

# LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

A Socialist Defence Bulletin on  
Eastern Europe and the USSR

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Trade Unionists and Repression  
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"We should be able to check the  
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# LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

## Provisional Statement of Aims

A growing number of socialists and communists of all persuasions are taking a stand against the suppression of democratic rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Bourgeois claims that the British Left turns a blind eye to Eastern Europe while protesting against oppression in Chile or Southern Africa or Northern Ireland are being increasingly exposed as hollow hypocrisy.

But up to now socialists have lacked a source of frequent and reliable information on events in that part of the world. Most socialists have to turn to the bourgeois press for their information. Yet the latter reports selectively and from its own particular angle. At the same time, coverage in the papers of the Left remains scanty. The first aim of this bulletin is to help fill this gap by giving those concerned about repression in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union a more comprehensive and regular source of information about events there.

The mass media give ample space to Tory politicians and Cold Warriors on the Labour Right who seek to use protests against repression in Eastern Europe as a cover for their own support for imperialism and for witchhunts against socialist and communist militants in Britain. At the same time, campaigns that have been going on for many years by socialists in the labour movement concerning victims of repression in Eastern Europe are entirely ignored by the mass media. The second aim of this bulletin is therefore to provide comprehensive information about the activities of genuine socialist and labour movement organisations who are taking up this issue.

The purpose of this bulletin is to inform, not to debate the nature of the East European states nor to discuss the strategy that should be adopted by socialists in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Our aim is not to lend support to one particular trend in that part of the world but to provide information about all significant currents campaigning for democratic rights.

Wherever possible we will quote the sources of our information. Unless otherwise stated, all the material in this bulletin may be reproduced with acknowledgement.

In these ways we hope to strengthen campaigns to mobilise the very considerable influence that the British labour movement can have in the struggle for an end to repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

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# EDITORIAL

On 19th February, the Guardian reported that a 'high official' in the American administration recognised that many people would be annoyed with President Carter's statement in support of Sakharov. The reporter added that the high official felt that the people would be less upset if Carter 'was seen to be speaking out on human rights against countries outside the Communist World. But,' said the official, 'there have been few other prima facie violations recently'. Few obvious violations of human rights outside the 'Communist World'!

What about the hundreds of black people gunned down in South Africa during the last year? What about British action in Northern Ireland? What about Iran, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines? What about the fate of the Palestinians in Israel, the Lebanon and Jordan? Does not the American administration follow -- or rather dictate -- events in Latin America today? Perhaps the following little item by the Associate Press correspondent in Argentina is not quite 'prima facie' enough for the White House. Describing his inquiries about some Uruguayan left-wing politicians, the correspondent recounts this story:

'In a restaurant one day I asked a police official if he knew anything about the four Uruguayans. 'See that table over there?' he said. 'I was sitting there having lunch with this government intelligence officer and he asked me if I wanted a kid. I said, 'What?' And he said, 'Yeah, a kid. We just knocked off the parents and we have three kids and don't know what to do with them. You sure you don't want one?' Then he described how it happened. The parents were being interrogated in a safe house along with another Tupamaro and the other guy was being tough. He just folded his arms and challenged them to make him talk. It was winter and they had a heater in the room. One of the officers calmly picked it up, splashed the paraffin on the guy and threw a match on him. He went up like a torch..'' (New York Review of Books, October 28, 1976). An isolated case? The impeccably respectable AP correspondent says that more people were killed by government terror in Argentina last year than during the entire repressive drive by the Chilean junta after it seized power. But the 'Human Rights orientated' American administration which is mainly responsible for propping up the repressive regimes throughout the capitalist world, says that there are no obvious cases of violations of human rights outside what it calls 'the Communist World'.

Little wonder that millions of workers throughout the world, who know what capitalism and imperialism are about, look with deep suspicion on campaigns against repression in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They are right to have nothing but scorn for the human rights hypocrisy issuing from the mouths of Carter, Thatcher, and many right-wing Labour politicians who have built their careers out of witchhunts against militants in the labour movement.

But we cannot leave the matter here. We have to destroy the capacity of the cold warriors of the right to use campaigns against repression in Eastern Europe as a cover for their own brutalities. And in this task we face one great obstacle: the fact that working class and democratic rights are being suppressed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Just about every single current of opinion in the working class today recognises that such repression does exist in Eastern Europe. But many still feel that socialist campaigns against repression in that part of the world play into the hands of the class enemy. In our view, these feelings are the result of muddled thinking. It is not the socialists campaigning seriously against repression in Eastern Europe who aid the ruling classes in the West. It is the regimes who carry out the repression who provide grist for the mill of bourgeois propaganda. The absence of

thoroughgoing socialist democracy in these countries, has been a gigantic source of strength for the capitalist classes in the West in their drive to discredit socialism.

The right rejoices in the psychiatric prisons and labour camps that still exist in the Soviet Union. One raw young Western journalist recounts the following typical little encounter in Hungary in June 1956: 'I visited Budapest and chatted with a Western diplomat there. We were discussing the various little signs of change that had already appeared in Hungary and the concessions which the regime was being pushed to make by dissatisfaction within its own Communist Party. The diplomat viewed them all with gloom. Anything which made life a little easier for the Hungarians, he said, was bad for the West because then the people might diminish their opposition to communism.' (Flora Lewis, 'The Polish Volcano', p. xiii). Exactly!

Many socialists see another objection to East European defence campaigns: they wonder what they are letting themselves in for when people like Bukovsky come out to the West and associate themselves with some of the most vicious characters on the right-wing of the Tory party.

But it is not difficult to understand why some oppositionists in these countries -- though by no means all -- see bourgeois circles in the West as their friends. Bukovsky was demanding the implementation of rights contained in the Soviet Constitution. For this he was harshly persecuted in the name of socialism and communism.

This bulletin does not support the political ideas of Bukovsky, or Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov. It is utterly opposed also to currents wanting to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. But we are also utterly opposed to the use of physical repression against currents trying to campaign for working class rights and democratic rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. And such repression continues in these countries today. It is a policy which has nothing in common with socialist democracy; yet it is carried out in the name of socialism. And it casts its ugly shadow over the struggle for socialism, not only in Eastern Europe but throughout the world.

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The staff of this bulletin all consider themselves Marxists. Some are politically affiliated, some not. We have come together to use our knowledge of East European societies and our language skills to try to provide the most reliable information obtainable about cases of repression and action for working class and democratic rights in that part of the world. We hope communists, socialists, and trade union militants will be able to use this bulletin in a number of ways:

° Use our information to get resolutions through their organisations calling for the release of political prisoners in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

° Reproduce material from this bulletin and circulate it at political or trade union meetings to publicise cases of political repression.

° Learn about the various labour movement campaigns on this issue from the bulletin and link up with them.

° Supply us with information about local activities in support of political prisoners so that we can publicise them and get wider support.

° Tell us about labour movement or student delegations either to or from Eastern Europe and the USSR, so that we can send relevant information about political prisoners to the appropriate people.

° Subscribe to the bulletin, get organisations you belong to to subscribe, send us donations, and thereby help us to go monthly by the autumn of this year.

# Victor Fainberg on the struggle of a young Russian worker

## The case of Vladimir Borisov

[Victor Fainberg, a fitter from Leningrad, is now in exile in London. He was one of the eight who demonstrated in Red Square on August 25, 1968, against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. For this he spent five years in a psychiatric hospital in Leningrad. He is one of the most active campaigners in the West against psychiatric abuse in the Soviet Union.]

I got to know Vladimir Borisov while I was in psychiatric confinement in Leningrad. What struck me most about him was his optimism and sense of humour which he maintained even in the worst circumstances. He is a worker, who knows how to do everything with his hands. He was many things at once: a fitter, a mechanic, an electrician and a technician. His character was formed in Siberia in contact with savage natural surroundings where a person is continually confronted by danger and therefore has to make quick decisions. He gained his independent spirit from contact with the lone hunters there, the last free men.

At the age of 18 he participated in a dock strike in a small far-eastern port. On returning to Leningrad as a worker aged twenty-two, he organised a clandestine group of young workers whose objective was to reconcile socialism and democracy. He was arrested, declared insane, and interned in a special psychiatric hospital where he waged an active struggle against forcible treatment. Grigorenko was regrouping the left wing of the opposition and organising a militant struggle in defence of the Crimean Tartars. In May 1969, after the arrest of Grigorenko, Borisov was the sole representative in Leningrad of the Initiative Group for Human Rights.

That was the beginning of our long common struggle, which lasted three years, against psychiatric repression. One has to remember that the KGB psychiatrists posed three conditions for liberating a 'political patient': that one renounces one's views, that one recognises one's illness, and that one pledges one's loyalty to the Soviet state. We wanted to create a precedent: to gain release without conditions. And we were successful! In order to do this, we had to break through the wall of silence. We succeeded in passing on, via an orderly, a statement addressed to public opinion. Bukovsky played the decisive role in first making police use of psychiatry internationally known. One year later we went on hunger strike for 90 days. They tried to forcibly feed us but we responded by vomiting. As the date of the International



V. Borisov, his Mother, Marina Voikhanskaya and V. Fainberg

Congress of Psychiatrists in Mexico approached the administration retreated. The chemical treatment of political prisoners was stopped and we gained the right to receive literature and see our lawyers. We were even promised a review of our cases before a tribunal. For the first time Borisov and I were put in the same cell. Unfortunately the Mexican Congress finished with a victory for Soviet psychiatric diplomacy. From the day after the Congress we suffered the decisions flowing from it on our own skins!

We were separated once again. Harsh treatment and forcible drugging recommenced. This is when we started the second hunger strike, which was very difficult.

The administration tried everything to break us. We were completely isolated, under permanent surveillance, forbidden to go out for a walk. They were so afraid that this might become known in the West that they searched the cell several times a day and took everything we had away from us, even the toilet paper. After being bound to the bedstead we were forced-fed by a tube through our nose. This took two hours a day.

I was finally released in March 1973 after another hunger strike. But the KGB was successful in blocking the release of Borisov. Later, when a court had to decide whether Borisov should be released from compulsory treatment, the panic-stricken KGB tried to organise a court hearing inside the psychiatric hospital, to avoid publicity. But this new move failed when Judge Ivanov of the Leningrad City Court released Vladimir Borisov after he received a file full of Amnesty International telegrams.

After his release Borisov resumed contact with the opposition. Being a Marxist he thought that only a mass movement could bring about radical changes. Also he had a critical attitude towards the intellectual opposition because of one essential limitation: the absence of links with the working class. He felt that in order to go beyond the limits of the existing situation it was necessary for the intellectual opposition to make proposals which would link the working class with the struggle for individual freedoms. He showed a great interest in the socialist movement in the West.

Before his most recent arrest he was preparing a reply to a collection of essays called **From Under the Rubble** compiled by the right wing of the opposition; this reply was to have the ironic title of **Through the Swamp**.

Last September, a wave of searches and arrests swept Leningrad. At Borisov's flat the KGB confiscated a large number of samizdat materials and a duplicator. Arrested, then released, Borisov publicly demanded, along with other dissidents, the right to have a duplicator, emphasising that this is a right guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution and that what was at issue was to gain its implementation.

The anniversary date of the Constitution, the 5th December, has been marked by the opposition for the last 20 years by holding a meeting in Pushkin Square in Moscow. For the first time, on this occasion 25 people including Borisov held a meeting in Leningrad's Pushkin Square.

His most recent arrest took place on Christmas Day and he was once again interned in No.3 Psychiatric hospital in

Leningrad, in Ward 8 which is the grimmest. On January 4th, Borisov was examined by the first commission of psychiatrists which declared him sane. The reason for this surprising 'honesty' seemed to be linked to a fear of international scandal. But two days later the KGB spawned a new commission which rejected the first decision, resolving that 'the patient is in need of forcible treatment ... with vitamins'. Meanwhile the KGB proposed that Borisov discretely emigrate. Borisov and his wife denounced this blackmail, reaffirming the right to freely decide where

they choose to live.

A working group against psychiatric repression has been created in Moscow consisting of Pyotr Grigorenko, Irina Kaplun (Borisov's wife), Kalistatova and others who have undertaken the defence of Borisov.

At the moment the fate of Borisov is still not decided. In late January we heard that the authorities intend to call another commission to see him in 4 months. But unless preventive action is taken, we will see the KGB trying to concoct a new 'affair': if

this happens Borisov could again face the hell of a special psychiatric hospital.

Only international opinion can prevent this happening. What makes me particularly sad is the fact that up to now Borisov has not gained mass support. Volodya is a worker. He is a socialist. It must be the workers, it must be those who are socialists and trade unionists and also the psychiatrists who take the lead in defending him.

(This is a translation of an article which appeared in a left-wing French daily newspaper, *Rouge*, on 26th January, 1977.)

## Grigorenko asks CPs' aid for Ginzburg and Rudenko

At the beginning of February of this year the KGB arrested four of the leading human rights campaigners in Moscow and Ukraine. This act and the consequent protest by hundreds of Soviet citizens represents the most significant clash between Soviet authorities and the opposition since the crushing of the democratic movement and the Ukrainian opposition between 1970-1972. This new move by the authorities appears to be motivated by concern over the growing support for the Helsinki monitoring groups which have been set in Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. The Party leadership may also be worried about the possibility of a link-up between the Soviet opposition and the growing resistance forces in Eastern Europe.

The Moscow-based group was set up in May of 1976. Its expressed aim was to compile dossiers of information concerning the violation of human rights within the Soviet Union. Among its dossiers are one on Mustafa Dzhemilev, and another on 8 people who were arrested after the Helsinki Conference. It has also co-operated with the Lithuanian group on a joint report on repression in Lithuania. This deals mainly with religious persecution.

The Ukrainian group took up the Moscow initiative in November 1976. Since then it has distributed a statement of aims, and Memorandum No. 1. This memorandum not only outlines the problems of national oppression, but also provides a very detailed list, some of which is unknown in the West, of political prisoners. (1)

### EX-PRISONERS

Both the Moscow-based group and the Ukrainian group contain a fair proportion of ex-political prisoners. For example, in the Russian one Ginzburg, Marchenko and Grigorenko are all well-known for their dissident and literary activities in the sixties; in the Ukrainian group seven out of ten are ex-political prisoners, the most outstanding examples of which are Lukyan-

enko and Kandyba, both just recently released after 15 years imprisonment for having drafted a programme for a Ukrainian Workers' and Peasants' Union which never saw the light of day.

