Labour Focus on EASTERN EUROPE

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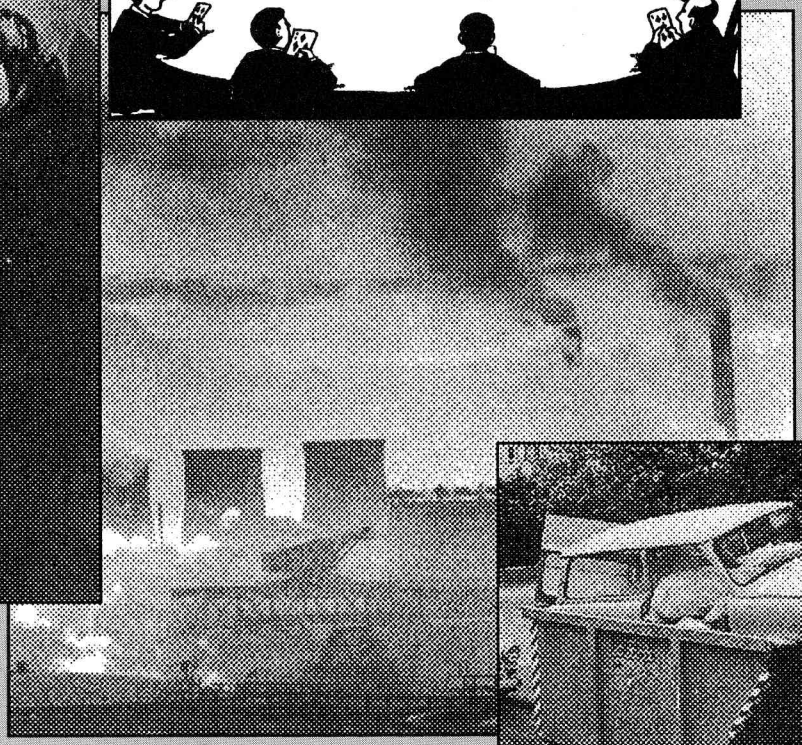

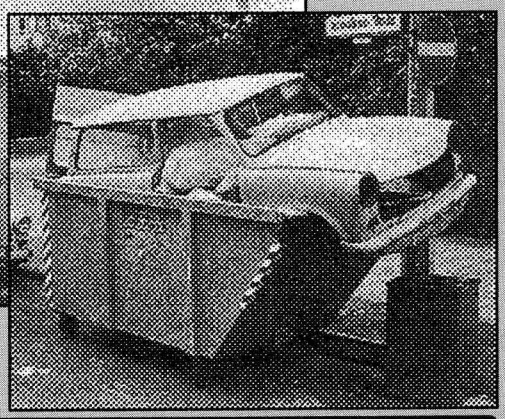

Interview with Karol Modzelewski

The Collapse of Kadarism in Hungary

Left-wing parties in the Soviet Union

Labour Focus on
EASTERN EUROPE

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Günter Minnerup

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From the Social Contract to the Grand Bargain?

WHEN THE STALINIST WORLD was still intact, it was often said that its social and political stability rested upon a kind of unwritten "social contract" between the working class and the communist regimes ruling in its name: the workers had lost their trade union and political rights in return for social security and a modest, but steadily rising standard of living.

By the late 1980s — and in some cases, such as Poland, somewhat earlier — this social contract broke down because the regimes were increasingly unable to deliver their side of the deal. The East European order never recovered from the blows it was dealt by Solidarnosc, that hybrid of a factory-based trade union and a nationwide political movement: the twin pressures of economic deterioration and fear of mass discontent forced a search for new solutions that produced Gorbachev's perestroika, the Hungarian political reforms, Jaruzelski's Round Table, and eventually the implosion of the entire structure of the "socialist camp".

In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary at least, the political power of the nomenklatura was replaced by liberal-democratic structures, but it is fast becoming clear that periodic elections with competing political parties cannot by themselves create a new social stability. Put crudely, the workers had come to expect the social security they had under the old regime: what they demanded of the new one was a higher standard of living and greater political freedom. Instead, the majority of East Europeans are today significantly worse off than they were before the great upheavals of 1989.

The signs of deep disillusionment and alienation are already clearly visible: increasingly low turn-outs at polls, the rise of maverick populists such as Tyminski, rampant nationalism and racism, soaring crime rates, and so on. Eastern Europe is finding out what has long been the established wisdom in the West: that a stable liberal democracy is premised upon material wealth. After all, only a small minority of "developed" nations in the capitalist world have ever enjoyed its blessings consistently over any length of time.

The countries of Eastern Europe are comparatively small, and their crisis does not immediately threaten the well-being of the West. The Soviet Union, however, is in a different league. The disintegration and descent into chaos of a state which is still a nuclear and military superpower, with the largest population in Europe by far, cannot be a matter of relative indifference in Bonn, Paris or Brussels.

Hence the talk of a Grand Bargain, a Marshall Plan type collective effort by the West to raise large-scale finance to smooth the transition of the Soviet Union towards a market economy. The sums involved are truly enormous, but then so are the stakes: both in terms of the dangers of unchecked political and social destabilisation, and in terms of the potential profits to be made if this huge market can be opened up for capitalist enterprise.

Already a clear strategic difference is becoming evident between Western Europe, especially Germany, and the USA in this respect. Germany wants to shore up the Gorbachev presidency and the territorial integrity of the Soviet Union because its own interests are tied up with the existence of a strong, stable partner in the East. The US, by contrast, wishes to sabotage too close a partnership between Berlin and Moscow, and would also prefer Gorbachev to be weakened further before throwing him a lifeline. But whatever the outcome of this debate, there should be no doubt about one thing: the cause of democracy is unlikely to benefit from closer involvement of the West in the affairs of the Soviet Union.

For as the experience of Eastern Europe shows, democracy and the market are far from twins. Each section of society tends to resist the practical effects of market mechanisms and defend its interest, so that it requires a quasi-Bonapartist, authoritarian regime to actually impose liberalism from above against the resistance of society. Where there is no significant native bourgeoisie, such authoritarianism can, one should add, only be rooted in the thoroughly illiberal institutions of the army, undemocratic populist nationalism, or — the remnants of the old communist nomenklatura.

In the Soviet case, a Grand Bargain designed to strengthen Gorbachev's hand can only weaken the democratic elements in perestroika and glasnost. For a restructuring of the Soviet economy to make it fit for the world market and a fully convertible rouble is unthinkable without bitter resistance and a further intensification of inter-ethnic strife, thus strengthening the hand of those whose idea of liberalisation has nothing to do with democracy and self-determination.

Günter Minnerup

GERMAN REUNIFICATION AND THE LEGACY OF GERMAN COMMUNISM

by
GÜNTER MINNERUP

THE DIVISION OF GERMANY in the late 1940s could be seen as the culmination of the latent (and occasionally acute) civil war that underpinned the last century of German history. This was also the view presented by the propagandists of the East German regime: the GDR as the representative of the left-wing, Marxist, progressive, democratic anti-fascist tradition of the "other" Germany, which had fought Bismarck's Prussian reaction, the betrayal of the 1918 revolution by the Social Democrats, and Hitler's rise to power. The foundation of two German states was, so to speak, the territorial consolidation of the struggle between what East Germany's first leader Walter Ulbricht liked to call "the Krupps and the Krauses".

This view also had a certain currency among the West German Left during the four decades of the GDR's existence. Whatever one's criticisms of the practices of the SED regime, of the role of the Soviet Union or of Stalinism in general, it was difficult not to side with the state whose leading representatives had been inmates of Nazi dungeons, underground activists or anti-fascist exiles, against the other whose elite was continuously being embarrassed by revelations of a brown-shirted past. Had not the East Germans made a decisive break with the curse of German bureaucratic militarism by expropriating the Junker class and redistributing their vast estates, and with German capitalism by nationalising its industries? Did all this not provide a solid foundation for a socialist future, long after the bureaucratic and repressive aberrations of the current SED leadership would have been forgotten?

Were these themselves not to be understood, if not partially excused, against the background of the enormous pressures brought to bear on a small and war-torn country by the might of Western imperialism? Or by the weight of Soviet domination? Would not, in time, the genuine democratic and socialist spirit of the German working class reassert itself and build a GDR "so rich and free that no-one will be tempted to leave any more" (Wolf Biermann)?

The demise of the "first German workers' and farmers' state" therefore leaves a German socialist with mixed feelings. Many of us, despite sharply disagreeing with the Ulbricht and Honecker regimes—and in some cases ourselves becoming victims of the attentions of the State Security (*Stasi*)—had campaigned hard for an end to the Western blockade against the GDR and its recognition as a sovereign state of equal status with the Federal Republic, because we saw the lifting of the siege as an indispensable precondition for democratisation. We read Robert Havemann, listened to Wolf Biermann, organised in defence of Rudolf Bahro. When, with the advent of glasnost and perestroika in Moscow, even official Soviet journals were indexed by the SED, and portraits of the CPSU General Secretary became fly-posted icons of opposition to Honecker, we redoubled our efforts to help those who worked for glasnost between the Elbe and Oder.

For a brief moment in October and November 1989, it appeared as if there was indeed a historic "window of opportunity". None of the banners and slogans at the big mass mobilisations, such as the largest-ever demonstration on German soil in East Berlin's Alexanderplatz on the 4th November, demanded the restoration of a capitalist market economy. Of the many thousands who streamed through the holes in the Berlin Wall, only a tiny minority failed to return, with many a Western reporter baffled by unprompted declarations of support for a better East Germany, a better socialism. Opinion polls revealed a large majority against quick reunification with West Germany, and the leading voices of the opposition campaigned for a reformed and democratised GDR.

We now know that this was merely the illusion of an opportunity. With hindsight, it is clear that the quick collapse of the East German state and the takeover by Bonn were inevitable under the circumstances—both the international constellation and the domestic relationship of forces. There is no point in blaming the stumbling brutality of Chancellor Kohl's intervention, the spinelessness of social democracy, the confusion and political immaturity of the opposition leaders. All these need to be remembered, but they were not decisive. Rather than soothe the pain with yet another "stab in the back legend", it is important to face the reasons why the hopes raised in Autumn 1989 were but an illusion, why the "gentle revolution" could be nothing but the first step on the road to capitalist reunification.

Gravedigger

Above all, the GDR had been a thoroughly artificial construct, imposed on the East German workers not only "from above", but also "from the outside". It was the repository of the German socialist tradition only in appearance, but in reality it was its gravedigger. The West German Communist Party was destroyed by its uncritical self-identification with the "actually existing socialism" of the GDR as early as the 1950s, but the extent of the destructive effect which forty years of this "socialism" have had on the once rich proletarian traditions of East Germany itself was only revealed when the spontaneous mass mobilisations of October and November had broken the back of the SED regime and the real voice of the East German working class began to articulate

itself. It was the workers in the big industrial conurbations of the South who quickly put paid to any dreams of a continuation of the "socialist experiment", even under new management. By early 1990, the historical myth of a socialist East German working class was stripped of all credibility: the workers wanted unity, a market economy, and the introduction of the Deutschmark as quickly and unconditionally as possible.

Much of this mood can be ascribed to justifiable bitterness. Bitterness over four lost decades of repression, manipulation and meagre economic reward; bitterness over the condition in which forty years of "Everything for the people" had left the housing estates, the public services, the infrastructure and—particularly in the South—the environment. But is was more than that: by voting CDU in the first, and only, free parliamentary elections in the history of the GDR, the majority of the East German workers also displayed an instinctive understanding for the realities of the situation. The Eastern bloc was in dissolution, the Soviet Union turning inwards with the convulsions of perestroika, the world market a cold and hostile place for a small state of 16 million inhabitants with huge debts and ageing industries. Only under the protective wing of the rich and powerful Federal Republic did it seem possible to sort out the mess without resorting to renewed austerity and self-sacrifice. Reunification on Bonn's terms was the practical, realistic solution in the absence of anything more than vague, moralising pipedreams from the left opposition.

The New Forum and the other opposition groups enjoyed enormous prestige for their courage in opposing Honecker's state when it was still dangerous to do so, but they were never perceived as an alternative government nor remotely capable of presenting themselves as such. This was not simply a question of weak organisation or inexperience in the manipulative art of power politics: the opposition was not a homogeneous force, held together by a set of common beliefs and principles, but a collection of small groups and individuals with sharply diverging views and philosophies. The leftism dominant in its ranks was a leftism without theory or programme, a moral rejection of Western civilisation uninformed by any coherent ideas as to how an alternative society should be organised economically, socially, politically and institutionally. The most perceptive—although not always also the morally most integer—activists of the old anti-Honecker opposition quickly realised this and re-oriented themselves towards the emergent East German branches of the major West German parties.

Of the latter, the CDU held all the trump cards: it was the party of the Bonn Government and hence the party with direct access to the source of the Deutschmark. It had inherited a large professional organisation as a former member of the SED-dominated National Front. It enjoyed the support of much of the Church hierarchy, and could thus benefit from the moral authority the Church derived from its role in the anti-Honecker opposition. While it had always been assumed that the SPD enjoyed a historical claim to a natural majority in the GDR, especially its working-class centres—an assumption which appeared to be validated by early opinion polls in the winter of 1989-90—the weakness of social-democratic organisation and the fact that the party was in opposition in the Federal Republic combined to neutralise the strength of such historical traditions and sympathies.

The main political remnant of the old order in what is now referred to as "the new Länder" is the PDS, the erstwhile SED. There should be no room for illusions in its essential nature as a party: it is neither a new force nor particularly radical. In ideological terms, its "break" with Stalinism has taken the form of left social democratism, eulogising a market with corrective social, ecological and technocratic controls. In terms of its membership and leading cadre, it is dominated by Gorbachevite intellectuals behind whom are ranged the survivors of the old regime with nowhere else to go. According to the statistics provided at its recent party conference, half of its remaining 300,000 members are old-age pensioners, while young people are correspondingly underrepresented. However, the party continues to retain a considerable electoral base in some urban centres where it also attracts a layer of youthful activists. The legacy of its SED past, continuing financial scandals over the disposal of the SED assets, and revelations of the Stasi affiliations of leading officials, however, have largely isolated the PDS from the political mainstream and, in particular, made it virtually impossible for its cadres to organise openly in the factories and workplaces. Its prospects of long-term political survival depend crucially on its ability to transform itself from a regional relic into an all-German left opposition: if the experience of the December 1990 election campiagn and its failure to attract more than a few hundred members in the West so far are any guide, the road ahead is more likely one of slow and painful disintegration, with the majority of its active supporters eventually joining the SPD, the Greens or perhaps some future new party.

Trade unions

The key factor in the ex-GDR today are the trade unions. In purely economic terms, it is unlikely that they will be able to make much difference to the situation of the East German working class. These are, after all, unions led by the most sophisticated class collaborators in Europe today, the bureaucracy of the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*. But the role of the unions is crucial in that they allow the demoralised workers of the "new federal states" to recover their class identity in a way that is not currently possible in the political arena, given the isolation of the PDS and the disorientation of the SPD. Less than a year after the weekly nationalist orgies of late 1989, the Monday evening demonstrations in Leipzig are back under red flags—albeit the somewhat washed-out red-and-yellow ones of the IG Metall—and hardly a week passes without some new industrial mass action somewhere in East Germany. Given the prospect of prolonged mass unemployment on a scale which far surpasses even the aftermath of the 1929 crash, and wages of around half the West German average despite Western prices for consumer goods, the euphoria of reunification is giving way

The SED emblem is removed from the Central Committee building in East Berlin

to explosive discontent over the unexpected social consequences of the *Anschluß*.

Sooner or later, this discontent will find a political expression, too. The crushing electoral victories for the Christian Democrats in both the *Volkskammer* and the *Bundestag* elections of 1990 should not deceive anyone into believing that clerical Conservatism has now become the dominant proletarian ideology east of the Elbe. As recent opinion polls giving the SPD a clear lead in all regions of the former GDR indicate, the CDU hegemony may turn out to be short-lived unless the promised economic upturn actually materialises in the near future. Chancellor Kohl is now in deep trouble and it must be doubtful that he will even be able to complete his current term of office without a break-up of the conservative-liberal coalition or a palace coup against his leadership within the CDU. After his recent defeat in the regional elections in the Rhineland-Palatinate—Kohl's home state and power base—where the SPD gained power for the first time in post-war history, the Christian Democrats are in control of only two West German states. Given the SPD's grip on the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council, made up of representatives of the Länder governments) and the requirement for much of the important new legislation arising from reunification to pass through the upper house of the German parliament, a *de facto* Grand Coalition is already in force in many areas of social, economic and foreign policy.

Before long, therefore, the new Germany could turn out to be a Germany of the Left, or at least the Centre-Left as it would probably involve a coalition between the SPD and the Liberals. German social democracy was confused and taken by surprise over the sudden collapse of the GDR, but now that reunification is an accomplished fact both the course of events and certain structural factors are giving it a new edge. Above all, the failure so far of market forces and privatisation to bring employment and prosperity to the East has given the SPD's insistence on an interventionist role for the state—represented by the *Treuhand*, which controls the former socialist enterprises—renewed plausibility. The unpopular Gulf War and the subsequent public debate over the future military role beyond NATO of the united Germany have re-ignited the peace issue. Finally, there are signs that the SPD has grasped far more firmly than the CDU that the reunification of Germany, combined with the collapse of East European communism, has given an entirely new meaning to the concept of "Europe".

The CDU, by contrast, has remained wedded to the narrow provincialism which is not only the trademark of Chancellor Kohl himself, but through which he personifies rather well the deeper historical and sociological roots of German Christian Democracy. The CDU are no Tories in the British mould, used to run an Empire, think in global power terms and firmly anchored in a political culture of privilege and deference. They are essentially the party of small-town doctors, lawyers and businessmen from the Catholic south-west of Germany, with only the shallowest of roots in the Protestant north and east and only the most superficial coating of modern, managerial cosmopolitanism. The party of Adenauer and Kohl

was well suited to run the Federal Republic for as long as its natural centre of gravity was along the Rhine, the parameters of foreign policy were determined by Atlanticism and Cold War, and German domination of Europe merely industrial, commercial and financial. For the cadres of this party, reunification is above all an opportunity to enrich themselves and spread lucrative tentacles further eastwards, while many of its base view the restoration of a Protestant-"Prussian" hegemony with considerable reservations and anguish. The intensity of the debate over whether the capital of the new Germany should be Bonn or Berlin can only be understood against this background.

This Christian Democracy is quite unable to come up with any kind of broad, inspiring vision in either domestic or foreign policy. But it is precisely such visions that are needed in Germany and Europe today, if only to fill the ideological vacuum left behind by the demise of the Cold War confrontation.

Domestically, the worship of the market provides a poor foundation for the cohesion of German society because the vast majority, especially in the new Länder of the former GDR, are beginning to realise that they are destined to be losers in the capitalist casino. Even in the West, confidence in the ability of market forces to solve burning social problems such as the restoration of some ecological equilibrium has been severely eroded over the last decade or two.

Historical crisis

But the problem goes much deeper than that, and centres around the disorientation of the largest force in German society, the working class. This has both a specifically German and a broader, European-historical dimension. In specifically German terms, the tragedy of the German working class began with its failure to avert the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Since then, it has been either unable to exercise its democratic rights to self-organisation as a result of fascist or Stalinist repression, or (the West German part of it) been enveloped in exceptional economic (the post-war "economic miracle") and ideological (Cold War, national division) environments.

Now, for the first time in sixty years, the German workers' movement has a historical opportunity to find its own identity, determine its own future and reassert itself on the stage of history. This opportunity, however, arises under extremely difficult circumstances which are not at all specific to Germany. In effect, the condition of the German working class movement is just the most extreme, most concentrated manifestation of the state of the European workers' movement as a whole. To grasp its full meaning, it is necessary to think in a broader historical sweep than just the last few years or even the history of post-war Europe.

It has become fashionable to speak of the "crisis of socialism", even its terminal crisis or death. But while reports of the latter may be greatly exaggerated, the former is in many ways an understatement. The present condition of socialism is not just a temporary crisis, it marks the end of an entire historical epoch. With the demise of Stalinism, the last wave of the first great tide of the workers' movement has finally crashed on the rocky shores of history. The only thread that links the labour movement of today with the great revolutionary challenge to the power of capital between the 1890s and the Second World War is the organisational continuity of the large reformist parties and the trade unions. No working class activist of today's generation still remembers the Marxist culture of the "first wave" epoch, and if they do know about it they blame it for the disasters of Stalinism[1]. There is also a crucial sociological dimension to this inasmuch as the traditional strongholds of the socialist workers' movement in the classical manufacturing industries have been decimated by technological change, and the majority of socialist parties and trade unions are today made up of social layers with no such historical attachments.

But for this reason, there are few today in the labour movement who see the collapse of Stalinism as anything but a historical step forward in the causes of democracy and social equality. Socialism may be out of fashion right now, but it is difficult to imagine the market satisfying the enormous hopes and aspirations that mobilised hundreds of thousands for collective action to overthrow the Honeckers and Ceausescus. In both East and West, Stalinism acted as a brake on the progress of socialism and now that it has been removed, the ideological supremacy of old-fashioned liberalism may be as short-lived as the political triumph of Chancellor Kohl.

The collapse of the GDR coincided almost exactly with the 70th anniversary of the founding of the German Communist Party by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Both Liebknecht and Luxemburg, and the bulk of the KPD's activists, had deep roots in the pre-war social-democratic mass movement, from which they split only under the pressures of war and revolution. Even then, they were acutely aware that the majority of the German workers still had to be won over to communism, and sharply denounced any *putschist* tendencies in their own movement. Today, the existence of the PDS notwithstanding, the great schism in the mass labour movement between its social-democratic and its communist wing has been overcome, but in the opposite direction of the one anticipated by the founders of the KPD.

Will there ever be a German communism again? As the memory of Stalinism fades and a new generation enters the class struggle arena, the legacy of Liebknecht and Luxemburg may well be rediscovered. But it will have to be a new beginning rather than the mere rebuilding of a now exhausted and discredited tradition.

Footnote:

1. How difficult it is today to resist the tendency to blame Marxism itself for the crimes committed in its name is demonstrated by Bertolt Fessen's essay in this issue. Is it really credible to suggest that Ulbricht and Honecker were in any sense guided by the writings of Marx and Engels, even Lenin, rather than merely using them as ideological cover for the self-interests of a privileged bureaucracy?

The People and the Power in East Germany 1989

The text below is by Bertolt Fessen, who experienced the terminal crisis of the SED regime as a member of the party and an assistant professor in the "Scientific Communism" section of the Philosophy department of east Berlin's Humboldt University. It is a slightly edited version of a lecture he gave recently during a visit to a number of British universities, and is published here because it is in many ways representative of the views to be found today among critical ex-party intellectuals now seeking to come to terms with their experience under the old regime.

by BERTOLT FESSEN

IN ALL PHASES OF THE UPHEAVAL in East Germany, the outcome of events differed considerably from the expectations of the agents. On the 40th anniversary of the East German republic, the gerontocrat Honecker ordered his grumbling people to pay him and his state homage as usual. Less than two weeks later he was toppled from power. The hasty opening of the Wall surprised not only all political observers in East and West, but also Günter Schabowski who had to announce it to the public at that historic press conference of 9 November 1989. Furthermore, the opening of the Wall initiated an increasing separation between the people and the activists of the civil rights movements. As a result, the civil rights movements started to decline before they would have been able to try to seize power. Finally, the hopes of many people that they would swiftly catch up with the West German standard of living by merely joining West Germany's economic, legal and political system have been heavily disappointed.

In my paper, I would like to focus on an analysis of the theoretical assumptions underlying both the political structure of East Germany, and the actions of those who used this political system and those who actively opposed it. It is one of the peculiarities of the East German revolution that both the regime and the opposition referred to the same Marxian tradition of political thought.

My paper is divided into four parts. First, I will summarise preconditions and characteristics of the East German upheaval. Second, I will explore the theoretical roots of the political system and of its legitimacy crisis. Third, I will sketch the political situation in which the government was acting. Finally, the rise and fall of the opposition movement will be analysed.

1. Preconditions and Characteristics of the Upheaval

There is no doubt that without certain international preconditions the radical change in East Germany could not have taken place as it did. The most influential among these were the Soviet policy of perestroika and the existence of West Germany.

The new Soviet foreign policy revived the process of détente between the superpowers and initiated the abatement of the Cold War. By suggesting an unwillingness to launch further armed interventions beyond its borders, the Soviet Union deprived die-hard leaders in other socialist countries of an ideologically useful power instrument and encouraged the opposition. In addition, the Soviet domestic policy exerted a remarkable influence on government and opposition in East Germany. I will deal with this aspect in more detail below.

West Germany's role in the East German upheaval can hardly be overestimated. From the very start of its existence, East Germany had been seen by its leaders as an alternative to the West German state—an alternative that was expected to become increasingly attractive. The East German people, too, considered the two Germanies to be alternatives. Yet there was the crucial point that many of them did not favour the socialist variant. The constantly rising number of applications for permanent exit visa (*Ausreiseanträge*) was eloquent enough.

