emerge as the new leading group. Thus Honecker took over from Ulbricht, under whose senile stubbornness, the Party apparatus had created growing social tensions similar in kind to the tensions in Poland at the time. The economic content of the policies pursued at that time is rather similar to Gierek's current industrialisation drive. The economy was becoming increasingly uncontrollable, with very large gaps in the availability of commodities. Last, but not least, the perspective suggested by the January 1971 events in Poland triggered off the changes in Party policy and leadership within the GDR.

The new orientation has since had a decisive effect on economic policy and on the provision of consumer goods, but in the field of ideology and culture the changes have been rather a question of emphasis, of stress. Nevertheless, as a whole, the turn of 1971 produced a real change in the social atmosphere.

The resulting social mobility and more independent mentality received its first political form in 1975 with the agreement on "Basket Three" at the Helsinki Conference. After this, the number of people asking for permission to emigrate to West Germany rose to at least 100,000 - according to some reports it reached 200,000. The size and structure of this movement was important enough to re-activate within the bureaucracy the special GDR trauma of people "Voting with their feet".

But this is only side of the picture. Simultaneously, especially in the spring of 1976 before the 9th Party Congress, petitions, criticisms and proposals from the population to the central state organs began to multiply. The number and quality of these rose to the point where the Party leadership, lacking any ideas to meet the democratic aspirations of the masses had to concentrate its attention on the movement. Factions were re-formed within the Party and new groupings were prepared. There were signs that

the economic impulses of the 8th Party Congress were being exhausted and contradictions were being regenerated. And such sensitive political events as the border incident that led to the death of an Italian Communist and the public self-immolation of the priest Bruzewitz could only increase the political tensions within the apparatus during 1976. For historical reasons, popular consciousness in Germany has always attached a high symbolic political value to ideological conflicts. The political bureaucracy's bad conscience placed it in strong contradiction with the political debates in the intelligentsia and beyond that with the heresies in cultural politics. The political debates had increased, exploiting the results of the 8th Party Congress; the cultural conflicts grew after the self-immolation of the Thuringian priest.



The expelled writer Reiner Kunze (Thomas Höpker, Stern Magazine)

Finally, when Biermann for the first time accepted the offer to appear publicly in a church, the rather diffuse intellectual opposition developed a tendency towards a clear left opposition with a possible institutional base. And that was the reason why Biermann was deprived of his citizenship. His West German concert tour was only a welcome pretext, preferable, for reasons of international politics, to imprisoning him for anti-state agitation. At first, for the apparatus it was merely one decision among others. But the case developed into a deep crisis involving social and political confrontations that concentrated all other democratic demands on one side and bureaucratic fears on the other.

This measure, which was intended to have a general political significance, now met with a response of general political dimensions. Biermann's expulsion provoked a sudden movement of public opinion and a political mobilisation throughout the whole country and all social layers. The politically educative value of the affair concentrates several specific contradictions within the GDR. Biermann can be seen as an exiled German poet who has now been compared with Heinrich Heine; or he can be seen as a Communist who called the GDR the better Germany and considered it his Fatherland, but was expelled while over 100,000 people wanting to emigrate are not permitted to do so.

Biermann has been active in the GDR long enough to be well-known, if not among the workers themselves, among the working class youth and certainly far beyond intellectual circles. Or at least he is suddenly becoming that well-known now. The Biermann affair itself provided ample material for questions, but it was pushed further into public consciousness, especially the left-wing and democratic dimension of it, by the letter signed by the most respected socialist authors in the GDR. Then, amid the growing interest of the population and the hecticism and the lying arguments of the bureaucratic apparatus, West German TV broadcast an unabridged transmission of the Biermann concert in Koln. The next morning the confused character of the collection of messages supporting the Party leadership in **Neues Deutschland** betrayed uncertainty within the apparatus. There

followed a growing wave of bureaucratic hysteria expressed in a flood of votes, declarations of support, etc., in the factories and at Party meetings throughout the country. Not only was the Biermann case supposed to have been a methodically planned provocation by West German imperialism, but the protesting artists were also presented as counter-revolutionary.

The wave of Party apparatus activity in the factories has now ebbed a bit but it continues unabated in the ideological and cultural institutions. This single affair and its mechanisms have in the meantime acquired a more lasting effect of general significance. The bureaucracy is censoring a broad and still growing democratic response to its earlier attempt at reform; the more this response has grown the more rigidly has the bureaucracy been led to react. At a certain point the deeper social contradictions between the bureaucracy and socialism have exploded and at this point the bureaucracy itself was forced to tear to pieces the curtain that it had only just woven around its own social position. It was not the real political foundations of the State that were trembling but the political foundations of the bureaucracy. The Party apparatus was shaken just as deeply as the democratic movement. The Biermann case is not a self-contained incident: it has revealed the existing polarisations in society and has sharpened these polarisations by clarifying the democratic movement's understanding of itself. The affair became important because it articulated the progressive and socialist significance of democratic aspirations within the GDR. It has also determined the axis of the apparatus' future policy as the latter has become more rigid in its attitude towards the still unbroken democratic aspirations of the population. The apparatus can now hardly escape from this posture. It is, however, possible that in the medium term the Party leadership will be able to blunt the articulated political edge of social pressure by combining repression and decisive measures affecting

the alliance of intellectuals and workers.

Nevertheless, regardless of coming bureaucratic manoeuvres, the broad political results of the Biermann affair must be seen as positive. The bureaucracy was in any case making an irreversible turn towards repression and its measures have come into focus through significant and politically clear events which will have an educative function even in the future. The events have enlightened the participating groups and layers as to the common character of their aims: for the first time they have experienced the scope of their political activity and their own social weight. And once again the Polish example is having its effect in the GDR; this time not only for the bureaucracy but also for the opposition, for one hears of movements to form committees in support of victims of repression. If the political initiative and solidarity produced in the Biermann affair can be institutionalised then a new factor will have to be taken into account in the political struggles of the coming period.



Oskar Bruzewitz in 1975 with his daughter Dorothea (Stern Magazine).

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Documents

Introduction

In an interview with Jan Kavan in our first issue, we gave details of the types and extent of the repression directed by the Husak regime at the Charter 77 human rights movement in Czechoslovakia. This repression has continued, as has the slander campaign in the media. The most serious incidents over the recent months have been the death of Professor Jan Patočka who collapsed after undergoing a police interrogation, and a series of further arrests. According to a Reuters' report of 30 April, six people were detained over the previous three days: Jiri Nemeč, a psychologist; Vera Jirousova, an art historian; a former priest and singer with the underground rock group, the Plastic People of the Universe, Svatopluk Karasek; two other members of the Czechoslovak artistic underground Milan Vopalka and Mr. Auld; and Vaclav Lenda. The Times of 29 April reported that three signatories of the Charter have been placed under arrest. They are Venek Silhan, who acted as a temporary replacement for Alexander Dubček at the head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party after the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968; Milan Huebl, former Rector of the Party's political school; and Petr Uhl who was imprisoned in 1971 for membership in the far leftist Revolutionary Socialist Party.

The Charter 77 movement has set itself the aim of overseeing the implementation of the Helsinki accords on human rights which have now become part of the Czechoslovak legal code. Towards this aim, the Charter has been releasing a series of documents on

various aspects of the violation of human rights in Czechoslovakia. Document No.7, which deals with the economic rights of workers and the position of women within economic life, is published below. Extracts from Document No.9, which deals with religious persecution, were published in the Observer of 2 May 1977.

We include a document to the participants of the East Berlin Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, which took place in June of last year. The appeal is signed by 11 former members of the Central Committee, and shows the continued unity in opposition to the regime of Husak on the part of the forces who supported the 1968 reform movement, despite the strenuous attempts of the regime to intimidate and bribe oppositionists to renounce their former positions.

One of the main forms of repression used against the Charter signatories has been politically motivated sackings. One of the victims of this form of persecution has been Zdenek Mlynar, a member of the Central Committee Secretariat in 1968, and one of the main architects of the Party's "Action Programme", the main political text of "Dubčekism". Since then he played a leading role in the underground Socialist Opposition. Below we print an appeal by Mlynar to the World Federation of Trade Unions asking them to take a position on the question of the sacking of supporters of Charter 77 for their political views. Although the appeal is directed to the Prague-based WFTU, it

should equally be taken up by the British trade unions and others who are not affiliated to the WFTU. Pressure should be brought by British trade unions on the World Federation of Trade Unions to take up Mlynar's appeal.

Finally there is an appeal by Petr Uhl to the Western Revolutionary Left which takes up some of the mistaken ideas current on the Left which has tended to prevent it from taking up the defence of human rights in Eastern Europe. We would welcome a response from our readers to the points made in Uhl's letter.

1. Charter Document No 7 on Social and Economic Rights

Since the inception of Charter 77 we have encountered critical observations about the state of social and economic rights. In this document we aim to summarise them.

Both pacts on which the Charter is based are imbued with the democratic ideal of the free human being. We think it just to emphasise in this regard, that the ideal of the liberation of man from fear and want had and has its most radical defender in the international workers' movement, which has formulated these rights in their most developed form. The socialist movement has placed, and continues to place as its aim to create the conditions in which workers will not have to sell their labour power. One cannot, however, on account of this aim of the complete liberation of work, set aside the simple and immediate demand that the man who enters the labour market should be able to sell his labour power under the most favourable conditions; that he should not only have the right to work in the narrow sense of the word but also free choice; that he should receive for his work a wage guaranteeing a decent standard of living for his family; that he should have the right to organise in the factories or in other work places struggles for wages and other demands; that he should have the right to form free trade unions with the possibility of free activity, etc.

All these demands are now enacted in law in the international pact about economic, social and cultural rights -- see the Digest of the Laws of the CSSR No. 120/76, which has now become a part of the Czechoslovak legal code.

We, the signatories of Charter 77, citizens of different political opinions, express agreement with the provisions of this pact. On the basis of our deliberations, we have arrived at the conclusion that the state of economic and social rights in Czechoslovakia demands an unbiased evaluation, which we want to stimulate with this document.

1. One of the most important articles in the pact speaks about the right to work at a job which is "freely chosen or accepted" (Article 6). We often meet with statements to the effect that this right has already been realised in Czechoslovakia, and that as distinct from capitalism there exists no unemployment here. It is true that the Czechoslovak workers have created the economic conditions which have abolished overt unemployment; the workers have in this respect more social security than in the other developed countries. This, however, has been achieved at a price which was not necessary for the abolition of unemployment. And it has produced a decline in economic efficiency and created widespread hidden unemployment, shown in the great number of superfluous institutions and working positions which could, by applying modern technology and organisation of work, have long ago been done away with.

This state of affairs is accompanied by the de facto duty to be employed, the restriction on the right to choose, give up or change one's place of work and legal handicaps on the citizen who does not fulfill the increasingly strict demands of the state. The state is more or less the monopoly employer; the association of workers in co-operatives is ever more restricted; the

co-operatives themselves are being brought increasingly under the control of the state organs. The possibility of a free choice of work is an inseparable component of the right to work; in fact, normal practice and the labour code go only a little way towards meeting this aspect of the right to work. In recent years there has even been a tendency for the labour laws and practice to get worse in this respect.

2. The international pact also affirms the right to a just reward for work sufficient for "a decent standard of living for a family" (Article 7). This right to a just reward for work is, however, almost illusory in Czechoslovakia, because the wage of one breadwinner is only rarely sufficient to guarantee a decent living standard for a whole family.

