

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

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Eastern Europe and the USSR

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Photo: Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

Charter meeting in Prague. Foreground left, Vaclav Havel. Background right, Anna Sabatova and her husband, Petr Uhl

DEFEND CHARTER 77

Contents

STATEMENT OF AIMS

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

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

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

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

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

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilise the considerable influence that the British labour movement can have in the struggles to end repression in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

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EDITORIAL

Prague Trial Signals New Policy in Eastern Europe 1

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The How and Why of the Prague Trial -- by Jan Kavan 2

Documents:

Charter Statement on Arrests 3

VOONS on Arrests and Background 4

Biographies of the Arrested 6

The Cases of Cerny and Sabata 7

The Danisz Affair -- by Oliver MacDonald 8

The International Significance of the Prague Trial --

An Interview with Zdenek Mlynar 9

International Appeal Against Trial 10

POLAND

Documents:

Poland and the Pope's Visit -- by Adam Michnik 11

The Situation in the Country and the Programme

of the Opposition -- by Jacek Kuron 12

EAST GERMANY

Clampdown on Writers Continues -- by Günter Minnerup 14

Harich in West Backs Bahro -- by G. Minnerup 15

New Laws Passed 15

HUNGARY

A Chronology of Political and Intellectual Opposition Under the Kadar Regime: 1956-1978 -- by Bill Lomax 15

SOVIET UNION

Clash in Writers' Union on Suppression of Literary Journals 19

Repression of Trade Unionists Continues 19

News in Brief 20

LABOUR MOVEMENT 20

REVIEWS

'Workers' Councils in Czechoslovakia' 21

'Workers Against the Gulag' 22

LETTER

Nalga and Romania -- by Phil Jones 22

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EDITORIAL

Prague Trial Signals New Policy in Eastern Europe

As we go to press, the biggest political trial in Eastern Europe for well over a decade seems about to open in Prague. 10 members of the Committee in Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted Persons (VONS), many of them very prominent signatories of Charter 77, are facing charges of 'subversion on a large scale' which carry between 3 and 10 year prison sentences.

This trial, which must have been cleared at the highest levels of East European politics, seems to indicate a new, aggressive policy of attempting to crush all open civil rights protests in the countries surrounding Poland. In an interview with Labour Focus published on page 9 of this issue, Dr Zdenek Mlynar indicates that a meeting of Soviet bloc Ministers of the Interior and Security Department heads in Prague last April took a decision to attempt to crush the entire East European civil rights movement before the Madrid Conference on European Security and Co-operation next year. He also states that preparations are being made to destroy the Polish opposition movement this autumn.

Already we have seen how the crackdown in Czechoslovakia has been matched in East Germany by the trials of Stephan Heym and Robert Havemann, the sacking of prominent writers from the Writers' Union and the introduction of new laws banning the passing of any unauthorised information to the West.

The article by KOR leader Jacek Kuron which we publish on page 12 of this issue paints a picture of a society in a profound and deepening crisis. If Kuron's analysis is accurate then we can expect to see increasingly vicious assaults on the opposition, of which the attack this spring on Kuron's flat (reported in our last issue) was simply a foretaste.

As Jan Kavan shows (see page 2 of this issue) the civil rights movement in Czechoslovakia has responded vigorously to the crackdown, demonstrating that the arrests have not seriously affected either VONS or the Charter 77 movement. But what is in doubt is the active commitment of the Western labour movements to their past pledges to defend the right of the civil rights movement in Czechoslovakia to function without repression. It is imperative that socialists respond to the latest trial by qualitatively stepping up practical solidarity with Charter 77 and VONS.

Labour Focus, in conjunction with the Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee in West Berlin, and with the editor of Listy, Jiri Pelikan, has launched an international appeal for the release of the jailed Charter 77 supporters. The appeal has been widely supported throughout Western Europe and Canada and has already been signed by well over our target of 77 Labour MPs in this country. Those who have signed include Tony Benn and 10 other members of Labour's National Executive Committee. The drive is now on for trade union leaders and prominent local leaders of the labour movement in the main cities of Britain to sign.

In addition, Phillip Whitehead MP, the Hon. President of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, and Reg Race MP have taken the initiative of establishing a labour movement Charter 77 Defence Fund, to provide financial assistance to the families of those suffering repression in Czechoslovakia. Discussions are also underway to establish committee of left-wing lawyers to monitor the legal problems of arrested civil rights campaigners. The prominent Labour Party lawyer, Peter Archer, former Solicitor-General in the last Labour Government is seeking to attend the trial in Prague as an observer, and it is hoped that a group of Labour MPs may be established to permanently monitor conditions facing the civil rights movement in Czechoslovakia. Amnesty International has adopted the 10 arrested VONS members and is hoping to send an observer to the trial. The Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists has established a new 'Charter 77 Defence Committee' to co-ordinate all aspects of the labour movement defence campaign, with the support of both the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign and Labour Focus. The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, which has played a large part in gaining support for the International Appeal, is deeply concerned about the turn of events in Czechoslovakia and is considering whether an international Tribunal on repression in Czechoslovakia may be necessary.

As soon as details of the arrests filtered through to the West in early June, Labour Focus produced a 15-page electrostencilled Dossier with documents, press cuttings and other information, which has been distributed to Labour MPs, trade union leaders and others in the labour movement who could either sign the International Appeal or circulate it. For the same reason, Labour Focus has now allocated over one-third of the current issue to the arrests.

The turn of events in Eastern Europe is paralleled by some signs of a shift to the right in various Western capitalist countries, not least in Britain. One of the very first acts of the new Tory government was to boost the police and military budget and to loudly support the strengthening of NATO. In response to this some on the left may feel that solidarity with those struggling for civil and democratic rights in Eastern Europe should be toned down. We believe this to be a profoundly mistaken view. The answer to the Tories' Cold War politics is a strong anti-NATO stand by the labour movement. At the same time the left must redouble its efforts to support movements for civil liberties in Eastern Europe.

In the next weeks and months, the focus of such support must be the defence of the Prague 10. Every effort must be made to take the defence campaign deep into the heart of the labour movement and to greatly strengthen the socialist defence organisations already in existence.

Those able to help the campaign in defence of the Prague 10 in any way should write to:
Charter 77 Defence Committee,
c/o Ruth Tosek, 14 Elgin Court, 16 Montpelier Rd., London W5

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Sharp crackdown on dissidents by Czechs and East Germans

Czech dissident's wife is 'beaten up'

from a Special Correspondent in Prague

A FULL description of the beating-up of the wife of a leading Czech dissident, now in hospital here, was given to THE OBSERVER in a written statement last night.

It came from the victim, Mrs Zdena Tomínová, whose husband, Julius, is on hunger strike. Ten people belonging to the dissident organisation VONS (Committee to Defend the Unjustly Persecuted) are in custody, accused of subver-

Czech human rights men held

The most serious charge—would occupy the attention of the world's Press. That intention was to destroy the Charter, and especially of VONS.

The arrests came 24 hours after the Charter issued its 26th Document, which is widely regarded as its most important. It describes in detail the shortages and low quality of many consumer goods and especially the difficulty of obtaining them.

People have to spend hours in queues even for basic food stuffs. It says, and other goods are obtainable only under the counter or through barter.

The scarcity of goods, combined with the lack of services for the exchange of goods, is the exchange of goods for example, spare parts for light bulbs, or car spare parts for almost anything. This system works bearably but also between individuals.

Charter says also that with- out them work in some areas such as building or man- tenance would never be done. An integral part of this system is the exchange of goods for example, spare parts for light bulbs, or car spare parts for almost anything. This system works bearably but also between individuals.

Charter 77 members charged

TWO spokesmen of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 human rights movement and six other members have formally been charged with subversion, Czechoslovak emigre sources in Vienna said at the weekend.

The two spokesmen, Jiri Dienstbier and Vaclav Benda, have been charged with undermining the republic, an offence which carries a jail sentence of one to ten years.

Five others — Vaclav Havel, Jiri Nemez, his wife Dana Nemez, Otta Bednarova and Jarmila Belkova — were also charged under the same section of the penal code.

Petr Uhl was charged with the more serious crime of undermining the state

EDITORIAL

Defend Charter 77

There are two open opposition movements in Europe — the KOR in Poland and Charter Czechoslovakia. Now Charter 77 is under attack from the regime. The arrest of 10 of its spokesmen, including two of the three Charter spokespersons and the editor of its Information Bulletin, represents the most serious attempt yet to suppress the open opposition movement.

This month is the third anniversary of the workers' action in Poland in 1976 which led to the founding of the KOR. The Charter was formed soon afterwards, and last year formal links were established between the two opposition movements. The existence of such open opposition movements is vital, because it is the only way in which the masses of those countries can formulate their political aspirations and learn from their

common experience. If those movements do not exist then the social explosions which are inevitable in Eastern Europe will only involve much more violence and bloodshed.

Without the solidarity and practical support of the international labour movement, Charter 77 is in danger of being destroyed by the Stalinist apparatus. It is imperative therefore that the Labour Party in this country, and the other parties of the workers movement in Western Europe, come out clearly and officially in defence of the Charter. Protests must be organised through the entire labour movement.

The Czech lawyer who in the past has defended Charter activists has been expelled from the legal profession. The labour movement here must take up this question and take steps to organise

Charter's list that the Chrs of their own; and that the send an offi/ urgently rec who have br of the other

If the I organisation- give suppo; Eastern Eu nowhere el; alternatives; The respons Defend Cha

Prague admits dissident arrests

VIENNA — Nine Czechoslovak men, Vaclav Benda and Jiri Dienstbier. The others are Jarmila Malá, Ladislav Nemez, Belkova, and Otta Bednarova and Dana Lis.

The agency says "criminal proceedings" have been started against them, and that the investigation is continuing. It claims that the group "for a long time systematically fabricated lying information, distributed it in Czechoslovakia and abroad in the public system of the republic, and eventually with lights on the dissident position at the house."

As I entered the building and switched on the light, I saw a heavily-built masked man on the Pope's

The How and Why of The Prague Trial

By Jan Kavan

Two political objectives have prompted the Czechoslovak government to stage a big civil rights trial in Prague. First they hoped to destroy the Committee in Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted Persons (VONS), to which all the accused belong. Secondly, they have calculated that the crackdown would decisively weaken the Charter 77 movement, because many of the accused are also key leaders of that movement. By bringing charges which could result in 10 year jail sentences on all the accused, the Party leadership must have felt sure that its aims would be secured.

But already these objectives have been thwarted. In response to the arrests of Charter spokespersons, Vaclav Benda and Jiri Dienstbier, Jiri Hajek and Ladislav Hejdanek immediately stepped into the breach, maintaining continuity. Even more dramatically, 12 new members of VONS have been announced, filling the gap left by those under arrest. And amongst other indications of the continued confidence and

vigour of the movement, Charter circles have announced not only that the journal *Quadangle* which Jiri Dienstbier was editing before his arrest will continue to appear, but even more strikingly that the Charter Information Bulletin, previously edited by Petr Uhl, has already produced a new issue.

On 3 July, 231 people sent an open letter to President Husak demanding the immediate release of the VONS members: 'We do not know of any humane state in which the publicly declared demand to observe the Constitution a priori held to reveal the intent to wreck its system ... we warn against the establishment of arbitrary rule not responsible to anyone ...'

The three free Charter spokespersons at the same time offered to meet the President personally to discuss the whole matter. They also requested that he use his right to grant an amnesty and order judicial proceedings to be halted.

In short, before the trial has even started, it has failed. Any hope which the Czechoslovak authorities had of repeating the operation carried out against the Moscow Helsinki Group, which was decisively weakened by the arrest and jailing of its leaders last summer, has been dashed.

The arrests were not a surprise: since last November the regime has been reported to have been preparing action against VONS — the decision to crush the committee was taken towards the end of last year.

VONS was created in April 1978 as a civil liberties committee similar in formal functions to the Workers Defence Committee (KOR) in Poland though VONS is far less known here than Charter 77. Yet this small committee of 22 people, (until, that is, the additional 12 new members joined) of whom one now lives in Austria, has been able to make a considerable impact, producing no less than 118 factual statements on the prosecution of individuals

during a year and a quarter of activity.

VONS's aims and methods were very precisely defined from the start: to monitor and spread information about infringements of the law by the police and judicial authorities during the course of arrests, investigations and trials. Many of those prosecuted in such cases have been young people, most of them workers, coming from small provincial towns or even villages as well as the big cities. Before VONS's creation such cases went totally unknown and VONS very successfully broke this silence, spreading information about political repression of this sort.

During the last 6 or 7 months VONS had succeeded in spreading the names and addresses of its members throughout a large number of provincial towns in Bohemia and Moravia, the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. Foreign broadcasts also spread this information making it possible even for people in small villages to contact the committee. Thus relatives and friends of hitherto unknown arrested people could supply VONS with official documents—indictments, verdicts, appeals etc.—which are normally made available only to defence lawyers and the families of the accused. Relying on such official documents, VONS covered in detail between 60 and 65 cases of this sort, during the last year. Vaclav Benda, the secretary of VONS, has stated in an interview that several hundred people are in jail as a result of political trials. The effectiveness of such 'low intensity operations' has depended on their anonymity. As the cases mentioned in VONS statement 115, reproduced in this issue of *Labour Focus*, illustrate, publicity turns these trials into extremely damaging indictments of the political system itself, greatly embarrassing the Party leadership.

Importance which the regime has attached to this crackdown is shown by the careful preparations that have gone into it. The

arrests were carried out on 29 May on the very eve of the Pope's visit to Poland. With all Western correspondents in Warsaw, the police calculated, quite accurately, that the Western media would fail to spotlight the crackdown. One VONS member, Albert Cerny, had been arrested earlier, in March, and the police have worked overtime to prepare their package of indictments in order to be able to hold the trial in the middle of the summer holidays when reaction both in Czechoslovakia and in the West will be much more difficult to organise.

Even then, the biggest problem remains, namely sending people to jail for long periods without having any justifiable reason for doing so. Tackling this involves first of all destroying the independence of defence lawyers for the accused and secondly distorting the facts for suitable presentation at the trial.

The task of intimidating defence lawyers has been in full swing since the beginning of the year, with the expulsion of Dr Josef Danisz from the legal profession for his courageous and effective defence of Charter 77 supporters. As the account of the Danisz affair printed below indicates, he has subsequently been brought before a court on criminal charges involving a three month suspended prison sentence.

However, further action was taken one week before the arrests at the end of May. The Prague Municipal Association of Lawyers sent the lawyers' union a blacklist outlining three types of lawyers who should be denied all positions within the Union: those involved in criminal activity—Danisz was mentioned here; those who willfully obstruct police and judicial processes, and finally those who are under suspicion of being in the first two categories. The meaning of statements of this sort is all too clear to any lawyer — follow the course of Danisz in this new trial and their jobs and

livelihood will be threatened.

It remains to be seen whether this intimidation will deter honest defence lawyers from defending those coming up for trial. But all those among the accused who do not have defence lawyers are appealing to the West for lawyers to apply to come to Prague to defend them in court.

There remains the problem of concocting evidence. (This is, of course, a problem of public relations rather than legal niceties, since the sentences will have been decided beforehand by the responsible Party authorities.) One possible case that the court may try to make capital out of could be an attempted hijacking of a bus with 40 secondary school pupils on board. Three men tried to use it to escape to West Germany and after agreement was reached with the border guards on safe passage to the West, the guards opened fire and both the driver and one of the hijackers were killed. The other two were arrested and sentenced to death, on the grounds of causing the driver's death, even if the actual bullet had been fired by a border guard. VONS in no way defended the hijacking, but did protest against the use of the death sentence, stimulating a petition by 350 people for the abolition of capital punishment and pointing out that the hijackers had not been proved to have actually shot the bus driver. It would be in keeping with the style of the regime to try to brand VONS as a subversive organisation backing criminals who threaten the lives of innocent children.

