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Czechoslovakia
Civil Society During the "Prague Spring"

Ukraine
Still Fighting After Seventy Years

Poland
Independent Culture Under *Glasnost*

UNCAPTIVE MINDS

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on Eastern Europe

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Teheran, Warsaw, Prague

By Jakub Karpiński

Jakub Karpiński is a sociologist and historian of post-war Poland. He was one of the leaders of the Polish student movement in 1968 and was imprisoned two and a half years for his activities. His articles on Poland and Eastern Europe have appeared in numerous publications.

Teheran. The name has an ominous ring not only for Americans who remember the hostage crisis. Forty-five years ago the three leading political figures of the world met there to discuss the political geography of post-war Europe. Although, according to Churchill, the American and Soviet standpoints were particularly close to begin with, all three delegations finally came to an agreement and decided the fate of East Europeans without even bothering to ask their opinion. The effects of these decisions have lasted for nearly half a century, and no one knows how much longer they will last.

The 1945 Yalta agreement is popularly regarded as the conference at which the post-war frontiers of Poland were determined, but the groundwork for those borders was already laid in 1943. Decisions concerning the post-war frontiers in Poland were made in Teheran without any consultation with the Polish government in London, and without even informing the Poles *post factum* about the results of the Teheran meeting. This was a clear signal to Stalin. If the frontiers of Poland could be decided without the Poles, the question of what form its government would take was also open, and the Polish government-in-exile could be ignored. And if the question of governmental form was open in the case of Poland, it could safely be assumed that it was also open with regard to other countries in the region — especially Germany's East-Central European (more or less compulsory) allies: Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

From 1943 on, some Western opinion-making centers started to talk about the unruly Poles standing in the way of a Soviet-Western *entente cordiale*. In 1943, the Polish government-in-exile wanted to know more about the mass graves of Polish officers discovered near the Byelorussian village of Katyn. In 1944, while the Red Army was entering Poland, the Polish Home Army and the underground authorities fought the Germans and tried to establish Polish rule independent of the

Soviets. These efforts culminated in the Warsaw uprising, which was crushed in October 1944 after two months of fighting. The Soviet argument of force prevailed, and by late 1944 it became clear that a Soviet-backed government would be installed and that an enormous area of Eastern Poland would be swallowed by the Soviet Union, since her territorial claims were backed by the Western powers. Though England went to war as an ally of Poland, its alliance with the Soviet Union proved to be stronger, and led her to disregard the Atlantic Charter's condemnation of territorial changes made without the agreement of all interested parties. During the war, Poland's Western allies changed their commitments, and towards the end of the war, Poland — as well as other countries of the region — were to be transformed by the Soviet army and the police, and by the new government which they helped set up, in which communists occupied key positions. Despite all that was said about the importance of the economy, in the immediate post-war period the communists, wherever they were members of multi-party governments, preferred the posts controlling the police to the ones controlling industry, agriculture, and commerce — which they took over later anyhow.

According to the Soviets, not everybody was to be included in people. Elections did not imply a choice. Freedom had to be guarded against abuse, and therefore regulated with the help of penal decrees and prisons.

The post-war political map has to a large extent been shaped by Soviet-German agreements and military incursions in 1939 and 1940. The partition of pre-war Poland and the Soviet incorporation of the Baltic states and of the former Romanian territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina — all happened in 1939 and 1940; in 1944 the Soviets merely returned to take back what they had taken earlier. By acquiescing at Teheran to the Soviet demands for Polish territory, the Western powers signaled their lack of opposition to any future Soviet moves in Eastern Europe, which were to range from outright annexation to careful and gradual Sovietization.

Another anniversary is worth remembering: that of the 1948 Communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia. The February 1948 coup marked the end of the process of the political subjugation of those countries which the Red Army entered at the end of the war.

According to some political commentators, the post-war plight of Eastern Europe was essentially the result of a misunderstanding. The Soviets understood such words as *people*, *election*, *free*, *democratic*, or *patriotic* differently than their Western interlocutors. According to the Soviets, not everybody was to be included in *people*. *Elections* did not imply a choice. *Freedom* had to be guarded against abuse, and therefore regulated with the help of penal decrees and prisons. *Democracy* meant an understanding of the true needs of the people, which needs the communists were able to define without the people's help. *Patriotic forces* in a given country were those on whom the Soviet leaders could rely.

The words *patriotism*, *democracy* and *national liberation* flourished in the official language towards the end of World War II and in the early post-war years. The *Fatherland Front* ran for elections in Bulgaria, the *National Front* in Czechoslovakia, the *Democratic Bloc* in Poland. The communists controlled all these *fronts* or *blocs*, and in their propaganda they stressed continuity rather than revolution, and democracy and nationalism instead of communism. This pattern was repeated in the phraseology and tactics of the communists during the decolonization of the sixties and seventies in Africa and Asia. In the ideological imagery of the 1940s in Eastern Europe, the Germans played a mobilizing role as a defeated but potentially dangerous enemy — a role which the ex-colonial powers later assumed. Hatred towards the Germans was exploited, aggravated in the media, and used in internal political struggles. Those

In the field of ideas, the defeat of communism is almost total: Once again they are using the national and democratic vocabulary of the immediate post-war era.

who disagreed with the regime were often depicted as former Nazi collaborators, or accused of supporting post-war German revanchism (especially in Poland, where the German threat has been exploited until very recently). Occasionally genuine, but usually fictitious, links between the opposition parties and the former German authorities were denounced by communists who dispensed "people's justice" — especially in the former axis countries: Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. In this respect, there was no equivalence: close collaboration with the Soviets was praised and did not constitute a political crime (except in Yugoslavia after 1948).

