

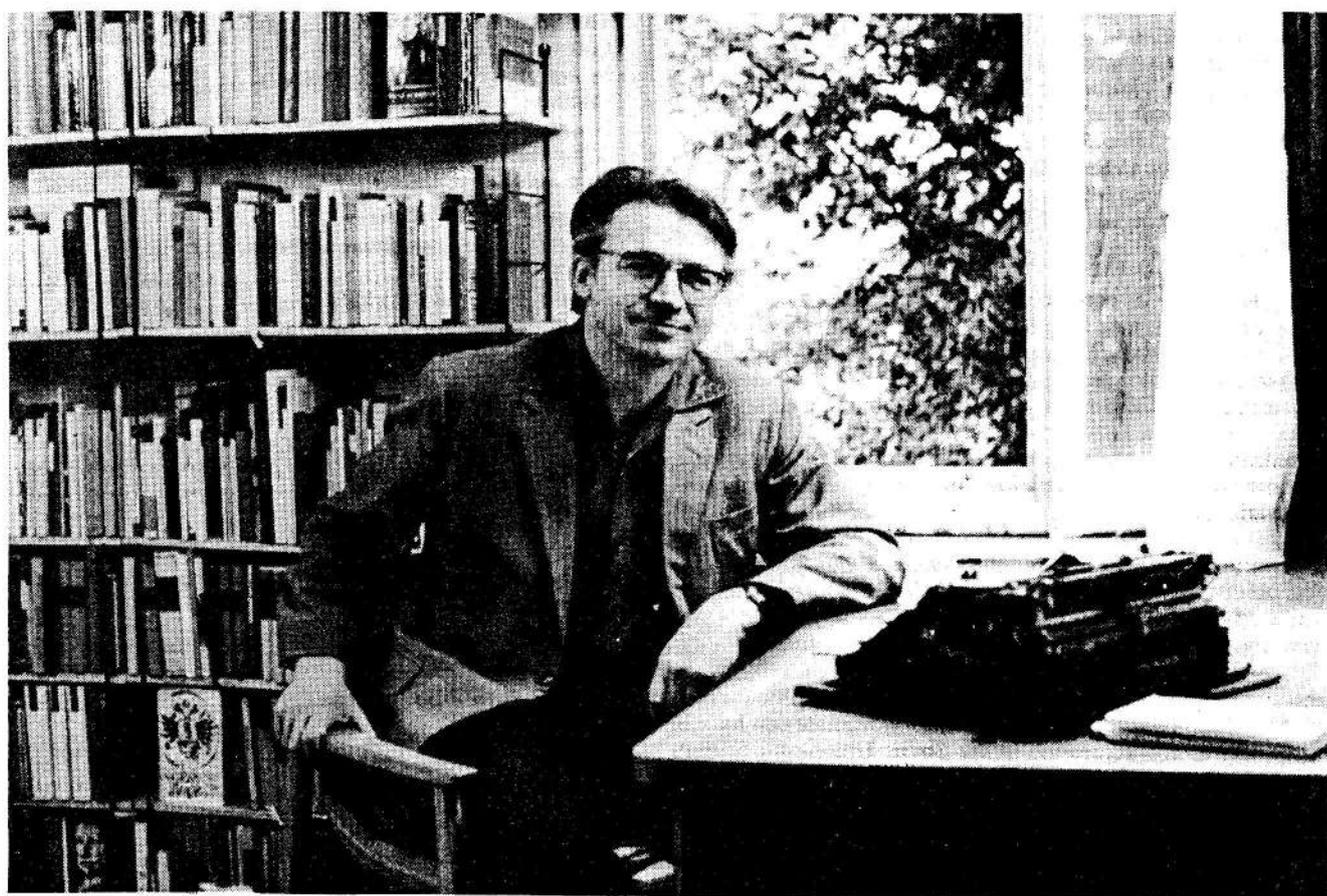
LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

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RUDOLF BAHRO

Imperialist Agent or Socialist?

ROMANIAN MINERS' STRIKE

Exclusive Publication of 3 Letters

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 Africa or Northern Ireland.

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

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

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EDITORIAL

LABOUR MOVEMENT DEFENCE -- URGENT TASKS

There are signs of a change in the attitude of the labour movements of Western Europe towards violations of democratic and working-class rights in the East. One such sign is the trade union conference due to take place in Paris on 17-18 December (see page 24 of this issue). Another sign was the Czech Committee meeting at the Labour Party Conference, at which Eric Heffer made a strong appeal for the British labour movement to develop the work already going on in defence of East European victims of repression. (For the text of the speech see page 2 of this issue).

There is no shortage of tasks. In this issue of Labour Focus we take up four cases in particular which require urgent attention from British socialists of every persuasion.

THE CHARTER 77 TRIALS

The Czechoslovak government chose the period of the Belgrade Conference to organise some trials of supporters of Charter 77. The first trial, which concerned two white-collar workers in the north of the country, took place without attracting much publicity in the Western press. The two accused, Machacek and Lastuvka, received 3 and 2½ year prison sentences respectively.

Perhaps encouraged by the relatively small reaction abroad to this first trial, the Czech authorities announced that they would hold a second one, this time in Prague. This trial of 4 prominent Charter supporters -- only three of whom, however, had actually signed the document -- was scheduled to last three days. Following a great deal of adverse publicity abroad, the judge arbitrarily terminated the proceedings after only one and a half days. Two of the accused were sent to prison.

The Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, in conjunction with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, has already launched a petition calling for an end to the repression. It is hoped that the campaign will receive widespread support from trade unionists and socialists throughout Britain, and that as many people as possible will come to the picket outside the Czechoslovak Embassy on 30 November between 12:30 and 2:30 pm.

THE ARREST OF RUDOLF BAHRO

At the end of August an event took place in East Germany which must shock socialists and communists throughout Europe. Rudolf Bahro, a Marxist opponent of the Party leadership was arrested on a spying charge for publishing a theoretical work in West Germany.

The arrest of Rudolf Bahro passed almost unnoticed in the Western press outside Germany. The East German authorities are alleged to be planning a very heavy jail sentence for Bahro. It is imperative that his case be widely publicised throughout the labour movement. This issue of Labour Focus provides as much information as we have been able to assemble about the Bahro case, including some extracts from his book and a transcript of his interview on West German TV. A Bahro Defence Committee has been formed to publicise the case and organise activity in Bahro's defence. Donations and messages of support are urgently needed.

REPRESSION OF ROMANIAN MINERS

In most East European countries large scale workers' strikes quickly become widely known and receive international publicity. But not in Romania. A bitter industrial dispute involving tens of thousands of miners in the south west of Romania last August has received scarcely a mention in the British press. Yet so bitter was the strike that at one point the workers held prisoner two members of the Central Committee sent to deal with the dispute. Eventually President Ceausescu went to speak to some 35,000 strikers for five hours, finally managing to persuade them to return to work.

Letters from some of the miners involved have reached the West appealing for support. What can be done? We think this is a case where a delegation from the British labour movement should arrange to visit Romania and find out the facts on the spot in the mining areas of the Jiu Valley.

THE KLYMCHUK CASE

The last issue of Labour Focus carried information about the arrest this summer of a British student, Andrij Klymchuk, who was in the Soviet Union on holiday. Andrij is charged with carrying "subversive" information and ideas into the USSR. He remains in jail, presumably awaiting trial.

The National Union of Students Executive has taken up the case in a forthright manner, calling for the dropping of charges against Andrij and for his immediate release. Along with other forces in the Committee for the release of Andrij Klymchuk, the NUS Executive is raising money in order to send NUS President and Communist Party member Sue Slipman to any future trial. Some hundreds of students picketed the Soviet Embassy on 19 October, calling for Andrij's release -- an indication of the strong concern felt over the case.

THE NEED FOR A LABOUR MOVEMENT DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

These four cases reveal facts which those who still see the world in the old Cold War terms will find surprising: in relation to the Charter 77 trials, the Andrij Klymchuk case and the Bahro case the initiative to launch defence activity has been taken, not by the right, but by the left. Socialists and communists are playing a leading role in all three cases. Indeed, when the campaign for the release of Andrij Klymchuk was being launched, the Klymchuk family's Tory MP, George Young, opposed a call for Andrij's immediate release and urged instead a demand for a fair trial. Fortunately, the NUS and the Defence Committee did not agree. They took the view that the charges should be dropped and Andrij should be released.

It is to be hoped that in the not too distant future the energies of socialists in the various individual campaigns in defence of democratic rights in Eastern Europe can be pooled in one unified East European solidarity campaign with broad labour movement backing. Such a body would make possible a much swifter and more effective response to events like the Czech trials or the arrest of Rudolf Bahro.

SOCIALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Repression in Eastern Europe "A Crime against Socialism" says Eric Heffer

[The article by Eric Heffer which we print below is the text of a speech he made at a public meeting organised by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists held at the Labour Party Conference this year.]

In 1971-2 I went to Chile and had the privilege of meeting President Allende. I remember over lunch he said our socialism will be a socialism with gaiety, freedom and happiness, it will not be the socialism of the Eastern European countries. They killed him for that.

In 1968 there was the Czechoslovakian attempt to build socialism with a human face. The comrades weren't all killed, but the attempt was destroyed and there has been repression since the Soviet occupation. I joined the Communist Party at an early age and as a socialist since my youth I have struggled against fascist repression. I think it is my duty to fight against repression even if it is in the name of socialism. I do not see that there is any distinction between the repression of the fascists destroying our comrades' attempts to build a free socialist society and repression of our comrades in the socialist or so-called socialist countries who are equally trying to build socialism with a human face, including freedom, dignity and the right to free expression. That's why I'm here, because I think that if, as a socialist, I am prepared to speak out and to work hard and to fight against the Franco regime when it existed, against the Greek colonels, the Chilean junta, or any country that represses its people because it struggles for socialism, then it is equally my duty and responsibility to speak out and work hard against those forces, acting in the name of socialism, who are acting basically against the interests of the socialist movement.

In essence what is happening in Czechoslovakia today is a crime against socialism. It hinders everything we do when we on the left of the labour movement are saying that what we want to build is a socialist society, and then you have the fascists of this world saying that what you want is an East European situation, that is repression. But that is **not** socialism. I say that it is the opposite of socialism. Socialism means freedom, it means the flowering of the human spirit, it means the development of the free mind, and of free expression. If one doesn't understand that, then one hasn't got the first understanding of what socialism is all about, because that's what it is about.

It is true that you can create a situation of



Labour MP and NEC Member Eric Heffer

full employment. You can create a society where the means of production are supposedly owned and controlled by the people through the state. But without working class control that is, of course, only a step towards what we want, although I think that it is a step in the right direction. However, you can have marvellous welfare schemes, without the right to write a poem or a novel, without the right to establish an alternative political organisation even within the framework of socialism, without the right to say you do not agree with this or that particular line, without the right to want to develop something else or to argue in another way for socialism.

That is **not** socialism and cannot be socialism. It is something else, perhaps bureaucracy or even some form of state capitalism -- though I would prefer to call it a type of state socialism -- but it is not the socialism of free expression which I believe those of us on the Left of the labour movement who work for democratic socialism want to create.

We were all moved by the experiment of 1968. I remember talking to Czech diplomats in this country who were themselves enthusiastic and felt they were on the path to what we had always wanted -- socialism with freedom, socialism with a human face. But then it was destroyed. Why? My own view is that had it been successful in Czechoslovakia then the peoples of the Soviet Union and of every other East European country would have said: that's what we want as well. The Czechoslovaks were not saying "turn the clock back" -- though, of course, there were reactionary forces trying to take advantage of the situation. But what the people basically wanted was freedom and free expression.

I don't know how many people have read Rosa Luxemburg. If you haven't you ought

to. No one can deny Rosa Luxemburg's revolutionary credentials. She was killed by the reactionary forces in Germany prior to the Nazis. If you read her works she clearly pointed out that socialism and freedom were synonymous. She said that you couldn't bring in socialism by decree, you could only bring it in when the people wanted it: if you didn't do it that way, then it wasn't socialism.

The National Executive of the Labour Party is regarded as an extremist body, wanting to create an East European-type bureaucratic society. Wicked people, we are: we want to bring about a socialist society -- that is wickedness in itself. I will tell you some of the things we have done. At the beginning of this year we saw the emergence of Charter 77, signed by very courageous people. Because they have signed it there has been repression and many people have suffered in many absolutely disgraceful ways. The response of the National Executive to this did not get much publicity. If we invite the Communist leaders of Spain, Italy or France -- who have themselves made criticisms of what is happening in Czechoslovakia -- then you are said to be "embracing the Communist philosophy". Yet our resolution on Charter 77 has never, so far as I know, been given any publicity whatsoever in the British press. On 21 January, 1977, we passed the following resolution:

"This NEC condemns the arrest and harassment by police of the citizens (of Czechoslovakia) who have signed Charter 77 and calls upon the Czechoslovak Government to respect human rights as it is pledged to do under the Helsinki Agreements and the United Nation's convention." Proposed by that wicked Red Ian Mikardo and seconded by that other wicked Red Eric Heffer. And carried unanimously by the NEC of the Labour Party.

We also passed an earlier resolution which should also be known. This was passed by the Labour Party's international committee. It read:

"The International Committee notes that the exchange of Vladimir Bukovsky for a Chilean political prisoner constitutes the first admission by the government of the Soviet Union that they have political prisoners. It deplores the imprisonment of persons for their political beliefs, whatever they may be, and deplores the arrest in recent days of Soviet and Czechoslovak citizens who are campaigning for human rights."

That is the position on which I stand, and it is the position of the NEC of the Labour Party and of the Labour Party in this country. We are opposed to political repression whether it is in Chile, in Iran, as in the past in Spain, in Czechoslovakia, in the Soviet Union or anywhere else. That is the correct political position for any democratic socialist and that is why I believe that it is important for us to stand up and be counted. We should not be deterred, of course, when we stand up in the House of Commons and are heckled when we talk about Chile. These carriages on the Tory benches say, "What about Czechoslovakia?" We say: "Yes, what about it? What about you speaking out against what's happening in Chile?" You cannot have double standards. There can only be one standard where repression and freedom are concerned. It is very important that we state very clearly where we stand on this.

I would like to draw attention to the text of an appeal made by a former secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, comrade Mlynar, on this whole question. He says:

"I am a communist who is convinced that socialism must give the people a larger measure of political and civil rights than capitalism. I therefore share the creed

presently advocated by many European Communist Parties, and I act accordingly. And for this I am being publicly denounced as a traitor to socialism and as an imperialist agent." He then goes on: "At present the problem is whether the democratic and socialist forces in Europe will allow the defenders of internationally acknowledged pledges to be brutally silenced in one decade in Czechoslovakia. The political powers in Czechoslovakia still have time to stop the repression and to engage in a meaningful dialogue on the violation of internationally guaranteed rights, and to take steps to gradually overcome these practices." He ends his appeal by saying this: "Help us before a great many communists, socialists and democrats in Czechoslovakia are hunted down, before the arrogance of power gives rise to new illegal political trials based on fabricated accusations. Help us, so that reason may prevail over the arrogance of power and win again in Prague in 1977."

We are now at the start of a new Belgrade conference. It is very important that the British labour and socialist movement as a whole makes its presence felt by the Czechoslovak government and to the Soviet Union and to those in Eastern Europe who in the very name of socialism are doing great harm to what socialism really means. If one reads the works of Marx and Engels

one knows that an essential part of their whole philosophy was that a central feature of the socialism they were advocating was the freedom of the human spirit and the development of the human individual. So I hope that we in the Labour Movement will support and defend all those - socialists or anyone else - who wish to speak out in any of these countries. Some of them will be reactionaries, like some who have come over here and fallen in the clutches of right-wing people and have been used by reactionary individuals. We can expect this: if you have lived inside a mental institution or a type of concentration camp for years and you suddenly get out and come to a bourgeois society and see at least that the socialists and communists can speak freely then you are going to think that this is God's world. It is understandable that some people will become influenced by this and think that capitalism is a damned sight better than socialism, if they equate what they've come from with socialism.

So let us make our position clear and support all those who are struggling within the Eastern European societies, not to turn the clock back and bring back capitalism, but to advance further towards a free, democratic society. That is why I have given my full support to the efforts of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists.

EAST GERMANY

The Bahro Scandal



Klein, Rector of East Berlin's Humboldt University, pictured above, has been orchestrating the campaign against Bahro inside the Party. Following orders from the Party leadership he has refused to discuss the ideas in Bahro's book at internal Party meetings, limiting his comments to personal defamations against Bahro.