VONS is not in any sense a political group or organisation. It was established as a citizens' initiative as allowed under the Czechoslovak constitution with the much needed task of defending civil liberties. The coming Prague trial illustrates better than anything else how necessary such activity is in Czechoslovakia to defend people who are being unjustly prosecuted.

Charter 77 Statement on Arrests

More than 48 hours have now passed since the Czechoslovak state security, with the permission of the Procurator-General, carried out searches of the residences of members of the Committee to Defend Unjustly Prosecuted Persons (VONS) and arrested 15 of them. (There are also others whose situation we are uncertain about.) In contravention of the law, those arrested have not yet been released.

The pretext for this massive police operation, 'suspicion' about alleged 'preparations for the subversion of the Republic' consisting of 'the production of a large number of texts of a sort likely to undermine the confidence of the citizens of the CSSR in the organs of the State and arouse moods of hostility towards the socialist system' has no basis either in the Czechoslovak Constitution or in the legal code, nor in the international pacts on civil and human rights.

VONS is an independent group of citizens, loosely connected to

the Czechoslovak movement in defence of civil and human rights, known under the name of Charter 77. In its activity it follows the same principles as those followed by the national sections of Amnesty International and bases itself on the Czechoslovak legal code, demanding that it be applied strictly and without bias, and drawing attention to cases where it is contravened. The 'texts' which are issued by VONS are known publicly as VONS communiqués; there have been 113 of them so far. They contain accurate information about police operations, prosecutions, legal proceedings and sentences passed on citizens, who are often condemned merely for making use of their inalienable rights and freedoms, and whose prosecution can only be described as unjust.

VONS has always strictly adhered to legality, and to accuse any of its members of being in any way connected with 'the preparations for subversion of the Republic' is a travesty of the facts. It represents a transparent attempt to intimidate Czechoslovak

citizens and warn them off any attempt to persist in demanding their legal rights or attempt to stand up for anyone else who is wronged. It is also another attempt to attack the Charter 77 association, which symbolises the invincible longing of the Czechoslovak people for a state of affairs in which democratic and humane principles are really applied in public affairs.

Charter 77 has at present 4 spokespersons. Of these 4, Dr J. Sabata has now served 8 of his 27 months of imprisonment, while Dr V. Benda and J. Dienstbier, both members of VONS, now find themselves in the so-called preliminary investigation cells and, together with other members of VONS, are in danger of being remanded in jail. It seems that the state authorities intentionally chose the time when Pope John Paul II is in Poland to launch their attack, so that the new wave of repression in Czechoslovakia would escape attention.

We ask the entire progressive world public, who are concerned with the implementation of the final act of the Helsinki Conference and with a just and humane world order, to once again support our parallel endeavours, and call for the immediate release of all the imprisoned members of VONS before a case against them can be fabricated.

Zdena Tominova
Charter 77 Spokesperson

31 May 1979



Photo: Ivan Basta (Palach Press)

Charter 77 spokesperson, Zdena Tominova.

VONS on Arrests and Background

Communiqué no. 115

On Tuesday 29 May 1979 at 5 a.m., the State Security launched a widespread and long-prepared action against VONS (Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted Persons). It detained for purposes of interrogation sixteen citizens who last year made public their names and addresses, thus giving notice that they intended to monitor the measures taken by Czechoslovak security and judicial organs against unjustly prosecuted people.

House searches were carried out with the approval of the Public Prosecutor of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The workplaces of some of the detained persons or their relatives were similarly searched. In a number of cases the members of the uniformed and secret police entered their homes by the use of force. In the apartment of Otká Bednarová (Prague 4, Novodvorská 416) they broke the lock and severed the security chain, then put in a new lock to which they had the keys. In the apartment of Jiri Dienstbier (Prague 2, Podskalská 8) they pretended that a girl friend of Zuzana Dienstbier had come to visit; she called out her Christian name, so that they men were able to see the co-owner of the apartment inadequately attired. They broke down the door also in the case of Vaclav Benda (Karlovo náměstí 18, Prague 2) and Rudolf Battek (Krizikova 73, Prague 8). Nowhere did they make any allowances for the presence of children, who were forced to witness all the humiliating procedures. For instance, the nine-year-old daughter of the imprisoned journalist, Jiri Lederer, during the house search in 20 Doubravický, district of Mlada Boleslav, was only allowed to go out into the yard after repeated requests from her mother, and then in the company of a female member of the secret police, who then searched the girl's pockets. In the apartment of Jiri Ruml (Kremelská 104, Prague 10) his son's friends, who had been visiting and arrived unaware that a house search was being carried out, were forced to stay and were even interrogated in front of microphones and asked what kind of work they did that they were able to make visits in the morning. In general, tape recorders, cameras and film cameras were used, without prior permission to those present, the shots evidently intended to serve defamatory purposes in programmes of the Czechoslovak media.

During the house searches all written material concerning VONS was seized, in particular the texts of the Committee's

announcements, Charter 77 documents, personal notes and correspondence, photographs, also some books and magazines, typewriters, and in some cases also sums of money (e.g. in Jiri Dienstbier's apartment, Kcs 15,000), and even mere facsimiles of foreign currency and bank stubs confirming the receipt of foreign currency in exchange for Tuzex coupons.

The interrogation of the detained persons—in 14 cases as suspects and in one as a witness—was conducted in the prison at Prague-Ruzyně, where the following citizens were put in individual cells for people on remand: Rudolf Battek, Otká Bednarová, Jarmila Beliková, Vaclav Benda, Jiri Dienstbier, Vaclav Havel, Ladislav Lis, Vaclav Maly, Dana Nemcova, Jiri Nemeč, Ludek Pacovsky, Jiri Rumi, Gertruda Sekaninová-Cakrtová, Petr Uhl. Elzbieta Ledererová was questioned at Ruzyně as a witness. Jan Tesar was arrested in Proseč, district of Chrudim, and taken to Brno for interrogation. Albert Cerny, another member of VONS, has been in custody since 26 March. All were told that criminal proceedings had been started 'in the matter of preparation of the criminal act of subversion of the Republic according to para 7/1 and 98/1 of the Criminal Code, for the ascertained facts showed that documents aimed at undermining the confidence of the citizens of the CSSR in organs of the State and at creating a hostile attitude to the Socialist system were being produced and distributed in large numbers'.

During the questioning the interrogators stated that VONS was an anti-social, illegal organisation hostile to the State, since it spread slander among the citizens of the Republic and co-operated with persons and organisations abroad. The questions were formulated with this in mind: How was the information for the individual announcements obtained, who actually wrote them, who typed them and copied them, who sent them out, where to and by what means, what help was given to prosecuted citizens, who financed it, who had contacts with abroad, etc. The persons under interrogation were given handwriting tests, had their fingerprints, palm prints and even saliva specimens taken. The interrogators often put leading questions to them, and indicated openly that all of them would be charged and that the prosecutor already had the necessary warrants for their imprisonment.

The following were released within 48 hours of their arrest: Rudolf Battek, Ludek Pacovsky, Jiri Ruml, Gertruda Sekaninova-Cakrtova, and Jan Tesar. Nine members of VONS were charged under para 98/1 (subversion of the Republic, which carries from 1 to 5 years' imprisonment). Petr Uhl was charged under para 98/2 (liable to 3 to 10 years' imprisonment). Vaclav Havel, should he be found guilty, may also have to serve the 14-month sentence passed earlier, which was suspended for three years in January 1978.

VONS brought out its programme in an announcement made public on 27 April 1978. This stated, in part: 'In the spirit of the intentions of Charter 77 and in keeping with its endeavour to support the creation of smaller working groups to carry out its various tasks, we have decided to set up a committee to monitor the cases of persons who are being prosecuted or imprisoned for the expression of their convictions, or who have fallen victim to arbitrary police or judicial action. We shall acquaint both the public and the authorities with these cases, and we hope to co-operate with anyone who shows an interest in such co-operation. We therefore appeal to our fellow-citizens to inform us about such cases. We believe that the work of this committee will help stop arbitrary police or judicial action. We shall acquaint both the public and the authorities with these cases, and we hope to co-operate with anyone who shows an interest in such co-operation. We therefore appeal to our fellow-citizens to inform us about such cases. We believe that the work of this committee will help stop arbitrary and unjust prosecution and imprisonment.' Thus a free association was formed of people who can, in accordance with Article 29 of the Czechoslovak Constitution, singly or jointly, put forward suggestions, proposals and complaints to our authorities and to the supreme organs of the State. State institutions are obliged to take note of these suggestions, proposals and complaints, to reply to them, put them into operation, or alternatively take the necessary steps to put matters right. Our government has adopted international covenants on human and civil rights, and thereby committed itself not only internationally, but primarily to its own inhabitants, to observe all the provisions of these pacts.

VONS therefore constantly draws the attention of the appropriate state authorities and of the public to the cases in which the rights of citizens were infringed upon. We may mention these as examples: a journalist is sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment because a declaration of Charter 77 was allegedly read in his flat even though there were no witnesses to prove it. And three young people, who during court proceedings dared to withdraw their testimony because they had the courage to tell the court that it was made under pressure, were sentenced because 'in a socialist state interrogators do not use inadmissible pressure'.

A prisoner who objects to the way he is being treated and expresses fears that fascist methods should not be repeated, is at first accused of propagating fascism and later sentenced for comparing our situation to fascism. In a letter to the Prime Minister a woman expresses a view that an official institution acts according to the size of the bribe one gives it: the Prime Minister's office, instead of asking for more details, passes the letter on to the relevant organs and the woman is sentenced.

A citizen is detained because a year ago he was found in possession of literary texts which are not officially printed in Czechoslovakia. The contents are irrelevant, only the name of the author matters. Another of the VONS members, after an interrogation at Bartolomejska Street [the police headquarters in Prague] is in front of this very building assaulted by some unknown attackers and driven far out of Prague, where he is beaten up and left to his fate. Later a lawyer is prosecuted for mentioned these cases in front of a public prosecutor, and he is accused of defamation of the state authorities, even though these cases were duly reported to the Public Prosecutor's office for prosecution. Nobody bothered to investigate them.

Two priests say mass in Esperanto and they are sentenced for 'preventing state supervision over the church'. A spokesman for Charter 77 is sentenced because he resisted an attack on his person by a member of the State Security who at that moment could not claim the protection due to a public official because he had overstepped his authority. Despite this, the spokesman is sentenced and thus forced to serve his previous suspended sentence.

The mother of a prisoner complains to the state authorities that her son is ill-treated in prison, but instead of investigation of the case and obtaining a redress, the mother is taken to court and is sentenced for an 'attack on a state organ'. An engineer who puts his pay-slip on the notice-board in the factory goes to prison. A writer goes to prison while his book stands no chance of being published. Young people, who privately read and copied officially unpublished literary works and listened to non-conformist music are also sentenced.

This is just a random survey of cases which have so far been included in the communiqués issued by VONS. VONS has also informed the public that the police have been continuously watching some citizens and their flats, have photographed or filmed their movements (which is against the law), have mishandled several citizens, have prosecuted them for their justified criticism of such things as violations of the legal code regarding public hearings.

So far VONS has produced 114 communiqués. These were as a rule sent to various state authorities: Public Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Justice, Interior Ministry, legal tribunals, etc. These reports have been known to the public, and the work of VONS has also attracted positive comments from abroad. Until recently, however, the State authorities have never reacted, either positively or negatively, to the suggestions from VONS.

VONS has made it a rule to collect only public documents, such as indictments, charges, verdicts, appeals, etc. which come from open legal Proceedings. The recent action of the authorities against some VONS members is just another example of their failure to understand the valuable social function which our independent initiative is trying to perform among the citizens. The accusations against ten of our members prove this.

All this shows that the authorities are completely ignoring the text of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Part II, Article 2.3:

Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:

- a) to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognised are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;
- b) to ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;
- c) to ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce remedies when granted.

It seems that the state authorities have interpreted the stipulation for an effective remedy for citizens to mean that such citizens should be detained.

Prague, 5 June 1979

VONS

(Committee in Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted Persons)

Biographies of the Arrested

[The following biographies include all the information which we've received to date about the 10 accused Chartists. For this reason some of the entries are very short, others quite full. As soon as detailed biographies become available, we will update the information contained here. All 10 are members both of the Charter and of VONS.]



BEDNAROVA Otka: Born in 1927, she joined the Communist Party in 1945 and was expelled in 1970. During the '60s she was one of the best known female TV journalists in Czechoslovakia; before 1963 she worked for Radio Prague. In the mid-60s she lost her job for one year because of one TV programme; in 1968 she was expelled from her job in TV. She then worked as a cleaning woman and ladies cloakroom attendant; her health was damaged: she suffered from chronic hepatitis and disordered pancreas. In 1970 while working as a cleaning woman a blood vessel burst in her brain; she became a semi-invalid and has been treated for the last five years for metro-rhagia. Since 1973 she received an invalid's pension; it was withdrawn in 1978 and when she protested a court backed the withdrawal. For 3 years now she has been subjected to continuous detentions, house searches and in December 1978 she was physically attacked on the street.

BELIKOVA Jarmila: Born in 1948, she lost her job as a social worker because of her political opinions. She subsequently worked as a cleaning woman and as a manual worker without permanent employment.



Copyright: Plastic People Defence Fund

BENDA Vaclav: Born in 1946, a mathematician and philosopher and a prominent Czech Catholic. Described by friends as a 'revolutionary democrat', he was working as a stoker before his arrest while being both the Secretary of VONS and an official spokesperson of Charter 77. He has five children.

DIENSTBIER Jiri: One of the most prominent Communist journalists working for Radio Prague in 1968. He was later an official correspondent in Washington before being expelled from the Communist Party and sacked from his job because of opposition to the 'Husak normalisation' that followed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. He was interrogated during the 1971-2 trials of leading communists and socialists but was not jailed. He became spokesperson of Charter 77 in February 1979. He has one child.



Copyright: Plastic People Defence Fund

HAVEL Vaclav: One of Czechoslovakia's most famous playwrights, he was a prominent intellectual figure during the Prague Spring and one of the signatories of the 10 Point Manifesto of August 1969, the last public manifesto against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. A moving spirit behind the creation of Charter 77, he was arrested very soon after its appearance while being one of the three founding spokespersons of the movement. In October 1977 he was given an 18-month suspended sentence. During the months after the arrest of Jaroslav Sabata last October, Havel acted as a temporary spokesperson again, despite being under virtual house arrest. He is a leading theorist within the Charter 77 movement.



Copyright: Plastic People Defence Fund

LIS Ladislav: Born in 1926, 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-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 instructor 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 Vysocany 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. He has two children.

MALY Vaclav: A Christian clergyman from Plzen. Otherwise we as yet know nothing about him.

Photo: Plastic People Defence Fund



NEMEČ Jiri: A psychologist and contributor to the literary period *Tvar* in the 1960s, he was born in 1932. Among his political activities he helped to organise the underground university, and signed with others a statement of solidarity with victims of the *Berufsverbot* in West Germany in 1978. He has 7 children.



UHL Petr: Born in 1941, a qualified engineer, Uhl became a Marxist while at college in Prague in the early 1960s, and after his experience in the French Communist Party's student organisation in the mid-60s he became a revolutionary Marxist, sympathetic towards, but never a member of, the Fourth International. In 1968 he played a key part in founding the Revolutionary Youth Movement which was one of the first organised movements of the opponents of the Soviet invasion. The movement sought to carry out political propaganda among youth and workers and for his involvement with this work, Uhl was

jailed in 1969 for 4 years. An important organiser within the Charter movement, he has been editor of the Charter Information Bulletin and figured prominently in the theoretical discussions within the Charter. He has two children and his wife, Anna Sabatova, a former political prisoner, is a member of VONS.



Photo: Plastic People Defence Fund

NEMCOVA Dana: A psychologist, she has played a leading role in organising the Czech cultural underground. She has 7 children.

The Cases of Cerny and Sabata

Before the arrest of the 10 Charter 77 and VONS members on 29 May, another member of these two bodies, Albert Cerny, was already in jail. Not yet brought to trial, Cerny may well be linked to the other 10 and tried with them.

