

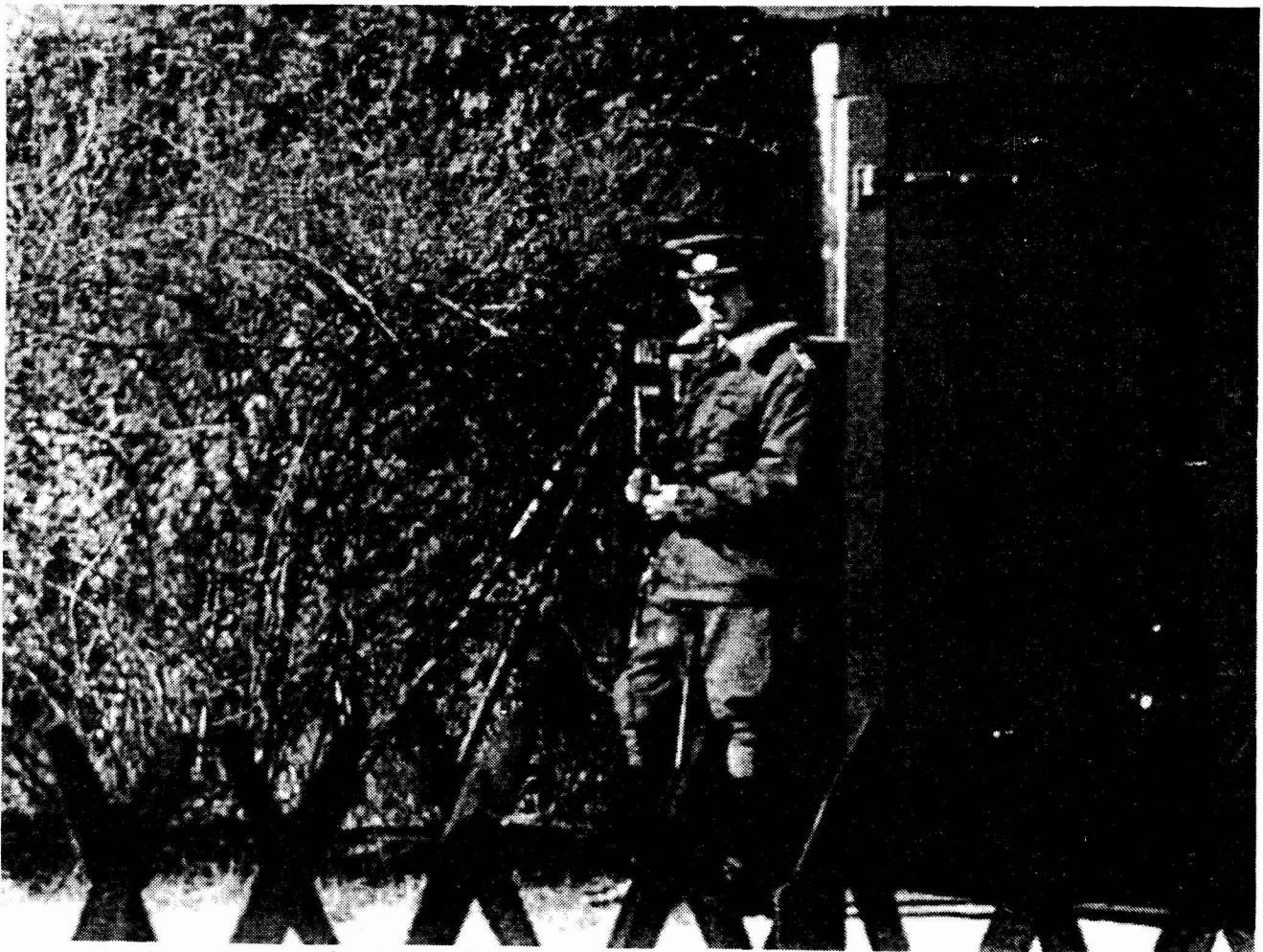
LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

Vol.1 No.6

January - February 1978

30p



Guard outside Havemann's house as he is held under house arrest.

**RELEASE BAHRO AND
HAVEMANN**

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

TASKS IN DEFENCE ACTIVITY

Our last editorial pointed to signs of a new readiness in the West European labour movement to take a stand in defence of democratic and working class rights in Eastern Europe. This judgment has been confirmed by the activities of the labour movement on the continent over the last two months. But Alex Kitson's uncritical support for the Soviet leadership and the Soviet Trade Unions shows that we have a long way to go in Britain and highlights the need to step up the work being done by Labour Focus and those who share our views on this issue.

Since our last number, Andy Klymchuk has been released by the Soviet authorities. The campaign taken up by the NUS and by the Left undoubtedly played a vital role in persuading the Soviet authorities that Klymchuk's continued detention and trial would be more costly than his release.

But the other three cases mentioned in our last editorial are still burning issues for socialists in the West: Rudolf Bahro remains incommunicado in an East German prison, while another leading East German Marxist theorist, Robert Havemann, has been placed under house arrest. Socialists in West Germany are demanding access to both these political prisoners, and campaigns for their release have been launched by the Left in many European countries, including Britain.

In Czechoslovakia, the Charter prisoners' appeals to higher courts for cancellation of their sentences have been rejected (though the prison terms of two Chartists have been slightly reduced). Meanwhile the Communist-led Italian Trade Union Federation CGIL has started sending regular financial aid to the Chartists thrown out of work and French CP leader Georges Marchais had called publicly for the release of the jailed

Chartists. In Britain the campaign against the imprisonments is being led by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists.

In this issue we carry an interview with Paul Goma who has recently arrived in the West from Romania. Goma is shortly to visit Britain in order to publicize the plight of the Romanian miners who have suffered heavy repression since their strike last summer. Their fate is a matter of elementary working-class solidarity and the news blackout by the Romanian authorities cannot be allowed as an excuse for inactivity on the part of the British labour movement. A delegation should be sent to Romania to establish the facts on the spot.

In the Soviet Union the authorities are continuing their drive against the Helsinki Monitoring Groups and other human rights opposition movements. The Soviet authorities are threatening Anatoli Shcharansky with a treason charge, and a Donbas miner, Vladimir Klebanov, has been put in a psychiatric prison for helping to organize workers' protests. These are only two examples of a wave of repression now spreading in the USSR.

Instead of branding as cold warriors those like Eric Heffer who have argued for labour movement defence of democratic rights in Eastern Europe, the Labour Left should be taking these issues out of the hands of the Right into the labour movement where they belong.

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1 Year of Charter 77 - by Jan Kavan

Writer Ludvik Vaculik, playwright Vaclav Havel and actor Pavel Landovsky were driving peacefully through Prague when their car was dramatically intercepted by the Czech Secret Police (S.T.B.) and its occupants detained. Their "offence" was that they were carrying 245 copies of a declaration signed by 242 people which has now become famous as the Charter 77 Declaration. They were on their way to post it to Dr. Husak's Government, the Czech Federal Assembly, the Czech News agency CTK, and other signatories. This violent and premature birth of Charter 77 was a foretaste of the way in which an essentially peaceful movement has been treated by the authorities as a dangerous criminal activity.

Charter 77 was the result of a complex series of events in the previous year. Ostensibly, it was inspired by Czechoslovakia's ratification in March 1976 of the

International Pacts on Civil and Political Rights. The Chartists stated that rights guaranteed by these conventions - for example, freedom of expression, association and religious confession, the right to strike and establish independent Trade Unions, the right to education for all, and the freedom to leave and return to one's country - that these "remain only on paper". They offered to enter into a "constructive" dialogue "with Dr. Husak's government over implementation of concrete human rights, to document cases of infringement of civil rights and to submit proposed solutions.

Charter 77 described itself as a free, informal and open association of people of varied opinions, beliefs and professions "united by their will to work for the implementation of human rights". By its symbolic name, it stressed "its origin on the

threshold of a year which has been declared the year of political prisoners and in which the Belgrade Conference is to examine how the Helsinki undertakings have been implemented".

LACK OF FREEDOM CONTINUES

The list of freedoms lacking in Czechoslovakia would be as long today as a year ago. The only "dialogue" was conducted across the interrogators' table. The Chartists succeeded in drawing the attention of the world to an occupied Czechoslovakia and killed the myth that popular acquiescence had been bought by government promises of better consumer goods. The Belgrade Conference, in which a large section of the population, but not many Chartists, had put their hopes a year ago, which will resume its work in mid-January, has still to show some concrete impact

the situation in Eastern Europe. As one Chartist said in an article: "If the Belgrade Conference comes to nothing we will be disappointed but not surprised."

The Charter has changed the atmosphere in the country. Up till autumn 1976 opposition was confined mostly to the protest letters written by prominent writers and communist politicians of the 1960s. The open support which these almost 'state-sanctioned' dissidents gave to two rock groups, "Plastic People of the Universe" and "DG307", who were tried and sentenced for non-conformist music, created a new atmosphere of trust and solidarity, in which it was possible for the Charter to grow. By signing the Charter, the reformist communists cut their umbilical cord to the "rehabilitation theory", that is, to the hope that some faction of the Party would utilize them and offer them positions within the power structure. That part of the population which had remained spiritually unbroken refused to wait for a reform from the top. A movement comprising communists and non-communists, atheists and Christians, an underground culture and prominent intellectuals, had a mass appeal which the government recognized. Federal Minister of the Interior, Jaromir Obzina, justified the hysterical anti-Charter campaign by his claim that without "instilling fear, as many as one to two million people would have signed the Charter".

SLANDER CAMPAIGN

The Government decided to nip the movement in the bud by isolating it with a massive workers' vote of condemnation. Workers' assemblies were hurriedly convened on the pattern of the fifties, when the workers voted en masse for the execution of Slansky and others. But this time the tactic failed. Many workers either failed to turn up or asked Party officials for the impossible: to hear the text of the Charter before they condemned it. The authorities retreated and instead asked factory managers to sign anti-Charter resolutions in the name of all their employees. They partially saved face by obtaining thousands of signatures from intellectuals, especially artists. But even this can hardly be described as a Government success. The mass media campaign ensured in a way the Chartists could never hope to achieve by themselves that every worker in the provincial towns and every villager knew of the existence of the Charter. Also, there is nothing which people can forgive less than humiliation. Thus, those who buckled under pressure and signed the anti-Charter resolutions will never be genuinely loyal to the rulers. At least 50 of those intellectuals were rewarded by being allowed to publish or perform for the first time in 8 years. The Chartists chalk up this fact as their own success as it may actually help Czech culture. Many Chartists know well from their own experience how

resolutions are put together and thus they do not nurture ill feelings towards those who "condemned" them.

By the time the government had second thoughts about mentioning the Charter to the workers it was too late. Interest had been aroused and typed samizdat copies of the Declaration began to circulate all over the country. The percentage of workers among Charter signatories began to rise. Out of the original 242, seventeen gave their profession as workers; out of 209 who had added their signatures by February, 57 were workers; of 166 announced in March, seventy-seven were workers, as were eighty-one out of 133 June chartists. Finally, the list released as Charter Document No.14 on 21 December consists of 45 workers, 18 technicians and skilled non-manual workers, 10 artists and intellectuals, 5 students and 4 clergymen.



Chartist Frantisek Kriegel, now under round the clock surveillance along with Petr Uhl.

CHARTER ACTIVITIES GROW

But numbers of signatories are a misleading criteria by which to estimate the actual strength of the Charter. The original Declaration made clear that "anyone who agrees with its ideas, takes part in its work and supports it, belongs to it." There are thousands of such people, many of them workers and young people. They distribute Charter documents, collect documentary evidence of injustices in their area, and set up their own informal groups. There is also an undisclosed number of people who have signed the Charter but for various reasons have not allowed their names to be published. For example, the signature of the Charter by the two technicians Ales Machacek and Vladimir Lastuvka from the north Bohemian industrial towns of Usti-nad-Labem and Decin (who were arrested on 25 and 20 January and sentenced to 3½ years imprisonment last

September, was revealed only in the Charter statement of 17 October reporting the trial. (See the document section in this issue.) At their appeal, at which Lastuvka's sentence was reduced to 2½ years, they attempted to show that their alleged distribution of Charter documents and Czech literature published abroad was not illegal under Czechoslovak law let alone under international covenants and agreements signed by Czechoslovakia. The attitude of the authorities to evidence, however, was well illustrated at the original trial by the judge's ruling that Machacek's public refusal at a trade union meeting to sign an anti-Charter resolution proved the man's hostile attitude to socialism and the society. Experience indicates that the Czechoslovak court's interpretations are influenced more by the strength of solidarity campaigns both in Czechoslovakia and abroad than by evidence.

Unfortunately, the only trial of Chartists to have attracted a great deal of attention in the West was the October trial of four intellectuals accused of smuggling literary works abroad. Two received suspended sentences, one 3 years and another 3½ years imprisonment. The trial is frequently described as the "biggest" and "most important" by the BBC and the majority of newspapers. It was also raised in the Belgrade Human Rights Commission. That is good. And the campaign for the release of the courageous socialist journalist Jiri Lederer should receive every conceivable support. But the fact that trade unionists Machacek and Lastuvka are the Chartists who have received the heaviest sentences so far must not be overlooked, especially not by trade unions and left-wing parties and organisations.

FORMS OF REPRESSION

The figures mentioned earlier indicate that after 1 February the rate at which people signed the Charter decreased. This is not as surprising as the fact that people still find the courage to sign. The original signatories could not have known what to expect and some of them may even have hoped that a moderate, more realistic faction within the Party might wish to conduct some form of dialogue. The over-reaction of the frightened government surprised everybody. By the end of January, it was evident to any potential Chartist that adding his/her signature would put his/her employment into jeopardy and invite the authorities' interference in every aspect of private life. Indeed, dismissal from work became the main weapon of the Party against the movement. About 130 Chartists are unemployed, and several hundred have been forced to take up low-paid jobs well below their qualifications. In a country where there is no unemployment benefit, the consequences of losing one's job are severe: many people have to rely entirely on the goodwill of their friends. The solidarity

of Western Trade Unions has only just begun to take shape. The Italian Trade Union Federation, the CGIL, has guaranteed regular monthly financial help for a number of dismissed Chartists for a limited period. There are also reports that French trade unions are considering a similar step, which, until the Czechoslovak government changes its policy, is probably the most effective form of solidarity.

Other repressive measures used not only against Chartists but also against their relatives and friends and those who either express solidarity or just refuse to condemn them, include frequent interrogations: on occasions people have been interrogated up to 12 times a week, and detained for periods of 24 to 48 hours. Many are put under surveillance. Since the end of September two Chartists, Dr. Frantisek Kriegel (a former member of the Party Presidium under Dubcek) and Petr Uhl (a former leader of the now banned Revolutionary Socialist Party) have been under full 24-hour surveillance.

The harassment did not stop the Chartists from fulfilling their original promise to issue regular documents on violations of human rights. So far, official Charter documents have dealt with discrimination in the sphere of education (document no.4 and a recent detailed supplement); trade union, social and economic rights (document no.7); religion (document no.9); publishing and literature (document no.12); and popular and folk music (document no.13). Each document proposes concrete solutions to the problems it describes.

