

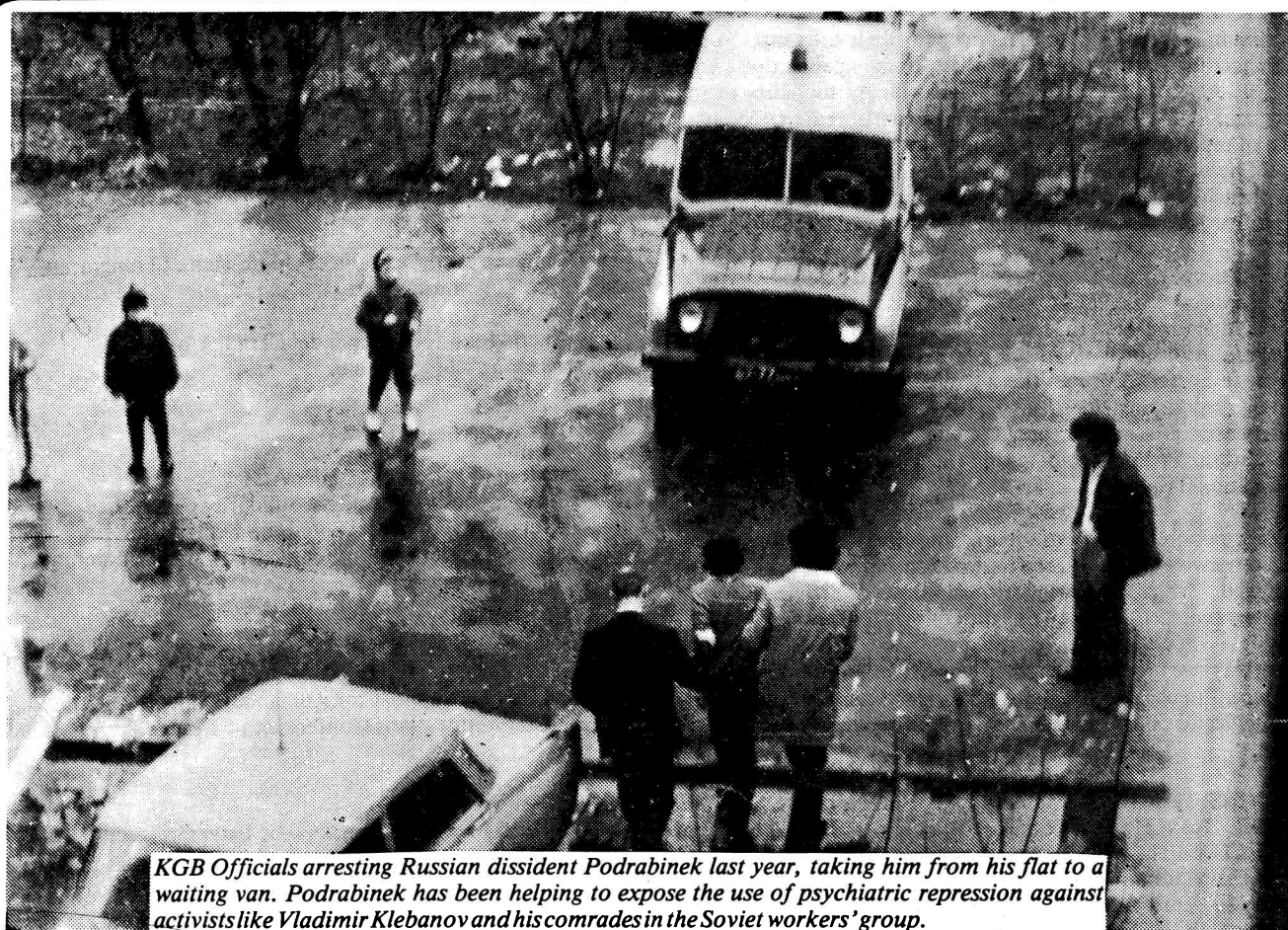
LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

Vol.2 No.1.

March — April 1978

30p.



KGB Officials arresting Russian dissident Podrabinek last year, taking him from his flat to a waiting van. Podrabinek has been helping to expose the use of psychiatric repression against activists like Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades in the Soviet workers' group.

WORKERS' OPPOSITION IN USSR

Socialist Defence Campaign Formed

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

STATEMENT OF AIMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

SPONSORS: Tariq Ali, Edmund Baluka, Vladimir Derer, Tamara Deutschèr, Ivan Hartel, Jan Kavan, Nicolas Krasso, Leonid Plyushch, Hillel Ticktin.

EDITORS: Vladimir Derer, Quintin Hoare, Jan Kavan, Oliver MacDonald, Anna Paczuska, Claude Vancour.

Managing Editor: Oliver MacDonald

Editorial Collective: Barbara Brown, Patrick Camiller, Ivan Hartel, Victor Haynes, Alix Holt, Mark Jackson, Helen Jamieson, Pawel Jankowski, Michele Lee, Anca Mihailescu, Günter Minnerup.

All correspondence to:

**LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE,
BOTTOM FLAT, 116 CAZENOVERD, LONDON N.16.**

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EDITORIAL

Now Concerted Defence Work Can Begin

For the first time, socialists throughout the Labour Movement have the possibility of engaging in organised defence activity with victims of repression in Eastern Europe. This is made possible by the formation of a broadly based "East European Solidarity Campaign" at a meeting in London on 6 March 1978.

The founding meeting of the campaign was attended by members of the Labour Party, the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers' Party, the International Marxist Group and independent socialists from both Britain and Eastern Europe.

The founding members of the campaign hammered out a detailed statement of aims embodying four basic principles. First, the British Labour Movement should defend all those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union suffering repression for attempting to exercise basic democratic and working-class rights. Only through implementation of this principle can the aspirations of the mass of working people in Eastern Europe be worked out and struggled for. Secondly, the task of the campaign is to engage in labour movement action of the broadest possible sort for the release of political prisoners and for an end to other forms of repression: it is not to work out a theoretical position on the nature of these states. Debates on such questions can be carried out on other platforms. Thirdly, the campaign should be a socialist campaign trying to generate labour movement action. It should have no truck with the enemies of the labour movement who attempt to use repression in Eastern Europe as a weapon against the working class and socialism. Finally, the job of the campaign is not to try to tell oppositionists in Eastern Europe what programme and strategy they should adopt. Instead, the rights defended by the campaign are those which would enable socialists and workers in these countries to sort out what needs to be done to bring the situation there into line with the interests of working people.

A campaign of this kind has long been needed. The development of movements like Charter 77, the actions of the Polish workers in 1976, and other struggles in Eastern Europe over the last two years have given a sense of urgency to the need for labour movement solidarity. Labour Focus on Eastern Europe is itself a product of this new awareness amongst socialists and Marxists in Britain, and members of our editorial collective along with comrades from the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists have played a central role in the discussions preparing for the launching of the East European Solidarity Campaign. Up to now, labour movement defence activity in Britain has been fitful and unco-ordinated, apart from the efforts of the Czech Committee. But with the launching of this new campaign socialists up and down the country can begin systematic, ongoing work to bring the weight of labour movement opinion to bear upon governments in Eastern Europe contemplating repression. The campaign is seeking affiliation from local trade-union, Labour Party and student-union branches as well as from socialist groups and parties. It is also seeking individual members and hoping to create local committees in different parts of the country.

The founding meeting of the campaign decided to support the May Conference of the Czech Committee to mark the tenth anniversary of the Prague Spring. (See page 18 of this issue). It also decided to organize a major conference of its own to discuss the situation in Eastern Europe and labour movement solidarity on the weekend of August 19-20 marking the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. The campaign is preparing its own literature for circulation in the labour movement and it is also getting straight down to

business in order to take up urgent cases of repression in various East European countries.

This issue of Labour Focus takes up some of these urgent cases. We have devoted a large part of this issue to the struggle of a group of Soviet workers over the last three years for basic working-class rights. A detailed account of their courageous campaign in the face of mounting attacks by the authorities, is followed by an important article by Vadim Belotserkovsky suggesting that the workers' group around Vladimir Klebanov is part of a more general growth of working-class protest in the USSR during the last year. The workers' group has formed an "Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the USSR" and they have asked the ILO to allow them to affiliate. Meanwhile some of their members have already been arrested and placed in psychiatric institutions.

When news of this group's activity reached the West, a number of calls for trade-union support were quickly made. We reprint a letter written by Eric Heffer, the leading left-wing Labour MP, to The Guardian calling upon the TUC to defend the rights of these Soviet workers. Edmund Baluka, chairperson of the shipyard workers' strike committee in Szczecin during the workers' revolt of 1970-71, along with Victor Fainberg and Vasile Paraschiv, have also called on Western trade unions to come to the defence of these Soviet workers. It is of the utmost importance that socialists in the West should demand a halt to the repression of Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades and should defend their right to seek affiliation to international labour movement bodies.

Another campaign which we have been publicising has been the jailing of the East German Marxist Rudolf Bahro for publishing a book on the nature of the East European states. As we report in this issue, the international campaign of protest has been growing: Santiago Carrillo, the Spanish CP leader, has called for Bahro's release, pointing out that the charge of espionage against Bahro is not believable. The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation has also called for Bahro's release and has invited Bahro to sit on the panel of Tribunal judges examining the Berufsverbot laws that ban Marxists from being teachers or state employees in West Germany.

Two other issues of great importance are the continuing repression against Chartists in Czechoslovakia and the sweeping measures that have been taken by the Romanian authorities against the Romanian miners. In Czechoslovakia three Chartists -- Lederer, Lastuvka and Machacek -- are in jail, dozens of others have been thrown out of work for their political beliefs, and two leading Marxist Chartists, Frantisek Kriegel and Petr Uhl, are kept under round the clock surveillance by the political police.

In January, the Romanian writer Paul Goma came to Britain to try to gain the support of labour movement leaders for the Romanian miners. He spoke to Labour MPs and to Lawrence Daly from the NUM. With the formation of the East European Solidarity Campaign it should be possible to step up this and other forms of pressure for a vigorous response to repression.

We hope that readers of Labour Focus will support the East European Solidarity Campaign and help to build it. Those wishing to contact the Campaign should write to the Convenor at the following address:

East European Solidarity Campaign, c/o Vladimir Derer,
10, Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.

SOVIET UNION

Story of A Workers' Group

Workers' Rights Activists Under Attack

[For years socialists in the West have been led by the Soviet authorities to believe that workers in the USSR enjoy social and political rights and control over their situation at work far superior to those of workers in the capitalist West. The facts that we print below tell a very different story.]

This is the story of a three year battle by a sizeable group of Soviet workers to gain elementary working-class rights. It is a chronicle of crude victimisation and political sackings of those who tried to protest against poor working conditions and corrupt practices; and it reveals for the first time the way in which the sinister use of psychiatric repression is not confined to small numbers of intellectual dissidents but menaces ordinary Soviet workers who try to fight for their rights.

This group of workers became known in the West at the beginning of last December when they called a press conference for foreign journalists in Moscow. At another press conference in February they announced the formation of a Trade Union organisation and asked for support from the International Labour Organisation and from trade unions in the West. Since the Amnesty International has received more than 80 pages of documents which show that the workers' group has been campaigning for basic civil and working class rights for a number of years. The article which we print below was compiled by Amnesty research staff from these documents.]

At the start of December 1977 details became known outside the USSR of a sizeable group of workers which had come together in Moscow to protest collectively against the authorities' refusal to satisfy their complaints of wrongful dismissal from work and other employment-related abuses and against persecution of workers for exercising their right of formal complaint on such matters.

But new information and documents from the USSR show that already in 1975 a number of these workers were acting collectively in support of their complaints.

The group began through the "accidental meetings" of unemployed workers who had come to Moscow to press their complaints in person at the offices of the highest party, government and legal authorities. Some of the workers who met in the public reception rooms of these official offices evidently decided to press their complaints collectively, and also to appeal collectively against the repression of themselves or

other protesting workers known to them. Their numbers had reached 38 by November 1977. Then in late January 1978, by which time the group claimed to have some 200 adherents, they decided to attempt to establish an "independent trade union".



Vladimir Klebanov, spokesperson for the workers' group, speaking at a press conference in Moscow last December. He was shortly to be imprisoned in a Psychiatric Hospital.

THE GAIDAR CASE

The first known collective action by the group was in May 1975 in connection with the confinement of Nadezhda Gaidar to a psychiatric hospital. This incident was described in some detail in a report ("On Psychiatric Abuses") issued by the unofficial Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group in October 1976. This report stated that "approximately 12 persons per day are sent by the police to duty psychiatrists from the reception room of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet alone". Nadezhda Gaidar, an engineer from Kiev, was one of these. It is worth quoting in full the Helsinki Group's account of her case:

Gaidar had gone on 6 May to the reception room at the Central Committee of the CPSU, where she saw the Deputy Receptionists V.I. Filatov. He sent her on to Tsubulnikov, the Deputy Receptionist at the USSR Procurator General's Office. She turned up twice at the times indicated by Tsubulnikov. The second time she was seized by police officers, taken to Police Station 108 in Moscow and then taken to Psychiatric Hospital No.13. There they began at once to give her injections of the drug aminazin. The head of Ward 2 of Psychiatric Hospital No.13, L.I. Fyodorova, said regarding N. Gaidar's hospitalization: "We will not make any diagnosis of her. We have made a note that she is suffering from nervous exhaustion brought on by her quests for justice. To keep her from complaining any more we

will keep her here for a while and then we will send her to Kiev via a special detention point. There too they will hold her for a while."

When Gaidar's acquaintance V.A. Klebanov came to ask after her and to say that her two children had been left without their mother and without anyone to look after them, Dr. Fyodorova told him: "Then next time she'll think a little before going to complain."

N. Gaidar was transferred from Moscow to a psychiatric hospital in Kiev, from which she was released after two months.

Members of the workers' group appealed collectively on behalf of Nadezhda Gaidar in 1975. It appears that already in 1975 she herself was among the workers who were acting collectively, and since then she has been an active participant of the group.