The desired political changes were achieved ultimately by pure physical force. The communists had at their disposal the Soviet army, prisons, labor camps, deportations and death sentences. Soviet advisers, with ample experience, made the decisions. Their suggestions or orders dealt with the art of sovietization and the appropriate pace of change: when to eliminate peasant-populist parties (generally in 1947), how to influence socialists and when to unite them with the communists (generally in 1948), when and how to launch a campaign against private commerce, private agriculture, and the churches (in these respects the pace varied from country to country).

The use of physical force was visible enough, but efforts were made to hide it with a *democratic* facade. Although certain pre-war political parties were not legalized at all, or were eliminated almost immediately, the various peasant parties were temporarily spared and became the dominant opposition forces in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania until their demise in 1947.

Terror was accompanied by persuasion and ideology. The official ideological atmosphere of the 1940s was mostly *nationalistic*, *democratic* and *progressive*, though these terms acquired martial connotations, since they were always used in conjunction with a struggle against an enemy (the concept of the enemy was more and more inclusive). Around 1949, the official ideology became more openly communist, and this process encompassed art, the humanities, and even science.

Now, forty years later, the nations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union still live under the burden of a Stalinist system which was shaped and imposed on them in the forties. With increasing frequency, independent voices are heard demanding a renegotiation and dismantling of Stalin's legacy to Eastern Europe. What was gradually lost in the 1940s is now being regained by independent movements, groups and organizations. People are aware of the need of independence for their groups and organizations, for their ideas — yet the communists seem to be stronger now and far better organized than forty years ago.

The idea of *national* or *patriotic* fronts has been officially launched once again, but brute force has not ceased to be the ultimate refuge of irritated — or frightened — communists. A comparison of the Czechoslovak *coup* in 1948 with General Jaruzelski's martial law in 1981 shows just how effectively technology and modern organization can be employed.

In the field of ideas, the defeat of communism is almost total; once again they are using the national and democratic vocabulary of the immediate post-war era. They have not ceased, however, to guard key positions of power, so that the *correlation of forces* is in their favor. One can assume that the struggle for East-European independence will be long unless East-Europeans themselves formulate their demands and are able to back them with strong, independent organizations, and unless the West sees its interest in the renegotiation of the Stalinist order in Europe. □

The People and Civil Society During The "Prague Spring" of 1968-69

By Vilem Prečan

None of us is aware of all the potentialities that slumber within the soul of the people...and the surprises that the public holds in store for us. Who, for instance, at the time of Novotný's decaying regime...could have anticipated that in the space of half a year genuine civil awareness would stir within that selfsame society or that a year later a society so recently apathetic, sceptical and demoralized would resist foreign invasion with such audacity and resourcefulness!

—from *The Long-distance Interrogation*, by Václav Havel

The following article, written in April 1988 for the international colloquium "The 'Prague Spring' and its Repercussions in Europe," concentrates on the role of Czechoslovak society at selected moments in that turbulent chain of events in the late 1960s. To refresh the reader's memory: The Stalinist regime of Antonín Novotný came to a close in January 1968 when Alexander Dubček took over and initiated a process of liberalization which, by the summer of that year, had led to the formation of non-Party clubs and associations, the democratization of official clubs and associations, the partial democratization of the Communist Party itself, local government elections, an end to censorship, and other substantial reforms. On the night of August 20, 1968, Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia, and the next morning Dubček and the rest of his government were arrested and flown to Moscow. Under duress, they signed an agreement known as the Moscow Protocol, according to the terms of which they were allowed to return to power, provided they purge officials whom Moscow considered unreliable and dismantle the majority of reforms which had been undertaken during the course of the last six months. On August 27, the Czechoslovak leaders returned to their country, which had been left without a national government for a week — the "seven days" to which Prečan refers. The remnants of the reforms, as well as the men responsible for them, lingered in public life for varying periods of time afterwards, until Gustav Husák replaced Dubček in April 1969 and began the final stage of the "normalization" — the total elimination of the "Prague Spring" from the Czechoslovak political landscape.

Vilem Prečan is one of the Czech historians who, in the 1960s, began to call for a "cult of historical truth" to replace the old "cult of the personality." His position at the Historical Institute of the Czechoslovak Communist Party put him at the heart of many of the era's controversies. He has since emigrated and now lives in West Germany.



Demonstrators wave the national flag.

As early as March 1968 it is possible to talk about the re-birth of "civil society" and of independent public opinion in Czechoslovakia. All the existing social organizations, interest groups, professional associations and clubs of every kind broke free fairly rapidly from the Stalinist-Leninist "transmission belt" model, and, as free entities, strove for independence from the power structures of the Communist Party. In the process, they were able to clarify their own specific interests and goals, which strengthened their avowed resolve to become independent social entities. Many who until then had been branded as unreliable or hostile elements, such as former political prisoners and members of religious orders or other ecclesiastical communities disbanded in the early fifties, demanded to be heard.

New interest groups came into being alongside ad hoc citizens' initiatives and groups that were set up on a permanent basis. With the discovery of the U.N. Covenant on Civil and



A Soviet tank stands guard in front of the bullet-ridden National Museum.

Political Rights, a steering committee was set up with a view to establishing a human rights association, which was intended to be a grassroots initiative. Self-government was rediscovered in the original sense of the term, and work got underway on specific proposals for implementing it in various spheres of public life. In other words, a whole infrastructure of autonomous organizations and institutions — and of those striving for their independence — came into being, laying the foundations for political and social pluralism.

It would be worthwhile to examine in detail just how strong were the foundations of that new pluralism in Czechoslovak society — a pluralism that seemed to arise spontaneously in the course of 1968, and which paradoxically grew stronger after the August invasion. An additional point to be explored is to what extent that pluralism hampered the initial efforts to restore the totalitarian order, as a result of which large segments of the cultural and academic community enjoyed the freedom to create and publish until the spring of 1970.

I am not sure one can truly speak of the incipient rebirth of civil society in Czechoslovakia at that time, but there is no doubt in my mind that there was a tendency to move in that

direction: an aspiration on the part of various social entities to lay the basis for a civil society — though the term “civil society” was not in use then.