There is in Czechoslovakia a high level employment for women, perhaps one of the highest in the world. But everyone is conscious of the fact that this is making a virtue of necessity. The majority of women do not take work from a longing for a fuller life and independence, but under economic pressure, from sheer necessity, because the wage of the man cannot ensure a decent standard of living for the family. Thus from this point of view, the general employment of women is a further shackle on women and not an expression of their equal condition.

Women are discriminated against in the type of work they do and over wages. Figures published sporadically in the first half of the 1970s show that women earn on average a third less than men. Those areas where women make up the majority of the workforce offer as a rule below average wages. In any case, the decision as to whether a given vacancy is to go to a man or woman is usually a matter for state officials to decide. Working conditions in those sectors where women play an especially great role -- light industry, commerce, agriculture -- are in a state which is far from reassuring. In fact the intensity of work here often reaches the limits of human capacities.

The social situation of women is also made worse by the systematic neglect of the development, and especially the continual increase in the prices of, services of all kinds throughout the entire existence of the contemporary social system. The chronic problems with the supply of consumer goods of the most varied kinds for the market is also well known: the range of goods in insufficient supply has without doubt decreased, but the problem itself remains unchanged.

The official women's organisation either takes no notice or responds in only a very lukewarm way to these problems; it does not put any serious pressure on either the legislative or executive authorities to get them to improve matters. Instead it concentrates its energy on demonstrating directly or indirectly that the equality of women has already been achieved in Czechoslovakia, that the equal rights of men and women (Article 3) are already secured. The creation of another organisation which would really defend the interests of women is, however, ruled out by the legal regulation on the right of association.

3. Discrimination between men and women is not the only manifestation of wage discrimination. A tendency towards discrimination against whole groups of workers can be seen in the remuneration of the young compared to the old, of manual workers compared to non-manual, and also of certain highly qualified groups as compared to the unqualified, with regard to evaluation of sectors, etc. One massive and especially demoralising manifestation of wage discrimination is the so-called personal working evaluation, which prefers political commitment to the detriment of professional skill and real working efficiency. One does not have to prove that this practice contravenes the law on "equal opportunity for all to achieve a correspondingly higher level at work, on the sole criterion of length of service and ability" (Article 7). The discrepancy is even more evident in that the so-called criterion of political commitment is at variance with real social needs.

This practice finds an extreme expression in the sphere of work organisation through the nomenclature system which capriciously favours certain individuals - especially members of the Communist Party - and unjustly passes over others. Via this mechanism, the economic and management system is deformed by being filled with people who are part of the apparatus of political power. What is given first priority is not production but the need to protect and maintain the regime. The criteria for deciding the remuneration of administrative workers are not the most beneficial from the point of view of efficiency. The fate of people who have been forced to leave their jobs for political reasons and who are now employed in work not on the same level as their qualifications, is only the most extreme manifestation of this general practice.

4. Both the practice of the trade union movement and the legal norms concerning association in unions are at variance with the right of union organisations to "free activity" (Article 8), for they do not admit the "right to found union organisations" nor the "right to join the union organisation of one's own choice" (Article 8). In the unions, it is not the blue and white collar workers but economic and other apparatuses which take the decisions. The function which the unions played for long decades in defending the basic interests of the workers has practically disappeared. It has been forgotten for a long time now that in the first years after the 2nd World War there existed, alongside the unions and independent workers' organs, factory councils with extensive powers including management functions and with an impressive activity in the political and socio-economic fields; it is also forgotten that the post-May 1945 workers' councils found their continuation in the workers' councils of 1968.

The attitude of workers to their work at that time is revealed in a sociological investigation, carried out in 1969:

Interest in work	Until August 1968	After August 1968
much more	46.8%	0.9%
somewhat more	20.1%	2.6%
no change	21.0%	11.3%
somewhat less	4.9%	14.2%
much less	3.1%	68.1%
can't decide	4.2%	2.8%

The unions do not ensure that broad layers of the workers take part in formulating wages policy either at the local or the overall level. They allow this policy to be decided from above; when the workers resist the lowering of wages, as for example during the rationalisation of the wages system in 1973-75, the unions do not stand by their side. If the workers go on strike -- at the risk of persecution, which is in conflict with the right to strike, so that it doesn't often happen -- the unions betray them. Nor do the unions try to make the government work out the minimum necessary for existence, which could be adjusted each year, and which could form the basis for determining the minimum wage.

The union organisations have at their disposal all kinds of information about the state of security of work and about the living conditions of the workers; they have at their disposal data about the real lowering of wages by hidden and overt inflation, and they are often made aware of the mess in the management of accommodation. In none of these directions, however, do they bring pressure to bear for basic solutions. Instead of launching a struggle for participation in basic economic decision-making, they abandon the field and thus bear a common responsibility for bureaucratic decision-making.

The unions take part in moralising campaigns about the full use of working time, but the real opinions and interests of the workers in this question are not expressed. It is true, and everyone knows it, that Czechoslovakia has perhaps the shortest working time in the world; much less than the established working time is **actually** worked, often in tacit agreement with the management. But everyone also knows that if one considers overtime and Saturday and Sunday morning, the Czechoslovak workers have one of the longest working weeks, at least in Europe. This paradox is not accidental. It is the consequence of unrestrained attempts by the workers to achieve just payment by the ways which, in the given situation - in conditions of a generally low standard of living and organisation of work - appear the most obvious. For this reason, the worker husband uses his labour power and does not achieve the efficiency which could be achieved. The "saved" labour power is then used in overtime, or is sold on the black market. In this sphere in fact there is a strong stimulus from the high demand for services of various kinds. The remuneration for overtime is in fact an important part of the wages for most workers.

The trade union organisation does not take any productive standpoint towards this complex problem of the national economy, although a whole gamut of possibilities offer themselves, like the participation of all union members in judging the real length of working time, the possibility of its shortening, at least to the legal time of 42½ hours, while maintaining the present level of wages or even raising it in some sectors.

But to expect the unions, which have become appendages of the economic apparatus, to take up the right of workers for a just remuneration and for the development of a radical initiative in this direction would be wholly unrealistic. This fact, however, should not become a handy alibi for anyone who has anything to do with these matters. For each "individual, having a duty towards others and towards the society, to which he belongs, is in duty bound to strengthen and uphold the rights recognised in this pact" (preamble to the pact about economic, social and cultural rights).

The critical remarks directed at the unions could be extended to a series of other points. And it would be possible to be much more specific than we have been here. This goes for all the other questions which we have touched on. It goes also for a whole number of other problems which are part of the sphere of social life: the right to secure and congenial work, the questions of commuting to work and public transport in general; the problems of the health service; the right of choice in cultural life and the question of the regimentation of culture; the problems of the worsening of the living environment and the protection of nature, etc. These real problems can only be resolved through making them public and discussing them. Silence about them combined with exaggerated claims of successes only deepens the piling up of contradictions and makes the state of things even more disturbing. For this reason it will also be the task of Charter 77 to make critical analyses of the spheres of social, economic and cultural life and bring them forward for discussion throughout society.

In connection with many questions, we could take note of many positive developments, especially in comparison with the past.

The essential thing, however, lies not in adding up the pluses and minuses in the field of social and economic rights, but in what attitude one takes to them. We consider it to be the duty of every citizen to express disagreement with the notion that the worker has full social rights and that these rights are all assured, and especially with the idea that the realisation of the right to work and certain other basic social rights deprives all the remaining rights - above all the political and democratic rights - of their significance.

It is true that the worker no longer sells his labour power on a capitalist market of the old type. But this does not mean that all their rights are automatically respected. Only the working people themselves can guarantee their interests and rights. If their role in this is restricted, curtailed or even prevented, so that they are denied civil and political rights, this has an inevitably negative effect throughout the whole of socio-economic life. In agreement with the pact about social and economic rights we are convinced that "the ideal of the free human being, free from fear and want,

can only be achieved if the conditions are created in which each will be able to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, alongside their civil and political rights" (preamble to the pact).

With similar urgency we would like to remind people that the aim and meaning of socialism is not only the simple assurance of social rights and security, but also the all-sided development of man as a free being - the liberation of humanity in the deepest and most meaningful sense of those words. There is still much to be done to achieve this aim. This would apply even in a situation where we in Czechoslovakia enjoyed social and economic rights not only on a much higher level than today, but even to the extent which is guaranteed to us by the international pact on economic, social and cultural rights.

Prof. Jan Patočka
Prof. Jiri Hajek

Prague 8 March 1977

(Document made available by Palach Press.
Translation by Mark Jackson.)

2. 11 ex-Central Committee members appeal to European CPs

TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST AND WORKERS' PARTIES IN BERLIN

Respected Comrades,

We are turning to you, the participants of the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties which took place in Berlin in June of 1976, because we, as communists find ourselves in a situation which is in contradiction to the spirit and the explicitly formulated conclusions of the Conference, and which forces us to resist the unjust and false accusations which are being made against us by the current leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

The Berlin Conference asked all communists to conscientiously put into practice all the principles expressed in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference of 1975, and explicitly declared that the success of this effort would depend on "how conscientiously and exactly all the participant States abide by the agreed principles and put into practice all the conclusions of the Final Act which form one indivisible whole". Among these principles, without any doubt, belongs the principles that all countries should abide by internationally recognised human rights. The Berlin conference explicitly asked communists and all workers to fight for the ratification of, and strict adherence to, the international treaties on human rights worked out by the UN and by all the European states. All the participants agreed with the formulation of the final document of the Berlin conference, where it is explicitly stated that the fight for the ratification of and adherence to the international treaties on human rights "corresponds to the interests of the struggle of the working class and all working people for real social and political rights".

This position on the problem of human rights, therefore, was recognised at the Berlin conference as being in the interests of the working class even by the leadership of the CPCs. Despite this, however, this same leadership of the CPCs has now started under the slogan of a class approach to the matter, a repressive and libellous campaign against communists and other citizens of Czechoslovakia, who appeal in the "Declaration of Charter 77" to the international treaties on human rights referred to by the Berlin Conference, and which have been ratified by Czechoslovakia and promulgated as official laws (in the official collection of laws No. 120/1976) by the Czechoslovak government.

The signatories of Charter 77 have pointed out, not for the first time, that there are large groups of citizens in Czechoslovakia who have since 1968 been discriminated against because of their convictions. Most often this has occurred because they have not recognised the military intervention of five workers' states of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968 as a correct measure, but remain on the contrary, convinced that the policy of the CPCs before August 1968 was in harmony with the requirements of the further development of socialism in Czechoslovak conditions. They have particularly insisted that as well as socio-economic rights socialism must also guarantee the citizens a greater measure of human and political rights than does capitalism.

Those communists who were deprived of their membership in the CPCs in 1969 because of these convictions, have been actively engaged along with other citizens in a campaign to achieve the practical realisation of these internationally recognised human rights. That is why many of them signed the "Declaration of Charter 77". They consider that the fight against discrimination against citizens because of their convictions is justified by the requirements of the development of socialism. The steps taken by the government - police repression, sackings, persecution of relatives, public denunciations of the signatories of Charter 77 as traitors, agents of imperialism and counter-revolutionaries on the other hand - they consider to constitute a practice which seriously discredits socialism not only in Czechoslovakia, but in the whole of Europe, and which therefore damages the interests of the Parties which you represent. Such a practice cannot be considered as an internal matter of the CPCs; it is a matter for the whole communist movement.

These protests against political discrimination in Czechoslovakia are the fruits of a policy that has for years stubbornly refused to soberly and democratically discuss some of the serious political conflicts in this country. Instead of trying to resolve these problems, this policy represses and intimidates those who point them out. Thus this policy over and over again leads to cul-de-sacs. We consider that the only solution is to create the conditions for a factual and democratic discussion and analysis of hitherto covered up political problems in Czechoslovakia.