It is sometimes argued that it is unrealistic to believe that the Government can take up any of these proposals. In a general sense it is true that a government, maintained in power solely by the might of foreign troops, would commit suicide if it allowed its citizens to enjoy the freedoms that are guaranteed on paper in the Constitution. On the other hand the Chartists stress that they are not putting forward an alternative political programme, and that they do not challenge the ideological basis of present-day Czechoslovak society. All they ask is that the government should respect the civil rights guaranteed in the Constitution. They argue that criticism should be aimed not only at the government but also at citizens who do not always utilize all the legal avenues available to them. The Chartists stress that it is vital for the individual citizen to remain in touch and continually to explore the ever-shifting boundaries of the possible.

Thus the Charter is also a challenge to those who have given up the struggle and become apathetic or cynical. In a recent article, one Chartist explained that "what is realistic is not what those in power will actually do but also what they could have done without being forced to reject the ideas which they themselves proclaim".

DIFFERENT CURRENTS

Given that the different political currents and groups in the Charter decided not to pursue their own political aims within its framework, the Charter's assertion that it is not a focus for political opposition is sincere. This does not, however, mean that there are no differences of opinion on questions of strategy, tactics and methods of work. That would be unnatural in a movement which encompasses such a broad spectrum of ideas and people.

In a movement which has become as large as the Charter is today, it is difficult to keep everyone fully informed of all the various activities and to co-ordinate the various interest groups, which are frequently located in different areas of the country, without having a structure or an organisation. Here the Chartists find themselves in a "Catch 22" situation. Once they become a structured organization the government would have the pretext to brand them as an illegal organization. A discussion of this and other problems over the summer eventually led to the conclusions announced in the Charter statement of 21 September. It was agreed to encourage different individual and group activities, both inside and outside the Charter. Each informal group would be able to prepare its own documents dealing with specific cases and signed by those who gathered the evidence and are thus responsible for the content. The only condition which these informal groups had to fulfil was that their documents did not contradict the basic aims of the Charter as stated in the Declaration. The various groups, if willing, would be able to exchange information and co-operate with one another.

POLICE PROVOCATION

Possibly it was this statement which led the State Security to believe that it could exploit the differences of opinion within the Charter and create an atmosphere of factional distrust and suspicion. During recent interrogations, the police hinted that they had evidence of the existence of a group which not only aimed at establishing a structured political organisation but which wished to discredit the legal basis of the Charter. To help substantiate its preposterous claim, the STB sent out anonymous letters and forged leaflets signed by invented "revolutionary organizations". They went so far as to interrogate about 50 Chartists in connection with the "discovery" of a plan to kidnap several Party and government leaders. The organizer of this "provocation" and "terrorist" action was allegedly Petr Uhl, who, as a Trotskyist, is supposed to be inclined to imitate the alleged "terrorist methods" of the Western New Left.

This tactic has failed however. On 23 November the Charter spokespersons released a special announcement in which they stressed that no Chartist subscribes to terrorism and warned the public that if any provocations were to take place, they would be organized not by a section of the Charter, but by its enemies. The harassment of Petr Uhl and his family has noticeably increased since last October. The frequent and open expressions of support for Uhl made by reformist communists and even by non-Marxists prove that the Secret Police has failed to shake the trust on which the Charter is based.

CHARTER 78

The Charter was never conceived as an ad-hoc campaign, and it cannot be called off just because 1977 is over or because the Belgrade Conference will soon finish its deliberations. For individual Chartists, their signature is a pledge of continuous everyday work, a pledge for years to come. The Charter is rooted among the rank and file of the population where it has had a significant impact, especially amongst young people. It must be very disappointing for Husak's educators, who believed that they could bring up a loyal and conformist generation, to learn that young people are signing the Charter, have joined protest hunger strikes, and have created their own human rights groups. Despite immense pressure, young apprentices in Prague and Brno attend private lectures on philosophy, history and other subjects given by purged lecturers in what has become known as the University of Jan Patočka.

The Chartists have not turned to the West for help; their main activities were aimed at the improvement of their own society. However, in their struggle for the implementation of human rights, a struggle which cannot be confined within the national borders of any country, they are prepared to accept support from those who also fight for human rights in their own countries, making it quite clear that this latter qualification is essential. In this respect they were greatly encouraged by the expressions of support sent to them from human rights groups in the other East European countries, most consistently from Poland. How much they value such support and possible future co-operation is shown by their recent "Open Letter to Polish Friends".

It is difficult to predict the concrete shape which Charter 78 will adopt, but it is clear that it is here to stay. The Charter will be capable of finding the optimal forms for its work. Only 2 weeks ago a new 100 page samizdat magazine entitled "Man in the Present World" came out, and it is certainly not a coincidence that in certain respects it resembles some of the existing Polish magazines.

Documents

Charter Statements on Trials

[The two documents published below are the official Charter 77 statements on the recent political trials in Czechoslovakia. For details of the trials see Labour Focus no.5. The documents are

translated by Mark Jackson and appear by courtesy of Palach Press.]

1. THE TRIAL OF LASTUVKA AND MACHACEK

Between 26 and 28 September there took place at the Regional Court in Usti-nad-Labem the trial of the technicians Vladimir Lastuvka and Ales Machacek, signatories of Charter 77 who had been held since January in the Litomerice remand prison. At first they were accused of agitation (article 100 of the legal code), later the accusation was changed to that of subversion of the Republic (article 98).

The basis of the charges was the fact that Czech and Russian books, published in Toronto, Paris, Munich and Rome, were found in the possession of both accused - a circumstance described by the court as the "receiving" of these publications. They "distributed" these books (lent them to friends and workmates) and spoke about them with the other readers. As proof of the subjective element necessary to bring charges under article 98 ("hatred of the socialist system") the court cited, among other things, the fact that the defendants were sympathetic to Charter 77 and had refused to associate themselves with condemnations of it in January. (As we know, these condemnations were ordered from above without the collective concerned having the right to acquaint itself with the text or even with an accurate summary of the contents of the Charter 77 appeal. On this (factually and legally) feeble basis, both were condemned to three and a half years in jail.

The atmosphere in the court corresponded to the sentence. The trial was formally public, but in the "Palace of Justice" which has room for 150 people, a room was chosen with only 8 seats, occupied only by the families of the accused and State Security personnel. The defendants were not allowed to use notes in their defence. Their friends and a representative of Amnesty International were prevented from attending. The judge not only sharply called the defendants to order, but also threatened family members present and put inadmissible pressure on the witnesses.

The evident infringements of the Czechoslovak legal code, in particular the provisions of the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights (enactment no.120 in 1976), as well as the disregard for the basic principles and regulations of court procedure, illustrate to a sufficient degree how in concrete cases legality (article 17) is upheld. They also demonstrate how the bases of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, whose fulfilment is currently being discussed in Belgrade, are tackled here.

Signed by spokespersons for Charter 77: Jiri Hajek, Marta Kubisova, Ladislav Hejdanek.

17 October 1977 Prague

2. THE TRIAL OF ORNEST, LEDERER, PAVLICEK AND HAVEL

Because we take seriously the constitutional duty of all citizens to concern themselves with the consistent upholding of socialist legality in social life (article 17) - a duty which was emphasised recently, among other places, in the Federal Assembly resolutions of 5 April 1977 - we bring to the attention of this Assembly a recent event in which certain norms of the Czechoslovak legal system were transgressed in a very serious way, and as a consequence of which the good name and interests of our state have suffered significant harm abroad.

On 17-18 October of this year at the Prague municipal court, the trial of Ota Ornest, Jiri Lederer, Frantisek Pavlicek and Vaclav Havel took place. O. Ornest and J. Lederer were charged with subversion of the Republic under article 98 paras 1 and 2 of the Criminal Code, Dr. Pavlicek with attempted subversion of the Republic under articles 7 para 1 and 98 para 1, and Vaclav Havel with attempting to harm the interests of the Republic abroad under article 8 para 1 and article 112 para 1.

The activity that was defined by the prosecution and recognized by the court as criminal in no way falls under the definition of what really constitutes a crime in this connection. For the document transmitted abroad was a work of an exclusively literary (historical and critical) and non-political character. Its publication anywhere at all cannot therefore be defined as a form of subversive activity under article 98, and it can much less threaten the social and state system of the Republic, its territorial integrity, defence capacity, independence or international interests. Furthermore, according to law an unmistakable element of subjective intent is required. In order to talk about



Marta Kubisova, one of Charter 77's three spokespersons, photoed recently in Prague.

criminal activity under article 98, it is necessary to prove that this activity is carried out "from enmity towards the socialist system of the Republic". Such enmity cannot be demonstrated with regard to any of the accused. On the contrary, the citizens involved here have dedicated the whole of their life to the cause of socialism, not only in the cultural sphere, but also in the broadest socio-political sense. This was publicly recognized in the award to Jiri Lederer of, among others, the Order of Labour; to Fr. Pavlicek of the State Order of Klement Gottwald; and to Ota Ornest of the Order of Merit in construction.

It is not possible to consider the memoirs of a politician active some thirty years ago as "an untruthful report about conditions in our Republic or about its foreign policy" and therefore liable to be charged with preparation of the crime of harming the Republic abroad under Article 112. This is quite clear from the law mentioned above and from the sense of the law which has been in effect since 1961 concerning defence of the established socialist system of the Republic and its corresponding international position and policy.

Depiction of such things as criminal does not take account of the ratification by the CSSR of international pacts on civil and political rights, or of the degree to which the legislation and practice of its legal and judicial organs conform to the binding statements on political rights flowing from this pact. Here we are referring to article 19 para 2 which guarantees the right to "seek out, accept, and distribute information and opinions of every kind without regard to borders, either verbally or in written or printed form, through artistic or any other means, according to one's own choice" (public announcement no.120). The administrative and other measures which conflict with these obligations and which, as we have noted in Charter document no.12 of 30 June, harm our culture by preventing the publication of many valuable literary works, understandably led the citizens convicted in this trial to attempt to publish their works at least outside the borders of our Republic.

The norms for holding trials were also not observed. O. Ornest and J. Lederer were kept in prison from 11 and 15 January 1977, respectively, although, given the character of their activity, there could be no legal reason for detaining them after the end of the investigation. This is indirectly confirmed by the release of the other two defendants in March and May when the investigation relating to all of them was finished.

The court displayed bias and lack of objectivity with regard to the accused. V. Havel was not allowed to cite in his defence the unfavourable judgment of the President of the Republic about the reliability of the expert who had, in his deposition, supported the characterization as criminal of the work whose proposed

sending abroad was the basis of the charges. J. Lederer was prevented from introducing many relevant facts about his behaviour, although, according to the Criminal Code, the President of the Court can only interrupt a defendant's closing speech if it goes beyond the framework of the matter in hand.

A small place with room for only 14 persons was chosen for the trial without objective reasons; apart from the relatives of the accused and the son of Jiri Lederer, the "objective public" was made up of people whom the accused and their families recognized as members of the State Security. This de facto exclusion of the public was reinforced by an extensive action of the security organs, who, during the course of the trial, rounded up dozens of friends of the accused on the pretext of an investigation into some kind of "proposed provocation", although nothing concrete was revealed to those being interrogated or held in this connection. Furthermore, the presence and behaviour of the security organs in and around the court buildings amounted to a whole series of illegal acts. These included the photographing and filming of citizens and foreign journalists, who by their presence were displaying an interest in the trial. All these steps could not but strengthen public doubts, both at home and abroad, about the regularity of the trial.

All these facts lead us to the conclusion that, in the preparation and conduct of the trial, many material and legal obligations and norms of the Czechoslovak criminal system were ignored. The fate of the international press - for example, the correspondent of the central organ of the French Communist Party, L'Humanite, which cannot be accused of bias against our Republic, was not allowed to enter the country - as well as the international repercussions of the trial at the Belgrade Conference bear witness to the fact that the conduct of the whole affair seriously harmed the interests of the Republic abroad.

We recall that a similar affair, with similar negative consequences, took place on 26-28 September of this year in Usti-nad-Labem: namely, the trial involving the technicians Vladimir Lastuvka and Ales Machacek.

Bearing in mind the resolution of the Federal Assembly of 5 April 1977, we ask the highest organs of state power to look into this whole question of the trials mentioned above, in the light of all their unfavourable consequences, and to inform the Czechoslovak public in due time about their standpoint.

Signed by spokespersons for Charter 77: Jiri Hajek, Marta Kubisova, Ladislav Hejdanek.

1 November 1977
Prague

Letters between KOR and Charter

[Ever since Charter 77 came into existence in January 1977 manifestations of open solidarity among human rights movements in East European countries have increased, particularly between Czechoslovakia and Poland. As co-operation between the two largest of these movements is of paramount importance, we reproduce below the full text of a letter sent from Poland to Czechoslovakia following the latest trials of Chartists, and the full text of the Czech reply. Letters provided by the Polish quarterly, Aneks.]

Dear Friends,

We may sincerely address each other thus, in the knowledge that it is not the ritual declarations of our governments that make us friends, but the common cause: the common striving towards reform in your country and in ours, the insistent demands for a human form to our lives and for a stop to those everyday practices on the part of the authorities which contradict the legally codified principles of human and civil liberties. In the post-war years we have often looked

to each other to share our hopes and anxieties. Now we are shocked to learn of the prison sentences imposed on you, blatantly and provocatively violating the resolutions made at Helsinki at the very moment when the implementation of these resolutions is being discussed in Belgrade by representatives of the signatory states, including your own.

We know that, as the spokespeople for society's protest, you are in painfully difficult circumstances. For the past nine years you have been continuously stifled by a force which has not even taken the trouble to maintain a semblance of legality. You have been openly and brutally persecuted at every point and in every manifestation of public life. Despite the indignation that this has aroused the world over, your situation remains unchanged. We perceive in these victimisations a revenge for the Prague Spring and, above all, a fear lest that magnificent surge which united your country might not only be repeated there, but also serve as an inspiration to other nations which share your fate.

We trust that that fear is not without foundation. Whenever we turn

our thoughts to that spring, we recall, with grief and bitterness, that the Polish army too took part in the invasion of your country. It is our most earnest desire, however, that you should not hold that against us, but believe that it happened through foreign compulsion and against our will.

Our dear friends, we admire your determination, your courage, your persistence in opposing wrong. We know that it is you who express the genuine will of the Czech and Slovak people, even though the majority of them must, under unremitting pressure, remain passive until such time as they will be able to express themselves as openly as they did in 1968.

In Charter 77, that historic manifesto of embattled democracy, you spoke not just for yourselves, but for us as well. Proclaiming our solidarity with your actions, we shall, despite the omissions and lies of our press, give the Polish public true information about your activities, strive towards strengthening the bond of friendship between our nations and undermine the principle "divide and rule", which has brought us so much harm in the past.

We do not know what difficulties we have yet to overcome. The path we tread is by no means easy. Yet when it does take its toll, let us take comfort with you in our awareness of the common cause and our faith that our sacrifices are not in vain. The effects of our joint effort are already visible; the achievements are irrevocable. The future - and, we would wish to believe, the not so distant future at that - must belong to you, to us, and to all people of good will - all, that is to say, who desire truth, justice and democracy.

