

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on
Eastern Europe and the USSR

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British Left Says:



Vladimir Klebanov and two other spokespersons for the newly created Trade Union Association, announcing the organization's formation to the press in a Moscow flat. The owner of the flat was subsequently arrested by the KGB.

(AP copyright)

“HANDS OFF SOVIET WORKERS’ GROUP”

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 African 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.

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EDITORIAL

The Trade Union Association Must be Allowed to Function

The Soviet news media have responded to growing labour movement protests against the persecution of the recently formed Trade Union Association by trying to deny the existence of any such body. On 21 April, TASS correspondent Yuri Kornilov reported that, "All this is twaddle from beginning to end. There are not, and never have been any such trade union 'associations' in the Soviet Union", he declared. He went on to state that people concerned about working class rights should take up such matters as "the persecution of trade union officials" in Britain, and singled out as an example what he called "the case of Alex Kitson" — a TGWU leader who was criticized on the Left for praising the Soviet Trade Unions last November. (This example merely illustrates Kornilov's inability to distinguish between disagreeing with people in public and locking them up.)

This kind of response by the Soviet authorities is typical, but of course not tenable. It will not, for instance, wash with British miners as a reply to the NUM's letter to the Soviet government about the case. It is just not possible any more to settle matters by crushing an organization and then turning round to workers in the West and saying the organization does not exist. The labour movement must demand: Release all arrested members of the Trade Union Association! Give them the right to work! Allow the Association to function openly!

Amnesty International has spread information about the Trade Union Association to the leaderships of the various trade unions and to the TUC, the Labour Party NEC, and to the Communist Party. A number of Union leaderships have begun to take up the case (see the back page of this issue of Labour Focus). But it is still not clear what stand the TUC General Council and the Labour Party NEC will take. When Eric Heffer raised the case on the NEC it was referred to the Labour Party's International Committee. The International Committee decided to take no position until it heard what the response was to a letter that Len Murray had sent to the Soviet Government. The TUC General Council is also waiting for a reply before it takes a position.

The Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign has launched a drive to

get support throughout the labour movement for the Soviet Trade Union Association. The Campaign is sending a dossier to Labour Party branches, trades councils and student unions explaining what the Association is, which of its members have been arrested, and what kinds of action can be taken by socialists and labour movement organizations here. Leaflets can be obtained by writing to the Campaign at the address given below.

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

In this issue of Labour Focus we publish in full the text of the Trade Union Association appeal to the Western Labour Movement. This gives an absolutely clear picture of the nature of the Association and its aims. We also publish an interview with the Russian socialist exile Vadim Belotserkovsky on the real character of the official trade unions in the USSR.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the Prague Spring and the subsequent Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia. The anniversary will be marked by a day-long meeting on 27 May organized by the Czech Committee, as well as by a Conference on Eastern Europe and the British Labour Movement 10 years after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The latter conference is being organized by the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign and will be held 19-20 August

THE PRAGUE SPRING, CHARTER 77 AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

Saturday, 27 May

Jiri Pelikan Eduard Goldstucker Jan Kavan Stan Newens, M.P.
Robin Blackburn A speaker from the CPGB

Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Rd., London NW1
Organized by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak
Socialists, 49a Tavoy Rd., London N.7.

SOVIET UNION

Soviet Trade Union Group Appeals to Western Unions

[Below we publish one of a number of documents which recently reached the West from a group of Soviet workers who have come together to protest against the lack of workers' rights in their country. A detailed account of the development of this group is to be found in Labour Focus Vol.2 No.1. The document appeals to the Western labour movement for assistance in their attempt to form an independent trade union association. It was signed by 43 people with a further list of 110 "candidate members". It is the first time that a collective attempt by Soviet workers to assert their rights has become widely known in the West.]

In Britain the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign has launched a drive for a grass-roots Labour Movement response to this appeal.

The spokesperson for the group, Vladimir Klebanov, a former miner, lost his job as a foreman in the Bazhanov mine because he refused to make workers do compulsory overtime or work in

unsafe conditions. He was interned in a psychiatric hospital for 4 years. After that he was unable to work because he had originally been "dismissed in connection with his arrest". Over the next few years he became part of a group of other workers facing similar problems. The group, however, did not make itself known to the West until November 1977 when a press conference was called in Moscow to protest against the repression against the group. Klebanov himself was re-arrested in December 1977, released and then again arrested on 6 February 1978. From 7 February he was held at a psychiatric hospital in Donetsk but was transferred to a prison at the beginning of May, where he is still being held. A list of other members of the group who are known to be suffering repression is given overleaf.

The document was translated by Paul Washchenko of the London Committee to Defend Soviet Political Prisoners and provided by Amnesty International.

APPEAL

TO THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) AND TO TRADE UNIONS IN THE WEST:

We are unemployed Soviet workers, who have come to Moscow from various cities and republics of the country. Having no other possibilities, we are obliged to seek moral and material support with this APPEAL through the Western press.

We have all been dismissed for exposing abuses or for speaking out against the management of enterprises where we worked. Among the issues we raised were pilfering and dilutions of materials, bribery, a high rate of industrial accidents, and flagrant violation of the Labour Code.

We are middle-aged people (35-45 years old) with more than a decade of working experience. We have been deprived of work for periods of one to five years. At first we thought that our complaints would find support, if not at local level, then at least in higher institutions and the press.

On the one hand, the Soviet Party and Government call upon citizens to correct violations wherever they occur: in industry and in the life of the state and society. On the other hand, the authorities come down with special brutality on those who respond to propaganda appeals by strictly observing the regulations and speaking out in the interests of the enterprise.

All our attempts to achieve justice from government authorities have been in vain.

We appealed as individuals to the central organs of Soviet power: the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and the All-Union Central Trade Union Council. They did not reply to us.

The ruling organs decide our cases only in a one-sided manner: that is, they give bureaucratic answers and transfer us from one department to another. When we appealed to higher authorities, not only did they not take positive measures, but they applied unlawful methods against us for exercising our right to complain: on the pretext of registering us for an audience with the leadership, they seized us one by one and in groups, sending us to police stations and psychiatric hospitals.

This happens at the highest offices of power: in the reception-rooms of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the USSR Procurator General's Office.

It is impossible to be received in a single high Soviet institution. All highly-placed personnel — our servants as they like to call themselves — use the police to protect themselves from us.

We decided to unite. We began to act collectively. But just as before, they continued to expel us from Moscow with the help of the police and to put us in psychiatric hospitals.

Collectively we addressed ourselves to all social, Party, council and trade-union organizations; to the editorial offices of major newspapers: "Pravda", "Izvestiya", "Trud", "Literaturnaya Gazeta"; and to the magazines: "Ogonek", "Kommunist", "Partiinaya Zhizn", and "Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost". We received no reply.

We hoped that the new Constitution of the Soviet Union would rectify the lack of rights enjoyed by the working population. But the facts concerning repression and internment in psychiatric hospitals, which we present in this Appeal, prove that the new Constitution is not taken seriously by Soviet organs, and that it

Arrested Members of Trade Union Association

***Fyodor Pavlovich Dvoretzky**, a worker from Kazakhstan, arrested on 5 March 1978, and put into a psychiatric hospital in Alma-Ata.

***Vladimir Alexandrovich Klebanov**, arrested in Moscow at the end of 1978 and kept in a psychiatric hospital in Donetsk. He was transferred to a Donetsk prison at the beginning of May.

***Yevgeny Nikolayev**, engineer, forcibly interned in a psychiatric hospital on 15 February.

***Valentina Pelekh**, worker, forcibly interned in a psychiatric hospital in February.

merely serves as a screen with which to confuse the Soviet people and world opinion.

It was only after we made known these acts of arbitrariness and coercion that we were invited to the "Izvestiya" editorial office and to the KGB office. There, we were told, help had been promised.

But all this turned out to be a trick:

At the "Izvestiya" editorial office, they had only one aim. By taking us in one at a time, humouring us with promises, and bringing everything round to the name of the organizer, they did everything possible to sow discord among us.

In seeking to find out exactly how many people supported the collective complaint as well as their addresses, the KGB organs had the clear aim of exiling us from Moscow or placing us in psychiatric hospitals.

And so, we decided to organize our own genuinely independent trade union. We did this in order to win the official and legal right to defend our interests — a right guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution — and to enlist in the common struggle for our rights other willing persons whose rights are unjustifiably violated.

We consider that only through a union of our own, basing itself on the public opinion of workers of all countries, can we force our government to respect the ordinary workers.

In our country, there is no organ which objectively defends the workers' interests.

Soviet trade unions do not defend our rights and do not have the necessary authority. For key union posts are held by communists — that is, by people who could not succeed in their Party organizations. They are all technicians and engineers who, if not re-elected for a new term, are again subordinate to one or other higher management official. And if only for these reasons, they always need to heed the opinions of top management.

Trade-union elections take place in a purely formal manner: the chairmen of trade-union committees are elected and appointed by the management of the enterprise, the Party organizer and the regional committee of the CPSU. According to the rules, one delegate per ten trade-union members is elected to attend a conference, whose purpose is to hear reports and elect new officials.

It is worth noting that, in the Soviet Union, there is not one enterprise with less than 100% trade-union membership of the workers and technical-engineering employees.

All of this would be democratic, if only delegates were elected at a general meeting, in the presence of everyone. However, in order to secure support beforehand, the management and the Party committee resort to the trick of having delegates elected by shop or section. Before this happens, there is a meeting of the technical-engineering personnel at which the trade-union chairman and leaders of the Party committee lay down how the election of delegates should be "carried out".

Afterwards, the elections take place by section or shop. As a rule, the supervisor of the section or shop "recommends" (i.e., records) whichever candidates he likes. Out of gratitude to him they nominate himself and the foremen, as well as someone from the technical-engineering staff. The employees elect their own delegates. The workers evidently do not get a look-in. In the end, although workers outnumber employees by ten, nearly all those who attend the conference are technical-engineering personnel — that is, those for whom workers' interests are not important.

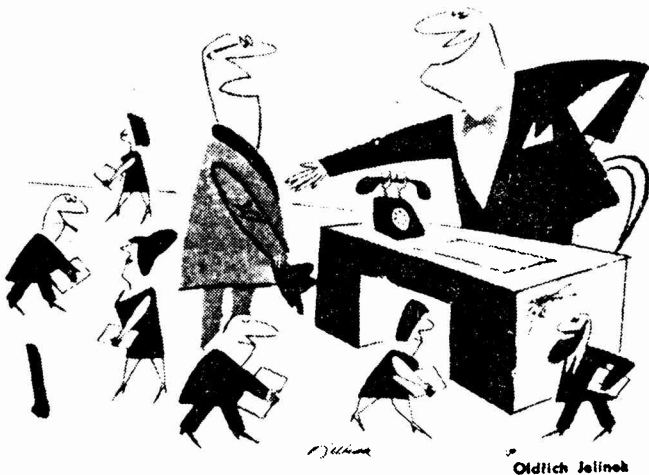
The workers' delegates receive money which they do not have to return, and the buffets abound in normally scarce products and alcoholic drinks.

To the presidium are elevated, without any invitation, the enterprise management and representatives of the district (Party) committee, the city trade unions, and the Party organisation. These then make a register of candidates, or in other words, they register on the ballot-paper anyone they like.

No other candidates are registered. That is why the election of the incoming members of the trade-union committee is ensured in advance.

The election of the chairman and the allocation of responsibilities take place at a table laden with food and spirits at public expense, and to the cheers of clanging glasses.

The chairmen of lower trade-union organizations go on to elect territorial trade unions, and so on.



Czech satirical cartoon from the magazine *Dikobraz*, 13 October 1966. The caption reads: "If you want to work with us, you will have to adjust."

In this APPEAL, we will substantiate our arguments with newspaper items confirming that these are not individual "shortcomings", but a normal part of everyday life. In its issue of 27 January 1978, "Leninskoe Znamya" [Leninist Banner - the organ of the Moscow provincial CPSU committee and Soviet of People's Deputies] carried an article "Getting Used to It" in its general column entitled "Following the anxious letters":

"... For the second year running, the No.3 administrative collective of the Mozhaiskovo Road building works has received a flood of anonymous letters to various local and district organizations ... There were similar signs earlier ... On 14 October 1977, there was a trade-union meeting to review the work and hold elections. At the end of this, the workers were given a rouble each, while the office workers went to a restaurant to drink away trade-union money ... The enterprise manager, B.F.Stepakin [stated]: We have an old tradition; we feel that it is better to drink collectively than to hide in a corner ... The chairman of the trade-union committee, N.I.Miroshnikov [said]: The regional committee of the trade union puts aside special resources for such 'gatherings'."

"Trud" (Labour) of 20 January 1978 published an article called "Strange Permits" from the town of Enakievo, Donetsk province:

"... The statement of face-worker A.L.Todoseichuk from the platform of the election and review conference is understandable to many at the mine. A.L.Todoseichuk severely criticized the chairman of the mine committee, V.S.Sigarev, for allowing violations of the Labour Code and for the improper allocation of material assistance. The worker brought forth concrete examples. He said: Year after year, the same people use the privilege of sanatorium-resort treatment. Worse still: after absenteeism, D. Ganziuk was given a holiday; and soon after a stay in a sobering-up station, E. Litvin and A. Melikhov received permits [for accommodation at a rest-home - trans.] What is this? The managers of the mine - the general director of the "Ordzhonikidze coal" association, N.F.Semchenko, the secretary of the association's Party committee, V.I.Gromov, and the chairman of the Enakiev territorial committee of coal industry trade unions, V.I. Kozlitiin, all of whom are on the presidium, let this go by. The reaction was unexpected. A.L.Todoseichuk was a member of the mine committee. Previously he had been recommended for the new structure. But when it came to considering the candidates, the presidium did not nominate Todoseichuk. He was not included in the list for secret voting, even though this was proposed from the floor.

Sigarev was again elected chairman of the mine committee, although out of 163 delegates at the conference only 59 voted against him. [The authors of the Appeal note that according to the rules, a two-thirds majority is required.] In broad daylight, in front of all to see, Sigarev was taken under protection, in spite of the opinions of those who openly spoke the truth about his improper conduct.

... A.L.Todoseichuk decided to fight for the truth. He wrote letters to the Donetsk regional and republic committees of the coal workers' trade union. He signed it with all his work-titles: face-worker, communist, honoured national miner, holder of the order of the Red Banner of Labour — but no one answered his letters.