"The security forces of the German Democratic Republic have arrested another spy for West German intelligence": so ran a short news agency item in the East German Party organ *Neues Deutschland* on 25 August of this year. This was the way that the East German authorities saw fit to publicly acknowledge the existence (in an East Berlin jail) of a major new Marxist theoretician whose work will eventually be discussed throughout Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. The man in question is Rudolf Bahro. He has just completed 7 years of work on a book called: **The Alternative. A Critique of real, existing Socialism (Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus)**. On 23 August he had been interviewed by West German television about this book which was about to be published by the West German Trade Union publishing house Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Cologne. On the following day, the East German political police arrested Bahro for espionage. He has remained in jail, incommunicado, ever since.

According to *Der Spiegel*, Bahro's book is being widely read by East Berlin Party

officials. One explained, "Bahro will be badly defamed. Not one word will be said about what he has actually written." J. Schuchardt, First Party Secretary at the Humboldt University has led the smear campaign by declaring Bahro a "wretched cretin" and his book "idiotic stupidity" -- a line of attack which simply serves to stress the non-viability of charges of espionage.

At a meeting of the Berlin section of the GDR Writers' Union, section chief and Party Central Committee candidate declared: "Guillaume (the spy in Brandt's office) got 13 years though he just gathered information ... But Bahro, who not only spied, but also called for the overturn of the GDR, must of course expect a much graver sentence." We are devoting considerable space in this issue of **Labour Focus on Eastern Europe** to the Bahro affair. Below we are publishing a transcript of the interview given by Bahro to West German TV on 23 August -- the immediate pretext for his arrest as a spy. Günter Minnerup then gives an account of Bahro's life and finally we publish four short extracts from **The Alternative**.

Who is Rudolf Bahro? - by Günter Minnerup

Until August of this year the name of Rudolf Bahro was completely unknown both inside and outside East Germany. He was in no way linked with the protest activities of dissident circles in the GDR; he was not one of the writers or artists who raised their voices in protest against the expulsion of Wolf Biermann and does not appear to have had any direct connection with other prominent Marxist opposition theorists like Professor Robert Havemann. Bahro's background was that of a typical Socialist Unity Party career official.

Born in 1935 in Flinsburg (now Polish), he joined the Socialist Unity Party (The East German CP -- SED for short) as a young student in 1952. After graduating in philosophy at the East Berlin Humboldt University in 1959, Bahro was employed in the campaign to collectivise East German agriculture. From 1960 to 1962 he worked as a journalist on the staff of the university journal at Greifswald and then became an assistant secretary of the Union of Scientific Employees in Berlin.

His next assignment in 1965 as deputy editor of the SED student journal **Forum** brought him his first difficulties with the Party line: ironically he was first reprimanded for being too tough on a non-conformist writer in 1967; but he was soon removed from his post for the opposite reason of publishing an essay considered too non-conformist. But his career did not suffer excessively. From 1967 until his arrest this August he occupied responsible positions concerned with industrial rationalisation and with the scientific organisation of production.

It seems that the invasion of Czechoslovakia was the most decisive event in Bahro's political development. As his interview on West German TV indicates, the invasion transformed Bahro into an active and

intransigent opponent of the regime. But not a public opponent. Instead of taking up the battle with protest letters and public appeals, Bahro laboured for years with the weapons of Marxist theoretical criticism, applied to the "real existing Socialism" which the propagandists of the GDR talk so much about. The result was his book, **The Alternative**.

The relative obscurity of Rudolf Bahro's background is, of course, in itself an important indicator of the problems that the SED is facing: how many more Bahros are there, still maintaining an external appearance of loyalty to the party line, but quietly thinking about, and discussing with their closest friends and comrades, possible alternatives to the existing political system. Prague 1968 must have had a tremendous effect on a whole layer of East German intellectual and party workers, particularly since they could obtain more information about what really happened in Prague through their access to the West German media than their counterparts in other East European countries could. It is a question that only the coming months and years can answer, but a question that must give Honecker considerable grounds for concern.

Bahro's book appears at a time of considerable ferment in the GDR. It will circulate clandestinely; extracts will be reproduced and passed from one hand to another.

YOUTH CLASH WITH POLICE

The Alternative has been published at a moment when fresh evidence is coming to light about the mass impact of Biermann's expulsion on GDR youth. During the 28th Anniversary celebrations of the founding of the East German state serious clashes took place between young people

and the police in Alexanderplatz, East Berlin's main square. The clashes lasted several hours and involved hundreds -- some reports say thousands -- of young people. The disturbances were a spontaneous response to the cancellation of a jazz concert after an accident, but the crowd's hostility to the police was quickly transformed into a political demonstration with the chanting of the name of Wolf Biermann. Such close contact between the intellectual opposition and popular sentiment is evidently strong in East Germany where opposition artists and writers quickly become household names. The authorities' fear of such links no doubt explains their frenzied attempt to silence the author of a book which spells out a positive, communist alternative to the existing situation. Bahro's work will undoubtedly provide the major focus for programmatic debate within the opposition in the coming months and years.

FREE RUDOLF BAHRO!

Rudolf Bahro is in jail, accused of being an imperialist spy. The spuriousness of the charge is evident, its nature as an attempt to silence a socialist critic of the regime obvious. All sections of socialist opinion in the West have the responsibility of doing their utmost to campaign for Bahro's immediate release from prison and his freedom to defend his views in public in the GDR and submit them to an open and democratic debate. The more trade union branches, Labour and Communist parties and other organisations of the Labour Movement raise their voices in defence of Rudolf Bahro, the nearer the day of his freedom, and the day of socialist democracy in Eastern Europe, will come. **Labour Focus on Eastern Europe** will play its role in this campaign.

The Talk that led to a Spy Charge

[The interview with Rudolf Bahro which we publish in full below was broadcast on West German television on 23 August 1977. It was this broadcast which led to Bahro's immediate arrest by the East German security police as an imperialist spy. Readers can judge for themselves whether Bahro's expressed views bear out the charge that he is an imperialist agent. Translation is from the French transcript published by the Paris Marxist daily Rouge].

Mr. Bahro, could you say something about your attitude to the Communist Party in the GDR today and the circumstances in which your book *The Alternative* has been published?

The East German Party today is - and I'll try to be precise here - the concentrated expression of the fact that the momentum of the October revolution has expired and that we have reached a point on the non-capitalist road of industrialisation where we can no longer advance qualitatively - I stress qualitatively, that's the essential point.

For this reason it's no longer any cause for surprise that the governing parties, or, to put it more exactly, the Party apparatuses (and I include the CPSU in this), that these apparatuses have lost any creative spark

which would let them see the problems we face as they really are. You can make the most radical criticisms but it doesn't do any good. The problem is that they're deaf to criticism, they can't grasp that you're telling them that they must innovate, do something different from what they've been doing until now. Why? Basically because they think that if they did adopt alternative policies they wouldn't be able to keep the boat steady, as they have up to now.

So that's how things stand at the present and this is where I part company with them.

The Party, in the form in which it's existed up till now, which, O.K., was necessary, had its historical justification, we know that, has now become a block to further development. It doesn't measure up to the demands which are now being made on it so that our "real existing Socialism" can take the road to true socialism.

As for the second question, it's just one small manifestation of how the system functions that I'm forced to talk in public here, in the West. I've published my book here in a small edition, not a very professional one, and I don't see any contradiction between that and the "Berlin, capital of the GDR, 1976" - Berlin, that's where the book comes from, that's where it was created. It's just another constraint tied to my circumstances. This is what the Party - the Party apparatus - is aiming for -- it's this principle which guides its behaviour: we must place the opposition in the following position: either keep quiet, which of course is tantamount to liquidating oneself politically, or serve the enemy. But I'm sure that we can break out of this impasse which the system - the political superstructure - has placed us in for its own protection. That we must simply be daring enough to spread our ideas through every means possible.

What was it that made you work for ten years on this book, as well as having a career and holding down a job?

Well, of course, that's a very difficult question because it takes us right to the heart of the matter - to the origins of the book. Let me begin by saying that I have long been a completely and profoundly committed Marxist and Communist - that I felt at the time when I asked to join the Party (that was 1952) that communism offered the only framework in which the fundamental ideals which humanity has aspired to could be achieved. That might seem a bit flowery, but at the time that's how I felt about things. There was an element of bravura, I suppose, but the Christians would say I had faith, and if you probe deeply I suppose you'd say that it's a faith I've never lost, it's just that now I've laid firm foundations for it, reflected upon it, laid down a rational basis for it. But as I perceived more deeply and learned more, I became disillusioned, went through the sort of process that thousands had gone through before me.

I realised that our society didn't fit in with my perspectives, at least not yet - that's what I say in my book -- that "real existing Socialism" is right now so far from communism that a real revolution is necessary to set it on the road again. I'm not talking about storming the Winter Palace, of course. I'm talking about a really far-reaching social shake-up.

Well, that's how I came to want to know

just what our society was, what "real existing Socialism" really is, and what we could hope for from the entirely different premises of true socialism.



Rudolf Bahro pictured in East Berlin just before his arrest in August.

Then something happened which was really important, I'd say even decisive, in my development -- the Prague Spring. From the first moments I felt completely involved, obsessively involved, in what was going on there. I built up tremendous hopes in the potential which the process contained. Of course, I wasn't blind to the problems involved, but I was absolutely convinced that this movement had to be pushed in a positive direction, that it had to come to fruition. And the tanks, the intervention against this attempt to give socialism a new face, this changed something in me, irrevocably, fundamentally, from that moment on I was hard, intransigent.

Until then I'd always tried to contribute to improving our society through criticisms internally in the apparatus. I thought that maybe things would get better with the new generations coming into the Party. At that time I still hadn't completed my analysis of the structures of our society.

Two days, no - one day - after the events of 21 August, I finished my resignation letter from the Party, but I realised that that was insufficient. It was a gesture, a necessary one, even a morally necessary one, but insufficient because it would only make a temporary impact. I told myself that I had to do better than that, that I could do better than that.

You deduce the alternative that you propose from Marx. How do you see that alternative?

First, and this is the precondition for everything else, there must be a regeneration of the Party. Without a Communist Party you can't, in a society which still functions in reality in an antagonistic way, carry through the passage to socialism. And socialism, or communism to be precise, is something which must be built. That's why, first and foremost, I plead the case for a legal communist opposition because once you've seen the rigid structures of today's Party you realise that the domination of the apparatus has to be broken. What do I mean? That first of all we must gain space to be able to struggle for the regeneration of the Party and after that, the problem becomes to discover the real content of the social progress which will take us towards socialism.

The first task, the central economic problem, lies in overcoming the old division of labour. Marx didn't mean by that primarily the difference between a physician and a chemist or a locksmith and a builder, but the vertical division of labour between, to take an extreme example, the Politburo member who has to take decisions on vital questions of war and peace and the housewife who can only decide on the rather less vital questions of which duster to choose to do a certain job.

So I demand a "university" training (and I put the first word in inverted commas) for everybody. I start from the fact that only people who have acquired the ability to reason through abstractions so that they can understand the very complex social structures of today's society will not be kept in a subaltern position. Formerly, everyone could understand and participate in general labour but to be able to do this today we all need what I have called a "university" training. I don't mean by this principally specialisation but a general social education in a "university" style.

Finally, I keep asking myself just how the general processes of the economy can be directed and organised in a new and original way. O.K. so we've transcended the principle of organisation into capitalist cartels - in the sense that we run society. But it seems indisputable to me that principles of superorganisation are basically antagonistic to individuality and that we ought to be looking for other ways of managing society, because we've got to maintain a unified form of social organisation - but how? On this question I've fallen back on the old Marxist concept of the free association of producers.

Association, I think, simply means the common development of different productive communities, a unified foundation for social labour. Both the principles of co-ordination, and of juxtaposition, are fundamental to the principle of association and must be counterposed to the principle of subordination which still dominates our society today.

You're not the first to have found a fly in the ointment of what they call 'socialism as it exists today'. What is it that distinguishes your achievements from those of your predecessors?

I would say two things:

-- To this very day no one else has tried to analyse the possible alternatives so deeply. No one has yet really tried to envisage the possibility of another form of societal organisation in the non-capitalist countries

as I try to do it in this book.

-- Secondly, and this is something which hasn't come through in our conversation at all, my book is a work of theory. That might seem a rather anaemic point to make, but I am convinced that the intransigence of my critique of "real existing Socialism" stems essentially from this, from the simple reason that I start from the same point of view and with the same end in mind as Marx did when he studied capitalism.

I have analysed our relations of production using the fundamental categories of Marxism and I hope to have shown, without omissions, just how they really function. And it is an analysis which, in the non-capitalist countries, if you are sincere, you couldn't turn a blind eye to while reading the book. Even Politburo members, if they start to study the book, will be forced to think on it and really search inside themselves for answers to my questions.

Document

The Alternative - 4 extracts

[The brief extracts printed below from a book of 500 pages can do no more than indicate a few aspects of the political and social thought of their author. But since Rudolf Bahro has been jailed as a spy for the West German secret police, Labour Focus considers publication of these fragments essential to expose the criminal lunacy of the charges against their author.]

The German publishers of Bahro's book, Europäische Verlagsanstalt of Cologne (the publishing house of the West German trade unions) sent Labour Focus a copy of the book for use in defence of Rudolf Bahro. At the time of writing, British rights for publication of the book have not yet been settled. We hope publication of these extracts will encourage socialists to buy and study the book when it appears in English.

Translation for Labour Focus has been done by Paul Edmondson, Peter Guard and Günter Minnerup.]

1. THE PARTY IN EASTERN EUROPE. (Pages 294-296)

The great vacuum created (in the cultural and ideological sphere in Eastern Europe) is being filled by Western ideological mass production wherever its communication techniques reach. And the contradictions of our system have matured to such an extent that the bourgeois propaganda machine plays, at least to a certain degree, the role of a useful corrective: regions untouched by its influence, such as for the moment extensive areas of the Soviet Union, have an unfavourable politico-intellectual relationship with the politbureaucratic system in comparison with here in the peripheral countries of the bloc. From where do the communists of Eastern Europe find out about the real life and the progressive movements in the world? How could they learn anything about the socialist experiences in Yugoslavia or China or about the 1968 Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Party? Who quotes, however tendentially, the Italian Communists' weekly *Rinascita*? One could continue endlessly. The anti-Promethean character (1) of the important "fraternal parties", above all the Soviet and the German, is the devastating truth. Their inner constitution and their form as super-state apparatuses are the decisive obstacles to the further emancipation of mankind in our countries. The Party which was once Lenin's and the party founded by Liebknecht and Luxemburg are today working under reversed banners.

The communists in such parties are organised against themselves and against the people. By its simple physical presence, without any particular perfidy, today's party machinery is the grave-digger of the party idea and the individuals' party consciousness. It makes those people who are communists out of character and conviction superfluous as party members. And more: if they are not successfully converted into bureaucrats and integrated into the apparatus then they can only "do damage" ... so it is logical to put the apparatus on alert against them. It is still one of the better

aspects of the mechanistic logic dominating the whole edifice that the party's style provokes opposition even there where comrades with principles do not yet understand its nature. The original emotional basis of all articulated opposition has been the protest of thinking members against the stupid tutelage of a no longer serving, but ruling party apparatus.

In the hour of change it will become apparent everywhere, as it did in Czechoslovakia 1968, that a new party - we have to say: at least one - has been waiting to be born under the hard crust. We must attempt to foresee what kind of party that will be, because it is clear that its real nature will follow our principled wishes only to a limited extent. Marxism merely offers us the possibility to extrapolate from the character of the given society and its contradictions. And the individual communist will retain the historic right to make his own personal choice and exert his influence on the direction of events - a chance he is not given today. That alone would be great progress. It is nonsense to demand advance guarantees that everything will proceed according to somebody's clever brain. That should be kept in mind by all those, particularly among the old communists, who always, when faced with the new developments and theories, insist on their moral right to principles with which they have grown up in a very different situation. Can one forget that these principles were part of the metamorphosis of the party into the ruling apparatus, and that appealing to them can only mean leaving everything as it is? Has not many an old Czechoslovak communist helped to restore the bankrupt Novotny regime after that August out of such subjectively understandable motives? We have to steer towards a new beginning, instead of condemning ourselves to inactivity under the dead weight of our previous defeats.

2. IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC ACTION PROGRAMME. (Pages 458-461)

Firstly, liquidation of bureaucratic corruption at the top. Whoever has political power automatically disposes of more or less large slices of the surplus product. Nothing more inevitably creates popular distrust, nothing more obviously confirms that "as always, everything remains the same" than the misuse of power to preferentially satisfy the needs of political activists and their followers and to bribe a broader layer of lower personnel. The corrupt elements attracted by such practices soon make sure that the spirit of corruption becomes general and obligatory. Soon they create a climate in which the honourable functionary who consciously seeks to forego such advantages is suspected not only of being a simpleton but also of being hostile to the group and of aspiring to the positions already conquered by the jackals.