Both the beginning and the end of the East German revolution were marked by a mass exodus. On 11 September 1989, Hungary opened its borders, which allowed the 6000 East Germans who had already been waiting there to get to West Germany via Austria. These were also the days of the sudden upsurge of the opposition movement. Two months later, however, this movement already began to lose its influence. The breakdown of the Wall had opened a new perspective. Now it seemed to many people to be easier to get out of the political and economic malaise by leaving the country than by toppling its leadership and establishing a democratic East German state. The development that followed must be seen in this light. East Germany had always had the problem that it was being abandoned by too many of its citizens. In the end, it was left behind by its entire people which abandoned the state and joined West Germany.

There has been much debate on whether or not the upheaval in East Germany was indeed a

Erich and Margot Honecker in the grounds of a Soviet military hospital, shortly before their "transfer" to Moscow.

revolution. Those who raised this question were disappointed at the East German people who seemed to have gone downhill from the political idealism of October to the selfish pursuit of private happiness after November 1989. I found the most convincing answer to this question in an article by Robert Darnton. He admits that the social change in East Germany does not fit into the conceptual frameworks to be found in textbooks on revolutions. Nonetheless, he goes on, there was one central issue that the East German upheaval had in common with other revolutions: the old regime had lost its legitimacy and thereby the control of the loyalty of its citizens[1]. I think Darnton is perfectly right in so strongly emphasising the issue of legitimacy. So let me now go briefly into the theoretical roots of the legitimacy crisis of the East German leadership.

2. Theoretical roots of the political system and its crisis

In my view, two crucial points can be found in Marx's political thoughts which relate to the problem of legitimacy. In the first place, Marx never convincingly elaborated the relationship between the hoped-for proletarian revolution and the future communist society. There exists a striking contradiction in his thinking between the centralist, dictatorial character of the revolution on the one hand, and the grassroots-oriented democracy of the mature communist society on the other. The revolutionary dictatorship, Marx believes, is needed to get rid of the exploiters and their assistants. Once this aim has been achieved the revolutionary state is supposed to wither away. Marx tremendously underestimates the conflict potential within society, which goes far beyond the question of who controls production. As a result, he does not acknowledge the importance of sophisticated political and legal structures for a modern society. Incidentally, this major shortcoming is not limited to Marx's political thought but can also be found in all exclusively grassroots-oriented theories of democracy.

The other Marxian political concept to be discussed here has had a more obvious impact on the development of the socialist countries. Marx transfers the exaggerated claim to truth which he makes for his theory to a political subject, that is, the communist party. The communists, he writes, differ from the proletarians in that they know about the future course of history. This idea forms the core of Marx's rather vague programme of an educational dictatorship, a concept that goes back to political views of the Jacobins and even Plato's philosopher-kings. Admittedly, Marx does emphasise that the educators, too, must be educated.

Marx, however, never had the opportunity to put his programme of educational dictatorship into practice after a victorious socialist revolution. The first Marxist to have such an opportunity was Lenin. His political thinking became the most important immediate theoretical basis for setting up the political structure in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Lenin further elaborates the concept of an educational dictatorship which forms the core of his entire political thinking and acting.

In his theory of the revolution and the so-called vanguard party, Lenin places much more emphasis on centralism and dictatorship than Marx did. Nonetheless, he clings to the Marxian ideal of a communist society based on grassroots democracy. He attempts to bridge this glaring contradiction with the help of his programme of an educational dictatorship.

According to Lenin, the military, bureaucratic structure of the party and, after the take-over, of the whole state enables the professional revolutionaries to lead and educate the masses of workers and peasants by means of so-called "transmission belts", such as trade unions and other mass organisations. Thus, in the course of the socialist transformation, the initiative of the professional revolutionaries is to gradually stir up the entire country. The next generation will assimilate the mass initiative, which was first stimulated by military and bureaucratic means, and this new way of life will become as normal

Krenz (left) and Schabowski (right) - late converts to glasnost could not save the GDR

and natural to the people as the very old rules of social life have always been. This evolution will be accompanied by a parallel reduction and eventual abolition of military compulsion.

Admittedly, Lenin does not perceive this educational process as a steady progression, but as a highly contradictory development. The people, he stresses, must learn from their own experience and, in particular, from their bad experience of non-Bolshevik policies, that it is in their own interest to support the Bolshevik party. It is only by building on the people's own experience that propaganda and military leadership can result in a genuine communist mobilisation of the people, says Lenin.

It is hardly surprising that Lenin's programme of an educational dictatorship did not work in practice. The idea of people proceeding from initiative to initiative was extrapolated from the vigorous behaviour of a few professional revolutionaries and could never meet the needs of the vast majority. Moreover, the strict centralism favoured by Lenin could only stifle individual initiative rather than stimulate it.

The concept of the educational dictatorship had disastrous consequences—not only for the poor guinea-pigs whom it was tested on, but also for their leadership. If a revolutionary government cannot win over a certain part of the population, then it has to step down or else to continue ruling without legitimacy, which may well work for a while. Yet in the long run, a dictatorial regime will either break down because of its self-inflicted inefficiency, or be toppled by a national uprising. It is precisely this which has been, from the very beginning, the dilemma of the socialist states and the nightmare of their governments.

Let me now outline the general political conditions under which the East German leadership made its policy.

3. The vicious circle of dictatorship

In a dictatorship, the leaders are trapped in a vicious circle. In order to win the people's loyalty and to stimulate their activity, the government has to ease the various restrictions which paralyse public life. Yet in doing so, the leadership is jeopardising its position of power, because the people are likely to use their new scope for action against the interests of a government which lacks legitimacy. Therefore the power sooner or later resorts to the old or to new restrictions and ends up with a loss rather than a gain in legitimacy.

The vicious circle of dictatorship affects the efficiency of the entire system. The permanent centralist interference with the various social systems of action hampers these systems from working smoothly. This applies to the economy and communications as well as to the arts and sciences.

This vicious circle of dictatorship is a pattern which can easily be recognised in the history of the socialist countries. This pattern prevents the socialist revolution from being finally victorious and, because of this, perpetuates the clash of different temporal dimensions brought about by the revolution[2]. The aim of the revolution was to open up the road to a post-capitalist future. Yet the high claims on the individual's morality along with the dictatorial measures meant to enforce them are relics from the pre-capitalist past. The supposed Great Leap Forward—to use Mao's expression—has, in many respects, turned out to be a refeudalisation, a relapse into the pre-capitalist world.

Take, for instance, the information policy, which was carried to extremes in Romania. Ceausescu even had the weather forecast faked in order to justify that the district heating in local housing areas was turned down.

The information or rather disinformation policy in socialist countries serves a double purpose. It is, on the one hand, designed to prevent the genesis of a political public. For this you need censorship and a restriction of the flow of information. The other purpose is to stage a conformist pseudo-public. This pseudo-public rather than the real people is the actual addressee of newspaper articles and radio and TV programmes. This is why they are so boring.

Of course, the people are supposed to constitute a public, because the hoped-for socialist society cannot do without a highly committed public and a maximum of individual initiative. Yet the public to be constituted is expected to be a socialist one. To this end, the people are subject to a pedagogical programme which follows a simple rule: the child will be treated like an adult until it has learnt to behave like an adult. In our case, the goal of the pedagogical programme is the pseudo-public. The problem with this rule, if applied to a people, is that the continuing repetition of a tedious ideological performance becomes counter-productive. Schabowski, a Politburo member, confirmed this in retrospect when he said at the hearing of the investigation committee of the *Volkskammer* that the attempt to fool the people was so blatant that the individual felt offended. Yet the unsuccessful educators could at least take comfort from the fact that they managed to achieve the other goal of their information policy: to impede the development of a critical political public.

It is interesting to note that the leaders themselves became entangled in the web of their

disinformation policy. In the early 1980s, Helmut Schmidt, then Chancellor of West Germany, was on an official visit to East Germany. Honecker took Schmidt to Güstrow, a small town in the north of East Germany. The entire route from Berlin to Güstrow and all the places they visited had been blocked off for ordinary people, so that not a single discontented East German could catch Schmidt's sight. During the walk through the town some of the people lining the streets started to cheer Honecker. Honecker was so moved by this expression of support that he went straight over to these people without realising that they were merely members of the secret police and the local party, whose task was to demonstrate to Schmidt that the East Germans were happy with their government.

This example is odd rather than important. The disastrous impact of the manipulative information policy is much more evident as regards the economy and science which cannot work if crucial data are either faked or not available.

The Soviet domestic policy of perestroika caused enormous difficulties for the East German leadership which opposed it. Admittedly, the obstinate hardliners opposing perestroika were in a sense more aware of the critical stage reached by the socialist countries than the advocates of perestroika. They felt that if they gave in to the people's call for political reforms, this would shake the very foundations of socialism rather than provide it with a more attractive face. Events were to prove them right.

The historical merits of the policy of perestroika differ considerably from its original aims. The central motive for the policy of perestroika and glasnost was the intention to revive the Soviet Union's ossified society in order to prevent its final breakdown which was already looming on the horizon. The protagonists of perestroika had realised that this revival of socialism at home would not be feasible without political and economic support from abroad. Because of this, Soviet foreign policy became much more flexible and restrictions paralysing public life were markedly eased.

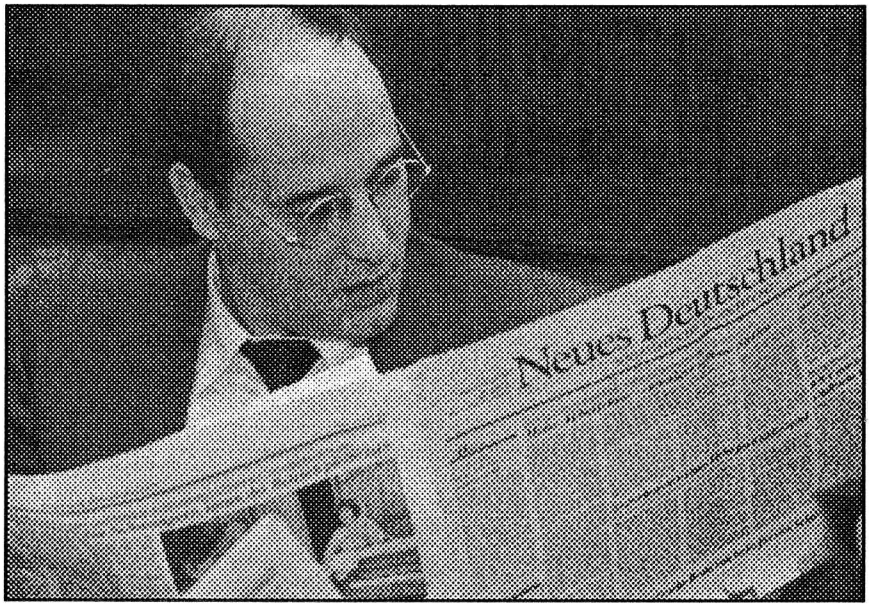
The main historical merit of the advocates of perestroika was that they continued clinging to their more flexible policy even when it turned out that this policy resulted in the breakdown of socialism in Eastern Europe. It was not the illusory intention of refurbishing the doomed Leninist model of bureaucratic socialism which is the merit of the policy of perestroika, but the fact that this policy departed from the vicious circle of dictatorship by accepting the collapse of bureaucratic socialism. This certainly holds true for the socialist countries outside the Soviet Union. Whether the protagonists of perestroika will also be able to come to terms with the inevitable disintegration of the Soviet Union and whether, if they finally do so, they will manage to prevail and stay in power, still remains to be seen.

The Soviet policy of perestroika and glasnost brought about the final erosion of the official ideology and legitimacy in East Germany. The small size of the country, compared to that of the Soviet Union, rendered the claim of its leadership to infallibility ridiculous. The ideological appeal to learn from the Soviet Union now turned into a proverbial slogan of the opposition.

The point was that the reluctance of East Germany's Politburo to embark on a reform policy became increasingly unacceptable even for those who adhered to the ideals of socialism, but approved of perestroika and glasnost.

The reactions of the East German gerontocracy to the people's demands were in general belated and inept. Although the erosion of the official ideology even caught hold of those who continued imposing it on public life, the East German leaders were, for various reasons, unable to replace the programme of educational dictatorship by any other political option even when they began to recognise the failure of this programme. Its failure only meant that the determination and ruthlessness with which they pursued it lessened.

In the final crisis, too, the leadership's tardiness in taking action stymied their measures. For years the people had been waiting for the government to embark on a reform policy. Only when the people's demands already went far beyond modest hopes for perestroika did the Politburo topple Honecker and desperately stage



PDS leader Gregor Gysi:* Neues Deutschland *is not the same anymore

a comedy of perestroika which, instead of placating the people, outraged them even more. Even the first realistic and consistent step taken in East Germany's domestic policy, the opening of the Wall, was the result of a completely illusory strategy. Egon Krenz, the unpopular successor to Honecker, actually hoped to win the people over by offering them as a present what they had been deprived of for so long—the freedom of movement.

4. The short heyday of the opposition

The sudden and steep rise of the East German opposition movement was indeed surprising. The legitimacy of the government had long since been crumbling. There had always been dissidents in East Germany, however few they may have been, and since the late 70s and early 80s opposition groups had been emerging which were focusing on the issues of peace, the environment and human rights[3].Since Gorbachev's advent to power perestroika had delivered the last blows to the legitimacy of East Germany's government. So why did the opposition movement not rise in proportion to the gradual decline of the government's legitimacy? Why did the influence of the opposition grow so suddenly?

One part of the answer is that the rise of the east German opposition came so late. For a long time, an opposition did not exist. The people were cautious after the suppression of the 1953 uprising. In addition, they had been thoroughly taught to obey authority under the Nazi regime. For many years, the secret police managed to hinder the development of an opposition. Utterances of discontent were silenced, and persistent dissidents had to go to prison or into exile, or sometimes both. In this way, the regime got rid of many potential opposition activists.

Yet in the long run the strategy of crushing any opposition could not work. It becomes impossible to silence all expression of dissatisfaction once too many people are ready to stand up for their convictions. One cannot ban too many from their occupations, let alone send them to jail or into exile, simply because somebody is needed for all the work to be done. In addition, Honecker was anxious to create, within the country and abroad, an image of himself as a judicious and generous ruler. This, too, restricted the scope of the secret police. So in the late 70s, after the east German leadership had signed the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and blundered into the expatriation of the singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann, it could no longer impede the emergence of opposition groups. Yet for some more years the secret police managed to confine the scope of such groups to local activities.

The outburst of long since pent-up dissatisfaction in the end accelerated the rise of the hitherto feeble opposition movement. Moreover, the lateness of its rise to prominence enabled the East German opposition to lean on the experience in other socialist countries, instead of having to go through it itself.

Another reason for the surprising role of the East German opposition consists in a structural weakness of political centralism[4]: the top can and must be blamed for anything that does not work. If the people are expected to regard what they enjoy as a gift of the party, then it is understandable that they hold the party responsible for anything they do not like. If they have to wait for more than a decade before they are allowed to buy a car, if there are only a few countries they are permitted to travel to, or if they waste their time and energy standing in endless queues, the people are not only annoyed, they also know who they have to thank for their discontent. Hence the fact that in a dictatorship everything is directed from the top, which makes it so powerful, is also a crucial weakness.

The sudden rise of the opposition movement was soon followed by considerable success. Honecker resigned on 18 October 1989, only five weeks or so after Hungary had lifted the Iron Curtain.

The swift success led the activists of the civil rights movements to a considerable overestimation of their influence among the people. They misperceived the collapse of the regime as a product mainly of their activity and were not sufficiently aware of the built-in weaknesses of the official ideology and political system[5].

The vast majority were weary of the system because nothing worked whatsoever. It was, therefore, comparatively easy to unite people from various strata for protests against the hated, or at least unpopular, system. The common opposition against the existing system covered up a reality which only came to the fore after the old regime had broken down: the diversity of ideas about its replacement. After the fall of the Wall it turned out that the majority was not interested any longer in the programmes of a new, grassroots-oriented democratic socialism which the activists of the civil rights movements as well as reformers in the communist party now attempted to implement.

The civil rights movements had formed the only visible political opposition to the rotten system. They were, therefore, backed by the vast majority in the final crisis of this system. Yet only a minority also shared the political ideals upheld by the opposition. Once the Wall had come down the people withdrew their support for the civil rights movements just as they had withdrawn their loyalty to the old regime two months earlier.

The breakdown of the Wall had opened a new perspective. In the eyes of the majority, West Germany promised to provide a much quicker and smoother way out of the East German disaster than the vague programmes of the civil rights movements, since it disposed of overwhelmingly more economic and political power. Of course, there were widespread illusions about the magic power of the Deutschmark and about the readiness of West Germans to become involved in the problems of East Germans. Yet the general idea that West German support would make the path out of the East German morass decisively easier and shorter was right.

This holds true even in the light of the inappropriate policy pursued by the West German government in 1990. Unfortunately, this policy mainly aimed at preparing the way for the election victory of the governing parties, not at finding the best solution to the East German problem. With this aim in view, false promises were made which, instead of stimulating the initial readiness of West

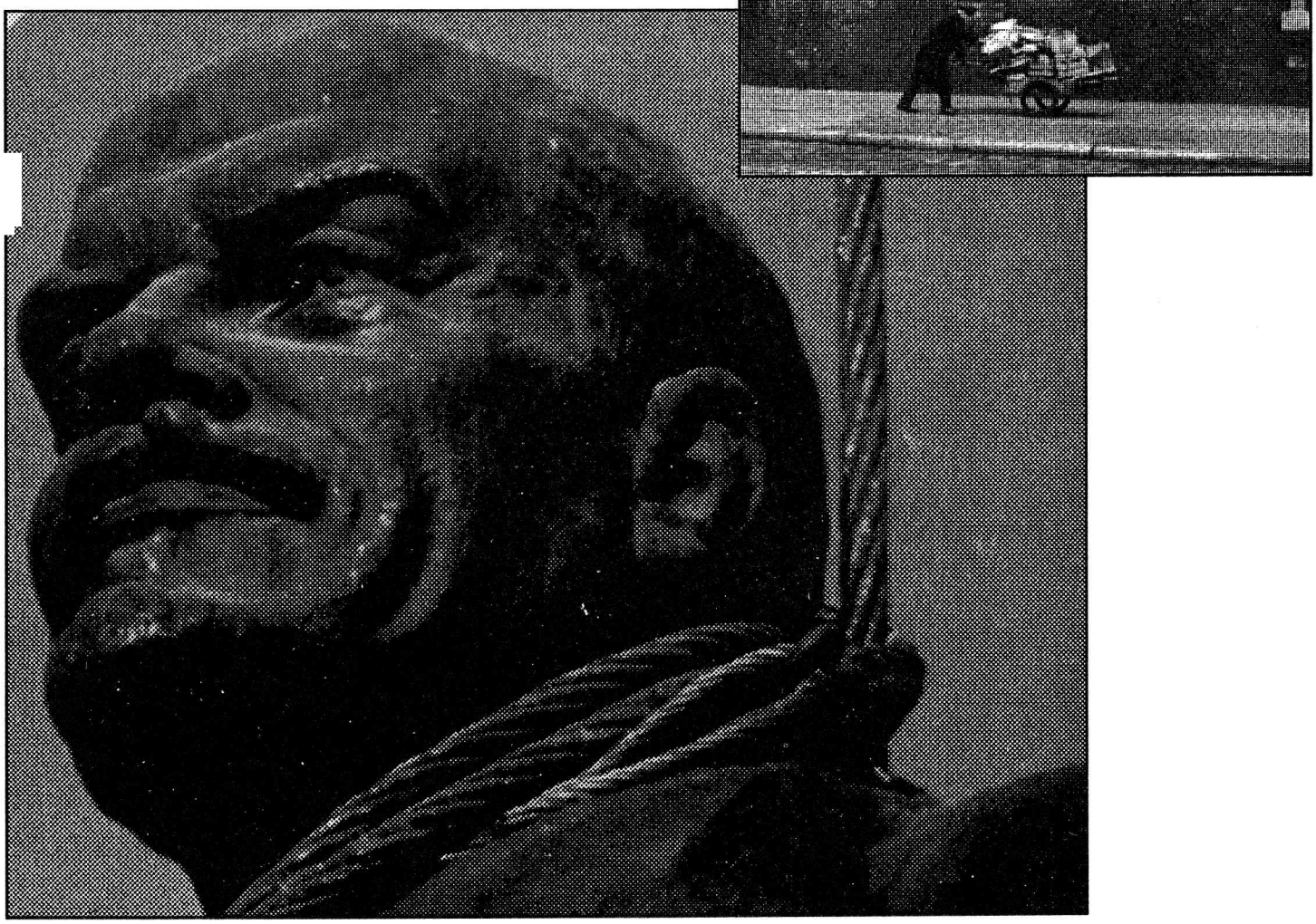
Germans to make sacrifices, enfeebled it. They nourished illusions held by East Germans. As a result, the awakening on both sides of the former border has been a rude one. And, even worse: one year had been lost before the government really started to recognise the full scope of the East German problem.

Yet compared with Hungarians or Poles who have made a more substantial contribution to the radical change in Eastern Europe, the East Germans are again economically better off, this time due to West German support. In all the grief about their hardship, the East Germans should not forget the harder fate of their fellow sufferers in the other East European countries.

Footnotes:

1. See Robert Darnton, "Ein Zusammenbruch geborgter Legitimität", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 November 1990, p. N3
2. For the clash of temporal dimensions in the socialist revolution see Gerd Irrlitz, "Ankunft der Utopie", in: *Sinn und Form* 42 (1990)5, Berlin, pp. 930 ff, in particular pp. 934 f, 940-945, 952. For the clash of temporal dimensions in the East German upheaval see Klaus Hartung, *Neunzehnhundertneunundachtzig*, Berlin: Luchterhand, 1990, pp. 15-19, 67-70.
3. See Karl Wilhelm Fricke, *Opposition und Widerstand in der DDR*, Köln 1984; Dietrich Staritz, "Die SED und die Opposition", in: Ilse Spittmann (ed), *Die SED in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Köln: Edition Deutschland Archiv, 1987, pp. 78 ff; Wolfgang Templin, "Zivile Gesellschaft—osteuropäische Emanzipationsbewegungen und unabhängiges Denken in der DDR seit Beginn der achtziger Jahre", in: *Die DDR im vierzigsten Jahr*, Köln: Edition Deutschlandarchiv, 198, pp. 58 ff; Günter Minnerup, "Politische Opposition in der DDR vor dem Hintergrund der Reformdiskussion in Osteuropa", in: loc. cit., pp. 66 ff.
4. For this structural weakness of the political system in socialist countries, see also Hartung, loc. cit., pp. 90, 106f.
5. See Irrlitz, loc.cit., pp. 930f, 943

below:
Lenin monument being demolished and poster saying "Actually existing socialism is the realisation of the ideas of Karl Marx"



Poland has long been one of the most advanced laboratories of social, political and economic crisis and change in Eastern Europe. Stalin once observed that introducing Communism in Poland would be like saddling a cow. Uniquely, it has combined all the factors producing crisis in Central European Stalinist regimes.

POLAND IN TRANSITION

by DAVID HOLLAND

THESE INCLUDED gross economic mismanagement and crisis; a fierce national pride, coupled with anti-Sovietism; a powerful Catholic Church; an intact peasantry wholly alienated from the regime; an intelligentsia imbued with strongly anti-communist views and a newly organised working class, which came into sharp collision with the regime.

The ideals of the first independent trade union in Eastern Europe, which was formed as a result of this collision, were at the outset, strongly egalitarian, collectivist in tendency and radically democratic. One of the central political collisions of 1981 was over a radical model of workers' self-management. The defeat of Solidarity in 1981, with the imposition of martial law, led to a prolonged period of political stalemate and "trench warfare", before the political situation began to move once more in 1987, and the Poles had a renewed opportunity to reach the political settlement which eluded them in 1981.

The Solidarity of 1989 and 1990 however was a very different animal from that of 1981. Years of martial law and repression had not succeeded in cowing the Polish working class, or even in destroying Solidarity. It did however smash rank-and-file democratic organisation and isolated Solidarity's historic leaders from their factory base. The ideology and programme of the clandestine union leadership veered steadily to the free market right, as it came more and more to rely upon its powerful rich foreign allies and the financial support which flowed into the underground—with consequent opportunities for patronage and corruption.

In the period 1982-89, the regime proved unable to "normalise" the situation and a repressed opposition proved too weak to organise mass protest. Underground publishing flourished, with literally hundreds of titles appearing illegally outside the censorship, ranging from factory bulletins to literary monthlies.

Underground Solidarity structures however, became progressively weaker, reflecting their inability to function adequately as trade union bodies in conditions of clandestinity. The most successful Solidarity Commissions were those which came partially "above ground", by standing candidates in the elections for the legal workers' self-management councils. Often the Underground Solidarity Commission gained complete control of the workers' council and was thereby able to use it as a trade union instrument. This was the case in the FSO car factory and the steel works *Huta Warszawa* in Warsaw for example.