... Sigarev forges signatures, sells holiday permits to a certain E.A.Sotnikova, who has nothing to do with the mine; as for the head librarian, N.I.Kuzmenko, he simply threw her out of his office (she had come to see him on official business); and the trade-union chairman paid no attention to the official requests of the city procurator. After a short period of time in office, complaints appeared in several departments from Sigarev's subordinates. Each one mentions his rude behaviour of his associates. Because of this, people are leaving "of their own volition" ..."

In our previous open letters we wrote: "there are thousands of similar cases".

Yes, we did not exaggerate. We are convinced that every tenth worker or employee could fill our ranks.

Let us look at the press. "Pravda" of 21 January 1978 printed an article entitled "Insufficient persistence":

"... At the Petrozavodsk enterprise no.1126 employing a thousand workers in the town of the same name, one third of the workers left in the last year alone ..."

The newspaper "Evening Moscow" of 21 January 1978, carried an article "A Difficult Topic". Concerning the Sokol'nicheskii railwaycar repair and building works in Moscow, we read: "... We pay a great deal of attention to our work with cadres .. What is the result? The balance is not in our favour, as 24 people left while 15 were hired ..."

“Leninist Banner” of 25 January 1978 had an article entitled “Easy Parting”:

“Over the past three years 262 workers have left the company. In effect, two out of three left...”

An article from “Pravda” of 29 March 1976, entitled “If a labour dispute occurred”:

“... Legislation of the Armenian SSR, in particular, provides for punishment of violations such as abrogation of the labour contract with the management official or his removal from the occupied post. However, in our republic there has not yet been an occasion for the trade union to use this law. Meanwhile, all the same grounds for such sanctions are encountered ...”

In the same article, not one tenth of the incidents of groundless dismissal of workers and employees is mentioned; and not one of these received help from the trade unions.

Here is what happened in one large metallurgical factory in the city of Enakievo, Donetsk province, where there are more than 15,000 workers. To whom is there faith entrusted? “Pravda” of 7 January 1978 headlines “The Effectiveness of Criticism”:

“... The Director of the Enakievo metallurgical works Iu. T. Cherneta became so offended at criticism in the local paper, that at the beginning of a meeting he put forward an ultimatum: ‘Either me or her’. And he got what he wanted - the meeting did not begin until the ‘her’, the reporter from the paper, left the hall ...”

How do the newspapers write about the cream of the cream, that

is, about communists: “Pravda” of 21 January 1978:

“... At an enterprise of 1000 workers, 75 are communists ... The secretary of the Party committee, A. Min'kovich, recently committed such a misdemeanour (!!?) that the communists had to elect a new secretary, A. Ul'ianov. The communists hoped that he would take matters in hand. But it did not work out: he didn't have enough character or experience. Furthermore, two other members had to be removed from the bureau: K. Asanov ended up in a sobering-up station, and V. Ushanov violated financial discipline ...” And then 49 wrote to “Pravda”: *“The notice was not discussed in the brigades. There are no noticeable changes at the enterprise ...”*

The whole country is gripped in a corrosive mould of bureaucratism. This has been witnessed by US and by our comrades-in-misfortune, who have grown to over 200: We worked in various enterprises in over 150 different cities and regions of the country.

We are an insignificant part of the citizens who daily occupy the reception rooms of the central apparatuses.

WE request the ILO and workers' trade unions to recognize our free trade union of working people and to give us moral and material support.

1 February 1978.

This is followed by a list of 43 signatures to the appeal as well as a list of 110 candidate members of the association.

Trade Unions and the Workers:

An Interview with Vadim Belotserkovsky

[After the appearance of the Soviet Trade Union Association, Labour Focus carried out the following interview with the Russian socialist exile, Vadim Belotserkovsky. The son of an old Bolshevik, Belotserkovsky worked for many years as an industrial correspondent in the USSR. He joined the movement for democratic rights and went into exile in the West in the early 1970s. An expert on the Soviet working class, Vadim Belotserkovsky is also a leading Russian socialist exile, the editor of a collection of left-wing Russian writings called The Democratic Alternative and the author of a work recently published Freedom, Power and Property. The interview was conducted by Oliver MacDonald, who speaks first, and translated by Helen Jamieson.]

Many people in the West consider that the Soviet trade unions are not proper trade unions. Yet the Soviet leadership devotes large resources to the official trade unions, pays the salaries of thousands of union officials, and makes senior Party leaders like Shelepin head of the trade unions. What is the role of these organizations?

The Soviet trade unions are not in fact real trade unions at all. But they do fulfil a function. In effect, they play the role of a

Ministry of Labour, organizing labour resources, trying to increase labour productivity and exercising control over the labour force. They also take responsibility for providing certain social benefits such as holidays, pensions and housing for workers. But they use their control over these welfare provisions as an instrument of political patronage, providing incentives for those who are loyal to the state, and sanctions against those who are not. Thus, in reality the trade unions are an arm of the state and not an independent defence organization of the working class.

The leaders of the Soviet trade unions are not particularly powerful figures. For example, Shelepin's appointment as head of the trade unions was a demotion: it was a sign that his career had been broken, after his rise to power as chief of the KGB.

There is another aspect of the official trade unions that is important, namely their propaganda and diplomatic role abroad. They are presented to the world at large as a powerful working-class movement. The hollowness of this claim was vividly illustrated by Brezhnev's speech to the 1977 Congress of Trade Unions. In the middle of the speech, Brezhnev unexpectedly referred to a discussion that was apparently going on about reforming the trade unions. He defended the need for this reform, saying that the structure and efficiency of the trade unions should be improved. But, what

discussion was he referring to? Who was involved in the discussion? Where was it taking place? Certainly not at the Congress, and not a single delegate rose to enquire about it. Just imagine: a supreme congress of the trade unions at which nothing is said, or asked or known about a debate going on concerning reform of the trade-union movement!

Of course, such discussion takes place within the ruling Party. The Party decides the policy, the activities and the personnel of the unions. At the lowest levels union officials do go through the formality of an election, but there is only one candidate, chosen by the relevant Party organization. And above the middle ranks of the unions, even such formal election procedures are dispensed with: officials are directly appointed from above by the Party. The workers know very well where the power lies. They know that anyone who genuinely tried to defend the workers' interests would have to do business first with the Party, then with the KGB.

You are suggesting, then, that the legal right of the trade unions to bargain with management over such matters as wages does not really operate in practice. In that case, how are wages fixed, what factors lead to the granting of wage increases, and how does the government gauge the mood of the working class?

Formally, the trade unions can take part in collective bargaining and Soviet propaganda maintains that this is done. But in reality no genuine bargaining process occurs. The trade unions in practice stand on the same side as the plant administration and the state. Indeed, in certain key areas they have a duty to assist the state: they are obliged to ensure that workers fulfil their work norms, even where these have been raised without a corresponding increase in wages. Thus, one factor in the big strike wave that took place in the early 1960s was this drive by the unions to steeply increase production norms, while wage levels remained stationary and prices rose.

Wage rises are in practice decided unilaterally through state decrees. Many of these government decisions for improvements in the standard of living are not in fact carried out. For instance, ten years ago a number of decrees were issued on the question of the minimum wage. These were supposed to form part of the last 5 year plan, yet they have still not been implemented. And the trade unions have not, of course, protested about this.

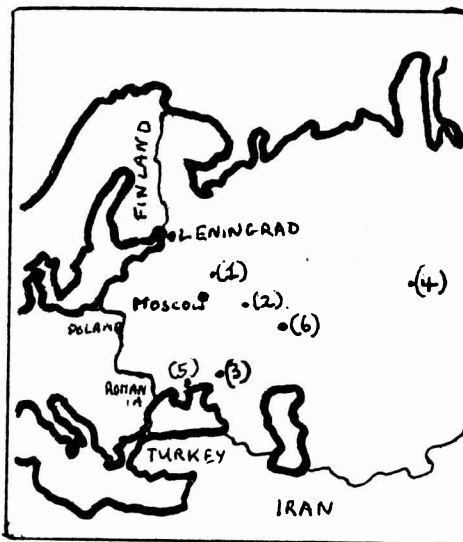
In recent years, there has been a slow but real rise in workers' wages and the main reason for this has been the government's fear of the working class. The Party leadership took note especially of the Polish strikes in 1970-71. Another important influence is that of international public opinion, especially that of the Left, which encourages the authorities to raise workers' living standards.

The regime has two main channels for gauging working-class opinion: a special network of KGB informers, who are responsible for reporting the feelings of the population; and secondly, the letters columns in *Trud* ['Labour', the central organ of the Soviet trade unions] and other trade-union papers in the various republics. These papers are obliged to publish workers' complaints about certain aspects of life, even though the most sharply critical letters are not actually printed. In addition, the Komsomol (Young Communist League) and Party organizations conduct various questionnaires, but these have a generally propagandist character. Their questions are very remote from the real interests of the workers, asking, for example: "Do you prefer to spend your spare time relaxing, going to the cinema, or going to the theatre?" -- that kind of nonsense.

Recently, the British academic Alex Pravda made an analysis of the letters published in *Trud* over the last 10 years. It showed that the majority of letters were complaints about the poor organization of labour and about bad safety conditions. Only 5 per cent concerned themselves with the issues that most interest the authorities -- "socialist competition" and raising the productivity of labour.

You worked for 10 years as an industrial correspondent. Did you have frequent opportunities to speak to factory workers?

Of course, all the time. The workers were nearly always ready to talk freely with me, although sometimes they would be suspicious, until I had gained their confidence. But the job itself mainly involved writing about industrial achievements and successes. On almost every occasion when I sent in an article on bad living or working conditions it was rejected.



STRIKES IN THE EARLY 1960S

Map of the USSR showing cities where strikes took place in the early 1960s, numbered in the following order: 1 Alexandrov, 2 Murom, 3 Novocherkassk, 4 Nizhni Tagil, 5 Odessa, 6 Kuibyshev.

You have described the ineffectiveness of the official trade unions as bodies through which the workers can press their grievances and demands upon the management and the government. What other ways do Soviet workers use to defend their interests?

No doubt the majority of Soviet workers think that a strike is the most extreme method. Here and there strikes do break out spontaneously. But a more common variant is the so-called 'Italian strike', in which workers turn up to the factory but in practice do no work. I know about this tactic both from my own experience and from samizdat. As a rule, once a strike breaks out, the workers' demands are satisfied. But for that very reason, they are soon followed by repression against the organizers. And since most workers live in the provinces, they lack one vital means of defence -- access to world opinion through contact with foreign correspondents. So strike organizers often simply disappear into mental hospitals without a trial, or else provocateurs are used in order to charge them with assault or hooliganism. Sometimes, before they are arrested, they are transferred to other factories so that their fellow-workers will not know what is happening to them. They are then grabbed and sent off to a labour

camp or a mental hospital.

In my work as a correspondent, I travelled around the country a great deal, living in ordinary houses instead of hotels in order to be able to talk to the workers. Quite often, I would hear of families who had completely disappeared -- not just following a strike but sometimes even after they had made a bold statement in defence of workers' rights at a trade-union meeting. For this reason, workers try not to go on strike, knowing that this is an extreme form of protest.

They tend to employ another method of improving their situation: namely, sabotage of the norm. Or again, if the foreman or manager does not complete their work-sheets to their satisfaction, workers will see to it that the machines 'break down'. And the foreman knows that, although the machines are not really broken, they will not re-start unless he credits their operator for the job of repairing them. Sometimes the workers will even wreck the machine themselves, or say that there are not spare parts for it. And in the Soviet Union it is extremely difficult to acquire any spare parts. The foreman knows that if he makes out a bonus chit, the workers will find the part or steal it from another factory, or carry out the repairs themselves. It is through such constant sabotage that the workers improve their lot to some extent. I am not talking now simply about their regular bonuses, which are in any case limited, but about that little bit extra; they force the management to sign forms for work that has not really been done.

You mentioned earlier the strike movement at the beginning of the 1960s. The strike in Novocherkassk is quite well known in the West, but where were the other strikes and how much is known about them?

For the period 1961-62 I have had definite reports of strikes in Alexandrov, Murom, Novocherkassk, Nizhni Tagil, Odessa, Kuibyshev and Timerdan. These strikes took place for various reasons and I will simply outline the events in the first strike, that in Alexandrov in 1961.

The police arrested a drunken worker and beat him so badly that he died. Although the official explanation was that he died from natural causes, the rumour spread that he had died from police beatings -- the story even reached Moscow. The workers at his factory went on strike. Then the factory director demanded that the dead man's body be exhumed and that an inquest take place. A medical investigation took place, establishing the real cause of death. The news quickly became known, and in fact the local Komsomol and trade-union journalist wrote an article on the subject. Then the workers and the whole town marched through the streets of Alexandrov, first

burning down the police station and then releasing all the prisoners from the town jail. At this point the army was called in, but the soldiers refused to open fire. The job had to be done by special KGB troops who began to shoot at the workers. I myself spoke to Party members who witnessed this and who told of random shooting in which even children were hit.

After the demonstrators had been dispersed in this way and the authorities had regained control of the situation in Alexandrov, a public show trial was organized. The factory director, who was a young engineer, the head doctor of the factory and the journalist were all sentenced to execution by firing-squad. Many more simply disappeared without trial.

The date of the bloody 1962 clashes in Novochoerkassk — June 2nd — has been declared a day of commemoration by a number of leading dissidents such as Grigorenko, Turchin and Sakharov.

Some people in the West say: O.K., the regime is in many ways very reactionary, but in this it is simply reflecting views and attitudes within the Soviet working class. What would you say to that? Some of the right-wing dissidents in exile also express a hatred and fear of the working class, portraying it as benighted, filled with anti-intellectualism, anti-semitism and chauvinism. What is your view on this and what are the different trends of opinion within the working class insofar as you can judge?

This is a completely false picture. It is by no means true that reactionary or chauvinist views are prevalent in the Russian working class. I spent some time working in factories, 5 years as a teacher of young workers and 10 years as a travelling correspondent. During all that time I was interested in the question of national minorities and how they lived. Hardly ever did I hear a complaint that the Russian workers were guilty of chauvinist actions. Of course, I am talking now about the Russian Federation itself: the situation is more complicated in other republics such as the Ukraine and Georgia. In those republics, if there is some antagonism between Russian workers and those of other nationalities, it is because the local Ukrainian and Georgian population is subjected to the Russification policies of Moscow. This obviously complicates relations between Russian workers and others in the national republics. And although I have not often been to the non-Russian republics and am not an expert on them, I have the impression that the antagonisms there are not very strong: even there people understand that the really guilty party is the regime itself, not the Russian nation.

Nevertheless, the regime itself continually tries to use the multi-national character of

the USSR to its own advantage. For example, the forces sent into Czechoslovakia in 1968 were carefully selected, coming especially from the national republics with a low level of general culture and awareness. Even so, our Czech friends explain how the soldiers had to be changed frequently because of disintegrating morale.

