

# LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on Eastern Europe and the USSR

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**NEW SOVIET ROUND-UP**

**FEMINISM IN RUSSIA  
4 DOCUMENTS**

## 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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Residents of Canada and the USA interested in more information about Eastern Europe, USSR and solidarity campaigns are urged to write to our North American representatives: Committee in Defense of Soviet and East European Political Prisoners, P O Box 835, Sub 11, Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta. T6G 2E0, Canada.

# EDITORIAL

## The Twilight of Brezhnevism

If the first weeks of this year are any guide, the 1980s will be a period of political movement, if not upheaval, in Eastern Europe by comparison with the last decade.

After Gierek came to power at the end of 1970, the only change in Party leadership during the last decade was the retirement, no doubt slightly early for his own taste, but nonetheless smooth, of Walter Ulbricht. The main lines of domestic economic policies and, with the exception of Albania, the postures of the government in international affairs changed little. There was no attempt at major political reforms from above and, apart from the important strike-wave in Poland in June 1976 and the big miners' strike in Romania's Jiu Valley the following year, there were no significant social upheavals.

Soviet politics gave the appearance of a steady concentration of power in the hands of Brezhnev and his circle. And the Soviet leadership's dual policy of detente with the West and strict central control over domestic affairs seemed to hold the Comecon countries in some sort of common front and domestic stability.

Yet within a few weeks of Christmas we have had the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the withdrawal of Tito from Yugoslav politics, effective Soviet pressure on Ceausescu to change his foreign policy posture at least on Afghanistan, the fall of the Polish Prime Minister and other Party leaders in precipitate fashion at the Party Congress and the cancellation of a planned summit between Schmidt and Honecker which should have crowned a decade of European detente whose centrepiece has always been West Germany's relations with Eastern Europe.

Of course, not all of these events are directly connected with one another, and the key development—the invasion of Afghanistan—has taken place outside Europe. But they symbolise more basic indications that the 1980s will be a much stormier period for Eastern Europe.

The long-term problems of the Comecon economies are becoming more acute and will be exacerbated by the impact of the international capitalist economic crisis on Eastern Europe.

Consequent stagnation and inflation are sure to increase social tensions. The traditional methods of controlling the working class are likely to prove increasingly ineffective. Growing tensions within both major power blocks are likely to make a return to Cold War postures increasingly attractive in both Washington and Moscow in their attempts to unite their own spheres of influence against an external enemy, while economic difficulties and social discontent will strengthen centrifugal pressures in both East and West. The re-armament drive is already well under way in NATO and people are even starting to talk about a new world war danger.

There are signs that a new drive against internal critics was launched in the USSR and some East European countries last autumn. In this issue we document the current round-up in the Soviet Union. The Prague Trial of 6 VONS members and the new harshness of the Polish police towards intellectual critics following the Independence Day demonstrations last November seem to form a pattern. The arrest and deportation of Andrei Sakharov is the most striking symbol of this new attitude.

Some socialists in the West may begin to feel that the new international atmosphere requires the abandonment of active labour movement defence of victims of repression in the USSR and Eastern Europe. There are powerful pressures to make socialists choose between NATO and the Kremlin, to campaign either against repression in the East or against NATO re-armament. The French Communist Party leadership has already refused to protest against the arrest and deportation of Sakharov as well as the Afghan invasion, thereby suggesting that the defence of civil liberties in Eastern Europe is no more than a tactical issue for the Western Left, to be dropped or raised when conditions are judged suitable.

# SOVIET UNION

## The New Crackdown on Oppositionists

By Helen Jamieson

The forcible removal of Dr Sakharov from Moscow decisively proves what Soviet oppositionists have been saying for months — that the Soviet leadership is centrally concerned to prevent any contact between domestic critics and foreigners during the Olympic Games. This exiling action is part of a general sweep against oppositionists which is wider than anything since the beginning of the '70s. The drive has involved the arrest and sentencing of members of the various Helsinki monitoring groups, especially those in the Ukrainian group; of trade union activists, religious groups, national oppositions; of young leftist groups and feminists in Leningrad; of samizdat journals including **Poiski** (Searches), the **Chronicle of Current Events** and **Community**.

The last wide sweep began in 1970 and culminated in January 1972 with two hundred arrests in Ukraine. This had been connected to the opening of Brezhnev's new detente policy. It was designed to show that detente would not mean any domestic political relaxation, and to prevent the opposition currents from attracting wider influence in the new international atmosphere that was emerging at that time. Many activists were sentenced to 12 years in prison and exile.

After the crackdown in 1972, a new form of protest did not emerge until 1976 with the formation of Helsinki Monitoring Groups in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia. These groups worked together to try to expose Soviet violations of their own voluntary commitments at the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation.

Partly in response to Carter's human rights demagogy, and partly because the monitoring groups gained significant support in non-Russian republics and from religious groups, the Soviet leadership rounded up the movement's main leaders in 1977 — including Orlov, Shcharansky, Ginsburg and Rudenko. Their heavy sentences were designed to isolate the movement totally from domestic support, and were accompanied by attempts to crush the monitoring groups outside Moscow altogether.

The Georgian and Armenian groups were effectively silenced, but the Moscow and Ukrainian groups responded to each new wave of arrests with new members, and continued to produce new documents.

More significantly, a wide range of hitherto unheard of currents came to the surface throughout the European region of the Soviet Union.

In particular two trade union groups appeared. Vladimir Klebanov's Free Trade Union Association, formed early in 1978, was quickly and brutally crushed; but a second group, the Inter-Professional Trade Union Association (SMOT), has survived despite repression since it appeared in November 1978.

A Moscow-based group monitoring psychiatric repression continues to operate despite the exile of its founder, Alexander Podrabinek. A movement of invalids demanding their social rights has appeared. And a Left Opposition youth group whose leaders were imprisoned or sent to psychiatric hospitals in the spring of last year was shown to have had wide support by a protest demonstration involving some 200 students in Leningrad. The group's documents also showed that they were in touch with other leftist groups in some half a dozen cities. (See **Labour Focus** Vol.3 No.2 for a detailed account.)



Poet, former political prisoner, and Helsinki Group member, **Victor Nekipelov**, arrested in latest Soviet crackdown.

The existence of another leftist youth group has just become known because of the arrests and trials of three of its activists. On 7 October 1979 Vladimir Mikhailov, Aleksei Stasevich and Alevtina Kochneva were arrested in Leningrad for writing slogans on the walls and putting up leaflets. The slogans said: 'Democracy — not demagogy!' and 'Down with State Capitalism'; the posters called for 'a single anti-authoritarian order' and opposed evil in the form of the 'family, private property and the state'. The leaflets were signed by the Movement of Revolutionary Communards. They were charged with hooliganism.

Mikhailov (born 1952) worked as a mechanic installing refrigeration in Dnipropetrovsk; and Stasevich was a musician, poet and

artist. They lived communally at the flat of Yuri Zaydeshnira in Leningrad. They had been members of a youth commune from 1975; in May 1978 that commune built an anti-war demonstration at Nevsky Prospekt. During a house search after their arrest, the following was confiscated: old Soviet publications of Kautsky and Bebel, works of Marcuse and Fromm, religious and other samizdat works, including the **Chronicle of Current Events**. Also leaflets were found signed by the Movement of Revolutionary Communards.

In the summer of 1978 a new literary review called **Poiski** was founded in Moscow, involving a wide range of political views from Marxist to liberal democratic. Among those involved were an Old Bolshevik, Raissa Lert and the very eminent Marxist historian Mikhail Gefer. Another literary project, **Metropol**, appeared with the support of some of Russia's most popular official writers. In September 1979 the first issue of a feminist journal, **Woman and Russia**, appeared in Leningrad. (See p.6 in this issue.)

All these activities were marked by continuing ferment in the national republics and amongst religious groups. In Georgia at least 5,000 people demonstrated in defence of their national language against changes in their constitution in the spring of 1978, and samizdat activity has been particularly strong in Lithuania. The struggle of the Crimean Tatars to be able to return to their homeland has also been very vigorous during the last two years.

But the KGB has been hard at work on a search and destroy operation against all these movements since the summer, and especially in the last few months. No fewer than 9 members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group have been arrested; of the 5 already sentenced, Oles Berdnyk, a former member of the Writers' Union, was given a total of 9 years of prison and exile. Another Ukrainian activist, Yuri Badzyo, a former headmaster and Party member, was jailed last year for 7 years followed by 5 years' exile. He had written a 400-page Marxist critique of the national question which was confiscated by the KGB.

In Moscow, Tatyana Velikanova, a founder of the Human Rights Defence Committee in the '60s, was arrested, as well as Victor Nekipelov of the Moscow Helsinki Group, and a number of leading religious figures. **Metropol** has been closed down and contributors to it have been expelled from the Writers' Union. Vasily Axyonov has resigned from the Union in protest. Four members of the editorial board of **Poiski**

have been arrested and a fifth hounded out to the West. (See p. 5 of this issue.)

In Leningrad, three members of the

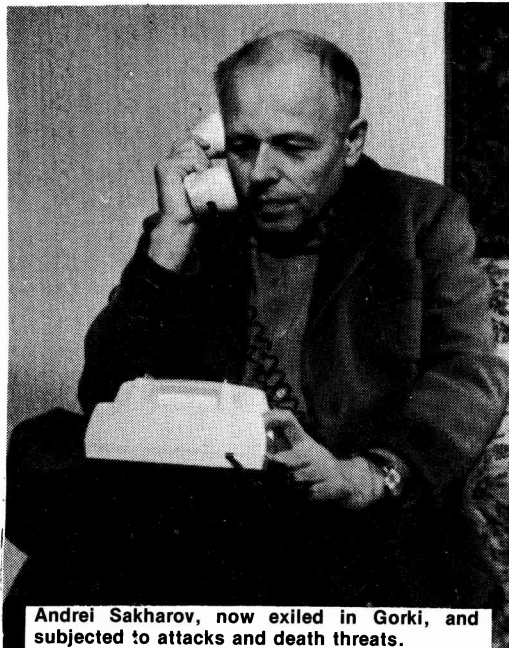
Movement of Revolutionary Communards have been sentenced to between one and three years in jail, and the editors of the new

feminist journal **Woman and Russia** have been threatened with jail if they produce a second issue.

## The Drive Against Sakharov — By Joe Singleton

On 22 January the Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov was arrested and exiled to the city of Gorki, a city with 1,170,000 inhabitants situated 400 kilometres from Moscow, on the river Volga. Sakharov, who three times received the title Hero of Socialist Labour, as well as the Order of Lenin and the Stalin Prize, was stripped of all his titles, said *Izvestiya*. His remaining title of Academician can only be removed along with his Soviet citizenship. *Izvestiya* on 23 January accused Sakharov of being a traitor and of divulging things 'that any state protects as important secrets'. His wife, Yelena Bonner, as well as his wife's mother, were also moved to Gorki, although his wife is free to travel. In a statement from Sakharov, made available in Moscow by Yelena Bonner on 28 January, he declared his readiness for a public trial. 'The authorities want to reduce me to silence', the statement said, 'because they want a free hand in the repression of other internal dissident groups, with less chance of the rest of the world being informed'. On 28 January a group of 16 intellectuals signed a declaration of solidarity with Sakharov, among them the journalist Raissa Lert and the philosopher Grigori Pomerants.

Sakharov profited from his position and privileges as an Academician to publicise attacks on human rights in the Soviet Union as well as to make public statements on world political issues, for instance his support for Carter's human rights policy and his call for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics. It was at his flat in Moscow that many of the press conferences were held which exposed cases of repression. Born on 21 May 1921 in a comfortable family in Moscow, his father was a university professor and his uncle was the well-known geneticist Nicolas Vavilov, who later died in one of Stalin's camps. In 1942, having finished his studies at university, he worked as an engineer in an armaments factory, where a number of inventions were credited to his name. In the late forties he worked with the group of Soviet scientists who were perfecting the atomic bomb, although he later refused the title of 'father of the Soviet H-bomb'.



Andrei Sakharov, now exiled in Gorki, and subjected to attacks and death threats.

Sakharov was never a member of the Communist Party. Elected in 1953 to the Soviet Academy of Sciences, he was, at 32, the youngest Academician. In 1978 he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

His first public disagreement with the Soviet authorities came in 1958 when he asked Khrushchev to call a halt to atomic experiments. Khrushchev told him, at a dinner, that he was a good scientist but he shouldn't mix in politics. At the beginning of the sixties he defended the theories of the geneticist Mendel against Lysenko. It was also at this time that he met the Medvedev brothers, Roy and Zhores. In 1966 he wrote a letter to Brezhnev, on the occasion of the 23rd Congress, warning against any rehabilitation of

Stalin. He protested the sentencing of Sinyavsky, Daniel and Ginzburg and in 1967 prepared his first samizdat, **Reflections on progress, peaceful co-existence and intellectual freedom**. After the shock of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he founded in 1970, along with a group of physicists, the first committee for the defence of human rights. Since then he has been a prominent figure in the human rights movement. He was refused the right to travel to Norway in 1975 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Already at the beginning of the summer of 1979 the President of the Academy of Sciences, M. Alexandrov, proposed the expulsion of Sakharov to a meeting of the Academy's directors. At this meeting the elder Academician, Pyotr Kapitsa (Nobel Prize for physics in 1978) said: 'If there is a precedent for this, then it is Einstein's exclusion from the German Academy of Science in 1933'. Since Sakharov's exile the Academy of Science has issued a statement which states that his activities had 'compromised the policy of the USSR for peace, disarmament and detente'. But the statement contained no threat of expulsion from the academy.

## Polish Protests Over Sakharov's Exile

On 24 January the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) expressed 'full solidarity' with Andrei Sakharov following his arrest and deportation to Gorki, and expressed their readiness to participate in international actions for his release. On the same day the Movement for the Defence of Human and Citizens' Rights also protested against Sakharov's exile, linking it to 'the intensified persecution of Russian, Ukrainian, Latvian, Tatar and other activists of the democratic opposition'. Various Polish academics have also sent letters of support to Sakharov.

## The Arrested and Jailed Since Last Autumn

### Helsinki Monitoring Groups:

#### MOSCOW

**Landa, Malva** — charged with anti-Soviet slander.

**Victor Nekipelov** — arrested 7 Dec. 1979.

#### UKRAINIAN

**Oles Berdnyk** — arrested 6 March 1979 and sentenced 21 Dec. to 6 years' imprisonment, 3 years' exile.

**Mykola Horbal** — arrested 23 October 1979; sentenced 21 Jan. 1980 to 5 years' imprisonment.

**Vitaly Kalinichenko** — arrested 29 November 1979.

**Yaroslav Lesiv** — arrested 15 November 1979.

**Yuri Lytvyn** — arrested 6 Aug. 1979; sentenced 19 Dec. to 3 years' strict regime camp.

**Petro Rozumny** — arrested 8 October 1979.

**Petro Sichko** — arrested 5 July 1979; sentenced 4 Dec. to 3 years' strict regime camp.

**Vasily Sichko** — arrested 5 July 1979; sentenced 4 Dec. to 3 years imprisonment.

**Vasily Striltsiv** — arrested 25 Oct. 1979.

#### LITHUANIAN

**Julius Sasnauskas** — arrested 11 Dec. 1979.

**Anatanas Terleckas** — arrested 30 Oct. 1979.

#### ARMENIAN

**Eduard Arutunyan** — arrested July 1979; August sent to Serbsky Institute for psychiatric diagnosis.

## Oppositionists:

#### RUSSIA

**Victor Davidov** — arrested 28 Nov. 1979.

**Sergei Ermolaev** — sentenced 24 Sept. 1979 to 4 years' imprisonment.

**Alexander Gotovtsev** — arrested 12 Sept. 1979; sentenced Nov. to 1 year imprisonment.

**Yuri Kashkov** — arrested 23 Nov. 1979.

**Igor Poliakov** — sentenced 24 Sept. 1979 to 3 years' imprisonment.

**Mikhail Soglovov** — arrested 12 Dec. 1979.

**Tatyana Velikanova** — arrested 1 Nov. 1979.

## By Helen Jamieson

#### UKRAINE

**Yuri Badzyo** — sentenced 22 Dec. 1979 to 7 years' imprisonment and 5 years' exile.

**Victor Goncharov** — arrested 5 Sept. 1979; Nov. sent for psychiatric diagnosis.

**Sawchenko** — sentenced in Jan. 1980 to 1½ years' imprisonment.

#### CRIMEAN TATARS

**Reshat Dzhemilev** — sentenced 17 December 1979 to 3 years' imprisonment.

**Rollan Kadiyev** — arrested January 1980.

#### JEWS

**Igor Guberman** (editor of *Jews in USSR*) — arrested 15 August 1979.

#### LITHUANIA

**Arvidas Chekhanavichus** — arrested 6 Nov. 1979; put in psychiatric hospital; 4 Jan. 1980 sent for indefinite psychiatric internment.