As the Ukrainian Memorandum No. 1 says: *"In the meantime, former political prisoners are returning unbroken, hardened, and determined to continue the struggle for human rights. It is enough to examine the membership of our Group to be convinced of that. This is a new, strange social phenomenon, for which the authorities are not prepared. It appears that prisons, camps, and psychiatric hospitals cannot serve as dams against a movement in defence of justice. On the contrary, they temper cadres of unyielding fighters for liberty. And the KGB can no longer make sure that political prisoners will never return."*

A crackdown on Soviet intellectuals in fact began in late December with the arrest of 4 dissidents in Moscow among whom were Vladimir Borisov and Yuliya Voznesenskaya. Voznesenskaya was sentenced to 5 years exile, while Borisov was for the third time interned in a psychiatric hospital. Subsequently a psychiatric commission declared Borisov sane and called for his release but to this day he is still in confinement getting "vitamin treatment" (see article on Borisov in this issue Ed.)

Simultaneously the KGB began its campaign of harassment, detentions, interrogations and searches of apartments against the leading members of the Helsinki groups confiscating 1200 documents, funds, etc. This culminated in the arrests of Aleksandr Ginzburg, a writer, on February 3, Mykola Rudenko, a writer in Kiev and Oleh Tikhy a teacher in Donetsk on February 5, and finally Yuri Orlov, a nuclear physicist, on February 10. Another Russian member, Lyudmilla Alexeyeva, has been given a passport to leave the USSR.

The response to the arrest of Ginzburg was in the form of an appeal by 270 demanding

his release. He is well-known not only for his "White Book" of 1966 on the Sinyavsky/Daniel trial, but also because since 1974 he has been the co-ordinator of a fund to aid political prisoners. So far this fund has distributed £216,000 to political prisoners and their families.

### GRIGORENKO CALL

Throughout January a number of appeals were issued to the West in an attempt to get support and to warn of the possibility of a crackdown. On 8th January, Sakharov appealed to the heads of states of all the countries who signed the Helsinki Agreement; and Roy Medvedev appealed to the leaders of Western Communist and Socialist Parties. On January 20, the Ukrainian Helsinki Group appealed to the American and Canadian Communist Parties to defend the Moscow group against repression.

Pyotr Grigorenko, member of both the Russian and Ukrainian groups, called for the immediate release of Ginzburg and Rudenko on February 8. He said that as a life-long communist he appealed to Western CP leaders and to all communists in Europe to demand an end to the repression of the human rights movement, and an amnesty for political prisoners. The following is an extract from his statement:

**'Here they persecute communists as in any fascist country; once you criticise the leadership - it means arrest. The Soviet authorities have engaged in a new anti-democratic attack with the recent arrests, and it is a duty of all communists in Europe to stop this attack...'**

Helen Jamieson

(1) Declaration and Memorandum No. 1 of the Ukrainian Public Group to Promote the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords, Kiev, Ukrainian S.S.R., available from the Committee in Defence of Soviet Political prisoners, c/o 67 Grangewood Street, East Ham, London E6, for 25 pence plus postage.

# CZECHOSLOVAKIA

## Charter 77 - a new stage

[Jiri Pelikan, head of Czech Radio and TV and member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee until his removal from office after the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, is now a leading figure in the Czechoslovak Socialist Opposition in exile. He edits the Czech language paper Listy. In our Reviews section we carry a brief assessment of his new book on the Socialist Opposition in Eastern Europe. Below we print a statement he gave to the French daily Rouge on Charter 77. Translation is by Labour Focus.]

The appearance of the Charter 77 movement represents a new stage in the development of the opposition in Czechoslovakia and by the same token an addition to the general oppositional movement throughout Eastern Europe.

The Charter offers a political platform which unites the different currents of opposition and the various social layers in the country behind a common purpose of defending democratic rights and freedoms guaranteed by international conventions and by the Helsinki agreement to which the Czechoslovak government has adhered. These rights and freedoms are also contained in the Constitution and laws of the country, yet they have been systematically violated by the regime of occupation. Charter 77 has not replaced the various opposition groups and movements and these will continue to operate in line with their own perspectives. But what it has done is to unite them for common actions, thereby making the work of all more effective.

It is also important that this initiative coincides with the growth of resistance of a new quality in other East European countries: the formation and activity of the Polish Workers' Defence Committee; Sakharov's committee for the defence of human rights and the Helsinki monitoring group formed by Yuri Orlov in the USSR; the protest movement against the expulsion of the communist poet W. Biermann in East Germany. Despite the different situation in these various East European countries, the objectives of the struggle are the same, or very similar: defence of freedom of expression and organisation, a demand for autonomous trade unions and for workers' self-management in the factories, abolition of the monopoly of power held by the bureaucracy of the one party, abolition of censorship and repression.

The economic, political and military integration of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon countries -- though it has negative aspects



Jiri Pelikan

for the most developed member states -- brings with it a gradual equalisation of the standard of living in all Soviet bloc countries. As a result there is a growing awareness of events in neighbouring countries and this helps the opposition movements to come out of their atomisation and national egoism -- features which were characteristic of the past and which were at the origin of the defeats of 1956 and 1968.

At a time when the myth of a depoliticised consumer society, by means of which the normalisers wanted to block the discontent of the workers, is collapsing, there is no longer the danger of national isolation, provided the movements develop and acquire an increasingly large base. The economic crisis in the East European countries, caused by bureaucratic mismanagement and by Soviet economic domination and accentuated by the crisis of the capitalist economy, will deepen even further in the next two or three years. It will draw into the opposition movement social layers which for the moment are passive and waiting.

The leading groups in the East European countries will try no doubt to stiffen once again this movement by a new wave of

repression. But today they are confronted by a much stronger and more determined adversary and one marked by a real internationalist solidarity of the exploited and oppressed. Furthermore, the illusions about the USSR which were traditionally held in the West are beginning to fade. A growth of repression could signify a complete break with the Euro-Communist Parties. The ruling groups are thus faced with a choice -- either make concessions, reforms of the kind demanded by the oppositionists, or face one or several spontaneous explosions which could have dramatic consequences.

The Western Left and socialist currents of opposition in East European countries, should prepared themselves to confront the two possibilities, with a courageous but realistic programme for a socialist alternative.

by Jiri Pelikan

### East European solidarity with Charter 77

For the first time in Eastern Europe a human rights initiative in one country has brought immediate widespread support in many others.

On January 9th, 34 Hungarian intellectuals, including Haraszti, sent a message of support to Czech writer and Charter signatory, P. Kohout. Another letter of support sent to Kohout came from the Romanian writer Paul Goma. Support has also come from the Soviet group of Amnesty International, headed by Orlov, and from A. Sakharov. The Lithuanian Helsinki group has sent a letter of solidarity with 37 signatures. 22 members of the Warsaw Workers' Defence Committee have sent a letter expressing solidarity, while the 23rd member, Ziembinski, has sent his own personal message of solidarity to Hajek. 40 Bulgarian dissidents were questioned and 14 detained in mid-January as copies of a French newspaper's reprint of Charter 77 circulated in Sofia. A letter signed by 1000 people came from Yugoslavia. Peking 'People's Daily' on January 21st expressed support for the Charter.

# Czechoslovakia in the wake of Charter 77

[At the beginning of this year a group of 242 workers, students and intellectuals in Czechoslovakia issued Charter 77, named after Amnesty International's designation of 1977 as the Year of Political Prisoners. Charter 77 is a Human Rights Manifesto.

[Jan Kavan, a prominent Czech student leader and associate of Jiri Mueller in the 1960s and now one of the directors of Palach Press, talks to Helen Jamieson and Mark Jackson of Labour Focus about the situation in Czechoslovakia since the Charter was issued. The interview was carried out in two sessions, the first at the end of January and the second on February 21st.]

**What are the basic aims and positions of Charter 77?**

It is a human rights manifesto based on the fact that on the 26th October 1976, the government published Law No. 120 (incidentally an immediate best-seller and no longer available in shops) which was in fact the government's ratification of the two UN covenants on civil and political rights, and on social, economic and cultural rights. It was signed by the government in 1968 and became legally valid in March 1976. By publishing the text, the government made available to the people the exact terms of agreement which had been signed on their behalf. The signatories of Charter 77 are just demanding that the government fulfill its obligations.

The signatories of the Charter have stated that it is not a platform for political opposition, that it has no programme, membership, or structured organisation. It is a citizen's group whose chief aim is to force the government to guarantee to the Czechoslovak people all civil and human rights. People who sign the Charter at the same time commit themselves to ongoing activity to win these demands. One example of this is their compilation of evidence in order to prove their charges that there is a complete lack of human rights in Czechoslovakia. For instance a dossier has been issued on educational discrimination against children of critically-minded parents, and another on discrimination in employment. It is also reported that other dossiers are in preparation, including one dealing with banned authors and another on religious discrimination.

On the other hand one should not be under any illusion that the government can actually grant these rights. If the government were to implement that law, it would



Jan Kavan

really be its own swansong, and I have yet to hear about a government which has voluntarily committed suicide. This would be nothing less — if the people were allowed to freely express themselves publicly, the government would be immediately confronted by the open secret: that the majority of the population rejects Husak's policies and considers it to be a puppet government imposed by force in 1968. The present structure of government would be unable to defend itself against open discontent and criticism.

This presents the government with an unsolvable dilemma: it will never be able to fulfill this Law, and therefore will never meet the demands of the Charter. On the other hand, it cannot declare that the

*demands* in the Charter are illegitimate or counter-revolutionary, because that would mean renouncing its signature on the Helsinki agreement and the UN covenants. In view of the forth-coming Belgrade Conference, it would make the Czechoslovak government seem silly on the international scene.

One should not forget another important aspect, something which underlines the spokesperson's claim that this is not an opposition group in the classical sense — among the signatories are people who were never persecuted after 1969, people who still have important, well-paid jobs to lose. Some of these have, in fact, now lost their jobs, including two philosophy lecturers at the Charles University in Prague, Dr. Radim Palous and Frantisek Jiranek.

Despite the statement that this document is unique, one has to have in mind that throughout the last nine years there were a number of protest documents signed by leaders of what is referred to as the Communist opposition, or Socialist Opposition — such documents were at least partially reprinted in the West, and circulated in samizdat form inside Czechoslovakia. The election leaflet campaign of November 1971 has one similarity with the Charter, and that is that it was the first public event in Czechoslovakia since 1969 when a number of opposition groups united on one action. People were asked to either boycott the elections or to cross out the Government candidate's name — this leaflet was signed by six different oppositional groups. You could say that between 1971 and 1977 there was no united action, but that there were a number of protest activities by individual opposition groups.

Charter 77 can, to a certain extent, be seen as the culmination of protest actions of individuals and groups over the last 9 years, sparked off and encouraged by the Helsinki agreement and by the present international situation. On the one hand, on paper the law guarantees them the right to protest against the situation in Czechoslovakia, and on the other they are greatly encouraged by the existence of what is referred to as Euro-Communism, that is, the existence of a number of important Communist Parties which go out of their way to express their support for these citizens' demands, and thus sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, condemn — or at least criticise — the present Husak regime. The combined effects of the Berlin Conference of Communist Parties, the Helsinki conference and the various injurious statements made by the Spanish, Italian, French, British and other Parties — all this creates an atmosphere in which numerous people are en-

couraged to participate in activities such as Charter 77.

**How widely known is the text of the Charter, and to what extent can it be made out by reading 'Rude Pravo'?**

**This is the first public protest by a broad spectrum of people since the action around the election leaflet in 1971. The signatories of the Charter must have considered that they would have mass support, which would defend them against the authorities. If one takes the example of the Russian dissidents, they have been easily smashed because they were isolated and had no mass support.**

One should avoid falling into a trap of missing the other side of the coin. This reminds me of a question that I was recently asked: 'How come that after nine years of silence suddenly out of the blue appears a fairly well organised opposition group called Charter 77?'. Here I would like to say that first of all it did not come out of the blue, and secondly that this type of protest is in a certain sense unique. It's unique in the following aspect: if you look at the present official total of 451 signatures, the signatories go right across the political and social spectrum. Socially, intellectuals, writers, journalists, historians, workers, technicians, and ex-students have signed it; politically, for the first time support ranges from purged Communist Party members like Dr. Kriegel, Mlynar and Silhan to intellectual liberals, democrats, Christians (mainly Protestants), Trotskyist groups, ultra-left groups, and groups like the Plastic People of the Universe. Age-wise, it cuts across generations; and geographically, it seems that it is for the first time not just based in Prague but also in other towns, although there is a relative lack of Slovaks. Two batches of signatures have been released so far, and it is important that the number of workers in the second batch — 69 out of 209 — is higher than the number in the first. This shows that the attempts by the regime to turn workers against the Charter have failed.

I have read every issue of *Rude Pravo* [the Party daily, Ed.] very carefully since the first of January. Not only has the Charter not been reprinted, but not even a single quote from it has appeared. To answer your question is very difficult because it is impossible to know how many samizdat copies of the Charter are circulating. Thanks to the decision of the Government not to ignore the Charter but to instead organise a vicious, hysterical campaign using the mass media every day, using Party and trade union organisations at all levels to support government propaganda and attempting to get an enormous amount of signatures by individuals or collectives to condemn the Charter, the issue has been brought into the centre of national life.

The way in which the regime obtains re-

solutions condemning the Charter is revealing. For instance, when the newspapers published a resolution from the Prague CKD factory, they forgot to mention that the meeting itself was attended by only 22 people — out of a work force of thousands! At the Tesla electrical goods factory in Prague and at a cement works in Radotin, the workers refused to condemn the Charter, while at the SONP factory in Kladno and in many other places, the majority of the workers refused to condemn the Charter without first hearing the text. For this they have been attacked for showing a lack of trust in the Party and have even been threatened with the loss of their jobs.

