

# LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin of  
Eastern Europe and the USSR

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT  
DEBATE INSIDE CHARTER 77

Vol. 2 No. 3

July — August 1978

35p

**10 YEARS AFTER 1968**  
**Come to the Conference**  
**August 19th~20th**  
**Join the March**



# Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

## STATEMENT OF AIMS

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

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

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

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

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

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilise the considerable influence that the British Labour Movement can have in the struggles to end repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

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

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

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Oliver MacDonald.

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

All correspondence to:

**LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE**  
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# Contents

## EDITORIAL

10 Years After Czechoslovakia, 1968: an Unsolved Problem .....1

## SOVIET UNION

What Help for the Soviet Trade Unionists? .....2

Labour and the Free Trade Unionists -- by Eric Heffer MP .....2

Document:

Statutes of the Trade Union Association .....4

The Trade Union Association: Basic Facts -- by Victor Haynes ...5

Trade Union Association members in

Psychiatric Hospitals: A list .....5

Orlov Sentenced, Shcharansky next? -- by Helen Jamieson .....6

Ginzburg for Trial -- by Mark Jackson .....6

The CPSU Explains .....6

Podrabinek Charged .....6

Hungarian Socialists Defend Orlov .....7

Document:

Morning Star 'Guilty' of Orlov's Crime .....7

10th Anniversary of the Chronicle of Current Events --  
by Boris Weil .....8

## SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:

### THE DEBATE ON PERSPECTIVES IN CHARTER 77

Introduction -- by Mark Jackson .....9

1. Open Letter from Jan Tesar to Prof. Jiri Hajek .....10

2. Open Letter from Jiri Hajek to Jan Tesar .....11

3. Letter from Hejdanek to a Friend .....12

4. Letter from Lubos Kohout to Jan Tesar .....15

5. Letter from Petr Uhl to Lubos Kohout .....16

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Defence Committee formed by Chartists --  
by Patrick Camiller .....18

## EAST GERMANY

Bahro Sentenced to 8 Years in Secret Trial --  
by Günter Minnerup.....19

## POLAND

Unofficial Trade Union Committees Established --  
by Peter Green .....20

Repression Against Robotnik Activists -- by P. Green .....20

Police Budget Soars .....20

Documents:

Founding Declaration of the Committee  
for Free Trade Unions in Katowice .....21

Leaflet by Katowice Committee .....21

Declaration of Founding Committee of  
Polish Free Trade Unions on the Baltic Seaboard.....21

## ROMANIA

Experiences of a Socialist Worker -- Interview with  
Vasile Paraschiv .....22

## LABOUR MOVEMENT

In Retrospect: The Labour Movement and the  
Invasion of Czechoslovakia -- by Patrick Camiller .....24

Campaign Launched for Bukharin's Rehabilitation .....25

Conference on the 10th Anniversary of the

Invasion of Czechoslovakia .....25

Czech Committee meeting on Prague Spring .....25

Bahro International Conference in October .....25

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign Notes .....26

Rally and March on 10th Anniversary .....26

## REVIEW

"Socialism with a German Face" -- by Günter Minnerup .....26

# EDITORIAL

## 10 Years After Czechoslovakia, 1968: An Unresolved Issue

This August marks the 10th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The great movement for democratization that was crushed by the intervention of 600,000 Warsaw Pact troops demonstrated beyond a doubt that the repressive political systems in Eastern Europe do not correspond to the aspirations of the working peoples of these countries. The events in Czechoslovakia ten years ago showed that the struggle for democratic rights and working class rights in Eastern Europe is not, as the Soviet leadership would have us believe, the concern of handfuls of misfits, 'counter-revolutionaries' and imperialist agents. It is the cause of the working classes in these societies. That's why over half a million troops were needed in 1968.

The British labour movement overwhelmingly condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia (See the article on the labour movement's reaction on page 24 of this issue). But the Left in the Labour Party and the trade unions has still not faced the basic practical conclusion that should be drawn from the events of 1968. It has not recognized its responsibility to throw its considerable weight behind the movements for democratic and working class rights in Eastern Europe.

There has, of course, been some change. Individual left-wing leaders have begun to campaign seriously for the rights of working people in Eastern Europe. And now and again the mass organizations have taken up individual cases of repression.

But by and large the old Cold War reflexes remain dominant. Eric Heffer's important article in this issue of Labour Focus graphically describes the paralysing hold of these attitudes among leaders of the Left within the Labour Party.

The Right and the extreme Right are no doubt preparing to use the 10th anniversary as an occasion for red-baiting. The bitter irony of such agitation is that it will be eagerly seized upon by the propaganda media in Eastern Europe and will be used as a justification for the present repression there. Attempts will be made to brand the movement in 1968 as an attempt to introduce the ideas of Thatcher and the National Association for Freedom. Thus do the enemies of progress in the East and the West feed off each other's propaganda.

Socialists should use the occasion to renew and step up their commitment to the struggle for democratization and working class rights in Eastern Europe. They can do so in a number of ways:

\*Support the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign's conference on 19-20 August on "Eastern Europe and the British Labour Movement, 10 Years After Czechoslovakia, 1968".

\*Support the demonstration from Smeaker's Corner to the Czechoslovak and Soviet Embassies on the afternoon of Sunday 20 August. The demonstration is being organized by an ad hoc committee established on the initiative of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists.

\*Take up Eric Heffer's call for a grass-roots campaign in defence of the Soviet Trade Union Association, and spread the information on the case produced by the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign as widely as possible.

\*Use the dossier produced by Labour Focus and the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists on political sackings of Charter 77 supporters to get their trade unions to give moral and material support to individual Chartists in their own occupation.

\*Get your organization to back the activities of the Czech Committee and to affiliate to the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, so that the mass organizations of the working class in this country can become involved in systematic support for the struggle for socialist democracy in Eastern Europe.

\*\*\*\*\*

You will already have noticed that the price of this issue is 5p higher than previous copies of Labour Focus (though subscription rates have remained for the moment unchanged). You may have thought that the price increase was to offset the extra 4 pages in this issue. But you would be only partly right: the price will remain 35p unhappily. Our printing costs went up by 10% last summer and they have been increased by 20% as from this issue. And we are already running on a shoe-string. Labour Focus has survived solely through sales, voluntary labour and above all subscriptions. We have had some near escapes and we desperately need the financial support of our readers. We are therefore appealing to you to help us and yourself by subscribing if you have not already done so and we would very much welcome any donations, however small, to help us survive.

### LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on Eastern Europe and the USSR

30p



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#### SPECIAL ISSUES

What is the real position of women in the various East European countries? A collective of socialist feminists with specialist knowledge of East European societies takes a comprehensive look at the place of women in these societies. 30p

Labour Focus and the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists provide detailed information on political sackings of Charter 77 supporters: names, addresses, occupations and suggestions on what British trade unionists can do.

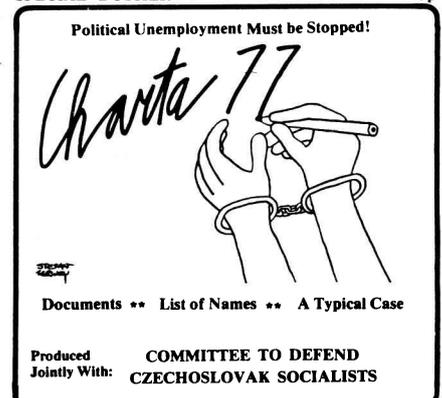
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### LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on Eastern Europe and the USSR

SPECIAL DOSSIER

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# SOVIET UNION

## What help for the Soviet trade unionists?

As yet no consensus has emerged within the trade unions and political parties of the working class in Western Europe on the attitude to take towards the appeal for support from the unofficial Soviet Trade Union Association. The Communist-led CGT in France, a member union of the Prague-based World Federation of Trade Unions, has publicly condemned the Soviet Government's suppression of the Free Trade Union Association. It has been joined by the other French trade unions and by a number of unions in the rival International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The International Labour Organization has already rejected the Soviet Trade Union Association's request for affiliation on technical grounds. But the ILO's November meeting will discuss the question of whether it should institute an official investigation into the Trade Union Association's allegations of violations of workers' rights in the Soviet Union.

The British TUC, on the other hand, appears to have decided to acquiesce in the crushing of the Soviet Trade Union Association. The TUC's International Committee has also apparently decided to oppose any ILO investigation of mistreatment of workers in the USSR.

According to the Observer (2 July), Jack Jones, the 65-year-old head of the TUC's International Committee feels that such an investigation to check the evidence available and to get more information would be a mistake. He justifies this view by saying there is too little information available about the whole matter.

TUC General Secretary Len Murray had written to the Soviet authorities asking for their views on the Trade Union Association. On 26 May, Shibaev, a former factory manager and Party leader who joined the official Soviet trade unions as their Chairman last year, replied to Len Murray's letter.

According to the Observer Shibaev's reply has "made a favourable impression on the TUC International Committee". But unfortunately the TUC has not yet made the contents of the letter public. Presumably the Soviet authorities have felt the need to adjust their earlier stance, projected by TASS, the Soviet news agency, of denying the existence of the Trade Union Association (See our editorial in the last issue of Labour Focus.) This line would be difficult to maintain after the Prague-based WFTU has already publicly recognized the group's existence (in a statement



The 11 June issue of *Trud* (Work), the daily organ of the Official Soviet Trade Unions, which denounces the Trade Union Association as "renegades — 'dissidents' who have nothing to do with the workers and trade unions".

condemning it). But it is still not clear how the Shibaev letter explains the forcible internment of members of the Soviet Trade Union Association in psychiatric hospitals or prisons, and the denial of work to other members.

The Labour Party NEC has also so far failed to come out in defence of the Trade Union Association, despite two attempts by Eric Heffer to raise the matter.

## Labour and the Free Trade Unionists

by Eric Heffer, MP

[Eric Heffer is the Labour MP for Walton (Liverpool) and one of the main leaders of the Left of the Labour Party. He played a prominent role in the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act, the measure introduced by the Tory government of 1970-74 to shackle the British trade union movement, destroy its independence and limit the right to strike. He is a member of the National Executive of the Labour Party, the leading body of the Party between conferences.]

Since the first news of the formation of the Soviet Trade Union Association, Eric Heffer has led the campaign in this country on their behalf. Some months ago he tabled a resolution on the Labour Party NEC urging support for those workers in the Soviet Union who wish to create free and independent trade unions, that is unions free from State control.

In the following important article Eric Heffer analyses the response of the Labour

Party leadership to his initiative and explains why every socialist should take up the cause of the Soviet trade unionists.]

There is no doubt, the resolution I have put down for the N.E.C. of the Labour Party has caused a great deal of heart searching amongst leading Labour politicians and trade unionists. A sort of cold shudder appears to have gone through their ranks. One gets the feeling that it raises a subject that one ought not to talk about.

This impression has been underlined by the fact that on two occasions the International Committee of the N.E.C. has deferred a decision on the resolution: on the first occasion because Len Murray, on behalf of the General Council of the TUC, had written to the Soviet Trade Union leaders for information; and on the second occasion for more obscure reasons which I frankly fail to understand.

Even some of those who basically agree with me have certain worries. They rightly have no wish to be classified as "Cold War Warriors". There is a danger that such charges will be made, especially by those in the Labour and trade union movement whose ideas remain rooted in the past. Some have failed to understand what the Khrushchev revelations really meant, in the situation that has arisen as the result of them. They have also failed to assimilate the meaning of subsequent events such as the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

In urging support for Soviet workers seeking the right to form independent trade unions such as exist in Britain, France, Italy and elsewhere, one is striking at the very heart of Soviet bureaucratic society. The demand is therefore more fundamental than even the right to write and publish freely. That is why the Soviet leaders are so concerned about it.

Over the years, particularly since the end of the Second World War, contacts have been strengthened between the TUC and the Soviet trade unions. Delegations have been regularly exchanged and obviously some personal friendships have been formed. It can therefore seem to some political or trade union leaders that if they backed the Soviet workers in their endeavour to create independent unions they would be breaking the ties that have been painfully built up. Furthermore, they would in essence be urging the growth of unofficial trade unions, something they would deplore and oppose in Britain.

It has actually been put to me, by a close political colleague, that the wording of my resolution in effect calls for the Soviet workers to revolt against their leaders. That is, of course, untrue. But the argument reveals a real lack of understanding of the nature of the Soviet trade unions. Soviet trade unions are not like those in Britain. They are an integral part of the state machine. The Webbs made that clear in their book **Soviet Communism**, although they appeared to approve of it. In the Soviet Union trade unions operate as 'transmission belts' for the Communist Party. The trade union leaders are always Party members alternating between varying parts of the state apparatus. Alexander Shelepin, for example, was at one time head of the KGB before becoming Chairman of the trade unions.

What is disturbing to me is the fact that some of my colleagues have adopted a different approach towards the resolution on the Soviet workers from their approach to other resolutions on Argentina, Chile, South Africa, etc. It is argued that the wording of the resolution is unclear. If that is so, the procedure adopted in other cases can be applied: the wording can be changed. Actually, I have already indicated my willingness to make such changes. Surely what is needed is support for the resolution in principle, then changes or improvements in the wording can be made.

However, if the principle is being objected to then those who oppose it should clearly state their reasons. Otherwise the charge of double standards can be laid at Labour's feet, and that, in my view, would be a baseless charge.



CPSU leader Boris Ponomarev toasts TUC General Secretary Len Murray

What is actually being proposed? It is that those workers who wish to create a non-state controlled union ought to be supported, and that protests be made when any of them are incarcerated in mental institutions or prisons for doing so. The issue is straightforward enough. Even if Amnesty International had not distributed the documents from the Association of Free Trade Unionists which came into their hands, the principle would still be correct.

The appeal those workers issued to the ILO and Western Trade Unionists states: "Having no other possibilities, we are obliged to seek moral and material support with this appeal through the Western press....

"We have all been dismissed for exposing abuses or for speaking out against the management of enterprises where we worked. Among the issues we raised were pilfering and dilution of materials, bribery, a high rate of industrial accidents, and flagrant, widespread violations of the Labour Code."

The members of the Association are all middle-aged with more than a decade of working experience behind them. In Britain such workers would receive the praise and support of their fellow trade unionists.

As mentioned earlier, after Amnesty published extracts from the documents, the General Council through Len Murray wrote to the Soviet trade unions. They asked for their opinions on the document. A reply in general terms has been received, but at the time of writing it has not reached Ron Hayward, the Labour Party's General Secretary. Naturally, I have no idea what the reply contains, but the general attitude of the Soviet authorities towards this issue was revealed in an alarming way by TASS correspondent Yuri Kornilov. He wrote, "All this is twaddle from beginning to end. They are not, and there have never been any such trade union 'associations' in the Soviet Union". He then went on to say that in Britain we should be concerned with "the persecution of trade union officials", and referred to "the case of Alex Kitson".

This is an amazing statement. It is clear that Mr. Kornilov cannot understand that in Britain one can disagree publicly without losing one's job or being put in a mental institution.

There are, of course, cases of what some of us would regard as the persecution of trade unionists in Britain, for example the imprisonment of the Shrewsbury pickets, or the operation of the Black list. The left-wing of the Labour Movement has always opposed such measures and will continue to do so.

Another argument used against supporting the Soviet workers is that it is best to discuss things with the Soviet leaders behind closed doors; that delegations can and do speak frankly to the Soviet leaders; that dissidents are sometimes released as a result of behind the scenes representations, and that improvements towards democracy in the Soviet Union result from such discussions.

I do not deny that behind the scenes discussions are at times effective. But there is one fatal flaw in the argument. The people of the Soviet Union never know what was said at these 'frank' exchanges of opinion. The Soviet press do not report their contents or any of the criticisms made. Those who use this argument would not do so in the case of Chile, Argentina, Brazil or South Africa, so why should it apply to the Soviet Union, not elsewhere?

Old habits die hard. There are those in the Labour movement who still think in terms of the situation in the period at the beginning of the Russian Revolution, forgetting all that has happened since. There are also those who simplistically believe that if a country calls itself socialist, it is socialist. It is precisely because the Soviet Union's leaders use the term socialist, and because their administrative, oppressive measures are carried out in the

name of socialism, that democratic socialists must distance themselves from what happens in that country. In opposing the oppressive policies of the Communist leaders, democratic socialists are helping those in the Soviet Union who themselves are trying to change the Soviet Union in a democratic direction.

The left-wing of the Labour Party carries a particular responsibility in this regard. They must not have double standards. They must give their support to human and civil rights everywhere, whether it is in Northern Ireland or the Soviet Union. In particular, it is essential that they support those who wish to organize non-state controlled trade unions.

What then is required? Firstly, resolutions

could be passed by CLPs and trade unions and be sent into the NEC of the Labour Party and the General Council of the TUC. Such resolutions could clearly declare their continued support for Detente, for friendship with the Soviet Union, for peace not war, so that they cannot be used by reactionaries for cold war purposes. At the same time the resolutions should demand that Soviet workers have the same basic rights as their counter-parts in the capitalist West, rights which the workers in the West have in the past paid dearly for. It is not surprising that the Italian Communist/Socialist-led trade unions are coming out of the WFTU, or that the French Communist-led union has recalled its General Secretary of the WFTU. Both the Italian and the French Trade Unions are independent, non-state controlled trade

unions, and see no reason why such unions should not exist in the East European Communist controlled countries.

