

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

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Italian Communist Paper Says 'POLISH STUDENT WAS MURDERED'

Inside: Documents, Reports, Interview with Kuron,
New Facts on Death of Polish Student Activist

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

Statement of Aims

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

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

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

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

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

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilise considerable influence that the British Labour Movement can have in the struggles to end repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

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EDITORIALS

1. Cover-up behind Polish Arrests

There are indications that the death of a Krakow student, Stanislaw Pyjas, at the beginning of May was not an accident but a political murder reminiscent of Stalinist killings of political opponents in the 1930s.

The Italian Communist Youth Federation has followed up the case and denounced Pyjas's death as murder in its weekly paper, *La Citta Futura* (See page 5 of this issue).

According to the official Polish version, Stanislaw Pyjas's body was found early one morning at the foot of the stair-well in the block of flats where his fiancée lived. His body contained a high alcohol content. This implies that Pyjas visited his fiancée, got drunk, fell over the bannister in the middle of the night and killed himself on the stone floor below.

Labour Focus has received information which contradicts this official story:

1. Pyjas's body was found not at the bottom of the stairs, but just inside the entrance porch, a position that could not have been reached from a fall.
2. The morning of his death, Saturday 7 May, was a working day in Poland. A waitress going to work in a nearby cafe found his body when she passed through the block at 7.20 a.m. But other people left the block for work between 6 and 6.30 a.m. that morning and none of them saw Pyjas's body. It must, therefore, have been placed inside the doorway between 6.30 a.m. and 7.15 a.m.
3. Doctors estimated death to have been between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m.
4. Pyjas did not have a fiancée. The girl in the block had known him but had not met him for 18 months.
5. On 26 April Pyjas and five of his friends, all of whom had received anonymous threatening letters which included death threats, lodged a complaint about these letters to the Public Prosecutor's office. On the morning of 7 May, Pyjas's five friends were summoned to the police headquarters and while they were there the police illegally entered their flats and removed copies of these threatening letters.
6. After Pyjas's death a bakery shop near the block of flats overlooking the entrance hall was closed down by the police and its workers were dispersed.

These facts destroy the official version of Pyjas's death and point to another theory: Pyjas was seized either by one of the various secret police apparatuses or by thugs with links inside the police. He was beaten up and killed during the night of 6 - 7 May. The killers then faced the problem of what to do with the body. For Pyjas simply to disappear would provoke a public outcry. On file the killers had the name and address of a former girlfriend, providing a suitable circumstantial version of the death. Those who dumped the body panicked and left it just inside the porch of the block. And on 7 May the police acted to destroy the damaging evidence of the threatening letters. They also dealt with the bakery shop that was open early that Saturday morning near the block of flats.

Who were the killers and what could their motive have been? In the absence of a thorough, independent inquiry we can conclusively prove nothing. But certain facts should be considered. First, the anonymous threatening letters have been a prominent feature of police activity against supporters and members of the Workers' Defence Committee since its foundation last September. One man publicly apologised to

Jacek Kuron for being forced by the police to write him an abusive, threatening and anti-Semitic letter (Kuron is not even Jewish). Thus the police or people working with one of the police apparatuses were definitely after Pyjas before his death. Secondly, the fact that thousands of people demonstrated in memory of Pyjas in Krakow indicates that large numbers of people in Krakow saw the death as that of a political martyr: someone killed by those bitterly opposed to the civil rights opposition in Poland.

But there is further information that points in a more specific direction. First of all, Rakowski, the editor of the sophisticated Party weekly *Polityka*, wrote a remarkable article on 28 May on Pyjas's death. He underlined the authoritative character of his article by signing it not with his name as usual, but with his title of Editor-in-Chief. In it he strongly implied that the death had indeed been a political murder. He then asked who would do such a thing and why. And he answered "enemies of the Polish People's Republic", "people not connected to the interests of any social group in Poland", adding that such people would wish to create a provocation in order to overturn the policy of the Party leadership. A second fact is the existence of rumours in official circles that it was the Soviet police who instigated the murder, and indeed Labour Focus knows of one Polish diplomat in the West who has categorically stated off the record that Pyjas's death was a Russian inspired provocation.

But who could have actually carried out the task? Opposition sources in Krakow believe that the murder was accomplished by a neo-fascist group operating in the south of Poland and led by a Party member called Filipki. This group has links with the police, who have protected its activities; it has a strong base in Krakow and has been training people there in political thuggery for some time. It would not have been the first time that the Soviet authorities had used neo-fascist, anti-Semitic currents in the Polish Party for their own purposes: this is exactly what they did with the "Moczarites" against the democratic currents in 1968.

What could the Soviet motive be? Both the Soviet and East German leaderships have been extremely worried about the social and political unrest in Poland and by what they consider to be the dangerous caution of the Gierek wing of the Polish Party leadership in its handling of the Workers' Defence Committee. A provocation, causing a spontaneous, and possibly violent reaction from students throughout Poland, could force the Polish leadership's hand: Gierek would have to crack down on the movement and would also be forced to organise a cover-up to prevent a dangerous scandal. Filipki's thugs would be the obvious instrument for such a provocation: he had already shown his colours before Easter by organising a letter from 600 Party members to the leadership denouncing the Central Committee for political weakness.

If this was the plan behind Pyjas's murder it has in part succeeded: in spite of his promise earlier this year that no members of the Workers' Defence Committee would be arrested, Gierek has now got 9 Committee members and sympathisers in jail. As *l'Unita's* East European correspondent has pointed out, the arrests are seen as an attempt to prevent members of the Committee from discrediting the official explanation of Pyjas's death.

Nothing can now be done to save Stanislaw Pyjas. But British socialists can do a great deal to ensure that Pyjas did not die in vain. They can put massive pressure on the Polish authorities to gain the immediate release of all the members and sympathisers of the WDC at present in jail. And they can also

put pressure through their organisations for a full, independent enquiry into the death of Stanislaw Pyjas to expose the enemies of social and political progress in Poland and prevent them being able to operate with impunity in the future. Too much evidence has now reached us for it to be possible to brush these matters aside for lack of information. We hope that the material

in this issue of Labour Focus will help socialists and communists to fulfil what the Italian Communist Youth Federation called our immediate task in relation to Poland: "To take up a firm and principled position for safeguarding the most elementary human rights which are today being trampled underfoot."

2. Letter from Union leaders

We print here a letter from Dave Bowman of the NUR, Lawrence Daly and Ernie Roberts, appealing to readers of Labour Focus to help the international labour movement campaign in defence of signatories of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. This letter has been sent to a very wide range of trade union and labour movement journals. Information about any action taken in response to this appeal should be sent both to the Committee for the Defence of Czechoslovak Socialists and to Labour Focus.

* * * * *

Nine years ago, the movement that became known as the Prague Spring was crushed by the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Soviet Union and four other Warsaw Pact states. This action was rightly condemned by the overwhelming majority of the working-class movement of Britain and many other countries.

Since that time a wide range of forces have continued to advance an opposition to the present government, despite imprisonment and other forms of repression. At the beginning of this year, many of these currents came together to publish a charter of elementary civil and human rights - such as the freedom of expression and the right to strike - which are denied to the working people of Czechoslovakia. Its purpose was to unite broad sections around the demand for full respect of those rights, and to draw up a list of the numerous violations taking place.

The existing regime has responded to Charter 77 by launching a vicious campaign of slander and harassment of its signatories. It has not shrunk from branding communists and socialists as enemies of socialism, and it appears to be preparing a new series of show-trials. Numerous cases have been already reported of citizens who have been dismissed from their jobs for signing the Charter or even for refusing to condemn it; and at least seven chartists have been arrested in an attempt to intimidate the others.

The British labour movement can and must play an important role in defending the signatories of Charter 77. Every Czechoslovak socialist oppositionist stresses that it is above all vocal support for the Charter by the international working-class movement that can prevent its suppression.

Moreover, we believe that it is the right and duty of socialists and trade-unionists in every country to speak out in defence of those democratic rights that are vitally important to the interests of the working class. We have no hesitation in fighting against the barbarities and anti-democratic policies of various capitalist regimes. And to those in Prague who invoke the name of the working class in support of their actions, we must answer that no genuine socialist democracy can be created in conditions where working people themselves are not able to exercise their democratic rights to the full.

We therefore appeal to the readers of Labour Focus to express, both individually and collectively, their solidarity as trade unionists with the signatories of Charter 77 and to condemn all acts of repression and harassment against them by the Czechoslovak authorities. Please send all messages of support to the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists and address letters/resolutions of protest to the Czechoslovak Embassy, 25 Kensington Palace Gdns., London W.8, sending a copy to the Committee. The Committee would be glad to provide more information about the Charter, as well as speakers for trade union meetings, etc.

Dave Bowman
Lawrence Daly
Ernie Roberts

Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists
49A Tabley Rd.,
London N7 0NA

POLAND

The Course of Events by Peter Green

[In Labour Focus No. 2 Oliver MacDonald forecast a turn to repression by the Party authorities, against the Workers' Defence Committee (henceforth known by its Polish initials, KOR). Since then, the Krakow supporter of the KOR, Stanislaw Pyjas, has been killed and 9 KOR members have been arrested. At the same time, open protests against the new repression have been made in most of the major cities in Poland and student opposition has developed qualitatively with the creation of the Student Solidarity Committee. Reports have also reached the West about 60 Ursus workers being arrested. We print below a detailed account of the course of events since the Central Committee Plenum which heralded the regime's new turn to repression. The information printed below comes partly from KOR, Communiqué No.10, partly

from the Paris revolutionary Marxist daily Rouge, partly from official Polish press sources and partly from the Western press.]

APRIL BUILD UP

April 14: At the Central Committee plenum Gierek indicates a new hardening of the Party leadership's attitude. He declares: "We cannot accept infringement of the law and the misuse of socialist democracy and civil liberties for activity stemming from alien class positions and directed against our socialist state. Such activity must be unmasked and will be opposed by all necessary means."

April 15: Jacek Kuron and other members

of KOR are arrested and held by the police for 48 hours.

April 25: At a national conference of regional and local Party secretaries -- the first such conference held since Gierek came to power in 1970 -- Gierek refers to the "increased activity of the forces hostile to Poland and socialism"

April 27: Kuron and Lipski (both KOR members) officially informed by the public prosecutor's office that they are being investigated for maintaining illegal contacts with foreign organisations damaging to the interests of the Polish state. Adam Michnik was also named in the charge. The organisations named were Radio Free Europe and Kultura, the main right-wing Polish emigre journal and publishing

house.

End of April: At both Warsaw and Lodz Universities, the authorities threaten reprisals against members and sympathisers of KOR. Mirosław Chojecki and Antoni Macierewicz (both KOR members) are sacked from their university posts along with 5 supporters of the Committee.

PYJAS'S DEATH

April 26: Stanisław Pyjas and 5 other students complain to the public prosecutor's office in Krakow about anonymous threatening letters which they have received, including one accusing Pyjas of being a police informer. (See letter below.)

May 6: Pyjas is last seen at a meeting with other students drawing up a protest document about police repression in Krakow, Pyjas leaves with a copy of the document at 4:30 in the afternoon.

May 7: At 7.20 in the morning the body of Stanisław Pyjas is found in the entrance hall of a block of flats by a waitress passing through the block on her way to work.

May 9: Pyjas's friends are called to police headquarters for interviews and while absent their flats are entered and anonymous letters they had received are removed.

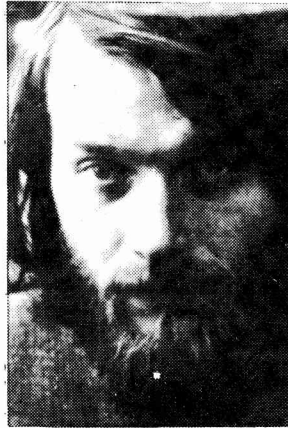
May 11: Pyjas's body is buried in Krakow.

May 12: Students at the Department of Polish Studies at Jagiellon University in Krakow as well as people from other parts of the university call upon the students to make 15 May a day of mourning for Pyjas.

May 14: The student militia, acting on behalf of the official student organisation, arrest A. Macierewicz, P. Naimski and W. Ostrowski (all members of KOR) who have come from Warsaw to attend the day of mourning.

May 15: Between 8 and 9 in the morning some students draping black flags outside the Dominican Church where a mass is to be held for Stanisław Pyjas are arrested by the security police. At 9 the mass is held with a crowd of about 5,000 people assembling outside the church. A delegation of workers from the huge Nowa Huta steel complex near Krakow takes part in the gathering. After the ceremony the 5,000 people march with black flags of mourning to the house of Pyjas's parents where a declaration issued by KOR on 9 May is read to the crowd. A declaration by people from Warsaw, Lublin and other towns who have been arrested on their way to the mourning ceremonies is also read out. All those present are then invited to participate in a demonstration of mourning at Wawel castle in the centre of Krakow.

At 9 p.m. thousands of people come to the Castle. The annual student festival, due to have been held that weekend in Krakow has effectively come to an end despite the refusal of the official student organisation to cancel it. Attempts by the security police to divide the demonstration in two fail and a declaration is read forming a Student Committee of Solidarity (SKS). (See the text of the declaration below.)



Mirosław Chojecki



Piotr Naimski



Antoni Macierewicz

All three KOR activists are now in jail.

May 16: 2 members of KOR who have attended the demonstrations in Krakow, Wojciech Onyszkiewicz and Krzysztof Lazarski, are involved in a serious road accident while driving back from Krakow to Warsaw. A lorry forces them off the road and then drives on. Both men are taken to hospital critically ill.

REACTION IN LODZ

May 12: A student assembly in the Department of Polish Studies at Lodz University observes a minute's silence in memory of Stanisław Pyjas.

May 16: J. Serniawski, a KOR activist, is arrested for 48 hours and beaten during interrogation. That evening 500 people take part in a mass commemorating Pyjas. The declarations of KOR and the Student Solidarity Committee are read out. Then Amsterdamski, a student from Lodz, reads a letter of solidarity with the students of Krakow signed by 150 people in Lodz.

May 17: The security police arrest Amsterdamski, a second year physics student and Lewinska, a first year sociology student and hold them for 50 hours.

May 19: A meeting of the regional council of the SZSP is held in the presence of about 200 people. The SZSP council guarantees to the students that there will be no arrests, interrogations or house searches.

May 20: Bezel, a student of law is interrogated by the security police for 17 hours continuously, without food. A search is made at the house of Pogronkiewicz, a first year sociology student.

May 22: Three students, arrested for helping to organise the Lodz memorial service for Pyjas, are released by the police on the condition that they will face a disciplinary trial to be held by the local SZSP executive. When the disciplinary hearing meets the people present decide not to consider the matter at the meeting and instead agree to send an open letter to the Mayor of Lodz demanding an end to the repression of students and workers, and a public enquiry into Pyjas's death.

REACTION IN OTHER CITIES

Lublin, May 14: 8 people travelling from Lublin to Krakow for the memorial

ceremonies for Stanisław Pyjas are arrested on the train.