MINERS' RIGHTS

Vladimir Klebanov has acted as the principal spokesperson and organizer of the group since its inception. The group's documents describe his background as follows: Klebanov worked for 16 years as a foreman at the Bazhanova coal mine in Donetsk region (in the Ukraine). Already in 1960 he tried to start an independent trade union among coal miners at his mine, but the local authorities called this "anti-Soviet activity" and stopped his efforts. Klebanov was dismissed, (apparently in 1968), for refusing to assign overtime to his men and to send them onto jobs where he believed safety standards were not met. At around this time he wrote a letter of protest about the high accident and fatality rate at the mine. When he protested at his dismissal he was detained, ruled mentally ill and confined to a maximum security special psychiatric hospital from 1968 to 1973. After his release he was unable to obtain work because it was noted in his personal Labour Book that he had been "dismissed in connection with arrest".

The group's activities in the remainder of 1975 and in 1976 are not well documented. However its members were then being subject to official repressions. On 30 June 1976 Valentin Poplavsky, a factory worker from near Moscow and one of the most active members of the group, was detained in Moscow at the reception room of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and "within one hour" was sentenced to 15 days in jail. (The charges against him are not known.) At around this time other

Heffer Call to TUC

members of the group were, reportedly, picked up by the police and threatened in connection with their complaints. In January 1977 two workers named Fazalkhanova and Tulikova were detained at the reception room of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and put in Moscow Psychiatric Hospital No.7. This hospital is used mainly for persons who are temporarily in the capital, and it appears that these two workers were subsequently dispatched from Moscow to their home towns.

On 10 February 1977 Vladimir Klebanov was detained and put in Moscow Psychiatric Hospital No.7. He was kept there for two months. According to later accounts by the group, KGB officers tried at this time to link Klebanov with an explosion which had reportedly occurred in the Moscow metro in January 1977. On 1 May 1977 another worker, I.P. Bobryshevy, was detained and put in a Moscow psychiatric hospital.

35 WORKERS JAILED

The earliest document of the group of which the text has arrived outside the USSR is dated 20 May 1977. It is an "Open Letter" signed by eight workers from different parts of the Soviet Union. As is typical of the group's statements, the document gave the addresses of the signatories. It said that all of the signatories had been deprived of their work. It listed 35 workers in different cities who, "though innocent, have at various times been thrown into prisons and psychiatric hospitals" for "exercising their rights to complain". The signatories described themselves as "honest Soviet citizens who have worked honestly and conscientiously for many years in various enterprises" and stated that because their complaints to Soviet authorities could not bring redress for their wrongful dismissal they were "compelled to give world-wide publicity" to their Open Letter.

On 22 June 1977 Varvara Kucherenko, a worker from the Caucasus and a member of the group, was detained in Moscow. According to later statements by the group the police tried to have her put in a psychiatric hospital but a psychiatrist refused to admit her. Evidently she was then picked up and taken to a police station by KGB officers, who demanded of her that she promise in writing not to return to Moscow.

A second "Open Letter" was dated 18 September 1977. This document, signed by 33 persons was addressed to "world public opinion" with copies to the United Nations and the participants of the Belgrade Review Conference. The signatories described themselves as "Soviet people from different strata of the country ... of various nationalities and from different localities of the country who are

GUARDIAN, March 2 1978

Sir,

The documents concerning Soviet workers who are trying to form genuinely independent trade unions in the Soviet Union make fascinating reading.

I have been privileged to have read the translated version of them, and I feel it is important that every aid and support should be given to the workers concerned. It would, however, be the height of hypocrisy for those in Britain who failed to support the Grunwick workers, and who accuse the British free and independent trade unions of being power hungry, to say they support the Soviet workers in their efforts. All that concerns such opponents of British trade unions is to use every struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union to attack the ideas of socialism and trade unionism in the West.

Trade unions free of government and state control are essential to a democratic society. This new development in the Soviet Union is for democratic socialists of the utmost importance. It means that the struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union is no longer being left or confined to academics, to writers, poets, scientists and so on, or to Jews who seek to live in Israel or in the West, but is now being taken

compelled to appeal to the so-called 'bourgeois press'." The statement said that the ranks of the unemployed signatories would be joined by any worker who criticized "wasters of socialist property, poor work conditions, low pay, high rates of work injuries, rising work output obligations and norms leading to breakage and low-quality output, the increasing rise in prices of basic necessities and food products". The signatories had all been dismissed from their jobs for making this sort of criticism, the statement said.

50 WORKERS REPRESSED

In this document twenty-two of the signatories described in some detail the circumstances of their own dismissal from work and their subsequent harassment for lodging complaints. The document also listed 50 workers (including some retired workers and some white-collar workers) who had been repressed in various additional ways for making such criticisms. Finally it listed 23 workers, including some of the signatories, who "as a sign of protest", had applied to emigrate from the USSR but without success.

With regard to all of the above groups of persons the "Open Letter" of 18 September 1977 said: "None of the persons mentioned above by us are renegades. None of them has committed any sort of anti-social attacks, supplied the West with slanderous information or spread false rumours. However, some of them have been put in psychiatric hospitals and expelled from Moscow solely because they came to Moscow with complaints against their groundless dismissal or for

up by ordinary working people who do not in any way want to restore capitalism or involve themselves in ideological conflict with the Soviet authorities, but simply demand to freely organise as their fellow-workers do in Britain, Italy, and France in free trade unions which can negotiate better wages and conditions and protect jobs.

It is very interesting to note that for a long time the workers concerned were reluctant to go to the Western press to explain what they were doing but in the end were forced to do so in order that workers in the world would learn of their efforts. I trust that the International Labour Organization will look into their situation, and that the Trade Union Congress will sympathetically concern itself with these workers' efforts, and strongly protest at any repressive measures that are being taken against them.

If it is right to uphold trade union rights in Chile, and in South Africa — and it is — then it is also right to support those in the Soviet Union who also want free and independent trade unions. There surely cannot be double standards where trade union rights or other basic rights are concerned.

Yours sincerely,
Eric S. Heffer, M.P. (Lab. Walton),
House of Commons, London SW1.

improvement of their living conditions, etc."

This document also charged that the internal affairs authorities were operating a number of special detention centres in Moscow for holding persons who had come to the capital to complain. It gave details on one such centre, and said that the prevailing practice was to hold complainants in such detention centres so as to intimidate them before expelling them from Moscow.

On 4 October 1977 Yevgeny Nikolayev, an engineer from Moscow and an active participant in the group, was detained in Kamchatka region and sentenced to 15 days in jail. On 5 October another participant, Gennady Tsvyrkov, was detained in Moscow and put in the ward for violent patients in Moscow Psychiatric Hospital No.1, where he was held for about 10 days. On 7 November 1977, 33 workers signed a "Collective Complaint" addressed to Soviet authorities and the foreign press asking that the authorities create a commission to investigate treatment of complainants by the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU. They singled out for criticism A.S. Pankratov, Deputy Procurator General of the USSR, who, they said, had driven complaining workers from his office and humiliated them by calling them (in specified cases) "speculators", "prostitutes" and "slanderers". The signatories complained that in contravention of Soviet laws authorities were passing on their formal complaints to the officials named in the complaints, and that this facilitated acts of repression by the latter. The documents listed a number of protesting workers who had been confined to psychiatric hospitals.

Although in May, September and early November 1977 the group had issued statements calling for publicity for their grievances, they began to receive publicity only when at the end of November 1977, in a private flat in Moscow, they held an informal press conference for non-Soviet journalists. At the meeting, the workers showed the correspondents some of their collective statements. According to foreign news agency reports, the group said at the meeting that 38 persons from 24 different cities had signed their latest appeal. In the first few days of December 1977 Gavril Yankov, a leader and a regular signatory of the group's statements, was detained by police and held without warrant in the "special cells" at the Moscow City Soviet. According to later statements by the group, the police were initially unsuccessful in efforts to have him confined to a psychiatric hospital, but on 2 January 1978 Yankov was confined to Moscow Psychiatric Hospital No.3, where he was held for two weeks.

"MANIA FOR JUSTICE"

On 19 December 1977 Vladimir Klebanov, who had been the group's spokesman at the press conference, was picked up by police on a Moscow street and taken to Moscow Psychiatric Hospital No.7. On that same day 17 members of the group signed an appeal to various Soviet authorities for his release. They said that his detention violated civil instructions on forcible confinement to psychiatric hospital, since Klebanov was neither mentally ill nor "socially dangerous". On 22 December he was delivered to the Regional Psychiatric Hospital in Donetsk, his home town in the Ukraine. There, according to a later statement by the group, he was diagnosed as suffering from "paranoid development of the personality" with a mania for "struggling for justice". He was released in Donetsk after about two weeks and ordered not to return to Moscow.

In the first days of January, according to a later statement by the group, Vladimir Shcherbakov, formerly a worker in a copper works in Chelyabinsk, "disappeared". He had been confined to psychiatric hospitals in 1976 and again in 1977, and the group surmised that now the same had happened to him again.

On 10 January 1978 ten of the workers held a press conference in Moscow. They were led by Klebanov, who had returned to Moscow in spite of official orders not to do so. The workers reported more cases of wrongful dismissals of workers who had tried to expose corruption by economic officials.

On 12 January 1978, 21 members of the group signed an appeal on behalf of group member Gavril Yankov, who was confined to a psychiatric hospital. Like their earlier appeal on Klebanov's behalf, this appeal

In the USSR Vladimir Klebanov, a Donetsk miner, announced at the end of January that 200 workers had decided to create an independent trade union, explaining that many among them had been sacked without the official unions taking up their defence. This is the first attempt to create a workers' movement independent of the state apparatus. On Monday, 27 February, two representatives of the 200 workers made public the statutes of their trade-union organization. In an open letter they asked Western trade unions for their moral and material assistance. The right to organize in trade unions is recognized by the Soviet Constitution for workers in that country; nevertheless, those like Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades who put the right into practice are repressed and interned in psychiatric hospitals. We ask you to urgently intervene for their immediate release.

In the same way, in Romania, the worker, Vasile Paraschiv, was branded with "raving demand mania" because he had demanded respect for these rights that are recognized in his country.

In Poland, a workers' committee has just been created in Katowice and has launched an appeal to all workers in Poland for the creation of independent national trade unions.

stated that Yankov's confinement was illegal.

On 13 January 1978, group member Gennady Tsvyrko was detained. He was held for several days and then expelled from Moscow. According to later statements by the group, the authorities tried to persuade Tsvyrko to sign a statement that he was leaving Moscow voluntarily and to renounce the complaints he had been pressing. (Tsvyrko had already been confined to a Moscow psychiatric hospital for 10 days in October 1977.)

On 20 January 1978, according to a later statement by the group, all police precincts in Moscow were circulated with a list of the 43 signatories of an earlier appeal by the group.

On 21 January 1978 Pyotr Reznichenko, a metal worker from Odessa and an active member of the group, was detained in Moscow. According to a subsequent statement by the group the authorities tried to incriminate him with malicious litigation and violation of the passport rules". The group also stated on 28 January 1978. **"Reznichenko is being held in one of the special cells (cell no.7) at the Moscow City Soviet's Executive Committee, without the sanction of the procurator, because they haven't succeeded in putting him in a psychiatric hospital."** Reportedly Reznichenko was still in detention in mid-February 1978.

"INDEPENDENT UNION"

On 26 January 1978 the group held its third press conference. This time six workers led

In Czechoslovakia, trade-unionists have been expelled from their unions for having refused to associate themselves with the political sackings of Charter 77 supporters.

Whatever your appreciation of these facts, they all pose the same question of principle concerning which we ask you to publicly reaffirm your position — on the undeniable right of workers to organize in trade unions independent of their employers, including in the countries which claim to be socialist and where the state is effectively the sole employer.

We urgently ask you to take all possible measures to send international trade-union commissions of enquiry, to throw light on the real nature of the trade unions in these countries and to take up the defence of those who are fighting so that a formally recognized right be at last put into practice.

You have already on several occasions expressed your concern for the respect of workers' rights in Eastern Europe. Today more than ever they need support from those in the West who struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Signed by: EDMUND BALUKA, VICTOR FAINBERG, and VASILE PARASCHIV.

by Klebanov met foreign journalists.

It was at the 26 January press conference that the group announced its intention of forming an "independent trade union".

They stated that 200 workers had agreed to join the body and showed foreign correspondents a list of some 100 'candidate members'. Most of these candidates for membership were unemployed. Group spokespeople were still uncertain as to the name of their independent trade union, but thought it would be called the "Trade Union for the Defence of Workers".

They said that they had decided on this step because of the ineffectiveness of the country's established trade unions, which were "government-controlled". Klebanov told the journalists: **"We can't do anything individually. We have to act together."**

The spokespeople said that they were going to ask the Geneva-based International Labour Organisation (ILO) to recognize the independent trade union.

On 27 January 1978, 21 members of the group signed an appeal to government authorities regarding the imprisonment of Reznichenko, Tsvyrko and Yankov. The appeal also said that on that day the police had tried to arrest Vladimir Klebanov and his wife. Another appeal, dated 28 January 1978, added that fellow group members and passers-by had prevented the police from arresting Klebanov. It was later reported that Klebanov went into hiding after this attempted arrest.

On 30 January 1978 43 members of the

“free trade union” signed an open letter to various Soviet professional organisations and Party and government authorities and to a number of official newspapers and journals. In it they stated:

“Instead of objectively investigating our complaints and appeals the authorities have given us empty formalistic replies, sent our complaints and appeals to the very persons against whom they were made, applied repressive measures against us and our comrades in misfortune: with police assistance they drive us out of Moscow, and they put mentally healthy people in psychiatric hospitals in Moscow.”