**Signed, Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR), Warsaw,
31 October 1977.**

REPLY FROM CHARTER 77

Dear Friends,

We have been greatly encouraged by the solidarity you have

expressed several times this year towards our endeavours to ensure that in Czechoslovakia the laws are observed as well as international agreements on human and civil rights embodied in our legal system. Your stand in defence of political prisoners and against political trials in Czechoslovakia has evoked a positive response among our people and, as an important component of international solidarity, has helped to bring about a mitigation of persecution and of sentences passed. Your support is all the more valued because you do not speak from a safe position.

We follow your just struggles for the honouring of laws and human rights in Poland and note with pleasure every even partial success you achieve. You strengthen our conviction that the common struggle which we are waging has a perspective, that within the framework of our countries' common system we are contributing to a growing respect for the law and the right of every individual to the free development of his personality.

We have never associated the participation of Polish troops in the suppression of our attempt at social reform in 1968 - referred to by you - with the Polish people. We can well imagine the reverse situation, which almost happened in 1956. We share a common fate, and our solidarity is not the result of today's circumstances alone. It is absolutely natural that we should support each other.

Having been reassured of the truth and rightness of our cause, we cannot but proceed along the path we have marked out. Today we do not tread it alone. Today, within the East European community of countries with similar political systems, co-operation is not limited to governments, but is being extended to us citizens. Therein lies hope for us as individuals and as nations. Implementation of the right of every individual to a life of human dignity is an essential precondition for overcoming our long-lasting social crisis and for the future meaningful development of our society.

Signed by the Charter 77 spokespersons: Dr. J. Hajek, Dr. L. Hejdanek, and Marta Kubisova. Prague, 16 November 1977.

Charter Support for Böll

[In an open letter to writer Heinrich Böll, which we print below, a number of prominent representatives of the "Prague Spring" have assured him of their solidarity and defended him against the charge of supporting terrorist activities. The signatories warn about the striking similarities between the political altercations in West Germany and the phenomena that have occurred since the crushing of the "Prague Spring" movement in Czechoslovakia. The translation was done by Patrick Camiller from the German version which appeared in Frankfurter Rundschau, 30 November 1977.]

Dear Heinrich Böll,

Allow us to express our sympathy and esteem for you in the period you are now living through. We value your literary work for its artistic worth and humanism, which spring from a deep experience of society. In the same way, we value your humanitarian stand as a citizen wherever human freedoms and civil rights, including those of dissidents, are threatened.

We are standing up for human rights in Czechoslovakia and so we are naturally opposed to individual terror as a means of solving political arguments or social conflicts. We consider terror as a degenerate phenomenon with extremely negative consequences not only for those directly concerned but also for the whole of society, whose public life is traumatized by acts of terror. But we are at the same time very disturbed at the efforts of certain circles to treat terrorism as a welcome opportunity to launch, under cover of the search for terrorist sympathizers, a witch-hunt against people to whom terrorist methods are completely alien and distasteful.

On no account will we approve the demand of these circles to "open the hunting season" in order to silence free-thinking citizens who inquire into the underlying causes of negative social phenomena. These citizens support the view that society should not be placed in a position where it defends itself against abominable terrorist activities only through surgical operations. It is the duty especially of scientists and artists to discover the roots of these social aberrations if society is to create enough anti-bodies against their regeneration. We know very well from the experience of our own country what follows from silencing opinions through obstruction, amalgam and anathema. We are all the more disturbed in that you and other humanists are slandered as terrorist sympathizers as a result of approaching the problem in the way we advocate.

Just as you support us in our efforts, so do we now stand by your side. Continue to count us as your friends in solidarity.

Yours,

Karel Bartosek, historian; Jiri Dienstbier, journalist; Jiri Hajek, political scientist, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs; Milan Hübl, historian, ex-rector of the Party college; Jaroslav Hutka, musician; Vlasta Chramostova, actress; Zdenek Jicinsky, legal scientist; Vladimir Kadlec, economist, ex-Minister of religious affairs; Ivan Klima, writer; Pavel Kohout, writer; Klement Lukes, social scientist; Stanislav Milota, cameraman; Venek Silhan, economist; Ludvik Vaculik, writer; Petr Uhl, technician; Jirina Zelenkova, doctor.

ROMANIA

Ceausescu Sacks Mine Ministers

by Patrick Camiller

"All quiet in the Jiu Valley!" Ceausescu's local commanders can now report with some plausibility. A massive military-police operation appears to have restored order for the moment in this traditional workers' bastion, which witnessed last August a full-scale strike for economic and social demands. (See **Labour Focus** No.5). Clearly hoping to eliminate the most active elements and intimidate the others, the authorities have reportedly compelled up to 4,000 miners to leave the area together with their families. At the same time, over 2,000 soldiers and secret policemen have been posted into the Jiu Valley in order to prevent the re-emergence of organized protest among the workers.

In late November, an **International Herald Tribune** story from the mining centre, Lupeni, stated that conditions were as bad as before the strike, although, according to some accounts, the authorities have combined the repressive measures with a number of material concessions, relating especially to the notorious food supply. Ceausescu himself has been forced to make two more visits to the area since the one in August when he was booed and jostled by the miners, and on 9 November he repeated his former promises about an improvement in living and working conditions. It is unlikely, however, that his popularity increased sufficiently to merit the bestowal upon him of the title "Honorary Miner of the Jiu Valley", announced in the Romanian media the next day! Nor is it difficult to imagine the origin of the telegram supposedly addressed to Ceausescu by the "miners' collective" of Capeni-Baraolt: "We beg you, dearly beloved comrade Ceausescu, to accept our highest feelings of gratitude and satisfaction for the constant paternal care



Ceausescu visiting the Lupeni mines a year before the strikes.

with which you ensure the best living and working conditions and the growth of the material and spiritual well-being of all the sons of the fatherland." (**Romania Libera** - an official Bucharest daily - 17 November 1977.)

Ceausescu's men in the Ministry of Mining were not so fortunate: another part in the drama was written for them. Thus, three out of five deputy ministers were sacked in November, and when that proved inadequate, the Minister himself, Constantin Babalau, was dismissed as the chief scapegoat. However, these changes probably served more than one purpose. For the new minister is to be Vasile Patilinetz, until 1975 Central Committee Secretary for security questions.

The Romanian leaders are clearly worried lest the miners' strike prove to be the harbinger of a broad social explosion. The material concessions offered to the miners were paralleled by the decision of the December National Party Conference to attach a higher priority to raising living standards; while the purges in the Ministry of Mining were associated with a noisy campaign against corruption that has led to, among other things, the suspension for "financial irregularities" of the minister and two deputy-ministers of the construction industry, as well as the deputy-minister of foreign trade.

On the "intellectual front" the authorities have sought above all to isolate known dissident groups from contact both with other sections of the population and with people abroad. A strict search is now made of all visiting journalists, and two documents were recently confiscated from Clas Bergman, correspondent of the Swedish paper **Dagens Nyheter**.

The partial success of the regime in the last few months highlights the urgent need to break the wall of isolation and to demonstrate the solidarity of the Western labour movement with the struggle for democratic and working-class rights in Romania. The Ceausescu regime is rapidly losing for good its carefully cultivated "liberal" image and now faces the prospect of mounting discontent and opposition in every layer of the population. As a Lupeni miner put it: "Nothing is changed, nothing has been resolved ... Things are quiet now because people are afraid. It is difficult to organize because now there are spies everywhere. But we are waiting, and next year..."

The Opposition in Romania

An Interview with Paul Goma

[Paul Goma has become known to Labour Focus readers as the central figure of the Romanian intellectual opposition that appeared in February last year. After two months of intense police harassment, during which the initial call for the respect of democratic rights received growing support, Goma was himself arrested. Before he was released, he was subjected to physical intimidation by, among others, the Deputy Minister of the Interior in person. From the very beginning, a large number of signatories of the Goma declaration were industrial workers: indeed, among the first

was a delegation of Jiu Valley miners, whose massive strike in August profoundly affected the political situation. (See **Labour Focus** No.5.) Despite the efforts of the Ceausescu regime to sow disunity and mutual isolation, the fate of the emerging workers' movement remains closely bound up with that of the small group of dissident intellectuals who carry on the struggle.

Paul Goma was born in 1935 in Bessarabia - a region that was annexed by the Kremlin Romania in 1944. When they were arrested

five years later on false charges, he was forced to live by his wits and had his first encounter with the secret police at the age of sixteen.

In 1956, following his recital to a university circle of a chapter of his book set during the Hungarian Revolution, Goma was arrested and sentenced to two years jail and four years exile. On his release, he began to write again, while holding various unskilled jobs. Eventually in 1965, he was allowed to return to his studies, but soon had to give them up when the secret police attempted to



A recent photo of Paul Goma

blackmail him into becoming an informer. At the same time, however, he was able to start publishing and was even awarded a literary prize. As Goma indicates below, the climate changed dramatically in 1971-72: three of his works were rejected and when his cell refused to expel him from the Party, higher authorities discovered that there had been an "irregularity" in the procedure whereby he had originally been admitted in 1968.

Denied a public in his own country, Goma has published three novels in France - La Cellule des liberales (1971), Elles etaient quatre (1974), and Gherla (1976) - becoming recognized there as one of the foremost contemporary Romanian writers. None of his works has yet been translated into English.

The following interview was given to Patrick Camiller of Labour Focus last December in Paris, shortly after Goma arrived with his wife and child. A further long section, in which he relates his experiences in 1956 and the impact of the Hungarian Revolution in Romania, has been held over until the next issue for reasons of space.

Translation by Anca Mihailescu.

When an intellectual opposition movement appeared in Romania last year, it was in response to the Czechoslovak Charter 77. Would you explain this by a particularly high international awareness?

I don't know if we can talk of a high international awareness. It is rather a question of the information that started to reach our country. Not, to be sure, through the Helsinki Agreements or various official channels, because after Helsinki you

couldn't even buy L'Humanite [the French CP paper] any more, but through Radio Free Europe. The Western Left has criticized this radio station as a left-over from the Cold War, but for people in Eastern Europe it is a unique and formidable source of information. As I could see from comparison with the French press, some of its programmes are very serious. On work-days, it broadcasts between 6.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. and between 5.00 p.m. and 1.00 a.m.; on Sundays it is non-stop. In Romania, everybody listens to it, including Party activists.

Were you well informed about the Polish opposition?

Yes, they enjoy the highest esteem in our country. Unlike the Russian opposition, which is restricted to a layer of intellectuals, the Poles established workers' defence committees and collected money for the families of arrested workers. They created an international scandal in connection with the workers. For who produces bread? The workers. And so they must be defended.

So the Romanians discovered that it is possible to express one's discontent - not in order to overturn the system, but in order to win reforms within it. It used to be thought that as long as the Russo-American balance of power exists, we in the Russian zone have no chance of expressing our discontent. But the Czechs and Poles have proved that we can even turn their own laws against them: "You passed these laws, now respect them! It is you who imposed the country's constitution and signed the Helsinki Agreements, not the workers of these countries. It was Brezhnev, who is a criminal, Ceausescu, who is also a criminal, and Gierek, who is something else." In fact, Gierek is greatly respected because he is a worker and because he knows what he is talking about: he also, of course, has to keep a balance with the Russians. But Ceausescu was never a peasant because he left for the city at the age of 16; nor did he have time to become a worker, because he was arrested. He is nothing but a narrow-minded and ferocious apparatchik. He cannot feel or understand the interests of the workers and peasants, and he despises the intellectuals because he understands nothing of their problems.

Thus, I was not the initiator or leader of this movement. For years I had been fighting a lone battle that became more open after 1970: I was not only alone but isolated from my fellow-writers. But last year people found out what I wanted through my letters to Kohout, Böll, and Tsepeneag that were read out over Radio Free Europe. They immediately rushed to me, not in order to create a structured oppositional force, but in order to demand their rights. They just wanted a bureau where they could complain about being refused a pass-

port, about harassment at work, and so on. Of course these were genuine complaints, and they simply came to me as their last hope. For they realized that afterwards the Securitate (secret police) might actually thrust a passport into their hands in order to get rid of them. I was accused by the police and even some friends that I had transformed this noble movement into an emigration bureau. Maybe it's true. But isn't the right to a passport a basic right? And if this action succeeded in obtaining passports for 200 people, then all well and good.

What do you see as the relationship between the miners' strike and the intellectual opposition?

I try to be modest about it. But it is a fact that 22 miners wrote to Radio Free Europe, expressing the solidarity of 800 miners with our movement. Of course it was not we but the human conditions under which they live that caused the strike. But in a certain sense we determined the course of events by showing our fellow citizens that the risks are not all that great. Naturally you are beaten up or arrested, but in the end you will win your rights. Our main contribution was to help to overcome the paralysis of fear. After thirty years of terror, the fear had penetrated everyone. Maybe this seems unreasonable; people say: "Am I really afraid? Of what? I don't know exactly." But so many innocent people have suffered - not only ones considered to be anti-communist, but even the militants who helped the regime to become established. There is a generalized state of fear.

And what effect did the strikes have on the intellectuals?

Well, firstly, they humiliated the intellectuals, who had been extremely prudent, if not cowardly, in the struggle for their rights. For it is said that people who wield the pen should take up the people's demands. This has been the case throughout history. Romanian writers may think they have something to lose, but in fact most of them live much worse than the average employee. If they manage to drink in the Athenee Palace, it is because they go without food and clothing, not to mention other goods. Their one big advantage is the possibility of travelling abroad. And so they are afraid that if they are not "obedient", they will not be able to see Paris.

Secondly, the strike may have shown that things are possible. It is true that the miners have a long tradition dating from the 1929 uprising, but their example will be followed even if in a less orderly manner.

How is the morale of the Bucharest students? Did the Charter and your movement have a considerable impact?

It is difficult for me to say since I was so isolated. But I can make two points.

1) Some students came to me wanting to sign the declaration, but I advised them not to do so on account of their parents' request.

2) On 16 February, Ceausescu made a speech against us, calling us Judases and traitors. Then they accused me in the schools, factories and faculties of being a traitor, an American agent or a KGB agent. After I was arrested, small groups of university or school students, bearing the name "Goma groups", wrote my name up on walls. The existence of a "Defenders of Human Rights, Goma Group" became known through Radio Free Europe.

What importance do you attach to declarations of solidarity by the Western labour movement?

A very great importance. Romania is not a large country like Russia and it actually wants to distance itself from the Russians. It has economic interests in the West and is very sensitive to reactions there. Furthermore, the regime bases itself on the name and traditions of the working class, so that protests against repression made by the Western labour movement can have a very great impact both on the workers' and intellectuals' opposition and on the Party and state leaders themselves.

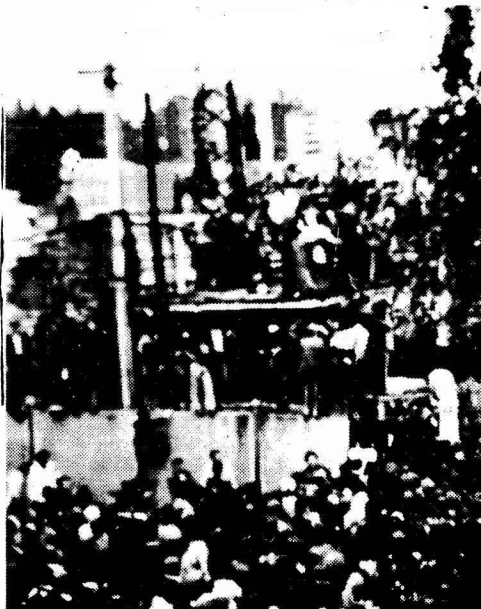
What considerations led you to join the Romanian Communist Party in August 1968 in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia? How do you regard this decision today?