The regime however felt sufficiently confident to amnesty political prisoners in 1984 and again in 1986, in the hope of mollifying Western critics and obtaining fresh credits. The emergence of Solidarity leaders such as Jacek Kuron, Zbigniew Bujak, Wladyslaw Frasyniuk and Jozef Pinior from prison permitted new initiatives designed to force the *de facto* legalisation of Solidarity. An open Solidarity National Council was launched by Walesa in September 1986. This was followed by similar moves at regional and local level, the emergence of a number of Solidarity leaders from hiding and attempts to register local Solidarity organisations in the courts.

As in 1956, 1970 and 1980 however, it was the deteriorating state of the economy which provided the trigger for a new period of political movement. This was further assisted by the stiffening breeze of reform from Moscow. Burdened by foreign debt, the Jaruzelski regime's efforts to promote economic reform on a model of decentralisation, enterprise self-financing and plant level workers' self-management, within a market framework, foundered in the face of the political obstacles.

Narrow base

The base of the regime was so narrow that it was extremely difficult for it to mobilise a "pro-reform" constituency for measures which threatened the interests of the small proportion of the population which did actively support it: the Party-State bureaucracy and the nomenklatura in enterprise management. It was in attempting to break this log-jam that the first opening since martial law appeared: the failure of the Jaruzelski government to win endorsement of its economic reform programme in the November 1987 referendum.

In fact the result of this referendum (11.6m yes, 4.8m no) would have counted as a resounding government victory in other conditions. The government failed however to gain the necessary 50% of the electorate for victory. While this was by no means a victory for the opposition, the result did show that the Government had been lulled into a state of false security by its apparently successful measures of normalisation, such as the orchestration of highly controlled local government and parliamentary elections. It revealed sullen apathy and a deep scepticism about

the Government's fine words of democratisation and raising living standards. For most Poles in 1987-88, economic reform meant price increases and further immiseration and talk about political reform was a sour joke. The result of the referendum was then heavily reinforced by the outbreak of two mass strike waves in 1988, demanding wage increases and the legalisation of Solidarity. It had became clear that the post-martial law strategy of "normalisation" and economic reform had completely failed. Only a government constructed on a broader basis of popular consent could introduce the marketising economic reforms, which were seen by the dominant elements of government and opposition alike as the only way out of the crisis for the Polish economy. Moreover, fresh Western credits could only be obtained by concessions to Solidarity. This was the background to the opening of the Round Table Talks with the opposition. The basis of these talks was the consensus which existed between Jaruzelski-Rakowski and the Walesa leadership of Solidarity that there was no alternative to the radical marketisation of the Polish economy.

While there is a long tradition of "market socialism" economic theorising in Poland, from Lange and Kalecki onwards, the consensus from the mid-1980's onwards was not for the "regulated market" favoured by these economists, but for a more radical break with the old system. Various solutions were canvassed from an institutional capital market, through group ownership and employee shareholding to wholesale privatisation. A weariness at the failures of past attempts at marketising reforms (what has been called "the long history of the short reform") combined with the political climate amongst the leading group of Solidarity to create favourable preconditions for the eventual victory of a shock programme to reintroduce capitalism as quickly as possible.

The very partially democratic elections of June 1989 that brought the Solidarity-led Mazowiecki Government to power were a product of the Round Table Agreement. The negotiations were conducted by a team personally nominated by Lech Walesa from a Solidarity "Citizen's Committee", also personally nominated by him. The negotiations contrasted sharply with those which brought about the Gdansk Agreement of 1980. In 1980 the negotiations were conducted by a strike committee, with all the proceedings broadcast over the plant tannoy to the striking workers, to whom the negotiating team were directly accountable. In 1989 a non-elected team sat in closed session in the imposing ministerial building of the Radziwill Palace in Warsaw. Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the substitution of a democratic mass workers' movement by a small group of experts and advisers immediately around Lech Walesa.

The broadly social-democratic, collectivist and egalitarian concerns voiced by the union in its previous period of legal existence did not figure in the negotiations. The programme of the "Self Managing Republic" agreed at the union's 1981 Congress disappeared from view. The aspiration towards powerful organs of workers' self-management, within a market framework, for which the union had fought, was replaced by a conception of the free market as the panacea for all ills. This outlook was shared by the old regime, and found symbolic expression in the glee with which Mieczyslaw Rakowski announced the closure of the Gdansk ship-yards as an unprofitable concern.

The deal struck with the government provided for free contests for 35% of the seats in parliament, with the Polish United Workers Party (Communist Party) or its satellites essentially guaranteed the remainder. This was to be balanced by the creation of a new Second Chamber of revision, the Senate, to which elections would be entirely free. New powers were accorded to a strong Executive Presidency, effectively reserved for General Jaruzelski, although in the event, he was only able to scrape into the post by a whisker after last minute dickering with Solidarity.

The Mazowiecki Government

The elections that followed, although they constituted a landslide for the Solidarity Citizens' Committee candidates, revealed a continuing high level of apathy or hostility in the population. Only a 62% poll was achieved, in elections billed as the first free elections since the 1920's. Although boycotts were called for by small organisations of the extreme right and left, this can only have accounted for a small minority of the abstentions. A large section of the Polish population was struggling for its physical existence in a situation of escalating inflation, wretchedly low wages and shortages of basic commodities. The legacy of martial law and repression was one of cynicism and absence of hope in the capacity of the political process to find solutions.

The coalition Government which emerged from these elections was headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a Catholic intellectual, with a long record of moderate opposition to the post-war regimes in Poland. He served as a deputy in the Polish Parliament in the 1960's as a member of the Lay Catholic "Znak" group. The Mazowiecki Government promptly launched a crash programme to marketise and privatise the economy. This programme became known as "The Balcerowicz Plan", after the Polish Minister of Finance, Leszek Balcerowicz. Balcerowicz is a Solidarity economist, with pronounced free market convictions. The plan involves withdrawal of subsidies, a crash austerity programme to damp down the hyper-inflation which was running at a monthly rate of between 40-60%; privatisation of industry and the attraction of foreign capital, under favourable terms of exportable profits etc. Current average Polish wages are about 100 dollars a month (1m zloty).

The Plan met with some success. That is, fresh foreign credits have been obtained, following the signature of a letter of intent with the IMF. Hyper-inflation has been apparently halted, after very steep price increases, coupled with a wages freeze. There are obvious social costs. Apart from the precipitate decline in living standards implied by the above (40% in the first quarter of the Plan and the slide has not halted), open unemployment has returned, virtually unknown in post-war Poland. It is at present estimated at a figure in excess of one million. The Government hoped to contain unemployment at 400,000. Some World Bank estimates, however, have suggested unemployment may rise to 2m in the course of 1991.

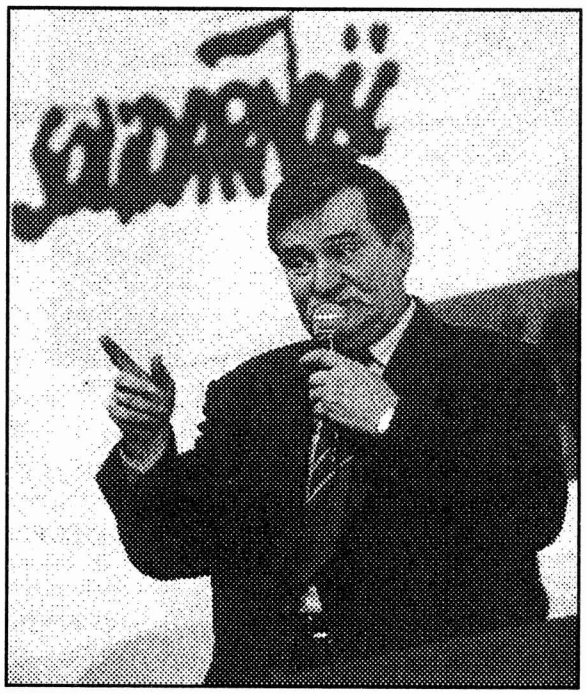
This is the more striking since serious restructuring of the economy, with large-scale closures and job shake-outs in whole branches of industry, has not yet begun in earnest. The inflation picture may also be temporary. After falling to a monthly rate of 1%, it was reported to be rising again (6% in November 1990). Moreover, wages are effectively held down by a punitive pay-roll tax, which is now at the centre of political struggle in the country. The unions are determined to get rid of this tax, the future of which is currently very doubtful.

Competition for Solidarity

Solidarity is a shadow of its 1981 self, claiming 2.5m members as opposed to the 10m it claimed then. It remains, however, a real mass workers' organisation, which is now experiencing competition from two sources.

The first of these is "Solidarity '80", an organisation born out of workerist opposition to the Walesa leadership of Solidarity and refusing to recognise the informal and personal authority exercised by Walesa in reconstructing Solidarity (i.e. the nomination of the Citizens' Committee and of regional structures). Led by Marian Jurczyk, Solidarity '80 is based in Szczecin and controls a nationally-distributed weekly paper, *Solidarnosc Szczecinska*. Although displaying a strongly trade-unionist orientation, this paper is also tainted not only with overtones of chauvinist nationalism, but also explicit anti-semitism.

In the 2nd April 1990 edition of *Solidarnosc Szczecinska*, for example, is found an article promoting a new political organisation: The Congress of the Polish Nation. The programme of this group hails the downfall of the "Totalitarian Zionist Masonic government in the Soviet Union;" calls for the recovery of full political rights by "Polish citizens of Polish nationality;" proposes "proportional representation of national minorities in public life;" demands the "liquidation, in the course of democratic elections of the hitherto prevailing domination by the Jewish minority in parliament and government", opposes "the sell off of national property to foreign capital", and calls for opposition to "cosmopolitan tendencies."



Whilst doubtless marginal, the presence of an explicitly fascist current can only be deeply disturbing. Not all Solidarity 80, however, should be tarred with this brush. After the newly established branch in the FSO Car Plant adopted a resolution sharply condemning anti-semitism, attempts to exclude it from the union were decisively defeated at the union's national council. Solidarity 80 can offer to some radicalising workers an alternative untainted with associations of support for the Mazowiecki Government, or its successor.

The other structure in competition with Solidarity is the old "official" trade union federation (OPZZ), headed by Alfred Miodowicz, which has not been "blown away" by the legalisation of Solidarity, as its counterpart was in 1981. OPZZ claims 7m members. Although this is certainly an exaggeration and includes many management personnel and pensioners, the OPZZ remains a force to be reckoned with, especially when the possibility exists of organising workers' protests against a Solidarity-led government's economic policies.

This was shown particularly clearly in the May 1990 unrest on the railways. The strike took place outside of Solidarity. The organisers invited leaders of the three main union centres to meet them. Jurczyk and Miodowicz arrived immediately and supported the workers' protest. Walesa arrived only when it was a question of urgently getting the strikers back to work, which he succeeded in doing, but at the price of a further erosion of his credibility.

In the run-up to the Presidential elections a wave of labour militancy broke out, which Walesa effectively rode, even if he had no role in inciting it, as he promised full employment and future prosperity to the workers, whilst assuring Poland's new entrepreneurs and the international financial community of a speed-up in marketisation and more favourable business conditions.

The wave of strikes amongst municipal communication workers, dockers, glass workers, miners and others in the Autumn of 1990, revealed a mood of deep discontent with the austerity of the Mazowiecki Government.

The results of the Presidential elections were therefore perhaps unsurprising. Walesa's victory was assured from the beginning. What was really striking was the complete humiliation of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was forced into third place by the emigre Polish-Canadian businessman, Stanislaw Tyminski. This humiliation demonstrated in a stark fashion the swiftness with which the immense prestige possessed by the first Solidarity Government on taking office had been dissipated.

Eighteen months had been enough to render Mazowiecki less popular than an unknown with some dubious associations (which were given a great deal of publicity during the campaign). Walesa should take warning from the course of these events. His ability to deliver marketisation, in highly unfavourable conditions of world recession and high energy prices, clearly depends on his ability to exercise discipline over the Polish working class.

Nor will his foreign creditors and sponsors leave him much room for manoeuvre. It was made clear to Walesa by the United States Government and the IMF, immediately following his installation as President, that Western aid, credits and the possibility of writing off a large proportion of Poland's foreign debt would rapidly disappear if Leszek Balcerowicz was not kept on as Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

At the time of writing, it seems likely that

Walesa will return from his Presidential visit to Washington in triumph, with an agreement to write off 40-70% of the foreign debt. The condition of this support seems likely to have been that the economic policy of the Government should effectively be handed over to Balcerowicz, the hard-line free marketeer. Jan Bielecki, the new Prime Minister, is clearly committed to continuing with the Mazowiecki Government's policy. The new Minister of Privatisation, Janusz Lewandowski, is likewise deeply committed to liberal economic ideology.

Unrest continues amongst rank-and-file industrial workers. Moreover, new horizontal structures, which escape the control of Walesa's allies in the Solidarity bureaucracy, are emerging. The Network of Leading Solidarity Enterprises, which was the protagonist of the 1981 struggle for workers' self-management has been re-established and is playing a role in the struggle against the pay-roll tax. In Warsaw, a number of Solidarity Commissions at enterprises with historical roles as centres of militancy, such as the Ursus Tractor Factory, the *Huta Warszawa* Steel Works and the FSO Car Plant are reported to have signed an agreement opposing privatisation moves. In Wroclaw, the Inter-Factory Co-ordinating Committee, groups a similar concentration of "Solidarity Citadel" enterprises and is campaigning on a sharply anti-Walesa line, with advisers drawn from the leftist Socialist Political Centre.

The political legacy of the underground period is now shifting into entirely new patterns of antagonism and political struggle. The Citizens' Committees, which were the organising bodies for the Solidarity leadership and the Mazowiecki Government in the June 1989 parliamentary elections and the 1990 local government elections, split asunder with the division initiated by Walesa with the Mazowiecki Government. Around Walesa crystallised the "Centre Agreement", which became his campaign organisation for the Presidency. Mazowiecki's organisation was "Democratic Action" (ROAD). The political differences were not clear between these formations, especially since Walesa retained the services of Leszek Balcerowicz and his economic strategy, in the government formed after his victory in the Presidential elections. There were indications that the Church and a constellation of forces more on the right supported Walesa, whilst Democratic Action has served as the germ of a liberal secular Party. Analysis of voting patterns in the Presidential elections confirmed the view that Walesa was supported by large majorities amongst industrial workers and the peasantry, whilst a large majority of the intelligentsia supported Mazowiecki.

However these developments are far from indicating the crystallisation of a Party system. For example, there are numerous rival contenders for the role of the future Polish Christian Democracy. The Polish Right has its own historic divisions, in particular between the traditional anti-German stance of the pre-war National Democrats, who have consistently argued for an alliance with whoever rules in Russia, and the powerful resonance of anti-Soviet feeling. *Ojczyzna* (Fatherland), the paper of the reborn *Endecja*, appeals strongly to national sentiment against the threatened take-over of national assets by German capital. On the other hand, groups such as the extreme-right Union of Real Politics are winning support by demanding purges of Communists from the state administration and economic life and by reviving the Pilsudskiite tradition of championing the nationalities of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Lithuanians and Ukrainians, against Russian rule. More fundamentally, the Right must choose between a xenophobic nationalism and a role as the surrogates of Western, especially German, capital.

The political left, in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism, was in a weak position to take advantage of workers' discontent. The successor organisations of the old Polish Communist Party were compromised and alternatives few and weak. However, new alliances and unexpected initiatives are constantly being thrown up by the fluid political situation. A few years ago, no-one would have expected to see the detested press spokesperson for the martial law regime, Jerzy Urban, editing a hugely successful private independent weekly, lampooning a Solidarity-led regime. Urban's paper is called "NO" and is reportedly selling out.

The Polish United Workers' Party dissolved itself at its Congress in January 1990. It then gave birth to two new formations. The first of these, headed by Jacek Kwasniewski, supported by Kiszczak, Jaruzelski, Rakowski and other luminaries of the martial law period, has inherited the old Party's valuable assets of newspapers, buildings etc. and includes the majority of the old apparatus. It is known as "The Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland". It is very seriously compromised by its past. SDRP currently claims 65,000 members, which contrasts sharply with the membership of the old PUWP, which numbered in millions.

The second formation is headed by Tadeusz Fiszbach, and is called the "Polish Union of Social Democrats". Fiszbach's supporters walked out of the PUWP Congress and refused to have anything to do with the old Party's substantial assets. Fiszbach was Provincial Governor (Voivod) of Gdansk in 1980-81 and enjoyed exceptionally good relations with the Solidarity leadership there. His prospects as a "player" in the mass Polish social democracy of tomorrow (or the day after!) are significantly better. He is substantially less compromised by his past than most ex-Communist political leaders. Nevertheless, his past will be a hindrance. At the 1990 Congress of PUS, it claimed 3,500 members.

The successor organisations of the Communist Party are very anxious to find new allies and insist that unlike Solidarity politicians they are uncompromised by links with the Government! With some justice, they assert that the new leader of Solidarity is practically an under-Secretary of State and regional union secretaries are now practically provincial prefects. No serious new organisation of the social-democratic left, untainted by the unpopularity of the Communist past, has however yet emerged.

New patterns

Jacek Kuron, co-author of the well-known left-wing manifesto "The Open Letter to the Party", in 1968 with Karol Modzelewski, would once have been considered a natural focus for such a project.

He was, however, Minister for Labour in the Mazowiecki government and therefore not only supported the Balcerowicz Plan, but was directly responsible for policing labour unrest. A group of about 20 "Labourist" parliamentarians organised themselves around Modzelewski in the Sejm and the Senate. Modzelewski is currently one of the Wroclaw Senators. This group, on Modzelewski's own admission, was too tied by personal links of loyalty to Mazowiecki and his team dating from the Underground period to mount a serious opposition.

An extra-parliamentary initiative, associated with Ryszard Bugaj, called *Solidarnosc Pracy* could be the germ of a more serious social-democratic opposition. This has Modzelewski's support. The Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was re-established in October 1987 and grouped together older figures with a more or less social-democratic background, such as Jan Jozef Lipski and Wladyslaw Kunicki-Goldfinger, with young activists on the left of Solidarity, such as the editorial board of *Robotnik* (The Worker) in Warsaw and the group around the ex-Underground leader, Jozef Pinior, in Silesia.

These groups soon split, on generational and political lines. After a period of competing PPS groups, a reunion took place in the Autumn of 1990, under the auspices of the emigre Polish Socialist Party. This remains however a group no more than a few hundred strong. Jan Jozef Lipski, its only parliamentary representative, strongly supported the Mazowiecki Government. It seems unlikely that a mass social democracy can be built from zero on the basis of support for austerity, unemployment and free market economics.

The main strategic political question for the left is whether the Polish economy can be stabilised on a capitalist basis, without provoking fresh waves of labour militancy. If it can, then a classic social-democratic formation may be able to establish itself. If it cannot, then a much more radical course will become necessary to lead and canalise the workers' movement against the radical solutions of the extreme right.

The size of Poland's foreign debt; the past and potential future militancy of the Polish workers; and the relatively greater attractiveness of East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to Western capital, would all suggest that it will be very difficult to stabilise the Polish economy on other than a Third World basis—which implies repression and immiseration of the population. The South Korean model, often referred to in Poland, cannot be feasibly imitated without much larger capital transfers than seem likely, even with the growing elaboration of Western financial support through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other agencies.

There is still a strong lobby in Poland for the break-up of the state monopolies to be succeeded by, if not the full blown workers' self-management of the 1981 model, at least some scheme of Employee Share Ownership. The present government is opposed to any experimental deviation from straightforward imitation of the capitalist West. Even this course has formidable obstacles in its way and is likely to be met by more or less organised resistance from the workforce.

The direct sale of shares in former state enterprises to domestic and foreign buyers is favoured by Leszek Balcerowicz, but runs into the obstacle of the very slender financial resources in the hands of the pauperised population. Take-overs of valuable state assets by sections of the nomenklatura also arouse controversy and threaten to perpetuate the corruption and nepotism which has been an obstacle to efficient economic life in the past.

The best known example of a nomenklatura take-over is the liquidation of the largest agro-industrial complex in Poland, "Iglopool", which was replaced by a joint stock company of the same name. The board of directors remained the same as before—the Managing Director was the Deputy Minister for Agriculture—and the shares were distributed to individuals, firms, organisations and co-operatives dominated by the Communist party. Similar coups, for example the transfer into the private ownership of a clique of management personnel of the most profitable section of a state firm, are not uncommon and naturally arouse intense controversy

The future

The difficulties of creating a feasible market economy in Polish conditions are such that a relatively long drawn-out period of social and political struggles can be anticipated, before any real transition to capitalism can be accomplished. Much will depend not only on the level of labour militancy, but also on the ability of the Polish left, conceived in the broadest sense, to articulate and project an alternative programme to the free-market convictions of government circles.

Apprehensions are often expressed both by the intelligentsia and representatives of the political left, that a stiflingly conservative clerical authoritarianism is in store in Poland. This cannot be excluded. Walesa's native authoritarianism and the expanding influence of the Church in public life are a potent combination.

However, it should be remembered that Poland is a modern European country. The prestige of the Church is indubitable, but the return of universal religious education to schools, for example, has been greeted by vigorous spontaneous protests by school students. The abortion law is another case in point. There has been free abortion on demand in Poland for forty years and the reaction of Church going-Polish women to the withdrawal of this right, has not been one of silent acquiescence. A referendum in a Silesian factory ("Agromet-Pilmet", an agricultural machinery plant) in February this year, showed that out of 865 workers, 314 of whom were women and 551 men, only 30 (21 men and 9 women) supported the proposed restrictions on abortion.

The political future in Poland will continue to be highly fluid and unstable for some time to come. The militant Polish working class is still capable of producing surprises. Let us hope so, for the prospect of a federalised European Community, drawing upon a semi-colonial hinterland of cheap skilled labour and raw materials, providing useful sites for dumping of environmentally dangerous waste, is a real and threatening one—but this agenda is still very far from fixed.

For your freedom and ours!

DURING THE LAST YEAR we have witnessed great social, political and economic change in Central and Eastern Europe. The inhuman order that existed here has collapsed leaving a political vacuum and widespread disorientation in the centre of Europe. The hope of the mass of people for progressive change in the world and the ending of oppression has largely gone. This poses a challenge for the Left of the whole world. We, in the Socialist Political Centre in Wroclaw, Poland, feel compelled to respond to this challenge.

To build democracy, social justice, workers solidarity and a community of nations we need free access to information which has not been manipulated and the circulation of a multiplicity of political analyses. In other words, conditions must be established in which it is possible for the mass of working people to consciously make decisions about the future of society. These conditions do not exist in Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland, the old nomenklatura elites, together with the new elite from the former anti-Stalinist opposition, are trying to guarantee for themselves a monopoly of the media for their own propaganda.

The material base for this dominant pro-capitalist ideology is the bureaucratic state and economic structures, which remain intact, backed by the driving force of intervention from Western institutions. This intervention can be in the form of direct grants of money or the activity of various foundations and joint ventures.

This alliance is able to subject our society to continuous indoctrination: the press, the radio and the television try to convince people that it is natural that a society should have both rich and poor, those who work and those who make profits. The impoverished and discouraged people of Poland have no access to other ideas. In this situation it is not surprising that people look at the collapse of the Left as the bankruptcy not only of the socialist ideal, but even of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. With the works of Marx and Lenin, society can bury also the principles of Rousseau, Voltaire and Hegel.

The continuing of this process implies the end of the whole progressive tradition, a regression of civilization and a step towards barbarism. This danger exists not only in Poland, but in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe and the USSR. We believe that such a regression would have a major influence in the developed capitalist countries, particularly in this era of rapid flow of information and ideas and the dominance of the world market. We want to oppose this tendency and think it necessary to do so.

Like all people who fight for a better world, we ask for your help and support, in the words of the old Polish slogan: For Your Freedom and Ours!

The Centre for Independent Information (Oni in Polish) that we want to create, will oppose the dominant ideology of repression by every media of communication. The creation of an independent TV studio will allow us to address everyone, even those who do not read books or the press, because they have no time and no money.

By starting an independent print-shop and publishing books and newspapers, which present the works of the anti-Stalinist Left, we want to give people the possibility of political thought and debate and a conscious choice as to the path of development adopted by the country.

We come from the libertarian and egalitarian tradition of Solidarnosc, the tradition of independent information and the fight to liberate humanity, the tradition of struggle for workers self-management.

For some months we have organised ourselves in the Socialist Political Centre. We have tried to develop a political and economic programme which would guarantee for the workers and peasants of Eastern Europe emancipation from the continued control of the state bureaucracy and the attacks that the world market puts on the agenda.

We have already begun collaboration with groups of journalists working in the press, radio and TV, to strive for accurate presentation of events in the world and to oppose the manipulation of information. The output of our TV studio would be broadcast by the alternative TV station in Wroclaw and we would be able to supply programmes to the state TV stations.

To set up our Centre for Independent Information we need your financial support. We address this appeal particularly to the Left in the dominant capitalist North. To equip our printshop and TV studio with basic facilities, we need to raise the equivalent of $20,000 US.

However as time passes the whole enterprise will become more costly. Your financial support NOW will make it possible for us to reach and bring together people who oppose the dictatorship of the bureaucracy and of market forces, who are in favour of a self-governing society and generalised democracy. It will enable us to develop the idea of a better, more just world. These are the essential principles of the movement for socialism. We need you to help us fight for them.