CALL TO WESTERN UNIONS

On 1 February the independent trade union issued several new documents. One of these was an open letter to foreign correspondents in Moscow. This document, signed by 43 persons, made known for the first time that the independent trade union was to be called the “Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the USSR”. It referred to the fact that Article 34(4) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims: “Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests”. It repeated that the independent trade union would appeal to the ILO, and added that it would also appeal to “trade unions in Western countries”. The open letter said: “The defence of human rights is not interference in another country’s internal affairs” and asked for an objective investigation of their grievances. Valentina Chetverikova signed this document as secretary of the union.

Also dated 1 February was the “Appeal of the Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the USSR to the ILO and the Workers’ Trade Unions in Western Countries”. This document is signed by 43 persons, who are designated as members of the body. The addresses of Klebanov, Shagen Oganessian and Valentin Poplavsky are given for correspondence with the union. Attached to this appeal to the ILO and foreign trade unions are: 1) citations from the Statute of the ILO relevant to the union’s request for recognition by the ILO; 2) the “Statute” of the union; 3) a list of 110 “candidates for membership in the free trade union”. To the list of 110 “candidate members” is appended a note saying that other workers wish membership but have asked that for the time being their names not be made public.

The list of 110 candidate members of the independent trade unions indicates the work speciality of each of the persons named: 45 are designated as “workers”, 25 as “employees”, 6 as miners, 10 as engineers, one as a lawyer, 4 as pensioners, 4 as collective farm workers, one as a war invalid, 5 as teachers, 4 as doctors or nurses, 2 as housewives and one as a work invalid; two are unidentified. Fifty-two of



--“Exactly what criticism is constructive and what destructive?”

--“Simple: criticising yourself or someone below you is constructive. But criticising someone above you is always destructive.” (From Rohac, Slovakia, 31 August 1966.)

them are women. These 110 persons come from all parts of the USSR.

NEW ARRESTS

On 6 February 1978 four members of the new body were detained for not having official permission to reside in Moscow, according to a statement by member Nikolai Ivanov. The four were Mikhail Guriev (a metal worker from Rostov), Konstantin Gucherenko (a railway worker from the Caucasus), Valentin Poplavsky (a factory worker from near Moscow who had already been detained for 15 days in June 1976) and Victor Luchkov (a miner from Donetsk).

On 7 February 1978 Klebanov was again detained in Moscow and again taken to a psychiatric hospital in Donetsk where he was put into “strict isolation” and was still being held there as of 22 February. At about the same time, another member, an engineer called Yevgeny Nikolaev, was warned not to use his Moscow flat for meetings of workers with foreign correspondents. Also on 7 February the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group issued a statement that the formation of an independent trade union was “based on law” according to Soviet labour legislation.

On 15 February group member Yevgeny Nikolaev was detained and forcibly placed in a psychiatric hospital and on 27 February Valentin Poplavsky and Varvara Kucherenko, who had been released from detention, stated that two of the union’s members were in psychiatric hospitals and 4 others were ‘missing’. The two in psychiatric hospitals were given as Y. Nikolaev and Valentina Pelekh. A seventh member, Klebanov himself, was also declared missing since the union’s members in Moscow could not confirm earlier reports that he was still held in the Donetsk psychiatric hospital.

Meanwhile, in the West Amnesty International delivered all the documents in its possession, including the group’s appeal to the ILO and foreign trade union organisations, to the ILO in Geneva. And international labour movement solidarity with Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades began to mount in various countries of Western Europe.

In this appeal the signatories say that they are on average between 35 and 45 years of age, that they have worked for more than 10 years, that they are all unemployed on account of their criticism of management abuses and that some of them have been unemployed for up to 5 years.

The appeal stated:

“When we have appealed to higher authorities, instead of taking constructive steps they have applied impermissible methods against us for exercising our right to complain: under the pretext of registering us for reception by the leadership, they seize us one by one and in groups, sending us to police stations and psychiatric hospitals. This happens at the highest offices of the authority: in the receptions of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the USSR Procurator General’s Office. We decided to unite. We began to speak out collectively - just as before they continued to expel us from Moscow with the help of the police and to put us in psychiatric hospitals.”

The statement said that the country’s established trade union organisations likewise had not given satisfaction to their complaints. “We decided therefore to organize our own genuinely independent trade union so that we may officially and legally have the right to defend our rights and interests and enlist for common struggle for our rights other persons who are willing and whose rights are unjustifiably violated.”

The statement asserts at some length, with quotations from officially published sources, that the established trade unions “do not protect our rights”, do not reflect their members’ needs and wishes and are not democratically elected or led.

The appeal concludes: “We request the ILO and workers’ trade union organisations to recognise our free trade union of workers and to show us moral and material support.”

4. Workers and Employees in Defence of Human Rights

by Vadim Belotserkovsky

[Is the emergence of the Trade Union group in the USSR an isolated exception, or a symptom of a changing attitude on the part of Soviet workers? Below Vadim Belotserkovsky, a former Soviet journalist on trade union affairs now living in the West argues that over the last year there has been a marked broadening of the social base of the human rights movement. Translation of his article from the Russian is by Helen Jamieson who also supplied the footnotes.]

On 9 September 1977 Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB devoted the following remarks to human rights campaigners in a speech on the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Felix Dzerzhinsky (1):

"These renegades do no, and cannot, have any base inside the country. This is the main reason why they do not show their faces in institutions like factories and state farms. From such places they would be forced, as they say, to take to their heels."

The most striking thing about this remark is not so much its distortion of the truth -- that is common form -- but its brazenness. For the most important development in the struggle for human rights in the USSR over the past year has precisely been the noticeable growth of protests by industrial workers and office and professional employees. The recently announced formation of the trade union group of workers is only the most dramatic and symbolic example of this development.

Andropov more than anyone else in the higher leadership must be fully aware of the real state of affairs. He must know that for a number of years the human rights movement in the larger cities, and especially the national and religious movements, have included people from all levels of Soviet society. And as time goes on the number of workers and employees in the movement has been growing, in line with the general growth of popular dissatisfaction within the country. It is well-known that the KGB has the task of covertly gauging the mood of the population, so Andropov must have been aware that life could at any moment disprove his remarks. How quickly has this in fact happened!

PUTILOV STRIKE

Even without access to KGB archives and before the news of the trade union group, the trend of events could be seen through information in the Chronicle of Current Events (2), the statements of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups and other samizdat documents. Chronicle No. 42 states: "At



Vadim Belotserkovsky speaking at the Brussels Socialist Conference on Eastern Europe at the end of January.

the Kirov factory (in Leningrad) a few months ago about 400 people staged a three day 'Italian' strike (3) -- carrying out the merest semblance of work at about 3% or 4% of the plan form -- protesting against the bad relations between the administration of the plant and the prisoner-workers in the factory." What is notable is not just the cause of the strike but the fact that in the Kirov works which was formerly called the Putilov works, the famous citadel of the revolution, the labour of prisoners is used.

On 13 February 1977 three people sent an Open Letter to the Soviet leadership. They were Vadim Baranov, his wife Galina Baranova and Elena Andronova, a Moscow housewife and mother of 2. Elena Andronova stated the following: **"The tyranny exercised by the authorities against people with unorthodox views -- this means anyone who attempts to think independently, who doesn't lie or resort to slogans -- forces me, a housewife and a mother of two children, a 40 year-old woman who is far from being engaged in politics, to raise my voice in defence of our rights."**

In April 1977, Gennadi Bogolyubov, a plasterer/painter from the city of Magadan wrote an open letter to Harry Bridges, the head of the American Dockers' Union. Bogolyubov, a worker of twenty years standing from a long line of workers in the weaving industry in Sava Morozov, was replying to an interview which Harry Bridges had given to TASS, the Soviet news agency. Bridges had said that he was pleased to see that representatives of the working class were absent from the Soviet dissident movement. Bogolyubov replies: **"You are deeply mistaken. We have many workers among the 'dissidents', but they are ruthlessly crushed by the organs of the KGB"**. He goes on to give the names of workers who have been victimised in Magadan and describes the persecution of himself because of his complaints and protests to Soviet institutions. He writes:

"I remember how I was called to have a discussion with the KGB captain in Magadan. I told him angrily that I would, as a worker, appeal to the leaders of the Communist movement, to Georges Marchais and Enrico Berlinguer. To this the KGB official Povolaretsky replied that there would come a time when they also would be sitting in Kolyma."(4)

Chronicle No.46, the latest number to reach the West, reports the following very interesting event in the Premorsk in the Soviet Far East: **"A 'Committee to Defend the Rights of Believers', organised by the authorities, has begun to operate. Members of the Committee visit the homes of religious Pentacostolists and try to persuade them to renounce their demands to emigrate. Some are being offered aid, a flat, a better job; others are being threatened. The officials of the Committee, Captain Drozdov and Lieutenant Smolentsev say to them: 'Why do you keep referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? It has been brought into this country illegally in order to subvert the internal structure of the Soviet state.' 1800 Pentacostolists and Baptists currently living in the Premorsk wish to immediately emigrate from the Soviet Union because of the persecution that they are suffering for their beliefs."** The majority of these people are workers, peasants and employees.

Document No.13 of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group, compiled a year ago by Valentin Turchin, reports a demand for the right to emigrate by a group of workers, giving political and economic reasons. The group included a lathe operator Leonid Siryi from Odessa; the electrician Valentyn Ivanov from Kaluga oblast, and the driver Vladimir Pavlov from Maikop. Leonid Siryi, the father of 6 children, writes: **"Help us, don't let us die here from constant malnutrition. Our leaders should be ashamed that a worker is not able to feed his family. To feed a nation only with promises and slogans is shameful."**

At the end of 1977, the Moscow Helsinki Group took up the cases of Sergei Frolov, Janis Varna, Mikhail Larchenkov and Andres Goldberg, Riga dock-workers who were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for their participation in a strike in the Riga Docks in May 1976. (5)

Many other examples of workers' protests could be given, testifying to the growing social base of the human rights movement in the country. But another important indication of the new trend are the unprecedented results of the elections to town Soviets in June 1977. According to official statistics about 650,000 people

voted against the candidates of "The Bloc of Communists and Non-Party People". Even more remarkable, in the 61st electoral district the candidates were blackballed by the voters. The Soviet press agency, unable to ignore this fact, tried to present it as specific evidence of ... the democratic nature of Soviet life!

The true meaning of this event is well understood in the conditions of 'Soviet Socialist Democracy' and it represents a

striking sign of the growing, or to be more exact the already widespread dissatisfaction of broad layers of Soviet society.

Against the background of such facts as these, a question comes to mind about the remarks of Andropov last September: Why did he make them? Is his brazen bombast not perhaps a sign of fear?

FOOTNOTES.

1. **Dzerzhinsky**, a Polish revolutionary who became the head of the 'Cheka' the organisation that fought the counter-revolution during the

Russian Revolution. A supporter of the Stalin faction within the Bolshevik Party, Dzerzhinsky died in the late twenties.

2. **The Chronicle of Current Events** is a samizdat news bulletin about repression that has been appearing since 1968.

3. An **'Italian strike'** is the name given to workers' protests which involve going to the factory but doing no significant work.

4. **Kolyma** is the name of a labour camp complex in Siberia made famous during the Stalinist terror in the 1930s.

5. On the **Riga Dock strike** see Labour Focus Vol.1, No.2, page 22.

Moscow Trial Soon? by Helen Jamieson

More than a year after the arrests of Orlov, Ginsburg and Shcharansky, three leaders of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group, there is still no news of a date for their trials. And Anatoli Shcharansky has still not been given definite charges against which he can prepare his defence.

On 7 February, the *Times* reported that Yuri Orlov, at first accused of 'spreading anti-Soviet fabrications', was to face the more serious charge of 'engaging in anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'. This would involve showing that Orlov was consciously distributing material criticising government policies in the Soviet Union. Such activity is, of course, regarded as an elementary form of political activity by socialists in the West, but is considered a grave crime by the Soviet authorities, punishable with 7 years in detention. Alexander Ginsburg already faces the same charge. Shcharansky's mother has been told by the KGB official in charge of the case at Lefortovo prison that her son may be charged with treason, which can carry the death penalty. It appears that Shcharansky may have been the victim of a KGB provocation. He was accused by a former flatmate called Lipavsky of being a CIA agent. The American government has now revealed that it was Lipavsky, not Shcharansky, who was working for the CIA and Lipavsky himself

seems to have been a KGB provocateur. The centre of international labour movement pressure for Shcharansky's release is the Defence Committee in Paris. This committee, which includes prominent left-wing members of the French Socialist Party and some CP members, held a day of solidarity for Shcharansky at the Mutualite hall in Paris, attended by about 2,000 people. The activities included films, an art exhibition and a discussion on anti-Semitism introduced by Tatiana Plyushch and Tatiana Khodorovich (a recent emigre).

One indication that the trial of these three human rights activists may take place soon is the fact that the families of all three have recently been told by the KGB authorities to find defence lawyers. In the case of Shcharansky the family has not been able to find a lawyer in Moscow who was prepared to take up the case. According to the *Sunday Times* of 5 March, Jewish activists in Moscow have been told that 900 of the 1000 practicing Moscow lawyers have been ordered by the KGB not to accept the Shcharansky brief. His mother has asked Roland Rappaport, a left-wing French lawyer to take the case - this has been rejected by the authorities who have appointed Dina Dubrovskaya as defence counsel without the family's consent.

CONTINUED REPRESSION

Meanwhile in other Republics arrests and repression of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups continue. In Armenia, the worker Arutyunyan was sentenced to 3 years in jail for "resisting a representative of the authorities" -- presumably a KGB official. Members of the Georgian group, Gamsakhurdia and Kostava, have been held since April 1977 and Viktoras Petkus from the Lithuanian group has been in jail awaiting trial since August 1977.

However, the harshest repression has been in Ukraine. There Mykola Rudenko and Oleksa Tykhy were given very long sentences of 7 and 10 years imprisonment to be followed by 5 years in exile in July 1977. Both men are socialists and former Party members -- Rudenko was at one time the Party secretary in the Ukrainian Writers' Union. Marinovych and Matuskevych have been held incommunicado since April 1977 awaiting trial; Lev Lukyánenko was arrested last December; and on 15 February Pyotr Vins, a Baptist, was arrested.