The ground had already been prepared by 1968 through the noticeable liberalization. In 1965 a large number of students were allowed to resume their studies. And then we were won over by Ceausescu's revelations concerning the abuses committed by the secret police, the Draghici case, the Patrascanu affair. (1) This was a period in which official nationalism had a big hold over us: even those who had suffered could explain their persecution in terms of past Russian national oppression. Things had been so crazy that Romanian had been described as a Slav language and Romanian history reduced to two chapters: 1) the class struggle since the time of the primitive commune; and 2) relations with the Russians which started even with some Sarmatic tribes long before the Russian state existed! Between 1948 and 1963, you could have got 4-5 years in jail for singing certain patriotic songs that are now sung so much that you cannot bear them. Finally there was Ceausescu's policy of turning towards the world and creating a distance from the Russians. How could all this not have won us over?

The Prague Spring was an unbelievable phenomenon for us, because in Romania the communists had discredited themselves through their continual pro-Soviet policy. We saw that the Czechoslovak communists and socialists were really trying to set things

right - there was freedom in that Czech variant with a human face.

In Romania, every movement had been branded as anti-communist and totally crushed. I'm not talking about the **legionari** (2), but about the socialists, with whom the communists associated themselves until they started putting them in jail. In any case, in the second half of the sixties we began to believe in Ceausescu. Like Tito, he went to Dubcek and Smrkovsky and assured them of our support. Then there was his speech from the balcony (3) ... how could you not go along with him? In those moments of general danger, the only organized force was the Communist Party. So I went to the Writers' Union and asked them how I should go about joining the Party and the patriotic guards. Three days later my application and those of twelve others, including Ivasiuc, were approved.



Lupeni, August 1977: the only photo of the miners' strike to have reached the West, showing a mass meeting.

However, we were very rapidly disillusioned. After two-and-a-half days the press was no longer free and Ceausescu started to withdraw into realpolitik: orders were given that Czechoslovakia should not be mentioned even in closed meetings. Then he began his cheap megalomaniac operetta performance. There were parades, stories about the struggle against the Turks, and about the Dacians. (4) Our daily bread had to be given up for the steel industry that is so dear to Ceausescu's heart; and cultural oppression began in earnest in 1971 after his trip to China. I don't know what he could have seen there, but he came back full of old Stalinist stupidities like wall-posters, shock-brigades and so on. I find it hard to admit that I made a mistake. But I don't regret it.

Did discussion of any kind continue at internal Party meetings?

Yes. Although discussion about Czechoslovakia was stopped, in some places ex-

tremely virulent discussion and criticism went on until 1972. We began to look forward to the Party meetings which had previously been considered a grind. Some meetings were even thrown open to non-Party members. I remember with pleasure that Paul Niculescu Mizil was among those who accepted this state of affairs. Even if he did not always say so, he appeared to be in agreement. Others took fright - Ghise, for example, who is still high up in the Ministry of Culture. But the general mood was one of well-calculated tolerance: "Allow them to let off steam in meetings, so long as there is no noise outside. Let them swear at us and we'll get on with our own job." That lasted until 1972. No doubt we had preferential treatment, we "professional writers of eulogies". For if the writers were given an illusion of freedom, they would eat shit with greater appetite.

Were there protests within the Party against the change of course?

Yes. There was opposition even in the Central Committee to Ceausescu's attempt to apply the lessons of his China trip. (I personally know only of Iliescu, who was subsequently shunted off to Timisoara and Iasi for his disagreement.) Then Ceausescu called a meeting of Bucharest writers, artists and intellectuals, or rather of writers who had certain political functions and who had rendered important services to Stalinism in the past. Some dared to protest - either openly like Jeleleanu, or through ostentatious silence like Z. Stancu, the president of the Writers' Union. Others refused their task of saying in the press: "Yes, of course, we agree with the July Theses" (as Ceausescu's positions on culture were called, by association with Lenin's April Theses). But the Party counted on time to grind people down, and in October-November the theses were accepted by an exhausted plenary session. Strict discipline was then imposed and the series of congresses that followed marked a deterioration in the cultural climate.

Footnotes.

(1) Alexandru Draghici was Romanian Minister of the Interior for 13 years until his removal in 1967. He is officially held responsible for the "violations of socialist legality" committed by the secret police during this period - including the murder of Lucretiu Patrascanu, ex-Minister of Justice, in April 1954.

(2) The **legionari** were Romanian fascists.

(3) On 21 August 1968, Ceausescu delivered a speech from the balcony of the Central Committee building in Bucharest to a mass audience of over 100,000. He severely criticized the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which had just taken place, and called for the formation of "patriotic guards" to defend Romania against a similar action.

(4) The Dacians were an ancient tribe which inhabited parts of present-day Romania and whose struggles against the Roman legions form the subject of an officially-inspired national cult.

EAST GERMANY

Growing Campaign for Bahro, Havemann

by Gunter Minnerup

Rudolf Bahro, author of *Die Alternative*, arrested on 23 August 1977 for "espionage", is still in an East German jail. Nobody knows exactly where, no attempt has been made by the GDR authorities to produce evidence substantiating the charge made against him, no date for a trial has been announced. But international protest against the repression of this outstanding Marxist thinker and communist critic of the Stalinist bureaucracy has grown, particularly in West Germany where his book was published by the West German trade union federation's EVA last September and where it has become a bestseller.

Many trade union bodies have come out in solidarity with Rudolf Bahro. The Frankfurt Regional Executive of the teachers' union GEW has decided to send delegations to East Berlin to visit Bahro and another prominent oppositionist, Robert Havemann (who is under house arrest), and to the diplomatic mission of the GDR in Bonn to demand "Bahro's immediate release from prison and the lifting of the house arrest on Havemann". Delegations from the Baden-Württemberg region of the SPD Young Socialists and the Frankfurt teachers' union have been to East Berlin demanding to see Bahro and

Havemann, without success. Both delegations had one member each refused entry into the GDR, and their protest resolutions were not accepted by SED officials. Further delegations to East Berlin and the GDR's diplomatic mission in Bonn are planned.

The national youth conference of the West German union federation DGB adopted a resolution demanding the immediate release of Rudolf Bahro and an end to all repressive measures, against bitter opposition from the delegates supporting the West German Communist Party (DKP), the most loyally pro-Moscow party of Western Europe. A conference organized by the social-democratic journal "L 76" in Recklinghausen, attended by over 300 people including Nobel Prize winner Heinrich Böll, Rudi Dutschke, Günter Grass, Italian CP leader Lucio Lombardo-Radice, Zdenek Mlynar, Jiri Pelikan, and the SPD MPs Horst Ehmke and Johano Strasser voted with only one abstention to send a similar letter to Erich Honecker. The publishers of Bahro's book have issued another volume, a documentation of press comments on Bahro's book and arrest together with six lectures

summarizing the theses of *Die Alternative* written by Bahro, and in the introduction call for a mobilisation of international public opinion to force his release.

At the Biennale, a bi-annual cultural festival taking place in Venice (Italy), a resolution calling for the release of political prisoners in Eastern Europe, supported by many Western socialist and communist leaders including Monty Johnstone of the CPGB and Jean Elleinstein of the French CP, mentioned Rudolf Bahro by name.

In Britain, the **Bahro Defence Committee** has written to many Labour MPs, trade union leaders, and prominent socialist artists, intellectuals and academics asking for their support, particularly their signature and financial donation towards a planned full-page advertisement in the labour movement press to publicize Bahro's case. Readers of *Labour Focus* willing to support this campaign can get further details from the Bahro Defence Committee, c/o Günter Minnerup, 14 Folkestone Rd., Copnor, Portsmouth, Hants.

Documents 1. Expelled Writer: Havemann, Bahro in Danger

[Following the expulsion of Wolf Biermann from the German Democratic Republic in the autumn of 1976 and the widespread protests from leading East German writers and artists, the East German government has presented many other intellectuals with an ultimatum: either face long years in jail or leave for the West. One of the most outstanding cases of such tactics was the treatment of Jurgen Fuchs who was expelled from the GDR in September 1977. We print below a statement written by Fuchs and endorsed by the musicians Christian Kunert and Gerulf Pannach who were also expelled in the same way.]

The statement refers to the case of Robert Havemann who has been under house arrest for many months. Havemann has been a member of the German Communist Party since before the war. Throughout the war he shared a German prison camp with the present First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (the East German CP) Erich Honecker. Today he is a prisoner of Honecker. Havemann's work as a Marxist theoretician has been translated into many languages and is well known in the West.

The statement also refers to Rudolf Bahro who remains in prison for publishing a major work of Marxist criticism of the political system in East Germany. (See the review of Bahro's book in this issue of Labour Focus and also extracts from the book published in Labour Focus No.5.)

Translation of Fuchs' statement has been made by Günter Minnerup from the German text published in Frankfurter Rundschau, 5 September 1977.]

We did not come to West Berlin voluntarily. For over three quarters of a year we attempted to counterpose to the despicable methods of the state security forces our determination to live in

the GDR, to participate there as artists in creating a progressive, human society. I repeat: to live in the GDR, not to perish in prison.

Since we were not prepared either to recant our artistic work and see it as "malicious slandering of the state", nor to endorse the persecution of our closest friends, we were promised a sentence of up to ten years.

We are glad not to be in pre-trial custody any more, and thank all who solidarised with us in the East and in the West.

At the same time we are greatly worried about our friend and comrade Robert Havemann, since we have directly experienced the whole perfidy and the intentions of the secret apparatus which rules our country and wants to get an even tighter grip on it, and fear that his life is in danger. Particularly because Robert Havemann calmly and determinedly opposes the hectic and brutal harassment of himself and his family and will not bow to psychological terror.

The same applies, in our opinion, to Rudolf Bahro, who is now where we came from and who is publishing an extremely important book in the West very shortly. The state security's *Alternative* could be the attempt to destroy the author's personality with scientific thoroughness. We know what we are talking about, our opinion is not a result of ignorance of the situation.

Where is our country going?
And who drives it where?

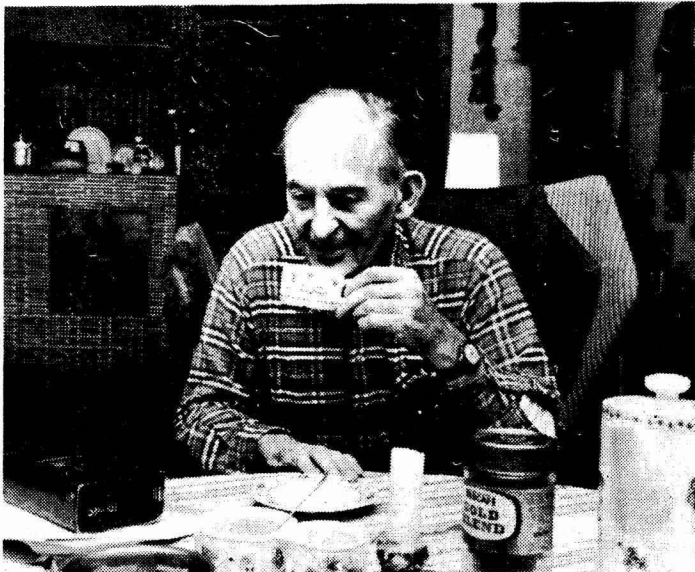
But there is only one alternative to the intentions of the state security forces: a humane, progressive and socialist society, in which one can breathe, not a police state that spies on its citizens, jails them, expatriates them or drives them out of their own country.

2. High SED Official on Bahro

[While Rudolf Bahro himself remains in jail for publishing his important theoretical work *The Alternative*, the book itself is circulating widely in East Berlin and is apparently being read avidly by large numbers of members of the SED (the East German CP). In its issue of 19 September, 1977, the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel* published a review of the book by "a high ranking SED functionary". Although the author remains, for obvious reasons, anonymous, there is little reason to doubt the authenticity of the article: the practice of publishing anonymous comments in the West German press is an established tradition among East German functionaries, and subsequent attacks on "comrades turning to the *Spiegel*" from SED sources would appear to be further, indirect confirmation.

The review is, furthermore, of more than curiosity value. It summarizes the ideas of Bahro's book very succinctly, and it also expresses a general ideological outlook which has been a recurring undercurrent within the SED since the mid-1940s.

Translation is by Günter Minnerup.]



Robert Havemann pictured at home shortly before being placed under house arrest.

The measures with which the security forces of the GDR have reacted to Rudolf Bahro are, from the ideological point of view, utterly incomprehensible. For Bahro, in the introduction to his book *Die Alternative*, explicitly defends all orthodox positions of Marxism-Leninism as they are taught in the GDR - especially the theory of revolution which falsifies Marx. (...)

Marx clearly warned the proletarian movement not to embark on revolutions while the objective material conditions have not yet matured. After the failed revolutions of the 19th century he declared that the proletariat would need decades or even centuries to prepare itself for the exercise of power. Bahro, in contrast, defends Lenin who carried out a *putsch* in a country that was neither economically nor politically ripe for socialism.

Lenin's break with Marx's theory of revolution is explicitly justified by Bahro. Thus SED's charge that Bahro proclaims pseudo-theories is a joke, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution. (...)

Bahro, as a utopian communist, remains completely within the framework of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. He is a danger only to the political bureaucracy whose incompetence he documents. But that is not treason in the GDR, rather a fact well known to everyone. How well aimed the punch was is shown by the fact that the Party does not confront the debate, but jails Bahro, charges him with intelligence activities and, in internal Party information, slanders him as an "idiotic cretin" without quoting even one of his arguments.

In the first part of his book ("The phenomenon of the non-capitalist road to industrial society") Bahro proves that the ideological utterances of the SED omit or falsify Marx's fundamental positions. Marx's "asiatic mode of production", in which an all-powerful bureaucracy lives parasitically off a socialist community, is the typical mirror-image of so-called real socialism with the exception of Yugoslavia and China - a fact carefully suppressed by the SED.

[Bahro] clings to the utopian elements of Marx's image of communism, which have, however, been rendered obsolete by the constantly growing international division of labour, the problems of the developing countries, of the ecology. He also defends - quite incomprehensibly from a humanistic standpoint - the boundless sufferings and victims which Stalinism has inflicted upon the most tested communists and millions of non-Party members.

All that is justified by Bahro as historically necessary and he forgets that the undemocratic and subjectivist rule of the Bolshevik system has brought such a fate on those people.

Following Marx, the Communist Party would, in the interest of the people, have had to support the development of capitalism in Russia in a parliamentary republic. As opposed to feudal tsarism the development of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois lifestyles would have brought neither counter-revolution nor civil war nor millions of deaths through starvation nor Stalinism. Without Lenin's putschist tactics the world-wide discrediting of the communist idea - so particularly effective in Germany - would not have occurred.

Since Stalin all of Marx's humanistic causes have been openly abandoned in the Party documents of the CPSU and SED:

- the aim of the communists was, according to Marx, the abolition of the state. Today we have the programmatic codification of the growing role of the state. The dictatorship of the proletariat has verbally become the people's state, but that does not alter the matter.