We want to express our thanks to those fraternal parties that have actively supported this view in the European communist movement. It is a stance which is in harmony with the spirit and political meaning of the conclusions of the Berlin conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties.

We ask you, respected comrades, to use all the practically effective means available to you in order to make the political leadership of the CPCs act in harmony with the political meaning of the conclusions of this conference. This would mean the release of all those imprisoned in connection with the police measures against signatories of Charter 77 amongst whom F. Sadlčický was a member of the Central Committee of the CPCs in 1968. It would mean that those who have lost their jobs because of their convictions would get them back and that all persecution and discrimination for political reasons would end. It would mean that black would not be called white and that our efforts to achieve fulfilment of the obligations of Helsinki would not be called a service to imperialism and war; that our respect for the peculiar Czechoslovak conditions for the development of socialism would not be presented as an attempt at counter-revolution.

3. Mlynar appeals to World Federation of Trade Unions

APPEAL TO THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Respected comrades,

I am asking you to take a position on the fact that in Czechoslovakia people are sacked for expressing critical opinions about the official policy of the authorities.

In recent days about ten people in Prague have been fired for signing the Charter 77 appeal which asks the government to fulfill the undertakings which it made when it ratified the International Covenants on civil and human rights. It is at the moment only a question of individual cases, but there is talk about further people losing their jobs. I am afraid that, if there is only weak international interest in this matter, there will take place, under various pretexts and for various stated reasons, a massive wave of sackings of those who have dared to express opinions differing from those of the political authorities.

I myself, through the application of Article 53 of the labour code, which applies if the worker can be shown to threaten the security of the state, was sacked at a moment's notice, the reason being given that I had failed in my duty to contribute to the welfare of socialist society:

"By associating yourself with the slander campaign called Charter 77, directed against the constitutional principles and bases of the social and state system of the republic, you have crudely violated this duty. The indignation of the public over this activity is such that your further presence at this place of work disrupts the working atmosphere of the collective." This is expressly and in writing given as a reason for sacking someone without notice.

People who are sacked for political reasons in Czechoslovakia find themselves in the following situation:

- They will not receive any other work, apart from unskilled temporary work, like unloading freight cars etc., they will not be able to enter into short term working agreements, nor receive permission to carry out any free occupation without a prior hint from the relevant political apparatus:
- They have no right to any unemployment benefit, since this does not exist at all in Czechoslovakia, there being no unemployment.
- They cannot, however, live through support given in solidarity by individuals or groups of citizens, since this would be to abet the crime of parasitism, so that those who organised this support would be exposed to various forms of persecution.

These people and their families are therefore entirely delivered

We are deeply convinced that, if no positive solution to the present conflict between the political power and the citizens over the question of human rights in Czechoslovakia is found, it will once again seriously damage the interests of socialism and communism in the whole of Europe.

Signed by members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia until 1969:

Jiri Hajek, Jiri Judl, Oldrich Kaderka, Vladimir Kadlec, Frantisek Kriegel, Zdenek Mlynar, Vaclav Slavik, Bohumil Simon, Josef Spacek, Frantisek Vodslon, Jirina Zelenkova.

Prague February 1977

(Translation (c) Palach Press 1977.)

over to the tender mercies of the arbitrary will of the power apparatuses, who brought about the loss of work in the first place. We know of the "blacklists" of private entrepreneurs against which the workers' movement has always struggled, but these only had a limited sphere of application, where the influence of private capital extended. The "blacklists" secretly drawn up by the state apply absolutely to every opening for employment in the country.

The trade unions in Czechoslovakia not only keep silent about this, sometimes even assist in it, but, moreover, sometimes deprive the persecuted of their last formal support - membership in the unions themselves. Thus, for example, Jiri Judl from the great CKD factory in Prague was just recently expelled from the union because, they said, his signature on Charter 77 constituted splitting the unity of the unions. Here I should mention that Charter 77 appeals to Article 8 of the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, and states that the situation where the unions are wholly dependent on the directives of other political apparatuses "prevents the workers and other employees from founding, without any hindrance, trade unions and other organisations for the defence of their economic and cultural interests and to freely use the right to strike".

I ask you, respected comrades, to take certain concrete steps:

1. To establish a commission or some other structure of the WFTU to look in to the practice of the Czechoslovak unions as members of the WFTU with regard to the persecution and discrimination in the sphere of work against citizens for their political opinions. The commission should talk not only to the official representatives of the Czechoslovak unions but also with those who are the victims of this persecution.
2. To publicly express your position on whether an appeal to Article 8 of the International Pact on economic, social and cultural rights can in any country be considered as splitting the unions and if it can be a reason for expelling people from a union organisation.
3. To request the cancellation of denunciations made in Czechoslovakia for political reasons. Make sure that Czechoslovak citizens who are sacked or are discriminated against in employment have the same possibilities for their defence and the same rights as citizens in the German Federal Republic have, when they are affected by the law forbidding the taking up of certain professions - the 'Berufsverbot'.

I recollect that in 1975 Alexander Dubček addressed himself to the WFTU when he was expelled from the Czechoslovak unions for his criticism of the autocratic regime in Czechoslovakia.

Because there is no knowledge of any answer yet to his letter, it is possible that it never reached the addressee in La Paz. Since I want to prevent any repetition of this situation, I am sending this letter as an open letter, and I will, among other things, put the

text at the disposal of the press agencies in Prague.

With comradely greetings,
Zdenek Mlynar.

Prague 27 February 1977.

(Document made available by Palach Press.)

4. Peter Uhl appeals to Western Revolutionary Left

Addressed to:

Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) Spain
Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) France
International Communist League (LCI) Portugal
International Communist Organisation (OCI) France
The organisations grouped in 'Proletarian Democracy' (DP) Italy
Socialist Workers Party (SWP) Great Britain
Socialist Workers Party (SWP) USA
Communist Party of Australia
Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) in Chile
Socialist Bureau (SB) Hamburg
International Marxist Group (GIM) West Germany
Communist Party of Germany (marxist-leninist) West Germany
and all the national and international organisations of the revolutionary left, and the press of these organisations.

personally to:

Alain Krivine, Pierre Broue, Ernest Mandel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacob Moneta, Ernst Fischer, Rudi Dutschke, Sibylle Plogstedt, Wolf Biermann, Livio Maitan, Leonid Plyushch, Ivan Hartel and Karel Kovanda with the request that they bring this letter to the attention of their comrades, friends and the public.

Comrades!

The revolutionary left, especially in the bourgeois democratic countries, often displays an aversion to the defence of civil rights and democratic freedoms which flows from their opposition -- often justified -- to the reformist movements whose first and sometimes only aim is to achieve at least partial improvements in the area of social relations, most frequently through a so-called dialogue with the state power.

We well know that the free development of society, based on the free development of each individual, is realisable only in a classless society, and that this is the result of a long process of the development of democracy opened up by the proletarian social revolution. But it is the common belief of all of us Marxists and revolutionary socialists that already the first revolutionary phase of communist development must bring to every member of society more rights and freedoms than can be assured by even the best bourgeois democracy - especially in the light of a critical analysis of those proletarian revolutions which have taken place up until now, and all aspects of their degeneration.

This opinion - if using other phraseology - is shared with us by all the reformists and recently their latest component, the Euro-Communists. In distinction from them however, revolutionaries do not suffer from the illusion that socialism and the liberation of man and society can be achieved through the gradual democratisation of bourgeois society, retaining capitalist relations of production, or with their gradual removal. Neither do they suffer from the illusion that a fascist or any other totalitarian power is likely to concede any extension of civil rights or democratic freedoms, or will be ready to engage in a dialogue on this theme.

But we can also understand that many of those who struggle for human rights against regimes of an autocratic kind or military, bureaucratic or other dictatorships are as aware as us that their efforts cannot lead to the results that they publicly demand. At the same time, however, they know that the **demands**

themselves for democratic freedoms and civil rights which cannot be realised under dictatorships can arouse the working class and other important layers of the working population, can heighten their fighting power, and shake the very foundations of the dictatorship. The example, near to us all, of Spain, is proof of this.

The pro-capitalist illusions and reactionary myths that may guide this struggle initially weaken to the extent that the self consciousness and self-confidence of the working class are raised. I think that the role of revolutionaries is to stand at the head of the struggle, to fight against illusions and myths, and at the same time to remember that no struggle for human rights, even if led by the Communist Party of Spain, can replace the revolutionary activity of the masses, transforming social relations from the bottom up, as history demands.

A struggle for human rights, however, is one of the roads that leads to revolution; it is one of the ways in which the subjective preconditions for the social and political revolution can be created. While it is certainly possible to doubt that such a strategy is suitable for the countries of bourgeois democracy, it is evident that it is useful and sometimes the only strategy under military and bureaucratic dictatorships and fascist regimes.

Everyone in the milieu of the revolutionary left recognises this when it is a question of evaluating a struggle for civil rights in the countries which belong to the so-called Western sphere of influence. They have reservations if they are evaluating such a movement in the countries of Eastern Europe. It seems to me that the difference, and sometimes confusion of the approach of the West European and American extreme left to this problem flows from a different, often superficial or even wrong, analysis of the social and political systems in this part of the world.

I can well understand, as an opponent of parliamentarism and other junk of bourgeois democracy, that the Charter 77 appeal - and Charter 77 is in deadly earnest and I identify myself with it - can have a repellent effect on Marxists when it sets as its one aim the effective introduction of principles contained in international agreements about civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, and that these pacts, ratified, legally enacted and published by the Czechoslovak state power - are the basis and starting point of its activity. (A side remark: The Czechoslovak workers do not have such a firmly negative attitude towards bourgeois democracy as I would like; in this they proceed from their own experience of Stalinism and the autocratic regime).

It might also put people off that the rights codified in both pacts are insufficient, aimed rather at the interests of intellectuals than workers; that both pacts have only a declarative value, as was the case with the old Universal Declaration of Human Rights; that they are expressions of efforts towards class reconciliation and of such a conception of peaceful co-existence as temporarily enables the survival of social and political formations doomed to destruction by history, involving not the peaceful co-existence of peoples but of state formations and confederations.

I would have liked to have written more about this, also about my opinions on the social and political system in Czechoslovakia, but the problem is that if I were to write something untrue, or rather something which the authorities found to be untrue, I could be

imprisoned for it for up to 3 years. And if you do not believe me, comrades, look at Article 112 of the Czechoslovak criminal code. And precisely because of this, I think that both pacts have their significance for the workers of Czechoslovakia and other countries and that it makes sense to refer to them since they have been legally enacted and published by the state authorities.

I do not see this significance in the fact that in a year or two I will be able to write without risking imprisonment - then I will still not be able to - but in the fact that collective 'legal' (I use quotation marks because you cannot visualise what such 'legality' is like) struggle for the realisation of the principles contained in both pacts arouses the workers, who can see their own interests contained in this activity, and raises their self consciousness and self confidence.

But I have already written about this, when I evaluated the struggle for civil rights and democratic freedoms under military and bureaucratic dictatorships. For reasons which I have mentioned, I am, of course, far from designating Czechoslovakia as bureaucratic dictatorship.

Charter 77 is not a political opposition nor does it wish to become one. It is too politically heterogeneous for that, and its aim - to struggle for civil rights and democratic freedom on the basis of international pacts, which are part of the Czechoslovak legal regulations - is too narrow. It is nonetheless the most significant movement in this country in recent years and has had significant resonance amongst the workers. It expresses their interests, even if not fully nor directly.