It is important that the Frank Chapples of the Trade Union movement should not have the lead. If the issue is left to them, much of the impact will be lost. It is my own view that even if the TUC, for its own reasons, does not wish to support the views expressed in my resolution, that should not stop the Labour Party NEC from clearly expressing its views. Labour does not need to follow the General Council viewpoint. We are a democratic socialist party which must on all occasions make its own position crystal clear. That is why I hope that the NEC of the Labour Party will accept the principle contained in my resolution, and clarify it in a Party statement.

## Document: Statutes of the Free Trade Union Association

*[In our last issue we published the complete text of the Trade Union Association's appeal for support from the Western Labour Movements. This Appeal gives a very clear idea of what the Association's aims are. The statutes of the Association, which we publish in full here, give an equally clear idea of how the organization seeks to work towards achieving its aims. The translation is by Olga Semyonova who, together with Victor Haynes, is producing a complete collection of the Association's documents in a Pluto Press book due out next January.]*

Valid from 1 January 1978 to 1 January 1979.

### Section 1. Membership of the Free Trade Union Association of Soviet Working People.

1. Members of the Free Trade Union Association of Soviet Working People should be workers and employees whose rights and interests have been illegally flouted by the administrative, soviet, party and judicial organs.

2. A member of the Free Trade Union Association has the right to:

- freely discuss all the activities of the association, make proposals, openly express his or her views and fight for their opinions until the decision of the Free Trade Union Association is made;
- participate personally in meetings when questions about their own activity or conduct are examined;
- tirelessly carry out the struggle for peace and friendship between peoples;
- raise political consciousness;
- observe the Statute of the Free Trade Union Association;
- participate in the social and political activities of the association.

3. A member of the Association is entitled to the following benefits:

- to receive sound legal aid;
- to receive moral and material aid within the limits of possibility;
- to receive aid in the search for accommodation, and if they are in a position to do so, to give help to their comrades.

4. Enrolment as a member of the Free Trade Union Association is carried out at the request of the person wishing to join, with a preliminary week for consideration in view of the possible consequences of joining.

5. Decisions on the admission of members are made by the assembly.



The official side of Soviet trade unions. Who brought the nice banners?

### Section 2. Organizational Structure of the Free Trade Union Association of Soviet Working People.

6. It is organized on the basis of democratic centralism which means:

- all officials from top to bottom are elected by the members and are accountable to them;
- all questions concerning the association are decided in accordance with the Statute;
- decisions are made by majority vote.

7. The free and businesslike debate on questions of the work of the Free Trade Union Association is a vital principle of internal trade union democracy. On the basis of internal trade union democracy, criticism and self-criticism, activism develop in the membership and practical discipline and political consciousness are strengthened.

8. The Free Trade Union Association is based on the association formed initially by the '43'.

9. The tasks of the Free Trade Union Association are:

- carrying out of obligations incurred by collective agreement;
- recruiting workers and employees to membership of the Free Trade Union Association;
- putting into practice the decisions of the association in its defence of rights and search for justice;
- teaching the members of the association to adopt an uncompromising attitude to inadequacies, manifestations of bureaucratism and mystification, bad management and extravagance and careless attitudes to national property.

### Section 3. Funds of the Free Trade Union Association.

10. The funds of the Free Trade Union Association will consist of:

- (a) a monthly membership dues and contributions from the unemployed according to their means;
- (b) the dues will be no more than 1% of a worker's wages, but no limit will be set on voluntary donations.
- (c) contributions by non-members of the Free Trade Union Association in return for the rendering of legal services, the printing and compiling of petitions at rates not exceeding the state tariff;
- (d) material aid received from foreign trade union organizations.

### Section 4. On the Rights of the Free Trade Union Association as a Legal Entity.

11. The Free Trade Union Association of Soviet Working People has a legal character.

As soon as the Free Trade Union Association of Soviet Working People is recognized by the International Labour Organization or trade unions of foreign countries, as soon as it receives moral and material support, the STATUTE will be reviewed in the light of the special situation of working people in our country. The review will be carried out not earlier than one year after the foundation of the Association.

Signed by the Council of the 43 members.

## The Trade Union Association: Basic Facts

By Victor Haynes

The 'Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers of the Soviet Union (AFTUWSU) was formed in Moscow on 30 January 1978. Two days later it appealed to the International Labour Organization and to Western trade unions for support. (The Appeal was published in full in the last issue of **Labour Focus**.) Its 43 full and 110 candidate members described themselves as part of the "the great army of Soviet unemployed, thrown out of the factory gates for exercising our right to criticism and free speech".

Their criticisms were, they say aimed at "wasters of socialist property, poor work conditions, low pay, high accident rates at work, increased work loads and output norms leading to wastage and low quality production, and the continuous rise in the prices of basic necessities and foodstuffs."

The AFTUWSU stressed its loyalty to the state by reference to the Soviet Constitution, their years of work and the medals they have won in honour of their service to society. Many refer to their participation in the 'Great Patriotic War' (the Second World War).

They call themselves 'mostly middle-aged people' who met one another in the reception rooms of the central Government offices in Moscow where they came, along with a multitude of others from all corners of the Soviet Union to seek a solution to their grievances. However, all that they received from the authorities was repression. They therefore finally decided to form the AFTUWSU.

Like an official Soviet trade union the AFTUWSU includes all grades of employees from managers and engineers through to foremen and manual workers, who make up the majority of the total membership. Nonetheless AFTUWSU differs from the official Trade Unions in that it genuinely aims to fight for the rights of its members rather than acting as a transmission belt for the orders of central offices.

The attempt to form an organization independent of the authorities has met with the usual repression. The best known member, **Vladimir Klebanov**, is in prison in Donetsk. Another leading militant **Gavril Yankov** was imprisoned in April 1978, while **Antonin Poplavsky**, one of the original 43 members, was sentenced to a year's imprisonment on 18 May allegedly for "parasitism". This amounted to the fact that he had been unable to find work since losing his job in 1975 for "exposing the abuses of the factory management". Other members have been confined in psychiatric hospitals/prisons.

The practice of putting oppositionists in psychiatric hospitals has been well documented with regard to the intellectual dissenters, but the documents of the AFTUWSU show that it is a common way of dealing with working class opponents of bureaucratic malpractices as well. Below we publish a list of some cases of this type revealed by the AFTUWSU.

**The following is a list of those who according to the documents issued by the AFTUWSU are confined to psychiatric hospitals because of industrial disputes:**

**Boiko, Aleksandr Mikhailovich**, a miner from Donetsk, Ukraine, who was placed in January 1977 in Moscow's Psychiatric Hospital No.7.

**Dvoretzky, Fyodor Pavlovich**, a compressor operator from Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, who according to his wife, a factory worker, was confined on 6 May 1977 to the Special Psychiatric Hospital No.2 in Alma-Ata.

**Gavrilenko, Viktor**, a history teacher from Vinnitsa, Ukraine, being held at the Special Psychiatric Hospital in Dnepropetrovsk.

**Gudz, Mikhail Stepanovich**, who was a fishing worker from Zaporozhyia, Ukraine, a member of the CPSU: 'Shut up in Psychiatric Hospital No.7 in March 1977, sacked after a quarrel with the captain of the fishing boat'.

**Korchagin, Viktor Ivanovich**, leader of a brigade of fitters, former CPSU members, who "is now being held in the psychiatric hospital in his home town of Kemerov", Russia.

**Mur'vyov, Pyotr Mikhailovich**, worked as a brigade leader of roofers in Leningrad. From 1959 confined to psychiatric hospitals for sending a petition to Khrushchev with a photograph of himself with his cap held in his outstretched hand. Presently at Psychiatric Hospital No.1 in Donetsk.

**Nikitin, Vasily Yurevich**, a mining engineer from Donetsk, who was held in a Dnepropetrovsk psychiatric hospital for having exposed abuses at a mine in the Donbas mining area of Ukraine. Placed again in a psychiatric hospital in Donetsk in March 1977 for attempting to flee into the American Embassy in Moscow.

**Nikolayev, Yevgeny Borisovich**, who unlike the other members of the AFTUWSU was a known intellectual dissident. He began his 'dissident career' when he was sacked from his research job at the Institute of Disinfection for refusing to do a day's free labour in honour of the 24th Congress of the CPSU. His flat in Moscow was used for the press conferences by the AFTUWSU. He was detained on 15 February 1978 and confined in Psychiatric Hospital no.1, the Kashchenko, in Moscow.

**Shcherbakov, Valentin Vail'yevich**, a worker at a copper smelting combine in Karatash, Chelyabinsk Region, who during 1977 was confined numerous times in Moscow psychiatric hospitals for complaining. "In early January 1978, V.V.Shcherbakov disappeared, and it has to be presumed that he has again been placed into a psychiatric hospital."

(This article is a summary of the section on the AFTUWSU documents which will appear in a book **Soviet Workers Protest** by Olga Semyonova and Victory Haynes to be published by Pluto Press in January 1979.)

## Orlov Sentenced, Shcharansky next?



Yuri Orlov

### The CPSU explains ..

In an extraordinarily violent private reply to the Labour Party NEC, concerning the Orlov case, the Soviet government attempts to explain its imprisonment of Yuri Orlov.

It singles out and lists 3 'facts':

1. The strike that Orlov said took place in Riga did not occur, and the people he said were jailed after it were invented by Orlov.
2. People who Orlov said were jailed for political reasons were in fact jailed for such things as 'malicious hooliganism' and theft, not for political reasons.
3. Jews who, according to Orlov were not allowed to leave the USSR, had either left or had not asked to go.

So **this** is why Orlov was locked up for 12 years: they say he told 3 lies!

### Podrabinek Charged

According to **Arkhip Samizdata** 3246-3248, the 24-year-old Moscow ambulance driver, Alexandr Podrabinek, has been charged with "dissemination of knowingly false fabrications discrediting the Soviet political and social system" for his work in founding and leading the unofficial Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes. Podrabinek was arrested on 14 May 1978. The charge against Podrabinek was revealed by his father, at the end of June.

128 human rights activists in the Soviet Union have sent a collective letter to the Soviet authorities appealing for the release of both Alexandr Podrabinek and of his brother, Kirill, who was arrested at the beginning of 1978. (See the cover picture on **Labour Focus**, Vol.2 No.1.) The KGB had been putting pressure on Alexandr Podrabinek to emigrate after his book, **Punitive Medicine**, about psychiatric abuse, appeared last year. They had threatened to imprison his brother Kirill if he refused to leave the country. When Alexander did refuse, Kirill was arrested and sent to prison on 14 March. He received a 2½ year sentence for allegedly possessing a firearm.

Yuri Orlov, the founder and leading member of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group was tried and sentenced for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" on 18 May. For making statements about the Soviet Union that were allegedly not untrue, Orlov was given 7 years imprisonment plus 5 years in penal exile — a total of 12 years confinement — by a Moscow court.

The Soviet propaganda media have stressed that Orlov was sentenced according to the Soviet law. This is quite true. Article 70 of the Russian Criminal Code effectively bans freedom of expression and gives the Soviet authorities the legal right to give 12 year sentences to people like Orlov for supposedly saying things about the USSR that are not true. And given the conditions in the USSR it is a relatively simple matter for the Soviet authorities to produce witnesses who will testify that information contained in the documents of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups is false.

The decision to put Orlov on trial at this time had nothing to do with what Orlov may or may not have said or written. It was a purely political issue, dictated by the complex diplomatic game being pursued between Moscow and Washington in the wake of the Helsinki review conference at Belgrade. The Soviet authorities have evidently been using Orlov, as well as Alexander Ginzburg and Anatoly Shcharansky as hostages or bargaining counters in its international diplomacy.

The Kremlin is undoubtedly expecting to recoup the damage done by the Orlov trial through a big show trial for Shcharansky, the Jewish activist in the Moscow Helsinki Group. The KGB seems to have pulled off a considerable coup in persuading the CIA to recruit one of its agents and in then introducing this man, Lipavsky, into Shcharansky's circle. They are thus charging Shcharansky with Treason for being linked to the CIA. The absurdity of the idea of a public civil rights campaigner in full view of the ever-watchful KGB leading, at the same time, a secret life as a CIA spy, will no doubt be counter-balanced by lurid accusations by KGB operative Lipavsky.

Meanwhile, out of the Moscow lime-light, the Soviet authorities have been remorselessly crushing the Helsinki Groups in the other Soviet republics. At the same time as the Orlov trial, two members of the Georgian Helsinki group, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava were sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment. Six members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group are in prison, four of whom have received long sentences ranging from 12-15 years; Lev Lukyanenko is still awaiting trial.

## Ginzburg for Trial

As we go to press the Soviet authorities have announced that Alexander Ginzburg is to stand trial in Kaluga (100 miles from Moscow) on Monday 10 July. Two months after Orlov's trial, Ginzburg has been chosen as the next Moscow human rights activist to be fed into the machine of judicial repression.

Ginzburg has been charged under Article 70 of the Russian Criminal Code for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' which carries a maximum sentence of 7 years imprisonment and 5 years exile.



Alexander Ginzburg

Ginzburg has a long and courageous record as a civil rights campaigner and he has twice previously spent time in prisons and labour camps for his activities. He was first arrested in 1960 and sent to corrective labour camps for two years because of his involvement with an underground literary journal called **Syntax**. His second arrest, for publicising the facts about the notorious trial of the writers Sinyavsky and Daniel in February 1966, led to 5 years in a strict regime labour camp. The Sinyavsky-Daniel trial marked the start of the Brezhnev-Kosygin drive against the Soviet intelligentsia and the protests against the trial opened the long history of public protests against the violations of civil rights on the part of intellectuals. The first issue of the underground **Chronicle of Current Events**, which has continued to appear ever since, concentrated on the trial of Ginzburg and his co-defendant, Yuri Galanskov. (Galanskov subsequently died in a labour camp).

In the camps Ginzburg was in the forefront of the prisoners' struggle for improved conditions, organizing collective protests and hunger strikes.

A member of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group, Ginzburg was arrested for the third time in February 1977, and has been held in jail ever since. Prior to his arrest, he was chiefly responsible for distributing money to the families of Soviet political prisoners: the money came from the royalties of books by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Since one of the main weapons of the Soviet authorities in crushing dissent is the economic hardship faced the families of political prisoners, Ginzburg's activities were no doubt seen as particularly irksome by the KGB.

by Mark Jackson

## Hungarian Socialists Defend Orlov

We are Hungarian socialist intellectuals forced to leave our home by political and police repression but who in no way pretend to the role of a political emigre group. We declare our solidarity with Yuri Orlov and with all the Soviet workers and intellectuals who have recently been condemned because of their activity in defence of the most elementary liberties.

We wish not only to express our own protest but also to appeal to public opinion of the democratic left in the West and the East.

Aside from the fact that these events are shocking in themselves, the offensive of the Soviet authorities is a sign that the systematic liquidation of opposition in the Soviet Union has begun. In view of the relationships that exist in Eastern Europe, this contains the danger that the

offensive of police measures will be expanded to all the countries of Eastern Europe. The trial [of Orlov] endangers not only the militants responsibly engaged in the political opposition in Eastern Europe but also all independently thinking people.

We will also not hide our conviction that the Western World bears some of the responsibility for this turn of events, because it is not at all an accident that the events have occurred after the conclusion of the Belgrade Conference.

This fiasco of official diplomacy makes it more urgent that we turn to the public opinion of the democratic left in order to stress: It is not appropriate to measure with two different standards.

When, as we do, one condemns restrictions on liberty in the West —

such as the **Berufsverbot** in West Germany — it is a political and moral obligation to raise one's voice in a series of far more serious cases, in which democratic, open activity is answered with forced labour and imprisonment.

We demand the release of Yuri Orlov and all those condemned at the same time, both the political prisoners in the Soviet Union and those in the other countries of Eastern Europe, and we call upon the entire democratic left to champion this goal.

21 May 1978

Sydney, Australia

**Ivan Szelenyi**, sociologist; **Maria Markus**, sociologist; **Ferenc Feher**, philosopher; **Gyorgy Konrad**, novelist; **Agnes Heller**, philosopher; **Gyorgy Markus**, philosopher; **Miklos Haraszti**, sociologist.

## Morning Star 'Guilty' of Orlov's 'Crime'

[British socialists have some difficulty grasping the significance of Article 70 of the Russian Criminal Code, under which Yuri Orlov was sentenced to 12 years by a Soviet court in mid-May. The following letter from a former political prisoner to the Morning Star gives a more precise idea of the meaning of Article 70 on 'anti-socialist agitation and propaganda'.

Translation is by Helen Jamieson. Labour Focus has passed Alexander Feldman's letter on to the comrades at the Morning Star.]



A. Feldman

TO THE EDITORIAL OFFICE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN MORNING STAR

Dear Editor,

During the last couple of years I have found myself in a Soviet (hard) labour camp. In my search for accessible sources of information, which would differ from the Soviet mass propaganda media at least in its general themes and objectivity, I turned also to your newspaper. Here I was sometimes able to find information which was not otherwise available to me in Soviet publications, especially information on the question of human rights in the Soviet Union, violations of which I myself have sharply experienced.

First of all, I must say that it is practically impossible to receive the **Morning Star** because of camp censorship, although officially these kinds of publications are not forbidden for prisoners. The censors confiscate all publications which are non-Russian. It is impossible to receive West European newspapers, although one can freely purchase or subscribe to them from (inside) the camp. However, I was able to read some issues of the **Morning Star** from the period between September 1976 and February 1977.