- the aim of the communists was, according to Marx, a democratic CP, in which there would be no administrative authority of the leadership and whose purpose would be its self-dissolution. The programme today is the increasing omnipotence not of the CP, but of the Secretariat over the Party, the state and society.

- the aim of the communists was, according to Marx, the unity of the German nation, its blossoming as a real democracy in which nobody is told what to think, read, hear. Today we have the destruction of unity and isolation from living international reality.

As to the national question, however, Bahro avoids any attack on SED policy; he therefore spares the Party bureaucracy in its most vulnerable spot.

But he assaults the bureaucracy the more tellingly in the second part of his book ("The Anatomy of Existing Socialism") on its second soft spot: the economy. This chapter, including the analysis of the Party bureaucracy and the state apparatus, is the strongest achievement of the book -- salt into open wounds.

For here speaks the experienced practitioner, the economic functionary Bahro, who demonstrates the enormous contradictions between the excessively exaggerated demands of the polit-bureaucracy and the realistic potential of the productive workers on the basis of empirical facts. Nobody can dispute these facts. They explain how losses going into billions occur in the economy of the GDR at the expense of the people, why the East Germans who are neither more stupid nor lazier than the West Germans continue to lag behind the Federal Republic in economic performance.

In the capitalist economy it is the laws of competition that make sure that failures are eliminated from leading positions. In the GDR these failures decorate themselves with the Karl Marx Medal. In reward for their mismanagement they receive a lifelong position in the Politbureau.

In his "Strategy for a Communist Alternative", formulated in the third part of the book, Bahro adheres strictly to Marx's philosophical positions. He merely attempts to apply them to the present conditions of the class struggle.

Here he has illusions - in, for instance, arguing against the pluralistic position of the Eurocommunists. In all likelihood a real advance towards communism is, after the discrediting of the communist idea by the present leadership, only possible on the basis of a practice rooted in European rather than Asiatic political concepts.

That would not necessarily have to lead to a confrontation with the "Asiatic despotism in Russia" (Marx). The Russian people have different ideas of community, freedom, the dignity of man from those of the West Europeans. One can definitely take a European road to communism while respecting national peculiarities.

Here Bahro omits to show in detail how the KPD broke its promise given in 1945 "not to impose the Soviet system on Germany" - after the group of Moscow exiles had, aided by the Soviets, outmanoeuvred the legally elected Party executive, which consisted of Western emigres who had led the Party against Hitler. If that promise had been kept, the KPD would not have been smashed in the Federal Republic either.

Bahro is right on target, however, in the political-ideological area, where ignorant, incapable people claim the right to permanently lie to the citizens of the GDR who are so well-informed by West German television. The resentment of that manipulation is increasingly being articulated in the SED too.

Full support and sympathy is due to Bahro also when he exposes corruption and enrichment, condemns bureaucratic wastefulness and throws light on the contradiction between propaganda and reality. He accurately analyses the causes of the decline in performance and the growing discontent in the GDR with the tutelage and suppression of every creative thought, the denunciation of every well-founded criticism as "anti-state".

Ignoring the most elementary democratic rules the GDR is governed like a German principality of the 19th century: the prince and a handful of advisers decide not on concepts and guidelines for the future, but on the religion of their subjects. Thus they stifle all initiative.

Bahro's courage to risk not only his civil but also his physical existence will earn him an honourable place in the history of the German labour movement, despite his excessively idealist-communist misinterpretations. That will not be the case for certain people who are now, as equals among equals, very much more equal than others.

Bahro's achievement is also not diminished by the fact that he published his book in West Germany. If there is no freedom here to articulate opinions, then one has to articulate them where such freedom exists.

Spiegel Claims SED Split

- by Günter Minnerup

"We are addressing this to the German public and declare that we, democratically and humanistically thinking communists in the GDR, have organized ourselves illegally in a League of Democratic Communists of Germany (**Bund Demokratischer Kommunisten Deutschlands, bdkd**), because circumstances do not allow us yet the possibility of legal association". Thus begins a 30 typed pages long manifesto, 3 of the 4 parts of which were published in the 2 January 1978 edition of the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel* which announces its scoop under a front cover headline of "Schism in the SED. The Manifesto of the Opposition". According to the magazine, "the resistance against the doctrinaire policies of the SED leadership assumes a high quality" with the appearance of this text by "middle and high-ranking SED functionaries who have broken with the official party line" and "organized themselves in small clandestine cells".

The official East German news agency ADN, however, describes the text as "a bad New Year's Eve joke" and a "miserable concoction" by the *Spiegel's* East Berlin correspondents and the West German intelligence service BND. On 9 January the East German authorities closed *Der Spiegel's* office in East Berlin. This may not be surprising, since the GDR authorities were also quick to brand Rudolf Bahro as a BND agent. But while there could be no doubt about Bahro's real identity and political integrity, the authenticity of the "Manifesto" is being doubted by West European anti-Stalinist socialists (see, for instance, the French Marxist daily *Rouge* of 3 January 1978).

Certainly both the style and the political analysis of the manifesto make the *Spiegel* claim of a major split among the higher ranks of the SED apparatus seem rather extravagant. Seasoned Party officials who

have developed even fundamental differences with the Party line would hardly employ the rather flippant style ("We do not believe in godfather Marx, Jesus Engels or the Holy Ghost of Lenin") of the text when writing a public manifesto, nor would they be likely to "share the view of the Chinese comrades that the Soviet leaders are of the neo-fascist type". The authors speak of the need "to follow and refine the methods of conspiracy learned during the Nazi period", but it seems highly unlikely that a whole group of members of that generation would have politically survived in the SED apparatus with the views stated in the text, which in any case are rather vague and often contradictory (the Eastern European system is, for instance, simultaneously characterized as "neo-fascist", "the Asiatic mode of production of bureaucratic state capitalism", "feudal" and "exploited by a parasitical bureaucratic caste").

All this does, of course, not necessarily mean that the "Manifesto" is a concoction of West German journalists and/or intelligence agents. *Der Spiegel* could have been taken for a ride by the SED's practical jokes department (to prepare a move against the real opposition) or to shake the credibility of *Der Spiegel*'s very searching coverage of East German affairs?). But it could also be a genuine document whose authors cannot be held responsible for the wild claims made by *Der Spiegel*.

Rolf Mainz, a journalist sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment for publishing an article on the East German version of the *Berufsverbot*, was on trial again on 5 January for his "unyielding conduct" in prison (ie. he conducted his own defence and has been on hunger strike). He was sentenced to another 5 years imprisonment. His brother, Dr. Klaus Mainz, is also in jail.

Dr. Helmut Warmbier, a former lecturer in

Marxism-Leninism at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, has been arrested. According to well-informed sources he is a friend and comrade of Rudolf Bahro.

Eight young workers from Jena and Leipzig were expelled from the GDR in September 1977 for organizing protests against Wolf Biermann's expulsion. They are still waiting for their close relatives (spouses and children) to follow.

POLAND

Gierek Bids for Church's Hand by Peter Green

The much heralded Party Conference that took place in Warsaw on 9-10 January failed to produce a new strategy for tackling the country's economic crisis and revealed continuing disagreements within the Polish CP leadership on how best to move forward.

After the strikes of June 1976 and the government's cancellation of large food price increases, 5 Party commissions were set up to prepare new proposals on economic policy. But instead of unveiling the fruits of their work, Party leader Gierek avoided any reference to their recommendations in his key-note speech on 9 January. And at a press conference the following day, the official spokesperson admitted to Western correspondents that disagreements remained on how to proceed on the economic front.

Since June 1976 the economic situation has in many ways deteriorated. To relieve the food shortage and ease inflationary pressures the government had hoped to rapidly expand agricultural output. Yet Gierek told the conference that agricultural production has actually declined by 3½% since 1975. At the same time the government's industrial strategy is threatened by high debts to the capitalist world estimated at more than 10 billion dollars. Furthermore, the Party weekly *Polityka* estimates that the trade deficit with the West was cut in 1977 by only half the planned amount.

During the 3 months before the Party conference Gierek held an unprecedented number of meetings with foreign leaders in order to find external sources of economic support: he met the Shah of Iran, Brezhnev, Giscard d'Estaing, Schmidt, Andreotti and finally Carter. But the results seems to have been quite meagre. Even Carter's 200 million dollar loan will be immediately swallowed up in grain purchases from the USA - and this in a country which Gomulka had planned to be self-sufficient in grain by the early 1970s.

In comparison with the capitalist world, of



Cardinal Wyszyński: Gierek is "a righteous man" he told Mrs. Carter.

course, Poland's overall economic growth looks extraordinarily impressive: industrial production up 20% in two years. And the kind of cut in working class standards that the government would like to carry out to pay for its own past errors is probably not much greater than the cut in British workers' living standards since 1975. But ever since 1971 the Party leadership's bid for popular support has rested primarily on its promise of uninterrupted increases in living standards. Thus all the current economic difficulties pose a deeper overriding problem: how to avoid fresh outbreaks of popular discontent and find new sources of authority for the Party apparatus.

SHARP DISAGREEMENTS

In response to the problem, one influential current within the Party favours the introduction of a new package of liberalization measures. Such ideas have been canvassed cautiously by *Polityka*, whose editor, Rakowski, is believed to be closely in touch with Gierek's own circle. The most dramatic demonstration of this pressure for liberalization was the publication of a letter to Gierek signed by none other than Edward Ochab, the former leader of the Party ousted by Gomulka in

October 1956 and head of state in the early 1960's. The letter, also signed by such leading 1956 liberals as Morawski, puts forward a series of concrete proposals: to give new life to the so-called Democratic Party and United Peasant Party -- up to now purely appendages of the CP nationally; the reanimation of Parliament, the trade unions, the local authorities and the organs of "workers' management" in the factories. The letter also calls for the freeing of the "sane forces" of society which at present cannot express themselves because of the "bureaucratic machine which provokes hypocrisy and the absence of initiative in the lower rungs of the Party organization". Calling for respect for the rights of minorities, the letter repeats a formula used by the Dubcek leadership in Czechoslovakia in 1968, declaring that the leading role of the Party should be maintained but that it should be based not on institutional controls but on mass popular support.

Against such liberalizing currents, powerful forces within the Party apparatus wish to find a political basis for a more rigidly authoritarian political regime. In Czechoslovakia or East Germany such currents still talk about 'proletarian internationalism' and the link with the USSR, but such slogans have long since been replaced in Poland by appeals to chauvinistic nationalism, anti-semitism, Polish Catholicism and anti-intellectual sentiment.

The strength of this current within the Party apparatus was shown in December when *Zycie Warszawy*, the daily of the Warsaw Party Committee, attacked Rakowski, the editor of *Polityka*, for "revisionism" in an article on decentralization. *Zycie Warszawy* could have used such anathemas against a man so close to Gierek himself only with the backing of forces at the very summit of the Party.

A NEW LINK WITH THE CHURCH

Gierek's political stance at the Party conference indicated an attempt to steer a

middle course between these two wings of the Party hierarchy. In a gesture towards the Party liberals he called for the **establishment of local committees to combat bureaucratic abuses, adding that no** problem was too sensitive for open debate in Poland today. But both these ideas are likely to meet with a good deal of scepticism while all the controls from above remain in force.

Much more serious are Gierek's efforts to establish a new basis for relations with the Catholic hierarchy. On 29 October Gierek had a meeting with Cardinal Wyszynski -- the first such publicized meeting for many years. Then at the beginning of December the Party leader met the Pope in the Vatican. A witness at the meeting told the **International Herald Tribune** (16 December 1977) that Wyszynski "virtually wrote the Pope's speech, if not that of Mr. Gierek".

The Polish Church has flourished as a popular force since the 1940s. The number of monks and nuns per head of the population is, for example, considerably

higher than before the War. Wealthy, and able to practise its religious activities throughout 11,000 parishes, the Catholic Church maintains a University of Lublin and has considerable influence within the intelligentsia and other layers of the population. At the same time the Church hierarchy has not been notable for progressive views on social matters. While attempting to place itself at the head of popular movements for greater political rights, the hierarchy has, in the past, used such movements as bargaining counters in its efforts to wring extra institutional privileges for itself from the Party leadership.

Wyszynski gave an indication of what he wants on this occasion when he returned from Rome in December. He called for greater respect for Christian moral values, especially in the schools, suggesting that he wants the Party to sanction religious education in state schools and calling for greater church access to the media. On this basis, the Church hierarchy would presumably cease to support the secular

forces of the opposition outside the Party.

A sign that negotiations are quite far advanced was given when Mrs. Carter met the wily Cardinal: Wyszynski told her that Mr. Gierek is "a righteous man".

A new agreement with the Church would accomplish a number of tasks for the Party leadership: it would buttress the regime's political base, without requiring any significant liberalization of political structures; it would give the leadership some extra support from Western governments, and it would also give a freer hand in dealing with the more left-wing oriented currents within the unofficial opposition. There are indeed some indications that before the formation of the Movement for Human Rights last spring, the Party leadership was looking for ways of increasing the weight of more Catholic and nationalist-oriented currents within the opposition, in the knowledge that such currents would be amenable to pressure from the Church hierarchy in the event of an agreement with Wyszynski.

Activists Debate Strategy

[Documents from Eastern Europe containing debates and discussions within the opposition movements in these countries are very rare. Generally we can follow only the results of such discussions in the form of protest actions, or statements or declarations. The difficulties involved in such discussions are seen today in Czechoslovakia where the police authorities are attempting to use various provocations to hamper the discussion of alternative policies within the Charter movement (see the section on Czechoslovakia in this issue). It is a sign of the strength of the Polish opposition that the following discussion on crucial issues of policy can be published including the names of the participants.]

The round table discussion published for the first time in English took place in Warsaw last November. Detailed notes of the discussion were made by Pietro Veronese, a representative from the Venice Biennale, a cultural festival which this year concentrated on Eastern Europe and the USSR. The version of the discussion printed here is an English translation of the Italian transcript circulated by the Biennale organisers.

Jacek Kuron has been well known amongst socialists in the West since the publication of his and Karol Modzelewski's "Open Letter to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party" in the mid-1960s. After serving a prison sentence that resulted from his Open Letter, Kuron was imprisoned again following the repression of the student movement in 1968. He has played a leading role in the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) since its foundation in the autumn of 1976.

Jan Jozef Lipski is a very well known Polish literary historian and critic. He was a leading figure in the events of 1956 in Poland and has been one of the most prominent members of KOR since its foundation.

Antoni Macierewicz is a young historian who has been very active in the KOR and the Polish opposition over the last 2 years, losing his university job as a result of his involvement in the opposition. Along with Lipski and Kuron he was arrested last July for some weeks until the Government declared an amnesty.

Urszula Doroszevska and Ludwig Dorn are students and

members of the Students Solidarity Committee (SKS) in Warsaw; they are also editors of the independent student journal Indeks. Notes are supplied by Labour Focus to assist those not familiar with recent events in Poland. Translation is by Patrick Camiller for Labour Focus.]

Veronese: In the West, the events of the last few months in Poland are seen as the newest and most promising development anywhere in Eastern Europe. For the first time, it is said, intellectual protest has managed to find roots in social struggles; the demands for bread and for freedom have fused in a single movement of struggle; and an alliance between workers and intellectuals has at last been achieved. The phenomenon of dissidence has passed into an opposition properly so called. All this is expressed in the appearance of KOR, first as a "workers' defence committee", today as a "committee of social self-defence".