The clause in the pact on social, economic and cultural rights which says that workers should have the right to build trade union and other organisations in defence of their interests without any hindrance, and that they should have the right to strike could perhaps be the starting point of the road which leads to the emancipation of the workers, which they will achieve **themselves** by means of **their own** organisations.

When I say the starting point, I am thinking of the subjective preconditions of that road, and I do not share any illusions about a reformist 'dialogue' or even some spontaneous way leading to the achievement of these rights. And as to what that road might be if it is not the road of reformism, a revolutionary marxist, burdened as he is by the threat of 3 years - in this case in fact 10 - must not mention. The active and passive support which is shown in one way or another to Charter 77 by workers - mainly by young workers - is the promise of this road.

It is likewise not possible to accept the idea that the propagation of the ideas of Charter 77 and the publication of information about the deprivation of human rights in the countries of Eastern Europe distracts attention from the economic crisis, unemployment and other problems of the universal crisis of capitalism. The apologists of bourgeois society certainly try to divert attention from these problems - and will use anything for the purpose - but the supporters of socialism and progress have quite different motives for solidarity with the struggle for human rights in Eastern Europe.

There is only one world, and the boundaries of class and the class struggle pass across every society without paying any attention to the borders of states, and there are good reasons why it is not possible to offer the arrangement of Czechoslovak society as a model to the workers oppressed by capital. To be silent about the problems of Czechoslovak society would mean to be silent about the rich experience which the Czechoslovak workers have accumulated over the past 30 years.

Only truth is revolutionary, lies and the concealment of facts are counter-revolutionary. And just an aside: nobody in Czechoslovakia complains when the official press publishes long articles about unemployment, the crisis and the infringement of human

rights in the West. Even if the majority of foreign news is made up of such articles - which was not the case before 1 January 1977 - even if they are distorted and tendentious - if, for example, a lot is written about a particular social and political conflict, but when it works out well for the workers then only a little or nothing at all is written; even if sometimes they are downright funny when compared to Czechoslovak reality - as for instance concerning the possibility of controlling the secret service in West Germany - the Czechoslovak workers accept this information with interest and sympathy, as information about serious problems of the capitalist world.



PETR UHL

Nobody complains that this distracts attention from domestic problems, whose very essence frequently remains hidden. The time will certainly come when the Czechoslovak workers will not only be better informed, but will have the same or other problems to solve along with the workers of the European and other countries.

For these reasons, I ask all comrades to help Charter 77 and to solidarise with it in whatever way you can. It is clear that the international problem of human rights and their infringement, or the existence of countries where the fight for democratic freedoms in the framework of the system brings serious and immediate consequences, is a matter of concern to us all, revolutionary marxists, Christians, humanists, and reformists; I know that it is also the concern of Charter 77 which is at this moment fighting for its very existence, to acquaint the Czechoslovak workers with the problems of the infringement of civil rights in capitalist countries.

Help can be very concrete. Three signatories of Charter 77 have been in prison since the middle of January of this year; a spokesman for the Charter, writer Vaclav Havel, another writer Frantisek Pavlicek, and a journalist Jiri Lederer. With them in prison is the director Ota Ornest.

Even though they are accused of other political crimes of a verbal character - I have already shown you the Czechoslovak legal code - it is clear that their imprisonment is a direct, and until now the most vicious act of repression against Charter 77. The cases of two young technicians are analogous: Vladimir Lastuvka from Decin and Ales Machacek from Usti nad Labem, who are also imprisoned in connection with the Charter 77. Only international solidarity can help here.

As in other similar cases each will choose their own forms of protest and measures, according to their possibilities and habits. In Czechoslovakia these possibilities are very small, being basically confined to verbal protests, and even these are very risky. In countries where workers are organised in trade unions and political organisations, which are independent of the state power, the forms of solidarity and protests can be more effective.

Free Vaclav Havel, Frantisek Pavlicek, Jiri Lederer, Ota Ornest, Vladimir Lastuvka and Ales Machacek!

Free the Czechoslovak political prisoners!

Petr Uhl Prague 3 March 1977 (Translated by Mark Jackson.)

ROMANIA

Over 200 sign appeal as

Goma is arrested

Since the Romanian writer Paul Goma and eight others established a human rights committee in Bucharest in February (See **Labour Focus** No.1), more than 200 individuals have come forward to publicly support the new group. The flow of signatures to the committee's appeal to the governments meetings in Belgrade has continued in spite of mounting repression from the authorities.

The signatories have come from many different parts of the country, from various national minorities as well as Romanians and from a wide spectrum of occupations. A remarkably large number of signatures -- over 50% -- come from workers and technicians.

Over the last few weeks the authorities have altered their stance towards the human rights group. At first, the government reacted carefully, offering members of the initial group passports to leave the country, and arresting no one. But as support grew, the Party leadership mixed attempts to intimidate new signatories with the offer of a deal to Paul Goma himself. Uniformed and plain-clothes police were posted outside Goma's home around the clock and a number of people arriving there were beaten up or arrested (see the letter by V. Paraschiv below). At the same time Goma

was invited to meet C. Burtica, member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in charge of ideology and propaganda. During the course of two meetings, Burtica offered Goma permission to publish, the right to travel and the payment of money to Goma for previous publications of his work. He also offered Goma the right to continue to maintain his own political views. The single condition for these special privileges was that Goma should refuse to accept new signatures for his appeal.

Goma refused this deal and signatures and letters of support continued to arrive: from miners in Valea-Jiului, from workers in Ploiesti and also from well known personalities like the literary critic Ion Negoitescu, the psychiatrist Ion Vianu and the indianist E. Becescu.

The police responded by arresting Negoitescu and threatening to put him on trial for homosexuality. After two days of continuous interrogation he broke down and dissociated himself from his earlier support for the appeal.

After the earthquake of 4 March, Goma wrote a letter to the authorities donating all his royalties to the victims of the disaster, with the stipulation that the money would

be used "exclusively for building homes for the families of workers and people of lower incomes, and under no circumstances for police functionaries, apparatchiks and their like".

Goma was beaten up in his own house and his phone was cut off. Finally, on 3 April Goma was arrested and since then he has remained in police custody. Others have been sacked from their jobs. Yet others have been compulsorily sent to new work-places chosen by the authorities. Goma's family has been thrown out of their flat.

One fact to emerge clearly from these events is the use of psychiatric prisons in Romania on the same model as Soviet institutions of this sort. We print below an interview conducted by **Labour Focus** with left-wing Romanian exiles in Paris, where they discuss the new opposition in their country. We also publish for the first time the letter from V. Paraschiv recounting his struggles with the authorities.

Telegrams calling for the release of Paul Goma, and an end to the harassment of other signatories, should be sent to the Romanian Embassy, 77 Gloucester Place, London W.1. Copies should also be sent to **Labour Focus**.

Anca Mihailescu

The New Opposition in Perspective

[At Easter Anca Mihailescu of **Labour Focus** spoke to three Romanian socialist exiles in Paris - ALAIN PARUIT, VIRGIL TĂNASE and DUMITRU TSEPENEAG. They discussed the origins of the new opposition, the impact of Czechoslovakia on the only Warsaw Pact country that refused to join the invasion of 1968, the position of the working class and the prospects for the future. Translation from Romanian is by Anca Mihailescu.]

A.M.: What role do you think the Helsinki Agreement played in relation to the emergence of open opposition activity in Romania?

Tsepeneag: These agreements established for the first time a common language between the authorities and the people. The Romanian Constitution contains a lot of rights which are mentioned in the Helsinki documents -- the right to express your opinions, the right to meet, the right to

choose one's religion, to leave and return to your country. But the Romanian Constitution contains an appendix that these rights will operate "provided they do not contravene the building of socialism", and this, of course, was the justification for a regime of absolute arbitrariness. Because, who decides what contravenes and what doesn't contravene the building of socialism? The authorities, of course. So the people could not consider the Constitution a guarantee of their rights. However, the Helsinki Agreement does not contain such an appendix.

Tanase: I would go a bit further than Tsepeneag and ask myself whether what is happening now would not have taken place even without the Helsinki accords. Perhaps these agreements, instead of being as many believe the starting point, are in fact the outcome of movements which started some time ago.

Tsepeneag: Yes, but they found their

concretisation in Helsinki.

Paruit: The Helsinki Agreement was a Soviet initiative, and it was designed to maintain a general status quo in Europe. But this initial intention was transformed by the action of oppositionists into a weapon and a platform which they could use legally.

And many other phenomena in the international political situation also contributed to the emergence of an open opposition in Eastern Europe: for example, the evolution of the three big West European Communist Parties.

Tsepeneag: Yes, but I think that the development of Euro-communism has had a much smaller influence in Romania than for example in Czechoslovakia, where the Dubcekite and socialist opposition currents exist.

A.M.: How was the Czechoslovak experience of 1968 felt in Romania?

Tsepeneag: The general population was not galvanised, but they saw the events there as meaning various democratic rights and the destruction of the old model. There was a big rally in Bucharest and Ceausescu got himself out of the domestic mess he was in by using his refusal to join the invasion to make nationalistic gestures.

Tanase: There was also the general fear and hatred of the Russians on the part of the population. At the same time, the big rally in Bucharest was not as spontaneous as people thought. There were delegations brought from the factories. The surprise was that there were many more people than the regime expected.

Tsepeneag: I went spontaneously, and it was at this time that Paul Goma joined the Party.

Tanase: But you have to remember that the impact was vague because the Czechs had no new model. How would they organise the economy? How would they have organised political life? They began to clear the ground and they then were to put new seeds into it. But what were these new seeds exactly? I think to speak of a Czech model is a bit too exaggerated.

A.M.: What do you think are the perspectives of the opposition current which has appeared around Goma in Romania?

Tsepeneag: At present the open opposition current hinges very much on the will to resist of Goma and a few other individuals. The number of people around Goma is still very small -- 140 have signed so far -- but it is an important development in political consciousness when people feel not only that they are right but that it is possible to take a public stand.

Tanase: Frankly, I do not believe that this opposition current will be successful, because the winning of its demands would mean suicide for the regime.

Tsepeneag: We should take a longer-term view. In these East European countries there is no serious possibility of a return to capitalism. And here the Czechs were right: everything the Russians said about the danger of capitalist restoration was a sheer lie.

Secondly, the regimes have to continually try to improve the situation. If we remember the Stalin era, for a whole period technical and scientific progress was stopped because of a dogmatism which did not allow the development of science. Even scientific advance needed for armament production was blocked. Then under pressure from the technocrats some chan-

ges in the old structures took place. And then, in Czechoslovakia an interesting development took place in 1967-68: it was not a question either of a movement purely from below or of a gesture or pirouette from above, but an interchange so to speak between head and body. Combined with the pressure of the technocrats is a background of general discontent which begins to express itself more and more -- that was the pattern in Czechoslovakia and it can be repeated.

And one other thing has to be said: political consciousness is growing all the time in all these countries including Romania. I think it is now very advanced in Poland. There the workers themselves have a word to say, and for the first time in any of the East European countries they have succeeded there in forging an alliance between workers and intellectuals. Of course, such an alliance started spontaneously in both the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and in the Prague Spring, but it did not survive for any length of time. In Poland it continues to exist. This is the most interesting thing. In Romania we have not reached that stage yet. But amongst the people around Goma there are quite a lot of workers.

Paruit: People came from far away specially to sign and they are from different professions and from the national minorities.