Furthermore, the newspapers frequently mention the Charter's aims when attacking them and also name some of the well-known signatories. The effect that this can have is demonstrated by the case of Jan Urban, who has lost his job for refusing to condemn the Charter. In a letter to Urban, the regional education department writes: "It takes your (i.e. Urban's) refusal to sign an agreement supporting the Party's policy and opposing Charter 77 as a loss of worthiness as a socialist teacher. Your explanation for refusing to sign the resolution is that one of the signatories is a good friend of yours, Venek Silhan, who would not sign anything wrong." Thus, clearly because he had learnt of Silhan's name through the press campaign, Urban was able to decide on a course of action. If they read the newspapers carefully, and the Czechs and Slovaks are well-trained at reading between the lines, the majority of the people would be able to deduce what the Charter's main aims were. When *Rude Pravo* attacks Western imperialist countries, "who organised the Charter", for trying to "impose their own interpretations of human rights on us", and when it goes out of its way to claim that human rights are guaranteed better in Czechoslovakia than in any so-called democratic western country, it is clear to the people that the Charter is about the non-existence of human rights, and about something that corresponds to their own reality and to the reality of the masses of the country.

Secondly, people realise that a broad spectrum of opinion supports the campaign. *Rude Pravo* mentions Vaclav Havel, a playwright, and Professor Jan Patocka, both known for their *non-support* of the reformist Communists in 1968, and then next to them 'right-wing opportunists and counter-revolutionaries of 1968' such as Zdenek Mlynar, Dr. Frantisek Kriegel (who is also called a Zionist) and Dr. Venek Silhan; and next to these some of the recently released political prisoners such as Jaroslav Sabata, prominent during the Prague Spring, and Jiri Mueller, leader of the left-wing student movement in the 1960s and early 1970s. Lastly, because the government campaign is so hysterical and widespread, on the front page of every newspaper and daily on the TV and radio -

and there is no sign of the campaign ceasing - people will also deduce that an enormous number of individuals must have signed it and that the idea that this is just a handful of individuals is nonsense.

**How many signatories does the Charter have now?**

Reports from Czechoslovakia indicate that the list grows longer each day. I think it is possible that the Charter could have several thousand signatures by the time the Belgrade Conference starts.

**What have been the different forms of repression used against signatories?**

The government's reaction came immediately, in the form of an hysterical campaign of denunciation coupled with harassment, intimidation, detentions and arrests. Its aim was to try and get signatories to retract their support and to try to frighten others away from signing. Up to now, however, only one person has disowned his signature of the Charter.

There have been seven arrests so far, three of them people who have not signed the Charter. According to Amnesty International four of them, Vaclav Havel, a former playwright, ex-journalist Jiri Lederer, a theatre and film writer Frantisek Pavlicek, and a non-signatory, Ota Ornest, are charged with subversion of the Republic. No details of the contents of the charges have been released. The fifth is a girl student, Zina Kocova. While still under arrest, she was forced to undergo treatment at a VD clinic, although she did not in fact have VD. She was released after 13 days. This is obviously an attempt to discredit the signatories of the Charter in the eyes of the public. The smear campaign against writer Ludvik Vaculik should also be seen in this context. Nude photos of him and his girlfriend leaning up against a tombstone were published in the Socialist Party weekly *Ahoj na Sobotu*. According to the journal "This picture was found in the house of Charter 77 signer L.V. and reveals his conception of morals."

The other two who have been arrested are Ales Machacek (31) (arrested on January 25th) and Vladimir Lastuvka, 35, (arrested on January 20th). It is reported that during searches of their flats several Czech periodicals and books published in the West and copies of the Charter 77 were found, and they are accused under para. 100 of the Penal Code for allegedly distributing these materials. According to one report, the Secret Police (STB) in Usti nad Labem stated that Vladimir Lastuvka was arrested whilst signing the Charter. Their arrest therefore has to be seen in the context of putting a stop to the Charter movement. I knew both of them personally very well. I have known Ales since he was 8 years old at primary school. He spent several years working as an unskilled worker in a small

Prague factory, and later he did a course in chemistry at an Industrial school in Pardubice. (The course was roughly equivalent to an "A" level in this country). Eventually he was admitted to the Agricultural College in Prague and until his arrest he worked as a technician in a regional planning institute in Usti nad Labem in northern Bohemia (the western part of Czechoslovakia). I never worked with him politically, mainly because, at the time of my political involvement he was living hundreds of miles away. But I understand he is a socialist with clear sympathies for direct workers' democracy. He was always outspoken about individual workers' grievances. Vladimir Lastuvka graduated in the late sixties from the nuclear physics Faculty at the Charles University in Prague, and then worked in the CHEPOS plant in the industrial town of Decin (also in North Bohemia). In the '60s he was closely connected with the attempts of Jiri Mueller and other student leaders to reform the Czechoslovak Youth Union. Mueller was especially known for his successful attempt in 1968-69 to forge a student-worker

Ivan Medek, a music critic, then a worker for the Supraphon company, Professor Milan Machovec, a philosopher, then an organ player, Dr. Jakub Trojan, sacked from a job in the REMPO firm, Dr. Jaromir Litera, a former official of the Prague Municipal Committee of the Communist Party. He has lost his job at the MITAS factory in Prague. Others are a journalist, Michal Lakatos, Ivan Dejmal, who has lost his job as an unskilled worker, and who has twice been imprisoned, the first time, in 1970, for 2 years for membership in the far-left Revolutionary Socialist Party, Ladislav Dvorak, a writer, Oldrich Hromadko, a former police colonel, and Matuse Stevichova, a worker. Others, such as Jiri Ruml, a journalist, Vaclav Novak, a state employee and Jan Sokol have been demoted to less skilled jobs. It seems that the government has a policy of sacking people one by one, to avoid attracting attention, and if they get away with it a majority of the signatories could be sacked after the Belgrade Conference. Therefore, Communists, socialists and trade unionists must demand the reinstatement of all those

#### leadership's attitude to the Charter?

Here I can only refer to reports in the Western press that some important members of the Soviet embassy in Prague met with Czechoslovak Party leaders shortly after the Charter appeared. Reports indicate that the Soviet Union's attitude was that the authorities should nip the movement in the bud, crush it before it has a chance to grow.

On the other hand, I find it difficult to believe that the Soviet Union would want to endorse public prosecutions of the Charter, such as widespread trials with heavy prison sentences. The Soviet leaders would probably prefer it if the Czechoslovak Government could deal with the movement by using sacking methods instead of publicised nasty political trials.

I must admit I don't know what the attitude of the Soviet leaders will be if this method fails. I think that if they have to make a choice between allowing a contagious political instability (contagious in the sense that it would spread throughout Czechoslovakia, and then of course into Eastern Europe) and losing face on the international scene, then I think that they will risk the latter, as they have done several times in the past.

The preservation of the political *status quo* in their sphere of influence is the most important thing for them. But the stated aim of Charter 77, and the widespread support it has in Czechoslovakia, limits the manoeuvring space that both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union have.



Sit-down demo on first anniversary of Russian invasion—same spirit survives today

alliance. Lastuvka was a member of the CP and in 1968 was known to support the ideas of the Prague Spring.

The most widespread form of repression is the sacking of the people from their jobs. We have heard of 18 people who have been sacked for signing the Charter. I have already mentioned Dr. Palous and Dr. Jiranek. Others include the former Party Presidium member Dr. Zdenek Mlynar, who had been working as an entomologist; Dr. P. Pithart, a trained lawyer, who was previously secretary of a Political Commission headed by Mlynar which in the late 60s prepared a number of ideological documents, including the framework for the 1968 'Action Programme' of the CPCz, then an office worker at Czech Academy of Sciences Construction Sites Office; Drahusa Probstova, Jiri Frodl, Vlad. Nepras all of whom were journalists before 1969, but now sacked from relatively unimportant jobs (for example Probstova was a junior clerk at a theatrical agency and Frodl a window-cleaner); Helena Seidlova (a librarian), Anna Farova (a photographer),

sacked and the release of all the arrested. Even people who have protested against the sacking of signatories have lost their jobs. For instance, 3 people have been sacked for this reason in connection with the case of Ivan Medek.

The authorities now seem to be going even further and to be sacking politically known people who did not even sign the Charter, but simply refused, when approached, to condemn it. We mentioned already Jan Urban as a case in point. Another form of intimidation is to threaten parents that their children will not have access to higher education, by which I mean not only university education but also secondary school. The government knows from experience that a lot of people are willing to suffer repression for their ideas, but don't want their children to suffer. Other frequent forms of intimidation affecting significant numbers of signatories, are withdrawal of driving licences, having the telephone cut off etc.

What do you think is the Soviet

According to *Le Monde* of 11th February 1977, Alexander Dubcek has expressed his full solidarity with Charter 77. He stated that the content was plainly in agreement with things that he had said several times in the past. Unfortunately because of very strict police surveillance he had been unable to see a copy of the Charter earlier.

According to Palach Press Agency, Dr. Milan Huebl, the former rector of the Party College and a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, who was released on December 10th, 1976 after serving 5 years in prison, attempted recently to visit Dubcek with a copy of the Charter, but was stopped by the police and whisked away from Dubcek's door and ordered back to Prague.

Donations can be made to help victimised signatories of the Charter - make cheques out to 'Solidarity Fund' and send to Labour Focus.

# Musical underground in Czechoslovakia

After several years of intensive surveillance, early last March the joint police forces of the Czechoslovak 'workers' state have descended upon the alternative cultural movement of young Czech workers and artists. They have decided to destroy one of its most popular branches which became known as the musical underground. At least 120 people have been raided, arrested and interrogated. Musical and electronic instruments of several beat and rock groups have been confiscated, as well as mountains of private correspondence, manuscripts, notations, tapes, films and photographs. Twenty-two people, including all the members of two of the most influential bands, the **Plastic People of the Universe** and **DG 307** were imprisoned. A month later the regime started a concentrated propaganda barrage in its media, describing the imprisoned workers as long-haired anti-social elements, alcoholics, drug addicts, psychiatric and criminal cases and accusing them of engaging in mass orgies, wanton destruction, deliberate organisation of disturbances and generally creating a public nuisance. The campaign has subsided since then, probably in face of other difficulties which the regime faces today, eg. the movement around Charter 77, of which many of the musical underground members are signatories. It is still, however, limping on, especially in the pages of the state's magazine for youth, **Mladý Svet** (Young World). The important point is, nevertheless, that despite the hard work of the secret police and the heavy prejudice of the state's courts, none of these charges have been substantiated in subsequent trials. Facing the outcry of public opinion at home and abroad, the regime reduced the charges against the imprisoned worker-artists down to the one of 'breach of the public peace' (Paragraph 202, maximum sentence 3 years).

The first trial took place on the 6th of July, 1976 in Pilsen, where Karel Havelka, Miroslav Skalicky, and Frantisek Starek were sentenced to 30, 18, and 9 months respectively. These sentences were later halved on appeal. The second trial took place between September 21-23 1976 in Prague, where Ivan Jirous, Pavel Zajicek, Svaropluk Karasek and Vratislav Brabanec received sentences of 18, 12, 9 and 9 months respectively.\* Subsequent appeal was unsuccessful. The third trial is about to take place this month, after two postponements. Six people, Milan Hlavsa, Josef Janicek, Jiri Kabes, Jaroslav Kukal, Jaroslav Vozniak and Karel Soukup are to stand in the dock in Prague. Dates of the trials still to come have not yet been announced.

Looking at these strange happenings in a



Milan Hlavsa of the Plastic People

country which prides itself on its musical culture and where children in and out of schools are continuously reminded, probably with certain justification, of the old popular saying, 'Every Czech a musician' - one must ask the inevitable 'Why?'. What is it in the young workers' music that 'the workers' state' fears so much?

The young Czechoslovak musical movement developed from the grass roots during the sixties and flourished especially in the years 1966-69, when literally hundreds of various beat, rock, pop, psychedelic, country and other musical bands emerged all over the country. One of the most original groups among these was the **Plastic People of the Universe**. After the Soviet occupation and Husak's take-over, the independent musical activity was suppressed just as were all other cultural and political modes of independent expression. All the groups were given a clear choice by the authorities: **either** collaborate and compromise in return for access to radio, T.V., and record contracts, (the fatness of these depending directly on the degree of public lip-service to the regime and indirectly on the total absence of any authentic social and political content), or, go back where you came from, that is first to amateur activity and ultimately to musical non-production.

The lure of an expensive life-style and cheap fame coupled with a threat of having to return to one's original profession for the mere sake of retaining artistic identity proved to be too much for most of the groups. These subsequently cracked in one or another direction. The **Plastic People of the Universe**, having been deprived of their professional as well as amateur licence, were about the only group which continued to play regardless of the regime's pressures. Their courage and integrity provided a focus around which the musical under-

ground has developed since the early seventies. More artists joined in and new groups were formed. (By now there are at least ten of these.) Concerts and festivals were being organised by word of mouth in the countryside, in innocuous district towns and even some factory clubs. Attendance at these ranged from a few hundred to thousands. Some of these were broken up by police, sometimes with utmost violence (eg. on March 30, 1974 near Ceske Budejovice). The musical underground now speaks directly to and for the young working class kids, who are its most ardent supporters and followers. They developed around it their own 'magnetizdat' and samizdat, self-producing their literary, musical and poetical works, which would otherwise never have had any chances at all of seeing either the light of day or some audience. These works circulate in deliberately uncontrollable numbers in factories and even villages, not being limited to relatively small audiences in big towns, as is generally the case with samizdat produced by intellectual dissidents. The attitude of this young workers' underground towards the regime and its various supporting pillars is also markedly more radical than is generally the case in intellectual samizdat. Clearly it was this internal socio-political significance and this mass appeal of the movement which prompted the regime to pounce on it. (Externally, up to the actual arrests, the alternative cultural movement never provided any deliberate embarrassment to the authorities as its activists obviously prefer to communicate directly with their fellow citizens, rather than utilize the Western media - the method favoured by many East European, but especially Soviet dissidents.)

If we consider this movement together with all other oppositional currents in this country, we can plainly see that the Czechoslovak authorities have an unenviable task at their hands - how to stop the manually and otherwise working intelligentsia from joining with the intelligent working class in working out a common solution to their common predicament. As the Underground points out:

**They are afraid of workers**  
**They are afraid of writers**  
**They are afraid of party members**  
**They are afraid of those outside the party**  
**They are afraid of the left**  
**They are afraid of the right**  
**They are afraid of the treaties they have signed**  
**They are afraid of Marx**  
**They are afraid of Lenin**  
**They are afraid of truth**  
**They are afraid of freedom**  
**They are afraid of democracy**

**They are afraid of the Human Rights Charter**

**They are afraid of socialism**

**So why the hell are we afraid of them?**

Poem copyright Plastic People Defence Fund 1976

**LIST OF SOME OF THE PERSECUTED:**

I. After the underground music festival near Ceske Budejovice in March 1974 was broken up by the police and army, the following received sentences between 3 to 14 months: **H. Krapikova**, 21, **V. Turkova**, 20, **M. Sievichova**, 25, **F. Ceska**, 26, **J. Pysny**, 22, and **R. Janacek**, 27.