A 37-page transcript of the trial of Rudenko and Tykhy is available from the Committee to Defend Soviet Political Prisoners, Box 88, 182 Upper Street, London N.1.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Testament to Political Bankruptcy by Marian Sling

[Labour Focus discovered through letters we have received from trade unionists that the Czechoslovak Embassy has been distributing a scurrilous book to all trade unionists and trade-union branches who write to the Embassy protesting about the repression of Charter 77 members. We managed to acquire a copy of this free propaganda booklet and asked Marian Sling, the Secretary of the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists and a person with bitter personal experience of Stalinist methods, to go through the book for Labour Focus.]

When Charter 77 was issued in January of last year, its signatories proposed 'a constructive dialogue with the political and state power' on implementing the civil and human rights which, as the document demonstrated in a sober and factual manner, exist only on paper in Czechoslovakia. Predictably for a regime that rests on violations of fundamental principles of international order and civil rights, the self-styled rulers of the country responded to the Charter by wielding the big stick.

Over the past year we have heard about the sorry record of persecution, arrests and political trials to which the signatories and supporters of the Charter have been subjected, although the capitalist press has usually been interested only in the more prominent victims. Accompanying these directly repressive measures there has also been a spate of propaganda in the Czechoslovak press, radio and television, aimed to discredit the Charter idea in the public mind, to suppress any overt support for it by threats and intimidation, and to demonstrate that all 'honest working

people' indignantly reject the foul deeds of the 'disrupters'.

When this propaganda for home consumption has reached the heights of viciousness and hysteria it has been reported in the world press, which has not helped to improve the image of the present Czechoslovak regime. Nevertheless, presumably as part of a propaganda exercise directed at public opinion abroad, we are offered this booklet **In the Name of Socialism**, telling us about 'a cynical and coldblooded act calculated to cause chaos in a peaceful country' (p.34, quoted from **Rude Pravo**, 26.1.1977) - and that, in case the reader should be in doubt, was not an act of terrorism, murder or sabotage, but the issuing of Charter 77.

The booklet is composed mainly of extracts from the Czechoslovak press published in the first couple of months after the Charter was published, and from broadcasts. Statements by groups condemning the Charter are few -- the longest signed by organisations of writers, composers, artists etc., two by 'representatives of the churches', one from a meeting of musicians. Expressions of working class disapproval are confined to a report of a press conference of 'Prague workers' representatives' with foreign correspondents, where the only correspondents mentioned are those from TASS, **Neues Deutschland** and the American **Daily World**, and to a section containing press reports which link record work achievements with 'disgust ... at the endeavour of the renegades who concocted the squib "Charter 77"' (p.175).

By far the longest section is entitled 'Who is Who'. This consists of a series of slanderous attacks on Vaclav Havel, Pavel Kohout, Ludvik Vaculik, Dr. Kriegel and other prominent Charter supporters. It is a smear campaign in the style of the Stalinist 1950s, the era of the show trials. Indeed, in this and other parts of the publication there are indications that material from the secret police files of those days has been used, as it was used by the opponents of the Prague Spring and by the invaders of 1968. We have again the anti-semitism in, for instance, the references to 'the international adventurer F. Kriegel', who is 'a cosmopolitan, a man without a home and without a country' (echoes of the Slansky trial where defendant Bedrich Geminder was described in the same words) and, of course, to Charter 77 being produced 'by order of anti-communist and Zionist centres'. Again we have the imperialist plot which, this time, has hatched up the Charter as a new weapon in the 'counter-revolution' dating from 1968. In fact, the present booklet can be ranked with the notorious 'White Book' put out after the 1968 invasion by anonymous Soviet 'journalists'.

That not a shred of reasoned argument is offered is a reflection of the dilemma with which the Charter has faced the regime. Dr. Husak and his Soviet masters know very well that if they were to yield to the demand for the freedoms to which they subscribe in words, the survival of their 'existing socialism', above all in occupied Czechoslovakia, would be at risk. They know that the strength of the challenge they are facing lies

in the fact that it is not made by anti-socialists or imperialist agents, but by genuine communists, socialists, democrats. They must also know, if they are not completely blinded by their own propaganda, that just as 'Eurocommunism' is feared by the imperialists even more than the orthodox brand, so the democratic socialist Czechoslovakia that could emerge if the people were given their freedom is not a welcome prospect for the capitalist world. Not an imperialist plot, but the solidarity from the Left for the Charter movement is the real threat. Hence the frantic attempts to brand the Chartists as 'counter-revolutionaries' in the hope that, as in the days of Stalin, some of the mud will stick. But things are different now, the international scene is different and the people at home have a new awareness. They can learn from the diatribes in the press that the 'counter-revolutionaries' stand for the basic principles of the 1968 movement, because the 'continuity' is actually stressed in the attacks on them. Even if they have not obtained **samizdat** copies of the Charter documents, they can recognise that the demands are their own, and that they are not made by a potential new power grouping out to impose some ready-made solution for the country's problems, but by people of varying views whose aim is to open the road for a freely agreed democratic solution to be found. They know that the real 'dissidents', the real 'disrupters and self-styled pretenders' are those now occupying the seats of power, that they are the people who act not 'in the name of socialism' but against it and against the true interests of their country.

Police Provocations and Thuggery Continue by Mark Jackson

In autumn last year there were reports that Chartists were being asked questions at interrogations about an alleged terrorist conspiracy being hatched by certain elements within the Charter. Now, **Le Monde** of 2 March 1978 reports that the Czechoslovak police have followed up their insinuations with further provocations. According to the report 10 people were picked up in mid-January, among them two Chartists, Merganc and Dvorak. The police story was that someone had phoned them up saying that there was a suspicious looking suitcase in the Central Station in Prague. Inside the suitcase the police found a taped message which talked about "a group which had prepared 3 large helicopters at Ruzyně [the Prague airport] with which three targets in Prague were to be destroyed." The police then launched a massive operation leading to the arrests. It is difficult to know how much truth there is in this story since it is not corroborated by other sources. The most likely explanation is that the police have been taking further steps to spread hysteria about "terrorist"

plots in order to isolate the Chartists from the general population and spread confusion in the ranks.

An attempt by Chartists to assemble at the annual Railwaymen's Ball came to an end when police evicted the Chartists. Given the restrictions on the right of association in Czechoslovakia, functions such as balls, weddings, and funerals become important as opportunities for people to meet. Writer Pavel Kohout was beaten up by the police and three Chartists were arrested: actor Pavel Landovsky, playwright Vaclav Havel and Jaroslav Kukal, a factory worker. Havel has already stood trial for activities in connection with Charter 77 in October 1977. He received a 14-month suspended sentence for "trying to harm the interests of the Republic by spreading false news". The three have not yet been released and no charges have as yet been brought against them.

These events occurred as the Belgrade Conference on Security and Co-operation

dwindled to a close. During its period of activity there has been little sign that it has had a restraining effect on the Prague government. Trials have been held and Chartists have faced continual harassment. Petr Uhl and Dr. Frantisek Kriegel remain under 24-hour surveillance, while Chartists Jiri Lederer, Ota Ornest, Vladimir Lastuvka and Ales Machacek are serving prison sentences.

The question of the handling of the Charter will be one of the central themes of discussion at the March Central Committee plenum, which is taking place at the time of writing. Party leader Gustav Husak is expected to come under attack both from forces advocating the re-integration of many of those who lost their jobs through the purges of 1969-70, and from the other side, from people who say that Husak has been too soft on the opposition. In the next **Labour Focus** we hope to review the factional situation inside the Party and its repercussions on the opposition in the light of developments at the plenum.

EAST GERMANY

Carrillo Calls for Bahro's Release by Günter Minnerup

Eight months after Rudolf Bahro's arrest by the East German State security police there is still not a single piece of news about him. Nobody knows where he is being held, what sort of treatment he has received at the hands of the repressive organs, what the precise charges against him are or whether and when he may be brought before a court. He has simply disappeared from sight.

But the campaign to secure his release is growing in many countries. The West German Liberal paper **Frankfurter Rundschau** reported on 23 February that the leader of the Spanish Communist Party, Santiago Carrillo had called for Bahro's release on West German television. Carrillo declared that the charge of espionage against Bahro was "not believable" and he insisted that "Bahro must have the right to voice his opinions freely within the German Democratic Republic".

A leading part in the campaign for his release is being played by the "Freedom and Socialism Defence Committee" in West Berlin. Two prominent members of this committee, Helmut Gollwitzer and the author and Nobel Prize winner Heinrich Böll have appealed to the Chairman of the West German Trade Union Federation DGB (whose publishing house EVA published Bahro's book **Die Alternative**) to convene urgently an international scientific symposium on Bahro's book and invite Rudolf Bahro to introduce it. Jakob Moneta, editor of the biggest European trade-union journal **Metall**, has applied to the East Berlin authorities for permission to visit Bahro in jail. A letter signed by Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Graham Greene, Arthur Miller, Carola Stern and Mikis Theodorakis in the **Times** of 1 February 1978 states that "we think it is necessary to remind the authorities of the GDR once again: the fact that Rudolf Bahro must be set free is no more and no

less than self-evident." This letter has now also been signed by such major East German cultural figures as Sarah Kirsch, Wolf Biermann, Jürgen Fuchs, Bernd Jentzsch and Hans-Joachim Schädlich.



Cartoon showing Rudolf Bahro, from the Swiss Socialist Defence Bulletin, **Samizdat**.

RUSSELL TRIBUNAL MAKES BAHRO MEMBER

Meanwhile in Britain the Bahro Defence Committee has received the support of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, whose director Ken Coates wrote to the committee: "You may like to know that we nominated Bahro to serve on the Third Russell Tribunal investigating allegations of repression in the Federal Republic of Germany. A letter sent to him care of the prison administration has brought no reply and we do not know whether it has been delivered. We also wrote to Willy Stoph [Prime Minister of the GDR - G.M.] who up to now has not answered our enquiry."

Amnesty International have now also taken up Bahro's case. A.I. groups in Geelong, Victoria, Australia and Osaka, Japan, have "adopted" Bahro and in a letter to the Bahro Defence Committee A.I. confirmed

that a European group would soon get to work on the Bahro case as well.

The Defence Committee is continuing its campaign to collect signatures for an advertisement in the British labour movement press to publicise Bahro's case. Among the signatories so far are Tamara Deutscher, Michael Hamburger, Dr. J. Riordan, Jan Kavan, Vladimir Fisera, Ken Tarbuck and the National Organisation of Labour Students. A letter to the editor of the **Tribune** resulted in a number of messages of support and requests for further information about Bahro, including one from the secretary of the "British-GDR Society". But the campaign needs more help. This issue of **Labour Focus** carries the text of the proposed advertisement for the socialist press. (See the Labour Movement section of this issue.) You can help by approaching Left-wing MPs, trade-unionists, journalists, academics, artists etc. with the text, asking for their support. Of all the Labour MPs written to by the Defence Committee only Dennis Skinner has so far even acknowledged receipt of the letter, so there is plenty to do by raising the issue in their constituency parties. Portsmouth Labour Party's General Committee has already passed a resolution calling on their MP, Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, Frank Judd, to intervene on Bahro's behalf (which Judd, however, in order not to endanger detente, declined to do). And you should, of course, sign the text and, if possible, make a contribution towards the cost of publicising it, yourself.

Send all letters to the Bahro Defence Committee, c/o Günter Minnerup, 14 Folkestone Rd., Copnor, Portsmouth, Hants., and all donations to Midland Bank Ltd., 8 King's Road, Southsea, Hants; Account No. 21013408 (cheques made payable to "Bahro Defence Committee").

Marxist Workers' Circles by Expelled GDR Workers

[On 2 September 1977, eight young people were removed from their cells in an East Berlin prison, bundled into a van, and forcibly expelled from the German Democratic Republic by the Security Police. Until the last moment they had attempted to resist expulsion and demanded their right to remain in East Germany.

The pretext for their expulsion was their collective public protest against the expulsion of Wolf Biermann the year before. However, they had already been

active in various ways before the Biermann affair.

Their very interesting accounts of their activities published below give an insight into the widening gulf between the Party leadership and young workers in East Germany and into the way in which the established order tries to strangle independent cultural activities. Conflicts in this field have acquired a growing importance in many East European countries as earlier reports in **Labour Focus** on Czechoslovakia and the USSR have

indicated.

The group, from Leipzig and Jena, includes an electrician, a printer, a bricklayer, a mechanic, two electronics workers, a nurse and a Christian deacon. They are all between 23 and 30 years of age.

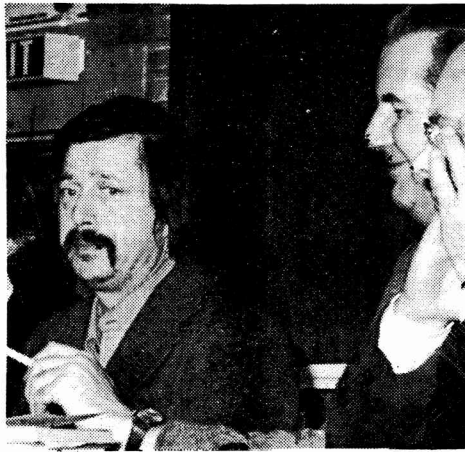
The second part of their account of their experiences will appear in the next issue of **Labour Focus**. Both parts are translated from **Neuer Langer Marsch**, a socialist newspaper in West Berlin. Translation is by Anca Mihailescu for **Labour Focus**.

1. THE WORKING GROUP "LITERATURE"

The working-group **Literature** was founded in May 1973, essentially on the initiative of a Jena student who had already had considerable experience in the poets' movement established by the official youth organization, the FDJ [Freie Deutsche Jugend - Free German Youth]. Most of the members of the working-group had just begun to write poetry; at first they numbered ten: young workers, school and university students, and apprentices. We met weekly in members' homes to talk about our personal efforts and about literature in general; as time went by, we managed to publish a few poems in various newspapers and entered some for literary competitions. In order to come more into the open, we tried to work as a circle in an official House of Culture. We soon ran up against the distrust of the authorities, for whom such individual initiative is always suspicious. But after several unsuccessful attempts, we were finally accepted in a new House of Culture, whose leadership was interested in the qualitative growth of cultural work.