Tsepeneag: The effect of the workers' movement is quite decisive. The regime continues to embrace a certain hypocrisy which forces it to depend enormously on the mood of the workers. They claim to represent the working class although they have long ago lost any contact with it. It is a question of legitimacy. Of course, the Party leadership is completely cynical, but their cynicism has not become the official ideology. There still exists the official ideological language in which they maintain the old clichés.

Tanase: If the regime is afraid of the workers, whether they strike as in Poland, or not as in Romania, it is because the workers constitute the economic basis. And what does exist in Romania is a vehement and striking refusal to work. And that is why the bureaucracy has to hang on to its demagoguery; they would be ready at any moment to give it up and go in with armed force. But they are afraid that for 100 workers that they crushed today another 10,000 will refuse to work tomorrow. A general mass opposition exists within the working class today, but it is prevented from organising itself.

Tsepeneag: This is why we could ask, after all, why can't they apply the Helsinki Agreement? Because a few people would leave the country? That is not a problem: the vast majority of the workers and peasants would not consider leaving.

Because Goma and Tanase would air some views? This would not change things. Their real fear is that the moment they legalise freedom of expression, the workers themselves will start speaking and organising themselves. And they know very well from history what organisation means. So their key problem is how to stop the discontented masses from organising themselves. A minimum of organisation within the working class would have an effect 100 times stronger than 100 protest letters.

Paruit: We must stress what you were saying about legitimacy: with their claims in general propaganda to be the representatives of the working class, the public international statement of refusal to allow the workers to organise themselves puts the Party leadership in considerable difficulties.

Tsepeneag: The dictatorship of the proletariat means the dictatorship of the majority over the minority, yet in Romania when the majority wants to have a say it is refused the right.

A.M.: Is there any evidence of the moods of the Romanian working class today?

Tanase: In Romania there are strikes. But one should express only exact data - that there was a strike there, then, etc. But organised channels for information about these things in Romania are zero. So one has to rely on rumours, and of course rumours are not born from nothing. There have been strikes recently, I have heard, in Pitesti and Petrosani -- mining areas -- and in Moldova: economic strikes. I know of workers in Resita who would only go to work when they felt like it. And when Ceausescu went to Resita he was very badly received. There was a very significant phenomenon: when Ceausescu visited the area they tried to organise big rallies with shouting and applauding in the big squares. But nobody shouted and applauded any more. And now at every big rally they bring along microphones with tapes and on the tapes they have all the shouting and applauding they need. I watched this on TV: you could hear shouting and clapping but you couldn't see the people doing a thing. Again, in Jasi so-called 'shock-groups' -- groups of people planted on the spot at meetings to do the shouting, etc. -- were exposed when they had to quickly move these groups by bus from the place of the rally to the airport, because they hadn't enough people at the airport to greet Ceausescu. So in other words people are showing their opposition by silence.

Paruit: What role can people in the West on the Left play in aiding the oppositionists in the East?

Tsepeneag: A very important role, for the governments in the East still take account of the left-wing movement in the West.

Here again we enter the realm of the conventions of the so-called Communist movement. The regime needs to maintain at least the semblance of international unity and the protests from the West, especially as they come from the Left, are bound to be felt there by the leadership much more strongly than if they came from the right.

What is lacking to some extent is the consciousness on the part of the workers in

the West that their exploitation can be increased by the exploitation of those in the East. A very simple example: we know about the ever increasing implantation of the multinational companies in Eastern Europe. What they are looking for over there is a cheap and docile labour force. Thus, Renault produces cars and parts in Romania and then exports them directly onto the international market. In this way they can avoid higher wages for the French

workers and they can also avoid possible trouble from strikes in France. So the Eastern workers, so long as they are not independently organised to fight for better conditions, enter into direct competition with their fellow workers in the capitalist world. This problem has to be taken very seriously and up to now it has not been given enough attention.

Document

Romanian worker denounces repression

Ploesti
22 March 1977

Dear Paul Goma,

I am writing to you to inform you of the reason why I was unable to visit you as previously arranged at 8.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 23 February 1977, and also why I was unable to get in touch with you before yesterday.

At 8.00 a.m. on 23 February, as I was about to enter your block of flats, I was arrested by 3 Securitate (the Romanian secret police) officers who were pretending to repair a car in front of your house, whilst keeping a close watch on the entrance. I recognised two of them, because they took part in a raid on my house on 12 November 1976. They were Colonel Nicolae Bica and Captain Ion Badea; the third was unknown to me. I was seized, forcibly thrown into a "Dacia 1300" car and driven to the offices of the Ministry of the Interior on Calea Victoria. Here I was questioned by another unknown officer, who demanded that I open my briefcase; when I refused he slapped my face, swore at me, and attempted unsuccessfully to grab my case. Faced with his renewed attacks, I shouted at the top of my voice: "Don't hit me!". He then demanded to know why I had been going to see Paul Goma, and again what I had in my briefcase and pockets. I replied that I would allow him to see everything if he showed me the authorisation for a physical search, according to Article 104 of the Penal Code. In response, he brutally hit me as if I were a common criminal, although he knew that my 'offence' was a political one.

When he realised that I would not give in, I was taken to another room and left with Capt. Ion Badea for an hour, after which Col. Nicolae Bica came and brutally attacked me, punching me on the head and the back of my neck. Finally I was taken to Ploesti in another car.

At Ploesti I was confronted by five Securitate officers who again demanded, without authorisation, to see the contents of my briefcase and pockets. They threatened that if I didn't consent to a search, then I would be forced to accept one - to which I replied that I wasn't afraid of anything. Another colonel then instructed them all to lay hold of me, but I fought back overturning chairs and the hat-stand and pushing the desk into a corner of the room. Although I struggled and shouted loudly for help, I was outnumbered and quickly overcome. Colonel Jipa twisted one arm behind my back, Lieutenant-Major Ticu Dobre did the same with the other, the unknown colonel who had initially ordered the physical beating covered my mouth so that my shouts could not be heard, and another officer immobilised my legs - this left Lieutenant Severin free to empty my pockets. The following documents were confiscated:

1. President Carter's first speech from the White House.
 2. The certificate of discharge from the Voila-Cimpina psychiatric hospital, where I had been forcibly detained from 1 December to 23 December 1976.
 3. A copy of the observation file kept on me at the hospital.
 4. A report of the search of my house carried out on 12 November 1976.
- (Eventually all these documents were returned to me on the instructions of the Ploesti Commander of the Securitate, Colonel Popa, although the account of my detention was destroyed.)

I did not know that, while I was being held at the Securitate headquarters in Ploesti, my wife was being driven straight from work to an appointment at the 'invitation' of Colonel Popa. He told her that he wanted her to help him get to know me as a husband, father, wage-earner, neighbour, human being and citizen in general. My wife accepted. The discussion lasted two hours - but was a disappointing failure from the point of view of the Securitate. They had hoped to use a member of my family to prove that I was sick, ie. 'insane', thereby justifying their political frame-up. But my wife described me just as I am in reality, not as they would have liked; after that they no longer bothered to ask her to sign any statement because it would have been of no use to them.

It was a surprise to me when Col. Popa came with my wife into the room where I had been brutalised and tortured. The five officers were immediately told to leave. He introduced himself as the head of the Securitate and said that he was taking over personal responsibility for my case. During this two-hour conversation, I complained about the brutal treatment I had been subjected to in Bucharest, which had been meted out simply because I had refused a body search without legal authorisation. I also complained about the following:

- that I had been wrongly and illegally arrested outside Paul Goma's house.
- that I had been forcibly detained in the Voila-Cimpina psychiatric hospital, where a false diagnosis was made at the instigation and under the pressure of the Securitate officer, Ticu Dobre; this had stated that I was "mentally disturbed", "irresponsible", and "anti-social", thereby depriving me of the elementary right of defence provided by Article 25 of the Constitution.
- that I had been compulsorily retired, although I was only 49 years old, in order to cut me off from society at large, so that I could no longer influence other workers with my ideas on respecting the law.

I pointed out to Popa that all this was a repressive political frame-up and act of revenge because I had sent a letter to Radio Free Europe criticising this radio station for giving too much publicity to the re-unification of families (in the West), rather

than to cases of ex-members of the Social Democratic Party of Romania. In fact this letter was the reason for my internment in the psychiatric hospital.

I further pointed out to Col. Popa that the right of freedom of information is an elementary right of all citizens of Romania; that it was ratified by the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as Decree 212 of October 1974 of the Council of State of Romania. I showed Popa a copy of the document.

- that I had been arrested in the street at 5.00 a.m. on 12 November 1976 as I was on my way to work.

- that my house had been searched on the same day, and the book **The History of Socialism in Romania** by Constantin Titel Petrescu confiscated.

- that I had first been arrested on 31 July 1969 at my workplace and forcibly interned at the Urlati psychiatric hospital.(1) This was done because I had decided to resign officially from the Romanian Communist Party due to the lack of respect for legality shown by state and party bodies.

- that all these actions were a flagrant violation of Article 31 of the Romanian Constitution; of Decree 212 dated October 1974; and of Article 19 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - a declaration which Romania pledged to respect when it joined the United Nations. They also contravened promises given to the people by Ceausescu in 1968, that workers need no longer be afraid that they would not return home from work.

I also pointed out to Colonel Popa that all these actions are concrete evidence in support of my accusation that the State Security flagrantly violates and ignores the country's laws and the Constitution as well as basic human rights. On the other hand, the Securitate have no evidence whatsoever of any violations of the law on my part. I also stated that the most regrettable thing was that I am neither the first nor the last victim of repression, (2) and that this situation could not continue any longer - that we workers, we men and women, are beginning to raise our voices and demand our rights.

Another reason which led the secret police together with the Medical-Legal Commission of Ploesti (3) and the Commission of the Voila-Cimpina hospital (4) to make a false diagnosis of my mental health was the fact that I had made various complaints to the Judicial Commission of the enterprise I.A.M.C. - Otopeni where I worked. These were against people with high-ranking, responsible positions, who had illegally punished me in various ways. The fact that I had attempted to defend myself by invoking Article 19 of the Labour Code and Article 34 of the Constitution, made these people conclude that someone who exercises his legal rights must be mad, mentally disturbed, irresponsible, anti social.

Strange logic! I said to Col. Popa. I then asked him what his own view was on this. He answered that, judging by what I had said, he did not consider me to be sick, still less mad.

In conclusion, I requested from Col. Popa that all the accusations against me, including the false diagnosis established by the two medical commissions, should be retracted in writing, and that I should be given written assurances that this would not be repeated in the future. Colonel Popa gave me no such assurances, but said that he would study my case in detail. Furthermore, he gave me to understand that I would get a good job, but on the condition that I move from Otopeni to Ploesti, which would mean that I would no longer have to commute.

He also promised to help me with my mother-in-law, who was ill but did not have the 50 lei (5) to pay for specialist treatment.

Popa then asked me if I knew Paul Goma and whether I had signed anything. I replied that I had met Goma on 20 February 1977, when I signed and expressed my full support for his letter addressed to Pavel Kohout and his comrades in Prague; that I

went to see Goma a second time on 21 February; and that I would have been there a third time today if I hadn't been prevented by the Securitate from carrying out this 'political crime'.(6)

At the end of the conversation, Popa gave me some 'advice': to break off all contact with Paul Goma. He gave me to understand that if I did as he wished, my diagnosis would be retracted, but I replied that I would act only according to my conscience. Nevertheless, tacitly, I accepted his 'advice' just as a test to see what they would do if I listened to them. Today, 22 March 1977, I found out. The regional medical authorities, with which I am registered, informed me that according to Order No.2 - 531 of 14 March 1977 (which I attach) my punishment has been commuted from internment for life in a clinic for the chronically disturbed to out-patient treatment; in other words, I remain "irresponsible", "anti-social", "mad". That is all Colonel Popa could do for me! I am not at all satisfied with this outcome because the false diagnosis and the political frame-up remain, and it is obvious that there is no intention of retracting either.