October 1990
Jozef Pinior for the Socialist Political Centre

The Polish Support Group, which is circulating this Appeal, intends to organise in the course of 1991 practical trade union links between trade union structures here and those in Poland which are struggling to defend workers interests against cuts in real wages, unemployment and attacks on democracy inside Solidarity. If you would like to sponsor a Solidarity Conference, or help in any other way, please contact us on 071-221-0092. Cheques should be made payable to Polish Socialist Appeal and sent to Polish Support Group, Kensington Labour Party, Basement Office, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 2HE.

Interview with Karol MODZELEWSKI

Translators' Note:
The following interview appeared in the 24th December and 11th of January editions of the Weekly Magazine of the Polish paper Gazeta Robotnicza. The interview was conducted by Grazyna Saniewska.

Karol Modzelewski is currently a member of the Polish Senate, from Wroclaw. He was a well known opposition figure from the 1960s onwards and co-author with Jacek Kuron, of the well-known "Open Letter to the Party". Unlike Kuron, who became Minister of Labour in the Mazowiecki Government, Modzelewski has continued to represent a left-wing, broadly social-democratic alternative to the programme of Thatcherite economic liberalisation pursued by the Solidarity governments and in particular by the Polish Finance Minister, Leszek Balcerowicz. *Solidarnosc Pracy* is one of the more likely candidates to serve as a nucleus for the mass labour party so urgently needed in Poland today.

David Holland

CAN THE VALUES OF social justice, solidarity, self-management and social welfare which were the credo of Solidarity in 1980-81 and to which you are still faithful today, be reconciled with the market economy, economic efficiency and competitiveness?

In the Scandinavian countries, Germany or France, which are under social-democratic influence, policies of equilibrium between social security and the requirements of efficiency, between equality and freedom, have been in operation for a long time. It would be difficult to deny that in these countries there is freedom, competitiveness, welfare and efficiency, which we could wish for ourselves.

It is easier to resolve these contradictions from a better material base. Perhaps achieving these goals is a luxury for the rich?

The PRL (People's Republic of Poland) is said to have been a super-welfare country, because alongside social services, free medicine and education, certain areas of production were subsidised in order to maintain very low prices for food, medicines, books and domestic rents. This is characteristic of socialism, which at the same time reduced real wages to a level several times lower than in West European countries, so that these social welfare programmes became indispensable components for a minimal existence. Now we are withdrawing from this programme and making a parallel reduction of one third in real wages. In this situation assistance to people cannot be cut back. It is a very good thing that as a result of the efforts of Ryszard Bugaj and others, the Parliamentary Commission has rejected proposals for the fixing of domestic rents at market levels. This is to say that we cannot allow the programme of social welfare to be abandoned for the sake of goals of economic policy.

What forms should such welfare take?

Material welfare and social security should be the departure points for defining the preferences and goals which economic policy should aim to achieve. The task of economic policy is the choice of means to achieve such ends. This is obvious, but those who create and form opinion seem to be continually disregarded. From the outset, political choices are involved and only after that a choice of economic instruments. If professional economists are carrying this out, then they must act on the basis of a political mandate. The programme should be based upon a certain philosophy, from which it is apparent what and who are given priority.

You do not agree with the present social and economic programme. Why not?

We have applied to the socialist system a therapy entirely drawn from the capitalist system, of full competition. With us the cohesive monopolistic system—not only in the sense that there is only one owner, the state, but also in the sense of technological monopoly—leaves scarcely any room for competition. There are no owners either who could move their capital from sectors and enterprises which are less profitable to those that are more so. Nor are there any mechanisms for the economy to re-structure itself. Without these elements, if you have a monetarist policy being conducted by the state, the monopolists resort to massive price increases. As a result, there is no demand for goods, there are no sales and there is a deep recession. So instead of the expansion of the stronger areas at the expense of the weaker ones, we have the collapse of everything. This threatens us with the loss of a significant part of our economic potential and may lead to a collapse like the East German one, but without West German money to perform a rescue operation. After German unification, within the framework of the world economy, it became apparent that everything which had been built by socialism was to be subject to the disciplines imposed by the competitive market.

We do not have such a munificent big brother. What are we to do?

We must accept that to reach the other shore represented by the market economy will involve a long period of transition and it is necessary to get through this period without devastating our potential. Although it is poor and ineffective, if we lose it we will find ourselves on the level of the Third World, from whence we will not be able to return to Europe. If we are not be to united Germany as Latin America is to the United States, we must modernise the assets we have. We will not achieve this without significant intervention by the state.

Nearly 90% of our economy is in state hands. In conditions when this proprietor is not making much of a job of managing its enterprises, should we really look to it intervening on a still greater scale?

Up until now we have had a command economy. It is difficult to call this interventionism. This consists of applying economic instruments like credit guarantees, concessions, tax exemptions, subsidies, anti-monopoly activity, the application of tax sanctions against excessive price increases. Interventionism is indispensable to us as

a substitute for the non-existent or badly functioning market mechanism.

Why were these failures in the Government's programme not exposed by the Group in Defence of Workers' Interests, which you established in Parliament?

This parliamentary lobby, involving about 30 MPs and Senators was not very active, owing to a sense of loyalty to Tadeusz Mazowiecki. I have no doubt that the extra-parliamentary grouping *Solidarnosc Pracy* (Labour Solidarity) will be more oppositional to the Government. Organised groupings, such as the Association of Workers' Self-Management Activists, can join it as well as individuals. However this grouping has yet to acquire a distinct political identity. A programmatic statement has already been worked out and preliminary discussions have been conducted by the founding group, which includes Ryszard Bugaj, Andrzej Milkowski, Jan Jozef Lipski, Jerzy Szczacki and others.

In the programmatic theses, of which you are co-author, there is a lot of talk about subsidies and state intervention. These are easy ideas to put forward, but their realisation would threaten an increase in inflation and the destruction of a balanced budget. Are you not afraid of these dangers?

As far as food and housing is concerned, we propose the maintenance of existing subsidies and not the creation of new ones. A faster than normal increase in prices imposes the highest costs of the crisis on the poorest, so a significant part of the budget should be directed at food and housing. The requirement that everyone must buy from their own money what they used to get at half-price is an example of text-book economics, which does not take into consideration the standard of living society actually has. State intervention has real costs, though not in every case. For example, sanctions against excessive price rises by monopolies are not a charge upon the budget. Apart from this, there are still certain reserves, which are being unnecessarily hoarded.

What reserves?

One of them is the surplus from foreign trade. With the present market situation, money earned from export goods should be used. These funds are not being used for imports and inflation is stimulated as a result. Moreover the Government will have resources as a result of privatisation, which should be wholly dedicated to the restructuring of the economy. Factories and branches which have possibilities on the world market, owing to their reasonable technological level, or the large proportion of highly skilled labour in the final product price, require support. We are talking here about the ship-yards, the food industry and agriculture.

Agriculture has been too brutally treated by the Mazowiecki Government. The peasants are not earning much. How are they to escape from the claws of the recession and win world markets?

Our agricultural policy has upheld liberal principles of non-interference, liberal even in comparison to that of Western governments, which as a rule subsidise agriculture. This is the way in which our agriculture has been forced to try and conform to a foreign model. Even if hundreds of thousands of small farms packed up, our agriculture would not in this way approximate more closely to the American model, where this sector employs a few per cent of the population. In Poland there are no farmers able to take over cultivation of abandoned land, nor is there housing available in the cities for millions of refugees from the countryside. In order to defend the productive capacity of the peasant economy and the level of national food production, we must make cheap credits available to the peasants. We must introduce guaranteed minimum prices for some goods, especially grain, as well as subsidising the retail prices of some food-stuffs with a key position in the diet of the poorest section of the community. This will cost, but leaving agriculture to its own devices will cost much more in the end.

Sooner or later there will not be enough resources to finance preferred areas. Who will provide the money to supply these needs?

This is a question with which the Government is always willing to silence demands for social provision, such as health services, or culture. Contrary to appearances, this is not a question of accountancy, but a choice of values and goals, where priority is to be given. According to the new premises law, clinics, nurseries and libraries will have to pay the rent set by the premises' owners. The authors of this law in the Parliament and Government have not inquired at whose expense this property right is to be accorded to the private, co-operative or communal owner. A similar example is the tax relief for importers of foreign goods. It all involves a rejection of the social preferences of Solidarity before the change of government. In 1980, the union gave priority to defending the weak. Bus drivers went on strike for creches for nurses.

You propose that the state should switch from an exclusively anti-inflationary policy to an anti-recession policy. How should this U-turn be carried out?

Above all, not too suddenly. The change of course from the Balcerowicz Plan must be carried out cautiously, negotiated with the trade unions and it must be comprehensible to the community at large. The Mazowiecki Government used blind trust, but now an agreement with society on socio-economic affairs should have more of the character of a social contract. Its implementation, together with the conduct of government, should be subject to continual monitoring. In the present situation, panic cave-ins to demands are destroying any economic strategy and leading to empty shelves and hyper-inflation, with a significant lowering of the standard of living.

Government circles envisage an exit from the present down-turn through privatisation. Do you share this view?

Without privatisation, the mechanisms of the market economy cannot begin to be activated. But we should not delude ourselves that it will extricate us from the crisis and change the face of the Polish economy. It will be necessary to wait for a long time for this. The tendency of the state to sell off good enterprises in order to promote privatisation, whilst keeping hold of loss making ones is a sacrifice of common sense on the altar of doctrine. Privatisation has to bring economic benefits and not ideological ones. For this monitoring must take place by Parliament, the workers' councils and the trade unions.

Aren't your ideas just a copy of Western social democracy?

Not a copy, since the Western social democrats

do not have to deal with an analogous situation. There do exist undoubted similarities, but there social democracy arises from a lay tradition, which has separated itself from the formations with a Christian origin. We do not believe in supporting political divisions on confessional grounds. We think it is particularly damaging to try and involve the Church in political in-fighting and make it take sides in such conflicts. Proposals to violate the neutrality of the state towards religious convictions and world-views are also dangerous. This leads not only to breach of the principle of equality of rights between all citizens but to a clericalisation of public life. It may promote the revival of anti-clericalism. This sort of thing can do fundamental harm to Poland. The Church which was the force defending the nation from spiritual sovietisation and was the mainstay of Solidarity, in the face of totalitarian coercion, has an unquestioned moral authority. This authority is still necessary in a materially ruined Poland. Therefore we will oppose all revivals of clericalism or anti-clericalism.

You did not agree with the Mazowiecki Solidarity Government, nor with Democratic Action (ROAD) nor with the Centre Agreement. Are you an eternal oppositionist?

Not an eternal one, but a fairly stubborn one. I do not agree with the definition of a political party that it is an organisation dedicated to gaining and then retaining power. I could participate in a political party which was dedicated only to the achievement of certain social goals. If conditions are not ripe for realising these goals in government, then instead of entering government and giving up on proclaiming the values I have always held, I would prefer to put pressure on the Government from a position of opposition, to do what was necessary.

What kind of support does Solidarnosc Pracy *have?*

The majority of trade union activists who were involved in politics joined either Democratic Action or the Centre Agreement at the time of the split in the Citizens' Committees, with both of which we have fundamental programmatic differences. I think that *Solidarnosc Pracy* has the chance to win significant support if it can find people on the ground to work for it. These should be new activists, rather than those from one fixed position or another.

A lot of intellectuals think that there is going to be a dictatorship of the proletariat, or an presidential republic. They are afraid that their role will be restricted to a minimum. Are their fears justified?

Working class people are not the ones who have a lot of political influence today. The social background of the President does not affect this at all. A presidential republic is a lot less democratic than a parliamentary one. The President in the nature of things, does not reflect the political diversity of society and at the same time he is not subject to the scrutiny of Parliament, which will reflect the political make-up of society, once democratic elections have taken place. In tense social conditions, with relatively weak democratic traditions and the characteristic 'leadership syndrome' of Polish political culture, then a presidential republic may swiftly develop into a dictatorship. The intelligentsia may take some knocks from such a dictatorship—but the truncheons are always mainly for the workers, struggling for bread. It is up to us all not to allow this to happen.

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Compared with some of the other countries of Eastern Europe, especially the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Romania, the transition from communist monopoly of power to multi-party democracy in Hungary appeared as almost a natural development. The two core elements of the transition in the Warsaw Pact states, political democratisation and the turn to the market, had been prepared over a longer time in Hungary. The limited but real liberalism of the Kadarist regime had allowed an alternative intellectual elite to emerge and to articulate its ideas.

HUNGARY:
THE COLLAPSE OF KADARISM

by GUS FAGAN

AT THE SAME TIME, the uneven but increasingly more radical implementation of market-style reforms by the regime ever since 1968 and the increasing acceptance of market regulation, at both practical and theoretical levels, inside and outside the Communist Party, meant that there was already a large amount of agreement on fundamental direction within the official, semi-official and oppositional elite. The transition in Hungary, therefore, took the form of a shift of political power within what was a very narrow stratum of Hungarian society, the political and cultural elite without mass involvement but not, of course, without objective socio-economic and political pressure, both domestic and international.

The present article examines the Hungarian "peaceful revolution" within its own national context. It is clear, however, that, although the transition in Hungary had specific national characteristics, it is not possible to give an adequate explanation of these events within such a limited framework. The collapse of Kadarist rule in Hungary is part of a (continuing) social and political transformation taking place within the entire region of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. Historically, it has its roots in the conflicts that developed out of the Russian revolution of 1917 and the division of Europe after the Second World War.

In looking at the various factors that led to the end of the communist system in Hungary, I place special emphasis on the internal collapse or "self-dissolution" of the Kadarist regime. This is not to deny the importance of other factors. The Kadarist regime did not dissolve itself from enlightened benevolence. The successive concessions to the demands for political democracy, market rationality and historical truth, concessions which undermined its own legitimacy and historical *raison d'etre*, represented, at the same time, calculated attempts at survival, however desperate. Among those other factors at work one has to list the role of the intellectual opposition (accompanied by increasing popular dissatisfaction), the new situation created by Gorbachev and, in particular, the failure of the regime to resolve the problems of the economy. The history of attempts to reform the Hungarian economy, to overcome the obstacles to growth and efficiency which were already clearly visible in the bureaucratically centralised economy in the 1950s, and the lessons drawn from this experience by economists and other intellectuals inside and outside the HSWP, form an essential part of the background to the events leading up to April 1990.

Failure of economic reform

Open dissatisfaction with the results of the command economy and attempts to reform it by increasing the role of the market were not peculiar to Hungary. There were attempted reforms in Poland in the 1950s, in the GDR (the New Economic System) and in the Soviet Union (the Kosygin reforms) in the early 1960s, as well as elsewhere. But of all these attempts, only the Hungarian reform of 1968, the New Economic Mechanism, survived.

The basic concept of the reform, the product of intense work by economic officials, academics and enterprise managers during the two years before it was introduced as a total package in 1968, was a clear one: to maintain key elements of planning and central direction of the economy, while allowing a greater role for thee market, money, flexible prices and managerial initiative. The first stage of reform thus ended mandatory planning targets and central resource allocation. Managers were to be guided by the criterion of profitability, while self-financing and bank credits were to be the main source of investment finance. State guidance of the economy was to be indirect, by means of taxation, fiscal and exchange policies. Essentially the reforms involved a transfer of certain property rights from the ministries to enterprise managers. It was a "technocratic or managerial version of market-oriented economic reform"[1] and at no stage did the communist reformers envisage a genuine democratisation of the economy or any form of workers' self-management. The reform also didn't envisage any significant expansion of private enterprise. After some retrenchment in the early 1970s, a second round of reforms in the early 1980s attempted to

deal with recognised weaknesses and problems thrown up by the unfavourable economic climate of the 1970s. These new measures included a greater role for the private sector ("economic partnerships" and "intra-enterprise contract groups"), increased autonomy for enterprise managers (enterprise councils) and price reform.

The economic partnership law allowed from two to thirty people to set up small private business units. In 1980 the legal private sector had contributed only 3% to gross domestic product. Combined with the household plots in agriculture, the figure was somewhat less than 10%. By the late 1980s, the share of the private sector and household plots had doubled. The 1984 law on enterprise councils transferred even greater power to enterprise managers. Formally, it had the appearance of a self-management law. In small firms (less than 500 workers) workers' assemblies hired or fired managers without ministerial interference. In medium and in some large enterprises, an enterprise council with workers, management and party representatives was responsible for appointing managers and making all "strategic" decisions concerning the enterprise (long-term plans, mergers, bonds, etc.). The actual result of this reform was to strengthen the role of the managerial group. In 1986 the Bankruptcy Law was introduced, the first in Eastern Europe, but in practice very few enterprises were closed down, for obvious political reasons.

By the end of the 1980s, however, the balance sheet was still a negative one. The reform had undoubtedly brought about improvements in economic life. Enterprises became more sensitive to demand and costs; there was a greater responsiveness to consumer needs and consequently a much higher level of consumer satisfaction than elsewhere in eastern Europe; the co-operative sector, particularly in agriculture, was relatively successful (in the mid-eighties this sector accounted for over 50% of gross agricultural output).

But the assessment made by economists and officials, including leading party functionaries, was that the reform had not brought about the kind of qualitative breakthrough that the reformers had hoped for. This assessment was based on two criteria that had to do with the goal and the instrument of the reform process. The goal of the reform was economic efficiency, with all that this implied for quality of goods, export, etc. The means was greater reliance on market as opposed to bureaucratic coordination. There never had been any wider conception of a new socialist project such as had informed the early Yugoslav self-management reforms. In the second half of the 1980s, Hungarian economic performance, based on the standard criteria of growth, productivity, real income, foreign trade and indebtedness, was no better off than the unreformed economies of the other CMEA states. Living standards were in actual decline (had fallen back, in fact, to 1973 levels); Hungary had the highest per-capita debt of all the CMEA countries ($20 billion); 20% of the 10 million population lived below the official subsistence level; trade with Western countries had declined.

But not only had the reform failed to achieve its goals in terms of economic performance, there was also a widespread recognition that there had been no qualitative shift from bureaucratic to market coordination. According to Janos Kornai, one of Hungary's most respected economists, writing in 1986: "...managerial career, the firm's life and death, taxes, subsidies and credit, prices and wages, all financial 'regulators' affecting the firm's prosperity, depend more on the higher authorities than on market performance".[2] This view was expressed even more strongly by Tamas Bauer: "Despite their greater legal or formal independence, Hungarian state enterprises were more dependent on bargaining with state authorities by the mid-1980s than they had been 10-15 years earlier."[3]

Since neither the economic officials nor the vast bulk of the establishment and dissident intelligentsia ever considered democratic control of decision-making as an alternative to the coercive discipline of the market, the failures of the Hungarian economy were generally attributed, by practically all of the critical intelligentsia and increasingly by party leaders themselves, to a "failure to implement" market policies consistently. Towards the end of the 1980s party leaders were openly embracing the market economy (a market not only in goods but also in capital and labour) as the only way to bring about prosperity. At the beginning of 1989, the HSWP-dominated parliament introduced the Company Law which, in effect, legitimised private ownership of the means of production. Other laws throughout this period opened the way to foreign ownership, the sell-off of state enterprises and a stock market.

This fundamental shift in official social values and objectives carried out by the communists in power, though not, of course, without internal party struggles, was assisted by perestroika in the Soviet Union, which removed the last ideological constraints on the Hungarian communist leadership. Thus the move towards a full-scale (capitalist) market economy, which is the goal of the present post-communist regime, had been prepared over a longer period by Hungarian communists themselves.

Hungary's "stagnation period"

There are a number of paradoxes in the transition to non-communist rule in Hungary. The number of active oppositionists was very small and the mass of the people were politically apathetic. The political power which was wrested from the hands of the Czech, East German and Romanian parties by mass popular action appears to have been almost voluntarily conceded by the HSWP to parties led by small groups of intellectuals who failed to mobilise even half the population to vote in the final round of voting in April 1990. The final political demise of Kadarism, identified for so long with policies of market-style reform and (limited) political liberalisation, became evident at the same time as Gorbachevism, modelled on similar policies, was signalling the end of Brezhnevite stagnation and giving a new boost to Soviet political life.

The particular form of transition in Hungary was determined, within the context of the given international situation, by the combination of three internal factors: the nature of Kadarism itself as a political formation; the economic, political and socio-cultural stagnation which was evident from

the mid-1980s and which the Kadarist leadership was incapable of reversing; the absence, within the HSWP, of an alternative leadership or political strategy capable of winning the support of any significant section of the Hungarian working class.

After the defeat of both the communist reformers and the old hardliners in the wake of 1956, as well as the brutal repression of the non-communist parties, the Kadarist party, during the 1960s, consolidated its rule on the basis of what appeared as a twofold compromise with or concession to Hungarian society. On the one hand, the regime pursued an economic policy which made real improvements in the quality of life of the ordinary people. On the other hand, restrictions on intellectual and cultural life, of the type common throughout the Soviet bloc, were significantly relaxed. A certain freedom to exchange ideas and information within the intellectual and academic community, the freedom to pursue one's career and to travel created a certain *modus vivendi* between the intelligentsia and the Kadarist regime while consumer satisfaction and perceived improvements in everyday life achieved the desired effect of depoliticising the broad mass of Hungarian society. The Kadarist regime, installed on the back of Soviet military power in 1956, had no illusions about its real position vis-à-vis the mass of the people. The official slogan, "whoever is not against us is with us", was a formula designed to encourage passivity.

This "historical compromise" with the intellectuals, characteristic of Kadarism, was much discussed during the 1970s. Mihaly Vajda, a one-time pupil of Lukacs and expelled from the party (and from his post as philosopher) in 1973, described it thus: "The basic structure was not called into question by the intellectuals, while, on the other hand, the party leadership did its utmost to ensure that within these limitations life was as tolerable as possible. And thus what happened is that the Hungarian authorities became 'liberal'."[4] The small number of public "dissidents" were harassed and consumer prosperity was limited, but these two elements of the consolidation helped create a certain kind of distorted "legitimacy" for Kadarist rule. This distinguished the communist regime in Hungary from all the others in Eastern Europe. This compromise with the intelligentsia and consumer-friendly economic policy created an important political reserve for Kadarism. By the mid-1980s it was clear that this political reserve was exhausted and the signs of stagnation were becoming increasingly evident. Throughout the second half of the decade the regime faced an economic and social/political crisis which undermined the twin pillars of its authority.

In economic life, living standards for large sections of the population could only be maintained by recourse to the "second economy". But increasing self-exploitation had its physical limits and it also had the unwelcome effect of increasing social inequality since not all social groups, for instance workers in the big industrial enterprises, had equal access to the second economy. Consumer satisfaction depended on an expanding national income and, in the expensive Soviet-type economy that existed in Hungary, this depended on a surplus labour force and a cheap supply of raw materials and energy. These preconditions disappeared during the 1970s and the only way that the regime could go on financing stability (consumer satisfaction and depoliticisation) was through increasing the national debt. Hungary became the biggest per-capita borrower in Eastern Europe. But this also had its limits and, in fact, only served to intensify the crisis. In 1975, 20% of Hungary's hard currency exports went to servicing the national debt; in 1986 this debt-service ratio had risen to 60%. In 1982 Hungary joined the IMF and, throughout the 1980s, had to agree to a series of austerity measures which further increased the alienation of the population from the regime. It clearly had no solution to the intensifying economic and social crisis. Sandor Gaspar, then leader of the trade unions and Politburo member, expressed the view in 1986 that Hungary was facing its "gravest political crisis since 1956".

This growing economic and social crisis began to undermine the regime's relationship with the intelligentsia (the professional middle classes) and important groups of establishment intellectuals now refused to acquiesce in Communist Party policy. Two significant events in 1986 signalled the regime's isolation. The first was a document entitled "Turning Point and Reform", drawn up by 68 experts, many of them moderate members of the establishment. It was discussed and rejected by the Central Committee. In September 1987, it formed the basis of a letter to parliamentary deputies signed by 100 prominent intellectuals. After painting a grim picture of the crisis, in which "labour morale is crumbling as is the cohesiveness of society", the signatories called for radical economic and political reform. Economically, they proposed that "all economic activity, save the energy industry and public utilities, (be placed) under the control of the market." Politically, they proposed a series of democratic demands which, although falling short of multi-party democracy, called for increased power of parliament, the freedom to establish associations, freedom of press and so on.[5]

The second indication, in November 1986, was the defeat, in elections, of pro-regime officials in the leadership of the Writers' Union. The Kadarist leadership retaliated by demanding that party members leave the union and establish a new one. The demand was ignored by the vast majority of party members, exposing not only the isolation but the growing impotence of the party leadership (the crisis in the Writers' Union was occasioned by a criticism of the regime's policies by a group of populist writers). During the second half of the decade the rupture between the regime and the establishment intellectuals became complete. With the coming to power of Gorbachev in the Kremlin and with the adoption, by the new Soviet leadership, not only of Hungarian-style market policies but especially of new international and security policies which made a peaceful dissolution of the post-war arrangement in Europe not only possible but inevitable, the Hungarian establishment intelligentsia increasingly expressed its vision of the future in the currency of radical liberalism: a capitalist market economy in a parliamentary democracy economically and culturally linked to the West. The social basis of Kadarism, as a distinct form of bureaucratic rule in Eastern Europe, no longer existed.