Cerny signed the Charter in 1978 and joined VONS three months later. He was arrested and held for 36 hours on 1 June 1978, during Brezhnev's visit to Prague, while police seized 14 samizdat books, underground music tapes and many documents of the group of Independent Socialists, to which Cerny adheres, from his flat.

Cerny was arrested again on 26 March this year and has been charged with subversion under Article 98/1 and facilitating help for criminal activity under Article 10/1c of the Criminal Code.

Cerny was born in Bratislava in 1937 and is an actor by profession. In 1968 he was a member of KAN (the Club of Committed Non-Party Members) in Opava. In 1969 he was banned from all theatres and worked for many years as a driver for the Red Cross in Brno.

A number of people who did not at first sign the Charter—an act which drew immediate police attention—were nevertheless extremely active in support of the movement. Albert Cerny appears to have been one of these. His arrest is another indication that the aim of the authorities is to jail many of the main activists in the movement.



Jaroslav Sabata pictured shortly before his arrest last October.

Jaroslav Sabata, veteran communist and leader of Charter 77, was sentenced to 18 months in jail on 10 May 1979. Sabata was already serving a 9-month sentence for insulting a policeman.

Born in 1927, Sabata joined the Czechoslovak Communist Party at the age of 19. At the age of 21 he became press secretary on the Party committee of Brno, the second most important Czech city. For 13 years he lectured in Marxism-Leninism at Brno University and became head of the Psychology Department there.

In the spring of 1968 Dr. Sabata was elected head of the Party in the Brno region and became a member of the Central Committee. He was one of the few Central Committee members who resolutely refused

to accept the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and because of his courageous stand he was expelled from the Party in 1969 and sent to do heavy manual labour in an iron foundry.

He refused, however, to abandon his struggle for socialist democracy. When the Husak regime organised rigged elections in November 1969, Dr. Sabata helped to organise a leafletting campaign, pointing out to voters their right to refuse to vote or to cross out the official list of candidates on the ballot paper. For this, Sabata was arrested and jailed in the summer of 1972 to 6½ years for 'subversion', along with his two sons and daughter, who received lesser sentences.

After a heart attack in 1964, Dr. Sabata suffered from heart disease and duodenal ulcers. In prison he was unable to receive proper treatment for these conditions, was given food which aggravated his ulcer complaint and suffered a severe heart attack in 1972 which left him unconscious for some days.

Dr Sabata was released in December 1976. However, the remaining 1½ years of his sentence were not cancelled, but suspended for a period of 3 years.

In the spring of 1978 he became one of the three spokespersons for the Charter. He was arrested in October 1978 and held in prison until January 11 when he received his first sentence. By convicting him of insulting a policeman, the authorities acquired the legal right to make Sabata serve the remaining 1½ years of his earlier sentence.

The Danisz Affair

By Oliver MacDonald

One important aspect of the preparations for a trial of prominent Charter 77 signatories in Prague has been the repressive action taken against Dr. Josef Danisz during the last 6 months. Danisz is a Czech lawyer who has become well known for his willingness to defend Charter 77 signatories in court.

Lawyers in Czechoslovakia are salaried state employees and they are therefore deeply affected in their work by the political character of the state that they serve. When the present authorities in Czechoslovakia wish to take legal action against opponents, they can do so in the knowledge that they have formidable powers for exerting pressure on the legal profession. Thus, as a rule, lawyers have refused requests to defend arrested Chartists, forcing the accused to accept defence counsels chosen by the legal authorities themselves.

But Dr Danisz broke this rule and accepted, on grounds of professional duty, defence briefs for many prosecuted Chartists. Furthermore, in one case after another he showed in court that he was ready to carry out his responsibilities in a vigorous and resourceful manner, without fear of reprisals. By acting in this way he placed in jeopardy the smooth functioning of judicial repression against Charter 77.

The work of Dr Danisz began to bear fruit, and one case in particular must have seriously alarmed the authorities in Prague. This was the trial of Jiri Chmel, aged 24, in July 1978. Chmel was accused of two subversive acts: allowing others to sign Charter 77 in his flat, and playing tapes of non-conformist music in a public place. The Committee in Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted Persons (VONS) covered the case in detail and Dr Danisz was the defence lawyer for Chmel. The prosecution brought forward two witnesses for each of the charges.

Under questioning in court, the two people who were supposed to have witnessed Chmel playing his musical tapes 'in front of the Luna restaurant' denied that they had ever seen the accused. And the two other witnesses, who were expected to confirm that they had signed the Charter in Chmel's flat, declared that they had been pressured by their interrogators into giving false evidence. By telling the truth in this way, the four prosecution witnesses made a mockery of the trial.

Jiri Chmel received 18 months in jail and the four witnesses were also jailed, for between one and two years each. They were convicted of having given false testimony. Action to remove Dr Danisz from the legal profession was soon to follow.

When Charter 77 spokesperson Jaroslav Sabata was arrested in October 1978, Dr

Danisz consented to defend him. But on 8 January 1979, three days before Sabata's trial was due to start, the Committee of the Prague Municipal Association of Lawyers called for the expulsion of Dr Danisz from the legal profession.

The charges against Dr Danisz related to remarks he had made during the Chmel trial and during the pre-trial investigation of the Sabata case. At the Chmel trial he had referred to the judicial procedures used during the terror of the early 1950s. On completion of the pre-trial investigation of the Sabata case, he had had a personal discussion with the investigating judge, Adamova, who had asked him whether he really thought that the Czech police would hit detainees. He had replied that he personally knew some cases of this. Such a reply was now construed as insulting the judicial authorities.



JUDr Josef Danisz

At this point some explanation of the organisation of the legal profession may be useful. Lawyers are salaried employees of the various municipals councils in Czechoslovakia and as such they are members of the Municipal Lawyers' Associations. It was the executive committee of this body in Prague which called for Dr Danisz's expulsion from the profession. But for such an expulsion to take effect it must be approved by the lawyers' trade union, a separate organisation to which all lawyers belong. In the first instance, the matter was put before Dr Danisz's local trade union committee, and this body rejected the request for his expulsion. However, the case then went to a higher organ of the union which ratified the expulsion, giving it effect for 3 years. It was considered that lawyers should not simply respect the institutions of the socialist state; they should at the same time actively lead the citizens of the country to show such

respect for state institutions. This, it was held, Dr Danisz had failed to do.

Dr Danisz's expulsion set the scene for legal repression to be inaugurated against him. In March he was brought before a court and sentenced to 3 months imprisonment, suspended for one year. The grounds for this conviction were drawn from a previously unremarked event which took place four years ago in 1975. According to Charter 77 circles in Prague, the course of events was as follows: Dr Danisz was leaving a restaurant when a policeman roughly accosted him and demanded his papers. Dr Danisz responded by saying that the police in a socialist state should not behave in such a manner. Hence his conviction for 'insulting a policeman'. At the appeal proceedings held on 14 June, the three months' sentence was confirmed and Danisz was further banned from practising as a lawyer for a period of three years.

It appears that Dr Danisz now faces a further prosecution resulting from the conversation with Judge Adamova mentioned above. A trial for insulting a magistrate is apparently being prepared. However, it appears that the sole witness which the prosecution could bring forward, a typist present when the conversation took place, has said she is not able to remember what was said during the discussion.

Dr Danisz's appeal against his expulsion from the legal profession was postponed indefinitely at a hearing also held on 14 June. Until then, he had been legally able to practise and had been starting work as defence counsel for Vaclav Havel, one of the ten Chartists arrested on 29 May. The authorities circumvented this by calling him as a witness in the case of another arrested Chartist, Vaclav Benda: it is not possible to appear at a trial both as a witness and as a defence lawyer. But now, after the three-year ban imposed at the judicial appeal, the regime has ensured that Danisz will be unable to practise for a long time whatever the eventual verdict on his expulsion from the legal profession.

The Danisz affair shows both the brutal chicanery of the judicial process in Czechoslovakia and the existence of real pressures to institute correct legal norms. The role of VONS has been precisely to bring real influence to bear to ensure the legal rights of the accused. This has also been the role of Dr Danisz. By posing this issue sharply in the court-room, in Czechoslovak society and internationally, they have made possible a real, substantial advance in this limited sphere of social life in Czechoslovakia. But the response of the governing authorities to the information which VONS has brought to light has been sweeping repression and more flagrant abuse.

The International Significance of the Prague Trial — Interview with Z. Mlynar

[Below we interview Zdenek Mlynar, who was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia's Presidium and a Secretary of its Central Committee under Alexander Dubcek in 1968-9, and a leading theorist of the Prague Spring. Expelled from the Party in 1969 he became a central figure in the 'ex-communist-Dubcekite' opposition and played a key role in establishing Charter 77. Forced to emigrate in 1977 he now lives in Vienna. He is on the Editorial Board of Listy, the journal of the Czechoslovak socialist opposition, published in Rome. The interview was conducted by Oliver MacDonald.]

Do you think the trial in Czechoslovakia has international significance; that there could be more to it than just simply a response to domestic conditions?

The Prague trial is part of a co-ordinated offensive against the opposition throughout the Soviet bloc. It appears that a decision was made last April at a meeting in Prague of all the East European Ministers of the Interior and the Heads of Security Departments of the CP Secretariats, that the opposition movement would be crushed by 1980. They seem to be attempting to ensure that what happened before the Belgrade Conference of 1977 should not be repeated before the Madrid follow-up conference next year. Soviet leading circles also seem to be concerned that the political opposition in Eastern Europe should be silenced before Brezhnev disappears. There is a continuous chain of events from the Shcharansky-Orlov trials right through the steps taken against the writers and intellectual circles in East Germany, down to the present attempts to stage a Prague trial.

Poland seems to be an exception and this is perhaps because of two reasons: first of all, the opposition movement is particularly strong, the internal situation is very complex and the opposition movements including the underground culture, i.e. the samizdat, have been particularly active. And it hasn't been possible to do anything inside Poland lately because it coincided with the Pope's visit to Poland which took up the entire political scene. But I think that an attempt to crush the Polish opposition movement will be made this coming autumn. This is what makes it particularly important that the Prague Trial meets with an adequate response from international public opinion. And therefore if the response to these trials is firm by the international public then this may have important repercussions for the entire Soviet bloc.

Do you think that this policy vis-à-vis the opposition involves also a change in attitude towards detente and the West on the part of the Soviet leadership or not?

In acceding to the Helsinki Accords and other agreements the Soviet leadership naturally did not have any intention of doing anything on the home political front which would contradict their political interest. And it was to be expected that they would only agree to widen the scope of political expression at home to the extent that international public opinion could force them. Not only public opinion, but also governments — all the forces.

There may have been some misunderstandings, particularly in the West, that by virtue of signing the Helsinki Accords alone, an extension of democratic freedoms at home would be ensured. It's been the policy of the Soviet leadership to claim that any advocacy of the extension of democratic rights at home was in contradiction with the policy of detente, it constituted a policy of interference with Soviet law, other East European internal affairs, and was therefore undermining international agreements.

All the regimes in the Soviet bloc have been trying to test the ground to see the extent to which they could move against the opposition. For example, prior to the Belgrade Conference the Prague regime didn't dare prosecute anybody for such things as the dissemination of documents or literature. But when they found in 1978 that international response to such actions was not particularly strong then their policy changed. Thus for example, in the last few days, last Tuesday a young sociologist J. Matlik was sentenced to 3 1/2 years' jail in Prague for the mere fact of having duplicated Charter documents.

Some people on the left in the West feel strong pressure on civil and democratic rights will threaten detente and halt progress on things like the Vienna talks on the Multilateral Balance Force Reductions. What is your view of these arguments?

We can hardly look at things in this way. And I would downright resent considerations made from a starting point of fear, that such and such an action would rouse the anger of the Soviet leadership, and should therefore not be taken. Any process which involves two contradictory principles of totalitarianism and democracy inevitably brings conflict. And it is an over-simplification to say that such processes have only two alternatives: conflict or detente, cold war or detente. This is the thesis of the Soviet leadership but in reality this amounts to political blackmail.

The policy of detente offers a great number of advantages to the Soviet leadership — economic, political, and military. And the Soviet Union will not waive all these advantages simply for a matter of greater or lesser civil rights. This is on a general plane.

Specifically as far as the Vienna talks are concerned, I don't believe that significant progress will be reached there within the foreseeable future whatever happens. As long as Brezhnev is still there the Soviet leadership will not consider any significant change in its policy. And what comes after Brezhnev will be a new stage.

You said that in 1978 the response of the Western left to arrests was too weak. What are the political obstacles to taking a strong stand, and what kind of policy would you like to see followed by, say, the Social Democratic Parties or the Communist Parties vis-a-vis these questions?

It's not that reaction by public opinion hadn't been strong, enough, but the Belgrade Conference itself, showed the Soviet leadership that they could go very far in their suppression of the human rights movements. And the Belgrade Conference seems to have reached an agreement that of verbally, course, that although there would be stress on human rights, in reality this would not prevent or interfere with agreement on any other matters. The reason may be in that the policy of detente in Europe is generally seen in too narrow a way as being based exclusively on the balance of nuclear armaments. But I believe that the policy of security in Europe and detente in general can only be ensured by a political balance. And this includes a minimum of mutual trust, especially trust that commitments entered into by agreement will be safeguarded. And that they will be observed even where one or other side finds this relatively obnoxious and it represents a concession by that side. So what must be aimed at is a political compromise by both sides. And I believe that the Belgrade Conference led to the conclusion that the Soviet Union, for one, was not duty-bound to observe any commitments within its own sphere. And this was a result of fear that this might interfere with bringing about a balance in nuclear armaments. And I believe that this was a political mistake.

As far as the other part of your question is concerned, I believe that the forces of the Left should make these aspects, that is, the necessity of a political compromise, very clear. And that the Left, for one, should avoid considering the problem of security in Europe to be the sole result of a balance of nuclear armaments.

International Appeal Against Trial

An international socialist appeal for the release of the 10 arrested Chartists has been gaining support throughout Western Europe and Canada. Launched by **Labour Focus** in conjunction with the Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee in West Berlin and with **Listy** editor Jiri Pelikan, the appeal has already been signed by 77 Labour MPs and by a number of prominent members of the CPGB in this country. Both the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign have given active

The arrest of 10 prominent Charter 77 campaigners at the end of May can be interpreted only as an attempt by the Czechoslovak authorities to suppress the entire civil rights movement in Czechoslovakia. It flouts the principles held by an overwhelming majority of socialists and trade unionists in the West, and it flies in the face of the Czechoslovak government's own repeated assurances that no repressive action would be taken against civil rights campaigners.

The scale of the arrests and the gravity of the charges make the present action the most serious case of repression in Czechoslovakia since the jailing in 1971 of socialists who had been prominent in the Prague Spring. These arrests include two of the three functioning Charter spokespersons, Jiri Dienstbier and Vaclav Benda, and the editor of the Charter Information Bulletin, Petr Uhl. They also include the well-known Czech playwright and former Charter spokesperson, Vaclav Havel.

All 10 arrested Chartists are members of the Committee in Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted Persons (VONS), a body formed by Charter signatories in April 1978 which has performed valuable work in defence of civil liberties. VONS bases its work on the principles of Amnesty International which are also enshrined in Czechoslovak law, and its activities have consisted of over 100 detailed, factual communiqués itemising breaches in the legal code by the police and judicial authorities in handling political cases. For this activity all 10

assistance to the campaign for signatures in Britain, and a new Charter 77 Defence Committee set up by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists with the support of **Labour Focus** is now co-ordinating all aspects of the defence of the Chartists in Britain.

Jiri Pelikan is circulating the appeal to Socialist and Communist members of the recently-elected European Assembly of which he is a member, and the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign has

are being charged with subversion on a large scale. This carries a sentence ranging from 3 to 10 years' imprisonment. The official Czechoslovak news agency charged the group with 'aiming to evoke distrust against the state system and its organs on the part of the public', a charge so vague as to be applicable to almost any critic of the authorities. Its use in this case involves an attempt to intimidate all campaigners for civil rights in Czechoslovakia.

