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# Uncaptive Minds

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*Romania*

STALINISM IN ONE COUNTRY

*Poland*

NOTES FROM THE GDAŃSK SHIPYARD STRIKE

*Czechoslovakia*

VÁCLAV HAVEL'S REASONS FOR HOPE

*Estonia*

WE ARE NOT WAITING FOR GORBACHEV

# UNCAPTIVE MINDS

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on Eastern Europe

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# POLAND

In late April, a new wave of strikes broke out in Poland, reminding us again of the country's continued instability. Although the strikes did not result in any clear victory for Solidarity, they did demonstrate the workers' ongoing determination to fight for their rights, as well as their discontent with General Jaruzelski's regime and the recent "economic reform" — that is, price hikes and a program of severe austerity.

In the aftermath of the strikes there have been reports of new efforts by the government to negotiate certain political and economic changes with the Church to forestall further unrest.

The events started when transport workers went on strike in Bydgoszcz on April 25, followed by steelworkers in Stalowa Wola. In each case, thousands of workers went off their jobs to demand wage increases to compensate for the steep price hikes. (The government had announced that prices would rise by 40 percent on average, but, in reality, the cost of living for most Polish families increased nearly 100 percent, since price increases were steepest for basic necessities; on the other hand, wages increased by only 25 percent.) Within days, the wage increases — sometimes as high as 50 percent — were granted. It is noteworthy that the strikes were spontaneous and came to be led, for the most part, by a new generation of Solidarity activists.

On April 26, a majority of workers at the Nowa Huta steelworks, one of Solidarity's most important strongholds, went on strike. The workers demanded not only increased wages for themselves, but also across-the-board increases for health workers and teachers, two of the most poorly paid groups in Poland; the reinstatement of previously fired Solidarity members; the release of political prisoners; and the reinstatement of Solidarity at the steelworks.

Although there were strikes at other localities, the most important expression of support for the steelworkers' strike came from the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, where on May 2, approximately 3,000 workers started an occupation strike. Here, too, the demands included reinstatement of dismissed Solidarity activists and the legalization of Solidarity.

The authorities attacked the workers at Nowa Huta at dawn on May 5, using percussion grenades, tear gas and truncheons. Dozens of workers were severely wounded by ZOMO anti-riot units. According to an eyewitness, Father Tadeusz Zalewski, "the workers were forced to their knees and beaten until they declared they would go back to work." At the same time, many Solidarity activists were detained and imprisoned across the country, including Bogdan Lis, Janusz Onyszkiewicz and Józef Piniór, who remains in jail as of this writing.

With Lech Wałęsa joining them, the strikers at the Lenin Shipyard held out as police encircled the area and sealed off

the shipyard, in the end preventing food and other necessities from reaching the strikers. On May 10, after the authorities made several offers amounting to demands for surrender, the strikers decided to break off negotiations and leave the shipyard without signing any agreement, but also without compromising themselves.

Uncaptive Minds is running an account of the Lenin shipyard strike by Wojciech Gielzynski, one of Poland's best-known journalists, who recently began to write for independent publications. Gielzynski was in the shipyard from the 8th to the 10th of May, including the final, dramatic day of the strike, when no Western journalists were present. Also included is an interview with Wiktor Kulerski on the recent labor unrest. In the interview, he explains how the recent strikes affect the current and future strategy of Solidarity.

What struck many observers about the recent strikes was the differences of opinion that emerged among Solidarity's leaders and advisers. Some advocated compromising over the strikers' demands for union recognition, even going so far as to downplay the strikes themselves. Others were against such compromise, and supported the young generation of workers who refused to sign any agreement that did not satisfy their principal demand for free trade unions, even if only at the local level.

The disagreement is not new and has been a running issue through both the legal and illegal periods of Solidarity's existence. It dates back, in fact, to August 1980 when many of the opposition's leading activists argued that the government would never allow free trade unions, and that the 21 demands put forward by the Inter-Factory Strike Committee should be moderated. The different strategies proposed for Solidarity lie at the heart of a debate about the direction the Polish opposition should take. In this regard, the series of interviews published in this issue of Uncaptive Minds, although they were mostly conducted prior to the strikes, provide a framework for understanding the current (and future) events in Poland.

We publish excerpts of an interview with Bronisław Geremek, a leading Solidarity adviser, from an official publication, in which he proposes an "anti-crisis" pact between the communist party and society — a concept which has recently gained currency during talks between the Catholic Church and the government. In a May 31 interview with the Italian Communist daily L'Unita, Geremek said, ". . . I believe there will be changes in the union's structure and that the model will be Spain's workers' councils." Our interview with him and a response by Leopolda, an essayist, follow. We also bring you an article by Jacek Trznadel, a literary critic, in which he urges Solidarity activists to clearly state that they strive for a radical change of the political system in Poland, and not to limit themselves to demanding "trade union pluralism."

# Notes from the Gdańsk Shipyard Strike

By Wojciech Gieżyński

I am putting these notes together on May 11, 1988 — the day after the end of the Lenin Shipyard strike in Gdańsk. I have just spent nine restless nights trying to sleep on styrofoam sheets, spread about the shipyard canteen. . . . Unfortunately, I am lacking some of my notes and recordings, which were spirited out of the besieged shipyard by a street-smart kid named Sławek. As a courier, he proved invaluable during the strike, because ZOMO [riot police] patrols were thoroughly searching even the Western journalists, who were under the mistaken impression that their press cards made them invulnerable. Sławek was the star of the “kangaroos,” that is, children who scrambled over walls, squeezed through fences, and wriggled through holes to supply the shipyard with food and information. It was they who led me, Jackson Diehl of the *Washington Post*, and John Tagliabue of the *New York Times* through a maze of holes to the heart of the shipyard. Sławek has tattoos on his arms; he escaped from a reform school to help the strikers. But the kangaroos include boys and girls from the best of homes: Dorota, for example, who writes sentimental poems and was nearly beaten to unconsciousness by a ZOMO man.

So much for an introduction to this raw record of events.

The night of Sunday, May 8 has been a little bit calmer. The Strike Committee is still in session, and it's nearly 1:00 a.m. The shipyard management has decided to be more polite; they've stopped dealing with the workers as an overseer might with illiterate farmhands — which shocked even Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the church emissary. Somebody runs in to announce that Jaruzelski will make concessions, because his position is threatened.

It is quiet on the shipyard grounds. Those standing watch at gate no. 2 are asleep on the roofs, one blanket for every two men. Patrols of “smurfs” — as the workers call the ZOMOs — wander outside the gate. One young man tells me that the bunch just outside the gate come from Kraków and Olsztyn, and that those in front of gate no. 3 come from Warsaw and Szczecin. According to him, they gladly accept underground newsheets, tell jokes, and horse around with the strikers. They've given up the pretense of preparing to storm the shipyard — the rhythmic beating of truncheons against riot shields and the martial cheers that usually precede a charge have gone silent.

Andrzej C. tells me confidentially that it is only the lull before the storm. There have been confirmed sightings of large



(Reuter-Bettmann)

concentrations of ZOMOs, with armored transports and helicopters, in nearby Wrzeszcz. If they do attack, it is these men — who've been sequestered in forest camps and inflamed with hatred for the “firebrands” and “anti-socialist elements” — who will lead the way, and not the ROMO [Reserve Civil Defense Detachments] patrols who've come to be on somewhat friendly terms with the strikers.

Will they attack tonight? Nobody knows. . . .

2:36 a.m. They say the Strike Committee is voting on something behind closed doors, without advisers. I lie down for a moment, but sleep doesn't come. At 4:13 Janusz tells us that the fourth round of talks with management has begun without the director, Tołwiński, who has kept his distance — and is in

contact with General Kiszczak [the Minister of Internal Affairs].

The workers lie on makeshift beds made from chairs or styrofoam sheets. Their representatives and advisers haven't even dozed off for a few minutes. One of the chief advisers, the lawyer Siła-Nowicki, has been simply amazing: well over seventy, he's on his feet all the time, smiling good-naturedly, but no longer up to answering questions, which he turns down with a silent gesture.

"Yesterday they wouldn't budge, but today they'll give in," Zbyszczek assures me. "Our people are driving hard, going for it all, for Solidarity nation wide."

. . . The sun rises. A cock crows. This is no ordinary rooster, but a gift from one of Lech's admirers, intended for soup but pardoned and subsequently promoted to shipyard mascot. The other mascot is a hedgehog, which was almost run over by an electric cart. At the moment he's looking for hand-outs in the canteen.

In front of the gate house, where a styrofoam caricature of government spokesman Jerzy Urban stands, a group of strikers is discussing the situation. "They're not going to attack — it just wouldn't pay." "They might if somebody loses his cool." "No, they don't want another Nowa Huta, they'd really be in hot water if they did that again. After all, that attack — by shocking the world — has given us a chance to hold out."

Janusz Kepa leads the discussion. He's one of the very few management-level employees to join the strike. Youth predominates — perhaps 80 percent of the strikers are in their twenties. The veterans from 1980 are few and far between; during the first few days there were more, but as the strike wore on, boredom got the better of most of them. Or pessimism. . .

8:00 a.m. The deadline of the latest ultimatum — perhaps the fourth? — passes, but nobody is paying attention to the government's threats any more. Whatever will be, will be.

There isn't a single worker who hasn't been thinking about the attack, which could occur at any moment. Everyone is afraid — they're well aware of the brutal storming of Nowa Huta; they've heard about the goons from the "anti-terrorist" unit, whose mere presence paralyzed an opposition rally at St. Brygida's Church. Everyone fears an attack, yet at the same time almost instinctively longs for it. A strange psychological state: to wait in terror for the dull thud of truncheons, simultaneously hoping that such a turn of events would most benefit you and your fellow strikers. And Poland. Western governments, long courted by the regime, seem to have had second thoughts about their affair with the General since the storming of Nowa Huta; West German politicians, for example, reacted much more vigorously than they did when martial law was imposed six and a half years ago. A massacre at *this* shipyard — symbol of Solidarity — would gain far more notoriety abroad than the action at Nowa Huta.

The authorities understand this. That's why they haven't attacked, and only entice, trick, delay, and delude with

negotiations, which amount to demands to capitulate. One moment they send conciliatory signals, the next moment they bear down with psychological terror, playing tapes with battle sound-effects, amplified over gigantic loudspeakers suspended from helicopters, so that the people of Gdańsk would lose their morale, thinking that their Alamo was about to fall.

That's the point of the government propaganda campaign — to cause despair. That's why they reported that only a "handful" of workers were "occupying gate no. 2," preventing others from putting in their honest day's work. True, the strikers' ranks had fallen from about 4,000, back on Wednesday, to a little under 2,000 today. And it's true that workers are still leaving — but as of this morning, those getting through the blockade and into the shipyard have actually begun to outnumber those leaving.

Western correspondents have unwittingly contributed to the government's efforts; Jackson Diehl states that he counted all the strikers, and there are exactly 350. Well, there's about that many at the strike's center, gate no. 2. But there are six other gates, and many sections inside; strikers can be found almost everywhere.

Greetings and messages of support, which have come from all over the country, are read aloud after morning prayers. Mr. Majdański sends his encouragement, as well as the lay ministry of Zamość, Polish writers and the Kozłowski family from Gdynia. Applause follows each message, but slowly grows more reserved. Everybody is waiting for another kind of message: whether the great industrial enterprises have been shut down by strikes or not.

9:00 a.m. Alojzy Szablewski [the leader of the Strike Committee] reports on what happened during the night: neither demands for increases in wages, nor the restoration of Solidarity, will be met.

The workers leave the meeting in surprisingly good spirits. They don't believe Siła-Nowicki, who found out from General Kiszczak himself that nobody is striking anywhere else in Poland. Nor do they believe Kiszczak's promise to set political prisoners free if the strike is ended. . . .

Wateśa shows up. "They hope we'll just give up and flee from the shipyard like rats," he says. "But I'm not leaving — many will stay. We don't want handouts, we demand Solidarity! Let them come in and take us if they want!"

Applause! Enthusiasm! But the workers continue to speak among themselves in small groups, and not all of them look unruffled.

11:05 a.m. The shipyard finds out that workers at the Ursus tractor factory outside Warsaw have gone on strike, and that something in Wrocław is happening. Inside the canteen the workers cheer; euphoria reigns. "Now we can hold on — a week or longer if we have to!" Bogdan B. remarks to me on the side. "If that's true, then the real negotiations can finally begin."

11:50 a.m. Wałęsa, calm as usual, shows up again in the canteen to request that rumors be ignored, that people refrain from getting too excited and passing on false information, of which more and more has been circulating through the shipyard. "Our strength has fallen," he says. "Now the struggle is in the realm of consciousness. The negotiations have fallen through, but the nation is still with us; in Gdańsk there is some action, but it's being broken up. This game isn't over yet," he declares, and calls a mass rally for the afternoon.

Several strikers who patrol the grounds of the shipyards have some encouraging news: the shipyard management — composed of foremen, directors and party members — quarreled with a detachment of the Civil Defense. . . .

Help continues to get through. Slawek shows up with two girls, ages 13 and 14, who are carrying letters. The three of them are beaming with pride — especially the leader. It is the only event until the big rally; otherwise the afternoon passes lazily by. Those on guard are tanning on roofs and lawns; everybody else is milling about. Only the members of WiP [Freedom and Peace Movement] and other youth organizations aiding the strike — of which there are many in Gdańsk — are busy. Their hands dipped in dye. Several different newsheets are being printed: one for those on strike, another for the people of Gdańsk, and yet another designed to soften up the "smurfs." There's great demand for these newsheets, but only one typewriter and an old duplicator at the production team's disposal. For monitoring the airwaves there is a dilapidated radio, also from a bygone technological era. In August 1980, there were loudspeakers that could be heard all over the shipyard, but this time the communications center was left in the hands of the authorities. This strike lacks everything — only food, thanks to the generosity of the people of Gdańsk and the dedication of their children, is plentiful. Sometimes there is even coffee and chocolate!

2:07 p.m. Lech arrives in purple slippers! But he's not the only one suffering from burning, itching feet. Talcum powder is the most sought-after medicine at the infirmary supply room. Otherwise, there have been no health problems except one case of bronchitis.

Wałęsa addresses the workers: "I'm happy to see that there are still so many of us. Don't be thinking: 'Are they going to attack or not?' because they won't, although I wouldn't rule out the possibility that they might want to surprise us from the inside. We will fight on together, in solidarity — you, the Strike Committee and Lech Wałęsa. We must practice psychological defense. Don't lose control of yourself if you hear that some brewery in the middle of nowhere has gone on strike. Put cotton in your ears and ignore everything." Stormy applause. "Wałęsa still has a couple of aces he hasn't played. This is the height of our struggle, and soon something must come of it!"

He always refers to himself in the third person. It may seem pretentious, it may amuse intellectuals, but the workers still have unlimited confidence in him — including the youngest ones. Any

murmuring about the "twilight of Wałęsa's authority," not all of which can be attributed to the government, is a lot of nonsense.

Which doesn't mean that the workers spare him difficult questions. When he gets a tough one, which he really can't answer, he says something like this: "It's good that you have a different opinion. That's what democracy is based on. But all in all, things are looking up; many of those who left are coming back, because their wives say: 'Go back, you old coward.'" Applause and smiling faces. "And if I manage to pull this one off," he continues, warming to the crowd, "I'll have another Nobel in the bag."

For supper the canteen offers goulash soup and goulash — a little bit thicker than the soup — for the second course. Dessert consists of sweet rolls which three pretty teenaged girls managed to get by the blockade in knapsacks.

Wałęsa is playing for time now, hoping to stretch out the strike another two or three days, against the wishes of several of his advisers and a portion — perhaps the majority — of the Strike Committee, who are for signing some sort of agreement. But the prospects for an agreement look doubtful; after several hours of negotiating, during which the atmosphere seemed to improve, management tightened up again. Which means that the central authorities tightened up, or perhaps a certain faction in the government. Is this the tactic of sending contradictory signals, of keeping one's opponent off balance — conducted by a unified party leadership? Or is it a manifestation of a factional struggle? There is no way of knowing until clearer signals are received. In the meantime it will be necessary to hold out and — should worse come to worse — prevent an unsuccessful strike from turning into a disaster.

Wałęsa, a demon of intuition, is drumming up support for his own conception: to break off negotiations, reject the enticement of wage increases, not to worry about guarantees for safe conduct, and not to sign anything — simply leave the shipyard in one mass, heads held high.

This position is unpopular with the advisers, who would prefer an agreement, as well as the workers, who — quite the opposite — wish to stay and fight.

The evening brings bad news: The Ursus strike fell through. It's been "suspended" until Thursday, which means that it's been suspended permanently. The shipyard workers well know, or at least sense, the dynamics of a strike: once you get going, you can't stop, or you'll never get started again.

But, strangely enough, morale does not fall. One of the older workers remarks, "O.K., big deal — maybe it's even better this way. We were the cradle of Solidarity, so now we will be its last bastion." Typical.

Alarm! Send twenty people to gate no. 4, where several suspicious types have been spotted, one of whom is drunk and passing a bottle of vodka amongst those standing watch.

The KKW [National Executive Commission] of Solidarity

is calling upon all of Poland to come out in massive protests.

It has no effect, however. What's up with this Bujak — why couldn't he keep the Ursus strike going?

"We can't expect any help from Poznań, either," adds Basia, who just spoke with Pałubicki [the Solidarity leader in Poznań].

In Elblag a few leaflets were scattered, nothing more.

9:40 p.m. Andrzej Bronk, a welder, was grabbed by a couple of tipsy industrial guards [who were under management's control]. One of them pulled a pistol, disengaged the safety, and blustered, "This is how we'll take care of you people."

Siła-Nowicki returns from seeing the bishop. An officer from the surrounding police cordon requests him to call Kiszczak. He learns that all the strikers' demands have been rejected. The deadline of the next ultimatum, the fifth, is to fall tomorrow at 8:00 p.m. At least we'll get a good night's sleep.

2:34 a.m. The night from Monday to Tuesday. Alarm! Several battalions of Civil Defense are crossing the canals on pontoon bridges. The plant's manager stands with a stick on a bridge overlooking the scene.

2:58 a.m. Flames are spotted in the northern part of the shipyard. Somebody set a paint storehouse on fire. . . .

8:00 a.m. The deadline of the fifth ultimatum passes. The day seems somehow sleepy. We continue to bide our time. I chat with 12-year-old Wojtek, who gets through the blockade twice a day — so far without incident. A dozen workmen or so are playing the guitar or warming themselves in the sun.

*Solidarność* has been painted on the buildings of this section, because they're the only ones in the shipyard visible from the city. There is no access to this gate, because a detachment of police and an armored column block the way. But it will be difficult for them to break in because a bed of spikes awaits their tender tires should they try.

5:25 p.m. A meeting is held in the canteen. First an anonymous poem about the strike is read, then Drawicz [a well-known and respected translator of Russian literature and literary critic] lectures on *perestroika*. Brave Andrzej! — he squeezed through the fence an hour ago, ripping open the palm of his hand, to convey Warsaw's warm regards.

6:15 p.m. Wałęsa, Szablewski, Mazowiecki and the Strike Committee walk in. Today there isn't a single foreign journalist. They weren't able to penetrate the blockade.

Right away the Strike Committee decides to take a vote, but chaos breaks out. Nobody can hear who is voting for what — only raised hands can be seen. Then Szablewski takes the floor: "As chairman of the Strike Committee I now announce our decision. By a majority of votes, we have decided to cut off negotiations with the authorities and leave the shipyard. We've won an important battle — we've won the young workers over to our side. Without signing an agreement, I declare the strike to be ended."

Wałęsa: "We have not lost. We will take our blankets, our provisions, our bread, and we will walk together, arm and arm, to St. Brygida's Church."

Mazowiecki: "An agreement could not be reached. You know that this was a difficult decision, but sometimes it is necessary to call a truce."

Siła-Nowicki: "The authorities offered nothing we could sign. All that they agreed upon was a guarantee of safe passage; nobody will be detained. Committees will be formed to oversee the truce, but nobody from the Strike Committee will participate. It was here that Solidarity was born, and that's why we felt it was important to save this shipyard, as the authorities were threatening to shut it down."

No discussion follows; everyone is shocked, their faces frozen, tears welling up in some of them. A worker walks up to the microphone. "It was a mistake not to turn the strike into a full occupation strike. It was only a strike in support of Nowa Huta. We weren't able to take over the whole shipyard. But, we can't let Lech face those goons all by himself."



(Reuter-Bettmann)

Wałęsa: "The authorities would achieve their greatest victory, if they managed to divide us right now. That would be the worst thing."

He goes on, in a different tone than usual, without his little jokes or theatrical delivery. An excellent speech by a politician who has taken the weight of two decisions upon his shoulders: first against the position of the advisers, then against the will of the workers. They don't protest, but neither do they cheer. Silence. A few quietly sob, but most are completely still. Nobody stands up — they all want to stay, if only for a few moments longer.

Grzegorz Półowski, 19 years old, suddenly cries out hysterically, "Again they tell us to wait! How much longer? Will anything happen? Will we ever win? Now, now is the time to let them have it! Let's stay, boys! Don't go! Who will trust us the next time?"

The sentiment is contagious. One calls for the gallows, another speaks of betrayal. It seems as if mass insanity will take hold. Fortunately, several of the more quick-witted workers unceremoniously silence the hot-heads, thereby saving solidarity. Silence returns, cold and full of hatred. Woe unto those, against whom these workers — richer in experience — rise up again.

And they will rise up. Maybe in a year. Maybe earlier. The shipyard will not give up the struggle.