The party reformers

The 1986 report mentioned above had been prepared under the auspices of the People's Patriotic Front, which had been set up by Imre Nagy in 1954 to involve non-party people in the affairs of government. Since 1982 the PPF had been led by Imre Pozsgay. Pozsgay became Minister of Culture in 1976 but lost the post in 1982 because of his suspected nationalist and liberal tendencies. He was prominent in the liberal reform wing of the party and was now using the PPF to create a base for himself and to establish closer ties with the critical intelligentsia. Although claiming continuity with the reformers of 1956, the Pozsgay grouping in the party were really a more modern phenomenon, ideologically and politically more in tune with the populist intelligentsia whose pro-Western and pro-capitalist orientation was given organisational expression in the Hungarian Democratic Forum, established in September 1987. Essentially, the Pozsgay grouping were opportunistically reacting to the impending crisis, the winds of change from Moscow and the intelligentsia's disillusionment with any form of "socialist" planning. Their initial proposal was for what Rezsö Nyers called "a return to the politics of the anti-fascist Popular Front" which would "unite all progressive forces in alliance with the party".[7] Nyers, a former social democrat, and famous as the "father of the 1968 reforms", attempted in the spring of 1968 to establish a New March Front of communist and non-party intellectuals. The initiative came to nothing but it did indicate the intensity of the battle that was now going on inside the party between the liberal reform current and the party establishment. There was even a Politburo special investigation after the trade union boss, Gaspar, accused Nyers of plotting to split the party and reestablish the Social Democratic Party.

Although this liberal-reform grouping had initially little basis of support in the party, they were being propelled forward by a combination of factors. Firstly, the Kadarist leadership, after more than thirty years in power, were clearly failing to deal adequately with the crisis. On 17 March 1988, the day on which another opposition grouping was formed, the Network of Free Initiatives (later to become one of the two main parties in parliament, the Alliance of Free Democrats), Kadar claimed, in a television address to the nation, that "there is no question of any sort of crisis... everyone has to do their work as before, only better and more diligently". Secondly, their policies were more in tune not only with the demands of the intelligentsia but also with the requirements of the IMF, which was demanding a more consistent application of market discipline as a precondition for further assistance. Finally, they were also seen as being more in tune with the new order being created in Moscow as well as with the inevitable moves towards greater democratisation.

If one can locate a decisive turning-point in the Hungarian process, it was probably the party conference in May 1988, where Kadar and most of his supporters in the Politburo were removed. Karoly Grosz took Kadar's place as party leader, while the leading reformers, Pozsgay and Nyers, joined the Politburo. The Grosz leadership, however, could only be an interim arrangement. To understand the objective dilemma of this new leadership, one has to appreciate two things. Firstly, the old leadership was Kadarist, not traditional Stalinist. Kadar was not Honecker or Ceausescu. The Kadarists were the traditional "reformers" who wanted to combine "plan and market", who had already distanced themselves from the old command model of the economy. They had also given up any attempts to control the cultural and intellectual life of the nation. Secondly, no section of the new leadership envisaged a strategy which would radically alter the relationship between the governing and the governed in any way which was recognisably socialist. "Working class" and even "socialism" now joined "communism" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" as embarrassing encumbrances from the past. There was to be no "third way" in Hungary.

In such a situation, the only possible route for the Grosz leadership was to make concessions to the path proposed by what was now clearly a social-democratic current under Pozsgay and Nyers. Economic legislation speeded up the tempo of market reforms already initiated under the old leadership. Thus a new Company Law was introduced from the start of 1989 allowing the general establishment of joint stock companies, the aim of which was to create a competitive capital market. The number of employees allowed in a private enterprise rose from 30 to 500 and foreign firms were now permitted to buy up entire Hungarian companies. During the summer of 1988 a radical austerity programme was agreed which reduced subsidies on consumer goods and envisaged a threefold increase in unemployment to around 100,000. Politically, the Central Committee in February of 1989 accepted the principle of a multi-party system. At the Fourteenth Party Congress, held 6-9 October 1989, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was renamed the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP). It now committed itself to a western-style welfare state/market-based economy in a multi-party parliamentary system. Rezsö Nyers was elected party president. The "radicals" now had control of the party.

During the three years while the party underwent a profound crisis of leadership and strategy, the country at large remained peaceful. Numerous surveys reported growing discontent as the scope of the general malaise became evident. The country "enjoyed" the highest suicide rate in the world and the highest per capita consumption of hard liquor. Official figures put the number of alcoholics at over half a million. The World Health Organisation published figures which showed that Hungary had the highest mortality rate in the 35-44 age group, in the context of an overall declining life expectancy. Crime in Budapest rose by 30% in the early 1980s. The mass of the people remained passive. It was the intellectuals who began to organise.

In September 1987 populist intellectuals held a meeting to which Pozsgay was invited to speak. This meeting established the Hungarian Democratic Forum. Its manifesto was revealed by Pozsgay in an interview in November, in what was a public challenge to Kadar. In March 1988 a group of law students established the Federation of Young Democrats (FYD), a challenger to the old Communist Youth League, membership of which

was rapidly declining. Within a few weeks the FYD claimed over a thousand members. The government banned the organisation but the ban was ineffectual. In early May the dissidents of the democratic opposition, the so-called "urbanist intellectuals", set up an open organisation, the Network of Free Initiatives, later to become the Association of Free Democrats. Other parties were either established or "revived", among them the Independent Smallholders' Party, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party and many others.

In January 1989 the government announced that Imre Nagy would be given an official burial and a few days later a committee headed by Pozsgay described the 1956 events as a "popular uprising". In May 1989 Hungary began to dismantle the barbed wire fence on its border with Austria. A quarter of a million people attended the reburial of Nagy and the government entered into round-table talks with the opposition. In September parliament introduced six bills dealing with the establishment of political parties, electoral law, the setting up of a constitutional court and reform of the penal code. Presidential elections were planned for November 1989 and Pozsgay's aim was to be elected president. But the Free Democrats and Young Democrats opposed the election and collected more than the 100,000 signatures necessary to force a referendum on the issue. The outcome was a victory for the Free Democrats. Now the campaign began for the elections in the spring of 1990.

Meanwhile, within two months of the October conference which gave victory to the liberal reformers and a new name to the party, a "revived HSWP" announced its existence. In January 1990 it published a programme which expressed a commitment to social ownership and opposition to "domination by the big capitalist monopolies". The revived party was marginalised in the subsequent elections (3.7%). At the October conference of the HSP a People's Democratic Platform presented a left-wing alternative to what it called the "old conservative Stalinist forces" and the right wing under Pozsgay. It was members of the People's Democratic Platform who, along with other non-party individuals and left-wing members of other parties, established the Left Alternative which is active in promoting the establishment of workers' councils in the enterprises (dealt with below).

But just as the logic of the party establishment under Grosz had left it with no consistent alternative to that proposed by the social-democratic marketeers under Pozsgay and Nyers, so now the HSP was offering no recognisable alternative to that being offered the Hungarian electorate by the new parties of the intellectuals which had blossomed into existence during 1987-88. The revision of party policy on 1956, pushed for by Pozsgay, only served to further undermine what remained of the legitimacy of the old party regime with which Pozsgay was associated. The populists in the HFD were not to be outdone in their defence of the Hungarians in Romania. The Free Democrats and the HDF offered not only more radical market policies but also enjoyed the support of the political elites in Western Europe and North America. The Western European social democratic parties had thrown their weight behind the tiny Hungarian Social Democratic Party, formed in January 1989. A poll in March-April 1989 gave the HSWP only 26% support in Budapest, where 20% of the population live.

Of course, things seem inevitable only in hindsight. At the end of 1987, the well-known dissident, Janos Kis, wrote in the opposition magazine, *Beszelo*, that "a neutral, multiparty, independent Hungary remains but a distant illusion."[8]

What assessment is one to make of the role of the Pozsgay-Nyers current during this period? Clearly, they reflected the disillusionment in the Hungarian establishment intelligentsia and of economic officials with any form of traditional central planning. They were the most clear-sighted in the party in recognising the consequences of ideological disintegration, the economic/social crisis and the international effects of Gorbachevism and they sought, in a pragmatic and opportunist way, to retain a share of power for the party through some form of coalition, preferably with the populist currents organised in the HDF. Their own ideological development during the preceding period precluded any attempt to find a "third way" (such as that favoured at the time by the reformed party in the GDR under Gysi) or to offer themselves as defenders of working-class interest during the difficult transition period (the Romanian ex-communists under Iliescu have adopted this stance, though with questionable sincerity). In fact, at the HSWP conference in October 1989, Pozsgay unsuccessfully sought to commit the party to banning any organisation in the factories (a law to this effect was passed by the HSP-dominated parliament only one week later).

To summarise: the stagnation and social/economic crisis which resulted from the failure of the regime's economic policy undermined the pillars of Kadarist stability—reasonable living standards for the masses and acquiescence of the intellectuals. Since a "Chinese solution" was not an option, the party, under its liberal democratic-reformist wing, opted for a parliamentary capitalist-market solution which corresponded to the wishes of the intellectuals and many of its own officials. In the elections of April 1990 the HSP was defeated overwhelmingly by the two main pro-capitalist parties, the Democratic Forum, with which Pozsgay had once tried to collaborate, and the Free Democrats, led by the dissidents of the 1970s.

Before looking at these new political forces that organised themselves and played a crucial role in the Hungarian transition, it is essential to mention, if only briefly, the role played by historical memory in undermining Kadarist legitimacy. In Hungary, as throughout most of Eastern Europe and in the Soviet republics during this period, the question of history plays a crucial role. Whatever its ultimate significance may be, as a surrogate for political programme, as a means of creating or recreating national identity, in the Hungarian context it meant first and foremost 1956. Pozsgays's concession, in 1989, that 1956 had not been a counter-revolution but a "popular uprising", a concession later accepted by the party leadership, completely undermined the legitimacy of the Kadarist regime. Nagy's rehabilitation and the mass demonstration of emotion at the time of his reburial in June 1989 served as a further

demonstration of the significance of this concession. Not only did it expose the illegitimacy of the regime, it also established a basis for a very broad consensus across the whole political spectrum with respect to Hungary's independence and a multi-party system. Not only György Krasso's October Party, on the left, but also Pozsgay and the "free enterprise" parties on the right professed their adherence to the symbol of 1956. The renewal of the ideas of 1956 was, however, a very selective one. Nagy's version of reform communism was not revived, while the workers and the workers' councils, what for many has been the real meaning of 1956, remained buried in collective amnesia.

New political forces

The "liberalism" of the Kadar era did not extend to permitting the formation of independent political associations or parties. The Communist Party's monopoly of power was a core element of the system which was breached in Hungary, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, only in the final stages of the system's demise.

Hungary, throughout the 1970s, had had its small group of public dissidents. Urban intellectuals, some with a Marxist background, they published samizdat, established links with Western left-wing and liberal-democratic groups and, although harassed by the regime, were never considered a political threat. Among them were a large number of economists, sociologists and philosophers and their writings during the 1970s and 1980s were an important source of analysis and information for the Western left concerned with the issues of socialism and democracy in Eastern Europe. In the 1980s the issues of peace and ecology broadened the scope of the independent groups and led to connections with the West European peace movements and environmental groups. In May 1988, they established the Network of Free Initiatives, an above-ground political organisation which, in November of that year, was reformed as a political party, the Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD). They distinguished themselves, as a political group, by their rejection of all forms of economic nationalism or separatism or of any "third", specifically Hungarian road, by their emphatic identification with Western cultural and political values and by their hard-nosed insistence on the need for unlimited foreign capitalist penetration of the Hungarian economy. They were closely allied with the Federation of Young Democrats who had a similar, if somewhat more radical, approach to the issues of marketisation and Hungarian independence.

Although the dissident intellectuals of the AFD were well established as a group before May 1988, they were not the first to establish themselves as a (potential) political party. This took place in September 1987, with the formation of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF). The background of the intellectuals who established the Forum was quite different from that of the dissident urban intellectuals who established the AFD. Critical, but not "dissident" writers in the populist tradition, they emphasised the values of the nation and the family, saw the Soviet system as "alien to the nation" and were concerned that foreign capital should not have too great a share of Hungarian industry. They described themselves in their electoral programme as a "democratic national centre party", incorporating "christian-democratic ideas of the French or West German type" with "middle-class liberal values" which put it "close to the Democratic Party of the United States". Although there were undoubtedly anti-semitic manifestations among some of its supporters, the HDF rejected the charge that its "popular-national" approach was a guise for anti-semitism. On fundamental economic and social issues there appears to be very little difference of substance between the two main anti-communist parties, with the Forum perhaps cautious of the Free Democrats' apparent commitment to unbridled economic liberalism. The HDF is not a throwback to pre-war nationalist thinking and, although nationalist writers like Istvan Csurka have been prominent in the Forum from the beginning, they are not likely to be a dominant force. In both its policies and leaders, the HDF defends capitalist modernisation, a welfare state and parliamentary democratic institutions and sees its task as bringing Hungary back into the Western cultural tradition.

Right from the beginning in 1987, and in the subsequent period leading up to the elections in 1990, there was a certain amount of overt hostility between these two main rivals to the HSWP/HSP. The AFD leaders (Janos Kis, Laszlo Rajk, Balint Nagy, Gabor Demszky, Miklos Haraszti and many others) had openly opposed the regime as dissidents for many years, with all that this implied in terms of careers, police harassment, restricted travel possibilities, etc. The Forum leaders (Jozef Antal, Istvan Csurka, many well-known writers and artists), although not party members, had held reasonably important positions in Hungary's cultural and intellectual life. Pozsgay had been invited to speak at the inaugural meeting of the Forum in the village of Lakitelek in 1987 but the dissidents had not been invited. The Free Democrats accused the Forum of wanting to do a deal with the reformed communists about sharing power. There were suggestions that the Forum's attitude was determined by the fact that many of the Free Democratic leaders were Jewish. These hostilities, however, were not based on fundamental political differences.

In fact a basic unity among all the political forces at the top was a feature of this first phase in the Hungarian transition, a feature which it shared with other Eastern European countries. The new elite groups that formed themselves around parties and contested the Hungarian elections were not articulating already existing (or conflicting) social interests. The relation of these parties and groups to society was very tenuous, hence their programmes had a very abstract character. The decision of the ex-communists, the HSP, to break their organisational links with the factories appeared to be making a virtue of this abstraction. In this type of situation national and historical symbols, moral stances and utopian projections (Europe, the market, Western values) assume a greater importance than articulated social alternatives.

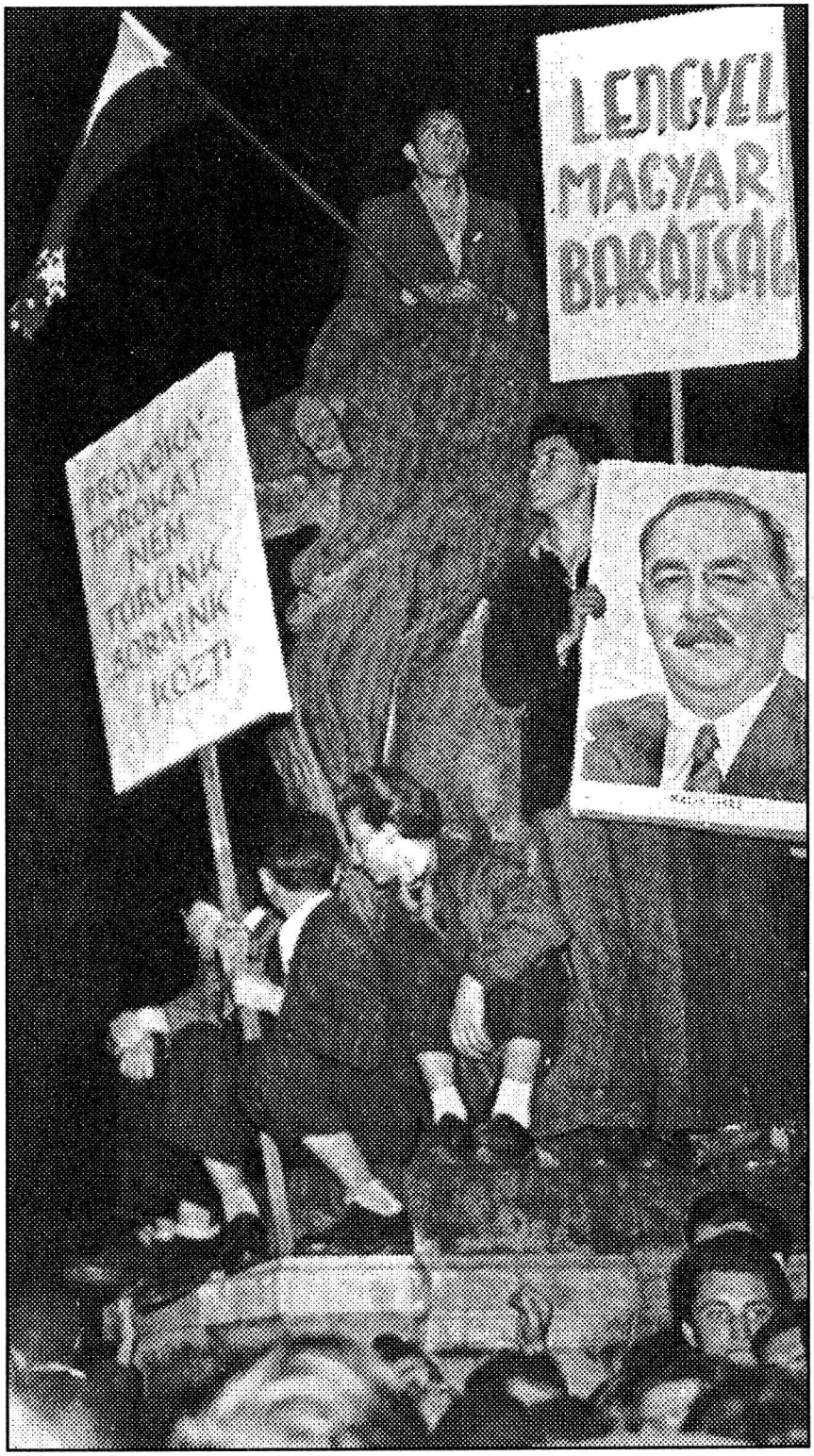
These two parties, which between them captured more than two thirds of the vote in the April election, were able to capitalise on the widespread dissatisfaction inside the working class concerning deterioration in living standards

and bleak prospects for the future, the equally widespread disillusionment among the intelligentsia (including in the Communist Party itself) with any form of "socialist economic planning" and the belief that only the market and links with the West offered any hope of prosperity. At the same time, they were more in tune, especially the Forum, with certain key aspects of modern Hungarian political culture—self-identification as a Western society, resentment at the limitations imposed on national life after 1947 and the "imposed compromise" of 1956, and concern for the Hungarian diaspora.

During the period after 1987, quite a number of political groups and parties were established but none of them, for a variety of different reasons, succeeded in establishing a significant base in Hungarian society. Some of the more right-wing of those attempted to establish a continuity with pre-1947 traditions, in particular the Independent Smallholders' Party (ISP), established in November 1988, which won around 11% of the popular vote and became a coalition partner of the Democratic Forum in the new government. The ISP sought to create a rural base for itself and distinguished itself within the Hungarian political spectrum by demanding that the land be returned to its owners according to the 1947 registers. In the 1945 elections, the Smallholders had won 57% of the vote, against the Communist Party's 17%. But 45 years on, any legitimacy conveyed by the past had little purchase on the ordinary Hungarian, whose political vision was focused on the future, the market and the West. The structure of rural Hungary has also radically changed since 1945. The reforms attempted in industry had been implemented much earlier and more successfully in agriculture. Three quarters of the agricultural workforce are part of cooperatives (average size: 4,000 hectares). This cooperative structure has allowed a high level of mechanisation and a level of productivity close to Western standards with obvious consequences for rural living standards. Private-plot production has been encouraged and is the source of around 34% of Hungary's agricultural output. Only around 6% of the agricultural workforce are professional private farmers. The agricultural sector has, in fact, been very successful. Hungary supplies its own population with most food items and is, at the same time, a net exporter of agricultural goods. Although there are undoubtedly problems in rural Hungary, and some reorganisation of the agricultural sector is inevitable, there is no large base for traditional peasant parties of the pre-1945 type.

The Christian Democratic People's Party, founded in April 1989, harked back to traditions even older than those of the Smallholders and it won a certain amount of support from Hungary's Catholics, winning little over five per cent in the election. Although around 60% of Hungarians are nominally Catholic, the church doesn't play any major role in Hungarian political life. Although precise figures are not available, a poll in 1980 suggested that only about 20% of the population regularly attended church and only 25% of those in the age group 20-29 professed any belief in God. The Church lost its landed property and its control of education in 1948 and today there are only eight catholic grammar schools in the country, with only around 6% of children getting a catholic education. From the 1960s (and especially after the death of Cardinal Mindszenty in 1974), relations between the church and the communist government improved. During the 1970s and 1980s a number of "base communities" began to be active in the church, critical of the cosy relationship between the hierarchy and the government and also involved in a campaign against military conscription. These groups were repressed by both the authorities and the church leaders and in 1983 the Vatican condemned them for

below: Hungarian students in 1956, carrying picture of Imre Nagy



"endangering the good relations between the government and the faithful". There are also around two million Calvinists, less than half a million Lutherans and around 80,000 Jews. Unlike Poland, therefore, there appears to have been a real decline in religion, a product of the social process in the countryside as well as in the urban centres. The Hungarian church, unlike its counterpart in the GDR, kept its distance from any kind of oppositional activity.

These six parties (Democratic Forum, Free Democrats and Young Democrats, Smallholders, Socialists and Christian Democrats) were the only ones to poll above the 5% hurdle in the first round of voting. The anti-communist centre parties most closely identified with the Western model, the parties without a past, were the clear winners.

Socialists and social democrats

The ideological and political development inside the HSWP/HSP has been outlined already. In its programme for the 1990 election the HSP proposed a market economy extending "not only to products but to the fundamental factors of production", mixed forms of ownership, and a constitutional welfare state. It claimed continuity with "the socialist reform movement whose activity was started in 1953" (i.e. The Nagy current). Like other attempts to claim legitimacy from Hungary's past, it was a dubious one. At the time of the 1989 conference, the party had 750,000 members, 17% of the total population. At the time of the election it claimed a membership of 50,000. Its poll of 8.5% in the election showed that it had lost any significant social base beyond its own membership.

The new/old HSWP, which polled 3.7% in the first round of voting, described itself as "a modern Marxist political party", and claimed to represent the ordinary members of the old party who "bear no responsibility for the mistakes and crimes of the narrow circle of leaders".

One of the interesting features of the Hungarian transition was the small amount of support for social democracy. The Hungarian Social Democratic Party, founded at the beginning of 1989 and, later that year, accepted into the Socialist International, polled just less than the old "unreformed" HSWP, 3.6%. The party was formed rather late and suffered from a lot of internal divisions during its first year. It had no base in the factories or trade unions and, like the HSP, made no attempt to present itself as a party of the working class. It shared the consensus of all the other parties on the need for a market economy, called for the "liquidation of uneconomic enterprises" and for a "controlled privatisation" which would "transform selected state companies into shareholding companies which should be sold to a cash-paying real owner". Its electoral programme, published in January 1990, supported returning the land "to the original owners, and their descendants, of 1947-48" and the president of the HSDP, in an interview just before the election, saw one of the main tasks of the new Hungary as being "the creation of a new, national, entrepreneurial class". The confused, opportunistic and rather right-wing character of the party's policies prompted some of the original leaders and some few hundred members to establish a new party, the Independent Social Democratic Party (ISDP) in November 1989. The ISDP stood few candidates in the election but, unlike the "official" HSDP, one if its candidates actually survived to stand again in the second round of voting. Neither party elected any candidates to parliament. The ex-communist Hungarian Socialist Party has also applied for acceptance in the Socialist International.

The working class

The Hungarian working class were only passive participants in the transition from communist rule in Hungary. Hungarians were well aware of their relatively high levels of consumption compared with the recent past and with the other countries of Eastern Europe. About 90% of all households had televisions, washing machines and refrigerators. Food supplies are much better than fifteen or twenty years ago. This is particularly true of the 20% of the workforce engaged in agriculture. The shortage of labour and the relative ease in changing jobs has meant that the workers, especially the skilled workers in industry, were in a relatively strong bargaining position vis-à-vis managers, especially on the question of wages. With the increasing autonomy of enterprises, and especially after the Solidarity experience in Poland, the official trade unions were no longer simply conduits of party policy but increasingly important players in the horizontal as well as vertical bargaining that took place between enterprises and between enterprises and ministries.

As conditions worsened during the 1980s, the workers turned more and more towards the second economy as a way of preserving standards. Hungarians worked longer hours than workers anywhere else in Eastern or Western Europe. In 1982 the regime had introduced "intra-enterprise contract groups" in state enterprises which allowed workers to rent equipment at negotiated rates for work after normal hours to fulfil contracts for their own or for another enterprise. Incomes were subject to taxation but exempt from wage regulation. Many thousands of such private work-partnerships were set up but, although useful from the regime's and management's point of view, they turned out to be simply a new form of overtime work.

