

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

Vol7 No2 Summer 1984 £1.50/\$3.50

Yugoslav
political crisis

HUNGARY '56

workers' leader breaks silence



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SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1984 (annual)
(As of Vol.7 No. 1):

Inland: individuals £6.00; all institutions £10.00

Overseas: individuals £8.00; institutions £12.00

Air Mail: £12.00

Back Copies: Back numbers, back sets available.

All cheques, international money orders must be made out in Sterling. No Canadian Postal Orders please.

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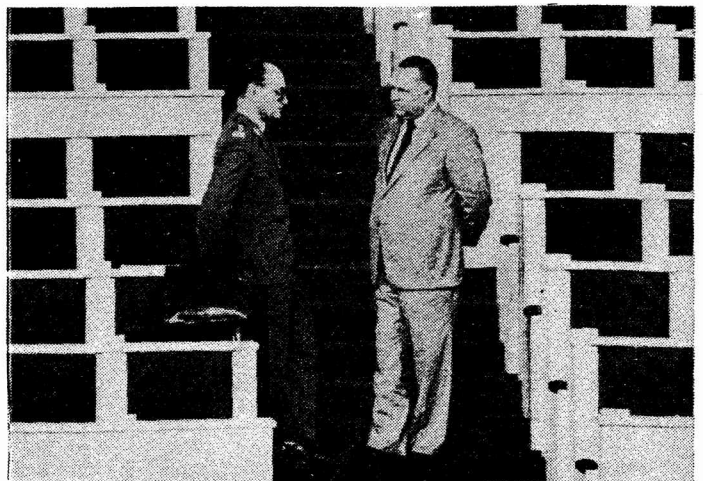
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Thanks to Phil Evans for the design of the Hungarian section. Thanks to Colin Smith for designing the cover and other help.

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Jaruzelski: Subscribe to **Labour Focus**.

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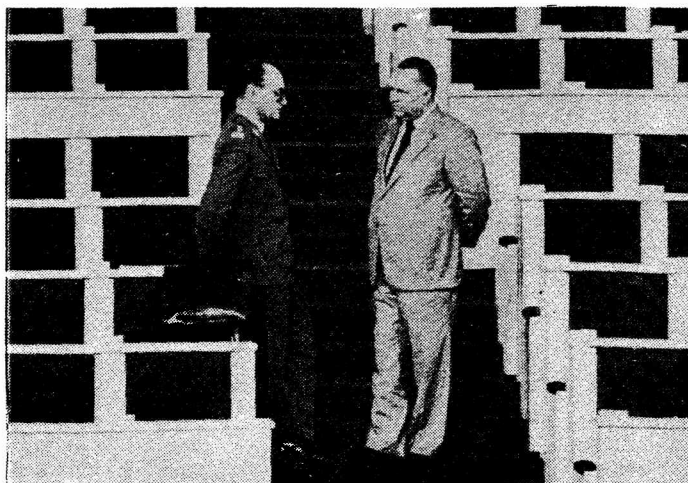
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Two Polish Voices Raised Against the Cold War

The two great movements that have shaken the status quo in Europe in the early 1980s have both now suffered serious setbacks. The independent working class movement in Poland, Solidarity, is now fighting for its continued organisational existence as an underground movement. And the huge peace movement in Western Europe has failed to stop Cruise and Pershing, and despite some victories on the margins - in Holland, Denmark and Greece, is facing a rising tide of militarism.

And perhaps the greatest setback of all has been the failure to develop common positions between the peace movement and the Western Left on the one hand, and the great movement of the Polish workers on the other.

If we are frank we must acknowledge that in the Polish underground — at least if the main journals that reach the West are any guide — there is suspicion of the peace movement and sympathy for the policies of the current US administration. While within the peace movement, and the Left, at least in Britain, there is a good deal of suspicion of Solidarity. (Anyone who doubts this should have tried handing out leaflets about Solidarity political prisoners on the impressive anti-Reagan demonstration in London at the start of June.)

Yet now, at last, two authoritative voices have been raised with statements which, if they were taken up seriously, could help overcome these deep divisions. Both come from Poland.

The first is a blunt and straightforward declaration of solidarity with the British miners' struggle for jobs against the Thatcher government. And it comes from none other than the Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners in Upper Silesia, the heartland of the Polish coal industry. We reproduce the statement, issued on the day of Poland's local elections, 17 June, in this issue of *Labour Focus*.

This statement is a crushing blow to the arguments of those, including Arthur Scargill, who have said that Solidarity does not operate in the interests of the working class (if only many of the trade union leaders in this country would display a similar sense of solidarity with the miners to that in the Solidarity statement). It is also an embarrassing setback to the efforts of the AFL-CIO and the ICFU leaders to use their funding of Solidarity representatives abroad to present the rank-and-file Solidarity workers as having something in common with the cynical and often politically corrupt operations of Western international trade-union apparatuses abroad. The Solidarity miners' leaders of Upper Silesia have recognised the all too obvious kinship between their struggle for their rights and their dignity and that of the miners in Yorkshire and the other British mining areas.

The second statement from Poland comes from Jacek Kuron on hunger strike as we go to press, waiting for his trial to open in Warsaw on 13 July. At the beginning of June, Kuron smuggled a letter out of Mokotow Prison in Warsaw, an open letter to the peace movements of the world.

As yet the full text of this letter — Kuron's first public appeal of this sort since he was arrested in December 1981 — has not reached the West (despite the fact that it was in the hands of Western press agencies in Warsaw on 6 June!).

But the very brief summary sent over the wires (and reproduced by *Uncensored Poland* — the indispensable source of reliable news from Poland) says an enormous amount in a few words. Each phrase is worth taking in turn and pondering:

* 'It is not enough to demonstrate only around NATO bases': in other words it is *necessary* to do so, but not sufficient.

* This is not sufficient, he says, 'when Warsaw Pact armies are in a permanent state of readiness for action against their own societies'. This is an incontrovertible fact — they *are* in such a state of readiness against popular upheavals in Eastern Europe — Poland has shown that. But we should notice that he *does not* make the standard cold war utterance repeated ad nauseam in the

West and repeated by many opponents of the regime within Poland: he does *not* say they are ready to launch aggression against the West.

* 'World peace movements have a moral duty to support the peaceful struggle of the Polish people against a military dictatorship ...' Who can dispute this? Who can argue that the democratic liberties that the Left here fights so hard to defend should not be fought for by the Polish people?

* The summary then ends with this remarkable and profoundly important statement: Kuron calls 'for the demilitarisation of Poland, East Germany and West Germany ...'. This last statement contains the key to grasping the entire situation in divided Europe.

Let us spell out what this means. Kuron is not just calling for the demilitarisation of Poland and the GDR (including the withdrawal of Soviet troops there). His demand (also means the following: running down the Bundeswehr, Europe's most powerful army outside the Soviet Union, and the effective withdrawal of the huge American military machine on continental Europe, as well as the removal of the 55,000 British troops there. This would give the USSR strategic superiority in Europe. It would also open up the prospect for popular movements to change the face of Eastern Europe and the USSR itself. This is what Kuron is suggesting. And he is right. Only those who grasp this truth along with Kuron are on the side of genuine progress towards lasting peace in Europe and freedom for Poles.

Of course, allowing the Soviet Union a military advantage in Europe will seem absurd to people who overlook the permanent Soviet fear of attack from the West and the ways that has influenced Soviet military policy: insisting on a tight grip on Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia, while failing to take over Finland, handing back Austria and not overrunning Yugoslavia in 1948-49. While West Germany remains a massive launching pad for potential attack, there is no likelihood that the Russian people will ever feel secure with a Polish nation looking Westwards.

There is a second argument against Kuron's call for a modern version of the Rapacki plan: it is unrealistic. The Soviet leadership will never accept a political 'deviation' by the Poles or the possibility of a united Germany; and the Americans also will not accept Western Europe going its own way and Germany re-united.

This is true enough: ruling circles in Washington and Moscow would have great political fears about such developments and would resist them. So would their clients in both halves of Europe.

But both the Solidarity miners and Jacek Kuron can give an answer to this: the enormous potential political power of mass working class movements, as we have seen in Poland. And in the West the peace movement has also shown the capacity for action from below. When Kuron first outlined how that power could develop in Poland, back in 1976, he was considered by many to be irresponsible or utopian. But the 'realists' were proved wrong. The British miners are giving us another demonstration of such working-class determination when their vital interests are at stake.

The tragedy behind these two statements from Poland is that Kuron is in jail and the Silesian miners' leaders are clandestine. It is almost impossible to carry on any dialogue with people in such conditions. We do not even know whether the Western press agencies have reported Kuron's words accurately. And worst of all, these statements get publicity in the West only in magazines with tiny circulations like our own. Immensely powerful forces are at work to silence such voices from Poland long before they reach the ears of the Western peace movement and the Left. We must work to ensure this cannot happen. For a start, we must call for the release of Jacek Kuron and the other political prisoners in Poland. And we must continue to demand the right of the Polish miners and the rest of the Polish working class to organise freely to defend their rights.

HUNGARY



Hungary '56 — the Workers' Case: An Interview with Sandor Racz

FOREWORD By Bill Lomax

The Hungarian revolution of 1956 was an event of great significance to the Western Left, an event which had a major impact on the attitudes of Western socialists towards the regimes that had been established in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Closely following the revelations of Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union denouncing the crimes and errors that had been committed under Stalin's rule in the name of socialism, Hungary in 1956 provided the first instance of an entire population rising up against a Communist regime and being suppressed by a Soviet military invasion.

The Hungarian revolution was also of significance, however, because of the leading role played in it by the industrial working class, which not only took part from the very beginning in the revolutionary struggle and played a major role in the fighting, but which also put up the greatest resistance after the second Soviet intervention of 4 November 1956. In the years of terror and repression that followed the crushing of the revolution, it was also from

the ranks of the workers that came the vast majority of those imprisoned and executed.

Yet most published studies of the revolution have concentrated their attention on the role of the intellectuals and political reformists. They were the ones who fled to the West, and they were the ones who wrote about their experiences. Workers generally don't write history books or even their life stories. And because of the closure of the archives, documentation on the workers' role is equally difficult to come by. For this reason the interview that we present here is of particular value. It is with Sándor Rács, a Hungarian worker who was a young toolmaker only 23 years old in 1956, who had spent all his working life under the postwar regime, and who in 1956 was propelled to the forefront of the revolutionary struggle when he was elected President of the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest.

After the revolution Sándor Rács was arrested, brought to trial and then, on his 25th birthday, sentenced to life imprisonment. Released under the amnesty of 1963, he returned to the workbench and continues to earn his living today as a manual worker. Last year, on the 25th anniversary of his trial and on the occasion of his 50th birthday, Sándor Rács spoke publicly for the first time about his life and about his activities in 1956 — in an interview with the Hungarian samizdat journal *Beszélő*.

To read this interview is a unique experience. As we do so, we follow Sándor Rácz as he first comes to work in Budapest, as he lives through the social changes of the postwar years on the factory floor, and then to the hopes raised by Imre Nagy's first reform government of 1953. On 23 October 1956 he is there on the streets of Budapest when the statue of Stalin is brought tumbling down, when the fighting breaks out at the radio building and the first Soviet tanks arrive in the city. After the cease-fire of 28 October he returns to the factory and takes an active part in the formation of its workers' council. That's where we find him when the Soviet tanks return at daybreak on 4 November to crush the revolution.

In the ensuing weeks as the workers' councils already formed during the revolution come to play an ever more active role, Sándor Rácz emerges as one of their foremost spokesmen. We see him as he resists the new regime's attempts to trick, divert and manipulate the workers. He soon wins the workers' confidence, and within days of the formation of a Central Workers' Council for the entire region of Greater Budapest, he is elected its President. Now he finds himself in the corridors of power — debating with Government Ministers in the Parliament, negotiating with the Russian Commander-in-Chief at the Soviet military headquarters. But as the movement of workers' councils grows stronger and begins to develop into a national political force, the new Communist regime of János Kádár decides this is a form of workers' power it can do without. The Central Workers' Council is banned, Rácz and his comrades arrested and imprisoned. Then we follow him through the prison cells, through interrogation, trial, hunger strike, and finally, in 1963, to his release.

Sándor Rácz's interview is important not just for the story it tells of the events in which he took part, but also because of the ideas for which he stands. In fact while reading it, one cannot help feeling that one could be reading the account of a working class militant in the early years of the workers' movement in almost any country in the world. Certainly the ideas Rácz stands for are the

traditional ideas which the working class and labour movement has striven to represent from the very earliest times of its existence.

The greatest scandal of the postwar stalinist regime, for Rácz, was the fact that it undermined the workers' unity, the workers' sense of solidarity and fellowship, that should have been the basis of a true workers' power. The years of stalinism are seen by him as a missed opportunity for the workers to take the factories into their own hands and create a society without exploitation. In 1956, however, that opportunity occurred again, and the workers recognised the historical moment. That was why they came to the fore in the revolutionary struggle, and why they were the most steadfast in defence of the revolution's conquests.

The desires and ambitions of the Hungarian workers, however, aroused little enthusiasm amongst the leaders of the Communist regime brought to power by Soviet tanks on 4 November 1956. A system of workers' power based on a national structure of workers' councils, declared the new Party and Government leader János Kádár to a delegation from the Central Workers' Council on 16 November 1956, was "something which didn't exist anywhere in the world" and for which "there certainly wasn't any need in a people's democracy."^{*}

For Sándor Rácz and his fellow workers, however, their demands were not vain and idle fantasies, but the desire for a society that would respect the dignity of labour, for a society free from exploitation that would honour and protect those who construct, produce and create. As he himself concludes, it is indeed an immeasurable crime that even today the vision of such a society can find no place in a self-styled people's democracy, and that a working man like Sándor Rácz cannot speak freely and openly in his own country about the struggles in which he and his fellow workers strove to make this vision a reality.

Note

* *Népszabadság*, Budapest, 17 November 1956.

Workers' Councils Gave Their Stamp to the Entire Revolution

(Interview with Sándor Rácz, the President of the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest at the time of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956)

Before coming to our actual theme, the role of the Central Workers' Council, I should like you to tell me something about the road your life took before November 1956, about how you lived and thought until then. Let's begin at the beginning: Where were you born?

I was born at Hódmezővásárhely, on 17 March 1933. My father was a propertyless farm labourer, who married the eighth child of a poor herdsman. When I was six months old I was given to the care of my grandmother at Izsák, because my father didn't want me, while my mother came to Budapest to work in a factory. My father died fighting for his country on 16 September 1942 in the Valley of the Don.¹ So my widowed grandmother looked after me right up to 1946, until I came to Budapest. I was the sixteenth child she had had to bring up, and so in Izsák too I had to work hard to prove my worth.²

Did you come to Budapest after your mother?

No. It was just that it was announced in the village that a college was being organised at Budafok for orphan and half-orphan children who wanted to study. Without telling my grandmother, I put my name down for it at the village hall. On 15 August 1946, on the Day of Our Lady, I arrived at the Eastern Railway Station.³ I had just enough money left to buy a tram ticket to the college, but I got on the wrong tram, and I got lost. I found myself at Máriabesnyő, right in the middle of the festivities. That was my first experience of Budapest — the masses of people, the singing, and the fact that I was standing there alone amid all the commotion. I was lost, and I didn't even have enough money to get back to Izsák, because I would much rather have gone back. So it was thanks to my poverty that I stayed in Budapest.

Did you go to work right away at the Beloiannisz factory?

No. I started out as a carpenter, apprenticed to Gyula Polacsek. I was a puny child, some 35 kilos at that time, and I had to take the furniture barrow twice a day between Budafok and the Big Bill furniture store by the Western Railway Station. I only spent one year as an apprentice carpenter, because I became very weak and the doctor forbade me to do any sort of physical work. I looked for lighter work, and so I became a barrel maker's apprentice. Twenty-five of us lived together in the college — Catholics, Protestants and Jews all mixed together. In 1948 they wanted to close the college down, but I suggested that we should stay together. After that I have to work, to work very hard, to support myself, because I am a nobody's nobody. No-one is going to give me a slice of bread, if I don't earn it for myself. But I wanted more than that too. I wanted to study, I wanted to acquire a trade, so I could be my own boss. In 1948 I went to the Standard Works, to what is now the Beloiannisz.⁴ I worked for three months as a fettler, and then for two years I was an apprentice toolmaker. As early as 1949 I left the training shop, to work under the master craftsman Konstantin Major, and in September 1950 I was released from my apprenticeship. Then in 1953 I was called up into the army.

Excuse me for butting in, but there is something I would like to ask you. For you and your workmates there in the factory, what was it like to live through the changes as the new system was being built?

You know, somehow or other we really felt every change on our skin. When I first went to the Standard, the 200-man workshop was run by a Social Democrat works' manager with just one lady office assistant. Later on, after the Vogeler and Sanders trial and the uniting of the two parties,⁵ they brought in a Communist works' manager, who had very little knowledge of the profession, and the administration immediately started to grow. Of course the old Social Democrat skilled workers didn't let the workplace go completely to the dogs, and there was quite a lot of anger against the bloated-up bureaucracy as well. We were the ones who had to

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support them, and at the same time we could see that the work went better with less time-servers. There was a lot of grumbling, but in the end they remoulded the workplace — though, to tell the truth, it took them two years to do it. The social democratic spirit made for a very strong resistance.

Were you a member of the Social Democratic Party?

No. I wasn't a member of either the one or the other.⁶ You know, I'm always against anything that would restrict my ability to think freely, that would tie my hands down. Even in the workplace it wasn't the Social Democratic party that was important, but the solidarity, the collective spirit, the fact that each person was concerned for the other, for the work and the life of the one working alongside him. In a word, it was the workers' consciousness that was important. As I see it, in 1948 — and then again, later, in 1956 — we lost the opportunity, that history threw to us for a moment, for the workers to take the factories into their own hands. But that's another question.

I won't forget about it. But you're right, let's not rush ahead. You mentioned that the 'remoulding' of the workplace took two years. Yet was there any single moment, or any event, that you and your workmates judged as being the point after which something had really changed?

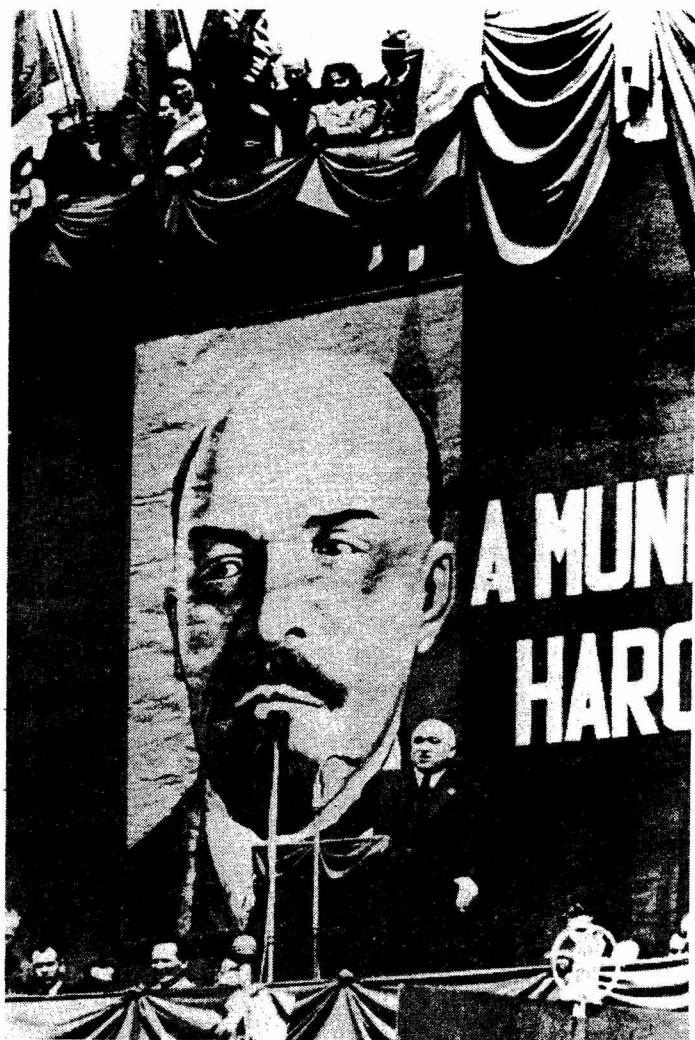
There was, but — you'll see, it's interesting — somehow this hadn't anything to do with changes in the big world of politics either, this too was something we felt on our skin. It happened towards the end of 1949, when a toolmaker was sacked. And what do you think it was for? You know, it's a custom in the workplace to send an apprentice out to fetch something for lunch. Now on this occasion the lad came back with only a piece of plain bread, and the worker who'd sent him slammed it down on his bench, cursing the lad in some very strong language. He was right — you can't work on dry bread. But he was taken away and given the sack on some pretext or other — being an agitator or something like that. That was how they let us know that a different world had begun.

Let's stay a moment longer at the workplace. It was here, wasn't it, that you got to know Sándor Bali?

Yes, after I was moved down to the toolmakers' section. There was just one workbench between us, and we often talked together in the morning break. Bali was ten years older than me, a member of the Communist Party since 1945, a person highly respected in the workplace, and the union steward. As you know, I'm someone who's always grumbling, I've always been a bit of a rebel — but Bali would patiently hear me out, and put my hot-headedness down to my youth. That's another interesting thing — I always had to do my work well for the others to put up with my rebelliousness. The Communist works' manager tried to give me rotten work anyway, that wouldn't pay well and that would make me unpopular into the bargain. He wanted to make me a work calculator, a norm setter, but Bali and his mates didn't allow it. They told him that I was able to do better work than that. But I wouldn't have taken on the norm setting anyway. I made hot moulding dies and deep drawing tools in the workshop, and I was always the one the men working on the machines came to if they needed anything putting right — 'You can trust Sándor, he'll make a good job of it'. So you see, by my work I won for myself some small right to grumble. The way you'd see it, I couldn't officially have been a stakhanovite because, as the works' manager put it, 'I was politically uneducated' — but I received a stakhanovite's pay, because I fulfilled the norms by 180%.⁷

Were you in the workshop right up to 1956?

No, because in October 1953 I was called up as a soldier into the Budapest Signals Regiment, and here somehow things began to make sense to me. You know, before then I really had been 'politically uneducated'. I hadn't let them force me into going to all those political courses, I wasn't letting them influence my opinions — but in the army there's no question of avoiding it, here you have to go to the meetings. And so I find myself in conflict



with the lecturers, because I stand up and say to them: 'How is it that the peasant has to have even his last cow taken away from him?' The peasant lads were behind me, because I was speaking the truth for them. And I understood Imre Nagy's aims from his June speech — to free the agricultural workers who'd been ground down into the deepest misery, to mechanise agriculture, to give greater freedom and opportunity to the working man, to put an end to the severity, the suffering of the peasants, and the rule of the AVO.⁸ I said all these things in the army too, and somehow things began to become clearer to me.

When were you discharged?

In October 1955 I went back to the Beloiannisz. Proletarian life began anew. In the factory the world had changed a great deal. One after another the informers had been found out, and they had become the objects of general hatred. For instance, a microphone was spotted in one of the workers' lockers — the bosses used it to listen to what we were talking about while getting changed. After that the lad had to be removed from the workshop, because nobody was willing to work with him. Then in the summer of 1956 I left the Number II workshop for the K I workshop, to work as a toolmaker.

Was it by then already possible to feel something of what was to come?

Not half! By then we were already past the Twentieth Congress, we were breathing more freely, even at official meetings we were more outspoken, and amongst ourselves too we talked more openly.⁹

Did the outbreak of the revolution on 23 October find you in the factory?

No, because on 5 October I had gone into hospital to have my ton-

sils out. But it was only on the 17th that I had the operation, because I am a haemophiliac and they were afraid to operate. On the 23rd I slip out from the Péterfy Hospital, because I was drawn to the streets by the speeches of Gerö and Piros.¹⁰ I'm unable to speak because of the operation, but the toppling of Stalin gives me back my voice. Today it's difficult for you to imagine, just what an experience it was when the statue came tumbling down. It was the people of Budapest, in whose name the statue had been built, who went there and brought it down. Everybody was your friend there and then on the square. After Old Joe had been brought down, and when just his boots were left standing on the plinth, lorries arrived for us to go to the Radio, because the people were being fired on there.¹¹ Everyone who could manage to do so, clambered up onto the vehicles. The streets were packed with people, and the city resounded to the echoes of two slogans: 'Russians, Go Home!' and 'Imre Nagy into the Government!'. We weren't able to get to the Radio, so big was the crowd. We stopped at the corner of the Sándor Bródy street and the Museum boulevard. Getting down from the lorry, I somehow found myself next to a girl called Marika — she was with me all evening, we went together everywhere. On the Calvin Square there were cars and trams in flames. Soldiers stood about on the corner — they were from my old regiment, but I didn't go across to them. Then about ten o'clock four Hungarian tanks arrived. They weren't able to go into the street because they were at once surrounded by the people, who jumped up onto them and demanded of their commander: 'What sort of a Hungarian are you then? Who was it that paid for your training? Would you really come against us with tanks?'



How long were you at the Radio?

I got back to the hospital about midnight. Marika went back with me. In fact it was she who persuaded me to go back, because the doctors had said my wound could easily open up. Later on, by the way, at the time of my arrest, Marika went to see my mother, and in 1963, after my release, we met again a couple of times — but somehow or other nothing came of it. She was a decent girl, a railway worker's daughter, a schoolteacher. You know, it was just that that bothered me — if she'd joined her life to mine, she wouldn't have been allowed to teach. That's why I was rather reluctant about it.

But to get back to the question: about midnight I got back to the hospital. There can't have been many injured there as yet, because they had plenty of time to listen to me. Next day at dawn, about 5 o'clock, I slip out again. I go to the EMKE, and stand on the corner.¹² The crowd is coming and going, and there and then I start to speak to them. I don't remember now, just what. I just improvised. Such things for instance as, a tank passes by and I say: 'These tanks fire against us, but they were built with our contributions for peace'. There were always some one or two hundred people around me. There were some who said: 'Such people should be arrested!' but others encouraged me to carry on, because I was speaking the truth. I told them that it was the toppling of the statue that had given me back my voice. But after two or three hours I had to go back to the Péterfy, because my throat was still very weak.

Did you go out again the next day?

Of course, every day. Then on the 28th I finally went home, to 1 Murányi Street. That's something I forgot to tell you: in 1955, when I was released from the army, I bought a windowless warehouse store-room, and from then on I lived there with my mother. That's where I go home on the Sunday, on the 28th. I sleep there, and the next day I go into the factory. After that I don't get to sleep in a bed again until after my arrest, until 11 December. But, that's by the way. Well, on the 29th, there inside the factory, some 500 of us were gathered together in the main hall. We stood around, we talked — there was plenty to talk about. We were in our street clothes; we didn't get changed for work because there were too few of us to start up production. I don't remember now just who it was, but someone suggested we should elect a workers' council. I can't remember either, just who it was who put my name forward. It's enough to say, I too had to go up onto the platform. The provisional workers' council finally came to have fifteen members. We went up from the main hall to the manager's office, and here someone suggested that I should be the president, but I didn't accept. I pointed out my age and my lack of experience — I was 23 years old — and I suggested Sanyi Bali. You know, somehow I felt that to accept such a position would greatly limit what I could do. It would tie me down to the factory, and well, there were all sorts of Communists there, and I didn't want to get into quarrels with anyone. After that I became the person who liaised with the district, and with the other factory workers' councils.

Who do you remember from the workers' council?