8:00 p.m. The strikers form a compact column as broad as the gate and over a hundred and twenty yards long. There are at least 1,500 men — that's how many cutlets were eaten, which some woman donated to the strikers, paying 700,000 zł. out of her own pocket. Not everybody ate one, however, because they weren't distributed to those on guard at the fence or the more distant gates. This then is the "handful," the "small and constantly shrinking group of firebrands."

Electric carts bring in those who have manned the far reaches of the shipyard. The national anthem and other patriotic songs are sung. Then silence.

The men close in together. The Strike Committee takes the lead position, while Wałęsa stands in the middle, flanked by Siła-Nowicki and Mazowiecki. The other advisers are behind, followed by a handful of journalists. Everybody links arms, so that the police cannot pull anybody away. The workers wouldn't stand for it — whoever was in the strike is one of them.

8:08 p.m. The legendary gates open. The strikers begin to depart at a slow and even pace, through the no-man's land between the police cordon and the shipyard, passing the monument to the fallen shipyard workers [who were killed by government forces during a strike in 1970]. A cross made of planks heads the procession; behind it, the red and white of the Polish flag; the blue and white of the shipyard banner protrude from the sides; and a third flag becomes visible: *Solidarność*. But there's nobody around but ZOMOs. They stand aside, dismantling barricades. The procession turns left, through a canyon of silent streets bereft of pedestrians. There's nobody,

nobody at all; the city doesn't realize that the workers are leaving the shipyard — without any dishonorable agreements, without promises, without raises, without a guarantee of safe passage; they depart the shipyard defeated, but not conquered.

Suddenly the bells of St. Brygida ring out in loud and resonant tones. The second police barricade quickly comes down. The procession moves slowly, without cheers or songs.

We pass by the third barrier, and behind it: a wildly cheering crowd! People appear out of nowhere, running from side-streets, lining the path of the procession now two, now three rows deep. Windows are thrown open, spectators crowd onto balconies — and everybody is delirious with joy. The crowd roars the forbidden term "Solidarity" over and over again, some shouting "thank you" in accompaniment.

The column continues to move forward at a measured pace, grimly silent. The bells of St. Brygida grow louder and louder, their ringing multiplied by echoes. A woman breaks into tears, runs into the procession, embraces her husband, then runs back into the crowd. In the same way, a father hugs his son; others do likewise. Somehow the spectators realize they can't linger in the procession, which is an honor reserved only for those who stayed at the shipyard to the end.

The ringing grows still louder. But it's not a mournful sound — it's majestic. Students at the conservatory pour onto the steps of their building, fervently shouting their support; in response the ZOMOs take hold of the handle of their truncheons. But they've been ordered to refrain from attacking, and merely turn from the procession to face the students and scare them into obedience.

The strikers go forward, their gait steady and unbroken. The sidewalks are filled with people, with flowers, with jubilation. The cheer *SO-LI-DAR-NOŚĆ, SO-LI-DAR-NOŚĆ* even drowns out the bells. Thousands of hands are raised high, making the sign for victory. But there are no "V" signs amongst the strikers — they know there's been no victory.

Only a truce. And truces aren't celebrated.

The final turn, and the procession stops in front of St. Brygida's Church. Throngs have gathered about the church, but a path to the door remains clear. Bells boom directly overhead. Flowers rain down. Then the doors of the church open.

The bishop, His Excellence Tadeusz Gocłowski, is there; at his side stands Father Jankowski, protector and friend of the shipyard workers. The procession fills the central nave, and the rest of the church is soon packed with the people of Gdańsk. The crowd senses that in this defeat lie the seeds of future triumph, and from the altar rings out a stentorian voice urging the flock to persevere, not to yield, and to prepare for the next test.

Close by stands Grzegorz — the young man who just an hour ago was crying hysterically. Now he is calm, his eyes cold and threatening. He became a man during that hour. So did a thousand other shipyard workers. □



# Solidarity and the Philosophy of Social Agreements

## Interviews With Bronisław Geremek

*Bronisław Geremek is a historian and prominent Solidarity adviser. In the following text (from which we reprint only a short excerpt), published in the February 1988 issue of Konfrontacje – an official journal – he proposes that both sides of the present conflict in Poland, the government and the opposition, recognize each other's separate identity and work out a modus vivendi. The views he expresses here, and in the interview he later granted Uncaptive Minds which follows, are quite controversial, but do not substantially differ from those of several prominent Solidarity leaders and the position of the Catholic Church.*

*Konfrontacje: Does that [which sets Poland apart from other socialist nations, such as private agriculture, the strength of the church and an independent civil society with democratic traditions] make the process of reforming the Polish system easier or more difficult?*

Bronisław Geremek: If the authorities have enough imagination, if they can break free of deeply ingrained habits and overcome a mental framework which once helped them apprehend reality, but now hinders them in doing so, then I think these distinctive features of Polish society will contribute to a reversal of the dangerous economic and psychological trends which can be observed in Poland today. Private agriculture constantly reminds us of the importance of the market and the problems of ownership, both matters of critical importance if any real reform is to succeed. The Catholic Church can act as mediator, and there is hope that its moral authority will be a major factor in overcoming the crisis of confidence between the opposition and the government. Finally, the existence of a civil society insures that any activity undertaken by groups will be characterized by both prudence and political imagination. These assets would be invaluable for the successful implementation of any real reform – reform which would put the economy on a rational basis and restore meaning to human labor. But in order to take advantage of these assets, the authorities must reorder their priorities in terms of the relations between political and economic objectives. . . .

*When, in your opinion, will the government's declared intentions [to embark on real reform] cease to be mere declarations?*

Geremek: When the government abandons the policy which I would call the "strategy of martial law." I am convinced that, in a certain sense, we still live under martial law. One senses this in the attitudes of both the authorities and society. To leave this phase behind is to overcome the stalemate and ease the conflicts in which both sides are blinded by a lack of trust and a surfeit of apprehension, fear, dislike and hatred for each other. It's high time we got over all this!

So what can we expect from those whom I've been referring to as the "authorities"? First of all, the renunciation of all exceptional measures which were imposed on December 13, 1981, including the abrogation of all laws designed to insure the new status quo, some of which are still in force today. These laws concern the functioning of the courts and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as collective and individual civil rights. In order to open a dialogue with society, the authorities must grant it the right to self-organization which no front organization can replace.

On the other hand, what efforts should society make in order to break out of the mentality of martial law? I believe that society would have to accept only those forms of activity which are based on settlements and agreements. The social accords concluded in 1980 were not only a response to the strikes, they were primarily the recognition of a certain arrangement, in which both sides accepted that the other side had its own, separate identity. I think this in effect means society's acceptance of the existing legal order, at least as a point of departure, together with the principle of the leading role of the communist party; in other words, society leaves a certain domain to the party's monopoly of power. The area of social life in which agreements can be negotiated lies outside the scope of this indispensable monopoly of power.

*What lies within the scope of the party's indispensable monopoly of power?*

Geremek: Foreign policy, national defense, internal security, and also, to some extent, the system of representation – which system, by the way, would most benefit the government, as well as society, if it were truly democratic in terms of electoral practice and parliamentary functioning. I would like to make myself clear with regard to the party's indispensable monopoly of power: I am not an advocate of such a monopoly; I am against all monopolies of power, whether political, ideological, or

economic. However, I accept the political status quo as it is expressed in the Constitution. And apart from whether I like it or not, I acknowledge the existence of controlled areas of public life, controls which only the authorities are in a position to relax — though I think it would be in the authorities' interest to limit their monopoly of power. The question of the mono-

poly of power within a representative system is perhaps the most delicate issue for the authorities and perhaps the most critical one for society. The more the authorities limit their powers, and the more they abide by democratic principles, the better. But it is up to them to initiate changes in this area. □

### *Bronisław Geremek Speaks with Uncaptive Minds*

*Uncaptive Minds: Your interview in the February issue of Konfrontacje has caused quite a controversy within the opposition as a whole and within Solidarity itself. It was the first time that a prominent Solidarity activist consented to give an interview to an official journal, breaking a certain code of conduct on both sides. In the interview, although you did not mention the word "Solidarity," you put forward a proposal for an "anti-crisis" pact according to which both sides in the conflict — the regime and the opposition — would agree to a period of social peace. Several questions arise, especially since you have said that your interview has been misunderstood. First, what was the significance of granting the interview? Secondly, what do you hope to achieve by advancing the idea of an "anti-crisis pact," and do you think it is likely to succeed?*

Bronisław Geremek: One must note that both facts are significant in this interview, not only that they decided to interview me but that I decided to grant the interview. But your question is also about the content of the interview.

When Solidarity arose, it was the first time that an independent mass movement took shape within a totalitarian context. As such, at the October 1981 Congress, Solidarity declared in its program its readiness for an agreement with the government in order to solve the economic crisis. There was a connection between the struggle to overcome the economic crisis and the effort to transform the structures of the national economy and the political system, that is to make the regime more open, more democratic and more independent.

This proposal for an "anti-crisis pact" was conceived in 1981 when the deterioration of the general situation in Poland, and particularly of the economy, was progressing extremely rapidly. Now, after six years and a half years of martial law and no economic growth, the situation is even more dramatic.

Because Solidarity is an outlawed movement, it cannot easily abide by the philosophy of compromise. Its illegal status and the repression it faces force us to politicize our actions. Our first goal is to preserve the structures of the social movement and trade union. Jaruzelski's government has had no success in reforming the economy but it has succeeded in limiting the structures of Solidarity. One of the government's methods is to politicize Solidarity, to manufacture the image of Solidarity as a strictly political movement that resists all positive reforms because it wants to overthrow the regime.

But in reality, the principal problem is economic survival. There is a fear of politics, and of political manipulation. In this situation, it is vital for Solidarity to create a clear link between the aspirations of Polish society and its own program for action. The anti-crisis pact is this link.

What do I mean by "anti-crisis pact"? The answer is simple. Solidarity is ready, as it was seven years ago, to accept a program for social, economic and political reforms and, in doing so, to recognize the government. That is, Solidarity would accept sacrifices if they were necessary and if they would actually serve the interests of the country.

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*If we want to work within a totalitarian system, we have to accept the system as it is. But our sine qua non is the allowance of a movement for freedom and democracy.*

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*But you are proposing this today, seven years later, when Solidarity is much weaker than in the fall of 1981. At that time you could say, "Deal with us and perhaps we'll come to an agreement. You can have your sphere and we can have our sphere and strike a bargain." One of Jaruzelski's successes, as you point out, has been to make Solidarity illegal and thereby weaker. How can you propose a pact from a position of weakness?*

Geremek: In 1981, we were a movement of 10 million people and today we can still say that we represent the aspirations of the Polish people. But now, just as then, the means of violent coercion are at the other side's disposal — everybody realizes this. What kind of power does each side have? The government has the power to use force. We, on the other hand, are the only credible force in society today. The government has no credibility. Its strength lies in its use of repression, not in any positive political or economic management.

If we want to work within a totalitarian system, we have to accept the system as it is. But our sine qua non is the allowance of a movement for freedom and democracy. The beginning of this process is to accept the geopolitical context in which Poland finds itself.

*But ever since 1981 the government has refused to make a pact.*

Geremek: They thought that this was the last opportunity to destroy our movement, and they used all the means at their disposal to repress us. In 1988, they know they still have these means intact, but also that they are unproductive in social and political life. They cannot use tanks, police and the like to run the economy. One could then ask if "the interests of the country" would be a point of reference for them. I do not have the answer to this question. But to do something, to organize ourselves within Poland, we must try to find this area of common interest for the good of the country.

In the last few years, the Polish government has frequently told foreign visitors and foreign public opinion that it is ready for a dialogue with Polish society, and that Solidarity is against such a dialogue, against economic reform, and for anarchy.

So it was important for Polish public opinion, for us internally, to reiterate which side really feels responsible for the future of the country, and who is ready to accept a political resolution, a compromise of necessity, and thus who is ready for dialogue.

I think one thing is clear after the publication of my interview in *Konfrontacje*: Jaruzelski's regime still suffers from a lack of imagination. For them, the only problem that existed and exists is the destruction of Solidarity, and the only fear is the return of 1980-81. Thus they cannot put forward a proposal acceptable to Polish society. This may change. The government may change its policy or the people implementing it. But it is clear that Solidarity is trying to pursue its philosophy of reaching social agreements.

*Your interview, instead of restoring consensus, has caused much dissent. One critic from the opposition, Leopolda [see p. 10], once described this continuing demand for dialogue as "the philosophy of the table." One must sit at the table, whether or not the other side is there, and because one believes in the magic of the table one will sit at it even though no one else comes. The government hasn't responded to this philosophy of social agreement for six and a half years — wouldn't it be better simply to act and to press rather than to continually propose negotiations of one sort or another?*

*This government is very weak, and growing weaker. This is not the demagoguery of the opposition.*

Geremek: No. This is the kind of political analysis one hears in a sidewalk cafe. We are not concerned with bringing the official representatives to the table. Our problem is our relationship with Polish society.

One of our most serious problems is not so much the em-

igration of our young people as the frustration of the entire young generation. Young people know that they can't obtain apartments for themselves or their children, and they know they can't expect much else. All their dreams and aspirations are focused on emigrating to a Western country. The problem is not that they will emigrate — after all not everyone will — but that the only hope they have is to do so. They will never be satisfied with their lives here. It is this generation which is our partner and not the government.

*But the majority of people are still waiting for a deal, for a pact, for a compromise and for evolution towards an improved situation.*

How can one respond to this general frustration of young Poles? One can answer that the regime must be destroyed in order to establish a free and democratic government. This is a strategy of opposition, but really it is a strategy of revolution. In August 1980 and during the year after the birth of Solidarity, we decided to practice non-violence and to adopt a philosophy of change by evolution. What we are saying to the younger generation is that we are ready to do everything possible to bring about a better future for this country, even if we have to conclude a pact with the devil — with forces, people and groups that are in a position to change something in this country. We are not looking for discussion, debate, or a common declaration with the government.

It is true that for seven years we have spoken about a compromise and the answer of the government has been no. But in social and political life that is not a sufficient reason to break off relations.

People are bored with the whole situation, with both the ineffectiveness of the government and of the opposition. For six or seven years there are talks and talks, programs and programs, and nothing has really changed. So, this image of revolt, of action, has some appeal — perhaps more appeal than six years ago. There are some groups that think the non-violent philosophy of Solidarity and its practice of compromise is the reason for its defeat, and that in order to change the situation, one must change the system.

But the majority of people are still waiting for a deal, for a pact, for a compromise and for evolution towards an improved situation. At the same time, I have the feeling that an explosion of unrest and hatred is more and more likely in the future. This would be a national tragedy. So, I still hope that some social and political agreement is possible, if not with this government then with another one.

*You said that your aim is to demonstrate to Polish society that the reason for the government's inability to function effectively is its refusal to compromise with Solidarity. But it seems evident*

*that people believe that the government is inefficient because such is the nature of that government — and there is an economic crisis because such is the nature of communism — not because it refuses to engage in a dialogue with Solidarity. And one therefore must change the nature of the system. The question of compromise, or dialogue, is secondary.*

Geremek: How do you know this? Speak with farmers and workers and you will hear a different story. There is of course anti-communism — nothing can work because of communism, nothing works in communism — but, at the same time, it is mixed with a distrust of politicians, including the political leaders of the opposition, because they don't think about "us" and the country but only about "them."

Anti-communist sentiments should be thought of as an effect of the situation. But what can one build with those feelings? We must resist not only the effects of the communist regime but also the effects of the deterioration of society, of the economy, of the environment, and of all the structures of public life.

*What is your view of the strength of the government? I ask this not because I necessarily reject your analysis, but because it seems to be premised on the belief that the government is weak. An equally legitimate view would be that the government is quite strong. That is to say, Jaruzelski acts now not because he feels weak but because he feels in control. He doesn't keep you in jail because he feels that he doesn't need to.*

Geremek: This government is very weak, and growing weaker. This is not the demagoguery of the opposition. One of the most important elements of this system is the combination of different instruments of coercion — ideology, police, army, and party apparatus. But today, ideology is absent in the day-to-day business of exercising power. The authorities are unable to organize the internal life of the power structure according to some idea of how to proceed, and especially according to traditional communist ideology. They have become very pragmatic. Such a system cannot continue to function.

The second weakness is that the party, together with its apparatus, was destroyed in 1980-81 and up to now has been unable to rebuild its structures. There are no young people in the communist party and this is a sign of its predicament. Solidarity showed that the whole communist structure was a sham, that nobody had any faith in it.

The only apparatus that is still strong, and which is still somewhat ideological and cohesive, is the police apparatus. It is the only part of this system, by the way, that has a substantial number of young people.

The army was the arbiter of the political situation in 1981 and is still the supreme institution in this country. The army is a very peculiar apparatus but the army is the only apparatus of political power with any credibility and social support, if somehow diminished since the imposition of martial law. The

real power in the country is still exercised by the military command created for martial law. It is stronger and more efficient than the Politburo and the secretaries of the party. Both the army and the police have strong repressive means at their disposal.

*Aren't these two institutions are highly ideological?*

Geremek: The police, yes, is a little bit more ideological than the party apparatus. But let me tell you something. A police official told one of my friends that state ownership of property was a mistake and it doesn't work so he, this policeman, is for private property. One can't build a communist ideology on the notion of private property. And the army is certainly not an ideological apparatus.

The whole martial law operation was efficiently conducted by the police. The army provided the protective umbrella and tried to reform the state and the economy. But this program collapsed completely because the military apparatus was thinking about the order of the economy and not its structure and functioning.

Jaruzelski's government was strong and there were no rival groups inside the political establishment, since Jaruzelski

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is not only the First Secretary of the party but also the commander-in-chief of the army. Yet, during all those years, he was unable to reform the economy. In 1986, one could argue that he decided to implement some deep political and economic reforms. An amnesty was granted that year, and afterwards there was a change in the local administration and a kind of pluralism within the system was introduced. But in October 1987, Jaruzelski's report to the Central Committee said that in fact, except for the amnesty, no change had taken place. One shouldn't think of the amnesty only in terms of some Machiavellian plan to destroy or neutralize the opposition — this was secondary. The primary aim was to reform the system, with the purpose of saving it. Of course, the authorities didn't intend to permit an evolution toward democracy and national independence.

Why has Jaruzelski been unable to realize his reform program? Because he had no social force behind his program. The weakness of his government is its inability to implement its own program, and this weakness is manifested in another way, namely the strength of his apparatus of repression. □

# "Jaruzelski Doesn't Need Us"

## An Interview With Leopolita

*Leopolita — a pseudonym — is a political commentator who publishes in the underground press. His articles have appeared in Tygodnik Mazowsze, KOS, and Wola, among other publications, and have been reprinted in the Committee in Support of Solidarity Reports (see, for example, "The Communists Behave As Communists Do" in issue no. 49, February 1987). In his interview with Uncaptive Minds, Leopolita comments on both the current strategy of Solidarity, as expounded in the interview by Bronislaw Geremek (see p. 7), and on the opposition's view of Mikhail Gorbachev. Highly critical of the strategy of "national reconciliation," he proposes another: to ignore the government. Although the conversation was held before the recent strikes, Leopolita's comments remain relevant to the current debate in Poland.*

*Uncaptive Minds: Currently, the actions and attitudes of General Jaruzelski and what you call in Poland "the ruling team" are characterized by a mood of apparent confidence. At the same time, the leadership of Solidarity also seems confident. Its statements more and more reflect the position that "the government must deal with us," and that the advent of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union will give Jaruzelski more leeway in negotiating with the opposition about reform. My impression is that Jaruzelski has more reason to be confident, and indeed is willing to go further than before in demonstrating the strength of the government; for example, by imposing economic "reforms," which are basically severe austerity measures.*

Leopolita: The answer to your question is difficult, because social and political events are unpredictable. If you venture an answer, either you are too sure of yourself, or you must emphasize that your answer is only one among many possibilities. I am not sure of myself. I only have hypotheses.

But I would like to say two things. The first is that Jaruzelski's team is quite deft at the technique of social engineering, which is the opposite of politics. I would say that this leader-

ship is the best group of social engineers in the history of post-war Poland. By this, I mean they are extraordinarily effective at manipulating people. They are not good at politics, however; they haven't resolved any political problems, except of course the problem of retaking power. But they have been quite skillful at manipulating the opposition and society, even without repression. The best example of this was the amnesty of September 1986, in which most political prisoners were released.

*But wasn't this widely seen as a total retreat by the authorities in the face of international and internal pressure?*

Leopolita: It was not the case at all. Why should they have kept Bujak in prison? There, he was only a pain in the neck. Out of prison he is largely ineffective.



Remember that Jaruzelski's success has been partially the result of the opposition's mistakes. Let me tell you about a conversation I had with a prominent oppositionist, which typifies our way of thinking. He told me that the communists are lucky that this winter was a mild one, meaning that if it had been harsh there would have been open discontent. My response is that it is we who are lucky it was mild, because it is we who suffer when everything breaks down and there is no heat.

*Let me get back to your views of the amnesty. Do you attribute its success for Jaruzelski to the mistakes of the Polish opposition, and not to manipulation by the communists?*

Leopolita: It was a good calculation on the government's part. They knew that as long as Bujak, Frasnyniuk and the others were in jail, divisions within the opposition would remain hidden; but when they were all free, there would be open debate and a weakening of opposition unity. One part of the opposition has asked for permission to function legally, and all these factory Solidarity Founding Committees have sprung up that have no importance because the courts won't register them. The other part wants to continue illegal activities.

My second point is about Poland and the situation in the Soviet Union. It is sheer nonsense to ask Jaruzelski to follow Gorbachev, which some people are doing, since the Soviet Union is far behind Poland in introducing reforms, and even lags behind East Germany in this area.