Since the movement's foundation in January 1977, Charter 77 supporters have been sacked from their jobs, harassed and imprisoned. Jiri Lederer and Ales Machacek have been in jail since the first weeks of the movement. And if convicted of subversion, Vaclav Havel faces a further 18 months in jail for a suspended sentence he received in October 1977.

The May arrests follow the jailing of Charter spokesperson Jaroslav Sabata for 2¼ years, the imprisonment of VONS member of Albert Cerny, and the expulsion of Josef Danisz, a courageous defence lawyer, from the Prague Municipal Lawyers' Association, thereby excluding him from his profession. And in the wake of the arrests, Zdena Tominova, the only Charter spokesperson not detained, was badly beaten up by an unidentified thug — an all too familiar form of intimidation by repressive regimes in many parts of the world today.

Only this spring, President Husak told the Austrian President that no repression would be used against Charter 77 supporters. If the

sent the appeal to every single local Constituency Labour Party in Britain. The first response has come from the Maidstone CLP and many more should follow in the next few weeks.

Below we print the names of Czechoslovak and East European socialists in the West who have signed the appeal as well as an initial list of Labour MPs and CPGB members, and socialist defence organisations in Britain.

Czechoslovak authorities put the 10 Chartists on trial, Dr. Husak's words will be shown to be simply a shoddy public relations exercise to confuse public opinion in the West.

We do not for one moment believe that the 10 arrested Chartists have engaged in any activity which could justify their imprisonment. We appeal to the Czechoslovak authorities to intervene for the release of all 10 arrested Chartists: Otka Bedanova, Jarmila Belikova, Vaclav Benda, Jiri Dienstbier, Vaclav Havel, Ladislav Lis, Vaclav Maly, Dana Nemcova, Jiri Nemecek and Petr Uhl.

We also appeal for the release of Jiri Lederer, Ales Machacek, Jaroslav Sabata, Albert Cerny and all other imprisoned Charter 77 supporters.

We call for the re-instatement of Dr. Danisz as a practising lawyer.

We call upon the Czechoslovak authorities to allow the Committee in Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted Persons (VONS) to continue its work without harassment.

If a trial of the 10 arrested Chartists takes place, we demand an open trial and provisions for labour movement and human rights organisations in the West to be able to attend the trial as observers.

We make this appeal as determined socialists who feel that this kind of repressive and intolerant behaviour is an affront to socialist ideals.

Czechoslovak Socialists in Exile

The Editorial Board of **Informacni Materialy**, the Editorial Board of **Listy**, Jitka Bidlasova (Charter 77, now in Sweden), Ivan Bystrina (West Berlin), Zdenek Hejzlar (**Listy** editorial board, Sweden), Cyrill John (Sweden, editor of Scandinavian **Listy**), Jan Kavan (Director, **Palach Press**, England), Ludvik Kavin (Director, **Palach Press**, Vienna), Zdenek Mlynar (Charter 77, **Listy** editorial board, Vienna), Adolf Muller (**Listy** editorial board, West Germany), Jiri Pallas (Charter 77, director of Safran Records, now in Sweden), Jiri Pelikan (editor of **Listy**, Member of European Assembly, Italy), Jan Sling (England), Marian Sling (Secretary of Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, London), Ivan Hartel (Manager, Plastic People Defence Fund, England), Vladimir Derer (Convenor of Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign), Ruth Tosek (Secretary, Charter 77 Defence Committee, England).

Other East European Socialists

Wolf Biermann (formerly GDR, now West Germany), Thomas Evler (formerly GDR, now West Berlin), Jurgen Fuchs (formerly GDR, now West Berlin), Wolfgang Hinkeldey (formerly GDR, now West Berlin), Walfred Maier (formerly GDR, now West Berlin), Mihaly Vajda (Hungary, temporarily in West Germany).

Britain

Members of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party
Tony Benn MP, Frank Ainslie MP, Norman

Atkinson MP, Michael Foot MP, Eric Heffer MP, Neil Kinnock MP, Joan Lester MP, Joan Maynard MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Renee Short MP.

Other Labour Party Members of Parliament

Donald Anderson, Andrew Bennett, Sidney Bidwell, Ron Brown, Jeremy Bray, Norman Buchan, Denis Canavan, Robin Cook, Laurence Cuncliffe, Stanley Clinton Davis, Frank Dobson, Al Dubs, Tom Ellis, Raymond Ellis, Ian Evans, John Evans, Frank Field, Alan Fitch, Martin Flannery, Leopold Fletcher, Ted Fletcher, George Foulkes, Reginald Freeson, John Garrett, Norman Hogg, Stuart Holland, Frank Hooley, Robert Hughes, William Hughes, Russell Kerr, Robert Kilroy-Silk, Red Leadbitter, R. Leighton, Alex Lyon, Kevin McNamara, Oonagh MacDonald, John Maxton, Michael Meacher, Ian Mikardo, Dr Maurice Miller, RC Mitchell, George Morton, Stan Newens, Martin O'Neill, George Park, L. Pavitt, Tom Pendrey, John Prescott, Chris Price, Reg Race, Alan Roberts, Ernie Roberts, Geoffrey Robinson, Jo Richardson, Jeff Rooker, Alan Roberts, John Ryman, Peter Snape, Clive Soley, Jack Stallard, Jack Straw, Stan Thorne, John Tilley, Frank White, Phillip Whitehead, David Winnick, Alec Woodall, Sheila Wright.

Labour Movement Committees

Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Charter 77 Defence Committee, Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, Labour Focus on Eastern

Europe, Plastic People Defence Fund, Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee

First Signatories from the CPGB

David Aaronovitch (National Secretary NUS), Colin Boatman (London District Committee), Alan Booth (National Education Organiser), Derek Boothman (West Europe Sub-Committee), George Bridges (London District Committee), Chris Crowley (National Student Committee), Paul Fauvet (International Affairs Committee), Josie Green (Executive Committee of CPGB), Mark Harrison (Midlands District Committee), Eric Hobsbawm, Monty Johnstone, Philippa Langton (London District Committee), Dave Lloyd (Morning Star), J. Hunt (Chairperson, Midlands District CPGB, Regional Officer TGWU), Brian Mitchell (South Essex District Committee), Steve Munby (Organising Secretary of the Young Communist League), Paul Olive (Morning Star), Brigitte Pemberton (Branch Chairperson, Netherthorpe Sheffield), Steve Palmer (National Student Committee), B P Rawlins (Basingstoke CP Secretary), Geoff Roberts (Editor, Socialist Europe), G. Palmer (Merseyside Area Committee), Jacky Rushforth, (CUL Organiser), Ron Spencer (Burnley Branch Secretary).

POLAND

Poland and the Pope's Visit — By Adam Michnik

This unusual Pope is coming to Poland, to one of the most unusual countries of Eastern Europe, at an unusual time. He is undertaking his visit at a time when the country's fate is being decided.

At first glance everything appears to be normal in Poland. The people are working, the trams are running, the newspapers are full of complacency. But at a conference of Communist sociologists, which took place in March in Jablonna near Warsaw, the mood was one of depression.

Those taking part, all of them Party members, fell into two groups: the optimists and the pessimists. The latter came to the conclusion that the present economic and political development would result in a huge explosion of social discontent and—in its inevitable consequence—Soviet military intervention.

The optimists were of the opinion that a popular uprising was inevitable also, but believed that it would not result in military intervention by the Soviets because Poland's police and army would put down the uprising on their own.

On the eve of the Pope's visit, awareness of the crisis is universal. Never before in the history of Socialist Poland has authority been so utterly in ruins as it is today; never was it so helpless and inconsistent. In Stalin's time, when the elimination of opponents, terror and poverty were the daily bread of the Polish people, the power of the State aroused not only hatred, but above all fear. Today it is the object of scorn and contempt.

Against the background of this State leadership, which has compromised itself completely, the behaviour of the Polish episcopate becomes especially significant. The authority of the Church has always been great in Poland and in recent years has shown itself to be unshakeable.

The voice of the bishops became the most important voice in the process of shaping social aspirations, feelings and emotions. Then the election of a Polish cardinal as Pope raised this authority of the Polish church to the level never before attained. The Church has become a state within a state, a sovereign state within one which is not sovereign. A series of coquettish measures undertaken by the organs of the State gave rise to the fear in many circles that a new variation of the alliance between throne and altar might occur.

I do not share this fear. I do not believe in the possibility of such an alliance, even though temporary compromises are of course possible. The Church knows that it owes its authority to its determined defence of fundamental human values.

To quote Tocqueville, there is no worse time for a bad government than that during which it seeks to improve itself. What is more: As a rule such a government is incapable of correctly defining the serious crisis situation in which it finds itself.

I shall attempt to help them in this.

The present crisis is a **crisis of the system of the exercise of power**. Edward Gierek, who promised the people pragmatism and prosperity, has not learned the full lesson from the demise of his predecessor Gomulka.

Admittedly, perhaps he understood that one cannot solve any political conflicts by using police repression— but he has obviously not understood to this day that to overcome the crisis a **bold programme of social reforms** is absolutely necessary.

When I published my essay 'Polish Perspectives' in *Der Spiegel* two years ago, I was still hopeful that Gierek and his team were capable of formulating such a programme of reforms. Today I no longer have this hope. They are like the Bourbons — they have understood nothing, they have learnt nothing. They are capable only of mindless conservatism, and their only philosophy is: Change nothing — the main thing is that we hang on until tomorrow!

An example of the situation into which Edward Gierek allowed himself to be manoeuvred: On the eve of May Day the Party leader very warmly shook hands in front of the television cameras with the sport student Jerzy Folcik, the leader of a gang of hooligans, which several days earlier had demolished the flat of the KOR member Jacek Kuron and had beaten up members of his family and their guests in the most brutal fashion.

This scene, which was captured by Polish television—on that very same May Day the political thug Folcik was solemnly presented with his Party membership card—was truly symbolic. It was, however, not a symbol of the inhumanity of this state power, but a symbol of its enormous stupidity and its complete decay.

The deployment of this gang of thugs was compared in Warsaw with those which took place in Germany before Hitler took power. However, Jacek Kuron correctly concludes that despite superficial similarities there is a fundamental difference: Whereas those thugs paved Hitler's way to power, the former signalled the end of Gierek's power and that of his team.

Within the leadership of the Party there are obviously those who believe that a change in personnel would be sufficient to get out of this blind alley. I should like to assure these people that they are completely wrong. This time a change of names will satisfy no one and please no one. What is required is a change in the mechanisms of government, a change in the spirit of pluralism and regard for human rights.

And another thing is certain: The democratic opposition is not interested in a confrontation with the State on the streets. Its aim is a development whereby Poland is spared both a Soviet military intervention and also a civil war. We want to exert **peaceful** pressure in order to arrive at a new model for the relations between the State and the people.

The Pope's visit is taking place at a time of possible change, at a time fear is fighting hope. Many are comparing the Pope's visit with Khomeini's return to Iran, and in the cafés of Warsaw one hears talk of the 'Redeemer Khomeini' coming. I believe this comparison to be wrong. In his encyclical the Pope precisely defined the Church's tasks. These include the defence of human rights, but not direct participation in political life.

Nevertheless: Although the Pope's visit has taken on the character of a religious pilgrimage, its moral and political consequences will be great. It will be a powerful demonstration of the bond between the Polish people and the world of Christian culture, a demonstration of their solidarity with the Catholic Church, and a demonstration of their yearning for freedom, the champion of which they see as being their fellow countryman John Paul II, the defender of human rights.

The significance of this demonstration could be immense and lasting. It will strengthen the vigour and courage of the people and it will contribute to the Poles feeling less isolated and more closely fraternised. And there is nothing this people has more need of today.

The Situation in the Country And the Programme of the Opposition — Some Notes — by Jacek Kuron

] The following important document is remarkable for the light it throws both on the current situation in Poland and on the thinking of one of the main leaders of the KOR. Kuron's views will undoubtedly lead to considerable discussion within the Polish opposition and they will also surprise many in the West with stereotyped views of the thinking of the various opposition currents in Poland. The article appeared in the third issue this year of the KOR Information Bulletin and was made available by the Appeal for the Polish Workers. Translation for Labour Focus is by Pawel Jankowski.]

I. The fundamental assumption underlying these reflections is a fear that we are threatened with an explosion of popular anger on a larger scale even than the combined force of June 1956, December 1970, June 1976 and March 1968.¹ As we know, such an explosion could easily become a national tragedy — in all probability a struggle with an eventual Soviet armed intervention.

Where does my fear flow from, and is it not a fear held only by me?

We currently face a lowering of the population's standard of living which can be compared only with that which occurred in 1953 when the 6-year plan fell apart. In addition, the social situation is fundamentally different from what prevailed then. At that time a terror reaching practically every sphere of social life reigned supreme. Allied to this terror was a prevailing fear and an inability for people to make contact with one another. The standard of living expected was restricted by the still fresh memory of wartime and immediate post-war misery (and for many also pre-war) together with the absence of accessible examples of prosperous societies. A large majority of the workers were new arrivals from the villages and they both felt the advancement which this change represented and also lacked any of the traditions of the workers' struggle. Permeating the consciousness of this group and also, it appears, of others, was a still active faith in the real or supposed achievements of the new system. The entire society was convinced of the strength of the new system, whether they saw its effects as purely negative or as purely positive. The social elite, and I have in mind here all types and shades of opinion-formers as well as those who wished to and were able to engage in political activity or play a part in public affairs, were either fragmented in those years or presented themselves as supporters of the new order.

I write so much about that period because all other assaults on the standard of living (economic crises) have evoked sharp opposition within society and explosions on a more or less local scale. The current attack is the largest so far and we are living through our deepest crisis. There is no terror, and indeed there exists a memory of all the successes won through workers' struggle, including the most recent, which in the main occurred without bloodshed.² Moreover, each of these successes left behind it a residue of hatred and a thirst for revenge.

We are a society which is sufficiently open to be generally influenced by Western patterns of living standards, strengthened as they are by myth. A relative increase in real wages at the start of the 1970s sharpened appetites and awakened hopes of prosperity. Thus the current regression is felt with so much more pain. In recent years, starting with June 1976³ a radical discrediting of authority as authority has entered popular consciousness: people lack any faith in the ability of the authorities to direct social life. There is plenty of evidence indicating that this belief has a sound basis. At present there is a paralysis of authority and an anarchisation of society on an unprecedented scale.

The absence of terror makes possible the formation of social elites. And it seems that almost all those who can be counted as belonging to these elites are at present negatively disposed towards the party and state authorities. This also includes Party members and probably sections of the apparatus. The real factor differentiating

the current situation from all previous crises is the universal awareness within society of organised activity by opponents of the system. I have in mind here not the direct influence of these social movements, still very limited, but simply a knowledge of their existence. Whereas a direct influence indicates methods of realising demands and thus limits an explosion, so the awareness of the opposition's existence does not provide these methods; it simply weakens fear and mobilises people against the authorities and thus aids the authorities. An analogous function is fulfilled by the unusual triumph of the Church through the choice of a Polish Cardinal as Pope. The authorities are doing everything possible to make the Church, in the eyes of society, an acknowledged opponent of the system. In consequence, the Church's triumph is viewed as a defeat for the authorities.

The market situation is, despite everything, better than the overall situation within the country. The authorities are attempting to halt the fall in the standard of living and in so doing they are weakening the tempo of economic life. The possibilities of such a policy will undoubtedly be exhausted by the end of this year. Circumstances of life will rapidly worsen.

The fact is that the events of December 1970 and June 1976 were caused directly by an increase in prices. These decisions formed a unified attack on the whole of society and in connection with that were the signal for the processes that occurred then. It is possible that the authorities will not make such a decision this time and so will not provide the signal. I fear that despite that, nothing will be altered.

As I mentioned previously the current attack on the standard of living touches the whole of society and it is rapidly being lowered. In these circumstances, the signal could be a multitude of events, continually recurring. A strike in a large enterprise where the authorities refuse to yield, confusion in front of a shop, the first brutal intervention by the police or, as took place in Tychy, an attempt to remove a cross from the centre of town.⁴ It is sufficient that that, or any other incident, could signal the start of local riots and the conflagration would encompass the whole country. Only if the authorities yield can a local explosion like that which occurred in Tychy be halted. That, on the other hand, further prepares the ground for a subsequent explosion, and that within the whole country.