Civil society and public opinion generally assert themselves independently of the state. However, a specific feature of Czechoslovakia in 1968 — and one of the catalysts that helped bring an independent public opinion into existence and encouraged the first elements of a genuine civil society — was the need to assert the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state. The need for sovereignty was increasingly regarded — and I am still referring to the pre-invasion period — as a necessary condition for the irreversible (i.e. institutionally guaranteed) transcendence of the totalitarian system.

At a certain point — and it must have been by the beginning of the summer — “independent society” ceased to be a mere forum for discussion (and a fragmented one at that) and started to exert more concentrated pressure on the centers of political power and on the Communist Party apparatus.

Independent public opinion was particularly worried that a point would be reached at which even the “new regime” (i.e. the pro-reform sections of the Communist leadership and ap-



"On this spot a 14-year-old boy died fighting the foreign occupiers."

parat) would consider any further demands by society to be incompatible with the "leading role of the Party," even if the apparatchiks interpreted that role more liberally than they had for the previous twenty years. Independent public opinion was also worried that the reform leadership would succumb to outside pressure. In other words, the fear was widespread that the party and state leadership would be incapable of respecting or effectively asserting the Czechoslovak people's right to run their own internal affairs, and that if it came to a tug-of-war between their two loyalties, the leadership would give priority to the interests of "socialism" and "international commitments" — which meant obeying Moscow's instructions.

The need was increasingly felt to put pressure on the leadership to respect the public will, particularly as tension grew between the "new regime" in Czechoslovakia and the opponents of the "Czechoslovak revolution" elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. The most impressive manifestation of this need prior to August was the mass petition delivered to the Czechoslovak delegation before it left for its meeting with the Soviet Politburo at Čierna nad Tisou at the end of July. Of the four slogans

of the day — Socialism, Alliance, Freedom, and Sovereignty — the last two became increasingly important. Freedom and sovereignty: these were what mattered.

* * *

Those "seven great days" from August 21 to 27, 1968, when the entire nation took part in the movement to resist the invasion, never would have happened without the events of the preceding six months, when an independent society and independent public opinion were created, along with the aforementioned infrastructure of newly autonomous social entities. It would also have been impossible without the growth of civic and national awareness within all sections of society, particularly during July and those first three weeks of August. Nonetheless, right up to August 21 the train of events was still determined essentially by measures taken by the national leadership, while the civil society-in-the-making was gradually transformed from a mass of sceptical onlookers into an increasingly self-confident public opinion which influenced the deliberations of, and exerted pressure on, the political and administrative establishment.

However, it was not until the events of August 21 that virtually everyone became involved, and a movement was created which embraced the entire nation. This gave rise to that remarkable interim period of those seven days plus the following seven months: between what at the time was called "the renewal process" and actual "normalization," when the restoration of the old real-socialist order began in earnest. Paradoxically, those seven days and the subsequent seven months were a period of the greatest freedom the Czechoslovak people has enjoyed since 1948.

That remarkable interval of freedom in the shadow of Soviet tanks was possible only because, at the moment of the invasion, the sovereign people of Czechoslovakia spontaneously took their country's fate into their own hands in a national uprising.

My intention here is not to detract from the importance of the declaration made during the night of August 21 by the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. It was of the utmost importance that the supreme organ of power in the land could issue a statement unequivocally repudiating the country's occupation by foreign troops and condemning it as an act contravening international law. It stamped the seal of legitimacy on the people's resistance from the outset and facilitated the unification of popular and institutional resistance, thereby fostering a sense of unity between the people and the country's political leadership.

In all other respects, however, the inaction of the country's supreme leadership at such a critical moment was astounding. No decisions or instructions for action, with the exception of "Remain calm, do not resist, and wait for the National Assembly, the Government, and the Central Committee to review



A Soviet tank labeled "Dubček."

the situation." Even twenty years later, we haven't discovered a shred of evidence that anyone among those eight men who voted in favor of the statement in question had any inkling of the possibility of a Soviet intervention. There is nothing to indicate that any of them had prepared — as part of their duty as statesmen — any sort of plan to deal with such an eventuality, or that any of them suggested withdrawing to their well-equipped and impregnable government bunker from which the country could have been run for a lengthy period.

When the moment of crisis arrived, the most powerful person in the state, Alexander Dubček, was not prepared for action. When asked his advice by the Secretary of the Communist Party's Prague Municipal Committee, the officers of which were then meeting to discuss the possibility of organizing a general strike the next day, Dubček intimated that there was nothing to do but wait until the Soviet leadership arrived for talks and until the Central Committee had had a chance to discuss matters.

The first broadcast statement of the President of the Republic (who was also the country's supreme military commander), nine hours after the beginning of the invasion, said even less than the above-mentioned statement of the

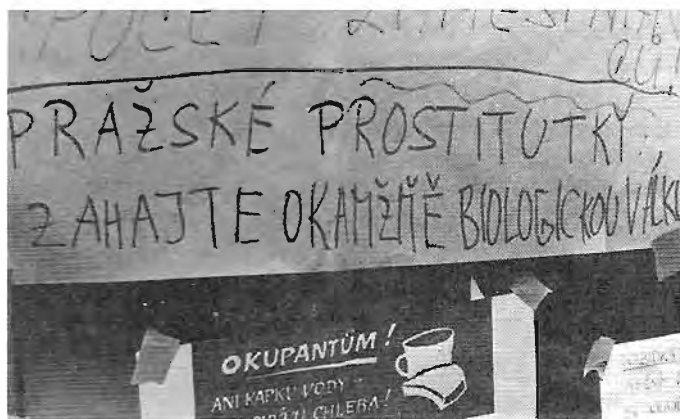
previous night. The President made no mention of whether or not he endorsed the Presidium's statement condemning the invasion, and the only appeal he made to citizens was for them to observe "complete restraint" and "absolute calm," to avoid any "rash actions," and to wait for the instructions which the constitutional authorities would give.