Government austerity policies, increasing inflation, declining standards and bleak prospects for any future improvement led to widespread dissatisfaction but no organised protests or political action by the workers. The collapse from within of the old Kadarist leadership and the willingness of the social democratic/liberal current under Pozsgay and Nyers to make the political and market-orientated concessions demanded by the professional middle classes meant that there was also no popular mobilisation which could have activated or involved the workers, as happened, for instance, in Czechoslovakia. The measures planned by the new government, part of the deal with the IMF and other capitalist agencies, will involve further reductions in living standards, unemployment and increasing discrepancy of incomes. The task of persuading the industrial workers that such shocks are justified and worthwhile remains and is complicated by the fact that the mass of the workers involved in the big state industries (many of which are threatened

with redundancies and closures) have as yet not organised themselves independently or brought forward their own genuine leaders, which happened in Poland and is beginning to happen in the Soviet Union.

Independent trade unions have made their appearance but these are very small and, as yet, are organised almost exclusively among the intellectuals. The first was the Democratic Trade Union of Scientific Workers, set up in Budapest in May 1988 with little over one thousand members, most of them professors and administrators in the various scientific institutes and universities. In December 1988 a federation of these new unions, the Democratic League of Free Trade Unions, was established. At that time the League had five small affiliates with a membership of around 40,000 (the new members mainly workers in the media and teachers). At the time of the elections, the number of affiliated independent unions had risen to seventeen, but the number of members was not more than around 60,000. The independent unions had made no breakthrough into the organised industrial or manual workers. Although the statutes of the League describe it as "not depending on any party", in practice there is a close relationship between the League and the Free Democrats. A smaller organisation, Workers' Solidarity, affiliated to the League, represented an attempt by the Free Democrats to create some kind of base among the workers. One of its principal spokespersons, György Kerenyi, was a candidate for the Young Democrats in the election. So far, the mass of the workers remain organised in the traditional unions.

A new form of workers' organisation emerged 1988/89 with the creation of workers' councils a number of factories. In many cases these uncils were a response to threatened redundancies or closures. Both the Free Democrats and the Democratic Forum were involved in some of these councils, seeing in them a way of outflanking the official trade union (SZOT). In December 1989 a conference of council delegates was held which established a Federation of Workers' Councils. At the time of the elections about 40 councils were affiliated to the Federation, with a number of councils organised separately. Although the leadership of the Federation is made up of delegates from the various councils, a leading role in the council movement is being played by members of the Left Alternative, many members of which are also members of the People's Democracy Platform inside the Hungarian Socialist Party. Although the left sees the role of the councils as organs of self-management, there is by no means unanimity, either among the councils themselves or among the different political forces involved, about the role the councils should play. The coming to power of the Democratic Forum, which openly opposed any self-management role for the councils, will obviously affect the outcome of this debate.

The national question

The relationship between the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe made it inevitable that nationalist symbols and nationalist sentiments would be an important political factor in the transition from communist power. In the case of Hungary, the fate of the Hungarian community in Romania was an additional factor. This moderate nationalism was an important element in the political consensus.

One of the main reasons why this moderate nationalism did not take an extreme form was the fact that it was counterbalanced by another orientation central to the concerns of the new elite, namely Europe. Already at the beginning of the 1980s, intellectuals in Eastern Europe (Konrad in Hungary, Kundera in Czechoslovakia and many others) had begun a discussion about "Central Europe". A key element in the political profile of the new elite, including the old opposition, has been this pro-European orientation. This is not just a practical question (economic rationality, entry into the EEC, etc) but a much more general historical self-understanding. As Jadwiga Staniszkis has pointed out, this "Europism" of the new elite is accompanied by a nineteenth century, almost Hegelian concept of history[9]. According to this conception, Hungary is simply "returning to the true path of history"" which was interrupted in 1945. This involves the introduction (although at a more rapid pace) of the capitalist market mechanism that developed in Western Europe and the reproduction of the state political structures of these countries. Both are seen as "natural stages of historical development".

But herein lies one of the dilemmas of the transitional phase in Hungary (as in Poland and elsewhere). In its relations with and incorporation into the European system, Hungary has very little scope for independent action. From the point of view of investment, technology and credit, the European orientation is not just a cultural aspiration but a hard economic and social constraint. The danger is that the social and economic consequences of Western Europe's "colonisation" of the country will create severe political problems for the new elite. The political unity at the top, characteristic of the first political phase, will not last. This political unity has broken down much more quickly in Poland and in Czechoslovakia than in Hungary but it is inevitable here as well. Under such circumstances moderate nationalism could very quickly take on a more extreme form.

The future

Shortly after the election, the HDF came to an agreement with the main opposition party, the Free Democrats, over choice of President and a number of constitutional amendments which would make it easier for the three-party coalition to govern. The choice of President was Arpad Goencz, a writer and former Smallholder who had worked with Istvan Bibo in 1956 and had spent six years in prison under Kadar. The constitutional agreement limited to 20 the number of specific bills that would require a two-thirds majority in parliament (the government has only 58% of the seats in the house). In future the president will be elected by parliament for a four-year term. The agreement with the opposition will at least provide some political stability for the government in the period ahead (10).

The social and economic problems confronting the Hungarian people in the period ahead are immense. The Blue Riband Commission of econo-

mic experts which advises the government has drawn up an ambitious plan of privatisation. The goal is 35% privatisation in three years, with 75 to 80% in ten years. To appreciate the scale of this undertaking we must remember that the British Conservative government privatised only 5% of public assets in ten years. The Blue Riband Commission estimates that a large part of Hungary's $20 billion foreign debt could be offset by revenue from the sale of its public assets, estimated at $30 billion. But this assumes there are ready buyers for the big state enterprises. The European Commission responsible for coordinating Western economic aid to Eastern Europe has estimated that, in addition to aid, Hungary will need at least another $20 billion in investment capital and, even under such favourable circumstances, would not be in a position to apply for EC membership for at least another ten years. There is no suggestion that the $20 billion debt could be rescheduled, much less written off. The EC Commission's report was rather understating the situation when it said that the measures required would bring about a "significant increase in unemployment".

The aid for Hungary and Poland from the Group of 24 Western states, coordinated by the EC Commission, involving some ECU600 million for 1990, is not really intended for the Hungarian economy as a whole, to be administered by the democratically elected government as it sees fit. The EC regulations stipulate that this money "must benefit the private sector in particular" and must be met with counter-part funds, i.e. To get aid the Hungarian government would have to switch a large part of its own resources to backing private sector projects. Both the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the European Confederation of Trade Unions have publicly criticised the EC aid programme for ignoring the social problems that can only increase in Hungary as a result of the new measures. Already in 1990, an IMF agreement with Hungary was made conditional on the government withdrawing rent subsidies. Even the precise allocation of aid funds will not be entirely in the hands of the democratically elected government. As the EC document says, "the Commission will take steps to identify areas where such aid can be most useful". The coercive character of this aid and the pressure on the government to push through austerity measures will create tremendous problems for a government whose legitimacy depends on democratic consent. The uncertainties are increased in Hungary by the fact that the working class remained largely passive throughout the transition and by the fact that none of the parties in parliament has any organised base inside the working class.

The Hungarian nation was ruled from Vienna before 1918 and from Moscow after 1945. The revolutions of 1848 and 1956 were attempts to shake off this national servitude. Both failed. The real test of the "peaceful revolution" of 1990 will be whether it really allows the Hungarian people to freely and democratically determine their own future, economically and socially as well as politically.

Footnotes:

1. Tamas Bauer, "Reforming the Planned Economy: The Hungarian Experience", in Jan S. Prybyla (ed), *Privatizing and Marketizing Socialism*, (January 1990 edition of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science)*, p. 106.

2. According to W. Brus and K. Laski, "...the periods of acceleration and slowdown of growth in Hungary correspond quite closely to the rest of Eastern Europe (apart from the USSR and Yugoslavia), which remained essentially unreformed; if anything the Hungarian slowdown was more pronounced, with 3.2 per cent of growth annually in 1976-80 against an average of 3.8 for Eastern Europe, and 1.4 in 1981-85 against 2.4 for Eastern Europe." (W. Brus and K. Laski, *From Marx to the Market: Socialism in Search of an Economic System*, Oxford 1989, p. 65).

3. Janos Kornai, "The Hungarian Reform Process: Visions, Hopes and Reality", *Journal of Economic Literature*, December 1986, p. 1700.

4. Tamas Bauer, "Reforming the Planned Economy", p. 111.

5. Mihaly Vajda, *The State and Socialism*, London 1981, p. 126.

6. The letter is reproduced in *East European Reporter*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1988, pp. 49-51.

7. Rezsö Nyers, in *Magyar Ifjúság*, 18 December 1987.

8. Janos Kis, in *Beszélo*, no. 19, 1987. Translated in *East European Reporter*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 44-47.

9. Jadwiga Staniszkis, "Dilemmata der Demokratie in Osteuropa", in Rainer Deppe et al (eds.), *Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa*, Frankfurt 1991, p. 343.

10. This agreement provoked a certain amount of surprise and hostile comment. According to György Dalos, a supporter of the Free Democrats: "I have a real feat that we are beginning a kind of politics which is somehow not really democratic. For instance, during the election campaign the Democratic Forum was our main opponent and there were highly emotional statements made on both sides. We seemed to be arch enemies. Then, suddenly, a week after the second round of elections, there were secret negotiations between both parties; not even between the leading bodies of both parties but simply between two party leaders. Within three hours every misunderstanding had been cleared up and, by means of certain compromises, a constructive co-operation in parliament was agreed on. The party membership doesn't know what those compromises were." Interview with György Dalos in Deppe, *Demokratischer Umbruch*, p. 189.

The power struggle in the Soviet Union has reached a decisive turning point. The sight of Red Army tanks murdering their way through the Baltic barricades, seemingly without the consent of a President whose legitimacy within the country has reached rock bottom is only the latest, if most visible, indication of the kind of anarchy gripping the old "monolithic" union.

BEYOND THE BARRICADES

The Ways and Means of Resolving the National Question in the USSR

by JEREMY LESTER

A NEW "TIME OF TROUBLES" has hit the Soviet Union and hit her hard, threatening to tear her apart like never before. While old institutions are crumbling almost by the week, new ones are simply not emerging with any degree of authority; and while the higher bodies of authority continue to argue amongst themselves, even the smallest of localities attempt to follow a separatist road of "splendid isolation". In short, the "lebanonisation of the USSR" that Gorbachev warned of last October is fast becoming a reality.

A viable solution clearly has to be found; it has to be found quickly, but it also has to be seen to have the potential of providing a long-term degree of stability. A military-dominated dictatorship clearly would not provide the kind of solution that is ultimately needed and will not therefore form part of the following analysis, even though the possibility of this solution being adopted (in one form or another, with or without Gorbachev) cannot be discounted.

It is possible to identify four remaining options, all of which have found a certain degree of support as long-term solutions to the current anarchic impasse. Two of the options amount to breaking up the Union into various numbers of component parts; and the remaining two favour the retention of the Union subject to differing degrees of reform. Both sets of proposals, meanwhile, can also be differentiated by a time category that distinguishes between an abrupt and gradual form of disunion and an abrupt and gradual form of union.

Option 1: Abrupt Disunion

According to this particular option, the long suppressed national republics have little, if anything at all, to gain by prolonging the death throes of the existing Soviet Union. Nationalist forces have been campaigning for as swift a move as possible towards formal independence and have attempted to surround themselves with the trappings of an independent nation state in the hope that popular nationalist fervour will offset the inevitable short-term hardships. A certain degree of trust continues to be placed in the hands of foreign (mainly Western) governments to give a positive response to an action they themselves have seemingly advocated for many decades, and to wealthy foreign creditors to provide the financial resources to sustain the movement towards independence.

All of the major republics in the USSR now contain advocates of the UDI approach. In Latvia, Estonia, Moldova and Armenia, nationalist-controlled parliaments have stopped short of officially pronouncing their formal separation from the USSR, but have made it clear that this is their ultimate goal. In Lithuania and Georgia, meanwhile, outright declarations of UDI are a reality.

This kind of approach to disunion is laden with conflict. Firstly, it relies very firmly on an ultra-radical promotion of nationalist and patriotic fervour which cannot but help to create a sense of superiority, intolerance and open hostility towards the minority national and ethnic groups within each respective republic. And secondly, the manner of this approach "invites" the hard-line ideological and military reactionaries throughout the country to make a determined stand, and centrist politicians like Gorbachev are either squeezed out completely or are forced to align themselves with one of the two extremes.

The effect of this approach, then, is all too clear. In the three Baltic republics, Georgia and Moldova, non-indigenous nationalities have been "provoked" into a direct response. In some cases, this provocation has been initiated by clear and pernicious attempts by the indigenous nationality to subvert the rights of what are often considered to be "sub-cultural" groups within the Republic. This, for example, would apply to the treatment meted out to the Gagauz community by the Moldovans; to the Abkhazians, Adzhars and Ossetians by the Georgians; and in some instances to the Polish community by the Lithuanians ("the Soviet Bantustans" as they are rather disparagingly called). In other cases, the provocation has been initiated by conservative ideological reactionaries who have seen the promotion of ethnic and nationalist tension within an independent-minded Republic as the greatest force for destabilisation; a destabilisation from which only they can gain any real benefit. This would seemingly apply to some (though not all) of the actions recently perpetrated by the strong Russian communities in Moldova (on the left bank of the Dniester) and throughout the Baltic Republics.

At the end of the day, however, no matter what the initial source of provocation, the result is always the same. Certain basic, fundamental political rights of the non-indigenous groups are restricted (in Lithuania last September, for exam-

ding non-Lithuanians from becoming members of political parties); basic ethnic and national allegiances are hardened, and worst of all, the basic social and economic concerns facing *all* members of the society are swept even further under the proverbial carpet.

In short, then, the UDI approach, as a solution to the current crisis in the Soviet Union, is extremely problematical. National unity and the desire for nationhood become ends in themselves, rather than a means by which social justice for the population as a whole can be attained. And by its own intrinsic logic many basic rights become suppressed and subverted.

Certainly many of the actions taken by Landsbergis in Lithuania and Gamsakhurdia in Georgia would seem to support this. The fact that their approach is tacitly supported by the likes of Alexander Solzhenitsyn only gives added weight to this conclusion.

In his essay on the National Question ("How are we to reconstitute Russia—a Modest [sic] Contribution"), published in the prestigious *Literaturnaya Gazeta*[1] and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* last September, Solzhenitsyn comes out in favour of a particularly perverse kind of Russian UDI. Russia should immediately separate itself from the existing USSR in order to set up a new "Union of Russia"—a Union that would have the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Russian-speaking part of Kazakhstan incorporated within it (whether they like it or not). Should any of the other Republics or nationalities not want to *voluntarily* separate from the existing USSR, then force will be necessary. For Solzhenitsyn, there is simply no way that the Russians (or at least the Slavs) can live any longer with the other Soviet peoples. The burden imposed on Russia, he argues, has dragged on far too long. As for the smaller ethnic groups and nationalities who have long been annexed to a "Greater Russia"? Well, here at least, Solzhenitsyn can afford to be a bit more magnanimous. The Tatars, the Bahkirs, the Udmurts, the Komis, the Mordovians, the Yakuts and all the other smaller peoples simply have no choice about going anywhere else. "We are not eager for this", writes Solzhenitsyn, but they will be allowed to stay in Russia.

Option 2: Coordinated Disunion

If the first option for disunion has a built-in tendency to aggravate existing ethnic-related problems and to provide the most radical and violent backlash by those who wish to preserve the Union "at all costs", the second option takes a more measured approach.

The basis of this option is the belief that a federal system for the USSR, with a specific set of authorities at the centre, has outlived its usefulness in terms of further modernisation and development. The trend denoting a movement of power away from the centre to the localities is not a temporary phenomenon, but a permanent one. The central authorities, therefore, have a choice. Either they can try to resist this trend and take the responsibility for the ever-increasing decline into anarchy and civil war that will inevitably follow from their determination to hold on to the reins of power; or they can effect a controlled and peaceful transition to a new structure, which has as its fundamental goal the creation of a new set of legitimate *nation states* with viable institutions of power at their respective centres.

To help achieve this goal, the "gradualists" propose a programme of controlled devolution, not down to all levels of the Soviet hierarchy, but strictly to the existing Union Republic level. Various plans have recently been put forward by the "gradualists" in the Soviet media and elsewhere. One, in particular, appeared in *Izvestia* in September last year and was written by the well-known liberal commentator, Adranik Migranyan.[2]

The first step in Migranyan's proposal would be to establish a Coordinating Committee, composed of all the republican heads of state, with the current President of the USSR as its Chairman. This Coordinating Committee would then unanimously agree on the most viable territorial demarcation of the new independent states, taking into account long-standing territorial disputes as well as current ethnic compositions. To achieve a peaceful resolution of this transition to a new form of statehood, an inter-nationality armed force would be created under the direction of the Coordinating Committee, which would be deployed throughout the old USSR so as to help prevent the development of any festering inter-ethnic and inter-nationality conflicts on the territory of a former Union Republic.

Each new nation state could then concentrate on building up its domestic infrastructure and on establishing the contours of its future relations with "foreign powers". A Central Coordinating Committee would continue to exist at this stage to facilitate the self-dissolution of the old USSR and to help establish new horizontal links, but it would not have any capacity to govern or rule. In time, this Coordinating Committee could either dissolve itself completely, or, if this was not entirely desirable, it could develop a role for itself very much in line with that played by the British Commonwealth.

The main advocates of this gradual demise of the USSR in its present form tend to come from the Westernised, liberal-democratic wing of the political spectrum. Apart from seeing the Western type of nation state as the *only* kind of entity around which a majority of people will be able to form a common and stable identity, they also clearly envisage that the internal structure of a typical Western European nation state is the only feasible for embodying the traditional Western values of liberal democracy, pluralism, civil society and market capitalism.

The logistical problems involved with this approach, however, are enormous. Even supposing that a President of the USSR accepted in principle the need to dismember the current geo-political entity, the prospects of him achieving this in anything like a peaceful, controlled and stable climate are remote. And, of course, this approach (like the first option) still begs the fundamental question: is the nation state, as we know it, the supreme form of human organisation and development? Is it really not possible to advance beyond this narrow structure?

These questions may be old-fashioned today,

even (or should one say *particularly*) for Marxists. The likes of Regis Debray, Ernest Gellner and Tom Nairn (amongst others) may well be right by pointing out in their different ways that in many instances the promotion of nationalism and the pursuit of nationhood is the best possible form of self-defence. But in the Soviet context, where does one draw the line between self-defence and self-destruction? Or between self-defence and chauvinistic oppression by one and the same nationality? As Eric Hobsbawm commented more than a decade ago[3], and as Gorbachev himself has argued on occasions, the notion of complete independence being achieved in the national struggle today is simply a form of (self-) deception. A Lithuania, for example, that was no longer dependent on the USSR would not be *in*dependent; its dependence would merely have been transferred elsewhere.

Of course, if this is the demonstrable will of the Lithuanian people, then so be it. But the questions that are asked of them must surely reflect the underlying truth involved here. They should not be asked, in other words, "Do you want dependence or independence?", but *"which* kind of dependence do you want?" "Do we have sufficient trust in the reforms that are being undertaken in the USSR to make it perhaps worth our while staying where we are and using the influence that we have to get the best possible deal for the Republic within this proposed new federation?" "Or, if not, do we recognise and are we fully prepared to accept the consequences of the other kind of dependence on offer? A dependence benign in appearance, even generous to a fault. But one whose power can be well camouflaged; one whose power is out of our control entirely; and one whose power is often totally unaccountable to democratic forces of any kind; that power being the international economy and the forces who control it, like the World Bank, the IMF and American and Japanese dominated corporations."

Option 3: The Gorbachev Approach

It has been mentioned above that the prospect of a President of the USSR, in the foreseeable future, deliberately embarking upon a path of dismembering the country is very remote. Gorbachev has effectively staked his personal and political future on trying to keep the USSR together. He may or may not allow individual republics to break away from the Union in the future *if* they adhere to the (very protracted) process of secession that was drawn up last year. But beyond this concession he will not go. The order of the day is the preservation of as much of the Union as possible in a reformed, but tightly-knit structure.

The actual manner in which Gorbachev has envisaged salvaging the Union has been outlined in the new draft Union Treaty (which will replace the original Treaty of 1922), submitted to the USSR Supreme Soviet in the latter part of November last year. A late convert to the idea that the country actually needed a new Treaty of Union, Gorbachev has nevertheless promoted a wide degree of consultation on this issue over the past year. According to the Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Rafik Nishanov, in his speech to the 4th Congress of People's Deputies in December, no fewer than seven draft treaties were independently prepared by the prestigious Institute of State and Law, three drafts were submitted by the Inter-Regional group of parliamentarians and one draft was prepared by representatives of alternative political parties. Consultations were also held with representatives from all the Union Republics and autonomous formations as well as 25 new political parties and movements.[4]

The extent of these discussions and the range of participants included has clearly influenced the nature of the proposals that have been put forward. Imagine, for example, a jigsaw composed of pieces not from one puzzle but from many different ones and you will have a vision of something like the first draft Union Treaty.

The collective embodiment of sovereignty is to be entrusted in the hands of the President himself, assisted by his deputy, with the back-up of a number of executive institutions comprising a Security Council, a new-look Cabinet of Ministers and a revamped Federation Council. Sovereignty at this level basically entails ultimate decision-making control in matters concerning the Union's constitution and its foreign and defence policies.

The key coordinating body linking the centre with the largest republics is to be the Federation Council, which will comprise all the respective highest state officials. Apart from the Council's input into the realm of collective or union sovereignty, it will also have the task of dialectically combining specific republican interests with the interests of the Union as a whole and will be responsible for arbitrating national and ethnic disputes. All decisions adopted by it will require a two-thirds majority and will be binding on the President, who must enact them by decree.

Below the arena of union sovereignty, it is then proposed that there should be a realm of interests, the fulfilment and implementation of which should fall within the ambit of the centre and the republics *jointly*. The main body of coordination here will be the respective Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the respective Prime Ministers. This joint "realm of interests" includes the implementation of a single financial, crediting and monetary policy based on a common currency; the drafting and execution of the national budget; the implementation of national economic programmes; the establishment of development; funds and emergency relief funds; the management of a single fuel, energy and transportation system; the management of defence institutions; space research; a national system of communications and information, meteorology, cartography and metrology; the implementation of coordinated environmental policies; welfare programmes; culture and education programmes; scientific research and technological development; and finally, the coordination of foreign economic activities and customs; the implementation of measures ensuring legality, the rights and freedoms of all citizens, the protection of property and public order and the combating of crime.

For the new-look republics, meanwhile, they will be able to independently determine their own budgets and taxation levels; their own state structure and administrative-territorial divisions;

and their own system of administration. The laws of the republics will be deemed to prevail in all questions except those assigned to the jurisdiction of the Union, with a Constitutional Court to arbitrate any disputes. Finally, the republics are to be considered the owners of the land and the natural resources on their territory and also of state property "with the exception of that part which is necessary for realising the powers of the USSR."

To hold all this together, the treaty also provides a range of principles by which the component sovereign parts are to be guided. These are, first and foremost, the recognition of the primacy of human rights (as proclaimed in the UN Universal Declaration), the value of having a fully functioning civil society and a reverence for a law-based state. All Soviet citizens are also to be guaranteed unhindered access to information, freedom of religious belief, freedom of property rights and other political and personal freedoms. References to class unity and socialism, meanwhile (which pervaded the 1922 Treaty), are noticeable by their total absence; the justification being that ideological tags are inappropriate for a state treaty of this kind.

Clearly, then, the crucial question is this: can this structure provide a framework around which the diverse interests in today's USSR could unite on a voluntary basis? According to the nationalist-controlled parliaments of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia and Moldova the answer is still categorically "no". According to the parliaments of the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Byelorussia the answer ranges from a less categorical "no" to a "maybe", depending on major issues of concern being resolved in the meantime. And even in the remaining Central Asian parliaments, one would be hard pressed to find any sign of outright enthusiasm for it. If a recent opinion poll is to be believed, however, a considerable majority of the Soviet *population* (73%) do, in fact, support the idea of keeping the existing Union together. And certainly Gorbachev himself must have a sufficient degree of confidence in the Treaty for him to warrant its submission to a nation-wide referendum, the result of which he is prepared to stand or fall by, provided the republican parliaments are as well.

What, then, will determine the debate in the coming weeks and months? One of the biggest criticisms, perhaps not surprisingly, concerns the degree of power to be maintained by the centre and the manner in which that power is to be structured amongst the executive branches of government, rather than the legislative branches. According to Ruslan Khasbulatov, First Deputy Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, the treaty proposals are nothing but "a big coffin for all of us to lie in".[5] For Dimitri Volkogonov, the historian, "the main thing is to cut sharply the number of directive functions of the centre, reducing them mainly to the coordination of cooperative efforts."[6] And for Boris Yeltsin, the proposals leave too much personal power in the hands of the President, and on a broader level, leave too much unsaid concerning the precise manner in which joint Union-Republic areas of responsibility are to be managed in practice. Other

political figures and commentators, meanwhile, have focused on the lack of precise detail concerning the division of property rights and the vagueness of some of the formulations concerning rights of republican citizenship.