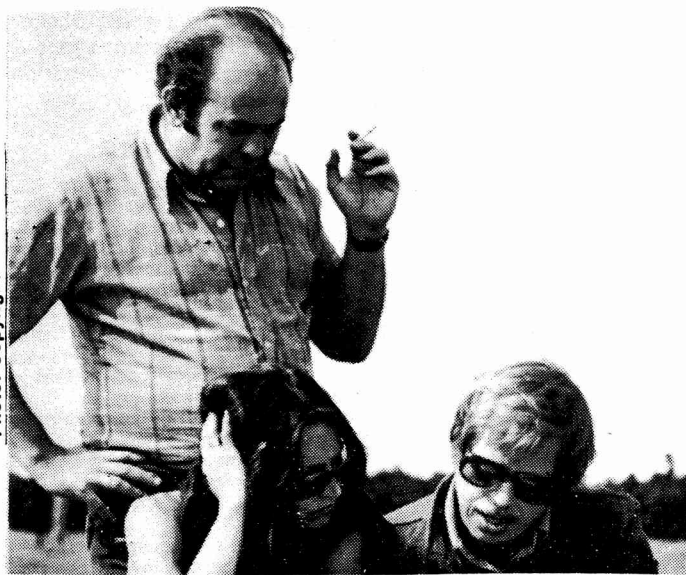
I can see other, less important causes of an explosion. On the other hand, I cannot see anything which would limit it, apart from the fact that people rather like peace, have their own ordinary lives to lead and would not like to lose that nor, ordinarily to change it. This is a constant factor, yet despite that, from time to time, risings, revolts and revolutions do occur.

2. I have no doubt that we all see rioting as an evil which we should try to prevent. Disregarding the threat of a social intervention, the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, as evidenced by the December events⁵ will not shrink before the slaughter of people and they can still find the strength to do that. I have no doubt that the whole democratic opposition wishes to realise its aspirations for parliamentary democracy and independent statehood gradually, by peaceful means. Attempts to smash the system right now, if we are not forced into it (see point 7 of these notes), I regard as adventurism. The enormous social costs of such an undertaking are indisputable. A national tragedy is more than likely, while success is doubtful.

3. The programme for social self-organisation, that is for the organisation of Polish society into independent social movements with institutions like the Committee of Peasant Self-defence, the free trade unions, student committees of solidarity⁶, is currently the only way of realising the aims of the opposition and the aspirations of the people. At the same time it is a means of limiting

an explosion. Nevertheless self-organisation, even though greatly stimulated by the situation of which I write, takes place, and must take place, far more slowly than the growth in social anger. There are numerous reasons for this, but it's sufficient to point out here that for the development of self-organisation, feelings which do not at all appear in the emotions of crowds—fear and lack of faith in the effectiveness of the activities—have to be overcome. In a word, the explosions which we fear currently will not be halted by self-organisation.

Photo: Copyright Palach Press



Jacek Kuron, left, with Charter 77 former spokespersons Marta Kubisova and Vaclav Havel, in summer 1978.

4. What can the opposition do to forestall the explosion? I ask this not only because I believe in such a possibility, but also because I regard such an undertaking as the elementary patriotic human duty of every citizen. Excuse these grand words, which I do not use in everyday language. But I feel that the opposition finds itself today in a situation which Pilsudski analysed in relation to the PPS in the year 1905⁷. Our authority is far greater than our organisational possibilities. I am seeking to show that time may run out before we see an increase in these possibilities and we will only forestall such an explosion if, taking advantage of our authority, we work out and popularise such patterns of activity as can be followed by everybody, regardless of our own organisational possibilities.

I think that such conditions are fulfilled by the pressure of society organised in the official structures on the authorities, in this way forcing them to yield. The point is that almost every citizen in our country belongs to various official organisations, the PUWP not excluded, and takes part in their meetings. If we can cause tens or hundreds of such meetings to pass resolutions with mapped out concrete demands and this fact becomes public knowledge, we can then anticipate that in their tracks other meetings and organisations will follow. The protests against the squads organised by the Socialist Union of Polish Youth (SZMP) passed by the cells of these same unions, official academic societies and university cadres, prove that the thought which I present here is realistic. The resolution of the meeting can become the programme of election to the governing bodies of these organisations, for instance, the unions, as proposed by the editors of *Robotnik*. Even if there is no victory in elections, and it's still a possibility, it forms a useful source of pressure on the centre. Speaking at meetings, and that in the name of the most obvious tasks of the work-force, does not demand even a fraction of the courage which the joining of independent social movements asks of people. As for voting for resolutions in these meetings, even the most careful persons can be persuaded to give support. If the people feel threatened in their own elementary concerns, then patterns of such activity have a chance of gaining ground.

Yet can such pressure, of which I speak here, really forestall rioting?

The movement for demands within the framework of the official structures is a form of organisation of society. If it can become a mass movement, then it radically limits the dangers of an explosion. As opposed to rioting, it forms a different articulation of demands and of their realisation. But if this movement is limited to wage demands, which is most likely, especially when, with the existing pressures, we do not come out with a programme, then concessions on the part of the authorities will quickly become impossible or ineffectual, because the increases in wages will increase the rise in prices. In this lies the danger of exacerbating the economic crisis, but at the same time, such pressure forces the authorities to reveal the state of the economy, and so heralds the start of a public discussion over the methods for its repair. Such discussions are an additional means of pressure and together with a movement of resolutions and demands, they push the authorities, or strictly speaking a section of the authorities, to publish a programme of reparation and at the same time force on them elements of such a programme.

Let's put the question clearly. The movement of pressure initiated in this way becomes the social base of the grouping within the Party whose programme most fully recognised the demands of society. I have in mind here backing for a specific programme of demands, formulated not by the democratic opposition, but by the wider social movement. When such a programme (or programmes) is declared then the opposition will have to take up a position in relation to it. In every case it will have to be a critical relation to it, as viewed from the standpoint of parliamentary democracy and independence.

5. The problem of whether this type of activity constitutes participation in the game of party factions is not new. But it is naive. From my very first attempt at oppositional activity—and in 2 years time I shall be celebrating its 25th anniversary—I have heard this objection. Once my activity allegedly served the Party hardliners, because it gave them an excuse for a hardline policy. On other occasions my activities supposedly helped the Party liberals by organising social backing for them. All this is of course true, except that there isn't any public activity in our country which would not become the object of clique activity within the ruling circles of the Party. The object of these struggles is precisely public life, and the fundamental means of taking decisions in these matters are clique struggles. If we want to gain concessions from the authorities we have to count on the fact that the social pressure organised by us will be used by some grouping within the Party for its own ends. On this, on the whole, depended our chance of success in freeing the Radom workers or Switon⁸, in limiting the repression against activists in independent social movements, not to speak of the right to strike, in the provision of conditions for the development of farming, or in the bringing to book of those within the apparatus of repression responsible for violating the law. We should be aware of this, because there is no point in making a virtue of naivete.

On the whole we are not aware which grouping uses our pressure, and against whom, so there is no point in paying any attention to this matter. Only when a faction publicises its programme on the real-life matters concerning society, only then do we have a responsibility for taking a position on it, in the same way as we take a position on the important decisions of the authorities. Programmatic rejections of all activities which aid some grouping within the Party can only be done when attempts are being made to smash the system, or when it is assumed that no explosion will take place, whereby it is assumed that the worse it is for the country, the better it is for the opponents of the system. I have stated my relationship to the programme of revolution. The programme that somehow we will muddle through cannot be the basis of a social programme, and the slogan 'the worse it is the better it will be' is simultaneously immoral and stupid.

6. I have come out in favour of initiating a movement of social pressure — revindication within the framework of the official structures. This fact alone determines the character of the programme for this movement. It has to proceed in the direction of

repair of the system and not its change. The programme of repair cannot be put forward by the opposition because it doesn't want and cannot accept the existing system.

I have substantiated above that the movement of revindication can be successful even when we do not propose its programme. It is impossible, however, to initiate a social movement not saying what for, what it should do. I can see two possible solutions to this dilemma: (a) to put forward demands limited to, in the minimum, a disclosure by the authorities of the actual state of the economy, and the putting forward of the programme of reparation, initiating a country-wide debate on these questions. This programme must be linked to a programme in defence of the standard of living; for example, increases to compensate the increase in prices, determined in negotiations with the various work forces, who will elect and mandate delegates with this aim in mind: (b) to put forward, together with the points mentioned in (a), such a programme of repair of the system as could at the same time be the minimum programme of the opposition. I believe that such a programme should encompass three groups of demands. The first ought to take account of freedom of the professional and corporate types: trade unions, peasant organisations, organisations uniting artists, educationalists, consumers, local organisations etc. At this point mention should be made of the right to strike, removal of Article 52 in the labour code, the right of assembly, the right to demonstrate, and access to the means of communication. It is worth bearing in mind that the movement of pressure already involves the practical realisation of these demands and even more so do the demands for the right of work forces to negotiate increases to cover the rise in the cost of living.

The second group of demands would be concerned with the socio-economic conditions for overcoming the crisis. That is the independence of the various industrial concerns, conditions for the development and growth of peasant agriculture, as well as the conditions for the development of private crafts, distribution services and small businesses.

The third group ought to concern the observance of the law by the authorities, among others, the demand for an administrative tribunal linked to the demand that judges cannot be removed. It should be underlined that the demands in groups two and three have a chance of being realised only when those of group one have been realised.

In the event that the minimum programme of the opposition became the programme of the movement of revindication, this movement would then have a greater control over the faction which was attempting to get its backing, and a greater chance of gaining its independence. Success of the movement of revindication, either with a minimum programme or without one, would be an enormous success for the opposition.

FOOTNOTES

1. June 1956 is the date of the Poznan workers' uprising, December 1970 is the date of the workers' uprising in the Baltic ports, June 1976 is the date of the workers strikes and demonstrations against price rises and March 1968 is the date of the national student strike for democratic rights.
2. A reference to the workers' strikes and demonstrations of June 1976.
3. The successful workers' protests against price rises.
4. Several months ago, the authorities attempted to forcibly remove an old traditional cross from Tychy in order to make way for a new road. This was done without consultation and produced such a fierce reaction that the authorities were forced to immediately put the cross back.
5. The Gomulka regime unsuccessfully tried to crush the Baltic workers' revolt by sending in the army and shooting down some hundreds of workers. Soon afterwards Gomulka was replaced by the current Party leader Edward Gierek.
6. The student committees of solidarity (Polish initials SKS) were set up in various universities after the spring of 1977.
7. During the 1905 revolution in Russia, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was active in the struggle against the Tsarist autocracy in the Polish part of the Empire. Pilsudski at that time led a nationalist military faction within the PPS. He later became the dictatorial ruler of Poland between 1926 and his death in the mid-1930s.
8. Radom, an industrial town south of Warsaw was a centre of the workers' protests in June 1976. Kazimierz Switon is a leader of the free trade union in Silesia who was arrested but freed pending appeal this spring.

EAST GERMANY

Clampdown on Writers Continues

By Günter Minnerup

The East German government's relationship with its critical writers and intellectuals, which worsened dramatically after the expulsion of poet and songwriter Wolf Biermann in November 1976, has taken another turn for the worse. Two of the country's best-known dissident intellectuals have been fined heavily for supposed 'illegal currency transactions', and nine writers were expelled from the GDR's Writers' Union.

After having been refused a visa to address a West German audience on his experiences during the struggle against German fascism, the prominent novelist Stefan Heym—author of, among other books, **5 Days in June**, a fictionalised account of the June 1953 workers uprising in East Germany—was fined £2,400 in May. On 20 June Professor Robert Havemann—the 'grand old man' of socialist dissent in the GDR, whose two-and-a-half year old house arrest had only just been lifted in early May—was sentenced to pay the maximum fine of £2,700. The sudden charges and stiff fines against Heym and Havemann, on purely technical offenses, can be clearly seen

as an attempt to intimidate writers thinking of circumventing censorship by publishing abroad. (East German writers who are refused permission to publish their works in the GDR, cannot legally publish abroad nor register West German royalty earnings.) Heym had several bestsellers in both the East and the West before his new novel **Collin** was published in the Federal Republic, and similarly, Havemann has had a whole string of books published.

On 8 June 300 out of 350 writers at a meeting of the East German Writers' Union voted to expel 9 members: Stefan Heym, Kurt Bartsch, Adolf Endler, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Klaus Poche, Klaus Schlesinger, Rolf Schneider, Dieter Schubert and Joachim Seyppel. Membership of the Writers Union is a precondition for legal publication in the GDR. One of them, Rolf Schneider, has just published **November**, a novel dealing with the events around Biermann's expulsion in November 1976, in West Germany, and may well face similar currency charges in the near future.

The expulsions follow the writing of a

collective letter by 8 writers on 16 May to Erich Honecker expressing their concern at the slanders directed at writers critical of the regime, as well as protesting against the fine imposed on Heym. This collective letter was followed by many individual ones by writers protesting against the hardening up of the regime's cultural policy.

But the writers concerned refuse to be intimidated. There are continuing signs of ferment in East Germany that must be worrying the Honecker regime. Over one hundred sympathisers turned up outside the Fuerstenwalde court building to support Robert Havemann at his trial — he had to conduct his own defence because his Spanish lawyer had been refused entry into East Berlin — and presented him with flowers afterwards. Havemann himself defiantly issued an Open Letter to the government the day after his trial, demanding the restoration of free speech, the release of all political prisoners in the GDR, and the abolition of the law against 'anti-state agitation'. Rolf Schneider, in an interview with the West German daily **Frankfurter Rundschau**, rejected any

suggestions that he may now be willing to emigrate to West Germany: 'I have never seriously thought of that. I am emotionally attached to the social experiment of the GDR and do not intend to abandon it. For me emigration from the GDR would amount to a personal and political defeat. I wish to remain in my country and shall fight for such conditions as long as it is reasonable.'

Harich in West Backs Bahro

The 11 June 1979 issue of the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* carried an interview with the East German philosopher Wolfgang Harich, in which Harich explains the reasons for his decision to leave the GDR and move to Vienna, Austria, in April. Harich joined the East German ruling party SED in 1946. As Professor of Philosophy at the East Berlin Humboldt University, and the chief editor of the *German Journal of Philosophy*, he developed views opposed to the Party line in the wake of the XX CPSU Congress in 1956 and was, along with other members of the so-called 'Harich Group', sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for 'conspiracy against the state'. Released in 1964, Harich modified his previous views and, although still sceptical of many aspects of SED policy and repeatedly saying so in public, kept his distance from oppositionists such as Havemann and Biermann. Until his recent move to Austria, he worked for an East Berlin publishing house, but has now been retired due to his ill health.

In 1975, Harich's book *Communism Without Growth* was published in the West. In it, he develops his view that the wastage of natural resources on a vast scale by both capitalism and the East European planned economies and the resulting pollution of man's environment, represent the gravest danger to progress today. He maintains that only an iron dictatorship in a centrally planned economy would be in a position to deal with such dangers. Harich made repeated attempts to convince the SED's leadership of his views. In his

At the same time, the Protestant Church—which was only recently engaged in a confrontation with the Honecker government over the introduction of military education in East German schools—has again reaffirmed its independence, by instructing its leaders to press the government to relax restrictions on travel to West Germany in a resolution adopted at its synod on 24 April. Following hard on the heels of the restrictions on the use of

interview, he recounts how various attempts by the Central Committee's Science Department to involve him in its work and persuade him to remain in the GDR were unacceptable to him: 'The commission to be set up now will work completely aloof from the environmental problems in the GDR. It has merely ideological tasks. It is, for instance, supposed to evaluate the 'Green Movement' in the West, the Club of Rome and the like, and to see where there are possibilities of alliances. Proposals for the GDR itself are not intended.'