The bureaucratic corruption from above is immune to painless cure. One has to fight its origins and cut out its roots. It is particularly inadmissible to liken such remuneration to the

additional incomes which traditional social layers like artisans derive spontaneously from the economic process. The bureaucrat's chauffeur-driven journey along a route covered by a tram-line is incomparably worse than the luxurious weekend chalet of the car-mechanic selling his services on the black market. The same comparison can be made between the preferential study grants for specialists who are being systematically bred for the most repressive branches of the bureaucracy and the, at least superficially, immaterial advantages derived by the intelligentsia from its links with the representatives of higher education. If things have gone so far that the central party and state organs allow themselves residences, luxury limousines, holiday castles and special clinics, then the only cure is to remove altogether from power the whole coterie occupying these positions. The political revolution will have the unconditional support of the majority of the population if it immediately decrees and carries out the following:

-- reduction of all salaries exceeding the top limit of the normal income scale. As all communists know, Lenin, and not only he, held the "demoralising effect of high salaries on Soviet power ... as well as on the working class" to be undisputable. The conditions that made him drop the principle of a skilled worker's rate for leading positions have long ceased to exist. What then prevents those permanently appealing to Lenin from practising this principle? The differential in mass income in the GDR at present ranges between 500 and 1500 marks. Anything above that goes into the pockets of people with other means anyway, who are thus simply remunerated for their bureaucratic servitude or special services to the regime. Salaries or incomes of above 3000 marks and more can, given our average income, only derive from the exploitation of the labour of others (...).

-- removal of all special material, social, medical, cultural and other institutions for the apparatus functionaries, as far as they do not demonstrably serve public purposes or remain within the usual limits of factory provisions; reduction of resources spent on representative purposes in the broadest sense (buildings, cars, receptions, etc.); dissolution of the government ghettos; reduction of the personal security personnel for representatives; elimination of the special bureaucratic influence on admissions to higher education which has, among others, the effect of subjecting access to certain branches of the apparatus like the interior and foreign departments to family traditions and other personal relations.

-- an end to the petty-bourgeois pomp of orders and other honours, especially abolition of all incomes relating to these immediately. The entire system of decorations and bonuses which is largely a permanent farce needs urgent review or at least a rigorous slimming down. Also necessary is the curtailment of pensions and other compensations for resistance fighters and victims of fascism. The "recognition" of human heroics in the revolutionary past by material privileges of different kinds in the present and also for descendants, can really only be an insult to all honest fighters for socialism: they are placed on a level with the rebels whose targets were the villas and riches of the old ruling classes. In any case the best of the old communists and socialists are thus compensated for what they must regard as the betrayal of the former ideals by the post-revolutionary society. "What have we fought for?"

The leaders, activists and functionaries must share the average living conditions of the people. Where want has not yet been overcome they must be on the waiting list too. They have to lead their private lives amidst the population and make clear through their activities and habits that they know themselves to be replaceable in their offices (which has nothing to do with the value of the personality) and that they will be workers again like everyone else tomorrow, after the constitution of the state and the mass organisations has been altered in this sense. An organised public opinion must watch that government business does not again degenerate into the self-portrayal of a corporation

above society. At the very least the liquidation of the bureaucratic corruption from above will make service in the apparatuses unattractive for the ordinary species of careerists and bureaucrats.



Some of the privileged Party elite, criticised by Bahro.

3. THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE. (Pages 396-399 and 402)

The socio-political role played by the post-Stalinist apparatus in the Soviet Union vis-a-vis Eastern Europe consists today, as it has done in a historically notorious way since 21 August, in preventing the peoples of this region from striding ahead to a form of socialism appropriate to them and thus in driving them, in the final analysis, into the arms of the **political restoration**. In fact on both counts it is counter-revolutionary. The increasing nationalism - that is in concrete terms "anti-Sovietism" - in the countries of Eastern Europe has a progressive function in so far as it is directed against the chains imposed on their inner social **development by the hegemony of the Soviet apparatus**. The essence of the problem of sovereignty, its crux as far as the people of Eastern Europe are concerned, centres on the necessity of determining its own progress to socialism as independently as possible from the different internal social situation in the Soviet Union, which, as far as they are concerned, is changing too slowly. This is precisely what 1968 in Czechoslovakia was about ...

The national phenomenon is a very important fact. The roots lie in the historical and contemporary differences in the development of the peoples which result in the antagonism of national interests. The Soviet leadership appeals to the same recipes against the nationalisms directed against it from within and without the country which Lenin had so decisively rejected in 1922 speaking about the conflict in Georgia. It obviously cannot do otherwise, at least not yet. Nationalism plays an objectively progressive role in the decomposition of the Holy Alliance of party apparatuses, in as far as it shows how they cannot productively come to grips with the national question; they are, in this question as in others, simply in their own way. But those who permanently evoke the Soviet tanks leave it to the apparatuses to demonstrate their "internationalism" to the world - they take a standpoint which itself is just the other side of the great power aspect of Soviet foreign policy. The opposition will learn to see the entire East European scene beyond their respective national conditions as its battleground and thus to keep itself free of all kinds of nationalist prejudices and stereotypes. Not least will it concentrate on active solidarity with the progressive forces in the Soviet Union, which receive encouragement or obstruction depending on the political development of Eastern Europe. The Soviet opposition needs support through encouraging examples. The importance lies not in the national differences and animosities, but in the fundamental contradiction between the social interests of **all** the peoples of Eastern Europe and the interests of their political bureaucrats. The peoples of the Soviet Union, just as much as the peoples of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, etc. need a new political order.

Certainly nobody can say today even in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev "what the time is" and how fast the clock is running. Given the nature of our superstructure it is the rule that long accumulated conflicts "suddenly" erupt because the sharpening contradictions have no organs through which they could articulate themselves in time. Even in Czechoslovakia where much could be guessed in 1966-67 the tempo, breadth and depth of the transformation were surprising. At all events the situation has deteriorated for interventionism, for the doctrine of limited sovereignty externally and internally, and the apparatus has to look for new ways and even incur new risks in order to prevent explosions. More than before it allows itself to be influenced by the mood of the masses, to be pushed ahead or pushed back, as now again in Poland. Experience shows that the apparatus would like to go beyond mere negative, restrictive measures. At least partial regeneration along the lines of the conciliation strategy employed not without success by the Hungarian leadership after 1956 cannot be excluded. There is more than one possible course for history. The view that "worse is better" is in any case not in the interests of the masses. The question remains open, however, of whether the traditional powers are still capable of taking advantage of delays. Bureaucracies past the zenith of their power have rarely carried out reforms, except with the recipe of "too little and too late". But the Soviet bureaucracy especially is today under the pressure of increasingly acute internal and external contradictions, which cannot find a solution within the framework of the established pattern. The Politbureau, the Central Committee, the whole sprawling apparatus cannot remain united in the long run around the old standpoints which are proving increasingly ineffective in practical life as well as in the ideological struggle. The more enlightened sector of the politbureaucratic personnel will inevitably seek to free itself of the dead weight of the most inflexible, most reactionary elements ...

All in all the Czechoslovak experiences are hopeful especially if one transcends the national framework in their evaluation. They encourage the opposition to strive for political hegemony within the whole of the Soviet bloc. The genuinely great opportunity provided by our non-capitalist base can bear fruit much more effectively in this greater area.

At the very least, when the next national confrontation occurs there should be a frontier-transcending solidarity which would go beyond mere sentiment and actually limit the room for manoeuvre of the repressive forces. Since the First World War, the revolutionary movement has acquired repeated and bitter experience of the depth of capitalist defence lines. This has been

seen most recently in France in 1968 and in Portugal. By contrast, as Czechoslovakia so clearly demonstrated, our politbureaucracy has only one line of defence. If it can be cut loose from the police and military instruments of power and if these repressive forces can be neutralised, the road to socialist regeneration of the social system is open. There was indeed some substance in the "Question to Radio Erevan" after 21 August: "Where will the troops come from to march against a Soviet Dubcek?" (2).

4. COMMUNISM: A FREE ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNES. (Pages 542-543)

And lastly I have taken up the problem of how individuals under communism can rationally control all facets of their social existence in order to elevate themselves above the realm of necessity and at the same time to find their freedom in their communal existence and unlimited scope for their self-realisation in action, thought, and in the enjoyment of their personal relationships.

The answer lies in the federative principle, which is implicit in the idea of free association: subordination of the hierarchically ordered information network instead of the subordination of individuals to their various subjective and objective goals; association of their federations (not least of course of the fundamental units at their place of work) to essentially territorially grouped communes to act as intermediary bodies in the whole decision-making process; association of the communes on a national level; association of nations in a peaceful, co-operative world; delegation to the respective higher level through representatives elected at grass roots level.

Thus one can envisage an order in which the conditions of real freedom coincide with those of real equality and fraternity. Communism is not only necessary, it is also possible. Whether it will become real must be decided in the struggle for its preconditions.

Footnotes.

(1) Anti-Promethean refers to Prometheus - a figure in Greek mythology who was able to unleash the creative powers of people, teaching them how to use fire and how to develop the arts.

(2) Radio Erevan refers to the radio station in the capital of Soviet Armenia. There is a whole tradition of political jokes in the Soviet Union which take the form of unintentional slips on the part of Radio Erevan, which by mistake reveal the truth about what is happening.

ROMANIA

Miners' Strike Jolts Ceausescu

by Anca Mihailescu

On 11 October the Paris daily *Le Monde* quoted President Ceausescu as saying that talk of strikes in the Jiu Valley, Romania's largest mining area, was "sheer fantasy". The Romanian President's remarks must have struck many Western readers as odd -- there had been almost no mention of such strikes in the West European press. But they were even odder to the ears of people in Bucharest which has been thrown into considerable ferment by the stories coming from the miners in the Jiu Valley.

The Romanian authorities have sealed off

the mining region declaring it a 'prohibited area'. But information about the strikes, which took place at the beginning of August, has nevertheless reached the West. In this issue we publish for the first time in English the complete texts of a number of letters from miners explaining their version of the events.

The strikes took place in the south western part of Romania near the Yugoslav border. In reaction to a new Pension Law which would have cut miners' living standards, workers in the city of Lupeni struck on 1 August. The strike spread very quickly

through the other mines in the Jiu Valley involving about 90,000 workers. The main demands of the strikers were: abolish the new pension law, improve working conditions and job security, a 6 hour working day, free movement of labour, adequate food supplies, replacement of the existing mine managers, free working clothes, abolition of unpaid compulsory labour and the re-introduction of rights which were won in 1955, 1956 and 1957 by the miners.

The authorities' first response to the strikes was repression. But water-hoses, security

men, police and army did not manage to budge the miners. Then discussion was attempted. The Party leadership sent along 2 Central Committee members, Ilie Verdets and Gheorghe Pana. But the miners refused to talk to them, elected their own delegates, arrested the two Central Committee members and held them hostage until Ceausescu would come to talk to them personally.

After 3 days Ceausescu arrived. A mass meeting of 35,000 miners greeted him with whistles, insults and shouts of "Down with the proletarian bourgeoisie". After 5 hours of discussion reminiscent of the famous confrontation between Polish Party leader Edward Gierk and the shipyard workers of Szczecin in 1971, Ceausescu promised to meet their demands and gave his word that repressive measures would not be taken against the strikers.

ALONG WORKING-CLASS TRADITION

The Hunedoara district, which includes the Jiu Valley, was one of the first centres of industrial capitalism in Romania. Industry was attracted to the area at the end of the 19th century by the rich deposits of coal and iron ore. Here also the first militant workers' organisations appeared. The Romanian section of the 1st International was founded in 1869 by workers in Resitsa, less than 100 kilometres from Lupeni. The names of the mining centres on strike this August reverberated through Romania in the early decades of the 20th century as focuses for workers' struggles against the old order: Cozla 1890, Petrosani 1906, Vulcani 1921 -- those names are common currency in the history lessons learnt by Romanian school children today.

But no event is more famous than the great strike in Lupeni on 5-9 August 1929, exactly 48 years ago. The strike has become a legend in the history books of the Romanian Communist Party. The 1929 movement was massive and the repression was ferocious. 22 miners were shot by the police and many more were wounded. The movement in many ways marked the beginning of the modern Romanian revolutionary movement. A broad movement of international solidarity for the Lupeni miners was organised. Curiously enough the issue that sparked off the 1929 strike was very similar to that which provoked the strikes of this August: wage cuts. In 1929 the reduction in income was 10-12%; the reduction this year was 30%. As the letters which we publish below indicate, the memory of 1929 is still very much present among the miners today: "remember, in 1929 it was Lupeni that sparked off the great fire" they warn.

THE ROMANIAN PARTY

The Romanian Party leadership is well known in the West for its assertion of

diplomatic independence from Moscow. A less well-known feature of the Romanian Party is the fact that, unlike many other East European Communist Parties, it did not pass through any phase of domestic "de-stalinisation" or "liberalisation" during the Khrushchev period. Indeed, the moment chosen by Khrushchev to launch his second "de-stalinisation campaign" at the 22nd Soviet Party Congress was also the occasion of the first open signs of Romanian defiance of tutelage from Moscow.



Map of Romania showing Lupeni, centre of the miners' strike.

When the Red Army moved into Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, the Romanian CP possessed no more than about 1000 members, many of whom had spent long years in the USSR out of touch with Romanian realities. Perhaps because of the Party's extremely narrow popular base Moscow abstained from purging the leaders of the home-bred wing of the Party in the early 1950s. While the purges of domestic Communist leaders like Gomulka in Poland, Kostov in Bulgaria and Rajk in Hungary were going on, Moscow decided to preserve the agile Gheorghiu-Dej as Party leader and purge the "Muscovites" around Ana Pauker instead. This later gave the Romanian leadership a freer hand in its dealings with Moscow than might otherwise have been the case.

The political weakness of the Romanian Party might also explain why Khrushchev refrained from putting strong pressure on Gheorghiu-Dej to 'de-stalinise' in the 1950s. Serious moves in that direction might have produced the kind of disintegration that occurred in Hungary in 1956. During the early 1960s the Romanian Party leadership devised an alternative formula for broadening its base of support while ensuring that the

machinery of power was not jeopardised: a combination of strident nationalism, forced industrialisation and strong central state control over the population. The nationalism and the industrialising ambitions grew hand in hand with the repressive apparatus for controlling the population.

When Ceausescu came to power in 1965 all these trends were accentuated, along with an extraordinary concentration of power in the hands of Ceausescu himself and his immediate family -- his wife is in the Politburo and his son also occupies a leading position. Romania's refusal to participate in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia undoubtedly increased the leadership's stature in the eyes of the population and the nationalist posture of the regime is also popular in many circles. But the economic and political pressure on the working class has been unremitting in recent years. Since 1965 an increasing number of compulsory unpaid days of labour have been introduced. In ten years the house building programme has apparently been reduced by 80%. Food prices have risen and paid holidays have been shortened.

TROUBLE IN 1972

The August strikes are not the first sign of mass opposition to Ceausescu's policy. In September 1972 the miners of the Jiu Valley launched a serious revolt against their deteriorating conditions and Ceausescu was forced to discuss with them in the town of Petrosani. Then the miners' grievances centred on the inadequate food supplies, bad food in the cafeterias, poor housing, the raised work norms and the lack of essential machinery. They also complained that a new method of wage payment had cut their earnings. Ceausescu promised improvements, but whatever changes were made have proved to be of temporary value.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

As described in previous issues of *Labour Focus*, a movement for human rights appeared in Romania earlier this year. Though the number of public signatories of its declaration did not exceed 300 -- in comparison with more than 800 signatories to Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia -- the initiative taken by the writer Paul Goma had a considerable impact inside the country and drew support from diverse social groups, including many workers. The letters from miners printed below indicate that the Jiu Valley miners followed the activities of the committee in Bucharest and supported its aims. The Committee itself was suppressed by the authorities but not before some miners from the Jiu Valley had signed its appeal.

The August strikes broke out in response to new measures introduced by the Romanian government after last spring's earthquake.

The earthquake did severe damage to the economy, particularly in the industrial area around Bucharest. But the authorities' response was to increase the production targets in the current plan instead of lowering them to allow for reconstruction work. One of the additional measures of increased pressure on the working class was a new pension law promulgated in July. This law entailed workers at the coal face spending the last period of their working life on the surface at 70% of their former wages. And their pensions were then to be calculated on the basis of this lower wage rather than the earnings they were getting underground.

REPRESSION

The letters which we publish here were received by **Labour Focus** in their original hand-written form. We have no means of checking their authenticity. But experience

suggests that they should be given at least as much credence, to put it mildly, as the official Romanian news sources.