Lublin, May 19: A memorial mass is held for Pyjas and a telegram is received from the Student Solidarity Committee in Krakow thanking the students of Lublin for their solidarity.

Wroclaw, May 25: A memorial mass is held in the cathedral, after which one thousand people hear a declaration from the Student Solidarity Committee read out.

Warsaw, May 15 - 20: Posters are visible throughout the university saying "Pyjas is dead because he thought freely".

Warsaw, May 20: A memorial mass is held for Stanisław Pyjas at St. Martin's church. Large crowds assemble outside the church for the ceremony.

ARRESTS OF KOR MEMBERS

May 3: At a press conference, spokespersons for the KOR state that during the previous 5 weeks the number of active sympathisers of the KOR has more than doubled.

May 9: KOR issues a declaration on the death of Stanisław Pyjas.

May 10: Adam Michnik, recently returned from the West, Jacek Kuron and Jan Lipski are formally charged with maintaining illegal contacts with foreign organisations. A statement in response to these charges by Michnik published in *Le Monde* appeals "to Western public opinion, particularly to the Left ... They accuse us, and indirectly hundreds of our friends, of having our own opinions, and of not respecting the state's monopoly of speech and action".

May 11: KOR issues a statement saying that the "growing offensive of acts of illegality" had made the Committee decide to expand its activity beyond the original basis of defending workers repressed after the price protests of June 1976. The statement announced the formation of an "Intervention Bureau" to collect and publish information about official violations of civil rights and it also announced the formation of a "Social Defence Fund" to support those who have lost their jobs because of their connections with KOR.

May 14 - 16: Under a three month investigative detention order, the police arrest Jacek Kuron, Mirosław Chojecki, Antoni Macierewicz, Adam Michnik, Piotr Naimski and Wojciech Ostrowski -- all members or sympathisers of KOR.

May 19: Jan Lipski, his two children, Marion Pylka and Seweryn Blumstein are arrested under the same order. These arrests take place the day before the memorial mass in Warsaw for Pyjas.

May 20: 17 of the most prominent writers and artists in Poland send an appeal to the authorities in Poland demanding the release of the arrested members of KOR. The appeal is also addressed to "workers, intellectuals, trade unionists, journalists and all people of good will" abroad. In response to the official press attacks on KOR members as criminals, the appeal calls them "people who are disinterested and ready to sacrifice themselves to achieve social justice".

May 24: 8 people begin a hunger strike in St. Martin's church to protest against the arrest of 9 members and supporters of KOR and the continued detention of 5 workers jailed after last year's protests against price increases.

May 25: 2 more people join the hunger strike. The hunger strikers call for the release of "all victims of the events of June 1976 and those who later defended them". Their statement also refers to the tradition

of hunger strikes in churches in the struggle for civil rights on the part of black people in the USA and on the part of those struggling against dictatorship in Spain. The hunger strikers include the wife and sister of one of the workers in jail, Czesław Chomicki, the editor of the Catholic monthly **Znak**, five members of KOR and the fathers of the jailed Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron.

May 25: 60 workers are arrested by the police in Ursus. (This information has been published only in **Rouge** and no further news has been received from Ursus.)

May 27: **Zycie Warszawy**, the daily of the Warsaw Party Committee, carries an editorial denouncing the hunger strikers and in particular attacking what it calls "a double exploitation on their part: of the church and of world public opinion". It adds that "half of them entered a church certainly for the first time" when they engaged in the hunger strike.

June 1: The hunger strike ends, as planned. **Zycie Warszawy** stepped up its verbal campaign by calling them 'terrorists'.

June 6: Jan Lipski is released from prison after having a heart attack.

June 9: Professor Lipinski, a member of KOR sends a letter appealing to the leaders of the French, Spanish and Italian Communist Parties for them to demand the release of arrested KOR members and

sympathisers.

June 9: A letter signed by 125 Warsaw intellectuals, students, employees and workers in Warsaw is sent to the Party leadership demanding the release of the KOR members in jail. By June 20 another 300 people have signed their names to this letter.

June 12: A letter signed by 33 intellectuals in Wrocław is sent to the President of the Polish Parliament demanding the release of the KOR members in jail.

June 14: A letter signed by 99 students from Lodz University demands the release of the jailed KOR members.

June 15: 3 students at Gdansk Polytechnic -- Z. Pietrun, Z. Wysocki and B. Wyskowski -- stage a hunger strike against the arrests.

June 20: 349 inhabitants of Zbroza Duza, a village 50 kilometres south of Warsaw sign a letter to the Polish government calling for the release of all those arrested as a result of the protests against price increases last June.

June 23: Police raid the homes of 3 Krakow student oppositionists, seizing an appeal to the authorities and other documents.

Interview with Kuron

[This is a translation of the interview carried out by **ROUGE**, a French daily left-wing paper, on 16 May 1977.]

You have just been charged along with J.J. Lipski and Adam Michnik

I will quote you the bill of indictment: "In the period from 1975 until today acting in a continuous manner, both inside and outside the country, in collusion with Michnik and Lipski, the accused made contact with the representatives of enemy centres abroad, in particular with **Kultura** in Paris and **Radio Free Europe**, having as his goal to act against the political interests of the PPR, using the financial means of these organisations."

Here we have a very particular manoeuvre: the authorities attempt to present the question of freedom of speech as a "diversion". I have never had any contact with Radio Free Europe and I have never received any money from **Kultura**, nor from Radio Free Europe, nor any other "foreign centre". I am further accused of having published material and if my "reflections on an action programme" has been published by **Kultura**, that in no way represents a "diversion".

Thus, they attempt to make out of an exchange of ideas, something which is not of the domain of ideas, but of terrorism. I am accused of "spying", of "diversion", of "co-operation", as a result of the publication of one article.

The Workers' Defence Committee has just denounced the attacks against its members and sympathisers, in particular the "mysterious" death of Pyjas, and the sackings.

In recent times, in a very clear fashion, there has been an intensification of the violations of the law by the authorities in response to the opposition. A particularly dramatic example of that is the death of Stanisław Pyjas. Obviously, we do not know, who is at its origin, but there are a series of coincidences which all point in the same direction. Firstly, there have been anonymous letters which threatened him with a bloody end. This author of "ill omen" claimed Pyjas was a police "informant". Next he was told that they were going to make him "bleed", then he was found under a porch, his skull fractured, with fist marks on his face. The porch does not open on to the stairs, but the press wrote that he fell down the stairs. The last time he was seen was at 16.00 hours, he had on him some documents on the arrests in Warsaw, then at 19.20 he was found in this



Jacek Kuron, a leader of KOR, now in jail.

porch. I want to add that in interrogating a member of the Committee (The line is cut).

Hello, have we been cut off?

Yes, in effect. I was speaking of Pyjas. There has been a leak "from up above" according to which, henceforth "the people of the Committee were going to be dealt with physically". This seems to have been

confirmed by the death of Pyjas and the beating up of Sulecki, a member of the Committee.

It is an attempt by the authorities to liquidate the opposition, to break its independent social organisation, with the least expense, that is by fear.

What happened to the hunger strike of the worker, Chomicki, which he began in prison as a protest against his detention?

He has ended his hunger strike. But he intends to restart it on 25 May, for periods of 200 hours, in order to by-pass the prison rules. I think that on 25 May, he will not be alone in going on hunger strike in Poland.

After the conditional releases, how many workers are there still in prison?

5 still remain, 3 from Radom: Chomicki condemned to 9 years, Zabrowski to 10 years, Skrzpek to 9 years. From Ursus, Majewski and Zukowski, both sentenced for demonstrating in front of the regional Party offices, are still imprisoned. What have they done? Pulled up a few carpets. Broken a few windows. In fact they are accused of having desecrated a "sacred" building -- the office of the Party. That explains the heavy sentences. The two from Ursus were sentenced to three years for blocking the railway: one for having helped to derail a locomotive and the other for trying to rip up the rails.

Are the workers who have signed the letter of protest harassed?

Yes, in specific ways. The police come to their homes, arrest them, or call on them during working hours and pressurise them to

withdraw their signature. One of them recounts that when he arrived at the police station, he heard - "Take him down to the basement and work him over." These are the types of pressure applied. They are also told that they are taking the side of the enemy, that they are working for Hitler (!), etc.

How would you define the new attitude of the authorities?

It is nothing new. The actual tactic can be called "Hamletism"; the Government is in a situation where in order to be able to exercise its authority it has, in some way or another, to find methods of communicating with the social body on the one hand, and on the other hand, it would like society to tell it what it wants to hear. This is the squaring of the circle.

What are the perspectives of the Committee? What is its audience in the society?

Concerning the audience of the Committee, it is necessary to say honestly that it cannot be measured because in a totalitarian system, nobody knows what his/her neighbour is doing or thinking. Society is atomised. However, certain signs indicate that in general, the Committee is supported as no other institution in Poland, except the church. For example, we have distributed, up until today, something like 3 million zlotys (about 3,000 months of average salary). The greatest part of this money comes from dozens of thousands of people in the country. There are petitions with nearly 3,000 signatures, among which is the letter of 1100 Ursus workers demanding the reintegration of those sacked. Finally, and this is the most important, there is a complete failure of the petitioning campaign by the authorities against the Committee, last December, in

which they attempted to draw in workers.

Concerning the aims of the Committee, the first was the freedom of those in prison. One cannot say that this has been satisfied. There are still 5 workers imprisoned, others received suspended sentences. Those still cannot obtain compensation and many are at the mercy of the police.

Concerning the reintegration of the workers that were sacked, one actually sees some steps in this direction. But for several thousands of people who had been sacked for striking, the salaries often have been cut by a third or even a half. It is necessary to affirm that Article 52 of the Labour Code must not be used as an anti-strike law; this Article relates to the cases of "serious breach of the obligations of the worker". A strike cannot be considered as a breach of the obligations of the worker. Finally, it is necessary to explain the circumstances in which the events of June unfolded and above all the conduct of the forces of order. We have proposed a parliamentary commission of enquiry. This from the point of view of social health is very important because it attempts to re-establish the principles of the responsibility of the authorities before society. In June 1956 blood flowed. A commission of enquiry was set up with Gierek as President. Nothing was ever made public. In December 1970, we were confronted with mass extermination, and in spite of the creation of a commission nothing was ever explained. It is time to break the silence which only enhances the insolence of the police. Thus events such as the death of Pyjas occur.

What do you want from the Western Left?

Above all, solidarity; defence when we face repression.

PCI Youth: 'Pyjas was Murdered'

On 26 May the Italian Communist Party daily, *Unita*, drew attention to an article in *La Citta Futura*, the journal of the Italian Communist Youth Federation. The article in question is written by the journal's Foreign Editor who brands the death of Stanislaw Pyjas as a case of "political homicide". The article goes on to say that the Polish authorities' reaction to protests that followed Pyjas's death indicated "a leadership accustomed to settling internal problems drastically by means of methodical repression against all that is 'different'. The article ended by stating bluntly the responsibilities of all socialists in the West:

"Our immediate task, and more generally that of the Left in the West, is to take up a firm and principled position for safeguarding the most elementary human rights, which are today trampled underfoot (in Poland), and for the immediate release of the workers arrested in June 1976."

Workers' Defence Committee members by the Polish authorities, calling them criminals, agents of West German revanchism and the CIA, the Italian Communist Party weekly, *Rinascita*, published an article by its foreign editor on 27 May saying that the Committee was "concerned with real problems of the development, or lack of development, of wide sectors of the country's social and political life."

Unita's own Eastern European correspondent, Silvio Trevisani, reported on 21 May that "the Polish government decided on a harsh intervention against it [the Workers' Defence Committee] because of the death -- and the interpretations given to it -- of the Krakow student Stanislaw Pyjas". He explained that the Workers' Defence Committee "cast doubt" on the official version of the death. In other words, Trevisani was implying that repression of the Committee sprang from a desire to cover up sinister aspects of Pyjas's death.

In response to official denunciations of So far neither the French Communist Party



A rally by the Italian Communist Youth Federation (FGCI) in September 1973 against the murder of Allende.

daily, *L'Humanite*, nor the *Morning Star* have printed any protest against the repression in Poland, nor have they questioned the official Polish version of Pyjas's death.

Documents

1. KOR Appeal Following Pyjas' Death, May 9th

On 7 May 1977 the body of Stanislaw Pyjas, fifth-year Polish philology student of Jagiellonian University in Krakow was found on the staircase of an apartment house at Szewska Street, Krakow. On 26 April Stanislaw Pyjas, together with five other students sent the following letter to the Regional Prosecutor's Office of the Podgorze district in Krakow:

Notification of the infringement of Article 166 (and others) of the Polish Penal Code

During 19 and 20 April 1977 anonymous letters were received by L. Maleszka, B. Wiltstein, M. Godyn and A. Balcerek, while Mr. B. Bek found a letter delivered secretly to his student quarters. Apart from crude and uncommonly abrasive accusations, the letters insinuated that our colleague and friend Stanislaw Pyjas was an individual of the lowest possible moral standards and a police informer. Furthermore, the letter incited the addressees to "settle the matter with this nasty character once and for all using every possible means at your disposal - this should be your prime task" (quotation from the letter to L. Maleszka). This kind of instigation to crime and creation of an atmosphere of threat and intimidation in respect of a citizen constitutes a criminal activity according to para. 166 of the Polish Penal Code. We should also like to draw the attention of the authorities to a peculiar psychological blackmail exercised by the writers of anonymous letters in respect of the addressees: They claim that the Security Forces in Krakow rely on the services of student-informers of questionable moral reputation, motivated by financial gains and special privileges offered to them, e.g. in respect of their study courses, diplomas, etc. The Security Forces would also, according to the anonymous writers, direct their activities against those students who collected signatures under a petition to the Parliament of the Polish People's Republic, demanding the creation of a special Investigation Commission to probe the abuses of police powers during June 1976 demonstrations in Ursus and Radom. Without attempting to analyse here the methods of operations of the Security Forces, we wish to state, nevertheless, that the citizen's right to petition was guaranteed in Article 86 para. 2 of the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, as well as in appropriate legal provisions. Nobody should, therefore, be threatened with repression by the state organs of law and justice for exercising the right to petition. In view of the fact that such threats constitute a form of intimidation and especially, that there are reasons to believe that these threats may be carried out, we feel it our duty to bring this matter to the attention of the Office of the State Prosecutor, and to ask you to undertake all necessary measures.

Signed: Leslaw Maleszka, Boguslaw Bek, Stanislaw Pyjas, Bronislaw Wildstein, Andrzej Balcerek, Mieczyslaw Godyn.

The Workers' Defence Committee considers it its duty to inform the public about the growing rate of criminal behaviour as practised by the authorities in our country. In our statement concerning the tragic death of Stanislaw Pyjas we issued information showing how physical acts of terror were inflicted on those who associate themselves with the Workers' Defence Committee. Alongside these incidents the persecution and humiliation of individuals for their activities within the community and for their political beliefs is growing dangerously frequent, those who joined the Workers' Defence Committee to organise aid for the victims of the June reprisals and those who signed letters addressed to the Sejm (Parliament) demanding the appointment of a special Parliamentary Committee are now themselves severely victimised.