On 6 March 1977 a KGB functionary from Kherson, near which our camp is situated, and a representative of the camp administration confiscated my translations into Russian of some articles from the **Morning Star**. The KGB official, Vitaliy Maksymovych, immediately defined them as being 'tendentious'. Soon afterwards, on 18 March, during a discussion with Captain Nidzelsky, the representative of the camp administration, the Captain called the translated materials 'anti-Soviet'. Here is a list of the articles that came under that category:

"Solzhenitsyn moves" (Sept. 9), "Drable protests" (Sept. 15), "Halt repression of gays - Communists" (Sept. 15), "London Protests to Chnoupek" (Sept. 16), "Prague jails 4 pop musicians" (Sept. 24), "League deplors Prague rock music trial" (Sept. 25), "112 countries violating human rights - Amnesty" (Sept. 27), "Chileans political asylum plea turned down by tribunal" (Sept. 22), "Plyushch to speak at London Amnesty meeting" (Oct. 6), "Junta lies about its prisoners" (Nov. 19).

Needless to say, these above mentioned articles were confiscated.

Categorizing material in this way means that it is a matter for the criminal law in the Soviet Union, punishable under Article 70 of the Russian Criminal Code.\* I therefore consider it necessary to inform your editorial staff and your readers that officials here have made such an evaluation of the information you have published.

I should add that, as far as sales of your paper are concerned, nothing like all the issues can be obtained, especially in the provinces, and a subscription to the organ of the CPGB is in general unobtainable, probably because of 'preventive considerations'.

Respectfully,  
**Aleksandr Feldman**,  
Enthusiasts Street, house 11/1-147, Kiev 154, USSR.  
26 April 1977.

\* Article 70 concerns 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' and carries a maximum sentence of 7 years imprisonment, 5 years exile.

## 10th Anniversary of the Chronicle of Current Events by Boris Weil

[Boris Weil is a Russian Marxist who emigrated to the West in 1977 and is currently living in Denmark. In 1956 as a 17-year-old student in Leningrad he was part of a radical group which distributed various documents, including Khrushchev's Secret Speech, Togliatti on Stalin, and Tito on Hungary '56. For this activity he and five other members were sentenced in 1957 to labour camps for terms ranging from 3 to 10 years. He emerged from the camp in 1966 and was active until he was re-arrested in 1970 both for his dissident activities and for his outspoken opposition to the invasion of Czechoslovakia.]

Exactly ten years ago on 1 May 1968, the first underground journal came out in the USSR — or, to be more precise, in Moscow. **The Chronicle of Current Events** was not printed — that would have been unthinkable — but produced on a typewriter according to the samizdat method. What distinguished it from similar journals was its ambition to appear permanently, with the regularity of a true periodical. And in fact, although the CPSU has done everything in its power during these five years, it has not succeeded in closing it down. What then is this opposition journal? How has it been able to survive until today?



Yangi-Yul, Tashkent region, May 1967: Funeral procession of thousands of Crimean Tatars and others after Femi Aldiyev had been shot dead by police. **The Chronicle** has published a great deal of information on the struggle of the Crimean Tatars to return to their homeland.

Despite the fact that the freedoms of information and the press are recognized in both the old and new Soviet constitutions, they are in reality accorded only to official publications that engage in apologetics for the regime and denigrate anyone who thinks differently (*inakomyслиashchoe*). Such people are subjected not only to repression but also to a torrent of accusations: CIA agent, Zionist, lunatic ... The aim of the **Chronicle of Current Events**, then, is to make known who are the dissidents; how they are illegally

persecuted; how their trials take place; and how they are treated in the prisons, camps or mental hospitals.

**The Chronicle** speaks only about these things. It neither makes commentaries, nor identifies with a particular oppositional current, nor expounds a doctrine of its own: and so, it cannot be accused of subversion. On its typewritten pages are nothing but stark facts; and everything has to be documented and checked. The circumstances in which it is produced entail that, despite the editorial care, mistakes are sometimes made. But it should be said that these are secondary or quite unimportant, and that there is a special section containing points of clarification and correction.

**The Chronicle** was born during the 1968 Prague Spring, and its first numbers consisted of typewritten pages from that source. A more recent number (the fortieth) has over a hundred pages. In addition, special issues have begun to appear on various themes under the heading: 'Chronicle Archives'. Even the geography of the information has changed: in 1968, it was a question only of 'current events' in Moscow, Leningrad and Novosibirsk; whereas today, information comes from the four corners of the country — from Yakutsk to Kazakhstan or Siberia. Of

course, even today a hundred-page journal is unable to supply complete information on the so widespread repression in the USSR. But during the last ten years, similar publications have come out in other Soviet republics: in the Ukraine, for example, there is the *Visnyk*, and in Lithuania the **Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church**. I am told that people in Poland have also followed this example.

The Western reader will have difficulty in imagining the courage, self-abnegation and

sacrifice required for the **Chronicle** to stay alive. It would be a mistake to think that it can be distributed on a street corner in the manner of a militant pamphlet in the West. KGB chief Yuri Andropov has personally undertaken to destroy this samizdat item. And if so much as a single copy is found in someone's house, he or she runs the risk of a five or seven year jail term. So it can be given only to extremely reliable people who accept the risk of taking it and passing it on in turn. Some, who are particularly courageous, have done this alone without even informing their family; while many others are too afraid of the fresh interrogations and worries that would occur if their name were to appear, even by chance, in the pages of the **Chronicle**. Yet, incredible though it may seem, the intensified persecution has not prevented a rise in the number of those who read and distribute the journal.

Furthermore, thanks to the **Chronicle**, many who are not known as dissidents have shown their sympathy and given assistance to political prisoners. It is forbidden to collect funds, and Alexandr Ginzburg is in prison for trying to do just that. But individually and sometimes anonymously, complete strangers will send money to prisoners and their families, whose plight and address have been made known by the **Chronicle**.

Lastly, the fact that the **Chronicle** sometimes carries 'scoops' proves that it has sympathizers even in high places. Thus, it was able to publish the secret measures taken by the Supreme Soviet concerning books to be banned or withdrawn from libraries. (Of course, these were in principle completely illegal decrees, like the decision to destroy books that had already been printed.) All such revelations embarrass the government, the more so as they become known abroad through the pages of the **Chronicle**. There is a bi-lingual, Russian-English journal called **Chronicle--Press** that appears in New York, and in Denmark, where I am now living, much of this material is translated and read both in the country and in Norway and Sweden.

Someone has made a comparison between this voice that stands out from the fury of official propaganda and the voice of the little boy in Andersen's tale who cried out: 'The emperor has no clothes!' The trouble is that the boys who publish the **Chronicle** have to deal not with Andersen's king but with Andropov of the KGB. And they pay for what they do with long years in prison or in a lunatic asylum. Yet they always re-emerge: and when one disappears, another is there to take his place.

(Translation from *Il Manifesto* by Patrick Camiller.)

# SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

## DEBATE INSIDE

### CHARTER 77

#### Introduction

Early this year, a remarkable and wide-ranging debate on perspectives took place within the Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia. We are publishing here and in the next issue a complete collection of the documents circulated amongst the Chartists in that debate.

As its documents and spokespersons have always stressed, the Charter movement has united people of widely varying political and ideological outlooks. The regime has continually sought to use these differences to split the movement. The Party press has published scurrilous and slanderous attacks on former leading Communists; and the police has attempted to spread all sorts of rumours against individual Chartists, even suggesting that certain Chartists around Petr Uhl favour some form of terrorist activity! However, the Chartists have not allowed differences on other questions to break their united action for basic civil rights.

The regime has been more effective in its drive to intimidate people who would otherwise have supported the Charter. Through its arrests, trials and political sackings it has been able to prevent the Charter from gaining the very large number of signatures that some of its founders had hoped for. And over the last year it has combined this repression with a complete refusal to engage in any dialogue with the Chartists. Thus, although Charter 77 has brought hundreds of new people into active struggle for civil rights and has raised the issue of civil rights before the entire Czechoslovak peoples, the Husak regime has to some extent succeeded in building a wall of fear around its supporters, cutting them off from the mass of the people.

This is the immediate background to the recent debate about the future perspectives of the Charter. As the documents indicate, an earlier discussion amongst the Chartists took place in September 1977. The exact content of that discussion is not known to us, but it was concluded with the election of two new spokespersons — Kubisova and Hejdanek — and the issuing of a Charter statement emphasizing the possibility for groupings within the Charter to take 'citizens' initiatives' on their own account, provided that these were within the general framework of the Charter's aims. This possibility had indeed been recognized in the Charter's founding statement of 1 January 1977.

The letters which we publish below give some idea of the immense difficulties faced by those who embark on a campaign of united action for civil rights in Eastern Europe: under constant police surveillance, thrown out of work, without the normal means of communication with other activists, without access to the press, without the possibility of holding meetings, under constant threat of imprisonment, shunned by their intimidated friends, and not least denied the really vigorous, militant political and material support that they deserve from their natural allies, the Western Trade Union and socialist movements.

The current polemic implicitly revolves around the failure of the Charter to extract any concessions from the Husak regime. Dr.



Worried Party leader Husak listens to advice from hard-line Moscow supporter Vasil Bilak.

Jan Tesar, in the first letter, attacks the whole strategy of basing one's hopes on developments within the Party leadership, and connects this strategy with the policy of the Dubcek leadership in 1968 itself which he also criticizes vigorously. From these repeated failures of what he considers to be a "moderate" perspective he derives the need for a more radical approach, although he does not give a precise meaning to this. From Uhl's letter it would appear to involve some element of organization within the Charter. But it would also seem to entail a less legalistic attitude to the struggle for democratic rights, as well as an orientation to internationalizing the struggle. The fact that Tesar has written an open letter to President Carter and signed a document addressed to the Second International ("One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism") may suggest his idea of what such "internationalization" means. In reply, Prof. Hajek re-emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the divisions in the ruling power and the need to seek international support only from those who respect the framework of detente. Lubos Kohout stresses in a more general way the importance of legal means of struggle, and the dangers that he considers that "radicalism" poses for the struggle for democratic rights because of the weapons of slander that it gives to opponents of that struggle. Similarly, Ladislav Hejdanek insists on the crucial importance of keeping within the bounds of Czechoslovak legality, also attacking the idea that the Charter should take up individual cases of injustice in a campaigning way. Petr Uhl criticizes the points made by Kohout about radicalism and moderation, and describes the attitude of many signatories towards the activities and attitudes of certain supporters of the "Dubcekite" line — although he sharply distinguishes Hajek from those he attacks. Finally, in a document which will be published in the next issue of *Labour Focus*, Tesar replies to some of the criticisms made of his first letter, and in a lengthy passage about "fascist" and "bolshevik" totalitarianism suggests his feelings about the reformability of the system and the value of the laws contained in the Czechoslovak legal code.

**Jan Tesar**, who opened the debate, is a historian. He was one of the signatories of 'The Ten Point Manifesto', the first programme to denounce the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, issued in 1969. For signing this document Tesar was held in prison for over a year. He was arrested again before the November 1972 elections and given a heavy prison sentence. He was released from prison in December 1976 and was a founding signatory of Charter 77.

**Jiri Hajek** was born in 1913 and became a leader of the Social Democratic youth movement in the late 1930s. After spending the war in a Nazi prison, he became a top official of the Social Democratic Party and in 1948 a member of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. He was Minister of Education between 1965 and 1968, then became Foreign Minister during the Prague Spring. In 1969 he moved to become a researcher in the Academy of Sciences until his removal from that position in 1972. He was a Charter spokesperson from the start of the movement until he resigned, giving reasons of ill-health on 6 April, this year.

**Ladislav Hejdanek**, born in 1927, is a professional philosopher and an active member of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. He was imprisoned in summer 1972 and was released the following spring. He became a Charter spokesperson in September 1977 and was a signatory of 'One Hundred Years of Czech Socialism'.

**Lubos Kohout** was formerly a reader in Marxism at the Prague Philosophy Faculty. He was dismissed in the 1970 purges as a 'right-opportunist'. Since he has held various menial jobs. He was among the first signatories of Charter 77, and has been detained several times and subjected to continual harassment.

**Petr Uhl**, a revolutionary Marxist, was imprisoned in 1971-75 for his activities in the Revolutionary Socialist Party. He was sacked in December 1977 for signing Charter 77. He has also been kept under 24-hour surveillance.

All the letters reproduced here were circulated as Open Letters. Although there is some repetition in the material, we considered it important that the letters be reproduced in their entirety so that there could be no unintentional distortion of the ideas of the participants. We have omitted only a few lines from the entire debate, and we have done this because they are purely concerned with personal relations. All omissions are indicated in the text.

We hope that publication of this debate will help those committed to active solidarity with the Chartists to make the Chartists' problem their own.

(Documents made available by **Palach Press Agency**. Translations are by **Mark Jackson** and **Susannah Fry**.)

## Letter from Jan Tesar to Prof. Jiri Hajek

Dear Professor,

In the last few weeks you have given several interviews to foreign journalists in which you have expressed a fairly complete political outlook — for example, you speak of the Soviet leaders as 'Soviet comrades', you voice fears that international pressure for the maintenance of human rights in the lands of the Soviet bloc might lead to the intensification of repression against those who defend these rights at home. You may have formulated these ideas carefully but nevertheless abroad - for example, in the *Economist* your words were understood as you obviously wished them to be, and the methods of struggle adopted by the Charter and, unfortunately, its results were directly compared with the political positions, methods and results of the human rights movement in Poland.

I do not deny, dear Professor, that you have a right to your own political position, whatever it may be. Whatever the risk to myself I will always fight for the right to the free expression and assertion even of those views which I think are completely reactionary. You are a moderate, I am a radical. Every reform movement in history has inevitably divided into moderates, the centre and radicals. That this has happened even among us is normal and shows that our society is waking up and again beginning to behave politically. I do not want to defend radical politics by saying that they are always without exception correct, and I certainly do not want to say that they are capable by themselves of implementing any kind of progressive change. On the contrary, I know that it is precisely the radicals who have often ruined the chances for the triumph of freedom. This has always without exception happened when they were not aware that the existence of moderates and the centre was essential, when they wanted to suppress or even exterminate them — and especially when they did this after the seizure of power. Unlike you, I believe in a necessary political plurality before the triumph of freedom — and particularly after it. Only the co-operation of all three basic political tendencies can initiate the struggle with despotism; and the existence of each one of them is necessary now and will continue to be so in the future. When after the fall of despotism there is a political crisis it will mean — as it always has — that there is a risk of a new dictatorship emerging. It will be possible to avoid this only through the uninterrupted democratic competition of all existing political tendencies. But if,

however, the radicals are aware of this it will be they who will create the only **realistic** perspective for society. You could also say it like this, that the historical sense of conservatism consists in its physical existence: it is spontaneous and has no historical quality — the sense of radicalism is in its perspective.

I do not know your real political views. I did not agree with your practical political activity in 1968 and I do not agree with it even now. Your present political position is apparently based on the conviction that your political tendency will eventually come to an agreement with those in power now, that you will be taken back into the party and the leadership of the state, whereupon you will reform it. As I see it, your idea is analogous to the dynastic aspirations of the middle ages. You are relying on an enlightened ruler. Your whole outlook depends on this enlightened ruler who will open the door back into the party for you. And so it is logical that you do not want to internationalize our struggle. You know that your hopes of an enlightened ruler at Hradcany (1) are rather small — and you would be silly to complicate your initial presupposition by internationalizing the movement because then you would need the simultaneous existence of enlightened rulers everywhere among our friends.

If one accepts your outlook, you are acting logically. I would of course add that you are acting unhistorically. For me the basic condition for every step forward is the internationalization of our struggle.

It is probably obvious that I have no intention of trying to convince you of my views. I have no doubt that they are quite alien to you. Still less would I want to impose them on you. The point is, however, that you are de facto imposing on the international public the idea that I probably also share your views.

The thing is that you in no way speak as a private person — I am thinking of your function as 'spokesperson'. This not very well-chosen term embodies the idea that you are speaking not only for yourself but for the whole Charter. In your interviews you were identified — at least by journalists — as a spokesperson of the Charter and you did not emphasize that you were speaking only for yourself. And you were **not** speaking only for yourself but for one of the political tendencies in the Charter today. You should have

I must of course point out once again that as far as I am concerned I write entirely on my own account. I am not responsible to anybody, let alone a party. Moreover, I have no more interest in gaining any adherents for my point of view because I do not care about political success. My ambition is to discern the contours of the future and to succeed in expressing the truth. And I know that the deeper one succeeds in penetrating the problems of society the less popular one is among one's contemporaries. People don't like listening to unpleasant things. But this is precisely the value of an intellectual's (though not a politician's) statement about affairs. (It must be based on a conscious abdication from the attempt to please the majority: so my view is not the less valuable because it is personal.)

Anyway, I have a moral justification for my position. If you express fear of reprisals it is still quite clear to us all that the first victims will not be you, either in person or as a political tendency, but me (and here I must speak only for myself though I am not thinking only of myself). This was the case 20 years ago, 9 and 10 years ago, 5 years ago, and it will be the case tomorrow and the day after. And this is why I can express my point of view. I am much more afraid that the Charter will become petrified in its present forms than I am afraid of repression, as you are. This is not because I assume there will be no repression. On the contrary, I think there will, even if your political plans come off. I hope for both our sakes that this might not be the case, but nevertheless realism tells me that even then repression would continue against those whose ideal had still not been realized..