The circle membership rose to about twenty young people, most of whom were already writing their own verse. Several poetry-readings were organized in apprentice and student clubs. A number of us were invited to district poets' seminars run by the FDJ, as well as to seminars of the "Union of Young Authors" held under the auspices of the District Writers' Union. At the weekly meetings of our circle, to which we often invited interesting guests, we discussed our own verse; other poetry and prose, above all that which critically examined the realities of the GDR; and the general theory of poetry. With the growing politicization of our group, which was expressed in our poems themselves, we found it more and more difficult to have our work published.

We began to organize events for prominent literary figures and thus came into conflict again with the direction of the cultural centre. In summer 1974, five of our members were invited to the Central FDJ Poets' Seminar at Schwerin. But when, in the framework of an open song-competition, one of us performed a children's song by Wolf Biermann (with whom we already had contact), the authorities considered the action to be a provocation and suspended the person in question from the seminar. The other members of the group who were present left the hall as a gesture of solidarity. Subsequently, the "affair" was described as a serious provocation during a discussion most of us had with the main functionaries in charge of culture in Jena. We were warned not to go any further along this road. And indeed from that time the work of our group became subject to strict control.



The Jena workers were expelled from the GDR for supporting Wolf Biermann, shown (left) with Zdenek Mlynar the former Czech Party leader (smiling, right) at the Brussels Socialist Conference on Eastern Europe at the end of January.

Early in 1975, our friend Jürgen Fuchs was expelled from the FDJ and the SED because of his literary work, and shortly before the end of his course in psychology, he was forbidden to continue his studies. The situation grew steadily worse: Every meeting of the working-group was attended by a middle-ranking cultural functionary, who kept a record of the proceedings. Several members were summoned to discussions and warned to go no further along this road. (We concluded from this that the record of our discussions contained distortions and lies.) Our leader was advised that any open work was forbidden, and that only a limited number of people were allowed to work with us. Those of us who were students were put under pressure in connection with their studies.

After a number of discussions, which were more like investigations, two members were forbidden to continue working with us by a City Cultural Council decree of May 1975; at the same time, a ban on further publication was imposed upon them. Our leader resigned from his position in protest at official obstruction and out of consideration for his studies. The working-group **Literature** officially dissolved.

2. THOMAS AUERBACH: THE YOUTH COMMUNITY IN JENA

Since 1970 I have been youth-leader at the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Jena. From the beginning, our work was directed at satisfying the needs of the youth: that is to say, in both big and small matters, the content of our social work and ongoing collective thought and practice was determined not by the missionary goals of the church, but by the real problems of young people. This kind of church youth-work is known in the GDR as "open work". Through our commitment to young people at social risk, and through our efforts to help with very practical problems of everyday life (finding accommodation and

work, care of single young mothers, and so on), we came increasingly into conflict with both state and conservative church authorities.

For years our work in Jena was watched by the state security service. Time and again, they tried to blackmail young Christians into becoming informers. We were not intimidated by this, but sought more and more to gain the solidarity of groups with similar aims and problems who were working with young people. Our primary aim was to help the youth community with the problems of life.

Particularly through dealing with the problems of young Jena workers and apprentices, we encountered ever greater contradictions and social injustice. We discovered that it is not enough to find free room, but that this free room must be used for ongoing collective thought and study focussed on the improvement of our society. For it is precisely this which does not take place in the state youth organization, the FDJ. Its function is rather to keep the youth under control and to mobilize it for the state objectives of the GDR - which, for all the fine phrases, have little in common with socialism.

About 1974, there began to develop a sound collaboration between the youth community and Marxist-oriented young people, who, just like us, were working to improve our society in the GDR. We all recognized that a critique of existing social relations in the GDR can bear fruit only if it is conducted from a Marxist point of view. It soon became clear to me and other young Christians that there is no contradiction between being a Christian and being a Marxist. And so, especially in 1975 and 1976, we organized many events together with our Marxist comrades. We were able to do this because, despite all the reprisals made against it, the Church in the GDR still possesses a certain freedom of action. We created a new platform for many young poets and song-writers who were denied virtually any possibility of appearing on state-run platforms. This was the case of, among others, Jürgen Fuchs and members of the now-banned Jena **Literature** working-group. These contacts subsequently grew into sound collaboration for our common goal: democratization of social relations in the GDR. Besides, it was important for us to create broad solidarity among the Jena youth, so that we could tackle problems relating to work and leisure-time. But just as important for us was work and study in the theoretical field. Above all for this reason, we set up the reading-group in which a number of young Christians also participated. At meetings of this group we discussed various joint actions and events: quite evidently, it became a thorn in the side of the state security service. Following our arrest, the main object of investigation was our

activity in the reading-group and everything connected with it.

3. THE READING-GROUP

The reading-group was initiated in April 1975. At first there were five of us who would read and discuss various Marxist works. What we had been told at school about Marxism was enough to attract us to the ideals of communism. But we had no theoretical grounding with which to find our way in the complex social relations of the GDR without submerging our ideals in reality; and we needed such a basis in order to become politically effective. We read Lenin's **State and Revolution**, which deals with such highly topical problems as bureaucracy, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the withering away of the socialist state. We also read Marx and Lenin's writings on the Paris Commune, when the proletariat conquered political power for the first time in history.

With the rapid growth of our circle, we began to read and discuss the **Communist Manifesto** and **Marx and Engels - Not Only for Beginners** by David Riazanov, the founder of the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute and publisher of the first edition of **Marx-Engels: Collected Works** — a man who, like so many other Bolsheviks, was thrown in jail by Stalin and died as a result.

The reading-group met once a week, each

time in a different house. Its members were nearly all young workers and apprentices, and so we also discussed highly practical problems connected with their work and studies; disagreements and conflicts with higher directors and functionaries; and questions of socialist democracy. Just as important were problems of economics such as wages, labour discipline, piece-rates, and the economy of labour-time. We talked of our experiences with the government administrative apparatus, various housing departments, town councils, the police and the state security — all of which stand in glaring contradiction to the classical communist conception of the functioning of the proletarian state.

We also read Engels's **The Peasant War in Germany**, in which the entire historical course of German wretchedness is portrayed as a sequence of interrupted or stifled revolutions — a trajectory which has still not been broken. In connection with the documents of the Ninth Congress of the SED, which we studied and evaluated closely in various working-groups, we read Marx's **Critique of the Gotha Programme** — that fundamental and relentless communist critique of a socialist party programme. We read material which theoretically analysed the real and more recent problems of 'socialism as it exists today': Robert Havemann's **Dialectics without Dogma**;

Che Guevara's **Economics and the New Man**; **The New Left in Hungary** by Hegedüs and others; Haraszti's **Piece-Rates**; **The Red Flag Over Poland** (which contains documents of the Polish strike movement); Medvedev's **The Lysenko Affair** — all books which, though banned in the GDR, reached us in a roundabout way.

In autumn 1975, as reaction was moving towards a decisive attack in Portugal, we led a Jena campaign of solidarity with revolutionary Portugal, which was particularly successful because it was not commanded from above.

The reading-group kept growing, and although the small rooms in which we met brought us closer together, they also restricted us. It became a matter of urgency that we lay a wider basis and find greater room for our work. Among us were photographers, painters, writers, actors, musicians. We wanted to build a youth centre — a centre of communication and cultural-political work such as is lacking not only in Jena.

In September 1976, we opened serious discussions with the authorities, presenting concrete plans and programmes of activity. We were never directly turned down; but we saw well enough that we would get nothing without a struggle.

ROMANIA

National Oppression in Transylvania by Mark Jackson



Tirgu Mures, centre of discontent among Hungarian minority.

At a press conference at the beginning of March, 1978, a former aide of Romania's President Ceausescu, Karoly Kiraly gave details of the repression that the Ceausescu regime has launched against attempts to raise the question of the position of Romania's two million strong Hungarian community. Kiraly, himself of Hungarian origin, claimed that, after he had published

a letter in the West protesting about discrimination against the Hungarian minority in jobs and education, a thousand security police were sent into Tirgu Mures, Kiraly's home town and capital of the northern Maramures region, in which the Hungarian population is concentrated. Tens of thousands of people were placed under surveillance, and many house-searches were carried out. Kiraly himself was summoned to the Romanian capital, Bucharest, accused of being a traitor to Romania, and asked to disown his appeal as a fabrication of Western Agencies. When he refused, he was moved away from Transylvania, and placed under round the clock surveillance. He has been threatened with criminal proceedings because of his activities.

The severity of the response to Kiraly's appeal shows the seriousness with which the Romanian leadership views the danger of a mass opposition from the Hungarian minority to national oppression. The leadership's fears on this score have no doubt been strengthened by the fact that many of the miners who went on strike in the Jiu Valley in August were of Hungarian

origin. Furthermore Kiraly revealed that his campaign had the support not only of ordinary Hungarians and Romanians, but also of top figures in Romanian political life such as former Primer Minister, Ion Maurer, and Janos Fazekas, a member of the Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Thus, the spectre of a rift in the Party is added to that of mass discontent.

The discrimination against the Transylvanian Hungarians and other minority national groups in Romania is the other side of the coin to Romania's attempt to chart an independent course to that of Moscow in foreign policy. The Ceausescu leadership has made vigorous use of Romanian national sentiment in order to secure its position at home, and this policy has inevitably had consequences for the non-Romanian population. The question of the Transylvanian Hungarians therefore raises the whole problem of the relationship between Romania and the rest of Eastern Europe. The potential of mass discontent amongst the Hungarians tends to act as a brake on the Romanian leadership's

independence, since such a major political weakness on the home front tends to push it into reliance on the immense political and material reserves of the Soviet leadership. Thus, after the August miners' strike, it was to Crimea to meet Brezhnev that Ceausescu went to discuss the situation.

Real mass actions in a neighbouring country are something that no East European regime would welcome. Thus the discontent of the Transylvanian Hungarians is good as long as it remains potential, not actual. This may explain why the response of the Hungarian Party leadership

to what, on the face of it would be an easy and popular issue to raise, has been so muted. No leading Hungarian political figure has so far taken up the question. The most that has occurred to date is that the Hungarian poet Gyula Illyes has written a strong article in a Budapest daily detailing the discrimination in Transylvania, and that this article has been republished in a magazine aimed at Hungarians living outside Hungary.

On the other hand the possibility exists of the most reactionary sections of the Hungarian bureaucracy making demagogic

appeals to Hungarian chauvinist sentiment. The fact that there are substantial Hungarian minorities living in Yugoslavia (500,000) and Czechoslovakia (600,000) makes this an explosive issue for the whole region.

First, the birth last spring of a small but significant human rights movement around Paul Goma, then the August strike of 30,000 miners in the Jiu Valley, and now this! Suddenly the Ceausescu regime, which only a year ago seemed one of the most secure in Eastern Europe, is looking extremely vulnerable.

A Worker's Plan for Independent Unions

by Vasile Paraschiv

The following short document is one of the very few comprehensive programmes for an independent trade-union structure to emerge from workers in any East European country.

Its author, Vasile Paraschiv, came from a poor peasant family and left home at the age of 12 to find work under the pre-war regime. In 1946 he joined the Communist Party out of conviction and was able to obtain some education through attending evening classes. In 1968 he decided to leave the Party, writing to President Ceausescu: "I have nothing against the general policy of the Party, or against the laws of the state, but I do not agree with the way in which they are applied."

Following the strikes in Poland in 1970-71, President Ceausescu launched an "Appeal for the Improvement of the System of Functioning of the Trade Unions" and called on all working people to "participate actively in the discussions" on this issue. V. Paraschiv took the proposal seriously and wrote the following document. He received no reply whatever from the authorities.

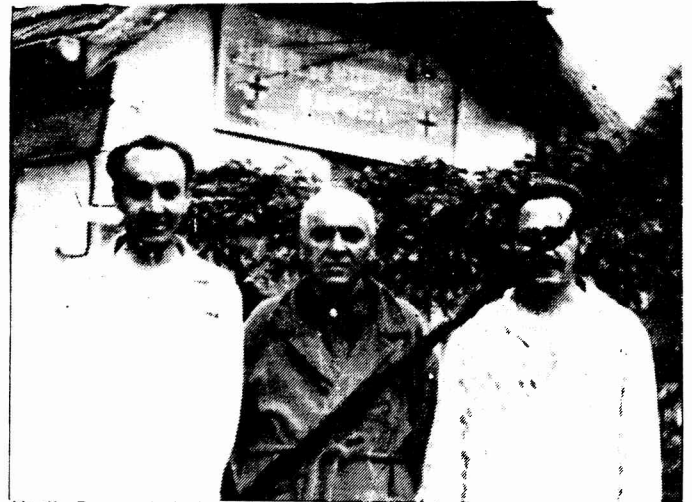
These circumstances account for the character of the document: its exclusive concentration on positive proposals for the future. But readers should bear in mind that each positive proposal is an implicit statement of what did not exist in Romania at the time when the document was written. And as can be seen from Paraschiv's suggestion that the Party should play the role of arbitrator in disputes between management and unions -- an idea that would not be acceptable to many British trade unionists -- the document is couched in very moderate terms.

Vasile Paraschiv participated in the Human Rights movement launched by Paul Goma last year and also wrote a document concerning his own forcible detention in a psychiatric hospital (See Labour Focus Vol.1 No.2). He was able to leave Romania last autumn to visit France but he was prevented from entering France and had to wait in Vienna for 3 months before the French authorities granted him a visa under pressure from the CFDT, the French Socialist Trade Union Federation.

Translation is by Patrick Camiller. The English text is copyright, Labour Focus.