Therefore I would like to ask you what your opinion would be on my appealing to psychiatric institutions abroad like the Royal College of Psychiatry in London, or maybe one in France, or USA. What I need is an **objective** medical opinion, for in our totalitarian state that is not possible.

Esteemed Paul, please forgive me for having taken up so much of your time with this letter. I cannot tell to what extent it is properly documented, and could be useful in clarifying the defects of our totalitarian régime and in furthering our just cause of defence of human rights in Romania.

Vasile Paraschiv

FOOTNOTES.

(1) On 31 July 1969, 100 people from the Prahova District were interned in the Urlati psychiatric hospital as part of a campaign of mass arrests throughout the country.

(2) On 1 December 1976, when I was interned in the Voila-Cimpina psychiatric hospital on the orders of officer Ticu Dobre, Dr. Christigeanu told me that two types of people are brought to the hospital -- sick people and those brought by the secret police. From this I draw the conclusion that I was neither the first nor the last whom the secret police of our State have forcibly interned in this psychiatric hospital, and in other hospitals in the country, because they hold political opinions different to those of the regime.

(3) It consisted of the following psychiatrists: Dr. Constantin Petru, Dr. Valeriu Honet, and Dr. P. Baltaretu.

(4) It consisted of the following psychiatrists: Dr. Valeriu Petru (Director of the hospital), Dr. Christigeanu, Dr. Petru Moruzi, and Dr. Mircea Piticar.

(5) 50 lei equals about £2 at the tourist rate of exchange.

(6) Although I am a highly skilled worker, as soon as it was announced on the radio that I am a member of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania, I was transferred to a low-grade job at another workplace.

District Hospital Ploesti
District Clinic No.2

Order No.531 of 14 March 1977.
Addressed to Health Centre No.8
For the attention of Comrade Dr. Victoria Tocaru.

In accordance with the instructions dated March 1977 of the medical authorities of Prahova District No.830, the following person is to undergo out-patient treatment: Vasile Paraschiv, 5 Basarabilor St., Apt.12, Ploesti. (Following the decision of the Military Prosecutor and the specialist report of the Medical-Legal Commission.)

Head Doctor of the Clinic,
Dr. Tamara Negulescu.

Acknowledgement:

I declare that I refuse to carry out this order and I demand an immediate end to this dirty political frame-up. I also demand that the medical authorities responsible for this false diagnosis, and

the bodies that enforced this measure should retract their statements.

22 March 1977
V. Paraschiv

SOVIET UNION

Groups formed in 4 Republics

As the Conference to review the 1975 Helsinki Agreement in Belgrade this summer grows nearer, events in the Soviet Union are moving very rapidly as more and more oppositionists are publicly taking a stand on the human rights issue.

There now exist five known Soviet Helsinki monitoring groups - in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and most recently in Armenia. The Erevan group is the smallest, consisting of three members: Edvard Arutunian (economist, 48), Robert Nazarian (engineer, 29) and Samuel Ossian (student, 25). They have affirmed that in 1973 and 1974, 18 Armenian activists were condemned to prison on sentences ranging from 6 months to 10 years, and they are demanding their release.

The current process began in the Soviet Union when the full text of the Helsinki Accords was published in *Izvestia*, unlike the Declaration of Human Rights. This led militants in Moscow to form a legal public group, a fact that became widely known in the USSR due to foreign radio broadcasts. According to Ludmilla Alekseyeva, official representative of the Moscow group, support and information began to flow from all over the country, enabling the group to function. It subsequently launched an appeal to the public of their own country, as well as to that of other signatory countries, to form similar groups. This explains the widespread initiatives in other Soviet republics.

To date the Moscow group has produced 21 documents, 19 of which are available in the West. Each one is a study of some specific problem of human rights in the Soviet Union. Document No.6 concerns itself with the discriminatory measures taken against political prisoners after their release. Nadia Svitlychna and Ivan Kandyba, for example, are not allowed to live in the cities they come from (Kiev and Lviv respectively), but have been banished to the countryside, an act that imposes on them another form of exile. Document No.12 details the repression in Ukraine which Alekseyeva said was far worse than in Russia or the Baltic republics.

Significantly, the work of the Moscow group has brought it into close contact with workers, providing a link that up until now has been largely lacking in the Soviet dissident movement. Many requests to the group came from workers who complained

that their wages were too low to support their large families. These workers revealed that they received no support at all from their trade unions, and so asked the Helsinki group to help them emigrate to any democratic Western country. Specific cases of workers making such appeals are described in Document No.13.

A significant case of worker dissatisfaction has also been documented by the Kiev group in a letter from the Odessa lathe operator, Leonid Siryi. Addressing his letter both to signatory governments of the Helsinki Accords and to trade unions, socialist and communist parties in the West, Siryi describes the continuous poverty and hunger his family lives in. After witnessing rejections of numerous appeals for help all the way up to the Central Committee of the CPSU, he came to the conclusion that "the working person has no right of protest; our trade unions also do not have any rights, and do not try to gain them. They replied to all our letters with derision..." (For full text of the letter see *Inprecor*, 31 March 1977.)

KIEV GROUP

The Kiev monitoring group has now released three Memorandums and the Lithuanian group two. In Georgia a new underground publication, *The Georgian Herald*, has appeared of which two issues circulated in samizdat at the end of last year. In content it is similar to the unofficial Russian *Chronicle of Current Events* and *The Ukrainian Herald*, which appear to have been suppressed by the authorities after the spring of 1974. It is not yet known whether the Armenian group has produced any of its own dossiers, but it is clear that very close cooperation exists between all these groups and the one in Moscow.

At a recent press conference for foreign correspondents, General Grigorenko denied the regime's claim that in the Soviet Union there is no opposition. He stated that a very strong opposition exists and that it includes persecuted minorities such as the Germans, Tartars and Jews, and a large number of religious believers. He also emphasised that an important opposition exists to the policy of Russification in Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia and Armenia, and warned that unless the regime begins a dialogue with the

people there could be terrible consequences:

"The problem of the nationalists in the Soviet Union today presents itself as sharply as in the 1930s. Stalin settled the problem by annihilating the national intelligentsias. It is unlikely that the Brezhnev leadership will go to the extent of such a bloodshed. The only reasonable solution for the Soviet government is to learn to discuss with the opposition and the dissidents rather than pursue them, and to tame the bureaucrats and hangmen".

TRIALS

There are no signs presently of a let up in the regime's crackdown on leading members of the Helsinki groups. No charges have been brought yet against Orlov, Ginzburg, Rudenko and Tykhy, taken into custody in February. The arrests of Anatoly Shcharansky on 15 March, the Georgians Zviad Gamsakhurdiya and Mirab Kostava on 7 April, and the Ukrainians Mykola Matusevych and Myroslav Marynovych on 23 April brings the total of arrested to nine. Others are being constantly harassed and subjected to house searches. The science-fiction writer, Oles Berdnyk, of Kiev, had been arrested and detained for three days before being released. Similarly, the historian Viktor Riskhiladze of Tbilisi had been picked up and then released, but on condition that he report to the police daily.

Mykola Rudenko and Oleksa Tykhy are being held in prison in Donetsk, where it is expected their trials will take place. This move by the authorities is an attempt to discourage foreign correspondents and members of the public from trying to attend the trials and manifest their solidarity.

It is expected that those arrested will be tried on criminal rather than political charges, as a motley collection of American dollars, German marks, pornographic pictures and an old rusted rifle were planted by the KGB during house searches. These crude measures, devised by the security organs to make Helsinki monitors appear as common criminals, are a means of avoiding embarrassment and accusations of charging people for perfectly legal activities.

In an appeal on 15 April to the workers of Renault factories in France, Pyotr Grigorenko, Andrei Sakharov, and eighty other Soviet activists asked French workers to take up the defence of the seven arrested militants in the Helsinki groups.

It remains to be seen what pressure will be brought to bear by communist parties and labour movements in the West in the face of mounting attacks in a co-ordinated effort by the Soviet and East European regimes to curb the fight for democratic

rights.

Andrea Martin*

(*Andrea Martin wrote a pamphlet called **Ukraine: Unrest and Repression** available for 25p.)

Latvian Workers Jailed

Early last August, four Riga dock workers were convicted by the Supreme Tribunal of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia, on charges of "fabricating slanders denigrating the State and the Soviet social system".

The workers had been arrested in May, following the "fish day strike" on the Riga waterfront. (Last spring, because of the meat shortage in our country, "fish days" were introduced. Meat was removed from the menus of the collective enterprises serving food, canteens, and restaurants for one to six days a week, which naturally caused dissatisfaction.)

Those who received three-year sentences were:

- Frolov, Sergei Ivanovich, born in 1946, father of two children aged five and three.

Family address: Riga, 23 Linzu Street.

- Varna, Janis Kristapovich, born in 1949, father of two children aged two and four. Family address: Saulkrasty, 8 Meya Street.

- Larchenkov, Mikhail Stepanovich, born in 1939. His thirteen year old child lives at the following address: Riga, 16 Elviras Street, Apartment 2.

- Goldberg, Andres Petrovich, born in 1936 and the father of three children aged fifteen, twelve and eight, was sentenced to a year and a half in prison. His children live at the following address: Tsessis, 18 Riga Street, Apartment 3.

All the workers are now being held in ordinary prison camps in Latvia, along with common criminals.

By publishing this information, we hope to

draw attention to the fate of these four workers, not only from the governments that signed the Helsinki accords, but from public opinion in those countries as well. In particular we are appealing to the trade unions in Europe, the U.S. and Canada.

Signed by the following members of the Soviet Helsinki Group:

Ludmilla Alekseyeva
Aleksandr Ginzburg
Malva Landa
Yuri Orlov

30 October, 1976.

(Printed in the French daily **Rouge** of 9 March 1977.)

Document Appeal to Renault Workers

On 2 May, **Pravda** reprinted the following statement of the General Secretary of the Renault management, Marc Ouin: "At the present moment, Soviet orders represent approximately a quarter of our total machine-tool production". The strengthening and deepening of economic relations mean that people in one country cannot remain indifferent to events in another. We place great stress on the views of workers throughout the world and on the political positions they take on international questions. We know that the Soviet leadership attaches equal importance to expressions of working-class opinion. We would therefore like to make the following appeal to you:

Recently six members of the Group Monitoring the Helsinki Accords - A. Ginzburg, Y. Orlov, M. Rudenko, O. Tykhy, A. Shcharansky, Z. Gamsakhurdia, as well as M. Kostava, a member of the Initiative Group for Human Rights in Georgia - have been arrested. The activity of these groups consists of collecting and making public information about the way in which the human rights clauses of Helsinki are being implemented in the Soviet Union. However, those arrested find themselves accused of particularly serious state crimes and of slandering the social and political regime. They face the threat of unjust condemnation to long and harsh terms of detention.

The human rights clauses of Helsinki play a very important role in the development of detente and the strengthening of collaboration between peoples. And the fate of arrested members of these groups cannot be dissociated from these problems.

Bearing the above points in mind and appealing to your sense of justice, we ask you not to rely solely on the Soviet or Western press in reaching your opinion on the matter, but to form a representative workers' committee empowered:

1. to study the basic information available on the work of these groups, and, in particular, to familiarise itself with documents issued by them and sent to a series of countries which participated in the Helsinki Conference;

2. to study existing documentation on the arrest of members of these groups;

3. to send representatives to the Soviet Union to attend their trial or trials.