From the point of view of the future our positions and statements have the same value. The generation to which you and I belong will not enter the promised land; at most, we may catch sight of its outlines in our last moments. We are too weighed down by our sins, that is our habituation to life in unfreedom, to be able to lead a free people. The realization of freedom will be the affair of the new generation, which in any case is already overwhelmingly predominant in the Charter and on whose account our generation, yours and mine, is weighed down by great guilt. These people were born into a system which they did not choose, and which was prepared for them by us, whether by our mistaken intentions, our errors, our short-sightedness or simply our inadequacy. We have a

moral responsibility to try to share our experience with them so that they can add it to the total of information on the basis of which they will decide. I myself feel it is necessary to share with them my conclusion that they will not go forward if they are afraid of repression. They will not get close to freedom if they do not have the courage to destroy the national barriers behind which our mutual enemy has enclosed us. The tangible results of the Charter will continue to be so far beneath its possibilities if they do not gradually adopt the methods of struggle for human rights which are applied in present-day Poland (I underline this so that it cannot be wrongly interpreted: I mean the methods of roughly the last 3 years). My fear is that this will not happen, that we will not find enough strength for it.

The whole content of our quarrel could be expressed in the words of P.J.Safarik (2) from June 1848. Safarik was not only a moderate but very truthful and in truth ruthless when he said, "You cannot get from slavery to freedom without fighting".

In conclusion I repeat that I really do not want either to convince you or to silence your views. I would, however, ask you to **disassociate** yourself from foreign interpretations of your words if they have been misunderstood, to disassociate yourself from my exposition if any of my presumptions (for example the idea that you are not only speaking for yourself) are in any way justified, and, in particular, to make it clear where you are speaking only for yourself, or for the political tendency to which you belong and where for the Charter as a whole. If you want to speak in this last capacity, and intend to express yourself in ways which lean towards support of the status quo, rather than towards the development of our struggle, I would strongly urge you to first consult as many signatories of the Charter as is feasible. For myself, if nobody else writes to you, I do not mind if you say that you are speaking for all the Chartists except Jan Tesar.

Friendly greetings,

**Jan Tesar**

**Footnotes.**

1. Hradcany: Presidential palace in Prague.

2. P.J.Safarik (1795-1861): Slovak. Important figure in Czech National Awakening of early 19 century.

## Letter From Jiri Hajek to Jan Tesar

Dear Dr Tesar,

You have chosen the form of an 'Open Letter' to voice your critical remarks about my interviews with foreign journalists even though in my opinion it would have been simpler and more productive to discuss matters personally, because I presume we want to clarify things and not engage in polemics for the sake of polemics. That is why I have to reply in the same way.

It appears that the primary motive of your letter was "concern at international pressure on the observance of human rights in the countries of the Soviet bloc which can lead to increased repression against their defenders at home" (your words); you impute the authorship of this concern to me and then go on to try and interpret my motives ... and finally object that I should "force on the international public the idea" that you, too, share this concern and these motives. I must assure you that I have voiced no such concern in any of my interviews with foreign journalists. On the contrary, whenever they put their questions along these lines, I considered it correct and appropriate to leave them unanswered and to make it clear that this was not the point. It appears that you have not been correctly informed of the contents of these interviews and I am sure you have not had their full text at your disposal. This may, perhaps, spare me having to prove to you that I am not concerned with winning the favours of the present team in power in order to obtain some position of power myself; and that I do not wish to make the international public believe that you or anyone else hold certain views (especially views which I have never voiced anywhere).

Since certain readers of your Open Letter may get an inaccurate idea about the views and concepts which I imparted to foreign journalists, or made public in some other way, allow me a few remarks:

1. I believe that the essence of Charter 77 is an appeal for full and active citizen status; people in our country should not consider themselves as vassals who must fear those in power and give them unconditional obedience, but as citizens who have their rights, recognized by the State authority, which, in turn, should not be an instrument of domination but a system of bodies and institutions serving the enhancement of society and respecting the citizens' rights. People with different interests and views have joined in Charter 77 to launch this appeal and work for its implementation: hence Charter 77 is a pluralistic, informal and democratic community. Its objectives, set out in the declaration of 1st January 1977, do not sound very radical. Its task is simple — to campaign for civil relations at various levels and in different situations, to take full advantage of the scope provided by existing legislation as well as of the possibilities offered by the infra-structure of this society. The fact that those in power and official propaganda deemed it necessary and expedient to react in such an irrational manner to the proclamation of these moderate objectives and tasks seem to indicate that under the circumstances they considered them more dangerous than the most radical words and gestures.

2. I think that anyone who asks the regime to stop behaving in an authoritarian manner and respect all it has recognized in its

Constitution, laws and commitments stemming from international agreements adopted in the process of detente does so in the conviction or at least in the hope that he will succeed in compelling the regime to act accordingly. He does not proceed from a naive faith in an 'enlightened ruler', but on the contrary, from the realization that the regime is not as monolithic as such a faith would expect, that it is a more complex phenomenon or factor in which ideas as well as elements of inertia, the interests and endeavours of concrete people carry their weight, and that this regime, however much it may strive to divorce itself from external influences and pressures, remains exposed to them more than it desires and is subject to development.

I am one of those who are convinced that the economic and social foundations of a society professing to be socialist (even though still burdened by factors alien to socialism) and the requirements of its enhancement must be accompanied by a development towards a democratic political system, as 1968 showed in our country and as tendencies within the international communist movement as well as within the Warsaw Treaty and COMECON countries demonstrate.

I believe that initiatives of the Charter 77 type encourage these tendencies even though the present regime is trying to suppress them. The fact that these initiatives are nevertheless resisting and are gradually imposing some sort of de facto recognition confirms both their progressive character and the realistic nature of their endeavours.

3. You write about the 'internationalization' of endeavours for the respect of human rights. I do not know where you find proof of your statement that people like myself do not want it. In my opinion, the internationalization resides in the fact that since the end of the Second World War there has been an increasing awareness that observance of human rights is an inseparable part of efforts for a peaceful world, and in the fact that this awareness is reflected in significant documents such as the United Nations Charter and many resolutions passed by UN agencies, the Universal Declaration and the International Covenant on Human Rights. The close direct link between human rights and the process of detente is expressed in the Helsinki Final Act. You are aware of what has been said in the documents signed by the Charter 77 spokespeople about these questions, about the binding character of these stipulations and the right of all participants in these agreements to voice their opinions about the way any and all of them are translating them into reality.

You also know what attitude these spokespeople have constantly adopted to similar initiatives taken both in the East and in the West of our continent. As far as I am concerned, I have on several occasions expressed appreciation of sympathy and support for Charter 77 from abroad. At the same time I feel it my duty to stress the dialectical unity of all endeavours for the respect of human rights and the process of detente as a whole, while dissociating myself from those who display interest in, and sympathy for, Charter 77 but in fact are alien to its endeavours since their statements are merely a weapon or an instrument directed against that dialectical unity of human rights and

peaceful coexistence.

4. I think that all this tallies with the principles on which those who have signed the Charter 77 declaration sincerely and with full understanding of the issues involved agree. Maybe some of them



Jiri Hajek, who recently resigned as Charter spokesperson.

believe that this is not enough. I for one believe Charter 77 has not nearly tapped all the possibilities of action in its present form. But this, I think, does not prevent anyone from exploring new forms and methods compatible with the principles which we have all signed in the Declaration of 1st January 1977. Should anyone wish to go beyond these principles or above them — as you wish to conceive it — it is not certain whether the others will be willing to follow him. The question then arises whether this would not be something other than Charter 77. There is nothing to stop the development of further initiatives which would broaden its endeavours.

But one can also conceive steps and forms which would narrow this endeavour and would channel it into an isolation which would be even more damaging than repression. And just as I do not consider appropriate and expedient the creation of situations which would result **only** in repression so I do not consider useful or appropriate steps which would lead to isolation.

It is surely evident that I am not forcing these views on anyone and that I am prepared to discuss them frankly and sincerely with anyone who does not like them.

With sincere friendly greetings,  
**J. Hajek**  
 Prague

2 March 1978

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

## Letter from Hejdanek to a Friend

Dear Friend,

From your letter I gathered that you and your friends are already acquainted with the letter of the historian Jan Tesar to Prof. dr. Jiri Hajek and with Hajek's reply. You write that you have read both of Hajek's interviews in translation. In this regard I would like to point out to you that the translation of the interview in *Arbeiterzeitung* is on the whole reliable, while the one in *Spiegel* has unfortunately been considerably shortened. I hope that this

will soon be corrected because this second interview is more substantial and is the main cause of the dispute. I think that we must separate out the formal and the substantial sides of the whole business. From the formal point of view, Tesar's letter is very unsatisfactory, and in some ways bad. I do not think that anything much is to be gained by dwelling on this.

The unsuitable tone primarily harms the author's own case. What it shows is that it is a question of clumsiness caused by indignation rather than of a conscious use of dirty methods. The use of the

'moral justification' to justify the position taken by the author makes insinuations in a way which is itself extremely doubtful from the moral point of view. This is not the same as what happened a year ago, when the insinuations came from quite another quarter. Tesar's letter is a piece of anti-Hajek agitation more than an analysis or a substantial polemic. At a time when, in the expectation of getting the green light, some elements in the StB [Statni Bezpecnost - State Security] have been getting more violent, and when signals of the attack which is being prepared on Charter 77 are multiplying, this sort of behaviour must seem stupid to everyone. But this is only a peripheral aspect of the whole affair. I consider the fundamental point to lie elsewhere: Tesar's letter is symptomatic in its fears "that Charter 77 will get stuck in its outer forms" and in the emphasis on the need "to go forward" and "gradually to make a transition" to new means of struggle for human rights. For Tesar, Professor Hajek is a "moderate" who inclines towards the "maintenance of the status quo". (Let us hope that this refers to the status quo in Charter 77 and not in the system, although given that Hajek and his "current" are accused of "in the last analysis only wanting an agreement with those at present ruling" so that they will be "accepted back into the Party and the leadership of the state" it cannot be excluded that it is the latter that Tesar is referring to.) In opposition to Hajek, Tesar proclaims himself to be a radical, although I find that what he wrote has nothing much radical about it.

Tesar finds an excuse for his attack in the fact that a spokesperson of Charter 77 had expressed political opinions in interviews without explicitly stating that he was speaking only for himself. He asks prof. Hajek to "make it clear in future which of his formulations are his own, and which are those of Charter 77 as a whole". I think that this is superfluous, because no spokesperson can speak "ex cathedra" in interviews. He or she can speak about the principles, aims or statements of Charter 77 provided that it is specifically acknowledged, but in such a case their interpretation does not have an official character, since it is neither a document or statement in the framework of the agreed norms of the Charter. On the other hand it is necessary to insist on the full freedom of the spokespeople to express themselves not only about political things but also on cultural, aesthetic, religious, philosophical or any other questions. In his introduction, Jan Tesar underlines the fact that he does not deny Jiri Hajek the right to his political position; if he really holds this view, he has only weakened it by his agitation. It isn't news that there are differences of opinion in Charter 77; we knew about it from the outset. We did not consider it necessary to develop the internal disputes, but decided instead to concentrate on what united us, among other things on what was expressed from the programmatic point of view in the first document of Charter 77. Now it seems that dr. Tesar has the idea that the time has come for polemics. On the one hand he has decided to "struggle for freedom of expression", "even for those opinions" which he considers to be "the most reactionary". (From which, since he must therefore be ready to accept such "most reactionary" opinions within the framework of the Charter, I do not understand why he considers himself a radical.) But on the other hand, he spends most of his time attacking Jiri Hajek and "his tendency". Perhaps this is because he sees extreme reaction in both directions — or perhaps it is the case that he finds the danger from Hajek's direction greater than from that of the most reactionary forces. But he doesn't spell this out. It would look too ridiculous. He must find some reason why he has launched into such a fierce polemic. So he stresses that Hajek has a function of being a spokesperson and that — in words which are not his own — he abuses this function to deceive the international public by suggesting that his personal opinions are those of all the signatories. This is an extremely dubious and not particularly effective procedure, as I have tried to show. Nevertheless the most important part of his letter is the substantial differences.

Jan Tesar writes that in every movement for change in history there has been a division into the moderates, the centre and the radicals. This also applies to us, is normal and "shows that our society is waking up and once again beginning to behave politically". I feel compelled for several reasons to oppose this idea in case

misunderstandings should arise. Above all it should be remembered that Charter 77 is not a movement in the original sense of the word, but a social standpoint defending commonly shared principles. And therefore there exists no genuine possibility for Charter 77 to turn into a movement or organization. In order for this to become possible, circumstances would have to change; the signatories would have to decide unanimously or at least in their overwhelming majority to abandon the original declaration of 1 January 1977 and the line of action based on it. That would not be so simple, because it would only take one signatory to insist on the continuation of the original line who would have the right to continue with the previous form of activity. So the only chance I can see lies in the altogether unlikely eventuality that all the signatories without exception will come together to decide to wind the Charter up.

In the second place, it is not true to say that the division into moderates, centre and radicals is just coming into being within the Charter. The differences of opinion existed from the start; they are part of the specific character of the Charter, part of the fact that it is not an association of people founded around certain principles, commonly held opinions, conceptions or programmatic points, political or otherwise, but around agreement on a couple of points of principle by people with otherwise completely different outlooks on life and completely different spiritual, cultural, political and other views on social questions. One of these principles is the propagation of respect for the basic human and civil rights of every individual in all spheres and at all levels of social life; this is a universal principle which allows us to appeal to the people of the whole world for their collaboration and solidarity. The other principle has a concrete social and political basis in legality and respect for laws, in this case quite concretely our Czechoslovak laws.

I am quite aware of the limitations and difficulties which are raised by this second principle. For that reason I would like to discuss them. But it is, at the same time, unquestionable that Charter 77 clearly stated in its very first statement, that it would restrict its activities to a strictly legal field. This must not, and cannot be interpreted as an attempt to preserve the status quo. There exist legal means by which the existing laws can be amended. Every society finds such amendments necessary.

Our society at the moment, for example, is undertaking a process of making extensive amendments to the whole legal code, including the Constitution, on the basis of the need to apply and make concrete international pacts which have been ratified by our government, such as the now famous law 120 (1), as we pointed out in the long document no.15 to the Federal Government and the Federal Assembly. In their majority our Czechoslovak laws are not bad and it is possible to proceed from them. They are often formulated in an unsatisfactory way, are too elastic, imprecise and ambiguous, and they have too many even more elastic exceptions. Far more important, however, is the fact that little attention is paid to their implementation, and that the state organs do not apply them equally to all citizens. This is justified ideologically as a class application of law, but in reality this phrase gives them a free hand to attack anyone who someone in power dislikes.

At the same time the unambiguous and unqualified emphasis on legality has a deep justification in our situation, although not only in ours. I would concede that there are situations in which methods of civil disobedience are correct and even inevitable. A classic case, for example, was the protest march to the sea when the Indians massively broke the law about the salt tax. If certain citizens wanted to do something like that in this country, they could do it in the framework of a citizens' initiative, but not on the basis of, and in the framework of the Charter. Even in cases where what is involved is not the breaking of any law or even the infringement of any applicable regulation, but just an attempt to apply in practice a concrete law in relation to human rights, such an initiative cannot be understood or described as an activity of the Charter, nor can it appeal to Charter 77, but only to the laws themselves, which guarantee the human right in question. For example, every Czechoslovak citizen has the right to go and stay abroad for either

a fixed or indefinite period of time. This right is systematically infringed by officialdom, and this fact has been and will be the subject of criticisms by Charter 77. This does not, however, mean that leaving the Republic or settling abroad could be considered as an initiative or activity of Charter 77. Unofficial educational circles and study teams are allowed by our laws, and by the international Pacts which we have ratified, but they cannot be described as initiatives of Charter 77, but rather as special citizens' initiatives.

Since it is the case that ideological differences have existed within the Charter since its beginning, it is clearly not possible to describe this as proof of the fact that "our society is waking up and again beginning to behave politically". My feeling is that the opposite is true. The healthy understanding and generally favourable reaction of the majority of citizens cannot be interpreted as signifying political maturity and understanding. The reason for the unqualified sympathy with which the majority of citizens have greeted the Charter is simply its critical attitude towards the existing state of things, which they are fed up with. We shouldn't deceive ourselves that the deeper meaning of Charter 77 has been understood. Even some of the signatories do not understand it very well. Signatories often come to us with disarming naivety with hopes that we unfortunately have to disappoint. People who have decided to leave Czechoslovakia, have made out all the forms, and done everything necessary to support their request, but have been turned down because their desire to emigrate "is not in agreement with state interests". Then they come to us to appeal to Charter 77 for support. People who have suffered legal injustices come to get us to put things right for them. The relatives of people who have suffered such injustices turn to us, asking that we "do something" about hopeless cases. And so on. And when they find out that we are in more or less the same state as them they are often disappointed. What is the use of Charter 77 if it can't help people? They do not consider what they might be able to do for other people in a similar position. They want to find someone who can fix things for them.

Such people provide a good audience for radical talk. Criticisms of the "moderates" and "reactionaries", attacks on those who allegedly want to separately "reach an agreement" with the powers that be, emphasis on the danger that the Charter "will get stuck in its present form", stress on the necessity of "going forward" and the depiction of marvellous foreign examples, be they Chinese, Yugoslav, Hungarian or most recently Polish, is only worn out "radical" jargon, which has nothing to do with real radicalism. If one wants to be really radical, then one has to clearly indicate one's aims and state the means by which one intends to achieve them. I have an unailing rule of thumb for these things: when someone talks about the need for changes, especially revolutionary ones, but does not spell out precisely what the aim of this change is, then whoever it is is in all probability a swindler. And I have a second rule of thumb: when someone clearly indicates the aim and the road, I play around with their formulations for a bit to see if I can't uncover the premises without which their programme doesn't hang together, but which were not explicitly stated. Something which looks splendid from a distance will often on closer examination turn out to have fatal flaws in its construction.