But in the meantime, "the people" — youngsters, workers, and employees of the mass media — had already begun to take action without any central guidance. The rising of the whole nation, the civilian resistance, the unequivocal condemnation of the occupation, the demand for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the boycott of the occupation forces, the refusal to take part in any kind of political collaboration, the demand for the reinstatement of the kidnapped statesmen and party leaders, and the expressed determination to continue with the renewal process already commenced — all provided the basis on which nationwide unity and solidarity were built in the course of the next few days.

It was a resistance movement that was to bring together representatives of all generations, social groups, and nationalities. One element of it was official resistance on the part of



"Go Home"(In Cyrillic) "We Want Freedom and Democracy"



"The prostitutes of Prague declare biological warfare." "To the occupants! Not a drop of water - not a crust of bread."

the constitutional and other national institutions — in so far as they were able to organize anything — as well as of Czechoslovakia's diplomatic representatives, particularly on the floor of the U.N. Security Council. Another component of the movement was the Vysočany Congress [the extraordinary congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which met in secret during the "seven days" and voted to condemn the occupation] and the activity of local branches of the Communist Party machine and its various organizations.

Though this resistance was unarmed, it was by no means passive. It proved how difficult it is for an armed aggressor to vanquish a country when it is ignored by all the civic structures. The role played in the resistance movement by the radio and the other communications media has also been documented in detail, demonstrating the real political power they have to coordinate the life of society.

Popular resistance, in the broadest sense of the word, continued to play a key role on the Czechoslovak political stage for the next seven months, even after "normal life" was bru-

tally restored at the end of August 1968. This movement ebbed and flowed, new initiatives appeared among various segments of the population — and much was yet to come: the students' strike against Smrkovský's dismissal as speaker of the National Assembly, the funeral of Jan Palach [a student who immolated himself in January 1969 to protest the invasion], and the spontaneous anti-Soviet demonstrations following victories by Czechoslovakia over the Soviet Union in ice-hockey. The movement displayed no single clear attitude to the national political leadership. On the one hand, the government's actions were tolerated (e.g. the agreement on the temporary stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia), but at the same time society forced the government to tolerate its actions as a form of authorized civil disobedience.

April 1969 marked the beginning of a new era. Freedom, however, did not cease to exist all at once. "Order" was restored in different areas of public life at different times and in different ways. There was only one further occasion when the people spontaneously took to the streets, and that was in August 1969 to mark the first anniversary of the invasion. But this is another story, about which I will have more to say towards the end of my paper.

* * *

Amazingly enough, the memory of those great moments in the history of Czechoslovakia is fresher elsewhere in the world than in the historical consciousness of Czechoslovaks themselves. The least one can say is that it was such a traumatic experience that people still resist attempts to come to terms with it.

Why should this be? Is it because all the efforts of Czechoslovak society in 1968 came to naught? Is it because the August movement, which united the whole nation against the Soviet Union's attempt to solve the "Czechoslovak question," had such short-lived success and was virtually dissipated by the capitulation of the national leaders? Is it because the people's newly-created civic awareness, their revived faith in the strength of the nation, and their hope in the future turned out to be an illusion when — in spite of all declarations to the effect that "we will never abandon the path we have taken" — their solidarity and resolve were betrayed?

This gives rise to a number of considerations which are a part and parcel of the truth about the "seven great days" in particular, and the "Prague Spring" of 1968-69 in general. How is it that the popular movement disintegrated so soon? How is it possible that "normalization" could be implemented so quickly? When and why did the people (i.e. the absolute majority of the population) give in? Their capitulation was as surprising and unexpected as were those illustrious movements of 1968, particularly at the time of the "seven great days."

I do not regard the abatement of activity and the erosion of solidarity among the broad mass of the people as well as their



A car flattened by a tank.

adaption to the "conditions for the normalization of real socialism" as the outcome of some "social contract," frequently referred to in certain learned books as well as superficial journalism. Nor do I believe it to have been a matter of cynical self-interest of the "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" variety, whereby people were to get a decent standard of living in return for their loss of political rights. In my view, what gave rise to the millions of private capitulations in Czechoslovakia from 1969 to 1971 — which left in their wake traumatized, distraught, and demoralized people who ostensibly conformed to the rules of "real" socialism (in other words, "living a lie") — was deep disappointment stemming from the capitulatory policies of the "leaders" of the Prague Spring.

It took Moscow no longer than 48 hours after the launch of its invasion to realize that if the most critical phase of restoring normality in Central Europe — in the sense of a "pax sovietica" — was to be accomplished successfully, it was going to need Dubček and the other "progressive" leaders it kidnapped, as well as those who — though left to go free — condemned the invasion and military and political plan of "fraternal assistance." In other words, help in implementing Mos-

cow's policies was to come from those people who had gained their popularity precisely by standing up to the Soviets and who had been returned to their state and party offices thanks to the people's defiance.

The Soviet leaders needed to pacify the mass of the Czechoslovak population as quickly as possible because their campaign of non-violent resistance was attracting increasing world-wide attention, and because they regarded any further internationalization of the Czechoslovak issue as undesirable. The people were therefore given back their leaders after the latter had signed the Moscow Protocol, whereby they promised to "restore order" in the Soviet sense. No doubt they signed it unwillingly (and some of them were subsequently racked with Hamlet-like doubts), but when they were asked to sign, they didn't hesitate too long. Afterwards, they continued separately in office just so long as they remained useful to the Russians; when their usefulness came to an end, the Russians dumped them, or at least made it clear that they were no longer acceptable. Each of these Czechoslovak leaders was allowed to stay on just long enough to help prepare the next stage in the pacification of the popular movement. Perhaps some of them could be convinced that their

was no alternative, or that something could still be salvaged if they were clever enough, yet continued to govern in good faith. Nevertheless, each of them behaved with that astounding absence of political vision which has characterized Czech statesmanship for the past fifty years.