The letters tell a story of ferocious repression after Ceausescu's visit: 4000 miners arrested or thrown out of work; many sent to work in other industries or on collective farms; many strikers badly injured; military and state security forces operating inside the mines; the mining areas sealed off from the rest of the country.

The miners tried desperately to resist and make their case known as widely as possible. They sent a delegation to the Grivitsa railway workers in Bucharest, another historical bastion of working class militancy where Party leader Gheorghiu Dej played a prominent role in workers' struggles in the early 1930s. They also sent these letters abroad hoping they would reach Radio Free

Europe "so that other miners can hear about our action". It is a sad but undeniable reality of Eastern Europe today that thirty years after the overthrow of the old ruling class in Romania, the miners of the Jiu Valley must turn to a bourgeois radio station abroad in an effort to get their voice heard by fellow workers in their own country.

By **Anca Mihailescu**

In France a Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania has launched an appeal to the French Communist Party and the CGT asking them to intervene on behalf of the Romanian miners, for their right to work and for an immediate end to the repression. For further information contact Anca Mihailescu of Labour Focus.

3 Letters from Romanian Miners

LETTER NO.1

Dear Mr. Bernard,

We are being watched, to prevent us from talking to foreigners or passing on a letter to them. But despite all the difficulties, perhaps at the risk of our lives, we are sending this off to you. Assuming that it arrives, select what is most important, if you are short of time.(1)

For on 1 January 1978, all Grade 3 workers liable to be pensioned because of illness, who have worked 20 or 25 years down the mines, will be taken to the surface and given 70% of our present wages.

Please ask through this letter Comrade or Mr. Ceausescu: "Is this how he intended to give us our rights, so that, even at the risk of being shot or hanged, we can't obtain an audience?" What of those two helicopters which he said would be provided for the working people after 3 August, in order to transport them when necessary to hospital in Timisoara, Cluj or Bucharest? That was just a formality - in actual fact those helicopters are used to link up Bucharest to the Jiu Valley.

Your radio station has not heard of the movement in Romania? Please speak up - or are you obliged to say nothing about our country?

LETTER NO.2

Dear Mr. Bernard,

We address this letter to you on behalf of a large number of mineworkers. When writing these lines we are extremely worried, because we have already sent you three letters - on 9 and 23 August, 1 and 10 of September. Today, 18 September, we decided to write to you again, as a follow-up to the letter sent on 10 September. The miners of the Jiu Valley went on strike on 1, 2 and 3 August. Following the strike, we started to be sacked en masse and to be sent off to other districts. That's what has happened to all who took part in the strikes and demonstrations in Lupeni. Ceausescu promised to give us all the rights that we were asking for, but all our demands have remained unanswered.

To us, the people of Lupeni, Mr. Ceausescu said: "Be reasonable and get back to work, otherwise you'll be crushed". This was his way of encouraging us in our work. On the 4th he was called by Brezhnev, and so we understood. If only you had a trumpet whose sound could reach the Central Committee and bring them down here to give us a few rights that we are asking for together with our starving families! We are being driven away from the places where we've been working for the last 20 years - from the mines of Petrila, Lonea, Dilj, Livezeni - the mines of the Petrosani region. Negruts, the mayor of the town, orders the police to beat us up, so that we will stop going to the town-hall gates of Lupeni, Vulcan, Uricani, Aninoasa, Paroseni, Barbateni. In 1929, it was Lupeni that sparked off the great fire. (2) Please ask them through your radio station to come and talk to us, to give us our right to work, so that we can keep our children and wives.

Footnotes.

(1) The letters were addressed to **Radio Free Europe**.

(2) Between 5 and 9 August 1929, the Lupeni miners launched a strike which was brutally repressed by the government. These struggles, which enjoyed the widespread support of workers throughout the country, became famous as a starting-point of the inter-war rise of the Romanian workers' movement.

We don't know whether you received our letter of 10 September, so I will start by outlining what has happened in the Jiu Valley, at the Lupeni mine, a mine with long working class traditions. On 1 August we were told by mates of ours that a strike had been called that day in Lupeni. All the miners of the Jiu Valley rushed to Lupeni, because that's where everything was happening. We were from all the mines: Lupeni, Cazda*, Uricani, Barbateni, Vulcan, Paroseni, Aninoasa, Livezeni, Dilj, Petrila, Lonea - involving altogether 90,000 miners. But on Wednesday, 3 August, when President Ceausescu arrived, there were no less than 35,000 miners in the yard of the Lupeni mine. Before the President arrived, the miners had had a lot of clashes with the

Securitate [Romanian secret police], the regular police and men from the Party: Ilie Verdets and Gheorghe Pana. They had probably been sent by the Central Committee to enlighten us about the laws published before 1 August 1977; instead, together with Negruts, the mayor of the town of Petrosani, and Radulescu, the district prefect, they appealed for help to Craiova, Tg. Jiu and Deva. More men from the Securitate and the Party were brought in to disperse us. They did not touch the miners who were dressed for work, with lamp and axe. Not only could they not disperse the strikers by means of firemen's hoses, but the miners grabbed Ilie Verdets and Gheorghe Pana and arrested them, saying that they would not be freed until Ceausescu came himself.

The Securitate and Colonel Mihuts tried hard to get the two released, telling the miners that the President himself would arrive at any moment. Finally the time of cde. Ceausescu's arrival came. The debates he held with us lasted from noon to five in the afternoon - as you can see, long hours of discussion with the head of state. But nobody would have liked to be in his shoes: Ceausescu was jeered, whistled at, and mocked, and when he had to leave, the general accompanying him held him by the hands.



Romanian miners on a May Day demonstration in the 1920s. The memory of the great miners' strike of 1929 is still present amongst the striking miners of the Jiu Valley today.

At the end, he said he'd come to visit us during the month of August to see how things were working out; but at the moment, he is visiting other districts - Iasi, Botosani, Cluj, Craiova - and he still hasn't been to see us.

In fact, measures were soon taken to sack the people who had been demanding their rights. They sent two helicopters; the Securitate and regular militia of Petrosani were doubled; from 15 September onwards, military units were sent into every mine in the valley; they infiltrated secret policemen among the mineworkers. We miners call these people "the party cops". As soon as they hear you uttering a word, they take you away and beat you really badly: they hit us only on the head to make us stupid. A lot of people have their heads bandaged, as a result of the beatings by the Securitate and the police.

Other steps were taken by the Minister of the Mining Industry, Constantin Babaloiu, acting together with the managing director of the Central Coal Works of Petrosani, with the town mayor Negruts, and the district prefect Radulescu: on 5 September 1977, they started to sack workers in every mine, to terminate their work contract - and do they care if you have 4 or 5 children? Or that you have nowhere else to go? I myself, for example, have worked down the mines for the last 23 years. In 1964, for a row in a cafe, I was given 6 months in jail. I worked in the mine until 5

September, and now, after 23 years of working down the pit, they invoke Article 153 to terminate my contract. And if you go to see the works manager, he answers: "That's the law." (Which one?) I am 46 years old, I am ill*, I have 4 kids, no home and they tell me I ought to go to my home district Suceava, where they will give me a house, because here "jail-birds aren't wanted". But I ask you: "didn't they need us until now?" - the 4000 and more miners who are thrown out onto the streets?

Between 15 and 20 miners went to Bucharest, to the Central Committee of the Party. As we went in for the interview, they asked us: "Where are you coming from - Petrosani? But you have cdes. Verdets and Pana out there - they'll sort everything out". Upon returning, they're bound to put us on trains or buses, saying: "Off to the farms with you! We'll put the army down the mines ..."

All those who are absent from work without justification, or who dare to open their mouths to the manager or the Party secretary, are sent away from the Jiu Valley. In every mine, those who were elected as delegates to the talks with the President of the State, are picked up by the police during the night, loaded in vehicles and taken to other districts under the supervision of the police and the Securitate.

That's justice in Romania, and a lot of people suffer from it. If the borders were open, many would have to choose to leave the country.

We ask you to read these letters over the radio if they ever reach you, so that other mining areas of the country may hear what has happened; because you may not know that the Jiu Valley has been declared a prohibited area until 1 January 1978.

Through your station we heard of the engineers and professors in Sibiu and of 5 persons in Bucharest living on the Aleea Compozitorilor.(1) In Bucharest, 20 militia-men (butchers*, in plain Romanian) jumped on five peaceful people. But here, 35,000 miners are on strike! How much we suffered and how much we tried to resist during those three days of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday! And look at the justice of our Party!

We fervently ask you to read out this letter and not to fear that it will be heard that there has been a strike in a socialist state. There are more to come, and we think that all we have left is to set out to forge our own justice, with axes, scythes, and anything else. This is a human right in the Romanian Socialist Republic.

This group of miners, eight to nine hundred in number, wants the State leaders to hear what kind of human rights interest our gentlemen-colonels of the militia (Chiloru), and the Securitate (Mihuts), as well as Verdets, Pana, Radulescu and Negruts. And in Lupeni we shouted: "Down with the proletarian bourgeoisie!" Because for every two workers with spades there are five people with briefcases. That's justice in Romania for you!

This group of miners expresses by its signatures its support for Paul Goma and for human rights. (2)

Please read out the names of these signatories several times on your radio station. Maybe they will concede to take us back to our usual jobs.

(Signed by 22 miners.)

Footnotes.

(1) A group of persons who went on hunger strike in order to obtain passports.

(2) For information on the human rights initiative taken by writer Paul Goma, see **Labour Focus** Nos. 1 - 3.

* Denotes that a word is doubtful owing to the lack of clarity in the manuscript.

(Translation by Anca Mihailescu.)

LETTER NO.3 (Extract)

The mines were closed for 3 days and so our country has lost big quantities of coal. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 30,000 miners stayed up without eating day and night. And it was only on Wednesday that Nicolae Ceausescu finally decided to come. And if he hadn't come on Wednesday, we would have stayed there Thursday, Friday and so on, because Pana and Verdets had promised us that he would come, after we had captured them and locked them up. Wednesday lunchtime, our long-awaited comrade, Nicolae Ceausescu finally arrived. He climbed the steps of the watchman's cabin, where the 13 miners' delegates were gathered. Then he went up to the microphone, put in place by the strikers, greeted them, and said that what we had done was not good, that it was a shameful event for a socialist state (sic) - at which point booing and whistling broke out for a long time. After the delegates had indicated through the microphone that we had asked him to come in order to solve our problems, because he is the only one in a position to solve them, Ceausescu read out our programme of demands. This consisted of 17 points, in particular:

- a six hour working day;
- retirement at the age of fifty;
- calculation of pensions according to the scales formerly employed;
- freedom to change jobs without reference to point E

- of the Labour Code; adequate food supplies;
- replacement of the present mine directors;
- reintroduction of laws passed in 1955, '56 and '57, and later withdrawn: free work-clothes, two meals a day;
- abolition of fines amounting to 30-35% of wages.

What the President had to go through here will remain implanted in people's memories: he had a really hard time. And when he saw that we were not going to give in, he promised us a special form of organisation for the Jiu Valley, with all the rights we had been demanding, and asked us to be intelligent, because otherwise, we would be crushed by other forces. On Wednesday, he went to Petrosani, and on Thursday, 4 August, he was called to the Crimea by Brezhnev ...

The party cops, Ilie Verdets and Gheorghe Pana, are at this moment in the Jiu Valley in order to get their hands on the strikers. The President promised us that he'd be back after 23(1) August to see what had been done and what remained to be done in order to satisfy us; and yet he has forgotten us ...

Footnote.

(1) A national holiday, commemorating the downfall of the German-backed military-fascist government on 23 August 1944.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Trials Begin! - by Mark Jackson

The trials of six people arrested earlier this year in connection with the Charter 77 human rights movement have finally taken place. Although in all cases the charges are not directly concerned with the fact that the accused have signed the Charter, there can be no doubt that the aim of the trials is to intimidate the movement that has developed around the Charter since the beginning of this year. Now that the Husak regime has resolved to try and break the movement with repression it seems likely that more arrests and trials will follow in the coming months.

I. THE TRIAL OF ALES MACHACEK AND VLADIMIR LASTUVKA.

The first to come up for trial, on 28 September, were two North Bohemian technicians, Ales Machacek and Vladimir Lastuvka. They were arrested on 27 and 20 January respectively and had since been held at the Litomerice prison. The state of paranoia into which the Czechoslovak authorities have been thrown by the Charter 77 movement was demonstrated by circumstances surrounding the trial. The courtroom in the North Bohemian town of Usti-nad-Labem was reported to have been surrounded by barbed wire and a ditch, while armoured cars "protected" the building. Several people were held by police at the time of the opening of the trial, including Petr Uhl (see letter below).

People attempting to get into the courtroom were allowed through the fortifications but not into the courtroom itself nor into the corridors where they might see the prisoners going to and from the courtroom. Instead the names of all the visitors were taken down. The court was entirely closed on the third and final day. There has been no report of the trial in the Czechoslovak press.

The charges against the two related to their activity in getting support for the Charter in the factories in the area. Contacts with emigre Czechoslovak journals and individuals were also mentioned.

Previously during searches of their apartments police had found copies of magazines and books in Czech and Slovak published abroad including the journal of the Czechoslovak opposition, *Listy*, the revolutionary socialist journal *Informacni Materialy* and a right-wing publication *Svedectvi* put out by pre-1948 emigres in Paris. Also in the apartments were copies of journals published in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring. A duplicating machine was found in Machacek's flat. Machacek received 3 years imprisonment and Lastuvka 2½ under Article 98 of the Czechoslovak criminal code relating to "subversion of the republic" which carries a maximum sentence of 5 years. They are appealing against the sentences.

2. THE TRIAL OF OTA ORNEST, JIRI LEDERER, FRANTISEK PAVLICEK AND VACLAV HAVEL.

The second trial, which opened on 17 October and received much wider publicity in the Western press, had four defendants. The most serious charges, against film director Ota Ornest (the only one of the four not to have signed the Charter) and journalist Jiri Lederer, were also under Article 98, paras. 1 & 2. According to the indictment they:

"maintained contacts of a conspiratorial kind with the Czechoslovak emigres Pavel Tigríd (editor of *Svedectvi*) and Jiri Pelikan (editor of *Listy*) and sent written contributions and information to them for publication in *Svedectvi* and *Listy* ... With their help various articles and items have been spread both abroad and on the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic which attack directly and indirectly eminent representatives of the Republic, the policy of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and its leading role in the state, and the alliance between the Republic and the Soviet Union."

Ornest "confessed" to these crimes, but still received the highest sentence, 3½ years, while Lederer, who has been in prison previously got 3 years. The charges against ex-Communist Party Central Com-

mittee member Frantisek Pavlicek and playwright Vaclav Havel were less serious. Pavlicek was accused of preparing for the crime of subversion under paragraph 7 of Article 98 for which he got a suspended sentence of 17 months, while Havel received 14 months suspended under Article 112 para 8 for trying to "harm the interests of the Republic abroad by spreading false news". This referred to the fact that he had given the memoirs of the pre-1948 politician Prokop Drtina to Lederer.

The trial was once again virtually closed. It

took place in an extremely small room in the Prague courthouse and only the wives of the accused and various people who were probably police agents could attend. Among other things a visa was denied to the reporter from the French Communist Party daily *L'Humanite* who wanted to report on the trial.

STATEMENT BY JIRI PELIKAN

In a statement published in *Le Monde* of 18 October, the editor of *Listy* Jiri Pelikan pointed out that the reason why it was

necessary for material to circulate clandestinely both within Czechoslovakia and across its borders was due to the fact that the regime suppressed free information within Czechoslovakia and promised to cease engaging in the clandestine circulation of *Listy* "as soon as all interests can publish in the normal way". He also pointed out the contradiction between the sentences handed out to people who had been communicating abroad and the Helsinki accords, officially ratified by the regime which among other things assert the right to free circulation of ideas and information.

Police Attack Rock Fans

Fighting broke out in the south-west Bohemian town of Kdyne when Czechoslovak police tried to forcibly disperse young people who were demanding their money back after a rock concert, scheduled for 13 August, was cancelled. According to reports in the Western press 100 people were injured in the fighting between the demonstrators and the police, including several policemen. Some reports claim that there were two deaths, both of policemen, while armoured cars, sent in to clear the area were overturned and a train was set on fire. The police eventually had to take refuge in a local school. Afterwards up to 200 people were questioned, and, according to the *Guardian* report of 7 September "at least 13" were held, including one signatory of the Charter, Victor Groh, described as a locksmith.

The rock concert was to have been part of an official folk festival, but when the organisers of the festival found that a large number of young and long haired people turned up for the rock concert, they attempted to cancel the whole festival, because, according to the *Guardian* "they could not guarantee that it would pass peacefully".