The importance of this issue was shown also in the disturbances in Novochoerkassk, Alexandrov, and Murom where the regular Russian troops sent against the workers refused to open fire, and they had to be replaced by special KGB units made up of peasants from the national republics with little education or knowledge of Russian, but serving under the command of Russian officers. The authorities were in other words exploiting the soldiers' lack of attachment to the Russian people. In the same way, they use poorly educated Russian soldiers to crush disturbances in the national republics. When I attended an open trial in Moscow where Vladimir Bukovsky was called as a witness, it was noticeable that all the soldiers escorting Bukovsky were from Central Asia -- this also was not an accident.

The chauvinist circles that exist among Russian dissidents like to say that the Russians live worst of all. In reality the working conditions in the RSFSR are much better than elsewhere. Such chauvinists say that the peasants are poorer in Russia than in the Ukraine. This is true for the simple reason that the land is of poorer quality in Russia. But they forget that in Russia proper only 25% of the population lives in the countryside, and in the towns conditions are better than elsewhere in the USSR. Thus the migration of workers and engineers flows from the national republics into the RSFSR and not vice versa. In the Ukraine the material conditions of workers are the same as in the RSFSR but in other, non-Slavic republics, for example Armenia or those of Central Asia they are lower. And in addition there is effective national discrimination because the main language spoken in the factories is Russian. Thus a Russian worker or engineer gains higher qualifications and promotion because they have ready access to the technical books and instructions which are in Russian. The discrimination therefore is really a matter of linguistic russification which, in recent years especially, has been pushed forward by the regime as a conscious policy.

One final point. The Russian working class is often judged by people's experience of the service sector workers in the larger cities and towns. In conditions of state capitalism, which is what I consider the Soviet structure to be, these workers find themselves in a really terrible position: the widespread corruption and economic inequalities have a profoundly demoralising effect on these workers, breeding in them bitterness towards everyone, as well as chauvinism, anti-semitism and anti-intellectualism. They

are the least educated and most warped section of the Soviet working class, and they are a social group quite unlike anything you will find either in a country like Czechoslovakia or in the West. They receive such paltry wages that they need to pilfer both from the state and from the ordinary working people. Working in tiny collectives and tending to serve various state or Party functionaries, they become totally alienated and filled with frustration and envy. In general there is no common solidarity such as exists in larger production units where the workers forge links in order to fight exploitation.

One last question. The emergence of the unofficial trade union association at the beginning of this year has raised enormous interest amongst trade unionists and others in the West. Were you surprised by this development?

Not entirely. I had been noticing signs of movement among groups of workers in the months before the trade union group became publicly known. [See Belotserkovsky's article in the last issue of *Labour Focus* - OM] I also remember an incident in 1972 that struck me very much at the time. One of my comrades had been arrested and his wife was later also arrested because she had refused a lawyer assigned to her by the KGB. She was threatened with detention in a psychiatric hospital, so we organized a hunger strike in the foyer of the CPSU Central Committee building against this unprecedented repression. While we were there we saw how many workers were coming to the Central Committee with their complaints. And we discovered that the workers were extraordinarily sympathetic to us, promising us support and help. "Keep it up lads!" they would say, "Give it to them - it serves them right!"

Now that we have heard the story of how the group around Vladimir Klebanov was formed we know that they came together through the queues at the Central Committee. The formation of the group shows that there is a growing indignation among Soviet workers and also that they have been influenced by the successes of the dissident movement and have decided to act in the same way.

For me the emergence of the trade union association is of great significance because I consider the workers and the engineers to be the healthiest section of Soviet society. They are the most intent upon, and the most interested in, really fundamental changes that are progressive and not regressive. I see in this stratum of engineers and workers the basis for a new socialist development in the Soviet Union.*

*Vadim Belotserkovsky has outlined his views more fully in a book that has just appeared in Russian entitled **Freedom, Power and Property**.

Demonstrators Win Victory in Georgia

One of the most significant signs of political opposition for many years took place in the Georgian capital, Tiflis (Tbilisi) on Friday 14 April 1978. According to a number of Western sources in Moscow, later confirmed by travellers passing through Tiflis at the time, a mass demonstration was staged against the Kremlin's policy of Russification in the non-Russian Republics of the USSR.

On Friday, 14 April, the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party met to approve the final text of a new constitution for the Republic. Following the adoption last October of the 'Brezhnev' constitution to replace the Stalin constitution of 1936, the Georgian republic was preparing to change its own local constitution. But the new draft contained an important change in the status of the Georgian language. Whereas both the 1921 and the 1937 Georgian constitutions had declared Georgian to be the official language of the republic, the new draft removed this provision and gave Russian an equal linguistic status in republican affairs. The Central Committee meeting on 14 April was the last occasion on which changes to the new draft could realistically take place. On the following day the Georgian Supreme Soviet was due to ratify the final text.

But on the morning of the Central Committee meeting a large crowd assembled at Tiflis University and marched to the Government building, arriving there at 2 p.m. The demonstrators, said by the BBC to number 'thousands', then stood in front of the building demanding the maintenance of Georgian as the official language of the Republic.

The Georgian Party Secretary, Eduard Shevardnadze, reportedly spoke to the crowd twice during the afternoon. On the first occasion he apparently tried to argue with the demonstrators, before retiring into the building. He then reappeared later and assured the demonstrators that "the Georgian language would be preserved". The crowd then dispersed. On Sunday 16 April, the Moscow paper *Zarya Vostoka* (Star of the East) then carried the full text of the approved constitution, and sure enough the provision promised by Shevardnadze restoring Georgian as the official language was included. The implication is unmistakable: a popular demonstration had successfully ensured that the authorities would retreat on this important constitutional issue.

Since the 1960s, the national question has emerged as an issue of first rate importance in Soviet politics, and the most explosive aspect of it has been the conscious policy of the regime to press forward with a policy of

linguistic Russification. It is often forgotten in the West that Russians make up barely 50% of the Soviet population. At the same time the Party apparatus and the state administration in the USSR is overwhelmingly dominated by Russians or thoroughly Russified members of other Soviet nationalities. Ever since the forced collectivization of agriculture in the early 1930s there has been a profound gulf between the stated equality of Soviet nationalities and the actual dominance of Russians in virtually every sphere of Soviet life. In the 1960s there was a renewed drive by the authorities to extend the russification of the USSR and gradually eliminate non-Russian languages from Soviet life. This policy was rationalized with a theory of the gradual replacement of ethnic differences in the USSR by a new, unitary 'Soviet nationality' — that is, a Russian nationality.

There has been bitter resistance to the Russification drive, especially in the Ukraine, the Baltic republics and the Caucasus. In Georgia this opposition has undoubtedly penetrated into the official organizations themselves. In the 8th Congress of the Georgian Writers' Union in April 1976, one writer, R.A. Dzhabaridze made an impassioned attack on russification, mentioning in particular the introduction of Russian as the language of instruction in various courses at Tiflis University. His speech was apparently received with great enthusiasm by those present. Another symptom of the extreme bitterness provoked by russification was the rash of bombings that took place in Georgia in 1975 and 1976. In April 1977 V.G. Zhvaniya was sentenced to death for these bomb attacks, and according to dissident sources in Georgia he had been motivated by opposition to the russification drive.

The success of the April demonstration will no doubt strengthen the movement against russification in Georgia. It can also be expected to have a powerful influence on opponents of Russification in other republics. The national question will be one of the major problems that succeeding the present Brezhnev leadership will have to grapple with.

By Oliver MacDonald



Grigorenko and his wife, Zinaida, in Moscow.

More Trials of Helsinki Monitors

Just as we go to press, it was announced today, 15 May, that Yuri Orlov's trial had started in Moscow this morning. Orlov was the leader of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group and has been imprisoned for over a year before his trial. Orlov is being charged with 'anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation' which carries a maximum sentence of 7 years in prison and 5 in exile.

Simultaneously, a trial has started in Tbilisi of two members of the Georgian Helsinki Monitoring Group: Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a writer, and Merab Kostava, a musicologist. They are charged under the same article as Orlov.

A third member of the Georgian group, Grigory Abramovich Goldshtein, was sentenced on 20 March 1978 to 1 year in a labour camp for leading a parasitic life-style.

The trial of Alexander Ginzburg, another leading member of the Moscow Group, will take place on 3 June, and most likely Shcharansky's will be soon afterwards.

For information on the recent trials of Ukrainian members, see the last page of this issue of *Labour Focus*.

By Helen Jamieson

Grigorenko Challenges Expulsion

On 10 March, Major General Pyotr Grigorenko was deprived of his Soviet citizenship while receiving medical treatment in the USA. 5 days later the Soviet authorities announced that G. Vishnevskaya, the Russian soprano, and her husband M. Rostropovich, the cellist, were also stripped of their citizenship. All three were accused of unspecified actions harming the prestige of the USSR.

Both the world famous Soviet musicians and Pyotr Grigorenko responded to this shock decision by immediately demanding the right to return to the USSR and stand trial for the crimes they were supposed to have committed. Their appeals have so far received no response from the Soviet government.

The French Communist Party denounced in strong terms the Soviet government's denial of the musicians' citizenship rights. In New York the Committee for the Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners immediately organized a protest by 350 people on 18 March. At the same time, an appeal was drawn up against the decision signed amongst others by Noam Chomsky, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Reza Barehni and Eric Bentley.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Political Currents Emerge Within Charter 77

by Jan Kavan

In April of this year, two apparently counter-posed documents appeared in Prague. The first of these was issued on the 10th anniversary of the Dubcek Communist Party leadership's adoption of its Action Programme for reform in 1968. Out of about 40 people who were involved in drawing up the original Action Programme, some thirty have signed this new document. Their reference point is the Prague Spring of 1968. The second document to appear in April marks another anniversary — 100 years since the foundation of the Czech Social Democratic Party in 1878. The almost simultaneous appearance of these two different documents is without doubt the most interesting development of the past few months in Czechoslovakia.

The Charter 77 human rights movement made clear from the start that it was not political in the sense that it has not adopted any political programme. Its aim has simply been to try to ensure that the Government does not violate its own laws, especially those relating to human and civil rights. The Charter is very heterogeneous from a political point of view, comprising reformist communists, Trotskyists, socialists, social democrats, liberals and Christians.

The appearance of these two new documents indicates that what is now happening within the Charter, though not necessarily only among Chartists, is a natural crystallization of political thinking with people grouping themselves together according to their political views. This development does not in any way violate the basis on which the Charter was created. The original Charter statement made it clear that informal groups within the Charter would be encouraged to put together their own documents.

The two groups represented by these April documents are probably the most advanced in the sense of their formulation of their political views in a cohesive and clear-cut manner.

The signatories of the first document — the reformist communists — used to be the only cohesive, politically defined group in Czechoslovakia that was known in the West. They are associated with the ideas expressed by Alexander Dubcek immediately after he became General Secretary of the Czechoslovak CP in January 1968. When Dubcek dropped out of active politics this group was associated with the figure of Josef Smrkovsky, a popular Party



Jiri Müller, leader of the Czech student movement for democratic rights during the 1960s, pictured here before being jailed as a socialist oppositionist in 1972.

leader during the Prague Spring. After Smrkovsky's death, many associated the group with the name of Zdenek Mlynar, a leading Party ideologist and Central Committee secretary during the Prague Spring. Last year Mlynar was allowed to emigrate to the West and today the reform communists have no obvious leading figure.

The second group is completely new, and absolutely unique in the political development of Czechoslovakia in the sense that they proclaim themselves very clearly to be socialists, but at the same time they are quick to add that their programme is along non-communist lines. The signatories of the second document include a span of political tendencies almost as wide as that within the Charter itself, with the exception that it lacks signatures from those reform communists who supported the Dubcek government between the invasion in August 1968 and the government's fall in April 1969. Those communists who have signed the document, such as Frantisek Kriegel, Gerta Sekaninova-Cakrtova, Jaroslav Sabata — a newly appointed spokesperson for the Charter — and others are very well known in Czechoslovakia for having opposed the Moscow Protocols and their

consequences right from the beginning. These Moscow Protocols were the agreement signed by the Dubcek leadership in Moscow after the invasion, binding them to accept the invasion. As Jiri Müller notes in a short letter to the reform communist Milan Hübl, Kriegel was the only member of the Dubcek leadership in Moscow who had refused to sign the protocols, despite all the threats made against him; Gerta Sekaninova-Cakrtova was one of the 5 members of the Federal Assembly (along with Kriegel) who voted against the legalization of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia in October 1968, and Jaroslav Sabata is known for his utterly uncompromising speech at the Central Committee meeting in December 1968. Such political leaders, unlike some of the signatories of the reform Communist document, did not believe that the reforms of 1968 could be salvaged by a policy of concessions to Soviet pressure.

The 100th anniversary document, which appeared three days after the reformist communist text and thereby automatically offered itself for comparison, takes as its political starting point the first programme of the socialist and working-class movement in Bohemia and Moravia (the Czech part of Czechoslovakia). In an Open Letter to the Parties of the Second International, Jiri Müller, one of the signatories of the document, explains that its ideas differ both from those of the government and from those of the reformist communists in the opposition.

At the same time, their programme is not some watered down version of Western social democratic or welfare state ideas that would in any way preserve the capitalist economic system. From the first programme of the Czech Social Democratic Programme they pick out the need for the social ownership of the means of production, but they believe that the fruits of workers' labour are not justly distributed among the working people of the country. The document envisages an attempt to implement socialist views while also reflecting something that has been true for years — a disillusionment with the reform communist politicians, the leaders of the Prague Spring. They had quite correctly pinpointed some of the major problems of the society in 1968 and they had offered some solutions to these problems, but they were not capable of implementing all their own proposals and of carrying them through to their logical outcome.

Sabata Replaces Hajek as Charter Spokesperson

On 6 April 1978 Charter 77 announced that Dr. Jiri Hajek had resigned his post as one of the three Charter spokespersons for reasons of ill health and that Dr. Jaroslav Sabata had taken his place. The announcement added that Sabata had been proposed by Hajek as his replacement. Hajek, a former Foreign Minister under Dubcek in 1968, is a representative of the reformist communist grouping within the opposition, which is associated with the ideas and politic

Hajek, a former Foreign Minister under Dubcek in 1968, is a representative of the reformist communist grouping within the opposition, which is associated with the ideas and policies of the Party leadership under Alexander Dubcek in 1968, and a signatory of the first document. His replacement on the other hand, although a CP official in 1968, has since then been associated with a more militant attitude towards the current regime than that of the

reformist communists, and is a signatory of the second document. Sabata spent 5 years in prison after 1972 for his participation in the distribution of a leaflet during the 1971 elections reminding citizens of their constitutional right not to vote. He was released in December 1976 and immediately signed the Charter. He is currently employed as a worker.