What does Jan Tesar have to say from a positive point of view? He is in favour of political pluralism, wants the status quo to change, rejects compromise with the powers that be, wants our movement to be internationalized, is a radical and likes what the Poles have been doing. This is rather a modest basis for any political programme, and hardly a more adequate one for criticizing another programme or outlook. I do not say that it would not be possible to criticize the positions and formulations of Jiri Hajek. I have only been in close contact with him for about 6 months and I have already had many disagreements with him. Disagreements can also result from misunderstandings and I understand his point of view more now than in the autumn. I have seen not only his various positions but also have begun to understand his motives. This does not amount to agreement — I

disagree with a lot, but it does mean that I respect his approach. All this is missing with Honza Tesar. Of course, in his letter he proclaims that his ambition is "to grasp the contours of the future and to succeed in expressing the truth". His procedure in this case, however, does not match this ambition. In his letter I find a lot of affects and not many facts, which is the opposite of what I would expect from a historian. At the same time, however, I must admit that I understand some of his motives, and that they are not only comprehensible to me but in some cases even arouse a certain sympathy, which might come as something of a surprise to the reader after what I have written here. But that's another story.

After having thoroughly discussed and considered Tesar's open letter to prof. dr. Jiri Hajek, I must now carefully do the same with both of Hajek's interviews. That I will leave for my next letter. I would, however, like to end these lines by expressing what I consider to be the positive significance of Charter 77 and what it can mean in the future, despite the fact that, to my sorrow, disappointment and sometimes even annoyance, people's advice cannot achieve much, as I have shown. I have already written about this, but it will do no harm to repeat it.



Ladislav Hejdanek, Charter 77 spokesperson.

Modern society is afflicted by a huge ulcer, called the state. State organs, which, to quote Frederick Engels in 1891, were created by society to serve its own needs and interests; and which "have in time turned from a servant of society into its master, adjusting things to its own separate interests". Engels considers this process by which the state turns "from a servant of society into a lord over society" as inevitable in all previous societies. But at the same time he considers as equally inevitable the "destruction of the old state power and its replacement by something new and truly democratic". "In fact, however, the state is only a machinery by which one class oppresses another, and this applies as much to a democratic Republic as a monarchy. In the best of cases the state is a necessary evil which the proletariat builds after its victory over class rule; the proletariat, however, as in the Paris Commune, must as rapidly as possible, lop off the worst aspects of this evil, until the new generation, grown up in new, free social conditions will be able to dispose of all this state junk." (2) Some 20 years earlier Karl Marx saw the ideal in every educational institution being "free and open to the people and purged of any kind of interference from the state or the Church. So that, not only is education open to everyone, but at the same time science itself is freed from the shackles in which it has been confined by class prejudices and state coercion." (3 - my emphases).

I quote the classics in order to be able to convince my Marxist colleagues: Marx and Engels did not think about the limitation of state power as something for the far distant future, but considered it necessary to "lop off the worst features of this evil" immediately after the victory of the working class. Unfortunately neither of them thought sufficiently about the fact that the evil of the old state machinery might be liquidated and replaced by the evil of a new state machinery. They did not realize that when you talk about the destruction of "all this state junk", the question arises, who is to destroy this junk and how. If you use the means of power for this then you immediately get a new state machine and a new evil. One cannot drive out the devil with Beëlzebub. The pushing back of the state apparatus and the narrower definition of its competence is one of the most important tasks and problems faced by modern society. This cannot be solved all at once; it is necessary to proceed step by step. It cannot be achieved by force, but by the purposeful and tireless resistance of each individual. The aim is not the liquidation of the state - that would only bring us to destruction - but the establishment and

systematic extension of social space, which will be extracted from the state, will be protected from interference from the state and the Church and the Party, and freed from the fetters of state coercion. Charter 77 wants to help create this space, and gradually to extend and guard it. And that is a programme for the whole people and for the whole world.

Your,  
**Ladislav Hejdanek**

**Prague**  
**2 March 1978**

**Footnotes.**

1. Law 120/1976: in which the International Pacts on Civil and Political Rights, and Social, Economic and Cultural Rights became part of the Czechoslovak legal code.
2. Engels: Introduction to **The Civil War in France** (1891).
3. Marx: **The Civil War in France**.

## Letter from Lubos Kohout to Jan Tesar

Dear Colleague,

I have read your open letter to prof. dr. Jiri Hajek and Hajek's reply to it. I feel it necessary to inform you that I disagree fundamentally with the substantive aspects of your letter.

1. I cannot understand why, as a professional historian, you did not start from the sources; why, rather than using a foreign interpretation of Hajek's interviews and one source in particular, you didn't use primarily the authentic text of the author himself.

2. In the current situation, when, as you know, the "opposing side" has the means to get its hands on and misuse for its own ends any text written by a signatory of Charter 77, it is an inadmissible luxury for one signatory to choose the form of an open letter to inform another about his or her disagreement with their stated opinions. A personal conversation aimed at clarifying the various points of view is more suitable in every way. This is also true because the open letter reawakens conflicts about questions which were sensibly resolved by a preceding discussion, and which was ended by an official statement from the spokespeople. (1)

3. In both the interviews which you attack, Hajek makes it clear that the author is giving his own personal opinion and not that of Charter 77. Whenever he expressed himself on any question in the name of Charter 77 he has always acted together with the other two spokespeople and signed the documents together with them. Your criticisms would only be justified if it were the case that Hajek expressed ideas which were at variance with officially published and generally accepted documents of Charter 77, and in particular the founding appeal from January 1977 signed by 241 people including Hajek and ourselves, in his capacity as a spokesperson or as a signatory of Charter 77.

This is what I think about the formal, but not unimportant side of your letter.

As for its substantive content: I welcome and agree with your statement that "the prospects for the victory of freedom have more often than not been spoiled by radicals". I cannot, however, agree with you when you reproach radicals solely because when they achieve power they liquidate the centre and moderates. I think that not only your own, but the course of world history as a whole has many times proved that radicalism both in a non-revolutionary and a revolutionary situation has objectively aided the strengthening of the rule of reaction and darkness and prevented the victory of the progressive social forces or at least shown itself to be ineffective in the struggle with the ruling conservatism.

Blanquism, Bakuninism, and Stalinist communism with its attacks on "social fascism" identifying it objectively with fascism and nazism, and the concept of "total pluralism" in the Prague Spring which formed such a suitable excuse for military intervention by the occupying great power etc. are all forms of radicalism. At the same time, I would point out to you that "wise radicals" have shown themselves at different stages of history to be aware of the objectively harmful effects of radicalism "at any price" and have been biting critical of it. Let us recall together the famous preface of Engels and Marx to Marx's **Class Struggles in France**. I quote:

"The irony of world history stands everything on its head. Legal methods do us revolutionaries and insurrectionists far more good than illegal means and insurrection. The party of order, as they say, will perish through the legal system which they themselves created. They cry out in despair alongside Odilone Barrot: Legality is killing us! Meanwhile this same legality provides us with strong muscles and red cheeks so that it seems as if we could live for ever ... The chief task of the day is to maintain the interrupted progress of this growth until it overflows the limits of the present system of government. We must not allow these shock brigades whose ranks grow stronger day by day to destroy themselves in vanguard skirmishes, but, on the contrary, to keep them until the time of decision comes. The only means by which it is at present possible to check the uninterrupted growth of the socialist fighting forces in Germany would be to provoke a great fight with the army, a blood letting similar to what happened with the Paris Commune. It is not possible to wipe from the face of the earth a party numbering millions; all the magazine rifles in Europe and America would not suffice. However, the normal course of development would be interrupted and we would not, perhaps, be able at the critical moment to use a shock force, so that the decisive struggle would be postponed, prolonged and would involve heavy casualties."

I know that some people who are close to your opinions adhere to the theoretical legacy of the so-called "classics of Marxism-Leninism". It would, perhaps, do no harm if with regard to the struggles and endeavours of Charter 77 you looked at what this legacy has to say about political tactics. I consider that Lenin's criticisms of the "atzovisti" (2) after the defeat of the 1905-07 revolution in Russia is especially instructive for us Chartists. At that time some of the Bolsheviks called for the withdrawal of the Bolshevik (or social democratic) deputies from the "reactionary" Tsarist Duma and in general were against the use of legal forms of struggle. Arguing against them Lenin called for the use by the revolutionary party of all legal possibilities, and especially stressed the need to work where the masses were. The same author speaks in a similar way in the famous book **"Left-Wing Communism; An**

**Infantile Disorder**", where he subjects the nihilistic attitude of a section of the newly born communist parties to the struggle in Parliament or in the legal "reformist" unions to a devastating critique.

Engels, who was quoted above, and Lenin are, I hope, not considered by you or your co-thinkers to be political theoreticians of a conservative cast of mind. I think (and perhaps you will correct me if I'm wrong) that their ideas on political tactics, expressed both after the defeat of a revolution and at the time of the rise of a revolutionary wave are wise, sensible, relevant and close to the outlook of Hajek and, I would suspect, to the majority of the signatories of Charter 77, while at the same time being different from the opinions which you, and probably a certain group in the Charter, express with regard to the future of the Charter.

I fear that the direction that you offer to the Charter, along with your co-thinkers, as Hajek points out in his reply to you, would in fact lead to repression. (This would destroy some and scare others into passivity — recall, if you will, as a historian of the resistance during the Second World War, the consequences of the assassination of Heydrich (3) for the activity and strength of the Resistance.) If it behaved in a radical way, it would at the same time lead to the isolation of the Charter in the current situation in Czechoslovak society. Nothing could be more welcome to the current leading politicians and their repressive and propaganda machines than that some people in the Charter should take a direction away from the fundamental conceptions expressed in the first and other official documents, or others should compromise it by taking ill-considered actions which would cause repression and allow manipulation by the propagandists of our rulers.

I also think that you do not do any good when you accept foreign judgments on our activity, preferring and praising the activity of the Polish democratic movement and belittling and criticizing Charter 77. If you are acquainted with the interesting and stimulating thoughts of Adam Michnik (4), you must agree with both him and other objective observers and analysts that the situation in Poland as far as attempts at democratization go is far different at the present time from here. Especially important is the fact that, at the moment, as Michnik convincingly demonstrates,

none of the three chief political forces wants to "overstep the mark"; the democratic forces do not want to put too much pressure on the regime, since this would bring about a Soviet intervention, the rulers have decided on a policy of tolerance and certain concessions in order that they should not cause a reaction on the part of the opposition which would bring about a Soviet military intervention, which would degrade them to the status of local officials of the Czechoslovak type, perhaps in a changed system. The great power of the East and its representatives after August 1968 in Czechoslovakia and its international repercussions would not, in the present international political situation want to intervene in Poland in its present state. To these features of the objective situation in Poland should be added mass discontent aroused by the critical state of the national economy and living standards. The influence of the Polish Catholic Church, at once huge and used openly in the political arena, should not be left out. I do not have to spell out to you the objective factors in Czechoslovakia which, being different, mean that we have to take a more cautious, slower but not less consistent course than our Polish friends.

Finally I want, respected colleague, to communicate to you my indignation over the completely groundless suspicion which you express that Hajek is seeking his own personal gain or the gain of the group of "reformist communists" perhaps at the expense of other trends within the Charter through his activity. I surely do not have to remind you that the regime's repressive and propaganda machines base their hopes for the division and self-destruction of Charter 77 on the undoubted differences of opinion and world outlook amongst the signatories. Against this we must always, in our written and our verbal statements defend the principle that we all stand together. Mutual suspicion and accusations can only help "the other side".

Lubos Kohout, Varsavska 24, Prague 2.

5 March 1978.

#### Footnotes.

1. See Introduction, and Jan Kavan: **One Year of Charter 77**, Labour Focus Vol.1 No.6.
2. Atzovists: Boycotters.
3. Reinhard Heydrich: the Nazi protector of Bohemia and Moravia 1941-2. Assassinated by Czech resistance fighters parachuted in from Britain.
4. Adam Michnik: Leading Polish oppositionist since 1968. Founder member of the Committee to Defend the Workers (KOR) in 1976.

## Letter from Petr Uhl to Lubos Kohout

Dear Lubos,

I have read your open letter to Jan Tesar responding to his letter to Jiri Hajek with pleasure and interest. With pleasure because, as far as I know, this public intervention, inspired by a desire to contribute to the solution of a certain political problem is your first as an individual for years. For me, as for others, this is proof that our society "is beginning once again to behave politically" (Jan Tesar) even if only to a limited extent.

I must say, quite directly, that I agree with almost nothing of what you have written, including the quotation from Engels and the paraphrase of Lenin. You write that "it is something of a luxury for a signatory of the Charter to choose the form of an open letter to express his disagreement with opinions stated by another signatory", and justify this by saying that "the other side receives, and puts to its own use, the texts of all the signatories, whoever they might be". With the exception of a text by Vaclav Havel (1), (which he wrote under pressure) I know of no occasion where the state power, which is presumably who you mean by "the other side", have made use of any text by any signatory written after they signed the Charter.

I might share your concern about the possibility of manipulation if this concern was not overshadowed by more real problems: in

particular the fact that the state power is not responding to our initiative, and that it is pretending not to know of our existence because it understands that the people of our country have been taught how to keep their eyes open after 30 years of a demagogic press and that even faked texts awaken their interest. The silence of the regime has lasted now for 10 months. Simply from the point of view of consistency, the opinion of yours that I have just quoted makes no sense, since it appears in an open letter where you express your disagreement with the opinions of the signatory Jan Tesar, and do not use your own recommended method of a personal conversation.

My explanation for this inconsistency is that you perhaps believe that your opinions are less likely to provide an opportunity for manipulation than those of Tesar. I do not want here to compare your opinions with Tesar's from the point of view of how the regime sees things; nor do I want to explain the reasons why your ideas might be less open to manipulation than those of Tesar.

I am writing to you because I get the feeling that, without naming me, you see me as being aligned with the conceptions and opinions of Jan. It is about this that I particularly want to express myself. Some of your phrases show it, as for instance: "I know that some people who are close to your opinions, and perhaps even you yourself, adhere to the theoretical legacy of the

so-called classics of Marxism-Leninism ... Engels and Lenin, who, I hope, are not considered by you or your co-thinkers to be political theoreticians of a conservative cast of mind ... a certain group within the Charter which is probably in agreement with your opinions ... the course which you and your co-thinkers propose for the Charter ...”

Jan Tesar wrote to Jiri Hajek himself. I don't know if he previously consulted anyone — in any case it was not me. Jan's letter is very unjust to Jiri Hajek. Jan Tesar attributed ideas and opinions to Hajek which are to be found on the fringes of the Charter and which are not his at all. Such attitudes and opinions are primarily to be found in that part of the 'ex-communist' (the precise description used by Mlynar) (2) opposition which has not been participating in the life of the Charter and whose principal hopes are placed in the 'crisis of government', in the arrival of a more enlightened government with which it will be possible to negotiate about the 're-integration of old members into the structures of the Communist Party'. This milieu is politically inert, without a programme, without self-criticism. It is sectarian and sterile. As Egon Bondy (3) wrote 5 years ago: "the communist opposition influences no-one in this country under 35 years of age". Five years later, this opposition has changed into the 'ex-communist' opposition and influences no-one under 40. Its hopes were dashed in 1976-7 when out of its supposed base of half-a-million people (4), only 130 individuals (followed by 150 more) signed the Charter. The negative development of this milieu has also affected even those who have joined or collaborate with the Charter. It has touched even the most active amongst them, who have tried to preserve a historical continuity with the Prague Spring and latterly with Eurocommunism. For it is they who are principally responsible for the decomposition and disappearance of the communist opposition in this country, and for the squandering of political capital such as has not been enjoyed by the opposition in any other East European country. This can be seen in the unexpected manner in which the authorities reacted, in January 1977, to the Charter.

The sectarianism and a certain 'esprit de corps' (even despite the fact that the body has become a corpse and the spirit gone out of it) which marks some of the signatories of the Charter who were



Trotskyist and Charter activist Petr Uhl.

previously members of the CP, gives the other members the impression that some of the attributes of Stalinism are a chronic characteristic of the ex-communist milieu, even if they only appear sporadically and rarely. This is a dangerous and false idea which originates from the behaviour of a few people or even only one individual who represents the conservative attitudes which are to be found outside the Charter. I have tried to dispel this impression for several months by pointing out the differentiations in the ex-communist milieu into, among others, the radicals, the centre and the moderates.

First of all there are the slanders, schemes and rumours, and the tone of aristocratic superiority; the breaking of the Charter's smooth development (including the publication of documents); the speculation about differences among the rulers; the habit of considering the Charter as the ideological child (or at least the offspring) of the liberalization process of 1968, while at the same time considering the Prague Spring as the spiritual father of so-called Eurocommunism without any attempt at self-criticism concerning the development of the situation in this country. Then there is the tendency to isolation and conspiracy; the rejection of all new forms of struggle for human rights and all attempts to introduce an element of organization into the activities of some Chartists in order to facilitate communication and co-ordination of actions — an attitude which looks to other people like an attempt to control the Charter and which is linked to the fact that the spokespeople are considered not as spokespeople but as functionaries exercising considerable power within a bureaucratic centralist system. Finally, there is the conception which reduces the great Charter movement for human rights to an instrument for reminding the current holders of power that the 'old faces' still exist, that they have support, and that their existence therefore represents a political alternative in the current situation. All these things exist within and outside the charter, creating the false impressions which I am talking about, and against which I have been fighting.

