Labour Focus on EASTERN EUROPE

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ANNIVERSARY OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION:
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STATEMENT OF AIMS

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe is a completely independent journal whose editorial collective includes various trends of socialist and Marxist opinion. Our purpose is to provide comprehensive analysis of trends and events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, documentation of opposition movements in those societies, and a forum for the developing dialogue between radical democratic and socialist forces East and West.

We are opposed to the "liberation" of Eastern Europe by Western capitalism and the exploitation of the victims of repression in these societies for the Cold War propaganda of those who prop up racist and fascist dictatorships in other parts of the world. We believe that the division of Europe can only be overcome by a common movement for socialism and democracy. We support the struggles for working-class, democratic and national rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe and call on the labour movements of the West to extend their internationalist solidarity to them.

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EDITORIAL

NEW LIFE AT 70?

Was this really the confident and charismatic Mikhail Gorbachev? Anybody watching the General Secretary's televised speech on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution must have been struck by the nervously hasty, uncertain style of his delivery. But then again, this was never going to be the occasion for rhetorical flourishes and off-the-cuff spontaneity. Nor was the lack of any sensational new departures in the contents of the speech really surprising: after all, the text had gone through a thorough collective vetting in the Politburo, and as such represented little more than the lowest common denominator amongst the majority of the CPSU leadership today. The tensions between its different wings shone through Gorbachev's words, were reflected in his demeanour, and were most certainly exercising the minds behind the motionless faces in his audience.

Even as a lowest common denominator, however, the positions contained in the anniversary speech are remarkable. They would have been inconceivable in Brezhnev's oration ten years ago, or even Krushchev's in 1957. The latter had shocked the cadres with his denunciation of Stalin at the XXth Congress, but he had done so in terms of the "personality cult" being a violation of party norms. Gorbachev, by contrast, puts Stalin in the context of the overall balance-sheet of seventy years of post-revolutionary development, of the achievements and failures of Soviet power. Whatever the ambiguities and sterilities in his present public evaluation of Stalin's record against that background - and let us not forget that in the 1970s, Rudolf Bahro was jailed in East Germany for presenting a not entirely dissimilar perspective on the dictator's "achievements"! - the important thing is surely that the final word has clearly not been spoken in this debate. The special commission announced by Gorbachev will undoubtedly rehabilitate many victims of the repression and the purges, but more crucially, the many threads linking the Soviet present with the Stalinist past appear to be no longer entirely taboo. Others are asking the same questions as Gorbachev, but will come up with very different answers. Far from wishing to rehabilitate Stalin, it was the prevention of such a broader debate that moved the Brezhnevites to suspend "de-Stalinisation" after Krushchev's fall. In this respect, too, the Brezhnev era has now come to an end.

Where is the Soviet Union going? It is impossible to tell, but there appears to be no road back. Even if Gorbachev were to be toppled, it is hard to see how even a Ligachev could lead a return to the cosy certainties of Brezhnevism - always assuming that he would actually want to. The accumulated reform deficit is so large that it did not take Gorbachev to impress on Soviet society the need for something to be done about it: from Krushchev via Kosygin/Brezhnev and Andropov there had been no shortage of dire warnings and empty promises. But things have not just remained the same, they have actually got immeasurably worse over the years. During the sixties and seventies, there was at least a favourable international economic climate and the prospect of lasting detente with the USA to give a superficial air of realism to the project of modernisation without change. This illusion can no longer be maintained after eight years of Reagan and Weinberger, in the face of the world-wide stockmarket crash, and with Star Wars looming on the horizon. Even the Soviet generals have come to realise that without drastic reform, the USSR is destined to a socio-technological stagnation that would adversely affect its military-diplomatic standing in the world.

On the terrain of social and economic reform, therefore, Gorbachev can count on a broad consensus behind his projects in the upper echelons of Soviet society. This is not the case in the spheres of politics and ideology, as the open resistance to the concept of *glasnost* shows. Many Western commentators, both from the left and from the right, make the mistake of analysing the divisions within the Soviet leadership on this score in terms of different psychological dispositions: the "liberals" versus the "old guard" Stalinist diehards. But it was precisely this preoccupation with individual biographies and supposedly rigid mindsets which blinded many of them to the significance of Gorbachev's accession to power when there was little in his previous record to justify great expectations. In reality, the conflicts between "liberals" and "conservatives" are not over personalities but policies: more specifically, about how to harness the latent energies of the people for the process of *perestroika*, and how to deal with the deep social tensions that lie just beneath the calm surface of Soviet society.

The handling of the widely-reported clash between Yeltsin and Ligachev, as well as the anniversary speech itself, suggest that Gorbachev is increasingly playing the part of a quasi-Bonapartist adjudicator and conciliator between different social and political forces. He seems to have decided that genuine reform and modernisation are impossible without some political and ideological upheaval, but that at the same time such upheaval should be carefully channelled and contained to avert an outbreak of open civil war within the party and state bureaucracy. With every passing day, however, the contradictions of Soviet society assert themselves ever more clearly. The independent Club movement which we document in this issue is a striking illustration of the vitality of the new voices that are increasingly heard. In the intelligentsia at least, the movement for renovation has already gone much further than Krushchev would ever have tolerated; there have been the first signs of unrest emerging in the working class; and there is the much-publicised resurgence of nationalist agitation among, for example, the Baltic nations and the Crimean Tatars. And then there is "Pamyat", a warning to all of us that the re-awakening of Russia will see the revival also of less than savoury political and ideological traditions.

All this seems to point to the conclusion that another widely-held belief - that Gorbachev's reformism could simply peter out in the morass of daily bureaucratic obstruction - is wide off the mark. Too many hopes and fears have been aroused, too many skeletons released from the cupboards, for easy inertia to reassert itself. The Soviet Union has irreversibly entered a period of conflict and turmoil which requires solutions not postponements.

Moscow is not alone in this. All over Eastern Europe, the feeling that things cannot much longer remain the same is almost tangible. There are a number of ailing and ageing old leaders - the Husaks, Kadars, even the Honeckers and Ceaucescus - inviting speculation over their succession, but again personalities are not central to the real issues. More than the giant Soviet Union, whose very size enables it to ride the ups and downs of the world markets better than anyone else, the smaller economies of Eastern Europe find themselves caught between huge foreign debts and domestic stagnation. The depth of the crisis is forcing the ruling bureaucracies to consider unprecedented attacks on the living standards of their working people, thus annulling the implicit "social contract" entered into after 1956 which offered steady material improvements in compensation for the denial of civil and democratic rights. Only in Poland has this strategy been tried before on a broad scale, and the response of the Polish workers holds many lessons for those in Budapest, Prague and elsewhere contemplating a similar strategy in an attempt to avert financial bankruptcy.

Rather than simply revoking the "social contract", the new trend is therefore to seek new terms. If mass acquiescence can no longer be bought with consumer satisfaction, then maybe the new austerity can be made more palatable with an offer of political participation and reform. If the intelligentsia, the churches and the dissatisfied managerial technocrats can be incorporated into a new deal, then maybe the inevitable working class unrest can be prevented from creating a politically explosive crisis and channelled into socially fragmented and ideologically harmless channels. Hence the startling utterances of Hungary's new premier, Karoly Grosz, about the role of the democratic opposition, and General Jaruzelski's new overtures towards the remnants of *Solidarnosc*. Hence also the "reconstruction" rhetoric in Prague, and the new tolerance towards the church and the peace movement opposition in Honecker's East Germany. This is no longer simply sensitivity to Western public opinion, or grudging concessions to the new spirit in Moscow: it represents the beginnings of a genuine attempt at defining a new domestic strategy.

It would be premature to misread the sceptical response to these new departures from sections of the critical intelligentsia at face value, and to conclude that the gulf of mistrust is now so wide that nothing could ever bridge it. The unmistakeable growth of enthusiasm in Eastern Europe for Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* point towards some readiness to explore avenues other than all-or-nothing confrontation. The problem is one of credibility: the prerequisite of a lasting deal is the opening up of some genuinely new space for political debate and independent activity, and such openings have not yet been on offer. The political monopoly of the party and state bureaucracy is too precious to be made negotiable in anything other than the most dire circumstances. But such circumstances are rapidly approaching.

So far, the voice of the working class has remained muted in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It would be naive to expect otherwise: apart from the still considerable repression, there is plenty of social and economic demoralisation and political confusion. The siren voices of marketising reform that are so dominant in the intellectual and bureaucratic reform discussion hold little appeal to those who are expected to pay through wage cuts, price rises and loss of job security for the incompetence of others. It should be recalled how the Czechoslovak reform proposals of 1968 met with considerable indifference from the workers, not all of it due to manipulation by Stalinist trade union functionaries. It was only when political reform promised a qualitative extension of democracy, and when these *democratic* conquests of the Prague Spring were under attack from domestic Stalinists and Soviet intervention, that the Czech and Slovak workers raised their hands and voices. The widespread mistrust of both "conservative" bureaucrats and "liberal" reformers indicates a healthy class instinct that refuses to be bought off by either "material incentives" or lofty talk alone: an awareness, however diffuse, that economic improvement and democracy are fundamentally inseparable.

Seventy years ago, the leaders and participants of the October Revolution envisaged a socialism of popular power in which the working masses themselves, through their democratically elected councils (*soviets*) would be masters of their own destiny both politically and economically. The retreats from this revolutinary aim which they were forced into by the course of events, and the subsequent descent into the depths of Stalinist terror and despair, have weighed heavily on the socialist movement for decade and, in combination with the long post-war era of capitalist stability under US hegemony, spread despondency and demoralisation among the dwindling numbers of adherents to its cause. From this point of view, the long-awaited movement in Moscow should surely be welcomed whatever our detailed assessment of the nature and the prospects of Gorbachev's *perestroika*. Whatever its present limitations and ambiguities, any change in the direction of democratisation and social renovation must be preferable to the prolongation of an ossified status quo. Given the continued slide of the capitalist world into social and economic crisis, the possibility of a new life being breathed into the seventy years old ideas of the first socialist revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe today must be an issue of prime concern to all socialists everywhere.

Günter Minnerup

Our feature article *Eastern Europe and the German Question* by Peter Brandt and Günter Minnerup in the last issue has met with a lively echo. It was reprinted by *Die Neue Gesellschaft*, the official theoretical journal of the West German SPD, and we have received replies from Jiri Dienstbier in Prague and a West German reader (both too late, however, to be included in this issue). Further contributions to this debate have been promised from East Germany and Poland. Watch out for a full documentation of the controversy in the next issue of *Labour Focus* in early March 1988!

DECLARATION OF MOSCOW CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST CLUBS

During 1987 a new independent social movement has sprung up across the Soviet Union. At the last count, 48 independent Clubs have been formed in Moscow alone. Many more have sprung up in other cities and regions: Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, the Baltic republics and the Urals, as well as elsewhere throughout the USSR. This development has no precedent in Soviet history since the organisations of the Left Opposition were broken up in 1927-28. Some clubs were formed in 1956, but most of these were clandestine and the student groups were rounded up and jailed for long years soon after they were formed. There were, of course, the dissident organisations of the 1970s - the Initiative Group and the various Helsinki Monitoring groups. These were indeed public organisations, but they were insignificant in size compared with the present movement and they were preoccupied simply with collecting information and "bearing witness", largely cut off from the social and political life of the bulk of the population or even the intelligentsia.

The present movements are linked by tens of thousands of threads to the political, social and intellectual life of the Soviet population. They survive and grow not by being on the margins of society but by being at the heart of the great issues being fought over in the Soviet Union today. The Club movement differs from the bulk of the 1970s dissidents also in another respect: by being overwhelmingly socialist in orientation (the Moscow Helsinki Group, for example, excluded individuals like Pyotr Egides from membership on the grounds of their being socialists). Finally, the present movement has tied its fate as a matter of course with the fate of the wider social and political movements for reform within the Soviet Union today, rather than with the supposed capacity of Western powers to defend the Soviet dissidents.

In late August the Moscow Clubs, together with representatives of other Clubs, held a first Conference of Socialist Clubs, and out of this conference came the Federation of Socialist Clubs. We publish below some key documents from the conference and information on the new Club movement in the Soviet Union. Readers wishing to gain a fuller picture of the currents of opinion within the Soviet intelligentsia today should read the article by Boris Kagarlitsky in *New Left Review* 165.

Oliver MacDonald.

We, independent social organisations, gathered in Moscow in August 1987 as a part of the information meeting/ dialogue "Social Initiatives in Restructuring", make the following declaration:

1. The processes occurring in society in respect of restructuring have led to the appearance of independent social and social-political organisations. According to the Constitution of the USSR all power resides with the people, therefore the independent social and social-political organisations, as a part of the people, have the right to express and defend their interests independently without any intermediaries.

2. The groups and associations signing this declaration support a socialist perspective of development in our country. As convinced supporters of socialism we agree with the goal proclaimed in October 1917 of building a classless society in the USSR and the complete withering away of the state. In the formation of independent social groups and associations and their increased role in society we see one of the ways of developing social self-management and eliminating administrative-bureaucratic structures.

3. At the moment our motherland is passing through an epoch of serious changes. That is why the success of these reforms depends on the extent of popular support for and participation in restructuring. The question of the success of restructuring is one of life and death for socialism in the USSR.

We acknowledge the constitutional role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in our society but the Party is not homogeneous. Within its ranks are those who bear direct responsibility for the abuses and errors of recent years, those who filled the ranks of the bureaucracy, that self-perpetuating mass of officials, cut off from the needs and aspirations of the people.

We seek to support those leaders and rank-and-file members of the Party representing healthy and progressive forces.

4. Both at the centre and in the localities restructuring is meeting bitter resistance from those who fear for their privileges and preserve their monopoly of information and decision-making. New undertakings and popular initiatives are met with hostility or ignored.

The association of independent groups and organisations, standing on a platform of support for the course of developing socialism and democracy adopted by the CPSU at the 27th Congress, is necessary because within the informal movement groups are being formed nad are growing which propagate reactionary political views: racism and chauvinsm, fascism and stalinism and which adhere to extremist methods of action. By uniting we can oppose extremism in the independent movement and publicise the activities of these groups.

5. Flowing from the above considerations we, the organisations signing this agreement, in complete accordance with the Constitution of the USSR which proclaims the freedom of unions, have agreed to unite into a federation of socialist social clubs the primary goal of which is to support restructuring.

The Federation will seek to achieve:

In the ideological sphere:the elaboration of the concepts of democratisation of our society; the resolution of the dialectical contradiction between administrative power and social self-management; an analysis of the role and place of the social organisations in the political life of Soviet society and in the system of self-management.

In the political sphere:legal status for independent organisations and movements, the granting to them of the right to initiate legislation and also to secure the fulfilment of all decisions of the January 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU with regard to democratising the electoral system, the granting of the right to social organisations to nominate their own representatives

to all levels of the Soviets of Peoples Deputies without any restrictions and in accord with free access of candidates to the mass media; the expansion of the length of sessions of the Soviets of Peoples Deputies to levels necessary for constructive work; an increase in the budgets of the Soviets of Peoples Deputies on a firm legal basis with complete independence to dispose of their resources. Establishment in law of a sharp distinction between criticism of the shortcomings of the existing system and anti-state activity; realisation of the first point of the programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party concerning the rights of citizens to independent prosecution in court of officials responsible for illegal acts independently of complaints made at an administrative level.

In the economic sphereTo promote:the reorientation of the organs of state planning and management of the national economy away from predominantly administrative methods to economic ones; the broadening of the scope of money-commodity relations as a basic mechanism regulating the economic activity of the country while firmly maintaining the social conquests of the workers: full employment, the minimum wage, guaranteed pension etc.

To strive for:a reduction in the expenditure of society on the maintenance of the state apparatus; the switching of the economy to the principles of self-management; an effective mechanism of control from below over the system of management; to lease the social means of production, such as mills and factories, to collectives of self-managing enterprises; democratisation of the planning system; the creation of the conditions for the free development of all forms of socialist property..paIn the sphere of cultural lifefreedom for creative associations and unions to operate on a profit and loss basis; tolerance towards creative and social views and tastes of the representatives of various trends as long as the forms of expression of these views do not contravene the Constitution of the USSR; unrestricted access of the public to statistical and archive material, to library and museum collections, and the liquidation of the special depositories; the elimination of all forms of prior censorship; widening the network of independent, co-operative publishing houses and the removal of administrative obstacles to independent organisations exercising their constitutional rights and freedoms: of word, press, street processions and demonstrations.

In the spheres of ecology and the ecology of culturethe creation of effective mechanisms for the participation of social organisations and movements in the struggle for the preservation of the environment and historical and cultural monuments.

In the sphere of international relations support and solidarity with the struggles and activity of revolutionary, liberation and democratic movements in the capitalist and developing countries.

"Alexander Severukhin", known to readers of this journal for his interview published in LFEE 1/1987 ("We must mobilise the masses for reform") was a participant in the Moscow conference. In the following article, he draws a balance-sheet of the development of the independent reform movement in the Soviet Union so far.

ALEXANDER SEVERUKHIN

THE LEFT UNITES

Moscow, 7th September 1987

To all appearances the process of change in the Soviet Union has entered a new and, perhaps, decisive phase. After Gorbachev's speech at the January Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, the liberalisation began not only to be proclaimed but put into practice. Official decisions created the legal conditions for many kinds of public activity which had previously been considered, if not "anti-state", then at least "reprehensible" and "harmful". Instead of the traditional principle "everything not allowed is forbidden", the opposite approach "everything not forbidden is allowed" began to triumph.

Nevertheless, the liberal declarations from above would have changed nothing if real forces, capable of utilising the new circumstances, did not exist in society itself. The rapid growth in 1987 of a different kind of associations, clubs and groups of various trends showed that such forces did exist.

Despite their own numerous calls to displays of civil and democratic initiative, the authorities at first appeared manifestly dismayed in the face of the new social movement. Even activists on the reformist wing of the leadership had no sort of experience of contact with self-organised representatives of various social layers. Since many of the newly established groups preferred not to register, and others as far as possible avoided contact with bureaucratic structures, officials christened them "informal associations".

Founders

Several new organisations quickly achieved legal status and established links with the mass media, having gained relative independence thanks to the "policy of glasnost'" . Others, with no trust in official toleration, remained in a semi-legal position.

To begin with the attention of both the Soviet and the western press was focused mainly on the extreme right grouping "Pamyat'" (Memory) which preaches Great-Russian chauvinism and antisemitism. However, numerous left organisations had already been formed by the Summer of 1987 and were forced to make themselves known. The most important of these, the Moscow "Club for Social Initiatives" (KSI), had been established, in fact, in Autumn 1986.The founders of KSI were the sociologists G. Pel'man and B.Kagarlitskii, journalist G. Pavlovskii and philosopher M. Maliutin. To begin with, this group was concerned with an analysis of the letters to the youth newspaper "Komsomol'skaya Pravda" but then it became an independent organisation with the aim, in Kagarlitskii's words, of "consolidating the left wing of restructuring". The activity of KSI was based on socialist ideas and Marxist traditions. During Brezhnev's time, Pavlovskii was editor of the left samizdat journal "Poiski" (Searches) and Kagarlitskii participated in the underground group of "Young Socialists". Both were arrested at the end of the Brezhnev period and were only released thanks to the ensuing political changes. However, a majority of activists and members of KSI have never or almost never had any experience of participating in political activity. They have become involved in public life precisely because of the liberalisation happening in our country. Some have even been in the Party, for example Maliutin. All have been united first and foremost by the desire to turn the "radical reform" promised by Gorbachev "from theory from above into practice from below", to unite reformist projects with revolutionary traditions.

In KSI seminars and discussions have been organised and working groups on problems of youth and self-management, the legal

position of the working class etc. have been established. Material on the activity of the club has begun to appear in periodicals and on the radio. Youth and student left radical groups, the number of which has begun to grow rapidly since the January Plenum, have started to collaborate with it.

Alongside KSI have arisen several important associations with a left orientation. The "Perestroika" Club in Moscow and Leningrad brought together primarily young students - lawyers, sociologists and economists. As distinct from KSI the Moscow "Perestroika" did not have a unified conception of its work and people with very different views came into conflict within its ranks. Because of this members of the club, for a long period, spent much of their time arguing amongst themselves rather than on practical work. Although socialist principles have been expounded in the documents of "Perestroika" as the basis of its activity, young groups have, as a rule, suspected it of "liberal Westernism", preferring to colloborate with the more ideologically homogeneous KSI.

In Leningrad, alongside the comparatively small "Perestroika", appeared the "Council for the Ecology of Culture" (SEK) and the cultural-democratic movement "Epicentre". A demonstration of supporters of SEK against the demolition of the old Hotel "Angleterre" was taken up by leading Soviet newspapers. Moreover, "Epicentre" established its own information organ "Mercury", hundreds of copies of which were distributed throughout Leningrad. In August 1987 "Mercury" was even favoured with friendly references in the official Moscow press - an unprecedented event in the history of samizdat.

Disagreements

Numerous left groups have also arisen in Riga, Vilnius, Kiev and other major cities. In May the most radical of these came to the conference in Moscow of the "All-Union Corresponding Social-Political Club" (VZSPK), . From the very beginning this organisation declared its intention of promoting the most extreme demands: "no cooperation with the authorities", "the struggle for democratic socialism", "revolutionary self-organisation of the masses" etc., but because of differences within its own ranks it proved incapable of adopting agreed documents or of sorting out its work.

However, not only VZSPK suffered from disagreements. A sharp dispute developed between KSI and "Perestroika". This led to a split in KSI itself. In May 1987, the most moderate group left to found the "Fund for Social Initiative" (FSI). A month later new frictions arose and to all intents and purposes the club broke up into two groups both of which attempted to keep the old name. Nevertheless, the movement continued to develop. A month after the second split one of the participants in the events observed with some surprise that each of the rival groups was now bigger and stronger than the original, united KSI.

The desire for cooperation had been preserved despite all of the conflicts. Also in May the Council of KSI had taken the decision to hold a conference of all progressive clubs throughout the country to be held not later than August 1987. The authorities agreed to the conference taking place on the proviso that it be renamed an "informational meeting/dialogue: 'Public initiatives in restructuring'".

Preparations for the meeting went ahead in a very strained fashion because of the factional struggle between the Moscow groups. Nevertheless, the conference opened on 20th August with 250 delegates present representing approximately 40 different groups. Throughout the four days representatives of provincial associations, too late for the opening, continued to arrive. At the close of conference, the Organising Committee announced that in all around 600 people and no less than 50 groups of ecological, cultural-democratic and socialist tendencies had taken part.

The first days of the meeting were marred by clashes between the "Perestoika" delegation and the Organising Committee which comprised representatives of both factions of KSI. "Perestroika" spoke in favour of creating a broad association of clubs and groups without any sort of ideological restrictions or well-defined programme. In opposition to this, on behalf of KSI, was proposed the creation of a federation of socialist clubs. Sharp differences also arose over procedural questions. Compromise proposals from the Organising Committee were unable to resolve the situation. At the same time the Marxist political clubs engaged in a sharp polemic with participants at the conference from the pacifist liberal group "Trust" and the seminar "Democracy and Humanism" organised by former dissidents. Representatives of the authorities felt rather uncomfortable both at the speeches of dissidents and because of the radical demands of many of the socialist and Marxist groups - abolition of prior censorship, the establishment in Moscow of a memorial to the victims of Stalinism, rehabilitation of those who suffered under Brezhnev, punishment of high Party officials responsible for the breakdown of the economy and corruption. In the corridors rumours began to circulate that the conference might be broken up before its alloted time.

Unity

Under these conditions the principal opposing groups began to unite. Both factions of KSI merged and, according to the observations of a participant in the conference, "began to act as a well-coordinated team". Soon agreement was achieved between KSI and "Perestroika" on the simultaneous foundation of two organisations - the Association "Circle for Social Initiatives" with an open membership and broad democratic programme and a Federation of socialist clubs.

Some members of the "Perestroika" delegation continued to vacillate, declaring that such decisions were premature and excessively radical. However, during the course of the conference the relationship of forces had changed. The radical youth groups - "Obshchina" (Peasant Commune), "Young Communards-Internationalists", "Scarlet Sail", "Ernesto Che Guevara Brigade" etc. - had quickly found a common language. It was these, and also activists of KSI not represented on its Council, who determined the psychological atmosphere of the conference in its final stage. They had gathered here to take concrete decisions and did not wish to leave empty-handed. The success of the conference would have been impossible without their decisiveness and pressure.

The results of the four days of the conference seemed sensational even to many

Socialist Clubs Press Conference

participants in the discussions. The declaration of socialist social clubs, read out by Kagarlitskii on 23rd August 1987, proclaimed the independence of the movement and its right "to express and defend its interests independently and without any intermediaries".

"We acknowledge the constitutional role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in our society" the declaration continued, "but the Party is not homogeneous. Within its ranks are those who bear direct responsibility for the abuses and errors of recent years, those who filled the ranks of the bureaucracy, that self-perpetuating mass of officials, cut off from the needs and aspirations of the people. We seek to support those leaders and rank-and-file members of the Party representing healthy and progressive forces."

Demands

The socialist clubs announced their firm intention of struggling against bureaucratic conservatism, fascist groups like "Pamyat'", and any form of extremism "from below and above" as it had been declared at one of the conference sessions. The declaration noted that an immediate threat to the social movement came from "racism and chauvinism, fascism and stalinism" which was spreading throughout certain layers of society.

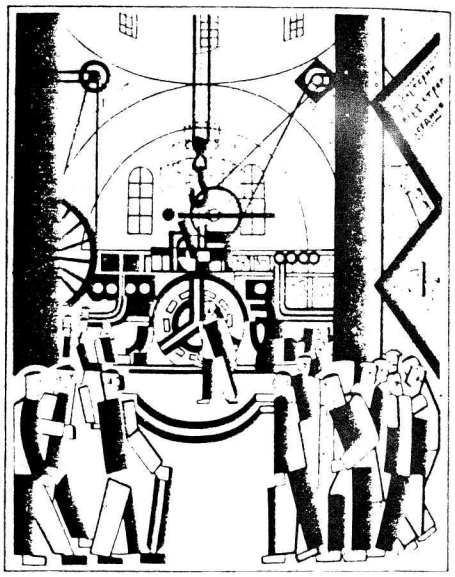
The declaration demanded change in the electoral system, a broadening of the functions and powers of Soviets at all levels, the right of the clubs to put up their own candidates to Soviets without any restrictions, and access to the mass media.

In the economic field the socialist clubs expressed their support for the development of market relations while, at the same time, preserving the system of social guarantees and democratising planning. A series of participants in the discussions even emphasised the necessity of simultaneously broadening the system of social guarantees and the development of the market so that a more effective and democratic social service could compensate for the costs of market redistributions. Apart from this the declaration spoke of the genuine self-management of labour collectives as a guarantee of the success of the reform and of the necessity to struggle against bureaucratic attempts to manipulate the organs of self-management.

The declaration proclaimed the principle of freedom of information - the abolition of prior censorship; the liquidation of "special", closed funds, libraries and archives; the foundation of independent cooperative publishing houses; the right to hold street processions and demonstrations. At the insistence of the radical youth groups the declaration also included a point in solidarity with revolutionary and left forces in the capitalist and developing countries.

The declaration was signed by 16 groups including KSI, "Perestroika", "Obshchina" and the Moscow section of VZSPK. At the same time as setting-up the conference press centre, G. Pavlovskii founded an independent public information agency. At the conference a special working group was also formed concerned with organising a campaign for the construction in Moscow of a monument to the victims of repression. The idea of such a memorial had been advanced at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU but since then had been successfully forgotten by Party leaders. A working group on extremism (RGE) also began its work. The latter was to co-ordinate the efforts of th left clubs in the struggle against the nationalists of "Pamyat'", "fascism and stalinism". The appearance of such an anti-fascist centre provoked serious concern on the far right. Only a few days after the end of the conference unknown persons broke into the flat of N. L'vov, an active member of the group, and removed all papers and even tape-recordings of the speeches of leaders of "Pamyat'". Another activist was threatened with violence. However, such occurrences could not change the course of events. Dozens of progressive groups, having established links between themselves at the conference and confirmed common principles, initiated joint work on a whole range of questions.

One could say that the movement had got to know itself. Its activists no longer felt themselves isolated and alienated. Many questions which on the eve of the conference had provoked sharp polemic and even splits, were now beginning to be resolved through businesslike and constructive discussion. Of course, the differences between the left and right wings of the movement, between the supporters of a "revolutionary onslaught" on the bureaucracy and more cautious groups remained, but it had become clear to all that such differences should not hinder joint work towards common goals.