Two of the three spokespeople of the Charter, Sabata and Ladislav Hejdanek, are signatories of the "Hundred Years of Czech Socialism", while there is now no representative of the signatories of the other document, which has raised speculation in the West as to whether the reformist communists are voluntarily decreasing the level of their participation in the Charter or whether their strength and influence within the Charter is simply on the decline.

By Mark Jackson



Jaroslav Sabata, the new spokesperson for Charter 77, pictured here during the 1960s.

10 Years Since the Prague Spring

Although the 1968 "Prague Spring", seen as a regeneration at the level of government, lasted for less than 8 months, it represented a significant event in the modern history of Czechoslovakia. The January plenum of the CC of the CPCz, at which A. Dubcek was elected First Party Secretary, opened up a new stage in the protracted struggle within the Party and society about the character of socialism and of the solution to the social crisis. It thus opened the way for a process of renewal. After a long period of passivity, the Czechoslovak people themselves rose up to decide in a democratic and responsible fashion how they should proceed further along the socialist road. The Action Programme indicated the line of march and some immediate goals; however, continuation along this path was prevented by military intervention. Since 1969, official documents and the media have systematically distorted those events, denying the socialist character of the renewal process and suppressing the active role played by the people. We therefore consider it our duty as direct participants in those events to recall the truth about 1968 for both the domestic and the world public.

The January CC Plenum was the first step towards solving a crisis which had existed for a long time. The progressive forces within the CPCz understood the harmful consequences of the fact that domestic social and economic conditions had not been respected in constructing socialism in Czechoslovakia - even though, for a short period after 1945, the slogan of a Czechoslovak road to socialism had been raised. Economic development was mainly of an extensive character, and public life was marked by many infringements of civil rights. In addition, the 1960 Constitution restricted the rights of the Slovaks in a way that was quite contrary to the provisions considered necessary in the 1945 Kosice programme in order to ensure equality with the Czechs. These and many other things created considerable tension in the country. In such a context, changes in the leadership personnel aroused a discussion throughout society on the accumulated problems and on possible ways of solving them. On 4 April 1968, the CC of the CPCz unanimously accepted the Action Programme. The Action Programme was based on the understanding that society had entered a phase where "all social groups are tending to come together" and that deformations of the principles of socialism had

occurred in the preceding period of development. It was based on a project for democratic reconstruction of the political system, and on the need for a new constitution and for transformation of the entire state structure. One of its cornerstones was the idea that citizens should be guaranteed greater possibilities of asserting and developing their personalities than those provided by any bourgeois democracy, and that the areas in which public opinion can or cannot assert itself should no longer be laid down from above. It demanded that "freedom of expression and all the political and personal rights of citizens should be upheld by constitutionally guaranteed legal means." It demanded that every citizen should have the right to travel abroad and even to spend long periods of time in other countries. It called for the development of a new electoral system in order to bring back life to representative organs rendered moribund by formalism. The previous situation, whereby every elected representative up to the Parliamentary level was gagged by the duty of unanimity, prevented the emergence of inevitable differences in opinions and conflicting proposals.

The Action Programme only indicated the direction in which changes had to be made: these still had to be concretized through relevant constitutional and legislative measures. Given the prevailing conditions, the AP proposed that the political system should develop within the framework of the National Front, but in such a way that its components should be changed from transmission belts to living organisms with their own activity and responsibility. The leading role of the CPCz was seen as something that had to be continually won and reaffirmed, not as something established by decree, preserved by coercion and achieved by administrative means. It was to become a process of anticipating the needs of future development, formulating new solutions, and taking the initiative in their implementation.

The AP proposed the reorganization of the Republic into a federal state as a means of satisfying the demands of the Slovaks for full equality in a united state. The Constitutional law on the federalization of Czechoslovakia of 27 October 1968 is in fact the only part of the AP that is in force today. However, insofar as it has been abstracted from the whole system of democratic measures and inserted into the framework of the present bureaucratic-centralist system, it has been unable to live up to its aim of improving relations between Czechs and Slovaks.

In the legal sphere, the AP called for the rehabilitation of everyone who had been unjustly sentenced or subjected to other abuses; while in the economic sphere, it proceeded from the understanding that the sources of extensive growth had been exhausted. It associated itself with the economic reform launched by the 13th Party Congress, the purpose of which was to stimulate the growth of labour productivity, technological progress and innovation. It brought economic pressure to bear on enterprises and anticipated that their independence and responsibility to achieve economic rationality would be strengthened by a combination of material self-interest with the instruments of planning. The AP created a new situation in the economic as well as social spheres by ending the "cadre ceiling". It established a new atmosphere, and awakened fresh interest in raising the level of the economy, stimulating enterprise initiative, and reducing bureaucratic obstruction. The AP formulated measures for the democratization of economic life that involved real autonomy for enterprises and groups of enterprises and their relative independence of state organs; the full and genuine right for consumers to define their own consumption and lifestyle; freedom to choose one's work; and the right of various groups of workers and different social groups to formulate and defend their economic interests within the framework of economic policy.

However, this promising development in the economy was suppressed after August 1968 and the bureaucratic-centralist system was re-established in a still more rigid and retrograde form. It is not surprising to find that the situation is now similar to that of the early sixties before the reform was introduced: in the last ten years, the relevance of these propositions has increased. This is indirectly recognized by the so-called economic experiment that has just been proclaimed - although it only very partially expresses some of these principles, and owing to its half-baked character, does not enjoy any great prospect of success.

Art and other spiritual-cultural activities had full scope to grow in the post-January period, and indeed they took advantage of this to the full. Despite all the obstacles, the process had been developing since the early sixties. Freedom of artistic creation and scientific activity was seen by the AP as an indispensable precondition for the development of society as a whole.

The AP considered the alliance with the other countries of the socialist world as the cornerstone of Czechoslovak foreign policy. However, this had to be supplemented by greater activity and initiative on a basis of equality, by respect for one another's sovereignty, and by mutual solidarity. Czechoslovakia wished to contribute more actively and with its own developed conceptions to the activity of Comecon and the Warsaw Pact, especially with regard to European policy. It was in this light that steps towards normalizing relations with our neighbours West Germany and Austria were seen. After the invasion, the enemies of the renewal process described such endeavours as traitorous; but after a few years, the current leadership of the CPCz adopted the same policies because they were necessary for the interests both of Czechoslovakia and of the entire community.

The Party itself underwent renewal as part of the general process. The secret ballot was instituted in all its bodies. Its meetings, assemblies and conferences lost their formal character and became the scene of lively exchanges of opinion, through which decisions could be reached collectively. After the extraordinary 14th Party Congress was called for 9 September, new draft statutes were proposed for discussion: these were intended to establish ways in which the principles of inner-party democracy could become part of everyday life. Thanks to all these measures, which immediately took on life, the CPCz gained wide support amongst the public, such as it had not previously received; it considerably strengthened its authority, which had been very much shaken during the fifties. This was an expression of the people's hope that such changes would result in the creation of a prosperous society. Its support was reflected in the general enlivening of political interest and

democratic activity on the part of all social layers — activity that was of a decisively socialist orientation. A few deviations or excesses cannot obscure the fundamentally positive trend of this development. But all this was destroyed by the invasion of the five Warsaw Pact powers.

The entrance of the armies into Czechoslovakia during the night of 21 August 1968 has subsequently been depicted as an inevitable act of international solidarity aimed at defending socialism in our country. On the night itself, however, every constitutionally recognized body or representative thereof emphatically stated that they did not see the least justification for this measure. The Presidium of the CC of the CPCz described this step not only as contradictory to the nature of relations among socialist states, but also as an infringement of the norms of international law. Although this position was renounced by the current leadership in 1969, its correctness was re-affirmed by the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference and by the document which came out of the meeting of European CPs in Berlin — both of which the current leadership voted for.

In the days following the invasion, the broadest layers of Czechoslovak society countered its direct effects with the highest level of consciousness, discipline and creativity. The constitutional organs of the Republic and the extraordinary 14th Party Congress, which met in the CKD factory in the workers' district of Vysocany, expressed these demands in the name of the people. An attempt to establish a new party and state leadership was frustrated because it was decisively rejected by the people, and the kidnapped representatives were able to return to the Republic and once again assume the functions with which they had been entrusted by the people. To a great extent their hands were tied by the Moscow protocols, which they had, with one exception, all signed. Through a one-sided interpretation of this document backed up by the pressure of the forces of intervention, the opponents of the renewal process were able to achieve its gradual suppression and liquidation. But for a whole year after August 1968, they faced the resistance of the majority of the Czechoslovak people, who attempted to maintain their democratic achievements. For a few months after April 1969, even the Husak leadership had to respect to some extent the opinions of the public as expressed by the most important social organizations, in particular the trade unions; indeed, at the beginning it proclaimed its adherence to the AP and the ideas of the renewal process. But by August 1969, they were already using the toughest forms of repression against popular demonstrations, and after the September purge of the CC of the CPCz, they proceeded to the complete liquidation of the renewal process. Press freedom was gradually suppressed, while the CPCz expelled a third of its membership, including tens of thousands of those in the enterprises, institutions, schools, offices,





Czechoslovak President Svoboda (left) with the Soviet leaders immediately after the invasion in Moscow where he and other Czech leaders signed the 'Moscow Protocol' accepting the invasion as a *fait accompli*. One of the Czech leaders, Kriegel, refused to sign.

governmental organs, publishing houses and editorial offices who did not want to renounce their opinions and convictions. The bureaucratic-centralist system created in the early 50s was now once again in force in every sphere of life. The economic reform was wound up, and the system of bureaucratic directives re-established with the result that the symptoms which forced us along the path of reform in the 60s are now once again becoming more and more pressing. Disproportions and waste permanently mark the internal market, investments, the supply of materials, transport, energy and foreign trade. The state of the internal market is characterized by disequilibrium of supply and demand, such that it is impossible to obtain any low-priority goods without hunting around, waiting in queues or paying bribes. Demoralization has thus extended into spheres where there has never previously been corruption. It is a situation in which suppliers have dominance over consumers and are able to tell them: "Take what there is. If you don't take it, you will get nothing. Others will be only too pleased to have it." There is a lack of economic stimuli and of the pressure that would force manufacturers to concern themselves with technical progress, efficiency, quality, the range of goods and investment. Poorly elaborated investment policy creates a number of jobs disproportionate to the growth in labour reserves, etc.

We can see what follows from the leadership's rejection of the basic Action Programme theses, according to which the security apparatus should not be used to solve internal political questions and divisions within socialist society. It is significant in this respect that the number of people sentenced for various crimes, including political ones, was 62,000 in 1962, 60,000 in 1969 and 139,000 in 1972. Almost every sphere of social life is subjected to the control of the security services. The AP sought to ensure that every citizen should have the maximum of information, both from Czechoslovakia and from abroad. But now citizens are restricted to a very narrow range of reports. The AP wanted to do away with the division of citizens into different categories and to guarantee equal rights and possibilities for all. Instead of this, however, whole new groups of people are now discriminated against and prevented from using their talents and qualifications. People's

children are also prevented from developing their talents and gaining the necessary education and qualifications.

Especially destructive has been the attack on artists and scientists, many of the most significant of whom have been hindered from using their talents to the full in the years of their artistic maturity and greatest activity. Unofficial literary and scientific publications such as *Petlice* [Padlock, an underground press] provide an emergency outlet for the artistic and scientific self-realization of the intelligentsia, and the fact is that many more valuable works appear in this way than under the auspices of the official publication's policy. In this case the manufacturer of typewriters becomes of greater importance and value than machine printing techniques. The way in which this discrimination operates in the various areas of life has been indicated in the documents of Charter 77. The Charter comprises citizens of different political outlooks and aims to fight for the maintenance and application of laws on human and civil rights which are in the spirit of the Prague Spring — in the spirit of the concept that socialism is either democratic or not socialism.

By re-establishing the rigid and unresponsive power structure of the Stalinist era, the current party and state leadership itself causes the development of contradictions and the appearance of retrograde tendencies which fundamentally conflict with the basically progressive dynamic of socialism. The pressure of life on forms which have been surpassed once already gives rise to permanent economic difficulties and growing political tension. It is no excuse to say that such problems have appeared in other socialist countries as well, because Czechoslovakia, as an industrialized and developed country, is in one of the best positions to overcome such tendencies to stagnation.

We do not derive any pleasure from the fact that problems have spiralled back to where they were in 1968. On the contrary, we feel concern for the future fate of the country and its people. The vicious circle of permanently recurring economic difficulties and political conflicts is, in more than one sense, deeper and more general than in 1967. Given the chance that developments may take a far more serious turn, it is high time that the festering problems began to be tackled. Fear is always a bad adviser, especially when it dissuades one from implementing inevitable changes. The urgency of such changes is also understood by communists from other countries, and we feel a sympathy for the endeavours of those who are struggling to overcome the negative heritage of the past and to find adequate answers to social questions.

Signed by:

Karel Bartosek, Frantisek Blaha, Jiri Dienstbier, Jiri Hajek, Miluse Fischerova, Milos Hajek, Robert Horak, Milan Hübl, Ludmila Jankovcova, Frantisek Pavlicek, Karel Jaros, Jiri Judl, Zdenek Jicinsky, Miroslav Kabrna, Vladimir Kadlec, Erica Kadlecova, Lubos Kohout, Miro Kusy, Karel Kyncl, Ladislav Lis, Jaromir Litera, Klement Lukes, Zdenek Prikryl, Slavka Povolna-Skvarilova, Antonin Rusek, Rudolf Slansky, Josef Stehlik, Venek Silhan, Vaclav Vrabec.

100 Years of Czech Socialism

The ideas of socialism were first given form in the Czech Lands on 7 April 1878 when the Czech Social Democratic Party was founded at a congress held at Brevnov. The conditions were thus created for an institutionalized political struggle for basic workers' and civil rights. The first programme of the socialist and workers' movement was drawn up.

These are generally known facts, but we should like to point out that Czechoslovak socialists and democrats are still in debt as far as these century-old demands are concerned. Many of the programme's aims were achieved and indeed surpassed long ago. Nevertheless, some are still outstanding. We regard it as our task to see that they are accomplished.

The Brevnov programme states that "in our present society the means of production ... are the monopoly of one class". As this has led to the dependence of "the working people and is the cause of their misery and enslavement", the authors demand that "the means of production should be used for the common good"; and that there should be "a just distribution of the fruits of labour" and "abolition of class domination".