Stanislaw Pyjas died most probably around 3 a.m. on 7 May as a result of head injuries. The Workers' Defence Committee wishes to

draw attention to the fact that WDC member Miroslaw Chojecki and WDC collaborator Eugeniusz Kloc were threatened during police interrogations with violent death at the hands of unknown individuals. A similar threat was made by Security Force agents in respect of Andrzej Zdziarski, a WDC associate, whom they kidnapped and later dumped at night in the middle of the countryside. In fact, all members of the Workers' Defence Committee received anonymous letters and telephone calls with threats to their lives. On 4 May Wladyslaw Sulecki, a miner of "Gliwice" colliery was kidnapped by Security Force officers from his own apartment. He was dragged by the hair to the police car and beaten up in plain view of several witnesses. A medical examination carried out immediately after the incident revealed serious contusion of the right side of the chest. Wladyslaw Sulecki was interrogated by the police on a number of occasions in connection with his contacts with WDC. He was also a signatory of a petition to the Parliament demanding the setting up of a Parliamentary Commission to investigate police abuses during the June events. The circumstances surrounding the death of Stanislaw Pyjas must be the subject of a public inquiry by appropriate authorities which should also ensure that those guilty of the crime, irrespective of their position, are brought to justice.

During the past few months S. Blumsztajn, M. Chojecki, J. Lytinski, A. Macierewicz, J. Szczesna and W. Ziembinski, who had all been associated with the Workers' Defence Committee, lost their jobs. Until recently employers still sought pretexts for dismissal. In the last while, however, the situation has undergone a marked change. Pretexts are no longer necessary, social views and political beliefs now constitute an explicit reason either for dismissal or for organising a persecution campaign. Andrzej Celinski was dismissed from his post at Warsaw University for his political beliefs. The Regional Committee of Recall justified his dismissal with these words: "In a private conversation with the Secretary of the Works Committee, A. Kaluzynski, Celinski mentioned his views concerning the June events in Radom and at Ursus." The Managing Board and the Party leadership of the Electrical and Engineering Institute in Warsaw unleashed a persecution campaign, very reminiscent of the psychological terrors of the Stalinist era, against five of its employees, (Dr. A. Glowacki, Engineer S. Klimek, Engineer M. Kociszewska-Szczerbik, Dr. A. Wolynski, Dr. R. Zdrojewski), who had added their signatures to the letter addressed to the Polish Sejm. They are now being called for talks - interrogations; ordered to revoke their letter to the Sejm, in writing; their colleagues have been incited against them; a demand has been made for the dismissal of a member of the Works Committee who added his signature to the letter; public meetings, condemning them outright are being organised within the Institute (the editor, M. Misiorny was invited to take an active part in one of these); resolutions are being passed against them by listing the names of all those attending the meeting instead of the names of the voters. Those who signed the letter to the Polish Sejm stand accused of acts of sabotage and of allying themselves with enemy groups in the West, hostile to Poland; colleagues who added their signatures to the letter and who argue against the stand taken by the Managing Board and the Party leadership of the Electrical and Engineering Institute are being persecuted and terrorised. Some of those most actively involved in this persecution campaign are: the director of the Electrical and Engineering Institute, W. Seruga, the chief specialist for works' affairs and secretary of the Party organisation, R. Lojek together with T. Cesul, Z. Kajczynski, H. Szumiejko, H. Zagorski, E. Zasada. A more detailed account of this campaign will be reported in the Information Bulletin. Similar methods of persecution against those who ally themselves with the Workers' Defence Committee have been started in other establishments.

In March, April and May of this year, officials of the Security Forces raided private homes in Warsaw, Lodz, Krakow and Poznan, checking on Workers' Defence Committee members and sympathisers, searching them and detaining them for many hours of questioning, taking photographs and fingerprints. A dozen or more were detained for 48 hours. All of them were called for questioning at the Public Prosecutor's Office. The daughters, who are still minors, of Wladyslaw Sulecki, a miner from the "Gliwice" colliery and a member of the WDC, were interrogated by the Security Forces and incited to inform on their father. We know of other, similar cases. These are only a few examples of the authorities' criminal behaviour and of their violent disregard for and violation of human rights. It is an extremely grave and serious situation, one that we must not underestimate. We must not overlook its uncalculable consequences. We have to oppose it with all our might and as actively as possible. We appeal to every single individual to act at all times to oppose any act of terror and persecution, whether it be directed against his fellow citizens, his colleagues or against himself, and whether it takes place at work, in his professional or social environment, or in his union. Solidarity is now an absolute necessity and self-defence by the community as a whole is indispensable. Every violation of human rights and of our rights as citizens, which goes uncensured, which passes without opposition and without being brought before the public eye will eventually severely injure every one of us, though it may not, at that moment, be aimed directly at us. Every infringement that passes without comment becomes an antecedent to another transgression. We become accomplices to every violation that we let pass in silence.

In this situation, where acts of lawlessness are growing in number,

2. Appeal of Student Solidarity Committee

On 7 May, 1977, our friend, Stanislaw Pyjas, a student of Philology and Philosophy at the Jagiellonski University, died a tragic death in mysterious circumstances.

The deceased was a person who held independent and non-conformist views. In the last phase of his life he actively co-operated with the Workers' Defence Committee. His death left a deep-felt sense of shock among the academic community, not only in Krakow but throughout the country. The Workers' Defence Committee made official protests, circulated in their statement of 9 May.

The students of Krakow have spontaneously responded to this shocking act of murder by deciding to boycott all the events of the traditional annual festivities. Neither the students nor the inhabitants of Krakow were left to mourn Stanislaw's death undisturbed, for they were harassed by officials of the Security Forces. Many of our colleagues who went to mourn were detained and arrested and even the place of mourning was frequently desecrated. In this way the Socialist Students' Union lost the ultimate moral right of representing the academic community. Thus on 15 May we called together the Committee for Student Solidarity in order to initiate the forming of an authentic and independent student organisation.

3. KOR Statement Following Arrests

In Krakow and Warsaw, from 14 to 16 May the following members of the Workers' Defence Committee were arrested: Jacek Kuron, Antoni Macierewicz, Adam Michnik, Piotr Naimski and an associate of the Workers' Defence Committee, Wojciech Ostrowski. All these people received sanctions from the public prosecutor and are now in prison. Miroslaw Chojecki and Sreniowski who, also, are members of the WDC have been arrested and are also in prison. The Workers' Defence Committee demands their immediate release and appeals to the community to support this demand. The Workers' Defence Committee acts in the interests of the Community and within the bounds of the laws guaranteed by the Constitution and the Pacts which set out Human Rights and the Rights of Citizens. The release of those arrested is absolutely

the Workers' Defence Committee acknowledges the necessity for appointing a **Bureau of Intervention**. Its function will be to collect evidence of any violation of human and citizens' rights and then to inform the public. Whenever it lies within its power to do so it will try to give legal aid where possible, medical aid where needed and financial aid where absolutely necessary to the victims of unjust treatment of establishments of work, by trade unions, by the administrative organs of the State, by the Security Forces or by the judiciary. It also becomes necessary to form a **Fund for the Self-Defence of the Community** in order to establish continuing aid for victims of reprisals and of criminal behaviour by the authorities. This Fund will be instituted directly after the accounts of the Workers' Defence Committee have been cleared. We call on the following people to help set out the principles of administering the Fund: Prof. Jan Kielankowski, Prof. Edward Lipinski, Dr. Jan Jozef Lipski, Dr. Jozef Rybicki, Halina Mikolajska, Wacław Zawadcki, Jan Zieja.

The Workers' Defence Committee appeals to all citizens to oppose any manifest act of a criminal behaviour. We call on individuals to relay every reliable piece of information concerning known cases of violations of the law by the authorities. The Workers' Defence Committee wishes to stress its conviction that widespread and purposeful action by a united community is the only way to counteract acts of violence, and to check the recurring violations of human and citizens' rights which are being committed with such impunity in our country. We alone, with justice to support us, can fight against injustice.

The Committee for Student Solidarity states that the circumstances surrounding the death of Stanislaw Pyjas require a public explanation by qualified representatives of the Authorities and that those guilty of the crime must be brought to justice regardless of the positions they hold.

The Committee for Student Solidarity demands an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the acts of profanity at the place where Stanislaw Pyjas was mourned and demands that those guilty of such acts be punished.

The Committee appeals to all for support and for information about the victimisation of those who took part in the mourning ceremonies. We hereby state that we wish to organise ourselves in self-defence against reprisals.

The Committee for Student Solidarity allies itself with the Workers' Defence Committee.

The members of the Committee for Student Solidarity authorise the following people to represent its standpoint: 1. Leslaw Maleszka 2. Andrzej Balcerek 3. Lilianna Batko 4. Elzbieta Majewska 5. Malgorzata Gatkiewicz 6. Wieslaw Bek 7. Bogumil Fonik 8. Joanna Barczyk 9. Bronislaw Wildstein 10. Robert Kaczmarek 11. Katarzyna Ptak 12. Jozef Roszar.

necessary if peace is to be maintained within the Community and if we are to avoid a series of events which no-one can foresee or control.

On behalf of the Workers' Defence Committee:
Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stanislaw Baranczak, Bogdan Borsewicz, Ludwik Cohn, Stefan Kaczorowski, Anka Kowalska, Edward Lipinski, Jan Jozef Lipski, Halina Mikolajska, Emil Morgiewicz, Wojciech Onyszkiewicz, Antoni Pahjadak, Jozef Rybicki, Aniela Steinbergowa, Adam Szczypiorski, Wacław Zawadski, Jan Zieja, Wojciech Ziembinski.

(Documents made available to us by **Aneks**, a political quarterly journal.)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Case of Machacek and Lastuvka

In January 1977, Vladimir Lastuvka and Ales Machacek were arrested.

Vladimir Lastuvka was arrested on 20 January, while on a professional trip from Decin to central Bohemia. According to reliable information, the State Security detained him in order to prevent his activities in connection with Charter 77. On 27 January, Ales Machacek was arrested in Usti-nad-Labem.

During house searches, a large amount of material was confiscated: several Czech language journals published in the West - **Svedectvi, Listy, and Informacni Materialy**; books (especially novels, short stories and essays) published in Canada, West Germany and Switzerland; complete collections of journals that appeared in Czechoslovakia before April 1969 (**Reporter, Literarni Listy, Listy**); press cuttings from daily newspapers of that period (including **Rude Pravo**); and

books published in Czechoslovakia before April 1969. More important still, at least one duplicated copy of the text of Charter 77 was seized.

Vladimir Lastuvka and Ales Machacek have been charged with "subversion of the Republic" according to Para. 98 section 1 of the Penal Code; this carries a maximum prison sentence of 5 years. Their criminal activity allegedly consists of distributing manuscript material. Both are being detained in the notorious Litomerice prison on the instructions of the District Procurator of Usti-nad-Labem. The trial is expected to take place at the end of July or the beginning of August.

Vladimir Lastuvka, 35 years old, is a nuclear physics engineer and works at the national enterprise Chepos-Decca. He is married and has a six-year-old son. He lives at 132/17 Fucik Street, Decin 10.

Ales Machacek, 31 years old, is an agricultural engineer; he draws up projects for the Usti-nad-Labem Regional Engineering Institute. He is married with two children (6 years and 2½). He lives at 5 Kozin Street, at Usti-nad-Labem-Strehov.

These two young specialists, who are competent and highly regarded, lacked nothing from a material point of view; but they did lack individual freedom. Their case has a more general social significance: the zeal with which the security forces of North Bohemia attempted to stamp out Charter 77 in the region contributed greatly to its popularisation.

(Information taken from a letter dated Prague, 23 February 1977, which appeared in the French edition of **Listy** No. 4)

Appeal to Federal Assembly

One of the most widespread forms of repression used by the Czechoslovak regime against signatories of Charter 77 has been unlawful dismissals from employment. The cases of all those for whom particulars were obtainable are described in a 60 page dossier sent as part of an appeal to the Federal Assembly, signed by Professor Hajek and 10 prominent Chartists, including Professor Zdenek Jicinsky and Dr. Petr Pithart, two very prominent lawyers. The Letter is dated 30 May, and was submitted to the authorities on 6 June.

The letter explains why the dismissals detailed in the 60 pages of documentation are illegal. The central point of the argument is a dispute over the interpretation of the pertinent articles, in particular 46 and 53, of the Labour Code. The ILO (International Labour Organisation) expressed satisfaction with the new, 1975, wording of these articles, which replaces "violation of the socialist system of society" with "threat to the security of the state". In the ILO view, this "removed features from the previous wording which could have given grounds for objections", and they added: "It is important that these changes should be publicised and really applied. It is necessary to stress that disagreement over political decisions or political opinions should not be regarded as being linked with State security, but as related to freedom of thinking."



Czech political police car, with the head of one agent visible, in front of F. Kriegel's flat.

Despite the ILO's belief that the change of the wording of the law would prevent political discrimination, the new wording, "threats to the security of the State" is used today as the main reason for the dismissals of the Chartists. The legal weakness of this measure is particularly evident when one recalls the Czechoslovak spokesman's definition of state security, voiced at the 60th session of the ILO, namely: "the inviolabi-

lity of the territory of the state, the inviolability of the defence capability of the State, the inviolability of state institutions and state secrets". He even claimed that the amended Article 53 (the one used most frequently today as grounds for dismissals of Chartists) made it impossible to sack people for political reasons.

The authors of the letter request the Federal Assembly to declare publicly which interpretation of Articles 46 and 53 is correct - that of the Czechoslovak ILO spokesman, or that of some Czechoslovak employers, backed by the Public Prosecutor's letter sent to all the labour courts.

While acknowledging that a vast amount of data on "persecution of citizens in the sphere of employment" has been compiled, the authors admit that the documentations is not complete. It does not include all cases of dismissals which have occurred in the last few weeks, and emphasises the difficulty in obtaining documentary evidence of cases outside Prague. The authors also stress that although the report concerns mainly signatories of the Charter, this in no way implies that the Charter is concerned exclusively with the fate of its signatories, or that the repression affects only them. They then outline 7 different forms of dismissal, and illustrate these with detailed examples.

(Summary by Palach Press)

Documents

Letter from Jiri Mueller to CPGB

To the Political Committee
Communist Party of Great Britain

Dear Comrades,

On 20 February 1977, having previously been followed, I was arrested by Czechoslovak State Security forces, physically assaulted and subjected to a personal search, during which the following items were confiscated: four issues of the daily **Morning Star**, dated 9, 10, 11, and 12 February 1977; translations of several readers' letters to the **Morning Star**, pertaining to the campaign of the Czechoslovak authorities against Charter 77 signatories; and a translation of the statement made by the Political Committee of the CPGB on this question.

The above documents were confiscated on account of their "dangerous character for the State", because, as it was explained to me, they contradict the policies of the Czechoslovak CP.