The solidarity and determined resistance of the broad mass of the people, born of August 1968, were gradually stifled over the next few months. The so-called "realistic" policies of the reformist leadership pointed the way and helped fashion the attitudes of the man in the street, in terms of national politics and the microcosm of daily life. Forces ready and willing to restore totalitarian power according to a Soviet blueprint came to the forefront as a traumatized populace looked on — a populace which had been gradually pacified and disoriented by its "national heroes." The initial solidarity slogan of the people, "We're standing by you, you stand by us," began to sound more and more like a desperate plea, until it finally faded away.

As a result, a feeling of futility, disillusionment and revulsion gradually took hold of society, helping to create the necessary social and psychological conditions for the restoration of an authoritarian regime, while avoiding mass conflict. It only remained to teach a lesson to those members of the population, particularly the young, who were still holding out against the pressure to retreat into their private lives — and to show them who owned the streets. The opportunity came in August 1969 on the anniversary of the invasion. However, this time it was not Soviet, Bulgarian, Polish, etc. troops and tanks, but special units of the Czechoslovak security corps, tank units of the Czechoslovak army, the Czechoslovak police and members of the Czechoslovak "people's militia" which, through the use of force or the threat of force, dispersed the commemorative demonstrations in the cities and towns of their homeland.

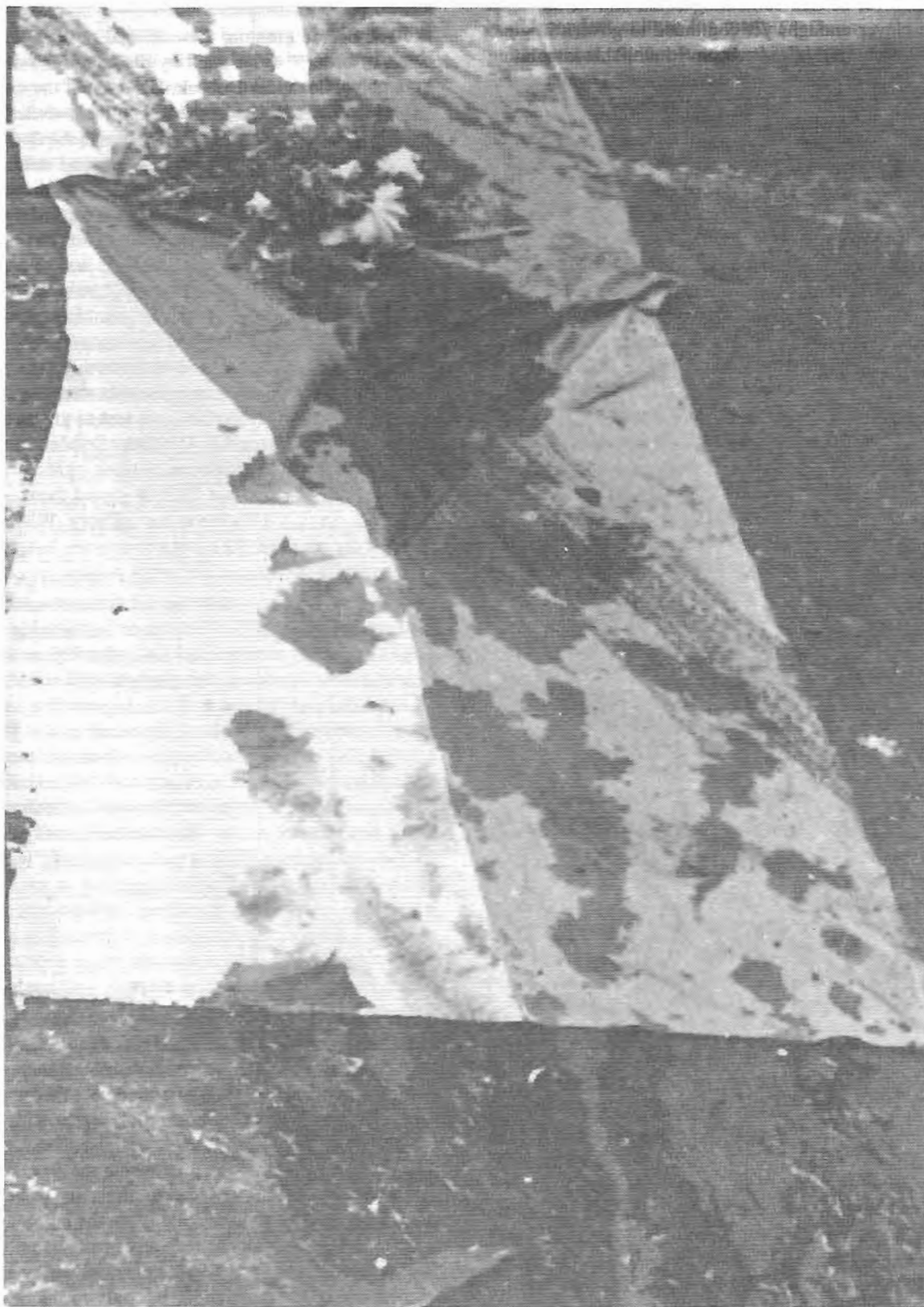
By that time radio, television and the press in Czechoslovakia were already consolidated, i.e. "regimented," and the lesson meted out to the people was hailed by those in the media as "repelling an enemy assault." On August 22, 1969 the Federal Assembly passed emergency legislation, valid until the end of that year, ostensibly to protect "the public order" from "anti-socialist and anti-social elements." The police were given temporary powers to detain arrested persons for up to three weeks. Magistrates (instead of the regular panel of judges) were empowered to try cases of so-called "political misdemeanors" — incitement, slandering the state or the "world socialist system," etc. — as well as everything else that could come under the heading of "offenses against public order." There were no pre-trial proceedings, which meant that the counsel for the defense was not briefed until the trial itself. In the case of "offenders against public order," the Labor Code was suspended, and the state authorities were given the right to suspend the activity of organizations or even to disband them. Under these emergency powers, students could be expelled from school or university, teachers could be instantly dismissed, and professors could be fired from the academy of sciences if they did anything to "harm the socialist order" — according to the terms of ex-

tremely elastic emergency regulations.