It is true that the major part of the means of production have been nationalized — a process initiated by the presidential decree on nationalization of 28 October 1945. But it is doubtful whether the fruits of labour are always used for the common good and whether the present system of remuneration is just.

The programme demands "equal rights for all citizens over twenty to elect representatives to the provincial and central parliaments and to local government". Universal and equal rights to elect representatives to parliament were legally recognized already in 1907 as a result of the efforts of workers' parties and other democratic bodies. This principle was applied to local elections for the first time in 1919, that is, directly after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic. But the pioneers of our workers' movement certainly did not envisage an electoral system in which the citizen may vote for one candidate only, as is the case today.

A further demand was for "complete freedom of the press, association and assembly and of coalition". The workers largely achieved these freedoms. But what remains of them today? How many journals and organizations (political and non-political) were abolished after 1948? And how many after 1968? In 1977 numbers of citizens were variously persecuted in connection with the Charter 77 petition, which deals only with the necessity to observe laws passed by our highest legislative bodies.

The early socialist programme demands "independence of the judiciary", "election of judges by popular vote", the introduction of "free legal proceedings and free legal aid for all" and "abolition of capital punishment". The monster trials of the fifties proved that our system in no way guarantees independence of the judiciary; and doubts have been cast in Czechoslovakia and abroad about the justification and justice of the political trials of the seventies. Legal proceedings are not free today, and nor is legal aid. As for capital punishment, our supreme legislative bodies and mass media have not even initiated a discussion on this topic.

The programme also demands "elimination of all social and political inequalities", referring to the working-class struggle as a

struggle for "equal rights and equal duties". The present practice deviates from these moral and political principles. Citizens are persecuted for their convictions, in some cases many years after expressing them. Charter 77 has a large quantity of documentary evidence on this subject. The principles of equality and justice have been largely abandoned in the practice of filling top positions in all sections of economic and social life mainly with members of the Communist Party. This means that the criteria for appointing persons to responsible posts are often not expert knowledge, ability and moral qualities but compliance, lack of scruples and string-pulling. Today many workers do not regard the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as a workers' party but as a party of "overlords".

The signatories of this statement declare their allegiance to the traditions of our early workers' and socialist movement. The Communist Party, the ruling party in our country, also claims to support them. The present regime however does not honour many of the principles formulated by the pioneers of this movement. As socialists and democrats, we feel our personal responsibility for the implementation of these principles.

7 April 1978

Brno and Prague

Signed by:

Rudolf Battek, Vaclav Havel, Ladislav Hejdanek, Premysl Janyr, Bozena Komarkova, Anna Koutna, Frantisek Kriegel, Karel Kyncl, Milan Machovec, Jaroslav Meznik, Ervin Motl, Jiri Müller, Petr Pithart, Ales Richter, Zuzana Richterova, Gertruda Sekaninova-Cakrtova, Jaroslav Sabata, Jan Sabata, Jan Simsa, Jan Tesar, Jakub Trojan, Zdenek Vasicek, Jan Vladislav.

(Document made available by **Palach Press** agency. Translation is copyright **Palach Press**.)

Information to the Parties of the Second International

On the night of 6 April 1978 the secret police conducted house searches on the premises of Professor Vaclav Cerny and Premysl Janyr in Prague and of assistant professor Jaroslav Meznik in Brno.

A document on the lines of a programme, the content of which I do not know, was confiscated from Professor Cerny's flat. The draft of a document, "Opinions and Solutions", containing reflections on values which its authors respect and on a social system which would promote the implementation of these values, was seized in assistant professor Meznik's flat. (The document did not refer to present conditions in Czechoslovakia.) The text of a declaration on the hundredth anniversary of the first programme of the socialist and workers' movement in the Czech lands was also confiscated. The declaration, "A Hundred Years of Czech Socialism", was later publicized with a list of 23 signatories from Brno and Prague.

At the same time the secret police attempted further house searches. However, Rudolf Battek refused to let them into his flat and Jiri Müller was not at home. On the morning of 7 April Dr. Milan Silhan, Ing. Alois Vyrubal and Ing. Jan Schopf were detained and taken to a police station in Brno for questioning. All three - together with assistant professor Jaroslav Meznik - were sentenced to heavy terms of imprisonment in the trial against "Dr. Milan Silhan et al" in 1972 for drawing up the Small Action Programme, a text along socialist (but not communist) lines.

During the interrogation on 7 April each was shown a photocopy of a typewritten document in German entitled "A New Reality in the Czechoslovak Opposition". This document stated that a new reality had arisen within the Czechoslovak Opposition — in fact a new trend furthering the ideas of the Small Action Programme. The revivers of this trend want to organize themselves and are in

the interim calling themselves independent socialists. The movement is not so broadly based as Charter 77. It is drawing up its programme underlining democracy, humanism and self-management and its content reflects the ideas of the Socialist International. In the margin of the letter the following names were written: Czerny, Janyr, Battek, Müller - Brunner Gruppe.

Also presented at the Brno interrogations was a photocopy of an envelope with a Vienna postmark addressed to the Czech embassy in Austria, in which the writer informs the Embassy that he had come by a document which could affect the good relations between Austria and Czechoslovakia. He was therefore sending a copy of it to the embassy but owing to the nature of the position he held, he did not wish to reveal his identity. The signature was illegible. The presented photocopy gave the impression that the unknown supporter of the Czechoslovak government had acquired a very confidential document in which another unnamed person gave information concerning the activity of socialists in Czechoslovakia to a highly placed (and also unnamed) person - addressed as Your Excellency - in the Socialist Party of Austria.

During the afternoon of 10 April Ing. Rudolf Battek was arrested and taken to the police station for interrogation. He was questioned about his published text entitled "Political Thesis" and his contacts with the Socialist Party of Austria. In the presence of his wife his flat was searched and his typewriter confiscated. That same afternoon Jiri Müller was arrested in a Prague street and after a struggle pushed into a car and driven to Brno where the door of his flat was broken down and the premises searched. The text of the declaration "A Hundred Years of Czech Socialism", a draft of "Opinions and Solutions" (similar content to the document confiscated from assistant professor Meznik) and a translation of the good wishes telegram sent by the Executive

Committee of the Spanish Communist Party on 7 April to Dr. Frantisek Kriegel on his seventieth birthday were seized.

Professor Cerny received a further summons to present himself for questioning on 11 April.

The steps taken against eight persons (some of whom are unknown to each other) linked only by the fact that they are non-communists of socialist convictions were authorized by the Interrogation Department of the security police; consent to house searches was given by the Prosecutor General.

From the point of view of internal politics these measures can be

taken as attempts by the security police to obtain information about Czechoslovak socialists and their socio-political ideas which differ both from the government's and from those of the reformers in the communist opposition. In the context of international politics these measures show to all those interested in the policy of detente in Europe that the Czechoslovak state, through its representative, is capable of shaking the hand of the president of the Socialist International with one hand while the other persecutes socialists in its own country.

Jiri Müller

Brno 19 April 1978

(Document and translation provided by **Palach Press**.)

Open Letter from Müller to Hübl

Dear Milan,

Greetings. I read your article in *Listy* No.1 of February 1978 and I can't pass over your remark about the internment of Czechoslovak public figures [by the Russians] in August 1968 without a public comment. "As a result of public pressure in Czechoslovakia and abroad, they were released; but before their return from Moscow, with the exception of Frantisek Kriegel, who was not allowed to attend negotiations, they signed the so-called Moscow protocol which bound their hands."

This formulation would give the impression to many that Frantisek Kriegel did not sign the Moscow Protocol because it was not presented to him. You are not, of course, responsible for the impressions of others, but the fact that Kriegel was asked to sign the protocol and was the only Czechoslovak representative who refused to add his signature can be expressed in a substantially different way. I do not wish to deny you the right to describe the facts in your own way. Furthermore as an historian surely you

weigh your words carefully. For this very reason I feel obliged to ask what purpose it serves to ignore the fact that besides acceptance of capitulation there existed for communists the possibility of rejection.

I am compelled to ask this by my growing conviction that the morale of the nation will take its strength from the latter possibility, personified by Frantisek Kriegel's action, and not from the "realism" of the others; and also by my growing conviction that an unswerving allegiance to moral principles is one of the fundamental bases of political co-operation between non-communists and communists.

How do you see the matter yourself?

Jiri Müller

Brno 16 April 1978.

(Document and translation made available by **Palach Press**.)

More Charter 77 Supporters Jailed

The Husak regime continues to attack the Charter 77 human rights movement. In a document of 11 March the three Charter spokespeople draw attention to the persecution of 6 citizens, none of them signatories of the Charter, on charges connected with it. Among the cases mentioned are those of Miloslav Cerny who was sentenced on 24 July 1977 to 3 years imprisonment for the "illegal distribution of the slanderous pamphlet Charter 77"; Frantisek Pitor and Alena Klimova who received 3 and 1 years respectively in November 1977 for typing and duplicating copies of Charter 77 after recording it off the **Voice of America** radio station, and Miloslav Lojek who was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for passing Charter 77 to some of his army colleagues.

Also recently imprisoned is the artistic director of the **Plastic People** rock group, Ivan Jirous, for allegedly disrupting an exhibition by making an insulting remark about a Youth Union official. His defence lawyer pointed out that nobody at the exhibition had actually complained about Jirous' behaviour, but the court was not to be swayed by such details and sentenced Jirous to 8 months imprisonment on 11 April.

Others still in jail because of their connections with the Charter are Jiri Lederer, who was sentenced to 3 years in October 1977 and Ales Machacek and Vladimir Lastuvka who are currently serving sentences of 3½ and 2½ years respectively.

One of the other defendants in the October trial, Ota Ornest, has been released. Although originally sentenced to 3 1/2 years, reduced on appeal to 3, his release is clearly a reward for the fact that he "confessed" to his crimes and errors at the trial.

The 3 Chartists who were arrested at the annual Railwaymen's Ball in Prague on 28 January: Vaclav Havel, Pavel Landovsky and Jaromir Kukal, were released on 13 March. Proceedings against them are still continuing, however, which is especially serious considering that Havel received a 14 months suspended sentence at the October trial.

Chartists Frantisek Kriegel and Petr Uhl remain under 24 hour police surveillance.

By Mark Jackson

Dossier on Sacked Chartists

As one part of a growing international campaign, the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists is shortly to publish a dossier on the sackings and other job-related harassment of Charter 77 supporters. The dossier, which is being produced in collaboration with **Labour Focus**, will contain two Charter documents covering repression at work since the end of the Prague Spring and focussing especially on the period since the Charter was launched; a documented case-history of a typical dismissal procedure; a list of names of workers affected in this way; and the Charter No.7 document on general working conditions in Czechoslovakia. Copies will be available at the Czech Committee Conference to be held on 27 May (see editorial page), and we will carry a further report in the next issue of **Labour Focus**. Copies may be obtained from **Labour Focus**, price 25p plus 10p postage (postage free on orders of five or more).

EAST GERMANY

From Discussion Circles to Open Resistance

Part 2 of Jena Workers' Story

[Below we publish the second part of a text from a group of young workers from the East German town of Jena who were forcibly expelled from their country on 2 September 1977. The first part was published in Labour Focus Vol.2 No.1., and the entire text originally appeared in Neuer Langer Marsch, a socialist newspaper published in West Berlin. Their account of their experiences gives an impression of the extent and depth of opposition to the East German regime as well as demonstrating the importance of the expulsion of the popular singer Wolf Biermann in bringing much of this opposition into an open forum. Translation is by Anca Mihailescu.]

SOLIDARITY WITH BIERMANN

On 16 November 1976, we heard on the radio about Wolf Biermann's deprivation of citizenship. We spontaneously gathered in the house of some friends and followed the news on television. Then we went to the youth centre and discussed the possibility of taking some action against the expulsion; but we came to no conclusion. One of us drove to Grünheide in order to ask Robert Havemann and Jürgen Fuchs for their advice. The next day, the GDR Press published the first official information about the expulsion. In the evening, there was a reading of Jurek Becker's work in Jena. We learnt from him about the thirteen Berlin artists who had protested against Biermann's expulsion.

On 18 November, a friend brought from Berlin a copy of Robert Havemann's letter to the SED Politbureau, "Wolf Biermann must remain a citizen of the GDR", in which he expressed his opposition to the measures taken by the Party. We also had someone read over the phone from Berlin the text of the artists' solidarity statement, together with the names of other people who had signed it. Next, we duplicated the text and prepared a list of signatures to go with it. We discussed organizing a teach-in at the youth centre: the programme would include the reading of press statements concerning the Biermann affair and Havemann's letter to the SED Politbureau. In between, we played Biermann songs and recited the poems "Praise to the Revolutionary" by Brecht and "The Customers" by Erich Fried. We also played a tape with radio broadcasts from the last few days, in which international public reaction to Biermann's expulsion was expressed. The Berlin artists' statement was also read out. There then followed discussion on the persecution we could expect as signatories of this infamous

text. But after a few minutes of thought, about 50 of the 80 people present signed their names. Following the meeting, we collected further signatures from acquaintances in the town; and in the late evening, we met at the house of some friends and heard the first notes of the Cologne concert. We then talked about ways of extending the declaration to other towns (Apolda, Berlin, Cottbus, Dresden, Gera, Erfurt, Karl Marx-Stadt, Naumburg, Plauen).

On the morning of 19 November, the state security began to strike - the first five comrades were arrested. Their homes were searched, but the list of signatories was not found. Two of us drove to Robert Havemann's and discussed with Gerulf Pannach and Christian Kunert what should be done with the list of signatures. The next day, they sent one copy each to the SED Politbureau and *Der Spiegel*, keeping a third copy hidden. Our two friends were arrested by the security after their return to Jena, and in the period that followed, about 30 people were arrested and interrogated. As far as we know, they have all now been released; but some have been expelled from their place of study or subjected to *Berufsverbot*.

HELD FOR INVESTIGATION

After our arrest, we were taken to the investigation bureau of the state security in Karl-Marx-Stadt. First we were put in solitary confinement, and after two or three weeks each of us was transferred to a cell with an unknown prisoner. At no time did we have any contact with one another. And it was only after three weeks that we were allowed the facilities prescribed by prison regulations: smoking, access to newspapers and books, chess, letters, purchase of goods and cigarettes to a value of 30 marks per month). Such "facilities" were arbitrarily allowed or completely denied to us. Preliminary proceedings were initiated according to para. 106 of the Penal Code:

Para. 106, pt.1, clauses 1 and 3:

1) Whosoever, with the intention of harming or agitating against the socialist state and social order of the GDR, shall

1. introduce, produce, disseminate or sell any writing, object or symbol which slanders the state, political, economic or other social relations of the GDR;

3. slanders representatives or other citizens of the GDR, or the true character of the state and social bodies and institutions,shall be punished by imprisonment of between one and five years.