The opposition in Poland, and in all of Central Europe, may be making a critical mistake in assuming that everything is going to be easier now under Gorbachev. In 1980-81, when there was a stable situation — albeit a bad one to be sure — in the Soviet Union, and we were going through a turbulent period, everyone was wondering whether the Soviets would intervene or not. But the Soviets at that time didn't have one million people rallying in Armenia, and didn't have riots in Azerbaijan. It may be that Gorbachev will be much more sensitive to the situation in Poland, and will want stability here, if he is to deal with problems in the rest of his empire.

This point isn't even being considered by the opposition here, nor anywhere else in Eastern Europe. Yet it should have serious ramifications for the strategy that any East European opposition decides upon.

*What are the consequences of thinking that Gorbachev may be sympathetic to reform?*

Leopolita: The whole assumption is that under the leadership of Gorbachev it will be easier for the Polish opposition to come to an agreement with Jaruzelski. But I simply don't believe that Jaruzelski wants to reach any agreement or compromise with the Polish opposition. Some people in Solidarity, like Professor Geremek in his interview, speak about an "anti-crisis pact" with Jaruzelski, starting from the premise that things are so difficult for Jaruzelski that he will be forced to make an agreement. But I haven't seen any evidence that Jaruzelski wants anything of the sort, or that he even has serious difficulties. It might simply be a tactic on the part of the opposition, but even then it's a bad one. Geremek should know that Jaruzelski doesn't need him or anyone else.

*As far as I understand, the idea is to gain legal recognition for Solidarity and a commitment to real economic reform, in exchange for which Solidarity would support austerity measures.*

Leopolita: Some in the opposition have said since 1982 that we need a pact of national reconciliation and the only answer given by Jaruzelski is that he has already achieved national reconciliation. Jaruzelski says, "Look at the national referendum. Who needs the opposition?"

*What would be a better strategy in your view?*

Leopolita: Simply to ignore the government. It would be much better, if more difficult, to have a real economic program to offer the membership, to lay down what specific changes we need in the economy. And then, if Jaruzelski wants national reconciliation, he can call us — he has our addresses. Why harangue him each week about the need to achieve national reconciliation. He has no such need. One has to admit that we don't have any other issue — yet this issue of national reconciliation is a *cul-de-sac*, because the government refuses to negotiate with us and will continue to refuse. So let's stop pursuing it.

Jaruzelski has been making promises about economic reform, and the response of a good part of the Solidarity leadership is that he can't succeed without an agreement with Solidarity. That means they accept the government's reform program — except for the price increases, which the government had to impose to meet the requirements of the international lending agencies. On this point I agree with Solidarity.

The government's reform program has been highly criticized, for example, in an article in *Tygodnik Powszechny* [an independent but legally published Catholic weekly] and elsewhere. The best critique, however, has not come from Solidarity itself, which is unfortunate.

*But Solidarity boycotted the referendum because it disagreed with the reform program that was put forward.*

Leopolita: It wasn't clear in the beginning whether Solidarity would boycott the referendum or remain neutral. They finally said that they themselves wouldn't vote. Yet they didn't act decisively, as in the 1984 and 1986 elections. The boycott was successful, but not because of any efforts on the part of the Solidarity leadership.

The leadership of Solidarity is trying to pose as a serious partner for the government. So, they didn't want to spoil that image. Of course, the boycott turned out to be more serious in the end, but that was due to pressure by society.

*These are rather harsh criticisms of the Solidarity leadership.*

Leopolita: Let me emphasize one thing: I may be unjust. Perhaps we need this type of politics. Perhaps we need the full spectrum of tactics and strategies, and this is an integral part of that spectrum. Maybe. But the tactic of national reconciliation that I have described is not just one part of Solidarity's overall strategy: it is the only tactic the leadership has employed. □

# An Open Letter to a Solidarity Activist

By Jacek Trznadel

*Jacek Trznadel, a literary critic and essayist, gives his views here on the strategy Solidarity should adopt. He believes that the communist authorities are not willing to reach a compromise with an opposition which demands only free trade unions, and which is willing to recognize the communists' "indispensable monopoly of power" in certain areas. Solidarity must thus put forward "maximum" and not "minimum" demands if it wants to remain credible in the eyes of society. The following article — which we present in excerpted form — appeared in Kultura Niezależna(no. 39), March 1988.*

Dear Solidarity Activist:

. . . What do you intend to accomplish by the course of action you have chosen? During the historic negotiations of August 1980 — upon which we have focused ever since — your main goal has been declared and defined over and over again: free trade unions. Nowadays, this idea also goes by the name of "trade union pluralism" — without the adjective "socialist," of course, which cancels any term it qualifies.

Your struggle against a government imposed on us contrary to our will, which is in fact the struggle of Polish society and the majority of Polish workers (which you represent), has been a worthy and admirable endeavor. While leading this struggle, you have repeatedly called yourself a union activist without a political agenda. . . .

You continually speak about the necessity of free trade unions. The word "free" is not a relative term. Therefore, free trade unions, united in one national organization, would necessarily threaten any totalitarian government by limiting it or even rendering it unworkable. That's why anyone who thinks straight knows that in Poland, a totalitarian state, truly free trade unions could never come into existence. The one time they did exist it was a miracle, made possible by the totalitarian government's momentary weakness. But even though the free trade unions restricted their own freedom, they were a threat to this government; their demise with the imposition of martial law was a direct consequence of the totalitarian nature of the government. There was no other solution from this government's point of view. That these unions were established in the first place testifies to just how stupid, senile and sclerotic this totalitarian system had become. But now the system has recovered a little bit; it has undergone *perestroika*, which is all well

and good because, personally, I don't think there will be another miracle, and if there is — if Solidarity is reborn — it will spell the end of the system. amen.

So when you say "free trade unions," it's clear you mean something else: freedom and independence. Why don't you use these words? Do you think it's enough that other people use them? There's just no getting around it: either we're in power, and they're not, or it's the other way around — there simply isn't room for both of us. And we have only ourselves to blame for our current status.

I do however respect your approach to the problem: totalitarian governments cannot easily convince the world that freedom, or any of those rights or institutions upon which it is based, exist under them. That's the whole idea behind *perestroika*. After all, what self-respecting wolf wouldn't try to convince his Little Red Riding Hood that he was nothing more than a respectable, kind-hearted grandma?

So whenever you use the term "free trade unions," you force our totalitarian government to make certain concessions on account of its international obligations and other weaknesses. All along you've had an effective tool at your disposal, but in your efforts to influence the hearts and minds of your countrymen you've failed to use it wisely, and now it may be too late. Why? Because in one way or another you keep saying that you accept the system, and you're only interested in those free trade unions. Well, the first part of your statement doesn't hurt the authorities at all — quite the contrary. And the second part they simply won't allow. Wałęsa pretends that he's not fighting against totalitarianism, just as totalitarianism pretends it didn't put an end to freedom.

Can Solidarity afford to play this game? What are its psychological effects on society? Must we continue to stop at ineffectual demands for free trade unions? Even when we discuss other political problems, we almost invariably connect them with this one demand — "of course we're for economic reform, but only if it includes free trade unions." Can this one point replace the whole range of indispensable political demands, which — if they were put forth — might expose the tactics, and even the weaknesses, of our opponent in the eyes of society? Can't the trade union movement make political demands? . . .

As various points of the Gdańsk Accords demonstrate, the trade union movement can and should be concerned with politics, if it is to have any moral authority or practical impact. Perhaps you would reply: but we succeeded in August 1980

precisely because we didn't advance certain maximum demands. Perhaps that's true. But as a rule, in the game of politics, exorbitant demands do not preclude the possibility of coming to a partial agreement short of one's maximum position. A bid is one thing, the final outcome of the game is something quite different. Why bid low? If we lack the strength to back up our demands, we certainly are well-endowed with truth, which should allow us to bid very high indeed. The game you're playing, my dear Solidarity activist, is based on the following calculations: If you bid low, then the government will sit down to negotiate with you, "like one Pole with another." If you bid very high, then the government won't even sit down with you.

Well, first of all, it's hardly appropriate to speak of sitting down "like one Pole with another," and second of all, we must overcome the myth that radical demands exclude the possibility of negotiation. Once that was true — but then, there was a time when you couldn't tell certain kinds of jokes in public, either. If the authorities are weak somewhere, then they'll negotiate even with those who bid the highest — although the maximum demands will sooner or later have to be withdrawn. When they are strong, they won't even accept a low bid — they won't sit down with anyone except perhaps members of some "consultative commission" or whatever other make-believe representative bodies they can dream up. No free trade unions will result from bidding low, from making modest demands.

In this situation it is fitting to ask whether a genuine radicalization of Solidarity's program wouldn't breathe new life into the union, and put a stop to the continued squandering of Poland's human and natural resources. I believe that the situation can no longer be politically camouflaged. It's become so polarized, that I strongly urge you to raise the verbal and programmatic barricades. They may exist only on paper, but they're nonetheless powerful.

We hear so much about economic reform from above, but we know it is nonsense, since radical changes would have to be implemented by a new, wholly different decision-making structure — that is, a non-totalitarian government. And if the government was still to retain its totalitarian nature, it would have to keep its hands off the economy. But we know the government wouldn't agree to this, because our country is economically subordinated to the Soviet Union, and growing more dependent every year. This, among other things, is what *perestroika* is all about. So when we speak about negotiations between society and the government, we must try to keep in mind that it is a captive society and a Quisling government we're talking about. Let's not mince words: every ruler of Poland for the past 45 years has been a Quisling, and Poles are sick of being told otherwise! This government, however, is recognized by various international organizations, simply because they're obliged to maintain ties with as many states as possible. But from a moral and historical point of view, it's a Quisling government. Clarity on this point won't make the government magically disappear, but it could be tactically advantageous for us.

If our rulers are Quislings, then our army is a Quisling army — and not only since December 13, 1981. But a union activist with a political agenda needn't point this out; he could bring up a number of related issues, which have been strictly off-limits, but which are normal topics of debate in free societies, and which never call into question the legality of those societies' governments.

Take the army and the defense budget, for example. An impoverished country like ours has no good reason or moral right to maintain a large army, especially since its citizens are dying of curable diseases and its economy is collapsing. Such a country has no business conducting a great-power foreign policy, either by itself, or at the side of a genuine superpower. Therefore, one of your demands should be cutting back expenditures on the armed forces to the minimum level required to protect the borders, and re-assigning those funds to health care and other capital-starved sectors of the economy. This is something quite different from the demand for granting individuals the choice of conscientious objector status. What we're saying, is that we don't want an army — that we want Poland to be a neutral country. We want the government to take Poland out of the Warsaw Pact. If our government really is sovereign, then it should be capable of taking such a step; the Hungarian government, under Imre Nagy, did it once. Calling upon the government to take such a step wouldn't be tantamount to questioning its legal existence. Public debate over whether one's country should or shouldn't belong to a military alliance, or over the size of the defense budget, is not considered revolutionary activity — that is, activity aimed at overthrowing the established authorities — anywhere else in the world. . . . Why, then, hasn't anyone made these demands? Arresting those who made such demands would contravene the human rights provision of the Helsinki Accords. Why haven't we demanded that information on the defense budget be made public? We would like to know — as a free and sovereign country, we have the right to know — for whom we produce weapons and what we get for them in exchange. What percentage of Polish exports does the arms industry account for? Our workers have the right to know, and why not? Even at the height of Stalinism, the media glorified the stance of French workers, who wanted a say in budget matters, and demanded the withdrawal of France from NATO and the right not to unload military cargo from ships.

These observations and recommendations have been published as an open letter, which I didn't send to you personally, because you already have enough advisers. The point I'm trying to make is that you need to make certain changes in your tactics and rhetoric, because the authorities have perfected their methods against us and make fools of us whenever we employ our traditional tactics against them. It is time to move forward, and to regard 1980-81 as a bygone historical era . . .

We must bring pressure to bear on the legal system, and not only for the sake of free trade unions. In fact, unfortunately, we must press for change in every area, in every single aspect of public life. □



# The Strategy is to Keep Pressing

An interview with Wiktor Kulerski

*Wiktor Kulerski is a member of the Regional Commission of Solidarity for Warsaw, and the representative of Solidarity to OKNO, an independent educational, cultural and scientific movement. From December 1981 to September 1986, Mr. Kulerski led an underground life, serving on both regional and national underground Solidarity bodies and providing much of the strategy for the building of an "independent society." He came out of hiding with the amnesty of September 1986, and since then has continued his activities above ground. A teacher of history for 22 years — and a leader of Teachers' Solidarity — Mr. Kulerski was unable to obtain any teaching post, and after one year of unemployment finally got a job as a librarian at Warsaw University.*

*Uncaptive Minds interviewed him in Warsaw both before and after the April-May wave of strikes. Kulerski discusses the strategy of Solidarity, how it has been affected by the government's continued intransigence, and what measures Solidarity should take. In the aftermath of the strikes, Kulerski calls for a "metamorphosis of Solidarity" and for the present leadership of the union to include the new generation of leaders that emerged from the strikes.*

## PART I:

*Uncaptive Minds: You have been above ground for a year and a half. Soon after coming out of hiding, that is, after the September 1986 amnesty, you stated in an interview [See Committee in Support of Solidarity Special Reports July 1987] your belief that it was necessary to continue underground activities, at the same time linking them with new, above-ground initiatives. A year later, it appears that there is more tension than cooperation between these two forms of opposition. How would you assess this last period, since the amnesty and the adoption of the dual-track strategy you advocated?*

*Kulerski: The authorities have released political prisoners and have allowed above-ground activity. At the same time they block this activity or make it difficult, albeit with more limited repression. Hence, they have presented a position of limited*

tolerance for social and trade union activists. The authorities' intention was to weaken the integrity and moral authority of underground activists. They wanted to force people out of the underground and into the open because they decided that the five-year plan to liquidate the underground through harsh repressive measures had been unsuccessful. The idea was to let people act above ground and thereby eventually have them under control, since this is better than having no control of important activists who remain out of sight.

What is the situation of the union, which is still formally illegal? Can it, in such a situation, be successful in realizing its program? The union is not being persecuted in any spectacular way; its members are neither in prison nor in hiding. On the other hand, they cannot be successful in their trade union activity, in representing workers. The attitude of many people towards Solidarity has thus become rather ambivalent. What is the purpose of helping the union when it cannot achieve anything? The most important goal for the union is to regain legal status, and the fight to achieve this, waged from the beginning, has been going on for too long, with too little to show for its efforts. This makes the union the province of a relatively small number of activists.

There are dozens of "Solidarity Founding Committees" at factories which seek legal registration, but without success so far. These attempts to register the union at individual workplaces, in the face of the authorities' categorical refusal to do so on the national level, have caused some anxiety within the movement. When the Founding Committees first started cropping up, a number of people were worried that this would lead to the union becoming localized and thus isolated. But now it seems we may be able to overcome this problem. At three

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*. . . the authorities have not achieved the level of control that they would like to achieve.*

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factories in the Warsaw area and at dozens of others across the nation, open Solidarity committees arose. At Warsaw University, four hundred people signed the petition for registration. The creation of these committees has not, up to now, hindered conspiratorial activity. We hope these examples will be helpful.

The most difficult problem is to take the first step in organizing the factories. Underground activists must take the initiative and find able and energetic people who have not been active in the underground. The new activists must recruit others willing to risk revealing themselves. Thus, the organization must be somewhat clandestine until the petition for registration is presented to the court with the full list of names. This first step is the most dangerous moment. After that, the danger recedes.

*What can Solidarity hope to achieve by acting openly?*

Kulerski: First, if there are no such efforts, the authorities can tell trade union federations abroad that people don't want Solidarity and that they are happy with the existing trade unions, and with "socialist trade union pluralism." The application for registration of Solidarity committees forces the state authorities to give some sort of response and justification. We know what their answer will be, but it creates a situation that is open and their response may be used in the struggle. The authorities prefer not to provide written justification for their actions; now they will be forced to make their position clear.

Also, from the moment the petition is submitted to the court, until the court decides on the case and the appeals process is exhausted — a process which can be prolonged — the factory-level Solidarity committee has the right, according to law, to function freely, to meet, and to make public statements about various issues relating to conditions at the factory or outside

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*Previously, the Church had to take a moral stand and speak out against persecution, but now that large numbers of people are no longer imprisoned, and there have been no more political murders, the Church does not have such a compelling moral obligation to speak out.*

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the factory. The day the petition was submitted to the court at Warsaw University, the entire group of four hundred people who signed it — teachers and staff — could gather in the courtyard under the banner of *N.S.Z.Z. Solidarność* of Warsaw University and have a list of their names posted publicly (although the rector ordered that the list and the Solidarity banner be removed the next day).

None of these committees has been registered, of course, but the effort to have them registered has provided an opportunity for people to be active. And we cannot exclude the possibility that if there are many such initiatives, and if we receive support from international trade union organizations, the authorities may decide to legalize trade union pluralism at the factory level. This will probably not happen, but we must try to

use all the available means of applying pressure so as not to commit the sin of omission.

*Allow me to return to your original analysis of the situation. You stated that the authorities' aim is to control the opposition by bringing it above ground. How can they hope to do this?*

Kulerski: The policy of the authorities is quite logical from their point of view. They think they will foment internal conflict and neutralize the union as an effective social force. They can achieve this victory without any concessions on their part, thus preserving the current ambiguous situation, which weakens the union.

There is a similar logic in the field of publishing. The official publishing houses are printing books that could not be printed as recently as four years ago. This is clearly a result of the pressure of the unofficial publishing movement. Given the scale of underground publishing and the vast divide between what can be published officially and what can gain distribution unofficially, it has become incumbent upon the authorities to ease censorship if the official publishing houses are to preserve any legitimacy.

Both sides are playing for time. By our perseverance we must force the authorities to change their policies: most importantly, to allow free association and freedom of speech. The authorities, of course, do not want to take such steps. Their aim is to insure that no independent social structures grow sufficiently powerful to force them to change their policies.

*From what you describe, the authorities are clearly in control now. They have been in control since martial law, of course, but now they are able to control the pace and level of activity in the Solidarity movement. According to their strategy, they will tolerate a certain degree of underground activity, that is they won't arrest you or close down operations through mass repression. Yet, what you describe indicates that the Jaruzelski regime may indeed succeed in neutralizing the opposition. What can you do to prevent this. . . ?*

Kulerski: First of all, the authorities, in creating the present situation, have relaxed their system of control and, at the same time, diminished the level of moral indignation and social discontent by removing the explosive issue of political prisoners. [At the moment there are only 20 to 30 people in jail for political offenses, most of them conscientious objectors.] This has made our social base smaller. Activists continue to operate, but the sympathizers and supporters of Solidarity, who previously were active because they opposed the blatant abuses of human rights, are no longer so strongly motivated. Take the Catholic Church, for example. Previously, the Church had to take a moral stand and speak out against persecution, but now that large numbers of people are no longer imprisoned, and there have been no more political murders, the Church does not have such a compelling moral obligation to speak out.

However, the second point to keep in mind here is that the authorities have not achieved the level of control that they would like to achieve. There are still quite a few people who are active. Even if the authorities were to destroy the leadership of Solidarity by imprisonment or other means, the underground publishing houses would still exist, the distribution of underground publications and books would continue, cassettes would still be produced, and independent theatrical, educational and cultural events would still be organized. If the authorities had full control over these activities, they would have put a stop to them simply by taking away their material resources. They would not even have to use imprisonment. The authorities do not do this because of their tolerance or de facto recognition, but because they do not have the capacity at present to destroy independent activities.

One must also stress that, in the year and a half since the amnesty, the number of people who are participating in the movement, especially young people, has stabilized at a fairly high level. We still cannot be liquidated. At the same time, it is too small a group to successfully press the authorities to change their policies, in particular, to allow freedom of association.

*There are many Solidarity advisers and activists who believe that perestroika and glasnost will result in some beneficial reform in Poland. Therefore, the present situation becomes a waiting game for the effects of Gorbachev's policies, for some initiative that comes through Jaruzelski. Is this a reasonable strategy? Wouldn't more and more people come to the conclusion that they cannot achieve their goals through Solidarity but rather through Gorbachev?*

Kulerski: This is not a reasonable strategy in my view, for several simple reasons. If someone doesn't fight for what he wants, why should he be given it? If the situation in Poland, which is profitable for the Soviet Union, can be maintained without concessions, why change the situation? We must be conscious of the fact that the communists retreat only when they are

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*We can neither simply wait, nor be too impatient. We must act and press for further change.*

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pressed to do so, or when it is profitable for them to do so. In terms of Polish-American relations, would the United States be willing to help Poles if they didn't fight themselves? We can't expect anyone to help us if we don't help ourselves.

There is a diversity of opinion in Poland, as in the West, because we have become a relatively open society. And, among others, there is the view that Gorbachev's policies might provide the impetus for Polish communism to embark on radical

reform. Those who hold this view say that it would be better to wait for *perestroika* and *glasnost* to achieve something than to continue with Solidarity. Others believe, first of all, that Solidarity was necessary and continues to be necessary, and that our actions have had some influence on the change in Soviet policy and the emergence of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. I believe

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*After all, this is a communist system, and we live under communist law.*

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that we in Solidarity should realize that nothing will be given to us freely and that we must be careful not to demand too much right away or the communists might cut our heads off.

*In the whole sphere of social and political relations the Jaruzelski government must manage, there appears to be a new alliance with the Church. The Church wishes to maintain calm and stability, and to do this it needs to play an informal mediating role between the government and Solidarity. How has the Church's role affected the overall strategy of Solidarity and the rest of the opposition?*

Kulerski: The Church is not so much for stability as it is against a social explosion. General Jaruzelski and Primate Glemp, as well as Lech Wałęsa, are all for social peace. But everybody wants something else in exchange for social peace. The Church's basic demand is freedom of religion, yet it also must take into account other social issues. Freedom of religion is not isolated from other freedoms, the lack of which limits religious freedom. The leaders of Solidarity and the rest of the opposition principally demand freedom of association. More and more people understand that without it they cannot fight for their rights; they understand the close link between freedom of association and other freedoms. This is Solidarity's most basic demand, a demand from which it cannot retreat.