But Harich stresses that he left the GDR 'without bitterness, even as a sympathiser' and that he 'wishes it and the SED all the best'. Confronted with the criticism often levelled at him that he had remained silent in the GDR on cases such as the arrest and imprisonment of Rudolf Bahro, Harich replied that such criticisms were based on 'ignorance of what I have done since October 1977 for Bahro in the GDR and just recently again in Spain'. 'I have substantial criticisms of important positions of Bahro. But I will only elaborate on what I would theoretically counterpose to Bahro when he is able to reply to me as a free man. And I would like to add: I wish that this highly-talented, well-read and fruitful thinker will enjoy his freedom again as soon as possible.'

Harich, who is 55, now intends to play an active role in bringing about an alliance of the Western ecology and labour movements.

West German currency in the so-called 'Intershops' and the restrictions imposed on Western journalists (see *Labour Focus* Vol.3 No.2), this latest move by the church and the determination of the dissident intellectuals to continue to utilise their access to the West German media in order to put their views across in East Germany, again emphasise the crucial importance of the 'West German connection' for future developments in the GDR.

New Laws Passed

At the end of June the GDR regime introduced new catch-all legislation designed to isolate East German society from the world at large. Under the new law, anyone who passes to 'foreign organisations ... information damaging the interests of the German Democratic Republic' becomes liable to a minimum of two and a maximum of twelve years in prison. Since it is clearly specified that this does not refer to classified information, which was already covered by other laws, it would appear that any report, true or false, conflicting with the propaganda image of the regime may now be considered a criminal action.

In a sense, this fine-tuning operation is East Berlin's answer to the growing international campaign in support of Rudolf Bahro. For not even the staunchest friend of the GDR has found it easy to argue that this Marxist theorist was guilty of espionage activity when he had a book published by the 'foreign' West German trade-union publishing house. Although the legislation may not be retroactive, it can now be said 'in the name of the law' that both writers like Bahro and citizens who speak of their grievances to foreign journalists are knowingly committing a crime.

By PATRICK CAMILLER

HUNGARY

A Chronology of Political and Intellectual Opposition Under the Kádár Regime: 1956-1978

— By Bill Lomax

This chronology makes no pretence to be all-inclusive. Owing to the shortage of concrete information, it contains virtually no coverage of mass or working-class opposition, while even the emergence and development of the intellectual opposition is covered in a fragmentary way. In some cases it was possible to establish the exact dates of certain events, while where dates are given there are still probably a number of errors and inaccuracies.

1956

Hungarian Revolution and its suppression by Soviet military force, leaving over 20,000 dead. Installation of new regime under János Kádár.

1958

Trial and execution of the leaders of the 1956 revolution: Imre Nagy, Pál Maleter, Miklós Gimes, József Szilágyi. Géza Losonczy said to have died in prison. Other leaders receive long prison terms.



Istvan Bibó, member of Nagy government in 1956.

1960

Release of some of key survivors from amongst political reformists of 1956, eg. Ferenc Donáth, Miklós Vásárhelyi.

1962

Expulsion from Communist Party and Government posts of certain persons responsible for repression after 1956.

1963

Official Amnesty for 1956 political prisoners — however, not all are released, and several are shortly re-arrested.

First tentative steps towards economic reform. Creation of Sociological Research Institute under direction of András Hegedüs — Stalinist Prime Minister immediately before 1956, who is now to emerge as a leading spokesman of reform.

1965

Establishment of semi-official Vietnam Solidarity Commission by left-wing students, which rapidly emerges as a rallying-point of potential dissidents who will later become the activists of the student groups of 1968-71, and eventually the writers and organisers of the present-day samizdat.

1967

András Hegedüs publishes an article calling for the self-criticism of socialist society — the first of a number of radical sociological analyses by him of the nature of socialist society and bureaucratisation, and the need for alternative models of socialist development.

Vietnam Solidarity Commission holds an unauthorised demonstration in front of the American Embassy in Budapest — the first of a series of demonstrations which, despite their orthodox slogans, caused considerable embarrassment to the authorities because of their unofficial nature. It was the first open action of student groups who, tending to take seriously the regime's claims as to its socialist nature, tried to uphold them in concrete cases even against the regime itself. At the same time the slowly growing student groups around the Commission began to split into a radical and a moderate wing.



György Dalos, a Marxist writer and a leading radical in the late 60s and early 70s. Blacklisted from work.

Left-wing student activists from the radical wing of the groups around the V.S.C. including Gábor Révai (son of former Stalinist leader József Révai), György Por, and about a dozen other young students, amongst them György Dalos and Péter Malgot, are arrested and charged with being leaders or members of an illegal Maoist party which had developed in the previous year from the more radical wing of the V.S.C. The party had some 30-40 members and maybe up to 300 sympathisers amongst the students and, despite its orthodox Marxist terminology, was actually the first democratic oppositional attempt since 1956, with strong egalitarian views, and which questioned the right of a small undemocratic establishment to monopolise the political process to the virtual exclusion of the rest of society.

1968

JANUARY: Introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in Hungary under direction of Central Committee Secretary Rezső Nyers who declares that economic reforms must be accompanied by political ones. György Aczél, commonly regarded as a liberal and often seen as Kádár's heir-apparent, appointed Central Committee Secretary in charge of cultural affairs.

MARCH: Trial of György Por, Gábor Révai and other members of the Maoist party on charges of conspiracy against the state. Some like Por receive prison sentences of up to 6 months; others, including Révai, get suspended sentences.

JUNE: Alexander Dubcek, new leader of Czechoslovak Communist Party and initiator of Prague Spring, visits Budapest and is publicly feted in the streets.

JULY: György Márkus, philosopher, pupil of Georg Lukács and prominent member of the so-called Budapest School, publishes what is to serve as a very influential article asserting the right for different trends to exist within Marxist thought. This period, in the months before the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, marked the highpoint of the influence of the Lukács—or Budapest—School which regarded the economic reforms as the first steps in the direction of an ideal socialist society. These views also strongly influenced the moderate wing of the student movement.

AUGUST: Warsaw Pact forces invade Czechoslovakia, bringing an end to the liberalisation movement. At the International Philosophical Congress at Korcula in Yugoslavia, a group of Hungarian philosophers and sociologists including Lukács' pupils Agnes Heller, György and Mária Márkus, Vilmos Sós and Zádor Tordai, sign a protest letter condemning the invasion. The invasion, however, had little immediate impact on the members of the Lukács school who tried to maintain their previous theoretical positions as if nothing had happened. Although their position would become more radical, they clung to their vision of an ideal socialist society, and refused to give up their belief that actually existing socialist societies were capable of evolving towards this ideal. The moderate wing of the student movement, however, had growing doubts about these assumptions — the invasion of Czechoslovakia resulted in their growing alienation from the Budapest School.

SEPTEMBER: András Hegedüs, who had signed the Warsaw Pact as Hungarian Prime Minister in May 1955, lets it be known that the Pact contained no secret clause justifying intervention in a member state's internal affairs.

NOVEMBER: György and Mária Márkus are expelled from the Communist Party, and András Hegedüs is removed from his position as director of the Sociological Research Institute, but given another research post and still allowed to publish. At the same time József Szigethy, director of the Philosophical Institute, is also dismissed for having called upon the Soviets and East Germans to intervene in Hungary and remove the Kádárist leadership.

The major consequence for Hungary of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia was to be the freezing of the economic reforms, and the subsequent ability of Party leaders hostile to the reforms to reverse many of their achievements. At the same time the economic reforms were not followed by political ones, with the result that the working class gained no rights to counterbalance

the increased powers of management. During the early '70s this contradiction led to sporadic strikes in Budapest and provincial towns, which the more dogmatic wing of the Party was able to blame upon the reforms. The freezing of the reforms also meant that the reform spirit which had characterised the intellectuals' movement during the late '60s was to gradually evaporate during the '70s.

1969

The Communist Youth Organisation of the Humanities Faculty of Budapest University begins to fall apart. The students try to transform the organisation into a forum of direct democracy, and when the authorities step in the leadership of the CYO of the Faculty of Philosophy resigns en bloc and in protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The students had contacts with various Western left-wing student movements, including the German SDS.

Following Jan Palach's suicide in Prague, a young Hungarian secondary school student attempts to burn himself to death in front of the National Museum.

Miklós Haraszti, a left-wing student and poet, one of the main figures of the radical wing of the V.S.C., is expelled from Budapest University for leftist agitation, and placed under police curfew regulations.

1969 is also marked by the appearance of increasingly radical trends in the cultural field — films (eg. Miklós Jancsó's **The Confrontation**), novels (György Konrad's **The Visitor**), pop groups and fringe theatre (eg. Grotowski-style theatrical group of Péter Halász). On the regime's side, the Party Central Committee denounces demands for Marxist pluralism, and there is a thorough-going purge of the Party at rank-and-file level, while rumours spread of the possible instigation of an anti-Semitic campaign similar to that in Poland.

1970

Illés, the top Hungarian pop group, is banned for a year after critical remarks made over BBC during a tour of England.

In the autumn, Miklós Haraszti and György Dalos, former Maoist activists, are placed under curfew regulations and police surveillance for 6 months.

While the specifically student movement appears to be on the wane during 1970, strong oppositional currents now grow in strength in the secondary schools. A main rallying point is Malgot's theatre and puppet theatre group ORFEO, and the ORFEO club becomes a debating place frequented in particular by the more radical students.

1971

In February, curfew and surveillance regulations on Haraszti and Dalos are renewed for a second 6 months. Claiming this to be illegal, they launch a 'civil disobedience action' and refuse to comply. Sentenced to one month in a labour camp they refuse to go, are arrested and go on hunger strike. Protests to Kádár and Cultural Secretary Aczél by leading intellectuals, including Georg Lukács, results in their release.

During the year the radical wing of the student movement turns increasingly towards attempts to establish some of the elements of Western leftist counter-culture in Hungary. Fringe theatre (especially the Halász and Orfeo groups), impromptu music performances, conceptual art and other avant-garde trends, as well as attempts

to stage 'happenings' and to set up communes, are characteristic of this period. 1971 also sees the first attempts to produce and distribute mainly cultural samizdat documents. At the same time the radical wing of the student movement stages demonstrations before the Greek and Albanian Embassies and at the Chilean Pavilion at the Budapest International Trade Fair, which result in open street violence with the police and a number of arrests.

1972

MARCH: Official demonstrations on anniversary of 1848 revolution are followed by further demonstrations by university and secondary school students and young working class apprentices from technical schools. The demonstration, with nationalist slogans and demands for human rights, was broken up by police who made several arrests, but was far bigger than any of the attempts made by leftist students in recent years. A week later, on the anniversary of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, leftist students try to stage a counter-demonstration, but this proves a failure and marks the last attempt of the student left at open political activity. In subsequent months the leftist Orfeo theatre group is repressed, and the following years see the rapid decline and disappearance of the left-wing groups.

Amid growing difficulties in Soviet-Hungarian trade relations, and increasing pressures for reversal of the economic reforms, a Hungarian-Soviet trade delegation led by Prime Minister Jenő Fock returns from Moscow and publicly announces disagreements with the Soviet leadership.

György Markus, György Bence and János Kis jointly write a critical study of Marxism entitled *Is a Critical Economics Possible at all?* which becomes widely known in Budapest intellectual circles as 'Anti-Capital'. A systematic attempt to analyse the inner theoretical contradictions of the Marxist model of communism in the light of the 1968 movements in Western and Eastern Europe, the work has a special influence over the theoretical development of the moderate wing of the former student movement.

SEPTEMBER: A 3-day sociological conference officially organised by radical young intellectuals at Balatonfüred is banned at the last moment after the preliminary circulation of the papers to be delivered.

NOVEMBER: Resolutions of the Central Committee criticise pluralist trends in art and culture, and give expression to the first official criticisms of the economic reforms.

1973

JANUARY: Both the Central Committee's Cultural Commission and the Secretary for Cultural Affairs, György Aczél, criticise what are labelled as anti-socialist and anti-Marxist views in the fields of philosophy* and sociology; reprimanding in particular: András Hegedüs, György and Mária Márkus, Agnes Heller, Mihály Vajda, György Bence and János Kis.

MARCH: Anniversary of the 1848 revolution is again marked by clashes between secondary school students and police in the centre of Budapest. Considerable provocation by the police results in some 50 arrests.

MAY: Hegedüs, Vajda and Kis are expelled from the Communist Party; György and Mária Márkus, Agnes Heller and György Bence reprimanded, and all dismissed from their academic positions. Before long, publication of

their works is also forbidden. At the same time the influence of the Lukács school over the younger generation of philosophers and sociologists begins to decline very rapidly. György Bence and János Kis in particular become increasingly critical of the esoteric Marxism of the older generation of the Lukács school, and they now write a critique of Lukács entitled *To the Young Lukácsism and Beyond* which marks their (and the younger generation of critical philosophers') break with, and virtual expulsion from, the Budapest School.



Left, Maria Kovacs, with her husband György Bence, a brilliant young theoretician. Both are blacklisted from work.

Meanwhile, Miklós Haraszti, who has been working for a year on the shopfloor at the Red Star tractor factory in Csepel, writes a book about his experiences entitled *Piece-Rates* (subsequently published in English under the title *A Worker in a Worker's State*). On submitting the manuscript to the Magvető publishing house, who had previously commissioned the work, he is arrested and interrogated by the police.

During the summer the authorities move against the last remaining centre of Hungarian leftist subculture, an avant-garde artistic centre established in a disused church at Balatonboglár. Police provocation results in arrests and short imprisonments of some of the centre's organisers, and finally it is closed down.

As part of a wider movement against repressive sexual attitudes and family oppression, and shortcomings in the social services, students from the former radical wing of the movement launch a campaign against a proposed new abortion law which seeks to restrict the availability of abortions. Some 1500 signatures are collected including those of many prominent intellectuals, and the petition is handed in to the Hungarian Parliament. Other petitions from various establishment and opposition circles also protest against the law, which is finally accepted by Parliament but in a much milder form than originally proposed. Some of the organisers and signatories are reprimanded and a few expelled from the Communist Party.

In October, on the anniversary of the 1956 revolution, Sándor Rácz, President of the Central Workers Council of Greater Budapest in November-December 1956, is married in Budapest's most well-known church, the Matyas Temple. The police consider the action a provocation but do not intervene.

Meanwhile, charges of 'incitement to subversion' have been brought against Miklós Haraszti for distributing copies of the manuscript of his book *Piece-Rates*. The trial opens in September, but is adjourned several times and Haraszti is granted bail. During the trial most of the witnesses called by the prosecution in fact defend the literary and sociological merit of the work. Finally, at the beginning of January 1974, Haraszti is to receive

an 8 month prison sentence suspended for 3 years. The outcome was partly the result of protests both inside Hungary and in the West, and following the trial the authorities became more reluctant to arrest and imprison intellectual oppositionists. The most important significance of the trial was that it was the first occasion on which a wide range of dissident intellectuals and potential oppositionists, from both the moderate and radical wings of the former student movement, and the critically-inclined sociologists, philosophers and economists, came together and publicly expressed their solidarity.

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1974

JANUARY: Communist Party leader János Kádár, in a speech to Party workers, condemns what he calls 'the excesses of liberalism', citing the various incidents of the previous year, and declares that the time has come to put an end to them.

MARCH: Clashes once again between school students and police on anniversary of 1848 revolution, but on a smaller scale than in previous years.

Central Committee Secretaries Rezső Nyers, in charge of economic affairs, and György Aczél, in charge of cultural affairs, are displaced from their posts, as also is Lajos Fehér, Deputy Premier in charge of the agricultural co-operatives. The changes, made in response to Soviet pressure, are seen by many as signalling an end to the previous years' moves towards economic and cultural liberalisation although both Nyers and Aczél continue to hold key posts in the regime.

OCTOBER: Sociologist Iván Szelényi, writer György Konrád and poet Tamás Szentjóbby are arrested after the police discover a copy of Szelényi and Konrád's manuscript *Towards the Class Power of the Intelligentsia* in Szentjóbby's flat. Immediate international protests lead to the three being almost immediately released and the charges against them dropped, but they are also 'advised' to leave the country.