This action by the organisers, and the subsequent attempt at violent suppression by the police, who used tear gas, rubber truncheons and dogs, are in line with the attitude of the regime to attempts to cultural self-expression by the youth of Czechoslovakia. In the summer of 1976 there were trials of rock musicians (see *Labour Focus* No.1). In July of this year there was a private concert of "underground" rock music in Rychnov given as a farewell party for Paul Wilson. Wilson, a Canadian, who had lived in Czechoslovakia for 10 years, was being expelled from the country because of his involvement with the musical underground. The farewell concert received a visit from the police. Jan Princ, one of the participants, and owner of the house where the party was taking place, was arrested and later sentenced to three months imprisonment. The police

also blew up a nearby road, and vandalised the motorcycles and cars of the participants (see photo). There have been many other similar incidents since 1968.

The explosion of anger against the police in Kdyne was not however, only confined to the estimated 1200 young people who had travelled to hear the rock concert.

It is also reported that local people urged on the demonstrators shouting "if they're going to put the prices up, let them have it!" While the current regime has been able to keep the retail prices of the most basic foodstuffs steady over the last decade, they were recently compelled to raise the prices of various consumer goods while the price of oil, following on from an equivalent increase in the price demanded from the Czechoslovaks by the Soviet Union for it, has doubled. The crowd of youth and local citizens pursued the police with cries of "Gustapo" - involving a pun on the first name of Party leader Gustav Husak.

This incident demonstrates several things

about the current situation in Czechoslovakia. On the one hand the regime and public authorities are primitively repressive towards attempts at independent self-expression by young people, just as they are opposed to free expression in every other artistic sphere. On the other hand, however, it shows that people - and not only the young - are becoming increasingly exasperated by petty bullying from the authorities. This was the first violent mass response to their activities that the police have met with since 1969. Lastly the participation of the local people suggests just how important it is for the regime to keep a steady rise in living standards going. They have succeeded well on this front over the past 10 years. Once the regime starts cutting back on living standards, and especially should it be compelled to raise the prices of the most basic products, then even peaceful middle-aged citizens might start behaving like "long-haired hooligans".

Ivan Hartel and Mark Jackson.



Who are the real hooligans? Repairing the tyres slashed by police during the Rychnov raid. (The Plastic People Defence Fund.)

Documents

INTRODUCTION

[The recent trials of Charter 77 supporters in Czechoslovakia have been accompanied by slanderous press attacks against the opposition by the official Czechoslovak press. Charter supporters are accused of being imperialist agents, bankrupt reactionaries, and so on. The first document that we print below gives the lie to such propaganda. It is "An Open Letter to Citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany Hit by the Berufsverbot", a West German law banning Marxists and people sympathetic to Marxism from being teachers, postal workers or workers in the civil service. All the signatories of the letter are people who have signed the Charter. Doctor Jaroslav Sabata was First Party Secretary in Brno, second largest Czech city, during the Prague Spring of 1968. He was imprisoned in 1972 for his activities in the socialist opposition. Petr Uhl, husband of another signatory, Dr. Sabata's daughter, Anna Sabatova, is another leading figure in the Charter movement. Prominent in the student movement during 1968, Petr Uhl was jailed as a Trotskyist in 1971. The "Open Letter" first appeared in the West German liberal daily, Frankfurter Rundschau on 25 October 1977.

Since the start of the trial of four Charter supporters in Prague, administrative harassment has been stepped up against Petr Uhl. The second document that we publish below is a description by

Petr Uhl of his arrest and interrogation after his attempt to enter the court room where the 4 were being tried. Since that time Uhl has been subject to the same 24 hour surveillance that has been applied to Frantisek Kriegel since last February and still continues (see Labour Focus No.3). The fact that the harshest forms of police harassment are directed against two intransigent Marxist oppositionists exposes the falsehood of the official propaganda concerning "imperialist agents". On 18 October Frankfurter Rundschau reported a letter of support for Petr Uhl from the exiled East German Communist Wolf Biermann, the West German Marxist Rudi Dutschke, and Jakob Moneta the editor-in-chief of the newspaper of I.G. Metall Union, the largest Union in West Germany. The letter supports unconditionally the struggle for human rights in Eastern Europe and adds "we think that here, in the German Federal Republic, we have a lot to learn from you about the way to fight against the reduction of democratic rights". And the writers conclude: "the more they want to isolate you and other friends, the more clearly shall we spell out the truth about you".

Translation of the first document is from the German by Anca Mihailescu. Translation of the second document is from the Czech version by Mark Jackson. The original was supplied to Labour Focus by Palach Press.]

1. Chartists Support Berufsverbot Victims

We address ourselves to you as people who are under attack in your country as we are in Czechoslovakia. The majority of Charter 77 signatories, of citizens who refused to criticise it and of people who were caught distributing it will be barred both from jobs in line with their qualifications and capacities and also from occupations which can provide a reasonable wage. With such measures all work possibilities are controlled, since our whole economy is managed by one central body.

Furthermore, there are some thousands of citizens in Czechoslovakia who were sacked from their jobs because they openly opposed the military invasion of the country in 1968. Even to this day they have not been able to return to suitable employment. And those citizens who have close relatives in emigration cannot occupy jobs above a certain level of responsibility.

Almost all citizens of the CSSR apart from members of the Czechoslovak CP are unable to hold leading positions in enterprises and other institutions, since Party decisions require the overwhelming majority of such posts to be occupied by Party members only. Many people are restricted by all kinds of measures such as the so-called "cadre-ceilings". The number of people persecuted in this way has become larger since school and university leavers are chosen according to the origins and jobs of their parents, their religious convictions, etc., rather than their abilities.

In this situation no one can have any security, either legal or otherwise. The press in the CSSR attacks individual people whose views are different from its own; on no occasion has our press informed its readers about citizens subjected to our berufsverbot (employment discrimination). In the Czechoslovak mass media we can hear about the German Federal Republic's Berufsverbot but unfortunately without explanation of what it concretely involves and what kinds of people are affected by it. It is clear that in the majority of cases it involves members of the DKP (German Communist Party). But information about other currents affected is not obtainable in the CSSR. Therefore, could you please give us the necessary information about such cases? Finally, we give you full authority to protest in our name in the newspapers of the German Federal Republic against the fact that



West German former concentration camp prisoners protesting against the Berufsverbot.

these newspapers occupy themselves with the persecution of Czechoslovak citizens while keeping quiet about their own problems.

You have certainly understood from this letter that the Czechoslovak mass media misuse the issue of the Berufsverbot to cover up domestic grievances and not to declare their solidarity or to provide concrete assistance. We therefore ask you to take a stand against this state of affairs -- the best way would be to send an open letter to the Czechoslovak mass media.

We are sure that in the future we will be able to find a common oppositional platform. If, for whatever reason, the solidarity actions that we propose are impossible, we would ask you to take this letter as an expression of our solidarity.

Ivan Medek (Janackovo nabr. 49, Praha 5)
 Dr. Jaroslav Sabata (Krizkovskeho 43, Brno)
 Jiri Pallas (Mikulase z Husi 16/341, Praha 4)
 Jan Lopatka (Vlasska 10, Praha 1)
 Jiri Nemecek (Jecna 7, Praha 2)
 Anna Sabatova and Petr Uhl (Anglicka 8, Praha 2).

2. Political Police in Action

In the small hours of 27 September, I was taken before State Security investigator, Lieutenant Colonel Pavlovsky at the SNB (National Security Unit) offices in Bartolomejska. I was released from there before 11 o'clock on 28 September. I spent the evening and night in a preliminary detention cell. Charges were not brought against me - legal proceedings were not launched. Between 11.30 and 18.00 hours, a house search was made of our residence, which had the prior consent of the Procurator General, on the basis of the legal proceedings concerning the subverting of the republic, which were set in motion on 6 January 1977 and in connection with which a number of signatories of Charter 77, including myself, were interrogated in the course of January 1977. The search, which took place in the presence of my wife, was directed by Lieutenant Colonel Jindrich Kristof, and carried out by Lieutenant Colonel Oldrich Noga, Major Josef Lejnar, Major Karel Jansky and other officers of the State Security, in all six people. During the search and in the course of an illegal personal search of my belongings, which the Procurator General had not given permission for, several kilos of printed or used paper and two typewriters were removed.

Of publications from abroad in Czech or Slovak they chose to take away the following items: **Svedectvi** No.53 - 1 copy; **Informacni Materialy** No. 14 - 1 copy, No. 24/25 - 1 copy; Skvorecky's **The Coward**; Trotsky's **The Revolution Betrayed**; Lenin's **Collected Works vol.14** and minutes of the 14th Congress.

They also took several dozen books, journals and newspapers in German, French, English, Polish and Russian (always one of each) of which I shall mention: Santiago Carrillo's **Eurocommunism and the State**; Isaac Deutscher's **Stalin**; and Isaac Deutscher's **Trotsky**.

Several dozen typed samizdat articles, letters, appeals, essays, etc., primarily to do with the human rights movement in Czechoslovakia, samizdat editions of essays from 1976-77 and the samizdat **Chapters from the History of the Czechoslovak Communist Party** [The Piller Report on the trials of the 1950s - MJ] were also taken away.

Apart from various less important items such as a post-bag or a French edition of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung, which were hanging in the lavatory, they also took away 50 typed copies of the communique of Charter 77 dated 21 September 1977, several copies of the accompanying letter of Jiri Hajek and of the appended biographies. At the same time several lists of names, on six hand-written sheets of paper, which included perhaps 50 names of Charter signatories, and perhaps 30 addresses were also removed. I will inform these signatories, who, through my carelessness may face difficulties, and who in some cases have already experienced them, of what has occurred. Other addresses were not taken.

All these things, except for one list which was under a chair cushion, were found on tables, on the chest of drawers, in the bookcase, on the floor - in other words, in accessible places.

The behaviour of the State Security officials towards me was correct on the whole. This did not, however, entirely apply to the behaviour of the SNB officers in the course of the house search. The law was broken only in certain instances: in the insufficient motivation from the Procurator General, in the carrying out of a personal search of my belongings, in keeping me in overnight in contravention of Law 40, section 23, concerning the SNB, and in a few other details. During my stay in Bartolomejska and Konviktska Street, I was offered food and reasonable comforts.

The interrogation itself, carried out under Part 19 of the law on the SNB had two parts. On 27 September I was questioned on:

- the founding of independent unions
- a consumers' document which had been prepared
- a march on behalf of Jiri Lederer on 19 October
- the founding of a Trotskyist Communist Party
- the receiving and distribution of foreign publications in Czech
- the founding of an "anti-university"
- an alleged letter of mine to the sections of the Fourth International. This is a full account, particularly in view of future actions which the State Security - legally or otherwise - will carry out in the future.

On 28 September I was briefly interrogated about the material which was found in my bags. I replied to all the questions in a stereotyped way, saying that I refused to answer and would not explain anything.

Besides the formal interrogations, I spoke for a full three hours with Lieutenant Colonel Pavlovsky and for part of the time with two other State Security officers. Primarily this involved a monologue from their side, which I supplemented with remarks or short statements, which did not concern fundamental issues either about the struggle for human rights, or the signatories of the Charter or other people. In the course of the discussion, the State Security officers named certain people, sometimes more than once. I can repeat them at random, but I cannot tell you the order in which they were brought in: Jiri Hajek, Marta Kubisova, Milan Hubl, Rudolf Slansky, Hodic, the Sterns, Riha, Jiri Dienstbier, Anicka Marvanova, the Silhans, Jiri Nemecek, Ivan Dejmal, Jan Frolik, Jaroslav Sabata, Anna Sabatova, Lastuvka, Machacek, Baruch, Frantisek Kriegel, Jiri Lederer, Kavan,

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Study of the European Socialist Countries.

Pelikan, Lis, Dubcek, Rattinger, and another name of a lawyer, which I have forgotten, Hosek and Bartosek.

They attempted to convince me that I am in isolation in the Charter movement and that in particular the former Party people, Hajek, Hubl and Slansky, do not agree with me, that they are much more constructive, and prepare more serious documents, as for example, about ecology or electronuclear power, than my consumer's document, that they are opposed to my radicalism, etc. Perhaps I do not need to emphasise that I am not in the slightest influenced by these assertions, and that I consider the very variety of opinions as an important precondition for the development of democratic forms of work on the Charter, and in other spheres, that I evaluate these divergences differently from the State Security, and that my evaluation of the differences can in no way affect my solidarity towards every fighter for human rights, whatever their conceptions and opinions.

I was also warned that my activity was beginning to overstep the law and the limits which the State Security was prepared to tolerate. One of the officers even expressed the opinion that my current activity was more serious than that for which I was imprisoned for four years at the beginning of the 1970s.

Lieutenant Colonel Pavlovsky notified me that he was placing a

strict guard on my person. In practice this means that on the way to work and when I go outside the house I am accompanied by a vehicle and security officers... Two uniformed VB (Public Security) officers sit on the staircase in front of my apartment 24 hours a day, regardless of whether I am there or not. They check the identity cards of visitors, and, illegally, search their hand luggage.

Taking this into account, it is evident that my activity on behalf of the implementation of the law and the application of human rights cannot be as great as it has been previously. I understand that many friends will be afraid to visit me, while I myself will only visit those who specifically call me. I would like to believe, however, that the restrictions on my activity will not negatively influence the initiatives of the supporters of the struggle for human rights.

29 September 1977
Petr Uhl
Prague 2 - Anglicka 8.

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

POLAND

From Defence Committees to Political Groups - by Peter Green

Almost imperceptibly something new in East European politics is beginning to emerge in Poland. Organised political currents are appearing, at least in embryonic form, in open opposition to the ruling Communist Party.

On 20 October, a new body called the "Democratic Movement" was announced in a declaration signed by 110 people from cities throughout Poland. The declaration (published in full in this issue of **Labour Focus**) makes clear that the Democratic Movement is by no means simply a committee for the defence of civil rights like the Workers' Defence Committee or other such movements in Eastern Europe. It will campaign for a positive programme of political change which would carry Poland a very long way from its present political system.

Alongside the Democratic Movement other independent political currents are becoming visible. They can be seen not so much in the form of definite political groups as in the shape of unofficial newspapers, and documents. Since the spring a body called the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights has been publishing a thick monthly paper called **Opinia** (Opinion). Although this movement itself was formally constituted on a human rights basis its official publication has, at least implicitly, developed a wider political scope. It carries a wide range of information about political events, Church activities, etc., which are not directly related to repression, and it

also includes analysis of, and comment upon, the general situation in the country.

There can be no doubt that the leaders of the movement around **Opinia** and the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights represent a distinct current of opinion not shared by the leaders of the Democratic Movement. It was formed last March at a time when the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) was itself discussing the establishment of a permanent body to defend human rights in general. A majority of KOR members almost certainly regarded the creation of the Human Rights Movement as, at best, a diversion. As times goes on relations between the members of the Human Rights Movement and members of KOR seem to have become more distant: two members of KOR who initially signed the founding statement of the Human Rights Movement later withdrew their support, while on 3 September people who were members of both bodies resigned from the KOR.

Since there is no written debate between the two groups it is not possible to spell out precise political differences, but in ideological terms, the **Opinia** current is clearly to the right of the leaders of KOR and of the Democratic Movement. There is no indication that the **Opinia** group includes socialists and some of its members could be described as Christian Democrats with a strong nationalist bias. The leaders of KOR and the Democratic Movement, on the

other hand, generally consider themselves to be socialists and some would call themselves Marxists.

From such ideological differences, Western readers might draw the conclusion that the regime in Poland would be more hostile to **Opinia** than to the Democratic Movement. But such a conclusion would be quite wrong. The KOR leaders have borne the brunt of repression and harassment and it would appear that elements within the Party and Government leadership are more favourably disposed to a more clearly rightist opposition. **Opinia** is undoubtedly a strongly based force within the opposition but it is possible that the regime finds it a less serious challenge to political stability than the movement around KOR.

At the end of September, KOR transformed itself from an ad hoc body tackling the repression that followed the June 1976 strike movement into a permanent Committee for Social Self-Defence. The new body will fight against all forms of political repression and discrimination, against illegal action by the authorities and to promote institutional guarantees for civil rights.