**Vitalda Skodis** — arrested January 1980.

#### LEFT OPPOSITION

**Irina Lopotukhina-Tsurkova** — 8 Oct. 1979 sentenced to 3 months' corrective labour.

### MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNARDS

**Alevtina Kochneva** — arrested 7 Oct. 1979; sentenced 25 Dec. to 1¼ years' strict regime camp.

**Vladimir Mikhailov** — arrested 7 Oct. 1979; sentenced 25 Dec. to 3 years' strict regime camp.

**Aleksei Stasevich** — arrested 7 Oct. 1979; sentenced 25 Dec. to 1¼ years' strict regime camp.

### POISKI

**Vladimir Abramkin** — arrested 4 Dec. 1979.

**Yuri Grimm** — arrested 25 Jan. 1980.

**Victor Sokirko** — arrested 25 Jan. 1980.

**Victor Sorokin** — arrested 4 December 1979.

### TRADE UNION GROUPS

**Nikolai Nikitin** — arrested 4 Aug. 1979; sentenced 23 Oct. to 1½ years' camp.

**Anatoly Pozniakov** — arrested 10 Sept. 1979; 30 Oct. sent for psychiatric treatment.

**Gavriil Yankov** — 3rd time psychiatric internment in Nov. 1979.

## Religious Believers:

### PENTECOSTALISTS

**Bishop Nikolai Goretoi** — arrested 13 Dec. 1979.

**Ilya Goretoi** — arrested recently.

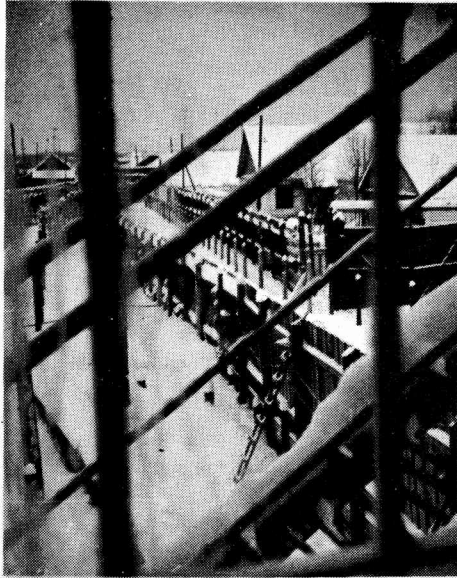
**Pavel Matiash** — arrested 13 Dec. 1979.

**Vladimir Morozov** — arrested recently.

**Fedor Sidenko** — arrested 16 Oct. 1979.

### BAPTISTS

**Nikolai Baturin** — arrested 5 Nov. 1979.



Part of the Perm Camp No. 37 where both Yuri Orlov, leader of the Moscow Helsinki Group and Arkady Tsurkov of the Leningrad Left Opposition are currently serving sentences.

**I. Danyliuk** — arrested 1 Aug. 1979.

**Victor Drag** — arrested Sept. 1979; sentenced 3 Dec. to 3 years' camp.

**Fedor Gordienko** — sentenced October 1979.

**Ivan Kyriliuk** — arrested Sept. 1979; sentenced 3 Dec. to 12 years' camp.

**Victor Litovchenko** — arrested Sept. 1979; sentenced 3 Dec. to 7 years' camp.

**Olga Nikolova** — arrested 5 Nov. 1979.

**Mikhail Prutyán** — arrested 31 Oct. 1979.

**Anatoly Runov** — 5 Dec. 1979 psychiatric internment.

**Pavel Rytikov** — arrested 23 Aug. 1979.

**Vladimir Rytikov** — arrested 23 Aug. 1979.

**Galina Velchinskaya** — arrested 23 Aug. 1979.

**Slava Zayets** — arrested Sept. 1979; sentenced 3 Dec. to 10 years' camp.

### CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE TO DEFEND RIGHTS OF BELIEVERS

**Father Dmitry Dudko** — arrested January 1980.

**Father Gleb Yakunin** — arrested 1 Nov. 1979.

### CHRISTIAN SEMINAR

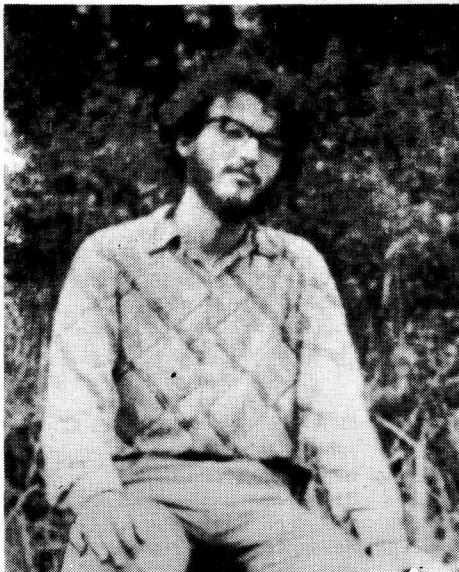
**Vladimir Poryesh** — arrested 1 August 1979.

**Lev Regelson** — arrested 25 Dec. 1979.

**Tatyana Shchepkova** — arrested 9 Sept. 1979; sentenced Jan. 1980 to 3 years' imprisonment.

## Programmatic Statement of the Left Opposition Youth Group

*[In addition to the 'Positive Programme' issued by the Left Opposition youth group in Leningrad (See Labour Focus Vol.3 No.2) another statement from this group has reached the west. Soviet authorities have used extremely harsh measures in an attempt to silence leading members of this group. Alexander Skobov has been interned for an indefinite period in a psychiatric hospital, while Arkady Tsurkov was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment and 2 years' exile, and Alexei Khavin to 6 years' hard labour. The following statement is reprinted here as found in the latest issue of A Chronicle of Current Events, No.51.]*



**Aleksander Skobov, leader of the Left Opposition in Leningrad, arrested in October 1978 and sentenced in April 1979 to indefinite compulsory psychiatric treatment. Address: USSR, Leningrad, st. Udelnoe, Fermshoe shosse 36, Psychiatric Hospital No.3.**

1. A group of young people, motivated by their dissatisfaction with the surrounding reality—that motor of social progress—have decided to embark on coordinated social activity aimed at transforming the existing society.

2. The group starts from the desire to bring about a social system capable of satisfying the widest material and spiritual demands of each member of

society, and of guaranteeing each individual the opportunity of full and harmonious development. The group considers communism to be such a social system ...

4. The group takes Marxism as its theoretical basis ...

5. By means of a Marxist analysis of reality the group has reached the conclusion that the existing system in the USSR constitutes state-monopoly capitalism ...

6. The process whereby this system was established in Russia after the 1917 revolution was in keeping with the laws of history and was inevitable.

7. The establishment of this system was at that time progressive ...

8. An analysis of the present state of Soviet society has brought the group to the conclusion that the Soviet system has already fulfilled its historic function and has outlived its day. The consequence and main symptom of this is the crisis which has seized our society, manifested in the loss of faith among the masses in the official 'religion', their increasing apathy as citizens, the intellectual and moral impasse which society has entered, and the growth of moral depravities ... The development of our system has entered the downward phase. For mankind's next step to be on the path to progress it is essential to replace it with a more forward-thinking system — socialism ...

10. The transition from state-monopoly capitalism to socialism is essentially a revolutionary process, for it involves the removal from power of the class of state bureaucrats as a result of a class struggle against it by the working classes, led by the intelligentsia.

11. The intelligentsia is the most progressive class of the late 20th century ...

13. The revolutionary process of the transition to socialism can take place in peaceful ways if the ruling class, after realistically appraising the situation, makes concessions and accordingly democratizes the existing system. Such a squeezing of the bureaucracy from power will be able to occur through normal methodical political struggle within the framework of a legal constitutional system.

14. This kind of revolutionary course is the most to be desired ...

15. An indispensable condition for achieving it is the presence of a strong, organised and, most important, constructive opposition, which will present the government with a peaceful solution to conflict, and which has a concrete programme for improvements.

16. The intelligentsia will then be able to play its vanguard role and lead the masses behind it, will then be able to give birth to a strong, organised opposition when it finally forms itself into its own class, will advance its own programme and form its own political party, a militant, united vanguard party.

17. To achieve all this the intelligentsia must overcome its three weaknesses: ideological, organisational and moral. For this, in turn, the exchange of information and ideas and the discussion of burning polemical questions must be organised in intellectually critical circles. It is necessary to undertake education and self-education to unite cultural forces and stimulate public thinking. The group sees its primary task as furthering this aim ...

## What is Poiski?

By Pyotr Abovin-Egides

[Below, Pyotr Abovin-Egides, a founder of the journal *Poiski* (*Searches*) outlines the origins and aims behind this important samizdat journal. Egides's remarks are taken from a longer interview he gave to the French journal *L'Alternative* in January.]

In the early 1970s I participated in the review *Twentieth Century*, which is edited by Roy Medvedev, but I found it too loyalist and evasive in its critique of the system. My fundamental disagreement with Medvedev, aside from questions of detail, lay in the fact that he saw socialism as existing in the USSR, whereas, in my view, it is not at all socialism which exists here. And that is when the *Poiski* review began.

After the break with Medvedev, we initially intended to create with Raissa Lert a review that would be socialist-oriented yet highly critical of the regime. (Raissa Lert, who was secretary of the *Twentieth Century* editorial committee, has very similar ideas to mine: we are both supporters of a democratic socialism, and we have the same critical attitude to Soviet society.) But at that point my friend Gershuni, with whom I had shared a cell in Butyrki prison, introduced me to Valery Abramkin and other young people behind the *Voskreseniye* (Resurrection) cultural movement. And in the end, we took the decision to bring out a review together.

They were essentially concerned with literature, and in fact they were responsible for the literary section of *Poiski*. I do not understand why the authorities decided to arrest them rather than myself, who was responsible for the section 'social and political life' that took up burning questions directly connected with the system. Maybe because they were the youngest — with Gleb Pavlovsky. Anyway, the *Voskreseniye*

group had several very different orientations: V. Abramkin, for example, is a liberal-humanist Christian. The actual decision to work together played a very important role, resulting in the fact that *Poiski* is a pluralist review. In other ways, too, it is unlike other samizdat journals. For most of the others are devoted to a single theme, like *Jews in the USSR*, or are purely literary in character, like the two numbers published by the *Voskreseniye* group. We chose to produce a major review—something in the style of *Novy Mir* (1)—with very many rubrics: poetry, literature, social and political life, documents, sociology. Moreover, *Poiski* represents very diverse ideological currents. *Kontinent*, by



Yuri Grimm, an arrested member of the *Poiski* editorial board.

contrast, even though it has developed to some extent, has never yet published articles from a socialist or Eurocommunist point of view. I am convinced that it will eventually

become a more tolerant journal, even if this has not yet happened.

Last year, it should be remembered, the authorities made two attempts to crush our review. At first the rate of publication was such—four numbers in six months—that the KGB did not have enough time to react. But it decided to deal it a heavy blow by completely seizing Number 5. That happened in January 1979, but we managed to bring it out a month later all the same. Then the repression caused a first break in publication. And today, after numbers 6, 7 and 8 have come out one after the other, we are forced to call another pause. We explained this clearly to our readers: after the arrest of three editors, V. Abramkin, V. Sokirko and Y. Grimm, and of a very close collaborator, V. Sorokin, not to speak of myself who am now in the West, we are obliged to suspend publication temporarily. Besides, we had reached the conclusion that there was a conflict between the number of issues published (eight in all) and the quality of the results; between the sacrifices involved in publication (already four arrests) and the effectiveness of our work and of these sacrifices (twenty copies, half of which are confiscated during KGB raids).

We have now decided to combine *samizdat* with *tamizdat*. *Samizdat* because we publish and will continue to publish essentially the living voices of Russia, texts actually written in the country; and *tamizdat* because we shall try to publish it here in the West, and then distribute it widely over there. This is precisely why I am now in the West. It should be said that I hardly had any choice: after the KGB ultimatum, it was either emigrate or be arrested. And then there is the immediate task of creating a committee to defend the four arrested members of the editorial board.

## The Crimean Tatars: an Oppressed Muslim Nation

By Susannah Fry and Victor Haynes

[The following article is based on an interview with Aisha Seitmuratova on 9 January 1980.]

In August 1944, while most of the men of the Crimean Tatar nation were in the Red Army fighting the fascists, the 250,000 who remained in the Crimea—mostly women, children and old people—were ordered at gunpoint by the Russian Army to leave their homes and accused of collaborating with the Germans. And when the war ended, instead of being demobilised, the men were deported too. According to Aisha Seitmuratova the Russians used the accusation of collaboration as an excuse to clear the remaining Moslems and other small nationalities from the Black Sea and the Caucasus, thus continuing the Russian expansionism that began with the Tsars, when millions of Moslems were forced to flee from that region. The Second World War gave the government a golden opportunity to clear out the remaining small



Aisha Seitmuratova, a recently exiled spokesperson for the Crimean Tatar movement.

nationalities and make the Black Sea a 'Russian Sea'.

### DEATH IN SEALED TRAINS ACROSS RUSSIA

She was seven years old when soldiers with guns forced her family out in the middle of the night. She didn't know whether they were Germans or Russians. Only when they were packed into goods wagons did they realize that they were to be deported rather than shot. The trains were sealed, and off they went on a month-long death trip. No food or water was provided. People died in their thousands, and the living, the dying and the dead all had to share the same sealed wagons until they reached Kazakhstan, when the dead were removed and those who remained were sent on to detention centres further east. She insisted the following figures be used for the number of Crimean Tatars who died in transit: out of a total of 238,500 who were deported, 109,000 died — most of them women and children. Of those below 16 years of age, 45,922 died out of

Photo: Victor Haynes

99,400; from 16 to 18 years, 6,144 out of 13,300; 43,085 women out of 93,200 died and 15,061 out of 32,600 men.

From Kazakhstan they were driven to Uzbekistan. They were packed into dug-out houses in detention areas, robbed by the camp administrators and forced to work in the mines, factories or collective farms for very low wages. Many people, especially the young, tried to run away, back to the Crimea, but most were caught and spent fifteen years in prison. However, the Crimean Tatar nation slowly regrouped by building an impressive internal democratic structure which today includes all 600,000 Crimean Tatars.

In 1964 their representatives managed to get a hearing in Moscow with representatives of the Party Central Committee. They presented 24 volumes of documents and letters, with more than 100,000 signatures. The Central Committee members agreed that the Crimean Tatars had been wrongly deported, but said that they couldn't return to the Crimea. A decree of the Supreme Soviet of 9 September 1967 actually rehabilitated the Crimean Tatars, but the state continued to keep them out of the Crimea. Nevertheless, they insist on their right to return there and to reorganize their republic. Since 1968 tens of thousands of them have gone back in the direction of the Crimea with the intention of settling. Only the combined efforts of the army, the secret police and the local Crimean administrators have kept them from returning. Today, after several waves of attempts to settle, a few thousand have succeeded. The local Crimean government continuously tries to deport the Tatars. Public advertisements of houses for sale state that Tatars need not apply, or that the house will be sold only to Russians.

### THE SYMPATHY EXPRESSED BY OTHER SOVIET NATIONALITIES

Aisha Seitmuratova finds that, while the state officials do not take seriously their own propaganda of proletarian internationalism, the common people do. She gave many illustrations of instances where Russian and Ukrainian workers in the Crimea had come to the protection of Crimean Tatars when officials had tried to kick them out. Some had even sold their houses to Crimean Tatars and protected them against individual police attacks.

She mentions warmly dissidents (what she calls the democratic movement) who have vigorously taken up the cause of the

Crimean Tatars: the Ukrainian, General Grigorenko, who was imprisoned for 5 years because of his active support and the Russian, Kosterin — both of whom were kicked out of the Communist Party for their support; the many people in Moscow who provided flats for visiting Crimean Tatar representatives; and the typists employed in state offices who typed a huge number of documents for them despite the risk of being sacked (Aisha knows one who was sacked for doing just that).