As for General Jaruzelski, he understands social peace in terms of maintaining power and control over the situation. We must conduct our activity in such a way as to force the establishment to fully understand the necessity for freedom of association and the full exchange of opinions within this triangle of social forces.

*Can the independent society survive Jaruzelski's waiting game, and if it can survive without being fully neutralized, what forms will it adopt?*

Kulerski: Before 1976, nobody imagined that such an institution as KOR could exist and achieve so much. In 1980, the most courageous independent thinkers did not dare predict that Solidarity would emerge and survive for one and a half years. In December 1981, when I went underground, I didn't even think

that this underground movement would survive, much less develop in the way that it has in the last six years. I could not imagine that instead of being in prison I would be invited to the American embassy for official dinners.

When considering all this, I can only answer: if society, and we in this society, had not expected a change for the better, and if it weren't for our experiences, instead of our well-developed independent cultural and political movement we would have something similar to the level of independent activity which exists in Bulgaria or Romania. I am not convinced that we will succeed in the struggle for our goals. One can't exclude the possibility of a social explosion or an even more dangerous situation than December 13, 1981 [declaration of martial law].

We can neither simply wait, nor be too impatient. We must act and press for further change. We are afraid of a situation where passivity and hopelessness in society bring a false feeling of security on the part of the authorities. This could lead to a social explosion that would be very dangerous for both sides, because society would put a halt to its own process of pressing for freedom, and the communists would no longer be willing to undergo any process of reform.



## PART II:

*The limited extent of the recent strikes has led some people to believe that Solidarity is going through a process of disintegration. Do you agree with this?*

Kulerski: The indifference surrounding the storming of Nowa

Huta and the tragic isolation of the Lenin shipyard strike could well be regarded as indications of disintegration. On the other hand, there is much that runs counter to this thesis. These strikes were organized by young people, largely on their own, but they were happy to accept help from the older leaders. Unfortunately, many of the older leaders were unable to get to the factories where the workers were waiting for them. These young workers demanded, among other things, the reinstatement of Solidarity. It is true that there is a disintegration of the old structures and leadership, from the level of individual enterprises all the way up to the national level. But these people will be replaced by new leaders, who will emerge in the course of future strikes. Let us keep in mind that the strikers did not give up on the old and tested leaders or on Solidarity. I would like to see the events of May lead to an internal metamorphosis of the union.

*The leadership of Solidarity is being accused of passivity. As one of those leaders, what can you say in defense of yourself and your colleagues?*

Kulerski: I don't have much of a defense. We were paralyzed by the security police. We were detained or arrested. Our telephones were disconnected. During the strike, we were not even able to communicate among ourselves. Some of us tried to go into hiding. We couldn't convene a meeting of the top leadership. Zbigniew Bujak and Zbigniew Janas tried to get to Ursus, but they didn't make it. On the other hand, Wałęsa could — or was allowed — to go into the shipyard.

*So these above-ground activities you described earlier have all come to naught? Weren't you an advocate of above-ground activities?*

Kulerski: I still support them. After all, Kornel Morawiecki and Andrzej Kołodziej were underground, but they were caught and — as it looks now — deported.

*So acting above ground you have no idea how to cope with the police?*

Kulerski: I think it would be impossible to develop systematic procedures for dealing with the police. After all, this is a communist system, and we live under communist law. It is possible we could be replaced by the underground commissions at the workplaces. However, they are not very numerous, and they are weak.

*How do you explain the limited extent of these commissions?*

Kulerski: The workers have been passive because of a combination of repression, price increases and propaganda. They do not feel the full force of the price hikes yet. They are still wearing shoes and clothing which they bought before the increases. Also, the older workers have not yet shaken off the effects of martial law. And the new generation is just entering the scene. When people begin to feel just how empty their pockets are, when the last illusions disappear, when the young feel their own strength — then the situation will change.

*Is there a new atomization and disintegration of society?*

Kulerski: Partially, yes. There is even a certain anarchization flavored with the illusions created by propaganda. Of course few people believe the propaganda, but in an environment saturated with it, it's bound to affect people to some extent.

*What is the state of independent, or if you prefer, civil society?*

Kulerski: Before December we were ten million strong, and counted among our membership the vast majority of workers. Today, independent society encompasses mainly young people and intellectuals. Workers are more directed toward action that promises tangible and swift results. Still, what we have is an independent society and not a handful of dissidents. And through its actions — even its very existence — it influences the behavior of the communists.

*Earlier in the interview you said that Wałęsa could — or was allowed to — go into the shipyards. Would you be willing to comment on that remark?*

Kulerski: I have a feeling that this time the communists, at least at the beginning, were controlling events. In Poland, people are dissatisfied, they complain, but they still hope that it won't get much worse. Then someone started the transport workers' strike in Bydgoszcz. It was well-organized, led by a member of the official trade union and of the party. The strike was immediately reported by the official media. The demands were limited but justified. By the evening the strike was over and the demands were met. What does all this mean? Soon thereafter, other strikes began to flare up across the country, which the government dealt with on an individual basis. The strikes — including the one at the shipyard — were shown on TV, as if the government had nothing to fear.

*But why did they go through all this trouble?*

Kulerski: Possibly it was the result of factional in-fighting. Perhaps the intent was to let society blow off a little steam — the strikes may postpone the next explosion, or even weaken it. The timing was also propitious: just before the Sejm was to pass a law granting the government special prerogatives for the implementation of economic reforms. Maybe the government wanted to demonstrate that there is no point in resisting, and

that the "extremists" from Solidarity are a minority. In the fall we are expecting further price hikes, which could set off a more serious wave of strikes. So why not let Wałęsa into the shipyard if the strikes are weak and not numerous. Let him lose together with the other strikers, but don't crush the strikes with tanks and turn him into a martyr.

*How do you interpret the ambivalence and lack of consistency of the authorities?*

Kulerski: They are waiting to see how Gorbachev fares in June at the party conference. As long as the situation in Moscow remains unclear, none of the satellite leaders will make his political line any tougher.

*What will happen next — what about Solidarity, the opposition leadership, civil society?*

Kulerski: The strikes in May were an important message which will have long-lasting effects. They allowed new people to rise to positions of leadership. These new people nonetheless firmly supported the reactivation of Solidarity. Wałęsa proved that he still retains the trust and respect of the workers. Once again the communists saw their dreams of "normalization" evaporate, and the ghost of Solidarity reappear to haunt them.

*What has the opposition learned from this?*

Kulerski: I think the current leadership must be changed, along with the way the union structures function. The older leaders should help the new ones who emerged during the strikes, because they will someday be in charge of the whole union. But the new generation needs older leaders such as Wałęsa, Bujak

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*So why not let Wałęsa into the shipyard if the strikes are weak and not numerous. Let him lose together with the other strikers, but don't crush the strikes with tanks and turn him into a martyr.*

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and Frasnyniuk, not only because they are trusted, but because they have an extensive material base and the necessary contacts that go with it. May 1988 may well mark the beginning of a new phase for Solidarity. □

# Romania: Stalinism in One Country

## An Interview with Mihai Botez

*Among the states of Eastern Europe Romania stands alone. But not — as many political analysts would have it — for her ostensibly independent foreign policy and special status within the Warsaw Pact alliance. Rather, it is Romania's continuing adherence to Stalinism which sets her apart from her communist neighbors. Nicolae Ceaușescu's rule has been based on the same methods of control, and characterized by the same rigidity and capriciousness, as Stalin's dictatorship. Also, Ceaușescu hasn't hesitated to use nationalism as a means of legitimizing his regime.*

*Mihai Botez, one of Romania's leading dissidents, describes his country as "the most primitive" communist state in Eastern Europe. As such, it is an excellent laboratory for the study of communist systems, because the basic mechanisms of communist rule can be observed in their unevolved state.*

*A mathematician, futurist, and now political scientist, Mihai Botez is among the few Romanians who have openly chosen to reject this system, and as a result has been subjected to many years of internal exile. The majority of those who share his beliefs have been exiled. Even so, he has been allowed to travel abroad for the second time, after being denied exit visas on 34 previous occasions, for a one-year fellowship in Washington, D. C.*

*Uncaptive Minds interviewed him after the November 1987 workers' revolt in Brașov, which was followed by several student demonstrations. Mr. Botez himself was not surprised by the revolt against price increases, wage freezes, and other drastic austerity measures — he predicted such a turn of events several years ago in an open letter to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. And while recognizing that the Party's repressive mechanisms are still at its disposal, he feels that the revolt signals approaching change, the form of which is not at all clear.*

*Mr. Botez's interview is striking not only for the courage it shows, but also for its depiction of the effect of the West's foreign policy towards Romania. In his view, Western governments' support of Ceaușescu's regime has resulted in disenchantment among Romanians with the West, both as a symbol of freedom and a force capable of effecting meaningful change in Eastern Europe.*



*Uncaptive Minds: Perhaps you could begin by describing your background. Few people in the West are familiar with your work and activity in Romania.*

Botez: I was born 1940 in Bucharest. I studied mathematics at the University there, and earned my Ph.D in statistics in 1966. In the beginning I was a professional mathematician, publishing theoretical articles, but in 1967-68 I became interested in the social sciences and the application of mathematical thinking to them, first in management and then in future studies. In 1970, I founded one of the first Institutes for the Future in Eastern Europe, which was part of the University of Bucharest. At that time we had many ambitious plans — namely, to influence our country's future development. However, my analyses grew increasingly discordant with the official views. Because I continued to be so blunt, I was considered undesirable, and was transferred several times, ending up at a computer center in Tulsea, a small city near the Danube on the Soviet border.

Since 1977, I have not been permitted to lecture at the University, to participate in public conferences, or to lead research groups, since I am probably considered too dangerous.

In addition, since 1977, I have been denied an exit visa 34 times; as a mathematician, systems-analyst and futurist I lost virtually all contact with my colleagues abroad. Thus I became isolated from my previous field and more and more interested in pursuing my studies and analysis of communist societies.

My first step into the field of so-called "serious commu- nology" was rather disappointing. I found that it was contaminated by ideological debate and a surfeit of history, incrimination, and victimization. For my generation, these problems are essentially meaningless. What exactly Marx thought, Lenin advocated or Stalin realized has little relevance, either for my life or for the modern communist world — which today represents 30% of the Earth's population. For me, communism was not an option, and I never felt obliged to justify it. Rather, it was the unchallengable political system I was born into. Therefore, my problem is not to cry, to claim, or to blame, but to understand this new world and do my best to improve it. As a futurist, I see the present communist world not only as the result of an evolutionary process, but also — and maybe more fundamentally — as the starting point for the future. My interest arises from my intention to spend the rest of my life there: I am thus powerfully motivated to develop alternatives and to act in order to realize what I consider the best possible one.

*That is, with a view toward changing the system.*

Botez: Yes. Yet while therapy is important, the diagnosis comes first. In order to understand and to design some possibilities for change (for the better, of course), one must first know what makes communism tick and then draw an exact picture, without emotion.

*I presume you mean that Romanians need to develop a dispassionate analysis, like the one which exists among Western scholars of communism.*

Botez: Dispassionate, but not cynical or distant, as one finds in the West. For example, we sometimes have the feeling that some Western analysts are studying us as if they were studying animals in a zoo. On the other hand, emigré scholars are not sufficiently dispassionate. They believe that because they have suffered under communism, they are entitled to consider themselves experts on the subject; the same logic would suggest that a person afflicted with hepatitis automatically becomes an expert on liver disorders. The analysis of modern communist systems has already been largely replaced by complaining and pamphlets against this godless and lawless society. Of course, I have the utmost respect for all those who have suffered under the communist system, and I agree that this system has often been horrible. But it doesn't really matter. We can only undertake action once we have obtained a clear picture of reality, and a clear picture of reality can only be based on careful and dispassionate observation.

*How has your analysis contributed to the study of communism?*

Botez: The marriage between the Soviet system and heterogeneous national traditions has produced a new type of society. I am thus merely trying to arrive at an essential model of such a society, with its logic and ethics, its self-regulating mechanisms and methods of feedback; in other words, I have tried to develop a "cybernetics" of these industrialized dictatorships (and not of the industrialized democracies, which is usually called "social cybernetics"). I explore the problems of stability and change in these societies — namely, the possibilities and limits of reform, of evolution and even of possible revolution. The approach is an interdisciplinary one, based on the "order-through-fluctuations" paradigm.

From this point of view, Romania is a very interesting case because it is probably the most primitive communist country in Europe today. An anthropologist told me once that primitive societies are the most interesting to study because the basic patterns of life are more clearly discernible. Well, I live in a primitive society and I am taking advantage of that fact to make a structural study of it from up close.

*By primitive, what do you mean?*

Botez: Extremely unsophisticated, the simplest and most Stalinist in nature. Ceaușescu is really a leader of the 1930s, which means he has no doubts — he is a true believer. He was certain from the beginning that communism is good and capitalism is bad; that central planning is good and markets are bad; that any private ownership or the introduction of even a semblance of market mechanisms would be heretical; that central planning and the vanguard of the Party can solve all the problems of humankind. In this view, people are basically bad because they waste their energy on marginal activities and are not sufficiently committed to the Master Plan — thus they need a firm hand. In his old-fashioned way he is building the new society.

*But not successfully. In Brașov in November, there was a general strike, with tens of thousands of workers participating. According to press accounts, the workers were protesting price increases, wage freezes and the general economic austerity imposed by Ceaușescu. A week later, the Politburo changed course and approved wage increases, making the workers' demands look justified. What effect has this had on the Ceaușescu regime?*

Botez: Unfortunately, I only have the same information that you have, living here in the West. These riots, in my view, are not surprising. I predicted this several years ago and sent a letter in 1985 to the Central Committee, warning that such riots could be in store if living conditions continued to deteriorate. My letter was broadcast by Radio Free Europe as well. In the present situation it is not surprising at all. Already horrible, the living conditions have deteriorated further; as a result, people have become more desperate: the choice is between getting more of

the same, that is, freezing in one's own home, or being shot on the street.

The Braşov events are a very important signal from the working class, and are probably only the first in a series of such protests.

*Will this message be heard?*

Botez: One of the main characteristics of the present rulers is their arrogance. Those at the top view themselves as messiahs. They are not willing to admit that they are wrong, and they certainly will not do so openly. Their response to the incident will be to mix repression with small and limited concessions in order to lessen social tensions.

*According to a report from the BBC International Service, the wage increases following the strike came at a high price. A week after the protests, 40 workers were sentenced to prison terms averaging four years in length for "malicious hooliganism," and several hundred others remained in jail awaiting trial.*

Botez: It is much more important for the authorities to register what has happened than to openly punish the rebels. There was a strike in 1977 also, and those who participated were dealt with later. The rulers will probably solve this new problem in the same manner, that is, people will disappear for some reason or other. The instigators and leaders will be transferred, punished or even killed. This is a more flexible strategy than to enter into a head-on confrontation with the workers, because officially, the authorities never even admit that these riots ever occur. For example, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs said in Paris that some hooligans had caused trouble in Braşov, but that the incident could in no way be considered political.

But it will be difficult for the government in this case to deny the existence of a political protest and, at the same time, punish people for that reason. Having regained control of the situation they are keeping the files ready, avoiding mass repression, and picking up people one by one instead. A week after the protests, however, students were demonstrating in Braşov and Timişoara, and there were waves of peaceful marches in other cities. It is a sign that something is moving.

*Is such protest organized at all? Are there underground centers? One account of the Braşov strikes indicated that a clandestine strike committee had been created and would direct coordinated action. Also, the student protests you mentioned occurred throughout the course of 1987.*

Botez: There are a number of new organizations, for example *Actiunea Democrată*, and a lot of groups signing statements calling for action and protesting against the current regime. But that does not mean there is real organization. I am skeptical because Romania is extremely well-controlled and it is nearly impossible to maintain a real underground organization.

The last time such an organization existed was 1977-79, and that was quickly dealt with in the way I described earlier. That experience is still alive. People know how difficult it is to organize something of this nature. But one must keep in mind that this is a process that develops over time. I guess there is some coordination now, because the statements reaching the West demonstrate a certain degree of continuity. One of the most active oppositionists, Radu Filipescu, who was previously imprisoned, sent a letter to the General Prosecutor, stating that he intended to participate in a peaceful march. The letter was circulated in the West, and broadcast over Radio Free Europe. Without coordination this would have been impossible, so yes, coordination does exist to some extent.

*Are the students organized?*

Botez: I don't know what is going on in Bucharest. But when I was at the university there the atmosphere was very repressive, since the central authorities are so nearby. But recently Radio Free Europe broadcast an open letter of a young mathematics student at the University of Bucharest. That means something is also moving there, and some noise seems even to have been captured by the "resonance box" of the Western media. Without some degree of coordination such things would be impossible.

I believe that the present role of these groups is not to destabilize the system and thereby accelerate its collapse, nor to offer a credible alternative, but to support one faction in the "inner party" against another. Mass protest can sometimes cause the downfall of at least some of the leaders of a communist system. There are signs of disappointment and division within the leadership. While mass pressure might become significant, a change at the top is more probable than a revolution. For example, in Poland, Gierek lost his position due to mass strikes, but he was replaced by Kania from the same group, and not by Wałęsa. At any rate, the growing dissatisfaction within the ranks of the *nomenklatura* is very visible for me. Let me quote an instance of this new attitude expressed by Silviu Brucan, a veteran communist and ex-ambassador to the U.S. and U.N. He openly condemned the Romanian leaders in the wake of these mass protests, and stated that the Party must change its strategy because the workers are disgruntled. Of course, these are Marxist assessments, and quite benign, but they also prove that something is happening at the top in response to the workers' anger.

*Is that in anticipation of Ceauşescu's death or retirement?*

Botez: What makes Romania a very special case in Eastern Europe, as it approaches the 1990s, is the present lack of reformist will on the part of our rulers. In all other communist countries, the Stalinist social contract is now challenged by two sides: from the top, by Gorbachev, and from below, by Solidarity or other movements originating from civil society in



countries like Hungary or Czechoslovakia. This means that both sides are disappointed with the present state of communism. Change will result from a combination of the two, because it is not simply a question of what Gorbachev and others are willing to do, but also what the societies will accept. Polish society after the legal era of Solidarity is no longer a passive object that will simply obey. Now the game has two partners: the reformist ruling party and the active civil society.

Romania in this situation is extremely isolated, because there is only pressure from below, and no pressure for reform at the top. This lack of reformist will at the top has created an extremely tense atmosphere in Romanian society.

You were talking about the change of leadership. Obviously, sooner or later such a change will occur. It also seems logical to think that mass pressure can accelerate this process. If we look at this problem realistically we see that change can only develop within the framework of the communist regime, within the official structures. There is no alternative right now. The real question for Romania is how our communists will face the future crisis.

*You seem to be saying that the communist system is unlikely to change.*

Botez: I believe that is so in Eastern Europe as a whole. There is a big difference between disappointment and the organized fight for a realistic alternative. Yes, everyone is against this old-fashioned form of communism, and so what? People do not have the freedom to organize themselves and to think of realistic alternatives. At most, they can think of replacing some leader with another, and of liberalizing the system, but not of actually democratizing the system. Because democracy involves a real and open struggle for power and the acceptance by the authorities of freedom of association, which means that they would also have to recognize the freedom to associate for non-communists, that is, for people who would challenge the communists' monopoly of power. It thus seems natural to conclude

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*[in the U.S.] in the late 1970s it was very difficult to criticize Ceaușescu, because people in policy-making circles in Washington thought that anyone who did was more or less working for the Soviets. . .*

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that these regimes would not tolerate real democracy, and therefore any changes that do occur are condemned to remain more or less within the framework of the power structure.

Of course, this does not mean that such changes are meaningless. They have enormous meaning for the quality of people's lives under communism. But it also does not mean that communist rulers will accept political pluralism, simply because

the people are disgruntled or some intellectuals are posing theoretical deconstructions of the communist system. For instance, I believe Gorbachev has never intended to introduce pluralism in the U.S.S.R; he is merely trying to transform an inefficient and unappealing dictatorship into a more efficient and attractive one. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* are regarded as two distinct and unrelated concepts. Nobody seems to think that if *perestroika* is successfully implemented, it would be the result of a democratic debate, engendered by *glasnost* — and not just another policy imposed by the same authoritarian policymakers. For them everything should remain within the existing party-controlled social system.

*Can't people better seek change by organizing themselves outside the system?*

Botez: Don't forget that the activities of these parallel societies are only tolerated — they are not sanctioned by law. People can isolate themselves within such parallel structures and attempt to lead normal lives by ignoring the official society. But this does not mean that the official society is no longer there and no longer exercises hegemonic power. This is the difference between freedom and democracy. The communist system can offer, if one is intelligent, some freedom. People can feel free to express themselves and to publish, they can even seek to challenge some of those in power, but not the system itself, and not the *nomenklatura* system as such.

I would be very surprised, keeping the logic of communist power in mind, if the authorities allowed an organized alternative to challenge their absolute power. This monopoly of power, in my view, is the basic issue for these societies. Of course, the quality and exercise of this power can vary — there is a big difference between Romania and Hungary, for example. But the main structures are the same. As far as I can see, the "parallel societies" in Eastern Europe are only islands of freedom in a totalitarian sea, tolerated only so long as they do not challenge the political power of the communist party. This is not democracy, as understood in the West. But of course, these islands are far better than nothing at all.