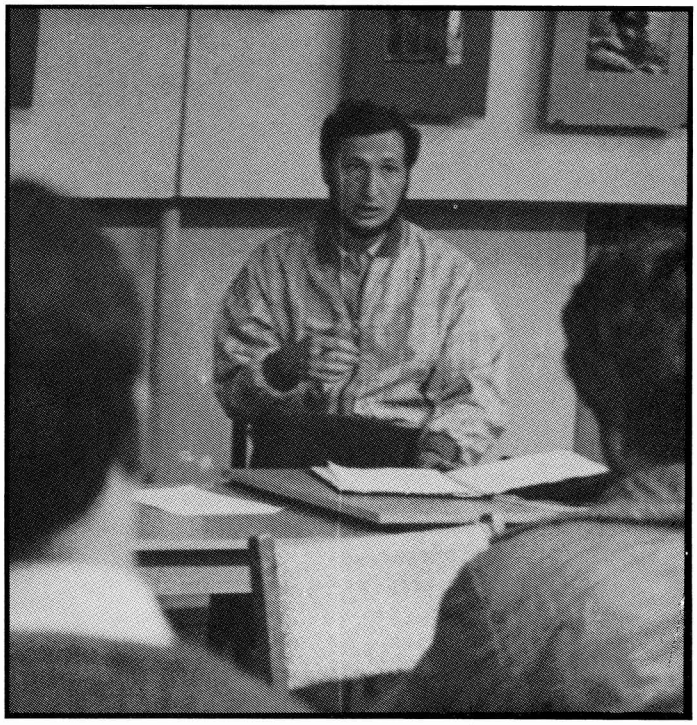
Reactions

The official press did not immediately react to the conference. Although a large number of journalists had participated in the proceedings, the mass media at first remained silent, the sole exception being the radio programme "Lighthouse" which gave a short report of the conference on its final day. It was patently obvious that the editors of official publications were waiting for a reaction from the top. Meanwhile information on the proceedings and the decisions began to circulate around Moscow and naturally quickly became the property of samizdat. Soon afterwards there was a reference to the conference in a "Voice of America" programme. Western radio did not broadcast any serious information nor did it report anything important to its Soviet listeners, but this proved to be a major stimulus to the official press: it had become clear that conference materials had to be published rapidly before it could be done by western journalists.

On the 5th September a quite detailed report of the conference finally appeared in the pages of the magazine Ogonyek, one of the more popular and well-known weeklies in the Soviet Union. The article did not mention the foundation of the federation of socialist clubs or the declaration but the rest of the material was put together fairly conscientiously. Meanwhile the clubs belonging to the federation and Pavlovskii's press centre declared their intention of preparing their own informational collection giving a fuller and "unedited" account of the activity of the left clubs and groups. On their part, the leaders of the campaign for the building of a monument to the victims of stalinism began immediate preparations for a mass collection of signatures to their petition and for a broad distribution of their material. The activity of the left had become the property of glasnost'.

Having overcome their own contradictions and weakness the movement of left clubs has become a real factor in the political life of the country. The real significance of the decisions taken on August 23rd 1987 has yet to be evaluated but one thing is quite clear: for the first time in Gorbachev's government it is possible to speak not only of reformist initiatives from above but of a serious social movement from below. And this means that the whole picture of political life in our country is essentially changing. And changing for the better.

SUMMARY OF BORIS KAGARLITSKII'S SPEECH TO THE PLENARY SESSION, 20TH AUGUST, 1987



Comrades,
I do not think it would be a great revelation if I say that restructuring is now entering a critical phase. The old structures are already beginning to be dismantled but the new ones are not yet working and, in any case, are not bearing fruit. Under these conditions social contradictions are exacerbated and reactionary forces close ranks on a common platform of opposition to democratisation. This is a very dangerous and a very important period in our history.
Before us we have the explicit process of the formation of a reactionary bloc comprising the bureaucracy sabotaging restructuring, Stalinists and extremists from "Pamyat'" (Memory). All of these currents are quite heterogeneous, between them exist significant differences, but hatred of any attempt at real democratisation brings them together.
What can we counterpose to this? Only the consolidation of the left wing of restructuring. It is already possible to speak with complete certainty of three basic left tendencies in our society: social-political clubs with a socialist orientation, ecological and cultural-democratic groups and associations. Much unites all of these three tendencies. But serious difficulties exist on the path to achieving a genuine unity.First of all there is a multiplicity of theoretical languages. In the absence or weak development of a common political culture everyone speaks in their own language. Even people adhering to basically identical views often cannot reach mutual agreement and understanding. A dialogue is needed which would allow a common theoretical language to be elaborated. We are diverse and we will speak in different ways. But we must learn to speak in one language so as to understand one another.
And there are other problems. There is no sense in speaking of an "informal movement" in general. With such a view of things it would be impossible to understand the difference between Leningrad's "Spasenie" (Salvation) and "Pamyat'" as has already been reflected in a series of publications. This is a formal approach to "informal organisations".
If we really want to unite then what is important is not the principle of informality but the community of our aims, ideals and values. It seems to me that there is such a community amongst a majority of groups present at this conference: a unity of democratic values within the framework of a firm socialist orientation. It is patently clear that we understand socialism in different ways. But it is no less important that under no circumstances can we or must we unite with Stalinists, with nationalist extremists or with supporters of the capitalist road. This is completely excluded. Finally, it is now very important, to use Lenin's phrase, "to separate the chatterers from the workers". This can only be done through work, practice.
Regardless of whether or not some sort of association of left clubs is created at this conference it is patently obvious that a co-ordinating structure is needed to ensure joint work. A controlled exchange of information will allow us to arrive at a resolution of this task without harming anyone's interests or subordinating some to others.
We would have liked an exchange of information to have immediately worked towards consolidating the left. Now we must specifically resolve the problem of how to achieve this. The conference has not been organised for squabbles and chatter but for a common resolution of particular problems. We must understand that this is an urgent task. If we do not settle these questions today, tomorrow might be too late.

"Under no circumstances can we or must we unite with Stalinists, with nationalist extremists or with supporters of the capitalist road"

PREAMBLE TO THE *PROGRAMME OF THE KSI*

The Preamble to the proposals of the Club for Social Initiatives (KSI) analyses the situation and discusses the conditions of transition to a new stage of restructuring - Economic Reform. It proposes a programme for the further development of democracy in the USSR based on constructive proposals for raising the social activity of the population, creating the skills for social self-management and drawing Soviet citizens into the process of socio-economic renewal. It provides recommendations for the means of accelerating the growth of the social base of restructuring (those social groups with an interest in the further development of restructuring).

1. The socio-political situation in the country is characterised by the opening of a new phase in socio-economic renewal with the beginning of restructuring in the economic sphere. The successful development of the economic transformations depends essentially on the results achieved in the preceding stage, on the social interests of individuals and groups, and on the socio-political situation as a whole from which the economic reform must start.

2. The preceding period (lasting 18-20 months) was a preparatory period devoted to creating the social and political conditions for ensuring the further development of restructuring and the creation of an irreversible mechanism for the subsequent transition to the phase of all-embracing economic reform.

3. To a very great extent restructuring, in its first stage, concerned the spheres of politics, information and cadres. The fundamental achievements, felt by all, are the paramount developments of Glasnost', candour and criticism. The fear of "unlawful" discussion is being destroyed and the limits of what was beyond criticism are being eroded and reduced. The active social position of labour collectives is being engendered among the population and the attempt to fight for and defend individual and social principles at trades union meetings and assemblies of labour collectives is assuming a mass but not, as yet, institutionalised character.

4. It must be pointed out that at the level of tactical tasks and from the position of the current short-term interests of social development, the ideological, political and social spheres are, in the main, diametrically opposed to the economic. Thus, social programmes are being realised at the expense of economic funds.

The economic situation and managerial practice at the present time is characterised, not so much by the fact that leaders of organisations take unsatisfactory administrative decisions (through incompetence or by ignoring social and collective interests), as by the objective absence of alternative economic decisions and alternative plan variants. As a rule, decisions taken by management, within the system of economic relations as it exists, are the only ones possible and compulsory by virtue of the absence of any degree of freedom for managerial action. At the same time, in conditions of democratisation, glasnost' is developing, broadening the realm of criticism and critically evaluating economic activity and, in the absence of any possibility of the administration choosing economic alternatives of management and reacting to "criticism", gives rise to the social protest of workers against economic leaders. This can turn into a new brake on economic activity which takes the form of "poorly managed, bureaucratic development of the economy". Thus, the emergence of a democratic culture can have an impetus towards the immediate destruction of old structures and economic relations before the establishment and development of new ones capable of replacing them. Such a tendency in a political context is destructive and can lead to a slow down in economic growth, an intensification of criticism and mass discontent and, consequently, to the curtailment of the programme of restructuring.

But in the long-term, the correlation of forces can change and then the ideological, social and political spheres can become an impulse to intensification and acceleration of economic development.

5. The process of restructuring is unfolding very unevenly in different republics, regions and cities. In the main restructuring remains a limited and subjective category which depends completely on the positions of individuals and interpretation by local leaders.

The historically shaped special task of local Party organs in the efficient regulation of economic activity in their area, not throughconomic but Party-administrative methods, remains (until major economic transformations) the central function of Party management. The economic control activity of the apparatus of Party committees dominates their political activity, which in an objective and logical way flows from the incompleteness and imperfection of the economic mechanism and the absence of adequate methods of economic activity, economic regulation and management.

In those regions (practically everywhere) to the extent that the function of administrative regulation of the economy is preserved for the Party Committees, there are no real objective stimuli (not to mention individual interests) to carry out restructuring in the social and informational spheres and to concentrate political will and initiative. In so far as there is restructuring in these spheres, the carrying out of the economic functions of the local Party committees is hindered. Consequently, in "the provinces" the first phase of restructuring has not been completed and the conditions for an overall economic reform have not been prepared.

Objectively, the vehicle (not declared and perhaps not yet formed

A large section of city Party committees have no objective, economic interest in restructuring, hardly support it and do not carry out its programme.

as a concept) for a consistent, overall restructuring are groups in the central leadership of the CPSU not responsible for the immediate managerial control of the economy. Such groups are the Politburo of the CPSU, part of the Central Committee and apparatus of the CC, the Moscow City Committee of the CPSU, part of the newly-composed leadership of the Republican Parties, part of the leadership of the Party committees of the capital cities of the Union Republics and individual leaders of party committees. A large section of city Party committees have no objective, economic interest in restructuring, hardly support it and do not carry out its programme.

Therefore, one must operate on the assumption of the heterogeneity of the political centre where all power of initiative and political responsiblity for interpreting and carrying out restructuring resides.

As a matter of fact, within the Party aktiv, it is possible to distinguish two groups. Firstly, an extremely small group with an interest in and supporting the programme of restructuring consisting basically of part of the central Party leadership. Secondly, a significantly more numerous local Party leadership which approves of restructuring in a humanitarian fashion but objectively does not support it (especially in this form and at this stage when democratisation and the development of glasnost' hamper and hold back economic activity or worsen the accounting and technical-economic indicators of the work of organisations.

6. The basic visible result of the preparatory stage of restructuring has been the openness and critical approach of the central press, the mass media and the development of a culture of general glasnost'. In the main, reports and published material have a sensational, castigating and critical character which, at times, forms the vehicle for social vices and enemies of restructuring. In present conditions the press, simultaneously with its informational function, must play an educative role.

The tendency can be seen for the formation of a bipolar form of political centre. At the one pole are those in favour of restructuring (the radicals), and at the other those who are against (the conservatives). In its outward appearance the political structure is completely monolithic - all party workers support restructuring - and the system appears to have only one pole, but in essence, although its content has not been clearly formulated, there is a second pole - a political group disapproving of restructuring.

Clear evidence for the existence of a politically powerful conservative pole is provided by the local (not the central) press and mass media which in practice have not changed the nature of their material, entirely express the position of the local Party leadership and do not fulfil the tasks of the preparatory period - directed toward the development of the social activity of the population, the formation of the culture of glasnost' and the experience of social opposition. Such a role is performed at the periphery by the central press, radio and television. The gulf between the central and local press creates a feeling among the population that restructuring is something happening exclusively in Moscow. This generates internal tension and distrust towards the local press and local organs of power, creates a contradiction and a situation of social conflict and forms a kind of social opponent of restructuring in the shape of the local organs of power and the administrative and managerial personnel (the "bureaucrats") of organisations and enterprises The bipolar system at the political centre is an extremely unstable form of political equilibrium in so far is there is an absence of a centrist political group acting as a buffer and natural political barrier in a period of a sharp imbalance in the distribution of political forces, and particularly a clear political and social preponderence of those against. In the event, even a brief, unsatisfactory development of restructuring can lead instantly to the formation among the population of discontent and hostility to restructuring as a whole and, consequently, an abandonment of a favourable position for one solely existing in the bipolar political system - against with the inevitable result of its subsequent curtailment.

7. Glasnost' and democratisation have become a catalyst to social revival, a manifestation of interest in the process of social and economic renewal, and an embryonic development of the social activity of the population leading to the formation of mass social movements and informal associations and clubs, etc.

8. In the major cities and capitals of the Union Republics, the independent movement is assuming not only a mass but a universal character. Informal structures are beginning to play a social and political role in the socio-economic life of the cities. (The defence of ecology, the preservation of the realm of historic architecture, the organisation of leisure, etc.)

The tendency for the rapid development of informal structures and their positively accelerating role in the socio-cultural life of society can be readily traced.

9. The phenomenon of "horizontal", club structures crystallising around the "realisation" of common, collective interests is undoubtedly a healthy, socially forward-looking and justified tendency in the formation of the social fabric and in the origin of co-operative ties of collaboration, common creativity and civil co-ordination.

Within the "informal" club movement at times originate "asocial" associations, socially independent groups who view the resolution of economic contradictions and the development of restructuring exclusively as a struggle with the bureaucratic mechanism and the bureaucracy which are perceived as the social enemies of restructuring.

The current task of such groups is reduced to a struggle with the bureaucracy and bureaucratic decisions at all times and in all places. Such a position, directed at the immediate destruction of the old structures and relations must be recognised as negative and intolerable in so far as the logic of restructuring at present in the absence of uniformity and unanimity with regard to this process among the central and local Party leadership, and in the absence of a social base for restructuring must occur, as far as possible, without a drop in the tempo of economic growth or a worsening (even if shortlived) of the economic situation of the majority of the population and particularly of the working class.

The social opinion directed against the bureaucracy, as a rule a synonym for the administrative-governmental apparatus, essentially expresses the pretensions, in practice unfounded, groundless

In the major cities and capitals of the Union Republics, the independent movement is assuming not only a mass but a universal character.-

and futile, towards the holders of executive functions, the bureaucratic conduct of which is predetermined by economic circumstances and legislative directions. The resolution of the bureaucratic dilemma lies not in the sphere of struggle with the executors but in the creation of a mechanism of influence and pressure on the legislative power or the granting of legislative economic right to the administration of organisations.

11. The present socio-political task is to create a mechanism ensuring the political stability of society during the transition to the extremely destabilising phase of restructuring - the profound economic reform. One method of establishing such a mechanism may be through a conscious reconstruction of the system of real political power at the expense of a transition from a bipolar to a tripolar political system. This would also be at the expense of declaring a centrist programme of restructuring and the obvious formation and delineation, in terms of its membership, of a centrist political group. A return to a single-pole, authoritarian political system is not considered as it is not a viable alternative for guaranteeing the programme of restructuring. The centrist programme must emerge as a political compromise supporting political equilibrium, stability and the subsequent development of restructuring.

We are not talking of the artificial formation of an artificial political group but of the natural separation of partially alternative variants within the framework of radical restructuring from its present eclectic, contradictory and eroded socio-economic programme. A more thorough and thoughtful attitude is needed to the traditional picture of the integrity, unity and possibility of simultaneously carrying out the social and economic programmes of restructuring between which there is not a mathematically linear but a dialectical connection. The social and economic programmes can play at different times the roles of co-operation or competition, mutual reinforcement or mutual exclusion. In the programme of radical restructuring, the socio-economic programme is put forward in an integrated fashion. Mutually exclusive tendencies each generating their own constituent elements are not distinguished. A precise programme of socio-economic transformation requires the clear definition and establishment of the correlations and proportions between the social and the economic. It is possible to distinguish between several different programmes of restructuring:

The radical programme of restructuring must depend on immediate implementation of a profoundly radical reform of the economy, accelerated growth of the economy on the principle of self-financing with general growth in average living standards but at the expense of greater stratification of the population with a tolerable lowering of the standard of living for a significant section.

The centrist programme of restructuring might focus on the necessity of implementing profound economic reform while maintaining social guarantees and without worsening the economic position or lowering the standard of living for a significant majority of the population. There would be a programme of broad workers' self-management, the implementation of an active democracy and a programme of extensive social reforms. The centrist programme, with its attendant idea of social justice, would enjoy the greatest support among the working class. Special attention would be paid to the creation of a mechanism taking into account and interpreting traditional, regional and national differences.

The conservative programme is the maintenance of order in a strictly centralised economy, the acquiescence of economic relations and the force of administrative relations.

Both the radical and centrist programmes are programmes for a principled restructuring and have had to be consciously separated into two independent programmes to create a bipolar localised, controlled and managed political situation between which is contained an acceptable interval for restructuring. Consequently, either variant is internally feasible and does not lead to a retreat from restructuring.

The differentiation of the centrist and radical programmes must procede from a general to today's (unformulated) conception of socio-economic renewal. Deliberately and clearly the division into two partially alternative programmes of restructuring and Party opposition groups and Party leaders of groups supporting differing programmes must be stated and declared through the mass media.

For the conservative programme - an obscure, invisible and shady programme - there is the obvious lack of a leader, programme, and opposition.

The division or, more accurately, partition of a presently integrated programme of radical restructuring into two programmes provides a medium of political selection, of political participation for citizens, creates the feeling of independent choice, a sphere of social self-management which in the final analysis forms a defence mechanism against political destabilisation.

The situation of political crisis which has been examined is viewed solely at the level of analysis of socio-economic tendencies which may not be borne out in real life. However, a political insurance mechanism playing the role of a buffer is needed while the political equilibrium is being disprupted.

11. The clear division between two or several partially alternative programmes of restructuring, the forming of a restructuring framework creates a socially stable situation. It should be particularly noted that at a time of major socio-political transformations a strict, authoritarian political system with a leader utilising a politically indisputable national and international authority can arise as before.

As a rule such a strict, authoritarian political system emerges as the reserve or basic system of administrative-political management alleviating and overcoming the economic crisis generated in the transition period as a result of the destruction of the old socio-economic structures and relations and the non-creation or embedding of the new ones. In this connection, the separation of the various programmes of restructuring must be realised only at the level of social and economic programmes, preserving in the political sphere the political monopoly on the political programme of restructuring. The authoritarian political programme of restructuring must maintain the traditional hierarchy of political power, sharply demarcating the various levels of leadership, preserving subordination and the social psychology of the need to submit to a higher leadership. Such a system which has historically become fixed in administrative and Party culture may be temporarily used as an effective mechanism of political control and distribution of the influence of authority throughout the system of political power.

As well as the division between partially alternative programmes in the sphere of economics and social policy, programmes of restructuring can also be formulated in the sphere of institutional complexes: health care, social security, training and education, culture, sport, industry, agriculture, construction etc. It would be expedient to conduct informal and nationwide discussions on these programmes before the annual sessions of the Supreme Soviet which confirm the plan of the State Budget for the following year.

Within the framework of the new law on state enterprises, the

The development of commodity-money relations will lead to a strengthening of the contradictioons between management and workers.

right for a work collective to choose its own model for evaluating the economic activity of the enterprise and the model for the system of planning has been strengthened. However, in line with proprietory rights it seems extremely expedient to allow the work collective the right to choose its own model of ownership, economic and social programmes.

12. On the other hand, political equilibrium might be preserved at the cost of creating a mechanism holding back the formation and development of negative, asocial independent groups and organisations, and informal associations and movements, the objective economic prerequisites for the emergence of which will exist in the near future.

In the initial phase of economic reform a brief worsening of the economic situation of a (significant?) portion of the population is possible.

The development of commodity-money relations will lead to the "cultivation" and counterposition of economic and social interests in the enterprises with a consequent strengthening of the contradictions between the bearers of these interests - management and workers. The tendency towards social conflict and the reinforcement of the pressure of the economic reform on the workers' social milieu, are also generated by the absence of a mechanism regulating social protection, the absence of social culture and the lowering of social guarantees. There is an inability to utilise and put into practice even those rights of labour legislation, trade unions and labour collectives which are permitted. As a rule, the executive organs of the social organisations in the enterprises suffer, not from legal restrictions, but from a refusal to utilise existing rights. Collective interest in the real activity of the social organisations is missing and faith in their capabilities has been destroyed. The formation of a system of extra-economic (non-legal) relations between management and workers creates a stable mechanism of shady deals and generates the extra-economic dependence of the workers on the management making it virtually impossible for the workers to actively participate in the social life of the enterprise. The executive organs of the social organisations, required to defend the professional, social and economic interests of the workers, have repudiated their rights and functions and taken on the role of defenders of the interests of the management. Unfortunately, such a situation is maintained to this day and practically nothing has changed during the first stage. On the eve of transition to economic reform such a situation can strengthen the function of economic pressure by the management on the social sphere of the workers' activity. Workers in the enterprises have been isolated and do not possess the organs to express and defend their collective interests. Thus, active democracy, as an objective means of realising a consistent programme of radical restructuring, is absent from the enterprises. Without this the workers are not able to oppose the economic pressure of the management. As a result of this pressure and the impossibility of counteracting or participating in the economic activity of the organisations, the social tension among the workers will overflow their boundaries and become exclusively directed at and transformed into hostility and rejection of radical restructuring.

It should be noted that the present-day restructuring differs in principle from a revolution through the absence of a class enemy and, as a consequence, the absence of a class feeling of the epochal, historical significance of the revolutionary transformations which engenders the necessity of historical sacrifice and the need to create for future generations. During restructuring it is impossible to expect and politically count on class restraint and rejection of current satisfaction of demands in favour of long-term class interests. In present conditions, there is an absence, amongst the basic mass of working people, of class patience, of waiting for results in the future and of consciously limiting themselves today for the sake of the future and future generations. Thus, even a brief worsening of the standard of living will be intolerable and may lead to social and political conflicts.

Apart from the possibility of an absolute worsening of the economic situation, a lowering of living standards for a large part of the population, the emergence of a small group with rapidly rising incomes and a more profound and obviously accelerated stratification of society which may lead to a rejection of restructuring.

13. In all probability, the limited appearance of individual and co-operative activity will entail a sharp rise in prices in the sphere of services, foodstuffs and on the consumer goods market. This will lead to a rise in the cost of living, particularly in the first stages with the existence of a consumer deficit, massive demand and in the absence of competition in unsaturated and restrained co-operative production.

The economic reform proposes an intensification of productive activity, the elimination of fictititious labour and the "pripiska". It projects a new work culture of productive activity which the working class, in its mass, does not possess. The introduction of order will possibly lead to a struggle with the "pripiska", a tendency towards the lowering of wage levels to what they were earlier, an intensification of productive activity, the appearance of temporary unemployment and an absolute and relative worsening of the social and economic position of the workers. A social and political system, a social buffer, which might compensate for and ease the economic stringency has not been prepared or elaborated and, in practice, no attention has been devoted to it either at a theoretical or practical level.

A failure to recognise or understand the objective causes for the temporary "worsening" of the economic situation will lead to the revelation of subjective reasons and a search for the social opponents of restructuring. A forecast of the tendencies of development in the current situation:

a) a winding-up of democratisation and consequently of restructuring,

b) the possible association and formation of "asocial" social-political associations (an example in embryo - "Pamyat'"). The formation of alternative, opposition socio-political organisations aimed at the struggle with the "social enemies of restructuring" which would lead to a rapid end and winding-up of democratisation and consequently of restructuring.

14. To the problems of the present moment must be ascribed the absence of a social base for restructuring, i.e. social groups positively supporting the positions of restructuring and prepared to single-mindedly promote, fight for and defend its programme.

For a lengthy period, restructuring will preserve its moral and ideological content without any tangible economic return. In reality, the economic reform and market relations, without which restructuring is impossible, is, in the transitional stage of eliminating the previous economic structures and relations, the

The Party Conference will coincide, in all probability, with a worsening of the economic situation and a growth of political discontent and social tension...

most serious threat to itself, i.e. to restructuring.

It must once again be emphasised that all this is happening with a lack of mass understanding of objective processes, inadequate economic and social culture, the inability of the majority of the population to form an objective picture of the socio-economic situation and reveal its true causes, the absence of the "patience of waiting" and hopes for the future, an extreme social revival and the existence of informal associations, "clearly seeing" the root of the evil and putting forward constructive proposals for a resolution of the situation, in the struggle with the social enemy of restructuring, which might receive real support in society and become a mass movement in reality with tragic results.

15. With the development of economic reform will come the objective tendency to be hostile to, slow down and hinder restructuring amongst workers of the territorial committees of the Party to the same extent as economic tasks are removed from the sphere of activity of the Party committees and the influence of the Party organs on operational economic activity is reduced, in practice, to nothing. Any disruptions of the economy or worsening of the economic situation will lead to continual external and internal criticism of the programme of restructuring. The position of individual leading Party workers in the provinces will be aggravated by the development of intolerance on the part of society towards any sort of abuses. The tendency towards integration of internal Party development is also characterised by the possibility of differentiation and the formation of a political intra-Party opposition concerned with ending restructuring. The critical moment in an economic and political sense might become the all-Union Party Conference, the timing of which will coincide, in all probability, with a worsening of the economic situation, a rise in prices and the cost of living and the growth of political discontent with the processes of social stratification and development of social tension among the population caused by restructuring.

Objectively, the moving force of restructuring at the present time is a small section of the central Party leadership which bases itself on the intelligentsia, the working intelligentsia and members of co-operatives.

Up to the present time, expectations of restructuring have given a tangible result solely in the humanitarian sphere, the beneficiaries of which are only the most educated layers of the population. The economic expectations of the majority of the people of a comparatively rapid raising of the standard of living have scarcely been justified as the standard of living of the majority of the population has probably worsened. However, on average it may be possible to observe some economic growth, to a large extent "assimilated" by a small portion of the population - basically co-operatives and those employed in individual economic activity.

16. In a direct sense, in its preconditions and tendencies, the situation is close to a social crisis. The development of social stratification and the first symptoms of the social consequences of economic reform will begin to appear in Autumn 1987 with the establishment of the co-operative sector, the development of individual economic activity and the beginning of economic reform.

17. At the present moment, the responsibility and spectrum of tasks of the Party and Party leadership, and particularly of that section disputing a consistent, major socio-economic reform, is repeatedly growing.

The enlightening and scientifically educative role of the central mass media is growing. More publications with serious and profound socio-economic analysis are needed. The utmost preparation of the population, the realisation, knowledge and understanding of the social perspectives and consequences of the economic transformations are required.

An extremely important, and largely initial, task is the creation of a mechanism "managing" and channelling the consistently growing social activity of the people in a socially constructive direction and building a social base in defence of restructuring at the roots of the independent movement. At times the social movement has no way back. The time slipping by, the opportunities being lost and the social energy are flowing into the asocial movement and, in reality, being accumulated by the asocial associations which gamble on the ideas of defending restructuring in a struggle with its social opponents that it will possibly be supported individually and by social groups with no subjective or objective interest in restructuring.

A possible direction for a constructive movement realising the social activity of the population can be seen in the propaganda and development of the movement of social initiatives.

18. The movement of social initiatives advocates the promotion of constructive social proposals, initiatives and the formation of independent groups for their elaboration, realisation and introduction. The movement's concepts are being worked out and mastered through the work of the Club for Social Initiatives (KSI).

19. The Club poses its task as being the development of the social activity of the population, the co-ordination and analysis of social initiatives and their synthesis into social projects, discussion, and the formation of groups and functional workshops for social planning which includes the elaboration of a project up to and including implementation.

The Club carries out the function of social mediation, promoting and stimulating an influx of social initiatives and tracing social contractors or forming independent collectives for the introduction of social projects.

The Club plays the role of an informal link between clubs, amateur associations and informal groups with the aim of uniting forces to carry out social programmes and the long-term social programme of the Circle for Social Initiatives.

The movement of social initiatives is a means of developing social activity, a distinctive school of social self-management, of restructuring, of social experience, and of constructive social opposition.

The movement of social initiatives wishes to and can become a mass, all-union movement. Through its content and tasks it can develop a socio-political organisation, not as an alternative to the CPSU but complementary to and reinforcing its activity in carrying out a major restructuring

The potential of the movement: interest in social initiatives is

The movement of social initiatives wishes to and can become a mass, all-union movement.

extremely great, however any initiatives by the mass media at the present time largely work to restrain social activity in so far as a realisation of the significance and importance of the social proposals by the authors of ideas is needed and editors, choking under the flood of letters, do not attempt to answer them or send out formal replies. In principle an entirely different scheme is needed - one for the development of the movement of social initiatives, the concept of which is set out below.

The organisational structure of the movement for social initiatives may be formed from all-union associations - the Circle for Social Initiatives, regional Clubs for Social Initiatives and primary,functional independent groups and workshops of social planning.

The workshops of social planning are primary independent social collectives bringing about the realisation of one or several social projects. Organisationally, a workshop might incorporate club and co-operative activity which permits the self-financing of several social programmes, giving an additional source of funds for the members of the workshop. The first such workshop began its existence in the Leninskii district of Moscow at the base of the club for social initiatives "Main Moscow Industrial Building Materials" (GlavMosPromStroiMaterialov) and the "Master" co-operative of social-consumer services. Together with the editorial board of the journal "Sobesednik" (Interlocutor) the social project "Miloserdie" (Mercy) was opened within the framework of co-operative activity directed at aid for lonely, elderly and ill people in need of material and spiritual support. The co-operative undertakes one-off or systematic orders for services to the population - the delivery of food, books, post, medicines etc. Preferential prices are charged or free service for people with low incomes. Within the co-operative a redistribution of income is allowed at the cost of commmercially profitable orders for repairs to flats, recording video programmes etc to finance the "Miloserdie" programme. People who occasionally wish to fulfil orders or run individual errands free of charge are also asked. Social subbotniks of non-commercial labour are also being proposed.