### THE EFFECT OF THE DEPORTATIONS ON THE MOSLEMS OF RUSSIA

Most of the Crimean Tatars were banished to Uzbekistan, which is near the Afghan border. When the Uzbeks realized what had happened to them they gave them their full support; even those who were Party members argued for the rights of the displaced Tatars up to the highest level.



Political prisoners in a Soviet labour camp in 1969-70. Top row [left to right]: Akhmet ?, Nariman Kadyrov, Aider Zeitullayev, Reshat Bairamov, Rollan Kadiyev. Bottom row: Aider Bariev, Ismail Yazydzhev, Izzet Khairov.

What unites the fifty million or more Moslems of Russia, besides their religion, is the fact that most of them are Turkic speakers. In addition, there is a powerful factor uniting these Moslem nations with the Ukrainians, the Baltic peoples and the other non-Russian nationalities (together they form almost 50% of the population) and that is the awareness that their so-called republics are fictions; that the real power rests in Moscow, and that Russians are privileged socially, educationally and politically. The non-Russian republics are seen as Russian colonies; the Russian government looks down on Moslems, and as a result, people turn to nationalism.

In Uzbekistan, for example, many cities

have a very small Uzbek population. As in most non-Russian republics, the cities are dominated by the Russians, ethnically, culturally and politically. Most of the Uzbeks live in compact areas in the country, where only the occasional Russian is seen. Because the Russians live in the cities they claim they are of a 'higher culture', able to bring civilization to the Uzbeks. The Soviet Constitution guarantees every republic the right to separate and declare itself independent, 'but just try to separate', says Aisha.

### THE SOVIET MOSLEM NATIONS AND THE MOSLEM WORLD

The problem of the Soviet Moslems is looming ever larger in the minds of the Soviet government. The birth rate of the Moslem nationalities is on average two or three times as high as that of the Russians.

When Brezhnev visited Soviet Azerbaijan he called on Moslem women to join the labour force; in Moscow others were telling Russian women to leave work and have children.

Aisha Seitmuratova's only purpose in leaving the Soviet Union is to bring to the world's attention the plight of her nation and to get support. She has been mandated by the Crimean Tatar Council to represent them outside the Soviet Union. She wants solidarity from every political and religious persuasion. Trade union support is essential because most Crimean Tatars are workers. She wants the ILO to investigate the problem of why Crimean Tatars are denied jobs in their native land by the Russian authorities.

## Woman and Russia — By Alix Holt

In mid-December 1979 typed copies of a new samizdat journal began to circulate in Leningrad. Underground journals have appeared before, but this is the first to have been written and produced by women, 'for women, about women'.

This opening issue of *Woman and Russia* includes poems, two short stories and a number of articles which explore and criticise the gap between the official ideology of emancipation and the reality of women's lives. One of the themes taken up

by several of the contributors is the lack of concern society shows for the conditions under which women give birth and bring up children. Women, writes R. Balatova, are denied control of their bodies during childbirth; the doctors are interested in the



welfare of the baby not of the woman, and because of shortages of staff, space and equipment women receive neither physical comforts nor moral support. Another article, 'The Other Side of the Medal', deals with the difficulties faced by the single mother: the humiliations, the problem of finding nursery accommodation, the economic hardships. Society gives women the choice of abortion, but in Arkhangelsk where the author, Vera Golubeva lives, the conditions in the main abortion clinic are appalling — women refer to the clinic as 'the meat mincer'. (This article is translated in this issue of **Labour Focus**.)

The women writing in the journal are agreed that the demands society makes on women as mothers and workers are unjust and impossible. They suggest different ways out of the dilemma. Tatyana Goricheva attacks the regime for socialising young girls to be sexless, to reject motherhood and regard cooking and housework as beneath their dignity. She has solved her crisis of identity by turning to the Christian religion, the Virgin Mary and the ideals of feminine chastity and purity. Other contributors insist on women's right to create culture as well as children and want men to take their share of those responsibilities which have always been considered easy, insignificant and women's. N. Malakhavskaya argues that though in earlier societies the sexual division of labour was inevitable and progressive, in the modern world it no longer has any purpose; the present social division of responsibilities is ludicrously unequal: women not only work to earn money, they give birth and bring up children, they cope with all the housework

and the running of the family. Women do and are everything, while men doze off on the sofa, sit in front of the television or pick quarrels. The journal is bitter at the 'dual burden' women have to bear — 'Daily life is torture', writes Tatyana Manonova in one of her poems — and angry at men who are quite content that women should suffer, who constantly drink themselves senseless, insult women with their swearing and coarseness; who once a year on International Women's Day will flick the dust from the sideboard, but otherwise refuse to take part in family life. In Sofya Sokolova's story, 'Flying Lizards', the boy's make-believe trips to Africa are shattered by the father, who returning from his business trip tears down the jungle paintings from the wall promising to buy his son a tank.

The journal is a powerful statement of the contradictions and conflicts Soviet women experience in their lives. The authors avoid the language of the press and of academic writing, choosing a style that is concise, yet rich in imagery, personal yet accessible. They do not make explicit connections between the immediate problems faced by individual women and the inadequacies of social and political institutions. Nonetheless, the journal is a highly political document. Like much feminist writing in the West, it is feeling a way towards making the personal political and in doing so changing our ideas of what is political.

For some of the contributors this is not the first time they have defied the regime. Included in the journal is a letter from Yulia Voznesenskaya, a woman who has been

battling with the authorities for over twenty years and last spring found herself making yet another journey to a Siberian labour camp. Her letter describes the inhuman treatment of women prisoners: a group of 18-year-old women are punished for an alleged infringement of regulations (they had been singing); they are hosed by the warders, beaten up and then shivering and bruised locked up, twenty-one of them in a cell for four. She also notes the sexual harassment: returning from their obligatory visits to the bathhouse, the women have to pass naked along a corridor lined with sniggering male prison workers.

The appearance of **Woman and Russia** is a new and very significant development for the democratic movement in Eastern Europe. Oppositionists have usually considered the 'woman question' peripheral if not irrelevant, and even those who recognise the importance of feminist goals have argued that the struggle for democratic rights must come first. The editors of the journal believe that feminism and democracy are indivisible. In their view the question of women's social position is the burning issue of the epoch and they insist that women must have their independent movement. By publishing this journal and inviting women to send in stories and ideas, and to share with them their problems, they have taken the first step.

A second issue of the journal is being prepared, but the KGB threatens to take reprisals if the women go ahead with publication.

## Documents:

### 1. Letter from the Editorial Board

Dear Sisters,

Hardly have we entered the world when we feel the weight of women's destiny on our bodies.

At first, we cannot believe in the reality of this powerful vice that hurts and humiliates us: it seems fortuitous, accidental. We cannot believe that life should so punish innocent beings, simply for being born women.

All humanity regards any suffering as unacceptable, seeking immediately to relieve it and make it disappear — except in the case of women. Our situation is so unbearable that it ought to vanish by itself like a nightmare.

But nothing changes by itself.

We can be sure that no one but ourselves will help us. It is by coming together to talk about our bitterness and suffering, by understanding and exchanging our own experience, that we shall be able to find a solution. Only in this way will we, and thousands

of women who suffer like us, actually help ourselves.

This is why we have decided to bring out the first free women's journal in Russia. In its pages, we shall bring to light the situation of women in the family, at work, in the hospitals and as mothers; the situation of our children; and the problem of women's moral rights. We shall publish texts by women: literary contributions, articles on political and social life, complete accounts of the life of women in our epoch.

We ask you to write to us about what disturbs and upsets you. Send us your own accounts about your sisters, mothers and women-friends.

In case of necessity, and insofar as our means allow, our journal's correspondents will come to see and help you. We hope that our joint efforts will bring us back from the point of disaster; that they will relieve women's suffering and set women's liberation under way. 'When what is secret becomes open, then there is light.'

### 2. Manifesto of 'Woman and Russia'

The active assertion of the rights of reason, which is extremely topical nowadays, has stimulated us to tackle the burning question of Woman and Russia. In our century of general feminization of men and general masculinization of women, in which the customary centre of gravity has shifted and old positions and

values have been revised, Russia has witnessed distinct processes that we now intend to clarify. Woman's situation in society — that is the key question of the present epoch. In Europe the question is being partially resolved: four women are in government, and many women have just been elected to the European Parliament; here,

the question remains extremely acute. The broad mass of women are very pessimistic; while the men are indifferent or cynical, arguing that it is an insignificant problem. Insignificant? Yes, like the seed that will bear forth a tree.

In Russia, life's major problems have reached such a dead-end that scepticism is becoming the normal mode of behaviour. And this is particularly visible in the case of women, who are the most sensitive element in society. The real ideal of a good old patriarchy — subject women, resigned mothers, household angels — no longer exists. But the weight of tradition and ossified mentalities continues to make women the caryatid of the home — or, to be more precise, of the communal apartment ... Women do not have the possibility of escaping these inhuman constraints: if they free their hands, then the house collapses. However, the myth of woman's 'frailty' is still very much alive, so that she has to pay if she leaves the home. Since the obligation and responsibility of reproduction rests upon women, together with participation in social labour and that domestic labour which is still unashamedly called 'female', it is quite normal that such an excessive burden should arouse frustration in woman; just as it relegates her to the background, according to a conception cultivated by patriarchy which sticks like glue to her skin. Formally, equal rights were proclaimed long ago; but in reality, women's legitimate demands are branded as too pretentious. Fear of competition (above all for the top jobs, which are given to women only drop by drop) and fear of losing prestige: these are what drive the very same men who flatter the exclusive roles of mother and wife. These pharisees pretend not see that it is women who drag the cart — which men spur on from the driver's seat. Feverishly get insidiously, the ever-moving steamroller of everyday life crushes women's personality. Her slave mentality is still with us, and it is taking a more concealed and monstrous form. The humiliating conditions in the maternity and abortion clinics and in the communal apartments are an affront to human dignity. The values are still male: women's social evaluations and self-evaluation depend on their similarity with men. This warped relationship demands ever new sacrifices from women — yet it is from society as a whole that one might expect these to be made. For the so-called 'woman problem' is a key point in the general struggle for a new world. Although it should not be denied that women's cultural level has increased, their conditions of existence are still antediluvian. Genuine, not just superficial, liberation is becoming apparent as the most important social requirement of our time. It is absolutely necessary to determine what is specific to woman's position in the family and production: so that, instead of accumulating both domestic and social labour at the cost of innumerable sacrifices, she may at last feel herself to be a human being with equal rights.

Patriarchy has long since evolved into phallocracy. It is quite understandable that educated women look for a solution in the refusal to have children; deliberately chosen motherhood cannot develop on barren ground. Women's rejection of arbitrary male authority is expressed not only in their refusal of motherhood, but more and more in a paradoxical refusal of themselves. This flight into the absurd is in conformity with the law, since the devaluation of femininity has set up an official sexism. Unfortunately, even the non-conformists do not overcome such conformism. In the lower strata of society, where women's age-old patience has taken on a pathological character, and where men are brutalized by inveterate drunkenness, women are crushed by this perverse and exclusively sexual relationship to themselves. But in cultural families, where equality is less rare, one can see the same feudal relations and the same failings on the part of the father. Who is against whom? It is a struggle between rival egoisms. And so women take extreme measures like men: they smoke, drink and swear like men. Cultured women refuse to feel themselves victims, yet male culture annexes women by sowing hatred among them (the idea of hating men evidently does not arise). The brutalizing pressure of phallocratic culture destroys the feminine in women and throws them back on to hating women. This stupidity is really thriving in our country. Women, deprived of sound information and filled with bogus science, cannot see their real enemy; and, fleeing before themselves, they stumble into the gloomy corners of an alien 'culture'.



Julia Voznesenskaya, former political prisoner, who wrote about her experiences in Woman and Russia.

This contempt for femininity leads to a dislocation of the family cell, an ever greater distance between the sexes, and the isolation of women from one another. There is so little awareness to reflect the internal contradictions of our society: no account is taken of the past experience of one half of humanity; and nothing new is elaborated. The development of their intellectual capacities condemns women to be alone as before: men are used to the idea that women should sacrifice their personal fulfilment to themselves.

In a huge, undeveloped country, it is hard to observe the nuances of degradation. Revelations, however slight, never occupy more than one newspaper column. And new ideas are discredited before they can grow beyond a root. The voice of truth can barely be heard above all the pomp and circumstance. There is a lot of talk about defence, but before we defend anyone perhaps we should begin by safeguarding the forces of life in society; women, who actually give life, should come first, and then should come the defenders, not the other way round. In order to give women real equality, society should pay more, not less, for their labour than for men's. But this is not a problem of arithmetic. Gorki already proposed to count five years per child in a woman's labour-time. And Soviet Russia, with its more illustrious representatives, had a correct and objective approach to 'the woman question'. When Lenin addressed the masses, he never forgot about women. The demand that all men should be equal could not exclude half of humanity.

The revolution was more than a letting of blood: it aroused an upsurge of feeling among the people (and in individuals). The mass enthusiasm of the twenties in Russia is both well-known and readily understandable. Hope in the new times, in new relations between men, in a new family, was everywhere an active force. The Russian Revolution had a resonance throughout the world, and the world changed under its impact. The liberalisation of society as a whole also gradually liberalized attitudes to women. But in Russia, this process came to a halt at the time of Stalin's personality cult...

However, the war revealed the immense courage of women — their capacity not only to give life and bring up children, but also to fight (against fascism). Then came the period of reconstruction and, finally, the sixties thaw that followed de-Stalinization. When the 'iron curtain' fell, the textile-worker Furtseva entered the government and Tereshkova flew in space. Things could have gone further (we know that it is society which determines women's

condition), but ... Margaret Thatcher, the current Prime Minister of Great Britain, is the logical sequel to Indira Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandaranaike and other women who have joined various governments. There, it is true, people speak of 'multivaginal' tyranny (while, in Leningrad, they write 'Will the husband be afraid?' about the new trend). But the risk is being taken — and, after all, it is an honourable risk. The Hungarian writer Moritz made the following symptomatic joke: 'Only when women take power back into their hands will we understand the true meaning of firmness. No feeling, no jokes — only women can talk like that among one another.' People are afraid of women's power, but they also set their hopes in it. Women's potential attraction to natural altruism is already a part of human nature — although the stereotype rooted in patriarchy leads them away from it. Some are afraid of bantering talk, on the grounds that the women's movement would be compromised. But isn't the act of bringing children into the world itself compromised? And yet children are being born. Isn't the Church compromised? And yet Christ's teachings find more and more followers. Others are afraid that the women's movement is too limited, claiming that men also suffer and that one should not be concerned only with women's problems. But no one accuses the gynaecologist of treating only women's diseases, since it would be absurd to deny their specificity. Still others say that the women's movement goes too

far: no doubt they agree that there are quite a few little problems; but they argue that when communism has been built, all problems, including those of women, will disappear by themselves. Others again adopt such a way-out position that they accuse the leaders of the women's movement of stirring the mud ...

Despite all this, the movement is growing and is at the heart of the present-day circulation of ideas. The harsh indifference which most men display towards the movement can only swell its ranks to an enormous degree. There is a lot of noise about 'conserving men' (who die from wine, cigarettes and sexual excesses), but there is only a placid glance for women who pave the streets or lay down railway sleepers. People calmly listen to the latest obscene jokes, which are nothing other than a form of discrimination against women. It never occurs to anyone to insult bread because it nourishes us. But it is thought quite normal to use the most contemptible gibes against women, who give life. The conservatism of the alcoholic masses, the blind animosity towards women displayed by that proliferating, single-celled organism, that gigantic amoeba with no will — that is the outrageous brake on social progress.

The Editors of *Almanach: Woman and Russia*

### 3. The Other Side of the Medal

(Document was translated by Helen Jamieson.)

To fulfil one's motherly function — that is a great blessing, predestined by woman's nature. Only a woman who has experienced the feeling of motherhood, is capable of comprehending, sensing and valuing this total and complete responsibility for the life of a small being. No wonder there exists a 'Mother-Heroine' medal.