II. Sentenced in July 1976: **Frantisek Starek**, 23, to 8 months, **Karel Havelka**, 26, to 18 months, and **Miroslav Skalicky**, 25, to 30 months.

III. Sentenced in September 1976: **Vratislav Brabanec**, 33, garden architect/saxophonist. Plastic People member, sentenced to 8 months. **Svatopluk Karasek**, 33, caretaker and manager of the University Library depository in the castle of Houska. Sings his own songs, composition based on American negro spirituals with original Czech texts, sentenced to 8 months. **Pavel Zajicek**, 25, woodsman/poet and singer. DG 307 member. Sentenced to 12 months. **Ivan Jirous**, 32, worker in restoring parks/art historian and artistic director of the Plastic People, sentenced to 18 months.

IV. Scheduled for trial in March 1977: **Milan Hlavsa**, 25, bakery driver / composer, singer and bass guitarist, founder of both the Plastic People and DG 307. **Josef Janicek**, 26, school caretaker / plays guitar and electric piano, band leader of the Plastic People. **Jiri Kabes**, 30, graphic

designer for Tesla (an electronics firm) / plays electric violin and theremin. Plastic People member. **Jaroslav Kukal**, 26, electrician / DG307. **Jaroslav Vozniak**, 20, employed in film warehouse / drummer with Plastic People. At the same time he is charged as a conscientious objector to the military service. **Karel Soukup**, 27, worker/independent poet and singer.

\* For full report see **Voices of Czechoslovak Socialists**, Merlin Press, 1977.

**Ivan Hartel**

**SEND DONATIONS FOR THE PERSECUTED AND THEIR FAMILIES TO:**  
The Plastic People Defence Fund  
c/o Amnesty International  
53 Theobalds Road  
London WC1X 8SP

## POLAND

# What happened in Poland in June 1976 ?

The main facts about what happened on June 24th and 25th, 1976, became quickly known in the West. On the afternoon of June 24th an unscheduled item appeared on the agenda of the Sejm, the Polish Parliament. It concerned a hitherto unpublished Government proposal on prices. The Prime Minister rose to announce the proposal and, after a brief discussion, Politburo member Edward Babiuch spoke indicating the Deputies' acceptance of the proposed measures. That evening, a Thursday, the Prime Minister announced the package to the nation on television. The aim was to hold discussions about the new policies with workers arriving at the factories the next morning and then implement the measures the following Monday. But throughout Friday 25th, widespread strikes and sit-ins were launched by workers across the country and in some places, particularly the towns of Ursus and Radom, stormy demonstrations took place. In the face of this movement the Prime Minister returned to the television studios on Friday evening and cancelled the new measures. As the day ended some hundreds of people were arrested in various towns.

The government measures which had produced such a dramatic response had involved steep increases in the prices of many kinds of food -- the **Morning Star** estimated a 70% increase in the cost of food (December 6, 1976). Price increases of some sort had been expected for at least six

months, but the population had not been led to expect such a massive increase. Some compensation in the form of wage increases was also announced, but these increases would not meet the population's extra costs and were graded so that the amounts of compensation grew larger the higher a person's income was. Finally the package involved increases in the prices paid by the state for agricultural products bought from private peasants and increases of a similar scale on raw materials bought by the peasants from the state.

### BILL BROOKS

About these facts there is no dispute. But there is a major disagreement within the Left press in Britain over the Polish government's subsequent handling of the workers involved in the strikes and demonstrations. Most papers on the Left have claimed that the Polish authorities responded to the working class movement with severe measures of repression. But the most extensive report of the situation in Poland - a series of 5 articles by Bill Brooks in the **Morning Star** - sharply contradicts this allegation. A number of letters in **Tribune** have also backed his claims.

Bill Brooks makes many valid points about the economic and social development that has taken place in Poland since the end of the war. At the same time he makes a number of critical remarks on the June price measures. He says that the authorities misjudged the views of the population over

the price measures; he stresses the unpopularity of the proposal that the higher paid should get larger compensatory wage increases than the lower paid. And he points out in the fourth article of the series (which in some respects contradicts the bland comments in his first article) that the works councils and the official trade unions completely failed to take up the workers' grievances over the measures.

But the striking feature of all these criticisms is that they had already been made soon after the June events by the Polish government itself. Both Party leader Edward Gierek and Prime Minister Jaroszewicz re-iterated a number of times that such errors had accompanied the June proposals. What the Polish leadership have strenuously denied is that there has been any victimisation of workers for going on strike or for demonstrating and that there has been any undue brutality on the part of the police. And on these matters also, the Brooks series echoes official Polish pronouncements. He simply re-states the government's assertions that '**no Polish worker had been arrested and punished in any way for taking part in strikes and demonstrations**'. He also maintains complete silence on the issues of police brutality and mass sackings.

### DEFENCE COMMITTEE

This statement has now been contradicted by a mass of documentary information from Poland. The information comes

mainly from a body set up in September 1976 in Warsaw called the Workers Defence Committee (KOR). The 23 members of the Committee are mainly prominent Polish intellectuals. Some, like Edward Lipinski, Ludwik Cohn, Antoni Pajdak and Aniela Steinsbergowa are socialists who belonged to the Polish Socialist Party before it fused with the Polish Communists in 1948. Others like Jacek Kuron - well known in the West for his Marxist Open Letter to the Polish Communist Party in the 1960s - Antoni Macierewicz, Piotr Naimski and Wojciech Ziembinski were active in the student movement for greater democratic freedoms that was crushed by the Gomulka government in the spring of 1968. The KOR also includes the Polish writer Jerzy Andrzejewski, who wrote the book from which the film *Ashes and Diamonds* was made, and the Polish actress Halina Mikolajska.

The KOR set out to investigate cases of victimisation of workers for their activities in June, to publicise the results of these investigations and to gain material, legal and political support for victims of repression. The information collected by the Committee has been circulated in a number of communiques from the KOR and in information bulletins produced by Warsaw supporters of the KOR. In the

documentary section of *Labour Focus* we reproduce a small proportion of the documents from Poland which have not so far been published in English.

#### REPRESSION

The picture that emerges from this documentary evidence is one of very considerable repression against the workers most actively involved in the June strikes in various parts of Poland. The most blatant forms taken by this repression have been the actions of the police and the judicial authorities. But in some ways more significant has been the sacking of well over one thousand workers -- some estimates go very much higher -- in various parts of Poland, including the Baltic port of Gdansk, Ursus and Radom. The exact scope of these political sackings is impossible to discover, but their national application is shown by the fact that individual industrial ministries issued memoranda encouraging such sackings after the June events. The information bulletin put out by supporters of the Warsaw KOR in September 1976 quotes one of these memoranda issued by the Minister for the Engineering Industry, dated 17th July, 1976, reference No.P.P.II.5201/76. It reads: 'The wilful stoppage of work without valid reason, the shirking of one's duties, and the disturbance of order and

peace in the Institution are a basis for termination of contract without notice, i.e. for dismissal from work with immediate effect'.

The seriousness of such sackings as a way of attacking working class families can be appreciated when we remember that the Party and state authorities can enforce their will on every single plant in the country, ensuring that sacked workers are not re-employed. Thus, at least into September the Department of Employment in Warsaw was refusing even to interview workers who had been sacked after the June events.

It is of the greatest importance that trade unions in this country should join in the protests already made by the Italian Communist Party and various other continental political and trade union organisations against this repression of working class people in Poland. Telegrams should be sent to the Polish Embassy demanding the release of all those still in jail for activity during the June events and demanding the re-instatement of sacked workers. Donations should also be made by trade union bodies to the Workers' Defence Committee fund to assist the families of jailed or sacked workers.

Oliver MacDonald

## Documents

### 1. First appeal by the Workers' Defence Committee

*[On 23rd September 1976, Jerzy Andrzejewski, on behalf of the Workers' Defence Committee, sent the following appeal to the Sejm (the Polish Parliament), asking the Sejm to grant an amnesty to all those who had suffered repression as a result of the events on 25th June, 1976. On 25th September, W. Popkowski, Director of the Sejm Office, sent the following reply, (Ref. 11222/76): "I am returning your letter together with the so-called appeal. On legal grounds and also because of the nature of its contents, the document in question cannot be considered by the Sejm."*

*[We reprint an English translation of the Appeal below. The translation has been supplied to us by Polish exiles living in London.]*

#### Appeal to the People and the Authorities of the Polish People's Republic.

The workers' protest against the unreasonable price increases was followed by a wave of brutal persecution. The demonstrators at "Ursus", Radom and elsewhere were assaulted, beaten up and then arrested. The mass sackings, together with the arrests, struck hardest at the families of the victims.

The reprisals went hand in hand with law breaking by the authorities. The Courts sentenced defendants without any evidence being submitted, people were sacked in total disregard of the Labour Code. Statements were taken under duress. Unfortunately, none of this is news in our country. We only have to remember the unlawful victimisation of people who signed protests against the alteration of the Constitution: they lost their jobs, were blackmailed and detained by the police without legal authority.

It is, however, a long time since we had anything approaching the scale and brutality of the latest actions of the security organs. For the first time for many years physical terror has been employed.

The victims are not able to rely on the help of those who should be helping them; the position of trade unions, for instance, is simply ludicrous. The social welfare agencies refuse to give any assistance. In this situation, they have to be helped by the country at large — their protest was in the public interest and we are all in their debt. Solidarity and mutual help are the only means we have to defend legality.

The undersigned formed the Workers' Defence Committee to initiate and co-ordinate financial, legal and medical aid. The full documentation of the reprisals is extremely important in this work. Public disclosure of the conduct of the authorities is our

best defence. We appeal to all the victims and to all those in possession of genuine information to let us have the facts.

So far, 150,000 zlotys have been collected and spent in assisting the victims. We need much more. Only a widely supported action will achieve the target. It is essential for defensive action to be organised wherever workers are victimised and we hope people brave enough to do it will come forward.

We need people prepared to organise aid in every institution and organisation.

The present reprisals violate civil rights recognised in international and Polish law: the right to work and to strike, the right to free expression, to participate in meetings and demonstrations. The Committee demands freedom for the victims already sentenced and for those held without trial. We demand that they should be given back their jobs. We support the resolutions of the

## 2. Appeal by Wladyslaw

*[Wladyslaw Bienkowski is a central figure in the history of Polish Communism. One of the principal leaders of the underground Party during Nazi occupation, he participated in the founding of the KRN, the National Council for the Homeland in 1943. After the war he was in charge of the Party's education department. A close friend and associate of Gomulka, Bienkowski was purged from the Central Committee during the anti-Gomulka drive in 1948. In 1956, as a leader of Gomulka's circle he returned to the Central Committee and became Minister of Education. In 1959 Gomulka broke with leaders of the so-called 'Liberals' of 1956, and Bienkowski was demoted to the post of Chairman of the Council for the Protection of Nature. In 1969 Bienkowski wrote a book called "Motor-Forces and Throttlers of Socialism". The book was not published in Poland and the Party leadership responded to it by expelling Bienkowski from Party membership.]*

*[The following Appeal was issued in October 1976. The English translation has been supplied by Polish exiles in London.]*

### **An Appeal to the People and Government of People's Poland to counteract the disintegration in the authorities of law and order.**

For several years now Poland has been witnessing the intensification of a phenomenon which presents a threat to the whole life of our society. There are increasingly frequent signs that those designated to guard the public order and binding norms are employing methods which not only contradict the law but incur the abhorrence and condemnation of the whole of society. There is an increasing number of instances confirming that the usual meeting-point between the citizen and the guardians of law and order is the police truncheon, and that physical beating and moral torture are also applied "preventively" against arbitrarily chosen people, not even suspected of an offence.

An occasion for the mass use of these methods was particularly afforded by the events of June of this year, when in numerous parts of our country the working class demonstrated its opposition to the government's decision on an increase in prices. Despite the fact of the government itself withdrawing its decision, deeming it insufficiently thought out, those workers who expressed their attitude even passively have met with the most severe repressions. Even if in certain cases the protest of the working class gave cause to incidents contravening binding norms, never and on no account can this be a justification of the methods used. Those arrested or held for questioning by the police are subjected to the well-tested methods of beating and torture, forced by torture to confirm confessions dictated to them.

Bishops Conference of the 9th September.

We ask for everyone to support us.

We formed this Committee for humanitarian and patriotic reasons. We are convinced it shall play its part in serving Poland and humanity.

Signed: Workers Defence Committee, organised to help the victims of reprisals following the events of the 25th June 1976.

Jérzy Andrzejewski  
Stanislaw Baranczak  
Ludwik Cohn  
Jacek Kuron  
Edward Lipinski  
Jan Josef Lipski  
Antoni Macierewicz

Piotr Naimski  
Antoni Pajdak  
Josef Rybicki  
Aniela Steinsbergowa  
Adam Szczypiorski  
ks. Jan Zieja  
Wojciech Ziembinski

## Bienkowski, Oct. 1976

Attempts at resurrecting these methods in our country, which still bears on its body the scars obtained from them in the not so distant past — from the Nazi occupation, and then from the practices of the Beria-Stalinist "security" department of the '50s — must bring out in everyone a feeling of odiousness, horror and the greatest anxiety as a grave symptom of the malaise of our state organism.

It is not just an issue of the highest human values, of defending man's dignity, of the sad paradox that using methods condemned by the whole of civilised mankind we want — so the claim goes — to build a "developed socialist state". Causes for anxiety reach deeper than that. These methods are a blatant symptom of disintegration in the apparatus of control, a proof of the fact that some of its parts have ceased to serve society's aims and have become a gangrenous organ which is transferring its putrefactive processes to other provinces of our life. A fact which has for long been a source of concern is that hand in hand with the decay and moral degradation of the police apparatus goes its corruptness. A natural consequence of the licence given to this apparatus, of its exemption from any form of control, is its participation in the widespread system (particularly in provincial Poland) of the citizen paying for services in his administrative and economic contacts with the state.