Ferenc Simon, a very decent engineer, and Árpád Opatowszky, an engine fitter. There were two eighteen year olds, spirited youngsters, who weren't actually members but were a great deal of help in the work of the council: Jóska Balogh and Imre Szélvényi. Szélvényi later became a sort of personal assistant to me. He looked after our contacts with the district, with the district workers' council and the other factory ones. If I wanted to speak with anyone I sent messages through him, and he brought in food to me at the factory.

What were the first measures you took?

While we were still up in the office, we decided we should start work, and organise factory guards. We took it as natural, as a conquest of the revolution, that the manager shouldn't run things, but that we should take over the factory ourselves. The guards were

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needed to defend the machinery and the materials, and to prevent any suspicious elements getting into the factory. In the afternoon I had two radios and a tape recorder brought in, so we could record the different radio broadcasts, and keep up with what was happening. Then I walked around the factory and, one after another, I took down the decorations — pictures, stars, statues, whatever. I said that anyone who couldn't manage without these things could take them home, but that one doesn't have to have decorations in order to work well. These were my first 'instructions'. I say 'instructions' in quotation marks, because it wasn't necessary to give orders to anyone — everyone knew their job.

But there was one very interesting thing that happened here: how I came to have my own AVO. About 5 o'clock I went down to the street when a young man in a leather coat came up to me and asked after me by name. He asked me to hide him because he was afraid to go home. He was an AVO captain and his wife was Russian. In return he offered to write out the secret Soviet radio broadcasts that in his job as a signalman he had listened to on 28 October. I thought it over. There were a number of secure rooms in the basement. I could take him there, and we would see. I took him with me into the factory, gave him pen and paper, and he got down to work. I locked him in the room. I went back a couple of hours later, and when I read what he had written out, I could hardly believe my eyes. The numbers of soldiers the Russians were mobilising, the troop movements being carried out — these were the sort of things he had written down. I locked him in again, and went to speak with several members of the workers' council. This document was so important that we had to get it to Imre Nagy, because he had to be informed about these things. We went into the Parliament on the morning of 30 October between 10 and 11 — this was the first time I'd been there. About thirty people are waiting around outside Imre Nagy's door. He steps out and is quite taken aback. 'What are you waiting for?' he asks. 'For permission to form parties,' they tell him. Imre Nagy's reply still rings in my ears today: 'Look here. I'm a Communist. I don't organise other parties. As to what parties may be formed, that's a matter for the cabinet to decide.' In the meantime I'd already seen to my mission. I had explained in a couple of words what I had brought, and I'd handed over the AVO captain's notes.

Excuse me for butting in again, but do you have a copy anywhere?

No, because only one was made. You know, there was a revolution going on. We didn't have time to think about the historians. But it's possible it exists somewhere — that's your job now, to look for it. Anyway, Imre Nagy then went back into his room, and I started to speak to the other people there. 'Are you out of your minds?' I asked them, 'You've got time to think about organising parties, when there are a thousand other, more important jobs to be done?' There were two journalists from *The Truth* there, and afterwards they took me across to the New York Cafe and interviewed me.¹³ It appeared in one of their numbers. That's where you can read my opinion of the multi-party system.

But let me finish the story of my AVO. When I got back to the factory, I found several people hanging around in the basement with the idea of giving this AVO a going over. I put it to them: 'OK, here's the key. As far as I'm concerned you can string him up if you like, but first you'll have to shoot me, because I've given this man my word of honour that he won't be harmed. Just shoot me, then you can have him!' This calmed them down a bit. We sent food for the captain's wife, and he stayed down in the basement for another few days. Finally, on 3 November, we handed him over to the district police station. I understand that, later, he was brought to trial. They threw him out of the AVO, or at least they didn't take him back. I asked for him to be called as a witness at my trial; after all, I had saved his life. But the judge didn't consider that had any significance. Well, maybe it really didn't. I don't know.

Let's go back to what happened after 29 October. What happened in the workers' council?

Up till 3 November, nothing, at least nothing important. We got to know one another, the representatives of the workers' councils in the district. We talked, we phoned one another. I lived inside the factory: I slept there, wherever I could — in an armchair, on a

table. The women cooked in the kitchen. They weren't short of anything to cook, because we'd received potatoes, meat and geese from the countryside. That story also belongs to the revolution: the peasants, with bundles on their shoulders, coming to feed the revolution. The workers' councils also paid out advances on wages, to those who came in for them. On 3 November, by the way, when we took my AVO in to the police station, we spent a little time looking around the city. We inspected its peacefulness, as if we were the masters. We went into the Bajza Street, into the area around the Writers' Association and the Soviet Embassy. Everywhere we went we felt the silence, the silence before a storm. We were planning for a return to work on the Monday, and we were curious as to the mood in the city, whether we would be able to come to work. And you know, it wasn't just a coincidence that I wanted to take a look at the Soviet Embassy. Somehow, from the beginning I didn't believe that the Russians would really leave us to enjoy what we had won. Then came 4 November ...¹⁴

When you woke up to hear the city being shot to pieces ...

We weren't woken up by anything, because we hadn't closed our eyes. That silence on the 3rd hadn't been at all to my liking! And I didn't agree with Maléter going into the closed-off Soviet military headquarters either — already in the night the radio had been calling on them to report in.¹⁵ Then at dawn, a little after 4 a.m., Imre Nagy's speech was broadcast on the radio. That's something you can't ever imagine, that tragedy! It was heartbreaking to hear this Communist pleading almost in tears with the Russians not to harm this city, this little country. Even today I can still hear it, because they read it out in Russian as well: 'Nyimanye, nyimanye!' — I don't know what it means, but something like 'Please, please!'. It was only a good hour and a half later that we heard the first gunfire. By 6 a.m. there was nothing but battle.¹⁶

Did you and your workmates fight too?

Not those of us who were in the factory, we didn't. We were twenty in all, without weapons, just the odd pistol — there wouldn't have been much sense in it. I went out onto the factory roof, from where I could see the shells and bombs flying in all directions. We were feeling really desperate and furious. For they had attacked a peaceful and calm country, and just when we were ready to restart production.

What were you able to do?

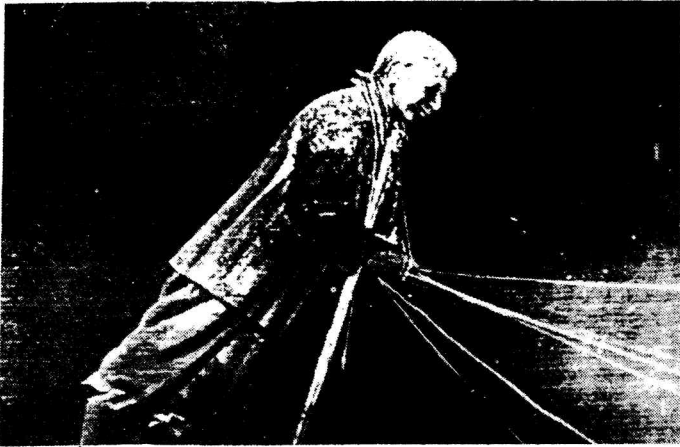
Until the 8th, nothing. For that day we called together a meeting of the district workers' council in the main hall of the small engine and machine factory. About a hundred came along. As a matter of fact, our only aim was to give the people a little hope. We were all of one opinion: that the workers' councils now had an active role to play. Up till then we hadn't intervened in politics, because we trusted Imre Nagy. We saw him as the political guarantee of the revolution, but Kádár and his lot betrayed both Imre Nagy and the revolution as well.¹⁷ At that time everybody was against Kádár. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with him — apart from the couple of people with whom he'd thrown together his Government. For our part, we thought that we had to save as much as we could of the freedoms that we had struggled for. That was our job now.

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Stalin's statue: the harder they come ...

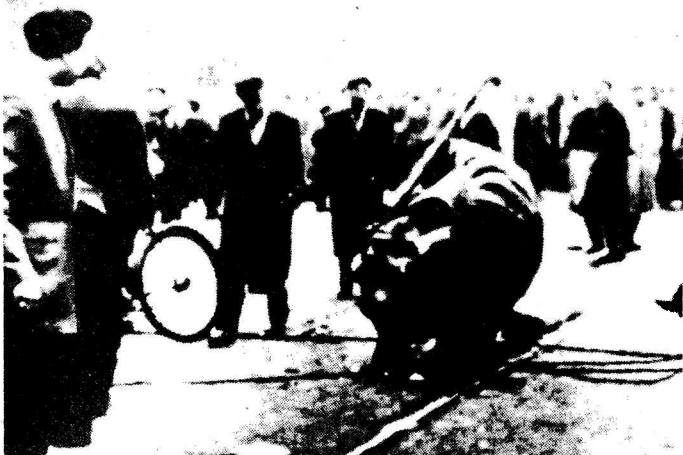
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At this district meeting, did you agree on any sort of political programme for the future?

I don't recall there being any demands. On the 12th, by then there definitely were, when we called together the district into the Beloiannisz. But first I'd like to tell about how Sanyi Bali was taken away on 8 November for three or four hours to the Russian military headquarters in a Pobeda, together with the factory manager Bertalan Berecz. This Berecz by the way spent the whole of the revolution inside the factory. He lived on the Gellért hill and he didn't dare to go home — he felt safer with us. (Later, at our trial, they made out that we were a great danger for the cadres — well, anyway.) Berecz got on quite well with Sanyi, and after 4 November he tried to talk both of us into joining the new party.¹⁸ "That's just the place for people like you," he said — and that was just when I was calling for all parties to be banned from factory territory! Towards the end of November they even offered me a villa on the Gellért hill, if I would give up my political activity.

What went on at the meeting on 12 November? Who came to it, and what decisions were taken?

People came from the workers' councils in the district. I recognised many of them by sight, because — as I told you — I'd earlier been the liaison man. I was really very active in those days. I may even have opened the meeting, but I don't remember now. I was also concerned by the fact that Sanyi was, after all, a family man,



... the harder they fall

and he'd already been taken away once by the Russians. So far as I could, I saw to as much as possible myself. That was when it was, by the way, that the political demands were drawn up: for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, the return of the Imre Nagy Government, legal recognition of the workers' councils and revolutionary committees, those sorts of things. Some four or five of the delegates made these demands up into a list, upstairs in the office, and then we voted for them from the platform. This is important, because on the 14th Sanyi Bali had this already prepared programme to take with him to the *Egyesült Izzó*, to the founding meeting of the Central Workers' Council.¹⁹

Were you not there in the Izzó?

No, because only the presidents were called there. Sanyi told me about it, about the formation of the Central Workers' Council, later, at daybreak on the 15th, when he returned from the delegation to the Parliament. That's how I came to learn about it, from him.²⁰

When did you get involved in the work of the Central Workers' Council?

Hang on a bit! Don't rush things, because there's something that happened here that's rather important. Already on the evening of the 14th, Sándor Sz. Nagy, the mill operator at the Ganz factory, had got in touch with our workers' council to tell us that he had called a meeting of workers' councils for the next day in the Koltói street at the headquarters of the Steelworkers' Union, and we should also send representatives.

On the 15th I asked Sanyi for them to send me, because I had a feeling that there was something odd about it. So I went along. The meeting started about 10 a.m., and I was unhappy from the start that the mood was so very formal. There were about 400 people in the hall. Those seated on the platform were all togged up — white shirts and all that — while I and the rest there in the hall, we were wearing our workers' clothes, what we go to work in. But no matter, I thought, let's wait and see what goes on. I'm standing at the back, at the end of the hall. Up front the first contributor is speaking, a tall, lanky young man. But he's talking a lot of nonsense. He thinks the workers' demands of the 14th are unsatisfactory and ill-willed. At this point I go forward, between the two rows of chairs, up to the table. I stand behind the young man, and wait for him to finish what he has to say. Then, very loudly, I ask if he'll be kind enough to introduce himself, to tell us just who or what he is, and whom he represents. It turned out that he was a university student, that two people he didn't know had been to see him, and asked him to come here and say what he's said. So now it's my turn to explain what's going on. I turn towards the hall, I give my name and explain that I'm from the Beloiannisz. I tell them that there's no need for this meeting, because the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest has already been formed at *Izzó*. "There's no need for a counter workers' council," I tell them, "and I'm leaving the hall. If anyone's interested in the real programme of the Central Workers' Council, they can find out about it at Akácfa street no. 15." So I go out of the hall, down to the street, and wait. Ten minutes later the crowd starts to straggle out after me. All right then, I think, and I ask a lad on a motorbike to take me across to the Akácfa street, to the Budapest Tram Company's building.²¹

Here again something interesting happened. I arrived at the door to the first floor meeting room at just the same moment as Tibor Déry, who was bringing the greetings of the Writers' Association.²² He was the elder, he went in first. As I waited outside, the 400 people from the Koltói street arrived. Then I went in. I explained what had happened, and I suggested they should give a report about the Central Workers' Council to these 400 people. Pista Babay opened up the big room on the fourth floor for this, so we could all get in.²³ He had hardly started to speak when two Russian soldiers appeared at the door. Once again I was sitting at the back, and I clearly heard them lifting the safety catches on their machine guns. Everyone turned round to look, and Fazekas got up from the platform to go towards them — but they pointed their machine guns at him, for him to go back to his place.²⁴ The air froze, and an atmosphere of panic almost broke out. Then I think to myself: "Well, we can't leave, so we might as well get on with

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what we've come here for." I stand up. I can feel the two guns pointed at my back, but I go up towards the table, and I start to speak: "Just because there are two Russian soldiers with loaded weapons standing here in the doorway, we still have to talk about the problems of the Hungarian workers!" Things calmed down, and the two soldiers too disappeared from the doorway.

So that's how you came to get involved in the Central Workers' Council?

Not quite. Szélvényi had gone there earlier on, and was waiting for me in the stairway. He'd brought the 11th district's resolution with him, so I'd be able to represent the district. (You know, each district had a delegate.) But it's true, that with my latest speech I'd already taken the second step forward. The first step had been in the Koltói street, when I prevented the counter workers' council being formed. This was the second step, when I saved the situation from the Russians. And so after these events, I step out from the unknown. In my view this was what counted, and not what Bill Lomax writes, that Rácz was the most outspoken representative of the workers' demands.²⁵ It wasn't the loudness that counted, but something else. There was another aspect to this incident. A little later József Sándor turned up at the meeting — he was the Kádár lot's liaison man with the Central Council — and he said there had been a misunderstanding with the Russians, and he expressed apologies on the Government's behalf.²⁶ I don't believe that it was a misunderstanding, because as we later discovered, everyone who was in the corridor had been forced into the large hall, while the building has been surrounded by tanks. Of course, there might have been some misunderstanding ...

After this, you became a member of the Central Council?

Yes. I presented my credentials, they were accepted, and I sat down. There were more people there, by the way, than just one representative for each district, but only one delegate per district could vote.

Was Sándor Bali there too?

No, he wasn't. Look, I know that Bali is more acceptable to you historians than I am. You say — at least that's all I've read so far — that he tried to influence me, because I was such a hot-head. But that isn't how it was. Bali, Rácz: we were as one; at least in 1956 that's how it was. Earlier, in the fifties, when he restrained me, he only did so out of concern for me.

What happened at this meeting of the Central Council?

We talked with József Sándor, and agreed to send a delegation to the Parliament. About ten people were chosen for the delegation, me amongst them. This was already a bit more than I was prepared for. After all I was the very youngest of them! But I'm sure that what played a large part in it — as I've said — was my two earlier appearances.

When did you meet with the Government?

It had been agreed with József Sándor that the meeting would be at 8 o'clock in the evening, but Kádár only turned up around midnight. Till then he kept us waiting. He wanted to tire us out. But that wasn't the only reason. You know, it was the first time I'd been in the Parliament — and under what circumstances! I was young too, and I had no particular wish to be the centre of attention, but I paid attention to what was going on. And so I saw just why it was they kept us waiting. They drove us into the meeting room, and in come several members of the Government — it's about 8 o'clock this happens — in comes Biszku, Ribánsky, Sándor József, Marosán, those sort of people.²⁷ You've hardly noticed them arrive, when there's one sitting to your right, one to your left, and they're pumping questions at you — just what actually is it that we want? Then they vanish as unexpectedly as they'd come, and Kádár knows in advance what questions he's going to be asked. All the same, I didn't give away very much to them, that's for sure. Well, come midnight and in comes Kádár. You know, the agreement was for our talks to be directly transmitted by the radio,

but in comes Kádár, steps up to the table and pushes the mike aside, saying, "I can speak without this!" So he tore up our prior agreement. In my opinion, after that we should have got up and left — but our president, Dévényi, didn't behave in a way befitting a working man. He swallowed, he whined, he stuttered, he wrung his hands — in a word, he was quite pitiable.²⁸

Wasn't any agreement reached?

Agreement? Quite the opposite! I'll tell you what it was in a moment, but first there's something else. You know, we were negotiating in the prime minister's quarters, in the wing overlooking the Margaret bridge; the meeting room is parallel to the Danube. Well, after Kádár has pushed aside the microphone, Dévényi is still stuttering, and the blathering's already been going on for about an hour, then we hear gunfire from the side of the Danube. Then I feel that I have to say something. I stand up and I tell them: "We're blathering away here like old women at the market, while out there on the street Hungarian workers are being shot down, and no-one here in this room feels any responsibility!" At this Kádár leaps up, declaring that he won't put up with such a tone. Biszku tries to quieten him: "Leave it, Comrade Kádár, he's just a naive child." Well, it could be I was naive, but I was speaking the truth. After that the atmosphere got even worse, and the negotiations were broken off. In the break we were surrounded by journalists and radio reporters, and a miners' delegation from Salgótarján who were also taking part in the negotiations, and we talked a lot. So this was the third of those moments — at least that's how I feel — that pulled Sándor Rácz out of the unknown, and which later led him to become the Central Workers' Council's president.

What happened after the break?

I don't remember whether the negotiations were continued, or what was discussed. At dawn we got a car, and I went back to the factory, to Fehérvári street no. 70. A Central Council meeting had been announced for 8 o'clock in the morning. Here, after Dévényi's account, I asked to speak, and I told them what had happened in the Parliament. Then I put forward a motion of no confidence in Dévényi — because in my opinion he hadn't behaved in a way befitting a worker — and at the same time I criticised the behaviour of the entire delegation. A hard debate began. Those around fifty tended to speak up in favour of Dévényi, feeling that he would achieve something with his bargaining, but those under forty took up a more radical position. (Just so that you should know: at that time and for a good time afterwards the man in the street, everybody, was against Kádár and his lot). Then we had a secret ballot to choose a new president, and it turned out that, apart from myself, everyone voted for Sándor Rácz. I was taken aback. This wasn't what I had wanted to achieve with my motion of no confidence, but I accepted, because I felt that I had to. The vice-president was György Kalocsai; the secretary Pista Babay.²⁹ It later turned out that Babay had at one time been some sort of minor nyilas³⁰ — although in my "inaugural address" on becoming president I had called on everybody's good faith: "This isn't a game, our lives are at stake, so if there's anyone who did anything before 1956 that could compromise the integrity of the Central Workers' Council, then it would be better if they didn't take part. Because we will be examined under a magnifying glass!" Dévényi withdrew anyway, because he was offended. From then on we weren't able to get on at all with Csepel, which in my view was because of that.³¹ János Fazekas was voted out as well. After this my own influence in the Central Council became stronger, and the grovelling behaviour was left behind.

What ideas did the Central Council's new leadership have?

First of all, that we should return to work, bring the men back into the factories. (It was the 11th district workers' council that first put this forward, but I was thinking along the same lines as well.) We couldn't allow Kádár's lot to be the ones to give work and bread to the workers, because then they would manipulate them. If the Central Workers' Council could bring the men back to work, back into the factories, then it would be strengthening its own position as well — that was the idea. The workers' councils also had to be re-elected. (Kádár's lot were always going on about the workers'



Armed workers patrol city streets early in the insurrection

councils not being valid, because the workers weren't there in the factories — as if they, on the other hand, had been elected by public acclamation...) Then afterwards on the 16th we went with this plan, with leaflets calling for a return to work, to the Parliament for more negotiations. I read out the appeal on the radio; at that time the studio was there, inside the parliament building. It was on this occasion that Antal Apró came up with the suggestion for three members of the Central Council to be appointed to the Government.³² To that I replied: "What are you thinking? You think that's why they sent me here, to haggle over ministerial positions?! It would be better if you would reply to my questions: When are the Soviet troops going to leave? When will Imre Nagy return to lead the Government, and when will the workers' councils be given legal recognition?"

Wasn't there any friction between you and the Soviet troops?

Look, at that time lots of people were being deported. We had a three-member rescue committee, and they went regularly to the Russian headquarters to save people from deportation. Later they arranged a meeting with General Grebennik, the Commander-in-Chief. That was later, after 23 November, after the demonstration of silence, because I remember well that it was just then that three Soviet military historians came along to a meeting of the Central Workers' Council, accompanied by József Sándor, to get to know our standpoint.

I remember one of them going down into the street at noon, and coming back almost in tears on seeing how this city, where even at night life was colourful, had become dead for an hour. There wasn't a soul in the streets, because the Central Workers' Council had called on the people to demonstrate in this way on the first month's anniversary of the revolution. It was a couple of days after that that I went along to the Dürer Ajtósi Row, to what used to be the building of the Party School, and where the Soviets now had their central headquarters. This was also an interesting picture: Grebennik and the other Russian officers with the Kossuth emblem stitched on their jackets — you know, just like everybody was wearing during the revolution — and when the duck was served with seed-cake, he sent back the cake, saying he'd have it with bread like the Hungarians. Grebennik was good-natured towards us, and I accepted to eat dinner with him, because I didn't want to offend the foreigner's sense of hospitality. Incidentally, there was also another reason why I went to see them, because I didn't want

them — and through them, Moscow — to get their information only from Kádár's lot. I thought, I'll tell them sincerely what it is we want — after that, let anyone else tell them whatever they like. We met with some success as well, in reducing the deportations and getting the curfew restrictions made a bit less severe. After that I went another two times to their headquarters. On one occasion I spoke with a huge Tatar or Mongol; the second time with a stocky Russian, I think he was Serov.³³ They were no longer quite so friendly.

How did you envisage building up a nationwide structure of workers' councils?

The National Workers' Council was never formed. We called together the delegates of workers' councils from the whole country to a conference in the Sports Stadium for 8 o'clock on the morning of 21 November. They came as well, several hundred of them — but the Stadium was so heavily surrounded by Soviet tanks that not even a mouse could have got in. Then we went across to the MÉMOSZ headquarters³⁴, but they didn't let us in there either, and so some 60 or 70 of us went over to the Akácfa street. Only one or two of the provincial delegates got into the small hall, and for that reason alone we couldn't really go ahead with forming the National Workers' Council. But I had been hoping a bit that when it was formed I would no longer have to be president. True though, by that time no one was really fighting for positions; the ropes were already tightening in around us. Well anyway, we decided to protest with a two-day strike, on 22-23 November, against the prevention of the meeting, and against the kidnapping of Imre Nagy.³⁵ The significance of the strike appeal was that only two days earlier we had brought the men back into the factories; now we were already calling them out on strike. This once again proved the strength of the Central Workers' Council.

Did you have any contacts with Imre Nagy and his colleagues?

No, because we didn't go in to the Yugoslav Embassy. We didn't want to make their already complicated diplomatic situation any more difficult. But we learned of their kidnapping. And, on the 21st we went again to the Parliament... But there's something I'd forgotten to mention: I'd already told them in the Central Workers' Council executive that a lot of people were saying I was too young, perhaps too hot-headed, maybe they should elect someone else in my place. But again it was me they elected, and so I

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was again the one to go to negotiate. We came to an agreement on two things in the Parliament: that they should issue a decree recognising the Workers' Councils and the Greater Budapest Central Council, and that they should provide us with premisses. On one of the preceding days Jenő Fock had already been to see us to discuss the draft decree which he had brought with him, because there was to be a cabinet meeting and he had to prepare for it. We spent the whole day working on the draft. We agreed on a final version, and we even kept a copy ourselves — but then on the 22nd it was none other than the original, uncorrected version that was published as the Government's decree.³⁶

What changes did you make to the Government's draft?

For the posts of factory management to be filled by competition, and for the workers' council to have the power to dismiss the manager — those sorts of things. But it was already clear that you're wasting your time sitting down to negotiate with the Government — they don't take any notice, they just spit in your face. Incidentally, as I understand it, these "changes" are by now the Government's programme.

Let's wait to see what really comes of it, Sándor...

Well, I don't know. There won't really be workers' councils, that much is already clear.

And what became of your other request, for premisses?

At first they wanted to give us a place in the Ministry of Agriculture, but I wasn't having that: we weren't a ministry! Of course, the real reason I had in mind was that if we got a place in such a large building, it would be easy for them to keep their eyes on us. I picked out a building that stood on its own in the Andrassy street, but they also realised that in there we'd be able to shut them out whenever we wanted, and so they wouldn't give it us. Finally, on 3 December, we were given some rooms on the fifth floor of the MÉMOSZ headquarters building, on the György Dózsa street.

What happened after the decree on workers' councils?

The Government invited the workers' councils' presidents and the factory managers to a conference on 25 November.³⁷ Sanyi Bali went to this, because I was in Veszprém, at a meeting to form a county workers' council. They had sent a message, asking me to take part in their founding meeting. I went down in the factory's Packard. I was in a pretty embittered mood, and I was quite honest with them, as to the sort of game the Government was playing with us. I went along to another workers' council's meeting as well. The factory's Obuda Red Star works sent a message that they were having problems with the workers' council there, because they were all Communists in it, and they weren't doing what the workers wanted. I went there and I called the men together. I expressed my thanks for the work done so far by the workers' council, and I told them: now elect the ones that you want. In less than ten minutes I had the whole election sorted out. Well, I come back from Veszprém, and on the 27th there's yet another meeting with the Government. This time I lead the delegation. They take us into the meeting room, where an oval table has been laid for dinner. Kádár's wife and another woman are bustling about, serving fried liver. I sit down on the sofa beside the wall, take out of my knapsack the cheap sausage and bread that Szervényi had pressed into my hands earlier in the morning, and I take a snack on my own. I'm not accepting this dinner, the one offered by Kádár's lot. In the meantime Marosán comes in and begins to splutter away: "Well, the famous steelworkers! We bakers are baking the bread, while the famous steelworkers are out on strike. Not everyone who wears overalls is necessarily a worker..."³⁸ But nobody took any notice of him, and he disappeared back into his room. At 11 o'clock Kádár came in, and I weighed in with my questions: "What is Mr. Kádár's opinion about what has been happening? The kidnapping of Imre Nagy, the strike, the arrests of workers...?" At this he jumps up, saying it's more than his nerves can take. This time I hadn't let him have us questioned in advance; he hadn't been able to prepare, and so the smile wilted from his face. After that, that was indeed the end of the meeting.

Didn't you have any further negotiations?

We did, once more, on 6 December. But by then our relations with the Government had become very embittered. The Communist Party was also getting organised by then, while the Central Workers' Council too was getting ever stronger. We had set up sub-committees: the press and information section under Miklós Sebestyén, the organisational group led by Ferenc Töke, a group concerned with economic questions, and some others.³⁹ On the 28th we wanted to publish the *Workers' News*, edited by Gyula Obersovszky.⁴⁰ The proofs were already being run off, when József Sándor telephoned to say that the Government would regard it as a hostile step. "All right," I reply, "We'll stop the printing then — We'll show you our good faith."



Talks: student leaders put their demands

So only a stencilled *Information Bulletin* was published. There were three issues, if I remember well; the last of them, maybe, on 5 December.⁴¹ There's something else that happened at this time that I consider very important. A grey-haired man came to see me — even today I don't know his name — and gave me a 40-page typed text of a plan for recovery. It was concerned mainly with economic questions, but touched on political issues too. At the time of my arrest they took it away from my office, and it is mentioned in János Molnár's book as the economic programme of the Central Workers' Council. Well, it wasn't originally our programme, and nothing ever came of it, but we were in agreement with most of it, and we wanted to put it forward for debate, but we never got as far as that.⁴²

What were the main ideas of this programme?