Within the framework of the workshops of social planning it is possible to link up with various types of co-operative enterprise, for example, co-operative cafe-clubs.

In such a way the co-operative, social and club programmes are combined within the framework of organising free time.

Having being formed as an independent impulse "from below", the movement of social initiatives can hope to have a special authority among foreign progressive social organisations that may become a new and attractive form of civil dialogue capable of strengthening peace, confidence in destroying the image of enemies, assisting in the development of socio-cultural and economic collaboration between countries of differing social systems. At the present moment, the KSI is proposing to open an international project with the working title social planning of a non-violent world (or co-operation instead of competition, or social creativity instead of military confrontation or social planning of an ecological world).

It should be noted that the movement of social initiatives in the developed capitalist countries has grown considerably and attracts extremely broad, diverse social groups, with which the establishment of contacts would have assisted in raising the international authority of the country and authority with regard to the socio-political programme of restructuring.

At the present time KSI is establishing links with the representatives of initiative groups in European countries interested in organising contacts and mutual activity in realising common social initiatives. KSI, together with the Soviet Committee for the Defence of Peace, might organise a working conference in Spring (Summer) 1988 in Moscow under the rubric of The Social Planning of an Ecological World. (Preliminary interest has been shown by representatives of initiative social organisations in France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Italy, WestGermany, Austria and Canada.). The movement of social initiatives, by its nature, is a consistent and constructive movement in defence and support of the processes of socio-economic renewal and radical restructuring. What is, therefore, vitally necessary is widely-distributed propaganda and the development of the movement through television programmes, newspaper articles, festivals, competitions and the founding of an independent periodical journal of social initiatives. This should contain analytical surveys of real problems of social life, surveys of the current state of the fund for social initiatives, proposals for the realisation of social projects, and discussion of their present stage, information on measures being taken, co-ordination of the activity of the workshops of social planning and information on the programmes being carried out by various clubs and amateur associations within the circle for social initiatives.Not only the machinery for the spread and popularisation of the movement but effective means for joint activity between Party organisations and the elements of the movement - clubs and workshops of social planning - must be envisaged.

To all appearances, one of the basic tasks of both current and longterm work for local Party organisations is supporting and assisting the development of the movement and providing help in the carrying out of social initiatives and projects. Within the Party committees it would be useful to have someone taking care of activity with local sections of the movement.

For Komsomol committees, supporting the development of social initiatives can become a basic function of their activity. Komsomol committees must be formed from talented informal leaders and first-rate organisers who could render assistance and provide consultation about the formation of independent groups and workshops of social planning while preserving their autonomous functioning and viability.

The movement consists of horizontal structures a new form of social organisation not replacing the vertical Party and Komsomol structures but supplementing them.

The activity of the organisations of the movement for social initiatives could become, in principle, a new vital and interesting form for reviving and renewing the Komsomol organisations. At the same time, strengthening the functions of the movement could become a new task for local Party committees corresponding to the programme of radical restructuring. To the extent that this replaces and supplants economic functions, an objective interest in the local Party apparatus supporting restructuring is created at the active administrative level.

The movement for social initiatives not only proclaims the principles of constructive criticism and the replacement of the old only to the extent of creating the new but in and of itself is a social initiative in so far as, in being a new social movement and forming new social collectives, it does not destroy but augments and renews the established social structures.

The formation of primary initiative groups in the enterprises could become the base and support for carrying through the economic reform, a centre of social activity, a school of social self-management for labour collectives, an initiative organ (after the example of the circles for acceleration in Japan) in the social and work sphere regenerating the position and revitalising the activity of the social organisations - trades unions, Komsomol,

councils of labour collectives, public editorial boards.

In principle, the clubs for social initiative in the enterprises could become independent, initiative organs carrying out the programme of restructuring. They would be an original collective, social Commissariat of Restructuring consistently carrying out the programme of restructuring and an obstacle to the formation of a new retarding mechanism.

Social initiatives should not be understood and interpreted in a literal sense as a sphere of activity exclusively in the social milieu. Undoubtedly this is a useless and fatal limitation of popular activity within the framework of social projects which excludes other expanses of human creativity. It would be more accurate to characterise the movement for social initiatives as a cultural-democratic movement, a movement for popular initiatives in support of restructuring, a movement for an ecological world and a movement for a non-violent world proposing the establishment of ecologically pure relations between people and the diverse spheres they inhabit - natural, cultural, social, historical, spiritual.

THE MEETING OF INFORMAL ASSOCIATIONS IN MOSCOW

by Evgenii Pavelko, Novosti Press Agency

The outstanding event in Moscow in the past week has been the meeting of representatives of informal associations. This took place in the House of Culture "Novator" (Innovator) on the initiative of the capital's "Perestroika", "Social Initiatives" and "Obshchina" clubs.

According to specialists, informal associations in the USSR today have a membership of several million, mainly young, people. Their growth began at the end of the 70's and beginning of the 80's. During the stagnation in society, the activity of these groups took on a nonconformist character. Sociologists currently distinguish between three basic types of association. The programme of the first sort has a constructive social character. Spare time brings others together. The third is distinguished by a definite extremism and belongs to the ranks of anti-social forces.

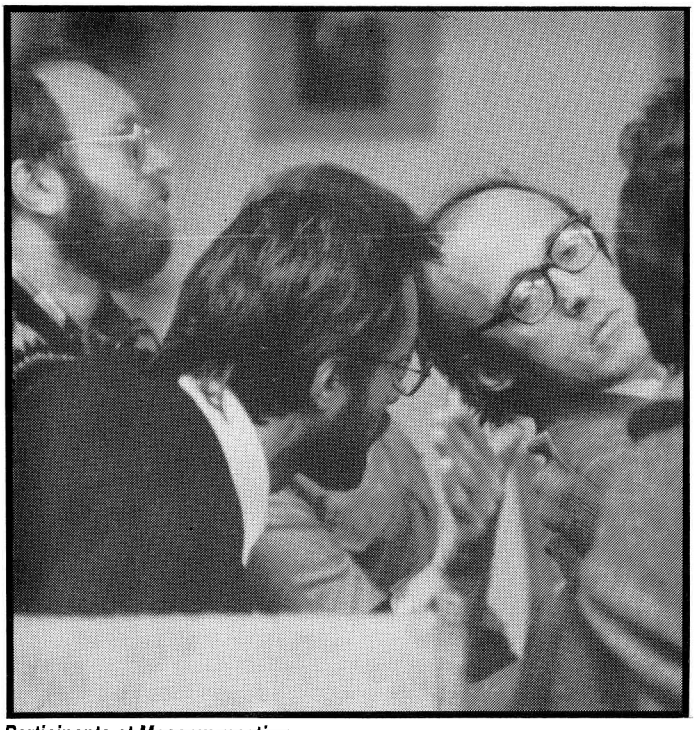
Petr Filippov, a Leningrad economist and one of the participants in the meeting, told me that representatives of youth associations with varying outlooks had come to Moscow. The majority constituted groups of the first two types: the Moscow and Leningrad "Perestroika" clubs, the Club for Social Initiatives, the Fund for Social Initiatives, the student associations - "Obshchina", "Che Guevara" and "Adelaida", the "Spasenie" (Salvation) group from Leningrad known for its activity in defence of ancient monuments, "Sistema" (System) - young hippies, and also independent organisations in the cultural, ecological and artistic spheres (in all 50 associations).

In Filippov's opinion, the aim of the meeting was to draw the informal associations into more active participation in the process of restructuring and to openly discuss all social problems. Discussions continued for three days in several sections: political clubs, creative and productive initiatives, leisure, information, ecology and the ecology of culture.

The debates were conducted in a stormy fashion in the political clubs' section in which representatives of the so-called human rights movement, the seminar "Democracy and Humanism", took part. There was a sharp polemic with them over the question of general democratic freedoms. The concepts of "abstract humanity" and "abstract democracy" have no meaning outside of a specific socio-political system. Without question we are for socialist ideals, says Filippov, the problem is how to find the best means to achieve them.

to restore historical justice, to throw light on the repressions of the 30's and they promoted the idea of a monument to the victims of these repressions.

At the meeting the structure and forms of co-operation of the informal groups was widely debated. In particular, this concerned the formation of two organisations: a federation and an association, the aims of both of which would be active participation in restructuring, struggle with bureaucracy, for social justice and for an affirmation of democracy and glasnost'.The discussions took place in a free-and-easy atmosphere with press, and with representatives of Party and Komsomol invited. Notwithstanding differences in views, the delegates declared in the final declaration their desire to work in the interests of the people.



Participants at Moscow meeting

In the official Soviet press, reformist intellectuals have again taken up the unfinished agenda of the first wave of "de-Stalinisation" which followed the XXth Congress of the CPSU in 1956. The celebrated poet and singer Bulat Okudzhava, one of the most articulate voices on the pro-perestroika wing of the Soviet creative intelligentsia, recalled the long continuity of the struggle to overcome Stalin's legacy in the 31 May issue of *Moscow News*. We also print here, for the first time in English, one of his poems about Stalin.

BULAT OKUDZHAVA

IF GORBACHEV TAKES RISKS, THEN WHY SHOULDN'T I?

Since the appearance of my latest album, which opens with a song"The Music of My Soul Is Getting Fainter", I am often asked what kind of music I hear now. The music of battle? That of victories? I answer: a music of hope. Great hope for the renewal of society, like thirty years ago. I think that today this music is being heard by many. That is probably the reason why the discussion of the 1950s, to which newspapers and magazines, radio and TV turn now and again, does not tire us. That time there was an awakening of public self-awareness. The years of the personality cult were then perceived as bitter fortuity which, thank God, had gone never to return. In our country there were many people eager to roll up their sleeves and work.

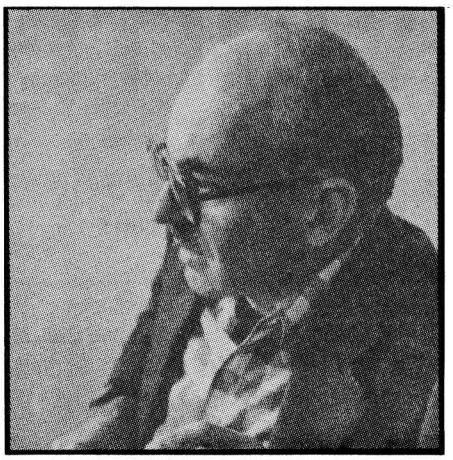
Everyone turned to poetry in a desire to learn how to go on living. Even to those who didn't know much about poetry, it seemed all of a sudden that versification was the means which would answer the numerous "accursed" questions and help overcome our social imperfections.

Even in hard times literature and spiritual life do not come to a halt and continue to exist as if behind seven locks and seven seals. Bulgakov, Platonov, Akhmatova and Pasternak created their works, meaning that there was vitality. And at the first opportunity all this suddenly turned into commotion. An explosion occurred. The locks were opened, and the accumulations in art received an opportunity for self-expression.

I was a Stalinist

That was the time I came into being. But before that I was a Stalinist like many others in my generation. There is nothing surprising about it. At first, every possibility to doubt was suppressed. This generated fear. Fear struck roots and created a new type of man. My parents were subjected to repression. But I believed they were guilty of something because our gallant CheKa (state security) men were never wrong. I witnessed two searches, night arrests and, like many others at that time, lived under a yoke of fear. Added to this was a desire to be a human being and to believe that what was happening was good, that it had some kind of sense. I wanted to believe - that was what was most terrible. I was a blind romantic, a typical product of the epoch, and I found a very simple explanation for the sinister facts associated with the Stalin personality cult. I believed that everything that happened was without his knowledge. He was engaged in serious affairs, construction, the building of a new state...

And all of a sudden - that tragic breakdown. But as far as I'm concerned, it passed very quickly. Unexpectedly, it became clear that my parents, whom I secretly loved,



Okudzhava

were not guilty of anything. That was already of great help. If so, then all the rest could be a mistake. I began to take a new look at our world, our life and our future.

Although I had composed songs even before, I regard the autumn of 1956 as the beginning of my writing any reciting poetry to the accompaniment of a guitar. It is then that I felt the need to make myself heard in public. I dreamed of coming to Tverskoi Boulevard at night, finding two or three guitarists who would play me up, and singing my songs. I was told: "Aren't you crazy - you'll be arrested!" And so I dropped the idea. But the need remained. At that time tape recorders came into existence - such a happy concurrence of circumstances. Thanks to them poetry spread like wildfire. Were it not for them, poems would probably be circulated in leaflets. But how can a leaflet convey the sounds of a guitar, the accompaniment! Music adds to the impact of poetry. And the range of those interested in it grows farther and wider, as does the circulation of the poetry.

Poetry to an accompaniment was a counter-balance to an amusing variety song, a spiritless art and an imitation of feelings. It was written by thinking people for thinking people. We attempted to speak to people not in the language that was in fashion for many long years, but in the one that was latent within them. We tried to awaken people. And I think we succeeded in this to a certain extent. We were a spur that stimulated people to think.

Long attempts were made to combat what I call an author's song. At the time of interdictions I was summoned and told: "You write a song so that as soon as youth hear it, they will immediately want to go to help develop our virgin lands". And I tried to prove that that was altogether not my mission. The calling of poetry consists primarily in building up the potential of good in the world and in helping good in its confrontation with evil. If there were no poetry, evil could have triumphed and we would have been degraded. But we continue to live, and we owe this to the existence of poetry, music, art and history. Poetry wields a beneficial influence on society.

Once I wrote, addressing myself to Moscow: "But once you believed our tears, neither you nor us would have to lament the past". What do we feel sorrow for? For the severity of our life. For the mistrust of the individual. For the collapse of ideals. For disillusionments. For losses. For the ephemerality of hopes. There is a need to speak about all of this. We have not said much about the past...We are worried about the destiny of our youth. We accuse it at times of light-mindedness, and every kind of nasty deeds. But who if not us is to blame for all this. This is our fault. We must tear the veil from our past and repent. If we find the courage to do this - then the youth will also be different. It will have faith in us.

Repentance

There is a point of view according to which

everything has already been said about the past - in the documents of the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the CPSU; something about this can be read in solid journals. But if everything has been said, then there is nothing to speak about any longer. I disagree with this point of view. I believe that we must clear ourselves completely and say "who is who". The Russian language has enough words to explain all this without encroaching on the nature of our system. It will then be possible to speak about the loftiness and moral health of the people, and the firmness and wisdom of the state. The tradition of repentance, which has long existed among the people, contains a great meaning. Evil cannot be hushed up for long, it mustn't be hidden just as a disease mustn't be driven deeper inside. The sooner we rid ourselves of this load, the sooner we'll reach whatever we are striving for now .

When I was young I believed that my hopes would come true in no time. Incidentally, the same was believed by many of those who were older than me. The road proved to be a long one. The present day is the continuation of "those times". And in this sense I am giving to them my entire still unexpected reserve of energy with joy and hope.

As a matter of fact, even in the years of stagnation I did not lose hope that there would be a change for the better. But I didn't know that this would occur in 1985 or 1986. But I believed in it. By that time I already well understood that society must mature for a perestroika.

I hoope very much that most members of our society have the strength for change. I pin special hopes on the youngest, those who didn't have time to breathe in the stagnant air. Why, if we believe biblical stories, did Moses lead his people from Egypt to their native land for forty years, although it was possible to cover that distance in five days? He did it on purpose - so that those who remembered the slavery would die out.

I am perfectly not apt to labour under a delusion. I have never respected ill-starred optimists - chatterboxes, big mouths and sickly-sweet phrasemongers. And I don't want to be considered one of them. I clearly see that the circumstances we live in are complicated and grim. A fierce struggle is going on and will continue. I cannot blame the present-day difficulties on the leadership, on the superiors, as is being done by many. No! The struggle stems from our mind-set.

Even back in 1919, Maxim Gorky said that the Revolution should not fear the Entente and the internal enemy - it should fear the philistine. Our philistine has gained enormous strength. Broad vistas were opened for him both in Stalin's times and subsequently. Usually such a person is silent and obedient, and does not interfere in the solution of acute social issues. But the philistine is terrible when he pushes his way to power. In the struggle for his personal rights and dividends he is ready to bite anyone's head off. And the most horrible thing about the philistine is that, fighting for his personal prosperity, he holds aloft slogans in his hands and utters lofty words. And resorting to these slogans he fixes his trite affairs and settles accounts with the objectionable.

That our philistine has grown out of all proportion I judge by our Writers Union. What do they speak about often at our meetings? Instead of speaking about lofty moral standards, the literary process, workmanship or ethical categories, what do some of our writers discuss? One of them lamented that the younger generation pays no attention and disregards the orders and medals, with which he is decorated. Another recalled Stalingrad and some unmentioned enemies, whom he must fight. Who are these enemies? Where do such feelings of animosity come from?

Sometimes it may be heard that the Writers Union needs no perestroika. It needs and how! In this Union there are people who can think independently. But most lack this ability. This is what is known as an element of retardation. This is not to mention old fears and a desire to live according to orders from on high. Constantly, in both large and small issues, I feel what we now call a phenomenon of resistance. This is not some malicious resistance. Although there are people who put up, one could say, desperate resistance for fear of losing their privileged positions. These people are dangerous in the sense that they contaminate the younger

SONG ABOUT THE GENERALISSIMO

What, then - generalissimo so fine,
you're saying your descendants are prejudiced against you?
Neither can they agree nor will they hold their tongues...
Some punch you in the snout and sweep you out
others praise you still, paint your portrait,
yearn and pray for your resurrection.

What, then - generalissimo so fine?
On Red Square, in the ground, you have found piece of mind...
Is that square not red already with the blood
which you with your own hands shed
as you gently stroked your moustache,
hidden, watching Moscow through your window?

Then what - generalissimo so fine?
Your teeth today hold no danger,
but your shadow does, with its low brow...
It is not my intention to number past victims,
yet, even if I am modest in my vengeance,
remembering the past, I cannot forgive.

Translated by Quintin Hoare

generation with their ink. But the bulk of people mustn't be blamed for anything - they are victims of the times, victims of education, victims of circumstances. They have been taught and brought up in this way. They have ceased to understand that something can be different. Now that the possibility to change everything has appeared, some of them would like to do it, except for fear of consequences. It is impossible to change the composition of one's blood at a moment's notice.

New hope

Some people say: "Nothing will come out of what society is now striving for!" But I believe that positive change will take place! Of course, it will not come like a bolt from the blue - it will take some time. What is important is not to stop half-way, not to retreat and not to dash madly to and fro, but to act wisely and consistently. It is easy to criticise and to tear down everything. I myself know our troubles. But I have been opposing them with my hope and my desire to roll up my sleeves and take part in the perestroika - as far as I can, to the best of my ability. A British correspondent once asked me whether I was not afraid of being duped into cherishing false hopes. I told him that the situation in the country was complicated. But if Gorbachev was taking risks, why shouldn't I also take risks?

If today's trend continues, if the process develops upwards, life will take a normal course. And we shall exist and enjoy our existence. This is life. And I set very great hopes on this.

25 NOVEMBER: DEMONSTRATE TO FREE KLEBANOV!

November 25th marks ten years since Vladimir Klebanov, a victimised Ukrainian miner and a group of Soviet workers announced their intention to form an independent trade union. They declared that for the Soviet working class "there is no organ which objectively defends the workers' interests. Soviet trade unions do not defend our rights and do not have the necessary authority".

It was in order to remedy this situation that the "Free Trade Union Association of the Soviet Working People" was formed. It declared its intention to "win the official and legal right to defend our interests - a right guaranteed by the Soviet constitution". At its foundation the Free Trade Union Association claimed a membership of over two hundred people. Many of the two hundred had suffered at the hands of management for protesting against working conditions and corruption. They found that on most occasions the official unions sided with the management.

Despite the fact that the Soviet workers had every right to form a trade union they were subjected from the very beginning to a deliberate campaign of harrassment and persecution. The authorities supplied every police station in Moscow with the names of members who were then questioned and threatened.

The worst treatment was reserved for Klebanov, the union's founder and leader. For forming a trade union he was found to be "suffering from psychiatric illness" and for nearly ten years he has been imprisoned in one mental hospital after another. He has been forced to suffer solitary confinement and the forced injection of "behaviour modification" drugs.

In June this year he sent the following statement to the West:

"I, Vladimir Klebanov, was born in 1932. I am a miner and have worked at the mine named VM Bazhanov. Since 1958 I have been harrassed and repressed because my actions were directed at defending the working rights of my comrades. I was continually sacked, only to be reinstated again many times.

As I continually refused to alter my opinions, I was falsely accused under article 187/1 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code. In consequence I spent nearly fifteen years in an MVD special psychiatric hospital, both in the Ukrainian town of Dnepropetrovsk and in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in a town called Tashkent. At this moment I am being held in Psychiatric Hospital No.1 in the town of Makeenki, in Donetsk region within the Ukrainian Republic. I am mentally healthy and can be held responsible for my actions. It is my opinion that the authorities either want me to recant my views or actually make me mentally unstable... According to the Soviet Government, the Central Committee of the CPSU, there has been no glasnost for the last twenty years. After the 27th Congress of the CPSU everything seems to have taken a turn for the better. In a weekly newspaper, News Times...the deputy Minister of Health..., E.A. Babayana claims I was involved in an accident at work from which I am now in the process of being cured. She also says that the KGB have 'no psychiatric hospitals in the USSR'. Such statements, Comrade Babayana, are called pure fantasy.

The American government has given the opportunity for Soviet doctors to examine an American citizen, Leonard Peltier... Let the Government of the USSR allow any Western Government psychiatric specialists have the same opportunity. I am in agreement with any conditions.

With respect, V. Klebanov, 20 June 1987"

Support workers' rights in the USSR by joining the demonstration for Klebanov's release at the Soviet Embassy, 18 Kensington Palace Gardens, 1.30pm on 25 November!

By far the most original aspect of the "perestroika", the restructuring that is occuring under Gorbachev's leadership, is the explicit linking of economic reform and democratisation. Gorbachev told the January 1987 plenary session of the Communist Party Central Committee that; "democracy is not simply a slogan; it is the very essence of the perestroika."[1]

DAVID SEPPO

ECONOMIC REFORM AND DEMOCRACY IN THE SOVIET UNION

Except perhaps for the Prague Spring of 1968 (and even here this was very much the work of forces from below), no other attempt at economic reform in the Soviet bloc has envisaged real change in the political system, characterised by the monopoly of power in the hands of the party-state bureaucracy. The opposite is actually closer to the truth: those reforms were conceived largely with a view to averting pressures for political change.[2]

The prime motive behind the perestroika is, of course, the need to improve economic performance. The Soviet leadership has recognized that the existing system of economic planning and management, the hyper-centralised "command system", originally established under Stalin in the late 1920s, is the basic cause of the economy's increasingly poor performance. This system, despite its terrible wastefulness of human and material resources, did succeed in rapidly industrialising the backward, overwhelmingly peasant society that the revolution inherited from Tsarism. But it has long since become an obstacle to further progress.

In the "command system", the vision, if not necessarily the actual practice, is that of a single immense enterprise in which the main lines of dependence, bargaining and circulation of information are vertical. Material resources are allocated by the centre, which also fixes obligatory production targets for the enterprises. This is a system which encourages waste, gives priority to quantity over quality, holds back technological innovation and fails to motivate adequately the labour force[3].

Under the reform, whose final outlines are still far from clear, but which is to be definitively in place by the start of the 13th five-year plan in 1991, the accent is to be on "economic" rather than "administrative" means of management, i.e. on horizontal rather than vertical co-ordination, with broad autonomy for the enterprises and a central role for the market mechanism. The goal is to end day to day detailed central tutelage over the economy. The idea, we are told, is not abandon planning, but to make genuine long-term planning at last possible through the central manipulation of economic levers such as interest rates, taxation, centrally fixed norms, subsidies, controls over foreign trade, and a limited number of key prices. Accordingly, the role and scope of centrally allocated resources and of centrally fixtargets is to be greatly reduced[4].

II

What is the relationship between this economic reform and democratisation? The January 1987 issue of the Soviet journal EKO (Economy and the Organisation of Production), published in the academic centre of Novosibirsk, carried an article entitled "The Facade and Kitchen of the 'Great Reform'", under the rubrique "Pages from History". Its author, economist G. Popov, analyses the process, as well as the causes for the failure, of the emancipation of the serfs by Tsar Alexander II in 1861. He begins with a quote from Lenin: "1861 gave birth to 1905", i.e. the failed reform was a central cause of the revolution. In explaining the failure, Popov cites the 19th century revolutionary, Nikolai Chernyshevskyi: out of economic and military necessity, "the state was forced to undertake a programme which was foreign to to it, a programme based upon principles that contradicted the very nature of that state."[5] And he concludes by citing Lenin's own conclusions:

> "The main lesson and the main experience to be drawn from the reform, according to Lenin, was the need to mobilise a movement of the masses. It was necessary to seek out that social force that was most interested in the most progressive variant of the transformations... to arouse it and to base the reform on its support... "Reforms carried out by feudal landowners cannot help but be feudal in nature"[6]

This article was clearly intended as food for thought about the contemporary reform process. What is noteworthy (and explains the indirect, implicit nature of the commentary) is the revolutionary character of the author's conclusions.Strikingly similar conclusions, based upon Hungary's 20 years of experimentation with the "market reform", have recently been published by another Soviet bloc economist, Janos Kornai, who argues that the move away from the "command economy" to the "regulated market", has been realised only to a limited extent. In the state sector of the economy, by far the dominant one, "vertical dependence on a superior bureaucracy dominates horizontal dependence on the market."[7] And while even the partial change that has taken place has resulted in greater responsiveness to demand and more attention to quality and technological progress, the main improvements in the economy's performance are the result of a liberalised policy in the co-operative and private sectors. (But in this area, it is important to note the role being played by a significantly extended work day: "In a large number of families, members are working to the point of physical and psychological exhaustion."[8]

Kornai, like Popov, offers a political ("class") explanation for the failure to introduce consistent structural reform:

> Power creates an irresistible temptation to use it. A bureaucrat must be interventionist because that is his role in society; it is dictated by his situation. What is now happening in Hungary with respect to detailed microeconomic regulation is not an accident. It is rather the predictable, self-evident result of the mere existence of a huge and powerful bureaucracy. An inherent tendency toward recentralisation predominates. The pioneer reformers wanted to reassure all the members of the bureaucracy that there would be ample scope for their activity. Their intention is understandable. The reform is a movement

from "above", a voluntary change of behaviour on the part of the controllers and not an uprising from "below" on the part of the controlled. There is, therefore, a stubborn internal contradiction in the whole reform process: how to get the active participation of the very people who will lose a part of their power if the process is successful? The reassurance worked too well in the Hungarian case: the bureaucracy was not shattered. The number of people employed in the apparatus of economic administration has changed hardly at all.[9]

Resistance to the reform within the different administrations has become a major theme of the Soviet press. The reports are frank and do not hesitate to name names. For example, in December 1986, *Izvestiya* ran a series on the engineering industry, which was supposed to be in the process of major reform. In reality, little had changed:

> The perestroika in the ministry so far has been of a halfhearted character and has not, therefore, yielded any noticeable end results whatsoever. In the style of the Ministry of Heavy Machine Construction, as before, direct methods of management predominate that go against the course adopted toward the strengthening of economic levers of management... These problems... are characteristic not only of heavy and transportation machine construction. Many branch industries are swamped in current work; petty tutelage over enterprises substitutes itself for the the solution of strategic tasks.[10]

Resistance is also common at the enterprise level itself. "Some time ago," wrote *Izvestiya* on May 5, 1987,

> restrictions were lifted on combining jobs and operating with a reduced staff. The entire amount of wages thus saved is to be distributed among the members of the collective. Many other elements of wage levelling have also been abolished. But very few enterprise managers have availed themselves of the new opportunities. In fact some have suggested to the USSR State Committee on Labour and Social Issues that it restrict such payments.

There is, of course, a certain amount of illogic and/or bad faith in these reports of bureaucratic opposition to reform. For as long as the overall structure of the economy remains basically unchanged, the net effect of these partial reforms (which Gorbachev himself qualified as "insignificant and not radical" in his speech to the June 1987 Central Committee plenum[11]) is often merely to make life more difficult for administrators in fulfilling their assigned tasks. These attacks reflect the contradictory nature of the reform process, which is far from clearly worked out.

At the same time, however, the harsh criticism of "bureaucratism" and "the bureaucracy" is aimed at softening up real and potential political opposition. For there are indeed basic interests, common to broad strata of the "administrative class", that are threatened by the reform. And although its members are not organised politically to defend these interests[12], they nevertheless constitute the critical source of opposition to the perestroika and, in a crisis at the higher levels, they would have little trouble finding vigorous defenders amongst a certain part of the politburo.

The most fundamental interest is job security: in the bureaucratic system, privilege flows not from property but from administrative office. The vast personnel changes that have so far marked Gorbachev's tenure and the renewed accent on performance have already put into question what in practice had become a right under Brezhnev. (The establishment of this "right" goes far to explain the unprecedented spread of official corruption under the latter's rule).[13] But the economic reform, if carried through at all consistently, would also bring severe cuts in the size of the administrative staff. They would affect, first of all, the very numerous middle levels of the economic bureaucracy - the dozens of industrial branch ministries and committees. These people would not only have to retrain, suffering in the process loss of power, prestige and income, but many, if not most, would have to leave the capital. This would perhaps be the cruellest blow of all in a country where the material and cultural abyss between the capital (and to a lesser extent Leningrad and the larger republican capitals) and the provinces is so profound.