Sometimes it takes only one person: for example, remember what happened with the rumours (which still appear to be around) on the subject of my terrorism. These did immense harm in the Charter, and it was above all the ex-communist milieu which took them up and helped to spread them. The rumours have died down now, except that occasionally someone says to me with a smile that I have kidnapped Aldo Moro or perhaps killed Schleyer with my South Moluccan friends. Perhaps some of these rumours affected Tesar, or perhaps you have believed them: if this is not the case then I do not see the reason why you see a connection between the course which J. Tesar and his 'co-thinkers' have been proposing for the Charter and the example of the assassination of Heydrich.

Jan Tesar can certainly deal with all this. And, having himself been a member of the CP, he feels the need to clearly differentiate himself from the ex-communist opposition. I realize that he does not do this in a very skillful way. But people understand what his motivations are — even including L. Hejdanek despite the fact that he expresses himself, in his letter no.5 like a jammed computer (but I want to write him a separate letter about this) — and they feel that Tesar's rejection of all these things expresses their own feelings. For this reason his letter is copied and circulated. The negative aspect is that J. Hajek is considered as a 'baddie', as someone who is at the root of all evil. I am not talking of the fact that Hajek never said what the bourgeois mass media published after distorting his remarks; nor of the fact that Hajek has nothing in common with the Stalinist heritage except insofar as he listens to its epigones, because he listens to everyone, even including myself, when we discuss whether the institutions of this system are reformable or not; nor even of the fact that during his time as spokesperson for the Charter he carried out his function with dignity and acted as the genuine spokesperson of the Charter and not of the political milieu from which he comes, and that he showed exceptional courage and competence in the period between the death of Patocka (5) and the famous 21 September 1977 when, as you write, the differences

within the Charter were "wisely resolved" with the discussion being concluded by a Charter communique.

What is really important is that Jan Tesar erases in a completely impermissible way the whole range of different attitudes which exist in the ex-communist milieu and amongst its most active militants. I would imagine that Tesar sees this differentiation as a positive phenomenon. I do myself. I am close to Tesar on the level of attitudes. We are connected by our ideas on the subject of repression, and by our fears with regard to it, as Tesar has put it, and by our concern for the internationalization of the struggle for human rights which, however, I would see in quite a different way from Tesar. On this level our ideas differ from yours, since you consider that radicalism objectively contributes to the reinforcement of the powers of reaction and darkness, that it hinders the victory of the progressive forces and that it shows itself ineffective in the struggle against the ruling conservatism.

It would not, however, be correct to say that Tesar and myself are close politically, still less ideologically. Insofar as Tesar rejects his Stalinist past, he also rejects Marxism to some extent and Leninism entirely. In this respect he is repeating the mistakes of people like Leszek Kolakowski, but I don't know if anyone apart from Petr Uhl, Jaroslav Sabata and a few other maniacs in this country are interested in these types of problems.

So, Lubos, you have found a good line to take. You attack Tesar by using quotations from the so-called "classics of Marxism-Leninism" (the 'so-called' and the quote marks are provided by yourself), in particular from Engels and Lenin, because you believe that in order to beat people who base themselves on the heritage of these thinkers it is best to use their own weapons. But Tesar has nothing in common with Lenin and very little with Engels and he has said so publicly. Your formulations and the quotation marks suggest to me that perhaps you yourself no longer base yourself on the theoretical heritage of Lenin and Engels. It is possible that I am wrong about this, but you will, no doubt, express yourself again and more clearly on this point. It is ridiculous to declare the opinions of Engels and Lenin that you have chosen as "wise, instructive, and close to the ideas of Hajek and the majority of Charter signatories".

Most of the signatories of the Charter get irritated as soon as you start quoting the classics of Marxism: that is to say, except for a few 'rogue' Marxists, nearly everyone out of the 500 who have never been in the CP, and a good half of the rest. J. Hajek, yourself and myself (but not Jan Tesar) are part of this minority. I don't consider the ideas that you quote to be either wise or relevant today. However, they are instructive. Your quotation from Engels, written 5 months before his death, expresses the reformist illusions of a powerful and growing social-democratic movement (in the process of acquiring firm muscles and rosy cheeks — more than one can say about the ex-communist opposition), illusions which culminated in

the butchery of the 1st World War and in the notorious attitude of that movement towards the War. This really is instructive. And as a negative model it is also relevant. The recommendations of Lenin on the parliamentary struggle and the struggle in the legal 'reformist' unions are also just right for our conditions.

Lenin was in favour of a combination of legal and illegal work. With us the problem is different: our activity is legal because it is public, but we have not found a way to enlarge our field of action for this work. In order to conduct a 'parliamentary struggle' we would first be obliged to create a parliament, and working inside the official trade unions requires shock tactics, as in the cases of Prikryl and Benda (10). It seems to me that the current Polish situation has a lot more in common with conditions here than the Russia of 1907.

From the moment when I read Tesar's letter to Carter, it has been quite clear to me that Tesar's political orientation is completely different to mine. In my view it would truly have done harm to the Charter if Carter had decided to make use of this letter or if it had got any publicity. But we are in agreement on many questions concerning the development of the broad democratic movement in our country, I see the importance of this letter in, among other things, the fact that it stimulated your reply which has clarified many things for me. I hope that we will be able to explain what remains for the moment unexplained. But it is above all those who so far kept silence that must speak out. I would be very pleased if, as a result of the discussion provoked by the letter of Tesar to Hajek, the signatories were to take up the theme "What is Charter 77 and what are its perspectives?" and in the future perhaps even the theme "In what social system do we live and what are the possibilities for changing it?"

Can we find the necessary strength and courage?

Friendly greetings,  
Petr Uhl  
Prague

31 March 1978

P.S. I do not see the need for a public polemic, but this letter is open.

#### Footnotes.

1. Vaclav Havel: One of the original Charter spokespeople. He made a statement resigning as spokesperson while under arrest in May 1977. Received a 15-month suspended sentence at October trial of Chartists.
2. Zdenek Mlynar: ex-member of Party Presidium in 1968. Leading figure in communist opposition (followers of Dubcek). Left Czechoslovakia in June 1977.
3. Egon Bondy: Czech poet who has never been able to publish in Czechoslovakia. Popular with rock underground in Czechoslovakia.
4. Half a million people were expelled from the Czechoslovak CP in 1969-70, and thereby denied the possibility of holding jobs involving administrative responsibility.
5. Jan Patocka: One of the original Charter spokespeople. Collapsed and died after a 10-hour police interrogation.

## Defence Committee formed in Czechoslovakia

In late May, the London-based **Palach Press Agency** reported an important new initiative in Czechoslovakia — namely, the formation of a **Committee for the Defence of Persons Unjustly Persecuted**. Its members include Rudolf Battek, a prominent Chartist and former member of the Czech National Council who is now forced to work as a window-cleaner; the well-known playwright Vaclav Havel; Ivan Medek, a Chartist whose politically motivated sacking sparked off a major protest by his work-mates; Petr Uhl, ex-political prisoner who was sacked from his job in December 1977 and who

has been under 24-hour surveillance; and former Federal Assembly member Gertruda Sekaninova-Carterova.

Among the first cases reported by the Committee were those of Petr Cibulka, an industrial worker; Libor Chloupek, a librarian; Pavel Novak and Josep Brychta. They have all been charged with distributing 'anti-state' documents.

The Czech authorities are still trying to crush the underground rock music movement. An appeal court has increased Plastic People singer Ivan Jirous's prison sentence from 8 months to 18 months. In our next issue we publish a lengthy interview with a member of the Plastic People.



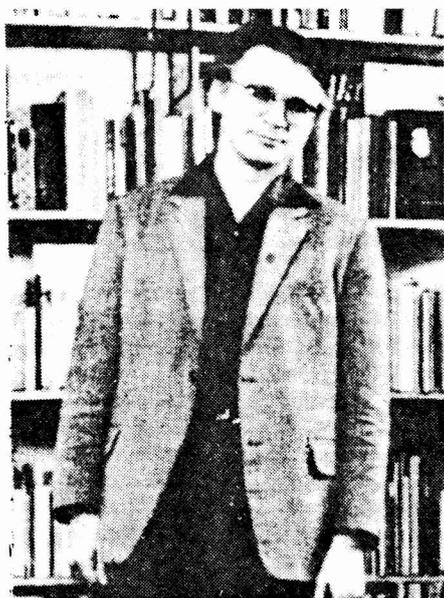
# EAST GERMANY

## Bahro Sentenced to 8 Years in Secret Trial

by Günter Minnerup

The rumours that have been circulating in West Germany during the last few weeks about the trial of Rudolf Bahro being already in progress have turned out to be true: the East German news agency ADN officially confirmed on Friday 30 June that the author of *The Alternative* had been found guilty of "espionage" in a secret trial and sentenced to eight years imprisonment.

According to the East German Criminal Code (Revised version of 19 December 1974, Clause 97) "espionage" is defined as the communication of "facts, articles, research findings or other news to be kept secret in the political or economic interest of, or for the protection of, the German Democratic Republic" to "imperialist secret agencies or other organizations, institutions, groups or persons whose activities are directed against the German Democratic Republic or other peace-loving peoples".



Rudolf Bahro, pictured before his arrest.

The all-embracing vagueness of this definition plus the tradition of conducting all trials involving security matters in secret made the charge of "espionage" against Bahro the ideal legal weapon to be used against him, however ludicrous it must have appeared to everyone else inside and outside the GDR. It seems that Bahro's necessary connection with EVA, the trade-union owned publishers of *The Alternative* was used as "evidence" against him.

Another rumour that has been circulating for some time now is that Bahro is about to be deported to the West, and that the only

problem standing in the way of that is his refusal to leave the GDR. Nobody should be fooled by this particular rumour which is obviously designed to disorient the growing solidarity movement. Rudolf Bahro, like Wolf Biermann and other recently expelled GDR oppositionists, rejects this "solution", and with good reason: because the real fight, the fight for which Bahro and others were prepared to risk their careers, their family life and their personal liberty, is for winning socialist democracy in the GDR and the rest of Eastern Europe, not their emigration to the West. It is therefore imperative that the defence campaign mounted after Rudolf Bahro's arrest in August 1977 is redoubled in order to win his unconditional release from prison and his right to freely propagate his views in the German Democratic Republic and submit them to a public and democratic debate.

An important factor determining the eventual success of the campaign will be the attitude taken by the leaderships of the West European Communist Parties. A number of *Morning Star* journalists, regional CP organizers and Geoff Roberts, organizer of the Communist University of London, have already signed the Open Letter to Honecker. The Secretary General of the Spanish CP, Santiago Carrillo, has already publicly condemned Bahro's arrest. An international initiative jointly organized by the Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee (Britain), the Committee for the Release of Rudolf Bahro (West Germany), and the Comité pour la Défense de Rudolf Bahro (France) for an international labour movement delegation to demand the right to observe the trial — now unfortunately obsolete — received the support of, amongst others, the French CP historian Jean Elleinstein. The Italian CP leader Lucio Lombardo Radice, in a recently published book on Germany, has called *The Alternative* an "important socialist critique" of the East European system and has praised Bahro's "very courageous decision" to get the book published in West Germany. Bahro has, after all, expressed his support for the emergent "Eurocommunism", despite some criticisms of it, and his arrest and imprisonment must also be seen as an indirect attack on several West European Communist Parties.

If the immediate reaction to the news of the sentence is anything to go by, the campaign is going to grow from strength to strength. In West Germany, spontaneous demonstrations in a number of major cities, protests from a number of socialist and trade-union organizations and the immediate announcement of plans to organize a nationwide

protest march starting simultaneously in a number of university towns and converging on the GDR embassy in Bonn have exerted so much pressure that the West German government was even forced to temporarily suspend the six-year-old ban on the Belgian Marxist Ernest Mandel to allow him to address a West Berlin mass meeting in support of Rudolf Bahro.

But while in Germany Bahro had been a celebrated cause with much publicity in the bourgeois press (his book rose to No.3 in the national bestselling list), the reaction of the British media to the news of the eight year sentence was extremely poor. Short paragraphs tucked away somewhere inside the newspapers and no TV mention of the jailed Marxist critic are in stark contrast to the lavish coverage given to Orlov and Shcharansky. But it is up to British socialists involved in the defence of the victims of repression in Eastern Europe to correct this situation. The first steps have already been taken: on the initiative of Eric Heffer and Phillip Whitehead, both honorary officers of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, a number of Labour MPs have signed a telegram to East German Party chairman Erich Honecker demanding Bahro's immediate release. At 1pm on Tuesday 18 July a mass picket jointly organized by the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign and the Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee will take place outside the GDR Embassy in Belgrave Sq., London, and an Open Letter to Erich Honecker, signed by Labour MPs, members of the Communist Party, prominent writers and academics and many other individuals, will be presented to the Ambassador on that occasion.



G. M. Cookson (Socialist Challenge)

Another signature is added to the Socialist Challenge Open Letter to Eric Honecker. Photo taken at the recent CPGB People's Festival.

# POLAND

## Unofficial Trade Union Committees Established

The last issue of **Labour Focus** reported that a Committee for the Creation of Free Trade Unions had been formed in Katowice, the big mining and industrial centre in Southern Poland. At that time we knew little except for the fact that this Committee, known hereafter by its Polish initials, KWZZ, had been formed on 23 February. We have now received extracts from the Committee's founding statement and from one of its public leaflets. We print these extracts below. (The French version appeared in the French Marxist daily **Rouge** of 5 June 1978.)

At the end of April a second committee was established in the Baltic port of Gdansk in the north of Poland, an indication that the impulse towards independent trade unions is spreading. We publish the full text of the founding declaration of this second committee, known as the Committee for the Creation of Free Trade Unions on the Baltic.

In addition to both these bodies an unofficial workers' paper, **Robotnik** (The Worker), has been appearing regularly

since the autumn of last year. Its tenth issue has now appeared and according to sources close to the editorial board, **Robotnik** is now produced in 12,000 duplicated copies per issue.

### SOVIET COMPARISON

The Polish trade union committees invite comparison with the Soviet Trade Union Association formed at the start of February by Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades. Unlike the Soviet Association, the Polish Committees have not published a list of members and supporters, and their size cannot therefore be assessed. They have also given themselves names which indicate that they do not actually consider themselves to be trade unions: rather they aim to win workers to the idea of creating independent trade unions. Their members appear to be exclusively proletarian, and unlike the Soviet Trade Union Association, the Polish committees consisted of workers still in employment, though one of the Katowice activists was sacked for joining KWZZ. Finally, neither of the Polish committees has sought to affiliate to any

international body like the ILO — such an attempt would, in fact, be inconsistent with their decision to form themselves as bodies preparatory to the formation of genuine trade unions.

### SUNDAYS OFF; 40 HOUR WEEK

The KWZZ in Katowice is unique in having launched a campaign for certain concrete social demands, namely the 40 hour week and the right to complete rest on Sundays. According to the Polish emigre journal **Kultura** published in Paris, the miners in Upper Silesia have engaged in a struggle for Sundays off earlier this year and have won this right from the mine management. **Kultura** does not mention the KWZZ appeal on this issue, but if this victory was indeed linked to the KWZZ campaign it would indicate real mass support for the KWZZ in the mining area around Katowice. The issue of compulsory Sunday work has been a source of tension in the mines for some time as an article written by a Silesian miner in **Labour Focus** last year indicated.

By Peter Green

## Repression Against Robotnik Activists

On 28 May **Blazej Wyszowski**, the editor of **Robotnik** (The Worker), an unofficial workers' paper, was arrested during a meeting of the paper's editorial board in the Baltic port of Gdansk.

According to Polish sources in London linked to the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR), the editorial board meeting in a private flat was disrupted by 40 state security police who arrested 10 of those present. No resistance was offered and no violence occurred.

The day before these arrests, two activists selling **Robotnik** outside a factory in the central Polish industrial city of Lodz were arrested and jailed for 'unauthorized distribution' of material.

**Robotnik's** editor **Wyszowski** has subsequently been jailed for two months for allegedly 'obstructing the police in the course of their duty'.

In response to **Wyszowski's** imprisonment, members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions in the Baltic have organized a hunger strike demanding his release. The campaign has spread to Warsaw where 5 people were arrested on 27 June for handing out leaflets demanding the freeing of **Wyszowski**.

The drive against **Robotnik** follows severe police pressure on the Katowice Committee for Free Trade Unions earlier this year. There is evident concern on the part of the authorities that the opposition is beginning to gain a hearing within the working class.

(See Labour Movement section for Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign protest against the imprisonment of **Wyszowski** and the two **Robotnik** activists in Lodz.)

## Police Budget Soars

The Polish authorities' cautious attitude towards using repressive measures against the opposition does not imply any downgrading of the strength of the security forces. This year's budget shows a large increase in the share of expenditure going to the Ministry of the Interior.

The Ministry's budget rose in March by 1,368,000,000 zloty, as against last year's figure. This compares with an increase of 127 million zloty for the Academy of Sciences and an increase of 837 million zloty for the arts and culture. As a whole the budget of the Ministry of the Interior is now 3 times greater than that of the Ministry of Culture — in a country where

all significant cultural activity is under the control of the state.