Such things, for instance, as for unprofitable enterprises to be leased out to the workers... In other words, what is nowadays virtually the Government's programme.

What further moves were there in your struggles with the Government?

First of all, they tried very hard to get us to work together with the trade unions. *SZOT* delegations had visited Yugoslavia well before 23 October, and they had worked out a draft plan for workers' councils on the basis of their experiences there. But I didn't want to see the workers' councils subordinated to the *SZOT*, and there was no way I wanted to have anything to do with Sándor Gáspár. He had already had his chance as a trade union leader in the Rákosi era. But they put a lot of pressure on us to co-operate with the unions.⁴³

The other issue was the two demonstrations: the women's demonstration, and the demonstration in support of the Government on 6 December. Incidentally, the women's demonstration on 4 December didn't have the prior authorisation of the Central Workers' Council, because many people said it would serve as a provocation — they would be fired upon, and afterwards we would be held responsible. I didn't agree with that, but I had to accept the wishes of the majority. In the end the demonstration was

very moving and beautiful. The women and the girls marched to the grave of the unknown warrior in Heroes' Square. When they got there they took out national flags from under their coats and unfurled them, and then each one placed a flower on the grave. By the end it was covered in a whole mountain of flowers. There were so many flowers, that the flags with the Soviet emblem cut out could be stood up in the middle. We praised the women in the *Information Bulletin*, to make up for not having supported them in advance. The other demonstration, the Communist one, was on the 6th. They marched out on to the streets, singing and carrying red flags, and arrived in front of the Western Railway Station about 4 o'clock, just when the workers from Angyalföld and Újpest were getting there — they gave the demonstrators a good thrashing.⁴⁴ At the time, on the afternoon of the 6th, we were in the Parliament where we'd gone with our *Memorandum*. Kádár's lot wanted to blame us for the disturbances. "Hold it a minute!" I said, "It's whoever permitted the demonstration who's responsible for the provocation!" It was too soon for demonstrations in support of the Government, for marching out under red flags! The Government's reply to our *Memorandum* was supposed to be broadcast on the radio the following day, the 7th, but not a word about it came from Kádár's lot.⁴⁵

We called a delegate conference of the National Workers' Council for 8 December. Ferenc Töke organised it, and I was the only one to know about the arrangements, because we had learned from our earlier experiences. The conference began at 9 o'clock in the morning, in the *MÉMOSZ* headquarters. I didn't go in, because the Central Council had taken the view that I shouldn't preside, because I might influence the delegates. (I've forgotten to tell you: on 6 December I asked the Central Council to vote again on who should be the president, because many people were saying I was inflexible and insulting with the Government, that it wasn't possible to negotiate with me — but once again I was the one they elected.) Anyway, the meeting begins, and then about 10 o'clock József Sándor rings up, saying don't you dare to hold the conference, because the Government is very much against it. I tell him that I'm here in the office, and I don't know whether there's any such meeting or not. Then about noon there's another, a far more important phone call: in Salgótarján they're firing on the workers, more than 50 are dead.⁴⁶ I immediately called the delegate from Salgótarján out from the conference, and asked him if he knows such and such a person, and if he's reliable. (I didn't tell him straight away why I was asking him this, because I first wanted to check the facts.) The delegate said the person phoning was completely reliable, so I rang up the Soviet headquarters, and then the Government as well, and asked them who was responsible for the shooting. I didn't get any replies to my question. I went into the hall, where there'd already been several people asking: "Where is Sándor Rácz? Why isn't he here?" I go up in front of the platform, and explain why I'm not the one presiding, and I give them the news that's come from Salgótarján as well. The mood in the hall was tense already — I could feel it. People got up to speak one after another, and then unanimously accepted a proposal for a 48-hour strike. But we ordered a ban on any news about the decision until 8 a.m. on the morning of the 9th, lest the delegates be picked up while travelling home. The Central Council also drew up an appeal to the workers of the world, asking them to support the Hungarian workers in their struggle for a life without fear. It was later reported in the world's press. As a matter of fact, the strike of 11-12 December and the appeal were the last things we did. We didn't have anything left to say to Kádár's lot who, in place of negotiating with us, had fired on us. You know, it's my feeling that the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest put its stamp on the whole revolution, showing that this wasn't an uprising of hooligans, but of the workers.

After that you were arrested...

Yes, in the Parliament. Bali and Rácz were summoned to the Parliament on the 11th in the name of the Government, or rather the Central Committee. (The other members of the Central Workers' Council were by then already under arrest, while the Central Council had been banned. We stayed inside the factory for two days — they didn't dare come for us there). Then on the 11th Bertalan Berecz comes in to see us, along with the Party secretary

for Baranya county — I don't remember his name — and asks us to go to the Parliament. We argued with them for several hours, because we were unwilling to go — I knew what we could expect. It wasn't that I wanted to hide, because then too, just as today, I accepted the responsibility for what I had done, but I felt better in the factory — if I was so important for them, then let them come for me there. In the end, we went with them anyway. The corridors of the Parliament were packed with people, which wasn't usual, but by then I was no longer surprised by anything. Berecz spoke with the man on the door for a couple of minutes — that hadn't happened before — then he comes over to us and explains he has to go for a pass (passes hadn't been needed before). "O.K." I say, "We'll wait here". As the door opens, I see two black cars pulling up in front of the building. Several chinless youths get out of them, and start asking to see people's papers. I turn round to one of them: "I'm Sándor Rácz, I'm the one you've come for. There's no need to carry on with this identity checking." At this he says that they had indeed come for me — and they're already taking me out to the car. One of them pushes his machine gun into my side. "There's no need for that," I tell him, "I'll go without that." "Hold your cheek, laddie, just get moving!" he replies — in other words, the usual AVO manners. Sanyi is bundled into the other car, and we're taken across the Margaret bridge to the Fő street prison. It was a gorgeous morning, the sun was shining...

They took Bali to the same place?

Yes, but he was let out a few days later, and they only pulled him in again in March. Just so you'll see what kind of man he was, you should know that they told him that if he would give evidence against me, they'd let him free — but he wasn't prepared to do that, even though he had a wife and two little children waiting for him at home. They gave him twelve years.



Flying the flag: workers rally to revolution

How long were you in the Fő street prison?

For nine months; then I was taken to the Markó street jail. That's where I got my number: 50-834 (Try it on the lotto — it might bring you luck!)⁴⁷ The first thing I did in the Fő street was to sleep the clock round for two days — I hadn't seen a bed since 28 October. My first interrogator was Lieutenant Sándor Kása — I told him everything, just as I'm telling you now, there was nothing to deny. Then someone called Izler — at least that's how he was known — continued my interrogation. He even pressed a picture of the 1st May procession under my nose, saying "Well, Rácz, fuck it, what is it the workers want? You're rotting away here, while your workers, they're applauding." I spent a month in solitary as well. I

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had time to think about the revolution, because during the events I didn't really have time for such things.

What conclusions did you come to?

Well, lots of things, but above all to the conviction that the revolution would have succeeded even if they were to execute the whole lot of us — because it showed just how much force, and what means, had to be used to crush it! Anyway I really expected to be executed — though I hadn't delivered a blow to anyone, I hadn't taken tuppence from anybody — because the parliamentary Communists hated me so much because of the way I behaved. I couldn't believe they would leave me alive. Neither during my trial nor since have I ever denied the revolution. It went under that name in my trial record too. And after all Death is no enemy to me, as I'm a religious man.

There's something I'd like to ask you about, Sándor. I've often heard it said — though, to tell the truth, I've heard the opposite too — that in 1956 there were anti-semitic slogans ...

Look, that's quite simply not true; at least I never came across anything like that amongst the workers. It's true that there was indeed a very strong feeling against the AVO and against the apparatus, and it's certainly true that these were packed out with Jews — but the non-Jewish AVO was hated just as much as the Jewish one. And after all, how many Jewish fellow prisoners could I list to you, who were far better than many others? Look, if someone knows his job, and if he's acceptable as a person, then he's OK by me. For me, that's the measure. For instance, there was an elderly Jewish rate-fixer at our place — he was very decent, because he left us to get on with our jobs. And it was a Jewish lad who first told me about the Petöfi Circle.⁴⁸ In fact this same youngster asked me to go with him to the West on 6 November. He was sure his uncle would be able to fix me up with something; but I didn't go because I had things to do here. Anyway, it was the younger ones who stood on our side, on the side of the revolution. The older ones were no longer very keen to get involved — they'd had their share of bad historical experiences. The more reasonable Jews, however, should have felt some responsibility for the situation after 1945 — amongst the Jews who'd been deported and then later came back, there were some who were prepared to use just as extreme methods as had been used against them. But in my opinion, one crime doesn't justify another.

When was sentence passed on you?

On 17 March 1958, on my twenty-fifth birthday. Life. At first they had wanted to stage a really big trial — with 86 defendants, all the workers' council activists whom they'd rounded up. But later they separated them up — which was fortunate, because in such a monster-trial at least ten death sentences would have been handed out. So it came to be Rácz, Bali, József Nemeskéri, László Abód and Endre Mester — this was the workers' council trial.⁴⁹ There's one further interesting thing about it — how we finally escaped the rope. After our sentences, we had appealed, but then one day Marika Bali gets a phone call: "They're getting the rope ready for the workers' council activists; they should withdraw their appeals!"

To understand this, you have to know that under the new laws for the people's courts brought in after the revolution, even if the prosecution hadn't appealed for a stiffer sentence, the judge could increase the sentence on appeal. We'd originally been given twelve years, and life, but we'd appealed. After the phone call Marika wrung her hands, because she couldn't think of any way of getting the news to Sándor. At that time they weren't letting anybody, not even relatives or lawyers, in to see us. Someone advised her to say she wanted to have the children adopted — they couldn't refuse her a visit for that. So Marika gets to come in for a visit, and she tells Sanyi that she's going to have the children adopted, if he agrees. Sándor went pale. He lost his temper. "You bitch!" he said to her, "How can you think of such a thing!" Never in his entire life had he used such language to his wife. Marika then begins, very slowly and quietly, to explain to him: "You must understand, Sándor, it's possible that tomorrow you'll no longer be here ..." Hearing this, the screw immediately jumps up, and puts an end to



Workers power: popular version ...

their talk. They lead Sándor away, but he calls back: "Thank you, Marika, thank you!" Marika calls after him: "All five of you, mind!" So it comes about that at the next session, when the prosecutor asks whether we are proceeding with our appeals, or whether we accept the original judgement, we get up one after another to withdraw our appeals. The judge would have strung the lot of us up. That was a time when they were very free in handing out the rope — you know, it always depended on just who had most recently been to visit the Government and why.

Where were you taken after the Fö street?

To the national prison at Vác. That's interesting too — how they took me to Vác. They stuck me on my own into the prison van, and sat an armed guard next to me. At other times they had always kept the prisoners separated from the armed guards. During the journey we stop once at a petrol station, and they ask me to pass down the empty petrol cans from the van — the door of the prison van is wide open in front of me. You know, I had the feeling that they were counting on me trying to escape, and they they could have finished me off. We finally arrived at Vác, and I was put on the ground floor. A couple of days later they put Imre Mécs in with me — we'd both been at the technical university at the same time. He was also doing life, although at first he'd been sentenced to death. So we sat there in the cell, two twenty-five-year-old lifers, and yet we couldn't take it all seriously — after all, you couldn't really, not in your right mind. I remember Imre teaching me maths. One of the problems he set me still rings in my ears: "How would a spider make its way across the wall, if it wanted to get by the shortest possible route from one corner of the cell to the corner diagonally opposite?" It's unforgettable that one because, you know, there are no spiders in the cells. Everywhere people live, spiders live too, but not in the cells.

How long were you at Vác?

Until the hunger strike in April 1960. I should mention that I got special treatment there too. They didn't let me go to work,



... and official version

although they could have made good use of me in the button factory, and I was kept under the strictest supervision. The hunger strike took place after the restricted “cadres” amnesty of 1960. It may seem insulting to those released then, but it’s no less true, that the only people released were those who were well-known.⁵⁰ But try to understand: what we protested against wasn’t that they were released, but that we, the rest of us, were kept inside. For that, the entire prison went spontaneously on hunger strike. They wanted to hold Old Pista Bibó and Arpi Göncz responsible for organising the strike — they said they were trying from there, from inside the prison, to overthrow the state, the people’s republic.⁵¹ It’s enough to say that on the third night of the strike they rounded us up from the cells, and packed us to overflowing — we couldn’t either budge or breathe — into six prison vans. There was a needle-sized hole in the roof of our van, and at dawn one of us managed to get a glimpse through it of the town we were being driven through. It was Miskolc. That really got us worried that they might be taking us out of the country, because then we would really be in for it. Finally, however, we were let out into the yard of the prison at Sátoraljaújhely, and each van-load was put in a separate cell. I found myself together with Óld Pista Bibó, Ferenc Mérei, Jenő Szell, Pista Marián and some others.⁵² The months that followed were hard ones, in almost total isolation, and it was only slowly that things began to improve. Some time later sixteen of us were one day lined up to be taken away. When they brought the chain, to chain us up, I asked them to leave that out. “We’re workers,” I said, “We’ve accepted the responsibility for what we’ve done, what we’ve been sentenced for. We’re not going to try and escape” — but they still chained us up together all the same. When they chained us up, we started to sing with our full lungs the *International*, and we raised our voices most of all when we got to the line that goes: “And the last fight let us fight!” The screws scurried around all over the place, and finally it was like this, chained up together and singing, that they packed us into the prison van. We kept on singing all the way through the town, and we only stopped when we reached the main road.

Where were you taken?

They brought us to Budapest, to the *Gyűjtő*, the central prison. They needed toolmakers in the toy factory, and they put us to work there. Incidentally, as I was being punished with loss of privileges, I wasn’t allowed to buy extra food from outside and have it sent in, and so my mates gave me bits and pieces — that they took from their own mouths. It bothered me a lot, to be kept in such a situation. I wrote a letter to the prison governor, saying that if they have me doing physical work, then they should let me have food sent in too. They shouldn’t expect me to work my bones to the marrow, nor to have to eat other people’s share. The answer — thirty days on strict rations. You know what that is? One day half rations, the next day just water. After the thirty days were up I was again banned from work, and into the bargain they stuck me in amongst spies. It was only sometime in 1961 that they allowed me to work again. We had to remove stamps from envelopes for selling to stamp collectors, and to sort them out into little packets. Here I got the chance to talk a lot with Old Pista Bibó, while we were removing the stamps. Later on they moved me to the carpentry workshop. I had a bit of bother there too, because they wanted to use my work as a standard for setting norms, but I didn’t let them. After all, I had once been an apprentice carpenter, and I could handle the tools better than the others — so I didn’t allow it. Another thing about my time at the *Gyűjtő*: it was there that I completed my eighth year of schooling. In 1956 with seven years schooling behind me I defended the cause of the Hungarian workers, and then in the prison I have teachers like Professor Mérei and György Litván.⁵³ In 1967 after my release I completed my schooling at night school. I didn’t apply there first, but to the Donáth Bánki technical school but they rejected me, on orders from above. I wanted to go to University too, but that wasn’t the way my life was to be. It was only prisons they built for me, not universities.

When were you released?

In the big amnesty of 1963, on 28 March.⁵⁴ I wanted to go back to the factory, to the *Beloianisz*, but they wouldn’t let me. After that some 25 large factories returned my cards, until I finally got work with a private toolfitter. True, it wasn’t in my real trade, but as a fitter, but then I had to find some means of earning a living. Finally on 3 August I got taken on as a toolmaker at the Telecommunications Cooperative where I still work today, though since 1979 only as an outworker.

Why have your connections with the Cooperative got so loose? Do you come out better financially, or what...

Look, there’s more than one reason for that. The first is that my family lives at Izsák. It was in Izsák that I met my wife Anikó, once when I went there to visit my sister. We got married on 23 October 1973 in the Mátyás Church, and we have two small children: Anikó who’s eight, and the six year old Sanyi. My wife inherited a house at Izsák and that’s how the family ended up there. The other reason was that I fell out with my section head. It was quite a complicated business — which arose from the fact that I then had two half-jobs. One involved going out as a machine tool specialist to the company’s branches in the countryside to carry out repairs on their equipment, and the other was working inside on a bench repairing the factory’s own instruments. Once I came back from two days away on a job to find myself faced with my things having been swept away from my workbench, and someone else working at my bench. I went to the section head and asked him: “Where were you taught to treat a worker like this? If in future you give me the right working conditions, then I’ll be the one to carry out the work that’s entrusted to me!” A month later he wrote a letter to the boss, saying he didn’t need me to work for him any longer. After that I felt that I should put a greater distance between us. And also I got the feeling, in 1979, as if something was changing in the world — and I thought it might be better for me to draw back and make way for others, because they had painted such a black picture of me, set me up in such a negative light, I feared I would only compromise things, if something should start to happen. So I withdrew back to Izsák. My assured monthly wage is 650 forints⁵⁵; I do some hoeing in the garden, I also have a little polythene

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greenhouse, and I grow mushrooms in the cellar. There's another interesting thing — how I came to be a peasant once again. There was a woman secretary in the Cooperative whom I didn't particularly like, and one day I accidentally travelled in to work together with her on the tram. We were already sitting facing each other, and so it was too late to avoid each other. She takes out a newspaper, takes it apart and gives half of it to me, for me to read. That's where I find the advert, for a course in mushroom growing at the Agricultural University. I enroll, I complete the course, and this is how I become a peasant once again, working on the land. I can support myself. I don't have to go begging to anybody for a bonus.

How do you see the situation and prospects of workers today?

A difficult question. We should have to talk about it for at least as long as we've been talking so far, for me to express my views accurately. Still, to put it briefly: in my view the situation of the working man today is more disheartening than it was in 1945-6, because the unity that was produced by the war and many other common problems didn't go on to develop in a way that would have served the interests of the Hungarian workers. I see it as the greatest scandal that after 1948 the regime didn't help to assist in the forming and deepening of the workers' consciousness. Instead — in establishing its system of informers — it undermined the very workers' unity that should in fact have been the starting point for the development of a true workers' power. In 1956 these workers who'd been cheated before, now judged their situation correctly — they stood firmly and resolutely on the side of the revolution, and they defended it for as long as they had energy left to do so. They did so because they recognised the historical moment. They saw it was possible to establish a free society without exploitation in Hungary. For my part I hold the actions of the Hungarian workers in 1956 to be the most important political and historical events in the history of the Hungarian workers' movement; because they acted for themselves, without being manipulated by anybody.

It has always been difficult to be a working man, but to do one's work honourably is even more difficult. If anything disturbs the composure of the working man — whether it be for political, economic, social or family reasons — it becomes evident in his work at once. That's why we need at last a form of social organisation that will care for and protect all its members, all those who construct, produce and create. Because let's accept it, the manual worker today doesn't have any honour — and yet without that no society is capable of existing. Above and beyond that, we should especially honour those who care to think as well, and if it sometimes happens that the occasional person gets ideas into their head that are not to the liking of the powers that be, that's no reason to chop off their head.

What do you think of the Polish workers' movement?

Look, I can't give you an answer to that. More to the point, I don't want to, because it's again a very complicated question, and I don't have enough room to fully express my opinion. And it's far from sure that I judge everything correctly. Things look different, if you think them over while you're hoeing in the garden, and different again if you're in possession of all the information, and you look at them from the viewpoint of the political leadership. But I think you can guess where my heart draws me.

Have you ever been abroad?

No. I've asked for a passport three times since 1963, but it's been refused: "Still under the force of punishment" — that's what they've written on the paper.⁵⁶

Haven't you asked for a pardon?

No. Look, I didn't ask them to give me a life sentence, and I'm not going to ask them to give me a pardon.

Where would you most like to go, if you could?

To India, to Japan, to the islands. Because there somehow humanity has kept in better accord with nature than in the case of

the European peoples. Ordinary people are more human there as well. The West has no attraction for me, because I'm not reconciled with the West. In 1956, and at Trianon too, they left us to our fate, from short-sightedness. We were punished with Trianon for the Council Republic — after that we took sides wherever we hoped to find better treatment for our injuries.⁵⁷ It was almost as though we were forced into it. And in 1956, when they bombed the Suez Canal, it was as if they were giving a free hand to the Soviet Union to overrun us — which was again just short-sightedness on the West's part.⁵⁸

I think I've got you to confess quite a lot. Is there anything finally that you would like to say yourself?

I am very pleased that at last after twenty years someone comes and asks me about those events that played such a large part in determining the nation's future life. Because whether we talk about the 1956 revolution or not, it's there in our everyday life. Those political, economic and social problems are just as much alive today as they were in 1956, and so long as they are not resolved, they can only grow and spread further. Those dramatic dates which the world already knows — 1956, 1968, 1980 — they are all evidence that the Hungarian people had right on their side in 1956. They are also evidence of how wrongly the politicians in power in those times judged even the decisive events of their age. And it's an immeasurably great crime that even today, in 1983, I still can't talk in public, freely, sincerely and without fear about 1956 and about those things in which I played a part and in which I was a leader. I know one can't spend one's whole life being a revolutionary, but I also know that life is only worth living if we remain true to the sacred ideas of the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

I would like to thank you for the conversation, and in the name of Beszélő too, to wish you many more happy birthdays.

(The interview was conducted by Sándor Szilágyi and first appeared in the Hungarian samizdat journal Beszélő, no. 7, Budapest, 1983, on the occasion of Sándor Rácz's fiftieth birthday.)

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1. The Hungarian second army suffered catastrophic losses on the Russian front in the winter of 1942-43 in the Valley of the River Don.
2. Izsák, where Rác and his family still live today, is a village with a population of almost 8,000 in the neighbourhood of Kecskemet, about 110 kilometres south of Budapest. Hódmezővásárhely, where he was born, is a larger town in the south-east of Hungary close to Szeged and the Yugoslav border.
3. The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, also known as the Day of Our Lady in Harvest.
4. The Beloianisz factory, formerly the American-owned Budapest Standard Electric Company, producing electrical equipment is in the Kelenföld or eleventh district of Budapest.
5. The two workers' parties, the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, were united into a single party under the name Hungarian Workers' Party at a joint congress in June 1948, after the Social Democratic right headed by Anna Kéthly and opposed to fusion had already been expelled from the party. In effect the union meant the swallowing-up of the Social Democratic Party by the Communists, and in 1950 the former left-wing social democrats who had supported union were also expelled from the new party, and their leaders Árpád Szakasits and György Marosán arrested.

In February 1950 several managers of the American owned Standard Electric Company, later called the Beloianisz, were brought to trial charged with economic sabotage and espionage against the Hungarian People's Republic. Amongst those put on trial were a U.S. citizen Robert Vogeler and a British citizen Edgar Sanders who were charged with having directed the sabotage and espionage activities on behalf of the American and British secret services. Vogeler and Sanders were sentenced to 15 and 13 years imprisonment respectively.

1950 was a year of mounting industrial conflict with workers' resistance to attempts to forcibly raise production forcing wage rises and falls in productivity. The regime responded by arresting hundreds of former social democrat trade unionists and imprisoning thousands of workers on charges of swindling, sabotage and anti-Soviet activities.

6. Rác refers here again to the two workers' parties, the Social Democrats and the Communists.
7. Under the piece-rate system introduced by the Communists, stakhanovites were outstanding workers who overfilled production norms and were rewarded by impressive bonuses. Their achievements were then used to raise the output norms for other workers. The practice was first developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.
8. Imre Nagy, who as Minister of Agriculture in 1945 had brought in the post-war land reform, was appointed Hungarian prime minister in June 1953 in place of the former stalinist dictator Mátyás Rákosi, and authorised to introduce a programme of reforms known as the "New Course".

Nagy's reform programme included restricting the role of the state security organs, the Hungarian secret police who were commonly known by their initials as the *AVO*.

Rákosi, however, remained as party secretary and after the fall of the Soviet leader Malenkov, Imre Nagy was dismissed as Hungarian prime minister in March 1955; Rákosi returned to supreme power, and the policies of the New Course were brought to a halt.

9. At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, Khrushchev made his famous "secret speech" denouncing the errors and crimes of the Stalin era, and launched a programme of destalinisation calling for economic and political reforms throughout the Soviet bloc.
10. The Hungarian revolution started on 23 October 1956 when Hungarian students marched through the streets of Budapest declaring their support for the recent changes in Poland where the national communist Gomulka had come to power, and calling for similar changes in Hungary, for a new Government and Party leadership and the return to power of Imre Nagy. The Hungarian Communist Party leaders reacted in a way that only poured oil on the flames. The Minister of Interior, László Piros, went on the radio to issue a ban on the demonstration, but later the ban was called off. In the evening, however, Communist Party leader Ernő Gerő made a broadcast in which he denounced the demonstrators as reactionary elements seeking to overthrow the socialist order. The speeches served to further inflame the mood of revolt.
11. One of the students' demands had been for the removal of the Stalin statue on the edge of the city park which they saw as "the symbol of tyranny and oppression", and this was one of the first demands to be realised by a crowd of Hungarian workers on the evening of 23 October who, after many initial efforts, finally managed to bring the statue down. Another crowd was assembling at much the same time outside the Budapest radio building, demanding that the students' 16 points be broadcast over the radio. Here it was that the first shots of the revolution were fired, as secret police troops guarding the radio tried to clear the crowd from the street.
12. The *EMKE* is a well-known cafe on the corner of one of the main intersections in the city centre of Budapest where the Rákóczi street crosses the Lenin boulevard.
13. *The Truth* (*Igazság*) was one of the more radical and popular papers published during the revolution, edited by two young journalists Gyula

Obersovszky and József Gáli with the help of other young writers and university students. Eleven issues of *The Truth* were published between 25 October and 7 November. After the revolution Obersovszky and Gáli were arrested, tried and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment.

The New York Cafe is one of the more well-known meeting places of Hungarian writers and intellectuals, close to the editorial offices of several Hungarian newspapers in the centre of Budapest. Renamed the 'Hungária' after the second world war, it continued for many years to be popularly known as the 'New York'.