To:
Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party
Letters Section, **Munca** Newspaper
Central Council of Romanian Trade Unions
The Editor, **Flamura Prahovei** Newspaper, Ploiesti

I the undersigned, Vasile Paraschiv, an ATM worker at the Brazi Petrochemical Complex, Sector Dero, in Ploiesti, am writing to you in connection with the task outlined by the Party of consulting working people about the role and tasks of Romanian trade unions at the present stage of national development. I am therefore addressing to you the following proposals, which



Vasile Paraschiv (left) with two other political prisoners at a psychiatric hospital in Ploiesti, where he was held for protesting against the repression of former members of the Romanian Socialist Party in 1976.

express the way in which I envisage a correct and complete solution to the problem. I request that these be published in full in the central and local press without changes of any kind.

I propose that the new law on trade unions should take into consideration the following series of points, which really constitute a sort of petition to the Party:

I. Trade unions are free, independent, working-class organizations, which account for their activity only before the workers who elected them and whom they represent.

II. The role and obligations of trade unions at the present stage in Romania are: **first**, defence of workers' economic, social, and political rights and interests; and **secondly**, production in all its aspects (quality, quantity, etc.), and support of the enterprise administrative leadership in carrying out the economic production plans presented to them by the higher organs of the state - that is to say, by ministries.

III. Within the framework of the relations of production, the state has its own representatives in the persons of hierarchical administrative leaders, who put into practice its stipulations, orders and decisions.

Within this same framework, the workers must have their own representative — the trade union — which is capable of discussing with the enterprise leadership in the name of the workers, and which will defend their interests and put into practice their decisions and will.

In the case of misunderstandings, litigations or labour conflicts involving, on the one hand, the trade union as the workers'

representative and, on the other, the administration as the state representative, the Party should play the role of arbitrator in its capacity as supreme instance of leadership. Its decision should be final and mandatory for either side.

IV. Abolition of censorship of the trade-union press; freedom of thought and expression; the right to criticize any political or administrative body for its failings and mistakes.

V. The unions must have the right of veto in all administrative organs — from the Management Committee at the bottom right up to the government at the top. They should also have the power to amend administrative laws and decisions affecting the workers' rights and interests.

VI. Trade-union bodies elected by the workers alone have the right to summon, organize and mobilize the workers for any socio-political or economic action.

VII. The word "group" is always understood to refer to a very small number of people - normally three, five, or ten at the most: in no case does it denote a number of dozens or hundreds of people. And yet that is precisely the number that usually compose a trade-union group. I therefore propose that, in the new organizational structure, the term "Trade-Union Group" should be replaced by "Trade-Union Branch" at department level, and by "Trade-Union Committee" at enterprise level.

VIII. The new trade-union statutes should make it possible for a general meeting to withdraw its mandate from any person or organ which has not fulfilled the obligations entrusted to it - even when this becomes clear in the middle of a year. In such a case, a fresh mandate should be given to other, more suitable persons.

IX. The tenure of office of branch and enterprise committees should no longer be extended indefinitely. The trade-union statutes should oblige the relevant elected body to go before the general meeting of workers every year: this may then decide on new elections or extend the mandate as it sees fit, with or without changes in the composition of the old body.

X. Trade-union meetings should obligatorily be held every three months, with an agenda confined to union problems of an economic and social character; twice a year, the agenda should be devoted to all aspects of production problems, to analysis of

work-performance over the preceding period, and to discussion of future tasks.

XI. Every union meeting is convoked and conducted by the appropriate elected body. The latter is obliged to consult the general meeting whenever this is requested by a union member; and in such a case, the general meeting is obliged to express its opinion on the question under consideration by means of an open vote. An opinion so expressed represents the decision of the meeting and is mandatory on all union members.

XII. Apart from being recorded in minutes, the proceedings of every union meeting must close by drawing certain conclusions from the discussion - conclusions which constitute the point of view of the general meeting and express its will and decision in relation to the problems under discussion.

XIII. Trade-union bodies should be elected through the presentation of candidates from the respective workers' collective (work-team, shop, office, etc.) within the framework of a given branch.

There must be a maximum of 3-5 candidates for each branch or enterprise organization. The general meeting will then decide by secret ballot which of those proposed it wishes to serve as president of the union organization or committee. The president of the newly-elected body then selects his team: namely, a 3-5 person bureau of the respective organization or committee. Finally, he makes his preferred list known to the general meeting, which must either endorse or reject the composition of the respective bureau.

XIV. The trade-unions should have the right of control over the administration on all matters concerning the norms in force and working-class legislation.

XV. During elections, persons not belonging to the respective union organization are not allowed to take part in debates. They may speak only at other meetings, when elections are not taking place.

3 March 1971
Vasile Paraschiv,
ATM worker at the Brazi Petrochemical Complex,
Sector Dero, Ploiesti.

POLAND

Police Break Up Meetings

1. Student Solidarity Committee Statement

[With the January Party Conference out of the way, President Carter's visit to Poland over, and a new rapprochement with the Church hierarchy established, the Polish Party leadership has brought 6 months of relative restraint to an end and launched new repression against the student and intellectual opposition. During February self-education meetings in various Polish cities have been broken up, lecturers and students have been arrested and beaten by the police. The Polish authorities have shown that they are not prepared to allow freedom of assembly for such self-educational activity.]

On 11 February 1978 officials of the militia and the Special Branch (SB) forcibly interrupted the third of a series of lectures by Adam Michnik entitled "From the history of the political events of People's Poland". Here is the course of events:

On 10 February at 10:30 a.m. Adam Michnik and Stanislaw Baranczak were detained at the railway station in Krakow.

Since the events described in the two documents which we publish below, all those held in jail have apparently been released. It therefore seems that the authorities are more concerned at this stage to prevent the unofficial public opposition from extending into activities than to organise trials of those who attempt to organise unofficial meetings. But it cannot be ruled out that we are witnessing the first moves in a new crackdown on the Polish opposition.]

Baranczak was released after 30 minutes, Michnik after 12 hours. The house in which the author's evening, given by Baranczak, was taking place, was surrounded by numerous functionaries of the militia and Special Branch. Each person entering the building was photographed (with the use of a flash) by functionaries of the SB. Jozef Baran, Jakub Meisner and Boguslaw Sonik were detained and driven to the Headquarters of the militia. They were

released after 4 hours in detention. Despite these incidents the author's evening passed peacefully. 80 persons were present.

On 11 February during the course of Michnik's lecture Florianska Street was again surrounded by the militia and SB. The lecture was attended by about 120 people. After less than an hour the flat was entered by officials from the militia, SB and members of the Department for Internal Affairs subordinated to the President of the town Krakow. They demanded that the illegal meeting be stopped forthwith. After explaining that the meeting had a self-education character the lecturer continued speaking. In reply the militiamen attempted to remove the listeners by force, jostling and kicking them. The student J. Skora was arrested, beaten up and thrown into a waiting police van. In order to defend themselves the participants of the meeting linked arms. At this point tear gas was used. The listeners of the lecture then sang the Polish hymn "God who protected Poland through the ages" and the Varsoviene of 1905. One of the officers of the SB ordered all those present to leave the flat, threatening them with a beating by "strengthened forces of the militia and SB". At the same time everyone was guaranteed a safe passage home. After completing the lecture and deciding the date of the next meeting everyone left into the darkened and closed off Florianska Street. In the street, a tussle started, provoked by the militia officials who attempted to pull Michnik out of the crowd. Again the only defence was the linking of arms and shouts for support. Surrounded by numerous police vehicles the students led Michnik to a flat in Grodzka Street. The lights in Grodzka and Florianska Streets and in the Market Square were turned off. Of the students returning home seven were stopped by patrols. That same night at

4.30 a.m. officials of the militia and SB attacked Michnik and three students accompanying him to the station. Elzbieta Krawczyk was beaten up; four uniformed militiamen held her while a civilian beat her about the face and head and pulled her hair. Leslaw Maleszka was beaten and dragged into a waiting police radio car. The person beaten most brutally was Adam Michnik. Militiamen punched him in the face and pulled his hair. When Michnik fell, he was kicked and pulled into a radiocar where the beating continued. All those detained were driven to the district Headquarters in Szeroka Street. Four militiamen pulled Michnik up the stairs into the building. They threw him to the floor shouting "To hell with you, you junkie! Come here once again and you'll die!" Lilianna Balko, Elzbieta Krawczyk and Leslaw Maleszka were released after 30 minutes and Michnik after 5 hours.

The use of force by the forces of law and order in response to the organisation of lectures in the history of the People's Republic of Poland requires no commentary. The SKS in Krakow declares that self-education centres and meetings will continue.

Jozef Baran - Economic Academy; Lilianna Balko - Jagiellon University (UJ), Polish philology; Joanna Barczyk - ASP; Boguslaw Bek - UJ, Polish philology; Ewa Kulik - UJ, English philology; Anna Krajewska - UJ, Ethnography; Ziemowit Pochitonow - Agricultural Academy; Bronislaw Wildsztajn - UJ, Polish philology.

Krakow
13 February 1978

Social Self-Defence Committee Declaration

Between the 10th to the 24th February 1978 the police acted in a number of major cities to inhibit self-education discussion meetings, seminars and lectures. Adam Michnik in his capacity as a lecturer of the Association of Academic Courses was detained for many hours on five occasions in Krakow, Poznan and Warsaw. Twice he was beaten by officials of the militia. On 11 February Wiktor Woroszyński, a writer arriving in Krakow for a meeting of writers, was detained at the railway station.

On 18 February a number of activists from the Warsaw and Gdansk Committee of Student Solidarity (SKS) were detained in Krakow. They were Urszula Doroszevska, Roland Kruk, Stanislaw Smigiel and Cezar Drzymalski. On the same day Antoni Macierewicz was stopped at the airport in Gdansk. He had arrived for a discussion meeting.

On 22 February Bogdan Borysewicz and Stanislaw Smigiel were detained in a private house during a history seminar. Borysewicz was hurriedly sentenced to 14 days in prison for hooliganism.

On 23 February in Wroclaw Jolanta Bojwit and Janina Stasiaczyk were detained together with the Wroclaw activists of the SKS, Mark Adamkiewicz, Jaroslaw Kminka and Mark Rosponda.

On 23 February Andrzej Klimowicz, Janusz Krupski and Jacek Kuron were detained.

During the night of 23-24 February, the following were detained in Warsaw: the writer Andrew Kijowski a member of the Association of Academic Courses, the actor Maciej Rajzacher, and a graduate of the Medical Academy in Krakow Elzbieta Krawczyk.

On 24 February in Radom the following were detained: Ewa Sobol and Leopold Gierek. Also Ewa Milewicz; Jan Litynski and Janusz Szpotanski from Warsaw.

To date the following remain in detention: Marek Adamkiewicz, Bogdan Borysewicz, Jolanta Bojwit, Leopold Gierek, Jaroslaw Klimek, Jacek Kuron, Janusz Krupski, Jan Litynski, Adam Michnik, Ewa Milewicz, Marek Respond, Ewa Sobol, Janina Stasiaczyk, Janusz Szpotanski, and Stanislaw Smigiel.

Entering homes in which discussion meetings or lectures were taking place, the police carried out two searches (Wroclaw, Sopot) and twice used tear gas (Krakow). During the search in Wroclaw Anna Bojwit was forced up from her sick bed. During the search of Borysewicz's flat in Sopot the functionaries of the militia demolished it. One of the occupiers has got medical leave due to tear gas burns in his eye.

In Lodz all members of the Independent Discussion Club were called to the town headquarters of the militia. In the headquarters of the militia in Poznan and Wroclaw, numerous hearings are taking place.

Such an escalation of repression has not been seen since the massive police actions of April-May last year. These facts are clear evidence of a full-scale mounting of police terror aimed against self-education, which expresses worthwhile wishes of young people to widen their knowledge. This terror is leading to a confrontation between the citizens and the police with moral right being unquestionably on the side of the citizens against the police. In recent years Polish citizens have shown that they want to and know how to defend themselves. The disruption of social peace does not lie in anyone's interest.

THE COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL SELF-HELP "KOR"

Warsaw
24 February 1978

(Translation of both documents by Pawel Jankowski for Labour Focus.)

Former Party Leaders Demand Sweeping Reforms

[In previous issues of Labour Focus we have suggested that there are strong liberalising currents within the Polish Communist Party. Dramatic proof of this was given at the start of this year with the publication of the following letter to Edward Gierek.

This letter is an important document for many reasons. It provides valuable information from an authoritative source on the present situation in Poland. Its ideas for political change are also of considerable interest; and in some ways the most remarkable feature of the letter is its list of signatories, several of whom are household names in Poland.

Edward Ochab, a prominent Polish Communist in Moscow during the war, became a leading figure in the drive to oust Gomulka from the Party leadership in 1948. After the death of Bierut in 1956, Ochab became General Secretary of the Party only to be replaced by Gomulka in October of that year. In the 1960s Ochab became President of the Polish state, but resigned in protest against the anti-Semitic drive by the Party leadership in 1968. Ochab at one point in his career was described by Stalin as 'a very good Communist' thus earning what was probably the most favourable comment Stalin ever paid to any Polish Communist leader!

Three of the other signatories, Albrecht, Matwin and Morawski were all secretariat or politburo members during 1956 and were leaders of the 'liberal' faction within the Party at that time. All three were eventually eased out of central positions by Gomulka as he sought to decrease his dependence upon the 'liberal' faction within the Party after 1956.

This English translation is taken from the German version of the letter published in Der Spiegel. Translation for Labour Focus is by Ed Murphy. The original Polish text was published in the unofficial opposition journal Opinia without the consent of the signatories at the beginning of this year.]

To the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party,
Comrade Edward Gierek.

The political and economic situation in our country is very serious. Difficulties and tensions are continuously increasing and the mood of wide sections of the population shows that the citizens' confidence in the Party and the State has been shaken.

The first steps, taken after 20 December 1970, to reorganize economic and social life found, at the time, general recognition from the public. Later, however, ill-considered measures led to a disturbance of this equilibrium and to the disorganization of the economic life of the country. The results were disappointment and protests on the part of the population.