After three months we could at last talk with a relative for 30 minutes, and three letters could be written and received every month. It was also only after this length of time that we could talk with a lawyer of our own choosing, although even then a state security officer was always present. Neither then nor at meetings with our relatives could we discuss anything to do with our arrest, interrogation or prison conditions. At the interrogation itself, it soon became obvious that the Biermann action had been only the pretext for our arrest. We had to give statements about our entire personal and political development, as well as about our friends in prison and those in Jena.

In May 1977 fresh charges were brought against us under para.107, which concerns the formation of anti-state organizations:

- 1) Whosoever belongs to a group or organization which seeks to carry out activity hostile to the state shall be punished with imprisonment of between 2 and 8 years;*
- 2) Whosoever forms an organization hostile to the state, or who organizes its activity, shall be punished with imprisonment of between 3 and 12 years;*
- 3) The attempt to carry out such actions is punishable.*

In other words, the range of possible sentences was explicitly laid down. When the preliminary proceedings came to an end in late May, we were allowed to talk with our lawyer in private. But we were still being watched. From the beginning of June until the middle of August we were constantly waiting for our trial to begin.

THE "ALTERNATIVE"

On 18 August 1977 our hearing finally began. Next to the familiar figure of our interrogator stood an unknown person in civilian clothing. He addressed all the prisoners in an emphatic, cold, objective manner. But he did not introduce himself. After a second examination of the accused, this stranger spoke about our alleged conflict with society and about the need to resolve this "conflict". We debated the ways and means of solving social contradictions under real socialism, stating that for us the only acceptable solution was freedom of speech. Only in that way could the basis for dialogue be constructed. But that was categorically refused by the security officials. In the end they made it clear that their intention was to remove us from the GDR, since they realized that we would be a disturbance there and that we would create a

lot of work for them. Clearly it was worth getting rid of such factors of insecurity as us. We were faced with a rather dubious choice between 2-13 years in jail and immediate departure for West Berlin and West Germany. They assured us that if the trial went ahead, they would be very generous with the terms of imprisonment; and that in our case we could not expect to be released before the sentence was up. We were told of the physical and psychological effects of long years in a GDR prison: "Why don't you stop resisting! If you don't give in, we'll have another look at you in a couple of years. It's doubtful whether you'll still feel like resisting then."

And: "If we allow you to remain in the GDR after your sentence is completed, you will sooner or later - sooner rather than later - end up in jail again." As we later discovered, each one of us was told that the other comrades were prepared to leave for the West, and that it depended on our decision whether all would leave or go to jail. But we all at first refused to leave the GDR.

Immediately we were refused all permission to consult with lawyers and relatives. During the days and nights that followed, we turned around in our cells considering the "offer", or rather blackmail. Finally we became aware of our impotence in the face of the state security. Members of the Ministry of State Security took us from Gera to the Magdalenastrasse investigation bureau in Berlin. From there we were taken to West Berlin on 2 September 1977.

MICHAEL SALLMANN, LEIPZIG

In November 1976 I was already a soldier in the People's Army stationed at Leipzig. The news about Biermann's expulsion reached us while I was on guard duty. It is necessary to have a picture of the situation in order to understand what tortured me during those hours: There I was, apparently powerful, with a loaded gun, full of indignation, and yet more helpless than many of my comrades in the GDR. For the security organs are quicker to pounce on soldiers who have committed political offences than on civilians. Still I had to do something, anything. But I did not yet know what.

In the days following the expulsion, the dominant mood in our barracks was one of hectic restlessness. People talked only about Biermann and his comrades in the GDR. Every morning the soldiers had to fight to get a copy of *Neues Deutschland* [the Party daily]. The lack of information even among officers assumed quite staggering proportions. Some who knew that I was a friend of Biermann and of the Leipzig song-writer Pannach (who had just been arrested) overwhelmed me with questions: What was our viewpoint? What did we criticize? Who were we? Where were we going politically?

The really striking thing was that, in their eyes, Biermann, the arrested artists, their friends and comrades, and those who had solidarized with them from the beginning were all something homogeneous that pointed to a new direction amid the political monotony of the GDR.

I began again to play my guitar and recite poems, going from one company to the next. Hundreds of soldiers and officers came to hear my critique of the things wrong in the GDR, my protest against Biermann's expulsion, and against the persecution of the left opposition. But then the end came ... on 13 April 1977. After another performance, I was arrested by the state security on the grounds that for years my songs and poems had been producing a dangerous atmosphere of rebellion and hostility to the state among the population. Three of my barrack-mates were arrested at the same time but released after being questioned for four hours about me. Until I left the GDR, I was locked up in the Hohenschönhausen investigation centre like my comrades Fuchs, Pannach and Kunert. There I had plenty of time to think about my past.

I have spent nearly 5 out of my 24 years intervening in the reality of the GDR with my poems. Like my comrades in Jena, I did this at first hesitatingly, and later with more awareness and sense of purpose. After I finished my apprenticeship as a mechanic, my institute nominated me to go to study economics. However, someone denounced me in 1974 and I was expelled after I had completed the common part of the course. The college authorities found out that I compose critical poems and that I am friendly with the "enemy of the state" Wolf Biermann.

I then worked as a driver in the construction industry. Since 1972 I had been giving small performances for students in clubs and discos, using every opportunity to bring what I had to say to people. Despite a ban, I continued to appear illegally in public.

For months after my arrest the security police offered me the chance of going to the West. But after months of resisting this pressure and hoping to be released, I was taken from my cell one late August evening and informed by a security officer that my friends from Leipzig, Pannach and Kunert, had been allowed to go to West Berlin. I was given to understand that I too might go there in the next few days. If I refused, I would have to reconcile myself to 7-10 years in jail, and even then I could still be expelled. On 2 September, I was driven to West Berlin with the Jena comrade Bernd Markowsky. This was not the only trip of its kind to take place on that day.

How much we missed a comprehensive analysis of society in the GDR! Robert Havemann started such a generalization from our experience at the work-bench, in



Robert Havemann, the East German Marxist theorist.

the antechambers of power, and at our writing-barricades — an analysis that should bring our feelings to a rational conclusion.

Now, when the state security has cleared the GDR of us and when it still has no reason to feel secure, we have such an analysis in our hands. How many in the GDR are searching for Rudolf Bahro's *Alternative* that has been published in the West. It was not Bahro who sent this product of ten years' labour into exile.

A short item in *Neues Deutschland* filled us with horror when we read it: "Rudolf Bahro has been arrested on suspicion of espionage activity. Preliminary proceedings have been opened against him." We were still in jail then. And we are afraid for him when we think how he is sitting in a cell like that, faced with the kind of interrogators we know. They see Bahro and communists like him as their arch-enemies. And rightly so.

Bahro still held ...

There is still no reliable news of the fate of Rudolf Bahro, the East German Marxist who has been held incommunicado in an East German jail on an espionage charge after getting his book *The Alternative* published by the West German Trade Unions last August. Socialist exiles from East Germany believe his trial will be held soon — within the next one or two months. They fear the trial will be held in secret.

For details of the international defence campaigns for Bahro see the back page of this issue. The Bahro Defence Committee in Britain is shortly publishing the first issue of a regular information bulletin with news, background analysis and documentation on repression and the opposition in East Germany. To be put on the mailing list write to: **Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee, c/o G. Minnerup, School of Languages, Portsmouth Polytechnic, Hampshire Terrace, Portsmouth, Hants.**

Manifesto of the Democratic Communists

[The text printed below consists of extracts from the "Manifesto of the League of Democratic Communists of Germany" which originally appeared in its entirety in the German magazine Der Spiegel at the beginning of this year. The magazine claims that it comes from an extensive and well-organized group including middle and high-ranking officials of the East German Communist Party (SED). Although there is some doubt about its exact origins East German dissidents such as Wolf Biermann and Robert Havemann have treated it as representing a strong current of thought in East Germany, and it has also aroused considerable interest and debate on the West German left. The extracts are translated by Günter Minnerup.]

Why does the gap between the GDR and West Germany in the productivity of labour — according to Lenin the decisive criterion for the superiority of a social system — continue to grow in the key economic sectors?

Why do the numbers of exit visa applications and escape attempts, even with risk to life, not decrease?

Why do 94% of all GDR citizens, including the majority of functionaries, escape mentally from this republic every evening by switching on the ARD and ZDF [West German television networks]? Because the political and ideological psycho-terror is unbearable, because the escape to another world is essential for survival!

Why does the consumption of drugs rise above average in the GDR, with the consumption of "LMA" tablets ["lick my arse": colloquial term for tranquilisers] six times as high as others? Why does the GDR lead the world in divorces, suicide rates and alcoholism?

What are the defects of this society?

Why has Dachism [dacha - weekend cottage] become the dominant lifestyle?

We could ask further questions about different spheres of life, the answers to which would be just as damning for the Politbureau even if it falsified the statistics still more. The final reason for this depressing state of affairs, which makes a mockery of the socialist "new man", is to be found in a political superstructure without democratic rules, in the scandalous gap between the ethical theory on one and an inhuman practice on the other hand, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the relationships of production. The GDR is the mirror image of a sixteenth union republic [of the Soviet Union], with the negative aspects enlarged with German thoroughness. (...)

We ask: Has the working class fought for the 8-hour day or the system of unbroken shifts? Families are separated day and night, but the Party raises its finger: Educate your children in a more socialist way, they are unstable! At the weekend father may go to the combat group, mother practises civilian defence, the son is with the GST [Society for Sport and Technology, a paramilitary youth organization], the daughter with the DRK [German Red Cross] — all for the defence of the Politbureau caste!

Not to speak of the week: newspaper analysis, agitators' meeting, meetings of the Party, trade union, FDJ [Free German Youth - the SED's youth organization], DSF [Society for German-Soviet Friendship], Party, FDJ and union education year - and everywhere the same litany. Collectivization is total, even the Sunday dinner together is replaced by compulsory demonstrations, compulsory welcomes, compulsory farewells, usually of a Soviet tourist. (...)

We ask: for what purpose does the GDR need a police and security apparatus eight times larger in comparison to the West German, when everyone can read daily in **Neues Deutschland** [official SED organ] how much the people love the top brass? Why does GDR need an army of journalists who are all reproducing exactly what Lùla's agitation commission decrees through telex? [Lùla short for 'Lügen-Lambert' (lying Lambert); member of the Politbureau and Honecker's No.2 while he was killed in a helicopter crash in March 1978.] And an army of ML people, from kindergarten to university, all of them serving the same lifeless dogma?

We state: no ruling class in Germany has ever been as parasitic and protected itself from the people as well as those two dozen families who use our country as a self-service shop. None of them has had such excessively golden ghettos built for itself in the forests, guarded like fortresses. None of them has so shamelessly corrupted and enriched itself in special shops and private imports from the West, with medals, premiums and special clinics, pensions and gifts.



Party chief Honecker (middle) with his predecessor, Walter Ulbricht (left). The Party chiefs are mercilessly criticized by the Manifesto.

Look at them closely: is there only one of these self-appointed leaders who ever produced an idea, wrote a book or at least an article? In any area of specialization or at least on politics? No, they employ personal secretaries and institutes to produce their lead deserts, called speeches, in which only thoughtlessness flourishes in a style that Lenin was compelled to use for Russian illiterates and which is still being slavishly copied today. (...)

The Secretary for Culture [Kurt Hager] claims to be a veteran of the Spanish Civil War. He never heard a shot fired at the front but only those of the liquidation commandos of the GPU. He never encountered fire and mud, but administered the libraries of the hinterland and purged them of Trotskyist writings. As a GPU agent he also did some personal purging. He falsified his curriculum vitae as did the agitation secretary [Lambert] who came from a Nazi background and even today still concentrates ex-Nazis in his **Neues Deutschland** and agitation apparatus.

Lùla falsified his questionnaire, which, according to the statutes, is an offence incompatible with Party membership. Thus he qualified himself as a worker and subsequently dedicated himself to his career and personal image.

There is also another agitation secretary [Albert Norden, Politbureau member], in charge of controlling the DKP [West German Communist Party], who calls himself a carpenter because, 56 years ago, he spent four weeks helping to sort timber — do you now understand, comrades, why the bosses' biographies are strictly taboo? There is Number One of the

capital [Konrad Naumann, Berlin District Secretary of the SED], who gets for his sons officers' commissions in the Ministry of State Security, and for his playmate the Palace Theatre plus a villa furnished by Hübner [fashionable and expensive furniture company in West Berlin]. There is Lülü generously settling his amorous affairs out of state funds.

Corruption, misuse of office, scandalous parasitism, nepotism, wherever one looks. According to the statutes these comrades should have been expelled from the Party long ago. Look at them closely: this is what creates a politico-ideological climate leading to GDR citizens living in a semi-schizophrenic situation: publicly and verbally he is for this strange socialism, privately and deep in his heart he is dreaming — in most cases too positively — of the West and carries out daily spiritual, and perhaps actual, escapes from the Republic.

This clique at the top does more damage to the socialist idea in Germany than all the so-called enemy propaganda. They follow the old quack recipe according to which much cures much, and cause the patient's political death by this overdose. Such conditions explain why the Party became paralysed overnight in the GDR in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 (...)

We demand a different policy: realistic, cost-related prices, a corresponding realistic plan, real incomes for the workers, artisans and salaried employees guaranteeing the present living standards. The higher incomes must be frozen and partly cut. Realistic prices will do that effectively. The development of prices and incomes must be tied to the real economic growth rate for the benefit of the producers in industry and agriculture, in every five-year plan. Not for all out of the big pot, but everything for the working people with low incomes!

We demand that functionaries are paid no more than the average worker's income in the GDR. According to our comrades in the Central Statistical Bureau that is about 600 marks per month. All privileges for the functionaries have to be abolished. This is the opportunity to carry out in practice the existing decisions to reduce the apparatus.

We demand an end to the irresponsible expenditure on competitive sport, cultureless pop music producers and television dilettantes. What is the worth of a gold medal costing 25 million



The appearance of the Manifesto has been one of a series of shocks suffered by the East German Party leadership in the aftermath of the clash between the government and the artistic community at the time of Wolf Biermann's expulsion. Prominent among the artists that the authorities decided to expel from the country were the writer Jurgen Fuchs, pictured above left with his wife, and Leipzig song-writer Pannach (right).

marks? Why does a football professional earn 2000, while a highly-qualified medical specialist gets 1500 including night-duty allowances?