DECEMBER: An article by a leading Hungarian dissident under the name Marc Rakovski entitled 'Marxism and Soviet-type societies' appears in the French journal *Le Temps Modernes*, arguing that Soviet-type societies are new social formations *sui generis*, neither capitalist nor socialist, nor transitional between the two, but a novel and unprecedented type of class society. This article, which illustrated both the achievements and the limitations of the intellectual evolution of the moderate wing of the former student movement, was to appear two years later in at least three different Hungarian translations as one of the first publications of the Hungarian samizdat movement.

In 1974 the Hungarian Constitution is amended to formally institutionalise the leading role of the Communist Party, and thus render criticism of it unconstitutional.

1975

MARCH: At the 11th Party Congress, attended by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Prime Minister Jenő Fock practices self-criticism, admitting that the economic reforms had been allowed to go too far but, contrary to many expectations, does not

resign. The Party Congress also revises, and tightens up, the Party statutes.

MAY: After further Soviet pressure, Jenő Fock finally resigns from the premiership, and the period of economic reforms appears to have been finally brought to an end. Sociologist Iván Szelényi emigrates to Britain, and the following year takes up an academic appointment in Australia.

1976

JANUARY: Writer Ferenc Karinthy publishes a highly critical short story on the life style of provincial Party leaders, which leads to further warnings by the Party leadership on the limits of freedom of expression in the Arts.

FEBRUARY: On a visit to England writer Ferenc Fehér, leading member of the Budapest School, gives an interview to the BBC denouncing the repression and Berufsverbot imposed on the intellectuals of the Budapest School.

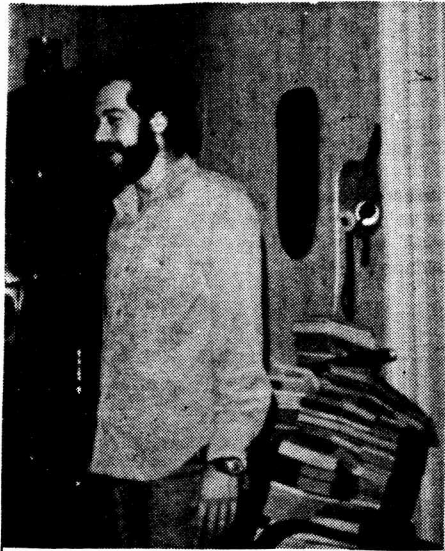
In the course of the year, Marc Rakovski completes a more developed account of his views on the nature of Soviet-type societies, and the relevance of Marxism for analysing and changing them, in a manuscript subsequently to be published in the West under the title *Towards an East European Marxism*.

1977

JANUARY: 34 intellectuals, amongst them prominent figures of the Budapest School, but also several members of the various groups of younger dissidents, and even figures of the 1956 generation such as Ferenc Donáth (veteran communist, leading oppositionist in the '50s and former colleague of Imre Nagy) sign a letter in support of the Czech Charter 77. Their action stimulates a number of young student groups into trying to establish a regular samizdat network.

During the spring, at least three samizdat publishing groups are established in Budapest, all organised by young people with no previous political activity, but working in close co-operation with members of the former dissident groups. The first samizdat manuscripts to appear are retranslations of writings of Hungarian dissidents that had appeared under various pseudonyms in the West, as well as translations of writings and documents from the dissident movements in other socialist countries, and essays of the Hungarian political theorist and minister in Imre Nagy's government in 1956, Istvan Bibó. A network of flat-seminars also now becomes more popular and widespread, and the participation and involvement of students and young people in the dissident movement is now on a far greater scale than anything experienced in the late '60s or early 70s.

During this year most of the members of the older generation of the Budapest School leave Hungary for the West finding academic posts chiefly in Germany or Australia. The younger oppositionists remaining in Hungary, however, who up to this point had usually acted as small isolated groups, separate and antagonistic to one another, now come for the first time to meet and establish good working relationships with each other. They are also able to establish a common front with broader strata of intellectual circles (populists, human rightists, democrats, etc.) who are less isolated than the small Marxist and the ex-Marxist groups, and at the same time the dissidents begin to enjoy the broad silent support or at least sympathy of even wider strata of intellectuals.



Andras Kovacs, a philosopher and prominent critical theorist. Blacklisted from work.

One of the first major projects of the new Hungarian samizdat is based on a questionnaire sent out by the philosopher András Kovács, one of the leading figures of the moderate wing of the former student movement, to a wide range of dissident intellectuals asking about their present attitudes towards Marxism, and in particular towards its contemporary relevance for East European societies. All of the respondents expressed an increasing disillusionment with the utility of Marxism, and the 21 replies were published in a volume entitled *Marx in the Fourth Decade*. Most influential of the replies were those of György Bence and János Kis who restated their reasons for breaking from the Budapest School and suggested a political strategy of 'radical reformism' based on some of the ideas of Adam Michnik's 'New Evolutionism', and János Kenedi's devastating attack on the ambiguity of the reformist attitudes of the 'critical' establishment intellectuals and his analysis of the possibilities for the emergence of a broader political opposition.

The end of the year also saw the first human rights text to appear in the samizdat — a collection of documents about the persecution of the Hungarian Methodist church.

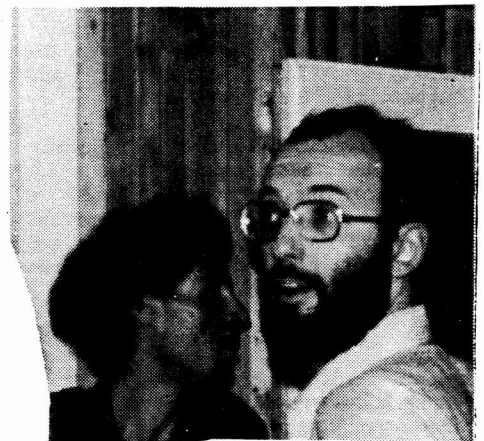
1978

The second major samizdat project is a collection of 34 articles nearly all of which had been consistently refused publication in official journals, which is edited by János Kenedi under the title *Profile*, with an introduction by him criticising the methods of censorship and self-censorship practised in Hungary. The essays included ranged from literary writings to various sociological, sociographic and economic articles and despite the fact that they had all originally been intended for official publication, they appear to have had a wider influence and popularity than previous more specifically political and ideological texts, thus giving some idea of the less theoretical interests of the wider samizdat readership.

Other samizdat publications over the year include the Lázár report on the fate of the Hungarian national minority in Romania, an essay about the religious persecution of the Protestant Churches, and articles on political prisoners in Hungary which pointed out that while the country has almost no intellectual political prisoners, even according to official figures some 2-300 persons are imprisoned yearly for political reasons. Other

articles appear discussing the perspectives of the samizdat and the new opposition movement, the possibilities of economic and political reforms, and essays about censorship and self-censorship. Amongst books to appear in the samizdat was a collection of documents about the events of 1968 in Prague, based on the Czech Black Book, which appeared on the tenth anniversary of the invasion, as well as Haraszi's *Piece-Rates*, and a translation of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. Another influential article to appear in the samizdat was an interview given by former economic reformist Rezső Nyers to a Swedish newspaper in which he had argued the continuing need for major economic and political reforms in Hungary.

At the request of the Polish Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR), György Bence and János Kis prepare an edited collection of Hungarian samizdat for publication and circulation in Polish samizdat, and a French edition of this, introduced by Miklós Haraszi subsequently appears in the West entitled *Opposition = 0.1%*.



Left, János Kenedi, writer, publicist and editor of samizdat Profile; right, János Kis, former member of the Lukács school and the author, with G. Bence, of some brilliant theoretical writings on East European societies. Both are blacklisted from work.

The unofficial lectures and seminars held in the private flats of leading samizdat activists also become more active and organised in 1978, beginning to resemble 'flying universities' on the Czech or Polish models. Three of the more 'popular' courses are on literary life and literature policy since 1945 in Hungary; the history of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the present day, and political developments since 1945 in Hungary. In the third seminar course, the topic of 1956 which many of the Hungarian oppositionists had formerly preferred to ignore, raises considerable debate and interest.

In Paris a new journal is launched entitled *Magyar Füzetek* (Hungarian Notebooks) under the editorship of the former 1956 political oppositionist Péter Kende. Edited jointly in Paris and Budapest, this journal sees its major function as being to republish samizdat articles reaching the West for further distribution both in the West and inside Hungary.

One major characteristic of the Hungarian samizdat movement in 1978 has been to discard the previous organisational forms of clandestinity and secrecy, and to act instead completely openly. Owing to the extremely rapid growth of the readership and support for the samizdat, nobody is actually arrested or imprisoned, but a number of people who had not previously lost their jobs as now dismissed, and the regime imposes a *Berufsverbot* against several of the leading samizdat activists and writers.

SOVIET UNION

Clash in Writers' Union on Suppression of Literary Journals

[One of the most popular Russian novelists, Vasily Axyonov, has threatened to resign from the Soviet Writers' Union unless two contributors to the unofficial literary journal, Metropol, are re-instated in the Union.

The two writers, Victor Erofeyev and Evgeny Popov were expelled from the Writers' Union in May of this year on the grounds that their work had 'insufficient literary value'. In reality this very severe sanction, which ends any possibility of a literary career, seems to have been one of a series of measures taken against the 23 contributors to the independent literary journal, Metropol, which began publication in Moscow in January of this year.

Axyonov's threat to resign came in an open letter to the executive committee of the Writers' Union dated 14 June. Another noted Soviet writer, Zoya Boguslavskaya, has been pressurised because of her refusal to condemn the contributors to Metropol. A few days before she was due to travel to Paris for the publication there of a new book, her passport was withdrawn.

Another samizdat journal, Poiski (Searches), founded in 1978, has also come under strong attack from the KGB. Whereas Metropol has consisted purely of literary work rejected by the censors, Poiski has had a wider range of material. In the tradition of the Russian 'thick journals', it has tackled social, political and philosophical topics as well as literary matters. It is especially concerned to publish a wide spectrum of different views, including official ones and it thus acts as a forum for free debate and dialogue. The editors, who include Pyotr Egides, a philosopher, Raisa Lert, a journalist, Vladimir Gershuni, a worker, Valery Abramkin, a chemist, and Pyotr Pryzhov, an historian, have sent the appeal printed below dated April 1979.]

We, the editors and collaborators of the free Moscow journal, **Searches**, appeal to our readers and fellow-citizens, to the world public, and to those who work in the media of all countries.

We inform you that recently the pressure of the authorities on the free press in the USSR has become stronger. In particular, the assault on our journal has been renewed: after the January searches and confiscations at the homes of its editors, and after the repeated interrogations to which they were subjected, in March-April a new wave of harassment began.

The 73-year-old Raisa Lert, one of the seven editors of **Searches**, has been expelled from the Communist Party in her absence. She has been a member since 1926.

The administration at the institute where another editor teaches, associate professor of philosophy Pyotr Egides, has passed a resolution to dismiss him. Approved by the local trade union committee, this decision contains an absurd reference to Article

254 of the Code of Labour Laws: 'for amoral acts'. The amoral act named is the open expression of independent views in the free press. This permits the application to dissenters of the *Berufsverbot* which has long been common in this country.

But the greatest threat has been aimed at editor Valery Abramkin. On 12 April he was interrogated for the **fifth** time by the Moscow Procuracy. This time the interrogation developed into open blackmail. Investigator Burtsev announced to Abramkin that 'the **Searches** case' had been specially processed and that he, Abramkin, faced criminal prosecution and imprisonment in a camp. Other editorial collaborators were threatened by the investigator with administrative banishment from the capital.

We have no time at present to discuss the 'right' of the investigators to threaten editors with the ultimatum 'stop your journalistic activity or put yourself in prison'. But we don't want to leave without an immediate response the attempt by the authorities to **split** the editorial board and, by extracting from it one person, Valery Abramkin, to turn him into a **hostage**.

We, the editorial workers of **Searches**, reject the ultimatum put to us, as being illegal blackmail. We again confirm: all the editors of **Searches** have an equal and indivisible responsibility for the publication of the journal. And we are ready to maintain this equal responsibility under all circumstances.

The attempts to prevent the appearance of **Searches** (as of analogous uncensored publications) by using the odious law about 'libellous fabrications' are directed against all members of society who are interested in the unfettered and open expression of their thoughts, problems and aspirations. We appeal to our readers and fellow-citizens to support the efforts of those who are openly exercising the right of the people to have a press free of censorship.

We appeal in particular to the International Press Institute, to the professional associations and unions of those who work in the mass media, and to other democratic organisations. We ask you to speak out in defence of the editors and collaborators of the free Moscow journal **Searches**.

But above all we appeal to you to intercede for the journalist Valery Abramkin. As the authorities try to halt the development of the free press and of independent public opinion in the USSR, he is threatened with the fate of a hostage. It is essential to avert the threat of his arrest. The practice of hostage-taking—the universally condemned method of terrorists—must not pay off for anyone!

Moscow

The editors, collaborators and publishers of Searches

Repression of Trade Unionists Continues

The Free Inter-professional Trade Union Association, created in October 1978 following the round-up of members of an earlier Trade Union Association whose best-known member was Vladimir Klebanov (see **Labour Focus** Vol.3 No.1) is also facing very heavy attack. Many of its members were arrested when the Association was publicly launched, and two of the founding members have been recently sentenced for their activities.

Vladimir Skvirsky, a 45-year-old geologist, arrested on 13 October last year, was sentenced on 16 May to 5 years' internal exile, ostensibly for not returning library books. His wife, Albina Yakoreva, has been evicted from a friend's flat with her 8-month-old baby daughter.

Lev Volkhonsky, a 34-year-old wood engraver, was sentenced on 12 June in Leningrad to 2 years' labour camp under

Article 190/1 of the Russian Criminal Code for spreading false information. His girlfriend, Natalia Lesnichenko, has been sacked from her job as a typist for belonging to the trade union association. Her phone has been disconnected for 'improper use' under Article 74 of the Telephone Rules.

Another trade union activist, **Mark Morozov**, a 35-year-old computer engineer,

was arrested on 1 December 1978 on charges of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda and has been held in Lefortovo prison. He had been investigating charges that workers on the Olympic Games site in Moscow have been forced to work a 10-hour day without overtime payments and that workers' families living in the area of the new complex had been moved to other areas without their consent. It is not yet known whether he has been tried.

Another founding member, **Valeriya Novodvorskaya** is still being held in Moscow mental hospital no. 15 even though she was declared sane and was due for release by Dr Valentin Theodorovitch Matveyev, Director of Psychiatry of the Moscow Medical Institute No.3. She declared a hunger strike since she was still being subjected to drugs, and there is considerable concern among dissidents for her health.

According to Peter Reddaway, another worker, **Mikhail Kukobaka** who was arrested last October, has been ruled mentally responsible by psychiatrists and is therefore due to stand trial soon on charges of slandering the Soviet system. He has already spent 5 years in psychiatric hospitals for his dissent. A bulldozer-driver by training, his writings have shown a special concern for the rights of workers and national minorities.

News in Brief

10th ANNIVERSARY OF INVASION MARKED IN CAMP

The biologist, Sergei Kovalev, who has served 4 of his 7-year-sentence for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda', has repeatedly been the subject of repression in the camp. But this has not broken his determination to fight for his own and others' rights. On 26 July 1978 he held a hunger strike in defence of prisoner Ravinsh; on 21 August together with other prisoners, he marked the 10th anniversary of the occupation of Czechoslovakia with a hunger strike. On 14 September, there was another hunger strike and a refusal to work by a group of prisoners demanding improved nutrition. On 20 September another hunger strike took place to protest against the reprisals against the Helsinki Group.

321 JAILED SINCE HELSINKI

According to a report published by Amnesty International on 24 June 1979, 321 human rights campaigners have been imprisoned in the USSR since the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975. Three members of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups were given special attention: Lukyanenko, Piatkus and Tikhy, who were sentenced to 10 years' special regime labour camp and five years' internal exile.