Although less visible than in Poland or Hungary, a parallel society also exists in Romania. There are not only "liberated" individuals — dissidents such as I. Puiu, D. Cornica, R. Filipescu, M. Celac, D. Petrescu — but also "liberated" social groups. But such groups do not constitute organizations: they are merely informal networks, operating within a hostile, totalitarian environment. The parallel society in Romania is thus difficult to discern from the official one.

Romania is a very special case from several points of view. Most importantly, we never experienced de-Stalinization. Ceaușescu's predecessor, Gheorghiu-Dej, stood up to Khrushchev and refused to de-Stalinize in the early 1960s. This policy was seen as a forceful display of Romanian nationalism and was so well-received all over the world that it became a form of hard currency, and thus the Romanian government found it use-

ful to promote its so-called independence from Moscow. When Ceaușescu came to power, he simply continued this extremely successful and rewarding policy.

The West has always promoted and cultivated dissidents in our part of the world. However, due to the special attitude taken towards Romania as an independent communist country, the West discouraged dissident activity in Romania. Until 1977 at least, Western journalists visiting Romania were satisfied with the image the officials were offering them — an island of Latin culture encircled by enemies, heroically fighting for its independence against the dangerous Russian bear. I remember that in the late 1970s it was very difficult to criticize Ceaușescu, because people in policy-making circles in Washington thought that anyone who did was more or less working for the Soviets and trying to destabilize the U.S. relationship with its best friend

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*In all major international conflicts, Romania will always side with the communist camp, and this means the Soviet Union; Ceaușescu states this clearly.*

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in Eastern Europe. The result of such thinking was tragic for human rights and the dissident movement in our country. Paul Goma's movement of intellectuals in 1977, the free trade unions, and Vlad Georgescu's movement all failed. We felt we were totally isolated. From the East there was no organized support, and from the West we were discouraged — sometimes even more than just discouraged — from acting.

From this point of view, the West was one of the godfathers of the most successful Stalinist regime in Eastern Europe. Even the presidents of the United States and France, the Emperor of Japan, and the Queen of England expressed their highest esteem for this regime. And when President Carter, the world champion of human rights, invited Ceaușescu to Washington and praised him for Romania's achievements, the human rights movement practically disappeared. This was just too much for many Romanians, and it was then that the last big wave of intellectuals left the country. A lot of my friends told me we have a long way to go, and the first task would be to try to speak to the West, to explain the truth.

*But the U.S. had an ambassador to Romania, Mr. Funderburk, who was favorable to your cause, and when he tried to speak up, nobody listened.*

Botez: That's right. Probably because the investment of the U.S. in Romania — the moral investment — was considered too high to change the policy of backing the Romanian government.

*What, in your view, is the cause of the Western policy to Romania? It cannot simply be the belief that Ceaușescu is independent of Moscow.*

Botez: I am a guest in this country, and it would be impolite of a guest to criticize his host, especially one so generous as the United States. I have written on this subject and my paper will be published in English. In it I presume that, in the beginning, Mr. Nixon's administration tried to embarrass the Soviets with Romania, which had an ostensibly independent foreign policy among Eastern European countries. However, the former Romanian chief of state security, Mihai Pacepa, wrote a book entitled *Red Horizons*, in which he describes the unbroken relationship between Romania and the Soviet Union and their collaboration in anti-Western movements, as well as their continuing economic and military relationships.

Again, let me point out that Ceaușescu — unlike, say, the Chinese leadership, which is willing to reform — is a true communist believer. In all major international conflicts, Romania will always side with the communist camp, and this means the Soviet Union; Ceaușescu states this clearly. In all basic policy issues over the last twenty years, Romania stood with the Soviets, or with the Third World anti-Western movements. It is unbelievable that the State Department did not notice this. But it is also difficult to fight against the inertia of policy — and then maybe there are other reasons unknown to the public. Ambassador Funderburk seems to know something that we don't, although his case is a little exaggerated, since he apparently believes that the State Department has been favorable to Romania because of some kind of communist conspiracy. I think that U.S. policy towards Romania is actually an understandable attempt to create a link between diagnosis and therapy. I hope everybody here in the U.S. knows the diagnosis of the Romanian illness today, but the difference between, say, the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Congress is in the cure they are advocating.

Let me give you an example of what puzzles me about U.S. policy. In Washington, there is a tradition that when some country violates human rights, and especially when mass riots occur, a U.S. spokesman expresses the government's concern and hope that there will be a peaceful resolution to the conflict, etc. Strangely, this did not happen with the Brașov riots last December. In the Philippines or Haiti, the U.S. does not directly intervene but it pays attention; in Romania, it doesn't even do that. From a moral point of view it is imperative that support be expressed for workers who are risking their lives, and I can imagine how the Romanians would have received such a communique. But the State Department said "we are still assessing the situation. We cannot make a statement yet."

At present, U.S. policy is generating a lot of anti-American sentiment — and anti-Western feelings in general — among Romanians. A lot of people believe that, while the West is good, it only looks out for itself, and that Westerners are playing with the lives of Romanians. There is a saying now in Romania that the West is fighting communism down to the last East European dissident. A lot of people are thinking, "We have been forced to live under communist rule, and we are obliged to obey. But after more than 40 years of fear and despair, why is it busi-

ness as usual between the Westerners and our oppressors? Nobody is forcing them to behave like that." The answer is that the democracies are cynical; they look upon us as sub-humans, to be used for their selfish interests. This thinking leads to the conclusion that the Russians might be better. Of course, the Russians are historically "the enemy," and common people have not changed their view on that. But the technocracy of Gorbachev looks much more appealing and democratic than Western democracy, which has treated them so badly. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* have become much more popular than this distant and unknown Western democracy. This is the real tragedy. . .

*In La Nouvelle Alternative, a French journal on Eastern Europe, an anonymous author argued that Ceaușescu's regime was not so much a communist dictatorship as a nationalist dictatorship, based on a personality cult and xenophobic policies. Your position is different, as you state that Ceaușescu is one of the truest believers in communism.*

Botez: There is a point here. Romania is perhaps the most successful experiment in national communism — a strange marriage between nationalism and communism. My explanation is quite simple. In this period, communism became an option for nationalists through the following line of thinking: Romanians believe that there is no alternative to communism in Eastern Europe, and that to accept communist rule is to accept the national identity. Those who are born and raised in communist Romania must accept communism as part of their national heritage. Of course, one can emigrate, but this is not a solution for 22 million Romanians; one can become a dissident, but that means retreating into "internal exile." In a sense, the only way to remain a Romanian, to speak Romanian, to have access to some form of Romanian culture, is to accept communism — at least as a social contract, as a deal.

*Even as the government goes about destroying all of Romania's historical monuments and part of her culture?*

Botez: Yes, because there is no alternative. Remember, many of my colleagues from the younger generation accept communism, not necessarily because they believe in the communist ideology, but because they think that it is the only way to remain a Romanian, to keep our national identity. That the national identity has been used to destroy the nation's identity is another problem. I know this sounds paradoxical, but it's true.

Ceaușescu understands that nationalism produces certain results, and remembers that Stalin used it to rally the Russian people behind him during the Second World War. This national communism, however, is no less communist, and no less totalitarian — yet nobody pins the mistakes of Stalin or other errors or crimes from the past on it. This communism is not besieged by the West, and is not manipulated from Moscow. It is the ideal framework for a dictatorship over a nation, especially a small one. And Ceaușescu's predecessors in Romanian history

are not the communists of the 1930s but Romanian kings. He has rewritten history and succeeded where others failed, by convincing the West that — although he is a communist ruler — he is nevertheless a genuine representative of the Romanian people.

So, I do not think there is much difference between a communist dictatorship and a nationalist dictatorship. In this case, it is still totalitarianism.

*You stated that your colleagues accept communism in order to remain Romanian. In doing so they also participate in the system. Do they act as the mouthpiece and theoreticians of the regime? Are they in its intellectual service, so to speak?*

Botez: We can distinguish four attitudes: positive support, positive acceptance, negative acceptance, and rejection of the communist social contract. A cost-benefit analysis in this series goes very much against the rejectionists. For them, there is only one possibility, internal or external exile, which happened to me and all the others who refused to accept the rules of the game.

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*There is a saying now in Romania that the West is fighting communism down to the last East European dissident.*

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The vast majority of intellectuals have chosen one form or another of acceptance. This is understandable. They are trying to remain loyal to a national tradition. National communism offers a much more attractive social contract and they accept it, motivated by legitimate national feelings. Obviously, I feel tempted to condemn such collaboration, but I do not. You cannot simply ask people to say "no." Don't forget that in our country, and in the rest of Eastern Europe, communism is a long-term problem. Romania is not in Latin America, where some colonels take over and the intellectuals can go into exile and in five or six years they know some other colonels will take over, reintroduce some measure of democracy, and allow them to return. Here, communism is for good. And if one goes into exile, there is no turning back. There are a lot of Romanian poets and writers who rejected communism, and went into exile. If they were lucky they became citizens of the international intellectual community, which is fine, but they are producing for a public which is not "here," but "there," and most probably their children will speak Romanian as a second language at best. To say "no" to communist rule in Romania is not a simple decision.

As for me, I still believe that my place is "there" and that is why I intend to go back. □

# CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In the spring of 1988, Czechoslovak society continues to show signs of dissatisfaction with the communist regime. The landmark events of the past winter — namely, the petition of Catholic activists, the establishment of *Lidové noviny*, and the December 10 demonstration for human rights — continue to have an impact on the opposition scene.

Efforts to collect signatures under the Catholic petition for religious freedom, circulated around the country, continue to enjoy striking success (see our first issue). Over 500,000 Catholics, as well as protestants and non-believers, have signed so far, despite the viriolic propaganda campaign unleashed in the official media, accusing "illegal clerico-fascist structures" within the Church and "anti-Czechoslovak circles" abroad of using the petition to further their own political objectives. On May 10, Cardinal František Tomášek sent a tough letter protesting the propaganda and disinformation campaign to Premier Lubomír Štrougal, in which he also expressed his outrage at the government's handling of the demonstration in Bratislava.

That protest, which took place on April 25, attracted several thousand Slovak Catholics, who gathered in front of the city's National Theater in a silent demonstration for religious freedom. The security forces responded by driving first their cars, then street-cleaning vehicles, into the crowd; by

using water cannons, dogs, truncheons and tear gas; and by detaining over 200 people.

VONS, or the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted, celebrated its 10th anniversary, as did the journal *Informacé o Chartě*, both receiving congratulations from Charter 77 and various human rights organizations in the West.

Finally, the Czechoslovak opposition mourned the passing of two of its members: Jaromír Šavrda and Pavel Wonka. Šavrda, a writer and human rights activist who had been imprisoned for his activities, died at home at the age of 54. Wonka, who was 35, died in prison, where he had spent most of the last couple years since having tried to run for Parliament as an independent candidate (see p. 38).

In this issue, we publish an essay by Charter 77's best-known activist, the writer Václav Havel, which takes a long-term look at the prospects for real change in his homeland. Underground culture and the samizdat journal devoted to it, *Vokno*, is the subject of our next piece. There follows an interview with Jan Urban, human rights activist and Charter 77 signatory. Finally we present an interview with an editor of a new independent journal, *Lidové noviny*, which is attempting to become a broad-based publication for Czechs and Slovaks both in and outside the opposition.

## My Reasons for Skepticism and Sources of Hope

By Václav Havel

*Václav Havel is a playwright and one of Charter 77's leading members. He has spent many years in prison for his activity, which included work for VONS (Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted).*

An assessment of the political situation and any prognostications stemming from it depend on just what is meant by the term "politics." In other words, that which each of us considers to be the real focus of political activity in public life.

If we concentrate exclusively on the locus of power, which is in the corridors of Party buildings and behind closed doors, then of course the most important question is how Gorbachev



or Jakeš balanced their various clichés in this or that speech; what Gorbachev said to Yeltsin during their vacation; which secretaries of the Central Committee banded together against Husák; which members of the Presidium are on Jakeš' side and which of them have the greatest influence over their new boss.

I certainly don't want to underestimate the importance of all this: the fact is, those at the top have an all-too-powerful impact on our lives. Nevertheless, I am even more interested in something else: what is happening in society, in the visible and invisible layers of its living, feeling and thinking. I am inclined to believe that it is here, and not in the lobbies and corridors of the various secretariats, where the inconspicuous buds of long-term change are sprouting. Why? Because those who

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*The most important development is the chasm which is slowly but relentlessly widening between two worlds which today no longer seem to have anything in common: the world of official ideology and the real world of thinking and feeling.*

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wield power in Czechoslovakia do so in reaction — even if indirectly, inadequately, belatedly or unconsciously — to the actual situation in society and the condition of its spiritual life. Even the most high-handed and overbearing power is exercised over somebody, and its rule over the population, or the degree to which it is subject to its moods or is contemptuous of its wishes, will always depend on how the population itself behaves, what it thinks, and what its attitude is toward the powers-that-be.

As far as the hustle and the bustle amid the mighty is concerned, our prospects up to now do not appear too promising. While Gorbachev is certainly a more enlightened ruler than his predecessors, and Jakeš is doing his best to verbally imitate Gorbachev, talking about would-be restructuring and democratization for his country as well, these two men have, in fact, changed our lives very little. It seems that Jakeš has been installed only as a fresher and more reliable guarantor of the status quo — that is, the changelessness hidden behind the change of words — than his tired predecessor, who was never entirely reliable for anybody.

But when we look at the situation from society's point of view, things do not look so bad. While we certainly can in the near future — and especially in this year of provocative anniversaries — expect some disappointments, persecutions, and perhaps even a marked decline in opposition activity, nevertheless some facts which cannot be overlooked allow us — at least in the long run — to believe that things are improving.

The most important development is the chasm which is slowly but relentlessly widening between two worlds which today no longer seem to have anything in common: the world of

official ideology and the real world of thinking and feeling. Of course, everyone continues to do what must be done — people vote, show fear of their superiors, follow their orders, and at various levels of the hierarchy they carry out the will of the central authority — but actually, nobody any longer believes the things that the powerful say. People just mind their own business and live their lives as best they can. The real interests of society — ranging from the hunger for Western electronic equipment to the pursuit of the latest *samizdat* literature; from the cultivation of sophisticated hobbies defiantly developed against many obstacles, to the acquiescence to various subcultures (be they musical, religious, or pertaining to some entirely different activity); from the mass watching of Western TV, to the free expression of opinions in the cheapest beer halls — all these together constitute a vast reservoir of independent expression entirely outside the framework created by the powers-that-be. We may even go so far as to say that the real and most important parallel *polis* is now represented not by the “dissident world,” but by the world of ideas and the private interests of all of society, which on the one hand is giving the totalitarian authorities what they unconditionally demand, but on the other hand openly pursues whatever it craves, which of course usually has very little to do with the will of the authorities.

The “dissident world” continues to be an island of public articulation of, and reflection on, various issues; even there we are more or less doing as we please and even saying things out loud which have been impossible to say for decades — even in 1968! Occasionally the security police scold us for what we discuss, but they themselves know — even they are not immune to the general atmosphere — that their arguments are silly and beside the point. Unfortunately, we can still be arrested, instead of merely scolded, whenever the party decides to do so, provided the general situation allows for such actions. When I look at the common denominator of that which all of society is aware of, and which the “dissidents” are openly discussing, I find that it is something simple, yet incompatible with the official ideology: the conviction that the only meaningful path for the economy to take is that of a genuine pluralism of entrepreneurial activity, and that the only meaningful alternative to the existing political structure is, again, a pluralistic system — without which economic plurality is in any case unthinkable.

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*Occasionally the security police scold us for what we discuss, but they themselves know. . . that their arguments are silly and beside the point.*

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At the same time — and this is especially important — this self-evident truth is not only valid for the Czechs and Slovaks but also, perhaps even to a greater extent, for the Poles and the Hungarians and even for many thoughtful and publicly active people in the Soviet Union.

I am convinced that this chasm between the ideology and the basic political functioning of the existing powers on the one hand, and the real thinking of society on the other, will continue to grow for a long time, but not indefinitely. This chasm is a political vacuum of increasing significance, the effects of which sooner or later are bound to materialize into more far-reaching political change — much more far reaching than the current exchange of *perestroika* phraseology for that of “normalization.”

Perhaps it will now be evident why — in the light of such a long-term outlook — I do not think it is really so important what Central Committee Secretary Jan Fojtík said in a speech yesterday, or what he will say in the corridors tomorrow. □

Prague

*Lidové noviny* (No. 3), March 1988



“WITH THE SOVIET UNION FOR ALL TIME”

## A Window on Czechoslovak Underground Culture

*Conversation With an Editor of the Independent Magazine Vokno*

*While independent political activities are still the domain of a relatively small group of people in Czechoslovakia, many more participate in the so-called “parallel” culture, which encompasses everything from independently-produced theater, to lectures, art exhibits and rock concerts. The following interview with František Stárek “Čuňas,” one of the editors of Vokno (Window), a journal which reports on the cultural underground, was published in the Polish independent quarterly, Obecność. Petr Uhl, a Charter 77 member and publisher of another independent paper, Informacé o Chartě, was also present.*

*Obecność: Could you briefly describe how Vokno was founded?*

František Stárek: I have to go back to a period long before the publication of the first issue. As far back as 1975, a group of people associated with two rock bands, Plastic People and DG 307, decided we should publish our own magazine. The full name of the first of these bands was Plastic People of the Universe and, since this was a very well-known group, we were going to call the magazine Plastic People in the Sky. In late autumn of 1975 we put together the editorial board, which was made up of Ivan Jirous (the leader of Plastic People), Jiří Němec and myself. We prepared the first issue, which was scheduled to come out around the beginning of 1976. At that time we were organizing a sort of mini-festival of alternative Czech culture in Bojanovice. Three weeks after the festival we were all locked up, so our first issue never came out. We got a variety of sentences, but most of us were out by the beginning

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of 1977. But that's when Charter 77 started its activities, and for the rest of the year there was no time for anything else. Some of the Charter activists were people who had worked for official cultural publications in the 1960s. It was probably through contact with them that the idea originated of publishing a magazine that would also contain our column on the cultural underground. And such a magazine was actually created; everybody called it *Spectrum*, even though that wasn't its official name. The magazine was a kind of trial run, during which it became clear that the editors would make concessions to the authorities that were too great for us.

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*Vokno is more than a magazine; for its readers it has become a movement.*

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We wanted something tougher, so in 1978 we decided to start our own publication. I remember we went to an underground commune, where Jiří Němec was living. A lot of concerts were held in barn there. I lived there too for a while. So we went there to convince Jiří that we had to start our own magazine. Somewhere around three in the morning, after who knows how many bottles of wine, Jiří said, "You've convinced me," and passed out. He slept like a rock till morning. We sometimes joke and say that Jiří's rock became the cornerstone of *Vokno*. The first issue came out in May or June of 1979. We took this issue to several centers of the Czech underground; we also went to Košice in Slovakia. Our print-runs of 100 were extraordinarily high for 1979, when anything above 10 copies would have been considered respectable.

Then we published the second issue, and a third, and a fourth. The print-run kept growing with each edition until it reached 180 copies. Our roster of contributors expanded in such a way that we were able to call ourselves an all-Czechoslovak publication. *Vokno* had co-workers in Košice and Cheb, from Budějovice to Liberec and all over. The sixth issue was ready and scheduled for publication at the end of 1981. Then on November 10, the government organized a great campaign against the magazine. Four people were arrested, several dozen apartments were searched and 200 people were interrogated. It was the toughest action against the Czech underground since the reprisal against the "Plastic People." The four of us were convicted. I was sentenced to two and a half years in prison, Ivan Martin Jirous "Magor" to three and a half, and both of us to an additional two years of "protective surveillance." Frič got 15 months, and Hýbek 18 months. We served our full sentences.

*Could you define the term "underground" as you use it?*

Stárek: The term does not only denote everything that is underground, such as independent culture or independent

politics. Our definition is more in the vein of a universal, world-wide concept of the term, as it was defined in the U.S.A. by Allen Ginsberg.

Getting back to the history of *Vokno*, we were all sentenced to various terms, and when I returned after two and a half years from . . .

Petr Uhl: . . . from salvation . . . (laughter)

Stárek: . . . from moral decrepitude. After all, my moral condition was completely decrepit. It took me six months just to adjust to being back, and the next six months were spent preparing the next issue. We celebrated "Magor" Jirous's release with the publication of the seventh issue. The sixth issue, as I said, never came out; it was confiscated by the authorities. Since then we've published the eighth through the eleventh issues, and the twelfth is in the works.

Uhl: The interesting part is that none of those four people were convicted of political offenses.

Stárek: That's typical. Whenever someone from the cultural underground is tried, he is usually sentenced for "immoral acts" under Part II of the penal code.

Uhl: The first part of the code is political, and has to do with offenses against the state. The cultural underground is charged with and convicted of offenses against public morality, such as when somebody gets drunk and takes his clothes off in public or takes a leak in the public fountain at noon.

Stárek: Publishing a cultural magazine is the same kind of thing. It was described as disregard for the rules of public conduct, as the spreading of disrespect for society, and these offenses fall into the category of immoral acts. I admitted in court that indeed I didn't respect any of those social rules. In the end, our offenses were classified as falling under the second part of the code, although the prosecutor wanted to sentence us under the first. At any rate, we've got the eleventh issue. But *Vokno* is more than a magazine: for its readers it has become a movement. In contrast to other Czechoslovak publications, including the independent ones, *Vokno* has a steady following.

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*Whenever someone from the cultural underground is tried, he is usually sentenced for "immoral acts". . .*

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Beyond just the new issues of the magazine, we try to supply our readers with new musical recordings and other independent publications; we encourage them to send in their work — literary texts, photography, art. . .