The growth of the security forces is shown in an even more dramatic way if we look at the figures for the Ministry's budget over the last 7 years, since Gierek came to power. The figures are as follows:

1971	..... 7,380 million zloty
1973	..... 10,976 million zloty
1976	..... 18,223 million zloty
1977	..... 21,124 million zloty
1978	..... 22,492 million zloty

## META

(Advertisement)

A quarterly left-wing journal on Eastern Europe with special emphasis on developments in the Ukraine. The latest issue contains a detailed analysis of the present opposition in the Ukraine, an article by Leonid Plyushch on the recantation of Ivan Dzyuba, an interview with Polish film director Andrej Wajda, a revolutionary socialist programme from Poland, and an article on the Ukrainian nationalist movement by Vsevolod Holubnychy. Price, \$1 plus postage or 60p from the CDSPP, Box 88, 182 Upper St., London N.1.

## Founding Declaration of the Committee for Free Trade Unions in Katowice

Faced by the centralized and all-powerful apparatus of power, and faced with the complete dependence of the factory directors and trade union officials on this apparatus of power, we, the ordinary workers, are effectively isolated and weak. We are being exploited because greater and greater effort is constantly being demanded of us, yet the standard of living of ourselves and our families is not only failing to improve but is deteriorating. We are convinced that this situation will remain as long as we do not organize ourselves into independent trade unions. It is only by uniting that we will be able to effectively oppose the state apparatus and those of the Party and the economy, who are exploiting us (...)

We, workers and employees of Upper Silesia and the coal-mining basin, we are the first to form free trade unions (...)

We launch an appeal to the workers throughout Poland: create independent trade unions, build workers' committees which will organize united action for all of us. It is only by uniting and organizing our forces that we will have the possibility of escaping the exploitation that is oppressing us and of creating a better life for our families and for ourselves.

### Committee for Free Trade Unions in Katowice

**Bogdan Cygan** (Wodzislaw Slaski), **Roman Ksciusek** (Myslowice-Kosztowy), **Wladyslaw Sulecki** (Gliwice), **Kazimierz Switon** (Katowice).  
23 February 1978.

## Leaflet by Katowice Committee

Workers and employees of Upper Silesia and the coal-mining basin!

We have the right to rest after work, we have the right to a family life, to spend time in our homes. Unhappily, this right is systematically denied to us. In a number of factories, Sunday working is obligatory. 'Activities for society and the Party' are also compulsory and in reality they are simply a means of using our labour power without payment — another symptom of our exploitation,

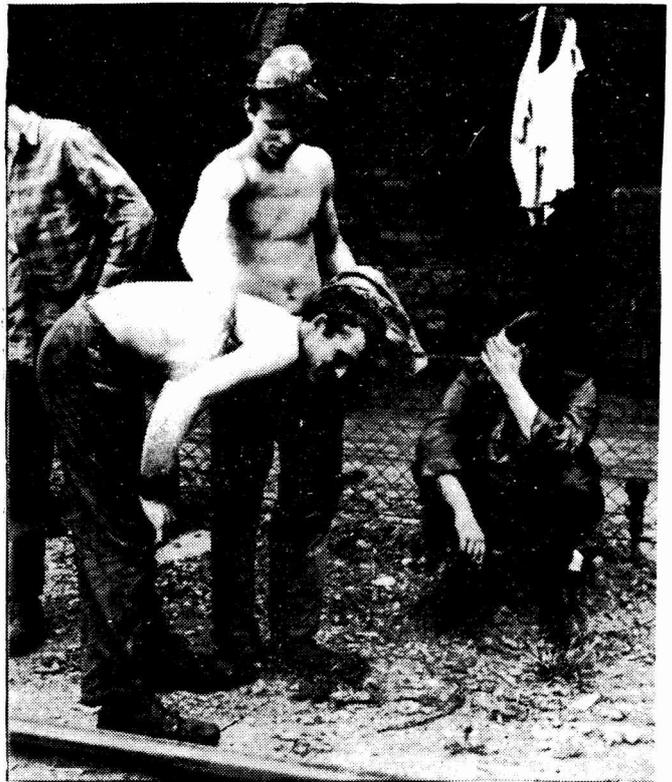
It is up to us alone whether this exploitation will continue. All of us must demand more and more firmly that the State and economic authorities promise us:

- \* The 40 hour working week
- \* The right to complete rest on Sundays

In our struggle for workers' rights and for those of employees we are not alone. The whole of society supports us. We are supported by the democratic opposition and especially by the Movement for the Defence of Human and Citizens' Rights. The voice of the Church is particularly important (...)

All those who have been or are still being mistreated can address themselves to the Committee for Free Trade Unions in Katowice. Its address is: Katowice, 30 Mikolowska Street, Flat 7 (the same address as that of the information and consultation office of the Movement for the Defence of Human Rights). Within the limits of our capacities we will try to help those who are being mistreated. You can also write directly to the members of the Committee who have signed below.

**The Committee for Free Trade Unions in Katowice.**  
**B. Cygan, R. Kscuiszek, W. Sulecki, K. Switon.**



Silesian workers take a break.

## Founding Declaration of Baltic Committee

The true Polish Trade Union Movement ceased to exist 30 years ago.

Forced dissolution of political parties, such as the PPS (Polish Socialist Party), the PSL (Polish Peasant Party) and other independent organizations representing various social groups in the country, preceded by the imposed merger of individual labour unions into a single (state controlled) body — resulted in the Trade Unions becoming yet another institution representing the interests of a monopolistic State employer, rather than of the employees. The Unions became an extension of the political structure of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party and a pliant administrative device to operate a system of organized exploitation of all social groups in Poland.

A population deprived of its natural and necessary forms of self-defence could only react impulsively: violent eruptions of social discontent, such as in Poznan in 1956 (1), during the 'March Events' of 1968 (2), the Baltic Coast workers' revolt of 1970 (3) and, lastly, in June 1976 (4) — were always associated with a menacing danger of a major revolution of unpredictable national and international consequences.

The [party] authorities, though occasionally forced to retreat — as in June '76 — or to offer a tactical and temporary appeasement — as in 1956 and in December 1970 — proved to be incapable of introducing any form of democratization of public life. Such incapacity resulted in a constantly aggravated social and economic crisis, leading to a crisis of State authority.

What is needed today is a process of a wide-spread democratization. The population must continue to struggle for a democratic form of government. All social strata should regain their right to self-determination and be allowed to recreate social institutions, through which their rights could be truly implemented.

Only free unions and associations can save the State, since only the process of true democratization can lead towards the integration of the interests and the will of the citizen with the interests and the authority of the State. These tasks are being carried out presently by existing (dissident) social institutions,

such as the 'Social Self-Defence Committee - KOR' (5), the 'Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights' (6), the 'Society for Academic Courses' (7), and the 'Students' Solidarity Committees' (8).

While remembering the tragic events of December 1970 and acting in compliance with the expectations of numerous groups and milieus of the Baltic Coast region, we wish to follow the lead of our Silesian colleagues (9) by organizing independent labour unions in our area.

Today, on the eve of May Day which for over 80 years symbolized the struggle for workers rights, we hereby call into being the FOUNDING COMMITTEE OF THE FREE TRADE UNIONS OF THE BALTIC SEABOARD.

The aim of the Free Trade Unions is to create an organized form of defence of economic, legal and humanitarian interests of the working population. The Free Trade Unions declare their willingness to assist and to protect all employees, irrespectively of their political views, or qualifications.

The Founding Committee will operate openly through their representatives, leaving our collaborators and supporters the right of decision and voicing their opinions.

Whereas we wish to identify ourselves with the guiding principles of the (unofficial) journal *Robotnik* (10), we shall express our views in its columns, or in our own publications. We shall also inform our readers about the progress of our activities and our achievements.

We appeal to all working people — the workers, the technical, managerial and administrative staff: form your own independent Employee Representation Committees. Alternatively you may reach the same goal by introducing independent-minded activists into your Works Councils — people who would represent the electorate's interests in a true and honest manner. We would like our initiative to become a stimulus for a number of individual, varied and independent social actions.

We appeal to independent social institutions for support and for the widest publicity for our initiative.

We appeal to all for solidarity in the struggle for a brighter future.

**For and on behalf of the Founding Committee 29 April 1978.**

**Andrzej GWIAZDA** — Gdansk, ul. Wejhera 3c apt.118.  
**Christopher WYSZKOWSKI** — Gdansk, ul. Pomorska 14b, apt.1  
**Antoni SOKOLOWSKI** — Gdansk, Poland.

(Document and translation made available by Aneks.)

#### Footnotes.

1. In June 1956 attempts to suppress a workers' demonstration in the Polish industrial city of Poznan led to a full-scale working class uprising and an open political crisis during which Gomulka came to power.
2. In March 1968 a mass student revolt was used as the pretext for sweeping repressive measures against Polish intellectuals and Jews.
3. A package of price rises provoked mass strikes on the Baltic coast in December 1970. When the police and the army responded by shooting down workers; the discontent spread and Gomulka was removed from power, Edward Gierek, the present Party leader taking his place.
4. In June 1976 Gierek's attempt to introduce large price increases was stopped by widespread workers' strikes and protests.
5. The Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) was established in the autumn of 1977 as a civil rights organization, replacing the KOR (Polish initials for the Workers' Defence Committee) which was set up the year before specifically to campaign against repression of workers who had engaged in the June 1976 strikes and protests.
6. The Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights was established in the spring of 1977. It publishes a journal called *Opinia*.
7. The Society for Academic Courses is an unofficial university, established late in 1977 to provide lectures and discussions on history, politics, philosophy, etc.
8. The Student Solidarity Committee (SKS) was formed in May 1977 after the death of a student civil rights activist, Stanislaw Pyjas in Krakow. Local committees have since been formed in other university towns.
9. Committee for Free Trade Unions in Katowice formed in February.
10. *Robotnik* ('The Worker') is an unofficial journal started in late 1977, which claims a monthly circulation of about 12,000.

# ROMANIA

## Experiences of a Socialist Worker Interview with Vasile Paraschiv

*[The interview with Vasile Paraschiv we print below gives a remarkable glimpse of the real life of the working people in Romania today. It also provides a horrifying picture of the casual brutality of the Romanian repressive organs.]*

*A worker all his life, Vasile Paraschiv joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1946 as a teenager from a poor peasant family. He became a Party member out of political conviction, and as has been so often before in other East European countries, such convinced socialists can become the most intransigent fighters against bureaucratic corruption and repression.*

*After resigning from the Party in 1968 Paraschiv was on three separate occasions forcibly interned in psychiatric hospitals, for, amongst other things, trying to defend people victimized for having belonged to the Romanian Socialist Party.*

*In 1977 the Romanian government used a device which has become fashionable in*

*Eastern Europe of allowing Paraschiv to travel to the West. Earlier this year Paraschiv attempted to return to Romania but was barred from re-entering the country.*

*Labour Focus, Vol.1 No.2 published Paraschiv's account of his arrest in February 1977 for expressing his support for the Human Rights Committee established at that time. This interview was conducted by Julia Gross; the translation was done by Anca Mihailescu.]*

### When and how did you leave the Communist Party?

On 24 October 1968, on the occasion of new Party elections, I brought to the attention of a general meeting a letter that I had addressed to cde. N. Ceausescu and the Party leadership. Among other things I wrote: 'While agreeing with Party policy, I cannot agree with the way it is applied by those charged with this task.' When I reached this point, the Party Secretary of our factory stood up and demanded that I

no longer be allowed to read my motivation for leaving the Party. I referred to my statutory right to speak, but it was to no avail. He put to the vote a resolution that I should not be allowed to continue, and everyone raised his hand in favour ... except one who abstained. This comrade argued that if we do this to cde. Paraschiv, then we should do it to everybody. I put a copy of my letter on the table of the bureau conducting the meeting and left the hall, never again to take part in discussions.

I must say, however, that I reached my decision after many abuses and acts of injustice had been done to myself and those around me. At almost every Party and union meeting, I used to raise problems relating to work, to the union and to general politics. But I was not properly understood, and they began to treat me as an eternal malcontent ever opposed to the Party line.

Let me give you an example: On the occasion of union elections at the Brazi Petrochemical Complex, where I was employed, the decision was taken that our

branch, ATM, should be composed of two union-groups instead of one. However, we workers decided to elect our representatives as a single group instead of as two. The next day, the Party and union organs overturned our decision and held separate elections for the central shop and for workers in the various plants. And so we had two union groups — an outcome that greatly upset me and sowed conflict between myself and the Party and union leadership in our plant. When I had spoken out against such arbitrary measures in the past, I had always been attacked and even subjected to threats. Once, I remember, Party Secretary Ene Constantin told me that my place was not really in the workshop where I had been trained in my job, but on the scaffolding of a building-site as a bricklayer or navvy. That is just one example of the threats made against me ...

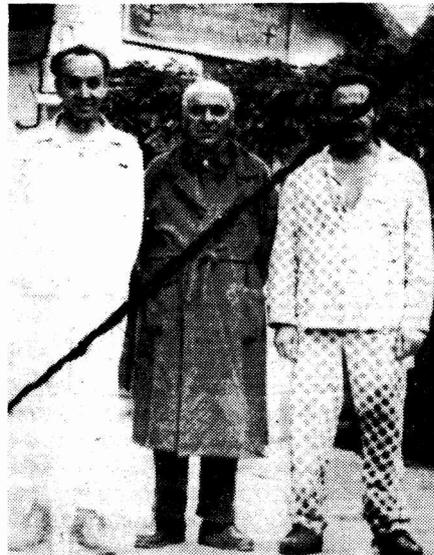
Another factor in my decision to leave the Party was the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. True, the Romanian Communist Party [RCP] took a position worthy of respect: it did not take part in the invasion, and the next day Ceausescu made his famous speech roundly condemning the action. But the day after that, cde. Nicolae Ceausescu had a meeting with the Soviet ambassador, and we never again heard our leader speak his mind about the Warsaw Pact invasion.

However, the main source of my disillusionment was the realization that those who committed this unjust act against a peaceful, free people were none other than the Communist Parties of (above all) the Soviet Union, and of Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and the GDR. Thus, although I respect the position taken by our Party, I cannot be satisfied with the profound silence that followed. And I cannot forget that the RCP, like all the other parties, is a branch of the same tree.

**In July 1969 you were interned in Urlati Psychiatric Hospital. What were conditions there like?**

About 100 others were interned with me in Urlati Hospital in 1969. But not a single one was ill. I cannot remember their names: I know that one had been an officer in the *Securitate* [secret police], and that another was an engineer who had been trained in Berlin. But I immediately went on hunger strike and could not discuss with or find out about the others. However, when I was interned for the third time, on 5 April 1977, in the Sapoca Buzau Psychiatric Hospital, I was able to talk with those who followed me in. There were two Ploesti workers called **Marcel Nuta** and **Constantin Dorin Pisica** — both of whom had signed Goma's letter on human rights to the Belgrade Conference. After Nuta had asked for a tourist passport with which to visit Austria, the *Securitate* offered him a passport to leave for good; but he had refused to accept

this. Pisica was inside both because he had signed the Goma letter and because he had requested a passport to work in Kuwait. **Gheorghe Rotila** of Posada was also there for asking to emigrate; while **Nicolae Dumitru**, a railway worker from Barcanesti, Tataran, Prahova County, had been arrested and thrown into mental hospital because he had opposed the marriage of his daughter to the village police chief. **Vasile Beneanu** of Buzau (186, Strada 23 August) was interned when he was seen urinating against a fence just as the local police-major was passing by with his wife on his arm. **Spirica Budilou** from Sibiu was also interned for asking to emigrate. But to police officers and psychiatrists alike he declared: 'If you lock me up, I shall kill at least one of you when I am set free. I know you can't hold me forever: at worst, I'll stay another two or three months here or somewhere else, and after that I'll be released. But then at least one of you will die. You'd do better to give me a passport to leave the country.' And in fact, that very evening those same officers returned with a car and set him free. From what I have heard, it seems that he was given a passport to go to Germany.



**Vasile Paraschiv (left) photographed with two other political internees in the Psychiatric hospital where he was interned in 1976.**

**Could you describe the course of events leading up to your emigration?**

The last time I was arrested was on 5 April 1977 right in Paul Goma's flat, while I was sitting talking with his wife. A uniformed policeman burst into the house and began to swear at me: he went on punching me all the way down from the third to the ground floor, where he was joined by other *Securitate* officers hidden under the staircase. They bundled me into a car and took me to the Bucharest police headquarters in the Drumul Taberei neighbourhood. Here an officer gave me pen and paper and, hitting and cursing me all the time, tried to make me withdraw my signature of Goma's letter. I said, 'I'll sign anything you like after you show me your

identity card.' He then went out and returned with two more officers: one of these stopped in front of me and without saying a word — or without my having said a word — began to punch me in the abdomen and the head until I stopped breathing and lost consciousness.

After I came round, three officers came in a special car and took me to the Ploesti *Securitate* headquarters. There I was stripped, thoroughly searched and locked up in cell no.16. The warden informed me that from then on, my name was not Vasile Paraschiv but No.30. 'So when you hear No.30, call "Present!" Understand?' I understood. That, then, was how I was introduced to cell no. 16 and to my cell-mate Tudor Florea, the man who robbed the Valerii de Munte State Bank, formerly a machine operator at the First of May factory in Ploesti and a native of the Izvoarele commune in Prahova county.

The next day I was taken under armed guard to the Sapoca-Buzau Psychiatric Hospital and interned for the third time. The two escorting policemen gave the hospital director, Dr. Nicolau Anton, a written note from Colonel Popa, the head of *Securitate* unit 0-7-hundred-and-something. This said: 'We hereby deliver the patient Vasile Paraschiv for treatment.' Dr. Nicolau asked the policemen: 'But don't you have anything from a doctor?' 'No,' they replied, 'we don't have anything like that.' 'But I told you before not to come again without a doctor's note.' 'That's all they gave us. They said they'd talk to you over the phone and that you know the problem.' The doctor said no-one had said anything to him. But he went on: 'I really ought to send you back with him. Anyway this is the last time I'll take someone without a doctor's recommendation.' And then, without asking me a single question or showing the least concern for my predicament, the doctor calmly told an orderly: 'Lock him up in No.2.' Here, in Section 2 of the Sapoca-Buzau Psychiatric Hospital, I saw hell on earth and went through the greatest suffering and humiliation of my life.