10-DAY STRIKE BY POLITICAL PRISONERS

Between 16-26 April, 10 political prisoners

held a 10-day strike in Ural Camp no. 35. More than a month before this strike, they had sent a statement to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announcing that they would go on strike because their previous protest letters, individual and collective, had been confiscated, unless their demands were met. The demands were that political prisoners be allowed to meet with Western correspondents, and that a representative of the UN Human Rights Committee be allowed into the camp to see the conditions. They also stated that according to the Soviet press, even Chile allowed Western correspondents to talk to political prisoners. The ten were: Anatoly Altman, Paruir Ayrikian, Igor Ogurtsov, Vasil Lisovy, Mykola Matusevych, Plumpa, Kvetsko, Ravinsh, Talgalis, and Yuri Butchenko.

LABOUR MOVEMENT

CHARTER DEFENCE COMMITTEE

The Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, supported by **Labour Focus** and the EESC, has created a Charter 77 Defence Committee to co-ordinate all aspects of the defence campaign. The Hon. Secretary of the Committee is Ruth Tosek. Other members include: Eric Shaw, Jan Kavan, Ivan Hartel, Oliver MacDonald of **Labour Focus**, and Vladimir Derer, Convenor of the EESC. All information about labour movement protests etc. should be sent to the Committee at: 14 Elgin Court, 16 Montpelier Rd., London W4.

EESC NOTES

The **EESC Briefing** dated June-July has been sent to all 650 local Labour Parties taking up the repression in Czechoslovakia and calling for protests. The EESC has also circulated the International Appeal and is aiming to get 77 local LPs to sign by the end of July.

EESC Hon. Chairperson, Eric Heffer MP, is putting a resolution to the next Labour Party NEC calling for the following: support for the International Appeal and for NEC members to present it to the Embassy, support for the Charter 77 Defence Fund, support for the efforts of LP lawyers to go to Prague to represent the arrested Chartists, support for Peter Archer to be an official LP observer at the trial, and for the creation of a group of Labour MPs to monitor events in the civil rights field in Czechoslovakia and keep the NEC informed.

FRENCH CP AND CZECH TRIAL

The French Communist Party leadership has decided to intervene in defence of human rights in Czechoslovakia, according to former Czechoslovak CP Central Committee Secretary, Zdenek Mlynar. Dr. Mlynar made his statement at a press conference in Paris on 21 June after meeting PCF Central Committee member Gerard Streiff.

However, some PCF militants consider that their Party's 'top-level' intervention is insufficient. In an 'Open Letter' published in the French daily **Le Monde** 20 PCF members recall that the recent Congress of their Party failed to respond to a letter appealing for aid sent to them by four Charter signatories. They call for the Party to make a public protest against the forthcoming trial and to mobilise the entire Party around this question.

LAWYERS TAKE UP DEFENCE

In France, 8 lawyers from the **Syndicat des Avocats Francais (SAF)**, which organises Socialist Party, Communist Party and Revolutionary Marxist lawyers, and whose membership comprises one-third of all lawyers in France, have responded to the appeal from families of many of the defendants in Prague for French left-wing lawyers to defend their relatives. The appeal was made because intimidation practiced by the regime has made it impossible to get an adequate legal defence in Czechoslovakia. 4 SAF lawyers, including CP members, had previously taken up the Danisz case and SAF had sent a delegation to Prague to investigate the case and protest against the expulsion of Danisz from

the official lawyers' association. These 4 lawyers, along with 4 others, have now taken up the defence of the Prague 10, and are seeking visas in order to be able to attend the trial. The other lawyers' associations in France are supporting this initiative. SAF has launched an international appeal on the Danisz case, calling on legal organisations around the world to take up the case.

In Belgium the Association des Juristes Democratiques de Belgique, an affiliate of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, of which the Czechoslovak Legal Association is also a member, has also protested about the Danisz case. In the third week of June, it sent Dr. Mertens, prominent Belgian writer and lawyer, to Prague to investigate both the Danisz case and the repression of Chartists.

In Britain, Mr. Rock Tansey, a Labour Party lawyer, who was a candidate during the last elections, and is well-known for his defence of civil rights cases here and for his concern over lawyers' rights in other countries, has responded to the appeal from Prague by indicating his readiness to defend one of the accused. He is approaching the Czechoslovak authorities to find ways of making this possible.

Amnesty International has adopted the 10 as prisoners of conscience, pointing out that their arrest is in contravention of the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights, of which the Czechoslovak government is a signatory. Amnesty International is seeking to send an observer to the trial.

The Parliamentary Human Rights Committee has also protested against the arrests, and has decided to send the leading lawyer and former Labour Solicitor-General, Peter Archer, as an observer.

CANADIANS BACK APPEAL

Prominent socialists and trade unionists from all over Canada have signed the International Appeal for the Release of the 10 Chartists. Members of the New Democratic Party in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, as well as socialists in Quebec have combined to present the appeal to the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Ottawa on Wednesday July 5. According to the **Edmonton Journal**, an Albertan daily of 6 July, the signatories included Alberta NDP leader Grant Notley, Ukrainian writer Myrna Kostash, and S.M. Duffy, President of the Edmonton local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, one of the most militant unions in Canada. The NDP is the Canadian sister-organisation of the Labour Party. The campaign for collecting signatures for the appeal in Canada has been organised by the Edmonton-based Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners.

CHARTER 77 DEFENCE FUND

A Charter 77 Defence Fund has been established in Britain by Labour MPs. Phillip Whitehead MP has taken on the work of being Hon. Secretary of the Fund, and Reg Race MP for Hornsey, is the Hon. Treasurer. A resolution being put to the Labour Party NEC by Eric Heffer MP urges Labour Party members to support the Fund. Donations should be sent to Charter 77 Defence Fund, c/o Reg Race, House of Commons, London SW1.

In West Berlin the Sozialistisches Osteuropakomitee has also established a Fund and has already raised several thousand German marks.

The international fund-raising activity for victims of repression in Czechoslovakia is being co-ordinated by Professor Janouch in Sweden. Professor Janouch is the official representative of VONS for relations with human rights organisations in the West.

BAHRO DEFENCE CAMI

A successful public meeting was organised by the Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee on 18 May. A hundred people filled the room in London's Conway Hall to listen to Tariq Ali of the IMG, Chris Harman of the SWP, Monty Johnstone of the CPGB, Bahro's English translator David Fernbach and the Hungarian Marxist philosopher Istvan Meszaros, and the ensuing lively discussion remained free of all sectarianism and discussed the views put forward by Bahro in his book **The Alternative in Eastern Europe** with the seriousness it deserves. The planned conference on the following day was, however, less successful, and the low turn-out showed how much remains to be done in translating the considerable interest Bahro's book has created on the British left into consistent campaigning activity in the author's defence.

There are, however, encouraging signs. One of them is the recent adoption of a motion proposed by Cardiff A.U.T. at the May meeting of the Association of University Teachers Council (the union's national delegate body) which now becomes national policy:

'AUT supports the call for the immediate release of Rudolf Bahro from imprisonment in the German Democratic Republic, and upholds the rights of intellectual freedom for citizens, including the right to publish views critical of their society and its Government without fear of reprisal. Council instructs the General Secretary to communicate this to the Government of the GDR and the GDR Embassy in London.' It is to be hoped that other unions will soon follow the AUT's example.

ENGINEERING WORKERS' PROTEST

Members of the 'Engineers' Charter', a rank and file group in the AUEW, picketed the Soviet Embassy in London on 23 April, protesting against the approaching trial of Vladimir Skvirsky, a Soviet unofficial trade union activist. (See Soviet section of this issue.)



Dana Nemcova, with her 7 children - photo taken in 1965

Photo: Palach Press

REVIEWS

'Workers' Councils in Czechoslovakia'

Perhaps because of television, the Prague Spring has been very closely identified in many people's minds with the dramatic developments that took place at the top of the Czechoslovak CP and with the invasion itself. Despite a number of very valuable general accounts of events and processes between the beginning of 1968 and April 1969, (for example, the work of Galan, Kusin and Skilling) a great deal remains obscure about the events of those years. Probably the greatest gap, at least in English, is the absence of a detailed study of what was happening at the base of the Communist Party itself, and also within the trade unions.

The collection of documents, **The Workers' Councils in Czechoslovakia** recently published by **Motive** and edited by Vladimir Fisera helps to fill one very important part of this gap. The book includes material both

from official Party decisions concerning the councils and from the workers' councils movement itself. A particularly revealing item is an extensive excerpt from the verbatim minutes of a conference of workers' council representatives that took place as late as January 1969. Also useful are the texts of two of the agreements that were made between trade unions and the Czech students' union on joint resistance to the bureaucratic counter-revolution ushered in by the Soviet invasion.

The workers' councils in Czechoslovakia were very characteristic of the entire process known as the Prague Spring. The Party leadership itself did in a sense initiate the movement — there were some vague references to self-management of this sort in the April 1968 action programme. But the leadership in this field as in others was unclear and indecisive. The real initiative and creative impulses came from below. An

enormous amount of discussion took place at the base on the most practical and mundane details as well as on the general functions of the councils, assisted by sections of the press, above all by the trade union paper, **Prace**. But before the movement could fully blossom and develop strong roots it was halted and destroyed by the Husak regime.

The book has a lucid introduction by Vladimir Fisera and the documents are clearly presented. It is slightly marred only by a flowery and irrelevant afterword by Faye whose pages could have been more usefully devoted to further documents and by one error: the November student strike in 1968 was not organised in defence of Josef Smrkovsky. But all in all, this is another indispensable book from **Allison and Busby's** excellent **Motive** series.

By **Oliver MacDonald**

'Workers Against the Gulag'

[Despite the NUM leadership's decision last November to drop its campaign in support of the Soviet trade union activist Vladimir Klebanov, the left-wing rank and file group in the Miners' Union around the Collier newspaper has continued to campaign on Klebanov's behalf. We asked Collier supporter Alan Bailey of the Armthorpe NUM in Yorkshire to review the collection of documents about workers' rights in the USSR published under the title, Workers Against the Gulag, by Pluto Press.]

As a miner I have been most concerned over recent months with Brothers Chapple, Jackson and co. and their precious Concordat which threatened the right to strike and picket. Even with the most socialist government conceivable, the right to strike is of paramount importance to the workers.

This was one of the reasons that we in the Collier Group pushed the Harlan County USA film about the famous American miners' strike around the country. Amongst other things, it served a warning as to what happens when you have something like the

Concordat. This, of course, is what we expect to happen in the world's most capitalist countries.

But what about in Russia? **Workers Against the Gulag** shows what happens when workers in Russia demand even the most basic trade union rights. The book gives the case histories of dozens of working men and women who have dared to stand up and demand the implementation of labour and safety laws. They are sacked, imprisoned, and locked in mental hospitals.

The book should be read by every socialist to remind them that so-called 'socialist' countries act in exactly the same way as the West once the right to strike is lost.

We at Markham Main Colliery at Armthorpe, near Doncaster, sent a donation to Amnesty International in order to find out about the imprisoned Russian miner Vladimir Klebanov and his welfare.

By a strange coincidence a month later the National Executive of the NUM accepted the assurance of the Russian Miners' union

that Klebanov had injured his head and was in hospital for his own health.

Workers Against the Gulag is remarkable. For an independent trade union to exist in Russia at all is a tribute to the courage of these people. The men and women who belong to the movement are mainly working class and committed socialists who, unlike the famous authors and ballet dancers, are not likely to have the international arts councils campaigning for their release from Russia.

On the contrary these people are determined to stay in Russia and fight for socialism.

Your heart will go out to these men and women who are risking all for socialism and I commend the book to all who believe in equality and justice.

ALAN BAILEY
(Armthorpe NUM, Yorkshire)

N.B. the **Collier** can be contacted via 38 Abbey Lane, Cundey Cross, Barnsley, Yorkshire.

LETTER

NALGO and Romania

[There has been some press coverage on the debate in the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) on the Union's attitude towards repression in Romania and Poland. Below a participant in this debate gives his view of the issues raised.]

For many years Nalگو has built and maintained links with trade unions in other countries. In recent times the International Relations Committee has worked with the Chile Solidarity Campaign against the Junta and with SACTU against the racist system of apartheid. But until very recently little has been done in solidarity with workers in State Capitalist regimes who are trying to organise in free trade unions. Traditionally Nalگو has gone along with the other British unions in their links with 'official' trade unions. These official trade unions have a right to negotiate over wages but according to an official Nalگو report after a visit to Romania: 'The unions do, however, play a part in increasing their members' income and living standards by their efforts to increase output — not only does this permit the wage increases provided for in the five-year plans, but overfulfillment of a workplace's target will lead to appreciable bonuses being distributed to its employees.'

Occasionally delegations of NEC members are sent to Eastern Europe where they are hawked around on official visits with 'very little time to follow individual initiatives'. The officials make an awful fuss of them and given them nice presents — leather briefcases, marble pen-stands. Prepared speeches are exchanged and plenty of good food and wine consumed. The delegates come away from these countries 'with a vivid impression of a proud (and hospitable) people with a strong consciousness of their difficult history.' blah blah. Then they go back again in a few years time on another junket.

Meanwhile the real workers in these countries are

struggling to organise even the most basic democratic rights. Reports of the resistance of workers against systematic state oppression are smuggled through the curtain but the authorities claim that everything in the garden is rosy except for a few pro-imperialist troublemakers.

After reading reports of suppression of demonstrations against food price rises in Poland, I raised the question of solidarity in my branch and then at Annual Conference. The Polish authorities called the striking workers 'recidivists with known criminal records'. Nalگو did nothing and sent a delegation to Poland. When one of the delegation met a number of the Free Trade Union movement he was accused of jeopardising the links with the official Polish union. The following year my branch put up a more general motion calling for the terms of reference of the delegations to Eastern European countries to include investigation into the right to form free trade unions. This motion, like the first, was not reached but was referred to the NEC for discussion. They discussed it and reported: 'The specific inclusion of a requirement to investigate in the terms of reference of delegations would lead to the interruption of contacts with East European unions as it would be seen as a fundamental criticism of their system.'

This year NEC member Tony Ayland wrote two personal letters to President Ceausescu of Romania requesting assurances regarding the whereabouts of miners imprisoned after a strike in 1977. He received no reply but the Chairman of Nalگو's International Relations Committee wrote to the Romanian Ambassador pointing out that the letters were not official. Obviously he didn't want Ceausescu to think Nalگو would dream of criticising him let alone have any 'fundamental' differences. Because of this action and Tony's reports to the South West District Council of Nalگو I asked a question to the NEC at this year's conference asking what they were up to and why

did they apply double standards when supporting oppressed workers. I received an unsatisfactory reply and successfully moved that the section of the report on oppression of foreign workers not be received. I did this despite pressure from an NEC member to withdraw the question 'for your own good, for the benefit of Tony Ayland and the whole of the South West District Council'.

Well, that was one up the bum for him and the junketeers but where do we go from here?

First of all turning the conference against the NEC is all very well as long as the issue is not forgotten. All socialists in the workplace must continually argue support for the workers' demands in Eastern Europe or the Right will move with their abstract demands of freedom of the individual in 'communist societies'. We are the ones with the right to criticise because we are fighting for workers' demands here. With the Pope flitting around Poland singing with a tear in his eye we saw a taste of the media's view of freedom. No mention of the right to strike or form unions. The media people think we have too many rights in Britain so they wouldn't dream of campaigning for workers in Poland. We must do it now.

Another interesting aspect is the Nalگو description of the role of trade unions in Romania. Compare the statement at the beginning of this article with statements from Len Murray and many British trade union leaders during the Social Contract — no negotiations on pay but bigger rises for management and unions can increase their productivity (cut jobs). Perhaps that's why they are so keen to maintain their links. In Russia the Government picks the head of the TUC. Perhaps our leaders would feel safer if that were the case in Britain as well. Food for thought?

Phil Jones
Forest of Dean Nalگو
Delegate to Annual Conference.