Do you share this assessment? Is the alliance holding up, or will it exhaust itself as this year's wave of social struggles comes to an end and as anti-working-class repression slackens (even if it may burst out again whenever new explosions occur)? More generally, what problems are facing it? What are its perspectives?

Macierewicz: The first signs of the sudden qualitative leap made by the Polish opposition may be found in the diffuse protests against the promulgation of the new constitution in winter 1975-76. A student protest letter of December 1975 brought to light the opinions of a very broad section of the population, not just the narrow circle of dissident intellectuals. Until then, it had been thought that criticism was restricted to a small group. But it is now clear that it had become an endemic phenomenon.

This generalization of discontent is at the origin of the links between workers and intellectuals. It was also necessary to overcome a psychological problem: the regime has always tried to inculcate into both the workers and the intellectuals the idea that their interests are mutually antagonistic. Thus, in 1968, the workers reacted badly to the student movement, while the intellectuals did not move during the great strikes of December



Participants in last summer's hunger strike against the arrest of KOR members. Back row, left to right: J. Geresz (student), O. Szechter (father of Adam Michnik), J. Szeszna (co-editor of the *Information Bulletin*), B. Blajfer (sociologist), Z. Palka (worker), E. Kloc (worker), K. Switoni (father of 2 of those in jail), B. Torunczyk (co-editor of *Zapla*), B. Cywinski (co-editor of *Znak*), Danuta Chomiczka (wife of jailed worker). Bottom row, left to right: H. Wujec (physicist), F. Hanke-Ligowski, T. Mazowiecki (editor of Catholic monthly *Wlcz*), L. Chomiczka (sister of arrested worker), S. Baranczak (poet, and member of KOR).

1970 in Szczecin and Gdansk. In both cases there was the same divorce.

When the decision was taken to set it up, the KOR was not expected to go beyond a few protest meetings and petitions. A huge movement of social solidarity appeared virtually impossible, given the thirty years of profound conditioning accomplished by the regime. In common with any opposition initiative, the KOR ran the risk that it would expose itself without obtaining a favourable response from society.

However, it met with an enormous and powerful response, which expressed a very broad measure of agreement. KOR became a genuine institution, characterized by its originality and independence, and able both to exert pressure on the regime and secure islands of freer life removed from the ever-present control of the authorities. Today, for the first time, the opposition no longer concentrates on protests to the government, but addresses itself directly to society.

When I was in prison, I read in the papers I managed to get that the regime was trying to organize workers' protest meetings against the KOR. But it had no success in this. Nor was it possible to collect workers' signatures for petitions requesting suppression of the KOR. You can imagine the organizational apparatus, the pressures and blackmail employed by the Party and the official unions in order to achieve this end. In 1968, they had been successful against the student movement. But this time they failed. This indicates the change in the relationship between the two social groups. Personally, I am convinced that the problems we are talking about here are common to the workers and the intellectuals.

Veronese: Can you give some examples?

Macierewicz: First of all, we have to fill the gap - the striking void - that the regime has created in our knowledge of Polish history, both recent and past.

Veronese: Do you think there is a social demand for this?

Macierewicz: And how! There is a very broad demand.

Doroszewska: There is also a demand for information in the narrowest sense of the term. During the workers' strikes of 1970, it was precisely lack of that elementary link of information that made it difficult to continue the strikes, to take up the slogans elsewhere, to form a solidarity movement, and so on.

Macierewicz: Of course, there is also that practical and immediate aspect, involving the communication of experiences, etc. But there is not only the utilitarian question: how can the strikes be utilized? More generally, these two social groups lack awareness of what they are, what they have done and are doing, and of where their roots lie. The entire history of People's Poland has been, and still is, falsified. Another problem that concerns all Poles, and not this or that class, is the fact that the most basic aspects of social organization are not revealed. We do not know the way in which our police or judicial apparatus functions. And no-one knows the data about our economic independence of the Soviet Union. According to a popular joke, the pipelines bringing Soviet oil to Poland carry back the pigs and cows we produce. That is the level of our ignorance: we know nothing else. This lack of self-awareness of Polish society is a problem that affects everyone, whatever the class he or she belongs to.

Lipski: The totalitarian communist system contradicts the interests of the whole of society - of all classes, social layers and groups. Each one has interests, reference-points and a hierarchy of values that differ from the ones imposed by the system. This explains why people were for a long time intuitively aware that resistance is a general phenomenon in Poland.

Still, they were divided and unable to communicate with one another, because the character of unsatisfied interests varied according to social group or class. And where their interests did coincide, the manner in which their frustration was felt and acted upon was nevertheless different. For example, passive general resistance to Soviet domination had existed for some time in Poland. If it did not rise to a movement, and if it lacked channels of communication, this was because the various social groups attached different weight to our economic, political and cultural dependence on the USSR. The student movement of '68 tried to change things with the slogan "without freedom, no bread". But it remained too abstract, and therefore ineffective.

The great strikes of 1970 created the opportunity that was to be repeated in 1976. But the massive repression that followed the ferment of 1968 (isolation, prison, terror) prevented the intellectuals from establishing links with the strikers.

However, the idea was implanted once and for all that a fresh explosion of social struggles would require vigilance and solidarity on the part of intellectuals. Thus, when repression again struck the workers after the 1976 strikes, a section of the intelligentsia already knew what to do.

The task of the opposition was to forge a common language - to express the kind of language and positions that would win the workers' trust. Through its success, this experience provides the outline for a new form of solidarity between Polish workers and intellectuals against the totalitarian system.

The problem for the intelligentsia is that the 1976 strikes and the subsequent struggles have not thrown up an oppositional leadership among the workers. If strike committees or another kind of leadership had been established, the development, extension and capacity of the movement would have been much more significant. However, the goal has been reached: the intelligentsia is now in a position to take up political themes and objectives other than its own.

I believe and hope that this step forward has greatly increased the chances for bridging the entire gulf that separates the two social groups. But a lot of very hard work needs to be done in order to achieve this.

Dorn: I would like to consider the problem from the point of view of the student movement. It seems to me that the workers' strike: really threatened the regime with difficulties only when they gave place to big demonstrations, ending up in riots or violent clashes

Conversely, student unrest always has a national echo; and even if it remains limited, its role as a signal or symbol leads the authorities to treat it as a serious development.

Look at some recent events: about a month ago, there was a workers' strike in Pabianice. It was reported in *Robotnik* (1) after it had become known through the BBC and Radio Free Europe. In fact, it had no impact on the general political situation in the country. By contrast, although the mid-May events in Krakow (2) were relatively minor, they had a much greater national resonance than the Pabianice strike.

Macierewicz: How can you compare a strike involving 3,000 workers, who limited themselves to staying away from work, with a street demonstration of 10,000 students in a big city?

Dorn: Maybe. All I did was suggest that the student movement may provide workers, too, with a model of an initiative at the social and political level. The SKS (3) action may prove exemplary, thanks to the network of information and contacts that is being created: it may show that independent, alternative forms of debate and action are possible even within a totalitarian system.

I would suggest that the students, who are also able to draw on a greater freedom of movement and initiative, could play a great role, even from the organizational point of view, in stabilizing and maintaining those links with the workers that are the very life-blood of KOR.

Doroszewska: I don't agree. The workers' revolts constitute a much greater danger for the regime than any student movement. The student demonstrations proved to be more spectacular, because we dispose of broader contacts and because we are closer to the sources of information. But this is possible because we form part of the social elite. Our interests are less sharply opposed to the regime. Even in the highly official Institute of Political Studies there are students with unorthodox ideas. Even if they are politically rebellious, students always have the option of making a career.

Kuron: Let us turn to the basic problem: the worker-intellectual alliance. When people talk of workers in the West, they imply the notion of an organized, if not homogeneous, social group. In Poland, the workers number 12 million physical persons, each of whom is alone and reckons only with himself. KOR has contact with many workers, but they are so many isolated individuals. Some workers have signed articles in *Robotnik*, and we shall be in contact with 100, 500 or 1,000 individuals: but what is that out of a total of 12 million? The real problem facing us is that of workers' organization: we are working with that in view, but it is a huge task. The only existing organizations are the official trade unions - a pure instrument of control by the regime, usually ashamed. In only two cases is the title "worker" brought to the fore. First, the Party sticks to the definition of itself as a "workers' party", and any apparatchik speaking in public will say, "we workers". Secondly, the word is used when it helps to get certain facilities from the bureaucracy.

Ultimately, the problem arises from the fact that when people talk of intellectuals they know what they are referring to, but when they talk of workers, it has to be admitted that they don't know what they are referring to.

Macierewicz: Things are more complex than that. In my opinion, you pose the problem falsely. There were cases this year when workers came to us already organized. It happened that while we were looking for strikers one by one, three delegates of 65 striking workers made contact with us. They expressed the position of an organized social group. In that respect, they operated in exactly the same way as the intelligentsia.

The problem is not a contrast between workers' lack of organization and the organization of intellectuals as a social group. It is rather that the two groups play quite distinct roles in social relations, and that the interests they express are different. Hence the difficulty of forming an alliance.



Radom Party headquarters burning during the workers' demonstration in June 1978.

Kuron: If by political collaboration between intellectuals and workers is meant collaboration between a social group of 3,000 individuals and one of 12 million, then it should be made quite clear that this does not exist. There is collaboration within the narrow orbit of the opposition - it works very well and there are many well-known examples of it.

The workers lack the organization with which to define their interests and aspirations as a class. That is the real problem. The only form of organization they have created was dependent on the movement of struggle, rather as KOR was born in the course of events. To establish organized and permanent collaboration is to push ahead with what we have already - that is, for the time being, only with individual workers, who count only as individuals.

Veronese: Do you think that KOR has the means to strengthen and organize itself, and to extend its influence sufficiently to be able to take the initiative in social struggles? Or do you think that these will again break out with an unforeseen strike, and that the role of KOR will, as before, be to give it full support?

Dorn: This can in no way be foreseen or programmed. My own aim is that KOR will acquire sufficient weight and prestige to enable any fresh explosion of social struggles to go beyond economic demands and take up more general political objectives such as the right to organize independent trade unions, greater democratic control, etc.

Macierewicz: I too think that we cannot make predictions. The state of society is such that a pub brawl can at any moment spark off just about anything. Our hope is that KOR will manage to play a catalyzing and coordinating role, and that it will be able to organize the tempo and goals in such a way as to ensure success. For the moment, everything hinges on the common sense of those in power. Depending on their policy, they may or may not arouse potentially terrible social explosions with unforeseeable consequences. Unforeseeable, because they may not remain limited to Poland. And that is something of which we are all aware.

Footnotes.

(1) In August, workers in an electric light bulb factory in Pabianice, a town near Lodz, struck against a wage-cut. *Robotnik* (The Worker) is a fortnightly samizdat journal tackling the problems facing the working class in Poland. On the Pabianice strike and *Robotnik* see *Labour Focus* No.5, page 17.

(2) Dorn is referring to the student demonstrations following the apparent murder of Stanislaw Pyjas, a Krakow student activist and KOR supporter. The march through Krakow in memory of Pyjas involved some 10,000 students. At this time the Student Solidarity Committee was formed. See *Labour Focus* no.3 on the May events.

(3) For the Declaration of the Student Solidarity Committee (SKS) see *Labour Focus* no.5.

SOVIET UNION

Arrested Workers Protest Corruption

by Helen Jamieson

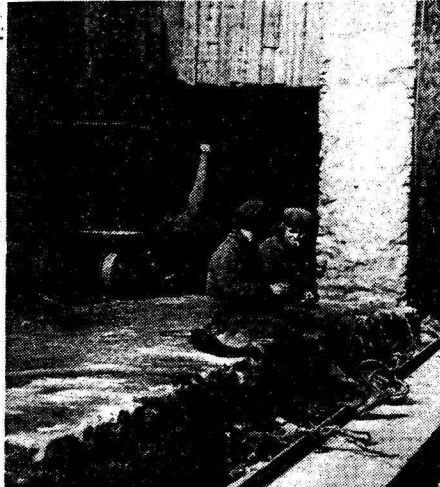
At the beginning of November 1977, 72 Soviet workers from 42 cities signed an open letter protesting against being sacked from their jobs for criticizing bad working conditions and corruption.

The signatories declare: "We are part of a vast army of the Soviet unemployed, thrown out of the gates of Soviet enterprises for attempting to exercise the right to complain, the right to criticize, the right to freedom of speech. We attempted to publicly criticize the plundering of socialist property, bad working conditions, low pay, high injury rates, and the raising of production norms leading to waste and low quality production."

Details of the cases of some of the signatories were publicized by 7 of the workers at a press conference for foreign correspondents in Moscow. The evidence which they presented was reported by the **Financial Times** on 8 December.

The 72 signatories made contact with one another while waiting in queues to present their complaints to the authorities. Through discussion they realized that their 'individual' problems were of a more general character, so they decided to act collectively.

One of the most striking cases was that of the organizer of these workers, a 45 year-old miner named Vladimir Klebanov. Having worked in a Donbas coal mine for 16 years, he became troubled that miners frequently had to work 12-hour, rather than 6-hour, shifts in order to fulfill the plan. He was also concerned about the accident rate: in his pit alone there were 12-15 deaths and 700 injuries every year. Thus, in 1968, when he became a shift foreman, he refused to demand overtime or to allow the miners to work in unsafe conditions.



Donbas miners taking a lunch-break: Klebanov is now in a psychiatric prison for protesting about miners' conditions in the Donbas last November.

For this basic "trade union" activity Klebanov was charged with slandering the state and spent 4½ years in a mental hospital!

After he exercised his right to make these violations known, by organizing the open letter and speaking to Western correspondents, he was re-arrested on 19 December 1977 and once again put into a Moscow psychiatric hospital. (**Le Monde**, 22 December 1977).

A 39 year-old locksmith, Anatoli Poznyakov, was earning about £22 a week when he requested a pay rise. After appeals against the expected refusal, he was thrown out of his job and now lives on a medical disability allowance of about £6 and on his mother's pension.

Nadezhda Kurakina, a waitress, had worked for 25 years in a "closed"

restaurant for high-level Party members. She said that the waitresses' pay had been docked for crockery which was alleged to have been broken but which had in fact been stolen by the managers themselves. When she complained about this in 1975 at a Party meeting, she was immediately sacked and has been unemployed ever since.

Valentin Poplavski (44) used to be head of the housing maintenance department at a factory in Klimovsk outside Moscow. He refused to reprimand a woman who complained about the use of company funds for drinking parties. For this he was fired and subsequently beaten up by the militia at home in front of his family. On filing a complaint, he was given 15 days in jail and his wife was sacked from a job she'd had for 18 years.

The most recent information has been that Evgenii Nikolaev, a worker, at whose home the meeting with correspondents took place, has been summoned to a psychiatric clinic.

Who Runs Soviet Trade Unions ?

A good indication of the real role of trade unions in the USSR is the fact that the last Chairman of the All-Union Central Trade-Union Council (the Soviet TUC) was the former head of the KGB, the Soviet secret police. Shelepin, who was removed from his trade union post last year, headed the Soviet police apparatus from 1958 to 1967. From 1967 to 1976 he ran the trade unions.