I remained in this hospital for forty-five days. When I was released I was informed that a court would soon consider an application by the Ploesti Prosecutor that I be 'definitively interned' in a mental home for the chronically sick. Many of my work-mates then offered to give character-references saying that I was perfectly normal.

My work-mates were outraged that my colleague, Negoita Dumitru, was prepared to make slanderous accusations about my behaviour ... But I did not think that their making statements on my behalf would be of any use. And in fact, later, the court did not consent to hear the witnesses whom I proposed, consulting only those brought forward by the *Securitate* ...

Still we agreed that a number of my mates should write a character-reference to be used in my defence. But while they were doing this, one of them informed the management and the Party branch and factory leadership. Someone came down immediately and ordered that work be stopped. He began asking questions: Which of you has written something? What have you written? Give the pieces of paper to me! Two or three did give in, but the rest denied that they had written anything. The foreman then shouted: 'It's not true! You wrote something ... and you, and you. Most of you have written something. Give me the bits of paper!' But still they denied it.

The leadership then decided to search everyone's lockers and drawers. And they found eighteen statements that my mates were going to give to me - eighteen character-references, not statements. The leadership threatened them, saying: 'Don't you realize what you have done? This is a serious matter, a delicate matter. This is a political question — you shouldn't get mixed up in it. Think of your children and families. Do you want your children to be left on the streets? Leave Paraschiv alone: he can take care of himself. He doesn't need your help.' That, according to my colleagues, was what section leader Andrei Mihai and other managers and foremen had to say.

A week or so later, when I returned to work, I asked my work-mates if they would still give me the character-references. But they all said that they were too frightened to do that again. Similarly, when I got permission to go on a trip to Austria, I started to hand in my tools. My mates asked me what I was doing and I told them I was going on a trip abroad. They asked me to send them postcards from wherever I went, and so I said I would send one to all those who gave me an address. No, they said, don't send it to our homes but send a collective postcard to us here at work. But when I repeated that I would only send it to a private address, since here it would never reach them, they all said they couldn't give me their address. They were too afraid.

**This is the first time you have been abroad. Do you intend to return to Romania? How do you see the present situation in Romania?**

What can I say about my homeland, Romania? It is a country where truth cannot either enter or leave: a country held in chains and hidden from the people. Instead, lies circulate freely up and down the land. And yet, despite all the repression of workers who seek nothing more than respect of the existing laws, I seek not a single change in the personnel of the Party or **Securitate**. Let the same men remain, so long as the methods change! Otherwise, what has happened will go on forever. Let the constitutional and legal provisions be respected, together with the civil rights laid down in them.

I am determined to return to my country, in accordance with cde. Nicolae Ceausescu's appeal of 18 February 1977, in which he said that problems are not solved by running away but by joining the collective effort to overcome difficulties and create a better life for all. But it remains to be seen whether the Party leadership will agree to give up using psychiatry as a weapon of political repression; to stop using beatings and torture during investigations — especially against honest workers whose only crime is to have demanded their legal rights. Whatever happens, even if the Party does not change its methods, I am determined to go back and continue living and working in my country ... to continue also, of course, fighting for human rights and bringing to the notice of the authorities any abuse committed against my fellow-countrymen.

In the discussions I have had, there are many different opinions about how change can be brought about. Personally, I think that an improvement of the workers' lot and respect for human rights can be achieved only by the working class itself. Only they have the necessary strength and power to accomplish this. I would be enough if the workers stood up in their union meetings and openly expressed their

dissatisfaction with the way in which their fellow-countrymen are punished for demanding that the provisions of the law be respected. If the Party goes on using the old methods, not only will the situation not improve, but the biggest loser will be the prestige of the RCP itself, and with it the ideas of socialism in general ...

It is undeniable that there are certain positive features of the RCP's activity over the last thirty years. But we must also recognize that it has given rise to many difficulties, and that the cause of these difficulties lies in the political monopoly of power. ... If, instead of a single-party system, another party had existed that also expressed the positions and interests of the working class, that is to say, a social-democratic party, I am sure that the RCP would not have made the mistakes that it did throughout its history. So, only

So, only democratic political pluralism can guarantee for the working class and the whole people that respect will be shown for its rights that are consecrated and legitimated in the Constitution ... Today, the Ministry of the Interior — that is, **Securitate** officers and Party activists in general — stand above the Constitution and the laws of the land; only workers, peasants and intellectuals are hauled before the courts, never **Securitate** officers and Party or trade-union activists. They always have the right to flout the country's laws and civil rights, because they know in advance that no-one can hold them responsible. In a democratic-pluralist system, however, that could never take place without creating uproar and without the guilty ones being brought to justice.

The western mass media, workers' organizations and the working class as a whole have a crucial role to play in forcing the Romanian government and Party to put an end once and for all to all the old methods of repression, and to respect in practice the laws and constitution of the country.

## In Retrospect: The Labour Movement and the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 aroused a wave of revulsion among socialists and working-class people in Britain and Europe. Unlike events in Hungary 1956, the Prague Spring had all along received wide publicity throughout the world and commanded, in one way or another, the support of nearly every section of the Left. When the tanks

rolled in to Prague, then, the Kremlin's fable of 'counter-revolution' and 'fraternal assistance' found the ears only of those for whom the number one article of faith is: 'Everything the Soviet Party says and does is 100 per cent correct.' All the major Western CPs, as well as the CPGB, expressed a varying degree of disapproval of the invasion.

Meeting on the day of the invasion, the General Council of the TUC '*strongly condemned*' the Soviet-led action and declared '*their profound sympathy with the Czech people whose hopes and aspirations are now being crushed by force*'. The General Council further decided to break off contacts with the trade-union movements of '*those countries associated*

in the attack' and suggested that affiliated unions 'reconsider their attitude towards visits or delegations to or from any of those countries'. In an addendum of 30 August, the General Council 'demanded the withdrawal of the invading forces' and condemned 'both the means by which [the Moscow] agreement was obtained and the terms which have been imposed on the Czechoslovak people and nation'. This statement was subsequently endorsed by the September TUC Congress.

The next year, an unopposed Congress resolution 'strongly condemned the continued presence in Czechoslovakia of the invading forces of the Soviet Union'. However, a heated debate arose on a DATA (now TASS - Technical and Supervisory Section of the AUEW) amendment which sought to reverse the TUC position on contacts with the trade-union movements of the Soviet Union and other invading countries. Despite repeated attempts by the chairman to prevent him making the point, Ken Gill of DATA proposed the amendment by drawing a striking analogy with the complicity of the British and US trade unions in the actions of their respective imperialisms in Ireland and Vietnam. But Gill blunted the force of his argument by carefully, at times tortuously, evading an

explicit statement of his own position on the occupation of Czechoslovakia. In the event, the amendment was carried by a mere 2,000 votes (3,971,000 to 3,969,000), although once again no speaker actually questioned the TUC condemnation of the invasion.

The Labour Party NEC responded to the invasion with surprising speed, calling a central London protest demonstration shortly afterwards. However, it soon became clear that the NEC of the day was more interested in gaining support for its right-wing, pro-NATO foreign policy than in securing the maximum unity of the labour movement against the Warsaw Pact action. Thus, in its statement on Czechoslovakia presented to the September 1968 Labour Party Conference, the NEC both 'condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and certain of her allies' and asserted 'that Britain's security must be based on the North Atlantic Alliance'. 'It is essential,' the statement went on, 'to maintain a vigorous and resilient defence system based upon NATO. Labour supports the development of NATO in such a way as to ensure flexibility in its defensive responses and to secure an equal flexibility in its political responses to developments throughout Europe.'

Clearly this deliberate yoking together of separate issues could only split the movement's response. And as if to ensure that this would indeed be the result, the Conference Arrangements Committee first got the proposers of six emergency resolutions specifically on Czechoslovakia to withdraw in favour of one submitted by the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party; and then refused to allow the Liverpool resolution to be discussed on the grounds that 'the points raised in the emergency resolution dealing with the protest against the action taken against Czechoslovakia are fully included in the NEC statement'. In the conference debate, therefore, left-wing speakers like Stan Orme M.P. were forced to combine their forthright condemnation of the Soviet action with dissociation from the NEC statement supposedly 'on Czechoslovakia'. At the end of the day, although no-one had voiced anything but sharp denunciation of the invasion, the NEC statement was approved by 3,387,000 votes against 2,435,000. Cold comfort perhaps: but the Kremlin was able to make full use of this manufactured 'division' within the British labour movement with regard to 'Czechoslovakia'.

By Patrick Camiller

#### BAHRO CONFERENCE

The West German Committee for the Release of Rudolf Bahro, in collaboration with the British and French committees, is organizing a big international congress for the beginning of October (probably the 12-15th) at the Free University, West Berlin. One of the purposes of the congress will be the opening of a dialogue between European Marxists on the theses put forward by Bahro in his book, and contributions are invited from British socialists. Anyone interested in preparing a contribution to the discussion or in simply coming along to the congress should contact:

**The Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee,**  
c/o Günter Minnerup,  
School of Languages and Area Studies,  
Portsmouth Polytechnic,  
Hampshire Terrace, Portsmouth.

#### BUKHARIN CAMPAIGN

Following a letter from the son of Nikolai Bukharin to the leadership of the Italian Communist Party, an international campaign has begun for the rehabilitation of the leader of the Russian Revolution who was executed following the third Moscow trial of 1938.

The Campaign for Bukharin's rehabilitation has received support from many Labour MPs and socialist intellectuals in Britain. The British collection of signatures to the appeal is being co-ordinated by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.

#### "EASTERN EUROPE AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT" 10 Years After Czechoslovakia 1968 A Conference on 19 August

On the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign is organizing the first national discussion held in this country between socialists and civil rights campaigners from a number of East European countries and British socialists, on how to strengthen the links between the labour movement and those struggling for civil, democratic and working class rights in Eastern Europe. Speakers will include Jiri Pelikan, Boris Weil, Vadim Belotserkovsky, Leonid Plyushch, Krzysztof Pomian. Films of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and of the Charter 77 movement. Speakers from the British labour movement including Phillip Whitehead MP, Hon. President of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign. Registration fee: £1. For details and registration write to : EESC Conference, 10 Park Drive, Golders Green, London NW11.



G.M. Cookson (Socialist Challenge)

Monty Johnstone of the Communist Party (on the left) chairs a session of the Czech Committee's meeting on 27 May in London, marking the 10th anniversary of the Prague Spring. Jiri Pelikan (second from the left) and Jan Kavan (third from the left) also addressed the meeting. The Secretary of the Czech Committee, Marian Siling is on the right of the picture. Other speakers at the meeting included Labour MP Stan Newens, Martin Jacques speaking on behalf of the British Communist Party leadership, Professor Edward Goldstücker and Robin Blackburn of the International Marxist Group.

**\*The Defence of the Soviet Trade Unionists:** there has been a very encouraging response to the EESC appeal to local Labour Parties — the following Constituency Labour Parties have already sent protests: Brighton LP, Greenwich LP, Faversham CLP, Newport CLP, Hendon South CLP, Ipswich CLP, Woking CLP, Dudley West CLP, Cheadle CLP. The following Labour Party branches have also sent protests: Allerton (North East Leeds), Sittingbourne, King Furlong (Basingstoke), Canterbury. The National Organization of Labour Students has also protested. News of further protests from Labour Party organizations is still coming in. The appeal to Trades Councils was sent out later and it will take some weeks before a complete picture of initial support will emerge. EESC Hon. Chairman, Eric Heffer is pursuing the case on the Labour Party N.E.C. The EESC is discussing organizing a delegation of trade unionists to the Soviet Embassy in November to raise the case of the Trade Union Association on the first anniversary of the announcement of the group's existence.

**\*Imprisonment of Yuri Orlov and other members of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups:** The EESC has appealed for protests from labour movement organizations against the imprisonment of Yuri Orlov and of Helsinki Group activists from the other Soviet republics.

**\*Polish Trade Unionists:** in response to the news

of the jailing of 3 activists for workers rights at the end of May in Poland ( see page 20 of this issue) the EESC Hon. President Phillip Whitehead wrote to the Polish Ambassador on 15 June protesting against this violation of civil rights.

**\*The Civil Rights Movement in Poland:** at the end of June representatives of the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) held discussions with EESC President Philip Whitehead and another member of the Campaign on the situation and problems of the civil rights movement in Poland.

**\*The sentencing of Rudolf Bahro:** On Wednesday 5 July the EESC called a press conference at the House of Commons to protest at the jailing of Rudolf Bahro. A telegram was sent to East German Party leader Eric Honecker calling for Bahro's immediate release. In conjunction with the Bahro Defence Committee, the EESC is handing in a letter signed by many prominent socialists in Britain to the East German Embassy on 18 July at 1pm. A picket of the Embassy is also being held at that time.

**\*Why Socialists should defend the dissidents:** The EESC is preparing a pamphlet on repression in Eastern Europe and what socialists in Britain ought to do about it. The pamphlet should be out in time for the EESC conference and the Czech demonstration in the middle of August.

## REVIEW

today: the day-to-day workings of "socialist democracy", a term more associated with other East European countries and not normally used by the SED); leisure, crime and private life; social services; and finally the "self-image of a new Germany". In an epilogue Steele summarizes his view of the GDR as follows:

"The excesses of its political way of life and the lack of travel possibilities for its people are the product of special conditions, and the continuing confrontation with West Germany. But its overall social and economic system is a presentable model of the kind of authoritarian welfare states which Eastern European nations have now become. Totalitarianism is no longer a useful concept to describe Eastern Europe. Authoritarianism is a better word. Within a centralized pattern of political organization, Eastern Europe has produced a variant of the welfare state which is different from Scandinavian socialism and English or German social democracy but which deserves close inspection."

And this is where the "bad news" comes in. The weaknesses of Steele's book are not so much his own as an author, but weaknesses of the whole genre of liberal attempts to come to grips with the reality of Eastern Europe in the age of "detente": despite the laudable efforts to abandon the anti-communist prejudices of the cold war, despite the readiness to re-assess the social and economic achievements of these

## 10TH ANNIVERSARY RALLY AND MARCH

A labour movement demonstration will take place on 20 August against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and in defence of victimized and imprisoned supporters of Charter 77. The demonstration is being organized by an ad hoc committee initiated by the Committee in Defence of Czechoslovak Socialists. Sponsorship is being gained from socialist and trade union bodies.

Assemble at 2pm on Sunday 20 August at Speakers Corner. After a series of socialist and trade union speakers, there will be a March to the Soviet and Czech Embassies. Publicity material and information can be obtained from: CDCzS, 49a Tabley Rd., London N7.

### HELP BUILD THE E.S.C.

If you are a socialist or a trade union member who supports the struggle for civil rights in Eastern Europe, contact the **Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign** or get your organization to affiliate by writing to:

E.E.S.C.  
c/o Vladimir Derer  
- 10 Park Drive,  
London NW11 7SH.

### SOCIALISM WITH A GERMAN FACE

By Jonathan Steele

(Jonathan Cape, London, 1977, 256 pp.)

First the good news: this is by far the best introduction to the history, society and politics of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) available to the general English reader. There is, of course, not all that much competition in the field (David Childs' *East Germany*, London, 1969, being outdated, and Heinz Lippmann's *Honecker and the New Politics of Europe*, London 1972 being limited by its format as a biography), but Steele's book has some real strengths which make it a good buy (or library loan) for anyone interested in the GDR: it represents a genuine attempt at understanding the GDR "from inside", measuring its achievements and failures against the enormous economic and political difficulties encountered by the regime and its own ideological claims, it is well-researched but not overburdened with statistics, and the eye of the professional journalist makes some of the very instructive observations of daily life in the GDR that cannot be found in the more "scholarly" volumes.

On the whole, the book is sympathetic towards the GDR, although not entirely uncritical. Just over half of it presents a historical account of East Germany's development, the last four chapters looking into specific problems of GDR society

countries in the face of the increasingly crisis-ridden reality of capitalism, Steele's viewpoint remains that of a bourgeois reformer. In his determination not to be prejudiced and achieve "fairness", Steele is frequently driven to write as an apologist of Stalinism - that the "excesses" of the GDR's "political way of life" are due to "special conditions" and of course West Germany, that Wolf Biermann and other socialist oppositionists are "Utopians", all that sounds sadly familiar. Just as the positive achievements of the GDR are seen in terms of the Western concept of the "welfare state", the negative features of the political "excesses" (ie. bureaucratic suppression of democracy) are at best criticized from the standpoint of bourgeois democracy. Since a number of CDU deputies were allowed to vote against the reform of the abortion laws in 1972, and since the state has begun to tolerate and even encourage trends towards a privatization of personal life, the regime is presumably now "authoritarian" rather than "totalitarian". Readers of **Labour Focus** will look in vain for a discussion of how the bureaucratic dictatorship of Honecker and Co. represents an obstacle in the way of the GDR's (and eventually all Germany's) socialist transformation, rather than its agent. But that would probably be expecting too much from Jonathan Steele. After all, **Labour Focus** readers also know why they do not rely on the **Guardian** alone for information on Eastern Europe.

By Günter Minnerup