14. After a few days in which the revolution appeared to be victorious and the Soviet Union seemed prepared to accept a more independent Hungarian regime, Soviet forces launched a major attack on Budapest at dawn on 4 November 1956 with tank and infantry forces designed to crush the revolution and overthrow the Government of Imre Nagy.
15. On 3 November 1956 negotiations were opened between representatives of the Hungarian and Soviet Governments over the planned withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. The Hungarian delegation was headed by General Pál Maléter, a hero of the revolution who had just been appointed Minister of Defence. The talks were commenced in the morning in the Hungarian Parliament and continued in the evening at the Soviet military headquarters at Tököl to the south of Budapest. Contacts between the Hungarian delegation and the Nagy Government, however, were broken off, and in fact shortly before midnight the Hungarian delegation including General Maléter were arrested by Soviet security forces under the command of the head of the Soviet KGB General Ivan Serov.
16. At 5.20 a.m. on 4 November 1956 the Hungarian prime minister, Imre Nagy, went on the radio to declare: "Today at daybreak Soviet troops attacked our capital with the obvious intent of overthrowing the legal, democratic Hungarian Government. Our troops are in combat. The Government is at its post. I notify the people of our country and the entire world of this fact." The announcement was preceded by the words: "Attention! Attention!"
17. János Kádár, a leading member of the pre-war underground Communist Party, had been imprisoned under the Rákosi regime in 1951 and released under Imre Nagy's Government in 1954. On 25 November 1956 Kádár was appointed first secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party in place of the former stalinist Ernő Gerő, and at the end of October he formally dissolved the HWP and announced the formation of a new communist party called the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Appointed a Minister of State in Imre Nagy's Government on 31 October 1956, he described the revolution in a radio broadcast on 1 November as a "glorious uprising" which had "shaken off the Rákosi regime" and "achieved freedom for the people and independence for the country", and he had called on the Hungarian people and on all democratic forces to help in consolidating the Government of Imre Nagy. On 4 November 1956, however, Kádár headed the new "Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government" which called on the help of the Soviet forces to crush the revolution and overthrow the Government of Imre Nagy. For most Hungarians at that time Kádár appeared as a traitor who had sold out his country and his people to the Russians.
18. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, formed on 1 November 1956 by János Kádár, and in the name of which Kádár continued to rule after the Soviet intervention of 4 November. Apart from Kádár himself, however, all other members of the preparatory committee formed on 1 November to reorganise the new party — Imre Nagy, Zoltán Szántó, Georg Lukács, Sándor Kopácsi, Géza Losonczy and Ferenc Donáth — were arrested, tried, imprisoned or executed under his new regime.
19. The Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest was formed at the electrical equipment factory *Egyesült Izzó* (United Electric) in the northern Budapest working class suburb of Újpest on 14 November 1956. The resolution of the 11th district workers' council, formulating the workers' political demands, is published in French in J.J. Marie and B. Nagy (ed.), *Pologne-Hongrie 1956*, Paris, EDI, 1966, pp. 223-4. This volume contains the fullest collection of documents on the Hungarian workers' councils yet published in any language.
20. Immediately following the founding meeting of the Central Workers' Council a delegation which included Sándor Bali went to present their demands to Kádár in the Hungarian Parliament. Kádár's superficially conciliatory speech was published in the next day's issue of the Hungarian Communist Party paper *Népszabadság*, and an English translation is included in Melvin J. Lasky (ed.), *The Hungarian Revolution*, London, Secker, 1957, pp.262-3.
21. After its formation the Central Workers' Council first set up its headquarters in the offices of the Budapest Tram Company in the Akácfa street in the centre of Budapest.
22. Tibor Déry, a long-standing Communist writer, criticised by the Rákosi regime in the late 1940s, who become one of the leaders of the writers' rebellion in the years leading up to 1956. After the revolution he was arrested, brought to trial and sentenced to nine years imprisonment.
23. István Babay, who acted from the start as the secretary of the Central Workers' Council, was a delegate of the Budapest Tram Company.
24. János Fazekas, a delegate from Újpest, was originally a member of the

HUNGARY

- Central Workers' Council executive, but was later voted off the committee.
25. See: Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, London, Allison & Busby, 1976, p.154. Rácz could have read this book in a Hungarian samizdat version issued in Budapest in 1981.
 26. József Sándor, a representative of the Kádár Government appointed to liaise with the Central Workers' Council, had been elected a candidate member of the Central Committee of the HWP in 1951. In 1957 he became a member of the Central Committee of the new HSWP, and head of the department of the Secretariat responsible for party and mass organisations.
 27. Members of the new Party and Government leadership under Kádár. Béla Biszku, one of the hard men of the new regime, became a Politburo member and Minister of the Interior in 1957. György Marosán, a former Social Democrat, was also a Politburo member in the new party, and a Minister of State in Kádár's Government formed on 4 November 1956. Miklós Ribianszky was deputy minister of state farms in the Kádár Government.
 28. József Dévényi, delegate of the Csepel Iron and Steel Works, was initially a member of the executive of the Central Workers' Council and the leader of its first delegation to negotiate with Kádár on the night of 14 November. He also became president of the Central Council, but resigned after a vote of no confidence in him was passed on 16 November.
 29. György Kalocsai, a chemical engineer and delegate from Csepel, was elected vice-president of the Central Workers' Council. Kalocsai and Babay appear to have been more prepared than Rácz to accept that Kádár was negotiating in good faith, and more hopeful of the possibilities of reaching a settlement with the regime.
 30. "Nyilas" was the name given to members of the Hungarian fascist party, the Arrow Cross, that ruled Hungary for several months at the end of 1944.
 31. Csepel is a major industrial and working class centre of Budapest, historically known as 'Red Csepel', on Csepel island to the south of the city. After 4 November there was an ongoing conflict between the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest and the Central Workers' Council of Csepel which was from the start more favourable to a return to work, and later opposed the Central Council's call for a strike on 22-23 November.
 32. Antal Apró, one of the few members of the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government to have actually been present at its formation on 3 November 1956. Member of the Politburo of the new HSWP and Minister of Industry in Kádár's Government.
 33. General Ivan Serov, head of the Soviet secret police, the KGB, was responsible for overall supervision of the repression in Hungary after 1956.
 34. *MÉMOSZ*, initials of the Hungarian Building Workers' Trade Union.
 35. When the Soviet forces attacked Budapest on 4 November 1956, Imre Nagy and several of his colleagues, together with their families, took refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest which had offered asylum to them. On 22 November they left the Embassy of their own free will after Kádár had issued a written guarantee of safe conduct for them in a letter to the Yugoslav authorities. Upon leaving the Embassy, however, they were seized by Soviet forces, taken to the Soviet military headquarters at Mátyásföld, and flown out of the country the following day against their will to Romania.
 36. The Hungarian Government's decree law on the workers' councils was published in the party paper *Népszabadság* on 22 November 1956. Jenő Fock was one of Kádár's early supporters, Secretary of the Hungarian TUC (*SZOT*) in 1955-57, and member of the HSWP Politburo and Secretariat in 1957. He later served as prime minister in the first economic reform period, 1967-75.
 37. The conference was held in the Hungarian Parliament on 25 November 1956. See: Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, pp.161-2.
 38. Marosán had been a baker's delivery boy in the early 1920's, and later a leader of the Food Workers' Trade Union. In his demagogic manner, he liked to recall his working class origins, but would overlook the fact that he had also worked for several years as a ballet instructor.
 39. Miklós Sebestyén, a young engineer and delegate from the Hungarian Optical Works, was a member of the executive of the Central Workers' Council and head of its sub-committee for press and publicity. Ferenc Töke, a toolmaker and delegate from the telephone factory in the 14th district, headed the Central Council's organisation sub-committee. Both later left Hungary for the West and published accounts of their activities and experiences, which can be found in Marie and Nagy, *Pologne-Hongrie 1956*, pp.242-273 (Töke) and pp.297-307 (Sebestyén).
 40. Gyula Obersovszky, who had edited the journal *The Truth* during the revolution, continued to publish a clandestine broadsheet *We are alive* (Élünk) in November and December 1956. Working closely with the Central Workers' Council, he was to have edited their planned journal, the *Workers' News*. On 5 December he was arrested, and in 1957 received a death sentence, later commuted to life imprisonment.
 41. Three issues of the *Information Bulletin* did in fact appear, on 27 November, 29 November and 5 December. Extracts from the last issue can be read in Marie and Nagy, *Pologne-Hongrie 1956*, pp.307-313.
 42. The book referred to is János Molnár, *A Nagybudapesti Központi Munkástanács* (The Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiado, 1969; ref. pp.119-121. A number of proposals for reorganisation of the country's economic and political structure were drawn up at this time, and it is probable that there was more than one of them presented to and discussed by the Central Workers' Council.
 43. *SZOT*, the initials of the Hungarian TUC, the National Council of Hungarian Trade Unions. Sándor Gáspár was General Secretary of the *SZOT* from 1954, and a member of the Central Committee of the HSWP in 1957.
 44. Early on the afternoon of 6 December 1956, one day after the special three-day session of the Central Committee of the HSWP — the first since the revolution — small groups of HSWP members held public demonstrations in support of the Kádár Government, marching into the streets carrying red flags, and protected by Hungarian police and Soviet soldiers. Clashes took place in several parts of the city between the demonstrators and members of the public, and the police intervened, opening fire on the crowds. The official Hungarian press reported several deaths and 50 arrests, and blamed the incidents on armed counter-revolutionaries. The clandestine revolutionary press blamed the police for the deaths, and condemned the provocative nature of the demonstrations.
 45. The *Memorandum* was presented to the Government in a final attempt to reach some agreement, restating the Central Workers' Council's fundamental demands and calling for a public reply to them — which never came. For the text, see Marie and Nagy, *Pologne-Hongrie 1956*, pp.314-7.
 46. Salgótarján is a small town in northern Hungary, at the centre of the coal mining area of County Nógrád, where the local people held out for several weeks under the leadership of their workers' council against the Kádár regime's attempts to impose its authority on the county. When several thousand workers demonstrated in the town centre on 8 December in protest against the arrest the previous day of two leading members of the County Workers' Council, Soviet tanks and Hungarian security forces opened fire on them — over 80 were killed and at least 200 wounded.
 47. "Lotto" — the Hungarian national lottery.
 48. The Petöfi Circle was a debating circle set up under the auspices of the Communist youth organisation early in 1956 to debate the problems of applying the decisions of the Soviet Communist Party's Twentieth Congress to Hungary. It soon became a forum in which most aspects of the Rákosi regime's policies were subjected to open, public criticism.
 49. The trial of the leaders of the Central Workers' Council was held in March 1958. The other three defendants, besides Rácz and Bali, were József Nemeskéri, who had come onto the Central Council as a representative of the freedom fighters and who served on its rescue committee for trying to prevent deportations; László Abód, a delegate from the third district who worked together with Miklós Sebestyén in the Central Council's press section; and Endre Mester, who represented the workers' councils of the railway workers and served as a member of the Central Council's political committee.
 50. In the 1960 amnesty it was indeed well-known figures, and former Communists in particular, who were released, like the writers Tibor Déry and Gyula Hay; Imre Nagy's political colleagues Sándor Haraszti, Ferenc Donáth and Ferenc Jánosi, and the army general Gyula Váradi. Also released at this time were the former secret police heads, Mihály and Vladimir Farkas and Gábor Péter. The majority of ordinary working class prisoners, however, remained behind bars.
 51. István Bibó, widely regarded as Hungary's most important twentieth century political theorist and essayist, Minister of State in Imre Nagy's final coalition Government of 3 November 1956, was arrested only on 23 May 1957 but sentenced to life imprisonment in 1958. Árpád Göncz, writer and translator, had worked closely with Bibó as a member of the National Peasant, later Petöfi party.
 52. Ferenc Mérei, a Communist and well-known psychologist, had been an adviser to the Students' Revolutionary Committee during the revolution. Jenő Szell had been responsible for the Nagy Government's relations with the radio. Both had been arrested in 1958 for having collaborated in the clandestine production of the *Hungaricus* pamphlet in December 1956-January 1957. (See: Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, pp.182-192.) Colonel István Marián had helped to organise the students' demonstration on 23 October and the students' militia during the revolution.
 53. György Litván was a young history teacher who had been arrested in 1958 for his involvement with the *Hungaricus* pamphlet. In March 1956 he had been the first person to tell Rákosi publicly and to his face that the time had come for him to resign.
 54. In the so-called "general amnesty" of 1963 the majority of political prisoners from 1956 were released, but significant categories of prisoners were excluded from its terms, amongst them all those charged with murder, treason or espionage, and all those with any previous convictions. Several hundred political prisoners thus remained in prison after the amnesty, and many of them were released only in the late 1960s or early 1970s.
 55. About £10 at current rates of exchange.
 56. Although Rácz was released on amnesty in 1963 he was not pardoned, and thus the punishment of withdrawal of civil rights (which would include the right to a passport) which accompanied his life sentence, would appear to still be in force.
 57. After the end of the first world war the Hungarian Communist Party seized power and established a Republic of Councils under the leader-

ship of Béla Kun. It was overthrown in turn and replaced by the right-wing dictatorship of Admiral Miklós Horthy in August 1919. In 1920 the Trianon peace settlement resulted in Hungary losing two-thirds of its former territory, including the large Hungarian populations in Slovakia, Transylvania and northern Yugoslavia.

58. The combined Israeli and Anglo-French attack on Egypt at Suez occurred exactly at the point when the Hungarian revolution appeared to be victorious, ie. 29-31 October 1956. It was on the following day, 1 November, that the Soviet leadership finally resolved to invade Hungary and crush the revolution.

Further Reading on the Hungarian Revolution and the Hungarian Workers' Councils

Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956*, London, Allison & Busby, 1976.

Bill Lomax (ed.), *Eyewitness in Hungary: The Soviet Invasion of 1956*, Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1981, which includes two articles relating to the workers' councils: Miklós Krassó, 'Hungary 1956: An Interview', and Balázs Nagy, 'Budapest 1956: The Central Workers' Council'.

Jean-Jacques Marie and Balázs Nagy (ed.), *Pologne-Hongrie 1956*, Paris, EDI, 1966, which includes many documents on the Hungarian workers' councils unavailable elsewhere.

Ernö Király, *Die Arbeiterselbstverwaltung in Ungarn: Aufstieg and Niedergang 1956-1958*, Munich, Oldenbourg, 1961.

János Molnár, *A Nagybudapesti Központi Munkástanács* (The Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest), Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó, 1969.

Balázs Nagy, *La Formation du Conseil Central Ouvrier de Budapest en 1956*, Brussels, Imre Nagy Institute for Political Research, 1961.

Ferenc Töke, 'Experiences with Workers' Councils during the Hungarian Revolution', *The Review*, Brussels, No.3, January 1960. (Also available in French in Marie and Nagy, op. cit.)

Miklós Sebestyén, 'My Experiences in the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest', *The Review*, Brussels, Vol.3, No.2, 1961. (Also available in French in Marie and Nagy, op. cit.)



The Radovic affair and its menacing consequences

On 20 April of this year the Federal police raided a flat in Belgrade (belonging to Dragomir Olujić) where a meeting addressed by Djilas was in progress. Those present were arrested, questioned and soon released. Four were physically assaulted while in custody. One of these, Jovica Mihailović, tried to commit suicide, but was prevented from doing so.

Several of the participants were subsequently rearrested for questioning, and released. One of these, Radomir Radović, disappeared after his second release, on 23 April. One week later he was found dead at a house outside Belgrade. (The house belonged to his aunt but was unoccupied at the time.) The official verdict was suicide (due to intake of weedkiller), but the family is adamantly contesting this.

In the first week of May, Miodrag Milić and Dragomir Olujić (of the original group) were arrested in Belgrade and committed for trial. They have been charged with dissemination of hostile propaganda. In the second week of May, Vojislav Seselj, another participant, was arrested in Sarajevo and charged with attempting to bring

down the constitutional order. Seselj has been on hunger strike ever since. His lawyer, the well-known Belgrade man Srdja Popović, has been denied access to him.

In the last week of May three more people were arrested in Belgrade: Milan Nikolić, Vladimir Mijanović and Pavle Imsirović. Mijanović will be charged with forming an illegal organisation — a Free University — the others with being members of one. All three at once went on hunger strike and are now in prison hospital, where they are being fed intravenously, apparently against their will. In mid-June Nikolić suffered a heart attack. All three are reported in poor health. Their families believe that the effects of the hunger strike will be permanent.

The four hunger strikers are demanding unconditional release, since they have broken no law. Amnesty International has adopted all six as prisoners of conscience.

Although the Yugoslav media has not even registered these arrests (with the exception of that of Seselj), a number of petitions on their behalf are now circulating in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. The

signatories include members of the *Praxis* group, and other best known writers and intellectuals (see documents below).

It would appear that the Yugoslav authorities have decided to use this method to frighten unofficial critics, at a time when the country is undergoing its most severe economic crisis since the war. We are worried that this may be only the first wave of a more general repression of *all* critical opinion. We are therefore urging friends of Yugoslavia, and people on the left in general, to write or otherwise contact the Yugoslav Ambassador to express their concern, in an attempt to obtain the release of those imprisoned, and the clarification of the circumstances of the death of 33-year-old Radomir Radović.

Letters and telegrams should be addressed to:

His Excellency Dragi Stamenković,
The Yugoslav Ambassador,
The Yugoslav Embassy,
5 Lexham Gardens,
London W8.

Death of a worker's tribune

Radomir Radović was arrested together with others on 20 April, taken to the Central Police station for 'investigation', but released on the following day, 21 April, at 4 a.m. His interrogator was Ranko Savić.

On the following day, 22 April, he was rearrested. This time he was questioned by Mirosavljević and Petrović. He was released the next day, 23 April, at 1 p.m. His family says he was quite calm. He had lunch, slept for half an hour and went to meet his girlfriend (they were soon to be married). Before saying goodbye to her, he told her he was going to visit a joint friend a few hundred yards away. This was the last time he was seen alive.

On Monday, 30 April, he was found dead at a cottage outside Belgrade by his aunt, Jelena Radović. He was in his sleeping bag, lying on his back, arms crossed. His face was relaxed, and he had a bruise or scratch on his temple. On the floor of the house were a lot of spilled insecticide and other agricultural poisons, human excrement and vomit. The family promptly called the police, who carried out a superficial investigation (for example, the cup from which he was supposed to have drunk the pesticide was not taken). The family lawyer asked for another investigation. It was agreed that he should be present at the autopsy. But when he came for the appointed meeting, he was informed that the

autopsy had already been completed and ushered out of the room. The day after Radović's burial, the results of the autopsy were still unavailable to his family and its lawyer.

The lawyer, Vitomir Knezević, was told that the technical analysis would take at least three weeks. Yet, as early as 10 May, the Under-Secretary of the Internal Security Service (ISS) of Serbia, Obren Djordjević, told a press conference that 'the autopsy ... found no sign of violence on the body and death occurred as a result of an overdose of sedatives'. Also, the Chief of the ISS of Serbia told the official news agency *Tanjug* that Radović had been arrested only once and promptly released. This was then transmitted by *Tanjug* to all Yugoslav media. At the same time, Knezević was told by the Institute of Judicial Medicine that the results of the autopsy were as yet unknown.

A subsequent article in the Belgrade weekly *NIN* had the family describe Radović on the day of his disappearance as being in a state of great nervous tension, sorry for ever taking part in the discussion meetings, and saying that he was going to break off with those people and turn over a new leaf. Also, the lawyer was purported to say that the campaign by friends for clarification of the circumstances of Radović's death was most unhelpful. All this was subsequently denied both by the family and by its lawyer.

Radomir was 33 years old. He was first a

building worker, later a technician. He helped to organise a petition, circulated by the workers of the Belgrade engineering enterprise *Minela* demanding the replacement and punishment of one of the directors, Radoje Stefanović, for misappropriation and theft. An investigation was started but soon dropped — the signatories being informed that Stefanović had been appointed to head the executive of the Belgrade city council (which post he still occupies). Radović was sacked. He then found a job at 'Hidrotehnika', where he was also involved in a workers' petition against Mikaina Savić, a judge in the Court of Associated Labour, known for her anti-worker stand and various abuses of her position. The petition led nowhere — the city's new top executive moved in to protect her. Her cousin, Ranko Savić, who is 'responsible for University and the intelligentsia' in the Belgrade section of the ISS, was Radović's first interrogator!

Radović was known at Belgrade meetings for his courageous defence of workers' interests and of the principle of social equality and democracy. His funeral was attended by his family, several dozen plainclothes policemen and several hundred friends and comrades. His comrades laid a wreath at his grave with a big red star at its centre, because Radomir was a communist in the old and best tradition of the word — a workers' tribune.

Document 1

Open letter to the Yugoslav Public

Surveying the measures of repression which have occurred over the past few weeks, in this freedom-loving city of Belgrade, we are led to the inevitable conclusion that this is a preventive terror directed against the people, and those forces which seek a way out of the current crisis through violence rather than reform have temporarily triumphed. Anxious that the present choice of repression may remain a permanent orientation of the state, we want to argue before you that it would be a tragic and irreversible historic mistake were this to be allowed to happen. The past experience of world socialism has shown beyond doubt that it can be its own worst enemy, and that the largest number of victims has fallen as a result of the multiplication of imaginary enemies. Accustomed to public glorification rather than public responsibility, totalitarianism automatically seeks preventive police terror. The worst that this terror can achieve in societies without previous democratic traditions is continuous stagnation. Those societies, however, which have seriously understood the great potential of the democratic alternative are quickly destabilised by it, since it inevitably leads into a permanent 'state of war' between the government and the people. There are situations from recent and contemporary history when the state, despite superior physical force, finds it impossible to govern. What follows is an unexpected situation which nobody wants and which creates no basis for future progress.

A tragedy has already occurred: Radomir Radović, one of the arrested, disappeared only to be found dead. Over one hundred citizens have written to the relevant organs energetically demanding that his death be fully explained. Instead, several functionaries and journalists have attacked the 'petitioners' in the crudest terms, as if they had done something other than to rely on constitutionally guaranteed citizens' rights. The arrests of Miodrag Milić, Dragomir Olujić and Vojislav Seselj followed.

The 'politics' of the preparation of the court trial of Vojislav Seselj, conducted in the 'organs of public information' by journalists and state functionaries, illustrates well the atmosphere which is being created in the country. In the Zagreb and Sarajevo press, Seselj has been called a 'rat of invective moving swiftly through the city's sewage system', 'a member of a pack of starving sharks', 'intellectual filth', 'Stalinist trash', 'mouthpiece in the service of foreign agencies of psychological warfare'.

Instead of taking action against such linguistic excesses and the expressed threat to human dignity, Mitja Ribicic and Stane Dolanc have joined the campaign against Vojislav Seselj. On 9 February the State Security Service (SSS) of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina arrested Dr Seselj for the first time and confiscated a manuscript in which he expressed his views on our socio-political situation. These views, taken from a manuscript that has *never been published nor shown to anybody*, were attacked by Mitja Ribicic at a meeting of the Federal Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia on 12 April and subsequently by Stane Dolanc during a TV interview on the occasion of the Day of the Security Forces.

Is it really the job of the SSS to confiscate private manuscripts and then hand them over to politicians and the media for their manipulations and campaigns? What right have the functionaries of the state to interpret and attack privately expressed opinions, and on that basis to demand the persecution of authors? Who is responsible for the 'verbal crime', the one who writes in private or the one who confiscates the manuscript and brings it to the public gaze?

After public opinion had been suitably prepared, the SSS arrested Seselj for the third time on 21 May, when he was brought handcuffed before the Investigating Judge of the District Court of Sarajevo. On that occasion he declared: 'I protest against this

unlawful arrest and against the charge which is totally without foundation. I refuse to say anything and demand to be freed. From today I shall go on hunger strike, which may well lead to my death.' This happened in the presence of his lawyer, his nine-month pregnant wife and his sister.

In the meantime, on 23 May, the SSS arrested in Belgrade Pavluska Imsirović (one of those questioned on 20 April), Vlada Mijanović and Milan Nikolić. Their wives sent a private letter one week later (see Document 2 — Ed.) describing how they were unlawfully arrested. Declaring themselves immediately on hunger strike, they said before those present during the house search that they 'are not inclined to suicide and will not resort to it under any circumstances'.

We are forced to conclude that these arrests are designed to cow free and critical public opinion, and also to prepare for trials of 'enemy groups'. This political oppression has been accompanied by a corresponding 'ideological' campaign, especially in Zagreb and Sarajevo. At a discussion meeting organised by the Ideological Section of the Croatian Central Committee about ideological struggle in the cultural arena, numerous writers, journalists and artists, publishing houses, editorial boards, etc. mainly from Belgrade, were attacked. An ideological consultation of similar vehemence and aim was also held by the appropriate section of the Vojvodina Central Committee. The press in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Novi Sad, with the traditional support and appropriate specific contribution of the Belgrade press led by *NIN* — with its notorious access to police archives and the secrets of foreign intelligence services — shows that the 'healthy forces' of the bureaucracy have started a generalised offensive against the freedom of creative and critical thought and democratic dialogue about the grave and fateful problems of Yugoslav society. Various 'ideologists' and 'journalists' threaten and swear, invent 'enemy groups', the 'Belgrade Circle', 'unity of Left and Right', uncover 'open counter-revolution' and are in this way preparing political arrests, trials and imprisonment.

Concerned with the progress and future of this country, with its human and civilised identity here and abroad, we raise once more our voice in protest against the limitation of freedom of thought, against the persecution of citizens who publicly express their opinions and tell the truth about our reality. We ask: is the intelligentsia safe only if it replaces with a blanket silence a free and well-intentioned discussion about the Yugoslav crisis and its possible solution? What sort of politics is it which asks us to look towards the future, without first looking for those who are responsible for the state of the country and who sharply prosecute all critics of the current situation?

We demand:

That all arrested citizens named above, whose life is now in danger, be released.

That civil and human liberties — guaranteed by the Constitution of the SFRJ, the United Nations Declaration, the Helsinki Agreement and other international agreements adopted by Yugoslavia — be respected.

That instead of political persecutions by the police, and violence conducted against critics of Yugoslav reality, a free, democratic and tolerant dialogue be conducted about the Yugoslav crisis and the way out of it in a democratic direction.

Signed: Matija Becković, Dobrica Ćosić, Kosta Cavoski, Milovan Danojlić, Zagorka Golubović, Vasilije Krestić, Mihailo Marković, Tanasije Mladenović, Dragoljub Micunović, Dragoslav Mihailović, Borislav Mihajlović, Predrag Palavestra, Nebojsa Popov, Mića Popović, Svetozar Stojanović, Ljubomir Tadić.
Belgrade 28 May 1984

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Document 2

Press release by Jelka Imsirović, Ljiljana Mijanović and Svetlana Nikolić

We consider it our citizen's duty as well as a moral obligation to inform the Yugoslav public of the following facts:

1) On 23 May 1984 members of the State Security Service (SSS) of the city of Belgrade searched without permit the flats of Vladimir Mijanović, Pavle Imsirović and Milan Nikolić. After the searches all three were arrested, without an official warrant.

2) Vladimir Mijanović was not found at home in the early hours of the morning. Two policemen stayed at his flat, thus depriving his wife and his brother of their liberty. At 9 o'clock Vladimir was grabbed by three plainclothes policemen without any prior warning, on the steps of the building leading to 9 Kosovska Street [where the Imsirović family lives]. He called for police help. Two passers-by protested at this attack by three people on a defenceless man, but without result. At about 10 o'clock Vladimir was accompanied by the three plainclothes and two uniformed policemen to his flat where the search began.

3) The children of Pavle Imsirović and Milan Nikolić were also temporarily deprived of freedom. They were not allowed to telephone, the two younger children were not allowed to be taken to the nursery school and the two elder ones had to go to school *on their own*.

4) Vladimir Mijanović, Pavle Imsirović and Milan Nikolić have started, in protest, a hunger strike.

Vladimir Mijanović demanded before witnesses — his wife, brother and two other citizens — to be allowed to contact the presidents of the Presidency of SFRJ, of the SFRJ Assembly and of the Federal Executive Council, since the bulk of the material confiscated from him contained letters addressed to the highest organs and representatives of this country. He added that he refused to give any further evidence to the SSS.

Pavle Imsirović declared, and this was taken down, that this was the second illegal search and the second unlawful arrest to which he had been subjected in the past month, adding that he 'had reason to believe that this time it was due to his activities in attempting to produce a clarification of Radović's death'. For this reason 'and in protest against this treatment, he was starting a hunger strike'. This was his 'last word to the SSS'. Of the eleven items taken from his flat, nine were letters sent either to the highest organs of the state or to the press in connection with the tragic death of Radomir Radović.

Milan Nikolić stated that he was going on hunger strike as a sign of protest against the unlawful treatment of citizens of the SFRJ. More than one-third of the papers taken from his flat contained previously published papers on the student movement in 1968.

5) Pavle Imsirović, Milan Nikolić and Vladimir Mijanović declared before those present that they are not suicidal and have no intention of resorting to suicide under any circumstances.