I am a signatory of Charter 77, released in December 1976 after 5 years' imprisonment for political activity. I consider it my duty to inform you that your Party's documents are used in order to persecute a Czechoslovak citizen.

Jiri Muller
Juna Babaka 3-5
61600 Brno.

23 February 1977

Exiled leader on Charter 77

Introduction

On 13 June, Zdenek Mlynar, an ex-member of the Presidium of the Czechoslovak CP, expelled from the Party in 1969, arrived as an exile in Vienna. Mlynar, who played a central role in drawing up the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak CP in 1968, the most coherent political statement of Dubcekism, is the most important opposition figure to leave Czechoslovakia since the Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968. His exile is part of a pattern of activity by the regime which is using a combination of concessions and repression to split up and disorient the Charter movement. Two striking examples from the past months, taking place against a broader background of continuous official harassment, have been the "last warning" given to spokesperson Jiri Hajek on 27 April, that he faced imprisonment if he signed another Charter document; while another of the spokespeople of the Charter, Vaclav Havel, was released on 20 May from the prison where he had been held since mid-January, although the charge against him of "harming the interests of the Republic" still stands. The official Czechoslovak press agency put out a story that Havel had renounced his signature to the Charter. Havel himself, however, exposed this report as a fabrication, stating that in fact he had only resigned from his role as a spokesperson, without ceasing to support the aims of the Charter.

Does the exile of Mlynar, who had previously refused to go into exile, reflect a growing demoralisation inside the opposition? Against this view we have the evidence of the release of the names of another 133 signatories on 18 June, including those of Leopold Hoffmann, ex-president of the security commission of the Parliament, Ludmila Jankovcova, a candidate member of the Party Presidium from 1948-63, and Vilibald Bzdicek, an ex-Minister of Education. What does seem to be the case, however, is that the Charter movement itself has shifted its centre of gravity away from the former Dubcekite communists, who had made up 50% of the signatures on the first list released. In the document which we print below, Mlynar himself emphasises the broad political and social basis of the Charter, and recognises the need for the Dubcekite current to take account of other trends by supporting their right to speak out. He also analyses the two major currents in the Party apparatus, the "extremists" and the "pragmatists", reproaching the latter for their chronic cowardice and suggesting the need for outside initiatives such as the Charter to prod them forward. His exhortation that the pragmatists "should re-evaluate their past conduct" reveals a certain disillusionment among those currents who had hoped for the development of reformist currents within the Party as a crucial part of the struggle for socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, as the document makes clear, the regime has been thrown into real confusion by the appearance of the Charter, and by its own clumsy reaction has enabled the opposition to reach vastly wider layers than it would have otherwise.

by Mark Jackson



Zdenek Mlynar, appointed to the Politburo and Secretariat of the Czechoslovak CP in April 1968, he played a leading part in drafting the Party's action programme of that spring. He is the most prominent leader of a ruling Communist Party to go into exile (13 June this year) since the expulsion of Trotsky from the USSR in 1929.

The only thing Charter 77 is concerned with is the contradictory stance of the Czechoslovak Government: on the one hand it persecutes people for their political beliefs, on the other hand it professes adherence to the International Pact on Human Rights which disqualifies such persecution.

Charter 77 offered little that is new. On many previous occasions documented accounts of discrimination have been publicized in Czechoslovakia and abroad. This time, however, the presentation was different. Instead of an individual appeal or a protest by a few dozen well-known personalities, hundreds of people demonstrated their readiness to engage in political activity strictly within the confines of Czechoslovak law. The timing, too, was important. It was published a few months before the conference in Belgrade to assess the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act, at a time when the authorities were under pressure to take a series of inevitable - and unpopular - economic measures, and

when dissent was appearing also in Poland, the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union.

These external circumstances, rather than the actual content of the Charter, have shaped the official reaction to it - a reaction which displays all the irrational motives of anger, fear and aggressiveness. Pavlovian conditioned reflexes of the fifties have reappeared: Stonewall. No discussions; no talks. Suppress. Set police on the track. Arrest some, sack others. Vilify them all. And whip up "popular support" - resolutions, statements, demands for punishment on Earth and in Hell.

Inevitably, however, this official response led to unexpected and unplanned consequences. It made the question of discrimination against certain groups of people the most widely discussed issue of the day, and the high interest in the actual text of the Charter could never have been aroused under other circumstances. Whoever reads one of the hundreds of typewritten copies now circulating will of course form his or her own opinion about the methods employed to combat it. Even if in the end, people allow themselves to be counted as members of an anonymous factory collective which has "denounced the shipwrecks and self-styled representatives [i.e., the Charter signatories]" they do this out of fear, not out of conviction.

On January 7, when the text of the Charter first appeared abroad, the Government faced just another of a long series of protests. But today it is confronted with a situation which is rather different - and worse - and which, in the last analysis, is its own fault.



Frantisek Kriegel pictured recently in a Prague park tailed by two police agents. Kriegel was a leader of the Communist Party youth in the 1930s, fought in the Spanish Civil War, was a victim of the Stalinist purges of the early 1950s in Czechoslovakia. A leading member of Dubcek's Central Committee in 1968, Kriegel is now a leading figure in the Charter 77 movement and in the socialist opposition. He is under continuous police restriction. (Palach Press Ltd.)

The rulers of Czechoslovakia are perfectly conscious of what their power is based on. The disillusionment and resignation which followed the 1968 invasion led to a curious "contract" with the ruling power: in public, people will go through the required ritual of agreeing with their rulers' activities in exchange for being allowed to live their private, non-political lives in reasonable comfort. For unusual services to the rulers, unusual official advantages are available.

Fear is of course an important element in enforcing this "contract": whoever breaks it is affected in every sphere, including private life. Discriminating measures are applied both at work and against the whole family right down to the children. People realize that such a "contract" is not the height of morality. In normal, everyday times, morality bears the cost of satisfying less spiritual needs. For a quiet private life, one pays an agreed tax. This involves attendance at meetings and parades, passive acquiescence in various activities of the rulers, membership in a number of national organizations, dropping a slip of paper into the ballot box, and so on. But the campaign against Charter 77 has struck at these very roots of "normalized" political power: people are asked to sign their full name to petitions denouncing the Charter. Collecting such an "extraordinary tax" is quite risky, for it disturbs the customary balance. People are asked to do something out of the ordinary and receive nothing in return.

The internal compromise which everyone has had to reach with his or her conscience was already disturbed by the simple fact that over 600 people publicly affixed their names to Charter 77. It may be argued that the Charter is a challenge of fools, dreamers, unrealistic people or of those who have nothing to lose -- nevertheless, it remains a challenge, and it makes some people uncomfortable by disturbing their inner peace and quiet. But everybody is made uncomfortable when the rulers press things to the extreme by demanding that people personally denounce the Charter, and then offer nothing in exchange. That is going too far, even for the shopkeeper morality that allows people to live within the terms of the "contract" in the first place.

An able politician would have avoided tampering with this fundamental "contract" at all cost, particularly at a time when the tax for an unruffled private life is going up anyway because of inflation; Czechoslovakia, so the jargon has it, "cannot avoid certain consequences of the crisis phenomena plaguing the capitalist economy". And yet the rulers lost all sense of propriety and started a campaign to gather workers signatures against the Charter.

The results of the campaign have indicated certain weaknesses. It transpired, first, that people are more opposed than had been expected to being treated as an unthinking herd of cattle. Thus, they frequently demanded to be acquainted with the Charter before they would denounce it. Rather than honour the request, the authorities usually dropped the search for individual signatures. Instead, the leadership-management, the Communist Party organization and the labour union, would sign a resolution "on behalf of" so many hundreds or thousands of workers. This way of handling anti-Charter resolutions was employed especially in factories, among the working class, and even in collective farms.

Office workers, by contrast, were far more frequently ready to sign their names. But even among them, quite a few refused to have anything to do with anti-Charter resolutions. The range of people who posed a moral challenge to those living in "contract" with the rulers was thus unexpectedly increased. Suddenly, it included some of their very own workmates. Moreover, signing out of fear amounted to a brutal and public humiliation. Those involved feel it as a stigma on their conscience which will engender a tacit, but profound hatred for those who humiliated them -- by publishing their names in the press, for example.

Young people are especially interested in Charter 77. Indeed, this is the first time that an action by critics of the present regime has met with a palpable response among the youth. In 1968, they were 10-15 years old and their experience of events was not political. The anti-Charter campaign has linked up vague personal childhood experiences with contemporary affairs.

The ruling power chalked up its one success when the national Artists' Unions produced a statement, on January 28. And yet it was not the kind of statement that the hardliners desired: why, it did not even contain the words "Charter 77"! The statement actually consists of a collection of political cliches which do not go beyond the customary political tax. This barrage of cliches envelops one little stunted sentence expressing contempt for "those whose unchecked conceit, vain superiority, selfish interests or even desire to make a few miserable pennies separates and isolates them from their own people, wherever in the world they may be". And a subordinate clause suggests that "even in our country" there has appeared a group of such apostates and traitors. Fancy packaging, if you wish, tailored to the more delicate tastes of those employed "on the cultural front". But the ruling power had to put up with such a "de luxe" statement in order to obtain at least a few names of some prominence in the country's culture -- especially in the theatre arts.

Unlike previous protests, Charter 77 was not politically monochromatic. The ruling power had grown used to the same names, mostly of former communists, appearing over and over again under various protests and petitions. The Charter, however, was signed by hundreds, including not only communists and Marxists, but also Christians and known opponents of communism and Marxism. The official propaganda offers only one interpretation of this: all these people are allegedly "agents of imperialism", linked by their "hatred of socialism", "thwarted personal ambitions", etc. Essentially, they are all "losers".

As a matter of fact, this unity demonstrates that the most diverse political trends have now realized how indispensable for their own existence is an atmosphere of political democracy and an effective legal system. What is new about this awareness is that it is shared even by communists and Marxists who, after 1968, were kicked out of their privileged positions and came to share the lives of working people. The paradoxical achievement of the ruling power has been to force hundreds of thousands of communists to appreciate the significance of political democracy. These people needed a profound personal experience in order to arrive at a profound inner understanding of the inseparability of civic and political rights.

What impact has the Charter had on the world of official politics? There, differences between two tendencies are becoming more and more apparent. One of these lives off the past, constantly detecting "dangers" that this or that historical situation will repeat itself (the Prague Spring of 1968, the challenge to the communists of 1948, etc.) Those who constitute this tendency live in an absurd world peopled by their own apparitions, and regard everything new, everything contemporary from behind their looking glass. They relive their worst past fears of losing their positions and influence. These are the extremists whose one and only political concept is never to give anyone the right to criticize beyond what is officially allowed -- because that would be the beginning of an unfathomable end. The extremists would deprive their former opponents (and their progeny) of all their rights, for ever and ever. In turn, they are constitutionally incapable of dealing with any of the country's economic and social problems. In history, this tendency has always eventually been defeated, and it was only outside help that allowed it to survive and even become predominant after 1968.



Part of the crowd at the funeral of Charter 77 leader Jan Patočka, who died from a heart attack after interrogation earlier this year. Behind the wall in the background are two members of the Czech political police.

The second tendency has a more realistic perception of the country's problems, especially those of economic development. It is to be sure, not a democratic tendency either, and is indeed scared of democracy. But at least it is not blinded by a belief in the omnipotence of violence and seeks to dilute (if not dissolve) tensions that have become an obstacle to implementing more rational policies. If it were strong enough, this rational or pragmatic tendency would probably be prepared to seek some compromise between the ruling power and the large groups of people who are discriminated against. It seeks to subordinate ideological-political tenets to the pragmatic necessity of carrying out certain economic and social policies.

However, since 1969 this tendency has been considerably weakened and has never managed to take effective measures to decrease the tensions generated by the extremists.

The political reaction to Charter 77 amounted to another round of subterranean struggle between these two tendencies. Some of the "realistic" politicians actually reproached the chartists for having rendered their own slower and more sensible efforts vulnerable to an extremist onslaught.

The reality, however, seems to be quite different. It is not at all clear that the reaction to the Charter strengthened the extremists and weakened the pragmatists. Future developments will surely reveal the opposite to be true -- provided the pragmatic tendency does not drown in the mud of the cowardice which it displays whenever a conflict comes to a head. The pragmatists should also reevaluate their past conduct; for it is precisely their lack of any achievement which led to the impasse that produced the Charter.

February 1977
Prague

(Translation copyright Palach Press, 1977.)

A further 133 citizens have signed the declaration of Charter 77 and allowed their names to be published, thus bringing the total number of signatories to 750. In addition, a large number of citizens have expressed agreement with the Charter in various ways but do not wish to be publicly associated with it - either because they are convinced that they could be more useful to the cause of human rights if they avoid the direct attention of the state authorities, or because they are afraid of discriminatory attacks on their means of livelihood.

The extent to which various Czechoslovak laws, including the Labour Code, have been violated in dismissals from work emerges clearly from a letter and accompanying documentation sent on 30 May to the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the World Federation of Trade Unions. The letter came from a Charter 77 spokesperson and ten people whose existence has been adversely affected as a result of their support for the Charter.

Certain friends of Charter 77 have asked during recent weeks whether further activity has not become too dangerous since, among other things, the death of Professor Jan Patocka, one of the three original signatories, and the resignation of another, Vaclav Havel, which was announced in a Charter statement of 26 May. We would like to reply by pointing out that Charter 77 is an informal association of citizens who, operating within the framework of Czechoslovak law, are determined to ensure consistent application

of human rights legislation enshrined in the Czechoslovak Constitution and in International Covenants which were incorporated into Czechoslovak law and published in the official Collection of Laws of 23 December 1976. Charter 77 is not an organisation; it has no firm structure and its functionaries play no clearly defined role. The Charter is rather a citizens' initiative based on the conscious activity of all those who agree with its aims and principles, as expressed in its collective documents. This fluid, democratic character is a guarantee that the Charter will find the legal forms and means necessary to present properly prepared and open points of view to the competent authorities and to the public. It has thus also made provision for alternative forms capable of standing up to attempted restrictions of its legal activities.

[The document continues by listing all the 133 additional signatories, with their full names and occupations: there are 81 workers, 30 clerks and technicians, 19 intellectuals, 1 agricultural worker, 1 pensioner and 1 housewife. Thus each of the four lists published so far has shown a trend for the percentage of workers to increase.]

Prague
13 June 1977

(Made available by Palach Press)

SOVIET UNION

Soviet Jews and anti-Semitism

Few problems have cropped up during the last 25 years as persistently as the Jewish question. And many of the crucial issues in the history of the socialist movement since the 1930s have in one way or another involved the Jewish question.

The rise of Fascism in Europe was accompanied by the mass extermination of European Jewry. The entire explosive, war-torn course of the Arab Revolution over the last 30 years has been bound up with the birth and consolidation of the Zionist Israeli state which was supposed by public opinion in the West to have signalled the final settling of the Jewish question. Successive waves of the crisis of Stalinism in Eastern Europe have been punctuated by the re-emergence of anti-Semitism, from the Prague show-trials and the Doctors' Plot to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Polish events of the same year. It is one of the ironies of twentieth-century history that the two historic projects to have proclaimed a lasting solution of the Jewish question - the Soviet state and Zionism - have both simply reproduced it in a new form. Marxists have always exposed the reactionary nature of Zionism. But what went wrong in the USSR? How is it possible that 60 years after the Russian Revolution, even the former leader of the CPGB is forced to admit that anti-semitism is far from dead in the USSR?