We are appealing through you to the whole of the French working class and ask you to consider the case of those arrested with all the seriousness demanded by the problem of human rights and international security.

Cordially,

[Signed by more than eighty Soviet citizens.]

ADVERTISEMENTS

VOICES OF CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALISTS - booklet of samizdat documents, available from the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists for 90p. Write to: 49a Tabley Rd., London N.7.

CRITIQUE - journal of Soviet Studies and socialist theory. Issue No.7 available. Write to 31 Clevedon Road, Glasgow G12 0PH.

CAPITAL AND CLASS - Journal of the Conference of Socialist Economists. For subscription write to: CSE, c/o Economics Dept., Birkbeck College, 7-15 Gresse St., London W1P 1PA.

DIYALOH - a left-wing, Ukrainian language journal dealing with the Ukrainian question, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, published bi-annually. Write to: P.O: Box 402, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6S 2S9.

PALACH PRESS LTD. - a press and literary agency which distributes news and documents from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Write to: Palach Press, 145 Gray's Inn Rd., London W.C.1.

META - a left-wing journal dealing with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Issue No.3 available from Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners, 67 Greenwood St., London E6 1HB.

Soviet Postal Censorship raised in UPW

Last year more than 100 letters sent by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation to various oppositionists in the USSR were seized by the Soviet authorities. All these letters were registered and under the regulations of the Universal Postal Union the country of origin -- in this case the British Post Office -- is bound to pay compensation to the sender of the letter and claim reimbursement from the offending post office later. After paying out a total of nearly £500 for Russell Foundation letters seized by the Soviet authorities, the British Post Office refused to pay any further compensation. Under Soviet law the seizure of mail is illegal except in certain legally defined cases and under authorisation from an official procurator. When the British Post Office refused to challenge the actions of the Soviet Post Office in Soviet courts, the Russell Foundation responded by

appealing on 9 March 1977 to the European Commission of Human Rights on the grounds that the British Government has not done enough to protect the right of British citizens to correspond with anyone they choose.

The case has now been taken up in a long article by J.N. Peck in the 31 March issue of *The Post*, the official journal of the Union of Post Office Workers. Under the heading "On the Need for the Free Exchange of International Mail" the article outlines the facts of the case and appeals for union pressure on the Soviet authorities:

"A refusal to act on an issue such as this means we are complicit in the denial of rights in a field which provides us all with our livelihood. In defence of elementary human rights and the professional service which we provide, our union should raise its voice. Psychiatrists outraged at the

abuse of their profession have played a big part in securing the release of dissidents and the voice of our powerful union representing a large part of the British labour movement can strike a powerful blow for the restoration of democratic rights in the USSR."

The article ends by proposing that the UPW should "advise the Soviet postal trade union of the position we have adopted and offer to establish a joint committee to investigate all charges of interference in private correspondence".

Interestingly enough many of the letters sent by the Russell Foundation to Soviet oppositionists and seized by the Soviet authorities contained articles from the *Morning Star* mentioning a film shown in Western Europe that showed conditions in Soviet labour camps.

Oliver MacDonald.

Tyneside Trade Unionists meet Socialist Oppositionists

Socialist exiles from three East European states -- Victor Fainberg, Edmund Baluka, and Jan Kavan -- appeared on a platform together in Newcastle, on Monday, March 7, as guests of the Tyneside Socialist Centre.

The meeting would have been in aid of Vladimir Borisov (on whom see the first issue of *Labour Focus*), but for his release on March 4. Instead, it was a general show of solidarity between socialists in the North East of England, and socialists in conflict with the East European bureaucracies.

About 4,000 leaflets, nearly 1,000 handbills, press and radio publicity together pulled in a mixed crowd of about 160. Those who came, generally, seem to have gone away more than satisfied with their evening. We hope to see some activity to follow the meeting, and thus to test its effect. The only serious complaint from those who had attended was that the subject had been too big to handle in one evening. Three speakers were, in fact, too many for an evening meeting. There was no time for any one of the three to cover his particular topic, or to clear up the audience's misconceptions.

The amount that even politically conscious members of the British Left understand about Eastern Europe is not to be admired. One member of the audience was "dis-

turbed" to learn from Kavan's speech that the Charter 77 group was not formed around a political programme (equivalent, I suppose, to demanding why the National Council for Civil Liberties is not a revolutionary party). The speakers had no time to make clear the differences between Soviet dissidents, the Polish workers' movement, and the Czechoslovak socialist opposition. These points were barely touched upon.

The most valuable part of the day's activity may have been the four and a half hour visit which Baluka paid to the Austin and Pickersgill shipyard, Sunderland.

He talked with three senior shop stewards of the Boilermakers' Union, comparing work conditions, attitudes, union organisation, differentials, inter-union rivalry, and problems of apathy and lapsing in union membership, etc.

Other spin-offs of the main meeting were a talk by Jan Kavan to about 20 Broad Left students at Newcastle University, four radio interviews, a TV interview, one interview and two short articles in the Establishment press, plus publicity in Left papers.

The final matter is the attitude of the Communist Party and fellow travellers -

who, generally, were notable for their absence from the meeting. They were fairly openly divided between those with reservations, and those who maintained that the Left has no business to take up an issue so dear to the capitalist media.

On Sunderland Trades Council, vague insinuations were made, so I understand, about money emanating from certain sources, but seem to have had an effect opposite to what was intended. The Trades Council delegated a Boilermakers' Union member to attend and report back.

The Communist Party was represented at the Socialist Centre bi-annual meeting 12 days later. Their secretary, Horace Green, said outright that he had not objected to the meeting, and had intended to be there. But, when it was proposed to include a reference to either "repression" or the fight for workers' democracy in Eastern Europe in the Centre's own policy document, the Communist comrades threatened to walk out. Instead, the Centre's supporters have committed themselves to the struggle for Workers' Democracies "worldwide", a compromise which seemed to please everyone.

Andy McSmith
(Tyneside Socialist Centre)

NUS backs Polish and Czech Opposition Speakers

The recent conference of the National Union of Students mandated its representatives to press for speakers from the Polish Workers Defence Committee in Warsaw and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia to address the next meeting of European Student Unions, planned to take place in Poland in November of this year. The students conference also challenged the decision to hold the meeting in Poland, arguing that the venue should be changed in protest at the repression of Polish workers following the strikes against the food price increases last year.

The far left in the student movement have been fighting the present leadership of the NUS for several years now over the need for an active campaign against repression in Eastern Europe. It was minority socialist members of the students National Executive that argued against the Czech puppet student union CSUV being represented at the International Seminar on Chile held in 1975. The decisions of this last conference are, however, the first time that the

proposals of the socialist minority have been actually adopted as policy by the students conference.

The proposals adopted were presented as part of a minority report from one of the delegates that attended the last European meeting in Cyprus. Andy Durgan, a member of NOISS, the student affiliate of the Socialist Workers Party, argued that the student unions from Eastern Europe were not democratic organisations and would not give an accurate report of the repressive situation that existed in these countries. The Broad Left, a political alliance of the Labour and Communist Party students that has maintained the leadership of the NUS for the past eight years, recognised that the repression existed but refused to take any stand on the issue. Pete Ashby, the Broad Left Deputy President of the Union, argued that to invite Charter 77 and the Polish Workers Defence Committee would only result in many of the East European student unions refusing to take part in the meeting.

Conservative students who have been a rapidly growing influence in the British student movement backed the Broad Left's line. Their concern about Eastern Europe clearly does not extend to the workers facing repression in those countries.

In the elections for the three-person delegation there were two far left candidates. Their combined total would have given them the highest number of first preference votes. As it was, the delegation elected is composed of Trevor Phillips, the newly elected National Secretary and member of the Broad Left coalition, Hugh Lanning who stood on the far left unity platform of the Socialist Students Alliance, and a leading conservative student Stuart Bayliss. Lanning has pledged himself to carry out the conference decisions and also to use his place in the delegation to build an active campaign in the student movement in solidarity with all those fighting repression in Eastern Europe.

Joe Thompson

Union leaders call for Solidarity with Charter 77

A public meeting held at the London headquarters of the National Union of Railwaymen on 23 March marked an important step forward in the organisation of activity in solidarity with Charter 77. The meeting, which was chaired by Dave Bowman of the NUR and attended by over 150 people, had been prepared by a wide range of forces in the working-class movement reacting to the campaign of harassment and vilification launched by the Czechoslovak authorities against signatories of the Charter.*

In the first speech, trade union leader Ernie Roberts made it clear that Prague must not be allowed a free hand: "No government can tell us 'mind your own business'," he said, "because that is exactly what we're doing. The defence of democratic rights is the business of the working-class movement." A similar point was made later by Lawrence Daly, General Secretary of the NUM and chairman of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, who went on to argue that it was only by assisting struggling workers in Poland or Czechoslovakia that it would be possible to convince fresh millions of workers in Britain of the superiority of socialism.

East European speakers - Edmund Baluka, Antonin Liehm and Jiri Pelikan - all

assured the meeting that statements of protest and solidarity by the Western labour movement were an invaluable and effective means of support for the chartists and other fighters for democratic rights. Robin Blackburn, of the International Marxist Group, welcomed the appearance of Charter 77 as a sign of the re-emergence of a powerful movement capable of carrying forward the struggle for socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe.

Ian Mikardo MP expressed the support of the NEC of the Labour Party, which was among the sponsors of the meeting. Unfortunately, the Communist Party, which had recently given considerable favourable publicity to the Charter, declined an invitation to send a speaker.

Marian Sling, Secretary of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, announced a number of messages from Artur London, Noam Chomsky, Leonid Plyushch, and the Communist Parties of Australia, Belgium and Great Britain. Finally, a resolution expressing solidarity with Charter 77 and condemning the actions of the Czechoslovak government was passed overwhelmingly after a brief discussion from the floor.

The meeting was an undoubted success. However, as several speakers pointed out, far deeper and more widespread forms of labour movement activity - such as branch resolutions, trade union delegations to embassies, local meetings - are now necessary to mobilise support for the Charter. At its last meeting, the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists began the work of carrying this campaign into the broader labour movement, and future numbers of **Labour Focus** will carry reports of its progress. Requests for further information and offers of support should be sent to Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, 49a Tabley Road, London N.7.

* The following is a list of sponsoring organisations: Bertrand Russell Peace foundation, British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, Clause Four, Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners, Critique, International Marxist Group, Labour Party (National Executive Committee), Listy editorial board, National Organisation of Labour Students, National Union of Railwaymen, NATSOPA, Plastic People Defence Fund, SOAS Students' Union, Socialist Workers Party.

Patrick Camiller

REVIEWS

“THE IMPETUOUS ICONOCLAST”? BY TAMARA DEUTSCHER

KHRUSHCHEV, The Years in Power – by Roy A. Medvedev and Zhores A. Medvedev

(Oxford University Press, 1977, cloth £3.95, pp 189.)

Into this small book of less than 200 pages Roy and Zhores Medvedev managed to pack an uncommon amount of information. The Khrushchev decade was rich in developments that shook the Soviet Union and had lasting repercussions well beyond its frontiers. This is, to my knowledge, the first coherent and balanced account by two authors who not only lived in the Soviet Union through the momentous period but are also singularly well informed and well equipped to understand and interpret some of the bizarre contemporary events. Zhores Medvedev, biologist and geneticist, author of a work revealing the fraud of Lysenko, is one of the foremost authorities on Soviet agricultural experiments. His twin brother Roy is Russia's most serious dissident historian whose writings, needless to say, are published in the West and in the Soviet Union circulate in clandestine *Samizdat* editions only.