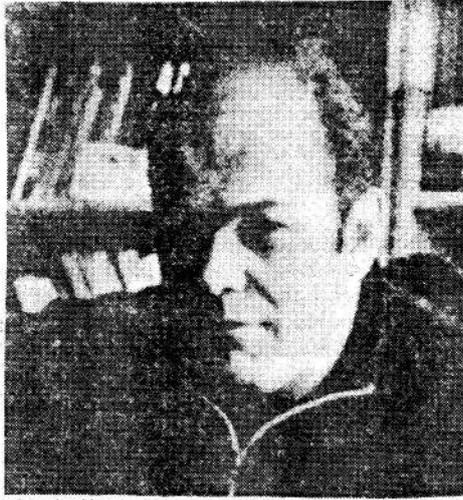
In the student field, the Student Solidarity Committee, formed in Krakow after the death of Stanislaw Pyjas, a student activist, last May, has expanded its network of contacts in order to develop a movement throughout Polish universities during the

autumn and winter. In this issue of **Labour Focus** we print the Declaration of the SKS, outlining its aims and methods of work.

Yet another initiative of the opposition forces around KOR has been the creation of a paper called **Robotnik** (The Worker). Although this is the same name as the paper of the Polish Socialist Party in exile, **Robotnik** does not appear to be a party paper. Its aim is to be a channel of communication for workers attempting to win their immediate demands in the face of the "moribund official unions", as **Robotnik** calls them.

The active oppositional forces outside the Party are today far more numerous and better organised than the opposition in any other country of Eastern Europe. This brief survey gives a far from complete picture of the currents of opinion and debates within the opposition. For example, there is evidence of significant revolutionary marxist trends -- an interesting analysis of the Polish situation under the name of Stephan Horton which is due to be published in the next issue of **Capital and Class** is a good example of such a trend. There are also evidently significant oppositional groupings emerging within the Party itself, although their weight and character cannot be judged by an outside observer.

Since the Amnesty in the summer the Party leadership has resisted the temptation to



Jacek Kuron, one of the initiators of the Democratic Movement.

launch a new campaign of administrative repression against the opposition. Some remarks on the opposition by Party leader Gierek at a private meeting for leading journalists (reprinted in this issue of **Labour Focus**) indicate the restrained attitude of the Polish authorities -- a caution which contrasts strikingly with the activities of the regimes in Poland's 3 neighbouring states -- Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and the GDR.

PABIANICE STRIKE

A vivid illustration of the new relationship of forces inside Poland was provided by a

strike that took place in Pabianice near Lodz in the second week of August. 3,000 workers at an electric light bulb factory there struck after the management had cut their wages. The wage cut had been in response to a fall in production which in turn had arisen from raw material shortages and high levels of sick leave. When promised that the wage cuts would be restored the workers ended their strike. But the wage cuts were not restored so the workers struck again. Finally a representative from the Party Central Committee arrived from Warsaw and sacked the factory director and his deputy. The KOR was in touch with the strikers during the dispute and there has been no report of victimisations of strike leaders since the dispute ended. The reaction of the central authorities to the dispute indicates a determination to avoid confrontation with the working class at all costs at the present time. The Party leadership, faced with a continuing economic crisis of very serious proportions, is preparing for an important Party conference in January 1978 which must produce some new policy for tackling the issue of prices.

The authorities clearly wish the conference to take place in the calmest possible political atmosphere. A serious clash with the political opposition could destroy such preparations. In the meantime the opposition grows stronger and extends its influence with every passing week.

Robotnik - a New Workers' Paper

Since the spring a number of unofficial newspapers have been appearing regularly in Poland. In addition to **Opinia** and the Communiques of the KOR a series of information bulletins have been issued by KOR activists. With the announcement of the formation of the Democratic Movement a new paper called **Glos** (Voice) is being launched to act as a mouthpiece of the movement. Yet another paper directed towards workers was started at the time of the transformation of the KOR into the Committee for Social Self-Defence. So far two numbers of this paper have been produced. It is called **Robotnik** (Worker). Some information about the contents of the first issue of **Robotnik** has been published in the daily paper of the Polish community in England, **Polski Dzennik**.

According to the introduction to the first issue of **Robotnik**, the editors intend it to be a journal in which workers can publish their own independent opinions, exchange experiences and establish contacts with workers from other workplaces. The aim is to give backing to initiatives leading to:

- solidarity for the defence of workers' interests;
- an increase in the part played by workers

in deciding their wages, conditions and time of work, social and housing conditions; - backing independent representations of the workers in order to finally replace the dead institutionalised trade unions.

In the first issue of **Robotnik** there appeared numerous protests from different factories, information about strikes, among others the strike in Pabianice. Information is also given about struggles to re-instate workers dismissed from their factories after June 1976.

In a separate article entitled "Broken Paragraph" Article 52 of the Labour Code is attacked as an anti-strike regulation.

The first number ends with the appeal: "The journal **Robotnik** arose and can continue to exist purely through the co-operation of representatives from different workers' centres. We appeal for people to establish contact with us, for participation in the production of the journal, for information and notes. We wish to register the difficulties which we are meeting. We firmly believe that through joint action we will overcome them. READ IT - PASS IT ON - DO NOT LET IT BE DESTROYED - SEND US YOUR COMMENTS."



Workers demonstrating in Warsaw.

Among other names on the editorial board appear those of Jan Litynski, Wojciech Oryszkiewicz and Jozef Sreniowski.

by Pawel Jankowski

Documents

1. Declaration of the Democratic Movement

I. Today our country is living through a deep economic, political and social crisis. The tragic events in Poznan 1956, on the Baltic coast in 1970, in Radom, Ursus and Plock in 1976 indicate that today's crisis is the product of the methods of rule imposed on our society in former years and the resulting relations between society and the authorities. The sources of the current economic disorganisation, decay of authority and demoralisation of society is the loss by the citizens of their rights, and by the state of its sovereignty. Today before us all stands the task of repairing the Republic. We consider that indispensable changes should secure:

--**FREEDOM OF CONVICTIONS.** This freedom does not exist, since a person's views, religion or Party political affiliation prejudice, in practice, the right of a citizen to occupy posts in state institutions, offices, social organisations and the country's economy. The right to occupy these and all other posts should be based only on qualifications, individual ability and personal integrity.

--**FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND INFORMATION.** Without freedom of speech there can be no development of culture, resulting in the stagnation of social life. Censorship of information distorts social awareness. When all publications are subjected to censorship before they appear, when publishers and the mass media are controlled by the state, public opinion is prevented from emerging. Citizens are unable to take up informed attitudes towards any decisions made by the authorities, who in turn are ignorant of the population's response to their policies. Preventive censorship and the state monopoly of information have particularly dangerous consequences for literature, art and education preventing them from performing their important social roles. For that reason workers' unions, artistic, religious and other associations should be in a position to publish their own periodicals independently of the state. It is necessary to abolish all preventive censorship and responsibility for the violation of the press laws should be determined only through court proceedings.

--**FREEDOM OF UNION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY.** This freedom does not exist, since the Party exercising power subordinates to itself, through administrative measures, all unions and associations.

--**THE FREEDOM TO WORK.** This freedom does not exist since the state authorities usurp the role of sole employer while trade unions are subordinated to the ruling party. In these circumstances attempts to defend workers' interests create the possibility of bloodshed and in any case could lead to serious disturbances. All workers should be permitted to adhere to the independent professional and trade organisations of their choice. The right to strike should also be guaranteed.

Only after the realisation of these freedoms can the aims and methods of social co-operation be determined, through understandings reached by citizens and their social, political, professional and trade organisations in the course of free discussions both directly and indirectly through the mediation of actual representatives elected in authentic elections. Equally we are convinced that self-governing organisations at the local, regional and cultural level which seek to achieve the aspirations of their members, independently of state organisations, have a particular significance for enlisting the co-operation of the population.

II. The first step in this direction should be the implementation of all those international pacts on human rights which have been ratified by the Council of Ministers. This demands fundamental changes in the realms of our legislative processes, particularly in the electoral sphere, in acts regulating matters concerned with rights of assembly, association, the press and publication, in trade union laws, in the Labour Code, in the criminal law, in the laws on the structure of the judiciary, in passport and custom regulations. The hitherto prevailing practices of the organs of administration will have to undergo a thoroughgoing transformation, especially in the realms of the defence of order and security, the administration of justice, the prison service and the arbitration of workers' disputes.

III. Regardless of whether the state authorities exhibit a sense of realism and fulfil the above demands, the Democratic Movement of Polish society must accept co-responsibility for the future of the country. This movement has for years consisted of persons standing in defence of freedom of thought and speech, in defence of people imprisoned and persecuted for their activities and social, political or religious beliefs. Within the last two years this movement has broadened appreciably. At the juncture of the years 1975-76 thousands of people protested against the imposed changes in the Constitution, defending citizens' freedoms. The defence of workers who were imprisoned, beaten, tortured and dismissed from their jobs on a mass scale for participating in the June protests became the fundamental form of struggle for human and citizens' rights. The movement of aid and solidarity led to the formation of the Workers' Defence Committee in September 1976. This movement struggled for a democratisation in the life of our country, realising certain concrete tasks and above all bringing aid to people suffering persecution. In May, June and July 1977 despite an intensified campaign of repression hundreds of students, workers, farmers and intellectuals joined the Democratic Movement.

The solidarity hunger strikes indicated new forms of struggle for human and citizens' rights. In Krakow during the many thousand strong demonstration, the Student Solidarity Committee came into existence. It took upon itself the task of organising self-governing activities of the academic community. Similar committees are arising in other university towns. The activities of KOR, the collective actions of the Ursus workers, letters from workers in Grudziejdz, shipyard workers in Gdansk, miners from the mine "Gliwice" and finally the successful strike in Pabianice indicate that despite repression it is precisely the joint activity of workers and intellectuals which is leading to a democratic organisation of society. Recent times have seen a big development of independent publishing activity. Informational, cultural and political periodicals are appearing.

IV. The participation of thousands of people in the activities of the Democratic Movement and the experience gained therefrom indicate that at the present time it is possible to undertake the struggle for democracy and sovereignty on a wider scale and in a lasting manner. We the undersigned are convinced that this programme can be realised **HERE AND NOW**. We call for participation in a broad Democratic Movement by forming independent self-governing social institutions to carry out concrete tasks in defence of human and citizens' rights.

Awareness of the devastation in the moral outlook of the younger

generations brings about the necessity to recognise the repair of the entire national educational system as being a question of fundamental importance for the future of our country. In the face of the failure of previous attempts to reform education, we turn to practitioners and theoreticians of education, people of culture and knowledge to participate in the movement in favour of basic reforms of the educational system in harmony with the national interest and future needs. The first step on this road must be the re-instatement of truth to its rightful place in the upbringing and teaching of our youth.

In the workplaces workers' representative organs should be formed. These would represent the interests of the workers in the face of the management. These organs could base themselves on existing union organisations or bypass them, but it is vital that experts in the realms of law, economics, sociology be enlisted to provide lasting co-operation. We summon people to take part in such joint work.

It is indispensable that peasant and artisan representative bodies be formed, based either on existing village organisations or independently of them. These bodies cannot emerge and continue effective activity without the participation of the intelligentsia linked to the villages: the agronomists, village sociologists, agricultural economists, doctors, teachers, etc. We summon people to collaborate in such work.

With the aim of establishing a constant and responsible control over the quality of products and their prices, the distribution of homes and the dishonest distribution of goods (Peweks, Konsumy*) the formation of a consumers' movement, taking such control into its own hands, is indispensable. We await collaboration from economists, engineers, sociologists and all those who by virtue of their employment and qualifications are aware of the state of our national economy and the urgency of its repair. This co-operation should take the form of work on questions of economic reforms together with the publication, in the independent publications movement, of reports, theses and projects about the state of the economy and its reform.

We appeal to educational workers, aware of the enormous destruction which the subordination of academic life to the Party and state administration brings about in the national culture and education, to undertake constant collaboration in the struggle for educational freedom and autonomy for educational institutions. It is equally vital to create moral and material conditions of aid for people of culture and education whose independent opinions have made them into objects of repression.

We call upon all citizens to take advantage of their statutory rights within the trade unions, the social, co-operative and cultural associations with the aim of restoring their independence.

2. Declaration of the Student Solidarity Committee [SKS]

[After the death of the opposition student activist Stanislaw Pyjas last May, a new body called the Student Solidarity Committee (Polish initials SKS) was formed at the Jagellonian University in Krakow. (See Labour Focus No.3). Since that time the SKS has expanded its activities to other universities throughout Poland. We print below the Declaration of the SKS outlining the reasons for its formation and its aims.]

We republish the SKS declaration from Na Lewo [On the Left] a Polish revolutionary Marxist discussion journal produced in Paris. Translation by Pawel Jankowski.]



A meeting of the Workers' Defence Committee in Warsaw flat. Jacek Kuron is on the right in a white shirt.

We call upon everyone to take part in the independent publications movement. Its success and development depend on the quality of the texts received, active participation in distribution, and lastly on the financial help given.

We turn to all people of good will to solidarise themselves against all excesses committed by the administrative apparatus, the police, the judiciary and the prison service. We ask for active co-operation with the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) whose aims are:

1. Struggle against repression applied for reasons of politics, world outlook, religion, race or the provision of aid to people repressed for these reasons.
2. Struggle against the transgression of legality and aid for those persecuted.
3. Struggle for institutional safeguards of citizens' rights and freedoms.
4. Support and defence of all community initiatives aimed at the realisation of human and civil rights.

The Democratic Movement acts openly and in conformity with the prevailing legal order in Poland, of which the citizens' and human rights pacts comprise an integral part. We are most deeply convinced that through founding and developing this Movement, we are discharging our citizens' and patriotic responsibilities, serving the good cause of Fatherland, Nation, Humanity.

[The document is followed by a list of 110 signatures.]

* In these shops you can buy products with only foreign currency.

(Document made available by Aneks. Translation by Pawel Jankowski.)

The Student Solidarity Committee [hereafter referred to as SKS] is not an organisation. Our initiative is to create a broad movement in the student milieu, whose aim will be to monitor the forms and principles by which all rights guaranteed by the constitution and other legislation in our country are respected, and in particular those rights pertaining to students. Such monitoring is the moral responsibility and right of us all.

The SKS is not introducing a formal membership structure for people who are willing to co-operate. The SKS has been formed as a result of a spontaneous initiative taken by students.

Spokespersons of the SKS do not have any formally binding

rights in relation to students; in particular they are not a directing body. It was necessary to put some names forward in order to co-ordinate proposals and initiatives emanating from the students as a whole.

The SKS is not acting contrary to the law on association, but in compliance with the contents and spirit of Article 84 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland, and Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the Polish authorities on 3 March 1977. The text of the article is as follows: "Everyone will have the right to free association. Included in this is the right to form and belong to trade unions in order to defend one's interests."

The SKS regards it as reasonable and purposeful to carry out a critique of the statutes and forms of activity of the SZSP [the official student organisation]. Our critique is based on the following convictions: the SZSP is an organisation which unites in its programme functions which, in the social life of our country, have been divided between political parties and trade unions. Thus the SZSP is an organisation representing the interests of the academic community as well as being a political organisation demanding the acceptance of a certain world outlook and political orientation from its members. In this way the SZSP usurps for itself the right to represent those who, for various reasons (e.g. as a result of a different world outlook, or for religious reasons) do not share its ideological principles. Based on point 14 of the 7th statute of the SZSP it can be stated that activity undertaken by this organisation in whichever sphere (be it academic, cultural, etc.) is in the first instance subordinated to a narrow ideological activity, which cannot be allied to a free development of creative circles. The effect of these presumptions is a deepening "double think" on the part of SZSP members, witnessed by the backing given to various initiatives emanating from students. This was done in spite of the fact that their organisation maintained a position of silence (e.g. the letter to the Sejm in the case of the amnesty for people imprisoned following the events of 25 June 1976; the petition against compulsory payment of deposits by inhabitants of student hostels; the letter to the Council of the SZSP on Theses for the 11th Conference of the SZSP).

The SZSP is dependent on other social or political organisations (Article 1, part 2 and Article 2) so it is unable to carry out its statutory duties of representing the academic youth in the face of these organisations. Thus there are no practical possibilities of it appearing as a representative and defender of students' rights in relation to college authorities. This function can only be carried out in full by an independent organisation.

3. Solidarity with Chartists on Trial

The trial of Vaclav Havel, Jiri Lederer, Frantisek Pavlicek and Ota Ornest is due to begin on 17 October 1977 in Prague. The first three are signatories of Charter 77. The charges have been brought in connection with activities in defence of human rights.

The Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) protests against these accusations and solidarises with all the signatories and adherents of Charter 77. We appeal to participants in the Belgrade conference on European security and co-operation to take a stand in this matter.

Warsaw
17 October 1977

As to practical activity, the specific nature of the SZSP shows itself to be the principle of centralism, leading to the emergence of a relatively stable administrative cadre directing the activities of rank and file members of the SZSP. The emergence of this elite increases even more the gap between the leadership of the SZSP and the student body. It is therefore necessary to initiate a broad independent student movement, open to all regardless of world outlook or political orientation. Such a movement could institute a platform for general discussion in the whole student community. It could also choose its own representatives to defend the real interests of the student masses. The SKS is fighting for the formation of an autonomous organisation which will guard the constructive changes in the colleges.