The other major bone of contention has concerned the right now granted to the lower autonomous units (below the Union Republic level) to be able to sign the Treaty also as a sovereign party should they choose to do so. This change of status for the autonomous units first came to light in a law of April 26, 1990 ("On Delimiting Powers Between the USSR and the Subjects of the Federation"). If a particular Union Republic, like Georgia for example, was adamant that it would not sign the Union Treaty either now or in the foreseeable future, the smaller autonomous units within the Georgian Republic (the South Ossetians, the Abkhazians and the Adzhars) could themselves unilaterally express a desire to remain within the Union and could go on to join the Union, if necessary, *without* the consent of their parent Republic.

According to Rafik Nishanov, this "sensitive, delicate and difficult" matter has arisen due to the insistent demands made on the central authorities by the autonomous formations themselves, nearly all of whom have been independently upgrading their status within the Union in recent months.

With their present territorial structure, however, virtually none of the titular nationalists making up the autonomous entities form a majority. If they therefore try to make use of their new status with regard to the Union Treaty this is clearly going to exacerbate many of the current tensions; and nowhere more so than in the Russian Federation where the vast majority of the lower autonomous units are situated. Consider, for example, the proclamation by the parliament of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Region (in the north of the RSFSR) last October, which upgraded its status to a Union Republic. At the time of the decision it was apparent to many observers that the parliament was very much in the hands of "conservative forces" opposed to Yeltsin's leadership of the Russian Federation. By taking this decision when it did, therefore, speculation immediately arose that this was a deliberate attempt to raise the prospect of Russia's own dismemberment if the political leadership of the Republic didn't fall into line. And if this provocation wasn't enough, one should also bear in mind that the indigenous Nentsy population making up this supposedly new "sovereign republic" amounts to less than 5% of the total population.

This clearly is an extreme illustration of the kind of effect the law of April 1990 and its recognition within the draft Union Treaty might have. But the principles of the matter involved here could easily be repeated (and indeed are being so) in all the larger autonomous units. There can be no doubt that national groups like the Tatars and the Bashkirs, for example, deserve to have their nationality status formally recognised in some independent, sovereign category. But if, as seems possible, they are being used as pawns in a game of Divide and Rule between the centre and the Russian Federation leadership, then there is little hope of the Union Treaty in its present draft form providing the long-term stability that the country demands.

Despite the enormity of the criticisms that have been made of the draft treaty, however, there are nevertheless definite ways in which many of the proposals made in it could provide a genuine basis for the renewal of the current Union and its ultimate survival.

There is, for example, a genuine attempt (for the first time in the country's history) to formally demarcate the powers of the component parts of the Union. The actual demarcations themselves, as has been noted above, have been the subject of much criticism. A start, however, has been made and with the right kind of willingness to negotiate amongst all the parties involved (including all the present-day autonomous units) a more suitable form of demarcation could possibly be found.

The second point in its favour concerns the proposed manner of its adoption. Opening up the final version of the draft to a nation-wide referendum should, it is hoped, produce a Union that can legitimately be considered a *voluntary* and *free* expression of the will of all the Soviet peoples.

Thirdly, by maintaining the rubric of Soviet citizenship (as envisaged in the draft) credence is still given to the equality of rights and obligations which all Soviet peoples would have within the framework of the Union.

Fourthly, there is at least some attempt in the draft proposals to try and promote some kind of interdependence principle between the rights and liberties of national and ethnic communities with the rights and liberties of the individual.

And finally, recognition should also be given to the attempt made in the proposals to try and meet the radical secessionists at least part of their way while upholding the name and spirit of unity. According to section 2, Article 6, the Union authorities may, with the consent of all the republics, transfer to one or several of the republics, certain *additional* powers. Once again, this particular provision (which can also operate in the opposite direction) was one which first found credence by its appearance in the April 1990 Law referred to above. At the time of writing, however, none of the "breakaway" republics has openly explored the possibilities envisaged by this particular article.

Option 4: Loose Confederation

One of the problems with the Gorbachev approach to preserving the Union is the Soviet leader's wish to get as quick a settlement as possible in terms of the actual ratification of the new Treaty of Union. This particular wish of Gorbachev's calls to mind Lenin's famous remark that "yesterday was too soon but tomorrow may be too late". One can certainly understand the need to sort this issue out without too many delays, but it does smack a little of "steam-rolling" and insensitivity with regard to the aspirations of those republics and regions who are supposedly going to be the "sovereign" subjects of this new USSR. As far as Gorbachev is concerned, of course, the real priority is to establish the basis of power at the centre; only then will the rest of the Union "jigsaw" fit properly in its allotted place. There is, however, an alternative (though slower) approach to this process; namely, establish the basis of power *at the*

bottom first and only then go on to complete the "jigsaw".

Of all the alternative paths so far considered, the basis of this "bottom-up" approach to the question of power relationships is the most innovative and radical. It has come to be identified largely as the "Yeltsin approach", though to see it solely in terms of the Russian populist leader may, at the end of the day, prove very limiting.

This idea was first mooted during Yeltsin's 22-day tour of the Russian Federation last summer, which covered the entire Federation. On many of his stop-off points, Yeltsin found himself confronted, literally there and then, with specific declarations of sovereignty by a number of autonomous regions and republics. Many of his followers at the time clearly believed that Yeltsin was deliberately being "set up" by conservative ideologues within the still strong party apparatus. According to Galina Starovoitova, for example: "It's common knowledge that shortly before his resignation Ligachev brought together the leaders of some autonomies and directly urged them [to take this course of action]."[7] Deliberate provocation or not, Yeltsin failed to take the bait. Instead, he simply described such developments in the territories as both "inevitable" and "an objective reality which must be taken into consideration". Indeed, in a TV and press conference on his return to Moscow, he was able to show his political adeptness by telling Gorbachev that if this approach had been adopted towards the Baltic states three years ago, then the Union would almost certainly be in a better shape than it was.[8]

The "consideration", then, that Yeltsin gave to this "objective reality" amounted in effect to the following simple, but nevertheless radical formula: the creation of new structures of power should proceed from the lower rungs upwards, whereby each rung assumes functions which it can effectively wield in the interests of the population under its jurisdiction, leaving only those functions of national importance to the higher bodies of power. Nor was this solely a formula to be applied to the National Question. *All* town, rural, district and settlement Soviets should fall within the rubric of this formula. "Let them decide for themselves on the spot [what powers they need]. Russia is a big place. The differences in traditions, climatic conditions, dimensions and so on are very great. Therefore, we may have to have different structures. There will probably be 20-30 types of structure in the organisation of Soviet power. But [however many there are], that is nothing to be afraid of."[9]

The radicalism of these proposals, which were limited to the Russian Federation, but which attracted some support as a possible panacea for the whole Union was not lost on the liberal community. In his Izvestia article calling for the break-up of the Union into Western-style nation states, Andranik Migranyan commented in very scathing terms:

"I am afraid that out democrats may become victims of the rigid rationalism of the 18th century, when it was assumed that society was a mechanism which could be built in accordance with a certain design. Marxists became the victims of this delusion in theory and Bolsheviks in practice. But the illusion that the pyramid of government may be reversed and built from bottom to top still persists. We are entering a new stage of constructing a society and a state in accordance with so-called common sense. Nowhere in the world has the state ever been built from bottom to top. Nowhere has it ever been said that local governments can take as much power as they wish and delegate to the centre only what they think they don't need. Across the world a democratic political system was formed in the pains of a long process of redistributing powers and authorities from top to bottom, but never the other way round."

Whether Yeltsin read Migranyan's reproach is, of course, impossible to say. Certainly, though, in recent weeks the Russian leader has begun to indicate that his "bottom-up" approach is to be restricted to nothing more than the relationship between the parliament he heads and that controlled by Gorbachev. That is to say, he will take what powers he needs for the Russian parliament, and if there is anything left then he will gladly hand it over to Gorbachev. He seems to be becoming more and more convinced that there will be nothing left to give. The fifteen republics, he is now arguing, will be happier to make horizontal agreements amongst themselves and completely cut out the need for the central authorities, even to the extent of making provision for a *Soviet* Army instead of the dangerous principle of relying on fifteen separate armies. And as for the "bottom-up" principle within the Russian Federation? If the first draft constitution of the new RFR is anything to go by, then Migranyan's criticism has been fully taken on board. The Presidential system envisaged by the constitution would provide the central executive organs of power with a considerable degree of control over the lower Soviets (whatever their nationality status).

Which one of the four options, then, is ultimately going to hold sway in the coming weeks and months?

The most pessimistic reply is that variations on all four options will continue to draw support from various quarters, thereby making the current anarchic mess progressively worse. The secessionist republics will continue their struggle for UDI, which will then provoke ever more brutal reactions from the hardliners. Gorbachev, meanwhile, will never agree to go down in history as the Soviet leader who presided over the dismemberment of the entire USSR. He will therefore continue to promote the cause of remaining within a Union, but in response to the situation around him, it will be a Union very much dominated by powerful and largely unaccountable executive bodies at the centre. This in turn will provoke a negative response by the remaining republics who will more and more follow Yeltsin's lead in trying to circumvent the central body. The smaller national units, meanwhile, will be affected by all these forces and will be subject to pressures of all kinds to have their own rights recognised. This will then leave them open to be continually used as expendable pawns in the destructive game of divide and rule.

A more optimistic reply, based on the reality that exists in the country today is very hard to find. A new Union Treaty is without doubt the *key* to resolving the current mess. A genuine recognition of the voluntary nature of a new Union based

upon the free expression of all the Soviet peoples is its most essential ingredient, for it would act not only as a basis for union, but it could also legitimately act as a basis for those peoples who want to go in a separate direction. The choice in this matter, however, has to be the people's and not some declaration of UDI by its republican government. Once the peoples have demonstratively expressed their will, then a proper framework of negotiations can be created to decide on the exact format in which secession can occur in the least damaging way to both sides.

As for the Union that remains, if it is to have any kind of viability whatsoever, it will have to find points of contact that outweigh an individual's allegiance to nationality and ethnicity. These "points of contact" must be *positive* in their nature; something that Gorbachev himself has seemingly lost sight of. In recent months, for example, the Soviet leader's manner of defending the need for a renewed Union has grown progressively apocalyptic. Speaking to the Communist Party's Central Committee plenum in December last year, for example, Gorbachev warned of besmirching the honour of past generations who had paid such a high price in achieving the Soviet Union's territorial integrity. Visions were conjured up of a huge demographic tragedy with a refugee problem the likes of which the world would never have seen. And tales of human misery, confusion and destruction abounded. Other terms like "bloodbath", "civil war" and "a tragedy unacceptable to the world community" are also features that now regularly appear in all the Soviet leader's speeches.

Clearly, such arguments have a legitimate place in any kind of defence of the Union. The vision they conjure up could indeed become a reality. But if this "fear of the consequences" of the Union's destruction is all that is left to unite the Soviet peoples, then it is clearly not going to be a very progressive and viable Union.

No one can deny that the past solid rock of Soviet society's unity has vanished, and vanished for good. In its place a chasm has opened, engulfing this rock and smashing it into hundreds of different segments. As the Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, Ramazan Abdulatipov, has put it: "[T]he basis of a new Union Treaty should be seen as a form of consent by which society will be allowed to build a new bridge across the chasm."[10] Who now emerges as the force with the authority to construct that bridge is the crucial question of the immediate future. The only political force with the resources at hand on an all-Union level to do any construction work remains the CPSU. Few, however, believe that this force (no matter how much it restructures itself) can be at one and the same time the demolition experts and the new construction engineers. Or, as Galina Starovoitova has nicely put it with reference to Gorbachev personally: "No one should try to be Pope and Martin Luther at the same time."[11]

While on the theme of religion, tendencies of this nature have themselves been gaining considerable ground in Soviet society, invoking visions of a return to Orthodox control and the old inspirational concept of *sobornost* (conciliarism). In light of the confusion and general loss of direction facing society at the moment, this return to the "certainties" offered by the Church is perhaps understandable. As the primary foundation stone for a new source of unity, however, no bridge constructed by the Church could be declared structurally sound in today's USSR.

Of course, the personification of a force for unity might be one specific individual—with Boris Yeltsin being the most likely figure. The populist attraction of the Russian leader clearly cuts across ethnic, ideological, religious, political, social and economic differences. But history has surely taught us that a leader who stands for everything and everybody also stands for nothing and nobody. "Yeltsin the bridge-builder" might be an attractive short-term option, but certainly not a long-term one.

At the end of the day, then, as always, it is going to be socio-economic forces at the base of society who will have the final say as to which political force will be granted the long-term task of bridge-building. To borrow Gramsci's term, the battle for hegemony now underway throughout Soviet society for the support of these forces is going to be a difficult and hard-fought one. One can only hope that wherever it is fought—in the republics which might one day gain their own statehood, in the Russian Federation and elsewhere—the labour movement and the emerging democratic-socialist forces will have the strength of conviction not to get embroiled in irredentist games, in petty ethnic recriminations and in narrow national chauvinism. Let us hope instead, that the struggle for more social, economic and political rights for *all* workers—a struggle that has been too long neglected in the Soviet Union—can still have the power to transcend narrow parochial interests.

The signs, at the moment at least, are not promising. But this does not mean to say that one should simply forego the attempt to put the message across. As Isaac Deutscher so eloquently put it:

"Socialists must be internationalists even if their working classes are not; socialists must also understand the nationalism of the masses, but only in the way in which a doctor understands the weakness or the illness of his patient. Socialists should be aware of that nationalism, but like nurses, they should wash their hands twenty times over whenever they approach an area of the labour movement infected by it."[12]

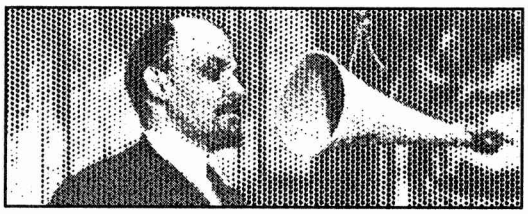
Footnotes:

1. September 18, 1990.
2. September 20, 1990.
3. See, for example, his response to Tom Nairn's book, "Some Reflections on 'The Break-Up of Britain'", *New Left Review*, No. 105, Sept-Oct 1977, pp. 7-8.
4. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB)* SU/0954 C2/2, December 22, 1990.
5. *The Financial Times*, December 1990.
6. *BBC SWB*, SU/0944 B/10, December 11, 1990.
7. *Moscow News*, No. 50, 1990, p.8.
8. *BBC SWB*, SU/0860 B/3, September 4, 1990.
9. *Ibid.*, B/4.
10. Soyuz, No. 49, 1990.
11. *The Guardian*, January 4, 1991, p.25.
12. Tamara Deutscher (ed.), Isaac Deutscher: *Marxism in our Time*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), pp. 110-111.

LEFT-WING PARTIES IN THE SOVIET UNION

The following three interviews originally appeared in various issues of the Soviet journal Dialog. Labour Focus *is publishing them to give the reader an idea of the background and thinking behind the emergence of left-wing organisations in the USSR. All of the interviews were conducted by Vladimir Viunitsky.*

Interview with Mikhail Maliutin, member of the Organising Committee of the Socialist Party.



Mikhail Valentinovich, you are well known in what might be called four different manifestations—as a member of the Co-ordinating Councils of the Moscow Popular Front and Democratic Platform in the CPSU, as a member of the Organising Committee of the All-Russian Committee for the Socialist Party (SP) and, finally, as a member of the CPSU. Today, I will be asking you questions as one of those attempting to found the Socialist Party. But, to begin with, I would like an answer from you to the question: does it not seem unnatural to you that you are creating the Socialist Party while remaining a member of the CPSU?

I can agree with you that this seems rather unnatural. But it is something of a reflection of our reality since, in the CPSU today, there are reflected all shades of opinion in society—from anarchists to monarchists—and I don't think that socialists should be discriminated against. But, joking aside, our entire future multi-party system is emerging out of the present CPSU and I am staying a member of the latter to participate in the realisation of that tendency within it which will lead to the formation of the Socialist Party.

But for its creation or, more correctly, its revival, if we talk about a socialist movement in our country, a desire is not enough. There must be some social needs to which this and only this party can give an answer.

I agree that one should rather speak about the revival of the socialist movement. Apart from the SP, its representatives today are the organisations "Sotsprof" (Socialist Trade Union Association) and the Federation of Socialist Youth.

As regards the Socialist Party then, in my view, the need for its creation is unquestioned as, in our country, one political monopoly—that of the CPSU—may be replaced by another political monopoly—that of the liberal-westernising currents, which for some reason call themselves social-democratic. This is possible because no one has any notion what real social democracy is. In this situation, the re-emergent socialist movement is called upon to become one of the forces defending the workers' socialist choice.

Of course, we have our own conceptions of socialism. These can be expressed in the brief formula "self-managing socialism".

But if this is the case, then the SP must find its socialist base among the workers. At the same time, until recently, socialist ideas and organisations were associated with a very definite milieu—the young scientific intelligentsia.

Certainly the first attempts came from there, from such organisations as "Socialist Initiative" created back in 1988. But, from the very beginning, these socialist circles and groups endeavoured to link up with the mass movement. The first attempt was the participation in the popular front movement...

But this was essentially a cross-party movement and the yet-to-be-formed socialists dissolved into it. But you must have your own profile!

Yes, and that is why a second attempt was needed—the unification of the new socialism with the workers' movement. The turning point was the First Congress of the USSR People's Deputies, which reflected the crisis and all emergent organisational forms of the mass movement and all the dominant models, from official to liberal-democratic. The result of the efforts to overcome this crisis was the founding in June 1989 in Moscow of the Committee of New Socialists, whose leader was Boris Kagarlitsky, awarded the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize for his creative development of Marxism. The Committee was composed of a number of activists from the Moscow Popular Front (MPF) and Sotsprof. The New Socialists distanced themselves from the social democrats and and established contacts with the newly organising workers' movement—with the strike committees and workers' unions formed during the miners' strike of summer 1989. And, under the influence of the second wave of strikes, the Organising Committee of the All-Russian Committee for the Socialist Party (VKSP) was founded at a conference in Moscow... This was joined by a number of leaders of strike committees and workers' unions in Karaganda, Vorkuta and the Kuzbass and groups in Irkutsk and Kuibyshev.

You spoke of the socialists distancing themselves

from the social democrats. But to the average citizen there is hardly any difference between them, and not simply through lack of information but also through the vagueness of their positions. What are the basic differences between them and what is the subject of disagreement? On what positions is there a difference?

Many in the Soviet Union have declared themselves social democrats without understanding exactly what this means. As a result, our social democracy has turned out to be a strange mixture, completely liberal in content, of dreams about how good life is in Austria or Sweden (we call this "supermarket socialism") and ideas of the mixed economy and a multiparty system.

We are not travelling in the same direction as those who understand social democracy as a movement of the middle strata, who are suspicious of the workers' movement and who are in favour of an exclusively parliamentary means of struggle. Our supporters are those oriented to extra-parliamentary activity, to the workers' movement and to the radical wing of the engineering and technical workers. We do not deny the possibility of participating in the organs of state power and a number of our candidates took part in the 1990 electoral campaign.

Distancing yourselves from the social democrats signifies, as far as one can judge, one wing of the socialist movement. On the other wing is the CPSU. How does the emergent SP intend to build relations with it?

We see one of our allies in the reform movement in the CPSU. It is not for nothing that the idea of a Socialist Party enjoys a certain popularity among activists of Democratic Platform and among the leaders of the alternative move-
ı the Komsomol who have created the
tion of Socialist Youth.
hough, nowadays, attempts to social-demo-
se the CPSU are often talked about, there are few social democrats in its ranks. But, on the other hand, there are many democrats. We do not share their illusions in the possibility of democratising the CPSU while maintaining its present structure which was created during the time of totalitarianism and is evolving towards authoritarianism. The result of such an evolution might just be liberalism and not democratism. Democratising the Party can only be done by radically changing and, essentially, destroying its structure. We support that Leninist wing of the CPSU which is in favour of such a decisive renovation of the Party.

Mikhail Valentinovich, nowadays the concepts "Leninist" and "Leninism" have various, frequently negative connotations. What do you mean when you talk positively about the Leninist wing of the CPSU?

For us it is not the neo-totalitarians like supporters of OFT [the Workers' United Front], who call themselves Leninists. By the term Leninist wing we understand those who utilise the traditional theoretical and conceptual framework of Lenin's version of Marxism in the struggle against the bloc of totalitarian power and corrupted bureaucracy.

In other words, the renovatory wing is not an opponent for the SP. But you criticise the CPSU as a whole. Who is then an opponent?

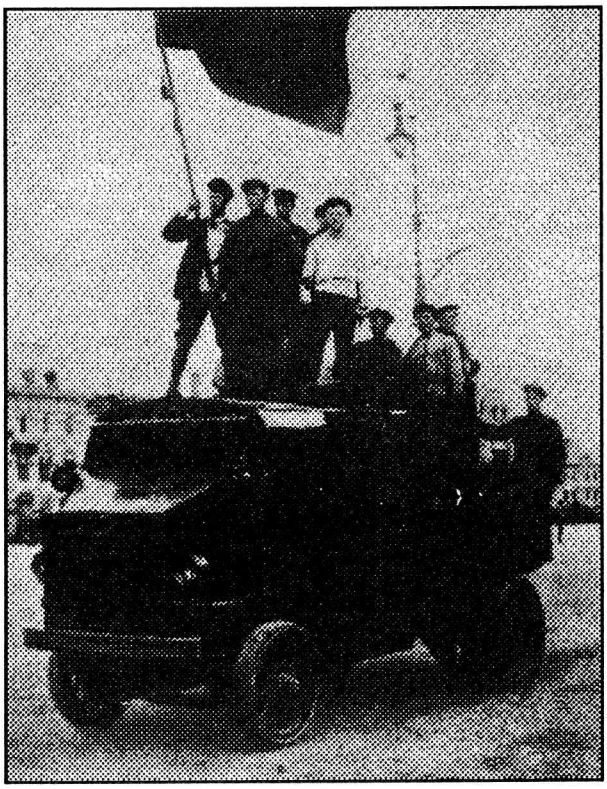
In the CPSU itself, it is the conservative wing. But on the whole we must conduct the struggle on two fronts—against the liberal-westernising tendency (who could lead us into a situation not like Poland but like present-day Columbia) and against the neo-totalitarian communism of OFT. But our chief adversary today is the present authoritarian regime, which can only be removed from the political arena by our Russian analogue of Polish Solidarity...

Does this mean that the SP takes the "Polish variant" as a model? There would seem to be a number of costs associated with that...

Yes, we do not idealise it. But without an anti-totalitarian revolution—true, with a different nucleus from Poland in 1989—and without our own equivalent of the events in Eastern Europe in Autumn of that year, it is unthinkable to conceive of democratic socialism, especially taking into account the specificity of the Soviet situation and above all the key and decisive role of the state in all social processes. Without another state no democratisation is possible.

Some socio-political movements link the possibility of democratisation with economic pluralism and primarily with the re-establishment of private property up to and including big capitalist structures. There is far from a consensus in society in respect of this idea. Is the SP in favour of private property or does it belong among its opponents?

According to our research, the overwhelming majority of the working class and engineering and technical workers is not striving for independent



ownership of property. But there are supporters of private property and their numbers are growing. Therefore, we do not deny the right of private property to exist.

But in the hopes that private property will solve all our problems there is an element of simplification. Naturally, if the ideas of economic reform embodied in laws on property, on leasing, and on land are carried out, then in the long run we will have a three-sector economy comprising a state sector, a private sector and a collective sector. It would be useless to expect that these sectors will enjoy equal rights. In any economy one of them is always dominant. In capitalist countries this is the private economic structure and the rest are stabilising structures built within it. Here the state sector is dominant and will continue to dominate in the long term.

True, one should be aware that the same state sector which we cannot do without is today the cause of many of our ills...

Rather it is not the state sector itself, but its deformation brought about by the statisation of our life. So in principle a different organisation of the state sector is possible and it is this that, in general, you call for.

I would define our social structure as state totalitarianism and I therefore consider that what are termed deformations are not something external or accidental in regard to it and are themselves a manifestation of its essence and are not a part of the logic of normal management. For example, without the participation of the state sector it would be impossible to solve the food problem and feed the country. But how does this sector feed it? Not through fields, but through petrodollars, by buying grain abroad, and by eating up non-renewable energy resources.

Without the state sector our housing and ecological problems cannot be resolved and a structural reform carried out. But to do this the state sector has to be freed from the absurd relations which exist within it at present. Then we will achieve a twentieth century economy and technology. If we are seriously aiming for the twenty-first century, we cannot avoid altering the state sector, even if it's without a conversion of the most advanced industrial branches.

But the economic role and place of the state sector must be changed. Wherever state ownership is not an objective necessity, it must give way to collective ownership. In all cases, the workers must be guaranteed real opportunities for self-management, co-ownership and profit-sharing...