The decree granting these special powers for the "restoration of order" was signed by the Chairman of the Federal Assembly, Alexander Dubček. His was not the only signature, of course: the President of the Republic, Ludvík Svoboda, and Prime Minister Oldřich Černík also signed the document. Thus, exactly one year after the "seven great days," there commenced an era in which everything that had been said and proclaimed during the "Prague Spring" was outlawed, despite the lofty promises of solidarity the year before. Soviet lies, which had been defeated during the "seven days" were now purveyed as truth, and henceforth nothing else could be heard from the country which only a year before had won the admiration of the world. No one has yet counted how many young people were held for weeks on end, often without trial, on the basis of these emergency powers; how many students were expelled from the university; how many people were sent to prison or victimized on the basis of a decree that Alexander Dubček signed into law. Few even recall the existence of those particular emergency measures and the fact that Dubček signed them — and maybe he too has blanked them out of his memory. When most people think of the past, all the events of that era have been lumped together with the subsequent mass purges.

And those purges were not an "unfortunate" excess, or the outcome of Husák's "ineptitude" in missing the opportunity to outwit the hardliners of his leadership, as they were categorized at a time when some people still had illusions about the new General Secretary. To make sure that the restoration of order would be maintained, the people had to be given a lesson they wouldn't forget. The purges were not merely intended to punish the supporters of reform and the partisans of national sovereignty, civil liberties, and the right to think and act freely. Their aim was not just to "homogenize" every component of the state machinery according to the criteria of "real socialism," and to eliminate from all official positions in government, public service, culture and elsewhere, anyone who could not be trusted to adapt to the restoration of order. The destruction of the livelihoods of a chosen segment of the population was also meant to serve as a standing example and warning to everybody else.

In other words, the general desire for a consumer life-style and "private prosperity" was not the beginning of the normalization process, but the aftermath. At the beginning there was widespread disenchantment and disgust with those whom the people regarded as "their" leaders; these attitudes were quickly followed by the fear of losing the few social benefits that the restored order was able to offer, and of being demoted overnight, along with one's family, to the bottom of the social ladder. The opportunity to reap any profits from the "normalization" by means of serving "real socialism" was not offered to the mass of the population, but only to the new elite, then being created in Party, state and administrative structures, as well as in the mass media, science and culture. □



The national colors lie tattered and dishonored. (The photographs on the "Prague Spring" were taken by Jaroslav Světlík and are part of the NAF DEMENTI/ "Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity" collection.)

Can Charter 77 Influence Political Changes in Czechoslovakia?

By Václav Benda

Václav Benda is a Catholic, philosopher, mathematician and former Charter 77 spokesman. The following was to have been presented at the third forum of Charter 77 on January 17, 1988. However, since the police prevented the forum from taking place, Mr. Benda submitted his remarks to the samizdat journal Informace o Chartě 77, which published them in issue no. 4, 1988.

I should like to begin with a brief description of the present situation. The loudly-acclaimed progress of the last two years has in every important area been limited to verbal proclamations without practical effect. In the field of politics *sensu stricto* (i.e. the methods of ruling and the persons who rule), only insignificant, mostly cosmetic changes have occurred, whose meaning moreover is subject to various interpretations. According to the popular wisdom contained in political jokes, these changes are unequivocally negative: "Under Husák," as the pundits will tell you, "at least we had enough snow." As far as human and civil rights are concerned, not a single new guarantee has been enacted. In fact, the repressive practices of the powers-that-be have lost none of their intensity, even if their forms have changed somewhat. And in the area of religious rights and freedoms, their practices have, if anything, become worse. To the layman, economic reform looks like a monster, whose main purpose is to prevent the revival of anything — and specialists in this area, in their learned discourse, essentially only confirm this impression. In the area of ecology, a strange direct proportionality seems to exist: the more the authorities admit that the environment is being devastated and that the situation is continually deteriorating, the further into the next century they postpone all rectifying measures. With regard to cultural policy, all changes have been precluded on an *a priori* basis. Finally, in the area of *glasnost* — in the availability of information to the public — substantial changes have indeed taken place. But, in my opinion, their impact is open to debate: the old systematic lying — which, by simply changing the pluses to minuses and vice versa, allowed everyone to arrive at a relatively accurate, if incomplete, picture of reality — as well as the suppression of all criticism, have now been replaced by half-truths and pseudo-criticism, which not only do not help to

set anything right, but tend to spread general disorientation and uncertainty.

It is necessary, however, to stress at least two positive aspects of the present situation. First of all, it seems that even the repressive components of the power apparatus are subject to the general tendency to limit their wrath to mere words: the attacks printed in *Rudé právo* [official organ of the Czechoslovak Communist Party] — which in the 1950s would have led to the gallows, or at least to a life sentence, and which up to recently would have meant a lengthy stay in prison — now pass by without anybody noticing or with only slight consequences. But it should be stressed that even these slight consequences are not entirely harmless: people still end up in jail because of their convictions — in fact, at this very moment, political prisoners are serving long sentences without reprieve for deeds which, if committed today, would incur only a fine or reprimand.

Second of all, the stagnation of the system is accompanied by rapid changes in the psychological realm, which threaten to break down the barrier of fear which the totalitarian regime has been assiduously building for decades. This is documented by a number of initiatives, best exemplified by the militant petition of lay Catholics, which has been signed by hundreds of thousands of people.