Sovietskaya Kultura 15 Feb 1977 on "Zionism": "Zionists, like their Nazi precursors, use as weapons not only military technology but also a fifth column of intellectuals who demand freedom of action. They demand limitless freedom for the children of Zion, but they totally forget the national obligations of citizens."

There is an almost total absence of any Marxist analysis of the Jewish question in Eastern Europe. This will not surprise those in any way familiar with the strangehold of Stalinism over every field of Marxist study during the last 50 years. And since the position of the Jews in any East European society immediately raises sharp questions about the nature of the social and political set-up as a whole, such silence is really to be expected.

Abram Leon's book **The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation** provides a comprehensive history of the Jews, and in particular of the 20th century holocaust in which Leon himself was fated to perish. Here we will simply rehearse his basic argument, albeit in truncated form. Leon underlines the radical difference between the course of events in Western and Eastern Europe. In the West, the rise of capitalism,

ushered in a liberal era, demolished the ghetto walls and resulted in the emancipation of the Jews. He describes how the loss of their specific function within pre-capitalist, non-market society, together with the disappearance of discrimination, hastened the integration of the Jews of Western Europe, followed by the rapid assimilation of the Jewish communities in that part of the world.

In Eastern Europe, however, the feeble development of capitalist relations both hindered the absorption of the uprooted Jewish masses into industry and impelled the crisis-ridden ruling class to resort to Jew-baiting and persecution as a diversionary weapon against revolution. Between 1880 and 1920, no fewer than 2,285,000 Jews emigrated from Russia - the vast majority to the United States. Thousands of those who stayed looked to socialism for a solution and threw in their lot with the revolutionary and socialist movements of the time.

The new Soviet regime immediately launched an energetic struggle against anti-semitism, which was a major tool of the White armies. A special commissariat for Jewish affairs (*Yevkomm*) was established, as well as a Jewish section of the Bolshevik Party (the *Yevsektzia*): a large number of Jewish intellectuals and semi-intellectuals were integrated into the Party

and administrative apparatus. Although the early period was not free from anti-religious excesses, it brought forth an unparalleled flowering of Jewish, and especially Yiddish culture in accordance with the Bolshevik programme for national minorities. Thus, in 1926-27, 51.1% of the Jewish school-age population were attending schools where Yiddish was the language of instruction - a figure which had risen to 64% by 1932; and the Soviet Union could boast of 42 Yiddish papers and ten state theatres promoting Yiddish drama. The Bolsheviks strove above all to draw the impoverished Jewish petty-bourgeoisie into productive activity through the formation of artisan co-operatives and the establishment of agricultural collectives in areas of high Jewish population as a step towards the creation of autonomous regions. On the other hand, popular anti-semitism was strengthened during the NEP period by the re-emergence of small Jewish manufacturers and tradesmen, as well as by the high proportion of Jews involved in the administration (37.2% of the active Jewish population). Although the authorities responded in 1928-31 by a vigorous campaign against anti-semitism, the tide had already begun to turn. In 1930 the *Yevsektzia* was dissolved, and a virulent campaign was launched against all manifestations of Jewish nationalism and Hebrew culture in particular.

In 1928, the Stalinist leadership attempted to resolve the problems of integrating the Jewish population into production by the administrative establishment of an autonomous region in Birobidzhan. (In all likelihood, this was equally inspired by the desire to combat Zionist currents which were still strong in the Jewish community - in 1917 there had been approximately 300,000 Zionists.) But out of 2,700,000 Soviet Jews (1926 census), only 40,000 were ever attracted by this desolate Siberian region. In fact, statistics reveal that, from 1930 onwards, there was a general decline in the number of Jews involved in agriculture; the Jewish districts themselves became rapidly depopulated under the impact of the industrialisation drive.

The liberal policy towards the Jewish minority fell victim to the hypercentralism and chauvinist adulation of Great Russia which came more and more to characterise the climate of the thirties. Popular anti-Semitism reared its head once again - feeding both off the folk tradition which identified Jews with usury and exploitation, and off the presence of a large number of Jews in the administrative apparatus and commercial fields. These primitive instincts were often encouraged by the Soviet leaders, who saw in the Jews a convenient scapegoat; the anti-semitic undertones of the Moscow trial of 1936 are clear enough evidence of that.

The official policy of more-or-less forced assimilation which was adopted in the

thirties involved the closure of Jewish schools, the suppression of Jewish Soviets and Yiddish-speaking tribunals, the dissolution of the Jewish Colonisation Organisation (OZET), and finally the disappearance first of provincial Yiddish newspapers and then of the one published in the capital, *Emes* (The Truth). The leaders of *Birobidzhan* were arrested and shot, and the mass terror engulfed a great number of Jewish personalities from all walks of life.

Despite the extreme nationalist character of the mobilisation against Nazi Germany, the regime was forced after 1941 to re-forge its links with the Jewish population, setting up a Jewish anti-fascist committee with its own paper *Elnigkeit* (Unity). But after the War the Jewish schools were not re-opened; indeed, a discreet purge eliminated Jews from the army, the Party and the diplomatic service. Tacit discrimination began to occur at university level, and in 1948-49, the Jewish press, publishing houses and cultural institutions were definitively liquidated. The actor Mikhoels, chairman of the Jewish anti-fascist committee was murdered by the secret police in 1948, the very year that Stalin sided with the newly-created State of Israel against the Arab regimes (to the point of supplying the Haganah with arms, through Prague).



В СИНАГОГАХ ЗНАХОДЯТЬ ПРИСТА
НИЩЕ РІЗНІ ШАХРАТ І ПРОВОД
ДИСВІТИ

Cartoon from *Judaism without Embellishment* a book published in the Soviet Union under the auspices of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. The caption reads: "A variety of swindlers and rogues find haven in the synagogues."

The last years of the Stalin regime were marked by an anti-semitic campaign, thinly disguised beneath the phrase 'rootless cosmopolitanism': the foremost Yiddish poets and writers - Bergelson, Markish, Fefer - who had been arrested in 1948-49 and deported to concentration camps were finally executed on 12 August 1952. There is reason to believe that the sinister 'Doctors' Plot' - an anti-semitic frame-up halted only by Stalin's death - was intended to serve as the prelude to the compulsory resettlement of the entire Jewish minority in the far east of Birobidzhan.

The period of 'de-Stalinisation' put an end to mass terror. However, as the Italian communist senator, Umberto Terracini, has noted, the old anti-semitic tradition is still tolerated in a more or less open way by the leaders of the Soviet state. It is true, of course, that a few Yiddish works have been published since 1959, but in such small numbers that one can only regard it as a publicity stunt designed to impress world public opinion. A Yiddish literary review was restarted in 1961, and there has been a slight rebirth of Jewish artistic activity since 1955; but these are the limits of the regeneration of Jewish culture. There is still no Jewish press, nor is teaching permitted in Yiddish, even though, according to the 1959 Soviet census, it is the mother tongue of 472,000 citizens. The tacit exclusion of Jews from public office persists, as does subtle discrimination with regard to university and administrative careers.

Not only do the authorities fail to campaign against popular anti-semitism; they actually underwrite some of its most flagrant manifestations. For example, the gramophone record of Lenin's speeches which was put on sale in 1961 deliberately omitted his address on anti-semitism - a fact which indicates rather well the limits of the 'return to Leninism'. In the Ukraine, the Academy of Sciences sponsored the publication in 1964 of a scurrilous anti-semitic tract by one Trofim Kitchko entitled 'Judaism Unembellished'. And the same 'specialist' was invited by the Kiev newspaper *Komsomolskaya Znanya* to inform the public about the nefarious character of Zionism. On 9 August 1960, the Daghestan newspaper *Kommunist* reproduced one of the oldest calumnies in the anti-semitic arsenal: the accusation of ritual murder.

The amount of publicity surrounding Jewish defendants in 'economic' show-trials, designed to conciliate popular resentment against the generalised corruption of the apparatus, shows clearly the preparedness of the authorities still to use the Jews as scapegoats.

The Jewish question relates to the very foundations of Soviet society, and it is for this reason that the Jews have not enjoyed even the partial rehabilitation of other nationalities (e.g. the Tartars). For the very fact that the Jews are not territorially concentrated means that cultural autonomy represents a serious challenge to the regime's monopoly of communication. Of course, this has nothing to do with idealist and metaphysical notions such as those entertained by Zionism ('We have always been oppressed, and always will be'; 'Minorities always suffer'.) It is due rather to the overall absence of democratic rights which characterises the political regime inherited from Stalin.

Under these conditions, the victory of Israel in the 1967 June war greatly speeded up the re-emergence of Jewish national,

and in particular Zionist consciousness. Soviet-Jewish youth has ostentatiously affirmed its national sentiments in the only place open to it: in the synagogues on Jewish Holy Days. Thus, what Stalin sowed, Golda reaped.

The pro-Zionist feelings of Soviet Jews are in part at least a consequence of the identification in their eyes of anti-Zionism with anti-semitism - an identification originating in official 'anti-Zionism' which is often merely a cover for straightforward racism; they are also rooted in the absence of a profound movement for social change with which young Jews could identify.

A number of countries in Eastern Europe have a similarly sordid history in this matter. In Poland in 1968 one of the ideologists of the regime, Werblan, put forward a rounded thesis of "ethnic proportionality" during the anti-Semitic drive led by the "Moczarite" wing of the Party leadership. (Werblan is still today a leading ideologist of the Polish Central Committee).

This thesis, which at least has the honesty to call a spade a spade, implies a total rejection of the solution to the Jewish question envisaged by Marxism and Leni-



ХАРАЧІ СЛУЖИТЕЛІ СІНАГОГІ ПЕРЕДКО УПІВНЮЮТЬ БІЖАКІ У ПРИБЛИЗІ ПОДІЛУ ЗДОБИЧІ
Cartoon from *Judaism without Embellishment*. The caption reads: "Grafters, servants of synagogues, often fight over division of the spoils."

nism, as well as by 19th century liberalism and socialism: that is to say, assimilation, unfettered integration. The champions of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are, in every case, the fiercest opponents of democratisation and

advocates of strict police surveillance over all forms of social life. They are supported by certain middle layers who see in the operation of a *numerus clausus* a sure route to social mobility.

We can be certain that an integral part of the struggle for democratic freedoms in Eastern Europe will be the fight against anti-Semitism. The labour movement must remain vigilant and ready to denounce 'the socialism of fools' wherever it appears; to denounce it as a crime against the Jews, a crime against the Palestinians (who are made to pay the price for anti-Semitism by facing continued colonisation by the Zionist state in Palestine) and, above all, a crime against socialism and communism.

by C. Levinson

Sources:

I. Deutscher, "The Russian Revolution and the Jewish Question" in *The Non-Jewish Jew*, OUP.

N. Weinstock, *Le Sionisme contre Israel*, Paris.

A. Leon, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*

*Both cartoons are taken from a book by the Canadian Communist John Kolasky *Two Years in Soviet Ukraine*. Kolasky spent two years at the Central Committee School of the Ukrainian Communist Party in Kiev.

Document

Secret Trial of Rudenko and Tykhy

[After the arrest of one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group last February, Pyotr Grigorenko, the veteran Communist oppositionist wrote an open letter to Western Communist Parties asking them to take up Rudenko's defence.

Andrea Martin, whose article in *Labour Focus* No. 2 described the 4 monitoring groups in the USSR, has just received the following information by telephone from Grigorenko in Moscow.

Rudenko was put on trial secretly, along with another member of the Ukrainian group, Oleksa Tykhy, on 23 June. No friends or relatives were allowed to attend -- relatives were notified about the trial only on 28 June! The defendants' own lawyers were not called: two officially appointed lawyers were offered when the trial opened -- Rudenko accepted one, Tykhy refused. Both were charged with "anti-Soviet propaganda" and both pleaded not guilty. During his final statement, Rudenko, who is very ill and has been an invalid since being wounded in the Second World War, fainted twice. The sentences were extraordinarily heavy: Rudenko got 7 years in a labour camp and five years exile; Tykhy received 10 years in a labour camp and five years exile.

At about the same time a Georgian activist of the Ukrainian group, Vasyl Barladianu, has been tried and sentenced to 3 years in prison in Odessa for distributing the Group's information.]

DECLARATION OF THE GROUP FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT IN THE USSR

Simultaneous with the Belgrade Conference, the KGB has begun to mete out punishment to the members of the Helsinki group who had been arrested earlier [this year].

In Moscow public trials on trumped-up charges have been set: Malva Landa, a member of the Helsinki group is charged with setting fire to her apartment; and Bihun, a member of the Jewish movement for emigration to Israel is charged with 'parasitism'.

The Rudenko-Tykhy trial, and that of Barladianu, have been conducted in complete secrecy. The Kievan, Rudenko, was taken away for his investigation 800 km. from Kiev to Donetsk.

However his trial and that of Tykhy began in a workers' settlement Druzhkovka which is approximately 100 km from Donetsk. The trial began in the Red Corner [a reading room in the enterprise containing Party propaganda material]. The premises were packed by people approved by the KGB. Not only friends but also the nearest of kin were denied access to the hall, including Tykhy's 80-year-old ailing mother who reached Druzhkovka with great difficulty. Workers of the enterprise where Tykhy worked, who had travelled to the trial at their own expense were not allowed into the hall.

The trial of V. Barladianu is being carried on in equal secrecy. We do not know what is going on behind the closed doors of the trial, which in the verdict will be hypocritically called 'open', but what is going on is a crying injustice. We think it is also clear in what way "socialist democracy" is developing.

As we have learned from a letter by a former prisoner, Y. Fedorov, the organs of the KGB are striving to organise a frame-up against Aleksandr Ginsburg and Yuri Orlov along the lines of 'legal' and illegal 'centres' like the Shakhty affair, industrial Party trial 'SVU', and the social-democratic centre [this refers to the wave of trials beginning in 1928-9]. The KGB is attempting to create these 'centres' from among former prisoners by using force, promises and threats. All this is being done to deal decisively with the prominent members of the civil rights movement in the USSR, to slander and denigrate the opposition in our country. The false rumour peddled by the KGB and conveyed to the West by such Western correspondents as Kraft [Washington Post] saying that the opposition movement in our country has collapsed and the Helsinki group has stopped its activity, also serves this last purpose.

We declare before the whole world that these claims are groundless. Due to the arrests and emigration, our group has been numerically reduced by half. With great pride in our leading people we point out that as a result of the repression we have gained many new friends, some of whom have expressed a

desire to join the group. Sofia Vasilevna Kalistratova, the prominent Soviet lawyer, has already joined the Moscow group. Peter Vins, son of the well known religious activist presently imprisoned, and Olya Hejko, wife of the arrested member of the Ukrainian group, Mykola Matusevych, have joined the Ukrainian group.