But we are concerned with those women who take upon themselves the task of giving birth and bringing up a child without a father — the so-called single mother. What leads them to take such a desperate step? For every individual destiny, it is necessary to understand the specific circumstances, the purely personal motives of a complex and contradictory nature. We shall present these as the women themselves present them.

Many women, having decided to take that bold step, do not always fully realize what a thorny path they have chosen. And there are women who have no close relatives or even parents to help them in difficult times.

You don't get much from society either. The state pays five roubles a month towards the upkeep of a child born out of wedlock. And you have to struggle through many formalities and humiliations in order to get those 5 roubles. They won't inform you that you have a right to the money, nor will they send it to your house. Moreover, you can't even live for two days on such a ridiculous sum.

But a single woman with a child, who has no one to rely on except herself, needs at least some means of subsistence throughout the years. To live comfortably for a whole year without working, a woman must have carefully thought out and foreseen all the difficulties of a single life, saving beforehand a specific amount of money. But very few are capable of this, because in practical terms it is difficult to foresee what our life will be like tomorrow.

And then there are women who gave it no thought, who took no steps beforehand, or who simply did not have the possibility of providing for a year ahead. What happens to those who are unable to adapt to such circumstances or who cannot compromise with their own conscience?

It is only at the price of inhuman effort that they can protect their own life and that of their child, a future member of a society — a society which will not take the trouble to think about such things, which is shrouded by the bombastic slogan of 'the emancipation of women'. No one thinks of the price a woman must pay in order to

achieve that 'freedom' which is talked and written about so much, but which does not exist in real life.

Nevertheless, those women who bring up their child for a year, naturally count on state nurseries for the next period. But now there is a new problem: how to get a place? In order to get your child into a nursery, you have to join a queue before the child is even born. There is still another way out: to leave one's job and to take one at the nursery; then they'll take the child as well. If you don't have any medical training, then you have to do the dirtiest, most difficult work, and at the same time look after your child. But it would be a great mistake to think that if you put your child into a state institution things will be as nice for your child as at home.

Nurseries and kindergartens are the most pernicious institutions in the country's public health system. The personnel mainly consist of middle-aged and elderly women, with a small percentage of younger women who work as cleaners because of their children. The majority of the middle-aged and elderly women do not have their own children. It is hard to say exactly what drives them into the strange flowerbed of child-like purity and spontaneity. But it is doubtful whether the motive is that so-called feeling of self-sacrifice and self-denial in relation to weak, defenceless children requiring a great deal of attention.

Throughout the day, the children need to be carried from place to place, and have their noses or hands washed and their nappies changed. They need to be fed by spoon.

There are about 25-30 children to one nurse and one nanny. How much love and patience is required to greet the tiny charges with smiles each day; to patiently look after them all day; and to see them again the following day with a fresh reserve of spiritual strength!

By no means are all women capable of such a feat, and the majority are in fact guided by mercenary motives. They know that these small, defenceless beings cannot tell anybody anything; that they are mute witnesses, as yet incapable of understanding and judging the actions of grown-ups who have their lives in their hands. And people take advantage of this. I have had occasion to associate with such people, and never have I met more ruthless and squabbling people. They come here with the definite aim of pilfering. They take the children's very food, the basis of their lives. They take half the meat and make up the rest with bread, and then make the kind of dishes invented by some culinary specialist: cutlets, meat-balls, meat-dumplings and hamburgers. They dilute

sour cream and milk with water - which is just great for them!

The healthy summer season, when children are taken to the countryside to breathe fresh air and get nourishment from fruit and vegetables, provides exceptional opportunities to get rich. The vegetables which parents bring for their children are divided among the personnel, while the children are left with whatever rubbish remains: candies and other sweets which provide nothing.

The sanitary care provided for children is terrible. Girls are washed only rarely: and either they are dried with their night-dresses, or everyone is cleaned with one piece of cloth. Legs and arms are also rarely washed, and they are dried with a single piece of cloth.

During the summer of 1976, the Berigardov-Boko country home for sick children was overfilled. There you have both acute respiratory diseases with complications, as well as light diseases such as mumps and dysentery. The 'First Aid' cars know the road well here, coming almost every day. Still, even after such a sanatorium-season, a single mother who has entrusted her child to a state institution can only rack her brains to think of somewhere she can put her child without damage to its health.

The reason for this state of affairs in pre-school institutions needs to be sought for in the public health system itself and the mode of organising staff labour.

The shortage of manpower and the high turnover of labour are the result of low wages. Hospital nurses, for example, are paid 80-90 roubles per month, while a child-minder gets 75. No price can be set on the labour of women who have the vocation to bring up and educate our future generations, and who devote their own spiritual strength and health to this work.

But in the Soviet state there is the right to choose. If it is beyond one's power to cope with a difficult life with a child, then one has the possibility of not bearing one. In the USSR abortions are legal. After 10 or 15 minutes (the time of the operation), you are freed of all the troubles and unpleasantness associated with a child.

But what spiritual suffering and physical pain do those counted minutes cost! I think that the majority of women, once they have experienced this inhuman torture, would refuse this barbaric operation if they had normal human living conditions. But it is still not clear to society why women do have abortions. And sometimes, very rarely, when a woman goes to a hospital and fills in the many forms for an abortion, she is asked why she doesn't want the child. The reply, as a rule, is simple: lack of normal living conditions, or low wages! Where this information goes, is unknown. But it does go somewhere! In any case, our 'humane' society has done everything possible in order that the Soviet 'emancipated' woman can become fully aware of her freedom in the most varied respects.

## Protest Against KGB Harassment

[This letter appeared in 'des femmes hebdo' in January 1980 and was translated by Patrick Camiller.]

To the Procurator-General of Leningrad,

I, the undersigned, Arsenyeva Mamonova, permit myself to inform you that repeated telephone calls from the KGB have created an atmosphere of hate in the communal flat where I live with my husband and four-year-old child; and that pressures are stopping me from living a normal life as the law authorises me to do.

During the first 'discussion' at Kuibyshev KGB headquarters (to which I had been summoned by phone without any explanation), I was threatened with reprisals from Efimov. However, I had received no official summons to attend, and nor did I receive a transcript of the interrogation. Maybe they relied on tape-recordings — I've no idea. (Articles 129 and 141 of the Criminal Investigation Code.)

In replying to the examining judge Khazanov, who told me: 'I won't mince words, you're a provocateur', I expressed what I sincerely believe to be my patriotic convictions.

In September of this year, I published with some friends the Almanach Woman and Russia, in conformity with Articles 50 and 52 of the new constitution. We distributed it both here and abroad, as authorised by Article 19 of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. An incomplete preliminary draft of the Almanach (which is incorrectly called a 'review') came into the hands of the KGB. After they had marked me down as the one responsible they started taking measures against me in spite of Articles 56 and 57 of the Constitution and Article 144 of the Criminal Investigation Code.

On the evening of 7 December, a neighbour passed on to me a summons to

If a woman decides to have an abortion, she is faced with today's 'walking torture'. It starts with the humiliation of going to the maternity consultation bureau, having collected a bunch of papers of the punitive expedition, and then of being spoken to with unconcealed disdain, or even contempt. Next there is the humiliation of the other stages she has to go through in order to achieve her aim. There is the waiting in the queue for registration. In a huge room almost without light or air, on benches arranged along the walls, women sit with troubled and depressed faces. One has to sit there for 1½-2 hours.

Thus, hour after hour, the woman draws closer to the predestined torture until she ends up in the Abortion Clinic. The abortion clinic on Lermontov Prospekt is called 'the butchers' shop' by women. It has a daily capacity of 200-300 people.

Large wards for 10-15 places are filled with netted beds on which flanelette blankets are tucked in. There are never enough sheets, and the woman has to resort to various tricks to make do with one sheet, either covering herself with it, or spreading it underneath her. And this is in a medical institution, where surgical operations are performed on people.

However, the women who come here do not pay any attention to these discomforts. They are gripped by the horror of waiting for the blasphemy to come. And then the decisive moment approaches: the women form a pre-operation queue. Anything from two to six abortions may take place at the same time. The chairs are distributed in such a way that the women can see everything that happens opposite. While the face is distorted with suffering, the bloody meat is extracted from the woman's womb. In the operating room there are two doctors and one nurse. 'Quickly, quickly!', says the nurse. The woman, shaking from fear and emotion moves to a chair, her movements awkward and uncertain. The irritable doctor tells her what position to take on the chair. Finally the woman settles and the doctor begins the operation. Sometimes they are given an injection, but a very small quantity is used and the doctor does not wait for it to take effect. Insofar as there is no anaesthetic, the women experience terrible pain, and some lose consciousness. The nurse, helping both doctors at once, doesn't have time to help those who are in pain immediately after the operation. With difficulty the sick woman is 'pumped out', and it is left to the women awaiting their turn to guide her to the ward. In the ward the woman remains cramped by pain for another 1-1½ hours — which results in nausea and sometimes even vomiting. The next day she is sent home regardless of her general condition, which leaves one to desire better.

Medical service in the Soviet Union is based on the ill person's ability to survive and has the function of charity. First aid is provided for the sick, but in the end they have to rely on themselves alone.

appear once again at the Kuibyshev KGB at noon the next day. I spent all day running round town with my child... Two days later on 10 December (Human Rights Day, which is also my birthday), I was again asked, this time by telephone, to go to the KGB. There, I was forced to sign a declaration in which I 'accused myself' of publishing an ideologically tendentious review. (Again there is no transcript, nor any explanation of the reasons for the investigation.)

Comrade Procurator, I am informing you in writing of what I told the KGB agents, Efimov and Khazanov (and I am sending a copy of this letter to the Kuibyshev KGB):

'I intend to pursue my feminist activity because I consider feminism to be progressive, and because the women's movement is an essential part of the world democratic movement. Our Almanach is no more tendentious and no more ideological than any other feminist publication. The KGB agents are deliberately distorting what it means and seeks to achieve: their interpretation of it is completely one-sided.

'My friends and I are not ashamed to openly say what we think to anyone we like: Russian or foreigner, KGB collaborator or not. I deeply regret that the repression with which the KGB weighs me down has forced me to postpone indefinitely publication of the second number of our Almanach. Many women, however, have become aware of their situation; and many have spontaneously expressed the desire to write.'

I beg you to spare myself and my friends from the illegal actions of the KGB agents.

Tatyana Mamonova

14 December 1979

## The Democratic Movement, Workers and Party Reformers

[We publish below the second part of a survey of the democratic movement in the USSR which first appeared in the unofficial journal *Poiski* (Searches; see page 5 of this issue for more information on *Poiski*). The first part of the article (published in our last issue) gave an overview of the movement, considered the problems of achieving united action and gaining agreement on a common platform, examined the problems of having a leading centre for the movement, and critically assessed the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group.

In the second part printed below, the authors assess the significance of the workers' opposition and relations between the democratic movement and reform-minded Party currents and liberals. The article was written by Pyotr Abovin-Egides and Pinkhos Podrabinek. Translation is by Labour Focus collaborators.]

### THE THIRD ATTEMPT

We have already mentioned the attempts to create a Free Trade Union. There have already been two such attempts. Now a third is being undertaken. They will all be unsuccessful so long as an understanding is not reached with the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and the Helsinki Group, the bodies which, as we have already stated, form the natural centre of the Democratic Movement.



Vladimir Borisov and Lev Volokhonsky, organisers of the Free Inter-Professional Association of Working People (SMOT). Volokhonsky was sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment in June 1979.

The first attempt to create a free trade union was undertaken by the Klebanov group. This group and those associated with it had come to the conclusion that the official trade unions in our country, 'transmission belts' of the Party and state, are incapable of defending the interests of workers against employers, that genuine trade unions cannot, by definition, be dependent on the state and the Party if they want to defend hired labour against the management, if they want to defend the interests of working people.

But this trade union had a number of serious inadequacies. The most important of these were:

1. It included people from various jobs—manual workers, white-collar workers, engineers and nurses—yet called itself a **trade union**.

2. Its members were, in the main, people who had been dismissed essentially because they had criticised the management and who were justifiably demanding their re-instatement. Therefore it was more a **union of the unemployed** than of workers. (Incidentally, this alone demonstrates the falsehood of the claim that there is no unemployment in the Soviet Union, a claim just as false as the assertion that sane individuals are not shut up in mental hospitals.) In itself, such a union of the unemployed is also an exceedingly important thing, but, it cannot, of course, replace a free trade union.

3. The members of the Free Trade Union were people from different towns and regions of the country. From one point of view this was a good thing, but from another it made it easy for the authorities to destroy it. The people involved were dispersed by the police to their own localities and shut up, mainly in mental hospitals, without any way of communicating with one another. (1)

4. The leaders of the Free Trade Union announced that they did not have anything to do with the dissidents, and they did indeed dissociate themselves from them. For their part, the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and the Helsinki Group neglected the Free Trade Union. The Klebanovites eventually realised that, without links with the dissidents and the civil rights defenders, they were completely defenceless. After all, the statements issued by the Free Trade Union leadership claiming that they were not dissidents and had no connection with the dissident movement failed to impress the authorities, who went straight ahead and threw them in jail. What is more, Klebanov himself has been so successfully shut away that no one even knows whether he is still alive or not. (2) Who will fight to have them released if not the civil rights defenders? The Klebanovites have now clearly realised that they made a mistake when they cut themselves off from the civil rights defence movement. This is incidentally yet another demonstration of how working people can only wage their economic struggle for material, economic and social advance in **conjunction with** the struggle for civil political rights and individual freedom, and, conversely, of how the struggle for democracy must be accompanied by a struggle for the immediate socio-economic interests of the working people.

Soon a second attempt was made to create an association of workers in the form of an independent trade union. Now we are witnessing a third attempt — in the form of an inter-trade association. We are profoundly convinced, as has already been stressed, that an essential pre-requisite for the success of such attempts is firm links between workers' organisations and the Democratic Movement, ie. its central groups. There must be an alliance between the Democratic Movement and the workers' (socio-economic) movement.

The campaign for Free Trade Unions must be conducted by serious, respectable individuals not likely to become involved in adventurist schemes. The Free Trade Union and the Inter-Professional Associations ought not to engage in political activities: their task is to defend the social, economic, material and spiritual interests of the working people. But, at the same time, they cannot do without the support of the civil rights movement.

Another extremely important condition for the success of any free association of workers is that its nucleus, its skeleton, should be composed of members actually **employed**, and not chiefly people who have been given the sack and are not at present working.

Lastly, and this is of no less importance, free trade unions should not be content with making statements but should seek out ways and means of really defending their members and rendering them different kinds of assistance. In Soviet conditions this is an extremely difficult and complicated matter. At the same time it is surely here that the key to success lies.

## DISSIDENTS, LIBERALS AND THE POWERS-THAT-BE

As we have already noted in passing, the future of Russia depends to a large degree on the interaction of dissidents and liberals (from among the intelligentsia and from among the workers). However, now that a substantial number of liberals have broken with the dissidents, there has been a tendency for each side to ridicule the other. Liberals label dissidents as Don Quixotes, hopeless utopians, people incapable of adapting to reality, thoughtless seekers of martyrdom. According to the dissidents, liberals lack imagination: they are ineffective, opportunistic, ready to bend with the wind, do whatever is demanded of them. And the authorities cunningly exploit this estrangement: it gives them yet another opportunity to employ their tactic of divide-and-rule.

It was Tolstoy who wrote 'Is there anything that men are not prepared to hold up to ridicule?' and Hegel wrote, 'is there anything that cannot be justified in some way?'. And we might add, is there no limit to the ways men attempt to reconcile themselves to reality? Thus some liberals, seeing how 'dividing and ruling' authorities deal with dissidents by trying them in courts which are to all intents and purposes secret, and learning that women in queues who complain about meat shortages are now being 'removed' by the employees of a certain organisation of the State, try to justify their position by arguing roughly along the following lines:

— Any person living in a community conforms to its laws, to the social, psychological climate, to the atmosphere in which he/she exists. It is not a matter of fear, cowardice or an incapacity for thought. Failure to conform (they reason) is a pathological characteristic.

— Our people will never rise up in revolt because of meat shortages. The only thing that would provoke them to this would be if they were forced to work. Since there is no danger of that happening, the present regime is stable, and so ... don't waste your time, mate, you might as well give up.

— All opposition groups suffer from the illusion that they have a monopoly on truth, and when they come to power they behave exactly like their predecessors. It is possible that dissidents too would do the same ...