It is impossible to overrate the influence that this brings to bear on the country's organisational efficiency and the restraint it puts on economic development, particularly in the case of the peasant economy, completely dependent on regional authorities of law and order. The situation arouses special concern in view of the recent decision by government to raise the level of our food economy. If this goal is to be achieved, the first step must be to stop the truncheon and the bribe being the principal point of contact between the citizen and the state.

Evidence of the fact that this gangrene is being transmitted to other important fields of life of the state and the community may be found in the role to which the administration of justice is all too frequently reduced. Our jurisdiction assumes that the methods used with regard to citizens are in accordance with the intentions of the highest authorities, and accepts them — thus becoming an extension of the police apparatus and a screen to conceal unlawfulness. Hundreds of cases are known in which judges have not allowed methods of interrogation to be exposed, interrupting each mention of torture as "irrelevant to the case".

The question comes to mind, whether all this is happening with the knowledge, or, worse still, the will of the governing authorities? What kind of purpose could possibly guide them in this? To frighten, to terrorise the people, the Polish working class? Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of our history will know that

this has never been managed. Similarly, everyone knows — or should know — that state authorities which violate law and order and contravene the fundamental legal and moral norms of social coexistence bring about the anarchisation of the country, lower the organisational efficiency of the apparatus and annihilate the bases of civic discipline arising from society's feeling of solidarity with its authorities and of trust with respect to its individual branches. If the situation in both these fields — of organisational efficiency and the level of social discipline — causes so many reservations in our country, the brunt of responsibility falls squarely both on the conception itself and on the short-sightedness — not to say the thoughtlessness — of the means by which for the past 30 years the authorities of People's Poland have sought to regulate relations between themselves and the people.

It would seem that the present state authorities, facing as they do some important and taut economic and social tasks, are sufficiently aware of the significant role played in the realisation of these tasks by the efficient working of all branches of the state authority and by the full feeling of cooperation on the part of all sections of the community. It is therefore hard to suppose that the blatant violation of the norms of such cooperation is in any way in accordance with their conscious volition. It is much more likely that individual organs of authority, such as e.g. the police apparatus, have emancipated themselves and imposed their own methods, to which the central authorities, fearing a weakening of their support, are giving unvoiced assent — manifesting in this their impotence and helplessness.

Our country faces a task of key importance for the future: to put a stop to the returning wave of phenomena known to us from the past, to counteract the symptoms of gangrene threatening the organism of the society and the state, to root out methods which disgrace our country. Systematic and long-term efforts must be

made to normalise relations inside society and to restore confidence between the people and the authorities. The first and most elementary condition must be for the authorities to adhere to legal and moral norms, since it depends on them whether they will be spreading a feeling of lawfulness and discipline, or anarchy and disorganisation, in society. Law and order, respect for civil rights and protection of human dignity are necessary not just for the citizens — they are equally necessary for the authorities as the basis of all social order.

The urgent task of healing the country's atmosphere requires the active participation of the whole community. Wide activity on the part of the community, already nascent as a spontaneous force, is necessary, in defending civil rights, in exposing all cases of lawlessness, of the violation of elementary laws and manifest contempt for the norms of social coexistence. Occurrences of this kind should be notified to the central authorities and put under the ban of public opinion.

There will no doubt be branches of the apparatus which, frightened by the prospect of their legally punishable acts being exposed, will denounce such activity as an "outrage against the state". Our community, however, is sufficiently experienced to differentiate between the interests of the country and the fears of various types of petty despot that their methods will be unmasked. It will understand its role as that of a joint effort of all citizens — the people and the authorities — to eradicate the symptoms of an illness which presents a threat to our organism and to create sound foundations for the realisation of the tasks that face the whole nation.

Wladyslaw Bienkowski

Warsaw, October 1976

### 3. Letter by the Workers' Defence Committee to the Sejm, 15 Nov. 1976

*[During the last few months a growing campaign of appeals and petitions from various parts of Poland has demanded that a commission of enquiry should be established to examine allegations of police brutality against workers after the events of 25th June, 1976. In December, 13 members of the Polish Academy of Sciences, along with numerous other academics called for such an enquiry. The Paris daily, Rouge, reported on 4th February 1977 that 241 intellectuals in the Baltic port Gdansk had sent a petition to the Sejm demanding a general amnesty and a commission of enquiry. Polish exile sources in London estimate that over 1,000 people have by now put their names to demands for an enquiry. This campaign began with the Letter to the Sejm which we print below.]*

*[The English translation of this document has been supplied by Polish exiles in London.]*

Workers' Defence Committee

Warsaw, 15th Nov. 1976

To the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic

The resolution:

The Workers Defence Committee appeals to the Sejm to institute proceedings leading to the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry into the strikes and mass demonstrations of June 1976 and in particular into:

1. Torture and other forms of law infringement by the police and the security services.
2. The scale and extent of reprisals, the total figures of the detained, imprisoned, sentenced by the courts and by special tri-

bunals and dismissed from work.

The facts:

The Workers' Defence Committee examined 96 cases of detention in Radom and 94 in Ursus. 93 of those detained in Radom and 46 in Ursus claimed that they have been beaten up and their families testified that they have seen marks left by the beatings. Only 4 people reported that they have not been maltreated.

All reports follow a similar pattern. The detainees in Radom were taken to district or local police headquarters and in Ursus to the local police station, where they were made to march or run through the so called "path of health" i.e. a double row of uniformed and plain-clothed policemen brandishing truncheons. The "paths of health" were organised repeatedly throughout the period of arrest and imprisonment. The reports agree that during the pre-trial examination the suspects were beaten, hit and kicked to extract confessions. Some of the arrested suffered severe injuries and had to be removed to hospital.

Some detainees were moved in refrigerated trucks designed for transport of food. People fainted through lack of air. Most victims lack the courage to bring formal complaints. However, we have been told that the following lodged complaints with the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor and with the Sejm Commission for Home Affairs: Czeslaw Chomicki, Zbigniew Cibor, Waldemar Gutowski, Jan Milczar, Janina Nazimek on behalf of her son, Ryszard Nowak, Jozef Szczepanski. Janina Brozyna described in great detail the circumstances of her husband's death, following a beating by the police, in a submission she has sent to the Sejm Commission for Home Affairs and Justice. The authorities' routine answer to the complaints is that following

detailed inquiries it has been found that the police intervention was fully justified and their conduct was within the law.

The case of Miroslaw Chmielewski is an exception. While under examination in a district court in Warsaw Chmielewski declared (on 16th July) that he had been subjected to protracted torture by the police. On 27th September, in the trial in the Supreme Court of Chmielewski and others the defence submitted medical evidence to that effect and the public prosecutor promised an inquiry into their allegations.

The facts then are well known and yet, no steps have been taken by the authorities to bring the guilty to justice. On the contrary, the Chief Public Prosecutor found it appropriate to praise the police to a Sejm Commission. In Radom of all places, an anniversary of the police and the security service was celebrated with a march past and a gift of a new banner given, according to the press, by the local population.

The brutality of the police does not indicate that they have been taught to respect either the rule of law or the rights of an individual. The frequency with which the "path of health" has been used in both Radom and Ursus leads one to suspect that this is a part of police training.

In general the cases quoted demonstrate improper and indeed intolerable behaviour by the police. It will be necessary, therefore, for the Commission to direct its attention to an investigation not only of the behaviour of individual policemen, but also of the methods of training and the in-service regulations now in force.

The majority of the Radom and Ursus cases were tried by special tribunals. In the early cases sentences were mostly a fine and dismissal from work. However, the police frequently appealed against the light sentences and retrials were ordered, followed in most cases by a sentence of two or three months and often a fine as well. In a number of cases defendants were sentenced several times for the same misdemeanour. The special tribunal hearings were usually restricted to a reading of a police statement recommending a verdict of guilty followed by passing of sentence.

In Radom, with the greater numbers involved, even that procedure was abandoned for a simpler one: the accused were given a document, containing the sentence, to sign; and then the trial was over. Some of those sentences were later repealed on the grounds of a manifest infringement of the law by the Minister of Justice and some cases were re-tried. Clearly, all the cases heard

by special tribunals should be looked into by the Commission.

Not only tribunals, but also the courts were guilty of irregularities. It became a rule in Radom for the courts to rely exclusively on the evidence of the police and the security services. On many occasions the police were unable to give the court sufficient grounds for identifying a defendant. They would say that he or she was among a crowd of demonstrators shouting abuse and throwing stones and an assertion of this kind would pass for evidence. Many suspects were not arrested at the time of the "crime", but hours, and even days, later.

In many cases complaints made in court about the use of physical violence by the police were ignored by the judges. The most common charge in Radom was hooliganism: "the accused joined a crowd with the intent to assault the police, damage public buildings and private property. As a result, 75 policemen suffered injury and the damage was worth 28 million zlotys." This kind of charge meant that an element of collective responsibility has been introduced and people were tried not for what they have done themselves but for all that has happened in Radom on 25th June. We are now in a position to quote cases tried in the district court there, when the same defendant had to answer the same charge twice and was sentenced twice on it. The court ignored objections raised by defence, although the repetition of charges was clearly outside the law.

The exact scale of reprisals is still unknown. We have no doubt that the victims we have been able to contact represent only a fragment of the total figure. The public have reasons to think that the numbers involved are much greater than they have been led to believe so far. The social risks of a situation where the police break the law it is their duty to uphold are very great indeed.

The number of dismissals from work appears also to be greater than originally thought and to have occurred all over the country. The authorities interpret the article 52 of the Labour Code as an anti-strike measure, clearly an infringement on their part of article 68 of the Constitution.

The country fears a return of Stalinist brutality and oppression. The exposure of abuses, punishment of those responsible and a compensation for the victims are the essential preconditions for the return to the rule of law.

The above considerations lead the Committee to present this document to the Sejm and to the public.

## 4. Complaint by 65 Radom workers , 30 Dec . 1976

*[In the face of statements by the authorities that there has been no mistreatment of those arrested in Radom, 65 of those arrested after the June events signed the following protest letter, forwarded to the chief public prosecutor by Wladyslaw Bienkowski. The protest letter refers to a statement in "Zycie Warszawy" which is a Warsaw daily.*

*[The English version of the texts has been supplied by Polish exiles in London.]*

To the Chief Public Prosecutor  
Lucjan Czubinski

Dear Sir,

I enclose a copy of the letter of complaint from the Radom workers, who have deposited the original with me. I vouch for the authenticity of the text and the signatures.

Yours faithfully

Wladyslaw Bienkowski

To the Chief Public Prosecutor  
Lucjan Czubinski

Radom, 30th December 1976

In reply to the "Statement from the Chief Public Prosecutor" in "Zycie Warszawy" we, the undersigned, declare that the Chief Public Prosecutor has been grossly misinformed and that it is not true that "all the cases have been considered with great care, both as regards the offence and the person of the offender, during the examination by the police and the examining magistrates before the hearing and in the course of the trial itself".

We declare that, when arrested after the incidents of 25th June, we have been beaten by the police. Each of us had to run at least once through the so called path of health i.e. a cordon of uniformed and plain-clothed police, who beat and kicked us. Every time we were transferred to another place, we were beaten while getting in and out of the police trucks. During the interrogation we were tortured, so that we would make a statement they wan-

ted. In the Radom prison and when detained in the Radom police headquarters, we were beaten by the police and the prison warders.

We demand that those responsible should be punished. We also submit that there is a clear case for a Sejm Commission to inquire into the way in which basic principles of the rule of law have been violated.

Adamski Leszek, Adamski Stanislaw, Adamski Waldemar, Bacula Andrzej, Balinski Eugeniusz, Baran Zenon, Bartczak Andrzej, Bednarczyk Janusz, Berlinski Ryszard, Cholewa Maria, Czyzewski Wacław, Cwiklinski Waldemar, Drezler Adam, Dygas Kazimierz, Faryna Wacław, Gawlik Adam, Gawlik Marian, Gierek Leopold, Glowacki Marian, Jakubiak Andrzej, Jakubiak Tadeusz, Jeczowski Romuald, Kiak Stanislaw, Klich Kazimierz, Koprowski Wieslaw, Krol Andrzej, Kwasniak Mieczyslaw, Lyzwinski Bogdan, Majewski Henryk,

Maleczek Jerzy, Michalski Jozef, Michalski Waldemar, Mirocha Andrzej, Motyka Marian, Noga Marian, Pokroj Zbigniew, Oleksik Jerzy, Oparcik Adam, Orzel Jozef, Piedralski Tadeusz, Pitrycka Kazimiera, Popiel Mieczyslaw, Prokopowicz Marek, Rusinowicz Jacek (not tortured during the interrogation), Rybski Kazimierz, Siedlecki Marek, Sieczkowski Waldemar, Stanislawek Szymon, Stanioch Aleksander, Sulek Krzysztof, Szczepanik Jozef, Swierczynski Andrzej, Tarasinski Kazimierz, Trojanowski Tomasz, Walasek Andrzej, Wiata Stanislaw, Winiarski Stanislaw, Trojanowski Tomasz, Walasek Andrzej, Wiata Stanislaw, Winiarski Stanislaw, Wisniewski Jerzy, Wojcik Piotr and six illegible signatures.

Copy to: the Sejm, the Sejm Commission for Home Affairs and Justice, the Episcopate of Poland, the Central Committee of the Party, the Ministry of Justice, the Council of State, the Cabinet Office.

## 5. Letter to the Sejm by three poets from Lodz, 3 Dec. 1976

*[One of many such appeals, this open letter from three poets in Lodz raises the case of Janina Brozyna, whose husband died after being beaten up by the police in mysterious circumstances on the night of 30th June. This is only one of a number of cases of deaths as a result of the June events. There has been a good deal of argument over the number of killed or indeed over whether anyone has died as a result of police action. The Workers' Defence Committee estimated 11 dead.]*

*[The translation is provided by Polish exiles in London.]*

Lodz, 3.12.1976

### An Open Letter to the Parliament of the People's Republic of Poland.

Deeply shocked by certain documents which have reached us in the last few days (including a collective complaint to the Prosecutor General by workers of Radom and their families, and complaints by Janina Brozyna, Zbigniew Cibor, Tadeusz Jakubiak and Jozef Szczepanik), and moved by a feeling of solidarity with fellow citizens victimised as a result of the events of 25th June 1976, we demand that a Parliamentary commission be set up to investigate the circumstances surrounding the events in Radom, Ursus and other Polish towns. In particular, such a commission should look into the role played by the Security Service and the Police Force in suppressing the workers' protests, into the treatment of those arrested by the aforementioned departments, and into other methods of repression used by them.