The groups live on, are reactivating themselves and the best proof of this are the documents of the group and the continuous flow of statements to the group about the violation of the Helsinki

Accords by the Soviet Union. In spite of the intensified repression, the work begun by Orlov, Ginsburg, Shcharansky, Rudenko, Tykhy, Matusevych, Marinovych, Gamsakhurdia, Kostava and other members of the groups, continues.

Signed by:

Elena Bonner, Pyotr Grigorenko, Malva Landa, Naum Melman, Vladimir Slepak Moscow, 29 June 1977.

(This document made available and translated by the Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners.)

ROMANIA

Document

Audience with a Central Committee Secretary

[In Labour Focus No. 2 we mentioned that the writer and organiser of the Romanian Human Rights Group, Paul Goma, had met Burtica, member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee responsible for ideology. Shortly after this meeting Goma was arrested along with other members of the Human Rights group. He was subsequently released along with 17,000 other prisoners as part of an amnesty to mark the 100th anniversary of a united Romanian state. The account below, taken from a diary kept by Goma since the beginning of this year, gives a rare glimpse of the political style of a top Party leader in Romania. Also present at the discussion was Breban, a writer and ex-member of the Writers' Union expelled in 1971 for criticising the Party leadership's cultural policy.]

TUESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY, 1977.

11.15 a.m.: We are at the Central Committee building. Breban is saluted by the duty officer at the entrance (he's read all Breban's books). He doesn't ask Breban for his identity card, just gives him a pass. Obviously, he asks me to show my identity card. He shows no sign of surprise. We wait until 11.45 for our turn to come.

11.45 a.m.: We go in. Burtica looks thinner, less puffed-up than in his pictures. A smile that is affable, but slightly contorted. He stretches out his hand, both hands - one for my hand, one for my shoulder (although he doesn't touch it). He comes forward to meet us. I am not so much nervous as exhausted.

After we sit down on the two chairs in front of his desk, Burtica asks us with his eyes and hands: why did you want to see me? He doesn't actually say the words, but that is the meaning of his gesture. So, we had been received ... at our own request ...

Breban thanks Burtica for his kindness in receiving us. He thanks Burtica for the help given with my book. And then, he introduces the discussion something like this: 'As I told you before, Goma would like very much to be published in Romanian, in Romania.' I feel trapped.

I can only vaguely remember the sequence of 'themes'. In fact the whole exercise was one of exploring the terrain. And Burtica always avoided the issue when I dwelt on a particular question. He did this not by changing the subject, but by silence. To tell the truth, though, I didn't ask him questions. But, in answering his questions, I would sometimes implicitly raise ones of my own. He didn't give answers to them. For example, I remember how, at one point, Burtica reproached me for not having done everything in my power (!) to be published ... I replied that such a statement surprised me, since I had done everything in my power (I even gave a resume of the last eight years) and had been called to his office two years previously without requesting it. And on that occasion two guys, Nedelea and George Potra, had made fun of me by 'answering' with quotes from the Constitution.

I repeat, I did not ask him: 'Why have things happened like this?' but it was obvious that I was expecting some answer. Burtica remained silent. And he did not return to the question.

At one point, he said that as far as my letter to Kohout was concerned, the Party had no objection. The fact that I demonstrated my solidarity with the Czechs does not contradict the positions of the Romanian Communist Party, because the RCP continues to express its solidarity with the Czechs ... I stopped him here and asked: 'Solidarity with which Czechs? And when?' He gave no reply. He said: 'We have always had all kinds of problems in our discussions with the Russians.' I: 'I haven't read about that anywhere, you know our press ...' He went on to say that my statement that Romania was occupied by the Romanians was mistaken and defamatory. I replied that during the Russian occupation, people would find consolation in the thought that the evil came from the foreign oppressor. But the foreigners had left, and things were still in a bad state. Burtica said that this was false, because today people in Romania lived infinitely better than 30 - 40 years ago -- they have fridges, T.V. sets, furniture, carpets ...; and motor-bikes, I added, but went on to say that this 'statistical' manner of analysing things is incorrect, because one cannot make that kind of comparison. It is not only the Romanians who live better than 30 years ago; the same is true of people all over the world. The story about fridges is true, I said, because, to take one example, peasants no longer buy land and cattle - which they wouldn't be able to use anyway - but buy T.V sets, and even cars instead. But it doesn't mean people live well, just because they have a car. Here Burtica interrupted me to say that Romania found itself in a dramatic situation: if we don't industrialise rapidly, in the next ten years, the country will become completely dependent on the Russians, Americans and Germans; industrialisation is a very big business, he continued, and in order to achieve it, the interests of the individual are inevitably sacrificed even today ... I expressed my agreement with the policy of industrialisation, as long as it is a rational one - that is to say, a policy which takes into account the natural resources and specificity of the country: food industry, chemical industry, etc. ... Burtica paid no notice and went on to something else.

We then started talking about my books ... Breban spoke first. Burtica said that in my case (and not only mine) mistakes have been committed on both sides, and that he will try to correct what others have done wrongly. He said that he did not have the necessary competence, that he did not understand literature; the Party had put him in charge of the ideological department even though he is an electronic engineer. He said that he couldn't promise anything with regard to my books. If I wished, he would read them, and if he found them worthy of publication, they would appear. Here, both Breban and I interrupted: Is it not

shameful that a Vice-President of the Government should deal with problems which are in the province of functionaries? To all this, Burtica answered: 'The destiny of a man deserves at least one hour's attention.' Breban talked a little more about me, about how I have been treated by certain 'functionaries' - Nicolescu, Gafita ... (as if Gafita were the guilty one!). At one point I intervened, saying that functionaries, even the highest ones (Ghise, Nicolescu, even Popescu) would not have done the things they had without instructions from above. 'Those instructions,' I pointed out, 'originated here, in this building.' Burtica did not reply. Breban resumed his attack on the intermediaries, asking from Burtica that these 'links' be suppressed and that writers should be allowed direct contact with the Party leadership, as in '68 ...

I can't remember how the discussion turned to the measures taken by the Securitate [the Romanian secret police] against me in the last few days. He said: 'Comrade Ceausescu has given special instructions that no measure be taken against him.' I told him the story of the guard outside my house, the telephone, the threats. On the threats, he said: 'I personally know people who were very angry about your statements. Naturally some of them may have given vent to their anger.' I argued that there was no way in which all these 'angry' men could have known that I had a child, that my wife was Jewish ... Again no answer. Instead, he told us that yesterday, or the day before, a group of writers (I didn't ask who) had come to him to protest vehemently, to take positions against me. He also said that the question of my being followed, interrupted on the phone, was ... a hallucination! 'When I was a diplomat,' he said, 'I too used to have such ... thinking I was being followed.' Breban came in at this point to say that my phone had been cut off, and that he had seen my house being watched. I added that, from what I can gather, three of the

signatories have been arrested - they haven't phoned me for three days, although we arranged to speak. Burtica pushed a button (a different one!): 'Comrade Stanesco? Have any measures been taken against those who ... you know?' Of course not! Of course not - not even after I gave him their names: Stefanescu, Feher, Bedivan. No they haven't been arrested. So I thanked him: 'Thank you for freeing them.' He did not understand me, or else he pretended not to. (Anyway, the same evening about 6.00 p.m., all three of them phoned me from Constanta, Oradea and Bucharest ...)

In the end, Burtica started talking about eye-witness reports. Breban had offered (or had been offered the chance) to write such reports. Burtica asked me if I would like to do the same. I said that I would, but that I had unpleasant memories of the time when Ghise blocked my reports of the 1970 floods, on the grounds that they were painted too black. ... Burtica said no more. He saw us to the door, and offered his hands (both of them).

While we were putting on our coats, in the hall, Burtica came out. His son was waiting - ten (?) years old, chubby and with a squint. (When I told Ana [Goma's wife] about this, she reproached me for not having asked Burtica how he would feel if he had been told on the phone that his son would be cut to pieces ... ah, women!) The whole thing had lasted an hour and a half. I went down, exhausted (but not nervous). With glue in my mouth instead of saliva. We got the taxi in front of the 'Cina' restaurant. All the way back, Breban went on explaining how great we were to have been received by Burtica for an hour and a half. I can't say that I appreciated the achievement.

(Translation by Anca Mihailescu.)

News in brief

GDR: 15 East Germans arrested following the banishment of Wolf Biermann are still in preventive detention according to a committee in West Berlin called "Socialism and Liberty". Some of those arrested, like the writer Jurgen Fuchs, are ill. Many have been given prison sentences after special trials.

GDR: On 9 June, the East German singer and comedian Manfred Krug, who had taken up the case of Wolf Biermann, was authorised by the government to leave the country with his wife and three children. Very popular in the GDR, Manfred Krug twice received the "National Prize of the German Democratic Republic" for his artistic work. Since his very active part in protests against Biermann's expulsion last year, his numerous records have been withdrawn from circulation in the GDR.

Hungary: As a result of discussions between Austrian President Rudolf Kirchschlaeger and the Hungarian government in Budapest in May, a decision has been taken by both sides to pave the way to removing visa requirements for visits between the two countries. According to the *Vienna Kurier*, 26 May, this signifies that visas will be abolished as soon as the technical details have been completed.

USSR: On 20 May the Soviet painter, Yuri Zharkikh had his right to live in Moscow withdrawn by the authorities and was ordered to leave the city within 72 hours, according to the former Soviet art critic, Alexander Gleser, who organised the recent exhibition of unofficial Soviet art at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. Zharkikh's works, which have featured in half a dozen major Soviet art exhibitions since 1971, were also on show at the ICA.



Oscar Rubin

Another Soviet artist whose works featured prominently in the London exhibition, Oscar Rabin, has been charged by the police with "parasitism". Rabin's paintings have appeared in dozens of art

exhibitions in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the USA since he was singled out for praise at an exhibition of Young Soviet Painters in Moscow in 1957. Rabin's son has also been charged with "parasitism" and with "anti-Soviet activities".

Bulgaria: A decree in February introduced a new system of wage payment in Bulgaria bringing in its train a considerable amount of press comment which suggests resistance in some quarters to the new system. The decree calls for ending the payment of wages to individual workers: instead work brigades will receive a wage packet and the brigade will then have to distribute the sum amongst its members. Under the new system no worker can claim a basic minimum wage as of right. The brigade could decide to withhold an entire month's wage from one of its members on grounds of laziness or lack of a proper attitude towards work. Although reports in Bulgaria's main economic weekly *Ikonomicheski Zhivot* (Economic Life) generally speak of "full support" for the new system, one speech about the system to a meeting of workers "provoked animation", and those at another meeting merely "listened with interest". After months of discussion, the journal's issue of 20 April carried an article by one of the

architects of the reform hinting that the whole scheme may be heavily modified.

Poland: The French Communist theorist Louis Althusser, whose main works have been officially accepted and translated in Poland, has ordered that all the Polish royalties from his writings should be donated to the Workers' Defence Commit-

tee in Warsaw. Althusser, whose major works, *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, contain an attempt to combat 'humanist' interpretations of Marxism that became current in the West after 1956, had taken this action in support of the Polish Workers' Defence Committee at a time when the Polish authorities are branding the leaders of the Committee as agents of extreme-right-wing circles in Germany and the CIA.

Belgrade Conference: The representative of Soviet Defence Committees in Paris, London, Toronto and New York, also delegated by Soviet exiles to represent the Moscow Helsinki Group, was expelled from Belgrade on 24 June. He was arrested and told that the Conference was open only to Governments and journalists. The defence committees have pointed out that the expulsion violates the Helsinki call for "free interaction between citizens of all countries".

LABOUR MOVEMENT

Polish Defence Activity

The Polish Workers' Defence Campaign was set up in Britain following the food price riots in Poland last year. Its primary aim was to raise the question of Poland in the trade union movement, and to demand the release of all imprisoned workers, the reinstatement of all those sacked, the right to strike, and the right to free trade unions for Polish workers.

Pickets of the Polish Embassy and of the appearance last December of the Polish Premier in Britain have been organised, and bulletins issued and distributed among trade unionists. Some thirty shop stewards

and elected trade union representatives have agreed to sponsor the Campaign.

Bulletins have been sent out to trade union branches, and members of the Campaign have spoken at trade union and student union meetings. We have received various affiliations and donations from AUEW branches, trades councils and white collar unions.

We plan to continue the campaign around the question of workers' rights and to include solidarity with Polish students. Hopefully the Campaign will educate and

provide information for trade unionists, many of whom have only previously heard about Poland from those left wingers who think Poland is socialist and dissidents are 'hooligans'. Clearly the tradition in our movement of uncritical support for the Soviet and East European regimes needs to be undermined by socialists.

Anna Paczuska
Secretary,
Polish Workers' Defence Campaign
265a Seven Sisters Rd.,
London

NALGO and Poland

I raised the question of Poland after an argument in the tea room following a demonstration against the South African regime. Several people at work accused me of hypocrisy. They said I never criticised the so-called 'socialist' countries. I argued that I supported workers fighting oppression whether in South Africa or Russia, or even Britain.

I challenged them to come to London for the day, and we'd picket the South African Embassy in the morning and the Soviet Embassy in the afternoon. They refused. But the argument continued.

I put a motion to my union branch supporting the workers arrested in Poland following the food price riots and calling for free trade unions in Poland. The motion was carried and was sent to national conference of NALGO.

Our conference delegate knew little about Poland. He decided to find out. He wrote to the Polish Workers' Defence Campaign, the Polish Embassy, the local MP, and the Foreign Office in order to get a 'well-balanced view' of events.

The letter from the Polish Embassy contained a travel brochure together with a letter claiming that those arrested were hooligans and recidivists, and not really

workers protesting about food prices. This was an obvious whitewash job and so convinced our delegate. He prepared a speech supporting the motion.

He sent copies to the union publicity office and to various NALGO big wigs in order to try and gain support for our resolution.

But at Conference itself the resolution was never reached. This despite the efforts of our delegate to move precedence on more than one occasion. Could it be that this failure to discuss the motion was due to the fact that there was a fraternal delegate from the Soviet Union on the platform?

At the report-back meeting after conference I asked the branch to send a delegation to the picket of the Polish Embassy on the anniversary of the food price riots. That was agreed. Hopefully our branch will pursue the matter and try to get it raised again in NALGO.

Trade unionists must be confronted with this question. Many will support action against South Africa, but shy away from criticism of 'socialist' countries.

I'm a socialist and people at work know it. If we don't argue against the repressive capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe, people may think that we socialists want the

'Russian system' in this country as well.

To argue that strikes in Poland were caused by hooligans is taking the same part as the people in Britain who argued that the Shrewsbury pickets were hooligans, and rightfully imprisoned.

FUTURE ISSUES OF LABOUR FOCUS

Future issues of **Labour Focus** will include:

- ★ surveys of the national question, rights of workers at work, the position of women
- ★ history of the British Trade Unions and Eastern Europe
- ★ survey of Western labour movement defence activity
- ★ guides to reading on Eastern Europe
- ★ documents, interviews, news analysis, reports.