The new trade union boss in the USSR is Shibaev. His background is less ominous than that of Shelepin's. But like Shelepin, he did not have one day's experience as a trade union leader before getting the top trade union post.

Shibaev is 62 years old, a relatively 'young' man compared with the ruling gerontocracy. A graduate of the Gorky State University from its physical-mathematical department, he began his political career in a large plant in Novosibirsk, and was subsequently promoted to plant manager in the Rostov and then Saratov districts. In 1959 he was made First Secretary of the Saratov Oblast Party Committee, and has held top Party posts since then. This year he was elected to the job of trade union chairman.

By Bohdan Krawchenko

New Forces Back Human Rights



Kronid Lubarsky pictured in London shortly after he left Moscow in October 1977.

In spite of the KGB's relentless pursuit of members of the Helsinki Monitoring groups (see page 18), Kronid Lubarsky, a Soviet human rights campaigner recently arrived in the West, reports that new activists are joining the campaign for democratic rights in the USSR. Lubarsky points out that the movement has widened, reaching areas of Soviet society far beyond the small circles of intellectuals in the main cities to which the movement was reduced in the early 1970s. In a long interview with **Labour Focus** which will be published in our next issue, Lubarsky surveys the entire history of the movement for democratic rights since the mid-1960s.

Vladimov: A Workers' Writer in the USSR

by M.I. Holubenko

Georgii Vladimov is one of Russia's greatest contemporary writers. He is a prominent member of the so-called fourth generation of Soviet writers. He is also one of the few contemporary novelists in the USSR capable of effectively treating the workers' theme.

His novels, such as **Tri Minuty Molchaniya** (Three Minutes of Silence) serialized in 1969 in the literary journal *Novy Mir* depict the circumstances and problems of ordinary people, without propaganda clichés, with sustained honesty. For this reason his writing has found appeal with a large number of readers. Among those readers are many workers who, denied the opportunity to speak for themselves, were glad to have found a talented tribune on their behalf.

Vladimov first encountered workers not by his own choosing. In 1952 and 53, when Stalin unleashed the campaigns against Jews in the 'Doctors' Plot', his mother, a Jew, was arrested. The future writer had just completed his studies in law. Before he could begin work in his profession he was asked to renounce his mother as an "enemy of the people". He refused, and went to work as a stevedore. The workers' theme became a very real part of his life.

His first novel, **Bolshaya Ruda**, was published in the 1960s. But the writer later fell into disfavour because of his protest against restrictions on creative freedom in the USSR. In an open letter to the Presi-

dium of the Writers' Congress in 1967, Vladimov pointed out that Soviet literature could not continue to survive, grow, and be relevant to society without solving a number of urgent problems. An artist deprived of creative freedom is no more, he said, than "a petty official in the department of elegant words variation, going over the old ground of newspaper editorials". Since then Vladimov has repeatedly spoken out against violations of human rights in the USSR in general and against infringements of creative freedom in particular. On 11 October this year, Vladimov resigned from the USSR Writers' Union in protest against the expulsion of a number of non-conformist writers by the Union's board. In the statement (which he released to foreign correspondents in Moscow), he expressed the opinion that members of the Writers' Union who remain silent in the face of the expulsion from the organization of writers such as Lydia Chukovskaya, Lev Kopelev, Vladimir Kornilov and Vladimir Voinovich, are, in effect, merely stooges of the regime. Vladimov stressed that he did not have any intention of emigrating to the West.

In reply to a Western correspondent's question, why in a so-called socialist country there is such a poverty of significant literature about the working class in the USSR, Vladimov remarked:

"There are no heroes among the workers. Our literature about workers portrays

people who do not exist. The problem is that no one in workers' circles has roots, no one has a sense of responsibility or satisfaction about his work. The trouble is that nothing depends on the workers. In Sweden or in France they can go on strike. They are conscious of their rights.

I wanted to reflect all of this in **Tri Minuty Molchaniya** -- why the common workers drink, why they are deprived of everything, why they live as they do -- not as people, not as brothers."

Vladimov's resignation from the Writers' Union is a courageous step that is consistent with his integrity as a writer. A few days after his resignation, it was reported that he replaced Valentin Turchin, who has emigrated, as head of the unofficial Moscow branch of Amnesty International. Following his resignation, Vladimov received 'anonymous' letters criticising his decision. Whether the dark clouds forming over Vladimov's head will engulf him in a net of administrative-police reprisals remains to be seen.

His case, however, is an important one, and it symbolizes the best of what honest writers in the USSR stand for. In attempting to liberate the creative process, writers like Vladimov wanted to secure the right of literary creation to serve as an instrument of social criticism. The outcome of the struggle between the regime and such writers as Vladimov is not without interest to the Soviet working class.

No Let-up in Drive against Helsinki Groups by Helen Jamieson

In Moscow, three of the founding leaders of the Helsinki Monitoring Group, Yuri Orlov, Alexander Ginzburg and Anatoli Shcharansky, are still being held without trial in detention 10 to 11 months after their arrests. The trials should have taken place, according to Soviet law, within nine months of arrest, but recently Shcharansky's family has been notified by the KGB that the period of investigation has been lengthened for another 6 months. Presumably the same applies to Orlov and Ginzburg though families have not been officially informed.

With the creation of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups in Moscow (Russia), Kiev (Ukraine), Erevan (Armenia), Tbilisi (Georgia) and Vilnius (Lithuania), there was a qualitative change in the opposition movement, in that for the first time there was a unity of purpose between the dissidents in all the various republics - to demand the implementation of human rights. Yuri Orlov allegedly provoked the special anger of the authorities by

successfully unifying the various hitherto disparate movements into a single campaign.

Anatoli Shcharansky had been a leading activist for Jewish religious and cultural rights as well as the right to emigrate. He then became a member of the Helsinki Group, with special responsibility for the question of Soviet Jews. His wife, Natalya, emigrated to Israel the day after their marriage 3 years ago - he was not allowed to join her.

In early March the Soviet press began to link Shcharansky with agents of Western imperialism. S.L. Lipavsky, an ex-dissident, wrote an open letter to *Izvestiya* alleging that Shcharansky and other Jewish activists were working with the CIA, and that they were involved in espionage. Shcharansky, a 29 year old computer scientist was then arrested on 15 March 1977 on unspecified charges. The Soviet press denounced Shcharansky as a traitor, and said that he would be tried for espionage for the CIA. Prosecution under Article 64(a) for treason carries a death sentence.

During December, Shcharansky's mother reported that she was having great difficulties in getting defence counsel. 25 lawyers had refused to defend him, some of them had said they would consider it if he pleaded guilty. The only lawyer, Dina Kaminskaya, (who was defence counsel at many political trials in the late 60s) who had agreed to defend him was expelled in December.

While in Britain the campaign for the release of Shcharansky has been dominated by the Zionist movement which links such issues with an eagerness to expand the numbers of Jewish immigrants to Israel, in France the Left has given a lead. A Committee for the Defence of Anatoli Shcharansky was established in Paris last May involving such leading left-wing intellectuals as Jean Elleinstein of the Communist Party, Jean-Paul Sartre, Laurent Schwartz, Simone de Beauvoir and many Socialist Party leaders. The Committee is campaigning for the Soviet authorities to "free Shcharansky and give him a visa to enable him to be reunited with his wife."

MORE ARRESTS

The Soviet leadership has so far resisted such appeals and has indeed stepped up its drive to crush the Helsinki groups. On 12 December 1977, the KGB arrested the fifth member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group (Rudenko and Tykhy have already been severely sentenced, Matusyevych and Marinovych are still awaiting trial). Lev Lukyanenko, a 50 year old lawyer, was first arrested in 1961 for discussing the creation of the Ukrainian Workers' and Peasants' Union - he received a death sentence which was commuted to 15 years imprisonment. Just released in 1977,

he immediately became a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and has signed a number of documents, and written one himself concerning religious persecution although he himself is an atheist.

During December also, the first repressive moves were taken against the Helsinki Monitoring Group in Erevan, Armenia. Two members were arrested: Robert Nazarian and Chaguin Aroutiounian, a worker who recently joined saying he considered workers had a responsibility to support these activities.

In Moscow, the KGB seems to be resorting

to the taking of hostages in order to achieve their aims. Alexander Podrabinek, author of **Punitive Medicine**, is at the moment the main compiler and distributor of information concerning repression. He has been told by the KGB that he would get 10 years imprisonment if he didn't emigrate, but he has repeatedly refused to do so. On 29 December his brother, Kirill Podrabinek, was arrested in a flimsy frame-up (cartridges were "found" in his flat) and has been told that he will only be released if he agrees to emigrate with all of his family. He has gone on hunger strike in protest against this.

Klymchuk Released

Andrij Klymchuk, the British student arrested in the Soviet Ukraine on charges of smuggling anti-Soviet literature and money into the USSR last summer, was released on 5 January. Klymchuk told the British press that he had been asked by an Irishman called Dickson to take in some money and some literature on film and he had agreed to do so. The KGB was evidently waiting for him and arrested him in the act of handing the material to a man in Lviv, Ukraine.

A defence campaign was formed with the National Union of Students backing to

campaign for Klymchuk's immediate release, on the grounds that taking political propaganda across frontiers could not be considered a crime. According to the **Guardian** report of 4 January the NUS campaign had played a part in persuading the Soviet authorities to release Klymchuk.

In the meantime, Klymchuk had admitted guilt on Soviet television and the KGB had used his arrest to round up about 20 Ukrainian dissidents. It is still not clear whether Klymchuk was the victim of a

direct KGB provocation or whether the right-wing Ukrainian emigre organisation in Britain -- itself heavily infiltrated for many years by Soviet agents -- put Klymchuk up for the job.

The effect of the arrest of Klymchuk in Britain has been to make large numbers of students aware of the existence of the Ukrainian national problem and it will hopefully lead to the intensification of defence activity for victims of repression in the Ukraine.

GRIGORENKO'S TRIP TO WEST

Pyotr Grigorenko, his wife Zinaida, and stepson Oleg left Moscow on 30 November 1977 for a six month visit to New York. The writers Lev Kopelev and Vladimir Voinovich saw them off at the airport.

Pyotr Grigorenko, a former Major-General in the Red Army, and now one of the leading Soviet oppositionists, wished to go to the United States for medical treatment, and also to visit his son, Andrei. At the end of six months, Grigorenko intends to return to Moscow.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIGIL

On 10 December the KGB detained or placed under house arrest 22 people, including Vladimov, Podrabinek, and the wives of Orlov and Ginzburg, in an attempt to prevent the annual demonstration to mark human rights.

In spite of that, International Human Rights Day was marked by a silent vigil of 25 people in Pushkin Square.

Another, but this time successful, attempt to prevent a demonstration was made by the KGB by detaining 15-20 Jews who were going to demonstrate on 24 December outside the Lenin Library. This is done annually in commemoration of the 1970 trial of Jews who hijacked a plane in order to escape.

PSYCHIATRIC ABUSE

The Moscow unofficial Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes appealed in November to the World Psychiatric Association to exert pressure on the Soviet authorities to put an end to psychiatric abuse and gave examples of new cases of internment, reports **The Times** of 23 December 1977.

Anatoli Ponomaryov, an engineer, was first interned in a Leningrad mental hospital in 1971 for circulating samizdat. He was interned a second time for applying to emigrate, and this time met Dr. Marina Voikhanskaya who diagnosed him as sane. (See **Labour Focus** no.4) He has been interned for the third time in early November 1977.

Vladimir Rozhdestvov, at his trial in November 1977, was charged with listening to foreign broadcasts, agitating about the low wages of workers, and "extolling the Western way of life". A Kaluga court sentenced him to compulsory treatment in a mental hospital for an indefinite period.

On 6 October, Mikhail Kukobaka was interned in a mental hospital in Mogilev, Belorussia, and given compulsory drug treatment. The head of his ward, Dr. Nadezhda Drapkina, explained his internment by referring to the decorations in his room: "To put up an icon and photographs of people like Sakharov and

Grigorenko goes against our generally accepted norms of behaviour and therefore indicates mental deviance."

Other new cases were those of Yuri Vivtash, interned in Dnepropetrovsk, and Galina Kukarskikh and Vladimir Veretenikov - both in a Leningrad mental hospital.

DZHEMILEV/PARADZHANOV RELEASED!

Mustafa Dzhemilev, the Crimean Tartar leader, who was imprisoned in 1974 for his relentless campaign against the official policy of discrimination and oppression of the Crimean Tartars, has recently been released and is presently living in Tashkent with his family. Although it had been rumoured that he would be charged once again as soon as his term was up, he was doubtless saved further imprisonment through the vigorous campaigning of the New York based Committee to Defend Dzhemilev as well as various other committees and individuals in North America and Western Europe.

L'Humanite of 3 January 1978 reported that film director, Sergo Paradzhanov, has very recently been released from prison, after serving more than 3 years of his 5 year sentence. He is presently living in Tbilisi with his family, and it is unknown whether he will be allowed to return to Kiev and to once again take up his profession.

YUGOSLAVIA

Transport Workers' Strike in Zagreb - by Vasa Pelagic

[Labour Focus on Eastern Europe has received the following article from a correspondent in Yugoslavia. The transport workers' strike described below became widely known throughout the country. The city where it took place, Zagreb, is the capital of Croatia. Translation is by Michele Lee.]

The commanding officer of a police station and his second-in-command were brought to trial in Zagreb on 11 December 1977, charged with abusing their powers by physically maltreating the driver of the tram which came into collision with their police car. This trial was the result of a strike by the workers of ZET (Zagreb Electric Tramways), which was organized to protest against the brutal treatment of their comrade by the police. The incident may appear trivial but in fact it contains a number of characteristic features which would be worth examining.

The story started on 28 October 1977 when a collision took place between a tram and a luxury police car. The incident took place in Ilica, Zagreb's main street, at 7.30 a.m., during the morning rush hour. Furious with the damage inflicted on their smart car (although the accident was caused by the police driver) the policemen started to maltreat the tram driver in front of a large crowd of onlookers. They subsequently dragged him to the police station where he suffered serious bodily harm. (It was reported in the daily *Vjesnik* of 12 December 1977 that the driver obtained a doctor's certificate confirming his injuries). (1)

Left to public apathy and the fact that the incident was naturally not reported anywhere, this event would have been forgotten. But three days later it resurfaced in a way that was impossible to ignore. On Monday morning, during the rush hour, all trams stopped working (trams are the basic form of public transport in Zagreb). Those workers of ZET who work in OUR *Tramvaj* [OUR - Basic Organization of Associated Labour] went on strike in protest at police brutality towards one of their fellow workers, with the demand that those responsible should be punished. This strike, in which several hundred workers participated, caused "about 200,000 to be late for their work" or "caused damage to the economy worth 10 million dinars" (about £300,000), according to *Vjesnik* of 12 December 1977. Of course, a more important effect was that the strike became a major topic of debate all over the town, as did the incident that provoked it in the first place. (2)

As soon as they learnt of the strike, political leaders from Zagreb and Croatia rushed to ZET and organized a meeting with the workers. The workers' demands were immediately accepted and according to the testimonies of some workers, they were even promised a wage increase, something that was not even demanded. So, only two hours after it started, the strike achieved its aims and was ended. The speed with which the policemen's trial was begun, especially if their status is taken into account, indicates the efficacy of the strike as a method of pressure.