Thanks to the activity of the Committee for the Defence of the Workers, public opinion has found out about cases of maltreatment of those held for questioning, of beating, of statements being made under duress, of people who lodged complaints about police brutality being blackmailed. Stanislaw Wiata, a Radom worker who withdrew his complaint about having been beaten, is a case in point. The tone and content of Wiata's retraction bear witness to human dignity being trampled underfoot, to an incredible psychological violation, and are also an ill-boding symptom of the mentality of those who induced him to make that retraction. Another manifestation of the pathology of the investigation department is its conduct with regard to Janina Brozyna. The interest which the Radom police and Prosecutor's office took in her complaint relating to the murder of her husband was, in the main, restricted to attempts to find out who has inspired it and who helped to draft it. Similar cases can be listed ad infinitum. Information is, of course, incomplete, since it is gathered in an atmosphere of suspicion and intimidation. The silence of the

highest authorities on issues of such weight increases the mistrust and fear of society. Only a Parliamentary commission can clarify the problems that follow from the June events, and can thereby help begin the difficult task of restoring trust between the people and the authorities.

The police action in Radom, Ursus and other towns is the most forceful manifestation to date of a process of increasing licence on the part of the Police and the Security Service. The general conviction that no one has ever won with the police, and frequent cases of brutality and arrogance on the part of individual officers of the law, are all familiar symptoms of a general trend which has led — in the prisons and detention centres of Radom, Bialobrzegi, Grojec, Pinczow, Bialystok and other towns — to so-called "health trots", in which detainees were made to run under a hail of truncheon blows — a fact confirmed by the collective complaint by the citizens of Radom and by the individual complaints, all directed to the Prosecutor General.

It is no secret that the Security Service has an influence on the policy of employment: it can cause someone to be dismissed from work, or not to be employed. It also decides about the entitlement to travel abroad. Moreover, as was revealed by the sudden summonses for national service on 19th June 1976, it is also able to influence the choice of those called up for reserve exercises. The most striking manifestation of the Security Service's licence, however, is its summoning of citizens for so-called "official conversations", in the course of which threats are dealt out to people who are suspected of any offence. We even know of cases in which people are informally questioned in connexion with letters they had dispatched to the Parliament. If it is the statutory task of the Security Service to fight political crimes, then the number of court cases of that nature is grossly disproportionate to the size of that department. If, however, the tasks of the Security Service are of a different nature, then it is not our fault that we do not know the essential aims of this institution which is so omnipresent in the life of society. Hence the work of the commission we have proposed cannot be confined to exposing the truth about the June events. Such a commission should also look into methods of recruitment and training of the Police, and into the powers and methods of the Security Service. It should seek to restore lawfulness to these institutions, whose particular duty it is to abide by the law, strictly and pedantically. Excesses should be publicly condemned. It is not true that the disclosure of painful and shameful truths would shake the authority of those in power. On the contrary — it is a *sine qua non* of that authority.

Members of Parliament, we appeal to you not to ignore our letter. The simplest solution would be to disregard its contents

and label us as enemies, squabblers, rabble-rousers, revisionists or demagogues. A selection of epithets is provided for you by the propaganda apparatus. Several were used by the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party in one of his most recent speeches. We hope that you will not take the easiest way out, but will carry out your duty as Members of Parliament in the interests of us all. We have made this an open letter; we are summoning all

who hold dear the ideals of democracy, lawfulness and humanity to support our call.

**Jacek Bierezin**, Lodz, ul. Astronautow 11m. 17;  
**Zdzislaw Jaskula**, Lodz, ul. Wschodnia 49m. 9A;  
**Witold Sulkowski**, Lodz, ul. Uniwersytecka 42/44m. 53

## 6. Workers' Defence Committee reply to Gierek, 5 Feb. 1977

*[Following growing demands for a commission of enquiry into police brutality during the June events, Party Secretary Edward Gierek announced a conditional amnesty for those still in prison as a result of the June strikes and demonstrations: all those who were prepared to admit regretting their actions would be released. At that date, February 4th, 58 workers from Radom and Ursus remained in jail. Two days earlier, the Polish Supreme Court had for the third time intervened to reduce the prison terms of prisoners from the June events.]*

*Below we print the Communiqué issued by the Workers' Defence Committee on February 5th in reply to Gierek's statement. The translation from Polish is by Labour Focus.]*

### COMMUNIQUE.

On the proposal of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PUWP on the 3rd of February the Council of State recommended to the Commission of Pardons, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the organs for applying justice that a case be prepared to pardon, shorten, suspend or terminate the sentences of those prosecuted as a result of action on 25th June, provided the latter show contrition and promise that they will not be involved in breaches of the law again.

We welcome this decision by the Council of State as a first step in the direction of atoning for the wrongs done to workers who participated in the demonstrations. But the joy of the sentenced workers' expected return from prison cannot hide the basic inadequacies of the decision.

There is cause for anxiety in the fact that the Council of State has accepted the reports of the Public Prosecutor, of the First President of the Supreme Court and of the Ministry of Justice about the activities of their subordinates in relation to the June events. Because the pardon involves 'only those who show contrition and promise that they will not be involved in breaches of the law again' it requires the humiliation of imprisoned workers and excludes from benefit those active in June demonstrations who consciously defend the workers' interests and their own human dignity. It excludes those who do not accept their guilt; it excludes those beaten up and humiliated who can justifiably expect contrition on the part of their tormentors. Whatever the intention of those who asked for it, the decision creates the possibility that those sentenced will be dependent on the very organs trying to hide their own excesses. So far as it can, the Committee intends to provide information about the methods used in carrying out the Council of State decision.

Scepticism about the promises in the Council of State's resolution can only be increased by the accompanying positive evaluation of the practices of the organs of investigation and justice. These are supposed to have been 'applying the extraordinary reductions in punishments with magnanimity and understanding' and to have refrained from meting out punishments which unconditionally deprived people of freedom.

The Committee feels it has a duty to raise the following facts concerning this question. On January 31st the last of the revision

trials of workers participating in the Radom demonstrations took place before the Supreme Court. In all these trials sentence was passed in breach of Article 275 on participation in demonstrations. Despite statements by the authorities, the accused were not on trial for theft or robbery, yet sentences of up to 10 years imprisonment were handed out.

The statements of the Supreme Court could provoke dangerous social consequences. The method of collective responsibility was resorted to - each of the accused had to answer for the wounds of 75 militiamen and damages valued at 28 million zlotys. It is frightening when the Supreme Court, for political reasons, states that those participating in the demonstrations had no reason to do so. In other words, they were just committing acts of hooliganism - this carries an immediate increase in the severity of sentence. The setting of precedents by linking Articles 275 and 59 - on public gatherings and on hooliganism - can brand future workers' demonstrations as hooligan rallies. The Supreme Court has broken the principle of an objective appraisal of the evidence by accepting all the evidence of the prosecution witnesses, police functionaries, as the absolute truth. These depositions were not even weakened by the fact that the same witness ascribed the same acts to different people in different trials, or that he provided information about occurrences taking place in different parts of the town at the same time, eg. Majak, Opolsk and others. The Supreme Court did not take into account any statements from the accused relating to forced depositions, physical mistreatment, beatings and torture during interrogation. The Supreme Court didn't make the slightest effort to explain the astonishing circumstances in which shops were looted in Radom. According to numerous reliable accounts, a group of between 10 and 20 people went round the main streets systematically breaking display windows after the workers demonstrations had ended. This gave an impetus to acts of robbery and looting which the participants in the demonstrations were later blamed for. The extremely severe treatment handed out to the demonstrators should be compared with the relative leniency in the punishment of looters, who mainly received suspended sentences. The accused in the Radom trials were answering in reality not for their own actions, but for the whole of Radom, for the protest of workers in the whole country. Their individual guilt was irrelevant to the courts, and attempts were not even made to prove it. Even if we were to accept that the accused were guilty of their alleged offences we would still be astonished by the severity of the sentences. For example, Jan Sadowski, father of 3 under school age children, got 5 years imprisonment for 'together with a crowd of people breaking into the Party building where he used insulting language, encouraged participants to damage property, broke doors and windows, damaged desks and chairs'. Bogdan Borkowicz, 22 years old, got 6 years imprisonment for 'throwing stones at the Party regional committee building, breaking some windows, using vulgar language and shouting to others to actively participate in the devastation'. Ryszard Grudzun got 9 years imprisonment - 'he led a group of people throwing stones, inciting the crowd to follow his example, and, with others, damaging property in the committee building'. Although these accusations remained unproved, sentences of a number of years were handed out. After what has occurred in the Supreme Court,

possessions.

The First Secretary of the CC of the PUWP, seven months after the June events, introduced his proposal to the Council of State at a meeting of 200 party activists in the 'Ursus' works. A few weeks ago over 1100 workers from these works handed him a demand for the reinstatement of all those sacked in connection with the June events. This demand was completely ignored by the First Secretary. The sacking of workers occurred on a mass scale after June '76. The Committee intends to continue pressing for the following: the re-instatement, commensurate with their qualifications, with full continuity of work and no loss of rights,

of all those deprived of work; unconditional amnesty for all those accused and imprisoned for participating in the demonstrations; disclosure of the full extent of the repression and all the circumstances related to the workers protest of June '76; disclosure and punishment of persons guilty of violating people's rights, or torturing and beating workers.

When these requirements are met, the Committee will cease to have a rationale for existing. The Committee demands the convocation of a special commission of deputies to objectively examine these burning issues.

## EAST GERMANY

### 'Why was Biermann expelled?'

by Gunther Minnerup

*'His singing, reciting and talking there was a massive attack on our socialist state, our socialist order of society. It contained an appeal to get rid of this order in the German Democratic Republic.'* With these words, referring to the first concert given by Wolf Biermann on his West German tour in November 1976, the editor of the official East German party paper *Neues Deutschland* justified the decision to deprive Biermann of his GDR citizenship and force him into exile. Unfortunately for the East Berlin functionaries, however, the very same concert used by them as a pretext for their measure was broadcast a few days later on West German television, which can be watched by most GDR citizens, thus giving them an excellent opportunity to see (and hear) through *Neues Deutschland's* attempt to cover up a carefully planned expulsion.

For Biermann is no cold-war anti-communist militant. The son of a working-class KPD member murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz, he left his home in Hamburg (West Germany) as a 17 year old to participate in what he saw as the construction of socialism in 'Germany's better half'. Up to 1965 his theatrical and musical talents were frequently made use of by the SED (Socialist Unity Party, East German CP) hierarchy, including on propaganda missions to the West German Federal Republic. Since 1963, however, when the 'Berlin Workers and Students Theatre' founded by Biermann was dissolved, his critical attitude to some aspects of SED policy led to repeated conflicts with the authorities, and in 1965 he was finally banned from performing publicly or publishing in the GDR. His collection of poems, *The Wire Harp*, and especially his LP record *Chausseestrasse 131*, published in West Germany in 1969, made Biermann immensely popular among left-wing intellectuals in West Germany, but despite repeated offers he consistently refused to



Wolf Biermann

emigrate from the GDR:

*'For if you cannot stand it anymore in the East, then stay in the East: for the West would corrupt you!'*

He only accepted the invitation for a concert tour organised by the West German Metalworkers' Union (IG Metall) after receiving official assurances that he would not be refused re-entry into the GDR; assurances that turned out to be part of an elaborate manoeuvre to rid the GDR of this critical voice from the Left. The SED Political Bureau had, in fact, by 11 to 5 votes decided to prefer this manoeuvre to the alternative of a public show trial.

Within the spectrum of East European political dissent Wolf Biermann occupies a special place not only as one of the most widely-read (unfortunately as yet only in German-speaking countries), but also most decidedly and unambiguously left-wing of the oppositionists. He bitterly denounces modern, post de-Stalinisation 'computer stalinism, in which you don't get a hole in your neck anymore, but one in the punch-card':

*'Why do the people get on your nerves so much?*

*Why does the truth spoil your appetite so much?*

*Why does the long-haired grief of the young annoy you?*

*This poem, why does it enrage you?*

*Why do you ape the bourgeois?*

*Why do you tremble so much over the thought of*

*the dictatorship of the proletariat?'*

(From: Portrait of a Monopoly Bureaucrat)

His political programme goes far beyond demands for piece-meal reforms; his spontaneous reaction to the Prague spring reveals Biermann's conviction that Stalinism can only be overthrown through mass working class action with a return to the classical communist traditions:

*'In Prague is the Paris Commune, it's still alive!*

*The revolution again liberates itself  
Marx himself and Lenin and Rosa and  
Trotsky  
come to the communists' aid.'*

The impact of Biermann's songs and poems on the political consciousness of thousands of young dissidents in the GDR is difficult to assess, but it should not be forgotten that in many ways the East German opposition is in a privileged position compared to the dissidents in the other Stalinist countries: through countless family ties with West Germany, through the West German mass media and other channels Biermann's works reach an incomparably broader audience than, for example, the Samizdat literature could hope to reach in the Soviet Union. The historical strength of the communist and socialist tradition in what is now the GDR, and the fact that in the GDR no mass purges wiping out entire generations of militants took place, surely contribute to a high receptiveness for left wing criticisms of the bureaucratic order.