Far-reaching changes in the direction of democratisation of college life are indispensable, as is the creation of realistic possibilities for everyone to exert their influence over such a programme of studies which would be in harmony with Article 26 part 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "The aim of learning is the complete development of human personality, the consolidation of respect for human rights and basic freedoms...".

The autonomy of a college as an institution and a seat of learning can only follow in the tracks of the autonomy of student life. This is the function of higher educational establishments.

The student movement cannot limit itself exclusively to problems within its own milieu. Our situation is determined by the whole of society, on which we can only have an influence if we discard organisational and institutional dependence. For this reason we should be most attentive to the observance of individual liberties guaranteed by the People's Republic of Poland as well as the covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Of particular importance for us at the present moment is Article 19 of that Covenant, which is the following: "Every person has the right to his own views. Every person has the right to free expression of his opinions. This right encompasses the freedom to search for, distribute and receive all information and views regardless of state borders, through spoken, written or printed word, in the form of works of art or through any other method according to personal choice."

These principles cannot be violated without violating the vital interests of the nation.

Krakow
25 May 77



Another kind of internationalism: Soviet counter-insurgency expert General A.A. Yepishev arriving in Prague in April 1968. His visit helped prepare contingency plans that were put into operation with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

4. Gierek on the Opposition

[In the last issue of Labour Focus, we mentioned that the Polish Party leader Edward Gierek had expressed some interesting views on the various currents within the opposition in Poland. We have now received a complete transcript of Gierek's remarks made at one of his regular off the record briefings to leading Polish journalists after the amnesty this summer. The original Polish version of the transcript appeared in issue No.4 of Opinia (Opinion), the monthly journal of the Movement for the Defence of Human Rights. Opinia explains that its version of Gierek's speech comes from a verbatim short-hand version taken down by somebody at the briefing session. Commenting on Gierek's remarks, Opinia writes: "Despite the official line held until now, Gierek rejects "campaigning" as a means of defeating the opposition and other independent forces. This can mean only one thing: that Gierek himself has recognised that those groups were not a passing phenomenon but a permanent factor in Polish political life.

The English version of the text has been supplied to Labour Focus by Aneks.]

"The second issue which should be explored in greater depth by the media is the ideological orientation of the anti-socialist groups in this country. We do not want a campaign against them but much hard work is needed and much explaining has to be done of their hostile activities.

The ideological origins of certain groups must be shown, it must be demonstrated that they aim to put back on the agenda problems which were solved in practice a long time ago. In the past, the anti-socialist groupings with which our party, the Front of National Unity and our popular democracy had to struggle originated from the traditional Polish reaction and represented forces of the ex-landowners and the bourgeoisie.

Some groups took their ideology from the old social democratic, agrarian and revisionist movements. After repeated defeats and subsequent shrinking of the social and political base of the anti-socialist groups we are seeing a change in their ideological orientation. Comrades, the anti-socialist groups are careful to conceal their ideology and they present their activities as being restricted to humanitarian objectives and to the defence of supposedly threatened human rights. This ideological restraint has deeper reasons behind it: the anti-socialists have nothing which is new or of value to offer, other than hatred of socialism. Another important reason for the ideological camouflage is that they experience great difficulty in formulating a common platform. The situation differs from that of the sixties: we have to deal with a conglomerate of divergent anti-socialist groups, different in origin and in ideological orientation. They share hatred of our socialist state, its policies and institutions and they have common connections abroad among the centres for anti-Polish and anti-socialist propaganda and diversion.

Comrades, despite the eclecticism and the inner contradictions within the anti-socialist groups we can discern three main orientations. The first is reactionary in the traditional way. It decisively rejects socialism and does not conceal the fact that ideally it would like the return of the bourgeois system and of the capitalist economy. The spokesmen and representatives of that orientation come from the old bourgeois political groups of the prewar and wartime days and from the post-war reactionary underground. Those are the people who never recognised the existence of People's Poland. Most of them are elderly, but they command the support of a part of the middle and younger generations.



A recent picture of East German Party leader, Erich Honecker. His response to the Marxist oppositionists in East Germany has been in marked contrast to the approach of Gierek. For Honecker the opposition must be crushed as "imperialist agents" and spies. The East German authorities have indeed been very concerned about developments in Poland and have been exerting discreet pressure on the Polish Party leadership for it to take a tougher stand.

The second orientation may be described as liberal-bourgeois. It mostly represents members of the intelligentsia who have no concern for the building of socialism in this country. Possibly, they also have not accepted the change in the political system. They consider the capitalist economy superior and they would support a bourgeois political model. In essence, they imagine that Poland today could be run as a capitalist country yet enjoy social improvements on socialist lines.

The third orientation, most active and best organised, and enjoying some influence among the young, has a revisionist pedigree with neo-trotskyist and anarchist links. It is they who launched a theory of a new class of exploiters, they proposed a second socialist revolution, they would have liked to build the future of this country on "social movements" and the like. Those are, of course, the old trotskyist arguments. This orientation is given to adventurous exploits and to factiousness and controversy. Its attitude to the state and to the legal norms of political life is totally negative. It is important to remember that at this moment the revisionist, neo-trotskyist and anarchist character of this orientation is being carefully concealed and disguised by its followers. They are aware that they lack natural support in the country and they are intent on gaining the approval of the church. In order to achieve it, they hide their real ideology which in fact negates the concepts of patriotism, nationhood and the State.

Of course, comrades, the common denominator of all three orientations is anti-communism and their hatred of the USSR. Comrades, I do not wish to attempt a full appreciation of what certain people represent. There are among them some lost souls: we must talk to them and we must work on them. We are doing this already and will continue to do it. But we have to be aware that there are people who, throughout the period of the existence of the People's Republic, for all the 32 years, have stuck to their own ideologies, which are, let us spell it out, inimical to the socialist cause. They are damaging to our work, to our country and to our nation. I think that we should be aware of all this, without allowing ourselves to lapse into exaggeration."

HUNGARY

Methodists Protest Persecution

[The press has given considerable publicity to two recent events affecting state-church relations in Hungary: the official visit to the Vatican of Party Secretary, Janos Kadar, and the seven-day trip made to Hungary by American Baptist leader, Billy Graham. Graham was in fact free to address a number of religious gatherings, including one on the outskirts of Budapest attended by some 15,000 people. On 9 September, he was officially received in the parliamentary building by the Deputy President of the Council of Ministers, Gyorgy Aczel. Clearly, these events represent an attempt by the Kadar regime both to win the political support of the various hierarchies and to demonstrate *urbi et orbi* its respect for civil liberties.

However, the following letter, which has reached Labour Focus from Hungary, indicates the actual content and the limitations of these policies - not just in Hungary but in other parts of Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, where Graham's fellow-Baptists have been subjected to widespread harassment and arrests. At the very time that they are cementing a summit alliance, state and hierarchy join hands against all manifestations of independent activity among the congregation and the lower clergy. In this respect, state-church relations fall under the general laws governing the activities of all social groups.

A few minor stylistic changes have been made to the text by Labour Focus.]

Twelve Hungarian Methodist priests, claiming to represent the majority of church members, have protested in a recent declaration against certain repressive measures taken against them. While pledging loyalty to the state, they complained that the State Office for Churches has increasingly tried to interfere with the internal affairs of the Methodist Church (which numbers only 2.5 to 3 thousand believers in Hungary). The declaration dates from December of last year, but the twelve had withheld it in the hope that the conflict could be settled 'peacefully'.

In 1973, the Methodist Superintendent, Mr. Adam Hecker, introduced, under pressure from the State Office for Churches, an amendment to the statutes, to the effect that the annual general assembly of the Church could in future only be convened on the initiative of the State Office. He also set up a disciplinary committee under the chairmanship of his son Frigyes Hecker, who subsequently succeeded his father as superintendent. The committee promptly dismissed five priests who had been critical of the new measures: Tibor Ivanyi, Peter Ivanyi, Gabor Draskoczy, and Ilona Vadasz. When the five ignored the order, notice of eviction was served on them. But, enjoying the confidence of their congregations, they remained in their service flats and continued to perform religious services in their parishes.

In 1975, they were all given suspended prison sentences for 'abuse of the right of assembly' - a verdict which they ignored. When the police started a new investigation into their cases in 1976, they wrote together with seven other priests the joint declaration mentioned above, in which they expressed their readiness to compromise but stuck to their 'human and civil rights to continue collective religious life' in their congregations. Months of official silence ensued, but in the middle of August a number of events forced the twelve to publish their declaration. They sent it to the major Hungarian newspapers and leading public personalities including Janos Kadar, First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. But no response has been received.

On 16 August, Church Minister Lajor Elek was fined in court for refusing to leave his service flat at Gyorkony in the Paks District. The next day, a police raid emptied the Methodist prayer-hall in Szeged, as well as the flat of the local minister, Andras Vadaszi. The thirty or so people present in the hall continued to chant religious songs as policemen pushed them out of the building. Police Lieutenant Bela Nagy is reported to have said "The minister has been replaced by the Church, and we have to cover his replacement". Then he pulled out a believer by his moustache. Police forcibly moved the Vadaszi family (of 11 people) into a new flat with two-and-a-half rooms.

On the same day, in Nyiregy Haza, Tibor Ivanyi and Peter Ivanyi also received an eviction order which allocated a three-room flat for their 15-member family.

On 22 August, police forced three priests out of a Budapest prayer-hall. Church Superintendent Mr. Hecker Jr. then dissolved the congregation and sold the hall. Nevertheless, the believers continued to attend services performed by the dismissed priests in the sealed hall. When it was emptied by the police, three priests - Ms. Ilona Vadaszi, Mr. Gabor Draskoczy and Mr. Gabor Ivanyi - sent a letter to Janos Kadar, warning that they would not give up their right to assemble together with their believers. The answer was delivered in the person of a police officer, who explained the dangers of holding unauthorised meetings. The following Sunday, the believers and the three priests met in the street before the prayer-hall, watched by a police unit whose commander warned them not to open the door. The police did not interfere when they decided to hold a street service, but it is hard to believe that this will continue to be tolerated. In a letter explaining the events, the twelve said in essence: "On 20 August we celebrated our Constitution with sincere feelings. But who is to guarantee the rights it proclaims?" (1).

Footnote

(1) The current Hungarian Constitution was adopted on 20 August 1949 and amended in 1972.

BULGARIA

EMBASSY PICKET AGAINST REPRESSION

On 10 and 11 September pickets of the Bulgarian Embassy were organised by the Social Revolution group to call for the release of all political prisoners in Bulgaria and to draw particular attention to the cases of the libertarian communists Alexander Nakov, Atanas Kuceriv, Lubomir Djermanov, Gautcho Damianov and Atanas Artukous.

The pickets were timed to coincide with Freedom Day in Bulgaria. This date

commemorates the general strike of 9 September 1944 which overthrew the pro-Nazi military regime. Yet ever since then those who opposed the bureaucratic oppression of the Stalinist Fatherland Front have found themselves in jails or labour camps. As early as 1945 miners striking for higher pay were hauled off to jail and branded as fascists. More recently, in 1969, a group of young people were put on trial in Sofia for alleged "participation in an illegal group and spreading slander-

ous assertions concerning the State". In fact what they had done was to circulate a duplicated pamphlet attacking the regime from a libertarian viewpoint; for this they received one to five years imprisonment. The latest information that has been received concerns the arrest of dissidents for distributing a French translation of the Czechoslovak Charter 77.

More information may be obtained from T. Liddle, 83, Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ.

by Julie Feder

SOVIET UNION

News in Brief - by Helen Jamieson

SOVIET HELSINKI GROUPS

After the virtual decimation (through arrests and emigration) of members of the first Moscow-based Helsinki Monitoring Group, it was announced in October that Pyotr Grigorenko, Vladimir Slepak and 10 others have pledged to continue with the work of the group. Meanwhile 3 members of the Moscow group are still awaiting trial: Anatoli Shcharansky (arrested 15 March, charged with "espionage"); Yuri Orlov (arrested 10 February) and Alexander Ginzburg (arrested 3 February). 2 members of the Ukrainian group, Marinovych and Matushevych are still being detained incommunicado.

Rudenko, former leader of the Ukrainian group, sentenced in June to 7 years imprisonment and 5 years exile, has been under considerable pressure to renounce his activities in order to attain his freedom. The KGB have resorted to bringing his sons to the Kiev prison to try and persuade him to "recant".

Two workers from Erevan, Ambartsoum Khokgatian and Chagen Aroutiounian, have joined the Armenian Helsinki Monitoring Group. They emphasised that the predominance of intellectuals in the monitoring groups made it necessary for representatives of the working class to join the work.

CALL FOR AMNESTY

40 Soviet dissidents appealed to the Supreme Soviet on 30 October for an amnesty for political prisoners, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution. They specified that this should include those people who have been placed in psychiatric hospitals because of political reasons.

SUPPORT FOR JAILED CHARTISTS

According to *The Times* of 21 October, twelve Soviet dissidents have issued the following statement: "Today we announce our solidarity with those sentenced in Prague and express to them our support and respect. Their only crime is the desire to see their country free and happy."

RESTRICTIONS ON JEWISH CULTURE

In a 2,500-word open letter to the Belgrade Conference, 115 Jewish activists from 9 cities provided details of the Soviet regime's continued attempts to stamp out Jewish culture, eg. lack of education in Hebrew, lack of books on Jewish history, and the closing down of cemeteries.

OFFICIALLY 'SANE' BUT STILL HELD

Information Bulletin No.2 (dated 10 September 1977) of the Moscow unofficial Working Commission for the Investigation of Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes has just reached the West.

Amongst the information concerning 28 cases, the document gave details about the detention of Mykola Plakhotniuk. A Ukrainian paediatrician, he was arrested in 1972 and interned in the Dnipropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital where Leonid Plyushch was also held for 3 years.

In May 1977 a medical commission recommended that Plakhotniuk be released (ie. that he was no longer "mentally ill") and the case was sent to the Kiev Regional Court for a decision.

However, four months later Plakhotniuk still had not been released! The document goes on to warn that even if he is released he may face renewed charges of "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation" -- the reason for his arrest in early 1972.



Mykola Plakhotniuk before his arrest.

ANTI-RUSSIAN PROTEST IN VILNIUS

On 10 October, 15,000 Lithuanian citizens marched through the streets of Vilnius with some people overturning cars, burning police cars, and ripping down 60th anniversary propaganda banners. Security police tried to control the demonstration and tried to make arrests, although most of the people were freed by the crowd.

According to *The Times* of 31 October, 1977, news of this event was gathered by Alexander Podrabinek, a Soviet dissident. Residents of Vilnius told him that the trouble started at a football match between Zhalgiris of Vilnius and Iskra of Smolensk when members of the crowd began to shout "Russians go home" and "Katsapy", a derogatory word for Russians. Some of the shouting was heard in the live television broadcast of the match before it was cut off "for technical reasons".

REPRESSION AGAINST DISSIDENTS

On 19 October in Moscow Pyotr Grigorenko, Andrei Sakharov, Naum Neiman and Sofia Kalistratova made an appeal on behalf of two dissidents, Alexander Podrabinek and Iosip Terelya.

Podrabinek, 23, a Moscow ambulance driver, is the author of **Punitive Medicine**, a 265-page document on Soviet psychiatric abuse. Since it reached the West last July, he has been subjected to continual harassment in the form of house searches, detentions, days of interrogation and threats of 7 years imprisonment if he doesn't testify against Helsinki Monitoring Group leader Y. Orlov. During the last house search, the KGB "found" explosives in his room. These were obviously planted in order to be able to place criminal charges against him at a later date.

The other dissident, Iosip Terelya, has already spent 14 years in prison, camps and psychiatric hospitals. Although he was released in March of 1977, one month later, after writing a long document about his previous psychiatric internment, he was reinterned in the Beregovo mental hospital and is being treated with Stelazine for his "paranoid schizophrenia".

A third dissident, 47 year old metal worker and poet, Felix Serebryov was sentenced in September to 1 year forced labour camp for his involvement in the Moscow Working Commission on Psychiatric Abuse.

New arrests include that of Gely Snegirov, a Ukrainian writer and film director, on 22 September; Ernst Axelrod, a psychiatrist, on 21 September; and the painter Rabin on 12 September. (On Rabin see Issue No.3 of **Labour Focus**).