We have also published Egon Bondy's *Essays on the His-*

*tory of Philosophy*, a 400-page manuscript. We have prepared the first *samizdat* video in Czechoslovakia. *Vokno* also encompasses an independent theater and film production groups. For example, the twelfth issue will have several stories on the independent film studio Sado/Maso.

*How is Vokno different from other independent publications?*

Stárek: First of all, it is much more widely distributed. According to our statistics, we've got at least 5,000 readers. You could call these people "the first front." From them issues get passed on to others, but there's no way to assess any numbers beyond this point. Of course, these readers are only a small percentage of the young people in Czechoslovakia.

Uhl: I think *Vokno* is also different because it's so varied. It deals with every aspect of culture. There's a similar magazine called *Half Way There*, but it's strictly literary.

Stárek: They publish a lot of translations. . .

Uhl: Another magazine, called *The Other Side*, deals with music, but it's so specialized that I think most of their stories could come out in the official musical press. Yet another literary magazine, *Kritický sborník [Critical Almanac]* caters to a different audience, not primarily young people, and it deals with a different kind of culture and literature.

Stárek: Our main goal is to promote new people and new literature, so that everything doesn't always revolve around the same ten names, such as Havel, Vaculík, Kohout, Hrabal or Kundera. We try to give young people the opportunity to publish. Of course, this isn't always the best literature, but that's not the issue.

*What is this literature like?*

Stárek: The new authors are mainly Czechs from northern Bohemia; that region is a real literary phenomenon. Its population changed totally after the war. All Germans were deported, and people from all over the country took their place. The children who were born there have now reached the age when one starts to write. These young people form a northern Czech literary school of sorts. There was an interesting discussion last year having to do with a book published in the West, Jan Pelc's *...And It'll Get Worse*. The author is from that region. *Vokno* published several stories from his book and also several reviews of it. However, Pelc is just the tip of the iceberg. He is visible because his book came out in the West, where it is accessible to emigrés who write about it in their publications. The book was commented on in *Svědectví* [published in Paris], *Právo Lidu* [published in West Germany], and in other magazines. But there are a lot of other young people living in the North who also write prose and poetry. For example, Eduard Vacek, who is now in prison for his literary and publishing activities. He pub-

lished a magazine called *The Lever* in Teplice, and wrote a book called *Blackout At Home*, which has already been printed in two editions in Czechoslovakia, by independent publishing houses, of course.

There's also a lot of poetry coming out by the Czechs from the North, which is significantly different from what's written, say, in Prague. It frequently expresses social or ecological concerns. The North is a coal-mining, industrial region. The climate of this poetry is rooted in a working-class mentality. Working in a mine creates particular bonds between people; miners depend on each other; it also results in a certain roughness and directness that remains even after they come out of the mine. And this mentality and this flavor of the relationships

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*In the late 1960s the authorities hunted long-hairs; now there are pogroms against the punks.*

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between people is expressed in the Northerners' poetry. Ecological concerns are also strongly emphasized. The environment of the whole region surrounding Sokolov has been seriously damaged, not just by coal mines, but also by steel works, chemical plants and power plants. All of that can be found in this literature. These kinds of problems are also discussed officially, because some of those people have been able to break into official literature after having seriously toned down their books. Pusek, for example, has been able to publish several books. A hero in one of his books is a Pelc-like extremist who gradually mellows down and behaves himself, if only because he leaves behind the cultural underground.

*Does this young literature attempt to carry on any specific literary tradition?*

Stárek: I don't think tradition is a factor in that part of the country. It was destroyed when the entire population was replaced, as I have said before. The only [established] writers from that region are Hrabal and Páral.

*What literary form characterizes the Northern school?*

Stárek: This school is part of a world-wide trend in literature which has moved away from traditional novelistic forms and toward quasi-diaries or documentary literature, which actually isn't entirely factual but deals with concrete experience. Of course, the more classically-oriented critics don't see much merit in this kind of literature. I think, though, that in the history of art extreme tendencies have often turned out to be superior.

*What is the government's attitude toward youth culture — the punk movement, for example?*

Stárek: The punk movement is under attack. Its sympathizers



are continually arrested and prosecuted, basically because they are not like everybody else. In the late 1960s the authorities hunted long-hairs; now there are pogroms against the punks. Punk is not a mass movement, however; the underground is much more widespread. It has withstood repression and now reaches many more young people. A lot of people are part of what we call "the alternative scene," which centers around bands that are somewhere on the periphery of official activity, which means that they are allowed to perform but only in small halls or small towns, away from the big cities. They can't record and their music is not played on the radio. It is this "alternative scene" which will probably supply the underground with new recruits.

*Can you tell us more about the new music?*

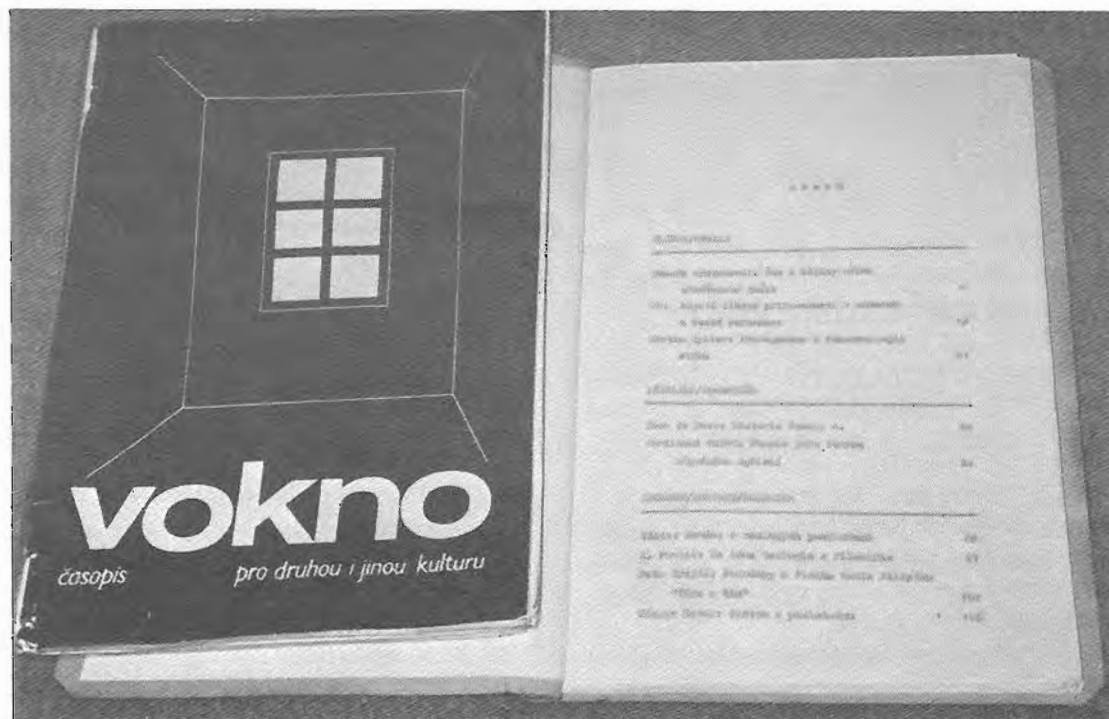
Stárek: "New Wave" music emerged in the 1980s and basically imitates the Western groups of this kind. Another new phenomenon is the influence of the folk movement on rock. What this means is that a rock group whose lyrics are incomprehensible hasn't got a chance. This is clearly a legacy of folk music, where the lyrics, artistic merit and authenticity are of prime importance. Now rock audiences also want the lyrics to be meaningful, and to express their concerns. The survival of folk music can be explained by the fact that folk-singers in the 1970s weren't subjected to the same kind

of repression that rock musicians were. So folk has been preserved by such singers as Hutka, Třešňák and the Šafrán group, whose records still come out abroad. And there are underground singers like Karasek, Dáša Voňková, Soukoup. There are a lot of singers like that because most poets still sing their poems to guitar accompaniment. And in rock, there were of course the underground bands, like "Plastic People" or "DG 307." Now there are scores of bands like that, and their recordings are distributed on cassette.

*In your opinion, how much is known in Czechoslovakia about what goes on in Poland?*

Stárek: I think that most people know quite a lot about what happens in Poland, because many listen to foreign radio stations, and besides, the Polish edition of the "Voice of America" is broadcast immediately before and after the Czech edition. A lot of people listen to the Polish broadcasts because it's easy for us to understand them. The Polish underground is not well-known here, just as our underground is probably not well-known in Poland. Among all the Czech independent cultural figures, you might be familiar with, say, Hável. Similarly, here we know only certain Polish independent figures. □

*Obecność, no. 18, Summer 1987*



# To Create Unsolvable Problems

## An Interview with Jan Urban

*Jan Urban is a member of Charter 77 and a human rights activist. In December, he represented Charter 77 at the Moscow human rights conference organized by Lev Timofeyev. He was the only dissident from Eastern Europe able to attend. Since his return he has been detained three times. Uncaptive Minds talked with him about the situation of the opposition in Czechoslovakia, which has recently stepped up its activities.*

*Uncaptive Minds: It appears that there is space opening up in Czechoslovakia for the opposition. How do you see the opposition using this space?*

Jan Urban: I don't think that we've taken full advantage of that space so far. One reason is that people have experienced 20 years of repression. The police tried to teach us during that time that it was impossible to act politically; they moved against every kind of independent activity, breaking up even private meetings. We must learn how to live freely again.

We must also learn that we are the opposition. Unlike others, I do not believe it is the opposition's job to solve the state's problems. It is our job to make problems for the state. Of course, we can point out existing problems, we can discuss the methods by which to solve the problems — but it is the government which must solve them.

An example of an unsolvable problem for the state would be my Moscow trip. It was an attempt to see how far we could go without being punished. For the government it was a dilemma because, on the one hand, it was a mistake not to arrest me, as I spoke absolutely openly and thus set an example for others. On the other hand, it would have been an even bigger mistake to arrest me because I had been highly visible in Moscow. I met with many people, among them Soviet human rights activist Andrei Sakharov. So the authorities here were more afraid of the bad publicity that would have resulted from my arrest than of the damage I could do by speaking openly. This is my goal: to create dilemmas for the regime.

*The demonstration on December 10 seems to be something new for the Czechoslovak opposition. Were there any disagreements about whether it made sense to hold this demonstration, or was everybody supportive of the idea?*

Urban: It is hard to say whether there was disagreement — I didn't know everybody who was informed that it was going to take place. But this demonstration was important because after twenty years of "normalization," and despite harassment and pressure in the form of threats of impending bloodshed and the detention of leading Charter 77 members, approximately 2,000 people demonstrated, the majority of them young people.

*Then why wasn't there any action on the 40th anniversary of the February 1948 communist takeover?*

Urban: February 1948 marks the very beginning of the problems we have to solve now. But we haven't yet dared to face this problem and say to the communists: it's not just 20 years but 40 years of mistakes. That would be going too far.

*Nobody says or writes anything on this subject?*

Urban: Some people do. Charter 77, for example, discussed putting out a document about the February 1948 takeover. But the topic proved too hot to reach a consensus. Obviously, a 40-year-old Catholic who has never been a member of the Communist Party can never agree on this subject with a 65-year-old ex-Communist. So we didn't publish anything.

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*So why do people not ask for democracy? One reason is that people don't think this is a question that needs to be asked. It is beyond discussion. We know that we need democracy.*

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*You spoke about how the opposition movement should take advantage of new opportunities. But there are differences within Charter 77 on how to go about it, concerning not only strategy and tactics, but also political goals. Some people have warned that Charter 77 would break up into various political factions if the liberalization proceeded further.*

Urban: Differences in opinion are natural. Allow me to use the analogy of a sinking ship: As long as the ship is sinking, everybody is trying to save their lives and they don't worry about



what the lifeboats look like. Only when they are close to shore can they begin to get picky about the color of their lifeboat.

*There was a recent article by Béla Faragó, a Hungarian living in Paris, who analyzed the writings of the political opposition in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia and was surprised to find that nobody demanded democracy or political pluralism. Do you think this is a sign of sovietization? Or is it due to the fact that these countries had rather bad experiences with democracy before the war?*

Urban: There are different reasons in each country for this. First of all, Czechoslovakia is the only country in Eastern Europe which experienced political pluralism for more than a few years between the two World Wars. We even had the only legally functioning communist party in the region, and a very strong one at that. So why do people not ask for democracy? One reason is that people don't think that this is a question that needs to be asked. It is beyond discussion. We know that we need democracy.

Everybody, even those of my parents' generation, has discovered after forty years that a one-party system — especially a communist one-party system — just doesn't work. Some people, of course, talk about the weaknesses of democracy during the First Republic and endorse the so-called "third way" and self-management. But this doesn't mean that we don't want democracy. We know what we don't want: a one-party system

and police state. But knowing so much about the mistakes of other systems, we just don't know yet what we would have instead.

*But don't most people in the opposition believe that, when the time is right, it would be good to demand a multi-party system? In 1956 in Hungary, people were asking to have the old Social Democratic, Christian Democratic and Liberal parties back. In Czechoslovakia in 1968, this demand was not one of the stronger currents in the general torrent of change.*

Urban: Yes, there were only a few voices in favor of re-establishing the old parties. Remember that in 1968 the Communist Party was very popular here. Unlike the Poles and the Hungarians, we trusted our Communist Party until 1968. Now, after twenty years of "normalization," people just don't believe in any party at all. However, everybody, even now, would agree on the necessity

of a free press. We think that the free expression of opinion is much more valuable than political pluralism. Of course, the free exchange of opinions and a free mass media would probably lead to political pluralism. But personally I don't care how many parties there are — I could even accept a system without any parties or a one-party system — as long as everybody has free access to the mass media. Let the Communists rule and just let us live our own lives.

*Can you describe the various political orientations that are emerging?*

Urban: There has been a real boom in this area. Everybody is fed up with waiting and now they see and smell the opportunities for being active. Husák's fall has also contributed to this. We remember fearing him for years. In 1969, we used to say that Dubček was a good person and a bad politician, and that Husák was a bad person and a good politician. But he is gone, and nobody is afraid of Jakeš. Now even members of the Communist Party at the lowest rank don't know what to do or how to behave. They want to do something, they are fed up with waiting and perceive a lot of newly-formed free space. We are now trying to establish how much free space there really is.

There are many new groups forming around political and cultural journals in Prague, in Chomutov, in Bratislava. The latest new publication comes from Brno. There is also a group which has been functioning for about a year around the *Revoly-*

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*er Revue*, which promotes independent youth culture. The people associated with it are mostly young, and are doing a very good job. They are not really connected to Charter 77 or to the Jazz Section and are quite popular among all those who are interested in independent culture, not just young people. There is a new independent theater publication, and of course *Infoch [Information about Charter 77]*, the oldest independent magazine, which is now being published in 1,500 copies, a very large print-run by Czechoslovak standards.

Another development is that independent groups, even Charter 77 itself, have more informal contacts with what we call "the official structures." Recently, for example, we received an extract from a top secret study on economic reform which was prepared for Premier Štrougal.

*Where does the Catholic movement fit in?*

Urban: It doesn't, really. They are an independent movement, much more on their own, but parallel to Charter 77. They feel closer to both the Polish Church and John Paul II. They have become political only now through that petition of 31 demands. Charter 77 has published a document supporting this petition.

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*Unlike the Poles and the Hungarians, we trusted our Communist Party until 1968. Now, after twenty years of "normalization," people just don't believe in any party at all.*

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They are using the space Charter 77 worked to open up, but they are very independent of the Charter. In the last year they have discovered their own strength and are no longer so willing to compromise with the Charter. Also, the decade of moral renewal which the Church declared is the beginning of something really important for Catholics, especially in Slovakia, which historically has been more religious than the Czech lands.

Two or three years ago, the Church was not a force to be reckoned with. Now, everybody is surprised at the number of people who signed that petition; some Charter 77 members are almost jealous, because Charter 77 could never collect so many signatures. Everybody listens and talks about the Charter but there is always the stigma of those prison terms and the police repression. Charter activities are considered risky, while it is acceptable to go to church.

*Do you also have, as is the case in Poland, people who work out of the Church, not so much because their religion is so important to them, but because the Church offers shelter?*

Urban: You must remember that up until now, the Church here did not offer any shelter at all. However, Catholic activists, not

necessarily priests, have been able to talk to people and give them hope for the past ten years or so. To understand what is happening now you have to understand the desperation and depression of ten years ago. This was the lowest point and people were looking for something to believe in – a way to survive

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*. . . if you gave these ordinary people a chance to change the system without personal risk, they would change it in 48 hours!*

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psychologically. They couldn't oppose the regime: to do so openly meant immediate imprisonment and punishment for you and your relatives. It was then that many Catholic activists started to go around giving people hope. This is something that the ex-Communists and Charter 77 don't know how to do. We are not able to go out among the common people; we are an elite. I myself work as a bricklayer, but most other Charter 77 members are either retired or work by themselves, often as stokers. And it's not just because the regime wants them to be isolated – they choose these solitary jobs themselves. Many Charter members simply don't know how to talk to common people.

Eleven years ago when I was working in a town in southern Bohemia, I was considered crazy because I belonged to Charter 77. A Catholic activist, who visited our town and spoke about hope, was highly sought after. Some people supported me, but nobody took me too seriously. Now we are not considered such a crazy group of people any more. But that was an instructive experience.

*It is said that the average Czech citizen accepts the system because the system takes care of him. People don't necessarily want to try something new, even though they might not like the Soviet occupation. Is this one of the reasons why the Charter has had a hard time dealing with ordinary people?*

Urban: My opinion is the exact opposite: if you gave these ordinary people a chance to change the system without personal risk, they would change it in 48 hours!

The situation is changing. Now, even manual laborers know that they have to work longer and harder for less pay than those poor, "exploited" West European workers they used to hear so much about. Czechs have a much better idea of how people live in the West. In fact, allowing ordinary people to visit the West has been this regime's biggest mistake. They come home not with postcards of castles or landscapes, but with pictures of butcher shops! Some ordinary communists I knew went to visit the West and came home terribly embarrassed for having been stupid enough to believe the regime's propaganda. □

# Beyond the Dissident Ghetto

*In December 1987, the first issue of Lidové noviny was published. Its appearance is notable for several reasons — one being that it is produced professionally and reproduced by printing techniques rather than the usual samizdat carbon copies. Uncaptive Minds spoke to one of the editors — who prefers to remain anonymous — about the paper and the situation of the opposition in Czechoslovakia.*

*Uncaptive Minds: Who are the people whose names appear in Lidové noviny?*

A: In the tradition of *samizdat*, the only names that appear in *Lidové noviny* are those of the editor-in-chief, Jiří Ruml, and the editorial board. We hope that all the people who are members of the editorial board are un-arrestable, since they are all more or less famous and well-known abroad. They include, among others, Václav Havel, Josef Zvěřina, who is a Catholic, Ladislav Hejdránek, who is a protestant philosopher, Petr Pithart, a former political scientist, and František Šamalík.

*Did the authorities give you any trouble with the first issue?*

A: The police confiscated all the copies, so we began to send them directly to the Bureau for Press and Publications with an application for registration. The editors had many conversations with various lawyers on the question of registration, which boiled down to a classic Catch-22 situation: we could only register our paper if we were already registered. That is, you can register a publication if your organization is registered with the National Front. Anyway, we decided to apply for registration, explain that we don't have a publisher, and ask the Bureau if they could give us one. The Bureau wrote back that it's not their business to give people publishers. Then we wrote to the Ministry of Culture and asked them for a publisher, but it wasn't their business, either. Finally we decided to found a society for the publication of *Lidové noviny*.

*Were you encouraged by the publication of the journal Glasnost in the Soviet Union?*

A: Yes, although I would point out that *Lidové noviny* began publication over 90 years ago.

*So you are a continuation?*

A: I wouldn't say continuation. The old *Lidové noviny* was a daily, and we are a monthly; there are also many other differences. The original was first published in Brno by the Stránský family, one of whom became Minister of Publications after 1948. This was a journal that was closely associated with people like Karel Čapek and Tomáš Masaryk. You can see what sort of political tradition it was associated with, and why we decided to use its name for our paper.

Actually, in 1968 everything was prepared to start publishing *Lidové noviny* as an afternoon daily. It was supposed to be like *Le Monde*. It was all set: we had an editor-in-chief, an editorial board, office space and everything else necessary. Then came August [the Warsaw Pact invasion], and everything went down the drain.

Anyway, since last year, when the idea for *Lidové noviny* came up again, we've been constantly corresponding with various bureaus and officials, trying to obtain legal status. But the government remained very ambivalent — it was never clear whether we would be forbidden or permitted to publish. The last application was submitted at the beginning of January 1988 and we were pleasantly surprised to receive a reply a month later, which was in fact an invitation to meet with the director of the Bureau of Press and Publications. And so Jiří Ruml and another member of the editorial board went to meet with him. It turned out that the officials were very nice, very polite, which was another pleasant surprise. Our people were told that publishing without registration could be regarded as a misdemeanor, but that the authorities also regard this law as obsolete. And since there were those in the government who would like this law changed, they suggested that we turn to the National Assembly and submit a legislative proposal to revise the law. They gave Ruml the necessary forms and told him that if the National Assembly takes too long or refuses the initiative, we should apply for an exception to the law. Finally, they said that within three years all newspapers would be writing as we are. I can tell you, nobody expected the meeting to go like that — it was a big surprise.

*What does Lidové noviny publish and what does it want to accomplish?*

A: What we would like, and this will be very difficult to achieve, is for *Lidové noviny* to circulate outside the dissident ghetto, that it be more than merely a Charter 77 affair. Of course, many Charter 77 signatories work on it — that's because they have the energy and initiative, and they're not afraid. But our pur-

pose and aim is to have as many people in the official structures writing for us as possible – if only anonymously, for the time being.