We demand the abolition of the restricted areas (...) We want to be able to move freely at least within the GDR. Our farmers should be able to cultivate intensively the restricted areas of the size of Luxembourg. The mine fields should be cleared by those who gave the order to lay them.

We demand the abolition of censorship of the press and publishing houses. Newspapers and literature have to be self-financing. Subsidies should be given to the immediate publication of the philosophical writings of the KPD's co-founder, Karl Liebknecht, the printing of which has so far been prevented on the order of the Central Committee Secretariat.

We demand the opening of the Party's financial books. The parasitical Party bureaucracy has no claim to even a single penny of the state budget.

We demand the reduction of the huge apparatuses of diplomats trained for subversion. Do we live in the age of the stage coach or of electronics? The genuine diplomatic tasks can be solved with 25% of the present personnel. The savings could be used to aid the developing countries.

We demand the reduction of the huge, outdated and antiquated administrative apparatuses of the SVK [Social Security], DER [State-owned travel agency], DSF etc. Also of the giant cadre departments in all branches of the state security. Everywhere there is personnel and resources to be released. Comrade Bahro has described all that in detail.

Having consulted our comrades in the factories, we demand for the workers of the GDR at least the same social status as that enjoyed by workers in Western industrialized countries: the 35-hour week, the lowering of the pension age by five years to reach at least COMECON level, four weeks annual holidays, two weeks education time off. The six-hour working day must be practised in three shifts with no loss of pay. Night shifts must be banned for youths and workers over 40. (...)

We demand urgently the abolition of the ban on any discussion of questions concerning the quality of life, particularly the ecological problems. The dangers to the health of our citizens have to be named and combatted. The dachas on the shores of our lakes should be expropriated. We need quiet places of relaxation for overworked labourers.

Comrades, spread our criticisms, popularize the ideas of the reform communists of Europe and Japan, demand the publication of the fundamental documents of our West European and Japanese fraternal parties, expose by all means the disgusting practices of the self-appointed Party bureaucrats for life! Demonstrate the SED's moral decomposition, prove how sickeningly the careerists, cynics, apparatchiks live in conflict with the most primitive rules of human decency!

Propagate and organize! The world-wide tendency of the international workers' movement is towards the decomposition of the Moscovite theory and practice. A creative, undogmatic, democratic-humanist reform communism is rising. The age of communist feudalism gives way to a renaissance and enlightenment which is capable of regaining the confidence of Germany's workers, too. Only in this way will we be able to have a say in the problems of the future of our German people.

BDKD
Central Coordination Group

Berlin, October 1977

ROMANIA

Document: Repression Against Hungarian Minority in Transylvania

[In the last issue of Labour Focus we reported on the rising discontent among the Hungarian minority in Romania following the publication of an indictment of official nationalities policy by a former aide of President Ceausescu, Karoly Kiraly. Below we print a letter in which Kiraly gives further information about the situation of the minority, particularly in his home-town of Marosvasarhely (Tirgu Mures in Romanian). According to reliable reports, the walls of this town, which is the main centre of the minority, have been filled with slogans of solidarity with Karoly; and according to a strong rumour in Bucharest, a street demonstration was recently held there. These events doubtless explain the Party leadership's decision to banish Karoly to a distant corner of Romania. The document was provided by the Committee for Human Rights in Romania (New York).]

To Comrade Janos Vincze,
Member of the Central Committee,
Romanian Communist Party

My Dear Friend,

Anxiety and concern compel me to write to you about the manner in which the nationality question has been handled in our country of late, and how the Nationality Workers' Councils on both the national and county levels are carrying out their work.

More than three months ago, I wrote to Comrade Verdet concerning various aspects of the nationality question, and, as you know, I raised the problem at the most recent meeting of the Central Committee, as well as the Spring session of the Maros County Council. In addition, several members of the Central and County Councils have also voiced their observations, criticisms and proposals. As for myself, it has been more than a year since I asked to be heard by the Supreme Party leadership.

To my deep disappointment, neither have I been granted a hearing, nor has my letter been answered in any manner whatsoever.

I would like to share with you some of my thoughts and concerns with regard to this subject.

First I would mention the problem in connection with these Nationality Councils, which concerns the manner in which they carry out their activities. It is well known that the Party resolution adopted ten years ago to establish these Councils was accepted and greeted enthusiastically by millions of workers of the various nationalities in our country. They considered it a well thought out and responsible act which would serve the preservation of their national identities, provide an organizational framework through which they could voice their various problems and complaints, and advance the development of their social, material and intellectual well-being.

Although from the very beginning the organizational structure as well as the rules of operation of the Councils proved narrow and inadequate, encouraging signs did appear in their activity: at meetings it was permitted to speak freely and openly; of the numerous proposals raised, a good many were considered; there were also some plenary sessions which were attended by Comrades Ceausescu and Maurer, and so on. The speech given by Comrade Ceausescu at the Spring 1971 joint plenary session of the Nationality Councils was met with lively enthusiasm and deep satisfaction. Unfortunately the situation and the hope were short-lived.

In practice it became clear that these beautiful speeches, incorporating so many sound principles, were not made for our sake, but to serve the purposes of propaganda, especially propaganda directed abroad.

It is commonly known that real truth becomes manifest in its lasting vitality, in the total harmony between words and deeds. We are compelled to state that the chasm between theory and practice is vast and that in reality while one thing is said, entirely different things are done.

We were promised new secondary vocational and technical schools in which studies were to be conducted in the languages of the nationalities, but in reality we have witnessed a decline in the number of these schools. Each year there are fewer and fewer of them. Children cannot study in their native tongue; compulsory instruction in the Romanian language has been introduced even at the kindergarten level. In 1976 a decision was born to eliminate Hungarian institutions of higher education. After the "Bolyai" (already largely denationalized) University in Kolozsvar came the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacology at Marosvasarhely, and then, by special order from above, a Romanian section was established at the Istvan Szentgyörgyi School for the Dramatic Arts, thereby liquidating in effect the last "island" of higher education in a nationality tongue; and — just to eliminate any remaining doubt concerning the latter move — of the six [Hungarian] graduates of the School for the Dramatic Arts, only one was appointed to a Hungarian theatre, while the remaining five — whether they liked it or not — were placed in Romanian theatres.

It is no secret, of course, that the Hungarian State Theatre of Marosvasarhely has a Romanian director who does not speak Hungarian. In the same way, it is nothing new that in cities where the majority of the population is Hungarian — such as Nagyvarad, Marosvasarhely, Szovata, etc. — Romanians who speak no Hungarian are being appointed as mayors.

Use of the native tongue is severely restricted at meetings of the Party, the Young Communist League, the trade unions, and in the various Workers' Councils, indeed, use of the native tongue is prohibited even at meetings of the Nationality Workers' Councils.

Signs identifying institutions, localities and so on in the native language of the local inhabitants have almost completely disappeared. In 1971 when I was First Secretary in Kovaszna County, we posted bilingual Romanian and Hungarian signs there, in accordance with a decree of the County People's Council. But their existence was short-lived. The signs were simply removed, and by 1975, not a single locality was identified in Hungarian.

Nationalities cannot use their native languages even in State offices; after all, most of the officials are Romanians who do not speak the nationality's language, either because they do not know it or because they refuse to use it.

With regard to the question of personnel, the replacement of Hungarian officials (where there still are any!) with Romanians is being carried out with incredible persistence. This applies equally to the politico-administrative apparatus and to the various economic and industrial enterprises. In Marosvasarhely at the "I.P.L. August 23" works, or at the Chemical Factory — to mention only two examples — not a single director or deputy

director is Hungarian, in spite of the fact that measures had been initiated "to improve the nationality composition of the personnel". I don't even wish to think of such cities as, for example, Nagyvarad, where there is not a single Party secretary of Hungarian nationality.

It is clear from only this much that a multitude of factual realities violate the Constitution, the founding Charter of the Party and the fundamental principles set down and provided for in Party documents. What is occurring in practice is not in harmony with the principles in these documents — indeed, what is more, it completely contradicts them — and has nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism, fundamental human rights, humanism, or ethical behaviour and human dignity, that is, all that which is trumpeted far and wide in the most varied kinds of propaganda.

These facts give rise to many questions which are not at all difficult to answer; what is difficult to **understand** however, is: who benefits from all of this?

Will such measures truly contribute to the unity and brotherhood of the peoples living in this homeland? Is this not a policy of chauvinistic provocation? There can be but one reply: all of this in no way benefits either the Romanian people or the co-inhabiting nationalities.

Has the lesson of history been so soon forgotten that a people which oppresses other peoples cannot itself be free? Experience and history teach us that coercive measures do not lead to the solution of problems.

The tendency to forcefully assimilate nationalities living in Romania is — this cannot be denied — also revealed by the press at times, and this creates total distrust in nationality policies; indeed, it casts doubt over the sincerity of all policies in general, and for millions of citizens, it destroys their confidence in Socialist Society.

What concerns me the most at this time is the obstinacy with which this problem is ignored by our Party organs; from the lowest level to the highest they act as if they were totally unaware of it. My own personal efforts, as well as those of others, to draw their attention to it, have thus far remained fruitless. And the situation continues to deteriorate, to the detriment of the prestige of our Party and society.

I am writing to you with a deep sense of responsibility, as I am one of those Communists who is convinced of the truth of our ideals. I have fought for these ideals since my tender youth, and later, as a member of the Party and State leadership as well.

The nationality question is a touchstone of democracy; it is an intrinsic element of the democracy which exists in the society as a whole. Without the just and real, not only verbal, solution of the nationality question, democracy in general cannot exist, and the new Society, the Socialist which we all want cannot be built up.

Our Supreme Leadership must analyze these problems very seriously. Unless it does so, the leadership itself will make the entire existence of democracy within our Party and our society, questionable.

It is not society which is bad, nor is it the socialist system which must be faulted, but the methods used by the leadership. It is necessary to illuminate the grave errors which are being committed in the name of Marxism-Leninism and in the application of the fundamental principles established by the Party.

We must renounce policies based on demagogy, the personality cult and the capricious application of Marxism. Only in this way can we achieve a proper, just and democratic solution of all those questions which reality has created in our socialist society.

As it has been proven, at no time and in no place has the personality cult ever led to any good. On the contrary, it has been the source of great suffering and pain, as well as the cause of political abuses, because the masses have always rejected it, regardless of the masks it wore or the excuses made for it.

My dear Comrade Vincze, I ask you to forward the enclosed letter, which I had addressed to Comrade Ilie Verdet and intended for the supreme leadership, to the members of the Politburo. It would be very useful if the Politburo discussed the issues raised in the letter, because, perhaps in this way, our supreme leadership would wake up to the truth and take the appropriate actions.

We nationalities — Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and so on — feel a deep respect for the Romanian people and wish to live in harmony with them.

I personally have thousands of friends and relatives of the Romanian nationality; my son-in-law is Romanian, and I love him just as much as my other relatives and friends with whom I have worked, shoulder to shoulder, for the building of the new society. I want our common home to develop, grow strong and prosper, and it is for this reason that I am writing to you with such sincerity and courage. It is my conviction that this matter is common to us all, that it is the duty of every one of us to critically examine the negative phenomena, and that such phenomena cannot be viewed through rose-coloured glasses, regardless of whether they are of an economic or social nature, or even if they derive from the co-existence of workers of the various nationalities. It would be a pity if all that would collapse which we, Romanians and the other nationalities, built up with hard work in the decades following the Liberation. After all, this country is the common home of all of us, and we love her as a good mother. We must do all we can to prevent her from becoming a cruel stepmother to any one of her children, regardless of his nationality.

Most respectfully,

Karoly Kiraly

Marosvasarhely, 10 September 1977.

POLAND

Appeal Launched by Workers' Group

On 23 February some workers in the Polish mining centre of Katowice announced the formation of a **Committee for the Creation of Free Trade Unions**. The authorities responded swiftly by trying to suppress the organization. According to the **Guardian**, 1 March, one of the members of the committee, Andrzej Czuna, was sacked from his job. Another member, Kazimierz

Switon, was arrested and held by the police for 48 hours before being released. Jacek Kuron has denounced this repression as well as the harassment of members and sympathizers of the KOR.

The Committee has, nevertheless, continued to operate. The Paris daily **Rouge** reported on 17 April that the Committee has

launched an appeal to Polish workers to create cells in their factories to discuss the statutes and programme of the Committee and to organize a struggle against exploitation and against the humiliation of workers at work. The appeal says that unions must be created to "defend the interests of workers and to obtain just wages". They must fight for a 40-hour week

and for 2 rest days per week, and they must oppose the small groups in the Party who "exploit the labour of the whole Polish nation".

Little news has reached the West about the composition and activities of the

Committee. But the creation of the Committee is a significant new development in Polish politics. While the dissident movement in Poland has concentrated almost entirely on the struggle for civil liberties there has been a very widespread and deep-going frustration amongst Polish

workers with their economic and social situation. The appeal by the Trade Union Committee is the first initiative that focuses attention mainly on these problems.

By Peter Green

Polish Writers Attack Censorship

The first Congress of the Polish Writers' Union to take place since the June 1976 strike movement and the subsequent emergence of a broad dissident movement took place in Katowice on 7-8 April. The congress was the culmination of an intense battle between writers supporting the Party leadership and those pressing for greater cultural freedoms in Poland. The results of the elections to the Board of the Writers' Union suggests that the dissenting writers won a qualified victory at the Congress.

The central issue at the Congress was the censorship of Polish publishing. Last year an official from the censorship office left Poland with a huge file of internal documents that gave the most complete picture to have emerged from Eastern Europe on how official censorship works. At the same time a number of leading Polish writers began to publish their own unofficial literary journals, the most prominent of which is *Zapis*. Against this background a large number of writers had gained a new confidence to struggle for greater freedom of literary expression at the Congress. Their numbers were swelled when the leadership of the Warsaw Branch of the Union tried to engineer the election of a docile delegation

to the Congress, thereby angering a number of writers who considered themselves apolitical or neutral in the growing battle. According to a *Palach Press* report the Warsaw Branch elected only two members of the Branch executive to the 75 strong delegation to the Congress, and the deputy Chairman of the Union, the hard-liner Jerzy Putrament, was elected as the 75th delegate by only one vote. A similar pattern emerged in the election of delegates from Krakow, Wroclaw and Lodz.

At the Congress itself, the role of the Censorship was openly debated. The Party's increasingly powerful and authoritarian cultural and press chief, Jerzy Lukaszewicz, spoke three times, and denied that the Censor's Office had got out of control. One of the delegates, Andrzej Braun, severely attacked the censorship system and accused the Union of failing in its duty of defending Polish culture. According to *Palach Press* some participants stated that the Congress heard some of the most outspoken speeches since the Writers' Congress of 1956.