However, even more important than the strike itself are some of the implications to be derived from it. This was the first wide protest in Yugoslavia against police arrogance since the students' strikes of 1968-72. The fact that the strike erupted among public transport workers meant that it was immediately visible to the public. This strengthened the strike in a manifold fashion, in a country where there is a monopoly over news and information. The strike was presented to the whole of the working class as an effective method of struggle. It confirmed once again that a ruling class has to accede to the demands of an organized working class. At the beginning of the 70s the strike movement in Yugoslavia fell to a low point although it

did not altogether disappear. Frightened of a possible extension of social conflict, the ruling class attempted to isolate strikes in individual factories, firms, etc., readily accepting working-class economic demands. But this demonstration of working-class strength also blunted the keenness of the struggle. The strikes guaranteed *a priori*, so to speak, at least a measure of success. They became institutionalized in a way, as a semi-legal corrective of the economic status of the worker *within* a single factory, firm, etc. This fragmentation of the class is in accordance with its atomization which is due to the specific politico-economic organization of Yugoslav society. By partially becoming "co-owners" of the enterprises in which they work, different sections of the working class find themselves in an objectively antagonistic relationship, given their total lack of political power within the society as a whole. This situation made it more difficult for the working class to perceive itself as a class, to form itself into a class-for-itself. Fragmentation of the working class within society as a whole is reflected in the fragmentation of workers even within a single enterprise. This is because each larger enterprise is divided up into a number of smaller units which function economically independently of each other, so that the interests of workers, as partial co-owners, become differentiated. This explains the fact that the tram-workers participated in the strike mentioned above but not the bus workers who are organized independently within ZET.

But although the Yugoslav ruling class has considerably strengthened its position by this atomization of the working class, it does not feel completely secure, hence is prepared to make concessions. The strikes showed how the collective experience of class struggle spreads! Of key importance is a fact I have not mentioned so far: although they had no previous experience of strike activity, the workers of ZET organized their strike with superb efficiency. The very same day that their fellow worker was beaten up by the police, the workers started to discuss collective action. Realizing that their strike would not have much effect or publicity if it took place over a weekend, the workers decided to wait till Monday, when hundreds of thousands of people would then be affected by their action. Although a large number of people had to be told about the proposed strike in advance, the workers succeeded in blacking all prior information about it thereby forestalling any attempts to stop it. However, without the widest possible publicity, the effect of the strike, which was also conceived as a public protest against the behaviour of the police, would have been considerably minimized. This would be so even if the immediate demand, action against the culprits, was to be conceded. But eventually, though I repeat, even without prior experience, the workers quickly learnt how to act against the police. They were conscious that the police would try very hard after the strike to discover "trouble-makers", "saboteurs", etc. The workers were prepared for all this, ensuring by the way in which the action was organized and by their whole initiative that "they would not reveal anything".

Footnotes.

(1) This spirit of arrogance which prevails in the police force surfaced recently when a policeman in Slovenia, without any reason, shot three people, and also when recently in Serbia a plain clothes policeman killed a man.

(2) That Monday and Tuesday, all media (press, radio, TV) carried detailed news of the strike and its cause (four days later!) and the press has kept reporting on the progress of the policemen's trial. (*Vjesnik*, 2 December, 12 December, and 13 December, 1977.)

BRISTOL T.U.C. RESOLUTION

On 15 December 1977, the Bristol T.U.C. passed the following motion from COHSE 771 Barrow branch:

"This Bristol T.U.C. urges the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress to convey his dismay at the abuse of psychiatric medicine in Russia to the Soviet Minister in charge of health.

In an age where new innovations are freeing us once and for all from the straitjackets and padded cells of the past, it is appalling that psychiatric medicine should once again be made to appear disreputable by a country which widely uses it in the punishment of dissidents."

CHARTER PETITION

On 30 November, 1977, on the 25th anniversary of the infamous Slansky show trials, five Labour MPs attempted to deliver a petition to the Czechoslovak Embassy in London protesting about the continued harassment and arrest of Charter 77 supporters. (For the text of the petition, and the principal signatories, jointly circulated by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, see *Labour Focus* no.5) However, the five MPs - Norman Buchan, Eric Heffer, Lena Jeger, Ian Mikardo and Audrey Wise - were refused permission to deliver the petition.

BELGIAN CONFERENCE

The Belgian First of May Committee for Democratic Freedoms and Workers' Rights in Eastern Europe has organized an international forum on Eastern Europe for 20-21 January in Brussels. On Friday a meeting will be held on Czechoslovakia. The main Saturday session will focus on economic, social and ideological question in Eastern Europe today; on "dissidence" (participants to include Zdenek Mlynar, Jiri Pelikan, Vadim Bielotserkovski, Zhores Medvedev, Adam Michnik, Leonid Plyushch and Wolf Biermann); and on the Belgian Left and Eastern Europe.

The next issue of *Labour Focus* will carry a full report on the conference.

BENEATH THE SURFACE:
UNCENSORED POLAND.

Beneath the Surface: Uncensored Poland - an exhibition of documents and materials from the unofficial opposition in Poland, organized under the direction of the Workers' Defence Committee in Warsaw.

It is being held from 31 January to 11 February, 1977 at the Polish Social and Cultural Association, 238 King St., Hammersmith, London W.6. Times of exhibition: week-days: 1.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays: 10 a.m. to 9.30 p.m.

NEW DEFENCE BULLETIN

We have recently received a copy of a new *Information Bulletin* on democratic movements in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, produced by the Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, P.O. Box 6574, Station 'C', Edmonton, Alta., Canada. Issue No. 1 contains a number of original items as well as reprints from various general and specialized journals, including *Labour Focus*. Subscription rates are 5 dollars for individuals and 10 dollars for institutions.

"REPRESSION IN YUGOSLAVIA"

A booklet just published by the Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners contains detailed information on repression in Yugoslavia in recent years. A first chapter, surveying the constitutional provisions and actual level of respect for democratic rights, is followed by separate sections on the statistical breakdown of political prisoners; the 1974-76 trials of "Cominformists"; the 1975-76 trials of Croatian "nationalists"; the repression of the Albanian minority; sentences meted out for "slandering the social system"; trials of "Chetniks"; life in prisons; and a letter from a "psychiatric internee" in Belgrade prison.

Costing 30p, *Repression in Yugoslavia* is obtainable from left bookshops or from CDSPP, Box 88, 182 Upper St., London N1.

SOCIALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Eurocommunism and Eastern Europe by Vladimir Claude Fisera

[In previous issues, *Labour Focus* on Eastern Europe has published contributions from socialists of various persuasions on the attitude that should be taken towards the defence of human rights. (See articles by Jiri Pelikan in No.2, the *Praxis Group* in No.4, and Eric Heffer in No.5 of *Labour Focus*)

Below Vladimir Fisera argues that the "Eurocommunist" parties can be expected to take an increasingly strong stand on the issue and hopes that the socialist oppositions in Eastern Europe will help these parties to develop their positions further on this issue.

In future issues we hope to publish further contributions on this theme.]

"We take the responsibility of a full solidarity with the dissidents and the struggles of the working classes in Eastern Europe". That is what was said by Alfonso Comin, the representative of the Catalan Communist Party and member of the Central Committee of the Spanish CP last November. He was speaking at a colloquium organized by the Italian new left newspaper *Il Manifesto* in Venice on the theme "Power and Opposition in the Post-Revolutionary Societies". The Italian Communist MP Rosario Villari (member of the Central Committee) added that "one must openly recognize the full legitimacy of cultural and political dissent, recognize the validity of the forces which, in the midst of real socialism, demand a democratic reform of the state"; and he pointed at a "certain convergence between Eurocommunism and dissent". (1)

However briefly we will try to define what

Eurocommunism is and how it came about. Eurocommunism represents the present orientation of the three largest West European CPs -- the Italian (1,800,000 members and more than 31% of the electoral vote), the French (500,000 members and 18% of the vote) and the Spanish (9% of the vote). Eurocommunist positions were also expressed before 1975 by the small British CP and most Scandinavian CPs. Today they have been joined by the Irish, Belgian, Greek (Interior) and the non-European Japanese CP. The small Australian CP held similar positions even before all the others, but its small size and the fact that Moscow had severed all links with it reduced its impact on the world Communist movement.

More than an ideology, Eurocommunism is first and foremost a practice. It became a central political issue only when the big three Mediterranean CPs adopted it, and they did

so through gradual changes in orientation. A series of limited and isolated political choices, including on Eastern Europe, emerged without any immediate changes at the level of principles and ideology. In the summer-autumn of 1975 the mediterranean Big Three started to hold bilateral talks, issuing declarations which insisted on the following points:

-- democracy is consubstantial with socialism (Berlinguer), Eurocommunism is "the wish to get towards a socialist society which would enrich individual and collective freedoms, as well as human rights", as Carrillo, Secretary of the Spanish CP, put it. (2)

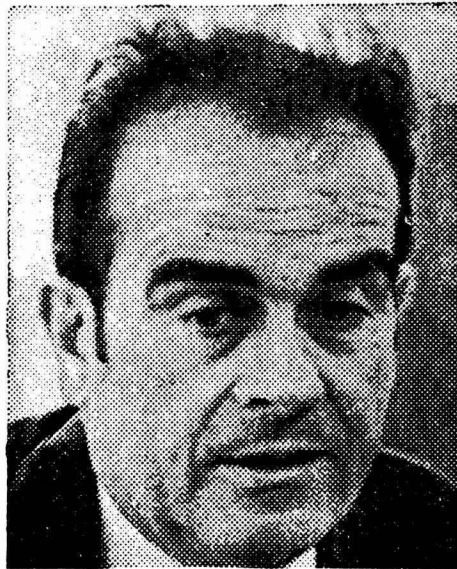
-- from this central proposition stemmed the following corollaries: pluralism, a bloc of classes in the transition and in the socialist period, rejection of the universal validity of the Soviet model as not applicable to the rest of the world, rejection of any centralization of the world communist movement, the wish to democratize and use the state in the transition to communism.

This new line has been adopted by CPs which are within reach of power in their own countries under conditions of crisis in the Western economy. Eurocommunism is fundamentally a relativisation more than a rejection of the communist dogma. Only one aspect is not relativized and that is precisely the insistence on human rights. This latter proposition counter-balances the other tenet according to which non-interference in the internal affairs of other CPs should be a central principle of the world communist movement. Collective freedoms are underlined not only as a necessary condition for the development of "primitive", "unfinished" revolutions in Eastern Europe, but also as an element of the dialectics of the seizure of power and of the transitional stage in the West. Not only can democracy be guaranteed at the legal, constitutional level: the Party cannot identify itself with the state. And if representative democracy will reffain in the West for a long time after the seizure of power, it must be combined with forms of direct democracy such as the workers' councils. (3)

This last idea was borrowed not only from West European experience-- the Italian trade unions, May 1968, etc. -- but also from the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak attempts at self-management. Hence the very deep understanding in the PCI of the value of the Czechoslovak experience of 1968: "The transformations which occurred in the leadership of the Party and the Government and the measures which were taken during these few months when a new political line could develop were met in Czechoslovakia with active support and provoked in the country a large development of democracy, due primarily to the creation of new organs which could represent the workers and also due to the decentralization of power. All this created new positive relations among the citizens, the Party and the socialist state."

(L'Unita, "8 Years since the intervention in Czechoslovakia", Editorial, 21 August 1976).

Indeed, one can say that the Italian and Spanish parties, unlike the French CP, have a strategy of gradual change within the existing national structures -- Christian Democracy, bourgeois state -- and in the international structures -- EEC, NATO. This strategy of gradual change without a break, without a



Georges Marchais, leader of the French Communist Party, expressed "profound disapproval of the trials [in Czechoslovakia] and of the sentences that followed".

'destabilisation' in international relations, forces these two parties to give more weight to the extra-parliamentary safeguards and additional reinforcements such as organization and the relative distancing of the Party/parties from government. This in turn makes them more outspoken than the French CP in their defence of working class dissent in Eastern Europe. It also makes them more critical of the military presence of the USSR in Eastern Europe. Carrillo said recently that he would not ask for the evacuation of US military bases from Spain before the Soviet bases were themselves evacuated from the East European countries (4).

The French CP, on the other hand, insists on condemning the USSR each time it shows its support for the French Gaullist foreign policy, arguing that the USSR should not interfere in other countries'/parties' internal affairs. This exposes the French CP to violent attacks from the hard-liners in Eastern Europe (such as the Czechoslovak leader Bilak or the leaders in the GDR and Bulgaria). The latter do not accept the implications of world stabilization for the internal affairs of their own countries. In this sense, the socialist opposition in Eastern Europe can be sure that the PCF will have to back it when it denounces the Soviet violation of the principles of the East Berlin Conference of European CPs (July 1975), and of the Helsinki Agreements (July 1976) which guarantee national sovereignty and

non-interference (5). On the other hand, the Italian CP insists on workers' rights in Poland (6) and the Spanish CP underlines that there should be more than one political party in the East European countries as "neither in Marx nor in Lenin would we find that socialism means the State with a single party" (7).

So the East European oppositions have been supported and will be more and more supported by the Eurocommunist parties, each party insisting on different aspects of the unacceptable face of socialism in Eastern Europe as all these aspects run against the image of communism that the Eurocommunists put forward to Western public opinion.

The socialist oppositions in Eastern Europe can also help the Eurocommunists to develop further their model: the oppressive apparatuses in Eastern Europe demonstrate that the violations of democratic rights in that part of the world are not just an accidental blemish on an otherwise healthy socialist system. They show that oppression is a rule not an exception, that there is no democracy inside the parties, that there are no trade union freedoms, that the most democratic constitutions in the world and East-West detente cannot suffice. This will ultimately force the Eurocommunist parties to question the principle of "democratic centralism" as it presently operates, to question the validity of the workings of the decision-making process in the CPs (the abrupt changes to liberalism have been made from the top in an undemocratic manner). It will also ultimately force them to question the conception which defines the class nature of the transitional societies solely by means of the criterion of the ownership of the means of production (not the control of the decisions and the means of appropriation of social wealth) along with the primacy of the development of the productive forces which does not question the social use of the products. As Bruno Trentin, the leader of the Italian trade unions and a prominent Communist put it at the Venice colloquium: "the left-wing forces must prove, by their own concrete answers, that the problem of the East European societies is their own problem".

Footnotes.

(1) See *Politique Hebdo*, Paris, 21 November 1977.

(2) See Victor Faij, *New Politics*, vol. XI, no. 4, 1976.

(3) See Santiago Carrillo, *Eurocommunism and the State*, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1977 and *The Italian Communists Speak for Themselves*, D. Sassoon ed., Spokesman, Nottingham, 1978.

(4) See Carrillo, speech at Yale University, *Le Monde*, Paris, 18 November 1977.

(5) See letter by eleven former members of the CPCz Central Committee in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, No. 2, May-June 1977.

(6) See *Labour Focus* No. 3, July-August 1977.

(7) See Manuel Azcarate, member of the Spanish CP Politburo, in *Triumfo*, 3 July 1976.