Politically much more significant, however, is the perspective loss by the party apparatus - again, particularly its middle levels: republican, regional and city committee secretaries and their staffs - of what has been its main function for nearly sixty years as a territorial economic co-ordinator, supervisor, pusher and fixer.[14] This economic role is an absolutely critical one in the highly centralised "command economy", with its chronic imbalances and shortages, and it has no doubt played a central role in the party apparatus' continued predominance within the state over the decades.

Over the past months, the party apparatus has been repeatedly told that it must give up its economic, "dispatcher", role. "The party organ must act as an organ of political leadership... and not as an organ of economic management," admonished Gorbachev in a meeting with Estonian apparatchiki.[15] At the January plenum he was even more explicit: "It is a matter of improving the methods of party leadership so as to exclude any supplanting of, or petty tutelage over, the economic organs... But some party leaders have trouble with the perestroika - they are unable to give up the dispatcher functions that do not belong to the party, the desire to decide all questions for everyone, to hold everything, so to speak, in one's fist."[16]

Another interest at stake is the nomenklatura mechanism of cadre selection. Under the reform party apparatchiki and higher economic administrators stand to lose at least a good part of their power to appoint managers. This is a necessary measure if managers are to be more interested in efficiency than pleasing superiors. (At the same time, it is not at all clear that even most enterprise managers would welcome this, as they are used to the old system, which despite its pressures, may often seem more secure to them.[17])

The power of appointment has been a crucial instrument for the construction of power bases and the accompanying accumulation of privilege and it will not be conceded easily. The resolution adopted by the January plenum, convened specifically to discuss and reform cadre policy, did not take up, except in the most general way, Gorbachev's proposals for the election of party officials, which included a secret ballot and multiple candidates.18 For the time being at least, this can be taken as tantamount to their rejection. (Similar proposals played a central part in Khrushchev's downfall.[19]) Gorbachev did not hide the fact that the preparation of the plenum, postponed three times, had been very difficult.[20]

The (at least partial) replacement of appointment from above with election from below, along with the accompanying freedom to publicly criticise officials without fear of retribution, mean an end to the unfettered use of power. And this, in turn, inevitably entails an attack on bureaucratic privilege. This is so because these privileges in Soviet-type systems are never legitimate (Soviet Marxism, the official ideology, despite its bastardisation, still retains its basically democratic and egalitarian character.) but take the form of an abuse of power. This theme, too, has become prominent in the press. In February, *Moskovskaya pravda* published a probing report on the capital's special foreign language schools. These, it was stated, cater almost exclusively for to the bureaucratic alite.[21] This exposa of "these breeding grounds of the gentry", as one reader put it, could not help but raise the more general issue of bureaucratic privilege. Among the dozens of letters the paper received, a common theme stood out: "A system has taken shape of by no means inoffensive health, recreational, trade and service institutions that are... the domain of the chosen few... - a system that is very convenient for the high-ranking officials themselves, and especially for their entourage."[22]

Although is clearly not at present the intention of the leadership, what is potentially at issue - and this is surely keenly felt by a good part of the bureaucracy - is the latter's very existence as a "class". This is certainly the aim of the most radical partisans of the perestroika. In an interview that merits quotation at length for its implicit "Trotskyism", A. Butenko, professor of economics at Moscow university, told *Moskovskaya pravda:*

In the course of our past development, a retarding element was formed. Its roots lie in serious defects of our institutions of socialist democracy and are directly linked to phenomena of the 1930s and 1940s that occurred in the conditions of Stalin's personality cult. Restructuring so far has proceeded slowly because the very same forces that blocked the implementation of the decisions of the 20th Congress of the CPSU (i.e. de-Stalinisation)... do not want changes and are now too impeding them... What is involved here is something that Marx, Engels and Lenin warned about but that was dropped in subsequent oversimplified interpretations of the construction of socialism. For the working class that has come to power, bureaucratism constitutes an enormous danger... Like Marx and Engels, Lenin also believed that as long as the division between the functions of management and execution existed, and there were managers and managed, there would be a danger of bureaucratism. But these Leninist ideas were condemned to oblivion by Stalin... Power was concentrated entirely in the hands of the administrative-bureaucratic apparatus he had created... The trials and repression of the 1930s were the completion of the formation of the Stalinist regime, which destroyed those who defended the system of management based upon Leninist ideas and traditions. The 20th Congress of the CPSU gave the bureaucracy a terrible scare, but afterwards active forces closed ranks and succeeded in stopping the process of purging our society of bureaucratism.[23]

At a roundtable discussion on the economic reform, writer G. Lisishkin was even blunter:

What does our society need most of all today? I think we have to change the division of labour that has crystallised, where one part of the population is narrowly specialised in the production of national wealth and the other - in disposing of it. What is this "other part"? The exceedingly large administrative apparatus at all levels of management and in all spheres, including not only the economy but in ideology, culture, science, leisure , health, etc... All this hangs around the neck of those who produce the wealth. For clarity's sake, in speaking of the unproductive sphere, I have in mind, of course, not the teacher, but those who hinder the teacher in teaching; not the doctor, but the superfluous bureaucrat of the Ministry of Health; not the artist or the actor, but the numerous ones "above them."[24]

"The question poses itself in the following manner," Gorbachev told the trade-Union Congress in February 1987, "either democratisation or social inertia and conservatism. There is no third way."[25] In thus intimately tying economic reform to democratisation, Gorbachev indeed appears to have concluded that if his ragime continues to lean upon the bureaucracy as its principal basis of power, the reform is doomed. But the only alternative basis that is at once interested in and capable of opposing the conservatism of the apparatus is the working class. This transformation of the social basis of the state is the only genuine meaning of democratisation. If it were to occur, it would amount to a revolution.

The terms "revolution" and "revolutionary changes" have indeed been used by Gorbachev and other official spokespersons to characterise the perestroika. A theoretical article in *Pravda* of March 13, 1987 entitled "The revolutionary Essence of the Renewal" analysed the "retarding mechanism that has come to exist" in Soviet society, and particularly since the October 1964 Central Committee plenum (that consecrated Khrushchev's fall and the appointment of Brezhnev, who used the forum to announce the policy of "respect for cadres"). Its author, G. Smirnov, seeks to lay bare the "substance of the contradictions that have come to a head and of the antitheses that are in contention... [in order to] grasp the revolutionary essence of what is transpiring." It turns out that the causes of the braking were "subjective", i.e. political, the conservative and anti-democratic policies of the post-1964 leadership, policies based on "weakness of will and incompetence, and in part on individual and group egoism. Departmental and localist tendencies, supported by bureaucratic and technocratic elements who were guided by their immediate interests, did great harm. Existing practices and existing forms and methods were to their liking."

So far so good. But then Smirnov attempts to square the circle:

Today's society does not have to have antagonistic classes whose elimination, and the destruction of whose ideology, would constitute an essential element of revolution.... The subtlety of this problem lies in the fact that we are not talking about a social and political revolution, in which the foundations of the old system's economic relations are destroyed and a fundamentally new political regime is established, expressing the interests of the victorious class... We are not talking about dismantling state power, but about further strengthening the socialist state of all the people... developing popular socialist self-government.

Admittedly, the Soviet system is a highly contradictory one, and the bureaucracy, as Trotsky and other Marxists have argued, is not a class in the historical sense of the term. But if one were to accept Smirnov's conclusions, why speak of revolution rather than reform?

Smirnov, publishing the authoritative central organ of the party, was expressing the current official position. For the same ambiguity is often characteristic of Gorbachev's own pronouncements on this theme. After going on for hours at the January plenum about the absolute necessity of democracy, he reassured the assembly (a gathering of the leading figures of the bureaucracy) that "it is not a question, of course, of any break whatsoever in our political system."[26] One can ask: was he speaking of the political system as it is officially portrayed or of the system as it really functions? For surely one cannot breath life into the former without destroying the latter?

Considering his past and the circumstances of his rise to power, it would require something of a leap of faith to accept Gorbachev as a revolutionary. Further we shall see that the democratisation over which he is presiding, so far at least, is ambiguous and limited, aimed at weakening bureaucratic resistance by mobilising controlled, popular pressure for reform and at reducing the dependence of managers on their bureaucratic superiors by allowing a certain amount of control from below. But not only will such a partial democratisation leave largely intact, if weakened, the power of the bureaucracy, it is also unlikely to create the necessary political commitment in the working class toward the economic reform. This is the other side of the link between economic reform and democratisation, and we therefore must now turn to this class, which constitutes today over 60% of the Soviet population.[27]

III

In the "totalitarian" vision of Soviet society, a vision that is undergoing change but that still predominates in the West, the workers are atomised and totally dominated by the absolute state. Their social situation is not very different to that of the workers in capitalist countries, except that they lack the political and union rights of Western workers that would allow them to defend themselves against exploitation. The reality, however, is much more complex. Political and union rights are indeed lacking in the Soviet Union (though one should be wary of exaggerating their practical significance for workers in the capitalist states). But Soviet workers are far from atomised, at least on the workshop level, where they possess certain rights and means that allow them to defend their most immediate material interests.[28] This is possi-

ble mainly thanks to certain key traits of the "command economy".

There is, first of all, full employment - or rather, the scarcity of labour (despite local pockets of surplus).[29] Article 40 of the 1977 constitution affirms the right of citizens to work.[30] However,the real force of this provision s difficult to assess directly because the "command economy" tends to maintain a chronic labour shortage. The sum of enterprise labour-force plans has regularly exceeded the labour-force plan for the entire economy (both before *and after* corrections). To the Soviet Manager, this extra labour is without cost. Rather, the opposite is true. It offers many advantages: management's incentive funds grow in proportion to the size of the wage fund, and the extra workers make it easier to meet plan targets in face of the irregular working of the material supply system, the resulting arythmic pace of work, and the periodic comandeering of the enterprise's workers by outside authorities to help out elsewhere in the economy, in agriculture, construction, vegetable and fruit depots, etc., the so-called "sponsor's jobs" (shefskie raboty).[31]

For related reasons, workers (but not office and technical personnel) enjoy de facto job security: although from a strictly legal point of view, they can be laid off for reasons of redundancy, in practice this almost never occurs.[32] (This has not been the case for political offences, but local conflicts between workers and management are not generally viewed as political by the ragime.) Over the years, workers have thus come to see job security as a right.[33]

This situation creates a balance of power within the enterprise favourable to the workers: management needs them; while they can easily find another job, where conditions will perhaps be more to their liking. Thus despite the absence of trade unions that would defend them, the workers can vote with their feet (change jobs) and they do so at a very high rate. Moreover, the informal use of strikes and other collective means of of pressure on the workshop level is quite frequent. especially in heavy industry.A second characteristic of the "command system" is the basis of common interest - or, more precisely, collusion - that it creates between workers and enterprise management in the fact of pressures from the central authorities. The Soviet enterprise is very different from the capitalist one, where management seeks to maximise profit by intensifying the exploitation of the labour orce, i.e. by keeping wages low and speeding up work. This is a management interest that workers under capitalism are able to verify every day of their working lives. Soviet workers, on the other hand, tend to have a much more ambivalent attitude toward management. While they do see management (and, to a lesser extent, technical personnel) as a group apart, this division is only partly based upon perceived conflicts of interest, i.e. discrimination in favour of managerial and technical personnel in the allocation of social benefits (e.g. subsidised vacations, apartments) and occasional arbitrary treatment of workers (e.g. by assignment to "less profitable" jobs, forced overtime) etc. But for the Soviet worker, at least as important a difference lies in the nature of their work, which is dirty, physically demanding and performed standing, while the "white shirts", as they are called, sit at their desks in clean offices, sipping their ever-present tea. Workers often express the view that "those people do not work".

Thus, while in their minds, "we" are the workers, and "they" - management, because of the collusion that regularly occurs, the workers' particular attitude to management seems to depend more on personal, subjective factors than on objective differences of social position. The question is more whether the director is a "good person": does he try to be fair to the workers and treat them as people? Unlike workers under capitalism, Soviet workers often say that management does not push them terribly hard. (It is readily admitted that one could, in fact, work much harder) and that it tries to get them the best wage in the circumstances (which are largely determined by the centre).

The collusion between workers and management in the "command economy" can take various forms. But its most striking manifestation is the "pripiska" - the "writing in" of fictitious work and of fictitious output. This serves the interests of both parties: the

worker, who earns more than is merited by his or her actual work; and the director, who fulfils and overfulfils the enterprise's plan targets. It is "only" the economy as a whole that loses. But then in the bureaucratic system that is solely the concern of the central authorities. Under Brezhnev, the pripiska could account for up to 40% of a workers' wage.[34]

In the absence of terror, abolished after Stalin's death, the result of these two traits of the "command economy" - labour shortage and worker-management collusion - is a constant upward pressure on wages, whose growth has borne little relationship to productivity rises, despite the insistence of the central authorities that wages follow increases in productivity. The situation is similar in relation to wage differentials, which are relatively small within the same industry, this too in the face of constant denunciations on the part of central authorities of "uravnilovka", levelling.

A third characteristic of the "command system" is the importance of the social wage, i.e. those goods and services that are provided with little or no relationship to the labour furnished: the heavily subsidised basic food items, rents, utilities, public transport, medical care, education, etc. According to a recent Soviet estimate, for each rouble earned as wages in 1964, 46 kopeks were distributed in the form of free or subsidised goods and services from public consumption funds. In 1970 the latter figure was 51 kopeks, in 1975 - 56 kopeks, in 1980 - 58 kopeks and in 1984 - 69 kopeks.[35] Even if the quality and quantity of these goods and services are often mediocre and their provision racked with corruption, they have nevertheless provided a margin of support for workers, the significance of which should not be underestimated.

In sum, under this system, the manager has neither the interest nor the means that the capitalist manager possesses, to ensure the "efficient" or "economic" utilisation of labour - in other words, to constantly intensify the exploitation of labour. The workers, on the other hand, possess informal means that allow them to defend their most immediate interests.

In explaining the urgent need for structural economic reform that would introduce indirect, economic means of planning and management and give broad autonomy to the enterprises, Gorbachev told the January plenum:

> The restriction of the economic rights of the enterprises and trusts has serious consequences. It has undermined the material basis of incentives, prevented the attainment of superior results, led to the decline of the economic and social activity of the population, to the decline of labour discipline.. There have been serious infractions of the socialist principle of distribution according to work... A mentality of dependence has developed. In people's consciousness, the psychology of levelling has taken root. The break in the link between the measure of labour and the measure of consumption not only distorts the attitude toward labour but leads also to the distortion of the principle of social justice - that is already a question of great social importance.[36]

The economic reform, if introduced in a more or less consistent manner, would thus transform the workers' situation. The enterprise directors, subject to the pressures of market forces, would be motivated to produce more efficiently. A principal means to this end would be to minimise on labour costs. Enterprise rights in setting wages would be significantly broadened. Wages would be tied much more closely to concrete results and to the performance of the enterprise, and wage differentials would widen accordingly.[37] Price subsidies and other aspects of the social wages would be drastically reduced relative to wage income. The chronic shortage of labour would end. There is also talk of the appearance of unemployment, though for the foreseeable future this would probably be only of an episodic and local nature. More significant would be the loss of job security. Many workers would be forced to retrain and move. A law soon to be adopted provides three months average national wage for workers forced to seek new employment.[38] Until now there has been no provision for the able-bodied unemployed.

In the press and scientific literature,these measures are often discussed under the rubrique of "social justice". Thus, for example, the general changes listed above were advocated in an article by the eminent sociologist, Tatyana Zaslavskaya, entitled "The Human Factor and Social Justice", published in the November 1986 issue of *Kommunist*, the theoretical journal of the C.P.S.U. In these discussions "social justice" tends to be given a particular meaning: if worker A produces better results than worker B, worker A's real income should be higher. This, so it is argued, is generally not the case at present.

In the Soviet setting it is not hard to understand the reasons behind the emphasis on strengthening the link between work and reward and on eliminating wage levelling. But it is, nevertheless, striking that other concerns usually implied in the term "social justice" are given little more than lip service: the motivation of work through the strengthening if social solidarity based upon real participation in decision making and the provision of a decent minimum for all, regardless of accidental circumstances (such as physical infirmity, family responsibilities, market conditions etc.) in which the worker may find her or himself. Thus, economists Rutgaizen and Shevnyakov begin their article "Distribution According to Labour": "Until recently the improvement of distributive policy was approached mainly from the viewpoint of solving urgent tasks of public welfare. Now we need to considerably strengthen its role in the intensification of production."[39] The entire article is devoted exclusively to developing the second sentence. The fact is that almost no serious attention is being paid to the development of social measures necessary to soften the economic and social blows that would inevitably be the immediate experience of a very large part of the population.

The point is not so much whether the envisaged reform is "anti-worker" or not (though one can certainly ask if there are not other variants of reform that would better correspond to the workers' aspirations.)[40] For the "command economy" is certainly not pro-worker, despite those, in both East and West, who do not hesitate to describe the Soviet workers under the present system as privileged.

As we have seen these "privileges" are in reality a defensive adaptation to a system that has deprived workers of their political rights. They are, in a certain sense, substitutes for political power, especially the right of control over the management of the nationalised economy, as well as for trade-union rights.

Viewed from this angle, the workers' mistrust of reform that, at least in the short run, would reduce them to the situation of workers under capitalism, but without giving any real guarantee that they will ultimately benefit from it, is understandable. And up until now, their experience of the factories under Gorbachev has been on the whole negative: tightening of discipline, intensification of labour, reduction of income and upwardly creeping prices - without significant improvement in the area of consumption.

In an interview to *Izvestiya*, the Director of the Institute of Sociological Research of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, V. Ivanov, generalising the the results of surveys conducted in 120 enterprises throughout the country, stated that, in contrast to the sweeping changes in the sphere of intellectual creation, little that is good has changed for workers in the sphere of material production. "Right now, the majority experience the restructuring only as growing pressure at work... The consumer market remains unchanged,and, moreover, last year, the [rate of] increase in the production of

consumer goods was lower than the rate for 1985."[41]

A woman worker in the ferro-concrete goods factory in the town of Kurgan described her conditions in the following terms: At work - a non-existent ventilation system, preferential treatment for administrators in the distribution of benefits, a trade-union committee that lies and has at heart interests other than those of the workers; outside - an apartment building whose roof leaks, whose elevator does not work, that is cold in winter, and public transport so overcrowded that it takes an hour and a half to make the four kilometer trip to work, and even so, one has to fight to squeeze in. "Excuse me," she concluded

> for writing what I think. I am not able to express all at once everything that is in my heart. We have been storing up insults for too long, while remaining silent. Now life has taken a new turn. We see changes for the better. We want to believe that there will be more. Election of administrators, state product acceptance - all this is correct and necessary. But I am afraid that behind the restructuring of production, the restructuring of everyday life may be forgotten. To be honest, for me the main thing is my home and my family, my children, I work for their sake. Believe me, the majority of women think the same. And if all around they are saying: "We are restructuring," and in the homes it remains cold as before, and if you cannot squeeze into the public transport, and cannot buy anything in the stores, then for us it turns out that there are no changes. That is what we think about. In a word, we not only want to work, but also to live differently than we have until now.[42]

Gorbachev is aware of this problem. The political aspect of the perestroika is aimed, in part, precisely at creating in the workers the political commitment necessary for the success of the reform. For example, Gorbachev explained that the election of enterprise directors by the workers is a necessary measure since:

> The well being of the worker will depend upon the abilities of the managers. The workers should, therefore, have real means of influencing the choice of director and controlling his activity.[43]

And more generally:

> We need the maximum democratism of the socialist system so that the individual feels himself master and creator... Only a person who feels himself master in his own house can put it in order.[44]

Other important reforms include the strengthening of the legal guarantees against the abuse of power by officials[45], and the introduction of a real secret ballot (as opposed to the current system, which renders it purely symbolic) and a choice among candidates nominated from below in Soviet elections.[46] There has been talk of empowering the Soviets vis-a-vis their executive committees, whom the former will genuinely elect and control.[47]There has also been a certain amount of encouragement to independent individual and collective in initiatives in economic and social life, including the appearance in some of the larger cities of clubs of various sorts that have a definitely political aspect, all, of course, formally in favour of the perestroika (but some, in particular the Pamyat (Memory) movement, actually of a Great-Russian chauvanist, proto-fascist character.) There is currently discussion of the creation of a national organisation of these clubs, which have taken up such varied issues as police brutality, protection of the environment, the economic reform, assistance to the elderly, the nomination of candidates in Soviet elections, labour rights, disarmament.

The regime has also shown a new toleration, and even given some encouragement, for popular struggles. Most of these, so far, have involved issues of protection of the environment and historical sites. These seem to have involved mainly intellectuals and student youth. One of these movements succeeded in stopping a project to divert the northern flowing Siberian rivers into the Caspian Sea. Another, which was marked by spontaneous mass demonstrations, failed to prevent the destruction by the Leningrad authorities of the Hotel Angleterre (where the poet Esensin committed suicide in the 1920s). Both were written up in the central press as struggles against bureaucratic narrowness and authoritarianism.[48] The most significant political protest so far, however, has been that of the Crimean Tartars, deported by Stalin after the war, whose struggle for the right to return at last seems to be approaching a critical point.[49]

Most spectacular, however, has been the unfettering of journalism and scientific and artistic work. This is the one area of Soviet life where changes have been radical and immediately visible to the ordinary citizen. Almost no aspect of Soviet society and history have remained untouched, including, for example, bureaucratic privilege, abuse of power, Great-Russian chauvanism, ethnic discrimination, drug abuse, prostitution, Afghanistan, corruption in the military, deterioration of the health system and the falsification of medical data, Stalin, Trotsky, the Purges. (One crucial problem that has so far received little attention is the situation of women).

While the significance of these political changes should not be underrated, especially in the Soviet context, socialist democracy still remains very much a promise, and measures to implement it are often vague and

For example, a collective letter from a group of citizens of Smolensk offered the following blunt evaluation of the experiments and proposed changes in elections to local Soviets: these "changes are so timid, that they cannot hope to solve the problem of the development of democracy and smashing the retarding mechanism."[50] Similarly,the draft law of the State Enterprise is very obscure on the actual powers of the worker collectives and their elected councils. Even the clearly stated right to elect managers is subject to "confirmation by the superior organ".[51] So far the experience with such elections has more often than not been the "parachuting" of candidates from above.[52] (Of course, even under existing laws, the workers have broad powers in the enterprise, but in practice very few workers know about them, much less have seen them exercised.) Nor did the congress of Trade Union in February 1987, despite the more frank and critical tenor of the speeches, create the impression that the trade unions were about to transform themselves into organisations for the defence of the workers' interests against management. The Komsomol Congress, held earlier this year, showed itself no more eager than the January Party Central Committee plenum to enter the path of internal democratisation.

More importantly, the political aspects of the perestroika, already introduced in the capital and about which one reads in the central press, are experienced very unevenly throughout the rest of the country. Outside of Moscow, implementation of political reform measures depends very much upon the interests and interpretations of the local authorities. In many areas the character of the mass media have only minimally changed, and the local press has been known to reprint articles from the central papers in altered form. As a result, for a large part of the population, even the political side of the perestroika is still often just so many words.

It remains to be seen, therefore, if the democratisation that Gorbachev is willing or capable of introducing will go far enough to win over a working class whose scepticism is based upon long decades of bureaucratic despotism. According to Ivanov of the Institute of Sociological Research, the "inertia and passivity" of the workers is one of the major factors holding back the restructuring. In a survey of workers of the Moscow Sanitary Equipment Factory, a third of the respondents stated that they would "wait it out until the restructuring became more clearly defined before deciding whether to adhere to it or not." Given the tremendous media and other official pressure in favour of the perestroika, it is safe to assume that these workers who expressed reservations were only the bravest of a larger group who feel

ambiguous.

the same way. In another survey of Kazakhstan enterprise, 40% of the respondents favoured maintaining the old wage system.[53]

For the near future, at least, the mass of workers will, on the whole, likely remain suspicious of, and even opposed to, the economic reform, even if this opposition is of a veiled and passive nature.

IV

Gorbachev's reform lacks a solid social base either in the bureaucracy or among the workers. The only social stratum in which there is significant enthusiasm for it is the intelligentsia. It has benefited in its professional activity the most from the liberalisation so far. Moreover, its relative material situation, which had declined since Stalin's death relative to that of the workers, is improving, albeit too slowly for many.[54]

But it would be an error to overestimate the independent political weight of this group. The intelligentsia alone is certainly no match for the bureaucracy. Moreover, a significant element of the intelligentsia has lived quite comfortably under the old system. Many other, despite their critical attitudes, fear too abrupt a change, which might, God forbid, draw the masses onto the political stage.

The historian, Stanislav Tyutyukin, told *Izvestiya* that

> in historical science - and, most likely, in science generally - the "fence-sitters" still predominate over the active champions of restructuring, although, of course, verbally everyone is for it... Some people have done a rather good job of adapting to the old conditions and and they are frightened by the openness (The emperor might turn out to be naked), by the prospect of more intensive, demanding work... Others, and there are very, very many of them, are waiting for authoritative explanations and directives, as they are not used to independent thought and action. A third group feels that, for the time being, it is better "not to stick one's neck out" - they could turn out to be fools. There are those most dissatisfied with the, as yet, comparatively modest material incentives for the new conditions of work and who are offended (and, in certain cases, rightly so) by the outcome of the recertification conducted last year of scientific personnel."

Tyutyukin added that in history the restructuring has involved a great deal of demagoguery and some settling of personal accounts, and the effects have not always been beneficial.[55] Conversations with artists indicate that the situation is not very different in the area of artistic creation.

V

The middle-term perspective for the Soviet Union is, in all probability one of political crisis, what Lenin called a "crisis of the top", i.e. within the bureaucratic ragime itself. For the opposition here is very strong, even if at present the reformers have the upper hand and all bureaucrats declare themselves for the renewal, while in practice many are merely biding their time and passively sabotaging.

The crisis will ripen at the moment it becomes possible to paint the perestroika as a failure. And that moment will come, and this only partly because the economic reform, judging by past Soviet and East European experience, will lack coherence. Although it is too early to judge, as it now appears, the old "command system" will be weakened, but not dismantled, and the new one foisted onto it. Thus, for example, in closing the public discussion in the press of the draft "Law of the State Enterprise", *Pravda* acknowledged that it

> only timidly opens the horizons on tomorrow; it obscurely shows the path for the creation of genuinely efficient methods of management. Many of our readers justly noted that different authors of the draft had at times contradictory views: some rush boldly ahead, while others try to hang on to the old and familiar, even though outdated.[56]

The Hungarian experience is relevant here. The current head of the Hungarian State Planning Commission spoke to the Soviet journalist of the nature of the crisis in his country a few years after the reform was first introduced:

> First of all the Czechoslovak events and the ideological campaign that followed caused some to fear accusations of wanting to take Hungary along the path proposed by Ota Sik.. Then the jump in world prices caused us great harm. The reform's opponents exploited the unfavourable situation and lifted u their heads... It is a human question - when people lose power.. (especially) those in the branch ministries and the party organs... The supporters of the reform also made mistakes... Theyconsidered that the old organs would begin working in a new way on their own. Those opposed to the reform, or unable to understand it, were left at their posts. So when the demagogic attacks began that minimised the the reform's successes and blew up the negative processes, the demagogues were not given a strong rebuff... Neither side could win and a sort of equilibrium that resulted in years of stagnation set in.[57]

It is worth remembering, in comparing Hungary and the Soviet Union, that the Soviet bureaucracy is at the centre of the empire and has no one to fall back on. In addition, unlike the Hungarian bureaucracy, which suffered a crushing blow in the 1956 revolution, its Soviet counterpart has known no similar defeats (at least since the purges) and is much older, Its potential opposition to reform is thus much greater.

More immediately, however, it is practically impossible to carry out profound structural reform and at the sane time attain high production targets. But this is what Gorbachev has promised.[58] His failure to deliver will be crucial ammunition for the opponents of the reform.

The outcome of this crisis, and of the entire reform period, will depend in the last analysis on the working class. If Gorbachev is going to introduce significant, irreversible change in his country, he will have to conclude a genuine, sincere alliance with the workers. That means the establishment of popular control over the economy, thoroughgoing democratisation. Only if he does that, can he hope to acquire sufficiently powerful and loyal political base to oppose the forces of stagnation and reaction. This was the experience of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The working class, initially suspicious and passive, became the most active and loyal defender of the renewal, once the reform was revised to give them real power.[59] The working class actually turned out to be more loyal to the renewal than the ragime itself, which quickly caved in to the Soviets after the invasion. On the other hand, if Gorbachev refuses this alliance, the likelihood is that he will be forced to abandon his reforms or he will be dismissed.

But even if that happens, one can still expect a worker mobilisation against the retrograde bureaucratic ragime that, as always, will try to make the workers bear the costs of its criminal mismanagement. Even if Soviet workers do sometimes speak of the Brezhnev era as their "golden age" (because it was easy to find common language with management), they have never been able to accustom themselves to the waste, the anarchy and the glaring irrationality that confronts them each day in the factory and that demoralises and sickens them. This situation, moreover, will have become all the more intolerable, as it is presently the object of systematic public denunciation by the ragime itself, which has promised "revolutionary reforms" to turn matters around.

But is there really a basis to expect a mobilisation of a working class whose passivity, especially when compared to the workers of Eastern Europe, dates back to the end of the Civil War? There are a number of factors that should be considered.