Personally, I am highly sceptical both of Mr. Gorbachev's intentions and the real possibilities open to him — and even more sceptical as far as the Czechoslovak leadership is concerned.

From a practical point of view it is doubtlessly an improvement that I will not be hanged for my opinions, and merely risk losing my job. But from a political standpoint this is doubtful progress...

Among Charter 77 signatories there are many ex-Communists, along with several people who have been decidedly non-communist all their lives, who do not share my views on this subject. We are confronted with the principle of the "leading role of the Party," which is an objective reality and which in a very specific manner determines the limits of any reform, be-

cause the Communist Party is not a political party in the classical sense of the word, but a para-military organization concentrating on a single goal: gaining and maintaining power. Forswearing this objective would be tantamount to abolishing the Party as a party. In Hungary, in 1956, Imre Nagy attempted as much, and on the basis of communist laws he was executed. Dubček certainly did not intend to go as far as Nagy; the Czechoslovak leader was quite correct in arguing so during his crucial meetings with Brezhnev — notwithstanding the fact that the Action Program of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in the spring of 1968 was an attempt to square the circle, i.e. to put a human face on socialism underneath the leading role of the Party. Perhaps Dubček meant it all more honestly than Jaruzelski; nevertheless, he ended up worse off than the General. As a politician he was unsuccessful, and when he signed

Charter 77 cannot and should not become the opposition or a political party...

the Moscow Protocol he gave up on his declared ideals as well as the opportunity to become a hero and a symbol; worse still, he sacrificed his followers when he signed the extraordinary laws of 1969. Now he publicly tells us that he wants his communist honor restored, and that the virtual concentration camps which he helped to plan in 1968 were not intended for a Stalinist or pro-Soviet "fifth column," but for "counter-revolutionary elements" — that is to say, for anybody who dared to talk about democracy and rejected the deification of the Communist Party.

From a practical point of view it is doubtlessly an improvement that I will not be hanged for my opinions and merely risk losing my job. But from a political standpoint this is doubtful progress: even the worst of regimes prefers to have the loyalty of its citizens and will use terror only when it is not capable of gaining that loyalty. As long as the Party does not intend to share power with anybody under any circumstances, any steps in the direction of liberalization or democratization — which may well take place, although quite the opposite may also occur — will continue to be in the nature of a magnanimous gift bestowed by an absolute ruler, a gift which can always be taken back in case it is "misused" or whenever the prerogatives of the ruler are threatened. It is in this sense that I speak of the present regime as essentially non-reformable. But it is non-reformable in another sense: the successful implementation of reform would be unthinkable without the genuine participation and initiative of those who are ruled. It has become obvious that such participation and initiative are among the few things that cannot be obtained by coercion. After having their hopes repeatedly dashed, the Czechs and Slovaks can hardly be expected to become enthusiastic again voluntarily, without gen-

uine guarantees — which, unfortunately, the powers-that-be consider unacceptable.

As far as a possible political role for Charter 77 is concerned, it so happens that the Charter's activities up to now almost perfectly coincide with the most effective anti-totalitarian tactics and strategy which I can at present imagine. We live in a totalitarian state, which — even in "the best of times" — has not been capable of becoming absolutely totalitarian, and which is itself becoming increasingly aware of that fact. (Only from this point of view, in my opinion, does it make sense to speak of a post-totalitarian situation.) While this state is certainly capable of imposing its own total demands in practically any area concerning society or individual action, technically it is incapable of both controlling all these areas and assuring that they more or less properly function. It is this fact which opens up a relatively large area of tactical opportunities for Charter 77. We should strive to occupy every space that the powers-that-be leave unattended or where at least their vigilance is somewhat diminished. We should discover new areas, since life tends to be much richer than the most thorough record-keepers' attempts to capture it in their files. This assumes carrying on a dialogue of sorts with the powers-that-be, even if in a somewhat different form than many of us imagined eleven years ago. Let's call it a dialogue with a cane in hand. But the cane cannot be applied all the time, and we can even get used to being caned occasionally — at least we can retreat less than those who wield it would like us to. We should not underestimate the powers-that-be; if they decide to do so, they can liquidate or pervert practically anything. But not everything! We should continue to surround their totality with reality. Because whenever totality is to be implemented fully, it requires emptiness and futility. If it runs consistently into reality, it can, in the final analysis, be forced to hesitate and to dodge and to carry on a real, though perhaps insincere, dialogue.

if Charter 77 is capable of maintaining its moral authority, its unwavering vigilance, and if its actions are not subject to merely tactical considerations, then it will be capable of both serving as the conscience of our present political leadership and influencing any alternative political representation.

Ten years ago I wrote about this concept in a paper on the "parallel polis" — in an incomplete and, in many respects, naive manner. Allow me now to reiterate: Charter 77 cannot and should not become the opposition or a political party — not even if all its signatories happened to agree with such a program. On the other hand, Charter 77 should strive to initiate various independent undertakings, and should be able to offer its

sponsorship as a defense against the arbitrariness of the state. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the Polish experience, I am afraid that the totalitarian authorities, even in a dialogue which has been forced on them, will keep their lines of retreat open, and that they will in the end succeed in overcoming the threat of even the smallest “parallel polis.” They have at their disposal the argument of tanks and rifles — even if it is clear that such things cannot overcome the inevitable, but only postpone it. Still, I attach only tactical significance to the building of a “parallel polis.”

My comments concerning a long-term political strategy are based on two circumstances: First of all, the domestic situation in Czechoslovakia largely depends upon the constellation of global or at least European forces; we cannot expect much improvement in the former without favorable changes in the latter. In the recent past, we have had at least three opportunities to take matters into our own hands — in 1938, 1948, and 1968. All these opportunities were squandered. In each case the problem was not the nation’s lack of enthusiasm, resolve, or will to make sacrifices; rather, the blame lies squarely on the shoulders of the political leadership. Sooner or later a similar opportunity will present itself, which we cannot afford to waste. Any reasonable strategy thus should concentrate on avoiding the mistakes of the past when the next such occasion arises.