Another important aim, especially in economics, is to be constructive and specific. We don't want to publish general statements about the need for reform, of which everyone is aware; we want specifics, we want to know what's wrong in what industry, and what should be done to correct it. For example: There was an article about an independent lecture, at which somebody said some very negative things about the quality of food. According to the reporter who was there, the lecturer said we shouldn't drink milk or eat any dairy products. But there was nothing specific, except a few chemical names which I didn't understand. Otherwise it was like gossip; it gave rise to rumors and made many people in Prague very panicky. It's exactly the kind of article we should not have printed. Rather, we should have mentioned the dairy, the specific shipments of bad milk, and why, in layman's terms, it was bad. After all, we have to drink milk. My daughter-in-law is nursing a baby, and now she tells me she's not going to drink milk – but she has to.

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*. . . Indra, the chairman of the parliament [is] like a little child stomping his foot, saying that the Prague Spring was counterrevolution, that anybody who says anything else is wrong, that what's going on in the Soviet Union right now has nothing to do with what happened here 20 years ago, and whoever says so is a traitor.*

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Unfortunately, we often lack access to important information; we lack people who are willing to stick their necks out a little – probably because people can still lose their jobs if somebody finds out they are writing for us.

We have a section on human rights, with information on demonstrations, and legal advice for those who have problems with the authorities. In the last issue there was a description of the December 10 demonstration at the monument to Jan Hus in Prague. I wasn't there myself, because I do not like demonstrations, but they say it lasted 35 or 40 minutes. Everyone agrees it was over 2,000 people, but at least 500 were police, and another 5-600 were holiday shoppers. That leaves 1,000 demonstrators, which is a lot, because Czechs aren't demonstrators, in contrast to Poles. It was the first street protest since 1969.

*You've mentioned two of the three major events on the Czechoslovak opposition scene – Lidové noviny and the December 10 demonstration. How about the third, the petition of the Catholic Church?*

A: The Catholic petition is a very important development. I think you can explain the increased activity of various Czechoslovak opposition groups by a general decrease in the level of fear. And that can be explained by two things: the liberalization in the Soviet Union, and a mellowing of our police apparatus here at home. No better-known member of Charter 77 has gone to prison in the last two years; if they do take you in, you know it's only for 48 hours at the most. It used to be rough for the leading Charter 77 signatories whenever a foreign dignitary came to Czechoslovakia, because then they would find themselves under constant police surveillance. Just last year, there was a meeting with the American Deputy Secretary of State, John Whitehead, to which 20 people or so were invited. Ten of them were physically prevented from attending, and Havel himself was picked up on the street right in front of his home. After what happened last year, Mr. Whitehead very strongly protested to the Czechoslovak authorities, and since then the atmosphere has definitely improved.

What's going on in the Soviet Union today is also influencing the climate here. There was an article in the paper the other day by Indra, the chairman of the parliament, which was really comical. He's like a little child stomping his foot, saying that the Prague Spring was counterrevolution, that anybody who says anything else is wrong. That what's going on in the Soviet Union right now has nothing to do with what happened here 20 years ago, and whoever says so is a traitor. The authorities remain very insistent on their assessment of 1968, but otherwise it is possible to print more than three or four years ago.

Even so, regarding the Catholic petition, I never would have thought there would be so many signatures. People are generally afraid to sign things. I think under certain circumstances people will stand up and be counted, like in 1968, for example. Still, I'm very pessimistic about the future of our nation. But pessimists are always wrong: the question is when and how.

*What, in your view, are the alternatives for Czechoslovakia?*

A: Economically, above all, greater private entrepreneurship in all its forms. Politically, pluralism. But it's very surprising, the degree to which so many people – even critical, thinking people – have rejected the system of Western political democracy. There was a very interesting article by Béla Feragó, a Hungarian political scientist who lives in Paris. In it he states that in the 20th century, nobody – from the West or the East – has come out for parliamentary democracy. A major portion of his article is based on an analysis of East European *samizdat*. Everybody speaks about self-government, but nobody is willing to say that Western-style democracy is a positive thing. Churchill, for example, said that it is a terrible system, except he doesn't know a better one. I spoke to Havel about this, and he too is not willing to come out for a Western-style parliamentary democracy.

*But why would oppositionists be against democracy?*

A: Because we have had such a bad experience with parliamentary democracy in the period between the wars, which ended with Munich. It didn't work. Czechoslovakia was a multi-national state, pretending to be uni-national. We had three million Germans, whom we pretended didn't exist, until they reminded us they existed. And there were Ukrainians, Hungarians and Poles who were disgruntled to one degree or another, not to mention our brothers, the Slovaks.

Havel is willing to discuss this issue, however. He comes from a real bourgeois family: his father was an important real-estate developer, and so were his uncle and grandfather. So he has been careful to imply here and there that capitalism is a bad thing. Yet, in one of his essays he writes that the freedom to invest and to become an entrepreneur is one of the basic human freedoms. And if one isn't free economically, one isn't free otherwise.

*This is an interesting point about the inter-war period, because the Czechoslovak Republic is considered to have been one of the most successful experiments in democracy in inter-war Eastern Europe.*

A: Then bad Hitler came in and put an end to it all. Well, it wasn't that simple. Because Czechoslovakia disintegrated before

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*Many within Charter 77 still believe that the whole purpose of the Prague Spring was to have the workers running the factories themselves. As far as I was concerned, workers' self-government was a way to disintegrate centralized management. . .*

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Hitler moved in, or actually under pressure from Hitler. But you can't just blame it on Germany, just like you can't blame the last 20 years only on the Russians. It's very easy to blame it on the big guys. Of course, given Czechoslovakia's geopolitical position, there was little it could do. But the first Czechoslovak republic was in fact a failure. The Slovaks seceded, the Poles took a piece of territory, Tešín, and the three million Germans, out of a total population of ten million in Bohemia and Moravia, were instrumental in the destruction of the country. And before Hitler took the whole thing over, before March 15, 1939, there existed the so-called Second Republic, when our own, domestic fascists were victorious.

*You said that if there was too much freedom, Charter 77 would disintegrate into separate political groups. What would these groups be? Which issues would divide them? You have spoken so far about free enterprise vs. state intervention in the economy, about political pluralism, on assessing the First Republic...*

A: First of all there is a very large group within Charter 77 who are former communists and who still consider themselves socialists. This group still believes in all the ideals the Party was striving for in 1968. They think that the program at that time is still sufficient for today. On the other hand, I viewed the 1968 reforms as a clear stepping stone to something else. My view was that those events were desirable in so far as they were destructive. My close friends and I were willing to accept anything that was destructive to socialism.

Who from this group still believes in socialism? Hájek, the former minister of foreign affairs, Miroslav Kadlec, who had been minister of education, Rudolf Slánský Jr., and many, many others.

*When I met Slánský a few years ago, I have to tell you, he was speaking a language I haven't heard in years...*

A: I have great respect for Slánský; he's very intelligent. But he's a very typical member of this group, which meets at his house sometimes. They even call themselves "Eurocommunists," although we call them "Neurocommunists."

Then there's a group of — if I may use the word — Trotskyites, or rather, New Leftists would be a better label. Petr Uhl, for example. He is essentially what I would call a New Leftist, although he has been called a Trotskyite, because he studied Trotsky and had contacts with people from the Fourth International. Towards the end of a discussion with him I told him that his ideas and opinions come from 1968 — 1968 in Paris, not in Prague. That is his point of orientation. The ideas he expressed then he expresses now. Whenever I tried to point out that the world had changed, that certain non-communist countries had experienced rapid growth, such as South Korea and Taiwan, he said he never heard of them. When I told him that they had used a purely capitalistic method of development, he said he'd have to study these countries first.

Many within Charter 77 still believe that the whole purpose of the Prague Spring was to have the workers running the factories themselves. As far as I was concerned, workers' self-government was a way to disintegrate centralized management, whereas for them it was, and still is, the final goal.

*What is the strength of the environmental movement?*

A: There have been some promising inroads made in this area. I don't know if you've heard of the Slovak group *Nahlas*, which is a literal translation of *glasnost*, or "out loud." About six months ago, a group of prominent Slovaks — teachers, chemists, botanists, engineers, all from within the official structures — put together a report on the ecological situation in Bratislava. An oil refinery situated downtown together with a number of other serious polluters nearby have made Bratislava the most environmentally devastated city in Czechoslovakia, even worse than Prague or the industrial cities of northern Bohemia. The

report was published as a booklet, in 5,000 copies. 3,000 of which were confiscated. What really surprised me was not the confiscation so much as the attack on the group in the official press, which stated that the group's participants were traitors, and that their jobs would be at risk if they persisted in their activism. But by all accounts, this group was definitely not organized by dissidents; it developed spontaneously. Which is how much of this country's environmental activity has taken place so far.

In the small town of Chomutov, in eastern Bohemia, there is a foundry where pipes are made. The town was suffering from occasionally serious air pollution, so a petition was circulated that was eventually signed by 2-3,000 of the town's inhabitants,

demanding that the authorities publicly announce when temperature inversions were forecast. The authorities have complied. In Prague, schools are notified when inversions are to occur — although the public at large is still not informed of them.

The authorities are very careful. They realize that this avenue of criticism could be taken advantage of by the opposition. Also, it has the potential to draw into independent activity people who would otherwise remain silent. My daughter, for example, is very troubled by the environmental situation, and is willing to become vocal on a number of environmentally-related issues, although she has a very good job and is not especially interested in politics. □

## The Death of Pavel Wonka

*In the first issue of Uncaptive Minds, we reported on the case of Pavel Wonka, who had been released from prison in February 1988. Just after we went to press in April he was re-arrested and sentenced, and then died several weeks later. The following article is based, for the most part, on a text that appeared in issue no. 5 of the independently-published Lidové noviny, as well as information from other sources.*

On Tuesday, April 26, at 6:45 p.m., Pavel Wonka died in a prison administered by the Ministry of Justice in Hradec Králové. He was 35 years old.

He was arrested for the first time in April 1986, together with his brother Jiří, and a year later sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment to be followed by three years of "protective surveillance." The reason: his attempt to run for Parliament as an independent candidate. He considered his sentencing and imprisonment to be illegal. Since complying with the terms of his imprisonment would have been, in his opinion, an admission of guilt, he refused to work while incarcerated. This stance brought upon him the wrath of the authorities, who subjected him to all kinds of abuse. When he was released last February he was in very poor health. On principle he refused to submit to police supervision. After less than two months of freedom he was arrested again on April 5 and sentenced on April 20 to

five months' imprisonment. The authorities did not inform his family about the date of the trial or about the sentence. Wonka's condition was so serious at that time that — according to his lawyer — he had to be brought to the courtroom in a wheelchair, spoke only in a whisper, and was unable to concentrate on the proceedings. Pavel Wonka's mother, unaware of his sentencing, wrote to the Prime Minister two days before her son's death: ". . . he was very ill, weak, had digestion difficulties, and could not walk. His condition has worsened, and I'm afraid that my son's health is seriously threatened."

The authorities' behavior remained the same even after Wonka's death. His mother was informed about his death by telegram and further details reached the family mainly through foreign radio broadcasts. Two American physicians, Robert H. Lawrence and Robert S. Kirschner, members of the organization Physicians for Human Rights, concluded from their autopsies that the most probable cause of Pavel Wonka's death was pulmonary emboli, or blood clots to the lung. No physical evidence of torture or beating was found. Still, added Dr. Kirschner, "35-year-old men shouldn't be getting emboli." Dr. Kirschner said that he would look for underlying causes of Wonka's death and had requested more information about his medical history.

Pavel Wonka's funeral took place on May 6, at St. Lawrence Church in Vrchlabí. Several people who tried to attend were detained by the police, among them Václav Havel. □



# HUNGARY

The year 1988 promises to be one of the most eventful for Hungary in the last couple decades. Not only is it the year in which the "old guard" of the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party) was replaced by the younger communist leadership — an event upon which the Western media has focused — but it also marks the beginning of increased social activity, which in the long run could lead much further than the changes in the communist party.

The level of Hungarian society's dissatisfaction with the present regime has risen almost as rapidly as the national debt, which doubled in the past three years to \$17.7 billion, and which, combined with the fall in real incomes, has led to calls for reform both in and outside the party.

The change in the leadership of the HSWP, in which 76-year-old János Kádár, the party leader for the past 32 years, was replaced by Károly Grosz, the Prime Minister since June 1987, had been expected. But the extent of the changes was not foreseen. Half of the Politburo and one third of the Central Committee members were also replaced. Imre Pozsgay, the chairman of the communist-backed Patriotic People's Front, and Rezső Nyers, the main proponent of Hungary's economic reform plans in 1968 — both considered to be in favor of economic and political reform — were included in the new Politburo.

The opposition had long called for Kádár's removal and radical reform. Prior to the party conference, several opposition groups met to demand such changes. For example, the group around the independent journal *Beszélő* — which in its political program last year proposed the establishment of a social contract between the communist party and society — places some hope in a change in the top leadership. Other oppositionists, such as the philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás (see our first issue for an interview with him), do not expect much from changes in the communist party. The nature of the party is such, Tamás argues, that it will never concede legal safeguards for the limitation of its power.

Some groups in society, however, have not been biding their time in expectation of coming reforms, but have started to or-

ganize independently of the official structures to press for political and economic change.

In our first issue, we reported on the demonstration in Budapest on March 15, which drew a record 10,000 participants, the largest group of people to assemble independently since the 1956 Revolution. Below, we publish an interview about independent publishing in Hungary with Gábor Demszky, the founder of the AB publishing house, which we publish here together with his speech — followed by another speech by Gáspár Miklós Tamás — read at the demonstration by his wife Róza, after Demszky was detained by police.

On March 30, a new political organization, the Federation of Young Democrats, was founded by 37 university students, with the aim of challenging the Communist Youth League's monopoly in this area. Five members of the group were warned by the police and the public prosecutor that their association was illegal, but the authorities have not yet tried to prevent the group — which now numbers over a thousand people — from meeting.

About a hundred people representing oppositionist, environmental and religious groups met on May 1 in a Budapest restaurant to form the Network of Free Initiatives, which hopes to serve as an umbrella organization for different types of political activity. The Network grew out of a group of dissidents and intellectuals who drew up a petition — which was issued on March 17 and signed by several hundred people — calling for democracy, political pluralism and a free-enterprise system, as well as for national sovereignty for Hungary and neighborly relations with the Soviet Union.

Finally, on May 14, the first independent labor union in Hungary in 40 years held its founding meeting. The new Democratic Union of Scientific and Academic Workers, which has over a thousand members, represents researchers at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, professors at several universities and other academic workers. The independent union was formed following a 22% cut in government funding for science and education in 1987, and after many academics declared that their interests were not properly represented by the official union.

# Publishing Independently in Hungary

## An Interview with Gábor Demszky

*In the last several years, independent publishing of books in Hungary has increased substantially, largely due to the efforts of Gábor Demszky, chief editor of AB Publishers and of the journal Hírmondo. While a few other independent publishing ventures exist, AB Publishers is the leader in the field. In addition, Mr. Demszky and his wife Róza run a bookshop out of their home where they sell books and publications printed independently. The bookshop is not without its risks. In March, the police raided Demszky's home and confiscated all the books and publications they found. Uncaptive Minds interviewed him in Budapest, discussing the history of his publishing house.*

*Uncaptive Minds: Tell us how AB Publishers was established.*

Gábor Demszky: We began independent publishing activities in 1981. Our model was the NOWA publishing house in Poland, which began operations in 1977. I learned various printing techniques there in May 1981. It is ironic that the very day martial law was imposed in Poland, we put out our first publication. It was a short history of the 1956 Revolution published by the U.N. In January 1982, we put out the *Documents of Repression and Resistance* about the new situation in Poland. The three issues were in a news-journal format and included articles on the resistance to the military coup. When communications and travel to the West were cut off in Poland, our friends could still send messages by calling us or sending couriers by night trains. For instance, we were the first to get information about the Wujek mine massacre.

In 1982 we published a few volumes of books, including an edition of poems by György Petri and a novel by György Konrád about 1956, which was published in English under the title *The Loser*. We put out a lot of documents about 1956, a lot of pamphlets and essays. It was not a highly developed form of publishing in those days, mainly pamphlets and the like, not the professionally-produced books you see today. We used silkscreen and *ramka* [a variation of silkscreen developed in Poland]. We came to master the techniques, teaching others as we ourselves learned. We found out that the black market economy could help us: For money, people will print the truth. Hungary has a well-developed black market economy; independent publishing wouldn't be possible without it.

*What have you been able to print in the last year?*

Demszky: I published a lot of books, for example, three novels by Milan Kundera: *The Joke*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *The Final Authority*. I put out the Yalta series of articles from *Encounter*, Zdenek Mlynarz's *Nightfrost In Prague* and another novel by Konrád, *The Garden Party*. Of course, I also published *Hírmondo*, and also helped *Beszélő* [another independent journal]. Altogether, AB has published 150 titles, but only 50-60 actual books.

*How are your publications being distributed?*

Demszky: Mostly through informal channels. Approximately 125 people assist us with distribution, but they are always changing and some are primarily interested in the journals, not the books. The journals have a print-run of 1,500 to 2,500 copies, the books less. But the books can still have a larger distribution because they are passed on to other people. And I have to reprint some editions because they sell out. For example, I had to reprint György Faludy's *Happy Days in Hell*. It is a novel about 1956 and the emigration that followed. Sometimes it takes a year to sell 600-800 copies, sometimes they sell faster. But the journals sell very quickly, because in this period of crisis

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*I don't do this because I believe that it will help bring democracy to Hungary and I don't know if there is a "third way" for us. But what we are doing gives greater cultural freedom to five or ten thousand people.*

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people want to get information quickly. And we know that people retype the journals throughout Hungary, as we did in *samizdat* times, so their circulation is even broader.

*How much interest have the police taken in your activities?*

Demszky: A lot. From December 1982 to May 1984 I was treated to ten house searches, two trials and a number of fines. I

was charged with “insulting a public servant,” i.e. beating up two policemen — although, I assure you, the opposite was true. Each time I was given a suspended sentence. There have been many tons of books confiscated since I opened shop, and even last year there were a few confiscations. But it is the printers they want to find, not just the books. Every year one or two machines are seized. So far we’ve lost about ten machines in all, mainly duplicators but also screens.

*What do the police do with the books? I ask because in Poland they often sell them on the black market.*

Demszky: No, here they shred them. Do they really do that in Poland? I would prefer it. I don’t like the shredding of books. We protested against it and brought action against the police in a civil court for shredding books. And we won. Now they put them in a vault.

*Are the printers imprisoned?*

Demszky: No, but of course they lose their jobs, which is a very severe punishment in Hungary.

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*The quality of our political culture is very low, and the only question for many is who to hate the most: the rich, the poor, or the Gypsies. And the communists are last.*

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*Tell us about your bookstore.*

Demszky: Well, we have regular visiting hours at our home. I speak about this because it is a matter of public knowledge now, and it seems it is easier and better protection to make your address widely known, as the *Beszélő* editors did. But the police have made several raids while I was selling books, and detained several of my clients.

*Is there anything you don’t publish?*

Demszky: There is one thing that I don’t publish in the newspapers: information about confrontations between Hungarians and Soviet troops and the placement and activities of those troops. This can only bring trouble. And of course, I won’t publish any anti-semitic or anti-gypsy writings.

*Hungary seems to have a relatively free official publishing system for books. What is the purpose of publishing independently of the state?*

Demszky: Well, they don’t print everything — indeed many things cannot be published. So, one reason for publishing in-



dependently is to foster independent culture in Hungary, to enlighten people. I don’t do this because I believe that it will help bring democracy to Hungary and I don’t know if there is a “third way” for us. But what we are doing gives greater cultural freedom to five or ten thousand people.

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*The journals sell very quickly, because in this period of crisis people want to get information quickly.*

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The authorities don’t allow the truth about the 1956 Revolution to be published. And of course, we are the only ones who would publish *The Gulag Archipelago* by Solzhenitsyn, which I would very much like to do. I believe that this is one of the most important books about the history of the Soviet Union, even if I don’t agree with everything Solzhenitsyn says. It needs to be published and everyone must read it. And it is very much our business since there were many Hungarians who ended up in the Gulag.

*Happy Days In Hell* also could not be published officially. György was imprisoned from 1945 to 1947 and again after 1947. He is one of the most important Hungarian poets and writers, but none of his work is published officially. After I my edition, there were discussions about publishing his works officially, because the public became aware of him and agreed that he should be part of Hungarian national culture. So, one purpose of independent publishing is to press the official struc-

tures to go farther than they otherwise would go. In fact, we know that the official publishers will agree to print someone's work only because they know that if they don't, the author will go to the underground publishing houses and get it printed there.

*What type of censorship exists in Hungary, then?*

Demszky: There is no censorship in the strict sense of the word [i.e. there is no Censor's Office like in Poland]. It is the editors who are the censors. The editor-in-chief is chosen by the Office of Publications, Spectacles, and Performances. It is a very important job and obtained only through the *nomenklatura*, and of course they are chosen on the basis of their trustworthiness. So, the editors often try to convince authors to take this or that out.

*What are the limits?*

Demszky: It is difficult to say. But one thing is 1956. One can write about 1956, but cannot refer to it as a revolution. You can write about the "national tragedy" or something like that, and of course 1956 can be portrayed as a "counter-revolution" or "insurrection," but never as a revolution. And there was no Soviet invasion, of course.

In the field of culture, not too many books by Western authors are printed, nor by East European authors who publish independently.