One of these is the sociological stabilisation of the Soviet working class during the 1960s and 1970s.[60] Young workers today were born in the city, not the village, and are themselves children of workers. They have deep roots in the urban working class culture and social milieu. They are better educated than their elders and have known neither the terror, the war, nor the severe material deprivation that were the lot of preceding generations.

Gorbachev's reform, moreover, aims at eliminating the basis for collusion between workers and management that has had such a corrupting influence on working class consciousness. (In this connection, one should also mention the relative success of the campaign against the consumption of alcohol, another corrupting influence.) There are already some signs of the emergence of a clearer class definition and seperation. According to Ivanov of the Sociological Research Institute:

> One cannot close one's eyes to the contradiction beginning to emerge between administrators and those who execute the work. This problem became increasingly clear with each new survey we did. The rigid division between "we" and "they" has serious consequences... It interesting that many of the administrators that we surveyed in the factories of Moscow's Sevastopol district complain of the workers' sloth and lack of initiative; while the rank-and-file workers speak of the administrators' idle talk, indifference and wait-and-see attitude to the restructuring.[61]

This was the impression of a Soviet emigre recently returned from a visit to the Soviet Union:

> Another thing which did not exist before, at least it seems to me: a completely clear division between "them" and "us". Of course, it did exist before, but not in a form so absolutely bitter, reaching the point of impotent hatred.[62]

The mobilisation will also be favoured by the space created by the "crisis at the top", which threatens to be more severe than anything since the 1920s. Even the present limited opening has allowed the emergence of a new stratum of democratic activists (partly in the club movement), for the time being, mostly socially marginal elements, including some ex-dissidents. Unlike the dissidents of the Brezhnev era,these people do not only not fear the "masses" but they actively seek to forge ties with them. If the

Labour Focus on EASTERN EUROPE

You may have noticed the slightly different typeface in this issue. If not, you will certainly have noticed its slightly (by about ten days or so) delayed appearance. Both are due to the same cause: our acquisition of new computer publishing equipment which has enabled us to drastically cut typesetting costs, but has also taken some time to master. The full benefits of this equipment should be felt with the next issue in the form of improved design , and, further into the future, perhaps more frequent appearance and/or more pages per issue.

We have been in existence for over ten years now. Given the slender resources at our disposal, this fact alone is a major achievement. But we are not content to merely survive: we mean to expand. The need for a serious, non-sectarian, socialist journal to provide analysis of developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and to provide a platform for dialogue and debate between the Western left and the democratic and socialist opposition in the "Second World", has never been greater. If *Labour Focus* didn't already exist, it would surely have to be invented now!

If our ambitious plans are to come to fruition, however, we do need your assistance. In particular, help is required in the following areas:

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it is amazing how many people still do not know about us! But we do not have the resources - yet, see below - for widespread advertising and promotion. Can you help arrange publicity for us in other publications (exchange ads, reviews) or organisations (newsletters, meetings)? If so, we would be pleased to hear from you.

FINANCE
the financial survival of the journal is reasonably secure in terms of income from sales and subscriptions just about covering production costs. But that leaves little for promotion and expansion, investment in equipment, or a desirable increase in expenditure on such items as travel for special correspondents and professional translations. You may have some money to spare for a one-off contribution to our budget, or you may be able to introduce us to potential benefactors sympathetic to our aims. Either way, every little bit helps!

workers rejected the dissidents, it was not because they could not understand, or had no sympathy for, the dissidents' criticisms of bureaucratic rule. Rather, they were put off by the latter's often condescending and disdainful attitude toward the common people and by the fact that they chose the Western media as their interlocutor. This was seen as "washing our dirty linen in public" and, therefore, unpatriotic.[63]

Thus, in a political crisis at the top, there will exist for the first time a stratum of experienced activists, one with ties to the working class and therefore capable of helping it to organise and to clarify its goals. These goals can only be popular control of the economy, socialist democracy. These have been the spontaneous aims of every worker mobilisation in the so-called socialist countries to date.

Gorbachev concluded his speech to the January plenum with the following words:

> We want to make our country into a highly developed society with the most advanced economy, with the broadest democracy; the most human and moral society, where the working person will feel himself master, where the future of his children will be assured, where he will have at his disposal all that is necessary for a complete and rich life... So that even the sceptics will be forced to say: Yes, socialism is a system that serves the well-being of the people, their social and economic interests, their spiritual development.[64]

This vision contrasts profoundly with the Brezhnevian discourse, which characterised the Soviet Union as "actually existing socialism", to warn people not to expect qualitative changes, since what already existed was the only possible socialism. But qualitative and permanent changes are conceivable in the Soviet Union only through an independent mobilisation of society, and of the working class foremost.

Footnotes

1. *Pravda*, Jan. 28 1987.
2. W. Brus, "Socialism - Feasible and Viable?" *New Left Review*, 153 Sept. Oct. 1985 p.59
3. Thus, for example, Soviet labour productivity, as a measure of overall economic efficiency is estimated at only 40% that of the US. MA Crosnier, "Le New Deal de Gorbatchev," *Le Courier de Pays de L'est*, March 1985, p.34, n.11. For a detailed description of the "command system" and its shortcomings see A. Nove *The Soviet Economic System*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1983. For a more analytical approach, see J. Komai, *The economics of Shortage*, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1980.
4. See the resolution of the June 1987 Central Committee Plenum, TASS, June 26, 1987.
5. G. Popov, "Fasad i kukhnya 'Velikoi' reformy," *EKO* No1, 1987 p.172.
6. Ibid., pp. 174-5
7. J. Komai, "The Hungarian Reform Process: Vision, Hopes and Reality," *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol.24 Dec. 1986, pp 1694.
8. Ibid., p. 1707
9. Ibid., pp. 1727, 1729-30.
10. "Pis'ma iz ministerstva," (Letters from the Ministry), *Izvestiya*, Dec 20, 1986. See also ibid., Dec 16-18
11. *New York Times*, June 27, 1987.
12. See D. Mandel, "Sur la nature de l'autoritarisme soviatique," in *Critiques socialistes*, Ottowa No1 Fall 1986, pp. 93-4.
13. See Z. Medvedev, *Andropov au pouvoir*, Paris Flammarion, especially chs 9 and 14.
14. For an analysis of thes role see J. Hough, *The Soviet Prefects*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, and A Yanov, *Detente after Brezhnev*, Berekely: IIS University of Cal., 1977, ch.2.
15. *Pravda*, Feb 23, 1987.
16. *Pravda*, Jan 28, 1987.17. 120 directors and chief specialists of major enterprises were asked to propose changes to the system of reporting. All were very critical of the existing system, but when it came down to proposing one to replace it, they restored virtually all of the current reporting procedures. "Real'nost' nadezhd" (The Reality of Hopes), *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987.
18. *Pravda*, Jan 29, 1987.
19. See Z and A Medvedev, *Krushchev: the Years in Power*, London: OUP, 1977, ch 13. Recently a Soviet analyst has also hinted at the role these reforms played in Krushchev's ousting. See G. Smimov, "Revolyutsionnaya sut' obnovleniya," (The Revolutionary Essence of the Renewal) Pravda Mar.13, 1987.
20. *Izvestiya*, Feb. 26, 1987.
21. *Moskovskaya pravda*, Feb.18, 1987.22. Ibid., Mar. 13, 1987.
23. "Rozgovory o perestroike," (Conversations about Restructuring), *Moskovskaya pravda*, May 7, 1987.
24. "Ekonomika na perepyt'e," (The Economy at a Crossroads), *Literaturayagazeta*, June 3, 1987, p.10.
25. *Izvestiya*, Feb. 26, 1987.
26. *Pravda*, Jan. 28, 1987.27. By "working class" I mean those men and women engaged in predominatly physical labour in manufacturing, transport and construction. It is obvious that broad elements of the intelligentsia (those occupying posts (or those aspiring to them) that require a post-secondary education) and of the employees in the service sector share many basic interests with these workers. It is also clear that the various strata that go to make up the "working class", as defined here, are not all cut of the same cloth. Nevertheless, shared basic objective conditions as well as the common historical experience of Soviet-type systems (most recently Poland 1980-1) tend to support the validity of this definition.
28. Much of what follows is based upon personal conversations and observations during trips to the Soviet Union. For an insightful analysis of the workers' situation inside the East European factory, see C. Sabel and D. Stark, "Planning, Politics and Shop-floor Power: Hidden Forms of of Bargaining in Soviet-imposed State-socialist Societies, " *Politics and Society*, Vol. 11, No4 1984 pp. 339-475. See also D. Mandel, "La crise du 'socilaisme raelement existant'," *Etudes internationales*, Quebec, vol.12 No2, June 1982, pp. 293-5.
29. For discussions of rural employment in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, see *Sotsialistecheskaya industriya*, 25-29 April, 1987 and *Sel'skaya Zhizn'*, April 24, 1987.
30. *Constitution of the USSR* Moscow, 1977.
31. See P. Hanson "The Serendipitous Soviet Achievement of Full Employment: Labour Shortage and Labour Hoarding in the Soviet Economy," in D. Lane, ed., *Labour and Emplyment in the USSR*, NY: NYU Press 1986, pp 83-111, and also VM Rutgaizen and Yu. E. Shevnyakov, "Raspredelenie po trudu" (Distribution According to Labour) *EKO* No3, 1987, pp 14-17.
32. See N. Lampert, "Job Security and the Law in the USSR," in Lane, *Labour and Employment in the USSR*.
33. Nove, *The Soviet Economic System*, p. 296. In Hungary, it is only last year that authorities began to close down some inefficient plants. Even though the displaced workers were offered jobs elsewhere and the political authorities met with them to explain the situation, the workers' dissatisfaction was great. (*New York Times*, Dec. 2, 1986, p.A-10)
34. From personal conversations. Rutgaizen and Shvnyakov cite the expert estimates of Pripiska amounting to 15-20% of reported work in individual transport and construction enterprises. See Rutgaizen and Shvnyakov, "Raspredelenie... ",p.20. However, they do not identify the period studied. In conversations, workers stated that pressures against pripiska increased significantly after Brezhnev's death.
35. Ibid., p.5.
36. *Pravda*, Jan. 28, 1987.
37. See U. Shcherbakov (Director of Wages Dept. of the USSR Stae Commission on Labour), "Kardinal'naya perestroika oplaty truda," (Fundamental Reform of Payment for Labour) *EKO*, No1, 1987, pp. 37-52.
38. Crosnier, "Le New Deal... " p.16. Layoffs have already begun to be reported in the press. See "Ekonomika na perepiet'e", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 3, 1987, p.10. TASS reported a first bankruptcy, a Leningrad construction firm, March 26, 1987.39. Ruzgaizen and Shevnyakov, "Raspredelenie..." p.3.
40. This very crucial issue, which has received relatively little attention, both East and West, is beyond the scope of this article. For an interesting - and very rare - defence of democratic but still basically direct central planning, see E. Mandel, "In Defence of Socialist Planning," *New Left Review*, No159, Sept.-Oct. 1986, pp.5-37.
41. "Real'nost' nadezhed," *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987. The press has also noted a continued decline in the quality of food products (Who spoiled our appetites?), *Izvestiya*, March 28, 1986.42. "My khotim zhit' inache" (We Want to Live Differently), Izvestiya, April 14, 1987.
43. *Pravda*, Jan. 28 1987.
44. Ibid.
45. See "Proshu zashchity u suda," (I Ask the Court for Protection) *Izvestiya*, April 9, 1987, and "Sila zakona" (The Force of the Law), *Moskovskaya pravda*, May 17, 1987.
46. "Kak nam vybirat?" (How Are We to Choose?), *Izvestiya*, Jan. 30. 1987; "Vybory po mnogmandatnym okruam," (Elections in Districts with Several Representatives), *Pravda*, Mar. 29, 1987.
47. "Demokratiya i perestroika," (Democracy and the perestroika), *Pravda*, Oct.31, 1986.
48. See "Komy urok?" (A Lesson for Whom?), *Izvestiya*, Mar. 27, 1987; "Urok ne vprok" (The Lesson Is in Vain), ibid., Apr. 9, 1987 and Apr. 25, 1987; and S. Zalygin, "Povorot - uroki odnoi diskussii," (The Turning - Lessons of a Great Discussion), *Novyi mir*, No1, 1987, pp. 118.
49. Vesti i SSSR, Munich, No14, 1987, pp.3-6.50. "Vybirat' no kak?" (To Elect, but How?), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 10 1987 p.1.
51. *Pravda*, Apr. 4, 1987.
52. *Izvestiya*, Feb. 8, 1987.
53. "Real'nost' nadezhd" *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987.
54. Interview with Zaslavskaya, *Arumenty i Fakty*, Mar. 2-7, 1987 pp.12.
55. "Uvazhenie k sobstvennoi istorii" (Respect for Our Own History), *Izvestiya*, May 3, 1987.
56. *Izvestiya*, Feb. 8 1987.
57. L.G. Pavel-Volin, "Chem privlekatelen i ot chego predosteregaet vengerskii opyt" (What is Attractive in the Hungarian Experience and about What does it Forwarn Us?) *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 10, 1987.
58. Crosier, Le New Deal..." p.6.
59. *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, Cambridge: CUP 1971, pp 280-3; and J. Rupnik, "La classe ouvriare en Tchacoslovaquie, *"Notes et atudes documentaires*, No 4511/12, pp. 180-1.
60. See Mandel, "La crise..." pp. 297-303.
61. "Real'nost' nadezhd," *Izvestiya*, May 5, 1987.
62. A. Sytcheva in *Russkaya mysl'*, No3645, Oct. 1986.
63. See Mandel, "La crise" p.301 and B. Gidwitz, "Labour Unrest in the Soviet Union," *Problems of Communism*, vol. 31, Nov.-Dec., 1982, pp. 37-8. Yurii Orlov, the Soviet Physicist and human rights activist recently allowed to emigrate, told an interviewer in October 1986 that the human rights "dissident" stage was more or less over. "The next stage will be that of activity within the working class, among the ordinary people." He referred to a movement analogous to the 19th century populist movement "to the people". (*Russkaya mysl'*, Paris, Oct.31, 1986.) See also the interview with A. Severoukhine, *Inprecor*, Paris, No240, Apr. 13, 1987, p.510.64. Pravda, Jan. 28, 1987.

HUNGARY

For many years, Hungary has been every Western commentator's favourite East European state for its "enlightened" regime and its "liberal" economic policies - the only Comecon state to be visited by Margaret Thatcher. The Hungarian model is also very influential among Gorbachev's economic advisers in the Soviet reform discussion. Yet for many Hungarians, Kadar's policies have been rapidly turning sour.

GUS FAGAN

KADAR'S LEGACY

Speaking to the Hungarian parliament on 16 September this year, Janos Kadar, Hungary's 76-year-old party leader now in his thirty-first year of power, spoke of serious economic mistakes for which he bore personal responsibility. That same day, the new Prime Minister, Karoly Grosz, called for greater "openness" in political and economic life and expressed his support for greater "socialist democracy". At a news conference later that same week Grosz suggested that everyone had the right to express different views and even a group of intellectuals who had presented a letter to parliament demanding freedom of the press and human rights merely saw the problem "in a different way". Parliament, suggested Grosz, could exercise a form of "control" over the government.

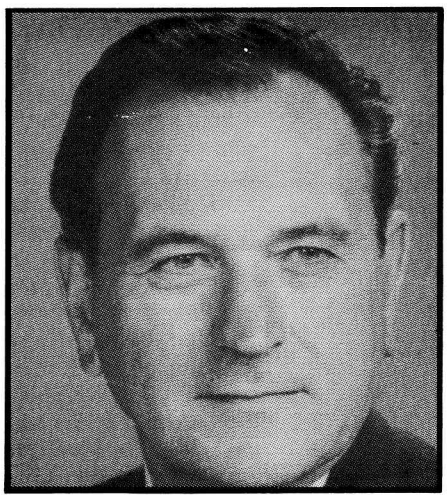
Dramatic change in Hungary? Not really, at least not in the manner suggested by the words. Kadar's "the buck stops here" speech was merely the introduction to a new and more severe programme of austerity. And the limits of Grosz' suggested parliamentary "control" were evident in the unanimous vote of support which parliament gave to these very unpopular measures. For what lies behind all the conciliatory speech-making, the confessions of error and the embracing of the Hungarian "glasnost" is the fact that Hungary is facing a severe economic crisis, one which threatens not only the much-heralded economic reform but the economic and political stability of the country.

The debt crisis

Goulash communism, as Miklos Haraszti described it, is in trouble. Sandor Gaspar, the head of the official trade unions and a member of the Politburo, has spoken of "the most serious situation for thirty years", i.e. the most serious since 1956. Balasz Botos, deputy director of the Institute for Industrial Research at the Hungarian Academy of Science, expressed the problem more dramatically: "Unless something decisive happens we are bankrupt and within at least two years we will have to reschedule our debts". It is in foreign trade and international debt that the crisis is looming.

Hungary has the highest per capita debt in the Eastern bloc. It stands at $9 billion this year and is rising rapidly. More than 75% of all Hungary's hard currency earnings from foreign export will be needed to pay the interest on the debt this year. Export earnings this year are expected to be around $4.6 billion[1]. The trade deficit has been worsening in recent years. In the first eight months of this years Hungary's balance of trade was in deficit by $511 million. Western economists attribute Hungary's deteriorating trade balance to worsening trade terms (especially in agriculture and energy, the main export earners) and to poor quality of goods[2]. While hard currency exports fell by almost 6% in the first ten months of 1968, hard currency imports rose by almost the same amount. Servicing the debt next year will cost Hungary $4 billion, equivalent to almost its entire export earnings from the current year. According to Grosz, the government is trying to avoid a rescheduling of debts at all costs. This will put enormous strains on the Hungarian economy and especially on the Hungarian working class who will have to bear the brunt of this burden.

Hungary's leaders are well aware of the importance of Poland's foreign debt in helping to spark off the crisis of 1980. The memories of 1956 are also never far away. This crisis also happens at a time when the leader is ageing and the struggle for succession has already begun. It is ironic that this crisis should occur at a time when, in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev appears to be starting down the Hungarian road.



New Hungarian Premier Karoly Grosz

Austerity measures

The austerity measures announced in September aim to freeze the foreign debt at about $12.5 billion by 1990. For the first time in the Eastern bloc, Hungarian workers from January next year will have to pay an income tax. The austerity programme also introduces a Value Added Tax (VAT) and a reform of company tax. Companies that are efficient and profitable will no longer have to pay such high taxes, Grosz promised. These taxes were used to subsidise inefficient companies. Whether the state allows many companies to go bankrupt remains to be seen. Income tax, VAT and price rises are to make up for this shortfall in company taxes. The consumer price index for next year is set to rise by at least 14% while workers' wages are planned to grow by not more than 4%. There will also be cuts in the health and education service. In his speech to parliament in September Kadar said that the state could no longer go on providing free education and health services while it lacked the necessary "financial cover". The "buck" for the "economic mistakes" may stop with Kadar, but the bill goes to the workers. The question is, will they be willing to pay?

Hungarian industry

Western observers have been very impressed with the Hungarian economy. Privately owned restaurants, forinth millionaires and satisfied shoppers strolling along Vaci utca have all been part of the familiar image. The private boutiques of Pest and Buda may add an air of Western-style consumer splendour to the city centre but they have little effect on the foreign trade statistics. The "private" economy is still only 5% of the total. The basic industrial structure has not changed fundamentally since the Stalinist days. Heavy industry dominates in spite of the fact that Hungary is very poor in natural resources. For the metal industry 100% of its iron ore has to be imported. It imports 80% of its oil.

But machinery forms only 6% of its exports to the West. Poor quality of goods and packaging is an increasing problem. According to Deputy Prime Minister, Joszef Marjai, the number of goods returned from capitalist markets because of shortcomings doubled in 1986[3].

The number of loss-making firms is growing rapidly in spite of the bankruptcy law of 1986 and the various measures to encourage efficiency. As Table 2 shows, there would be plenty of candidates for liquidation if the bankruptcy laws were strictly enforced. It would be politically impossible for the government to allow the really big firms to go bankrupt. Subsidies to those firms, however, are a major drain on the economy. Table 3 shows the subsidies budgeted to be paid to seven of the larger enterprises in 1987. As much as 44.5% of the state budget deficit and 50.4% of the total subsidies to enterprises can be accounted for by the support paid to just those seven firms[4].

In order to attract Western capital the Hungarian government in 1972 approved the formation of joint stock companies with foreign partners. In general the joint venture response has been disappointing. According to the Financial Times, "most Western companies still regard Hungary as a place to unload low technology or utilise cheap labour"[5]. A recent newcomer to the joint venture field is McDonald's which, in 1986, came to an agreement with the Babolna State Agricultural Company to set up five restaurants in Hungary. Hungarian hamburgers, last year voted the worst in Europe, should now improve[6].

The looming debt crisis, the structural problems, the problem of poor quality goods and the increasing foreign trade deficit all bring to the fore in a more pressing manner the central question for Hungarian economists and politicians: whither the reform?

The reform

This is nothing new. Indeed, since 1968, most Hungarians seem to be divided into two permanent camps, those that want more and those that want less of the reforms. Only a few oppositionists have gone beyond this issue to pose more radical questions and alternatives. According to Reszo Nyers, the now famous "father of the 1968 reform", Hungary has once again reached a decisive turning point. Now is the time, he argues in a recent article in the Hungarian economic weekly, Figyelo, for a thoroughgoing implementation of the reform. He identifies four main problems: the prevalence of large state monopolies; direct interference by the state; insufficient development of the market mechanism; and not enough power and responsibility in the hands of managers. The changes in company taxation announced in September, and the new promise that loss

COMECON: GROSS HARD CURRENCY DEBT

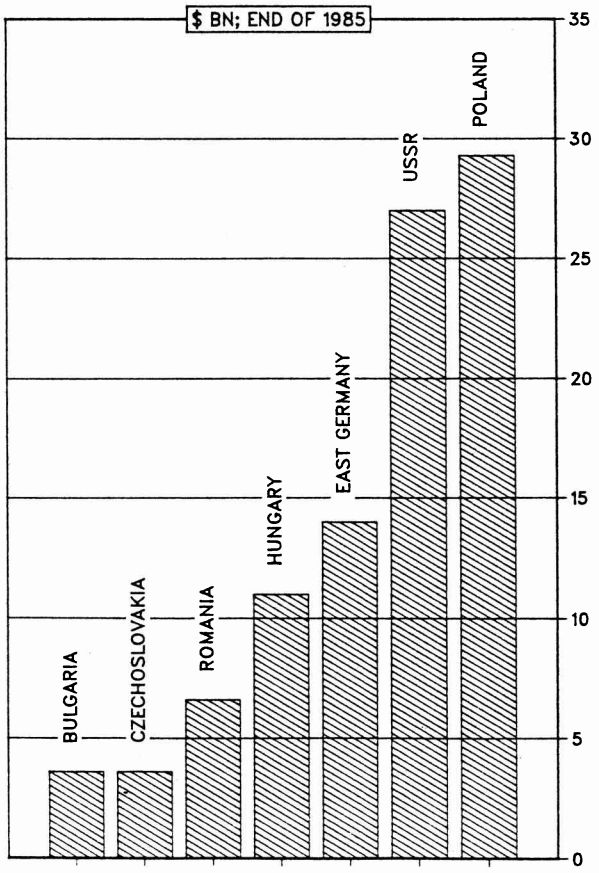


Table 1

making firms will be allowed to go bankrupt are a concession to the reformists. Whether the new Prime Minister, Karoly Grosz, has wholeheartedly embraced the reform programme is as yet unclear. It may be the case that only a strategy of full-speed ahead with the reforms will save Hungary from the impending catastrophe, as the reformists inside and outside the party argue. But the depth of the crisis itself also impells the state into greater interference in the economy, to rescue firms, soften price rises and head off the social unrest that might result from higher living costs and increasing unemployment.

Debate in the party

In the week in which the new austerity measures were announced, a group of 100 Hungarian intellectuals sent an "Open Letter" to parliament demanding a greater democratisation of economic and political life. They called for freedom of the press, a guarantee of human rights and parliamentary control over the government. Among the signatories were economists, journalists and writers, including party members. Indeed, the debate opened up in Hungary as a consequence of the worsening economic crisis is not primarily between the party and its opponents but within the party itself. At the beginning of this year, Imre Pozsgay, a member of the Central Committee and General Secretary of the People's Patriotic Front, presented a programme for reform called *Change and Reform* which was eventually published. Pozsgay called for a greater role for parliament, for a participation in power of social groups and for respect for the rule of law. The document was seen as a kind of reformist manifesto. Of course it did not question the "leading role of the party". Later in the year the Institute of Financial Studies at the Ministry of Finance produced a pamphlet on economic and political reform which prompted Janos Berencz, the Central Committee Secretary for Information, to attempt to suppress it. Recently 22 Hungarian journalists produced an eleven-page "Proposal for Media Reform" which called for non-interference of the party in the media and accused the party of feeding false information to the population about the depth of the economic crisis.

The demands for reform from within the party are clearly strong. It is also clear from what is publicly available so far that the demands are not limited to economic reform, greater marketisation and so on, but also approach, however cautiously, the question of political reform.

The party leadership

What has been the response of the party leadership? Kadar's speech in September of this year certainly didn't promise much. Reform of company tax law and changes in the structure of prices and taxes, however hard they may hit that part of the population that depends on state wages, fit well into the policy of gradualism that has characterised the Kadar leadership. Ministerial changes at the end of last year and during the summer did little to change the overall complexion of the government. The two most frequently mentioned contenders in the battle for succession are the new Prime Minister, the 57-year-old Karoly Grosz, and the Central Committee Secretary for Information, newly promoted to the Politburo, 57-year-old Janos Berecz. Berecz has a reputation as a dour ideologist (he is chairman of the Central Committe's agitation and propaganda committee) and is said to be behind moves to suppress the pro-reform pamphlet from the Institute of Financial Studies. Grosz, in his speech to parliament and in off-the-cuff interviews on Hungarian television, gives the impression of being fully behind the reforms and has criticised the leadership for its slowness in implementing the reforms and for the decline in living standards. Of course, both are ambitious politicians and how they respond to the economic crisis will depend on how it affects their chances in the struggle to succeed Kadar.

The working class

That many Hungarian workers have to hold a second, and sometimes a third job to make ends meet is common knowledge. Figures vary on the economic significance of this "second economy" but its physical and moral effects on the working class are seldom considered. "Nowhere else in the world do people have to work as much as they do here in Hungary", says Laszlo Szamuely of the nstitute of World Economy[7]. The cost to the workers' health is tremendous. According to statistics of the Hungarian Ministry of Health one out of every two Hungarian workers suffers from disturbance of sleep patterns. One in every three suffers from migraine and one in every six regularly takes sedatives. Hungary has the highest suicide rate in Europe (43.5 per 100,000) and it has the highest rate in Europe for deaths from heart disease between the age of 30 and 40. In the last twenty years life expectancy for men has gone down by three years[8].

Poverty has also provided a rather grim accompaniment to the reforms of the past twenty years. Roughly 20% of the Hungarian population live near to or below the poverty line. The massive rise in the consumer price index promised for next year (14%) will raise that figure even higher. For this sector of the population and for all those who depend on state wages the new austerity measures will Ido little to endear them to the economic reforms.

Outlook bleak

The Hungarian government's plans to peg the foreign debt at $12.5 billion by 1990 may be optimistic. A senior official at the National Planning Office, Akos Balassa, warned in September that the evaluation of the Hungarian economy by international bankers had "worsened markedly" and it had become increasingly difficult for Hungary to obtain fresh loans. The *Financial Times* reported Western bankers as estimating that Hungary may need up to $10 billion in new loans over the next four years at less favourable terms than the recent loans[9]. The *Economist* quarterly report on Hungary, the first in 1987, paints a grim picture: "With no sign of marked improvement in the economy and a 1986 hard currency current account deficit in the nature of $1.0 - 1.3 billion, Western observers must be wondering how much longer Hungary can continue to obtain favourable terms on its foreign borrowing... the dismal performance of the economy in both 1985 and 1986, and the lack of prospects for serious improvement in the future, should make it more difficult for Hungary to borrow either at favourable terms or in such large amounts in 1987"[10].

If those predictions turn out to be accurate, the Hungarian government faces some grim choices over the next few years. Although this choice may be presented in terms of for or against the further implementation of the reforms, the political significance is much wider than this. Further indebtedness accompanied by exposure of the economy to market forces, as the reformers call for, would place perhaps unbearable strains on the Hungarian workers who would increasingly have to pay the price of the regime's economic failure. Any retrenchment, such as occurred in the seventies, would provoke further unrest among the intellectuals and party members committed to the reforms. Most dangerous of all to uncork would be the bottle of political reforms, so this option is least likely. As Kadar's hand on the tiller begins to loosen, there are hard times ahead for the Hungarian ship of state.

Footnotes

1. *Financial Times*, 16 September 1987.
2. *Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Quarterly Economic Review of Hungary*, No.1, 1987, p.15.
3. ibid., p. 13.
4. ibid., p. 13.
5. *Financial Times*, 11 September 1987.
6. *EIU*, p. 19.
7. *Der Spiegel*, 31 August 1987.
8. Figures from *Der Spiegel*.
9. *Financial Times*, 15 September 1987.
10. *EIU*, p. 19.