Signed: Jelka Imsirović, Ljiljana Mijanović, Svetlana Nikolić.
Belgrade

24 May 1984

Document 3

Open Letter to the Assembly of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) and to the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia

Ever since 20 April this year, when 28 people were arrested for meeting at a private flat in order to talk about the national question in Yugoslavia, the Enemy Number One has become the Free University. One outcome has been the tragic death of the young worker Radomir Radović. The arrests are continuing. On 23 May the Belgrade Investigating Court issued a warrant for the arrest of three more people: Vladimir Mijanović, Pavlusko Imsirović and Milan Nikolić, whose names are now added to the previous three arrests — those of Miodrag Milić and Dragomir Olujić, and the synchronised arrest of Vojislav Seselj in Sarajevo. All are being charged with 'the criminal act of association for enemy activity'. At this moment, four young lives are also in danger since, in protest against these illegal acts by the authorities, Mijanović, Imsirović, Nikolić and Seselj have started an unlimited hunger strike.

The authorities are behaving sternly, pretending that they are dealing with a dangerous group of terrorists which is a threat to the security of the state and its citizens — the indictment speaks of 'acting in the period from 1977 until April 1984 in creating, organising, recruiting and consolidating a group of persons for the purpose of a counter-revolutionary action against the social organisation, designed to destabilise and anti-constitutionally change the existing socio-economic system and overthrow the existing system of government'. No proof is offered other than these meetings which took place in private flats, the various topics which were discussed, the number of participants, and the number of these meetings. These meetings have been declared illegal. Yet everybody knew about them since they have always been open: those who took part in them considered them to be perfectly legal, indeed guaranteed by the Constitution of the SFRJ. Indeed, while declaring them illegal, not a single theme discussed at them has been mentioned by the authorities as proof of this, no doubt in order to cover up the true character of these occasions.

We, ourselves, have organised such seminars, known as the Free University, in the past — though these could not be 'adver-

tised', because we could not use public places, which were closed to us, so we had to meet privately. As such we protest against this loathsome misuse of law which, playing with the lives and security of Yugoslav citizens, tries to construct a political process against imaginary enemies.

For the sake of public information, and in order to show what 'hides' behind these 'illegal meetings', we shall quote to you the themes discussed at them, together with the names of the main speakers, so that you understand the nature of the 'counter-revolutionary activities' with which these people are being charged today.

Between 1972 and 1982 we organised and participated in the following meetings: L. Tadić, *Once More On the Concept of Enlightenment*; S. Stojanović and Golubović, *An Attempt at a Marxist Analysis of Stalinism*; Marković, *The Distribution of Power in a Just Society*; V. Rus, *A Comparative Investigation of Industrial Democracy and Workers' Participation*; D. Micunović, *The Idea of Humanism in Post-Classical Philosophy*; Discussion of Bahro's *The Alternative*; D. Čosić, *About the Conflict between Realism and Modernism*; Discussion on the theme of *Philosophy and the Transformation of the World*; D. Bosković, *The Problem of Ideology in the Early Works of Yugoslav Marxists*; L. Veljak, *The Actuality of the Theory of Reflection*; B. Burzić, *Youth Between Movement and Organisation*; K. Cavoski, *The Legal System in Real Socialism*; D. Grlić, *The Theory of Creativity*; T. Indjić, *About Spain*; N. Popov, *Ideas, Movements, Ideologies*; B. Jelovec, *Problems of Ideology and New Experience (Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology)*; M. Nikolić, *High Technology and the Possibility of a Telematic Civilisation*; M. Belančić, *Speech and Power*; Z. Golubović and M. Marković, *On Human Needs*; L. Stojanović, *Modern Art and the Humanist Idea*; Debate about the Solidarity movement in Poland; S. Knjazeva-Adamović, *Man as a Natural Being*; Debate on the crisis of Marxism with respect to the work of Kolakowski.

Among those present at all these 'subversive' meetings were the above-mentioned comrades who, because of this, have been arrested and charged with 'organising against the social system' and with counter-revolutionary activity. That which even the Polish authorities did not dare to do between 1975 and 1980, when the so-called Flying Universities were operating as a first alternative to the existing institutions of learning, the Yugoslav authorities are now arrogantly doing, breaking all international conventions on human rights and civil liberties, which have been signed by our country. The idea of Free University was naturally born too, at a time when everywhere in the world, under the influence of new social movements, 'alternative forms' are increasingly being sought and created in parallel to the institutionalised ones, expressing a general dissatisfaction with the latter. This is how we conceived the Free University and how we practised it for several years at different discussion meetings. We consider we have done nothing illegal. We have used only rights guaranteed to its citizens by the Yugoslav Constitution, which allows them personal initiative in the organisation and improvement of their inter-communication. The above themes — and similar ones covered at other seminars of the Free University — best show its nature. Only a sick mind or an obscurantist conservatism could 'discover' counter-revolutionary activity and 'criminal acts' for the overthrow of the existing order behind this kind of activity.

We turn, therefore, to the general public and to you with a warning that a dangerous situation is now being created, which will have unforeseeable consequences not only for the future of these innocent people but also for the future of a free and democratic Yugoslavia, if *urgent* measures are not taken to put an end to this arbitrary exercise of power and if the necessary dignity is not returned to the court and judicial system in this country.

Therefore, in the interest of the possible and necessary democratic development of this country — which is the only real way out of the state of deep crisis in which Yugoslav society finds itself today — we demand an end to this hate-fuelled campaign, this hunting of people, and that those arrested — Miodrag Milić, Dragomir Olujić, Vlada Mijanović, Milan Nikolić, Pavle Imsirović, Vjekoslav Seselj — be released. The charges against them have been invented, and their elementary civil rights have been withdrawn.

Since their lives are in danger, we demand *immediate* action. Otherwise their personal tragedies may become a very great shame for the whole of Yugoslav society.

Signed: Zagorka Golubović, Nebojsa Popov, Miladin Zivotić, Svetozar Stojanović, Mihailo Marković, Dobrica Ćosić, Dragoljub Micunović, Ljubomir Tadić.
Belgrade

30 May 1984

Yugoslavia Between the IMF and Socialism

By Michele Lee

Since leading the workers and peasants of Yugoslavia through the horrors of an anti-fascist and civil war in 1941-5 to a successful revolution, the Yugoslav Communist Party (now the League of Communists) has shown a significant degree of tolerance for political differences — both inside and outside the Party — in comparison to other ruling parties. Its prestige was immensely strengthened in 1948 by its defiance of Stalin, which implied defence of national sovereignty but also a rejection of Stalinist methods of internal rule. Its introduction of self-management in the early 1950s, its confident determination to solve the complicated national question, and the decentralisation of the state and economy carried under its auspices in the 1960s and 1970s, have all contributed to give Yugoslavia social peace and political stability at variance with the conditions experienced by many of its neighbours.

There are no Yugoslav intellectual exiles like Kundera or indeed Solzhenitsyn working abroad, nor have disgraced Party leaders been tried as criminals and executed.¹ In the past decade or so, works from various socialist currents — Western Marxist, Trotskyist, Eurocommunist, social-democratic, etc. — have been made available to the country's reading public.

The *Praxis* intellectuals, dismissed from their university posts in 1972 for supporting student mobilisations, now work in a scientific institution of their own, are free to travel, and increasingly also to publish. The relationship between Party and intelligentsia, though never peaceful, has nevertheless for the most part been free of crude 'administrative' pressure. It is for this reason that the recent wave of repression has come as a rude shock.

The raid on an informal political meeting, the manhandling of some of the arrested, the death of the young worker

Radomir Radović, and the arrest of six intellectuals (five in Belgrade, one in Sarajevo), undoubtedly represents a novel development. Nothing like this has happened since 1971 when a number of student leaders (including Mijanović, Imsirović and Nikolić) were given two-year prison sentences for political activity. What explains these May arrests and what are their implications? What follows is a sketch of the economic and political conjuncture against whose background they occurred.

THE END OF AN ERA

Any analysis must start with the specific insertion of Yugoslavia's current problems into the wider international context. The post-Tito period, in which the Party has had to find a new internal balance after the departure in 1980 of its charismatic and long-serving president, has coincided with the first post-war economic slump. Its effect in fact began to hit Yugoslavia before Tito died; but any willingness to conduct the necessary economic and political reforms was lacking also in the period dominated by his departure. The present Party leadership, constituted after the large-scale purges of the early 1970s, proved to be weak and divided, not only in response to the first wave of economic troubles, but also in its response to the accumulation of national, economic and social frustration which exploded in Kosovo in the spring of 1981. This tangible warning of the gravity of the problems faced by the leadership broke the charmed existence in which the Party had lived throughout the 1970s.

The three pillars upon which the Party's policy had rested up to the late seventies — borrowing abroad in order to extend the industrial base, without sacrificing the standard of living or civil freedoms of the current generation; East-West détente, which

reduced the pressure on the country's independence; and the non-aligned movement, which gave it a positive place in international politics — were all structurally weakened by the end of the decade. But it is the economic crisis which has proved most immediately intractable.

The Yugoslav economic crisis started in earnest in 1979, with shortages of elementary consumer goods. The scope of the problem was initially hidden from the Yugoslav public — and indeed from the highest bodies of state and Party! Even two years later, when the foreign debt climbed to \$20 billion, neither the federal nor the republican assemblies, nor the equivalent Central Committees, were told the dreadful news. The truth emerged only in 1981 when, in the wake of the Kosovo events, the Belgrade press in a great heave broke through the traditional embargo on information. Other sections of the media pushed through the now opened door, and a period of considerable press freedom began. The Party leadership, its confidence now badly bruised, responded with verbal self-criticism in order to assuage public wrath. With the 12th Party Congress looming (it took place in 1982), it managed to cobble together a kind of compromise on how to deal with the economic crisis — the so-called *Long-Term Programme of Economic Stabilisation and Development*.²

NO TO STALIN, BUT YES TO THE I.M.F.?

Yugoslavia's economic problems have, no doubt, been aggravated by the high cost of money characteristic of the international finance markets since the oil crisis in 1976. Yet their roots are structural: they are to be found in the great imbalance created over the past two decades between an extractive industry which has been systematically

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neglected (along with other infrastructural investment like agriculture, transport, energy and health) and a bloated processing industry, mostly financed by foreign loans, dependent on imported raw materials, primary industrial goods and machine spares — all of which have to be purchased in hard Western currency.

At a recent conference Rade Pavlović, head of the Federal Committee for Energy and Industry, made it plain that the dependence of Yugoslav industry on imported industrial materials has become the main limiting factor on the growth of the economy.³ For it is this dependence which has led to the huge foreign indebtedness, and provoked the balance of payments crises that have plagued the country for the past four years. 77% of Yugoslav imports (worth \$10 billion, or practically the equivalent of the annual inflow of hard currency) went last year on acquiring these necessary industrial commodities. Participants at this conference, managers and economists representing the industrial base of the country, supported Pavlović with hard facts. The state of industrial anarchy — multiplication of processing plants, while investment into domestic resources went lacking — revealed in the course of this conference allowed the press to ask whether this could indeed be accidental, and to lay the responsibility for it firmly at the feet of the country's leadership.

In 1983 alone \$900 million were added to the country's \$20 billion foreign debt. To service this debt, and in order to be able to borrow more, the government has been cutting down imports and stepping up exports 'at all costs'. Import reductions have in turn produced a great shortage of essential materials. The situation has been aggravated by the fact that a large proportion of exports themselves (52% of the total in 1983) consisted precisely of such vital industrial commodities. According to unofficial calculations (no figures have been released by the government), this exporting in order to import basically the same things last year cost industry \$2 billion, a sum equal to its annual debt repayments. The result all around has been great industrial stagnation: depending on the branch, only between 30% and 60% of industrial capacity is at present being utilised.

This means that enterprises are increasingly operating at a loss. Industrial losses have in fact doubled each year over the past three years: 30 billion dinars in 1981, 62 in 1982, 118 in 1983. They climbed to 89 billion dinars in the first three months of this year. The main loss makers are to be found in basic industry — energy, chemicals, black metallurgy, construction — all of which have created large processing plants without an equivalent extractive foundation. Yugoslavia's underdeveloped republics and province (Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro) suffer particularly from these problems.

One consequence is that industry now shows manifest over-employment, estimated at 900,000 workers out of a working population (employed in the social sector) of 6.7 million. Outside the factory gates, officially registered unemployment totals 1 million. Further increases are expected as some of the loss-making enterprises are

forced into liquidation, and as social services are cut down.

Expensive primary industrial goods, a low level of utilisation of industrial capacity due to shortages, low productivity of labour and high taxation of industry have all been fuelling inflation, which last year reached the record level of 58%. For the only way that enterprises have been able to survive is by passing some of the increased production and operating costs on as higher prices. The rest is covered by borrowing. The pressure to borrow has drastically limited the availability of internal capital, 80% of which is kept in the country's 175 banks. As the IMF terms begin to bite this year, problems of internal liquidity will increase, thus further deepening the already grave industrial stagnation. What is worse, that part of the loan coming from the IMF and the World Bank which is not used for the payment of the debt will be channelled into the processing sector, rather than into the necessary industrial restructuring in favour of extractive plants.

What are the IMF terms? The IMF, working in tight coordination with 600 Western banks and 16 Western governments, has agreed to postpone Yugoslavia's current annual repayment of some \$2 billion and to provide the government with a standby credit for this year's imports, on condition that Belgrade implements the following:

- 1) strict downward movement of the dinar (at quarterly intervals!) with respect to a 'basket' of currencies of the main industrial countries;
- 2) 'realistic' internal borrowing rates which, within the current financial year, should reach a level of 1% above the rate of inflation;
- 3) free market formation of prices of most goods and services;
- 4) drastic lowering of individual and social consumption. With some amendments, the government has capitulated to these demands.

The crude monetarism of these terms spells nothing but further trouble for the Yugoslav economy. In 1983, when interest rates were at 18% and inflation at 58%, industry was already finding it difficult to sustain repayments on its internal borrowings. Its indebtedness rose by 68% with respect to 1982 (which was already a bad year), to a sum of 266.8 billion dinars. In fact, in order to keep production going and hence pay wages with some regularity, enterprises were borrowing without asking for terms — over 50% of loans today are short-term. 396 billion dinars went from the economy into the banks last year to pay interest on short- and long-term loans, a sum only 11 billion smaller than what was put into its capital reserve fund. 1983 was the year in which 4614 out of 9597 larger enterprises had their bank accounts frozen, as a result of their inability to service their debts.

The government's *Long-Term Programme*, already considerably leaning in a monetarist direction, was in fact never implemented for reasons which will be taken up below. The IMF, on the other hand, has replaced some of the government's initiative and added its own demands: namely, positive interest rates and fast depreciation of

the dinar — neither part of the initial programme.

In this situation, the rate of inflation becomes all-important. According to the government's current plan, the rise in inflation will be 40%, and new interest rates are being calculated accordingly. Such a rise in inflation will add 800 billion dinars to industry's debt burden, which means that outgoings will surpass accumulation. As industrial losses increase, so will the pressure on prices — indeed, the possibility of a 100% rate of inflation this year is not ruled out by respectable economists, both Yugoslav and foreign. If this happens, the government's economic strategy will break down, as it will be forced to breach the fundamental principle of the deal with the IMF — positive interest rates. In fact, nobody in the government — nor, indeed, the Party leadership — knows what will happen if the level of inflation goes above 50%. Whether this will happen — and there are some indications that it is in fact already above that figure — will be known in the autumn. If it does happen, Yugoslavia like Poland before her will be entering *terra incognita*. The press is already speaking of the possibility of recourse to Paragraph 267 of the Constitution: the suspension of self-management and direct rule by the nine-person state Presidency.

In actual reality, of course, self-management — after a long period of increasing suffocation by the bureaucratic cancer — has already effectively been terminated. Reflecting on the circumstances of its demise, it is instructive to note that it was the West rather than the East which dealt it the final blow. But self-management has not been the only victim. The grip which the IMF now exercises over the country's economy needed a fulcrum and found it in the increased power of the federal state, not only over the republican and provincial centres, but also over the main levers of the economy. As the government in Belgrade becomes the main arbiter of who is going to prosper and who go under, national intolerance has once again been placed on the country's agenda.

In a recent survey of Yugoslavia by *The Financial Times* (distinguished by the viciousness of its attack on the workers' socialist gains there), it was noted that 'Yugoslavia's protracted economic crisis, now in its fourth or fifth year, is beginning to change the political system'.⁴ More than that, Yugoslavia's national independence, always an important factor of its internal stability, has come to suffer as well. Its non-alignment looks increasingly like a Yalta-type division of spheres of influence: last year Yugoslavia exported more to Comecon than to the West. Yet, as the commentaries in both *The Times* and *The Financial Times* noted last June, the country's acceptance of capitalist economic principles — exclusive reliance on monetary mechanisms — is seen as implying that 'the West is ahead ideologically' of the Soviet Union.⁵ This year, furthermore, Yugoslavia has agreed to move away from the barter trade with Comecon towards greater exchange with the

West. Current agreements with the IMF and the World Bank show Yugoslavia's commitment to liberalise controls which still cover over 80% of all imports, to relax the terms under which foreign capital can invest, and to open (for the first time) the service sector to it as well. In return, the banks are promising patience and tolerance.⁶

However, it is obvious that this addiction to foreign loans, which the LCY leadership has acquired over the past decade or two, will have to be paid for by the Yugoslav working class. If one examines the economic effects of the current crisis on this social layer, the most visible is the drop in its purchasing power: 30% over the last three years, and the trend is continuing. A part of revenue destined for the workers' pockets has instead gone to maintain production. A tight squeeze on wages was enforced last year, with the federal government's decree which tied the growth of personal incomes to the growth of *net* income in the enterprises. This blatantly anti-self-management measure was found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, yet the government has simply ignored its ruling! As a result, the drop in real income of those employed in the social sector — 12.7% last year — was the only part of last year's economic plan which was fulfilled (all the other predictions dealing with the size of inflation, exports and industrial growth have already gone badly astray). This year further wage cuts are being planned. In compliance with IMF demands, the income of workers employed in loss-making enterprises, or in those which find themselves unable to maintain their tax and bank-interest-rate burden, will be cut further.

The following will do as an illustration. Between 50% and 60% of workers working in the communes of Zagreb and Belgrade, the two largest Yugoslav cities — i.e. some 200,000 workers — will suffer direct wage cuts. In Titograd, the capital of Montenegro, 7,500 workers are employed in loss-making enterprises and will be similarly affected. One of the worst hit will be the factory producing building machinery. The reason why it is operating at a loss is the great disparity between the cost of industrial materials and the price of the finished articles. In other words, the problem lies with the government's pricing policy, in the first instance, not with the factory. As a trade-unionist reported to a recent meeting of the trade-union Federal council, the first question you are asked when you go to the factory to explain the need for sacrifices is: 'When did you last receive a wage and how much was it?'⁶

According to a trade-union research study, 70% of the earnings of the lowest paid category of workers today goes on food. For those in the middle wage bracket, the equivalent proportion is 46%. Can their standard of living be forced down much further? Recent announcements in the press speak of rents and council service charges going up between 30% and 90%. Yet the government has done nothing to protect the low-paid. Last year's agreement in the Chamber of Republics and Provinces to protect the living

standard of the worst off was merely a piece of paper, since no sources for funding this relief programme were ever specified. Not only individual but also social consumption has been under attack, and further cuts are on the way.

The press reports economic and political pundits as saying that it is precisely large social expenditure that has been the main barrier to increased productivity and hence to a healthy competitiveness of Yugoslav exports. There are even suggestions to privatise consumption completely — what one paper called 'a monster idea spawned by the tide of conservative economic ideologies coming from the West'. Jakov Sirotković, a member of the Central Committee, attacked the government's monetarism in the press in the following fashion:

'Concepts borrowed from bourgeois economics which see profit as the fundamental moving principle, interest rates as the main regulator of extended reproduction, and the labour market as the economically rational criterion of consumption, are once again being popularised.'⁷

Mitja Ribicic, a member of Yugoslavia's top leadership, has commented in response that the critics of monetarism have not come up with a better, 'acceptable' solution. What is 'acceptable' is precisely the key to the present debate in Yugoslavia. A young Zagreb economist has recently put the matter bluntly: 'It is true that the workers have not eaten the accumulation; but they will nevertheless have to pay for all the wrong investment made by borrowing abroad. Somebody must pay, and it must be industry. ... The belief that industry's trouble can be solved by redistribution of capital sitting in the banks is absurd. For there is no capital there at all, only huge debts which do not appear only thanks to various book-keeping machinations.'⁸ It is now time to turn to the workers' vanguard, the League of Communists (LCY) and its leadership.

THE L.C.Y. IN CRISIS — WILL THE CENTRE HOLD?

The Long-Term Programme was cobbled together, as we noted earlier, in time for the 12th Party Congress, when the leadership needed a substantial answer to public concern about the economy. Adopted as the Party's programme, it was voted in by the Federal Assembly and taken as the main framework of the government's economic policy. Under the impact of a rapidly deepening social and economic crisis, however, marked differences in the leadership developed around its underlying conceptions, its aim and its general orientation. The conflict is about what is a *socialist* economy and hence also about the nature of socialism.

Six out of twelve meetings of the Central Committee since the 12th Party Congress have been devoted wholly to the economy without any of them producing a workable unity. These meetings 'have become instead a series of monologues, prepared several weeks ahead'. A broad division between the proponents of the market (and of the IMF

terms) and those in favour of a 'socially agreed' response and greater self-reliance has been established. This division is by no means neat. Many who adhere to the *Long-Term Programme*, because they fear that any other alternative will increase significantly internal repression, dislike for similar reasons the strengthening of the central state which has accompanied the adoption of the monetarist policies. Those on the Party's left, who are preoccupied by the effects of the current economic approach on workers' living standards and on the position of the working class in general, and who would like a more centrally-managed economy, do not like to align themselves with the Stalinists ('the bureaucratic right') and their demand to return to the situation which existed prior to the 1965 economic reforms. For example, Alexander Grlickov, a prominent 'liberal' member of the Central Committee, has expressed concern with the fact that there is no worked out 'self-managing way' out of the crisis. His Party colleague, Sirotković, quoted earlier, said recently that 'never before have vulgar apologists for the economy of state socialism, of state capitalism, tried with such aggressiveness and such misuse of their status to impose their views on the society'. Dragoslav Marković, the current head of the Yugoslav Party, complaining of the lack of unity in the Central Committee, stated in a recent interview:

'We seem to have adopted under pressure an attitude of waiting in order to gain time. It is once again 1965 when, influenced by social demagoguery and left posturing, we had in fact capitulated. Today there is no alternative.'

The Yugoslav press has registered the fact of leadership disunity and reacted accordingly. In fact, since its breakthrough in 1981, this press has in more than one sense become an honourable substitute for the banned journal *Praxis*. It is true that the influence of most of the alternative ideas that appear in print is limited; nevertheless, the readiness of the press to debate problems and solutions to the current crisis has been remarkable.

'Our creditors' success in bringing us down to earth has also opened earthy questions. And questioning, once it started, could not be stopped. That which was previously whispered has now acquired a loud and clear articulation. ... Up to now, all initiatives for change have come from the leadership. But now the leadership is no longer alone in this job.'⁹

Under pressure from below, but also from within the Party, the press has opened a wide discussion on the main themes of economic and political life. It has publicised the fact that the Party's disunity has affected the government's ability to act in any but an ad-hoc manner, and has turned its attention therefore also to the question of the democratisation of the state institutions, 'discovering' in the process widespread desire for direct (as opposed to the present laborious indirect system of) elections to all state bodies, with multiple candidacies.

The obvious impotence of the Federal Executive Council, the impression that nobody really knows what will happen when prices are finally unfrozen at the end of

June, have been seen as ominous. 'There is no analysis, nor any competent predictions, of what kind of social earthquakes may occur, nor is there a programme for what can serve as social shock absorbers when this happens.'

Indeed, the vacillations of the Yugoslav Party contrast badly with the determination of the IMF. 'Federal ministers admit privately that the IMF has given them support they have hitherto lacked from other institutions in the country.'¹⁰

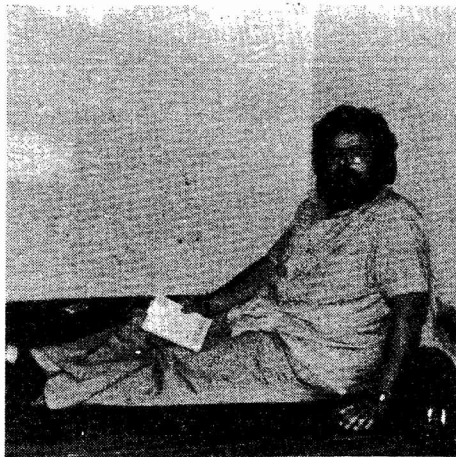
The state of health of the LCY has therefore come under an unprecedented scrutiny. This is so not only because it has been proved that 'the LCY was no better at foreseeing global social events than ordinary Yugoslav citizens, so that instead of the vanguard ambushing the crisis, the crisis has ambushed the vanguard'. It is also because of the Party's disunity. What level of differences can be tolerated without any move to do anything to overcome them? Are the differences in the Party more fundamental, or is it divided only on how to implement its programme? Is it possible to overcome the differences? What is specific to Party action which distinguishes it from being a mere tail to chaotic administrative regulation of the economy? These are some of the questions put to the LCY. Calls are being made for an extraordinary Party Congress. 'These days the Party forums are busy organising their own discussions and submitting their reports to themselves. Nobody mentions the position of the working class, the unemployment, etc. as the relevant criteria for judging the Party's efficacy.' Such statements can be found scattered in the press, showing the deep demoralisation of the Party membership.

According to Racan, a member of the Central Committee, an extraordinary congress of the LCY would serve no useful purpose. 'If this C.C. is unable to put into practice the decisions of the 12th Congress, why expect it to be able to prepare a congress which would solve anything?' Speaking before the June meeting of the C.C., which was to consider the current role of the LCY, Racan predicted rather accurately what was going to happen: 'We shall again have sterile expositions, sterile discussion and sterile conclusions, which will move nobody to action.'¹¹ Only after a thorough debate in the membership, he believes, can one hope to have a productive C.C. plenum.

Under the heading 'The Membership must be given a chance', the Zagreb weekly *Danas* wrote last May: 'The pressure of the problems is too great. It is impossible to go any further in stabilising the economy without a public debate. The question is: is it politically wise today to avoid a wide and democratic discussion of the state of the LCY?' Commenting on the view of Franc Setinc (the Slovene Party leader) that the Party should go to the people, the paper wrote: 'If among the most responsible people of this country there is no unity on the programme [for a way out of the crisis], what will the leadership take to the base? What will win the people, motivate them to shoulder the burden? A functionary's appearance is no substitute for a programme of action.'¹²

In spite of the clamour for an open and public debate, the head of the Party Dragoslav Marković does not see any need for it. He favours a 'scientific-professional discussion' instead. 'What are the questions around which we need to conduct a public or Party debate? The problem is not that we have no answers to the economic crisis, but that we do not have the strength to put them into practice.' Indeed, he was worried that 'insufficiently thought-out and precipitate social action may only worsen the great difficulties ahead: social and other misfortunes could force us to retreat.'¹³

The LCY leadership, in other words, while presiding over a first step in the thoroughgoing transformation of Yugoslav socialism into something more acceptable to its capitalist creditors, is unwilling to go to the country to justify itself. The Party has been accustomed to governing with a large measure of popular support; it knows today that such support escapes it. Squeezed between the IMF and the working class, between crude expediency and its historic association with this class, the Party has proved unable to move. Instead, as a result of this basic and inescapable contradiction, it is splitting into a number of different and opposing currents which cut across national boundaries. The question is: how long can the centre hold?