Khrushchev's rule can be roughly divided into two almost equal parts, the first under the heading Success, and the second under the heading Failure. It seems that at the summit of his influence, prestige and power, Khrushchev got “dizzy with success” or, as the authors put it, became “the victim of his own exuberance” and stumbled; from then on he was clearly on his way down.

When in 1957 in his Leningrad speech he exhorted the country “to catch up and surpass the United States” in the production of food within three to four years, he was obviously betraying signs of a *manie de grandeur* and of delusions fed on crass ignorance. True, some members of the Central Committee who saw him as a dangerous adventurer, tried to unseat him. But these were mostly old and discredited Stalinists whose motives were, to say the least, very shady. By that time Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and many of his relatively progressive and anti-bureaucratic reforms gained him enough popularity to foil what subsequently became known as the “Anti-Party Plot”.

Surrounded by his own proteges, who were either genuinely infected by his wild enthusiasm or had a vested interest in supporting him, Khrushchev set out feverishly to reorganize industry and agriculture, to adopt new techniques, to put into operation grandiose plans with the help of “experts” and “scientists” whose main

qualification was the fact that they promised to achieve miracles.

The first and most spectacular debacle in Khrushchev's career was the “Riazan fiasco” which the authors relate with a wealth of illuminating statistical data. In Riazan the local Party leaders - but not the actual producers of food - pledged their agricultural region first to double its production of meat, then to quadruple it, then to increase it five-fold. Similar pledges were made for the production of other food-stuffs. Tremendous publicity was given to the Heroic Undertaking of Riazan. Pressure was put on other regions and finally the whole Seven Year Plan contained an utterly unrealistic section on the future development of Soviet agriculture. Riazan activists were showered with incentives and awards bestowed on them personally by Khrushchev. Larionov, the First Secretary of the Riazan oblast, an inordinately ambitious mini-Khrushchev, was made a Hero of Socialist Labour and presented with the Order of Lenin. By hook or by crook, by cheating the kolkhozniks, by using up all reserves, by economic pillage, plunder and charlatanism, by juggling with figures the Riazan oblast could boast of impressive “results”. But soon reality asserted itself. “The glorious feat” ended in a collapse and in the total impoverishment of its actual food producers. A special delegation from the Central Committee confirmed that Riazan agriculture was in a “state of devastation”. Larionov shot himself in his office. As the Riazan experiment had been imitated in other regions, the repercussions were nationwide and very prolonged. In 1964, Khrushchev's last year in power, the production of meat, for instance, was lower than in 1959.

The second and final blow to Khrushchev's position came with the disastrous end to his gigantic and costly attempt to turn, within a few years, the “virgin lands” of Kazakhstan into a granary of the Soviet Union. Impatient like a gambler who “lost his cool”, heedless of warnings voiced by eminent scientists like Sakharov and dismissing them from their posts, Khrushchev relied on the quackery of Lysenko and his miracle makers. The experiment ended in an ecological catastrophe.

“Prolonged droughts and hot gales have turned vast areas of Kazakhstan and of the Altai province into dust bowls ... black dust and storms ... turned day into night ...” wrote Isaac Deutscher in 1963. The Medvedevs complete the picture: “... from thousands of hectares the arable layer was so completely removed by the winds that the underlying bedrock was exposed”. “It

will take at least one to two centuries before the arable layer is restored to these areas”, they add.

Among the illustrations in the book there is a photograph of the monument on Khrushchev's grave. The sculptor Neizvestnyi enclosed Khrushchev's head in bronze between two slabs of marble, one black and one white which “symbolize the darker and brighter aspects of Khrushchev's career”. I have dwelt first on the “darker” side because the authors devote to it more space and also because in the book it appears incomparably more dramatic. Also - and this is most unfortunate - it was easier for Khrushchev's successors to obliterate the few positive features of his rule than to undo the calamitous results of his economic hare-brained schemes.

The brighter aspect characterized Khrushchevian policies during the first three or at the most five years of his rule. What constituted the climax of this period was undoubtedly the 20th Congress of the Communist Party at which Khrushchev revealed the iniquities of the Stalin era. The release of political prisoners, at first selective and then general, which had began a few months after Stalin's death, reached massive proportions by 1956. (Madame Molotov met by her husband and Beria upon her return to Moscow from the camp in 1953, provides an uncanny postscript to history).

Khrushchev was credited with the first “public” denunciation of Stalin made in a “secret” speech and with “rehabilitation” of the freed men which at least provided them and their families with some of the much needed material help. Of those arrested in 1937-38 only 4 to 5 percent were still alive and posthumous “rehabilitation” was granted only very selectively and to a handful of men. Khrushchev's initial agricultural reforms which somewhat curtailed State interference in the countryside; the more egalitarian wages policy; his housing policy; “the thaw” in the relations between the rulers and the ruled and a small measure of liberalization -- all these enhanced Khrushchev's popularity all the more so as he, the extrovert enthusiast, bubbling over with energy, the speechifying improviser -- provided such a welcome contrast with the taciturn and terrifying man of steel who had been immured in the Kremlin for long decades.

Zhores Medvedev recalls “the hopes and disenchantments of the period ... enthusiasm and bitterness, elation at his [Khrushchev's] bold ... reforms, and exasperation at his sometimes startling ignorance ...” and finds it “painful to contemplate how

much Khrushchev, after a brilliant start, could have done for the Soviet Union and the whole world, yet his contribution turned out to be extremely limited... How and why did this "brilliant start" bring so much disenchantment and bitterness?

The authors of the book seem to feel that Khrushchev was trying to do "too much too soon". Their story of his economic adventures and agricultural hocus pocus certainly confirms that in the sphere of the economy he had tried to do too much too soon: he applied Stalinist coercive measures to nature and nature rebelled against him. He wanted at any price to "Americanize" the still primitive countryside, and the price proved much too high. But had he really tried to do too much too soon in the political field! Here also his contribution could not but be "extremely limited" mainly because he was limited by his Stalinism. He did not contribute a single new idea, but continued along the lines set by Stalin. His "peaceful coexistence" and his "national roads to socialism" were all refurbished concepts which he proclaimed with the great beating of drums as if they were his own startling innovations.

"Khrushchev made many mistakes whenever he tried to base his decisions on purely ideological foundations" say the authors of the book. Has he really every tried to base his decisions on "purely ideological foundations"? In the popular mind he remains

the champion of de-Stalinization. But was there any "ideology" behind his timid and ambiguous moves? He was driven to denounce Stalin not for ideological reasons but because even among the Stalinist cadres the revulsion against the tyrant had become overwhelming. Beria, Molotov, Malenkov, Mikoyan, old Stalinists as they were, had lived in fear of their master. Now they wanted to open the concentration camps and get their Stalinist colleagues, friends (and sometimes wives) out. It is a pity that the Medvedev brothers do not remind us that while at the 20th Congress Khrushchev still raved, in true Stalinist manner, against the "enemies of the people", it was Mikoyan who protested against these old slanders and spoke in defence of Antonov-Ovseenko, one of the chief leaders of the revolution and a member of the Trotskyist opposition of the 1920s. Mikoyan was more outspoken in his denunciation of Stalin than was Khrushchev. Khrushchev "was torn between his attachment to Stalinism and his revulsion against it, and on personal grounds, between his adoration for Stalin and his burning memories of unbearable humiliations suffered at Stalin's hands. In this he was representative of a whole generation of Party leaders on whose backs Stalin had risen to power and who then had to endure the master's kicks and whims. Helpless in Stalin's lifetime, they revenged themselves on the ghost." (I. Deutscher, *Ironies of History*, "The Failure of Khrushchevism", p.122.

Khrushchev was given credit for an action which he undertook half-heartedly and reluctantly, but which it was too dangerous not to undertake. He was too strongly attached to everything Stalin represented and too deeply rooted in the Stalinist tradition to make a real and decisive break with this tradition. He brooked no opposition, he tolerated no discussion, no free debate even within the Party which he wanted to remain as "monolithic" as before. This led to the cult of his own personality which he so disarmingly relished. And -- the greatest shame! -- it was under Khrushchev that "the enforced hospitalization of 'socially dangerous' 'mentally ill' individuals was introduced ..." as the authors remind us in a footnote.

He did too little, much too little, to set the Soviet Union on a truly non-Stalinist road. His "ideological foundations" were those of Stalinism and he had no others. He was an epigone of Stalin covering up his unwillingness to destroy Stalinism with verbal denunciations. The "impetuous iconoclast" of the Medvedevs' book was out to scratch his icon slightly, but careful not to break it.

Tamara Deutscher

London, April 1977.
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Samizdat Register I

Samizdat Register I - Voices of the Socialist Opposition in the Soviet Union. Edited by Roy Medvedev

(Merlin Press, 1977, cloth £7.00, paperback £2.50, pp 316.)

For most people in the West, the outstanding voice of the Soviet opposition movement has been Alexander Solzhenitsyn. There has therefore been a great danger that the Soviet opposition as a whole would become identified with the right-wing nationalist mysticism that Solzhenitsyn has been putting forward since he came out to the West. This book thus plays a useful role in setting the record straight. It consists of essays from the journal *20th Century* which circulated in typescript inside the Soviet Union, and shows that large sections of the opposition inside the USSR reject the type of politics that Solzhenitsyn or Bukovsky have been coming out with.

It is clear from reading the essays - which according to the publishers' note comprise all the material from the first three issues of *20th Century* except where it has or will be published elsewhere or where it would duplicate material printed here - that Solzhenitsyn's pronouncements and the volume put out by the right wing of the opposition called *From Under the Rubble*

have stimulated immense debate within opposition circles inside the USSR. They have begun to force people to begin to develop a much broader political outlook to challenge Solzhenitsyn's ideas about what ought to replace the present system in the USSR. In particular his idea that the Russian people need some type of authoritarian regime has obviously caused considerable outrage. Three of the eight essays in the book deal directly with Solzhenitsyn and *From Under the Rubble*, two of them from a Christian standpoint, which at first strikes one as rather out of place in a collection announcing itself as a *Socialist* opposition. From reading these two essays, however, it becomes clear that religion in the Soviet Union can cover a multitude of practical political outlooks. Thus one of them entitled "Repentance: its Theory, History and Prescription for Today" by Sergei Elagin attacks Solzhenitsyn for his contemptuous indifference to the material needs of the Soviet people and the substitution by the right wing of vague mysticism for practical politics to change conditions inside the Soviet Union. Both the religious orientated essays also take their distance from Solzhenitsyn's extreme nationalism and enthusiasm for the ancient Orthodox Church,

Most of the other essays deal with the **Mark Jackson**

connected problems of the history of the Soviet Union and its definition in Marxist terms. One of the writers, Zimin, attempts, not I think terribly convincingly, to apply some of the ideas raised in debates about the so-called "asiatic mode of production" to the Soviet Union. Whatever one makes of the theoretical framework of the author, however, it is encouraging to read an essay so firmly based on the classical Marxist conceptions of what socialism ought to be. Medvedev himself and Yakubovich, who attended the First Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in 1917, discuss the events of the October Revolution itself with Medvedev in particular going in detail into such vexed questions as the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks and their failure to make an alliance with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries in the immediate post-October period. Medvedev, placing himself definitely within the various liberal reformist currents such as that represented by Alexander Dubcek in Czechoslovakia, which have emerged in recent years, argues that the idea that "socialism is incompatible with commodity production" is a dogma, which suggests what style of socio-economic changes he would like to see introduced in the Soviet Union.