We will leave aside the answer that if the Opposition brought about the replacement of dictatorship by democracy then it would be quite different from before, and that the dissidents are not seeking power of any kind. What the liberals with their fatalistic ideas fail to understand, is that the concessions which the government grants them from time to time only materialise because of the existence of the 'quixotic' Democratic Movement with its 'pathological' members. The government allows the publication of works by writers like Trifonov, Rasputin, Bitov, Abramov, Belov, Okudzhava and Tendryakov only because it is so afraid that they might 'desert' to the dissidents and join Solzhenitsyn, Nekrasov, Kopelev, Vladimov, Korzhavin, Kornilov, Voinovich et al. Similarly, the degree of 'toleration' which the authorities, despite their normally harsh, repressive policies, afford the

dissident movement is to be explained not only by their sensitivity to the feelings of democratic public opinion in the West, of socialists and Eurocommunists, but also by their fear of provoking violent reactions among the liberals. The latter are at least aware of the fact that once the government eradicated the dissident movement then they would be the next target: after all, otherwise there would be no 'enemies', and, come what may, you can't do without 'enemies'; who else is to bear the blame for all the policy failures at home and abroad?

All this ought to persuade dissidents and liberals to come together and overcome their estrangement, which serves the interests only of the totalitarians. If they do not do so, history will forgive neither side. Signs of an impending rapprochement are already evident. Those liberals who protested against the attempts to rehabilitate Stalin and against the trials of Sinyavsky and Daniel, who shouted themselves hoarse in praise of Solzhenitsyn and later foreswore the dissident cause, are now being replaced by a new generation — the liberals of the late seventies and early eighties. However, we consider that the former generation—the liberals of the sixties—is not lost forever: they are living through a spiritual crisis, a period of reflection over which path to choose. One would like to think that they have yet to say their last word. It would be a great mistake not to take them into account.

Despite their tendency to embrace any ideas which might serve to justify their inaction, the liberals cannot fail to notice that the economy is stagnating, that the queues are lengthening outside the foodshops, that a new cult of the leader is sprouting, and that the civil and socio-economic rights of the working people are being ignored.

The liberals cannot fail to ponder on the fact that the **verbal criticisms** made by the dissidents are met with '**armed criticism**' on the part of the authorities, ie. with prolonged incarceration in prisons and asylums; nor on the fact that the dissidents' demands for a **dialogue** with the authorities about the fundamental issues in the life of our society lead only to arrests and deportations. (3)

### Footnotes.

1. It is true that psychiatrists were soon obliged to free the majority of them once they had acknowledged that they were in good health. According to the engineer Koelova, the doctor said, 'Give up your struggle for justice or you will become a regular patient here, even though you are perfectly sane'. She replied: 'Well, and without justice how are we supposed to advance to communism?' At this the doctor did not reply and the others could only shrug their shoulders. The Klebanovites periodically gather together in Moscow and will continue to do so. This kind of thing cannot be prevented. If some are put in prison, another group springs up. The appearance of a free association of the working people is long overdue.

2. We think that the Helsinki Group and the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights must now undertake a big campaign for the release of Klebanov and other members of the FTUA.

3. Andropov was mistaken when he stated that the dissidents were afraid to approach the workers.

# POLAND

## The Leadership Crisis

By Peter Green

The removal from power of Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz and party secretary Stefan Olszowski at the end of the Polish United Workers' Party's 8th Congress indicates that the crisis of leadership within the Communist Party is growing more acute in the face of the country's deep economic and social crisis.

The Prime Minister's removal suggests that Gierk wishes to make up for his refusal to introduce radical economic reforms by

offering the population the head of the man responsible for implementing the party leadership's policies during the Gierk period. It would be hard to find a Pole who would mourn Jaroszewicz's political death. He has always been pushed into the limelight when unpopular economic issues have had to be explained and he has given an impression of authoritarian rigidity which has made him the butt of some of the most savage jokes about Poland's economic crisis. One small incident may il-

lustrate the former premier's style. Some years ago the Polish equivalent of the RSPCA campaigned against the employment of men to travel around the country shooting dogs. The men were employed in this way to give them something to do when not required for their real job: servicing the hunting lodges of the party leadership during the hunting season. Jaroszewicz, a voracious hunter, was so incensed by this interference that he personally ordered the Polish RSPCA to be closed down.

During the pre-congress discussion Gierek had hinted that major personnel changes may be near. At the first provincial party conference in the pre-congress campaign, held in Katowice on December 10th Gierek had declared: 'At all levels, starting with the Central Committee, party organisations must pay more attention to the problem of cadres.' And according to Trybuna Ludu, Jaroszewicz declared two days later at the Warsaw party conference: 'Many critical opinions have been made recently on the manner of running the economy, and an especially large number have been addressed to the government. We do not reject that criticism. We are trying to draw proper conclusions from it, knowing that faults occur in the work of the government too.' Despite an attack on the opposition outside the party in the same speech, many Western journalists saw the Premier's remark as a response to popular dissatisfaction. It now seems clear that he was responding to attacks from within the party.

The danger for Gierek in removing his premier was that this could only stimulate opponents to transfer their fire from the instrument of Party police to the source of that policy, Gierek himself and his closest lieutenants from his days in Upper Silesia. To prevent that, Gierek has ensured that criticism of Jaroszewicz be kept within strict limits. While the premier was not allowed to make his scheduled speech to the conference, Gierek's own closing speech contained warm words for the premier's efforts to grapple with the economy over the last 9 years and in an unprecedented move he has allowed the fallen premier to make a special appearance in Parliament during the week after the conference to reply to his critics. During the pre-congress discussion, Gierek also attempted to sooth the feelings of some of his own enemies inside the Party by for the first time giving public praise to the man he ousted in 1970, Wladislaw

G o m u l k a .

In some ways more significant than Jaroszewicz's downfall is the ousting of Stefan Olszewski from both the politburo and the secretariat. Olszewski at 49 was a potential rival to Gierek himself and seems to have been pushing for a radical economic reform as the only way out of the crisis. During the early 1970s he played an important role in Poland's drive for detente and an accompanying expansion of economic links with the West and he has been seen as the figure within the top leadership most open to a dialogue with sections of the opposition — he is widely believed to have been sympathetic to the circle known as 'Experience and the Future' which produced a lengthy critique of the Party's management of economic and social life last summer. As Party secretary for economic affairs he had apparently opposed the leadership's 'more-of-the-same' approach and his removal undoubtedly strengthens Gierek's own position for the immediate future.

The two other demotions from the politburo — those of Jozef Tejchma and Jozef Kepa — are of less significance. Both men have been marginalised for some time. Tejchma presented himself as the liberal while Minister of Culture while Kepa had been Warsaw Party boss since Gomulka's days and was widely seen as having particularly close relations with Moscow. But he was removed from his power-base in the factional struggle that followed the June 1976 upheaval.

Some Western press reports have presented the changes as a victory by the 'hardliners' over Gierek. The only clear sign of such a trend would seem to be the promotion of the Central Committee secretary for propaganda, Jerzy Lukaszewicz, to the politburo. Lukaszewicz is reputed to be highly

thought of in Moscow and is young enough to be a possible successor to Gierek.

But the immediate effects of the changes will be to strengthen the position of Gierek himself and his immediate circle. The premiership is likely to go to his long-time lieutenant from Katowice, Edward Babiuch. And Gierek should be well-pleased to have removed Olszewski from the scene.

On the wider political front, the regime's main concern must be the threat of explosive social discontent with Poland's deepening economic crisis. In tackling this problem, the party can hope for some help from the Catholic Primate. In a statement released at the beginning of January the Bishops declare that provided there is legal protection for those who 'express concern about the general good', then 'one could expect from the people greater patience and greater readiness to put up with shortages in the spirit of sacrifice for the people and the country'. There are signs that some sections of the Church hierarchy are taking a more restrictive attitude towards providing facilities for opposition gatherings.

There are indications that the regime is tightening the screw on some of the most wellknown opposition activists, while continuing its harsh drive against less prominent worker and peasant campaigners. On January 22nd appeals against short prison terms by 4 activists, Andrej Czuma, Wojciech Ziembinski, Jozef Jankowski and Bronislaw Komorowski, were rejected. The four were sentenced respectively to 3, 1½, and one month jail terms for their involvement in the demonstration to mark Polish independence day on November 11th. In the new international climate following the Afghan invasion and NATO's rearmament decisions this 'softly, softly' approach could be replaced by harsher repression.

## The Struggle for Independent Workers' Organisation in Gdansk

By Oliver MacDonald

Gdansk, the Baltic port famous for its shipbuilding industry, has become the centre of the struggle to create an independent working class movement in Poland. Following a large demonstration in the city last December to commemorate the massacre of more than 200 shipyard workers by the armed forces 9 years ago, attempts to victimise some of the participants provoked strike action both in the shipyard and at a large factory in the city.

On 27 November, the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) called for a commemorative demonstration to take place on 17 December. Such actions have been held every year in Gdansk since 1976 without serious police harassment, but this time, the police arrested and detained about 200 known activists just before the event was to take place. Nevertheless, between four and five thousand people gathered outside Number Two gate at the shipyard at 2.30 on 17 December for the commemoration. Though a Tuesday, the authorities had closed the shipyard, giving as the reason their need to comply with the government's energy-saving policy. Wreaths were laid and four speeches were delivered. One of the

speakers, Maryla Plonska, representing the Founding Committee of Free Trade Unions of the Baltic Seaboard, which helped to organise the demonstration, declared:

'If we forget December 1970, the sacrifice of those who then lost their lives would have been in vain. We must now draw the conclusion: learn to organise ourselves, defend workers' leaders, demand our rights. Among them is the right to free trade unions which we shall defend. We are learning how to struggle in solidarity and we have learned from our mistakes ... The organisers of the strike [of 1970] made many mistakes, but the authorities are guilty of crimes. There is no doubt that it was criminal to open fire against defenceless people deprived of the right to speak up or organise themselves freely. December 1970 has made us aware of our strength and our lives. Some of us paid the highest price for this knowledge — their lives ...'

Immediately after the commemoration, security forces removed the wreaths. Most of those arrested before the demonstration were released within 48 hours. But some, including Bogdan Borusewicz, the founder of the KOR supporters group in Gdansk,

have been released only recently.

The police authorities were evidently seriously concerned over the scope of the workers' protest movement. According to the **Appeal for the Polish Workers**, the police had arrested a number of shipyard workers before the demonstration, but released them in response to a strike threat from the shipyards. At the end of January they made a second move to victimise the worker activists, this time working through shipyard and factory managements.

On 31 January, the shipyard management ordered that Ms. Anna Walentowicz, a crane driver in W-2 Department be moved to other work outside the yards. (She is within a years of retirement and cannot therefore be made redundant under Polish law.)

Ms. Walentowicz is a member of the Founding Committee of Free Trade Unions and the workers in her department saw the move as an attempt at victimisation. Out of a total of 100 workers in W-2, 80 immediately struck for the remaining three hours of work that day, demanding that she should not be moved from the yard. They

planned to continue the action the following day, but when they arrived at work the next morning 80 party members from the shipyard managements were waiting for them. One manager attached himself to each of the strikers and personally supervised his work throughout the day. Meanwhile the management announced that they would not remove Ms. Walentowicz from the yard—she has worked there for 20 years—but would move her to another department.

The shipyard dispute followed an earlier attempt to make 20 workers (some reports put the figure at 25) redundant at the Elektromontaz factory in Gdansk. Announcing the move on January 21st the management of the 500 strong plant claimed the measure was economically necessary but many of the workers saw the action as an attempt to victimise the men for their involvement in the December demonstration at the shipyards. A five member workers' commission was established with the support of about 170 employees to fight the dismissals. It issued a declaration calling a mass meeting at the plant. Because of management disruption, 2 separate meetings took place, but on the initiative of commission members 4 demands were raised by the workers: that the 20 workers be allowed to keep their jobs; that any redun-

dancy proposals should be put to an elected shop stewards' committee as the authentic representative organisation of the workers; that no redundancies could take place unless equivalent work was first found for the workers concerned in another plant; and that the living standards of the workers should be protected from inflation by the indexation of wages on a quarterly basis.

The following day, a Friday, the workers' commission announced that a meeting would be held in the plant after lunch, at 2pm. The management first responded by threatening reprisals against those who attended, but then decided to close the plant at lunchtime. On the following Monday, the management promised to guarantee good jobs for all those declared redundant, though the guarantee has not been put in writing.

The militants at Elektromontaz have been able to draw directly on the experience of the shipyard workers in their great struggle of 1970-71: one of the leaders of the 5 man workers' commission, Lech Walesa, was one of the organisers of the 1970 shipyard strike and a member of the strike committee.

Both these defensive actions illustrate the growing unofficial trade union movement in Gdansk. In June 1976, after the shipyard

workers had downed tools for the day to hold a mass meeting on the Government's proposed price increases, the yard directors had been able to sack some 200 workers (though the severity of the sackings was reduced by the readiness of many of the clerical staff to fiddle the records of work cards to show that the workers had left voluntarily, before the June stoppage). Today such punitive action would be very dangerous.

A strike took place in the shipyards last October against a new wages scheme and the unofficial union activists have been pushing forward with a concrete programme of action against the anti-working class aspects of the new scheme. The programme is outlined in the leaflet spread through the shipyards last November, printed below in full.

A crucial factor in the development of an independent workers' movement in Gdansk will be the capacity of trade unionists in the West to make contact with and give support to the working class militants on the Baltic coast. Messages of support could be sent to the addresses given at the end of the leaflet.

## Leaflet to the Shipyard Workers

### TO THE SHIPYARD WORKERS

A new system of wages is to be binding in the Shipbuilding Combine from 1 November 1979. Over the next years it will determine the wages of thousands of people and the financial position of their families. The hurry with which the changes are being introduced leads us to suspect that this is an attempt to reform the economic system without any consideration of the workers' interests. This is substantiated by the strike which occurred after payment according to the new principles was made on 11 October in department K2 of the Gdansk Northern Shipyards. In this situation we think that:

1) Demands should be made for distribution of the full text of dispositions and resolutions which introduce changes in the wages system, including resolution no. 161 of the Council of Ministers and all dispositions implemented by the management.

2. In order that everyone can familiarise themselves with and appraise the meaning of these resolutions, their texts should be delivered to the teams at least two weeks before the discussion. It should be ensured that the minutes of the meetings should be taken and all motions should be written down. This is a condition for carrying them out. Even the best reorganisation carried out in a busy work period causes havoc. Introduction of a new system at the end of a year must increase disorganisation. In the interest of the people and of production targets, changes should be postponed until the new year.

3. We demand a clarification of whether the introduction of the new system should not be connected with termination of old work contracts and introduction of new ones in accordance with article 42 of the Employment Code. The discussion meetings should demand that:

(i) Time lost not caused by the workforce but resulting from lack of materials, fuel, gas etc., and breakdown of machinery and tools should be paid according to the mean of six-monthly wages (including overtime). For this reason every worker should have a precise job description with clearly defined duties and auxiliary

activities, work location, materials acquisition, tool replacement, etc.

(ii) Time lost not caused by the workforce was subtracted from working time, i.e. it caused displacement of deadlines. Therefore a) the time allowed for any specific task must take into consideration the more pessimistic estimate of waiting time for materials, tools etc., and b) in case of downtime in excess of 6 hours which is not caused by the workforce, the deadline should be extended by a whole working day.

(iii) Certified illness, holidays and absence for other legitimate reasons of members of work teams should result in postponing the deadlines.

(iv) The deadlines should be determined realistically, taking into account an 8-hour working day; and the monies to be paid for work should be based on the existing productivity norms.

(v) Entitlement to long-service bonuses obtained in professions harmful to health should be retained after change of profession.

4. What we want is to prevent the penalising of workers for the costs of organizational deficiencies, to prevent situations in which overrunning of deadlines would demand work in unpaid overtime hours. We want to alert the management to the fact that avoidance of discussion and disseminating information only about the positive aspects of the new system will result in disillusionment and tension. In case of any reprisals taken against persons putting forward these demands, the following should be notified:

**Founding Committee of the Free Trade Unions of Gdansk Region**  
**Editorial Board of 'Robotnik Wybrzeza' (Independent Periodical)**  
 Bogdan Borusewicz, Sopot, ul. 23 marca 9/24; Andrzej Bulc, Gdansk-Wrzeszcz, ul. Zamenhoffa 18/16; Joanna i Andrzej Gwiazda, Gdansk-Zabianka, ul. Weihera 3c/118; Halina Bienkowska, Gdansk-Wrzeszcz, ul. Fittelberga 8/3; Maryla Plonska, Gdansk-Wrzeszcz, ul. Weihera 3c/120; Anna Walentynowicz, Gdansk-Wrzeszcz, ul. Grunwaldzka 49/9; Lech Walesa, Gdansk-Stogi, ul. Wrzosy 26c/5.