Milan Nikolić in Belgrade Prison during an earlier period in detention in August 1982 for participating in a petition in support of *Solidarnosc*

THE BELGRADE ARRESTS

The recent repression must be understood in this context. The Party's centre, in its desire to contain internal Party differences, has now moved sharply against an active dissident intelligentsia. The city's Free University forums have in the past three or four years been speaking with varied and dissonant voices. Interventions of a purely bourgeois character, unrestrained in their dismissal of all achievements of the Yugoslav Party; nationalist sentiments mingling with Southern European populism; anarchist visions of post-industrial society; social-democratic critique of the Leninist tradition; syndicalism influenced by the Polish *Solidarnosc*; trenchant Marxist critique of the state of socialism in Yugoslavia — all these and many other preoccupations have been registered in these forums. The socialist intelligentsia, under a continuous economic and political pressure from the authorities, has taken all this time to recover its élan of

the late 1960s. The rise of the working class movement in Poland was very important in this respect. Social tensions generated by the increasingly formidable economic crisis, and the immobilism of the Party in the face of it, have further strengthened its growing involvement with the present status and the future prospects of the Yugoslav working class.

As shown elsewhere in Eastern Europe, but also by Yugoslavia's post-war history, economic and political problems are deeply intertwined: there is no way of solving the current economic crisis in Yugoslavia without a sharp move to the left. The role of catalyst in this process will of necessity go to the critical intelligentsia in and out of the Party. These two wings should not and cannot be separated: the move against the Belgrade intelligentsia is also a warning to the Party's left wing. There have been others.¹⁴ The battle in Yugoslavia today to maintain and extend freedom of speech, writing and assembly is not, therefore, of concern just to restricted intellectual circles. It is of vital interest for the socialist future of the country itself.

Footnotes

1. Milovan Djilas, who spent several years in prison, has nevertheless been able to publish books and interviews abroad, often critical of the Party's past and current practice.
2. For some of the debate provoked by this programme, see previous issue of *Labour Focus*. In this period, faced with increasingly combative assemblies, the government has developed an art, reminiscent of Westminster, of dodging uncomfortable questions. For example, when asked to clarify the statement made by then finance minister Petar Kostic at the end of 1982 that Yugoslavia faced 'a collapse', it made a precedent by answering fifteen days later — in writing! At this time, however, it was still possible to hear government ministers describe the IMF as 'international finance gendarmes', whose task was to make sure that debtors paid in full and on time. By the end of 1983, as the economic crisis went into full swing, such direct naming of the *force majeure* became more or less impossible — 'democratic centralism' took care of that. The more the IMF bled the Yugoslav economy, the greater the attempts to present them as paragons of sound economics and honest living. The 'gendarmes' turned into 'our foreign partners'!
3. *NIN*, 3 June 1984.
4. Of 18 June 1984.
5. *Ibid.* Also, *The Times*, 16 June 1984.
6. The decline in the value of the dinar has made Yugoslav labour power very cheap. This has encouraged, for example, the influx of the modern version of putting-out from Austria, Italy and West Germany. Foreign businessmen bring in material, machinery and even supervisors and return with finished goods. Done occasionally in the past, as a measure of dire necessity, in the textile industry, the practice is now much more common and has entered other industrial branches. It has been attacked in the Yugoslav press in a language very reminiscent of pre-war CPY writings. See *Start*, 8 October 1983.
7. *Danas*, 2 April 1984.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Start*, 7 April 1984.
10. *The Financial Times*, *ibid.*
11. *Danas*, 2 April 1984.
12. *Ibid.*, 25 April 1984.
13. *NIN*, 27 May 1984.
14. See reports of meeting of the Ideological Commission of the Croat Party in Zagreb on 23 May and the response to it from its Serbian counterpart in *NIN*, 10 June 1984.

Solidarnosc Miners' Statement in Solidarity With the NUM

On 17 June the Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners issued an unequivocal statement in solidarity with the British miners in their great struggle for jobs.

The Co-ordinating Committee statement was read out at 10 a.m. on Sunday 17 June by the Solidarity underground radio station in Upper Silesia, Poland's main coal-mining region.

The statement read as follows:

'The Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners vigorously protest against the present policy of the Polish People's Republic on the management of our major source of wealth — coal. Selling it on foreign markets at competitive prices (ie. at less than world market prices) is first of all a violation of the Jastrzebie Agreements (August 1980) in which it was clearly established that coal is a national resource which must be used rationally. The above-mentioned pricing policy transforms investment in the mines into a straight economic loss.

Secondly, the Polish government's policy blatantly contradicts official propaganda which declares respect for the

miners' dignity and endeavour. Thirdly coal distribution and trade is organised outside of any social control. The Polish government has no right to behave like a mine-owner and to dispose of the national wealth as it pleases. Only the damned capitalists and dictators act in this way. Fourthly, the Polish government's policy in this field affects the basic interests of brother miners from other countries who lose their jobs as a result of it.

We hope the Party authorities and parliament — who say they represent the people — explain what is really going on.

To the striking miners of Great Britain: The Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners sends you fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work. We know from our own experience what it means to lose a job. For this reason we will do everything possible to support your struggle, including in action. The protest we have sent to the Polish government and parliament is an initial measure taken in support of your struggle.

The Political Struggle over Working Class Organisation

By Oliver MacDonald

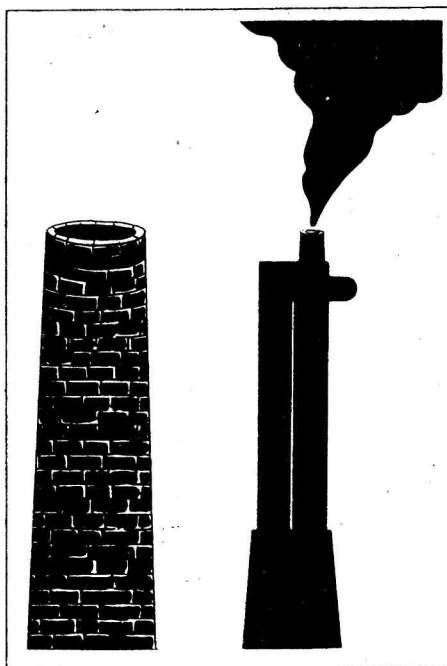
During the first six months of 1984, the Jaruzelski government has greatly intensified its drive to politically defeat and administratively crush the underground resistance movement.

The numbers of people held in prison for political offences has increased steadily in the following way, according to the official government spokesperson, Jerzy Urban:

31 December 1983	— 215
29 February 1984	— 310
30 March 1984	— 416
30 April 1984	— 472
30 May 1984	— 519
15 June 1984	— 601

These figures indicate what might be called the 'concertina tactics' of the police. For a period of many months, the numbers of political prisoners grows and harsh sentences are meted out. Then the government announces some sort of amnesty, leading to the release of many prisoners and the cutting of sentences. This is then followed by a steady replenishing of the prison population, often through re-arresting previous detainees, no doubt followed by a new amnesty.

Each of the amnesties is then used to exert pressure on the Solidarity underground leadership to scale down, or abandon its activity as a reciprocal gesture of good-will to the government. And such pressure comes not only from government sources but from the Church hierarchy. Opposition sources in Warsaw expect a new amnesty to be announced around the time of the Republic's National Holiday at the end of July.



The Solidarity underground remains a formidable movement, operating across most of the country. Its May Day protests took place in Warsaw, Gdansk, Szczecin, Czestochowa, Wroclaw, Nowa Huta, Poznan and Elblag. Police activity throughout this year (and especially since March) has been directed at the underground's press and printing facilities, but the network of local papers and factory bulletins is still very wide. And although the organisational links

between TKK and local workers' groups seem to be almost non-existent, the voice of the TKK and the public statements of Lech Walesa, who has in effect been operating as a public counterpart of TKK, continue to give the factory workers a strong sense of being part of a continuing national movement.

At the same time, the May Day demonstration by Solidarity supporters in Szczecin was very significant. In both 1982 and 1983 Szczecin was not a main centre of Solidarity May Day demonstrations, and in general the underground seemed weaker there than in some other cities of northern and central Poland. Yet suddenly this year a Solidarity march estimated variously at between 10,000 and 15,000 people took place on May Day in this city of 400,000. That is proportionately one of the largest protests in any city since the imposition of martial law and it suggests that the police have a long way to go before they can feel completely secure against the threat of mass protests organised by underground groups taking place in important cities.

UNDERGROUND ON DEFENSIVE

Nevertheless, the underground has evidently been losing strength. The government's own figures on Solidarity's May Day demonstrations (43,000 in 1983 and 8,000 this year) undoubtedly underestimate the numbers of participants, but the TKK (underground Solidarity national leadership) has undoubtedly lost a great deal of its former

capacity to initiate national political protests of an open sort.

Its failure to call workers out on a national strike over price increases on 30 January, followed by the weaker May Day protests, was partially reversed by the widespread support given to the TKK's campaign to boycott the local elections on 17 June. But while the boycott campaign itself re-invigorated Solidarity's underground base, the result of the elections — ie. the turnout, which was the only serious issue in the elections — seems to have been a success for the government: it was the first clear proof that the civilian apparatus of the post-martial law state is once again able to move the majority of the population into the required channels. The government claimed about 75% turnout; Solidarity claimed a 57% turnout in Warsaw.

The underground has not only been weakened in quantitative terms. It is also facing a deepening crisis of identity and of its own role. In its overriding aim of breaking the links between the underground and the working class, the government's tactic has been to trap Solidarity in a 'no-man's land' between playing the role of a political party engaged in a root and branch struggle against the existing political order and playing the role of a trade union concerned overwhelmingly with immediate practical issues of the rights of the working class, seeking to unite workers of all political persuasions. Thus there are even some signs that the government wanted to invite an election boycott campaign. The new electoral law contained a clause that if 50% of a local electorate fails to vote, the election is invalid and must be held again. (In the second round, the 50% clause doesn't apply.)

Voices are being raised within the underground attacking the TKK for not being political enough, for not proclaiming a global political programme. For example, the widely read journal *Niepodleglosc* (Independence) — which champions an independent, democratic, capitalist Poland — takes this view. At the start of the year a well-known leader of the Young Poland movement, Alexander Hall, resigned from Solidarity in Gdansk on similar grounds, arguing also that the TKK's attempts to organise set-piece tests of strength with the regime, culminating in a general strike, has failed.

On the other side, a trenchant article in *Tygodnik Mazowsze* No. 86 (a prominent Warsaw underground journal) argues that 'there are no conditions today for strictly political activity. Instead, what we need is social activity ... By concentrating on narrowly understood political issues, the underground Solidarity Commissions alienate themselves. In order to regain ground in the factories, Solidarity Commissions ought to engage themselves in reconstructing their purely trade union functions, work on the immediate problems in their places of work. There are a lot of them: safety conditions, production itself, unpopular nominations to management, moving people from one post to another, not to mention free Saturdays being taken away or the extension of working hours in

other ways. Should Solidarity commissions begin to organise NOTICEABLE actions over such issues, their popularity would grow. It would not be very difficult because Solidarity is something people really care for ...' (Translation from *Uncensored Poland*, 24 May 1984).

Such an orientation would not, of course, cut across the activities of various political groups. But only those political currents that give top priority to the practical struggle to improve the social conditions of the working class as it lives now, within the system, would be committed to such practical work.

Meanwhile, now that the government feels it has thrown Solidarity back on the defensive and rebuilt its own administrative apparatus, it is working very vigorously to try to make a new appeal to the industrial workers, trying to present both the new official unions and the Party itself as genuinely concerned with the workers' welfare, while using a nationalist appeal to denounce the Western capitalist economic blockade for crippling economic progress and living standards, and branding the underground as supporters of this blockade.

JARUZELSKI BIDS FOR WORKERS

The leaders of 13 new national federations of trade unions met together for the first time on 8 January and declared their intention of forming a new national trade union centre. Then, in a move that must have caused bitter resentment amongst Solidarity members but indicated very clearly government tactics, the new national trade union council held its first meeting in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk and declared its opposition to the government's planned 30 January price rises, saying they were too high. The government subsequently lowered the price rises, supposedly as a result of the consultations held with the new unions.

In April the government announced further price increases without consulting the new unions and this prompted verbal protests from the new union council both against the increases and against the fact that the government had flouted its previous promises to consult the unions on such matters. On 27 April the Party daily, *Trybuna Ludu*, published a letter from the leader of the council, Włodzimierz Lubanski, to Deputy Prime Minister Rakowski and its tone is instructive. He says:

'The working class wants answers to various questions such as: why is it that the economic reform, which protects the private sector, is helping to impoverish the working class? Why is it that successive price increases are being introduced prior to the people's council elections, which may affect the results of these elections? Why is it that the struggle against inflation is helping to shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the working people?'

The letter demand the 'absolute observance' of the principle of consultations before increases, an equal sharing of the burdens of the crisis by all social groups, a social minimum standard of living to be defined, measures against 'anti-social individuals who became rich by dishonest

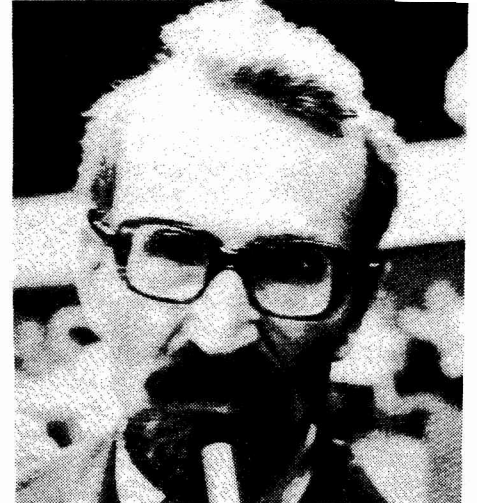
methods at the cost of the working people', and so on.

This approach by official unions firmly under the control of the Communist Party indicates a new turn in the government's tactics on the road to re-integrating the working class into the political system. During the first two years of General Jaruzelski's crackdown against Solidarity the regime turned for support to the new rich, the better-off peasants and the managerial layers and above all sought an accommodation with the Church hierarchy and conservative nationalist currents under its wing. At the same time, it depended upon the military-security forces to hold the line against the working class. In that phase, the institutions whose jobs was to integrate the working class into the political system — above all trade unions and the Communist Party itself — played no serious role. The authorities now feel strong enough to start to attempt a political appeal to the working class, allowing economic and social demands earlier raised by Solidarity to be raised by the new unions and even seeking to direct working class anger against social groups that the regime relied upon in its first phase of 'normalisation'.

Thus the attempt to stimulate interest in the new unions has been accompanied by an attempt to revive the Communist Party's profile as a working class organisation. After being almost invisible as a mass organisation in many plants, the local organisations of PZPR (The Polish United Workers Party, ie. the Communist Party) began to appear in local factories in the first quarter of this year in the course of report and election meetings within its basic units. These were followed by the National Party Conference held between 16 and 18 March — the first national conference of PZPR since the 9th Emergency Congress of July 1981, at the height of the Solidarity period.

There were evidently differences of opinion within the leadership on the holding of this conference. One of the novel, democratic decisions of the 9th Congress had been that the delegates elected to it — in one of the most democratic elections ever held in an East European Communist Party — would retain their mandates until the next full Party Congress, and could indeed call the leadership to order by reassembling on initiative from below. In December of last year, the leadership seemed to have decided to scrap this provision (unconstitutionally) and to elect an entirely new set of delegates for the March Conference. Then on 14 February Politburo member Czyrek said that the 9th Congress delegates would reassemble for the conference although 20% would not participate because they had resigned or been expelled.

Then on 27 February Central Committee Secretary Mokrzyszczak announced that all but 5% of the 9th Congress delegates would attend. Confusion was made worse when a letter on Central Committee note-paper, signed by 'Major Antoni Braun' was sent to enterprises inviting them to send 10-member delegations to the conference. Two days before the conference opened, this letter was denounced by the leadership as a 'provoca-



Three of Solidarity's seven national leaders, held in jail since December 1981 and still awaiting trial. From left to right: Marian Jurczyk, Jan Rulewski and Seweryn Jaworski.

tion'.

The Conference itself was used to admit shortcomings within the Party, to affirm determination to carry through the reform programme supposedly in the spirit of August 1980 and the 9th Party Congress, and to re-establish links with the working class.

The Conference was followed up by a public meeting of the Central Committee in Lodz on 2-3 June, designed to open up dialogue with non-Party workers and various other efforts to stress that the Party was trying to listen to working class grievances.

THE BIG INSTITUTIONAL GULF

The fact remains that this drive to sink new roots in the working class through the official unions and the local organisations of PZPR has not even begun to achieve significant progress. As far as the new unions are concerned, they quite quickly gained some three million members as a result of the levies of recruits from PZPR itself, from economic functionaries and from pensioners. But over the last year they have continued to grow at a very slow rate, reaching some 4 million by 13 March according to Minister Ciosek. And of these he admitted between 15 and 20% to be pensioners (*Trybuna Ludu* on 16 April claimed 4.3 million union members, 25% being pensioners). This means members of the new unions remain a small minority of workers — less than 30% of the employees in the state sector — and far below Solidarity's total in 1981 of over 9½ million members. Furthermore, there is overwhelming evidence of mass hostility to these unions amongst industrial workers, despite the welfare benefits to be gained from joining them.

PZPR also appears to be in a sorry state. Official membership figures vary considerably. The theoretical organ, *Nowe Drogi*, claimed 2.5 million at the end of 1983. On 8 March CC Secretary Mokrzyński claimed 2.2 million members, saying there was no intention of expanding it greatly. But an internal Party bulletin, quoted in *Krytyka* No. 16 (an underground intellectual journal) gave total membership as 1.8 million. The leadership is claiming that

workers make up 'almost' 40% of members — this is the standard norm for working class membership of East European Communist Parties, though in Poland in 1979 the proportion was 46%. But the same internal bulletin quoted above gives the real figure as being 14%. The Party exists as a mass organisation mainly outside the large enterprises which used to be its bastions in the Gierek period.

Equally crippling is the lack of young people in PZPR. The December issue of *Nowe Drogi* admitted: 'At present we are noting the lowest percentage of young people in the history of the Party.' *Tygodnik Mazowsze* No. 80/81 (an underground journal) says that since August 1980 the number of young people under 30 in PZPR has dropped by two-thirds to 11.1% of total membership. The number of students and academics has slumped. The first secretary of PZPR for Central Warsaw, Skapski admitted: 'In the statistics we are saying that in central Warsaw we have 600 students in the Party. Let us deduct from this number the students at WSNS (the Party college of political science attached to the Central Committee) ... I do not think I need to develop this theme further' (quoted in *NAI*, No. 35).

If we turn from formal members to active Party members the picture becomes much worse. The authorities themselves admit that much of the Party's activities as a mass organisation remain 'largely on paper'. To give one precise illustration, *Dzienia* No. 29 from Krakow gives figures for the Krakow Technical University: 'Out of 400 formal members only 90 are active and about 150 sabotage Party orders.' There are numerous reports of difficulty in filling executive posts at the local level — no members willing to be drafted. *Kronika Malopolska* No. 41 reports that out of 300 Party members at the WSK works in Krakow, only 60 participated in the May Day official march and when the workers at the plant struck on 10 November last year, Party members joined the stoppage.

The one positive fact from the leadership's point of view is that the big exodus from the PZPR seems to have halted. But rebuilding the Party as a political force with influence over the workers has still to begin.

Behind the statistics on the new unions and the state of PZPR it is possible to see how deep is the disillusionment and disaffection amongst the bulk of industrial workers. Their attitudes can also be detected in some of the government's economic information. At a conference with more than 50 enterprise directors on 16 April, attended by General Jaruzelski, Deputy Prime Minister Z. Szalajda reported that since September 1983 there has been 'a falling off in the dynamics of production increase', which has become even more serious in 1984. He reported that the effective working week is short — less than 35 hours. The authorities also admitted that absenteeism was averaging no less than 20% of the workforce.

At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister Zbigniew Messner told the conference that the pressure for wage rises is enormous, while some prices were held down or raised less than necessary because of social pressure from below. Pay rises have been higher than the government wanted and have not, in practice, been linked to the government's productivity criteria.

At another conference on 14 January, this time with leading journalists, Jaruzelski reported that the economic situation was going to deteriorate. He said the government urgently needed 4 billion dollars and there was nowhere to get it from. He explained the deteriorating situation partly by the fact that the public does not work, that people are escaping into 'retirement', by waste, a thirst for luxuries and, finally, by Western sanctions.

This then suggests that the economic upturn last year was a false dawn. 1983 had been the first year since 1978 when National Income had grown in comparison with the previous year: industrial production rose 6.7%, mining output rose 2.3% and processing industries' output was up 7.1% — all in fixed prices. (Agricultural output was also good last year, up 4.4% in comparison with 1982.)

These economic prospects mean that any hope that the workers will be gradually won back to co-operation with the new unions and the PZPR through pragmatic adaptation thanks to rising living standards can be ruled out for the next few years. Even if the

POLAND

West were to make a dramatic turn towards new, large-scale loans to Poland — and that prospect seems remote — the capitalist world is headed for a new depression in 1986 (if not before) that is likely to be even more severe in Western Europe than the last one. These are not favourable conditions for a Polish industry, still technologically very dependent on trade with the West, to recover quickly.

Thus the key to political and ideological 'normalisation' from the regime's point of view still lies in using some political tactic that will give it some semblance of new legitimacy in the eyes of substantial sections of workers. It is not difficult to see what such a move might involve. Its outlines have already been mapped out by Catholic intellectuals around Cardinal Glemp, the Polish Primate.

We can list the main items schematically:

- *The granting of full legal status for the Catholic Church
- *The establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican
- *The unequivocal abandonment of any support for the revival of Solidarity on the part of Glemp or the Vatican or, most importantly, Lech Walesa

*The freeing of the seven jailed Solidarity leaders awaiting trial on condition that they refrain from efforts to revive Solidarity, at least for a while

*The establishment of some sort of new trade union body, parallel to the new official unions, or at least the granting of some semblance of trade union pluralism.

It is, of course, this last point that is the most contentious and at the same time most crucial point, if there is to be a real change in political relations between the authorities and the workers in the short-term.

There is, of course, also a set of hidden conditions for such a compromise, as far as the authorities are concerned. These are:

- * The neutralisation of Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik and that whole political current which is distinguished by its lay, non-Catholic character, its radical democratic character, and its readiness to speak to the working class. The Catholic hierarchy has reservations about the methods of such a neutralisation, but has no objections on principle to the suppression of democratic currents like Kuron — far from it.
- * The thorough crushing of the radical working class leaders able to fight the Party leadership on a class basis (something the

KOR leaders do not attempt to do since they have abandoned their left-wing socialist views of the past). Such leaders are those from Wroclaw like Frasyński, Slowik from Lodz, and Edmund Baluka, the veteran working class socialist from Szczecin. They are being brutally maltreated in Barczewo prison and without strong international support from the labour movement they will not easily be prised from the clutches of the political police.

* A continued administrative drive to crush working class underground networks.

Following the local council elections, there is much speculation that the government may be preparing such a deal with the Church.

On the other hand, the authorities may feel that Glemp has now gone so far down the road of co-operation with the government that he has nowhere else to go. They may thus feel time is on their side and they can keep their options open for a good many more months, hoping that a concession on the trade union issue may eventually prove redundant.

The Barczewo Scandal

Barczewo prison has been chosen as the place to keep the working class leaders earmarked for rough treatment. While the 'Solidarity 7' — top national leaders who are household names — and the four former KOR leaders are protected to some degree by their national and international prestige, the prisoners in Barczewo are considered no less dangerous by the authorities but are less well protected by outside support.

They include successive leaders of Wroclaw underground Solidarity — Wladyslaw Frasyński and Piotr Bednarz (Wroclaw was the most powerful regional organisation of the Solidarity underground with a militant syndicalist leadership); the leader and deputy leader of Lodz Solidarity, Andrzej Slowik and Jerzy Kropiwnicki; and Edmund Baluka, the Szczecin socialist leader. Also in Barczewo are the KPN leaders: Leszek Moczulski, Szeremetiew and Stanski; and Patrycjusz Kosmowski, Solidarity chairperson from Bielsko-Biala.

After a hunger strike last year, the political prisoners won a number of concessions from the Barczewo prison governor. These included allowing no more than two

prisoners per cell, regular baths, two cells with open doors and TV sets, and some choice over who shared the cells. These arrangements, negotiated with the prison governor, were suddenly cancelled at the end of last year when the prison governor was replaced. On 5 December, the political prisoners were beaten up and hosed with cold water, they were banned from bathing for many months on the grounds of an alleged jaundice epidemic, they were placed four in a cell and banned from exercise.

The prisoners went on hunger strike once again (7 of whom on rotational hunger strike; Slowik and Kropiwnicki on indefinite hunger strike as of the end of March). The letter from Andrzej Slowik that we print below tells the gruesome story of what followed. In May, after Slowik's letter was written, Wladyslaw Frasyński was put on trial for violating prison rules and received an extra ten months' imprisonment in addition to the 3-year sentence he was already serving — he is now not due for release until September 1986. Slowik is being threatened with the same charge.

Allegations of the prison staff beating

prisoners, handcuffing them day and night, gagging them and putting them in strait-jackets were made by the prisoners both at the trial of Frasyński and at that of Jozef Piniór. Jozef Piniór, who became the third underground Solidarity leader of Wroclaw, was sentenced on 24 May to four years in prison, reduced to two years under the amnesty law of July 1983.

One of the prisoners who was to testify at Piniór's trial was Piotr Bednarz. On 14 May 1984 he stabbed himself in the abdomen with a knife and is currently in Warsaw Medical Academy because of a serious abdominal infection. It is not known whether he was attempting to commit suicide or whether he wanted to only injure himself as a dramatic protest against prison conditions.

The hunger strike at Barczewo had ended by 18 May following an appeal by the Episcopate, but we have no further news of conditions there. The TUC has protested strongly to the Polish authorities over the treatment of Andrzej Slowik and the other prisoners at Barczewo. Len Murray sent the letter of protest on 4 May.

A Letter from Andrzej Slowik

In view of the situation in Barczewo no contacts with the outside world have been possible. For quite a long time now everyone leaving the sector is thoroughly searched and has to take off all his clothes and squat on the floor. Together with Jurek (Kropiwnicki) we are still on hunger strike. They started to force-feed us on Wednesday 11 April. Jurek swallows the tube himself (he is too weak to resist).

I protest against being force-fed, so for the past three days they've had to pin me down, handcuff me and force my mouth open with a lever and the use of torture. And I mean torture — because when they sit me on a chair they stamp on my toes and twist my arms and legs. One of them sits down on my legs to break my knee joints or presses my shins against the edge of the bed. In

the meantime another pulls by head backwards and presses hard on the hinges of my jaw, while a doctor or a nurse uses the pliers on my jaws. When I start screaming, they put a lever between my teeth and they've got me: the only thing left is to put a tube inside and pour in gruel. Usually there are 5-6 wardens and a doctor with a nurse. Recently one of the nurses joined them in torturing me: on 12 April she started to press my lymph glands very hard — it is very painful.

Since 29 March 1984 I am all alone in the cell — Jurek, Wladek (Frasyński), Stanski, Szeremetiew have been put in solitary confinement. They are on the other side of the corridor, since all the thieves have been taken away. Only two prison orderlies are left, and there are about 15 cells here.

Yesterday Wladek, Stanski and Szeremetiew were put in the so-called thermos cell: with no toilet facilities, no water and no air. The cell has double walls and doors and excellent soundproofing and security. They will probably spend 24 or 48 hours there. They were put there for demanding the rights of political prisoners, including the walks of which everybody was deprived on 29 March. Yesterday they were taken out one by one for 30 minutes each, and afterwards locked up again in the 'thermos'.