*What was your motivation for starting Hírmondo?*

Demszky: I wanted to publish more frequently than *Beszélő*. Moreover, there were various points of view not represented in *Beszélő* that I believe should be heard. Also, one third of *Hírmondo* is about other Eastern European opposition movements: the Polish opposition, Charter 77 and the Soviet dissident movement. I publish many Eastern European authors, among them a number of Polish authors such as Michnik, Modzelewski, and Romaszewski. We run a number of articles from Western publications as well.

We are different from *Beszélő* in presentation and form, but also somewhat in politics. We do not differ much as far as ultimate goals are concerned, but they are more socialistic and left-oriented, whereas I am more liberal, in the classical sense of the word. But I believe it is important that there be a strong opposition, and this is why I support the *Beszélő* circle

against, for example, the Populists. And it is around *Beszélő* that the opposition has crystallized.

*What does the opposition hope to achieve?*

Demszky: We have to press for change. We are concentrating our efforts on convincing the intellectual community to change and to press for more democracy. We don't have much of a social base unfortunately, but we don't think of ourselves as a vanguard. Our demands come from society itself, from the people themselves, and we try to extend the message to the broader community. The main point is to demand something from the system.

The Hungarian intellectuals opposed to the regime are a small group. Most other intellectuals don't know what to do



— they are dissatisfied but they don't know what to demand. The quality of our political culture is very low, and the only question for many is who to hate most: the rich, the poor, or the Gypsies. And the communists are last. Nothing like in Poland. Most intellectuals don't like the regime, which is very unpopular, but they don't define it as a communist regime. They speak of the Kádár government, the ruling class, or the elite. And this is because the regime doesn't have a communist ideology. It is very pragmatic. Only on May 1 and November 7 does one read about "building socialism" in Hungary. □

# Speeches from the March 15 Demonstration

*Gábor Demszky (delivered by Róza Hodosán)*

At this historic moment, we can no longer keep silent. We must speak out against the Soviet-style dictatorship that has plunged the country into a crisis from which there is no escape.

Our entire region is deep in crisis: Ceaușescu and Jaruzelski have set their own houses on fire. Honnecker and Jakeš can only rely on the forces of coercion. And the Hungarian leadership has only been piling on the kindling.

We don't want an explosion, we want radical changes by way of bloodless reform: the curbing of excessive government power and the introduction of genuine parliamentarianism! For this we need new elections, from which will spring authentic representation.

We demand the freedom of association, which the government

strives to curtail, principally by restricting the activities of clubs and their members.

We demand freedom of assembly, so that public gatherings can occur with no more than the simple notification of the authorities.

Let democratically decided laws put an end to the authorities' intervention and arbitrariness. Instead of a party-state let us found a state of laws. We no longer want to live in fear. Through our own labor and initiative we desire to take part in the ordering of our national affairs.

At the same time, the lesson of our fate in 1956, 1968 and 1981 are the following: Our demands cannot be realized within the limits of the present political framework, but rather through the unity of the common people, in the embrace of mutual solidarity.

*Gáspár Miklós Tamás*

Not one, but three revolutions — in 1848, 1918, and 1956 — tried to attain the same goals: freedom, a system of laws that creates social peace, national independence, and a leadership to mirror an elected parliament — and through this, a place among civilized nations.

Today we are still far from these aims, and the blossoming of the stunted buds of this dictatorship would not be enough. The Hungarian nation demands at least as much today as it did 140 years ago. We desire a peaceful transition.

But this is only possible through a single means: elections. The

time of those who advance themselves to positions of power is now over. Hungarian democracy must be created from a new constitution and free elections.

Let the leaders who have lost the confidence of the people resign. The sober and strong political will of the nation can create the necessary institutions: the institutions of freedom, which cannot arise through the machinations of the police and military.

Straighten your spines! Dare! Demand! Let us end the crisis! Let us protect the Hungarians in Romania! Long live the opposition! Long live Hungarian freedom!

# ESTONIA

*In the last few years, the opposition movements of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been growing steadily more vigorous. The movements share common goals: the release of political prisoners, the protection of national culture, the achievement of greater autonomy and, increasingly, outright national independence. The Baltic countries also have similar histories, having been — after a short period of independence between the two World Wars — forcibly absorbed into the Soviet Union in 1940. Each country suffered mass deportations, and has been subjected to a russification campaign which has hardly abated even today.*

*Perhaps the most interesting developments have taken place recently in Estonia. Two years ago, Estonian national activists organized a rally to mark the 47th anniversary of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. In 1987, they founded the Group for the Disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (MRP-AEG). The Group's principal aim is to have the secret protocols of the infamous pact released and published, so as to belie Soviet claims that Estonia and the other Baltic states willingly became Soviet republics. Later that year, the Group organized demonstrations to commemorate the anniversary of Estonian independence on November 18, 1918. On June 14, 1987, the MRP-AEG marked the anniversary of the Soviet deportations, which occurred in 1941, by staging demonstrations and circulating a petition demanding that the facts of the deportations be revealed. In response to the petition and other forms of public pressure, an article appeared in the official Estonian press stating that 10,000 Estonians, 15,000 Latvians, and 34,000 Lithuanians had been deported in boxcars to Si-*

*beria on that day 47 years ago (the true figures are substantially higher). Similar demonstrations are planned for this year's anniversary of the event. The Group has been the center of opposition in Estonia and was also a springboard for those who eventually went on to form the Estonian National Party, the first independent political party to appear in the Soviet Union in recent years.*

*The Soviet response to these events and organizations has been heavy-handed. Many of the demonstrations were attacked by police, some were simply not allowed to even get started, and a few proceeded without incident. But all the activists have suffered harassment, and many have been arrested or at least detained. The authorities have also, in the last year, adopted the tactic of forced emigration; many of the original leaders of the MRP-AEG are in the West.*

*Finally, it is interesting to note the degree to which national concerns are being voiced within the Estonian Communist Party. A number of prominent Party figures, leading officials in state cultural organizations, and recently, the Estonian Lawyers' Union as a body, have publicly supported demands for enhancing the status of Estonian language and culture, and for a re-evaluation of Estonian history.*

*Below is an interview with Tiit Madisson, a founder of the Group for the Disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and a long-time activist in the Estonian national movement. After periods of imprisonment, he was forced to emigrate in the fall of 1987. He presently runs the Stockholm-based Relief Center for Estonian Prisoners of Conscience.*

## We Are Not Waiting for Gorbachev

*An interview with Tiit Madisson*

*Uncaptive Minds: Are there a lot of people in Estonia who don't speak any Russian at all?*

*Tiit Madisson: According to the last census, which was conducted in 1979, only 20% of the Estonian populace is fluent in Russian. Young people speak a bit, but they don't like studying the language. Nobody wants to be forced to learn a language. Russian is being used as a weapon against our culture;*

*our language is more and more restricted. Estonian television is down to only six hours of programming in Estonian per day — the rest is in Russian.*

*On February 2, 1920, in the city of Tartu, Soviet Russia signed a treaty with Estonia, which was independent at the time. This year Estonians decided to commemorate that anniversary and hold a demonstration.*

Madisson: Yes, in 1920 Soviet Russia recognized the borders of Estonia and renounced all claims to the Estonian Republic. But during World War II they occupied Estonia and seized Estonian lands along the border — in spite of the sanctification of that border twenty years earlier.

The Estonian Group for the Disclosure of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact [MRP-AEG] announced on Western broadcasts and with leaflets that a demonstration was to take place. The group then applied to the Tartu City Council to request permission for the demonstration. The authorities rejected the request and began to isolate each member of the Group. Some

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*Anyway, at that time I was presented with an ultimatum: emigration or Siberia. In the end I chose to emigrate, because I'd already spent six years in Siberia.*

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were drafted into the army, others were summoned to the public prosecutor just as the demonstration was about to take place. Heiki Ahonen [a leader of the MRP] was arrested on February 1 in Tallinn upon leaving the office of the draft board, where he had explained why he couldn't find work, yet couldn't join the army for moral reasons, because the Soviet Army occupies not only the Baltic states, but Afghanistan as well. He had already been a political prisoner, and later helped organize the demonstration in Tallinn on August 23, 1987, which took place simultaneously with demonstrations in Riga and Vilnius, the capitals of the two other Baltic republics. This, by the way, shows the degree to which the Baltic opposition movements are coordinated. In Tallinn about 5,000 people took part in the demonstration.

Anyway, at that time I was presented with an ultimatum: emigration or Siberia. In the end I chose to emigrate, because I'd already spent six years in Siberia.

*What for?*

Madisson: For anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. That's what the offense is called in paragraph #70 of the Soviet penal code (#68 in the Estonian penal code). I was imprisoned in 1980, just as things began to happen in Poland. We even tried to organize an independent trade union in the town where I was living at the time, Bärn, in the western part of Estonia. We distributed leaflets — that is, our underground newsheet, *The Estonian Chronicle*. Later I protested against the occupation of Afghanistan. For all that I got six years.

*Was it just a coincidence that your activity in 1980 occurred during the events in Poland?*

Madisson: No. A month after Solidarity was legalized in

August, serious rioting broke out in Estonia. In many cities Estonian youths demonstrated by the thousands. The authorities have been on guard ever since. On October 20, 1980 they locked me up, together with many of my friends. The KGB itself later admitted that the times were such — they had Solidarity in mind — that “it would have been impossible to let you remain free.”

*What significance did the Polish experience have for Estonia?*

Madisson: The nation simply rose up when the events connected with Solidarity took place in Poland. Just recently *Pravda* wrote that the Estonian Communist Party has not been dealing adequately with resurgent Estonian nationalism, that much the same thing had taken place before in 1981, and that these events had been related to the Solidarity movement in Poland. There was a great deal of interest here in that movement, and in 1981 a number of Solidarity documents were widely circulated in Estonia, which I discovered after my release from jail.

*How did this news reach Estonia?*

Madisson: Usually someone would listen to the radio, record the relevant broadcasts, and then someone else would transcribe them and make a number of copies. Tourists also brought written material directly from the West. In addition, we received information from our Russian friends in Moscow and Leningrad.

*Does the Estonian opposition maintain contacts with other non-Russian Soviet Republics?*

Madisson: “Soviet Republics” is a term that sounds rather offensive to us. The fact of the matter is that the Baltic countries are occupied — we don't regard them as Soviet, although that is their official name.

Our contacts go back to the 1960's. It was through the Gulag that we befriended Latvians and Lithuanians, and these friendships continue today. Personally, I have ties to the Lithuanian Catholic movement. I myself am a Catholic, although

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*“Soviet Republics” is a term that sounds rather offensive to us. The fact of the matter is that the Baltic countries are occupied. . .*

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the majority of Estonians are Lutherans. I also have good relations with the Helsinki group in Riga. I took part in last year's June 14 demonstration in that city [to commemorate the anniversary of mass deportations ordered by Stalin in 1941]. In addition we have close ties with Russians from Moscow and Leningrad, with whom we were imprisoned.

*But to return to the events in Tartu . . .*

Madisson: The authorities decided to make it impossible to demonstrate. They blocked the streets with buses and circled the house at 35 Vanemuise Street — where the Soviet-Estonian treaty was signed in 1920 — with hundreds of policemen in gas masks, with shields and dogs. It was the first time the police appeared in riot gear — although it wasn't the first demonstration. In 1987 there had been street protests on August 23 and again on October 21, the latter drawing 3,700 participants according to official estimates. The police were present at both these demonstrations, but they did little or nothing to hinder them. This time they clearly decided to intimidate people. The protesters first attended a meeting, which took place nearby at 46 Vanemuise Street. The tension was already building when the meeting was adjourned and people began to walk out onto the street, and then together turn toward the center of the city. At that moment the police began their attempts to disperse the crowd. Whoever straggled behind or made any kind of remark to the police was arrested. Even though, in the end, the crowd was dispersed, demonstrations took place in three different locations in the city.

*What do you think is in store for the future?*

Madisson: February 2 was only a rehearsal. The 70th anniversary of the founding of the Estonian Republic falls on February 24,\* and it will certainly be celebrated on the streets. The

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*Estonians may soon become a minority in their own land — already the percentage of Estonians in Estonia has dropped to 60% of the population.*

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authorities have already begun to organize Russians and the Communist youth into counter-demonstration brigades; the police are preparing too, of course. A propaganda campaign has begun in the press, radio and television. Yet without regard for the consequences of repression, the opposition keeps growing, because the nation has been disillusioned by the policies of the Communist Party. Just as in Poland, a National Independence Party has been formed in Estonia. The party's first press conference took place in Moscow on January 29, 1988. Sixteen members function openly, and hundreds have already joined the party's underground wing. This party will most likely be the force which will lead the way in any future opposition activity. At the moment people are optimistic. We'd like to take advantage of this mood, to win for ourselves at least the position the Poles enjoy: statchood outside the Soviet Union.

*What are the chief points of your program?*

Madisson: We would like to know the truth about what has happened in the 20th century, and before. Estonian history is

either falsified or covered up. The migration of Russians into Estonia must be stopped. Estonians may soon become a minority in their own land — already the percentage of Estonians in Estonia has dropped to 60% of the population. In some cities such as Narva or Kohtla-Järve there are no Estonians at all; over half the inhabitants of Tallinn are Russian. This process must be stopped: our borders should be closed and a law on citizenship passed. Finally, we must fight the destruction of the environment. The government is planning to mine phosphate, which would be a catastrophe. Such mining would devastate some of our most fertile lands, and would also lead to the immigration of tens of thousands of non-Estonian workers.

The most important point of the program concerns the economy. We would like to move from a planned to a market economy, so that, on the one hand, Estonia could conduct foreign trade on its own, and on the other, reduce construction of new, unnecessary factories. For the most part, raw materials are transported into Estonia and finished goods are shipped out. Our country contributes labor without getting anything in return. In agriculture, we should disband the kolkhozes and replace them with family farms.

Estonia should have its own representation in the U.N. and the Olympic Committee. An Estonian youth organization is needed, and lectures at the Universities should be held in Estonian. Our program declares that the present state of affairs cannot continue: the Estonian nation is facing extermination.

*Do you think the situation will improve for Estonia under Gorbachev?*

Madisson: Estonians never believe in what comes out of Moscow. We don't believe Gorbachev, or anyone else. Gorbachev doesn't have any other choice, because — from an economic point of view — the Soviet Union cannot continue to exist as it is now. It is already far behind the West, and cannot afford to further arm itself. Even the economists admit that the Soviet Union is on the brink of catastrophe. That's why they have to reform. And we, just as the Russian dissidents, are trying to take advantage of the situation. We've managed to accomplish a lot since last year. People are bolder, less afraid of repression; they really believe they can achieve something. And they're not waiting for Gorbachev, because since he took over, the economic exploitation of Estonia has worsened — precisely since Gorbachev's visit to Tallinn in February. So we're not counting on anything from Moscow. □

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\* On February 24, approximately 1,500 people demonstrated in front of the Tallinn town hall, waving the blue, black and white of the Estonian national flag. Speeches were made. The police did not intervene. Streets leading away from the downtown square where the demonstration took place were blocked off, however, and the city was closed to Western journalists. A number of activists from the Estonian Group for the Disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact were detained for several hours during the demonstrations.



# The Struggle for Change, the Reaction to Change

From Lithuania to the Kamchatka Peninsula

Robert Van Voren, a staff member of the Second World Center in Amsterdam, contributed this special report. A journalistic essay written in April, it expresses the widespread fear among Soviet dissidents that the authorities may soon decide not to tolerate genuinely independent initiatives. Indeed, after this essay was written, Grigoryants' *Glasnost* was crippled by a number of administrative measures, including the confiscation of one of its two computers.

"With at least 60 unofficial publications, and perhaps even more independent and dissident groups, the human rights movement in the Soviet Union has assumed unprecedented proportions. It no longer can be compared with the dissident movement of the 1970s." Larissa Bogoraz says this with hope. Less than fifteen months ago, she lost her husband, the well-known writer Anatoli Marchenko, who died on December 8, 1986 in the Christopol prison after a long hunger strike. At that time he had already been imprisoned for twenty years, with ten more years in camps and internal exile ahead of him. Larissa Bogoraz and her son, Pavel Marchenko, did not stop their work. Their home has become a meeting place for dissidents, and a source of help for the persecuted. Visitors come and go; the telephone rings incessantly.

The same scenes can be found all over the Soviet Union, including the publisher's office of the journal *Glasnost* — until now the most outspoken dissident paper. The telephone never stops ringing, reports of violations of human rights are transmitted, and statements are read. People from all parts of the country come and go. One person asks for help in his struggle against unlawful treatment, the other comes to get copies of *Glasnost* to distribute in the provinces. In the meantime the print-run has increased to 2,000 copies, says the publisher, Sergei Grigoryants. "An Armenian translation has also appeared, and issues in other languages are in preparation. The journal is now being distributed in about forty cities throughout the country." In response to the question as to what the future holds, he could not give an unequivocal answer. He agrees with Bogoraz that the movement has grown with astonishing speed, and that this time it is rooted much more deeply and widely in society. "Initially, *glasnost* came from the top down, but now we see it is coming from the bottom up, from the people themselves. People have begun to think

independently, they have broken their silence. This means that our movement has gained broader popular support, and thus is a great deal more difficult to suppress."

Grigoryants does, however, fear a new wave of repression, and he is not the only one. The feeling that the situation has gotten out of hand, that the authorities are in danger of losing control over society, is shared by many. Besides, the economic situation continues to deteriorate. While the authorities are now following a much more conservative policy regarding openness, *glasnost* is moving ahead in the press. As a result, a wider gap is developing between what the authorities want and what the press is willing to print. The authorities can no longer automatically expect its support and obedience. "Already there have been several instances when Soviet journalists have been attacked by the authorities. They have even been denounced as 'irresponsible idiots,'" says Grigoryants.

The telephone rings. Estonia is on the line. A person has again been arrested for defaming the Soviet State. Only his name is known: Zholbin. He is said to have distributed pamphlets. Houses have been searched; people have been summoned for questioning by the KGB.



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According to Grigoryants, the situation in the Baltic countries is extremely tense — an opinion that was confirmed a few days later by a former political prisoner, Yiri Butchenko. He had just returned from Lithuania, where he took part in a demonstration on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Lithuania's independence on February 16. In Lithuania's second largest city, Kaunas, thousands demonstrated that evening; several demonstrators were beaten, others were arrested. Butchenko also spent a few hours at the police station. "In Kaunas you don't have to do much to organize such demonstrations," he said. "That city is so rife with national feelings that a single leaflet is enough.

The authorities no longer know what to do. They are already doing everything possible to discredit the movement."

Indeed they are. Shortly before the February 16 demonstrations, a rumor was spread that "bourgeois nationalists" intended to murder seventy communists on that day, one for each year of Soviet rule. And the evening before the demonstration, a movie was shown on television about a Lithuanian priest, Alfonsas Svarinskas, who is serving a ten-year prison sentence. In the film, Svarinskas is shown in camp clothes — a unique event. Excerpts from underground publications are included. At first, nobody knew why the film was being shown. Only at the end, after the filmmakers had hinted that Svarinskas would soon be banished from the country, did the authorities' reasoning become clear: Svarinskas is accused of betraying fellow partisans, with whom he fought against invading Soviet forces in 1944. Svarinskas was arrested in 1946 and sentenced a year later, languishing in prison camps until 1955. Scenes from his interrogation were shown on television, designed to make it appear that he had betrayed fellow partisans in 1946. He was not given a chance to say anything, nor was anything said about the fact that this "confession" was obtained from him with the help of torture. In any case, accusing Svarinskas of betraying anti-communist partisans is rather strange, because — if he really betrayed the partisans — shouldn't he have been a Soviet patriot in the eyes of the propagandists?

In every conceivable way the authorities are trying to foster the impression that the leaders of the nationalist movement in Lithuania were former Nazi collaborators, untrustworthy people, or traitors, now well along the way to becoming terrorists — which would explain the rumor that seventy communists were going to be murdered. It also would explain why the authorities falsely reported that — after the demonstrations in Lithuania on February 16 — two policemen were shot dead and three others wounded from a passing automobile. The dissidents are convinced it was a provocation. They fear that the authorities are using this press campaign to prepare the public for a new wave of repression, which would enable them to regain control over developments. The dissidents, in turn, are trying to establish themselves as securely as possible, to obtain the widest possible support. In Lithuania they have already established close contacts with the Catholic Church, which supports many of the dissidents' demands. It is hoped that there will soon be an independent Church press and publishing house.

In other parts of the country, too, groups are forming, demonstrations are taking place, and new papers — no longer just reprints of Moscow and Leningrad newspapers — are being published in the provinces. The Siberian city of Sverdlovsk now has three independent papers, and Krasnoyarsk, a city farther to the east, has one. In the magazine *Rocker*, an underground publication devoted to rock music, there are even contributions from the Kamchatka peninsula, at the easternmost limit of the Soviet Union. In *Rocker*, much space is devoted to the "Lyubery" phenomenon, named after gangs of rootless youths in the Moscow satellite city of Lyubersty, which have

developed into what could be called the "shock troops" of the authorities. They are sturdily-built members of the Communist youth organization Komsomol, smartly dressed with a Lenin pin on their coats, who emerge at unofficial pop concerts to beat up as many people as possible. When present, the police look on without doing anything. When they are summoned, they arrive "by chance" only after the Lyubery gangs have disappeared. Some people have compared these "shock troops" with the SA in Hitler's Germany.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the authorities will do no more than tolerate independent activities, and that they are not yet ready to enshrine the right to engage in them in law. "If the authorities are not willing to formally acknowledge [the new journals and organizations], we must look out for ourselves," said an ex-political prisoner, who prefers to remain anonymous. "Our job is to see that this becomes a mass movement before the authorities get the chance to wipe us out. If we succeed, the situation will have changed structurally, and the unchallenged power of the Soviet government will be broken." □



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