YUGOSLAVIA

Branko Mikulic, head of the Communist Party of Bosnia, has stated that on 29 November 1977 the Yugoslav government will announce an amnesty for most of its 500 political prisoners. According to Mikulic, this will affect those who have been sentenced for minor political offences, eg. spreading hostile propaganda. But political terrorists and people engaged in subversive activity would not be included in the amnesty.

The London-based Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners is publishing a document entitled "Repression in Yugoslavia" - which contains detailed information about political prisoners there.

LABOUR MOVEMENT

Students say "Free Klymchuk!"

On 19 October 1977, 300 - 400 students participated in a picket outside the Soviet Embassy in order to protest against the continued detention of British student, Andriy Klymchuk, in Lviv, Ukraine and to demand his immediate release. Various NUS representatives along with Andriy's parents tried to submit a 2,500-name petition but it was not accepted by the Embassy.

Andriy Klymchuk, a student of Ukrainian origin at Hull College of Higher Education, was arrested on 1 August while in Lviv as a tourist. (See **Labour Focus** No.4 for details.) He is being charged with carrying anti-Soviet literature and organising dangerous crimes

against the state.

In response to his arrest the NUS has initiated the formation of the Andriy Klymchuk Defence Committee which has representatives of various left-wing and student organisations. Having organised the picket, it is now collecting funds in order to be able to send Sue Slipman, NUS President, to Ukraine to see Andriy.

Donations and letters of support should be sent to:

Andriy Klymchuk Defence Committee
 c/o Trevor Phillips, NUS
 3 Endsleigh St., London WC1.



Part of the NUS march from the Soviet Embassy demanding the immediate release of Andriy Klymchuk. The contingent from Hull, where Andriy was studying, was particularly large in spite of the long journey to London.

BAHRO DEFENCE COMMITTEE APPEAL

A Bahro Defence Committee has been established to campaign for the release of the East German Marxist Rudolf Bahro who is at present in jail on a charge of espionage. **Labour Focus** has received the following appeal from the Defence Committee:

We appeal to all socialists to write to the Embassy of the German Democratic Republic, 34 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QB, demanding Bahro's immediate release and the publication and free discussion of his book; and also to urge trade union branches, Labour and Communist Parties and other organisations of the labour movement to do likewise.

For further information about the case of Rudolf Bahro, or for speakers on Rudolf Bahro for your trade union or party branch, contact: **Bahro Defence Committee, c/o Günter Minnerup, 14, Folkestone Rd., Copnor, Portsmouth.**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES IN EUROPE

A joint initiative has been taken by several French trade unions - the CFDT, FEN (teachers) and Force Ouvriere, and the League for Human Rights to organise an international conference on human rights and liberties in Europe in Paris on 17-18 December 1977.

They are appealing to all trade unions and humanitarian organisations to send representatives to this Conference. It has been called during the time of the Belgrade Conference in order to demand from all the countries "the implementation, by all nations, and for all the people, fundamental rights and democratic liberties."

Information about it appeared in the September issue of the FEN bulletin. For further details write to: FEN, 10 rue de Seliferno, 75007 Paris.

Czech C'ttee Launches Campaign

Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists

49a Tabley Road London N7

Chairman: Lawrence Daly

CHARTER 77

In January, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation issued the following Appeal:

"With great courage, 257 Czechoslovak citizens launched the manifesto 'Charter 77' on the 1 January this year. This Charter states the plain truth that democratic rights in Czechoslovakia exist only on paper, even though Czechoslovakia has ratified the Helsinki Declaration and the United Nations Convention on Human Rights. The manifesto gives renewed evidence that tens of thousands of people have been denied the right to work in their professions because they hold opinions of which the present Government disapproves. It points out that children are being deprived of educational opportunities because of the views of their parents, and that artists are subject to censorship. The Charter has the support of Professor Jiri Hasek, Foreign Minister in the Dubcek administration, together with that of many other distinguished spokesmen of authentic Czechoslovak communism.

The grotesque situation in Czechoslovakia is a permanent reproach to socialism throughout Europe. It is impossible to defend the repressive actions of the present Czechoslovak Government, which are aimed against the hopes of the Czechoslovak people, but which also constitute an attack upon the socialist ideal as it is understood throughout all Europe.

We, the undersigned, declare our support for Charter 77, and our solidarity with its authors and signatories."

Among the hundreds of people who have already signed this appeal are several dozen Labour Members of Parliament; the Secretary of the Australian Communist Party, Mavis Robertson; the Belgian Communist leader, Pierre Joris; Robert Pontillon, International Secretary of the French Socialist Party, together with dozens of French Socialists of a whole variety of political tendencies; Professor Lombardo Radice of the Italian Communist Party; Zhores Medvedev, the distinguished Soviet bio-chemist; Professor Ernst Bloch and Heinz Brandt together with a large number of West German Socialists; and Mikhail Markovic, Rudi Supok and numerous other Yugoslav academics.

Please endorse this appeal and return it to the above address.

Printed by the Russell Press Ltd., Garside Street, Nottingham.

The Committee's petition
 in defence of Charter 77.

A fringe meeting of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists at the Labour Party Conference launched a campaign against the repression of supporters of Charter 77. Marian Sling, Secretary of the Committee, called for the release of Ales Machacek and Vladimir Lastuvka, recently imprisoned for their Charter activities. The meeting, entitled "Czechoslovakia 77: Socialism and Repression" was attended by about 50 conference delegates. Other speakers were Eduard Goldstücker and Left Labour MPs Eric Heffer, Stan Newens and Lena Jeger: Audrey Wise, MP, took the chair.

All the speakers stressed that the repression aimed at Charter 77 was a crime against socialism, and merely provided ammunition for right wingers in this country. They called for a campaign against this repression as vigorous as that which the Left has launched in relation to Chile and Iran.

The Committee, in conjunction with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, is circulating a petition of solidarity with Charter 77. They have also called for as many people as possible to join a picket on 30 November, 12:30 - 2:30 outside the Czechoslovak Embassy to protest against the recent trials of Charter supporters.

TASS PROTEST AGAINST CHARTER REPRESSION

The following letter of protest shows what can be done by trade unionists wishing to take up the campaign against repression in Czechoslovakia. The letter was sent in October.

Mr. Ambassador,

The Manchester East Branch of AUEW-TASS recently passed a resolution condemning the suppression of Human Rights in Czechoslovakia. We are particularly concerned about the reprisals the Czechoslovak authorities are carrying out against the signatories of Charter 77.

Our Branch which represents some 700 trade unionists has been consistent in its

criticism of suppressors of Human Rights in Chile, Uruguay and more recently Argentina. We are aware that Human Rights are disregarded in Poland and Czechoslovakia as well as in the fascist countries. Your country which is generally regarded as being socialist, is in fact anti-socialist while there is continuing suppression of speech, thought, publishing and also trade union organisation. We support the demands of Charter 77 and feel that when met, these demands will go a long way to making Czechoslovakia a true socialist state.

We would like to take this opportunity to inform you that, at our request, the No.10 Divisional Council of TASS is looking at

the possibility of setting up a local Charter 77 solidarity committee. The aims of such a committee would be to publicise and gain support for the aims of the Charter, in order that a campaign can be initiated to realise the aims of the Charter. Far from being anti-socialist, the committee would be dedicated to publicising the suppression of truly socialist and democratic tendencies in Czechoslovakia.

Yours sincerely,
R. Day (Chairman)
J. W. Hughes (Vice Chairman)
J. P. Lyst (Branch Secretary)
For and on behalf of the
Manchester East Branch of AUEW
TASS.

DEFENCE ACTIVITY IN NORTH AMERICA

In the last issue of **Labour Focus** we surveyed socialist and labour movement defence committees in Western Europe. A few words should be added about North American activity.

In the USA the only explicitly left-wing defence committee that we know of is the **Mustafa Dzhemilev Defence Committee** in New York. It takes up the case of the imprisoned Crimean Tartar leader and has a very wide-ranging list of endorsers from the American labour movement. Another

defence body is the **Committee for the Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners**, formed in 1972 in response to a wave of arrests in the USSR at that time. An extremely active body, this committee gears its activity both towards liberal circles in the USA and towards the Left. It has been the source of a steady stream of information on repression in the USSR, using pamphlets, press releases, etc.

The Toronto-based **Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners** was formed in the

spring of 1976 with a mass rally at which Leonid Plyushch along with prominent Canadian and Quebecois trade union leaders spoke. It has campaigned against psychiatric abuse, as well as initiated a committee to defend the Polish imprisoned workers. Some of the members of the Committee are involved in the publication of a left-wing journal called **Meta** which is a valuable source of information on East European oppositionists and particularly for discussion on Ukraine.

By Helen Jamieson

LABOUR MOVEMENT DEFENCE COMMITTEE ADDRESSES

SWITZERLAND:

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

BELGIUM:

1st May Committee in Defence of Democratic Liberties and Working Class Rights in Eastern Europe,
Christine Michaux
Avenue Edmond Mesens, 65
1040 Brussels, Belgium.

WEST GERMANY:

Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee
D-2000 Hamburg 13
Postfach 2648
OR
1000 Berlin 30
Postfach 4147.

FRANCE:

International Committee Against Repression
c/o Jean-Jacques Marie
Ap. 2A2, 111 rue de Reully,
75012 Paris.
Shcharansky Defence Committee
Therese Etner
7, rue Sedaine, 75011 Paris.

The January 5th Movement for a Free and Socialist Czechoslovakia
Robert Simon
9, rue de Lagny, 75020 Paris.

Committee in Solidarity with Polish Workers
Cahiers du Cinema
9, passage Boule Blanche, 75012 Paris.

French Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania
Ed. Albatros
14, rue de l'Armorique, 75015 Paris.

Committee Against Repression in Bulgaria
18, rue Brunel, 75017 Paris.

Committee Against Repression in East Germany
Isabelle Bourigaud
99, rue Vercingetorix, Paris 14.

Paradzhanov Defence Committee
Alexian Herold
47, rue de la Defense
Issy-les-Moulineaux 92 130.

Co-ordinating Committee of Support for the Struggles of Peoples in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union
110 Avenue d'Italie, 75013 Paris.

SWEDEN:

Osteuropabulletinen
Box 12021
750 12 Uppsala 12, Sweden.

Socialistiska Osteuropa-Gruppen,
Fack 116, 221 01 Lund, Sweden.

UNITED STATES:

The Mustafa Dzhemilev Defense Committee
853 Broadway
Room 414
New York, N.Y. 10003, USA.

Committee For the Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners
P.O. Box 142
New York, N.Y. 10003, USA.

CANADA:

Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners
P.O. Box 130, Station M,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners
P.O. Box 6574, Station C,
Edmonton, Alberta, T5B 4M4, Canada.

The Desert of Piece-Rates

A WORKER IN A WORKER'S STATE
By Miklos Haraszti
(Penguin Books, 1977, 175 pp., £0.90.)

A Worker in a Worker's State is a unique documentary record of life in a giant Budapest engineering works, at which the author was employed for six months during 1971. A work of unquestionable honesty and social and literary value, it deserves to be read by all those interested in the conditions and struggle of the international working class. Hungarian workers and intellectuals, however, are not able to read the book in their own language and compare Haraszti's account with their own experiences - at best, a small number of copies of the German or English translations will illegally cross the border to reach a very limited readership. No-one can imagine that this is due to lack of demand: if published, a popular edition would be sold in tens or hundreds of thousands of copies. The truth is that the Hungarian authorities tightly control 'effective demand' by prohibiting the supply of books in any way critical of their policies - even if the writer is, like Miklos Haraszti, a committed socialist, who first came to the attention of the police in the 1960s as a radical poet and organiser of activity in solidarity with the Vietnamese Revolution. The power of *A Worker in a Worker's State* is clearly demonstrated by the decision of the authorities to sentence its author to eight months (suspended) imprisonment, rather than attempt the impossible task of refuting his depiction and arguments in public.

The original, and perhaps apter, title of Haraszti's book was *Piece-Rates*. For it is concerned above all with the system of payment by results that weaves, in an opaque and semi-automatic process, the entire web of social and personal relations connecting the workers to one another and to the factory management. In a series of short sketches, Haraszti demonstrates how the worker is thereby reduced to a solitary individual, whose every nerve and muscle is strained to the production of a higher number of pieces. The piece-rate worker stands in an antagonistic relationship to the world in which he works: to the machine-setter, whose unhurried movements and unwillingness to cooperate rob him of time-money; to the quality inspector, who penalizes his enforced obsession with quantity; to the foreman, whose authority appears to keep the whole system in place; to the office-workers, whose arrogance and work-style create an unbridgeable gulf with the shop-floor; and to the remote and seemingly arbitrary management living in a world of sleek automobiles and ideological mystification. But the antagonism goes deeper still. The piece-rate worker is

encouraged to see his fellow-workers as direct competitors for the best jobs, the scarce supplementary wages, the attention of the setters and inspectors, and the paternalistic favours of the foreman. He knows, too, that the efforts of each worker to earn a living wage will, like those of past workers, eventually be consolidated in the form of a lower rate for the job, and that they therefore represent a direct threat to his own security. And, finally, he comes to see himself as an enemy of his standard of living. Every second of distraction, every personal contact with his work-mates, every moment spent eating, drinking, thinking, resting or going to the toilet could have been used at his machine and is a pure waste of time-money. The first thing he learns on entering the factory is that it is impossible to respect the safety regulations which hang above every machine: as time passes, he even begins, despite himself, to feel grateful that the foreman does not make him protect his own life and health.

The description could apply with very little change to the capitalist factory. But in Hungary and Eastern Europe, this most individualistic of systems of payment enters into contradiction not just with the increasingly social and cooperative basis of the production process, but with the state ownership of the means of production and the enormous potential for social planning. Far from recognizing this contradiction, the official ideologues of the regime claim that 'payment by results [is] the ideal form for socialist wages', since it embodies 'the principle, "from each according to his capacity, to each according to his work"'. It is also argued that piece-rates raise the productivity of labour and thus contribute to the general well-being of society. Now, it may be true that, in the early stages of industrialisation, no other system was capable of realising the necessary cohesion and discipline of the workforce. But piece-rates were never anything other than a sordid and alienating system of wages, and today, when a numerous and experienced working class exists throughout Eastern Europe, they have become a major brake on the productivity of labour and a constant insult to the capacities of the working class. Consequently, each worker attempts to conceal his own knowledge, skill and experience, since he knows that, once they become 'objective', they will be used to tie him even more firmly to a reduced piece-rate. Haraszti does not hesitate to spell things out: 'They don't even need to admit what everyone knows, namely that they can't count on any information coming from us, who actually operate the machines. On the contrary, the whole of their "science" is aimed at overcoming our instinctive, unremitting sabotage ... But can one still talk of being scientific when the workers see science as their enemy? We haven't the slightest

interest in the possibilities of rationalisation ... We reduce the effectiveness of new technology as much as we can, and we sabotage its further development.' This 'sabotage' is constantly and inevitably reproduced by the imposed system of piece-rates and uncontrolled managerial power. The managers respond to the sabotage by attempting to close all loopholes and increase their own resources of surveillance and authority, much as the bureaucratic politician deals with any independent activity of the 'dark masses' by imposing even tighter forms of control. And so the process goes on. Piece-rates are functional, then, not to a socialist system of labour but to the regime in which the privileges and monopoly of power of managers and bureaucrats depend upon the maintenance of a passive and atomised mass of 'worker-saboteurs'.

Haraszti's fellow-workers inhabit what he calls 'a desert of piece-rates', in which individual competition reigns supreme and in which the union officials make little show of representing the collective organisation and interests of the workforce. There does, however, exist one small 'oasis'. During short periods of enforced inactivity, perhaps only a couple of minutes towards the end of the week, many workers turn to the design and production of objects for their own use - 'homers', as they are known in English factories. The purpose is not to produce commodities for personal gain: homers are, in fact, usually objects of little value, like ash-trays or small metal boxes. But the worker put into them all the creativity and passion which is suppressed by the piece-rate system. Moreover, 'making homers is the only work in the factory which stands apart from our incessant competition between each other. In fact it demands cooperation, voluntary cooperation - not just to smuggle them out but also to create them'. In a highly lyrical passage, Haraszti goes on to describe this activity as the embryo of a society of 'united homer-workers' freed from external production controls. It would, of course, be easy to talk of utopianism at this point. But *A Worker in a Worker's State* is not a theoretical text and it does not attempt to elaborate an alternative form of organisation of the workers' state. In the section on homers and in other passages, we simply catch a glimpse of the tremendous creative energy of the Hungarian workers which is capable, under conditions of socialist democracy, of raising production and social well-being to unprecedented levels. Recent events in Poland and Romania are the first signs of struggles which will harness that energy to movements going far beyond the stifling confines of the piece-rate section.

By Patrick Camiller