These protests found their drastic expression in June 1976. The pacification which followed is delusive, and the crisis of confidence has, if anything, deepened and extended since then. Great bitterness, which has also undermined the authority of the state, was created in society by the policy of repression against those who had taken part in the workers' protests of June.

Acute difficulties in the provision of foodstuffs and industrial goods, as well as hidden price increases, create an atmosphere of dissatisfaction and nervousness. Finally, the primitive form and content of press, radio and television propaganda, which is taken by all thinking people as an expression of the low estimation of public opinion, leads to general disgruntlement.

The conviction is spreading amongst the population that one achieves nothing through honesty; the tendency to corruption,



Former Party General Secretary and Head of State, Edward Ochab.

cliquism and the dishonest earning of money increases constantly. At the same time cases of people getting rich quickly, of selfishness, of the misuse of one's post for personal gain, are indignantly commented on.

The recent change in economic policy, the so-called "economic manoeuvre", which aimed at restoring economic equilibrium, is not achieving its goals and does not have the support of the population.

This is because no attempt has been made to have a dialogue with the citizens, to explain the real causes of the existing difficulties to them. Apart from verbal declarations, no efforts are to be seen which, through the greater involvement of democratic public opinion, could lead to a solution of the country's difficult basic problems.

It was with this background that an atmosphere of general distrust of all slogans and programmes arose. It is here that the reasons for the various expressions of protest, the activities of KOR [the Committee for Social Self-Defence - trans.], the unrest amongst the students, and the protest letters of the intellectuals, are to be found. Every attempt to change the political climate through repression, instead of serious efforts, is doomed to failure. Repressive measures do not lead to a reduction of tension; on the contrary they only deepen the bitterness.

The sources of our major difficulties are largely political. To them belong the undemocratic form of government and, first and foremost, the lack of a democratic exchange of opinions in the choosing of goals and the selection of the means for solving socio-political problems.

An absolutely necessary step, on the road of progressively rebuilding trust in the Party and State and improving the present mood, is the formulation of a clear programme of the political and

economic reforms which will guarantee a corresponding influence of public opinion on the course of events.

This demands great mental efforts from the committed and experienced members of the Party, a departure from many obsolete attitudes and ideas, and a courageous look at the causes of our difficulties. An open exchange of opinion between Party activists, members of the existing political groups and non-Party citizens is also necessary for this.

A real action programme can only emerge out of a discussion about principles. It is unlikely that it could arise in the long established commissions and experts' committees. The results of their work are useless in a practical sense. This, and the apologetic attitude towards official directives are the reasons why an atmosphere of discontent and feebleness rules in these commissions.

The so-called "General Consultation" [consultation of the people by the Party leadership - Gierk's promise on taking office - Trans.], too, cannot lead to the wished-for results in the present situation. In order to work out a daring and, at the same time, realistic programme the first thing which must be done is to do away with the atmosphere of uncritical affirmation.

An essential role in the working out of such a programme can and should be played by those active Party members and non-Party citizens who are not afraid to express their opinions openly, who have their own experiences of, and an impartial attitude to, the problems, and have at least the realization of socialist ideas corresponding to the needs of the times.

In order to work out and realize a programme of reforms, basic discussion and changes appear to be necessary in the following areas.

1) The role of the Party in society.

Changes in the Party, which would then, acting within the framework of the existing possibilities, lead to an evolutionary development in Poland, are an essential element in the transformation of the country. This implies the activation of the healthy forces inside the Party. A hindrance to the unfolding of these forces is the bureaucratic control of the Party machine, which opposes the democratic and social essence of the Party. This machine encourages political-moral lack of principle; it leads to dishonesty and torpidity and kills the initiatives which should go out from the Party organizations. We have thousands of people in the Party who are capable of taking initiatives. Thousands and tens of thousands are able to develop many kinds of activities, provided that these correspond to their convictions, to their concept of the truth, to the public interest.

The unfolding of the democratic forces in the Party and society is hindered by the mechanical and incorrect use of the concept of the leading role of the Party. We must oppose any institutionalization of this concept. The leading role of the Party can only be established on the basis of the recognition and support of the population, achieved by everyday work.

The initiative and independence of the groups, trade unions and organizations allied to the Party must not be restricted. The Party can discuss with them, attempt to win them to its positions. It is not permissible, however, to force its decisions on them by administrative means. The Party cannot establish its leading role by decree.

If the Party authorities had actively worked for inner-Party democracy, the inner-Party forces would achieve the ability to act effectively more rapidly. A free and open discussion, with an end to the anonymous expressions of opinion, is also called for. The right of subordinate levels to criticize higher ones must also be guaranteed, as must be the statutory rotation of leading Party posts, the combatting of privileges and servility, the creation of a climate of modesty, and real consideration of the views of the Party

membership.

The appropriate place and role of the salaried Party apparatus must be marked out. This has to serve the elected Party organs and not usurp the right to direct and command the Party organizations, activists and state apparatus.

We are discovering no new truths here. These are all elementary principles on which the Party must base its activity. It is only necessary that these principles be realized in practice.

2) Political and Economic Democracy

The level of consciousness of the masses and their agreement with the principles of socialism permit and demand the application of truly democratic forms of government, without endangering the fundamental basis of the system. As well as inner-Party democracy, various institutions of political and economic democracy must be introduced, the one depending on and conditioning the other. The necessary conditions for the independence of the existing political parties must be created, so that they may be able to claim their right to have their own authentic positions in all representative organs. The sovereign rights of all these organs must be re-established and extended. This applies to the Sejm [Parliament], the National Councils [local authorities - trans.], the trade unions, as well as various forms of self-administration and the cooperatives.

All social and cultural organizations, as well as the self-managing bodies must have the possibility of electing their leading authorities in a truly democratic fashion and freely developing inside the framework of their states. The interference of the Party in the everyday work of these organizations must be ended as it weakens their initiative and destroys their basic autonomy.

A detailed discussion and the reform of the present electoral regulations is called for, in order that citizens can freely choose from among the democratically proposed candidates, in the elections for the Sejm, the National Councils and the executives of the social organizations.

The trade unions, as the representatives of the working class and all working people, have an especially important role to fulfil. They must become equal partners of the government departments and economic administrations in all questions which affect wages and social policy. Another task of the economic policy and its democratic realization is to, once again, create the conditions for the functioning of workers' self-management. It would certainly be correct to re-establish the institutions and powers of the workers' councils.

3) Problems of Economic Policy

If one wishes to find efficient means of improving the country's present economic situation it is necessary to know what has led to such great difficulties. Excessive and structurally one-sided investment, the arbitrary fixing of incomes, inconsistency with the production incentives used in private agriculture, and the irrational use of foreign credit are the most important reasons. Finally, the lack of adequate stimuli for the increasing of efficiency in the economic sector is a basic reason for the economic difficulties.

Only on the basis of an analysis of these causes could one attempt to produce a broad detailed reorganization programme. A basic discussion is urgently required on the level and structuring of investment, an important factor for the prosperity of the population and harmonious economic growth. Correct price, wage and employment policies must be thoroughly discussed and set out.

Amongst the most essential questions are those of agriculture. A consistent, long-term policy needs to be formulated, through which a solid growth of our agricultural economy can be guaranteed, on the basis of various property forms, private farms as well as economically healthy state enterprises and cooperatives.

The complex of measures which need to be taken to put the country's balance of payments on a sound footing must also be

considered.

A conscientious analysis of the true causes of the failures of all previous economic reforms is wanting. Only on the basis of such an investigation is it possible to make plans for effective changes in the economic system. In order to increase productivity an adequate participation of the work-force in the administration of the factories is necessary.

Naturally these are not all the questions that a Party programme seeking to provide a solution would have to take up. One can look at the situation from various points of view, and there could be a number of possible counter-measures.

One thing is certain, however. If we want to effectively overcome today's difficulties and take measures in time to prevent those disturbances which threaten to assert themselves tomorrow, we must have an unfalsified picture of our social reality.

We will, however, be able neither to achieve such a picture of our

reality nor work out a programme of effective measures, without an open exchange of opinion, an open discussion of opinions in a democratic form. Convinced of this, the signers of this letter consider it necessary that a broad discussion of the above-mentioned themes should be held in various forms amongst the Party activists. Such a discussion is particularly important in view of the approaching 2nd Party Conference [which met in Warsaw on 9-10 January - trans.]

In view of the serious situation we regard this expression of our opinion as our moral duty.

October 1977

Jerzy Albrecht, Andrzej Burda, Wincenty Heinrich, Szymon Jakubowicz, Cezary Jozefiak, Julian Kole, Mieczyslaw Marzed, Wladyslaw Matwin, Jerzy Morawski, Edward Ochab, Jan Strzelecki, Jerzy Szacki, Zofia Zakrzewska, Janusz Zarzycki.

Conference in Brussels



Jiri Pelikan, leader of the Czechoslovak Socialist Opposition and editor of its journal *Listy*, speaking at the Brussels Conference.

On the weekend of 21-22 January between 700 and 800 Belgian socialists attended a conference marking the 10th Anniversary of the Prague Spring. The conference heard reports from leaders of the Czechoslovak Socialist Opposition about the events in Czechoslovakia 10 years ago and about the Charter 77 movement. Amongst the speakers from Czechoslovakia were Jiri Pelikan (see picture above), Zdenek Mlynar, former Central Committee Secretary under Alexander Dubcek, and a recently exiled Marxist Charter supporter, Jan Kavin. The conference unanimously called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia, the release of political prisoners, an end to the 24-hour surveillance on Petr Uhl and Frantisek Kriegel, and the return of all those Chartists sacked for their political activities to jobs corresponding to their qualifications.

The conference was also addressed by Wolf Biermann, the Russian dissident Vadim Belotserkovsky, and the Polish socialist Krzysztof Pomian as well as other East European and Belgian speakers, and it appealed for greater international co-ordination of labour movement solidarity with those attempting to win political rights in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Bahro Defence Appeal

"THE PARTY APPARATUS TRIES TO PLACE THE OPPOSITION IN THE FOLLOWING POSITION: EITHER KEEP QUIET, WHICH MEANS LIQUIDATING YOURSELF POLITICALLY, OR SERVE THE ENEMY"

--RUDOLF BAHRO

Rudolf Bahro, member of the East German Communist Party (SED), is the author of the book called *"The Alternative. A Critique of Socialism as It Exists Today"*. For getting it published by the West German Trade unions, Bahro was arrested by the East German police on an espionage charge. He has been in jail since August and is threatened with a long prison sentence.

RUDOLF BAHRO MUST BE RELEASED!

Rudolf Bahro has been a communist since he joined the East German Party at the age of 17 in 1952. His book is an important work of Marxist theory. He supports the Euro-communist Parties in Western Europe. His only "crime" is that he dared to publicly criticise the political system in the German Democratic Republic from a Marxist standpoint.

FOR A LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN TO FREE BAHRO!

The arrest of Rudolf Bahro is a crime against socialism. It is an open challenge to all those who stand for socialist democracy. A broad campaign is needed throughout the British labour movement to demand Bahro's immediate release.

We appeal to all socialists and communists to take up Bahro's case:

- *Send letters of protest to the Embassy of the German Democratic Republic
34 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QB
- *Get unions and/or political organisations to pass resolutions
- *Raise money for a campaign to publicise Bahro's case throughout the labour movement.

For further information about the Bahro case or for speakers for your trade union or party branch, contact:

The Bahro Defence Committee, c/o Günter Minnerup,
14 Folkestone Rd., Copnor, Portsmouth.

Signatories include (so far): Tamara Deutscher, Michael Hamburger, Ken Coates, Jan Kavan, National Organisation of Labour Students, Tariq Ali, Ken Tarbuck, Paul Hoggett, Chris Taylor, John Saville, Margaret Vallenge, Dr. J. Riordan.

GOMA APPEALS FOR LABOUR MOVEMENT SOLIDARITY WITH ROMANIAN MINERS

The Romanian dissident writer, Paul Goma, was in London from 16 to 21 January 1978. During his visit, he especially tried to raise support for the Romanian miners, who were on strike last August.

Among the activities organized on this occasion was a meeting with some members of the Trade-Union group of Labour M.P.s including Edwin Wainright and Tom Irwin, who is the British representative on the European Commission for Human Rights. Paul Goma was also sympathetically received by Lawrence Daly, General Secretary of the NUM, and during their discussion Goma raised the possibility of a British delegation visiting Romania to enquire into the miners' situation.

On the occasion of Goma's visit to Britain, **Labour Focus** produced a special supplement on Romania, dealing with the fate of the earlier Human Rights Movement and with the miners' strike.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA — TEN YEARSON: THE PRAGUE SPRING, CHARTER 77 & THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

This is the title of a day-long conference on the 10th anniversary of the Prague Spring which is being organized by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists on Saturday 27 May in London. In the morning session, Czech speakers will present their views on the lessons of 1968 and on the course of the opposition leading up to and including the Charter 77 movement for human rights. During the afternoon, speakers representing various trends in the British labour movement will open a further discussion on the ten years' experience, taking up the possibilities and tasks of solidarity in this country. A number of prominent members of the labour and socialist movement will be invited to attend and contribute from the floor, and there will be ample time for discussion in both sessions. It is intended to hold a social in the evening.

This event should be of interest to all our readers and will provide a major forum for discussion of the Czechoslovak experience in the British Left. Further details will be given in the next issue of **Labour Focus**, which will appear in mid-May. But readers who wish to have information earlier, or who think they can help in making the

event as widely known as possible should write directly to the Committee at 49A Tabley Rd., London N.7.

Women in East Europe.

SPECIAL ISSUE OF LABOUR FOCUS

Finances permitting, a special issue of **Labour Focus on Eastern Europe** will be appearing shortly entirely devoted to the position of women in Soviet and East European societies. The issue will include analysis of the family in Eastern Europe, the position of women in employment, abortion and contraception rights, the official view of women's role in society, sexism and the position of gay people.