One of Biermann's closest friends, the former university professor Robert Havemann, another Marxist dissident, asks his former cell-mate in a Nazi concentration camp, SED general secretary Erich Honecker, in an Open Letter protesting against Biermann's enforced exile:

*'Can you imagine that you have now made him into the idol of millions of young people in the GDR? He today symbolises ... a last great hope of a socialism of which they had already stopped dreaming.'*

Biermann himself sees his role as the mouthpiece of a growing discontent which, although increasingly impatient with the existing order, does not want to return to capitalism: *'I am dangerous because my songs give expression to ideas, hopes and attitudes that are virulent in the GDR and increasingly threatening to the rulers.'*

The reaction to Biermann's expulsion proved that at least sectors of the opposition are now prepared to stand up and be counted - a phenomenon unknown in the GDR for many years. Thirteen prominent authors signed a protest within 24 hours, over a hundred well-known writers, actors, singers and artists followed in the same week. Students interrupted lectures to demand discussions of the 'Biermann affair', hundreds of workers in the Zeiss factory of Jena signed a petition. This can only be the tip of the iceberg: the tens of thousands of applications for exit visas after the signing of the Helsinki Agreement indicate the existence of an increasingly uncontainable discontent. Two factors in particular contribute to the fears of the ruling apparatus: the growing influence of 'Euro-communism' (the speeches by Berlinguer and Marchais at last year's international CP summit conference in East Berlin had to be printed in the *Neues Deutschland*) and the 1976 workers' strike movement in Poland against the

increase in food prices. The Italian, French and other CPs' criticisms of 'the lack of socialist democracy' in the Soviet Union and the other Comecon countries gives many party cadres and intellectuals at least fragments of an alternative orientation (Biermann: *'This is a most important shift with a deep impact on GDR reality and the people of the GDR'*), while the partial success of the Polish workers (enforcing a withdrawal of the price increases) recalls the experiences of the older generation of East German workers made in June 1953 and encourages the younger generation. It is in the context of the possibility of a fusion of these different currents into one anti-bureaucratic mass movement that the importance of Biermann's powerful voice (and that of other socialist oppositionists like Havemann and most of the prominent dissident writers and artists) must be assessed: cause of fear for the Party apparatus and cause of hope for socialists.

#### **EIGHT ARGUMENTS FOR KEEPING THE NAME 'STALINALLEE' FOR THE STALINALLEE**

by Wolf Biermann

**There is, in Berlin, a street and also in Leningrad A street like in many another great city.**

**And therefore it's called STALINALLEE and, boy, understand: that time is past!**

**And Henselmann got beaten so that he'd build that street and because he then built it they beat him again And therefore ...**

**And when on June 17th many a construction brigade worker shouted, heavily armed with bottles not only beer was flowing And therefore ...**

**And because in this street every night at half past nine it's silent like in a graveyard and the trees are queuing up That's another reason ...**

**After the great party congress there were those who shat themselves And who, in the dark of night, Tore down a monument Yes, that's why ...**

[...]

**Karl Marx, the great thinker what has he done that his good name is written on those plates? After all, its name's not KARL-MARX-ALLEE, but, boy, understand: STALINALLEE!**

**Under socialism we shall build the most beautiful streets where people are happily living people who trust their neighbours Then we shall build us a KARL-MARX-ALLEE!**

**Then we shall build us an ENGELS-ALLEE!**

**Then we shall build us a BEBEL-ALLEE! Then we shall build us a LIEBKNECHT-ALLEE!**

**Then we shall build us a LUXEMBURG-ALLEE!**

**Then we shall build us a LENIN-ALLEE! Then we shall build us a TROTSKY-ALLEE!**

**Then we shall build us a THALMANN-ALLEE!**

**Then we shall build us a PIECK-ALLEE! Then we shall build us a [damn, there's someone missing!]**

**BIERMANN street and, boy, understand: that time is past!**

## **ROMANIA**

# **Human Rights group starts in Romania**

*"But what is the secret police really after? Why?... Only one answer is possible: because those in power have got something to hide. And they are scared that writers, when they speak up, will start divulging things, exposing things: they will say the truth — an entirely different truth from the things said by permission of the police... I am convinced that if writers take up secret police provocations and confront them, not all will be defeated, not in every situation. It is all a*

*question of overcoming our basic fear, which the Stalinist police implanted deeply in us, a fear which the police today feed off."*  
Paul Goma 1976

*"Any changes of political direction would be dangerous for the Romanian government, especially if we are talking about a change in a Marxist direction: official ideology in Romania covers itself with the language of Marxism, but that is simply in*

*order to hide better the real content of Marxism..."* Virgil Tanase, Dec. 1976 in an interview from Bucharest by phone to the French literary bi-monthly *Les Nouvelles Litteraires*.

On 11th February *Le Monde* carried a brief report that the Romanian writer Paul Goma had declared his solidarity with the signatories of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. His open letter was also supported by

two Romanian writers now living in enforced exile in Paris, Dumitru Tsepeneag and the Marxist Virgil Tanase.

On 16th February *Le Monde* carried a further report of the formation of a human rights group in Bucharest. A *Daily Telegraph* report of 15th February stated that a letter by the nine members of the group had been issued in Belgrade the day before. The appeal is addressed to the governments of the European Security Conference which is due to re-convene in the Yugoslav capital this summer. Paul Goma is one of the signatories, along with his wife, Ana-Maria Goma, the painter Carmen Manoliu and her son Sergiu who is also a painter; Adalbert Fecher, a metal worker, the economist Nicolas Bedivan, Emilia and Erwin Gesswein, musicians in the Bucharest Philharmonic Orchestra and Serban Stefanescu. The signatories complain against restrictions on freedom of travel and on the free circulation of ideas in Romania.

Up to now very little has been heard in the West about dissent in Romania. The foreign policy of the Romanian government has been markedly different from that of the USSR and other East European states — Romania did not, for example, support the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. But internally there has been no easing of political controls on the part of the regime. Indeed, the regime has used its actions on the international arena to appeal to domestic nationalist sentiment and to tighten the hold of the central leadership over the country's political life.

Nevertheless, the appearance of the new human rights group is the outcome of a long-standing tradition of dissent among Romanian intellectuals. The strength of the repressive apparatus has up to now been sufficient to confine open expressions of opposition to isolated individual cases: all attempts at organisation have been stifled. But for a long time informal links and discussions have existed between various circles of mainly literary dissidents. With the formation of the Human Rights Group this opposition has for the first time appeared with a public voice.

Paul Goma, one of the members of the Group, has been a prominent Romanian novelist since the 1960s. Born in Bessarabia, he spent his youth in Sibiu and Fagaras in Transylvania. He studied philology at Bucharest University until his studies were interrupted by his arrest in 1956. He was sent to prison for two years for organising a public reading of part of his book, "*Suffering*". In 1965 he was allowed to return to his studies and the following year he won a literary prize. On August 22nd 1968, his book "*The Room Next Door*" was published. The same day Ceausescu publicly condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and Goma joined the Communist Party. In October of 1968 he was made one of the editors of "*Romania Lit-*

*erara*" (Literary Romania).

In subsequent years Goma wrote a number of novels, plays and film scripts, none of which were approved by the Romanian censors. In a bitterly sarcastic letter to the Romanian Writers' Union last year, Goma ridiculed the official denials of censorship by the authorities: "*In case you didn't know, in Romania there is no censorship.*"



Paul Goma

*The fact that bad or hostile books do not appear is due to the 'vigilance' and the 'consciousness' of the printing workers: when such manuscripts reach them, the workers refuse to print them! Just like that! Because aren't they masters of their own destiny? So if a book like 'Ostinato' (2) was not printed, we should not rush to put the blame on D. Popescu, V. Nicolescu, I.D. Balan and D. Ghise (3). On, no! It's the printing workers who raised a determined veto — such, at least, is the explanation given by an official of Radiodifuziunea Romina in a discussion with the French Radio network ORTF." (4)*

Unable to get his novels published in Romania, he started to arrange their publication

in the West. For this activity he was not arrested. He received instead a passport and was sent abroad. While being in the West, his works were suppressed in Romania, on the grounds that he had sought political asylum and he returned to Romania in 1973. Since that time, though still a member of the Writers' Union, he has been unable to work and his name has been removed from all previous projects with which he had been connected in the past.

Many other writers have received similar treatment to that of Goma. The stage director, Lucian Pintilie, author of the film script of "*The Reconstruction*" which was shown at the Cannes Festival and in Paris, was issued with a passport in order to remove him from the country. The most recent case is that of Virgil Tanase. Unable to get his book published in Romania, Tanase, who is a declared Marxist, had an article and a book accepted for publication in France. In response, the authorities, who had previously refused him a passport to travel abroad, suddenly issued him with travel documents. Asked by the French bi-monthly *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* whether his book would ever appear in Romania, Tanase answered: 'Yes, if, as I hope, Romania one day has a socialist government.' Official repression has been carried furthest against the writer Dumitru Tsepeneag. After he was given a passport to travel abroad, his name was removed from all articles and books and he was expelled from the Writers' Union on the grounds, in fact false, that he had sought political asylum in France.

by Anca Mihailescu

Footnotes.

- (1) Letter published under the title '*The Tanase Problem*' in *Index on Censorship*, Vol.5 No.2, Summer '76, pp.57-60.
- (2) One of Goma's novels
- (3) The names of leading literary managers in Romania
- (4) P.Goma, *A Letter to the Writers' Union in Romania*, passed on to *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* by Romanian exiles in Paris.

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**116 Cazenove Road,**  
**London N. 16.**

# The British Trade Unions and Eastern Europe

An interview with Ernie Roberts\*

**What do you see as the significance of the movement for democratic rights that has arisen in Eastern Europe? What role can the British working-class movement play in relation to it?**

Any society which sets itself up takes steps to defend itself and to protect its power - whether it is a feudal state, a capitalist state, a socialist state, or a state which is run on the basis of bureaucrats, technocrats or whatever. And of course they will take actions which they justify by saying that these actions defend the power which they have established. It is quite clear that a workers' state, when it is set up, has to take steps to defend its newly won power. But after nearly sixty years, a worker would think that a workers' state would have established sufficient strength and stability to defeat any internal challenge to its power and authority which it should exercise on behalf of the working class - and this should be so in the case of the Soviet Union and the other workers' states.

So, to say that it is necessary to put into prison, restrict the liberties of, or take action against persons who disagree politically with aspects of government within those workers' states, to call them dissidents and outlaws is not acceptable in the working-class movement. For we argue that there must be, especially within the working-class movement, what is called the democratic freedom to disagree, to fight for a minority point of view and for a change in the policies and structures of our working-class organizations and states. And this is at the heart of the matter with regard to 'dissidents'. We do not consider them to be agents of the CIA or of some foreign power, but workers - professional or manual - who have disagreements and wish to see changes made in the society which the working class has created. And it is clear that there are bureaucracies which stand in the way of making these changes.

Therefore, an appeal has to be made to the international working-class movement -- the trade unions, working-class political organizations, cooperatives and so on -- to support them in their efforts to achieve democratic liberties in the workers' states. If such democratic liberties are not permitted, if they are not won, then workers, particularly in the capitalist countries, will listen to the propaganda of their enemies, the capitalists and opponents of socialism,



Ernie Roberts

who say that freedom is restricted, and that the working class suffers from dictatorship even in states where it has taken power from the landlords and capitalists. So it is a matter of concern to the whole of the international working-class movement to see that this argument of the enemies of socialism and the working class is not true, and where there is any truth to it, to put the matter right. That is the purpose of the support given to 'dissidents' in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, or wherever else they are being oppressed.

That means, of course, that the forces that have to take up this fight, for it to be honest and sincere, must be people who support the socialist movement, the trade-union movement and the efforts of the working class to achieve power. The appeal must go out to the trade unions in Britain, the Labour Party and all other working-class political organisations - the Communist Party and all sections of the movement. And so I see that it is necessary for us in Britain to approach these organisations of the working class so that they make their voices heard to the leadership of the Soviet

Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and so on, in order that these matters can be put right. This is going to be a difficult job, because there will be some apprehension by some workers in making criticisms which they may feel give grist to the anti-socialist and capitalist mill in its attacks on the workers and their organisations and states. But this is a risk that we have to take, because the greater risk is to have liberty suppressed and workers' democracy distorted in those countries where this cannot be allowed to happen. For we too are fighting for a workers' democracy under socialism in our own country. And we must let it be seen that we are genuinely for the fullest possible freedom and rights for all workers within the country in which they live.

**At the moment, leading up to the Belgrade conference on the Helsinki agreements, the western bourgeois media are full of reports of the positions of the Carter administration and other capitalist forces in relation to East European dissidents. What attitude do you think socialists should take to this campaign?**

I think it is right to support what are called the Helsinki agreements, which lay down basic human rights. Even though some capitalist states, as well as socialist states are involved in these agreements, it is necessary to see that those human rights are fought for in all countries and applied above all in the countries where the working class has achieved some power. So it is important that where those demands are made for human rights by dissidents and others in their countries, these should be supported by the workers in all capitalist countries. The fact that Carter and others are raising the question of human rights and so on ... well, we must also take them at their word, and whilst supporting the demands for rights for dissidents in socialist countries, we have to tell Carter that we also put up a fight for rights in America. In fact, there are many more rights denied to the workers in the United States than in the workers' countries in various parts of Europe.

**In Britain, for example, do you think that socialists should campaign for democratic freedoms in Eastern Europe together with forces which are alien to the working-class movement itself?**

No, it isn't necessary, because, especially

looking at it from a British point of view, I believe that with 11 million trade unionists, 13 million cooperators and nearly 7 million members of the Labour Party, there is enough strength, together with all other working-class parties, to achieve these objectives without the vocal support of the Carters and other so-called capitalist-liberal elements.

**One idea that has been talked of in recent months is the organisation of a trade-union delegation to Poland to investigate the conditions of workers who were imprisoned or sacked after the events last summer. Would you see that as the kind of initiative towards which British trade-unionists can usefully work?**

Yes, I think that these things should be open. We in this country, (certainly I personally) are fighting for open government, whether politically through the state, an open government of trade unions and working-class organisations, or open government so far as the Labour Party is concerned - things should be made open and clear to the working class as to what is being done in their name. And this should apply also internationally. It is right that we should say to those countries where workers are complaining, having to take strike action or other actions in defence of their living standards or other rights ... we should be permitted, those other sections of the working-class movement in other countries, to send in representatives in order to check the facts and see for ourselves what exactly the situation is, and what it is that gives rise to these problems.

**Could you say briefly what you think to be the significance of the Charter 77, and what action the British working-class movement can take in solidarity with it?**

The Charter 77 is one of the movements, in this case in Czechoslovakia, where manual and professional workers are complaining about a lack of liberty within a workers' state. Here again efforts should be made to support them in their demands, and to investigate, to inquire on the spot in those countries what exactly is wrong, what it is that is being complained against, what in fact is happening to such persons, what action is being taken against them, whether there is any victimization of these people for the views that they hold, and whether (which is even worse) retaliatory action is being taken against their families, as has been alleged. These things need to be inquired into for the purpose of arriving at the truth.