Table 2: Loss making firms in Hungary

	Enterprises		Losses (Ft mn)	
	1980	1985	1980	1985
Industry	5	29	11	1,603
Construction	10	23	193	1,311
Transportation	-	3	-	309
Domestic trade	2	7	13	136
Agriculture	156	152	928	1,400
Other	4	4	13	15
Total	177	218	1,158	4,774

Table 3: Budgeted subsidies to large enterprises, 1987 (Ft bn)

Lenin Metallurgical Works	6.0
Ozd Metallurgical Company	4.0
Hungarian Aluminium Trust	2.0
Tungsram	3.0
Szeksszard Meat Industry Company	1.0
Hajdusag Sugar Refinery	1.0
Total	17.0

In Berlin and other towns and cities in the GDR, the independent peace and ecology movements have given rise to a broad "counter culture" with its own circuit of cultural and political events and its own, "unofficial" and uncensored media.

KEVIN BALL

"SPRING IN MOSCOW, BUT CLOUDS OVER BERLIN"

For many years, the GDR was among the most repressive of the East European states, with spaces for independent activity and critical debate virtually non-existent. As recently as in the 1970s, and early 80s, nonconformist writers like Biermann and many others were deprived of their East German citizenship, critical communists like Havemann and Bahro put under house arrest or jailed, and entire groups of peace activists, such as the one in Jena, forcibly disbanded and its leading members confronted with the choice between long years of imprisonment or expulsion to West Germany.

Toleration

It is now clear that things have changed, perhaps irrevocably. While the state security police (*Stasi*) continues to take a close professional interest in the activities of independent groups, and restrictions such as the ban on travel even within the communist bloc still apply to their members, a new regime of "repressive tolerance" has been established. In other words, while the nature of the East German state has not changed and conmditions in the GDR could not be described as socialist democracy by any stretch of the most fertile imagination, a certain level of dissent appears to be considered as tolerable, even "normal" by the authorities now, and goes unpunished as long as it can be contained within the margins of East German society and does not threaten to destabilise the existing order.

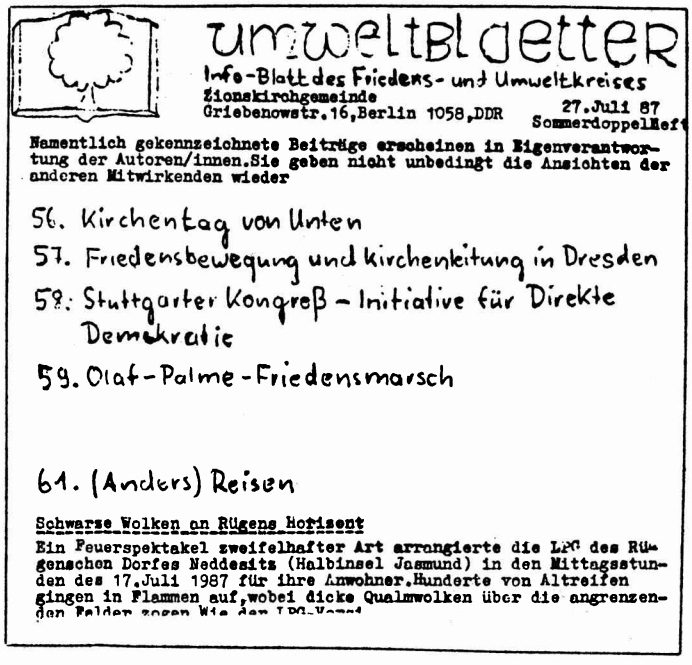
The reasons for this change of approach are threefold: firstly, crude repression gives the GDR a bad press in West Germany and is therefore undesirable at a time when the furtherance of good intra-German relations is a key element in the GDR's political and economic stability. Secondly, the protestant church - while small in comparison with the catholic church in Poland, for example - has become an increasingly important domestic factor in recent years and is holding a protective, albeit on occasion also restrictive, hand over these groups. Thirdly, however, experience has taught the regime that while it is possible to get rid of individuals and small groups at the cost of a great deal of bad publicity, these are quickly replaced by new ones. Short of returning to a policy of generalised and massive Stalinist terror, it is impossible to establish the kind of fear of the consequences which alone would be sufficient to dry out what has now become a broad social milieu with many similarities to the "alternative" and "green" scene in West Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe.

It is true that, for the time being at least, Honecker and the ruling SED have little to fear from these activities. There is no acute economic crisis in the GDR today, the party appears united around its leadership, and even the church is at pains to emphasise that it regards itself not as an oppositional force but as a "Church within socialism". Yet outburst of youth rebellion such as the recent clashes with the police at the Brandenburg Gate during a West Berlin rock concert close to the Wall (see *Labour Focus* 2/87, "Only Rock'n Roll?") indicate deeper currents of disaffection, and the economic prospects are by no means indisputably rosy. In addition, the wind of change from Moscow raises some political uncertainty over the post-Honecker future of the GDR.

Infrastructure

The emergence of a relatively stable and well-organised infrastructure of independent peace, human rights and ecology groups with their own meeting places and publications is therefore a significant political development with as yet unpredictable long-term consequences. The publications, in particular, reflect a lively political debate and the predominant left-green flavour of the groups supporting them.

The most established and most widely-read of these are the UMWELTBLATTER (Ecology News) and GRENZFALL (Borderline Case). The former, published by the ecology library at the Zion Church in East Berlin, concentrates, as the name suggests, on "green" themes but without ignoring wider political issues, whereas the latter, published by the "Peace and Human Rights Initiative", focussed more explicitly on political issues. Support for Solidarity in Poland and Charta 77 in Czechoslovakia, and more recently the Gorbachev reforms in the Soviet Union - one headline read: "Spring in Moscow - but democratic Berlin remains overcast" - have



umweltblaetter

Info-Blatt des Friedens- und Umweltkreises
Zionskirchgemeinde
Griebenowstr.16,Berlin 1058,DDR
27.Juli 87
SommerdoppelHeft

Namentlich gekennzeichnete Beiträge erscheinen in Eigenverantwortung der Autoren/innen.Sie geben nicht unbedingt die Ansichten der anderen Mitwirkenden wieder

56. Kirchentag von Unten
57. Friedensbewegung und Kirchenleitung in Dresden
58. Stuttgarter Kongreß - Initiative für Direkte Demokratie
59. Olaf-Palme-Friedensmarsch

61. (Anders) Reisen

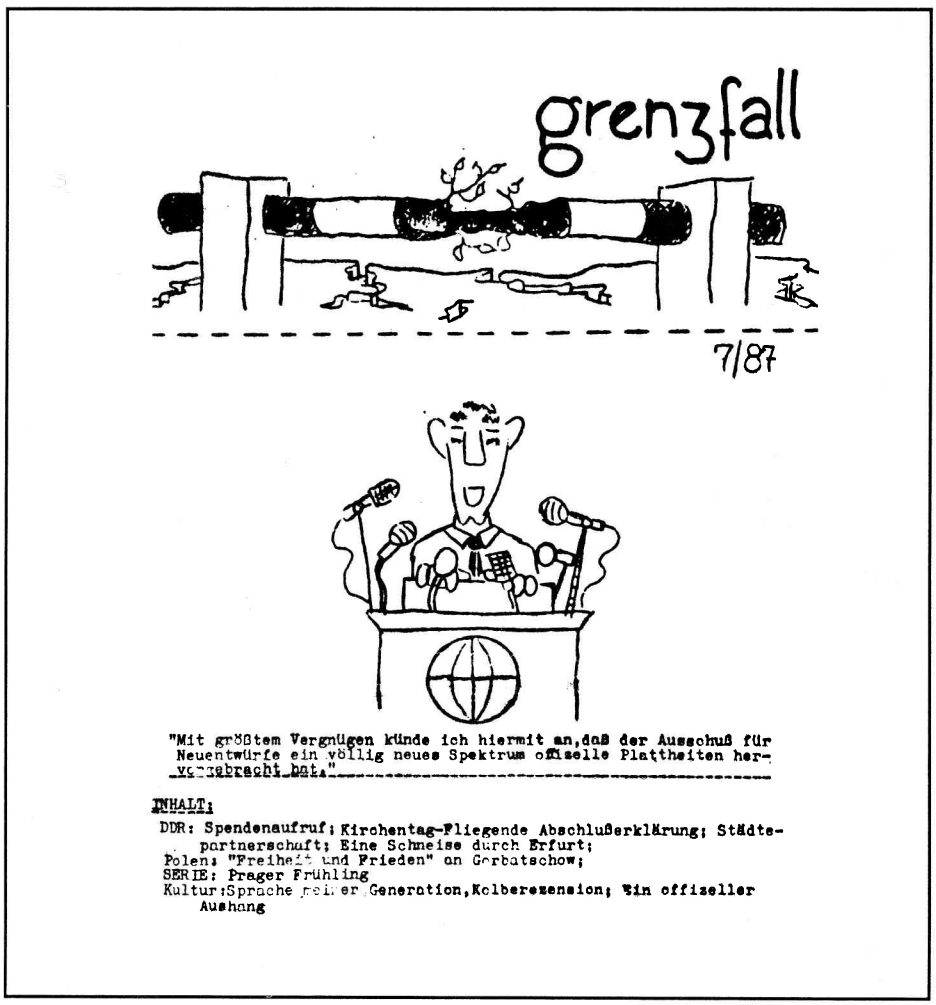
Schwarze Wolken on Rügens Horizont

Ein Feuerspektakel zweifelhafter Art arrangierte die LPG des Rügenschen Dorfes Neddesitz (Halbinsel Jasmund) in den Mittagsstunden des 17.Juli 1987 für ihre Anwohner.Hunderte von Altreifen gingen in Flammen auf,wobei dicke Qualmwolken über die angrenzenden Felder zogen Wie dem LPG-Vorsit

been openly articulated in its columns. Both publications have been in existence for over a year now, appearing regularly every month with a circulation of several hundreds. Duplicated from stencils, they are distributed informally at meetings and among friends.

Members of the "Peace and Human Rights Initiative" are also behind ARTIKEL 27 - FUR EINEN DEMOKRATISCHEN FRIEDEN, a more recent addition to the range of journals with longer articles and a photocopied rather than stencilled look. Its most recent issue (3/87) carries lengthy accounts of the Brandenburg Gate clashes and their aftermath. The FEUERMELDER (Fire Alarm) published by the peace group at the protestant church in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde, is marked "Only for internal church information", but declares its wide-ranging political concerns with a broad review of cultural, litterary and economic developments in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

For some time, the GRENZFALL in particular was considered a risky enterprise and publicity was avoided until the attitude of the state security could be gauged more accurately. Such initial fears have proved groundless and we are now able to give readers a small impression of the contents of these publications by printing a selection of smaller items from recent issues on these pages.



The Polish Peace Movement

The peace group Wolnosc i Pokoj, which not long ago held an internaional peace seminar in Warsaw (See Grenzfall No 6), is composed mainly of young people and students. It makes connections between the themes of human rights, peace and ecology. WiP is not an organisation but a nationwide movement which comes together to deal with specific issues. For this reason it has neither members nor a system of contributions.

State institutions describe WiP as "semi-legal". Its activists are under close surveillance, are not allowed to travel abroad and are occasionally arrested. However charges against Jan Rokita from Krakau had to be dropped on the 4th of March after the intervention of a lawyer. The examining authorities had to make a public apology to him and pay substantial damages to the Red Cross.

WiP undertakes demonstrations, leafletting and seminars and occasionally makes its presence felt at official demonstrations. A recent action was undertaken in support of two conscientious objectors, one Hungarian and one Polish. A large placard was hung from a block of flats and leaflets were scattered.

In Krakau, which is in an industrial area of Poland, WiP puts a great deal of emphasis on ecological questions. As in the case of the GDR the willingness of the population to assert their own needs in environmental issues is not very great. The workers prefer to move elsewhere rather than fight back.WiP activists perceive a reinvigoration of the Polish economy as being possible only through opening up to the Western market economy. They seem to see no potential problems with the International Monetary Fund. They see a solution to political problems through the participation in power of Polands existing social movements.

In parliamentary, ecological and economic questions they share many of the concepts of the West German Greens (the only Western group, by the way, which maintains any regular contact with Polish grass roots organisations). As a result of the limited opportunities to travel, contact with other East European neighbours (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR) is reduced to signatures under common appeals. A dialogue of issues has not yet taken place. There has been no visit from the GDR to the Krakau WiP people since 1981 either.

In discussion with them their central question proved to be about our conceptions in the German question. They are afraid of unified Germany, even as a demilitarised, neutral state, and any independent role it may take in Europe. Such questions, to which even GDR peace groups have paid scant attention so far, will play an important role in the dialogue with Polish grass roots organisations as well as with other East European neighbours.
(from UMWELTBLATTER, 1/9/87)

Soviet history

On the 10th July 1987 Michael Gorbachev embarked on a second stage of destalinisation at a meeting with Soviet journalists. "There can no longer be any blank areas in our history. I believe that we can never pardon or justify what happened in 1937 and 1938. Never."

So Glasnost is now also pertinent to the Soviet Unions past. In keeping with this the Kremlin archives are also now to be opened. Unpleasant truths will now have to be dealt with by Soviet society. Not only 9 of the 15 members of the Leninist council of people's commissars, the revolutionary government in other words, but also hundreds of thousands of less well known Soviet citizens fell victim to the firing squads of 1937/38.

The first stage of destalinisation was opened by Nikita Khruschev on the 25th Feb 1956 in his "secret speech" after the 20th party congress. Through his policy of enlightenment the process of coming to terms with Stalin's "personality cult" was begun. Beforehand 600 000 had already been rehabilitated, many of them only posthumously. After the Khruschev era the tide of destalinisation beagn to ebb. On the 100th birthday of Stalin in 1979 many publications seemed to point more to a rehabilitation of Stalin rather than the victims of his reign. As in Germany the discussion about the day to day reality of fascism continues so Soviet society will also now be forced to start a discussion about the structures of Stalin-

ism. Any comparison between Stalin and Hitler can also be discussed. As it is, for example, in the film "Repentance".
(from UMWELTBLATTER, 1/9/87)

CONTENTS OF MOST RECENT ISSUES

GRENZFALL 9/87:

Open letter: The reconstruction needs citizen's rights - Declaration on the work of the mass media - Travel - The Great Counter-reformer, by Adam Michnik - Interview with Jan Litynski - Documentation: the Soviet-German pact of 1939 - Series: Short chronology of the Prague Spring (III) - Report from the END conference.

FEUERMELDER September 1987:

10 Years of the peace group - a history Culture and literature in the USSR - Cooperative enterprises in the USSR - The GDR peace movement and South Africa.

ARTIKEL 27 3/87:

Eyewitness accounts of the events at the Brandenburg Gate - The demand for freedom and the calls for Gorbachev and Luxemburg at the Brandenburg Gate - Brief items - Culture - Open letter to Politburo member Hager.

UMWELTBLATTER 1st September 1987

There is no smog: the ecological situation in Halle - Perestroika and glasnost in the USSR - Poland: Wolnosc i Pokoj and the Ecology Club - Nuclear waste in Bartensleben - De-sulphurisation at the Schwarze Pumpe? - Alternative travel.

RADIO GLASNOST

THE geographical position of West Berlin right in the heart of the GDR has for many years made it an ideal outpost forf propaganda broadcasts by Western radio and television stations.

More recently, however, rather unusual messages have been received by East German listeners accustomed to Radio Free Berlin (SFB), Radio In the American Sector (RIAS) and similar voices of the Free World. Every first Monday of the month, for an hour in the early evening, voices with a familiar Thuringian or Saxon accent report on the activities of East German peace and ecology groups, discuss the situation of young people, women, workers and conscientious objectors, cover current affairs from an East European angle and, more generally, behave as though media freedom had broken out in the GDR. On top of all this, the sounds of officially unrecorded rock and punk bands from East Berlin, Leipzig and Halle alternate with the decidedly subversive songs of East Berlin balladeer Stephan Krawczyk and the Rolling Stones' "Street Fighting Man" (right after the Brandenburg Gate clashes, at that!), interspersed with information about cultural events, political discussion meetings and other useful items.

Radio Glasnost has arrived. Using the services and frequencies of one of the local independent radio stations that have sprung up in West Berlin after deregulation, it provides the independent scene in East Berlin and around with an easily accessible, uncensored and politically reliable source of information and discussion forum. Inspired by Roland Jahn, formerly of the Jena Peace Group, Radio Glasnost has already met with an enthusiastic - and critical - response from a growing number of regular listeners in the GDR.

POLAND

We continue our series documenting the various strands of political thought which have emerged from the Polish Solidarity experience with three articles by Leszek Nowak, whose positions differ greatly from those of our last author, Jadwiga Staniszkis. The first two articles were edited and translated by David Holland, the third - which first appeared in the Szczecin monthly *Obraz* (No.11/1984) - was translated by Franek Michalski and is reprinted from *Across Frontiers*, Summer-Fall 1987.

LESZEK NOWAK

A VOICE FROM THE LEFT

Introduction

Leszek Nowak, born in 1943, has a background in academic philosophy. His academic career, at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan, was interrupted, first by internment in the course of the suppression of Solidarity, in 1982, and then by his victimisation and sacking from his academic post in 1985. He is the author of a number of works of Marxist philosophy, of which only *The Structure of Idealisation* (Reidel 1980) is available in English.

Nowak published widely in the Solidarity press in 1980-81 and took part in the first and only national congress of Solidarity as an expert member of the thematic team, working on the question of the relationship of the Union to the state and the Party. He was a co-author of what became known as "The Fundamentalist Programme." The fragments presented here were prepared during the author's internment and published in underground magazines, such as *Observator Wielkopolski.*

Revolutionary Marxism is Nowak's theoretical reference point, but of a distinctly heretical brand. He remains a Marxist in the sense that he holds to the view that social movements have their origin in the material conflicts of interest between different social groups, layers and classes. For a Polish intellectual to take a critical distance from Polish nationalism and from the Church and retain a creative Marxist approach is extremely difficult, since Marxism in Poland is almost entirely confined to pseudo-intellectual regime apologetics. It is not surprising therefore, that Nowak's work betrays signs of this frustrated isolation in a polemical style and a certain abstractness.

Nowak's view is that the suppression of private property in Poland has not led to the suppression of social classes, but has in fact intensified class conflict. This conflict stems from the existence of a minority super-class, which controls not only the means of state coercion, but also ideological production in the form of control of the propaganda apparatus and the economy.

This "super-class" has never existed before in any socio-economic system and is uniquely regressive. By contrast,the subject "people class" is excluded from all influence on decision making. But its destiny is a revolutionary one: to bring "late socialism" (!) to a close. According to Nowak, the Church or Solidarity, will prove to be as much passing phenomena, to be brushed aside by the spontaneous movement of the masses ("Only the Masses Count" is the title of one of his collections), as the oppressive Party State structure (or "Ruling Trinity" in Nowak's jargon). So the time of conscious revolutionary elites, in Nowak's view, would seem to be over. Here there are echoes of C.L.R. James and the Johnson-Forest view of the future of the East European societies. Nowak however, does not profess Marxism. He lays claim to a "non-Marxist historical materialism."

The extracts here are unavoidably brief. Although they are a little dated, they express a view-point on the events of 1980-82 that has had some currency in the Polish Opposition and contrasts strongly with the pragmatic, compromise politics of its more well-known representatives, such as Adam Michnik, also featured in the last issue of *Labour Focus* The reflections in the second piece on the most desirable goal for the Polish authorities - some kind of incorporation of Solidarity - have acquired a new topicality with the recent attempts to draw Solidarity leaders into association with the planned referendum on new economic reforms and the associated massive price rises. It is possible that a chastened group of leaders might find such recognition more tempting now than they did in 1982, when such a subordinate, tamed association was so decisively rejected.

David Holland

WHAT SUITS THE RULING TRINITY BEST IS DARKNESS

We must recognise the sharp class struggle in our country." So our press tells us (For example W. Lebiedzinski in 'Marxism and the Practice of Socialist Construction,' *Materials for the Ist PUWP Wojewodship Ideological Conference in Gdansk, Special upplement to Glos Wybrzeze 23/9/82.* At first glance this seems absurd. What kind of "class struggle" is he talking about ? But it is not entirely absurd. This is an ideological slogan, which fulfills a definiteáand integral ideological function in tŁe language of the PUWP (Polish United Workers Party). And it's sufficiently important to be worth the trouble of "breaking the Party code" to discover what meaning there is in the "language of class struggle."

It is always worth understanding your enemy's language.The Party apparatus acted against the mass of the population and so it is indeed the enemy. Firstly, as the government it monopolises political decision-making, excluding any possibility of influence on decisions by those whom they affect. Then as owner, the Party

apparatus controls the factories, trade, the banks. It makes decisions about work and wages. It is thus the classic exploiter. The revenue of the state depends on the poverty of the worker.

Finally, it has a monopoly over the means of indoctrination. It imposes on the mass of the population a way of thinking that suits it through its control of television and the press, the schools and the universities. This is the enemy. The very same enemy that for centuries has oppressed the popular masses. Their political aspirations have always been stifled by the state; their lack of property has subjected them to poverty; and various intellectual elites have hoodwinked them. The people have always been subject to oppression on political, economic and spiritual fronts.

However, these three sources of oppression used to be distinct from one another. In capitalism, the state constitutes one force, big business a second and the means of mass communication a third. In socialism they are all concentrated together, in the hands of the triple ruling class - the Party apparatus.This is why the struggle of the oppressed class, the mass of workers, peasants and students, continues against the triple-rulers, who hide behind the secret police and the ZOMO.

The dates of 1956, 1968, 1976, 1970, 1980-81, which everyone recognises are of key significance for the history of People's Poland, are the dates of revolutionary manifestations of the people against the triple-rulers. And this struggle is the direct continuation of the slave revolts, peasant wars and workers' strikes, taking place in the new conditions of three-fold oppression. They are equally justified and equally necessary.

After all this, against this background, you can see what the ruling triple-class is doing, quite what it is saying to us. It is saying that this class, made up of those who dispose of all the means of domination, is the heir to the movement of the popular masses, whose aim is to build a classless society, and moreover that anyone who opposes it, stands on the reactionary side of the barricades and is a counter-revolutionary.

Really one can get completely lost in this confusion. The workers who are setting up trade union organisations, who are persecuted by the secret police and beaten up by the ZOMO, appear to be "counter-revolutionary reaction," opposed by "the people" from ministerial arm chairs ! And really this is the whole point. The point is that we should become confused. Darkness suits the ruling trinity best. They themselves appropriate the slogans of social justice, of class struggle and of social progress, in order to deny us the possibility of turning these sharpest instruments - ideas - against them.

They besmirch these slogans so effectively so that we will not have the nerve to use them and say to them clearly and expressly : you are the new ruling class. Behind the Marxist slogans you are hiding the biggest, most drastic class society. You are worse than the bourgeoisie, because at least it plays a positive economic role. But you, in your greedy lust for power, can only subject everything to yourselves, master everything and so spoil it. You are the classic reactionary social force, more reactionary than any earlier class - you are solely exploitative. Your time is finished. You can win one or two battles, but the war with the people, the war for social liberation - from you! - you must lose. History has turned against you.

All this we are unable to say to them, because they have appropriated the only language in which it can be said: the language of popular struggle for social liberation. They have very efficiently taken from us the tools of the struggle of ideas. And so we are only able to lecture them that a "wise government" rests on compromise, that it should be concerned about its credibility, or to ask for human rights to be respected. However, the only thing that will make oppressors yield is the strength of the mass of the people. And the only language that they fear is the language of the struggle of a people for liberation. So it must be taken back and turned against them. It must shed light on the obscurity in which they rule. Let it show who they really are.

Sept. 1982.

IF SOLIDARITY IS FORCED TO DISSOLVE - THAT'S O.K.

What are we to do about our union ? Many consider that this is a question of fundamental importance. I do not think that it is.

Anyone who thinks that the governing factor for the destinies of Polish society is whether Solidarity is able to function legally, sees the conflict that divides our society as one between two rival institutions - the PUWP (Polish United Workers' Party) and Solidarity. However the conflict runs much deeper. Since time immemorial the history of the societies of our civilization has been defined by the struggle between the exploited and the owners of large-scale property: under slavery, feudalism and capitalism. It really isthe case that the slave revolts, the peasant wars and the workers' strikes were the basic condition of progress. The peasant was already not merely the enslaved property of his lord, although he was tied to the land. The capitalist worker was a degree more free. According to Karl Marx he had to liberate himself completely in a new system. Things have turned out quite the opposite.

In capitalism the ownership and control of the means of production is separated from the state, which controls the means of coercion and also from the intellectual elites in control of the means of indoctrination. Socialism in real life, rather than on Marxist paper, consists above all in the fact that the controller of the means of coercion, controls also the economy and culture. In this fashion, the state, which used to control "only" the secret police and the prisons, now took in the factories and the universities too. The functions of ownership, government and doctrine, which were separate in the good old ownership class society, were now concentrated into the hands of one and the same minority: the ruling trinity.

The ascendany of the ruling trinity became so great that the mass of the population was reduced to a state of slavery. The solidarity between people, which is the only source of human strength, was broken down. People were transformed into a crowd of isolated units. The rebirth of that solidarity between people, which has persisted for thousands of years was needed, to make collective resistance possible. This happened in the risings in the Soviet concentration camps, and in the struggles in Poznan and Budapest, and put an end to a system dependent on global terror.

Thus socialism finds itself in its final phase, as is shown by the speeding up of the rhythm of the struggle between the masses and the ruling trinity. The acceleration of this rhythm is most evident in our country. In 1956 the Poznan explosion remained isolated. In 1970 the movement was regional. In 1980 it was a national movement. By virtue above all of its mass character, and owing too to the earlier activity of the democratic opposition, this led to the emergence of a universal popular organisation. This organisation, regardless of the intentions of leaders or advisers, was directed against the ruling-trinity class system, elaborated in

the coercive organisation disguised under the name of the "People's Republic".

Thus, just as the People's Republic is only an organised expression of the ruling trinity, misleadingly called the Party apparatus and ruling over us, so Solidarity is only an instrument of the people, organised in peaceful struggle to realise their aspirations. The people organised in our union produced dozens of bulletins, newspapers and magazines. They struggled for the independence of universities and of the profession of journalism. In this way they broke the ruling trinity's monopoly on the means of indoctrination. They established self-management organisations, so placing the factories in the hands of their rightful owners, working in them.

Thus they took away the ruling trinity's monopoly hold over the means of production. In a word, they carried on a practical, daily struggle to liquidate the ruling trinity. They did not aim to seize political power. They struggled by peaceful means to transform the ruling trinity into a normal government. In this way, the masses, endowed with ownership which was finally truly social, and with means of social communication, could in the future be in a position to control this government.

This time they were not successful. One reason was that our union was not sufficiently conscious of its true role in the overthrow of the ruling trinity. Too many people deluded themselves as to the character of the enemy, or succumbed to the socialist illusion that Pole could always come to terms with Pole. If they believed this its not surprising they got a bloody nose.

The 13th of December showed that the ruling-trinity Pole will always, if he is able, renew his efforts to enslave the subject Pole.The good times however will never come back. The ruling trinity class is no longer in a position to enslave the mass of the population. The only possibility of returning to long term social peace, is to unleash a wave of terror so great that people will once more lose their sense of solidarity.

This in fact is the real meaning of the "Hungarian model." It is not true that the Hungarian model is about economic reform. The Hungarian model is tens of thousands killed and many years of real martial law. It is a society shattered for a long period, after which the ruling trinity threw consumerist scraps to it. The Hungarian model is economic reform in a social cemetary.

Hitherto, our ruling trinity has not been able to produce such a funereal silence, not with its demoralised forces. There is no way of introducing terror, if you are dependent on soldiers who will allow the workers from the factories they have surrounded to completely escape from the ZOMO, or on a militia, which includes forty thousand people who want to establish a union independent of the Party, on a judiciary which will sometimes seek out any pretext to acquit the accused, or upon journalists who prefer civil death to becoming blind tools of the ruling trinity. The past sixteen months have been a powerful morality lesson, which has brought the executive services of the ruling trinity to the realisation that unthinking obedience simply does not pay. The masses' instrument - the union - effectively blunted the instruments of the ruling class.

Our union then is nothing more than an instrument of the masses in the struggle against the ruling trinity class system. And if we understand this we will grasp too the solution to the question of the fate of our union in the present situation.Thus the most convenient strategy for our uniformed ruling trinity can easily be reconstructed. It consists in drawing Solidarity into their system, in finding some very well known activists (best of all Lech Walesa himself), who could become the officers of a tame, subordinated Solidarity, preferably with the addition of a fine word like 'Worker's.'

We should not delude ourselves. A section of the membership of our union would willingly follow such an initiative. These would be the weaker ones, who from fear believe in the myth of a "Polish state," subject to the ruling trinity. The TV takes this up very effectively, exploiting fears, which are not shared by the Party apparatus, which is completely expert in hiding behind the magic of elevated words. As a result this could even lead to the temporary isolation of underground Solidarity, especially if the new pseudo-Solidarity handled workers' welfare well. The best solution for the ruling trinity therefore is to deal with a subordinated Solidarity, which would operate along with the military as a prop for the weakened system.

Eventually the pseudo-Solidarity could ubstitute for the military. Because the introduction of the army to the administration of the country is in the long term very damaging for the system. The army has to play the role of instrument of last resort for resolving social conflicts. It must therefore be isolated from the hierarchy of authority and from society. The introduction of sections of the military into the authority hierarchy means that some officers will undergo an accelerated social education, drawing them towards the masses, while others will enter into competition with civilians in the government.