Work on this special issue is being done by a collective of socialist feminists in collaboration with the **Labour Focus** editorial board.

Help us to finance this issue by placing a bulk order for this first attempt to provide comprehensive information about the position of women in Eastern Europe. The issue will cost 30p per copy plus postage, from **Labour Focus**, Bottom Flat, 116 Cazenove Rd., London N.16.

REVIEW

The Polish Opposition Speaks by Peter Green

"DISSENT IN POLAND, 1976-77": Reports and Documents in Translation. Published by the Association of Polish Students and Graduates in Exile, London, 1977.

Anyone wishing to gain a detailed picture of the Polish dissident movement must read this book of documents. Well researched and clearly laid out, **Dissent in Poland** contains a representative collection of documents from the mainstream of the civil rights movement outside the Party. The texts are linked together by means of a factual commentary with biographical notes and a detailed chronology at the end of the book.

Such a collection cannot, of course, provide a complete account of the various oppositional currents within Poland: tendencies at the base of the Communist Party itself, though undoubtedly active, remain hidden from public view. The letter from Edward Ochab and other former Party leaders, published in this issue of **Labour Focus** gives an inkling of some of these trends and other more radical Marxist currents undoubtedly exist also.

In addition to portraying the views of the intellectual dissenters, the editors have provided the most detailed account yet available in English of the workers' protests and the subsequent government repression

in June and July 1976, and it also provides some valuable insights on the policy of the Polish Church, by quoting large extracts from speeches by Cardinal Wyszyński and from documents issued by the Catholic hierarchy.

The editors do not conceal their strong support for the Polish Church and praise its "humanitarian principles". Yet they do not conceal such facts as the Church's major campaign against free abortion which was one of its main themes at last year's Czestochowa pilgrimage, a central festival for Polish Catholics. The quotations from Wyszyński also bring out the Cardinal's appeals to a narrow Polish nationalism, as when he mourns the supposed fact that the Poles are being expected "to save the world at the cost of Poland .. It is a disaster to be preoccupied with the whole world at the expense of one's own country."

Although the authority of the Church in Poland is enormous it would be wrong to imagine that the Polish hierarchy takes a disinterested view of politics or that it is wholeheartedly committed to the struggle for democratic rights. There is plenty of evidence that the Church hierarchy today, as in the past, is more concerned to use expressions of popular discontent for its own narrow purposes of increasing its own

institutional privileges and ideological influence through negotiations with the authorities. Indeed the section of **Dissent in Poland** devoted to the Church brings out some of the ambivalence in the hierarchy's posture and it was possible to foresee that the recent rapprochement between Church and state was likely to be a prelude to police repression of the more leftward leaning sections of the dissident movement (See my article in **Labour Focus** Vol.1 No.6).

Many British socialists may be disappointed with the section of the book on Perspectives for the Future which includes documents outlining the longer-term aims of the various strands within the dissident movement. One could argue that the Programme of the Polish League for Independence is given too much weight -- the strength of this current is in my view not great within the opposition. And it would have been useful to have had Kuron's programmatic document that appeared at the end of 1976, rather than the short interview and subsequent retraction in **Le Monde**. But the lack of material on the overall aims of the opposition is not really the fault of the editors. It is rather a reflection of the shortage of such statements even in an unsigned samizdat form from leaders of the movement of intellectual dissent within Poland itself.

NUS AND DEFENCE ACTIVITY

The Labour Student Viewpoint by Hilary Barnard and Nigel Stanley

[In this issue we print what we hope will be the first of a series of contributions from socialist currents within the National Union of Students on the stand that students should take in relation to repression in Eastern Europe. Hilary Barnard and Nigel Stanley are both members of the Executive of the National Organisation of Labour Students, the Labour Party's student organisation.]

This article we hope will begin to open up a constructive and thoughtful debate on Eastern Europe in the British Student Movement. Eight years after the National Union of Students (NUS) puts on record its support for the Liberation Movements in Southern Africa, we believe this is long overdue. Petty sectarianism and point-scoring have been allowed to obstruct this debate. We hope in this article we have escaped these weakening traits, and will assist in striking a new direction for discussion. We do not imagine or expect that all the points we make will be endorsed by other Left forces in the Student Movement. We feel that we will be able to claim some success if our views are not dismissed out of hand and stir all sections of the Student Left to examine the possibilities for united action.

Consideration of whether and how a Student Movement campaign on Eastern Europe can be initiated cannot be discussed in isolation from the chequered history of NUS and student organisations on Eastern Europe. In the immediate post Second World War period, the Left leadership of the NUS was largely broken on the wheel of anti-communism. NUS moved from the International Union of Students (IUS), of which it had been a founder member in 1946, to the Cold War International Students' Conference (ISC) in the early 1950s. By 1967 when the CIA credentials of the ISC had been exposed and NUS had disaffiliated, many students and young people were subject to very different ideas and influences. In the years that have followed, the development of a Student Movement, that Movement's links with the Labour Movement, and the solidarity actions undertaken by students with the Vietnamese people in their struggle against US imperialism have become well known.

What is indisputable is that these significant trends were not matched by a surge of interest or concern with events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe either in the Movement at large, or in NUS Conferences, since the "Education only" clause of the Constitution had been repealed. It was only

at the November 1973 NUS Conference that an initiative by NOLS forced a discussion on the floor of Conference with the NUS Executive accepting the Executive Report's section on the Soviet Union as inadequate. The same fate awaited the more lengthy reports that the NUS Executive presented to the next two NUS Conferences, but no policy mandate was given to them to carry out. The two positive outcomes were the decision by NUS Conference April 1974 to break links with CSUV, the puppet Czech student organisation, and that NUS Executive should send an observer to the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists.

Last year's campaign over the case of Andrej Klymchuk does suggest a more mature and united approach, and a greater possibility to mobilise students on Eastern European questions than was possible in the past. Many students, however, will quite rightly take some convincing that talk by sections of the Left of a united campaign on Eastern Europe is not another guise for playing for Party advantage, and is really about pursuing united student action as has been possible over other International questions, like Chile. It is our view that Joe Thompson's article in *Labour Focus* No.2 regarding the April 1977 NUS Conference will not help to alleviate these fears or contribute to a solid basis for united work in the future. This is particularly regrettable given the rapid decline and almost complete demise of Stalinist forces in the NUS, strengthening as it does the conditions for a campaign involving almost all sections of the Left.

We believe that there is a real need for active solidarity with those engaged in the struggle for full democratic and working class rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, just as there is for solidarity with similar struggles all over the world. The defence of both individual and collective freedoms are at stake. We believe that students no less than trade unionists or members of Left political parties have a responsibility to give that solidarity. The Student Movement is not a socialist movement or part of the Labour Movement, but it is a progressive and democratic force. We see much worth applauding in its record in taking up the fight for basic democratic rights in this country and internationally. This concern we believe should be extended to Eastern Europe.

To operate double standards or a selective conscience on international questions can

only weaken the Student Movement. Students' internationalism should not be divided.

We believe that work on Eastern Europe must take as its fundamental starting point the processes of detente. The Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1975), parallel developments on the international youth level, like the European Youth and Students Meeting (EYSM), Warsaw, June 1976, Disarmament talks, and the consequent lessening of Cold War tensions have represented the most significant change in International Relations in recent years. They open up whole new campaigning perspectives for the Left, as well as the dissident movements themselves.

We do not regard the central question regarding detente as to whether there should be detente — this can be left to the Cold War warriors of the Tory Party. It is not possible to have a credible perspective towards avoiding the destruction of the planet by war between hostile super-powers without involving detente. The central question is what we mean by detente. The Left should be campaigning for the detente that Jiri Pelikan saw in *Labour Focus* No.2 as "a real co-operation between citizens and their organisations with the aim of opening new paths of development in Europe in accordance with the needs and aspirations of peoples".

The Student Movement in its practice has a history of being committed to a lessening of tensions and to the struggle for World Peace. Our campaigns should seek to build on that commitment. The Helsinki Agreement has the advantage of being something that socialists and students in both Western and Eastern Europe can campaign around. We believe that this must be on the basis of the full implementation of all three baskets and consequently condemn the opportunism of Carter's stand on human rights. The emergence of Helsinki Monitoring Groups in the Soviet Union and the references to Helsinki by the signatories of the various Charter 77 declarations illustrate the importance of such international agreements to those arguing for far-reaching democratic reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

A failure by the Left to take up the initiative on Eastern Europe can only concede political space to the Right. The implications for the offensive that the

Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) have mounted in the NUS in the past three years should not be underestimated. No longer should one be able to pick up copies of *Free Nation* and see pictures of Charter 77 signatories who have left Czechoslovakia for the West, presented as though their natural allies were the forces of reaction in this country.

In developing its work, the Left must attempt to grasp the different political conditions that exist in each of the Eastern European countries. Different approaches in our campaigning work will be necessary to meet diverse political developments. Mass movements of workers in Poland agitating for the right to strike are clearly not the same as groups of individuals issuing manifestoes.

It is essential within the campaigning of the Left to demonstrate alternative conceptions of socialism to those professed in the USSR and Eastern Europe. At the same time this should not be at the expense of falling into the crude anti-communism that too many on the Left share with Mrs. Thatcher. The many achievements of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries and their aid to anti-imperialist struggles cannot be passed over. What we argue is neither the absence of democracy at all levels. We see much in the experience of the Prague Spring with its search after the fullest flowering of the human spirit in economic, social and political spheres that repays attention. Many students who entered College last autumn were only 7 or 9 at the time of those events. We have a major task to reveal their importance and in so doing the fundamentally liberating character of a humanistic socialism.

We would be dishonest if we were not critical of our own organisation's record. Only in the last two years has NOLS been involved in active solidarity work on Eastern Europe. Before that time it occupied itself passing resolutions giving lengthy analyses of the nature of the Eastern European states. Whilst not wishing to detract from the importance of theoretical debate, it is simply not good enough for organisations merely to have policy in a vacuum without actively engaging in concrete solidarity work. We believe we are not the only ones guilty of this shortcoming.

Since then we have become involved in the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists. In many respects the Committee should be a model for future initiatives. A real pluralism of Left forces are involved Liberal Students, Labour Party members, Communist Party members, and members of the IMG among them. This shows that working co-operation and campaigning can be obtained without any organisation

trying to use it as a "front", if the political commitment and effort is given. NOLS would welcome similarly broad based work on other solidarity issues concerned with Eastern Europe. Our activities have not been confined to the Czech Committee. We have worked to raise the issue of solidarity with Charter 77 in the International Union of Socialist Youth with some success. We have also endeavoured to strengthen, deepen and make more widely known the commitment of the NEC of the Labour Party to the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe.

If the experience of high levels of youth unemployment has encouraged the FCS to argue for student particularism and special case-ism, it has allowed other students to realise the similarity of their conditions with young people at large. This creates the possibility of a wider unity between students and youth. We believe that this should be extended to questions related to Eastern Europe.



Prague students protesting the Soviet invasion in 1968. Their union, the CSUV, closed down by the Stalinists in 1969, is still recognised by the NUS.

Youth detente was specifically encouraged by Basket 3 Section 1 f — Meetings Among Young People — of the Final Act of the Helsinki Agreement. The EYSM in 1976, the recent European Youth and Students Conference on Disarmament in Budapest, and the forthcoming discussions of All European Youth Co-operation show every sign of carrying it further. In addition, much work has been done by National Youth Councils, including the British Youth Council, the umbrella body for all youth organisations in this country, in developing their own bilateral links through exchanges of information and delegations.

We believe that this process can contribute to weakening and breaking down the power blocs, strengthening the position of those fighting for democratic and working class rights in Eastern Europe. A contribution can be made here. NOLS supported the successful NUS move in the BYC last October for the BYC not to open relations with the Czech Youth Council. NOLS, together with almost all those involved in the

British preparatory work for and delegation to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana in July will attempt to raise questions of repression internationally, including in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. *This is only a start.*

Definite problems face those raising the question in the Student Movement. We do not consider it would either be correct or feasible to go straight for a policy debate at NUS Conference. It would not be correct, because students have yet to be mobilised on this question to any significant extent. To do this, thorough discussion must take place at the base level, with students themselves determining the central directions of the campaigning work rather than having them imposed from above. We believe that it would be virtually impossible to get the question prioritised for debate at NUS Conference at present.

Work at the level of the local Students' Union and NUS Area should be broadly based. It should not take as its sole focus the adoption of resolutions by Students' Union General Meetings. The question should be taken out into the student press and radio, for example. The campaign should be deliberately aim for a breadth of support beyond just the Left political societies. Bodies, like Women's Groups, should be drawn in.

We see two possible avenues as open towards a full Student Movement debate — firstly, through a specific debate on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and secondly, through a general debate on Human Rights. These are not necessarily counterposed. The first could be built on the second. A debate on Human Rights will only be a right-wing debate, if the Left is foolish enough to let the Right set the parameters of the debate. The Left needs to discuss the nature of its intervention in such a debate.

We do consider that it is a desirable objective for NUS to adopt progressive policy on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. NOLS will be there, arguing for its perspectives, and in particular for the importance of active campaigning work. In this article, we have not been able to do much more than sketch an approach, but we hope, nevertheless, we have made enough points to stimulate a wide ranging debate.

Corrections to article on Eurocommunism in Labour Focus Vol. 1. No. 6.:

Col. 1, p. 22, middle para., should read: "The legal, constitutional level cannot on its own provide a sufficient guarantee for democracy: the Party ..." instead of: "Not only can democracy be guaranteed at the legal, constitutional level ..."

Col. 2, p. 22, middle para., should read: "such as the organisation from below and the relative distancing of the Party/parties from government."

ONE YEAR OF LABOUR FOCUS

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(R) = Review

(LM) = Labour Movement

Solidarity Committees**East European**

Solidarity Campaign
c/o Vladimir Derer,
10, Park Drive,
London NW11 7SH.

**Committee to Defend
Czechoslovak Socialists**

49a Tabley Road London N7

Chairman: Lawrence Daly