Gdansk

25 October 1979



## Protest Over Mining Disasters

[The following leaflet was distributed in the mining area of Katowice in Upper Silesia following three very serious mining disasters that took place in a single month.

On 2 October, seven miners were killed and three others seriously injured at the Nowa Ruda Mine near Walbrzych. On 10 October an explosion at the Dymitrow Mine killed 33 and seriously injured 3 others. And on 30 October a fire in the Silesia Coal Mine killed an unknown number of miners — the figure is probably 22.

Some of Poland's mines remain old-fashioned — Nowa Ruda is at least 100 years old — and some are very near the maximum depth considered safe in the present state of technological knowledge. During the last decade there has been great and growing pressure to increase output, both to earn more hard currency from exports to help meet Poland's huge foreign debts and to make up for the sharpening oil shortage. Poland has thus not followed the Western practice of closing down less profitable mines or even those which could be considered unsafe.

At the start of January 1978 the four-brigade system was introduced into mining, allowing 24-hour production. Officially this was to be combined with both higher production targets and a shortening of the working week, but such a shortening depended on expanding the workforce by 11%. Since in 1978 coal face workers increased by only 2% it is fairly certain that hours have not declined. It is thus very likely that these disasters had social causes. Furthermore, two of the mines had already faced recent serious disasters: 32 died at the Silesia Coal mine in June 1974 and 17 died while 35 were injured at Nowa Ruda in September 1976.

The author of the leaflet, Kazimierz Switon, is one of the best known activists in the Free Trade Union Committees in Poland. The leaflet has been slightly abbreviated by the Appeal for the Polish Workers who made the English translation available to Labour Focus.]

Within only one month in Silesia three major mining accidents occurred. Several dozen miners lost their lives but the exact number is not known,

### Trial of Workers' Leader

As we go to press, the trial of Edmund Zadrozynski, the workers' leader from Grudziadz has begun (25 February).

Zadrozynski, who has been in prison for 8 months, is accused of inciting others to engage in criminal acts such as burglaries. One of the principal prosecution witnesses, his own son,

apparently suspected of burglary by the police, was due to testify that his father had incited him. But on the trial's first day, the son repudiated his pre-trial testimony and declared that far from ever pressurising him to steal, his father had tried to persuade him to get a job. The son also stated in court that the prosecutor had promised him freedom if he testified against his father.

Edmund Zadrozynski is the leader of one of the strongest unofficial workers' movements in Poland and an editor of the newspaper **Robotnik** (The Worker). More than 250 workers from the plant where he used to work have protested against his arrest. (See **Labour Focus** Vol.3 No.5 on the background to the case.)

since the censorship stopped publication of the true facts. Evidently Party functionaries are afraid to reveal that there are mines in which the 4-shift system has been introduced, despite protests from the miners themselves. This system leaves no time to carry out the necessary repairs and secure your safety, it deprives you of free Sundays and disorganizes leisure and family and religious life. You, mothers and wives of the miners, know it best. You, miners, understand well that our system has nothing to do with socialism, it is state capitalism in which there is no room for concern for workers' well-being. Miners are not important, the only thing that counts is the coal that can be exchanged for dollars. The red bourgeoisie profits by your sweat, your injuries and often your lives. At the expense of working people they build themselves palaces equipped with modern gadgets imported from the West. It is they who build the luxury Party House at the cost of one thousand flats for which you have to wait for years. The Party excuses itself with lack of resources but does not spare money to develop the police forces which recruit healthy young men to spread fear and lawlessness in society instead of employing them in useful work. There is no money, however, to spend on work safety. You are treated as black slaves.

Do not let yourselves be exploited! Do not wait for the Party trade unions whose duty it is to defend you: they only—for your money—help the state to exploit you! We have a right to free, independent trade unions. This right is guaranteed by the Polish Constitution and the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights.

**Only strong and well-organised free trade unions are able to protect you successfully from state exploitation. Only then can lead the country out of the present crisis.**

There exist Committees of Free Trade Unions in Gdansk, Katowice, and Szczecin. Contact the Free trade Unions in Katowice, ul. Mikolowska 30 m.7, where every Thursday at 6 pm activists and supporters meet together. I invite all who need help and who feel the need to act in defence of their rights, Only together can we make the authorities respect human and civil rights.

Kazimierz Switon, Ul. Mikolowska 30 m.7, Katowice.  
Katowice

10 November 1979

# CZECHOSLOVAKIA

## Charter 77 Declaration on Movement's 3rd Anniversary

[On the third anniversary of its foundation, Charter 77 issued the following statement on its standpoint. As the end of the document indicates, the Charter has decided to expand its number of spokespeople beyond the number—3—who have acted as representatives of the movement in the past. At the same time three main spokespeople will still operate: Rudolf Battek, a member of the Independent Socialists current, Marie Hromadkova, a former Communist Party official of working class origin, and Milos Rejchrt, a Protestant clergyman. They have taken over from Zdena Tominova, Jiri Hajek and Ladislav Hejdanek, though the latter remain among the wider team of spokespeople.]

If we think back over the first three years of Charter 77 and try to review our activities we can say that it lives on and is active despite various errors and, more particularly, despite the constant and society. In the context of the historical situation at that time we understood that the defence of human and civic rights was an important prerequisite for an inalienable existence, free from repressive manipulation. Moreover, it is an essential condition of non-conformist social and cultural activity which, to a large extent, determines the preservation not only of the human and civic identity of the individual but also of national identity in the spirit of European cultural traditions.

Photo: Palach Press Ltd.



We believed, and still believe, that by directly defending human and civic rights Charter 77 is able to erect a barrier against the general growing demoralisation and become a force of new hope for the people and for our nation. After three years one can say that Charter 77 has essentially lived up to this mission even though

there have been setbacks on this road.

We maintain that the declaration of Charter 77 was not only a landmark in the so-called normalisation era after 1969 but a qualitatively new phenomenon in our post-war period. Charter 77 has united people with an ethical and civic responsibility in our country going beyond world outlooks, political ideologies and religious beliefs. This occurred without historical recriminations on an ideological basis and was intended to be worthy of the heritage of the ideas and ethics of Czech and Slovak history and their great personalities. It was therefore no coincidence that the philosopher Jan Patočka, a great thinker and a person with unquestionable moral authority, was one of those who stood at the helm of Charter 77.

In essence the activity of Charter 77 is not concerned directly with the political sphere; if individuals or groups of citizens supporting recently escalated attempts by the state authorities to destroy it by trying to turn it into a merely formal surviving body.

We even believe that a steadily increasing number of people in our country understand its historic significance and topical mission. The events of the past six months have contributed to this substantially since the political authorities themselves revealed all the aspects of Charter 77 to which they object most strongly, namely the systematic and consistent defence of basic human and civil rights as regards concrete human beings. This was the fundamental reason for the publication of Charter 77 three years ago. At that time we were fully aware of the fundamental importance of the values characterised as human rights, for the life of man as a human being guided by pure ethics and responsible to Charter 77 combine their civic activities with political objectives they are doing so on the basis of their own personal ideological stance going beyond the aims and meaning of Charter 77. In such cases Charter 77 acts objectively only as a catalyst even though it considers its duty to defend also those citizens who are seeking political solutions within the law for the present situation of Czechoslovak society.

Charter 77 is based on the legal system of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as a sovereign state. It has no intention of changing the existing social system, on the contrary, it wants to consolidate Czechoslovak statehood by pressing for the observance of laws guaranteed to its citizens by the Constitution of the Republic which international pacts on human and political rights supplement and specify in a mandatory manner. In the words of Jan Patočka, 'the declaration of Charter 77 is truly also an expression of the joy of citizens that Czechoslovakia has ratified the covenant on human and political rights in 1976 and has thus enshrined it in its political system'

Following the gruesome experience of mankind in the twentieth century, marked by a systematic genocide of horrific dimensions and complete disregard for human life which has undeniably been the worst iniquity of mankind, the defence of human and civic rights as the innate objective of Charter 77 makes it our duty to stress the defence of the fundamental rights of man to life. One of the paramount objectives of the struggle against fascism during World War II was to free man of the feeling of stress and fear and this demand is as urgent today as it was then.

Charter 77 intends to continue to stand up for the right of every human being to a free life in accordance with his or her conscience and human values and not on the basis of repressively enforced standards.

A free and creative life, based on pure ethics, without which the existence of man as an ethical human being with a social responsibility is impossible, is in the interests of every cultured and prospering state and social system. If we recall the wider social impact of human and civic rights in keeping with the spirit and letter of the relevant UN Covenants, this demand is not excessive, let alone subversive. The past three years were nevertheless marked by a growing effort by the obtuse authorities to repress Charter 77, slander it and disrupt it from within. Many of our friends were

unjustly imprisoned or directly or indirectly driven out of their country, not to speak of other forms of persecution and discrimination which, in a civilised country, should not be the common norm. The authorities, which in this illegal manner exercise their claims to absolute domination over society and individual citizens and ruthlessly repress all, even the often very modest attempts at independent human and civil existence, make our efforts to conduct an effective dialogue with the state institutions illusory. Nevertheless, we insist on our right and our duty to defend our own human and civil rights and those of all citizens of our Republic because we are convinced that their fundamental human and moral significance far transcends any political practice. We believe that the very meaning of our personal lives and the existence of our nation as bearers of European cultural traditions are involved in this; in defending human and civil rights, we are not deliberately seeking a conflict with the political authorities. Our conviction that the future will demonstrate the correctness of our views, of our belief in the justice of our cause, gives us hope and the strength to continue at all costs.

Charter 77 enters the fourth year since the declaration of its views more internally unified, despite all blows, and with a clearer understanding that human and civil rights lie at the heart of meaningful existence, not only for those who actively defend them, but for all people in this country. Their defence cannot therefore in the nature of things be a direct instrument in any kind of political struggle; our motives are moral and human in the most literal sense.

Today, in the light of our experiences over the past three years, we are more clearly aware that even a small space won for independence and free activity is a space of genuine life — and this, despite all the negative trends in present-day civilisation and the disruptive effects of an undemocratic political system. We seek solutions which are not merely local and for the moment. The Czechs and Slovaks have already lived for over eleven centuries as cultural nations of Europe.

1979 marked a turning point for Charter 77, and despite attempts to destroy it—which have had sad consequences for some of our friends—it has demonstrated its vitality and value precisely in the sphere that is most its own. It has activated a number of young people who are not burdened by the past and ideologies; for them, Charter 77 should provide in our closed society some space for a life which has meaning and is not manipulated.

It has been confirmed that Charter 77 is not a union of opposition forces, but that it genuinely speaks for those for whom it was intended from the outset, offering them a way out of the labyrinth of all-pervading manipulation, fear, and resignation.

The experience of Charter 77 activity in the past period gives us no reason to feel any need to change our methods. However, the Charter 77 community has grown considerably. It has, therefore, become necessary to invite some more signatories, who have promised their cooperation, to join the group of spokespersons. This is being done in harmony with the original idea that every Charter 77 signatory is its potential spokesperson. We believe that this will benefit our work, as well as strengthen the elements of cooperation and democracy.

The group of Charter 77 spokespeople consists, as of today, of: Rudolf Battek, Jiri Bednar, Vaclav Benda (currently in prison), Jiri Dienstbier (currently in prison), Zina Freundova, Jiri Hajek, Vaclav Havel (currently in prison), Ladislav Hejdanek, Marie Hromadkova, Vendelin Komeda, Ladislav Lis, Milos Rejchrt, Jan Ruml, Jaroslav Sabata (currently in prison), Zdena Tominova. (The names of other members of the group of spokespersons will be published in a future statement.) In the immediate future, Charter 77 documents will be signed by Rudolf Battek, Krizikova 78/530, 180 00 Prague 8; Marie Hromadkova, Prague 4-Jizni Mesto, Kolskeho 1937 objekt 2801/5,16; Milos Rejchrt, Vrsni 60, 182 00 Prague 8 - Kobylisy.

(Translation Copyright Palach Press Ltd.)

## VONS Statement on Appeal Court hearing

[On 20 December the Czechoslovak Supreme Court rejected the appeals by 6 VONS members sentenced at a trial which attracted world-wide publicity last October. The sentences were: Petr Uhl, 5 years; Vaclav Havel, 4½ years; Vaclav Benda, 4 years; Otta Bednarova and Jiri Dienstbier, 3 years; and Dana Nemcova, a two-year sentence suspended for 5. Petr Uhl was sentenced to a 'strict regime'.

We print below the part of a lengthy VONS communiqué of 28 December which explains what happened at the Supreme Court hearing. See also the Labour Movement section of this issue. The VONS communiqué was made available by Palach Press and translated for Labour Focus by Mark Jackson.]

Immediately after the hearing opened, Petr Uhl and Vaclav Benda raised an objection about the prosecutor's lack of independence, claiming that JUDr. Balas had played a part in deciding the length and nature of the sentences. They cited art.71 of the Criminal Code, according to which remand in custody beyond a two-month period has to be decided by a superior prosecutor. Balas had in fact played a quite disproportionate role in the proceedings; he decided on the removal of the defendants to prison and on the prolongation of their remand in jail. Furthermore, he had supervised investigations and taken part in the main trial. The Senate of the Court rejected this submission on the grounds that the procuracy was a monolithic organ and the court was independent. In the course of the proceedings, JUDr Klouza objected on behalf of all the defendants and their lawyers that the members of the bench were materially interested in the case, since they had taken part in some of the trials mentioned in VONS communiqués. After a recess of one hour the bench decided that this objection was not justified.

In giving her (perfunctory and often inaccurate) account of the business in hand, the President of the Court ignored that fact that the Prague City Court had not attempted, at the trial itself, to deal with either the subjective or objective aspects of the criminal

activity at issue. Thus, not one single VONS communiqué had been read to the court; and the accused and their lawyers had met with no responses when, on numerous occasions, they had requested that some attempt be made to arrive at the truth through an objective analysis of the VONS documents. The appeal judges accepted the prosecution claim that these matters (the question of proof) were outside the competence of the appeal proceedings. The court also rejected Jiri Bednar's request that the editor of the French edition of *Listy*, Jean-Jacques Marie, should be allowed to give evidence. (Marie had come to Czechoslovakia in order to testify that he had published certain VONS texts without the knowledge of their authors.)

In his closing speech, JUDr. Balas concentrated exclusively on the political side of the case, characterising the defendants as enemies of society and of the state system, and demanding that the court reject the appeal. The legal measures taken by the court against the defendants were described as an expression of the inalienable right of states to defend their economic system through effective means. He referred in this respect to the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter.

In their closing speeches, the defence lawyers laid emphasis above all on the lack of serious proof. Again referring to the fact that the court had not seen fit to consider any VONS communiqués in detail, they argued that the principle of specific proof and due establishment of the facts (laid down in paras. 177 and 220 of the Criminal Code), as well as the principle of the assumption of innocence, had been violated at the trial. They asked for the complete quashing of the sentences.

Next, the appellants made brief statements. Petr Uhl's wife, Anna Sabatova, referred to the spontaneous opposition to the trial which had come from progressive world opinion. She told the court how a re-creation of the trial had been staged in a Paris theatre, based on recollections by relatives of the accused.

## Police Sabotage Kriegel's Funeral

In an unprecedented demonstration of its own bankruptcy, the Czechoslovak Party leadership prevented the holding of a funeral for Dr. Frantisek Kriegel who died of a heart attack on 3 December last year.

Kriegel, one of Czechoslovakia's most renowned Communist militants, fought in Spain and in China against the Japanese, led the workers' militia in February 1948, organised the health service in Cuba after the revolution and alone among the Czechoslovak Party Presidium refused to sign the agreement accepting the Soviet occupation in 1968. He remained an active

founder-member of Charter 77 until his death at the age of 71.