As a result of both these factors the army will cease to be the blind tool of the ruling trinity. The longer it is constrained to use the army for the direct exercise of authority, the less it will be able to count on it when the new flood of struggle is unleashed by the popular masses. This sharp instrument will rust in its hands. That is why they will be eager to replace subordinate officers with subordinated activists, if a pseudo-Solidarity can produce social peace.

The great danger for the social struggle would if our union were to be frozen into the present disposition of forces. If this were to happen - and things are tending that way - a new "class union" would be established. (Another nice sounding term, desecrated by the potentates of the ruling trinity). The strength of the social resistance that manifested itself in the May and August outbreaks was so great that they cannot take over Solidarity in this way. That is to say, they are not in a position to utilise what is from their point of view the most efficient strategy of coercion concealed by falsehoods. We should be pleased if they dissolve Solidarity, because then and only then will it remain ours. And then we can use it better and more effectively as an instrument for popular struggle for social liberation, when the new August arrives.

Kwidzyn 28/9/82

LESSONS OF HUNGARY 1956

We do not seem to know very much about the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Well, yes, courageous though foolhardy Hungarians started an uprising. Caving in to public pressure, Nagy withdrew from the Warsaw Pact, which, in the end, provoked the Russians to aggression. What is missing in these banal statements is the main point: the way the masses organised.

That revolution proved - not for the first time nor for the last - that the masses have a natural talent for self-organisation. Already in the first days of the revolution, Hungary was covered with a network of workers' councils. Factory workers spontaneously elected their most trusted colleagues to run things in their name and in their

own best interests, because the structures of state power had collapsed. Councils ran the factories and the means of transport, they took care of the distribution of food, they published bulletins. They created a self-organised society outside the state. And they met with staunch rejection from every political party; both the Communist Party and the newly created ones that harked back to the parties disbanded during the years of dictatorship. And small wonder. The structure of a political party - whatever ideology allegedly guides it - is diametrically opposed to the structure of a self-government body or council. A party, after all, is a state in miniature: there is a leader, there is an apparatus based on top-down authority, there is a membership manipulated by professionals and unaware of the subtleties of the political game being played at the top of the hierarchy. A party is organised to seize state power, and it is precisely this that is the sole business of the apparatus. Ideology is only a clever screen concealing the lust for power. Councils or self-government bodies are the natural form of self-organisation of the masses; political parties are the natural form of organisation of rulers, real or potential. This became apparent after the Soviet aggression. All the non-Communist political parties disappeared without a trace. But workers' councils survived.They organised a general strike, one of the most successfully carried out in the history of the workers' movement. Some 3,000 Soviet tanks milled helplessly in the streets of Hungarian cities, but the factories did not produce anything. Buses and trams were at a standstill, trains did not run, and the telephone exchange and the Post Office passed messages only on instruction from self-government bodies. Kadar controlled his bureaucrats but no one else. The Soviet Army, 200,000 strong, was sufficient to quell the resistance of poorly-equipped partisans, but it was unable to restart public life in Hungary. This could be done only by self-government bodies.

Kadar meets with representatives of the self-government councils, and offers concessions in return for calling off the general strike. The self-government councils are virtually granted official recognition. In a speech Kadar declares: "Workers' self-government ought to be introduced in all factories and enterprises... Democratic elections will be guaranteed for all existing administrative bodies and revolutionary councils".

He also promises establishment of an independent newspaper - an organ of self-government. Self-government bodies negotiate with the Kadarist administration or directly with the Russians (dealing with, among other matters, the halting of deportations of prisoners to the USSR). Self-government activists receive passports from the Russian Army which allow them to travel about in the occupied country. And they develop unusual forms of activity. First, there forms a Budapest Central Workers' Council which organises life in the recently paralysed city. All of the most important decisions of the Council delegates can be recalled at any time by decision of the assembly. An all-Hungarian conference of representatives from self-governments is set up, which was to have elected a national council. It never came to be: Soviet tanks surrounded the building in which the conference was to take place. The authoritites decided to speak to the masses once again, by arresting the entire Central Workers' Council on 3 December 1956. In response there was a general strike: Hungary came to a standstill for a second time. December 15 the death penalty was instituted for "inciting to strike"; soon thereafter, sentences were carried out. Despite this, strikes continued halfway into January 1957, on occasion becoming pitched battles with "the forces of order". Finally, exhausted and half-starved, people gave in; the strikes began to come to an end. Kadar was still trying to co-opt the existing councils, if only they would accept the "leading role of the party". The Budapest Central Council disbanded itself in answer. "They don't offer us any other role besides carrying out government decrees. We cannot fulfill instructions which countermand our mandate... We are convinced that to continue in existence would mislead our members. That's why we are returning our mandate to the workers".

What arouses admiration, even in almost 30 years hindsight, is the enormous will to resist. Hungarian workers fought on a mass scale two months after - as it would seem - the military situation had been solved once and for all by Russian aggression. They were not daunted by the tens of thousands of dead, by the tens of thousands of deported, they were not paralysed with fear at the sight of the hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers. Under conditions that were hopeless from the military point of view, they not only managed to paralyse the government but to take over the management of public life. With Soviet tanks in the street, they continued the socialisation of property begun in the course of the revolution!

We must not evade difficult questions. So let us ask straight out: why was the resistance of the working masses in Poland, with due respect to the sacrifice of those who defended their mines and their shipyards, so much less after the imposition of martial law? And this even though Warsaw had not been bombed, tens of thousands of people had not been killed, and there had not even been any shooting in the streets. And yet the masses fairly quickly gave in to despair. Street demonstrations are not comparable to strikes, after all. Brave young people in the streets do not replace protest through strikes. How did it happen?

The attractive response that the resistance was less because the pressure was small compared with that exerted on the Hungarians, in other words, that if we had been invaded by Warsaw Pact armies then the resistance of the masses would have been as stroing if not stronger than in Hungary, I believe to be false. This explanation is based on nationalistically-tainted nonsense.

"In Poland, the greater the pressure, the stronger the resistance". This is nonsense, because it turns us into supermen, who do not back down even when faced with intercontinental missiles. The fact is that we retreated before ZOMO clubs. And we shall continue to be incapable of making a new social revolution as long as we continue to be frustrated by listening to such nonsense.

I think that if martial law had been imposed on Poland in 1980, or even in March 1981, then the response of Polish workers would have been no worse than that of the Hungarians. What happened, then, in the course of that year, that by December the masses failed to support Solidarity to the extent they had supported it in March?

Let us not evade difficult questions. Let us recall an event that took place, I believe, in September 1981. The printers working for the Gdansk Solidarity Region announced a strike because their demands for improved living conditions had not been met. A strike directed against their employer - Solidarity. In response, Solidarity leaders, the decision was taken by only a few of them, immediately sent a goon squad - there is no other word - armed with pipes and wrenches to "straighten things out". On the anniversary of its founding, the labour union broke a workers' strike by force.

No, I would not say that this was why the masses' support for Solidarity faltered. After all, hardly anyone knew about the affair. I want to say that in the course of its first year an essential change must have occurred in the internal structure of our union, since individuals in the union's leadership who were angered by this decision spoke about it only privately, since at the Gdansk Congress there were protests about the rising price of cigarettes, but no one cried out that the workers' union had violated the workers' right to strike, and since there was no uproar in the allegedly independent union press. I wrote frequently during the time of Solidarity about what it was that had changed and I do not want to repeat all those arguments: Solidarity had become progressively bureaucratised and, as the months rolled by, it became less a tool of the masses and more that of our non-Communist political elites; from a form of mass self-organisation, similar in its beginnings to the workers' councils in Hungary, it turned increasingly into a political party. And the people have an instinctive dislike of all political parties, understanding that whatever they might say of themselves, they will still do whatever lies in the interests of the party elites. It was in the interests of our political elites, not of the masses, to want a "union run by generals"; after all, it is easier to influence a "leader" or his entourage than a general assembly in a factory or a university. It was in the interest of our political elite, not of the masses, to propose "a government of national salvation" in the autumn of 1981. All this took place on the halcyon heights of macro-politics, which the masses knew little about, let alone could have beebn able to influence. They

realised only this: the union they had fought for was drifting away from them, was ceasing to be a form of struggle against the hated system. It was becoming an element in a remote game of politics that had crystallised in the country, more concerned with playing at negotiation and less witgh expressing their interests and aspirations. Is it any wonder, then, that when the authorities struck on 13 December 1981, the masses did not defend their union as they would have as recently as the previous March?

The basic lesson to come out of the Hungarian Revolution is as follows. A centralised labour union is not a form of struggle well-suited to use by the masses against a *political system*. Sooner or later such a union must become an alternative state within a state, capable only of negotiating with the state proper, doing it above the heads of the rank-and-file members and blocking the revolutionary potential of the masses so long as the authorities can continue to deal with it without having to contend with the full power of ordinary people. The only organisational form which these people are ready to defend to the death are councils or self-government bodies: a loose federation representing workers that, without negotiations or laws, simply take over the management of enterprises and administer them in accordance with the wishes of those who elected them; a federation that does not exert pressure on the government but simply ignores it, managing to rule on its own; a federation that does not get itself a leader but whose upper echelons only coordinate the actions of the lower echelons, those at the very bottom; a federation that doesn't care about press spokesmen but instead makes sure that each of the organisation's basic units has its own means of expressing opinion, wholly independent of the officials whose actions they must control; self-management bodies whose officers have an imperative mandate, meaning that they must implement the policy that their electorate wishes and who may be removed by the same electorate for not following that policy. Only this kind of organisation, as shown by the Hungarian Revolution as well as other revolutions, fully expresses the aspirations of the masses. And only then are the masses ready to defend it with a wholly unexpected determination, as did the Hungarian workers. Ours would have defended it quite as staunchly in December 1981 - if they had had something to defend. Let us make sure that they have it the next time around.

Public finance scandals, the near-bankruptcy of the economy, working-class unrest and national antagonisms have thrown Yugoslavia into a deep political turmoil which the leadership of the ruling LCY appears ill-equipped to lead the country out of.

MICHELE LEE

A NEW STAGE IN THE CRISIS

1987 will be remembered in Yugoslavia as the year in which the systemic character of the crisis was made so evident that any hope of a partial solution to the country's troubles has been buried for good. The debates over the distribution of power among the republics and provinces that have been taking place during the past year, in preparation for possible changes to the 1974 Constitution have been unable to conceal the true problem: the gravely eroded legitimacy of the party and state apparatus in the eyes of the population at large - and above all in the eyes of the working class[1].

The Yugoslav press highlighted this problem particularly in its detailed coverage of last April's strike by miners at Labin in north-west Croatia, the longest strike in Yugoslavia's post-war history. The miners stayed out for two months, braving a concerted barrage of hostility from managerial, trade-union and party/state functionaries at the regional level, struggling to provide their families with the bare necessities of life (attempts by Slovenian miners to collect aid were blocked). Deserted by their own Workers' Council, the Labin miners showed that self-organisation, discipline and solidarity could prevent the imposition of a quick solution at the workers' expense.

The very length of the strike and the unanimity of officialdom's attitude to it (though it did enjoy a largely sympathetic press coverage, with reporters clearly shocked by the conditions in which the miners were supposed to live and work and by the gulf between the miners and local functionaries) produced a new awareness of how inadequate the existing system of self-management is in representing and defending the interests of the self-managers. The system was challenged at all levels: the power of workers to decide on their own living and working conditions; investment policy; control by managers, officials and party or trade-union bodies. Always presented as expressing the socialist essence of the Yugoslav state, in the light of this strike self-management was shown to be its opposite: an instrument for exploiting the

Striking miners in Labin

workers. This is not, of course, to say that self-managemenmt could not be given a different content. But in an overall situation in which emphasis is increasingly laid on the right of the market to determine the mode of operation - and indeed viability - of an enterprise, the question is automatically posed as to whether the workers too should not be free to determine the price of their labour power in the market place, by their self-organisation and using all the traditional means of working-class struggle[2].

Srdja Vrcan, a sociologist of national repute, has expressed this plainly: "I must admit I have always been suspicious of the idea that true self-management, which ought to mean more than complete autonomy of economic management, can be harmonised with the treatment of workers as wage labour, as a commodity. It seems to me now [i.e. after the strike] that refusal to recognise the status of workers as labour-power is only too easily translated into denial of their right to influence independently the price of their labour".

Remoteness

The Labin miners' grievances were not just the abysmal level of their wages or the arduous conditions in which they lived and worked, they were also the fact that recent unprofitable investment by the republican government in two new pits had had to be paid for largely out of their own pockets. The unequal distribution of this burden was registered graphically by the media, which contrasted the comfortable life-style of the local functionaries with the dire poverty of the workers, one of whom told a reporter: "I work in a pit and live in a hovel". Many of the pit workers in fact come from Bosnia-Hersegovina and remain totally unintegrated into the local community based on tourism, where life is geared to making a quick buck out of this particular exchange with the wealthier West.

The workers had no difficulty in calculating the difference between their wages and the price that coal fetches on the market; but no republican politician came to explain to them how the surplus was being used. Energy prices are a matter of increasingly heated dispute between producers and consumers, and the final settlement is left to the powerful chamber of republics and provinces within the Federal Assembly. The remoteness of the republican government from the men who actually dig the coal was pointed up sharply by the strike.

The miners asked for members of the Federal Government to visit Labin, to see how they lived. In 1986, in fact, all Yugoslav wages had actually been allowed to rise, after a four-year decline; this was due to the thirteenth party congress which took place that year. In 1987, however, the rise of inflation to a new high of 120% was used a a pretext to claw back some of this gain (a reduction in the value of their work norms provided the immediate motive for the Labin miners to come out on strike) and the Federal Government imposed an all-round wage cut, except for administrative workers. Throughout the country, industrial workers responded by taking strike action, in the most extensive wave of strikes since the war.

The republican and federal governments chose to treat the strikes as problems of local self-management. What was particularly conspicuous was the total abstention of the party from any involvement at that level. Indeed, in the case of the Labin strike, the party quite simply attempted to break it, by calling upon its members to return to work, provoking many bitter comments on the new role of the party as strike-breaker. Threats to dismiss the striking miners prompted the press to quote Brecht: since the people have lost the confidence of the government, the people should be dismissed.

The Bosnian miners digging coal in Croatia did not feel that their problem had to do with their national origin, for they knew that the local bureaucracy had used similar methods to break the strike by the largely Croat dockworkers in the nearby port of Rijeka, following which all the strike leaders were sacked. The Labin miners ensured that the same thing would not happen to them by insisting on total democracy and the participation of all in the conduct of the strike. Similarly, in the second wave of strikes which took place over the summer, Serb and Albanian workers in Kosovo struck together, giving the lie to the daily propaganda in the Belgrade press about the supposedly unbridgeable ethnic tensions in the province.

The very durability of the Labin strike allowed a sustained press coverage that gave the Yugoslav public a glimpse into the organisation of power at the local level. But the enormous clout possessed by local government bodies was most graphically illustrated at the beginning of August, in the Macedonian village of Vevcani in the commune of Struga. The cause of the conflict that arose there was the decision of the commune authorities to tap into Vevcani's water system, installed by the village's own efforts, in order to supply a neighbouring cluster of new dachas built by Macedonian republican functionaries. Worried that there might not be enough water to irrigate their own fields, the villagers organised an effective civil resistance and prevented the new pipes from being laid on their land. The authorities responded by sending in a squad of specially trained riot police: armed with dogs and electric cattle prods, they attacked the inhabitants, including small children in their mothers' arms. Several ended up in hospital. While the pipes were then being laid, the youth of Vevcani organised a hunger strike. Thanks to the press in other republics, the enormity of what had happened at Vevcani was made public; and the intervention of a Slovene delegate to the Federal Assembly ensured that the Federal Government's responsibility could not be passed over in silence[3]. Slovene writers, moreover, attending the yearly poetry festival at Struga, used that forum to register their strong condemnation of the police brutality at Vevcani, and they were subsequently joined in this by their Serbian counterparts. But the total absence of any comparable protest from within Macedonia itself allowed the authorities there to brush off the writers' protest as merely an example of "intolerance towards the Macedonian nation" - a perfect vindication of the charge commonly heard among left intellectuals that the main purveyor of nationalism in Yugoslavia is the bureaucracy.

The vital need to stand up to the nationalism of one's own bureaucracy (which provided the main theme of the recent debate in these pages between the present author and the editors of *Praxis International*) was stressed in a recent interview carried by the Zagreb weekly *Danas* with Vladimir Milcin, one of the most talented young Macedonian theatrical directors. "For us in Macedonia, the present moment opens a perspective of decline into barbarism... we are gathering the fruit of a situation in which part of the intelligentsia has been richly rewarded for its silence and for its applause... part of the Macedonian intelligentsia has played the role of a shock-absorber, silencing possible incidents which could have caused it to raise its voice and ask: what are these politicians doing to our country? The economic situation is inevitably going to radicalise society, and the idyll - which has even been theorised - that the intelligentsia and the political establishment cannot come into conflict because of the external danger [i.e. to the nation] will no longer be able to function effectively".

Intellectuals and nationalism

Commenting on the silence of most Macedonian intellectuals following the police assault on the people of Vevcani, Milcin went on to say: "The intelligentsia believes that the repression is directed against concrete individuals and that it will stop there. But in fact repression never stops there, it is increasing, both in terms of the numbers affected by it and in terms of the range of measures employed. The more silence and collaboration there is, the more it gathers momentum. The silence of the Macedonian intellectuals in the case of Vevcani gives the political establishment, the bureaucracy, the right to use equally drastic measures against all protests, in all parts of Yugoslavia... Things went so far that people made statements saying that nobody had been injured there, that women had gone into hospital just to have a good time. Macedonian participants at the Struga peotry festival never contemplated boycotting it. They all agreed to the official blasphemy. The Macedonian intelligentsia agreed to applaud those who lie, persisting in their hope that all would end there, that they themselves would not fall victim... Something terribly important

happened there [i.e. in Vevcani]. It showed above all that the Macedonian bureaucracy can with impunity raise a truncheon against the Macedonian people. The people of Vevcani have taken away from it the right to speak on behalf of the Macedonian nation... We are in a situation in which everybody is trying to save their soul... I mean, all of us have to find individual answers, though the space for such expression is narrow. So we are left with the necessity of taking risks as individuals, reacting as individuals - which is more difficult and dangerous than speaking through a collective. But it seems that there is no other way".[4]Milcan's words do not merely show the specific predicament of a Macedonian intellectual, they also express a general need for Yugoslav intellectuals to transcend the confines of their national cultures and to end collaboration with republican and provincial bureaucracies that try to present their own interests as "national interests". A new awareness of Yugoslav solidarity in the face of a common threat of bureaucratic reaction has been one important contribution of this troubled year.

Instructive in this respect has been the reation to the political infighting in the Serbian party, which erupted into the open in dramatic fashion at the end of September. In an unprecedented move Dragisa Pavlovic, head of the Belgrade party - the largest party organisation in the country, numbering almost a quarter of a million members - was dismissed overnight. This followed a talk he held with the editors of the newspapers and journals published by the Politika publishing house, in which he criticised the nationalist tone that had been present in several of their organs (notably *Politika, Politika Ekspres, Duga* and *Intervju)* and emphasised the danger presented by the growth of Serb nationalism.

The difference between the two wings of the Serbian party - that led by republican Prime Minister Ivan Stambolic, to which Pavlovic belonged and whose principal organ in the recent period has been the weekly NIN; and that led by Serbian party leader Slobodan Milosevic, whose flagship in the past months has been the daily *Politika* - has most evidently centred round their different approaches to national problems in the autonomous province of Kosovo: should these be tackled with or without the collaboration of the Kosovo provincial leadership; consensually or by more drastic means, including reliance on Serb nationalism?

The print runs of the papers criticised by Pavlovic, which have increasingly been specialising in the exposure of supposed instances of Albanian nationalism and irredentism (often through the pens of discredited former policemen from the Rankovic era before 1966, who seem to be in possession of many secret party and administrative files), have been risingh vertiginously, making them a powerful and independent instrument of policy-making vis-a-vis

FROM DRAGISA PAVLOVIC' ADDRESS TO THE EDITORS OF THE "POLITIKA" PUBLISHING HOUSE

In implementing our policy of intra-national relations and equality among nations and nationalities, Communists and all progressive people in the Socialist Republic of Serbia today find themselves confronted by probably the most difficult, most complex and most demanding set of tasks in our post-war history. The situation in Kosovo, which is not improving with the necessary, the desirable or the seemingly lightly promised speed, is creating a dangerous atmosphere in which every word spoken against Serb nationalism is taken as surrender to Albanian separatist nationalism.

In this atmosphere, with signs of growing political tensions in evidence, it is easy to lose one's orientation. Positions become confused and the line which one should not cross grows indistinct. Resignation on the one side and passion or hysteria on the other have entrenched themselves in some circles and in some of our press organs. Resignation weakens our struggle, while passion and hysteria turn it against ourselves.

But Communists are Communists precisely because they do not yield to such moods; rather, they try to alter them. The question before us is not just: "Are we united in the struggle against Albanian nationalism and separatism?", but also: "Are we united in the conviction that this struggle should be waged only with a policy based on the programme and statutes of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, through existing institutions, on the basis of self-managing, democratic socialism?"

Anything which seeks to divert our struggle against Albanian nationalism along other paths is deeply anti-Serb, anti-Yugoslav and anti-democratic. Recently, in relation to Kosovo, in certain public organs and in public proclamations, we find people of openly anti-communist orientation, hiding behind a supposed popular contribution to implementing the conclusions of the Ninth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

The Serb nation has its historic obligation to solve the problem of Kosovo together with other nations and nationalities. It cannot and should not allow itself, by choosing wrong methods of struggle, to be pushed along a wild path, which would alter its historic character and freedom-loving tradition.

In the sharp struggle against Albanian separatism, which is yet to acquire an agreed and finalised programme and is being replaced by intemperate and inflammable words, our essential task is to safeguard the dignity of the Serb nation and historic charactracter.

Inflammable words bring nothing but fire. Intemperate words create only hysteria, which leads only to the abyss and solves nothing. The space for solving the Kosovo problem is now so narrow that the least mistake in our tactics, however well-intentioned it may be, can only lead to a tragic outcome for the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo, for the Serb people and for the stability of Yugoslavia.

The message that, given the situation in Kosovo, one must do everything and that even if mistakes are made they can be corrected later, is a classic example of pragmatic and bureaucratic logic, which may collect applause today but which breeds only trouble for tomorrow. The hands of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo are turning from applause into clenched fists, and this is the point beyond which only tragedy can follow. Who today needs blood, for what imagined solutions? This frieghtening word is being publicly spoken with increasing frequency, without political or legal response or even human concern at its presence.

What has to happen for us to understand that the trigger on the gun is pulled by intemperate and hysterical words spoken in public, sometimes just by a line in a newspaper? How many Albanian shop-windows must be broken before we become convinced that anti-Albanian sentiment is to be found not just in the warnings of the highest organs of the League of Communists, but also on our streets?

The struggle against Albanian nationalism is a task in the execution of which we cannot show the least hesitation or indulgence. Every such hesitation or induklgence carries a high price. However, if the struggle against Albanian nationalism is accompanied by intolerance and hatred towards the Albanian nationality, which is what we find in some of our press organs, then the struggle departs from socialist principles and comes close to nationalism itself. All those who today are ready to give up democratic and socialist principles, the road of self-management, in the name of some more effective solution to national problems and conflicts, is close to nationalism or deep within it - whatever protection he may find for his actions.

International relations can be ruined by force, but force cannot improve them or build them. Serb nationalism is no longer being fed just by what is happening in Kosovo, but also by all the loss of measure over Kosovo which is present in some of our press organs, in certain public utterances, in some institutions of our system.

As of today, we must criticise Serb nationalism on a daily basis. For the Serb nationalists are presenting themselves as the saviours of the Serb cause in Kosovo, when in fact they cannot solve a single social problem.

Kosovo.

When in early September a young Albanian recruit called Aziz Kelmendi went berserk in a barracks at the Serbian town of Paracin, killing five of his fellow soldiers (one Serb, one Croat, two Bosnian Moslems and one Slovene) and wounding a dozen more, the door was opened for an orgiastic assault in sections of the Belgrade press on the Albanian population as a whole, an assault which spilled over into actual (and inplaces seemingly coordinated) violence against Albanian citizens and their property in towns throughout Serbia (similar incidents also occurred in Macedonia and Montenegro). A dangerous link was emerging between militant nationalism and the "firm hand" ideology associated with Rankovic's period: the no-nonsense approach of the authorities at the time is increasingly being contrasted with the supposedly soft policy of today towards the Albanian population in Kosovo. Resurgent Serb nationalism was thus carrying in its wake the danger of a slide into undemocratic methods of political rule.

Neo-Stalinism

It seems likely that the differences between the two wings of the Serbian party in reality go well beyond the issue of Kosovo. Yet it is characteristic of the present climate that Kosovo was used as the pretext to settle differences. It did not matter that Pavlovic, in drawing attention to the danger of Serb nationalism, in fact said nothing contrary to the proclaimed position of the Yugoslav party; nor that the methods used to remove him and a number of his co-thinkers (including two leading functionaries of the Politika publishing house) were openly undemocratic; at the end of a two-day public debate, the Central Committe of the Serbian party voted overwhelmingly for the dismissals, in the full knowledge that this was only the first stage of an extensive purge. Only a handful of contrary votes were cast, while a small number of delegates mainly from the Provinces abstained.

Milosevic in reality won his massive victory on the promise of strong leadership, at a time of mounting economic difficulties and growing social unrest. The precarious state of the Serbian economy, which is officially admitted to be on the point of collapse, had produced a fear of popular demonstrations in a city which concentrates one quarter of the republic's industry. Yet Milosevic offered no alternative programme for solving either the national problem in Kosovo or the perilous state of the Serbian economy - nothing other than insistence on "unity" and unquestioning respect for the authority of the party leadership. He has now gained the reputation of being the country's leading neo-Stalinist (an honour once coveted by the Croatian politician Stipe Suvar).

The bulk of the Yugoslav press published in the north has registered its concern at events in Serbia with unwonted unanimity. The Slovene youth weekly *Mladina* denounced the particular marriage of nationalism and neo-Stalinism that brought Milosevic his victory. In more measured tones, the Zagreb weekly *Danas* expressed similar anxieties. In Belgrade, the weekly *NIN* - which had been among the first in the capital to draw attention to the increasingly unacceptable face of Serb nationalism, and whose editors will for that reason soon be replaced - has, together with *Danas*, provided the best coverage of the Serbian party's new course. Party leaders in other republics, however, have for their part remained silent. Public comment would have broken the accepted norm according to which politics within the different republics is the prerogative of the local party leadership. But more importantly, perhaps, they had nothing to say on the key nexus of problems: the state of the Serbian economy, the plight of its people and the fear of mass demonstrations in the country's capital city. Their silence points to the missing centre of the country's politics: the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and its "executive" officers. The authority once enjoyed by Tito was never transferred to the federal party organs and this provides an important clue to Yugoslavia's current political disarray.

It is not just Serbia's economy, of course, which is in a critical state. Most recently, the precarious economy of the entire country was given a massive jolt by the Agrokomerc affair. Agrokomerc, based at Velika Kladusa in north-west Bosnia, was until August of this year considered to be one of the most successful of Yugoslav enterprises, having grown from a small chicken farm to an agro-industrial unit employing 13,000 people. In August, however, it began to emerge that much of its phenomenal expansion was due to the extensive issuing of false promissary notes, costing unwitting creditors right across the country as much as $500 million. The rise and fall of Agrokomerc cannot be explained simply in terms of economic crime, though it was also that. In many ways it was Yugoslavia in miniature, cobining such elements as: shortage of liquidity, which is strangling the economy; desire to escape from backwardness and underdevelopment; integration of party chiefs, state functionaries and managers into a form of concentrated power specific to Yugoslavia's decentralised system; development as a springboard into prestiguous public offices; localised Stalinism, in the sense of both total control over economy and men and loyalty of a population lifted out of traditional backwardness; as well as a degree of national pride, in this case linked to Bosnia's two-million strong Moslem nation. One dramatic outcome of the affair was the resignation of Federal Vice-President Hamdija Pozderac - a tactic of damage-limitation so far as the high functionaries of Bosnia-Herzegovina were concerned.

The big holes which have emerged in the capital of many banks and enterprises (some of which could not pay their workers in August or September) have caused consternation throughout the country, and there has been a concentrated attempt to present Agrokomerc as the sole responsibility of the Bosnian republican government. Yet it is in fact clear that the responsibility for this greatest of post-war financial scandals rests with the entire Yugoslav political establishment, since Agrokomerc simply behaved in a manner which has become the norm in the country as a whole. "Fikret Abdic [director of Agrokomerc] made only one mistake: he overreached himself. Otherwise, Fikret's innovation is not new in the Yugoslav economy as a whole: whenever somebody issues a false promissory note, the officials of the commune, the republic or the Federation - depending on the importance of the Potemkin village in question - come to his aid and cover the losses. This time there is no power in Yugoslavia which could cover this up, quite simply because Abdic inscribed the whole of Yugoslavia on his promissory note. That Agrokomerc was a motley lie was known by all. Those who did not know - did not wish to know"[5].