All the Congress delegates were invited to a ceremony at the headquarters of the Ministry of Mining in Katowice, where the

deputy provincial head, Dr. Gorczyca, attacked Andrzej Braun by name, saying he had 'foreign task-masters'. Cries of 'Shame!' came from the audience and many writers, including even Jerzy Putrament, got up and walked out. The Congress subsequently passed a unanimous resolution condemning the "attempt to meddle in the Congress's affairs" at the Mining Ministry ceremony.

In the elections of the new Board of the Union, Marek Nowakowski, one of the editors of the unofficial journal, *Zapis*, was among those elected.

In order to head off the opposition to the official censorship, Lukaszewicz promised the creation of a Publications Council, attached to the Ministry of Culture and composed of both politicians and creative writers. Its function would be to arbitrate in arguments between artists and censors. But it remains to be seen how far such measures as this will be successful in stemming the movement to abolish the censorship of cultural life in Poland.

By Peter Green

Marxist Manifesto Calls for Socialist Democracy

A Manifesto, entitled **For Socialist Democracy in Poland!** and signed by "A Group of Communist Oppositionists" appeared in the 27 March issue of the American Marxist weekly *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.

Drawing inspiration from the classical writing of Marxism, the Manifesto sums up the system in Poland in the following words: "There is no organization of production by the producers themselves. This system, therefore, is shown to be a type of despotism that envelops all areas of life. Insofar as atomized individuals defend their private interests (which are in fact completely illusory), they are capable only of realizing their own powerlessness".

Unlike some of the currents within the Party seeking to change the system, the authors of the Manifesto recognize the positive role of the Workers' Defence Committee, saying

that "it contributed to the process of organizing the anti-bureaucratic opposition on a larger scale". The Manifesto urges the necessity for opponents of the system to advance a positive overall alternative to the present order and criticizes the opposition for its failure to pose such an alternative. This, they say, is not to be done by trying to work out a new blueprint in a purely theoretical way, "It is a matter of discovering, in the history of this system, the incipient forms of possible liberation that are in the process of being created." The Manifesto finds such liberating impulses in the struggles of the working class against the bureaucratic system.

The Manifesto puts forward the perspective of a struggle for a state based upon a system of workers' councils, in which all political currents prepared to abide by the rules of socialist democracy could function freely. It calls for the democratic election and recall

of all officials, and the payment of no more than the average worker's wage to all officials. The authors conclude by stressing that only international solidarity can ensure that the struggle for political freedom and to establish socialist democracy "will not be brutally cut short through outside intervention".

It is impossible to assess the strength of the revolutionary Marxist current within the Polish opposition at the present time. A second document reflecting this trend, "Reflections on the Revolution of Hope" by Stephan Horton, has appeared in the latest issue of the British journal of the Conference of Socialist Economists, *Capital and Class*. But the tradition of Marxist opposition in Poland is a long one, going back to the "Po Prostu" current in 1956 and the Open Letter of Kuron and Modzelewski in the mid-1960s.

By Pawel Jankowski

YUGOSLAVIA

Managers Take Workers to Court for Complaint

by Dunja Vukasinovic

[The following article was sent to us from Yugoslavia dated 1 March 1978. It provides a revealing insight into industrial relations there. Translation for Labour Focus by Michele Lee.]

In Yugoslavia, workers dissatisfied with the situation in their factory can submit a complaint to higher authorities outside the enterprise. This is usually the first step, the next one being to go on strike — a method which has proved itself a far more effective way of fighting for workers' interests.

Workers usually take their complaints to higher Party forums, since they are well aware that this is where social power is concentrated. But they sometimes also complain to higher trade union bodies or to special parliamentary commissions.

What happens to such workers' complaints? Usually they are answered with promises issued in a soothing tone designed to neutralize workers' dissatisfaction and to prevent the possible further escalation of the dispute into strike action. The whole affair is kept as secret as possible and information about it rarely reaches a wider public. The mass media generally publishes news about the case only when it has already for one reason or another become public knowledge through the spreading of rumours. Then what usually happens is that the papers print denials of these rumours along with a calming 'explanation' of what is 'really' supposed to have happened.

But sometimes a 'case' escapes such administrative control and unlike tens of other affairs becomes public knowledge. One revealing example of a case that became public knowledge is the court proceedings that were instituted against a group of workers from the Cibaliija leather factory in Vinkovci, an industrial and railway centre about 130 miles from Zagreb. The workers had lodged a complaint in the form of a letter to the President of the Yugoslav Trade Unions, Mika Spiljak and to the President of the Croatian Trade Unions, Milutin Baltic. In their letter, the 5 workers — T. Kupresakovic, I. Sivonjic, M. Salopek, M. Drca and S. Damjanovic — alleged that the management and business policy of their factory was against the interests of the workers and that 'self-management' existed only on paper because the top leaders took all the main decisions on their own. The manager of the factory, M. Blazanin, has been a professional director for the last 27 years although his qualifications do not meet the usual norms expected for such a leading position. The workers also stated that relations between the managers and the workers were

undemocratic and that the managers "shout at the workers and threaten them in various ways", adding that malpractices by the leading bodies in the plant were rife, and so on.

This workers' complaint developed in a startling way when the leaders of the Cibaliija factory filed a private court action against the signatories of the letter accusing them of defamation. At the same time the central trade union paper, **Rad** [Labour] carried a number of letters from other workers in the factory confirming the allegations in the initial letter of complaint and testifying that the workers on trial were good communists and good people who were very popular in the factory. Even the President of the Yugoslav Trade Unions, Mika Spiljak, published a statement in **Rad** just before the start of the trial declaring that "Nobody who turned either to him or to other functionaries should be taken to court before the matter had been discussed in the field from which the misunderstandings have arisen". At the same time, the Croatian Council of Trade Unions sent a message to the Vinkovci court demanding an end to the proceedings.

The Vinkovci court was presided over by a certain Katica Dajak who, significantly, had been a bridesmaid at the wedding of one of the managers of the Cibaliija factory. The court found the workers guilty of spreading false rumours against their factory managers. The accused were given a choice of either paying a fine of 3,000 din. [about £86] or serving a one month prison sentence. They were also given leave to appeal to a higher court in Osijek. At the time of writing the decision of this higher court has not yet been announced.

The case was reported not only in the trade union paper **Rad** but also in the mass circulation weekly **Duga** [Rainbow] as well as in other papers, so it became quite well-known. This would not have happened had the letter of complaint not precipitated a clash between the local and the higher authorities. The course of events had prevented the authorities from uniting in defence of a common interest in suppressing this 'unpleasant affair'.

One can be sure that nothing very tragic will happen to the managers of 'Cibaliija' — the worst that can happen to them is that they will be transferred to leading positions in some other firm. The workers, on the other hand, who had sufficient courage to bring to public attention the situation in their firm, can easily be transferred to worse jobs or even fired for 'grave infringements of work discipline'. If this happens, they will find it very difficult to get another job since they will be known as rebels and people who are 'morally and politically unsuitable'.

BULGARIA

"Declaration 78" issued by Opposition Group

The **International Herald Tribune** of 12 April reported the appearance of an opposition manifesto entitled **Declaration 78** in Bulgaria. The complete text of the declaration, which was apparently published in the Austrian daily **Die Presse** on 3 April, is not yet in the hands of **Labour Focus**.

There is no indication of the document's authorship except for the initials ABD which appear as a signature. Although the declaration's title is reminiscent of Charter 77 its demands are much more extensive

than those of the Czechoslovak Chartists. Its 6-point programme includes the following demands:

1. For full civil and human rights; no interference in privacy; a free press and freedom of artistic expression; freedom of criticism and of elections; freedom of religion; the elimination of censorship.
2. Freer exchange of information and of people; free emigration and an opening of borders; the right of every Bulgarian citizen to hold an international passport; the scrapping of penal clauses against those who

- fail to return to Bulgaria from trips abroad.
3. Improved social benefits; increased old age pensions; the fixing of an acceptable relationship between wages and prices, relating them to real rises in the cost of living.
4. The formation of independent trade unions in place of the existing ones, to defend the real interests of the workers.
5. An end to privileges in all spheres of public life.
6. The publication of this declaration in all the daily papers.

Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign Launches Appeal for Soviet Group

The recently formed Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign (see **Labour Focus** Vol.2 No.1 on its formation) has launched a campaign directed towards the trade unions, the Labour Party and student unions calling upon labour movement organizations to take up the defence of the members of the Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the Soviet Union.

The campaign is sending a briefing to trades councils throughout the country, to trade union bodies, to every Labour Party branch and to student unions, providing them with basic information on the AFTUWSU, on its demands, and on the repression directed against its members by the Soviet authorities. The Campaign is hoping for a strong response to its call for mass working class protests against the Soviet authorities' attempt to suppress the Trade Union Association.

Already some sections of the labour movement have taken up the case in response to the information that has been supplied to them by Amnesty International. (See **Labour Focus** Vol.2 No.1 for a detailed account of the history of the group that has formed the Trade Union Association.)

The following letter was sent in the name of the union to Leonid Brezhnev, M.P. Georgadze and A. Shibayev.

Dear Colleague, 6 April 1978.
My Executive Council are greatly perturbed at the information now being circulated here in Britain regarding your Government's treatment of a sizeable group of workers who call themselves the "Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the Soviet Union". Particularly we are worried about the so-called "psychiatric treatment" to which they are being subjected, and would ask you, in the name of humanity, to intervene and concede to those workers the normal freedom that the working class in any country should be entitled to enjoy.

Yours sincerely,
John Boyd, General Secretary, AUEW.

At the 16 March meeting of the **Bristol Trades Council**, the following resolution from the **NATFHE** Branch was passed by 61 votes to 23 (against the advice of the Executive Committee):

"Bristol Trades Union Council supports those people in Russia who are trying to form a free and independent trade union movement. We condemn the harshness of a regime which represses these workers, incarcerates them in mental hospitals, withdraws their labour permits (which denies them the right to work) and sentences them to lengthy periods in labour camps."

Here is a list of some of the steps that have already been taken by sections of the labour movement in this country:

- * **The AUEW Engineering Section** has sent a letter of protest to Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders (see box on this page for text of the letter).
- * **TGWU leader Moss Evans** has raised the issue with a delegation of Soviet Trade Union officials.
- * **The NUM** has written to the Soviet authorities, saying that they will take the matter up with the TUC if they receive an unsatisfactory reply.
- * **The NUR** has written to the Soviet authorities, saying that they will take the matter up with the TUC if they receive an unsatisfactory reply.
- * **NALGO** has issued a public statement expressing its concern.
- * **The Bristol Trades Council** has passed a resolution of support for the AFTUWSU and sent it to the Soviet Embassy and the TUC. (See box on this page for the text of the resolution.)
- * **The NGA Executive** has supported the AFTUWSU and is publishing their appeal in their journal.
- * **USDAW** has decided to take the case up with visiting Soviet delegations.
- * **The ASBSBSW (Boilermakers)** have protested to the Soviet Embassy and have referred the matter to the TUC.
- * **The National Woolsorters Society** has sent greetings and support to the AFTUWSU and are taking the case up with the National Association of Unions in the Textile Trades.
- * **Both the NEC of the Labour Party and the TUC General Council** are due to discuss the case in the near future.

Copies of all resolutions and protest letters from labour movement bodies should be sent to:

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

FRENCH UNIONS SPEAK OUT

In response to the appeal by socialist exiles from various East European countries (see the letter in **Labour Focus** vol.2 no.1), the main federations of French trade unions have come out strongly in defence of the Soviet Trade Union Association.

Joannes Galland, Secretary of the Communist-led CGT (the largest trade union federation) declared:

"For the CGT there can be no question of defending liberties everywhere in the world except in the socialist countries. Also we unambiguously denounce the repression."

The CFDT added that it "supports all those who use the means at their disposal to struggle against political unemployment and for their own dignity. The CFDT demands the release of Klebanov and his comrades."

The Teachers' Union, **FEN**, also called for the immediate release of those imprisoned and for the reinstatement of those sacked. **FEN** then appealed "to the international trade union movement to urgently intervene to save our comrades from repression."

BAHRO DEFENCE GROWS

The Bahro Defence Campaign is now being co-ordinated between committees in various West European countries. On the initiative of the British Bahro Defence Committee, an international appeal to the leaders of the labour movement organizations has already been signed by Labour MPs Tom Litterick, Eric Heffer, Stan Newens and by prominent socialist individuals like Simone de Beauvoir, Wolf Biermann, Jiri Pelikan, Zhores Medvedev, Tamara Deutscher, Jean Ellenstein of the French Communist Party, Ken Coates and others.

The "Freedom and Socialism Defence Committee" in Germany is organizing a major international symposium to discuss Bahro's book **The Alternative** and another German committee, "The Committee for the Release of Rudolf Bahro" is planning an international congress of solidarity to be held in Berlin this autumn. Those wishing to assist the defence activity for Bahro should write to: **Rudolf Bahro Defence Committee**, c/o G. Minnerup, School of Lanugages, Portsmouth Polytechnic, Hampshire Terrace, Portsmouth, Hants.

CAMPAIGN FOR HELSINKI GROUP

The Toronto-based Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners has launched an international appeal on behalf of the 6 arrested members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group. 5 members have already been sentenced, a sixth is awaiting trial:

- * **Mykola Rudenko**, sentenced June 1977 to 7 years prison and 5 years penal exile.
- * **Oleksa Tykhy**, sentenced June 1977 to 10 years prison and 5 years exile.
- * **Myroslav Marynovych** and **Mykola Matusevych**, each sentenced March 1978 to 7 years prison and 5 years exile.
- * **Petro Vins**, sentenced April 1978 to one year in a labour camp.
- * **Lev Lukyanenko**, arrested December 1977 and not yet tried.

All six are charged with "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" — the legal clause in the USSR criminal code banning free speech and freedom of the press.

The Toronto appeal is addressed to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and it calls for the release of all 6 political prisoners in the name of "organizations and activists in the struggle for human and democratic rights of all working people, oppressed nationalities and women".

Anyone wishing to take up the campaign on behalf of these prisoners can obtain copies of the appeal from: **CDSPP, P.O. Box 130, Station M, Toronto, Canada**. Details of the trial of Tykhy and Rudenko are in **Labour Focus** Vol.1 No.3.

WOMEN AND EAST EUROPE

Just out: Complete issue of Labour Focus on the position of women in Eastern Europe. Articles on the family, employment, legal rights, position of gay people, abortion, etc. Order now from Labour Focus. 40p per copy. £2.75 for 10 copies post free in the UK.