I suppose we'll have to continue our hunger strike for a long

time yet. Jurek and I are determined to go on. We won't give in. Yesterday they even took Jurek's bed away, to have more room for manoeuvre for the struggle with me to feed me. Please spread this news as best you can. I hope 1 May will be celebrated this year also; the tradition must be kept up — otherwise it might die out for a long time.

Best regards for all those who remember and continue the work.

Andrzej Slowik

13 April 1984

The Battles of a Reformist Party Leader

(Was there a genuinely reforming current among leading Communist Party officials ready to co-operate fully with Solidarity, during 1980 and 1981? And if so, how was it defeated? These questions have been difficult to discuss because the real, internal history of the Polish Communist Party during Solidarity's 16 months of legal existence remains to a great extent hidden from view.

But in late 1983, an underground paper, The Attempt, published a remarkable personal account by the Communist Party Provincial First Secretary in Poznan, one of the main cities of Poland.

In October 1980, Edward Skrzypczak was elected First Secretary of the Party Committee at a large engineering plant in Poznan, where he worked as an electrical engineer. Only eight months later, as part of the rank-and-file wave of struggle to democratise the Party, Skrzypczak was elected First Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee. He continued to hold that post through the first six months of martial law, before being summarily sacked by the Politburo (after he had allegedly come to an informal arrangement with leaders of the banned Solidarity organisation in Poznan on ceremonies marking the anniversary of the Poznan insurrection of June 1956). Following his dismissal, Skrzypczak took a low-grade job in a Polish trading company in Nigeria.

The following summary of Skrzypczak's memoir is taken from Uncensored Poland, No. 5, 8 March 1984.)

Skrzypczak attributes his rise to the position of regional Party boss to the emergence of a loose coalition of local forces — Party members from some large industrial plants in the Poznan region, delegates from rural districts and activists at the Poznan University — which saw the existing system of Party work as one of the major causes of the Polish crisis. Skrzypczak and his supporters sought to replace the traditional hierarchical structure of command within the Party by the so-called 'horizontal structures' which came into being also in other parts of the country, and decided to try and change the established practices. He accepted the need for reforming political life by adopting the notion of political pluralism and competing with Solidarity as a recognised social force which deserved respect. Competition, in his view, did not exclude some measure of co-

operation and, indeed, he established contacts with Solidarity officials in his region.

This led, however, to his being accused of political disloyalty by many Party members whose idea of exercising power, as he puts it, was to give commands and to draw a definite line between the people and the authorities. This attitude, he recalls, led to paradoxes: the central Party leadership actually frowned upon him because he had been applauded at a mass meeting. Public approval was suspicious, it would be regarded as more natural if he had met with booing and whistling.

In order to keep in touch with public opinion Skrzypczak introduced opinion polls in his region. This move also incurred official disapproval. Perhaps the leadership, speculates Skrzypczak, did not want the lower Party echelons to have any independent sources of information; all information was to come from above and be trusted without any attempts to verify it. In due course polls were forbidden; one that was conducted immediately after the imposition of martial law was described by a regional military commander as 'hostile' and a complaint was lodged with the Party leadership that it had been meant to undermine the purposefulness of martial law.

In addition, Skrzypczak met with fierce opposition from the local Party apparatus following his widespread personnel changes in the regional Party bodies, designed to introduce new methods of Party work. Skrzypczak and his group of reformers became the objects of constant attacks: anonymous letters of complaint against him were sent to the Central Committee, accusing him of co-operating with Solidarity and of destroying socialism. Complaints were also made by the Soviet consular staff in Poznan: the Soviet Consul, as Skrzypczak recalls in his memoirs, criticised him for his attempts to make the regional Party office accessible to the public, complained to the Party leadership about anti-Soviet publications and put forward a demand that such material be suppressed.

Furthermore, the Party authorities frowned upon Skrzypczak's contacts with the press, which were considered too informal and too frequent. Publicity, as Skrzypczak observes, was apparently to be given only to those at the top positions of power, the popularity of people occupying lower levels of the Party structure was deemed dangerous.

Skrzypczak also encountered formidable difficulties in his relations with the Security Services. During the months preceding the declaration of martial law, the control of regional Party bodies over the local security structure had diminished, as apparently the security forces were given instructions directly by the central authorities. This lack of efficient control on the local level led to conflicts. Skrzypczak recalls that his repeated demand for the dismissal of a local police commander known to be guilty of corruption fell on deaf ears with the leadership in Warsaw, including General Jaruzelski, General Kiszczak and General Milewski. Although the substance of the accusation was never questioned, the central authorities stressed the 'operational abilities' of the police chief. Eventually he and his associates were made to pay large sums of money to the State, which only served to prove their guilt; nevertheless they stayed at their posts after Skrzypczak was dismissed from his position.

The decision to remove him was communicated to him during a brief meeting with Kazimierz Barcikowski, a Secretary of the Central Committee. It was never, as Skrzypczak points out, properly justified, apart from a charge that his activities were considered incompatible with the work of the State administration and made it more difficult to normalise the situation in Poland. Under pressure from the central leadership, as Skrzypczak recalls, the Poznan Party organisation relented, albeit not without some attempts to reverse the decision. A delegation from Poznan went to see General Jaruzelski, who admitted that the decision was not correct but urged the delegates to accept it.

According to Skrzypczak, Jaruzelski promised the delegation that such incidents would not be repeated in the future but explained that the decision with regard to Skrzypczak could not be revoked as it would undermine the authority of the Politburo. The Party organisation in Poznan in the end deferred to the central leadership and Skrzypczak was 'recalled' from his post.

His reformist drive, to which he had owed his rise to power, in the end led to his fall, as, in his words, the concept that Party activities should be based on a real dialogue between partners and an agreement to share power with the forces present on the political arena — proved unacceptable to the central Party leadership, or at least to some people in it.

An Official Report on the Ecological Crisis

(Protection of the environment is one of the central problems confronting contemporary society. It is also becoming one of the most important political issues in various capitalist countries, as the rise of the Greens in West Germany and the opposition to Reagan's anti-environmentalist policies in the USA illustrate.)

Ecological concerns are also becoming a major source of public disquiet in Eastern Europe and the USSR. However much an economic system based upon planning rather than private profit might in principle be able to tackle threats to the environment, the practical experience of bureaucratic planning in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has caused very severe ecological hazards.

The Czechoslovak government was eventually driven to commission a study of the ecological crisis, carried out by the country's Academy of Sciences. The resulting report showed that 30% of all fish, 60% of amphibious creatures, 30% of reptiles, 30% of birds and 35% of mammals face extinction in the Czechoslovak countryside. And it states that if present trends continue, between 45% and 60% of all trees within the Republic will have been either damaged or destroyed by the turn of the century.

The Academy of Sciences report has not been published by the Czechoslovak government, but the Charter 77 movement in Prague obtained a copy of the document and has distributed it. On 12 December 1983, the Charter 77 spokespeople wrote to the President of Czechoslovakia welcoming the authorities' concern to establish the facts about the state of the environment and expressing the hope that 'the greatest possible number of Czechoslovak citizens will be able to acquaint themselves with the analysis of the ecological situation in Czechoslovakia and that the awareness of the gravity of the crisis will lead the authorities to take swift and effective action in the light of a public appreciation of the need for such measures.'

We publish here section 3 of the report, dealing with 'Hygienic and Ecological Aspects of Human Life' in Czechoslovakia. Translation for Labour Focus by Mark Jackson from the Czech text published in a special issue of Listy, February 1984.)

HYGIENIC AND ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF

HUMAN LIFE

The dynamic of the socio-economic factors which have led in the last decades to a significant improvement in the state of health of our population and to a prolongation of the average life-span has now exhausted itself. This trend to stagnation is strengthened by the deterioration of the environment. The capacity of the human organism to adapt to detrimental changes in the environment is limited. Furthermore the effects of these changes can often be delayed and only manifest themselves through an accumulation of small changes or through a catalytic event. In some cases the results of these changes are not seen until future generations. Given the fact that the environmental situation has been progressively deteriorating since the 1950s and that the current younger generation will have spent a particularly long time under the influence of this deterioration, it is essential to dedicate particular attention to the whole problem of the relations between the population and its environment. It is probable that many disorders in the health of the younger generation will manifest themselves at an earlier age, even at an age when they should be at the height of their powers, than was the case with previous generations.

A number of factors which affect the very lowest age groups, the newly born, and children of pre-school age only show their effects in maturity. Thus damage to the muscles of the heart by nitrites and nitrates later result in an increased tendency to infarcts. Embryos and foetuses can be affected in many ways and cause

defects at birth. Still other factors lead to allergies by causing a hypersensitivity of the organism.

To all this should be added that diverse harmful substances can interact in a way which increases their activity many times, or, on the other hand, they can counteract the effects of drugs in a way which prevents the treatment of the patient. Many of these interactions are completely unexpected so that the side effects have to be dealt with on an ad-hoc basis. The same unpredictability also applies to the influence of the environment, whose effects often remain concealed for a period of time.

These phenomena have been studied for a longer period of time and more fully in the capitalist states than here, where we only have fragmented and unsystematic investigative material to draw on. Take lead and its compounds for example. Since there was no information on the subject ten years ago, it was decided that the environmental problems presented by lead did not exist. As soon as a serious investigation was undertaken, however, it became clear that we had exactly the same problems as other states.

The figures on the health of children from the North Bohemian brown coal districts (Chomutov, Most, Teplice and Usti nad Labem districts) show the harmful effects which result from environmental pollution. Infant mortality was higher in this region than the national average by 11.4% in 1979 and 12% in 1980. The number of infants who are taken ill while in hospital or just after is far above the national average in these districts. In the Most region this figure is three times higher (36.65%) than the average of the Czech Lands (9.54%).

Checks on adolescents in these districts in 1980 found that only 38.4% were free of the effects of some sort of illness as against 57.7% for the Czech Lands as a whole. Particularly in evidence were acute infections of the respiratory tract (CSR 2.7%, the North Bohemian Region 4.1%), infections of the digestive system (CSR 0.4%, the NB Region 1.3%), infections of the skin and subcutaneous tissues (CSR 1.7%, NB Region 4.6%), ailments affecting muscles and bone and connective tissues (CSR 8.6%, NB Region 12.7%).

The occurrence of respiratory illnesses was 120.6% higher than the average for the CSR, virus induced inflammations of the liver occur 2.2 times more often and the incidence of infective and parasitical ailments is 3.61% higher.

Whatever other factors are involved the worsening condition of the environment clearly exercises a decisive influence. This region represents a kind of model of the way in which the environment is deteriorating throughout Czechoslovakia.

Pollution of the atmosphere is without doubt a factor which significantly affects people's health. This is particularly true of children and young people. In the affected regions not only do we find an increase in the incidence of ailments of the respiratory system, but above all the occurrence of complications in common minor afflictions such as inflammation of the lungs or of the middle ear. Some indicators of the make-up of the blood show significant changes, such as the number of red cells, of blood colour, and the resistance of the red cells, as do the body's immune capacities (immunoglobulins), certain enzymes, as well as the patterns of physical development and growth (bone maturation). But even among adults we find a higher incidence of chronic ailments of the respiratory system (bronchitis, asthma) and affliction of the heart itself (cor pulmonale). The average life-span is some 3 to 4 years shorter in the North Bohemian Region than in Czechoslovakia as a whole. Besides the major cause of pollution, the chemicals emitted by fossil fuels used in industry and transport (including dust and SO₂), the atmosphere is also polluted by nitrogen-based acids, compounds of toxic elements (arsenic, cadmium, vanadium, nickel, lead, beryllium, selenium etc.) and polycyclic carbons with carcinogenic properties.

Another aspect of the environment which has a fundamental affect on health is the water supply. People use water for drinking, for domestic and working uses and for recreation. Drinking water is more than just an integral part of human nutrition and needs to be considered not only in terms of whether it is or is not harmless,

but according to whether it contains necessary minerals. For this reason mineral waters cannot be considered as a permanent substitute for 'ordinary water' from a medical point of view.

The problems involved in ensuring a supply of suitable drinking water begin with the implementation of the steps necessary to protect the sources of water. We have many splendid regulations on this subject, but a coherent conception on how to manage water supplies, dealing with problems such as the conflict between the demands of hygiene and the demands of agriculture, remain to be sorted out. As a consequence water is being heavily polluted at its source to the extent where it is often either temporarily or permanently unusable. In most cases the water is polluted by harmful or toxic waste from the most various sources. (See 2.3.)

Crises of water supply recur frequently in our country and are only dealt with by temporarily shutting off the supply from the affected source. This has happened at Rychnov nad Kneznou and Myto na Rokycansky — cyanide pollution; Prachatice — nitrated lime; Chemko Strzske — polychlorated difenyl and formaldehyde; Cheb — leaded salt; Praha-Podoli — a virus contamination; and Zelvka — an increase in the amount of lead salts in fish etc.

Furthermore drinking water from sources contaminated by microbes and viruses can cause serious outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as typhus, paratyphus, dysentery, infectious jaundice, cholera, and a whole number of other serious diseases. In the past we know of epidemics of abdominal typhus and dysentery and of leptospiroz. In recent years there have been epidemics of jaundice (in Usti nad Labem, Jablonec, Kysucke nove mesto and other places).

Most of our drinking water comes from surface water, from sources such as streams, reservoirs and lakes, much of which is not clean enough even for agricultural use.

The purification methods which have been used until now, such as chemical filtering and disinfection, are not enough and in many urban areas, such as Praha-Podoli, Usti nad Labem, Hradec Kralove, Brno-Pisarky etc., there is a real threat to the health of the population. The threat exists because daily intake even of water with a relatively low level of toxic substances has a cumulative effect over time. It is well known that the existing technology for purifying water does not dispose of pesticides, the compounds of toxic metals, and numerous other harmful or toxic materials whether organic or otherwise. A serious threat to health is also presented by contamination by pathogenic microbes, particularly viruses against which the existing preventative methods, such as chlorination, are ineffective. This is especially the case where sewage is not purified, such as newly constructed housing areas, where waste products are directed some distance away to waterworks at which the purification facilities are not adequate, such as at Ohre or Louny. Furthermore it is known that chlorinisation of water leads to the establishment of carcinogenic trihalometanes and that chlorine increases the toxicity of many substances.

The growing amount of nitrates from domestic waste and industrial fertilisers in both underground and surface waters is a serious problem. Prescriptions for bottled water can, to a certain extent, prevent methoglobaemia in infants, but it should be made clear that intakes of nitrates even in adults can risk inducing the formation of carcinogenic nitrosamins in the digestive tract and bladder which result in an increased incidence of tumours. Livestock also frequently suffer illnesses or even die after eating fodder contaminated with nitrogen-based fertilisers.

The increasingly polluted state of pollution of surface water by waste of all kinds results in its eutrofyzation and is often useless even for recreational purposes.

Everything which has been said about drinking water also applies to the contamination of foodstuffs. Harmful and toxic substances enter during the food cycle from the soil and water thanks to the widespread use of chemicals in agriculture, through irrigation because of unpurified waste water, through atmospheric pollution, by acids and metallic compounds, and also because of the technology used for preserving food, such as chemical preservatives, packaging, additives and contamination by microbes. These materials present a danger both to health and a genetic risk.

It is in any case essential to stress that the quality of both plant and animals foods is determined by agricultural production, the nutritional value of which is not only often low, but is sometimes directly injurious to health. These dangers can be met, however, by a number of means. One of them is to rationally apply the insights

of ecology to agricultural production itself. Further sources of damage to food occur in distribution, but these questions lie in the field of technology and organisation.

Although the connection cannot be directly established, it is obvious that diet and health are intimately related. In a planned economy the production of foodstuffs, both in the quantitative and qualitative sense, should be determined on the basis of a scientific understanding of what constitutes a rational diet. This must also affect pricing policy. Table 6 shows that many trends in consumption patterns are at variance with the guaranteed minimum.

Noise represents a very serious problem, whether because it has a direct impact on the population or because it is increasing not only in workplaces, but also in residential and recreational areas. The noise level in some localities in Prague has grown from 65dB (A) in 1935 to nearly 90dB (A) in 1975. In much of the city the level is between 70 and 80 dB(A) which is sufficient to have a detrimental impact on the population. The resistance of the organism decreases and the efficiency and adaptability deteriorate. Some 40% of the population may be affected in this way, displaying an increasing incidence of the 'diseases of civilisation', especially hypertension. Investigations carried out in Prague also show that the growth of noise also results in an increase in neuroses, of deafness and overall unhealthiness, as witnessed by the consumption of sedatives, tobacco addiction etc. These investigations have shown that the increase of noise at night in Prague from 50 to 65 dB (A) results in a 7% increase in illnesses. Demands on the health service and loss of productivity caused by tiredness are a genuine social problem, leaving aside the ethical side of the matter.

The health and hygiene problems of urban areas and of the construction of residential areas deserve special mention. It has been demonstrated all over the world that the concentration of people in towns results in a deterioration of the state of health. This is particularly true of the big cities, but also applies to a number of our lesser urban centres, such as Plzen, Ostrava, Kosice etc. The incidence of illness is significantly higher in large towns and industrial agglomerations than in the countryside. There is also a higher incidence of socio-pathological phenomena such as criminality, prostitution, aggression and of suicide. There are 30% more fatal suicides than the national average and 90% more attempted suicides in urban areas. There are 30% more heart attacks in Prague than in Czechoslovakia as a whole. These trends are deepening and the gap between urban and rural areas is getting wider. (Table 7)

Thus, for example, deaths from diseases of the circulatory system were 6.1% higher than the average for the CSR in 1976 and 11.6% higher in 1977; the number of deaths from heart attacks rose by 7.1% in Prague compared to 1.9% in the CSR as a whole. Still more divergent is the number of illnesses caused by harmful neoplasms (a 10.8% rise in Prague in 1976-7 compared to a 1.5% in the CSR as a whole).

Similar differences are also to be found when we compare the situation in industrial agglomerations with non-industrialised areas. (Table 8) People of a casuistic frame of mind might say that particular examples do not prove anything, but the problem is that there are not properly integrated statistics which would summarise the impact of the environment on the health of the population. This is not just a question of 'pollution disasters' but of a whole range of minor sources of pollution which often get completely overlooked. An example is the use of chipboard stuck together with wea-formaldehyde resins. This material, used in furniture and construction, gives off formaldehyde, a very irritating gas which causes inflammation of joints, conjunctivitis, and of the mucous membrane of the upper reaches of the respiratory system and which, apart from causing allergies, is also suspected of having carcinogenic properties. Another pressing problem is to monitor the use of some scrap metals such as garbage and fly ash in construction, which hold out a real risk of exposure to ionising radiation which will affect the inhabitants of these buildings in the long term.

The risks of genetic damage caused by pollution to the future generation should also be mentioned. Genetic mutation leads to a higher incidence of growth deficiencies, to an increased tendency to the development of tumours and to premature ageing. Mutation of the somatic cells increases the likelihood of the formation of tumours and of arterial scleroses. New information about the effects of the exposure of fathers to mutagens is also now available. It results in a significant increase in growth deficiencies in the

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

children. The existence of genetic dangers to workers in the chemical industry during the production and moulding of plastics has been demonstrated as well as the risks presented to health workers involved in the application of new cytostatics, probably through the combination of mutagens with viruses. It should be borne in mind, however, that our whole way of life tends towards the increase of mutagenic activity, apart from the effects of pollution.

From the points that we have raised, it follows that in regions where the water supply and the atmosphere are increasingly polluted, it is necessary to monitor the development of mutagenic effects as an integral part of a programme to control the quality of the atmosphere and of drinking water.

The most common causes of death nowadays are diseases of the arteries of the heart, cancers, accidents and diseases of the respiratory system. From the economic point of view, it is significant that there is a shift in the number of deaths towards those who are still of a productive age. It is also a significant fact that the incidence of incapacity to work caused by illness has sharply increased, as is shown in the following figures:

Year	Index
1960	100
1965	119.4
1975	126.7
1980	148.2

Such trends are the result both of the deterioration of the environment and by a poor life-style.

A healthy population is the fundamental precondition for the proper development of society. The degradation of the state of the environment and the deterioration of health which is connected with it means both huge direct economic losses, in productivity of work but also secondary economic losses through expenditures on health care, etc. It is not at present possible to precisely define the relations between the economic losses resulting from the poor state of health of the population and the need to implement a programme of environmental protection, but it is possible to state without reservation that if measures are not taken then there will be an exponential growth of disorders amongst the human population while there is a very real danger that future generations will be affected in ways which will be hard to overcome.

Petr Uhl Released



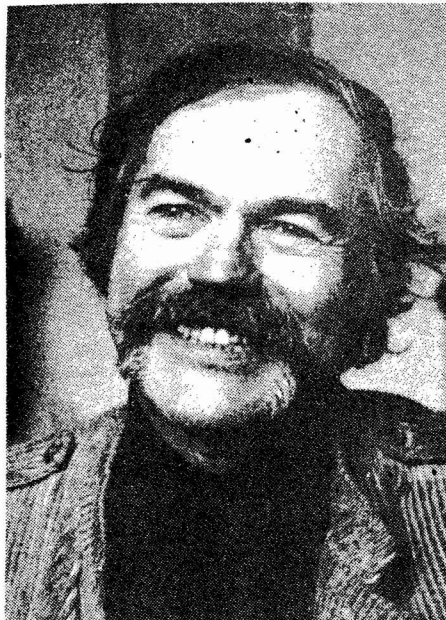
Petr Uhl, the radical socialist and moving spirit behind the formation and growth of Charter 77, was released from jail on 29 May after serving exactly five years' imprisonment in a strict regime labour camp. Uhl is well known in Marxist circles in the West for his writings on socialist democracy and self-management, and for his inspiring work in the late 1960s and 1970s in the cause of socialist internationalism and democracy. He was jailed on 'subversion' charges along with Vaclav Havel and other prominent Chartists in 1979 and received the longest sentence because of the organisational dynamism he showed within Charter 77.

Ladislav Lis Jailed Again

On 24 May the unofficial peace activist and Charter 77 leader Ladislav Lis was jailed for three months for failing to comply with an order restricting his movements. He had refused to request 'special permission' to spend a long weekend at his country cottage outside Prague.

The restriction order had been imposed on Lis following his release from prison on 5 March and the new jail sentence undoubtedly reflects the authorities' worries about Lis' activities as an extremely resourceful unofficial peace activist. According to the *END Journal* (June-July 1984) Lis was planning to help initiate an unofficial peace movement just before his arrest and the police also wanted him out of the way during the European Nuclear Disarmament Convention in July.

Ladislav Lis' biography reads like a potent political history of post-war Czechoslovakia. A skilled worker in the engineering industry, he was one of the organisers of the Prague uprising in May 1945 and subsequently joined the Communist Party. He became a member of the workers' council in the famous CKD engineering works in Prague and in 1949 became General Secretary of the Union of Czechoslovak Youth as well as Vice-



Ladislav Lis

President of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. After conflict with Party leader Novotny in the early 1950s he was removed from these posts and became an in-

structor within the Communist Party. But in 1961 he was expelled from the Party for struggling for the rehabilitation of victims of the Stalinist terror in the early 1950s. In 1968 he was rehabilitated, became a secretary of the Prague City Committee of the Communist Party and was a central organiser of the Vysočany Congress of the Party held in clandestinity just after the Soviet invasion. Again expelled from the Party in 1969, he became a manual worker in the forest timber industry. Twice arrested he had his invalid's pension withdrawn after he joined Charter 77.

Despite ill-health, Lis came forward as a Charter 77 spokesperson to revive the movement after a wave of arrests in 1981. He very quickly grasped the importance of the great peace movement in the West and has played a very great role in developing a dialogue between peace activists in Western Europe and in Czechoslovakia.

On 5 January 1983 Ladislav Lis was sentenced under Article 100 to 14 months' imprisonment and three years' protective surveillance for distributing 'illegal' publications.

Protests should be sent to President Husak via the Czechoslovak Embassy, 25 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8.

The Round-up of Peace Activists

By Günter Minnerup

News of a number of arrests of members of the independent peace movement in the German Democratic Republic, and of prison sentences against some of those arrested, has reached us in the last few weeks.

In *Jena*, Christian Marx and Michael Burneleit have been arrested following the appearance of peace leaflets which confirm that the large-scale arrests and expulsions of 1983 have not succeeded in preventing a continuation of the work of the Jena Peace Community. A number of flats and houses have reportedly been searched, too.

In *Leipzig*, Patrice Castillo (23), Bernd Strake (20), Bettina Müntzenberg (20), Olaf Schubert (22) and Sven Thomas Wetzig (21) were arrested after their candle-light vigil outside the international documentary film festival in November. Schubert was sentenced to one year and two months for 'rowdiness' and resisting a state organ; Wetzig received two years for 'rowdiness' and 'contact with the West' — presumably exchanging information with the Peace Movement in the Federal Republic; Müntzenberg received ten months for 'rowdiness'; Castillo received 18 months and his wife was given an eight-month suspended sentence.

In *Potsdam*, Roland Radow (28) was

sentenced to eight months, Tobias Philipp (23) was jailed for 20 months, and Alex Arnold was jailed for 14 months as a result of their activities in the peace movement. We have also heard that Vera Kupris was arrested but do not know whether she has been sentenced.

Similar police actions have occurred in *Brandenburg* and *Karl-Marx-Stadt* and we know that in the latter city Christoph Nobius, Antje Tensel and Irene Neichsner have been arrested for their peace movement activities, but we have no further information from these cities at the present time.

In *Weimar*, eight members of a local peace group were arrested in December and January on charges related to the appearance of peace and other political slogans on the walls of the town. Most of those arrested had been involved in a range of activities, a good impression of which is given by the two accounts we publish below. On 24 February 1984 six of the eight were sentenced to up to eight months' imprisonment: Thomas Onisseit (18) to eight months, Grit Ferber (18), Holm Kirsten (18) and Ulrich Jadtke (19) to six months. Andreas Tillmann (18) and Jörn Luther (19) were released on parole. We do not yet know what happened to the others: Wolfram

Hasch (20), Volker Otto (19), Alexander Kobylinski (19) and Jan Georg Fischer. They are still under arrest. We have also heard that earlier, on 2 February, Steffi Ebisch, from the same *Weimar* peace circles, was given a 21-month jail sentence for exchanging information with the Western Peace Movement.

Readers of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* are urged to write to Herrn Erich Honecker, Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, c/o Embassy of the GDR, 34 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QB to protest against the recent wave of police repression against the independent peace movement in general and to demand the release of all those named above in particular. That such appeals can have some effect is demonstrated by other recent cases: such as that of Lothar Rochau (see last issue of *LFEE*, p.23), and that of two activists of the East German women's peace movement, Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe, arrested on 12 December 1983, who were all released recently after widespread international protests. Please send copies of your letters to Günter Minnerup, 24A Bellevue Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight, so that a full account of solidarity in Britain can be given to members of the East German peace movement.

Background to the Weimar Arrests — A Document

(By an East German peace activist)

All of those arrested knew each other either through school, where some of them were in the same class, or through their work in the evangelical church (Monday circle) where they discussed peace and environmental issues every week. They prepared the topics of debate on a rotational basis and then held communal events with meditation, theatre and discussions. Some of the topics covered were, for example, weapons systems and rearmament, non-violence and pacifism, environmental destruction and nuclear power.

They were not, however, content with their meetings alone, in which between 30 and 70 regularly took part, but also tried to take their message outside the confines of the church.

They wanted to demonstrate their ideas in practice and set to work on various environmental problems such as cleaning up streams, improving children's playgrounds, tree planting and so on. Even these small actions were hindered or forbidden by the authorities. The GDR bureaucracy deeply mistrusts any personal initiatives in any form and, as a rule, defeats them by simply putting insurmountable bureaucratic barriers in their way.