The regime evidently feared that his popularity could lead to a large turn-out for his funeral. On the day of his death the funeral offices were prohibited from making arrangements for his funeral. The following day the line changed: the family was banned from holding a funeral in the local crematorium where all who die on the right bank of the Vltava are cremated; instead, any funeral would have to take place on the outskirts of Prague at Motol. Furthermore, it would be allowed only at 7 a.m. on the 6th of December.

Meanwhile funeral offices had been put under police surveillance and before 7 a.m. on the 6th of December the police surrounded the Motol crematorium.

Thus was the funeral effectively banned. Dr. Kriegel's widow refused to go ahead with a funeral for her husband on such insulting and humiliating terms. One of the Charter 77 leaders, Jiri Ruml, commenting on these events pointed out that 'shortly after the bloody coup in Chile even a man like Pinochet permitted the public funeral of the late poet Pablo Neruda'.

## Danisz is Sentenced

The well-known Czech human rights lawyer Josef Danisz, who was suspended from the bar last June for his firm defence activity, was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment on 24 January by a court in Hradec-Kralove district. In addition, a fine of 300 crowns was imposed on him for challenging the court's competence, and two more years have been added to his three years' suspension from the bar.

The prosecution case, which sought to show that Danisz is 'a danger to society', rested on a quite perverse and unprecedented application of the criminal code supported by virtually no concrete evidence. Thus, it was alleged that he 'grossly slandered' a magistrate by describing as unconstitutional the procedure at the 1978 trial of his client Jiri Chmel, a young Charter 77

supporter. However, there was absolutely no discussion of the procedure actually employed at this trial, and no evidence was given about the words Danisz used in the relevant private conversation with the trial judge. The second charge, which referred to the same conversation, alleged that Danisz 'grossly attacked and slandered a state body for exercising its functions'. In fact, Danisz had merely repeated to the judge Chmel's assertion that he had been beaten up by plain-clothes policemen and left in a deserted spot outside Prague. Yet, once again, no attempt was made to ascertain the truth about Chmel's treatment at the hands of the police. The very act of lodging a complaint—by a lawyer, in a private conversation—was deemed to make Danisz 'a danger to society'.

This crude attempt by the Husak regime to

intimidate the Czechoslovak legal profession has aroused considerable protest in France. Jean-Yves Le Borgne and Jean-Alain Michel, two lawyers acting on behalf of the Paris Bar Association, flew to Prague in an effort to attend Danisz's trial ... only to be turned away on the now-standard pretext that the courtroom was full. In Paris, itself, a number of prominent lawyers, including two members of the Communist Party, held a press conference to protest at the verdict.

After the trial, Josef Danisz immediately gave notice of appeal against the sentence, and in the meantime remains at liberty.

By Patrick Camiller

# HUNGARY

## The New Mechanism: A Balance-Sheet

[In November 1979 a representative of the Austrian Wiener Tagebuch, a journal which represents 'eurocommunist' views, interviewed three prominent Hungarian left-wing intellectuals, Andras Hegedüs, Tamás Földvári and Zoltán Zsille about their views on the Hungarian economy. The participants were:

**András Hegedüs:** born 1922. During the War a member of the illegal Communist youth organisation. Sentenced to two years' imprisonment for his activities. From 1955 till 1956 he was Prime Minister. Afterwards sociological and economic research. From 1963 till 1968 leader of the Hungarian Academy's Sociological Research Group. 1973 expelled from the Party because of his critical writings. Now lives as a pensioner in Budapest.

**Tamás Földvári:** born 1939. Sociologist. Studied in Budapest, Leningrad and Oxford. Worked in the institute headed by Hegedüs in the sixties. Has published scientific and economic/sociological works. Works at educational research centre.

**Zoltán Zsille:** born 1942. Studied philosophy and sociology. Worked in Sociology Institute and then as an industrial sociologist in a telephone factory. 1973 he protested against the sacking of critical sociologists and philosophers. Expelled from the Party in 1974. In 1975 he lost his job as a professor at the Institute of Management. Since has had casual jobs. Primary field of publication - industrial sociology.

The translation for Labour Focus is by Ed Murphy.]

**How much success and how much failure have the 12 years of economic reforms brought? How should they be seen today, from the historical perspective throughout Eastern Europe?**

**Hegedüs:** Actually one should go back to the middle of the sixties, to a time when, mainly under the influence of neo-liberal economists, who also played a significant role in the power structure, various reforms were set in motion. Originally the main theme was the re-establishment of market relations. In Hungary, the decision to implement economic reform was taken in 1967. The reform period did not last long without disturbances; only until 1970, when criticisms were raised inside the Party and an anti-reform wing crystallized. In November 1970 the opponents of reform won a majority in the Central Committee. Amongst the first counter-reform measures was the attack on the private secondary economy. At the same time the power of the specialized ministries increased and the independence of the factories was reduced.

A new period began around 1974-75, when it was realized that the measures against the

private sector had had disastrous consequences. These branches of the economy were given support once again. Because of the increase of the price of oil and our unfavourable balance of trade with the West, our prices had to be brought closer to world prices. Unlike in 1968-70, world market prices were mainly passed on from the central bureaucratic institutions to the factories. That was not so rigid: it appeared as if market relations were determined directly. Through this, special interests achieved broad room to manoeuvre.

**What do you think, Tamás? Have the reforms brought any progress?**

**Földvári:** Yes, certainly; but looking back it must be said the reforms were half-hearted, right from the beginning. I think that even then it was clear to many leading functionaries that it is impossible to reform the economy whilst leaving political institutions untouched. Political reform was taboo, however, especially after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968. At the time it was stressed that economic reform had absolutely nothing to do with politics. At the same time, however, there was an ideological development. It was recognized that the Party is not always capable of recognizing social interests but that these are determined through the struggle between interest groups, and these interest groups acquired legitimacy. But, at least as far as the 'official' ideologists were concerned, this was not taken to its final consequences; if one recognizes the existence of interest groups then one must allow them to organize themselves. The political representation of these groups is the precondition for the functioning of such a mechanism.

Thus an economic model was established but its political implications were ignored. This was due to the international political situation. It was seen that even where a more modest reform of the economy had been set in motion, but at the same time the political institutions were changed—as in Czechoslovakia in 1968—far-reaching consequences had to be reckoned with. To be precise: as early as 1968 it was clear that our reforms were doomed to failure, because of their half-heartedness. We did not think, however, that it would happen so quickly. In my view, one of the main reasons for the failure was that the over-large heavy industry factories showed signs of disintegration. The workers left them, which caused chaotic conditions. Their output fell well under their targets.

Since 1969 real incomes have gone up by 3 to 4% annually. Bearing this in mind, how do you see the results of the reforms, Zoltán?

**Zsille:** If one considers what the main aims

of the reforms were, then I think they failed right at the beginning, in 1968. I think that the advocates of reform—or at least some of them—really believed in the success of an (albeit limited) reform programme. They assumed that it would be easier to assert rationality in the economy. Today, however, I can see nothing rational in a plan whose starting point is the big factories, which in their targets and structure are basically militarized, which squander a large part of national resources and labour and which are extending themselves in a parasitical fashion throughout the economy.

If one is going to set up factories the size of a complete industrial directorate then the directorates should be abolished and the factories given independence. Instead, people who previously worked in the state administration or economic centres, were sent into the factories to work as specialists. There they continued their bureaucratic style of work. Whilst staff were being cut down in the ministries and in the Party's economic apparatus the same people were playing a major role in the new economic policy. They had gained their experiences as civil servants and saw the reforms, by which they lost their senior positions, as a defeat. Of course, most of them did not admit it.

**Hegedüs:** I am not in complete agreement with that. At the time opponents of the reforms won, in November 1972, they failed to achieve two things: firstly the 'purging' of the reformist economists, although some of them were given other posts, where they were also active and able to help get rational ideas pushed through; and secondly it proved impossible to eradicate the spirit of reform completely.

**Zsille:** I disagree with that.

**Földvári:** Besides it would have been impossible to have admitted that the reforms had failed. The 'old tune' continued to be played.

**Hegedüs:** No, it was not played any more. From the beginning of 1972 until the end of 1975 there was no mention of the reforms from the official side. You are right in as far as they were not criticised either. It was simply forgotten that reforms had been started in 1968. On the other hand, since 1976 there has been renewed talk about reform and I think that that is very important.

Neither the political power structure nor the persons involved have changed very much. There has been a shifting of positions between individual groups, but has there been any change in the total strategy?

**Hegedüs:** The changes affected different

groups to a different extent. Between 1968 and 1970, the true reform period, things improved greatly for the people employed in the more dynamic factories. The young workers left the backward factories in droves and many of the old factories began to lag behind and to become obsolete. As the government supported the private economy the situation of the population of the villages changed by 80 to 90%. I am not talking about changes in the power structure, but about those which actually affected the population. After November 1972 the wages of the workers were raised considerably overnight, for which there was no cover at the time. We are now feeling the effects of this. These burdens, the rise in the cost of oil, and other factors, have led to an increase in the state's debts, which the government has to cover.

**Zsille:** The wage rises were the result of the workers' successful economic struggles. Their most important method of struggle was that of changing jobs, going to factories with better conditions, by and large cooperative factories in the non-state sector, that is the 'den of vice'. If these subsidiary factories were shut down, either because they were fought by the state administration or because they were unprofitable, then the workers went back to their old workplaces, this time, however, receiving the higher wages they had previously demanded in vain.

**Földvári:** At the time the reforms were being prepared, between 1965 and 1968, when many people were analysing the mechanisms of the economy and demonstrating the weaknesses of the system of central planning and directing, as broad layers who are otherwise politically apathetic began to grasp the problems involved, then it was possible to awake a certain interest in the new system and a certain optimism amongst wide layers and that was certainly positive. The reforms increased the system's capacity to function, which created a relatively calm and balanced political atmosphere for some time. The bad thing was that long overdue changes were postponed. The whole thing was posed as a purely economic question.

In Hungary between 1967 and 1975, and to a certain extent up till today, only economic questions were discussed. In the past ten years it has been possible to provoke public discussion on economic questions. There is a tacit consensus that politics are taboo and therefore not worth discussing.

**Hegedüs:** I would not blame the reforms for this situation. I would say that a form of economic centralism has existed in the countries of Eastern Europe right from the beginning. The social significance of economic development has always been exaggerated. Even after it had become possible to satisfy the population's basic needs there was little discussion on the organisation of society, style of life and the consumerism model.

**Do you not think this could be because Eastern Europe lagged behind and, therefore was forced to make rapid progress after the war? Then came the Cold War. Wasn't this the reason for the emphasis on heavy industry, which caused the mistakes?**

**Hegedüs:** One should not forget that large-scale industrialization began in the late 19th century in parts of Eastern Europe and the Western part of Tsarist Russia. Hungary, for example, had a relatively developed infrastructure at the beginning of the Second World War. Of course, the war caused great damage. But it is scarcely possible to say what our societies would have been capable of if they had not seen themselves forced to place so much emphasis on armaments. This put our countries in an unfavourable position in respect to the West. Whenever I read Western economists' analyses of Eastern Europe I am annoyed that they ignore the fact that the economy here is, to a large extent, an armaments economy whereby a much smaller economic potential is in competition with a much larger one.

**The Hungarian political leadership, which was proud of the successes of the reforms and the increase in the standard of living took a great risk in raising prices overnight in the summer of 1979. In January new price increases should follow. The leadership blames other factors. How long can one follow such a course without provoking reactions more serious than griping in the bars?**

**Zsille:** I do not favour the idea that the worse things are the better. But I notice that, after a long period of political apathy, people are beginning to open their eyes, now that their situation is worsening. It is now realized that the paternalist police humour, according to which we work little but live well, applies not only to idlers but also to those who work hard. Whilst the slow increase in the standard of living was presented as a gift of the state, the government has been guilty of much neglect and has squandered a great part of our resources on things which make us poorer. Now, after the failure of the economy has become obvious, people see perhaps more clearly that they have to rely on themselves. They see that, in reality, economic progress is not assured, that the leadership does not know what to do about the 'concentration' of the influences of the world economy. Should there be an outbreak of dissatisfaction, the government knows no answer other than a demonstration of force.

**Földvári:** Zoltán is speaking here for those people who have been 'woken up' recently. Certainly many people are beginning to think like him. The leadership of the State claims that external factors are responsible for the serious situation; and to an extent our own indolence and negligence. However, where I do not agree with Zoltán: there are still plenty of people, perhaps even

the majority, whose dissatisfaction is restricted to moaning in bars. There are also sections of the intelligentsia who keep quiet because they are privileged. Also there are groups who can largely compensate for the price increases through their activities in the secondary (private and black) economy. They are climbing up the inflationary spiral, which is becoming steeper. Thus dissatisfaction is not general.

Zoltán judges public opinion more realistically than the authorities do. One must, however, see public opinion as differentiated. Unfortunately, we do not have an institution which could research public opinion. We have to rely on personal impression.

**Hegedüs:** I must say that the price increases of last summer were absolutely essential. It would have been better if they had been implemented a year earlier; but at least it wasn't a year later. In this respect we have to recognize that the Hungarian economic leadership has been more courageous than, for example, the Polish. I agree one must bring the reasons for the worsening of the economic situation more into the open. The press writes a lot about the lack of work discipline: I see the most important problem as being the development of bureaucratic structures in the economy, which are beyond any control, including that of the Party. The population, even the government, have no idea how great the waste is. I consider it a merit of Hungarian economic policy that the price increases did not go together with a cutback in the production and import of consumer goods. That the population took the price increases so quietly was due not least to the fact that we do not have such goods shortages as other Eastern states. Nobody who has a feeling of responsibility towards our society could wish to see price increases leading to unrest. Our only realistic orientation can be for as many people as possible who can think and act independently — intellectuals, workers' organisations, the workers themselves — to prod the economic leadership itself into analysing the causes of the present difficulties. Incidentally, I agree with those economists who say we should consciously plan for a long period of 'no growth'.

**Such views can also be heard in the West. You, Andras, obviously see this system, this leadership, as reformable. Do you think it can allow a certain autonomy and the real articulation of interests?**

**Hegedüs:** There are serious forces in the leadership and in the economic bureaucracy who want a rational reform of the economy. It is another thing whether or not the political leadership will tolerate the formation and existence of autonomous movements, without which significant social reforms are unthinkable.

## EESC Protests Sakharov Arrest

In a statement published in **Labour Weekly and Tribune**, the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign called on local Labour Parties, trade unions and other labour movement organisations to protest against the exiling of Dr Sakharov and the arrest of many other human rights activists and trade unionists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The statement pointed out that if concern in the labour movement was to be effective it must be brought to the notice of the Soviet government which is sensitive to grass root reaction in the West.

The statement concluded: 'It is of the utmost importance that the British Labour movement

should make its position known on this issue. This alone will make it unequivocally clear that socialists stand for human rights **everywhere**, unlike President Carter, Mrs. Thatcher, the Soviet government and its apologists in the West who merely practice a double standard: they condemn oppression, persecution and torture in some countries while condoning them in others.'

## QC in Prague for VONS Appeal

The Charter 77 Defence Committee sent one of Britain's most distinguished socialist lawyers, John Platts-Mills QC to Prague for the appeal hearing by six VONS members in November.

Mr. Platts-Mills is the President of the Haldane Society to which some 500 members of the legal profession belong, and is a Vice-President of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the body to which lawyers associations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are attached.

Mr. Platts-Mills was expelled from the Labour Party while an MP in 1948 for flying to Prague in February 1948 and hailing the victory of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in the February events of that year.

Some of the highest functionaries in the Czech judicial system know Mr. Platts-Mills very well, though their behaviour during his recent visit would have suggested otherwise. Jan Nemeč, the Minister of Justice, for example, worked closely with the British lawyer in Paris some years ago when they were both heads of Soviet Friendship Societies in their respective countries and collaborated in attempts to establish an international co-ordination of Friendship Societies. Josef Ondrej, the Head of the Czech lawyers' union is another long-time associate of Mr. Platts-Mills through their joint work in the IADL. The British lawyer has made a number of official trips to Prague, the two most recent being to be briefed by Czechoslovak organisations in order to go to Baghdad and to Chile to act on behalf of political prisoners in those countries.

Yet as his own account of his trip to Prague shows, the Czechoslovak authorities were prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to harass him and prevent him from attending the VONS appeal hearing.