In other words, the SP's economic conception is strongly reminiscent of the Yugoslav model of socialism. But, as is well-known, this model not only did not resolve the problems of effective economic and social development, the growth of the workers' well-being and their social security, but exacerbated many of them...

Yes, we are often told that the Yugoslav experience has demonstrated the bankruptcy of a socialism based on collective ownership. In our view, it is this argument which is bankrupt: in Yugoslavia the same state totalitarianism has ruled throughout the 45 years of its post-war existence, for much of the time burdened by personal dictatorship. And if Yugoslavia has demonstrated anything, it is the compatibility of totalitarianism with the market, with industrial self-management, with a convertible currency, with free travel abroad, with democracy within the party and with regional autonomy... In brief, with everything which is today presented to us as the essence of perestroika and democratisation and which we are promised. The only thing with which it is incompatible is the existence of trade unions independent of it and workers' parties. This means that without them genuine socialism cannot exist. Without them neither the democratisation of the state nor the democratisation of the economy which this entails can exist.

There is talk these days of a schism in society, of the threat of civil war, and against the background of the crisis of power, of the striving of a number of forces to realise a new "February", albeit not in February. As an alternative to all this, the ideas of social peace, consolidation and coalition forms of government are being promoted. Finally, there are many arguments around the recently adopted Presidential rule. Perhaps, the SP would support one of these ideas, for example, the idea of social peace. Others deny the idea of a new "February" (although supporters of the party have participated in meetings under this slogan). Finally, a third group partially accepts the idea of Presidential rule. Could you make the SP's positions on these burning questions more precise?

First of all I should immediately make the proviso that not all of the slogans of the meetings in which our supporters participate express the position of the socialists.

As regards Presidential rule, this measure has been necessitated by the crisis of the existing political structures. Unlike in 1917, there is no one who could say, like Lenin, "There is such a party!" and assume the responsibility for everything. Those who, like the Bolsheviks, would like to construct a one-party regime forget that history only repeats itself as farce.

In my opinion, some sort of coalition forms of power are inevitable. Otherwise, against a background of economic collapse and bloody confrontations, any new "February" might turn into a new "October" which would lead to the coming to power of newly emerged Kornilovites with the "workers' friends" from OFT, who would organise even greater chaos with a strong hand. Greater, because in 1917 there were no mass media, and the majority of the population lived in the countryside and could feed itself.

The only rational alternative to all this chaos is a mass, organised workers' movement, the backbone of which must become the bloc of engineering and technical workers, skilled workers and that part of the humanitarian intelligentsia which is drawn towards the movement of the majority.

Mikhail Valentinovich, everything you have said is, so to speak, reflections on the long term. But what about the reality today? Who will follow the SP?

Of course, now, when a few dozen activists, a few hundred participants and a few thousand supporters follow the socialist movement, it is difficult to speak of the Socialist Party as a real force. But it is certain that it does have a future. For with its conception of socialism it is in favour of the people's socialist choice, and presents a democratic perspective for resolving the problems facing the country and civil peace. And although, for the foreseeable future, we cannot aspire to the role of ruling party, we will become an integral part of the bloc of left forces.

Interview with Yuri Leonov on the Marxist Workers' Party/Party of Proletarian Dictatorship.

The MWP's founding conference took place in Moscow in March 1990.

Yuri Yurevich, any political organisation declaring its foundation one way or another endeavours to clarify the reasons for its creation. What motives guided those who prepared and conducted the founding congress?

The idea of creating a Marxist political organisation of the working class has, so to speak, been in the air since the 1970s. It was at that time that self-active Marxist groups arose and came into existence. But there was then no possibility of unification. Today the conditions exist for unification and forming into an independent political party.

Such conditions have existed at a minimum for about two years and a number of parties and movements have arisen aspiring to the political representation of the working class and, frequently, much earlier than you. The major problem, however, is that the CPSU also sees itself as the party of the working class and of all working people. In other words, nowadays several parties aspire to the same role...

This is a common phenomenon in politics. But in this case one should be guided, in our view, not by what a party says about itself, so much as by whose interests it does in fact express. The CPSU is the ruling party, calls itself popular, and no longer aspires to the role of expressing the interests of the working class. However, although the Party's class positions are "embedded" in popular slogans, its current economic and social policies do not correspond to the interests of a major part of the population.

What sort of organisation do you think the CPSU is today?

We do not consider it to be a communist party. Although it utilises communist ideology and phraseology, the CPSU today is actively moving towards social-democratisation. I think that, in the future, it will not leave the political arena as some political forecasters predict but turn into a powerful current in world social democracy thereby freeing the political niche it currently occupies for political forces and organisations which continue the communist tradition in our country.

Accusations of social-democratisation against the CPSU have been frequently heard since it adopted the slogan of a humane and democratic socialism, the very idea of which arose in the bosom of socialist and social-democratic thought and has for a long time been denied by communists.

For us there cannot be an inhumane and undemocratic socialism. If a majority of people are divorced from running society, you can call it what you like, but it's not socialism! The CPSU today is moving from bureaucratic non-socialism to democratic non-socialism. This is undoubtedly a step forwards but it does not give power to the mass of working people. Moreover, the CPSU is occupying two political "stools", thereby obstructing the social-democratic and communist movements in the USSR.

As a result we might get what happened in the countries of Eastern Europe. There the Communist Parties transformed themselves into Socialist Parties, into social democrats, and there are no communist organisations.

Does the MWP regard itself as being among the organisations of the communist movement?

Yes, without doubt. But, since there is a strong anti-communism in our society, the concept of "communist" has been largely discredited. We see the terms "Marxist" and "communist" as synonyms and we speak of ourselves as a Marxist party.

But the dictatorship of the proletariat? After the bloody lessons of Stalin's terror, our society hardly wants to return to the formula of the political structure with whose name these evil deeds are associated.

We will begin first of all from the fact that in a Marxist sense the dictatorship of the proletariat has never existed in our society. We have had a dictatorship of the bureaucracy or of the apparatus, but not of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the power of the majority of the people but here it has always been alienated from power...

But power is one thing and dictatorship...

All power is, according to Marx, the dictatorship of one class or another: one part of society dictates its will to the rest. If it's a minority, then it will be the dictatorship of the minority. But its political form is often parliamentary democracy. It is precisely for that reason that we are against transferring the mechanisms of parliamentarianism into our political structure. But if the majority dictates its will to society then the best political form will be the dictatorship of the proletariat. But dictatorship itself and its methods are not for us goals in themselves. They are only called upon to help the working class eradicate the old division of labour, organise the economy on the basis of complete self-management and thereby eliminate the basis of all class contradictions. And then the need for the dictatorship itself fades away.

But nowadays we are well aware that the erasure of class differences predicted by Marxism is quite a protracted affair. And the maintenance of relations of dictatorship, albeit even of the majority, over such a prolonged historical period is obviously a prospect not without danger. And there is also a negative attitude in society to the very possibility of dictatorship. What is

your attitude to this tendency?

We take it into consideration. At the congress which will take place in September 1990 we intend to exclude from the name of our party the second part—"the party of proletarian dictatorship". And in programmatic documents we will use the concept of "proletarian democracy". In Marxism it is a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In "Moscow News" it says that the MWP is influenced by the Fourth, Trotskyist, International. To what extent is this true?

I think the reason for our being numbered among such organisations is the MWP's international contacts and links: among our partners in Western Europe and Latin America there are parties who are members of this International.

Yuri Yurevich, what sort of social changes does your party favour?

In the economic sphere we are for a transition from the hire of workers to the hire of managers and for redistribution according to work. We are convinced that getting out of the crisis is possible without any belt-tightening. But to do that both bureaucratic directive planning and the ideas of the "free" market must be rejected. The introduction of the latter will lead to the impoverishment of working people and primarily the working class, will worsen the position of those with little, and also socially undefended strata: the poorly paid categories of the population, pensioners, invalids and large families... For both Marx and Lenin, the market without capitalism is absurd. Therefore, for Marxist theory, the phrase "socialist market" is just as nonsensical as a round square. We are already encountering rising crime and prices, unemployment and the division of society into rich and poor in full measure and the transition to the market is only just beginning!

But, while not accepting the market, the MWP must advance some sort of alternative opening up a way out of the crisis for the country...

We are not calling for a return to the "good old days". For us the dilemma itself—the market or the command-administrative system—is false. We are against the market because it is our conviction that a way out of the crisis must not be found at the expense of the workers. We are against the command-administrative system, since power must be seized from the bureaucracy and given to the workers. We are advocates of an alternative line of social development based on the development of self-management in production and in society. For us socialism is a free, self-managing, classless society.

For millions of industrial and agricultural workers, perestroika has become a continuation of the loathsome dictatorship of the bureaucracy. We have therefore set ourselves the aim of widening the narrow framework of soviet democracy; through workers' self-management, and through the rebirth of soviet power to include in the process of democracy all those in whose name the old and new "servants of the people" spoke and continue to speak.

In itself this thesis in Marxism was formulated quite a while ago. But to its fullest extent this formula of socialism is not yet a reality for us but a perspective, and a quite distant one. But you have not worked through the question of specific mechanisms for implementing this theoretical position in social practice. For example, how will self-managing workers' collectives be connected to each other in a single self-managing national economic complex? For the time being there are no mechanisms other than the market and centralised state planning. Through what sort of mechanisms will self-management be realised?

For us the answer is obvious: through the soviets. But not the soviets that have been with us until now. Since the Stalin Constitution of 1936 which, in our view, ended the last possibilities of workers' self-management in our country, the soviets have been turned into non-functioning parliaments. Now they want to make them functioning, but still parliaments, while asserting that workers self-management is something of secondary importance in Marxism. We beg to disagree—it is of prime importance. We are, therefore, in favour of the revival of the system of soviets as organs of democracy for working people which creates the possibility for the direct participation of a majority of them in managing society.

Yuri Yurevich, where does the MWP stand in respect of the alignment of forces in our country?

First of all we do not agree with the concept of left and right which is now in use. It contradicts completely its universally accepted usage. The struggle now is between right-wing radicals (they are called left-wing in the USSR—Afanasyev, Popov, to a lesser extent Yeltsin) and right-wing conservatives (OFT, "Unity", a section of supporters of the apparatus). There is also a centre, which is those whom the command-administrative system does not suit but who are afraid of the transition to the market. And there is the Left movement to which we relate and which is only just being formed.

What is your attitude to the CPSU? The situation would seem to be more complex with it—many of your ideological approaches have things in common with it or you coincide in your formulations.

Precisely for that reason we see the CPSU as our ideological rival. But we are also prepared to collaborate with it.

What is the MWP's attitude to political extremism?

We are not extremists and we have a negative attitude to it. The MWP is in favour of the struggle of parties being resolved only through the free expression of the popular will. In general, a tendency towards extremism and violence is, in our view, a sign of weakness and lack of confidence in one's own forces, influence and social base.

And who do you regard as your social base?

Primarily workers. Eighty per cent of our supporters are workers. But we are also open to the intelligentsia and other social strata.

And the peasantry?

Peasants are the same as workers, the only difference being that they are employed in agricultural production...

It is difficult to agree with that. At least in Marxism, the class characteristics of the peasantry are quite precisely elaborated and the question of relations with it is very complex and ambivalent. So one way or another your party is always guided by corporatist principles?

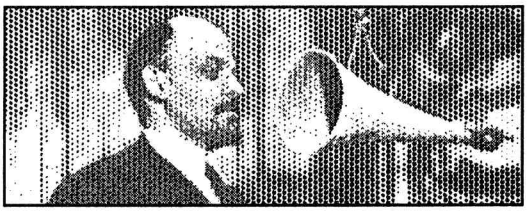
In society today there are few corporations. We orient to that which represents the big majority of people and proletarians in the broad sense of the

word.

Final question: what is the membership of the MWP?

At the moment one can only speak approximately—we will know more precise figures after the September congress. It is clear for the time being that, although our party has about 100 organisations from 8 republics in membership, it can be regarded as a small organisation. But we are growing and we will grow into a serious political movement.

Interview with Pavel Kudiukin, member of the Executive Committee of the Social-Democratic Association



The RSDA was founded in May 1989. He is also a member of the Presidium of the Social-Democratic Party of the Russian Federation, whose founding congress took place in May 1990.

Pavel Mikhailovich, political events such as the foundation of parties or movements cannot be simply the result of subjective desires—it was wished for and it was created. There must also be some objective needs which call into existence this type of movement or another and tasks which that organisation takes upon itself to resolve. What, in your opinion, are the objective prerequisites for the social-democratic movement? Which requirements of social development has it been summoned to answer?

I could note several such requirements. Firstly, the need to modernise our society. And since modernisation in Russia, at least until now, has always happened as Westernisation, as borrowing from the West, it is obvious that the formation of a party-political structure here will proceed with significant similarities to what already exists in the West and primarily in Western Europe. It is not simply a question of imitation but of the fact that our society, for all the complexity of its development, is becoming more and more modern. And, in particular, over the past 30—35 years, in different ways in different spheres, elements of civil society have come into being (for example, more successfully in culture and everyday life than in politics and economics).

Civil society contains diverse interests and the opportunity to express those interests. And among them are those interests which in the West are traditionally expressed and defended by social democrats...

But these interests still do not exist by themselves. These are the interests of definite social forces, of intermediate strata, whose political representatives abroad are traditionally social democrats. Here, at least until very recently, it was considered that the intermediate strata were not very developed or numerous. Whose interests then will the social-democratic movement express in the Soviet Union?

For the time being these few, ill-defined "new intermediate strata". Of course, we realise that we will not become a leading party in terms of membership in the near future with this social base. Who are they? Primarily the highly-skilled, and therefore layers of workers who are not afraid of the transition to the market and who even have an interest in it; the labour aristocracy in the best sense, which has always been a prop of Russian social democracy, and a section of the scientific-technical and engineering-technical intelligentsia. In other words, our support comes from those people who are today suffering from being unable to work to full effect.

But in this connection it is necessary to see one other prerequisite of the social-democratic movement, one other objective need that it can answer. Today the country faces the task of transition to a modern market economy. And this dictates the need for a force to arise, capable of consistently defending the interests of working people and socially squeezed strata, who have much to lose from such a transition. This is where we differ, for example, from the liberals who say "Give us a market and it will solve everything by itself". We are in favour of a transition to the market which will not lead to a social explosion directed against both the market and our nascent democracy. But those socially weak layers, which will suffer from the market, could support us if we propose to them a realistic programme for the defence of their social interests.

Finally, I would also name among those forces, which constitute our base, the socially responsible entrepreneurial elements, who are, alas, still insignificant in our co-operative sector. The strengthening of these strata is not contrary to the interests of hired labour since, in our view, the latter has an interest in civilised enterprise. And this is where we differ, for example, from the socialists, who condemn these new "bourgeois".

Pavel Mikhailovich, much of what you have said today could also have been said by representatives of other parties and organisations including the CPSU. Many forces are in favour of the transition to a

regulated market with the maintenance of social guarantees, and for the possibility of revealing the initiative of some while having a social defence of others... It is difficult at times to grasp the difference. But this is a problem for the electorate. But there is also the problem of your party and its basic aims. You base yourselves on two ideas: social guarantees and the market. And the forces to which you orientate are also sharply differentiated according to interest, between those who are for the market and expect benefits from it, and those who will suffer harm from the transition to the market and who therefore need to be defended. Which of these two irreconcilable extremes, the market or social security, is today your priority and your basic aim?

Today, it's the transition to the market. Without an efficient economy, social guarantees are a fiction.

Pavel Mikhailovich, the logic of your answers demonstrates that the social democrats are resolving a complicated political task. By calling for the creation of a multi-structured market economy, you are essentially trying to create the social situation which will give rise to those social strata which constitute your social base. In other words, your party has begun building a structure not from its foundations but, if you like, from its roof—from a political party which is striving to place its objective prerequisites under itself through political decisions. Are Soviet social democrats conscious of this problem?

More and more conscious. It's one of the peculiarities of our development. Probably nowhere else in the world has social democracy been faced with the task of creating its own social base.

Social democrats throughout the whole world are regarded as parties of the socialist choice. Where would you place them in the multi-party system forming in our country?

If one is guided by the international system of co-ordinates (since here the concepts "left" and "right" are completely interwoven) then I would answer that the social democrats are centre-left.

As regards the concept itself of "socialist choice", I would make the observation that socialist ideas and socialist values are losing popularity in our society today.

Admittedly, not among all strata. It is a well-known fact that at your founding congress, quite decisive and, one might say, bellicose words were uttered in respect of "Bolsheviks"...

Yes, but among, for example, the liberal intelligentsia (which is nowadays having a more and more serious influence on policy) the popularity of these ideas and values is significantly lower than in the same milieu in the West. Therefore we avoid using the concepts "socialism" and "socialist" in our documents. Thus even the word "socialism" is absent from the documents of the founding congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party (RSDP), from both the Manifesto and the Declaration of basic principles. Nevertheless, I would formulate our ideas in the following way: the majority of us favour socialist values occupying a fitting place in society. These values are connected in our programme with a triad of basic ideas: freedom, justice and solidarity, but space must also be left for other values—initiative and enterprise. Only under conditions of such pluralism can society develop successfully. Precisely for these reasons, I am dubious that socialist ideas can occupy an exclusive place in society.

Social democrats declare themselves to be supporters of a broad political pluralism. How do you intend to build links with other political forces? Where are the points of contact?

We are advocates of broad coalitions of democratic forces. For the foreseeable future—the next 10—15 years—this will be unavoidable for our country. We do not place any ideological restrictions on participation in such a bloc and this distinguishes us from, for example, supporters of the idea that only forces standing on socialist positions, or only supporters of the left camp or only democratic non-socialist organisations should be permitted in such coalitions. In the main, the composition of coalitions will be determined by the will of the people.

And what about relations with specific political forces? What ecological niches will you surrender to them?

At present it is difficult to say with any certainty. There is a spontaneous rise of parties going on. Other countries which have completed the transition from totalitarianism to democracy have also gone through this. Such a spontaneous multi-party system is usual prior to the first parliamentary elections. It is then that ecological niches are defined; it is becomes clear who will be among the number of parliamentary parties and who among the rainbow of various kinds of organisation will not be participating in power.

As regards our relations with this socio-political organisation or another, then we are guided both by the interests of the party and by the interests of society. Thus, it would in the interests of both the country and of social democracy if an intellectual and influential liberal party, about whose foundation L. Piyasheva, N. Shmelev and L. Timofeev have talked, were formed.

But we already have parties and organisations of the liberal camp. There is the Liberal-Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party of the Soviet Union, the Union of Constitutional Democrats, and a whole series of small organisations of the same stripe, up to and including the liberal-democratic fraction of the "Democratic Union" (which despite its name belongs to the radical movement).

I have not accidentally named definite names. Such names would determine the great intellectual potential of a liberal party and the possibility of its influence on the course of events in our country, capacities which none of the organisations you have mentioned possesses. Following the implementation of the transition to the market, such a party would constitute one of the poles in our political spectrum and, in particular, would allow us to define our own position more precisely.

In other words you hope to form with these liberals a political pair of "best rivals"...

In a certain sense, yes. At least relations with a liberal party would demarcate our right flank.

And who would demarcate the left?

Primarily the new socialists who, as opposed to us, plainly declare their adherence to the socialist choice and, as I have already said, with whom we differ in our evaluation of some social forces in a market economy. And also the various groupings into which the CPSU is increasingly splitting.

Relations between social democrats and communists is a very complex page of history, especially in our

country. What sort of relations do you have with the CPSU? As the evidence of sociological surveys testifies, there is among workers still a strong attachment to the socialist choice, possibly primarily because of the social guarantees associated with socialism...

On the whole we have declared that we are in opposition to the CPSU as an opposition party to the ruling party. But it is a fact that it is difficult to call the CPSU a party. If one is talking about the groupings and currents within the CPSU, then we are in opposition to its conservative right wing (represented first of all by those forces which organised the initial congress of the Russian Communist Party in Leningrad) and particularly the right-wing forces in its leading apparatus. An alliance in this case is out of the question but a dialogue is quite probable.

For all its heterogeneity, we view Democratic Platform in principle as an ally. But we see no prospect of it growing into what could be called a renovated Communist Party. One part (particularly those members of Democratic Platform intent on leaving the CPSU) is joining the socialists, another part is joining our ranks and another part is joining the essentially populist Democratic Party of Russia, the foundation of which has been declared by Nikolai Travkin.

Marxist Platform's position is quite candid although in the main romantic. A dialogue is possible in this case and collaboration on the grounds of defence of workers' interests probably at some time in the future as we have different understandings of these interests.

As regards relations with the country's political leadership—the President and his entourage—then, in my view, Gorbachev has lost the opportunity to gain popular support after his election as President and he has remained dependent on the CPSU apparatus. The moods and also dangerous character of the tendencies in this apparatus were shown at the February and March Central Committee Plenums. It's a very unreliable prop for a President striving to become a reformer. But, overall, we do not exclude the possibility of a dialogue with the group of reform-minded leaders.

Does the reform movement in the CPSU which partially exists—in part within Democratic Platform—within other structures, including official ones, have a chance of forming itself into a renovated Communist Party or, so as not to be stuck with the name, into a left socialist party?

In principle it does, but if you are talking about the leaders, then there are many people who are inclined to create their own parties.

Pavel Mikhailovich, a few questions in conclusion on the state of the social-democratic movement. It is well-known that the social democrats do not have an all-union party but instead have founded, not even a federation, but an association, which is considered a model for other movements.

We are opposed to an imperial policy, so we have not formed an all-union organisation. Social-democratic parties are being formed in the republics. In this sense, the founding of the Russian Social-Democratic Party is a step forwards, although, in my opinion, we have been a bit hasty due to force of circumstance.

Evidently, it is not so much objective, the "new social strata" have not yet come into existence, as subjective, primarily the emergence of other parties?

Yes. If we had not been hurried by this state of affairs, the congress would have taken place later. But, one way or another, the party has been founded, its leading bodies elected and programmatic and political documents adopted. Now it depends on us and our political work whether we will number among those parliamentary forces which will influence the country's future or remain a marginal organisation of people proud that they have maintained their political identity.

What is the current membership of the RSDP?

According to the credentials commission at the founding congress, about 4,000. Because of an active layer of sympathisers we can double or treble our membership in the near future. But the future will depend mainly on how events turn out in our country.

ERIC S. HEFFER
1922-1991

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALIST

THE EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE of *Labour Focus* mourns the death of Eric Heffer MP, who finally lost the last of many struggles in his life on 27 May this year. We have lost a friend and comrade, but above all one of the great champions of socialism and democracy. For Eric Heffer, socialism was as unthinkable without democracy as democracy was unthinkable without socialism. As a true internationalist, he applied this principle equally to all countries East and West.

Where others in the labour movement used the repressive practices of Stalinism as a cover for their right-wing policies, or alternatively (and sometimes simultaneously) refused to support the victims and opponents of bureaucratic dictatorship on the grounds of furthering detente, Eric Heffer never wavered in his convictions. He chaired the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, spoke frequently at meetings on Eastern Europe, and was one of the original sponsors of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe,* a journal he always took a great and active interest in.

Above all, however, Eric was always prepared to use his prominent political position to do whatever he could to help those persecuted for their democratic activities. One particularmemory is of his voice on the phone well after midnight, returning my earlier call to Doris, his wife, comrade and secretary, about the arrest of a group of East German peace campaigners. Two days later the embassy of the German Democratic Republic received a strongly-worded protest signed by a number of Labour MPs mobilised by Eric. This sort of activity was a regular occurrence: we always turned to Eric Heffer first in such situations because we knew he could be counted on for concrete support, however busy his schedule.

To pay tribute to Eric Heffer, we reprint here an excerpt from an interview which appeared in *Labour Focus* nearly five years go (No.3, Vol.8, November 1986), well before the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and at a time when the new detente inaugurated by Gorbachev was barely visible on a horizon still dominated by fears of nuclear superpower conflict.

Günter Minnerup

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

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

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

The two things go hand in hand. I don't think you can talk seriously about fighting for a democratic foreign policy without arguing that the rights of people inside any country, including the Soviet Union, are fundamental. You can't have double standards; you can't say we want peace with the Soviet union, but that means we can't be critical and support the fight of the people within the Soviet bloc for their rights. Otherwise you have a double-think policy. The fight to overthrow right-wing dictatorships in Latin America is part of the same struggle as the fight for the democratic rights of the people in the Soviet bloc. The objective is the establishment of democratic socialism. This doesn't mean a right-wing policy. Many people have either never read or forgotten the works of Rosa Luxemburg. Nobody could suggest that Rosa Luxemburg was a right-wing social democratic hack. She was killed by the right-wing forces in Germany after the first world war because she was a revolutionary socialist. But she made it absolutely clear that in a socialist society there had to be pluralism and that the individual had to have the right to disagree if they were in the minority. I read these words many years ago when I was young and had been thrown out of the Communist Party. It was like a revelation; here was somebody who was a revolutionary socialist but who understood that in a socialist society you had to have rights for the individual; you had to have the right to independent trade unions, the right to a free press, and the principle of free elections. If you didn't have that you have an increasingly bureaucratic setup which ends up via the dictatorship of the party in the dictatorship of individuals.