Labour Focus is entirely dependent on the support of our readers for its survival. So far we have survived thanks to the regular flow of subscriptions. **But we need more subscriptions and more donations.** Please help by publicising **Labour Focus** and winning subscriptions from your local Union, labour Party, Communist Party, SWP or IMG branch, etc. Without such help **Labour Focus** will fold and the voice of those struggling for working class rights and democratic rights in Eastern Europe and the USSR will be greatly weakened in Britain.

LETTERS

Dear Comrades!

Let me first of all congratulate you on the new journal you have just started. It is much needed, for it fills a gap between occasional articles on Eastern Europe in Left papers and journals, and a theoretical journal like *Critique*, and it is very important to have something like this just now, when fortunately once again the attention of the "general" Left is being drawn towards Eastern Europe.

Now, I would like to make some critical remarks on Gunter Minnerup's contribution on Biermann in *Labour Focus* No. 1. It ought to be kept in mind, that I restrict myself to these criticisms and will not comment on the article as a whole. In general I would like to state that I found those parts of the article, which I do not mention in the criticism, quite good and the points raised and the context (e.g. Eurocommunism) are certainly very important. Just because these questions are so important, especially now, when we are attempting after a long - inexcusably long - period of lack of attention to the GDR, to get towards an assessment, I felt prompted to write the following criticism, which is advanced entirely in a spirit of solidarity.

The criticism concerns that part of Minnerup's article, in which he put Biermann in the wider context of the East European dissident movement. In general, it has to be remarked, Minnerup's assessment is much too optimistic: he only takes the positive elements and potentialities of the situation into account, neglecting those factors which might prove to be obstacles on the path of socialist democracy in East Germany (and for that matter, of socialist transformation in the West). I will presently elaborate this in greater detail.

If it is true that the GDR - practically alone of the then "People's Democracies" - was spared mass purges of communist militants, one has to take cognizance of the fact, that firstly the "communist and socialist tradition" in that area from the pre-1933 period had been very severely interrupted by German fascism (after all, we do stress this always in analysing the working class in West Germany!). Secondly, the cadres, which were installed in the - later - GDR by the Soviet leadership after World War II were in almost any sense of the word creatures of that leadership (Stalinist education, reinforced during the exile in Moscow by gratitude for being kept alive; after the return to Germany complete dependence on the might of the Red Army, etc.) - this to an even larger degree than was the case in the other "buffer countries". That layer of militants who had won some prestige of their own through fighting Nazism in the underground (e.g.



Ulbricht (left) Party chief in 1953, with successor Erich Honecker, who took over in 1971.

Gomulka in Poland) only to be wiped out (Clementis in Slovakia) or replaced (again Gomulka until 1956) during the purges, when the Soviet regime was reasserting itself after the Tito split, was practically non-existent in the East German Party.

This one has to realize, before far-reaching conclusions are drawn like: "The historical strength of the communist and socialist tradition in what is now the GDR, and the fact that in the GDR no mass purges wiping out entire generations of militants took place, surely contribute to a high receptiveness for left-wing criticisms of the bureaucratic order." Of course, it can be maintained, that nevertheless the absence of purge-experiences facilitates critical utterances, but this is only a potential variant, one, which, as we have seen, did not materialize in the GDR, the German opposition being, as Minnerup himself states, among the latest to speak out loud. Before 1976 (and after the early 50s) Biermann and Havemann were conspicuous for us as relatively isolated figures. That this is a thing of the past is, of course, an occasion of great joy for us. At the same time we should certainly be cautious in assessing the oppositional tendencies: Minnerup mentions side by side - and without evidence, it seems to me, for the former - the "high receptiveness for left-wing criticism of the bureaucratic order" (my emphasis) and "tens of thousands of applications for exit visas". Surely, we are agreed that large numbers of visa-applications are a sign of deep resignation and lack of perspective within the GDR, and not at all indicative of a conscious left-wing anti-bureaucratic position. (By this, I of course, don't mean to condemn those East European dissidents who apply for exit visas because otherwise their life or at least their personal/professional/political existence is so threatened as to make their remaining in their respective countries impossible, e.g. Leonid Plyushch). To have mentioned the mass demands for exit visas in the same breath (and same positive spirit) as the Zeiss workers' protest against Biermann's expulsion is especially unfortunate, as it is bound to heighten the confusion on this point.

Lastly, it is quite correct to mention the numerous ties still linking East and West Germany, especially family ties and the accessibility of the West German mass media for East German citizens, which makes possible a rapid spread of, in this case, Biermann's ideas. However, this is not an unilinear process as it reads in comrade Minnerup's article. It should be remembered that the broadcasts are at the same time used as a vehicle for anti-communist ideas.

In the limited sense as Minnerup put it, the West German broadcasts are indeed of great advantage to the East German dissidents. Still the other side of the matter (anti-communism) should be kept in mind. I do not wish to overstress this, however, as it probably has greater effect on the West German masses, since those in the East are much more used to reading between the lines! This ability will not fail them, no matter if applied to Stalinist propaganda in the East or to bourgeois propaganda from the West.

With all best wishes and comradely greetings,
Steffi Engert,
Köln, West Germany.

Reply by Gunter Minnerup

The restricted space available for my article on Wolf Biermann forced me to condense some very complex problems into a few lines and paragraphs, and I accept that some of these are open to misinterpretations. Comrade Engert does, however, raise two substantial problems: that of the effect the lack of mass purges involving the wiping out of whole generations of working class militants in the GDR has on the consciousness of broader oppositional layers there, and the applications for exit visas following the Helsinki Agreement. Both questions need more systematic discussion, but in "self-defence" I would like to clarify what exactly was meant in the article:

Steffi stresses the thoroughly Stalinist

formation of the top layers of the regime installed in the Soviet zone of occupation after WWII, which is, of course, indisputable. But I was not referring to the "Gruppe Ulbricht" and its heirs in my remarks but rather to the lower ranks of the Party cadre. In my view, the events of June 1953 - the role played by CP and SP cadres, the popular slogans and forms of struggle (cf. my review of *5 Days in June* in this issue of *Labour Focus*) - alone indicate that despite the 12 years of fascist persecution the communist and socialist traditions of the German labour movement were incomparably more alive in the GDR than in the West Germany of the 1950s. Neither before nor after June 1953 did the East German working class experience anything like the mass terror working class militants in most other "People's Democracies", not to speak of the Soviet Union itself, had to suffer. This, together with the relatively high general cultural level and the

many contradictory influences from and ties with West Germany - particularly because the 1960s saw the rise of a new left and social democracy coming to power - surely must make both proletarian and intellectual layers of the opposition more receptive to left-wing criticisms of bureaucratic rule in the GDR than is the case in other East European countries, certainly the Soviet Union. It seems obvious to me that analysing this specific context of opposition work in the GDR is not the same as claiming that there already is a conscious, left-wing anti-bureaucratic mass movement in existence.

On the second problem: I wrote that "the tens of thousands of applications for exit visas after the signing of the Helsinki Agreement indicate the existence of an increasingly uncontainable discontent", of which the visible opposition "can only be the tip of the iceberg". I did not, of course, want

to imply that they are, as Steffi writes, "indicative of a conscious left-wing anti-bureaucratic position", but rather show that the protests against Biermann's expulsion, far from being isolated incidents provoked by the treatment of one isolated intellectual dissident, must be seen in the context of a deeper and more fundamental crisis of the GDR regime, involving broad social layers beyond narrow intellectual and artistic circles even if we cannot always agree with the particular form their unrest takes. Mass emigration is certainly no perspective for the East German opposition, but for the regime the flood of visa applications is an unmistakable warning. It is precisely to prevent a fusion between mass unrest and left-wing opposition, precisely in order to contain the mass unrest within the alternative of emigration or resignation, that Honecker & Co. launched their preemptive strike against Biermann and other oppositionists.

REVIEWS

The Formative Years of Leonid Brezhnev

(In *Labour Focus* No. 2 Tamara Deutscher surveyed the career of Khrushchev. Below, Oliver MacDonald reviews *Brezhnev, the Masks of Power* by John Dornberg, published by Andre Deutsch, £3.95.)

Leonid Brezhnev will not be with us much longer. The problem of the succession is becoming one of the main questions in Soviet politics today. True, his recent acquisition of the Presidency, his earlier removal of political opponents like Shelest, Shelepin and now Podgorny are all signs of Brezhnev's growing personal ascendancy within the Soviet leadership. But their significance is very different from the concentrations of power achieved by either Stalin or Khrushchev for the simple reason that Brezhnev is over 70. Whatever further steps he is able to take to mould the Soviet leadership in his own image, in a matter of years or even months these labours of an old man will be more or less destroyed by his successors.

But what is the Brezhnev mould? What does he represent in Soviet politics and what has been his characteristic style of leadership? Marxists tend to shy away from examining the roles of individual leaders, preferring to discuss broad historical tendencies of social development. Yet when considering likely political developments in societies ruled by huge authoritarian bureaucratic apparatuses we are forced to recognise the very considerable role which such social-cum-political systems give to a handful of political leaders at the top. And it is therefore of some importance to try to establish the characteristic features of Brezhnev's political career.

The image of Brezhnev on the Western Left is very marked by the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the repression of oppositionists in the USSR and perhaps his close relationship with Nixon during both the Vietnam War and the Watergate crisis. These events do reveal a great deal about

the overall nature of the regime of the Soviet Union, but they do not necessarily tell us much about Brezhnev's own specific characteristics as a leader of that regime. On the other hand, such a well informed analyst of Soviet politics as Roy Medvedev has characterised Brezhnev as a "moderate" within the political spectrum of Soviet leadership. (See his "Political Essays", p.127, Spokesman Books, 1976.) To go deeper we must study the available facts about his career.

The only full-length biography of Brezhnev in English is a book by John Dornberg, a former *Newsweek* Moscow correspondent who now works as a free-lance journalist based, appropriately, in Munich. Dornberg's style is often hard to stomach: attempts to suggest that the author eats, sleeps and gossips with the politician he writes about is trying enough in relation to American politics, but becomes bizarre and even grotesque when the subject is the General Secretary of the CPSU. Nevertheless, from my own limited knowledge of Soviet history I have the impression that Dornberg is a reliable factual chronicler and in the frequent cases where Byzantine intrigues within the Kremlin are open to various conflicting interpretations he is generally content to explain the various alternative views. And perhaps the book's greatest virtue lies in the fact that Dornberg has no particular axe to grind about Soviet society or Communism: he evidently simply wants to write a best-selling full-length biography of Brezhnev: he gives us a mass of information and leaves us to sift through it drawing our own conclusions.

Within the scope of this short review it is not possible to assess the entire span of Brezhnev's political career. We will attempt only to examine some of the formative experiences in Brezhnev's rise to the position of Party General Secretary - an aspect of his career little known on the Left.

A PRODUCT OF THE YEZHOVSHCHINA

The leading organs of the Soviet Party and State are still, to an extraordinary degree, staffed by men who began their political careers in the 1930s. These were the years of forced collectivisation and industrialisation. And they were also the years of the great terror which reached its height under Yezhov's regime during 1937 and 1938. Brezhnev himself is in many ways typical of the new generation of political leaders who rose rapidly within the Party in that period.

Born of Russian working class parents in the industrial province of Dnepropetrovsk in the Eastern Ukraine in 1906, Brezhnev became a student in a local engineering institute at the age of 25 in 1931. He had previously trained as an agricultural technician but this career ended suddenly in circumstances that have never been made clear by Soviet official sources. In 1931 Brezhnev also joined the Party and by 1933 he was the head of the Komsomol (the Young Communist League) in his institute. At this time the Ukraine - the bread-basket of the USSR - was the scene of unparalleled rural devastation as a result of forced collectivisation. There was famine in the villages and hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of Ukrainian peasants were being rounded up, killed or deported. In the spring of 1933 25,000 Party supporters and Komsomol members were mobilised in Dnepropetrovsk province (known in Soviet parlance as 'oblast') to act as armed shock brigades to crush peasant resistance and collect the grain. This struggle against the peasantry must have been a profound experience for the young Brezhnev and he passed through it with enhanced standing in the local Party. By 1937, on the eve of the Ukrainian mass purge, he was director of the engineering polytechnicum in his home city. Nowhere in the USSR did the police terror exceed the scope of the purge in the Ukraine in 1937-38. With insignificant

exceptions the entire upper and middle ranks of the Ukrainian Communist Party were obliterated. Out of 102 members of the Ukrainian Central Committee elected in June 1937 only 3 survived by Christmas. In the same 6 months three Ukrainian Prime Ministers followed each other to liquidation and two entire sets of ministers perished in the same period. It is no exaggeration to say that the entire cadre of the Ukrainian Communist Party of the revolutionary period was crushed. This was the occasion for Brezhnev's great leap up the Party hierarchy. By the spring of 1938 he had become a member of the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast Party Committee in charge of ideological work. He therefore presided over the liquidation of the Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia and over the wholesale drive to Russify Ukrainian culture in the most important industrial centres of the Ukraine.

The young Brezhnev had all the right qualifications for rapid advancement in this period. He was too young to have gained any political experience of the revolution or the debates of the early 1920s. He was not contaminated by family links with intellectual circles, and his authentic working class background must have given him great confidence in his role and prospects in the society produced by the October Revolution. He possessed the vital technical qualifications for joining the new generation of managers of the industrialisation drive and as part of the Russian minority in the Ukraine he could be relied upon to have no sympathy for the culture of the national minorities. And by 1937 he had demonstrated organisational capacities and a willingness to apply ruthlessly directives from above.

A GOOD WAR RECORD

The importance of the Second World War for subsequent Soviet history is generally grossly under-estimated on the Western Left. As the opening paragraphs of the new Soviet Constitution indicate, the victory over Nazism plays an ideological role in legitimising the regime almost on a par with that of the October Revolution. Brezhnev's own war record appears to have been genuinely outstanding and it indicates some of his personal qualities as a political leader.

When the Ukrainian front collapsed in 1941, Brezhnev was drafted into the army as a colonel in the political administration. He remained in that field until the end of the War, by which time he had risen to the rank of general on the Southern Front.

The Red Army's political administration was generally unpopular with both regular officers and troops for it was associated with avoidance of front line action, considerable privileges and repressive political functions. Yet during the war Brezhnev won many decorations of the sort given only for exceptional bravery in action and there is plenty of evidence that he turned his back on soft options and proved himself to be a dedicated military organiser. This indicates that Brezhnev was very different from those circles in the Party whose first thought was for their own safety and comforts behind the lines.



Left to Right: Hungarian Party chief, Kadar, Czechoslovak Party chief, Husak, Brezhnev, East German Party chief, Honecker. The picture was taken at the famous Crimean meeting of East European Party leaders in July 1973 where both Husak and Honecker criticised the liberalism of the Polish Party leader, Gierak.