The fall of Agrokomerc exposed a fundamental truth of the state and organisation of the Yugoslav economy. In his interview quoted above, Milcan spoke of the vista of barbarism opening up. For the population of Velika Kladusa, the bankruptcy of Agfrokomerc brought barbarism to their doorstep. As creditors sought to make good their losses, the entire regional economy simply closed down. The empty vaults of the local bank meant that 13,000 workers - as well as many others in the area - could not be paid. Shops were closed down since there were no goods in them: they simply had no money to buy stock. At the extensive Agrokomerc farms, millions of turkeys and chickens, left without food, have turned to cannibalism. Local rivers are full of dead birds, and the army has been called in to plough up a square mile of land to bury the victims. Sixty thousand inhabitants of Velika Kladusa and its surroundings have been suddenly abstracted from the rest of Yugoslavia and left in limbo. The republic's authorities did provide some money to prevent actual mass starvation, but they have not dared send any representative to talk to the local population. Nobody in the end has taken responsibility for remedying the catastrophe that has hit the area. Practically overnight, a large part of north-west Bosnia was thrown back into its age-old existence of poverty and unemployment. The traditional exodus of local men to the industrial centres of the north has been resumed.

The army

The rapid deterioration of the country's overall political and economic situation has been becoming a matter of public concern for the Yugoslav army. Back in 1981, the army

was called in to put down mass demonstrations in Kosovo; it made it clear that it did not like the task. Defence Minister Admiral Branko Mamula warned in September that Yugoslavia's friends abroad were becoming increasingly concerned about the fact that "our country's problems are growing in an unbridled manner, to a level which exceeds any possibility of control by the leadership". He criticised the League of Communists for remaining at the margins of social reality, devoid of the necessary unity on the basic question of how to tackle the crisis, and without any secure basis on which to reform and organise. The army has declined any autonomous role for itself in resolving the country's problems. Yet the possibility cannot be excluded that it may feel obliged to assume such a role, if only on behalf of the beleaguered party. There are certainly signs that the army is quietly beginning to organise the necessary infrastructure within civil society, in order to facilitate the imposition of law and order if and when it feels that this has become imperative.

One medium of the army's presence within civil society is provided by the peculiar structure of the Committees of General People's Defence and of Social Self-Protection. These were established by decision of the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978, when it had already become clear that the crisis was there to stay. Committees are formed at all enterprises, and at all levels of the state administration. They are composed of party and trade-union leaders, representatives of the state administration, army and police commanders. Thus they concentrate political and state power at the different levels of society, though it is not at all clear to whom they are responsible.

Last September, Nenad Bucin, a member of the Federal Conference of the Socialist Alliance, called for outright abolition of the committees on the grounds that they not only act outside the norms of the system, but are also deeply unconstitutional. "Not only does no organic link exist between them and the state, i.e. a self-managing and socio-political mechanism, but their members also feel themselves to be free, under no obligation to integrate themselves into or act within that system. With the exception of the highest party bodies, socio-political organisations [i.e. party and state organs] have practically ceased to follow and analyse in depth the political situation, not to speak of what should follow from such an analysis - e.g. action, influence, leadership... It is open to dispute whether these committees have assumed non-transferable rights and obligations; I personally believe that they have. The important thing is that the state, enterprise, political and other social bodies are no longer concerned with this delicate and important work"[6].

The editor of *Danas* commented pertinently: "The essential truth contained in this proposal [of Bucin's] begins to shine forth once one understands that a whole series of the 'black spots' in Yugoslavia's current reality are due not to any nefarious activities by some internal enemy, but to the suspension of the system's legitimate institutions and to the exercise of political power by way of silent prohibitions, through which an increasing number of political decisions are being taken with ever-decreasing responsibility". The bureaucracy is increasingly engaged in a kind of double-talk: what individual state and party leaders cannot do in public, because it may be unpopular or open to question, they do under a different hat through the Committees, which are not susceptible to outside control.

This question, together with others, is likely to be discussed at the forthcoming Party Conference, scheduled for 1988. Whether this conference will be productive remains to be seen.

Footnotes

1. Working-class membership of the LCY continues to decline. The Belgrade party lost 4,389 members during the last year, most of whom were workers. The rate at which workers are leaving the party trebled over the last year. There are also fewer peasants. The Belgrade youth organisation, moreover, registered a loss of 10,601 members during this period. *Politika*, 15 October 1987. Only in Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo has the party membership grown over the last year.
2. Since 1980, the number of strikes in Yugoslavia has been doubling every year. In the course of 1987 alone there were over 900 strikes, involving over 150,000 workers. Strikes increasingly involve whole enterprises: although most of them are aimed at higher wages, an ever larger number demand the replacement of managers and functionaries, and take up wider issues of economic policy and declining living standards.
3. Vika Potocnjak asked for the formation of a commission of enquiry to establish what happened in Vevcani. The assembly's Committee for Internal Policy decided against this; instead the commune of Struga and the Macedonia republican assembly will be asked for additional information. In the meantime, Vevcani holds daily public meetings.4. *Danas*, 22 September 1987. Milcan could have taken up the question of the Macedonian republic's attitude to wards its Albanian minority. In a letter to *Mladina* on 9 September 1987, a number of Albanian intellectuals drew attention to attempts by the Macedonian authorities to reduce educational opportunities for the Albanian population. It seems that the commune of Struga is once again taking a leading role here. "In recent years, the number of Albanian children attending secondary schools has been decreasing, as has the number of secondary school children receiving education in their own language. Silently, through a system of unspoken quotas, closure of Albanian classes and reallocation of Albanian children to mixed classes, educational discrimination is being practised against Albanians. In Skopje, where 3,000 children finished primary school, only 140 of them were enrolled in the erstwhile Albanian 'Zef Lush Merku' gymnasium. If this trend continues, we can expect that in the near future secondary school education in the Albanian language will practically disappear in Macedonia". Albanians form some 17% of the population of Macedonia.
5. Alexander Singer, in an interview in *NIN*, 4 October 1987.
6. *Danas*, 6 October 1987.

BOOK REVIEWS

Nayan Chanda
Brother Enemy: The War After the War
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
1986,$24.95

Gabriel Kolko
Anatomy of a War 1940-1975
Allen & Unwin 1986 £20.00

The publication in 1986 of Navan Chanda and Gabriel Kolko's books books on the wars in Indochina greatly enriched existing literature on the subject. *Brother Enemy* and *Anatomy of a War* differ in style. Nayan Chanda deals with a recent and as yet little-known period: from the revolutionary victories of 1975, through the Khmer/Vietnamese and Chinese/Vietnamese conflicts of 1978-1979, and up to the present time. Chanda, Indochina correspondent of the *Far Eastern Review* for many years, now working in Washington, combines in-depth knowledge of the region, the result of systematic historical research, and personal journalistic contact with the principal protagonists involved. Over the years he met Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians, Chinese, Russians and Americans, Thais, Malaysians, Singaporians and Indonesians.

Without sacrificing any information, and in a refreshingly simple narrative style, Chanda presents us with a remarkable analysis and striking synthesis of a particularly complex crisis.

Whilst *Brother Enemy* concentrates upon the last decade of Indochinese history , in *Anatomy of a War* , Gabriel Kolko analyses the thirty-five years leading up to the victory of the Communist forces in Vietnam, thirty-five years of war against the French and the Americans. Kolko has published many studies on United States history and foreign policy. Currently teaching at York University in Canada, during the sixties and seventies he fought against US political and military involvement in Indochina.This book is for him the outcome of research begun as long ago as 1964. Kolko sees himself as both rigorous researcher and committed thinker: "I have always felt there is no tension between my partisanship and a commitment to as objective and informed an assessment of reality as possible". In *Anatomy of a War* he is more concerned with the interpretation of events than with their presentation. The style is dense and perhaps rather difficult to read for those who know nothing of the subject. But the end result is an exciting and thought-provoking study.

Each of these two works - and this is probably what they most have in common - sets out to analyse how national, regional and international factors combined to shape the history of the Indonesian wars. They show to what extent it is useless to seek a simplistic "single cause" explanation of such events. Chanda and Kolko also mention the role played by conscious action against impersonal factors, in determining the course of modern history and revolution.

"Was the Third Indochina War inevitable?" asks Nayan Chanda in conclusion. "With the benefit of hindsight the answer is yes - and no". A certain level of tension between the erstwhile allies, Vietnam, Cambodia and China, was, he believes, inevitable. The end of colonial rule and of foreign intervention effectively left the field clear for the expression of the real contradictions between these countries. These contradictions, however, "in themselves did not ensure war".

In 1975 Hanoi was convinced that unity between the three Indochinese countries was strategically and economically vital, and that Vietnam had a leading role to play in the peninsula. The Vietnamese regime, primarily concerned with the task of internal reconstruction, was still hoping, however, for a lasting compromise with Pol Pot; it sought also to keep its international options open in respect of China and the West, refusing a unilateral alliance with the USSR. Peking had no wish to see either a strong revolutionary Vietnam or a united Indochina coming between itself and South East Asia. But it was troubled by the adventurism of its Cambodian ally and wanted to avoid open warfare.

One of the very great merit of Nayan Chanda's book is to show, step by step, how war gradually became inevitable as a final option. The West and China eventually left Hanoi no choice but to integrate with the Soviet bloc. Vietnam, thereupon, immediately became in the eyes of Peking a party to the conflict in which Peking was ranged against Moscow. In Cambodia, the Pol Pot faction having firmly established itself over its regional rivals, war on Vietnam's border areas was bound to intensify. In Washington unfavourable attitudes towards Brzezinski led to an alliance, at the crucial moment, between the United States and China against the USSR and Vietnam. The Hanoi-Moscow alliance itself became military. By the end of 1978 Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia and the "Chinese Lesson" against Vietnam had already been decided behind political closed doors.

After 1975, Indochina remained subject to strong international pressure, both from the imperialist bloc, and as a result of the inter-bureaucratic conflicts between China and the USSR. With the debilitating heritage of the past decades as a contributing factor, the historic memory of secular national differences between China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand was re-awakened, and cultural and ideological grounds for renewed military confrontation restored.

Nayan Chanda shows, with great clarity - and great discretion in interpretation - the chain of events and decisions which led to the war. He also traces the historical background of the conflict. However, he touches only incidentally upon the American war in Vietnam, nor does he pay much attention to the socio-economic structures and the nature of social influences in the area. Gabriel Kolko addresses himself in particular to these two questions.

For Kolko: "War profoundly transmutes human and social realities; it is the prism through which one must see the events in Vietnam from 1940 onward... War telescopes social times". Conversely: "War is not simply a conflict between armies; more and more it is a struggle between competing social systems, incorporating the political, economical and cultural institutions of all rivals". It is from this point of view that he looks at the main protagonists in the Second Indochinese War: the Vietnamese Communist movement, the Republic of (South) Vietnam and the American regime. It is rare to come across a study of Vietnam which so integrates analysis of the South Vietnamese regime from Diem o Thieu, and successive socio-economic changes in the different parts of the country, and which transcends the traditional division between specialists in Vietnamese Communism and experts in American foreign policy.

Kolko's book is a rare and brilliant synthesis. One regret, however: it seems to me that in his analysis he has not taken sufficient account of the factors involved in the formation of the Vietnamese Communist Party (He has also paid too little attention to studies carried out in France such as that of Daniel Henry on the Thirties in Saigon[1]. The history of the communist International deserves to be approached more systematically. Granted, his book pertains to the post-war period. Nevertheless it should not take as its starting point an analysis of the Vietnamese revolutionary movement as it had become, an analysis which at times seems to me too simple.

Kolko's book is nonetheless most stimulating. He addresses many of the controversial aspects of VCP history and of Washington policy. He presents fine analyses of fundamental questions such as the Vietnamese administration's management of the partially contradictory exigencies of a national united front policy on the one hand, and class mobilisation on the other. Nor does he shrink from often neglected themes such as that of revolutionary morale and its place in Vietnamese Communist thinking and capacity to survive.

The reader will discover plenty more food for thought in these two works. However, *Brother Enemy* and *Anatomy of a War*, in spite of all their qualities have not succeeded in fully answering one of the most important questions thrown up by contemporary Indochinese history: what might be the far-reaching effects of forty years of war, including ten years of absolutely unprecedented American military escalation, so well described by Kolko, upon an entire society?

Pierre Rousset

(1) Daniel Hemery: Revolutionnaires Vietnamiens et Pouvoir Colonial en Indochine, Maspero, Paris, 1975.

The Re-emergence of the Chinese Peasantry
Edited by Ashwani Saith
Croom Helm 1986

In the early 1980s changes in agricultural policy were seen as the major success in China's new modernisation programme. Agricultural output rose rapidly, peasant incomes rose even faster, and the swift reintroduction of market forces in the countryside seemed to bode well for Deng Xiaoping's strategy for the Chinese economy as a whole.

Recent events, however, particularly the drop in the grain harvest, cast doubts on how long the success can continue. In addition, research shows the enormous social cost of the new agricultural policies. Despite this, the substantial changes have yet to receive the attention they deserve from Chinese specialists.

Although any new book on the subject must therefore be welcomed, *The Re-emergence of the Chinese Peasantry* fails to satisfy. As a collection of eight essays on various aspects of the modernisation strategy aimed at the academic "development studies" market, it emphasises what has happened rather than analysing why. Given the structure of the book, this leads to a great deal of tedious repitition.The sources used by most of the contributors are also problematic. Although some have done field research, most material relies on the official Chinese press and is treated quite uncritically. While this is less serious than in Mao's time (by and large, the press no longer lies outright), it still limits the usefulness of the information.

That said, parts of the book are excellent. The editor's article on the impact of the single-child family policy, though containing little that is new, is comprehensive and well argued. It is particularly sharp on how the policy further lowered the status of rural women. Many people still seem to believe that the Chinese population limitation policy is being carried out in the interests of the Chinese masses, or that it will benefit them in the long run. They should read this article - between the lines of academic understatement, it leaves that misconception in ruins.

Stephan Feuchtwang's paper on the basic welfare system is similarly instructive. He shows how the growth of the household responsibility system, while initially leading to a marked decrease in absolute poverty, increasingly placed the cost of welfare on the extended family. Between 1978-81, he argues, public welfare funds in the communes grew only 2.43 per cent, less than the increase in the rural population. (Though not mentioned, it is also well below the rate of inflation for the period.) For those who have not benefited from the new policies, the safety net of state welfare provision is even less adequate than it was before.

By far the most interesting chapter is by Ajit Kumar Ghose who focuses on the labour process in the countryside before and after modernisation. The commune system is now attacked by the post-Mao leadership for failing to develop agricultural production. Ghose argues that this misses the point: "Communes and brigades were not units of agricultural production, they were primarily vehicles of accumulation and rural industrialisation". From the state's point of view, it thus made sense to pay everyone roughly the same: "Even modest inequalities in the distribution of incomes within a collective unit often meant unacceptable levels of poverty for a significant section of its members". In other words, because of the high rate of exploitation, what was left in the villages had to be shared out equally to avoid serious hunger.

Ghose is not attacking this state of affairs. On the contrary, one of his major criticisms is that the household esponsibility system reduced the rate of accumulation and thus reduced the state's ability to direct the economy. The article is one of the clearest expressions of the elitism of "development economics": "development" is something that is *done to* the masses. But it is precisely because he takes such a clear standpoint that he has much of interest to say to socialists about the problems facing the Chinese ruling class.

It is a pity that the rest of the book does not reach the same standards.

Charlie Hore

Ilang Heng and Judith Shapiro
Return to China: A survivor of the Cultural Revolution reports on China Today
Chatto & Windus 1986, £12.95

Liang Heng is now an American citizen, married to an American, Judith Shapiro. But when he first met her in the late seventies he was a student in Hunan, in central China, she a "foreign expert". They married with the special permission of Deng Xiaoping and left in 1981 to live in the United States. Liang believed he would never be allowed to return.

Liang Heng had become a Red Guard in 1966, at the age of 12, at the start of the Cultural Revolution. "I wore a red armband and denounced my primary school teachers; I travelled to mountains and cities all over China 'making revolution'. I wept with ecstasy when, with tens of thousands of others, I caught a glimpse of Chairman Mao in Beijing's Tiananmen Square". And like tens of thousands of others he too became a victim, his family torn apart, denounced as a counterrevolutionary.

After years in the countryside he returned to Changsa, in Hunan, and enrolled as a student. Two things changed his life. He was once more caught up in political turmoil - this time the student election movement - and he met and married Judith, an event which he believes saved him from a period in a labour camp for criticising the political system.

Once in the United States, he set down his experiences in his first book, also written jointly with Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution*. That, he assumed, was the end of it. But in 1984 a Chinese embassy official in Washington suggested he return and see for himself what changes the new reforms had brought about. His criticisms of the Cultural Revolution were no longer exceptional.

The return is recounted in this book, as a series of portraits of the people they met and the places they visited. It is in part a picture of China today (1985), but almost without exception the portraits hark back to that earlier period and the devastating effect it had on people's lives.

Many of the stories are poignant: a brief meeting between his own mother and father, who have not met for years. He had divorced her in an attempt to disassociate the family from the stigma of her supposed "rightist" views, only to fall victim himself during the cultural revolution - for "taking the capitalist road in news reporting".

Others are horrific: Mrs Yang, now runs a noodle shop, but as the widow of a general in the nationalist army she was called upon to make endless self-criticism during the Cultural Revolution. She was humiliated, forced into a life of extreme poverty, but she survived. Her teenage daughter didn't. Forced to denounce her mother, "crazy with hatred for me" says Mrs Yang, she committed suicide by drinking liquid pesticide nd jumping out of the window of the single room in which they lived.

It was just one death among thousands, denounced at the time as a counter-revolutionary suicide to escape punishment. Now, thankfully for Mrs Yang, the official judgement is that her daughter was persecuted to death. But, adds Liang Heng, the truth of what happened in Guiyang where she lived, and where so many died, will never be known. "It was unlikely that even the current regime would investigate the tragedy seriously, for too many of those now in power had children who had been Red Guard radicals".

Others have fared better, but their stories give us a more acute insight into China now. Wu Tianming, a film director spent time in prison during the Cultural Revolution. Now his films win awards and he has been elected head of the prestigious Xi'an Film Studio. But to turn it into the sort of studio which can make the sort of films he wants to make, free from the endless bureaucracy and red tape, he too has had to introduce "reforms" - the workers are now on a one-year contract system, all job security has gone.

Tao Sen, a student activist with Liang Heng wasn't so lucky - he did spend several years in a labour camp. Liang is surprised when he meets his old ally. His silk tie and black leather document case didn't fit the image of a man recently released from labour camp. But "Tao had come not to talk of human rights or democracy but to ask me to help him find foreign

connections and capital"! To resolve the problems of unemployment the government is actively encouraging individuals to set up in business - some like Tao running "briefcase companies" with no office or telephone, just fixing as and when they can.

Other radicals have changed, too. Some of the members of the Research Group on the Problems of China's Rural Development had horror stories to tell, but now their reports and experiments lay the basis for the changes taking place in rural China - the end of collectivisation and the reassertion of private enterprise and the free market. Their economic perspective leads them to their own political conclusions: "Democratic foundations have to be built gradually," says Chen Yitzi. "If you handed democracy to the Chinese people now, they wouldn't know what to do with it". They haven't yet been given the chance to find out.

This is a personal book about China. The horrors of the Cultural aRevolution are real, kept alive in people's memories, and now written down. The insights into the current political and economic changes are real, too, even if they appear in no particular context other than an assumption that what is happening is generally a good thing.

There are flashes of criticism. The authors record seeing posters with big red ticks on them, indicating that the execution of the person identified has been carried out. They also write about beggars being rounded up in Xi'an, put on board buses and driven back out to the countryside.

It is a real account, written by people who, by dint of their language and background, have had unusual access to the people who are living the changes now taking place in China. It isn't an analysis; it doesn't set out to be.

Margaret Renn

[redacted]

Michael Ignatieff
The Russian Album
Chatto & Windus 1987
£12.95

As the *Guardian* reviewer said, Ignatieff has a formidable portrait gallery of forebears. His great grandfather, who was with the allied army which restored the French monarchy in 1814, went on to assist the expansion of the Russian Empire in the Far East and eventually became Minister of the Interior. He was repressive, anti-semitic and represented the more reactionary wing of the Russian aristocracy. Paul, Michael's grandfather was a liberal monarchist, totally devoted to the Tsar but in favour of reform - not least to avoid the prospect of revolution. In 1915, he became Minister of Education under Nicholas II and attempted to introduce a school curriculum closer to the needs of agriculture and industry. The ineffectiveness of the Cabinet became apparent as the Russian army collapsed and power slipped away to military headquarters, to the Tsarina and the circles influenced by Rasputin. Ignatieff was marginalised, the last liberal at the heart of the regime, according to Michael, and eventually resigned. In 1917, the revolution swept the monarchy away for ever.

The story of the Ignatieff family before the revolution takes up half of the book. The second half deals with the revolution, the civil war and the family's exile - first to England and then to Canada where Michael was born. His grandfather's liberal past saved him from execution during the civil war when the Red Army occupied that part of the Ukraine to which the family had moved. When the Whites reoccupied the territory, the Ignatieffs were automatically assumed to be on the side of the angels. Their escape from Russia was organised by the English family governess, progress assisted by influential emigres and family friends.

In England, the family bought a farm in Sussex and Michael's father and his brothers were packed off to public school to learn to be English. They hated it. His grandfather, Paul, became increasingly involved in work for the Russian Red Cross raising money to send to the White armies still fighting in Siberia and then helping the flood of refugees as the civil war ended. Much of this work was done in Paris whilst his wife Natasha remained in Sussex. In 1928, Natasha and her youngest sons emigrated to Canada where the two eldest had already found employment. It wasn't until 1932 that her husband arrived from Paris to join them. The Russian sons became Canadians and married Canadian women. Michael, Paul and Natasha's granbdson and the author of this book was brought up to speak English. The book is in a very real sense an attempt to seek out his Russian roots.

Like all family histories, I am certain it is far more interesting for the author and his family than for everyone else. We all have Uncle Georges and Aunty Helens but we don't immortalise them in print. Of course, Michael Ignatieff's family is intrinsically more interesting than most families not just because of who they were but because of what they experienced and the events which they witnessed. Nevertheless, I didn't feel that reading the book told me very much about what it was really like to live through the monarchy, revolution and civil war. It is better on the exile. I have read better accounts but they were written by people who experienced the events. This is a reconstruction.

I find it difficult to identify with the characters who act out the main part of Ignatieff's story. They move from country house to Ministry or Embassy, from Russia in the summer to Cannes in the winter. The lower ranks of Russian society are a vague entity and we never meet them. Except the peasants. They turn up from time to time to sing in church or to congratulate their lords and masters at some family celebration or other. The aristorcracy even speak a different language - French. Not because some colonial power made them but because Russian was too vulgar for their elevated station.

Every time I read an account of this kind I feel that the Russian nobility got just what it deserved.

John Cawood

[redacted]

David Dyker (ed.)
The Soviet Union under Gorbachev: Prospects for Reform
Croom Helm 1987

Alfred Rosmer
Lenin's Moscow
Bookmarks 1987, £4.95

Finding out about Eastern Europe has always been a problem for those in the labour movement who reject both old time Stalinism and Western anti-communism. *Labour Focus* was set up to meet this need. Our masters, on the other hand, have never had any such difficulties. Apart from their directly paid servants they have always had any number of individuals and organisations trying to help and influence them. In the US this is big business, in Britain the scale is smaller but the same work goes on behind the scenes.

One of the most important sources of information for government and big business is the *Economist Intelligence Unit*. For £25 a time you can get its run down on Russia. If you have a further £40 (£80 for institutions) you can also get *Soviet Analyst*, a fortnightly, eight page commentary on the Soviet Union. Unlike the EIU which has a pretence of "objectivity" *Soviet Analyst* is a old war journal supported by such luminaries of the right as Robert Conquest and Brian Crozier.

To find out some of the thinking that goes into this insider dealing in information you could start with *The Soviet Union under Gorbachev: Prospects for Reform.* The book's main contributors are David Dyker, now contributing to the EIU reports and Ian Elliott, long time editor of

Soviet Analyst.

But the curious will find few surprises. Much of the book is a fairly tedious discussion of the details of changes proposed and already implemented. This leads the team of writers to conclude that "the real prospects for change ... remain deeply uncertain". This is partly because Gorbachev is going for smaller scale "continuous reform" rather than a big bang. It also arises more fundamentally from an unwillingness to radically confront the problems in the system which leads to reforms either being stillborn or generating new problems of their own. In the short term, says Dyker, this may not matter: "There is nothing in current Soviet (industrial) production trends to give Mr. Gorbachev a big fright". His main problems lie elsewhere: in agriculture, a worsening international economic position and the complications of dealing with the US and what Gorbachev himself has called the "bleeding wound" of Afghanistan.

In general terms this is probably correct as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. Russian workers hardly appear except to repeat the well-worn joke that Gorbachev might find himself mugged in an alcoholics revolt against his anti-drinks policy. Most readers of this journal will also find it hard to accept the implicit assumption that Soviet problems would disappear if it modelled itself on the West. One does not have to be pro-Soviet to sympathise here with the Soviet leadership's dilemma. They may well be trapped, as the authors say, by ideological blindness, but in a world of economic crisis they are also objectively caught between the frying pan and the fire.

In discussing how far reform can go, the New Economic Policy is often held up as a model. In strict economic terms it is difficult to see that a system designed for a backward agrarian economy has much to offer the modern Soviet Union. NEP's importance is more as a symbol of a more relaxed and freer past that can legitimise a similar future. But the real future will be nothing like the real NEP. That was built politically on a clash between the traditions of 1917 and the giddy pace of degeneration that led to Stalin's victory. Alfred Rosmer's *Lenin's Moscow* is part history and part autobiography. Re-published in the series Revolutionary Classics it may not quite be that but it remains a valuable and powerful account of the contradictions of the years 1920-1924.

Rather than bothering with the EIU, *Soviet Analyst* or the Dyker book, readers would be better advised to save their money for a subscription to *Labour Focus* and still have enough left over to buy Rosmer's splendid little book. There can be found a different past pointing to a different future in which neither Gorbachev nor the Western commentators will have a part to play.

Mike Haynes

BRIEFING

Spycatcher by Peter Wright (pub Viking Penguin) with its documentation of bugging, spying, counterspying, paranoia, betrayals and mindgames, reads just like a John Le Carre thriller. The author even describes a member of Intelligence personnel thought to be a model for le Carre's formidable character, Connie. Perhaps Le Carre is no fiction.

There are, however, two major differences between this book and a le Carre thriller. First John le Carre is a much better writer than Peter Wright (what does he mean when he says he dislikes someone who "had a face like a motor mechanic"?). Second le Carre questions the morality of the dealings he describes, detailing the painful human costs of the double dealings and the games-public-school-boys-play. No such scruples for Peter Wright who is so obsessed with the details of intelligence gathering he never pauses to question what the game is for.

Despite the enormous resources put into gathering information, nobody seems to know what to do with it once they have it. The spy high up in MI5 has not been publicly exposed and the left still organises depite the mountain of information gathered. The point seems to be to keep the ight-wing, London-based *Evening Standard* in copy.

Roger Hollis, the MI5 chief Wright alleges is a spy, spent his youth travelling in China, working for British and American Tobacco. Whilst there, he met the writer Agnes Smedley. An article in the *Sunday Times* two years ago which purported to summarise the evidence against Hollis mentioned the encounter between Hollis and Smedley. Smedley, it was implied, was a highly suspicious character probably working as a Comintern spy.

Agnes Smedley was, in fact, never even a member of the Communist Party. She grew up in a poor mining family in America, and became involved in the birth control movement. She also became closely associated with members of the Indian Nationalist movement abroad. Later she travelled in Europe and then China. She became China correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* and wrote extensively about events in China from the 1920s onwards.

China Correspondent (pub Pandora), first published by the Left Book Club under the title *Battle Hymn for China*, is the story of Agnes Smedley's journey through China in the thirties. It contains vivid descriptions of the people she met, both among the leadership of the Communist Party and among the peasantry and the workers. Her descriptions of women are particularly memorable. Smedley was a committed feminist. Her attempts to educate men often took unexpected forms such as teaching the leaders of the Red Army to square dance. Her sensitive observations of the role played by women in China's history are unique.

Not all history is written with such sensitivity for its major protagonists. A case in point is ***The Polish Way*** by Adam Zamoyski. One reviewer wrote that it ranked alongside Norman Davies' epic work on Poland. He must have been reading a different book. Certainly Zamoyski's book is beautifully produced: colourful cover, glossy pages, many illustrations, but immensely hard going. It details Polish history as a series of military events, kings and queens and cultural changes. The dizzying amount of detail is undoubtedly the result of years of hard work, but it is hard to admire. It is reminiscent of a sketch from an agitprop play I saw in the Sixties. The sketch depicted a quizmaster in an American-style panel game. His sixty-four thousand rdollar question was "Who built the Eiffel Tower?"

The answer? "The Workers".

Adam Zamoyski clearly does not know that answer. He knows a great deal about art and culture and has much of that knowledge into this book, but it grated. Perhaps Zamoyski, like Peter Wright, finds something objectionable about motor mechanics' faces. He evidently finds the doings of the cultured and the powerful much more interesting, to the extent he thinks that they built all the famous buildings in Poland.

A much more moving and readable insight into history comes in ***Solik***, an autobiography by K.S. Karol (Pluto Press). Most of the book is set in Russia, beginning during the Second World War. As the author tells, his position in the school he attended in Rostov-on-Don was unique. He came there from Lvov via Western Siberia. That account and the subsequent events are a vivid description of war and of how ideas and explanations are extracted from a mixture of experience, friendship and learning. It is a book which shows a great deal about the human, tender and humorous side of the way people behaved during the Cold War. A powerful antidote to the pompous cynicism of *Spycatcher*.

Anna Paczuska