Some of the arrested had already been noticed at school for their 'appetite for debate' and as a result were not admitted to higher education due to 'political immaturity'. This was especially the case when they rejected the officer training course normally expected of them. Others of them were felt to be provocative simply because of their slightly 'punk-like' appearance.

In April 1983 a peace meditation organised by these young peo-

ple with the title 'Live in peace, not perish in peace' took place in the St. Jacob's Church with about 500 participants. The meditation 'Destroying the enemy image' planned for World Peace Day on 1 September 1983 was called off at very short notice by the church authorities. As a result leaflets were distributed in the city centre which carried a Brecht quotation warning the people of the growing danger of nuclear war. The appearance of peace slogans on the city's walls became a welcome excuse to stop all autonomous peace and environment activities in Weimar. The massive attack on those working openly in the Monday Circle was supposed to serve as an example to all those who, up to that point, had not allowed themselves to be intimidated in their personal commitment. A specific thorn in the sensitive flesh of the authorities was the well-established commune at 19, Mozartstrasse which functioned as an open meeting place for the whole 'Weimar scene'. The occupants of that flat were also involved in the preparations for the planned action in Alexander Square on the 22 October 1983 (*Alexanderplatz* is a central square in East Berlin city. It was intended that at five minutes to twelve on the day of international protests against Cruise and Pershing peace activists from East and West should meet in front of the world clock there.)

The two people released at the beginning of January have been told, amongst other things, not to have any contact with the commune whatsoever.

On 25 January 1984 Wolfram Hasch, Volker Otto, Jan-Georg Fischer and Alexander Kobylinski were imprisoned. Following the arrests, the flat at 19 Mozartstrasse was sealed after a search of the premises.

Self-Critical Observations on the East German Peace Movement

By Wolfram Hasch

(This was written by Wolfram Hasch, Weimar (GDR), currently imprisoned for allegedly spraying peace slogans onto walls in his home town. The translation is by Peter Thompson and Günter Minnerup.)

In the 17 July edition of *Die Zeit*, the banner headline asked: 'Jena — precursor of a new Germany?'. At that time forty people had managed, within a year, with minutes of silence, resolutions and pacifist banners at state-sponsored peace events, to create such an

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atmosphere of anti-militarism that Jena came to be talked of as a new German 'soviet republic'.¹ After Munich 1918 today Jena?

After a period of temporary arrest all the peace people of Jena ended up in the West and the 'soviet republic' (or island of peace) came to an end. The 100,000 people left in Jena, that passive mass of which it is said that it remains wedded to the status quo, were apparently forgotten.

All that is now nearly three quarters of a year behind us and the pacifist scenario of Jena lives on nostalgically in West Berlin as a regurgitated memory. In Jena (the city of the Zeiss works, of optics and precision) quiet has returned. Of course there are still peace people there, but their day to day work makes no headlines à la *Die Zeit*, and does not give anybody cause to hype up Jena into a 'soviet republic'. If what happens daily now in Jena is as ordinary as what goes on elsewhere, then it is necessary to look elsewhere in the hope of finding a new 'precursor'.

Weimar (20 kilometres from Jena), for example, is one such place where every day a few grassroots wrestle with the earth's crust. Weimar is less a result of Carl Zeiss' technologically neutral optics than the negative thought of Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare. The spirit of the enlightenment triumphed here over the craving for 'revolutionary' technology.

In Weimar it smells of coal and petrol (amongst many other things!) but the stink of the factory chimney is almost unknown. Consequently those who still find the smell objectionable are less likely to come from the people's factories with their real-socialist stinking chimneys than from the middle class which is so numerous in Weimar.

Of the six anti-militarists (with typical careers from officer to conscientious objector) who have now been in prison for more than three months all come from middle-class backgrounds. The sons of an author, a doctor, a teacher, a small property owner, and the daughter of a potter. They are all just 18 and once intended to study, but because of their 'political immaturity' were expelled from school or refused a place at college. Now they are in jail for repeated spraying of graffiti.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (the celebrated cultural heritage of the city) once wrote that 'no people is more enslaved than that which considers itself to be free without actually being free'. Obviously the graffitiists felt themselves not to be free — he who feels his chains turns into a hooligan. On the grounds of '14 cases of hooliganism' they were arrested on 10 October 1983 and the walls of the city are now clean again. For hours one could read messages like: 'SS 20 — no thanks!', 'Defend yourselves and strike back', 'Long live Solidarnosc', 'Turn the state into cucumber salad'. Anarchistic romanticism in a world where it is no longer possible to see socialism through the forest of bureaucratic 'communists'.

It is now two years since they first met in Weimar. The first 'Peace Sunday' at the St Jacob's church saw the formation, after a discussion evening, of the peace circle in the church's 'open' youth work. Since then about 30-70 young people have met there every Monday. One talks — and talking knows no boundaries. For 20 months now reality has been taken apart once a week. The topics were: pacifism, NATO rearmament, anarchy, identity, Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud, child raising, 'back to nature', and fascism. New people come, others go to disappear to other talking-shops, armies, cities and countries.

Others, who belong to the hard core of members, stay. The weekly permission to talk is not enough for them to feel at home in the concrete utopia and, above all, to stay in the country. So they look for opportunities for action and their hands are not always tied. For example, they are free to live in communes if they so wish (one calling itself 'Commune number 0' to boast ironically that they were revolutionising society even before Fritz Teufel).²

At some point though, the impetus evaporated, the structure of the group stagnated. Some offered their ideas, others talked about them. But there was no concrete action. Some emigrated, others formed action groups and in the meantime environmental, theatre and women's groups have materialised outside the confines of the church.

Since 'World Peace Day' in 1983 the confrontation with the guardians of order has become open. Since then one can be picked up on the streets at night or taken from one's bed early in the mor-

ning, or have one's flat 'tidied up' by the authorities. On 1 September the peace group had organised a meditation meeting under the appropriate motto of 'Destroying the enemy image'. Two days beforehand the church officials saw red. Allusions which the church could not defend — banned. Despite this, about 100 people assembled on the church green. After waiting in a state of confusion, they decided to hold the meeting in a nearby old people's home. On the way leaflets ('An Appeal for Concern') which had obviously been written by somebody in a great hurry after the official cancellation of the meeting were handed out to people in the city centre. One week later the inevitable interrogations followed, and by Weimar standards a real 'hot autumn' began. On the one side there were the GDR-wide meetings of open youth work projects, tree planting actions, the peace meditation eventually held successfully two months later, the demonstration planned for 22 October in Berlin and the preparations for a workshop which then took place in November. On the other side the numerous house searches, interrogations and six arrests, culminating in the detention for 16 hours on the 21-22 October of 10 'potential demonstrators'.

These gave a new sense of identity to many. What they had been unable to achieve through various common activities was now achieved temporarily for them by the repressive actions of state security forces: a feeling of solidarity against the arbitrariness of the state.

In the meantime, however, the old atomisation has returned. There are the disillusioned punks, the self-sufficient women's group, environmental reformers, christian identity givers, functionaries for petitions and legal questions, detached intellectuals and activists of the apocalypse. All this in the melting pot of pacifist aspirations amounts to the colourful 'drop-out' scene of a boring town of culture. A few dozen 'lumpen elements' commute between resignation, activism and self-satisfied peace waffle. One aspires more to a renaissance of old-fashioned *gemütlichkeit*, the other considers a newly-planted tree a form of resistance, yet another would rather talk about Yalta. In between all this flutter petitions, leaflets, books on Dadaism, wood carvings and anarchist graffiti of which nobody knows who sprayed them.

The November workshop showed how such a splintered activity presents itself. It began with soft music in the early morning. Then the environment group presented its therapy, the women's group animated the at least 100 people to discussions, E.P. Thompson's essay on exterminism was introduced later on, civil disobedience was phantasised about, and signatures collected against Pershing and SS-20s. And in the evening, three local punk bands demonstrated how seamlessly such topics can be linked with their aggressive music.

The fearlessness with which Petra Kelly, Gert Bastian and the East Berlin Peace Initiatives put forward their idea of 'transcending the blocs' is admirable. The system of black-and-white deterrence has utterly failed, the blocs are growing through confrontation (an undialectical contradiction, according to Thompson, with both poles gaining from their mutual struggle), they need the threat. The bloc-transcending movement is a hard necessity in our missile-protected Yalta present. I only fear that neither Jena nor Weimar nor any other town in the GDR is the precursor of such a movement. Somehow there is something in Marx' dictum of the narrow-minded peasant whose consciousness does not go beyond the horizon of his village church spire, despite the numerous acts of 'hooliganism' against Prussian normality in the provincial backyards. It is to be wished that once again the theory of bloc-transcendence can go ahead and lay down a marker for a consensus of action. Only in this way can we become the Eastern participants in a movement for a new Germany, if not its precursors.

20 January 1984

Notes

1. The reference is to the short-lived 'Bavarian Soviet Republic' of 1918, which was centred in the city of Munich and crushed by central government troops.
2. A reference to the West Berlin student group of the 1960s, 'Kommune 1', inspired by the anarchist Fritz Teufel.

BOOK REVIEWS

God's Playground, A History of Poland

Norman Davies

Vol. I, The Origins to 1795, Clarendon Press, pb £12.50

Vol. II, 1795 to the Present, Clarendon Press, pb £12.50

A History of Poland

O. Halecki, with additional material by A. Polonsky, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pb £6.95

Norman Davies' *opus* is a *tour de force*: in two volumes on over 1300 pages, he surveys the history of Poland from its origins to the present. The second title *God's Playground*, puzzling at first, comes from the 16th century verse of Kochanowski and may be taken as the Polish equivalent of 'All the world's a stage ...'; but while for Shakespeare 'all the men and women (are) merely players', for Kochanowski they are rather jesters. This appeals to Davies. Reacting against the 'scientific scholars' solemnity, his 'treatment of weighty events has been sweetened with a mild infusion of anecdotes, epitaphs, *bons mots*, ditties, hymns, songs, poems, travelogues, lyrical evocations, and antiquarian curiosities'. He may have overdone it, especially in the first volume, where the piling of too many amusing 'historical whimsicalities' becomes tiresome.

A prodigious amount of work went into the making of these volumes. To master the enormous mass of material, Davies, quite successfully, adopted an original structural device: his narrative chapters, with their wealth of encyclopaedic information, are preceded by 'thematic essays' discussing general subjects: society, religion, economy, constitution, etc.

Norman Davies is probably right in saying that his book, in which he so unequivocally shows his hostility to Polish nationalism, will not endear him to the majority of Polish readers. He does indeed attack 'their most cherished beliefs', 'their sense of indestructibility and moral superiority' and he does not take it for granted that Poland 'has any special worth, or superior mission, or even any absolute right to exist'. The severity of his judgment — tinged with condescension — is somewhat sweetened by an attitude of indulgence and affection for the Poles.

Norman Davies claims that his study is not inspired by 'any particular ideology'. Surely, a very consistent attack on the ideology of nationalism is in itself ideological? Yes, it is true that the majority of Poles are intensely nationalistic; it is also true that part of that passionate nationalism is a result of the repeated threats to, and breaks in, their national existence.

Davies' hostility to Polish nationalism does not stem in any way from his devotion to internationalism. He does not see the nation-state as such as an anachronism and is not looking forward to the 'withering away of the State'. He is neither a Marxist nor an anarchist and he would not quite like to see Polish nationalism replaced by anything resembling socialist interna-

tionalism, though he urges the Poles to become 'good Europeans' — whatever that may mean. He pays little attention to the internationalist current in the Polish tradition. As a conscientious scholar he does mention Rosa Luxemburg and her school of thought, but bestows no praise on those who had represented it. He also greatly underrates the appeal that internationalism and communism exercised on the Polish working class and the intelligentsia, before and after the attainment of independence in spite of the concerted efforts of Stalin and the Colonels to destroy the Communist Party in the 1930s.

Norman Davies' *magnum opus* is impressive as a mine of valuable information not available elsewhere and as a corrective to the work of those historians who regard Poland as 'a cause' or 'an ideal', and as an antidote to the Polish 'Messianic spirit'. Its attraction lies, paradoxically, in the fact that it stimulates and provokes disagreement of those, who, unlike the author, do not believe 'in the primacy of the irrational' in the realm of human motivation and who view history as an 'organic process' and not as 'the playground of mischievous fate'.

Professor Oscar Halecki's *History of Poland* is quite a different kind of work. On

some 340 pages it covers the Polish 'millennium' up to the end of 1945 and is brought up to date by the addition of three chapters written by A. Polonsky on the post-war period and the early 1980s.

In the inter-war years Prof. Halecki was a respectable Professor of Warsaw University, and later on, in exile, occupied distinguished posts in the American Academia, and his work bears all the distinctive marks of that milieu. For Prof. Halecki 'the most vital historical traditions of Poland are those of her great centuries'. Here, according to him, the central place belongs to the epoch of the Jagiellos (15th and 16th centuries) and he sets out to retrieve this tradition from oblivion. Not without reason, Norman Davies would view this perspective as very harmful. It is precisely this 'memory of an ancient heritage', the persistent attachment to the 'image of the Old Republic' used here, which perpetuates among the Poles their 'sense of indestructibility and moral superiority' and encourages their 'reveries'.

The book is meant to be a 'simple manual' and the author was, and had every reason to be, very modest about it.

Tamara Deutscher



BOOK REVIEWS

Western Policies on East-West Trade,

Stephen Woolcock, Chatham House Papers 15, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1982, pb £3.95.

It is a commonplace that the rise of socialist revolutions has lessened the degree of inter-imperialist contradictions. The possibility of an all-out inter-imperialist war seems remote, and the conflicts between major capitalist powers are confined to areas of finance, trade, government management policies. Despite Suez and Grenada, outright disputes on third world issues are much rarer than at the time of Fashoda or Agadir.

Yet in one foreign policy area inter-imperialist strategic conflicts seem to continue with great intensity — that of dealings with the Soviet bloc itself. And with the development of the Second Cold War since 1979, the US administration has clashed on a range of issues with the other OECD countries. The attempts by Washington to enlist the support of the Europeans and Japan for boycotts and economic warfare against the USSR after Afghanistan and Poland have produced some of the deepest foreign policy clashes in Atlantic relations since 1945.

Stephen Woolcock's study of these disagreements ends in early 1982. It therefore omits both the loosening of pressure over Poland, and the attempts by the Reagan Administration to tighten up exports of 'critical technologies' through a new Export Administration Act. But he provides a clear and competent survey of the three main areas of conflict — sanctions, controls on security-related exports, and US concern about European 'dependence' on Soviet energy supplies.

He shows that there have been three different phases of NATO policy on this question since 1945, and that it is the most recent period that has produced the sharpest disagreements. His detailed statistics bring out the differences between US and European trade with Comecon, but he is right to avoid an economic explanation of why such disagreements exist. Differences in strategic perception between major western bourgeoisies, not trade reliance as such, lead to the clash between the USA and Europe.

Woolcock's conclusion is that commercial advantage, not political calculation, should govern NATO's trade with the east. He can see, as the more reactionary sectors cannot, that trade neither serves to induce Soviet 'good behaviour' nor to alter unwelcome policies once they have begun. What he avoids, except in some asides, is the degree to which the USA under the Reagan Administration believes in economic warfare itself as an instrument for waging the cold war, and how the USA ever since 1917 has tried to use economic pressure against the USSR.

Woolcock's plea is for free trade, without political hindrance. But the fact is that the world's most powerful capitalist country has never believed in this, subordinating the prospect of profit to that of international class warfare. It is a dispute about the strategies of counter-revolution,

not competition for markets, that underlies inter-imperialist conflicts on this issue.

Fred Halliday

Class Struggles in Eastern Europe 1945-1983

Chris Harman, Pluto Press, £6.95.

This is a new edition of the author's *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* which appeared in 1974, and the changes made to the original version were obviously largely dictated by the need to include description and analysis of the upsurge of the Polish working class under the Solidarity banner in 1980-81. In addition, the concluding part has been altered and expanded, partly to take into account the Polish experience, partly to deepen its polemical content. For this is, essentially, a polemical book: Harman is a leader of the Socialist Workers' Party and as such not primarily interested in an academic account of events, but in their interpretation from the standpoint of revolutionary marxism and the promotion of the SWP's view that the Eastern European regimes are 'state capitalist' and that the clashes between them and their working masses are therefore class struggles, more or less akin to those of the West.

This gives the book both its strengths and its weaknesses: the most refreshing thing about it is its unambiguous siding with the oppressed, its unyielding insistence that the problems and contradictions of these societies cannot, in the final analysis, be resolved through bureaucratic reform 'from above', but only through the seizure of political power by the working masses themselves 'from below'. This perspective is rather rare in books on Eastern Europe, including those written from a leftist, 'reform communist' viewpoint.

On the other hand, however, Harman's 'state capitalist' class-struggle perspective tends to reduce the problems of revolution in Eastern Europe to the *organisational* tasks of building a revolutionary party and preparing for insurrection, and to submerge crucial *political* aspects of the dynamic of the process — the contradictions within the ruling parties and the East-West conflict, for example — to mere inter-capitalist rivalries. Both the strengths and the weaknesses are particularly clearly reflected in the chapter on the Polish crisis.

This new edition is to be welcomed because only books like this one can really advance the rather stagnant clarification process on the left's theoretical and practical attitudes to Eastern Europe. There are enough journalistic accounts of events in Poland, but precious few that seek to make socialist sense of Solidarity's struggle. This is why all those who disagree with Harman's political and analytical perspectives should nevertheless read it.

Günter Minnerup

Late Marx and the Russian Road

Teodor Shanin, RKP, £12.95.

The central claim of this book is to have discovered a hitherto unrecognised, new 'late Marx' who, under the influence of his studies of Russia, dramatically rethought many of the central propositions of his theory. The evidence for this consists of the translation of the drafts of Marx's letter to Vera Zasulich in 1881 concerning the possible fate of the Russian peasant commune. But these drafts have been known about since 1924, and the main point — that Marx thought the commune could survive and form a point of departure for socialism if the revolution

came soon enough — was contained in the letter itself, which has long been known about.

The book also contains items such as a month by month chronology of Marx's life after 1867 and biographical sketches of the Narodniks.

What would have given the book some real substance would have been an investigation of first what actually happened to the Russian commune and to the peasantry between 1881 and 1917, and second the continuing debates on these questions among the Russian marxists focussing particularly on Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism* and Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

But to do this would have undermined the central thesis of this book for it would have shown that whatever the merits of Marx's specific observations in 1881, they were superseded by Russia's actual historical development. A development which made *Capital* and the main body of Marx's thought more, not less, relevant to Russia.

John Molyneux

No Fire No Thunder

Sean Murphy, Alastair Hay and Steven Rose, Pluto Press, £3.95.

Captain Ecuyer, a British officer at Fort Pitt prosecuting the war against the Indians gave hostile chiefs 'two blankets and a handkerchief out of the Small Pox hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect'.

The deployment of CBWs (Chemical and Biological Weapons) requires cunning. At a diplomatic level, ploys to evade the spirit of the 1925 Geneva Protocol (the major international sanction against the use of CBWs) show great semantic ingenuity. Britain, for example, claims that the use of gas in a 'domestic' context — CS in Northern Ireland — is legal. The US claims that herbicides like defoliants to not come into the category of chemical weapons. They are to 'clear vegetation around US military base camps'. Vietnam had the misfortune to be around such a base.

The most recent sidestep has been on the deployment by the USSR and the US of the so-called 'binary' chemical weapons. Two common and relatively harmless industrial chemicals are loaded into a projectile and mix after firing to produce lethal gas which is spread after detonation. Negotiated on-the-spot checks cannot locate nerve gas factories.

This book is thorough, but when groups of academics write books like this it is often fairly dry reading. It is not helped by a tiresome habit of telling the reader what he or she knows already. For instance (solemnly): 'But in a war it is military considerations which dominate'. Astonishing.

Phil Evans

Also received:

Journey Into Russia, by Laurens van der Post, Penguin, £2.95

A reprint of an account of a journey across Russia first published in 1964

Eastern Europe 1740-1980

Feudalism to Communism, by Robin Okey, Hutchinson, £4.95.

A concise history which examines particularly the role of nationalism.

Feminism in Russia 1900-1917

Linda Harriet Edmonson, Heinemann Educational Books.

The early women's movement in Russia never reached the proportions it attained in Britain, Germany and America. The western movement had its roots in the egalitarian aspirations released by the French Revolution, and in the opportunities presented by industrialization, as well as in related demographic factors and changes in family structure.

In Russia it was different. Feminist ideas were imported from the west in the 1850s and found relevance among the radical intelligentsia. '...the obvious parallel between the subjection of the peasant to the serf-owner and that of a woman to her husband or father was quickly drawn and the emancipation of the serfs encouraged demands for female emancipation too.'

After 1861 and the abolition of selfdom, the changing social and economic role of the female gentry provided an impetus for feminism. But the women's movement remained confined to a small layer of privileged women. Until 1881 the feminists campaigned for higher education opportunities for women. Then when women were banned from belonging to societies with an educational aim, the movement took a nosedive.

The revolution of 1905 revived the movement and sparked not one, but two women's movements — one among middle class women (the *ravnopravki* or equal rights feminists); and one of socialist women.

Middle class feminists took up the suffrage struggle, but scorned the militant tactics of British suffragettes and condemned their attacks on property as 'excesses'. They tried to ally with reformist political parties, but were appalled to discover that their members did not consider women as equals. But they echoed their politics all the same and in 1914 supported the war effort with enthusiasm.

The feminists welcomed the overthrow of the tsar but the 1917 revolution marked the end of the middle class women's movement. Outmanoeuvred and overtaken by the Bolshevik women's organisation it faded rapidly into irrelevance. Perhaps because of this sudden demise the movement has often been underestimated.

Despite its small size, however, the feminist movement helped to make the demand for women's equal rights politically acceptable. It also significantly influenced Bolshevik policy. The Bolshevik decision to set up 'special party

work among women' in 1914 and again in 1917 was at least in part a direct reaction to feminist attempts to organise working women.

So far books about Russian women have concentrated on socialist women and have been written from the standpoint of opposition to the equal

rights feminists. This book is a sympathetic but critical account of those feminists. As such it provides considerable food for thought about socialist orthodoxies on the 'woman question'.

Anna Paczuska



SAKHNORSKAYA: WOMAN IN THE '1905 REVOLUTION

'The Polish Revolution'

Solidarity 1980-82

Timothy Garton Ash

Jonathan Cape, £12.50

This book bids to become the standard source on the history of Solidarity. It is a mixture of direct reporting, accounts from other sources, historical narrative and political analysis. But it is structured so cleverly, that in effect it offers the full story. It is also extremely well written. It is an example of ambitious journalism that can do more to advance knowledge in a particular field than many a scholarly and systematic study.

With this approach, the book is bound to be somewhat uneven. Some of the best things are passages of direct observation, as in the chapter on the peasant commune in Rzeszow. The writing here has a thrilling immediacy and provides rare insights into the peasant outgrowth of the movement. The account of the March 1981 crisis, triggered

by police provocation in Bydgoszcz, is valuable on a more strictly political level. In the writer's judgement, Solidarity achieved the pinnacle of its effectiveness as an organised movement in the general strike alert of that time, while the authorities and the police were far from the state of preparedness they were to demonstrate in December. The hasty compromise to stave off confrontation, imposed undemocratically on the movement, started the process which was to lead to a reversal of those relative positions. Tim Garton Ash refuses to take sides about Walesa's move to withdraw from what looked like the final confrontation, but he traces the germ of disunity within the movement and its relative loss of direction to the March crisis.

The writer rejects popular Western assumptions about Poland and Solidarity. Tim Garton Ash has learned to speak Polish fluently and accepts a broadly Polish perspective. He sees Solidarity as the product of a uniquely Polish political and

cultural experience. The reverse side of his sympathy for the national experience is his strong dislike of the regime. The villains are the Party bosses, both the known 'hard liners' and the 'liberals' like Deputy Prime Minister Rakowski.

Most judgements in this book are clear cut and delivered with certainty. The writer's own political values appear to be those of a liberal conservative (I'm not saying that he is a conservative voter: I don't know how he votes). He understands the many complex and sometimes contradictory currents which went to make up the movement, including a strong socialist content in its programme, but he appears to draw from it only sustenance for his own established position. This book does not offer the excitement of a creative rediscovery; it is not about a personal challenge, with the writer being forced in the face of this new phenomenon to redefine and restate his own values. But it offers much else.

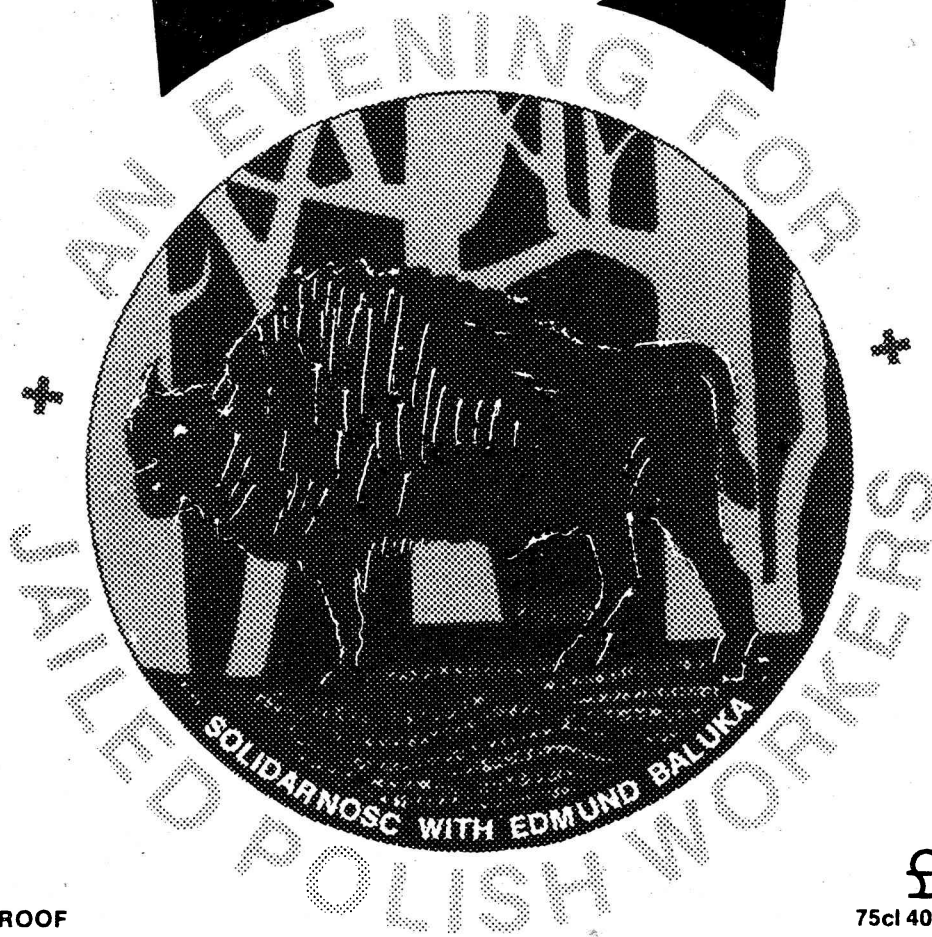
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**FRIDAY JUNE 29th 8.30—LATE BAR. POLISH FOOD
BRABANT ROAD COMMUNITY CENTRE N22 (Wood Green tube)**

**ORGANISED BY LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE,
BOX 23, KINGSLAND HIGH ST, LONDON E8 tel 359 1371/249 5658**