MANAGER OF POLITICAL REPRESSION

Twice after the War Brezhnev was given tasks requiring exceptional repressive measures and ruthlessness against the local population. In 1945 he was appointed chief of the political administration in the Carpathian military district, based in Lviv, (in Russian, 'Lvov'), the main city of the Western Ukraine. This area, which the Soviet Union annexed from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania during the War was the scene of widespread popular resistance to Soviet control, and in spite of extremely heavy repression, armed guerrilla action in the Western Ukraine was not finally crushed until the beginning of the 1950s. Brezhnev was in political command of counter-insurgency operations there while the struggle was at its fiercest before moving back to Dnepropetrovsk as First Secretary of the Oblast Party in August 1946.

At the start of 1950 Brezhnev was given a similar job, this time as Party Secretary in the Moldavian Republic. Annexed from Romania after the war, Moldavia (formerly called Bessarabia) had a Romanian population of some 3 million people in 1945. By 1950 popular resistance to Sovietisation had been such that the authorities felt compelled to deprive hundreds of thousands -- the figure current in the West is half a million -- Moldavians of their rights, through deportations to 'resettlement areas' in the East, through incarceration in labour camps and through executions. At the same time a quarter of a million Russians were drafted into the Republic to staff the state machine, change the ethnic balance and push forward cultural russification. Brezhnev's task was to complete this project, finalise collectivisation, crush armed resistance, and stabilise the regime. By 1953, the Moldavian Communist Party had still not pushed its membership figures beyond 20,000 but Brezhnev had been considered sufficiently successful to be selected for the top Party leadership at the 19th Party Congress, Stalin's last, in 1952.

ECONOMIC ORGANISER

Brezhnev's other main role between 1945 and the fall of Khrushchev was that of organiser of crash economic programmes. Between his jobs in Lviv and in Moldavia he was charged with organising industrial reconstruction at break-neck speed in Dnepropetrovsk and in neighbouring Zaporozhe, one of the main industrial zones of the USSR. He managed to meet his targets and this achievement no doubt encouraged Khrushchev to make Brezhnev his lieutenant in Kazakhstan when the virgin lands scheme was launched at end of 1953.

The early successes of the Virgin Lands scheme were crucial in enabling Khrushchev to vanquish Malenkov at the beginning of 1955 and Brezhnev was able to return triumphant to the top leadership in Moscow before the project showed unmistakable signs of coming unstuck. At the 20th Party Congress he became a Central Committee Secretary and candidate member of the Politburo. His jobs during the late 1950s and early 1960s involved less spectacular tasks: he was CC Secretary responsible for relations with foreign CPs, deputy chairman of the bureau in charge of affairs in the RSFSR -- the Russian part of the USSR -- and President of the USSR. These posts enabled him to establish contacts in the Soviet heartland -- he had previously always been based in the minority national republics -- and it also enabled him to travel abroad and learn about Soviet foreign policy problems. But his political style and profile had already been formed in his earlier years.

KHRUSHCHEV'S PROTEGE

A fundamental feature of Brezhnev's entire career from 1937 to 1964 was the fact that he was a protege and lieutenant of Khrushchev. It was Khrushchev who took over the Ukraine at the height of the terror in the 1930s. Brezhnev operated directly under Khrushchev on the Southern Front during the war, and his work in the Eastern Ukraine in the late 1940s was again, apart from a brief interlude, under Khrushchev's

overlordship. Brezhnev's appointment to Moldavia was almost certainly Khrushchev's work, as was his posting to Kazakhstan and his later rise to the top of the Party. In the factional struggles of the 1950s Brezhnev remained loyal to his protector and the plot to remove Khrushchev in 1964 was almost certainly not Brezhnev's work at all -- Suslov, Shelepin and Semichastny were the organisers.

Such loyalties within the apparatus are common form in Soviet politics, where protectors at the top and informal networks of loyalty down below are elementary requirements of political security. Yet it is also common form for ambitious aspirants to high office to break early ties and strike out independently as challengers for power. The fact that Brezhnev never seems to have attempted this gives a clue to a striking feature of his career: he has never appeared to be a man with independent ideas and policies. He has appeared at all times as an executor of the policies of others, without any of the independence of vision which characterised both Stalin and Khrushchev. Brezhnev has been par excellence a manager for the policies of others; and not much more than that.

THE NATURAL CANDIDATE

This lack of independent ideas made Brezhnev an attractive candidate in 1964. And his past career provided him with two other qualities that made him an ideal successor to Khrushchev: first, his links

with the fallen leader over three decades would make him unlikely to want to massively purge the apparatus of others who had risen to power with Khrushchev; many of these people were indispensable and long-standing allies of Brezhnev himself; but secondly, Brezhnev's past had built him a reputation in no way associated with policies of either democratisation or liberalisation. On the contrary, he was known as one of the toughest managers of popular dissent in the Party hierarchy and his activities in this sphere had earned him a network of supporters who were strongly opposed to Khrushchev's 'destalinisation' initiatives. This combination of qualities indicated that Brezhnev would be a unifying force within the apparatus, and a tough opponent of pressure for political reform.

In 1964 Western commentators debated two possible views of the new General Secretary: either Brezhnev would be a short-term caretaker leader; or he would be a new strong man like Stalin or Khrushchev, carving out an unassailable power-base and surviving for a long time. In reality, Brezhnev consolidated his position and survived precisely on the basis of being a caretaker leader. He has attempted to manage the house in as orderly way as possible without any striking innovations, preserving as much of the furniture of the past as possible. Both Stalin and Khrushchev took dramatic, bold initiatives to try to solve their problems. Brezhnev has attempted to avoid any such moves. And as a result, the leadership of 1964 has survived

remarkably intact. But so have all the problems that Khrushchev faced: the dispute with China, growing difficulties in Eastern Europe, tensions with the Western CPs; a chronic crisis in agriculture, increasingly sluggish economic growth, a failure to make a decisive shift to consumer goods production; chronically low productivity of labour and work discipline reflecting the alienation of the working class, strong tensions within the intelligentsia, growing national tensions in the USSR, and difficulties in culturally integrating Soviet youth into the social and political order.

The Brezhnev era has been a golden age for the generation of functionaries that began their rise within the CPSU during the purges of the 1930s: men like A.P. Kirilenko, once Brezhnev's colleague in Dnepropetrovsk in the late 1930s, now his second in command in the Politburo; N.A. Shchelokov, once Brezhnev's assistant in Dnepropetrovsk in the 1930s, now Soviet Minister of the Interior; K.S. Grushevoi, another colleague in Dnepropetrovsk in the 1930s now holding the key post of chief political officer of the Moscow military district; or Trapeznikov, once Brezhnev's ideological 'expert' in Moldavia, now in charge of science and culture for the whole of the USSR. During 13 years of office Brezhnev has served these aging men, and hundreds like them, exceptionally well. And he has also piled up a heap of trouble for their successors.

by Oliver MacDonald

5 Days in June, 1953

5 Days in June. A Novel. by Stefan Heym. (Hodder and Stoughton, London 1977).

It is only with some suspicion that one starts reading a novel about an historical event. Is it fiction? Is it reality? And the scepticism is certainly the greater with a novel dealing with such a controversial event as the 17 June 1953 uprising in East Germany, written by an author who still lives in that country and who might have a number of reasons for being less than totally faithful to historical truth (to enable publication of this book in the German Democratic Republic, for instance).

These suspicions are quickly dispelled. **5 Days in June** is certainly fiction, despite its semi-documentary appearance with chapters headed "Tuesday, June 16th, 1953 at 6.50 p.m." and texts like "From the Address of the First Secretary of the Central Committee ..." between them. The principal characters of the novel, like its hero, the trade union official Witte, the Party functionaries Bangartz and Sonneberg, the confused worker Kallmann, and Gadebusch, the Western agent provocateur, are fictitious characters - so much so that they seem

somewhat unreal, stereotypes, cardboard cut-outs. But it is also reality: one only has to look at the characters not as real persons, but as personifications of real forces that were at work in June 1953: the Party bureaucracy that has become detached from those it claims to represent and lead (Bangartz), the veteran communist whose loyalty to the regime is unbroken but who has not quite lost the capacity for independent thought and flexible reaction to the mood of the masses (Witte), the ordinary worker who certainly wants socialism but cannot see his power realised in this particular "workers' government" (Kallmann), the agent of the West German SPD's "Ostburo" (Gadebusch). It was rather silly for the reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement to reproach Heym for "misrepresenting" the "Ostburo's" role with the argument that "it actually rejected pleas from East German workers to declare a general strike ... and tried to persuade them that a strike would only provoke Soviet intervention". Silly, because one can hardly expect the role played by SPD undercover agents to be revealed in the Party's public statements, and because Heym never accepts the official Party version that the 1953 uprising was an anti-socialist conspiracy

inspired by fascists, Trotskyists, American and SPD agents. "But just because you thought you knew one conspirator, you'd better not make the mistake of seeing the whole thing as a conspiracy", thinks Witte (p.308). "Thousands of workers didn't conspire; these were movements of much larger dimensions: and we who claim to be Marxists ought to be able to comprehend both their origins and their drift and by specific means available to us, to influence their course."

Heym does actually capture the essence of the June 1953 events very well: as in real history, and as opposed to Western propaganda versions, they appear as a proletarian movement, not a popular anti-communist uprising (the urban bourgeoisie - what was left of it - and petty-bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and rural farming population remained passive). He describes how a column of workers from his fictitious factory march into the centre of East Berlin under the slogan "Down with the norms!", how their anger escalates into more openly political slogans directed against "the beard" (Ulbricht), but also how, despite the efforts

of however-many-provocateurs-there-were, the movement disintegrates before the Russian troops actually intervene: after a panic-stricken SED Politbureau has withdrawn the hated new norms, an essentially spontaneous and leaderless mass finds itself without an immediate focus to unite against, and despairs at the sheer enormity of the task of bringing the regime down.

There certainly is an element of despair in Heym's book, too: for the omission of some other crucial features of the June revolt cannot be accidental. All of Heym's class-conscious communists, for instance, even those - like Witte - who are critical of the Party leadership, attempt to stop the strikes and demonstrations, while it is well-known that in places like the huge Leuna works (28,000 workers) communist militants played a leading role in organising the

protests. Almost a third of all Party members disciplined after the June events had been KPD members before 1933, and everywhere it was the older and more experienced layer that caused most trouble for the leadership. Similarly, the Party apparatus tends to be portrayed by Heym as essentially committed to the cause of communism, although too inflexible and detached from their base, and not as a specific social layer with its own material interest and ideology. Heym directs the reader's hopes towards the apparatus, or at least an enlightened sector of it, capable of reforming the system, and makes one despair at the lack of a response. However acute the contradictions within the SED's top leadership revealed in 1953 may have been (Zaisser, Herrstadt, Ackermann, Jendretzky, Dahlem, Fechner and other Central Committee members and top officials became victims of post-June purges), history has not borne out

such hopes.

But without any doubt **5 Days in June** is an honest book, and its strengths and weaknesses reflect genuine uncertainties not only on the part of Stefan Heym, but in the minds of a great number of East German communists critical of the bureaucratic regime. As a subjective (and also entertaining!) account of the first great anti-bureaucratic movement in any Eastern European state after Stalin's death, it should be read by every socialist.

Is it really necessary to add that, despite Heym's initial hopes, he has not been allowed to publish it where interest in it would undoubtedly be greatest, the GDR?

By Gunter Minnerup

Voices of Czechoslovak Socialists

(Merlin Press and the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, 1977, paperback 90p.)

A lot of the material in this book is similar in type to that in the volume on "Socialist Opposition in Eastern Europe" edited by Jiri Pelikan, which I reviewed in the first issue of **Labour Focus**. That book concentrated on the programmatic discussions and directly political interventions of the Czechoslovak opposition. In the book now under review, the open letter by Zdenek Mlynar to the Communist and Socialist Parties of Europe, a criticism of Solzheyn's "Gulag Archipelago" by Michael Reimann, and a reply by Karel Kaplan to a book by one of the most cynical reactionaries in the Czechoslovak leadership, Vasil Bilak, run along the same lines.

A new dimension is added, however, by the material by Vaclav Havel and the transcript of the trial of the rock group, the Plastic People of the Universe, which convey vividly something of the spiritual climate inside the country. Havel describes in detail the results

of the policy of the regime, whereby anyone who is prepared to go through the motions of accepting the official line receives substantial material rewards, while, on the other hand, those who refuse to accept are persecuted in a multitude of vicious ways. Behind the surface of daily life there lies an all-pervading fear of the secret police. It is against this background that a simple act of signing a piece of paper asking for elementary human rights comes to be such a threat to the regime, since it tears apart the tissue of lies and corruption by which those who have materially benefited from the period of Husak's rule seek to provide themselves with self-justification.

It is also against this background that another important social phenomenon has arisen in Czechoslovakia. This is the development of "alternative culture" trends whose style reminds one of the similar development in the West in the mid-sixties. In the introduction to the transcript of the trial of the Plastic People (See also **Labour Focus** No. 1 for information) Jan Daniel quotes one of the imprisoned musicians:

"In Bohemia (Western Czechoslovakia) the situation is far different from the West, and much better, because here we live in an atmosphere of complete agreement; the official culture doesn't want us and we don't want anything to do with it." (p.34)

This attitude of rejection is the other side of the coin from the officially induced apathy. But whatever the intentions of the underground artists, the regime is quite unable to ignore such open and contemptuous defiance, as the staging of the trial of the rock musicians itself shows. Furthermore, such a deeply felt rejection of the system will inevitably lead to the creation of a climate amongst the underground in which the most radical ideas will flourish. What direction their thinking will take depends very much on the overall political situation and also on the ability of the directly political opposition to articulate a project of political renewal for Czechoslovakia which will point the way out of the present stagnant and demoralising morass.

by Mark Jackson

SOMETIMES FOR GOOD REASONS | SOMETIMES FOR BAD

★ What has been going on in Poland over the last couple of months?

★ Is the Polish opposition and the Workers' Defence Committee in Poland a bunch of CIA agents?

★ What really happened to the Polish student who died recently?

★ What are the real views of the Czechoslovak Socialist Oppositionists like Mlynar who support Charter 77?

★ Is there any real evidence of official anti-Semitism in the USSR, or is it just Western Zionist propaganda?

Questions like these come up when socialists consider protesting against repression in Eastern Europe or the USSR. And very often, when proposals are put forward for

Labour Movement defence action, the reply is We don't know the facts: we have no information to go on. This response is put forward sometimes for good reasons -- trade unionists, socialists and communists very often really don't have the facts. And sometimes, although the facts are available, people plead ignorance for bad reasons -- they prefer to turn a blind eye to the denial of working class rights and democratic rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

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supply to back up resolutions demanding an end to harassment of Charter 77 signatories and sympathisers in Czechoslovakia, or demanding the release of jailed members of the Workers' Defence Committee in Poland. Show **Labour Focus** to skeptics about repression in Eastern Europe and get a subscription to ensure a copy of future issues. Both the Soviet Embassy and the CIA have felt the need to subscribe. So should you.

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