**What is your attitude to the World Federation of Trade Unions? Could the question of repression be raised within bodies of the WFTU?**

One of the most disastrous things for the world trade-union movement was the fact that it split in a number of ways - principally between the WFTU and the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), but also involving other bodies such as the *Carthage International*. These splits and divisions are reflected nationally too - you get divisions and conflict between trade unions within national boundaries. There should be a

coming together of the world trade-union Internationals. There are many issues on which agreement could be based - not least of all of course the issue of peace and war. There are also the issues of unemployment and of raising the basic living standards of the working class throughout the world. And this, of course, could lead to other issues on which there could be international trade-union unity, not least this question of the rights of minorities - referred to as dissidents - in various countries; the rights of people like, in Britain, Agee and Hosenball and the three others who have been taken into custody by the authorities. So that, yes, there is good reason for having international trade-union unity to deal with these problems of human rights and liberties as they affect the international working-class movement.

Because of the authoritative positions it has in the communist world, the WFTU should be raising these questions with the people responsible in their own countries, just as it is our own responsibility to raise through our trade unions the question of political prisoners, whether they are Irish, American, British, Chilean or any other nationality. This is a responsibility which rests upon the international trade union movement, and the sooner we collectively, irrespective of our other differences, take up these basic questions the better it will be for the whole of the world's working class.

**\*Ernie Roberts is Assistant General Secretary of the AUEW [Engineering Section].**

Interviewer Patrick Camiller

## Committee to defend Czechoslovak socialists

In the summer of 1972 several major political trials were staged in Czechoslovakia. Over forty communists and socialists were sentenced to terms of imprisonment of up to 6½ years. In many cases the charges related to the production and distribution of leaflets informing the public, in an entirely legal manner, of their constitutional rights in the general election of November 1971. The underlying reason for the attack on these comrades was, however, their refusal to accept the official version of 'socialism' as proclaimed by the post-invasion regime headed by Dr. Husak.

In August 1972 a group of people from various sections of the Left in Britain came together to discuss ways of expressing active solidarity with the political prisoners. It was agreed to set up the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, its members representing, in their individual capacities, different shades of socialist opinion, but all agreeing to the following statement

of aims:

The Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists has been formed in solidarity with those who are being persecuted in Czechoslovakia because of political activity as socialists and communists. We are concerned with what happens to these men and women, not only as individuals whose constitutional rights are at stake, but as fighters for a cause which is that of all Czechoslovak working people. We believe that those who endanger the socialist cause today are not those who are the target of repression in Czechoslovakia, but those who instigate and conduct this repression. The Committee will seek to disseminate information throughout Britain, especially within the labour movement, about the struggle of socialists in Czechoslovakia and to express and organise support for their struggle.

Lawrence Daly accepted the Committee's

invitation to be its chairman.

Among the first activities of the Committee was the publication of a bulletin, **Defend Czechoslovak Socialists - Pravda Vitezi!**, containing documents about the political prisoners, news from Czechoslovakia, appeals by individuals suffering persecution, reports on trials, and also political statements by members of the socialist opposition not only on internal Czechoslovak affairs but also, for instance, on Chile.

Much concern was caused by the manner in which the political trials were conducted and by the harsh conditions under which the political prisoners were held. A Special Issue of the Bulletin on the case of the former student leader Jiri Nejedlik highlighted both the socialist principles for which he and the other prisoners stood, and also the illegal manner in which he was being treated. Among its activities in

campaigning for the release of the prisoners the Committee held a public meeting in November 1974 in cooperation with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in support of Sabata-Mueller Day.

In accordance with its aims, the Committee also provides a forum for discussion on questions which concern socialists in Czechoslovakia and Britain alike. In May 1975 a teach-in was held on 'Socialism and the Czechoslovak Experience' and in January 1976 a week-end seminar was addressed by Prof. John Saville on Socialist Democracy and by Stan Newens M.P. on detente and the labour movement.

In welcoming the conditional release in December 1976 of four leading political prisoners -- Jaroslav Sabata, Milan Huebl, Jiri Mueller and Antonin Rusek -- the Committee emphasised that there is still an unknown number of people detained for a variety of 'offences', for instance, workers who chalked up pro-Dubcek slogans. Moreover, attacks in the press such as the labelling of Mueller shortly before his release as a 'terrorist' have not been withdrawn. Indeed, in connection with the Charter 77 human rights statement the Czechoslovak media displays a vicious hysteria reminiscent of the Stalinist era. The need for socialist solidarity is now

greater than ever. A reminder of this is also the case of the musicians in the groups Plastic People of the Universe and DG 307 (for an account, see the Committee's forthcoming booklet, **Voices of Czechoslovak Socialists**).

Most recently the Committee has taken the initiative in convening an ad-hoc committee in solidarity with Charter 77. A public meeting under the title '**Socialist Solidarity with Charter 77**' will be held in London on 23rd March. Further information can be obtained from Charter 77 Committee, c/o ICDP, 6 Endsleigh Street, London W.C.1. **Marian Sling**

## REVIEWS

### Socialist opposition in Eastern Europe

Jiri Pelikan

(Allison & Busby, cloth £5.25, paperback £2.95 -- 221 pp.)

Jiri Pelikan was the director of Czechoslovak television during 1968, and now lives in Rome where he edits *Listy*, the journal of the Czechoslovak socialist opposition, which is aimed chiefly at readers inside Czechoslovakia. He is therefore well equipped to fulfill the task that he sets himself in this book - the presentation of a new phenomenon in Eastern Europe, the development of a structured underground opposition. In the first part of the book, Pelikan traces the birth of the opposition through from 1968, describing how it is based on the 1/2 million communists expelled from the Czechoslovak Communist Party because of their activities and attitudes during the Prague Spring. The sheer number of the expelled led to the creation of a broad social basis for developing opposition to the 'normalisation' policy of the Husak regime, creating a situation previously unknown in Eastern Europe. It became possible to go beyond the individual gesture of protest against the regime and to begin actually to develop a

political programme and strategy for a continuing struggle against repression. Pelikan goes on to touch on some of the political problems faced by the opposition in deciding on an orientation. He discusses for instance the whole problem of whether or not the socialist opposition should found a new party, or only form a 'movement', '...which however would possess an intellectual centre which would determine the general political line ... and take practical initiatives while giving groups which could be freely formed in factories and localities complete autonomy in applying the common programme'. (p.42) Another important aspect of the development of a strategy by the socialist opposition is what attitude to take to international developments. Pelikan sees the growing split within the Communist Parties between those which follow the Moscow line, and those known as the 'Eurocommunists' which take their distance from many of the undemocratic aspects of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Pelikan's aim however is chiefly to present to us the reality of the socialist opposition in Czechoslovakia. Thus the latter half of the book consists of various documents

from the opposition. These fall into two types: firstly public appeals against the regime, and secondly programmatic discussion documents, in particular a substantial 'Short Action Programme'. One I found particularly interesting was a 'workers' proclamation' which sets out a series of practical measures to be taken by workers against the regime, such as insisting on safety regulations or refusing to take part 'in mass parades intended to demonstrate to the public abroad that the working people agree with the political set up in our country'. (p.163) The group who prepared this document are not part of the structured socialist opposition, and this fact should emphasise to us that, although this book is concerned with one particular section of the Czechoslovak opposition, in fact the opposition is extremely diverse, as is shown by Charter 77.

Nonetheless, this book provides an extremely interesting introduction to the real problems of strategy and tactics that are faced by opponents of the East European regimes from a socialist standpoint.

**Mark Jackson**

### Literature on the position of women in Eastern Europe and the USSR

by Alix Holt and Barbara Brown

There is not a great deal of literature on the position of women in Eastern Europe and the USSR. At the time of the Russian Revolution the 'woman question' was widely debated in the socialist movement, and some articles by leading figures of the early Soviet government are still available. These writings discuss the problems of the day (the lack of funds due to the

Civil War and economic disruption; backward attitudes) but also how a future socialist community could best help women, and so on, are relevant today. Alexandra Kollontai, an activist in the Russian social democratic movement and in 1917 a Peoples' Commissar for Social Welfare, had a long standing interest in women's liberation. Some of her pamphlets recently re-issued are '**Women Workers Struggle for their Rights**' and '**Love and the**

**New Morality/ Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle**' (Falling Wall Press). Soon to be published is '**Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai**' (Allison and Busby), which will include an assessment of her contribution to the socialist debate on women.

A collection of Lenin's references to women is in '**Lenin on the Emancipation of Women**' (Progress Publishers). These wri-

tings range from statistical material on the position of women in industry to speeches Lenin made after the revolution at women's congresses. There are similar collections of Trotsky's writings available in **'Women and the Family'** and **'Problems of Everyday Life'** (Pathfinder Press), which deal mainly with the difficulties of family life at the time and the need to change it.

In the thirties and forties, with industrialisation, collectivisation and the war, the number of women taking an active part in production and social life increased sharply, but interest in the 'woman question' as such declined. Little was written in this period apart from a book by the German socialist Wilhelm Reich, **'The Sexual**

**Revolution'** (Vision Press), the second half of which deals with the struggle for the 'new life' in the Soviet Union. Reich argues that this struggle has failed because the family, authoritarian relationships, and sexual morality have not been changed.

In recent years, interest in the position of women in Eastern Europe has grown both in the West and in these countries. In the West, literature within the women's movement has included many short pieces on the Soviet experience. Probably the best known of these is the chapter in Sheila Rowbotham's book **'Women, Resistance and Revolution'** (Penguin) called 'If you Like Tobogganing'. A more detailed, if uncritical, review of the life of Soviet women can

be found in William Mandel's book **'Soviet Women'** (Anchor Books), while a recent publication by Hilda Scott, **'Women and Socialism'** (Allison and Busby), both provides a detailed account drawing on her long experience as a journalist in Czechoslovakia, and attempts to analyse the gains and setbacks in the fight for women's equality. An assessment of the Soviet scene by Tamara Volkova in a brief pamphlet called **'A Woman's Place in the USSR'** (I.M.G. Publications) draws extensively on recent Soviet sociological research and provides a useful bibliography for those able to read Russian.

Alix Holt  
Barbara Brown

## SOCIALISM AND BUREAUCRACY

by Andras Hegedus

(Allison & Busby, cloth £5.25, paperback £2.95--195 pp.)

The author of this book of essays was the Prime Minister in Hungary during the months before the revolution of 1956. After 1956, Hegedus spent 2 years in the Soviet Union. According to an interview given to the Paris daily, **Quotidien de Paris** (October 27, 1976), 'in September 1958 I returned to the country. What a surprise. I was struck by the extent of positive changes.' Thereafter in 1963 he became director of the Sociological Group at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. During these years, and up until the early 70s, as he says in his 1976 postscript to the book reviewed here, 'like the majority of my colleagues today, I was living in a special atmosphere of reformist optimism'.

The atmosphere in which these essays were written, conditioned as it was by a significant liberalisation in Hungary connected with the introduction of market oriented economic reforms, needs to be kept in mind. Some of the essays are of a practical bent - dealing with very concrete problems of organisation and management.

Nonetheless, Hegedus is no mere efficiency expert. Even when dealing with the most detailed problems he attempts to keep to the fore the conflict between what he calls 'humanisation and optimisation' and he insists that 'the theory of revolutionary practice can be helped by the social sciences only if they can to a certain degree provide a view 'from the outside of how society must evolve ... and can commit themselves to the course of social progress rather than to some given solution'. (p.61)

In other essays he deals with the problem of bureaucracy from a general and historical point of view, and these are by far the most interesting from the viewpoint of the general reader. In particular he pays close attention to the debates within the Bolshevik Party before the death of Lenin, when as he sees it, the direction of development of the Soviet Union was not yet fixed, so that many applicable options could be put forward. In his view the bureaucracy in the 'socialist countries' played and still does play a historically progressive role, but by the mid-60s he 'came to recognise the fact that self-analysis and self-criticism on a Marxist basis had become a historical possibility and necessity in the East European countries'.

All the essays were written between 1966 and 1970, and since then the 'possibilities' for such a Marxist self-criticism, though certainly not its 'necessity', have become more and more limited.

In 1968 Hegedus lost his job at the Academy of Sciences because of his signing of the Korcula petition against the invasion of Czechoslovakia and in 1973 he was expelled from the Party. Nonetheless he remains optimistic about the long-term prospects for the self-reform of the East European societies, owing to the fact that 'various movements are appearing amongst the masses, which I think are opening up more and more possibilities for the realisation of socialist values in daily life...' (p.190). The optimism of the late 60s, however illusory it may have been, leads Hegedus to do really concrete studies on the problems of bureaucracy from a Marxist standpoint, and the result is a book which is not only of interest with regard to the problem of bureaucracy in Eastern Europe, but also stimulates the reader to consider the problem with regard to the achievement of a future socialist society in Western Europe.

Mark Jackson

## FUTURE EVENTS

### 'Socialist Solidarity with Charter 77'

Meeting on 23rd March at 7:00pm at the National Union of Railwaymen Headquarters, Euston Rd., London N:W:1. Organised by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists

Chairperson: Dave Bowman  
Speakers to include:  
Antonin Liehm  
Ernie Roberts  
Lawrence Daly (if in London)  
Labour MP  
Robin Blackburn

## RELEASE PARADZHANOV!

Sergo Paradzhanov, director of the film **Shadows of our Forgotten Ancestors** was sentenced in 1974 to 5 years in a labour camp for the crime of 'homosexuality'. In fact, previously he had written several protest letters against political trials and against cultural oppression in Ukraine.

His film will be shown at the **Electric Cinema** (Notting Hill Gate) from April 1-3.

Antonin J. Liehm, editor of the official organ of the Czech Writers' Union, **Literarni Listy** in 1968, will give an introductory talk on Paradzhanov at the following showings: on April 1st, 11pm, before the showing, and on April 3rd after the 2pm showing.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

**VOICES OF CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALISTS** - booklet of samizdat documents, available from the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, c/o ICDP, 6 Endsleigh St., London W:C:1.

**CRITIQUE** Conference April 4-7 on the Soviet Union to be held in London. Write to Critique, 9 Poland Street, London W.1.

**CRITIQUE** - journal of Soviet studies and socialist theory. Issue no. 7 available. Write to 31 Clevedon Road, Glasgow G12 0PH.

**META** - a left-wing journal on the Ukrainian question, 60 per issue. An interview with Leonid Plyuschch - 50p. Both available as well as a booklet of samizdat material from the Committee in Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners, 67 Grangewood Street, London E6 1HB.

**Palach Press Ltd.** - a press and literary agency which distributes news and documents from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Write to Palach Press Ltd., 145 Gray's Inn Rd., London W:C:1.