The report on his trip which we print below was given at the press conference on his return from Prague on 21 December. Near the beginning he mentions his efforts to talk to Madame Dojčerová — she was the presiding judge during the VONS appeal hearing. Later he mentions an old friend of his, Jiri Hajek, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s and a spokesperson for Charter 77; he also mentions Zdena Tominová, another Charter 77 spokesperson.

## Report on Trip to Prague — By John Platts-Mills QC

When I arrived in Prague, I went to see the British ambassador, with whom, it turned out, I had played in a fathers' match at a little boys' school. Bearing an introduction from him to the lady chairman of the court of appeal, Dojčerová, I made my way to the courthouse, getting there at 5 p.m. on the eve of the hearing. An aide said they would try to fix a meeting if I came early the next day. So the next morning at half-past eight, only four of the relatives of the accused had managed to get into the building.

Using my introduction, I and a French woman lawyer were able to get a footing inside. I was informed that the judge was busy in court, but that it should be possible to arrange a meeting later in the day. It seemed rather a waste of time staying, so I set off to meet some of the Embassy staff. Outside, some 50 people were being moved on by a lot of armed police; while inside, 30 police in uniform were checking everybody before turning them out, and photographing any newcomers. The police were very businesslike, uncouth to a degree that I don't think I have ever encountered before.

Later, I went to meet the Minister, Jan Nemeč, whom I had already met before in connection with some lawyers' activity. He said that he did not recall meeting me; there was a lot of scurrying around, and then I was told that it was the Minister's wedding anniversary and that there was a lot of trouble in the building. What they were trying to say, without actually saying it, was that I hadn't a hope of getting into the trial.

Finally, the message came back that the Minister would send me to the head of the Bar Counsel, Josef Ondrej, whom I had also known for some years past from the International Association of Democratic Lawyers to which he has been the Czech delegate since 1968. So off I went, this time with more confidence, back to the Supreme Court. However, the police tried to turn us out at once — the hotel had kept my passport so they had a ground for complaint. But when my Austrian companion, who spoke Czech, brought out the note to Ondrej, there was a complete change of front and we were most courteously invited to sit down. We thought we were doing rather well ... until these two very brash secret policemen in plain clothes came over, each with a group of 5 or 6 armed policemen, and demanded that we should go at once. We tried to ask why, but they merely insisted that we should leave.

Eventually, we were taken by police-car to the central police headquarters, where nobody spoke anything but Czech. These were quite arbitrary arrests, of course, contrary to the law in any country that one knows of. I was kept for an hour while the Austrian was interrogated: when this was over, they took him straight to the border, stopping only to pick up his luggage. Then I was interrogated at length by a sensible and senior chap—the brusque young men had all disappeared—who really wanted to know about my past history. After I had spent about an hour writing this down, along came some very senior chap who treated me to a little homily, describing my character as not only honourable, but even noble in

relation to Czechoslovakia. He said that some persons whose motives were by no means straightforward had been misusing my character and my position for their own purposes. Nonetheless, he presented me with his utmost apologies and even thanked me for being so very patient with them.

About four minutes after my release, while I was walking back to my hotel, a presentable young man came up beside me and offered to buy some English currency for five times the official rate. I smiled broadly at him, and affected not to notice his police accent (his English was perfect). Perhaps he was genuine, I thought, since such offers seem to be common. Anyway, I nipped into a tram just as the doors were closing, and he got into the next carriage. I got off at the next stop, skipped round to the back of the tram and left him on it. I walked back for some 20 minutes towards my hotel, and at 2.45 went to have lunch in a Wenceslas Square café.

Inside I found Jiri Hajek whom I hadn't seen for some 20 years. He had been Ambassador to England, and we had been together in setting up a youth International in Prague in 1945. We had a chat and then Hajek went to make some telephone calls. Some people came in and were obviously surprised not to find Hajek there. Hajek came back and then went off, leaving me with this woman, who turned out to be Tominová, although he hadn't introduced her. I explained what I was doing there and what had happened and received a handsome apology. Then, as I was finishing off my beer and sausage, some 12 armed men came in and said they were going to

arrest me. I pointed out to the three I recognized from before that they had just seen me arrested two hours ago, but they must have thought that I had somehow escaped. Then Tominova spoke to them with round abuse and said: 'You silly asses, can't you see that he's just been released ...'. I'm sure that was why the police chief, with a wonderful, dramatic gesture, said: 'Arrest that woman!' She demanded to be told what she was being arrested for, and was clearly determined to resist arrest — although I tried to persuade her not to, since they were looking very hostile, and very pugnacious. It was worth avoiding bloodshed. She went to pick up her stuff at the far end of the restaurant and all the police except one went with her. The one who stayed with me was obviously upset by the scene, having heard that I had been released with an apology. They had lost their nerve a bit, having got a new quarry. Now, however, the head waiter who spoke French started shouting to the whole assembly: 'These are pigs, you see this is what happens in our country.' Then he

took me by the elbow and said: 'quick, out the back way'. That is how I got away from my second arrest.

Going back to the appeal itself, the high-point seems to have been about 11.00 when all the lawyers submitted a joint application that the lady chief-justice was unfit to hear the appeal. Since, they argued, the defendants had accused her and the entire Senate of the Bench of Appeal Judges of displaying extreme hostility and bias in some one hundred trials, and since this accusation was the sole basis of the charges against them, the judges could clearly not judge the question of their own bias. This led to a one-hour adjournment, during which the chief judge consulted with the whole panel — and, no doubt, with others including the Minister. This explains why there was considerable confusion at the Ministry when I arrived there at about this time. Finally, at 12.30 the appeal judge ruled that the hearing would go on; and 12 hours later judgment was passed.

## Transcript of VONS Trial

Readers of *Labour Focus* will be familiar with the events of October 1979 in Prague, the trial of Petr Uhl, Vaclav Havel and six other members of Charter 77. Now the French publisher **Maspero** has published a transcript of the trial. 'The documents which we publish here', says the introduction to the 190-page collection, 'are sufficiently clear as to speak for themselves. They demonstrate a caricature of justice and show how impossible it was for the accused to defend themselves'. As the defendant Petr Uhl declared to the presiding judge: 'I do not consider you as in any way a tribunal which is capable of judging me. I know, Mr. President, that you yourself have nothing to judge, that the decision has already been taken and taken elsewhere'. (p.92) The book also gives an account of the conditions of detention for political prisoners as well as an account of the international campaign of solidarity and a selection of documents and letters from the Czech civil rights movement. The title of the collection is *Procès à Prague*, and is available from Francois Maspero, 1 place Paul-Painlevé, Paris 5e.

## Defence Activity in Canada

(We have received the following account of defence activity in Canada on behalf of the jailed VONS members at the end of last year.)

The defence work of the Committee in Defence of Soviet and East European Political Prisoners (CDSEPPP) in Edmonton, the Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners (CDSPP) and the Charter 77 Defence Committee in Toronto centred around the collection of signatures from trade unionists, socialists, feminists and concerned groups who have consistently supported democratic-national rights both East and West. Encouraged by the principled and international basis of the work of these committees, and of similar ones in Europe, a number of new defence groups were formed. In Montreal, a CDSEPPP was set up by Ukrainian and Polish students, and 20 Quebec dramatists sent an open letter to the Czechoslovak President, protesting at the trial of VONS activists. Members of the Calgary-based Human Rights Defence Committee spoke at socialist and student meetings, and attended the 16th Annual Convention of the New Democratic Party on 26-28 October 1979. The NDP delegates passed a

resolution condemning the trials of Charter 77 members, and made a financial contribution to the committee.

In Edmonton, the CDSEPPP picket of the Czech Ambassador's arrival for trade talks received extensive coverage in the local press and television. It was actively supported by members of the Edmonton Women's Coalition, the Revolutionary Workers League, Hromada, and the Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union. The leader of the Alberta NDP also raised questions in Parliament about the holding of trade talks at the same time as the Prague trial.

The linking up of defence initiatives between Canadian defence groups and European ones, greatly assisted the internal linking up of these same groups in Canada. Shortly after the trial of the six Chartists, on 21 November 1979, at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, the CDSEPPP, together with the Czechoslovak National Association, organized a rally with speakers including the Canadian civil rights lawyer and NDP activist, Gordon Wright, and Vladimir Skutina, a former Czech political

prisoner and Charter member who was active in the underground radio network after the 1968 Soviet invasion.

Gordon Wright, who had flown to the trial (See the last issue of *Labour Focus*), presented a detailed juridical account of violations of international, socialist, and constitutional democratic rights by state authorities in Czechoslovakia during the trials of six Chartists.

Vladimir Skutina, who had first been imprisoned for 4 years in Czechoslovakia in 1962 for calling the then-Czechoslovak President Antonin Novotny an ox, referred to the democratic and national aspirations of the Czech and Slovak peoples, and stressed the importance of Western solidarity action.

The rally was attended by 150 people, predominantly of East European origin, with many concerned students and intellectuals giving both financial and moral support to the activities of the Defence Committees.

**Levko Dumianenko**

## ILO Defends Soviet Workers' Right to Organise By Susannah Fry

In its latest report on the cases of the Free Trade Union Association and SMOT (see *Labour Focus* Vol.3 No.5) the ILO has defended Soviet workers' right to form organisations of their own choosing, independent of the Communist Party and the existing trade unions.

The case of the Soviet workers has been before the International Labour Organisation for 18 months. It produced an interim report on the FTUA last year, in which it asked the Soviet government to provide information refuting allegations that it was impossible to found an independent trade union organization, and that the founders of the FTUA (like Klebanov) had been put in psychiatric hospitals for doing just that. In November 1979 it produced another report, this time also dealing with the case of the second free trade union — SMOT.

The evidence which the Soviet government submitted to the ILO stated that the Soviet labour laws and constitution proved that there were no restrictions in the USSR on founding trade unions or on their activities. Then it went on to make several very serious accusations against the men and women who had formed these free trade unions. Some, it said, were ex-criminals, another had been dismissed from his job for 'immoral conduct'. Many had been sacked for breaches of labour discipline. It classified other workers as 'mentally disordered', claiming that they had been undergoing treatment for these 'disorders' for a long time. And there were others, apparently, who denied having signed any document relating to a free trade union and knew

nothing about any such organisation.

But the ILO was not distracted by attempts to discredit these individual trade unionists. It pointed out that they themselves claimed that they had been arrested or incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals after they had publicised their attempts to organize, not before. Its report, however, concentrated on whether Soviet workers really had the right to form independent organizations and it concluded that, contrary to what the Soviet government had claimed, they did not. The Soviets say that the workers in the FTUA and SMOT have nothing in common apart from their opposition to the government, and that therefore their organizations aren't real trade unions. But

the ILO decided that they formed an 'organization for furthering and defending the interests of workers' — and that was enough. It examined the Soviet Labour Code and concluded that this did not guarantee the freedom to organize independently of existing trade unions. And furthermore, it said, the leading role of the Communist Party in all organisations, as defined in the 1979 Constitution, seemed to deny the right of workers to organize independently of any

political party.

The ILO therefore asked the USSR to amend its legislation so that these rights, which it had recognized when it signed the ILO Convention, were expressly guaranteed.

So Soviet workers have been vindicated. They were justified in thinking that the Soviet trade unions couldn't defend them against the state, and they were within their rights in wanting to

form an independent organization. The USSR has signed the ILO Convention — it hasn't got a leg to stand on. In the face of this decision we must now urge the British Labour movement to act. In a letter to Ron Hayward, dated 3 July 1978, Len Murray said that the TUC would consider the case once the ILO decision was known. Now that the ILO has defended Soviet workers' right to organize, the British labour movement must do so too.

## LETTERS

### Don't Malign the Plastic People!

In October's **Labour Focus** there was a review of Safran, the Czech record label based in Sweden. There are a number of points raised in the review which I think merit further discussion.

Let me quote the most contentious statement: 'The first recording of Czech underground music to be produced in the West was the work of the Plastic People of the Universe ... it makes available the music of avant-garde musicians in Czechoslovakia whose work is not easily understandable to a mass audience'; and another such statement: 'Safran is the business side of the Czech underground'.

I can only think that Oliver MacDonald has never been to Czechoslovakia and knows nothing about Rock music. (Forgive me if I malign him.) I very much doubt that the Czech authorities would have been so consistent in their persecution of PPU if they thought it was 'avant-garde music not easily understandable to a mass audience'.

For anyone familiar with the development of Rock music since the 'psychedelic sixties' PPU are neither avant-garde nor not easily understandable. They are original, raw, intelligent. Influenced by the whole of psychedelic music and therefore by rote influenced by the Beatles, Elvis Presley, the Animals ... You can check this out by listening to the record — it reeks 'wildness', frustration, violence. But at the same time it is the product of a positive era. A celebration of joy as well as a statement of cultural opposition.

Listening to the more recent PPU compositions (yet to be released) 'Passion Play' and 'Klima' it seems to me that depression has set in. However, especially in the case of 'Passion Play' the musical language continues to plough forward. Not content to rest on its laurels and imitate itself interminably. Sadly, the whole cultural underground in Prague is going through a particularly tough time. For PPU concerts are rare and difficult to organize. There are terribly few young people taking the lead of the well established groups (PPU, DG 307, Dom ...). There is an oppressive feeling that any more than survival is impossible.

But PPU have absolutely a mass audience. It is the same audience that listens to rock music here. It's interesting that also in Czechoslovakia there is this division between the folk singer's (Hutka etc.) and rock group's audience. Not as total as here but still large and deep. And those who partake of the folk singer's 'club' seem to think that because they find rock music violent and rough that it must either be banal or, patronizingly, avant-garde and not easily understandable.

This kind of wrong thinking can cause all kinds of mischief, and does the PPU no good at all. Their music is still largely unknown outside Czechoslovakia, not because it is avant-garde but because the pop press are scared of the real thing and the left press are scared of rock music. The reviews the record picked up from the left press have mostly talked about the trials, the political context, but not the music, as if the music bore no relation to all that.

PPU do, of course, reflect their political situation, but their primary source of inspiration comes from the history of music over the last twenty years. So few appear to understand the **implicit political function** of rock music independent of the external political situation, but the Czech government understands it! It is such a subversive force that they are reduced to selling disco as a safe alternative.

For PPU it's the music which they think is of value. They don't enjoy going to jail or not being allowed to play. The music is their *raison d'être*, and that music inevitably refers to the conditions about them.

The statement that Safran is the business side of the Czech underground is truly misleading. Safran do not represent PPU, DG 307, and any of the other past or present rock groups, all of whom are de facto represented by the Plastic People Defence Fund. The records Safran are putting out represent at best one side of Czech underground music.

Although it may be convenient to forget the other side because the music is 'unpleasant', it is not at all honest. It is worrying that money to finance 'folk music' is much more readily forthcoming from the left. Does it mean that left wingers are out of touch with culture in their own countries? I hope not. But lack of finances have certainly to date prevented the publication of *Passion Play*, *Umela Hmota*, DG 307 and others. All of whom deserve to be heard, and especially for England are speaking a language (because it is primarily a musical language, not words with decorations) which is infinitely closer to the mass of young people than the language with which speaks Safran.

The PPU record is available mail order from: PPDF, BM 1415, London WC1V 6XX; and is distributed in the UK by: Recommended Records, 583 Wandsworth Rd., London SW8. Phone: 01-720 0171.

Maxwell Simpson  
London.



The Plastic People in action in Rychnov in 1977: singer Paul Wilson and Milan Hlavsa.

### Are You Reliable?

I have just read your issue for November 1979 — January 1980, Vol.3 No.5. As usual, the issue is packed with very interesting material, much of which has proved useful to our organisation in its continuing fight for respect for human and trade union rights throughout the world.

To a large degree, our efforts are conducted through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, of which the Canadian Labour Congress is very much a vigorously participating member.

I was disturbed therefore to see in the article by Victor Haynes entitled 'ILO Backs Klebanov', the ICFTU described as the 'West European trade union movement'. The ICFTU in fact represents 70 million workers in 127 trade union movements in 89 different countries. These countries are to be found in each continent of this world and are by no means restricted to Western Europe.

I hope that this kind of inaccuracy will not give readers like me cause for them doubting the accuracy of the substantive information which is all too often only available through your magazine, which I have already described as very useful to us.

Yours sincerely,  
H. John Harker, Director,  
International Affairs,  
Canadian Labour Congress.