Secondly, it seems to me that the destruction of totalitarianism cannot be brought about merely on the basis of a program, since the powers-that-be — even in their most difficult periods — are so strong that they are capable of defeating all attempts at resistance at an early stage, whether those attempts are open or conspiratorial. Those events that can cause an avalanche tend to be more or less random and extremely unpredictable. Such an avalanche, when it comes, will be something

akin to a real natural force: It will be blind, could do a lot of harm, and might end up with no lasting results after an enormous release of energy. But in the final analysis, it is nothing but the sum of human volition and thought. Even if it cannot be triggered intentionally, it can be influenced from an early stage, and hopefully transformed from a mere explosion of discontent into purposeful and effective action.

In my opinion, it is precisely Charter 77 that is best suited to address the problems of learning from history and shaping the rise of elemental social forces. Under no circumstances should the Charter become a political movement, i.e. an opposition with a clearly defined political program. This would lead to the loss of its identity — and if internal strife did not eventually lead to its demise, it would doubtlessly be coerced and effectively suppressed by the authorities. On the other hand, if it is capable of maintaining its moral authority, its unwavering vigilance, and if its actions are not subject to merely tactical considerations, then it will be capable of both serving as the conscience of our present political leadership and influencing any alternative political representation — with which, however, it should not identify itself. It will also be in a position to make an impact on the developments that might lead to any future avalanches.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that Charter 77 is today, even in a purely political sense, more important than the majority of us are willing to concede. We will have to learn to live with this fact — not for the purpose of cultivating our pride, but because of an awareness of the increased responsibility that this implies. □

Prague, February 24, 1988.

Barter and Theft, Or How to Live Well in Czechoslovakia

Uncaptive Minds conducted the following interview in Czechoslovakia with a signatory to Charter 77 and economist, who wishes to remain anonymous.

Uncaptive Minds: Is the increased activity on the part of the Czechoslovak opposition related to the state of the economy, about which there seems to be much discontent? I must say that in comparison with Poland, it almost looks as if socialism works here. Yet everyone speaks of an economic crisis.

A: I had a big argument with a friend of mine who is an economist employed at one of the government institutes, who said that we have macro-economic equilibrium, more or less. I wanted to know why I can’t buy this or that item, and he said it’s all “structural.” I mean, I spent two hours yesterday looking for a navy blue slip — is that too much to ask? — and after several hours of shopping I couldn’t find a waste-paper basket. But, really, the most important thing is food, which we have plenty of — although its quality is another matter; it’s also relatively cheap, because it is heavily subsidized. Yet, in comparison to Western countries, a very high share of the family income goes toward food — in America you spend 20% of your

earnings on food, in Western Europe 30%, but here we spend 40 to 50% of our income to feed ourselves, which also indicates our standard of living in relation to the West. And then things like coffee, meat and imported fruit are extremely expensive for us.

Does Czechoslovakia have a debt problem?

A: No, we have the lowest foreign debt in the Eastern bloc.

Yet even the government keeps talking about an economic crisis. Does it know something the common people don't know?

A: There is a crisis — the balance of trade has greatly deteriorated. We have problems with exports and our trading relationship with the West has changed dramatically. Before World War II we were exporters of technology and finished goods. Now — and it's been a clear trend — the only things we sell are raw materials, such as timber and the clay used in making china, instead of the china itself. We export raw steel, instead of machinery, because our machines are obsolete. We manage to sell some labor-intensive goods such as clothes, crystal and other traditional crafts.

That the entrepreneur has a bona fide role to play in society is something that even critical and thoughtful people — and I don't just mean intelligent communists — still don't agree with.

In other areas we are doing very poorly indeed. In electronics, "the train left long ago," as we say in Czech. The auto industry is very obsolete; we only sell a few Škodas abroad, and at very low retail prices. Shoes — another traditional Czech product — well, we don't even wear them anymore. And the Soviet Union isn't willing to buy them either, because they're not willing to trade their oil — a readily-saleable commodity on the world market — for our poor quality shoes or other shoddy manufactured goods. This is why we speak of a crisis.

The workers in Czechoslovakia are quiescent — one hears nothing about strikes, work stoppages or slowdowns...

A: No, we don't have that. What we do have are problems with supply and distribution, which is leading to the non-fulfillment of production plans.

Haven't you always had this problem?

A: True, this always has been a problem, but lately it's been getting worse. Last year about a third of all enterprises did not

fulfill their plan, which is quite high. Usually this occurs in the third or fourth year of a five-year plan, but this time it happened in the second year, which indicates that the five-year plan will probably be scrapped, or at least revised.

Do you feel there is any chance that the government will allow some form of low-level private enterprise, such as shoe-repair shops or bakeries, for example?

A: I think that would be highly unlikely. But it is an important problem, this lack of private enterprise. Our economy is the most highly nationalized of all the socialist countries — to a much higher degree than that of even East Germany or the Soviet Union. I think, however, that if the authorities carry out some of their plans for economic restructuring and close down some of the large enterprises, the resulting unemployment may force them to consider allowing low-level private initiatives. The other day I read that some ministries will be closing down or cutting back by up to 30%. They'll be abolishing the so-called "intermediate level" of management, which will probably eliminate tens of thousands of jobs. The government will be faced with quite a problem, and allowing small-scale shops and businesses will be the best way to solve it.

Has Czechoslovakia experimented with this before — in 1968, for example?

A: No, there was practically nothing — there wasn't enough time.

I asked them why everybody steals so much, and they said I shouldn't call it "stealing." Stealing is when I take something from you, but if I take it from the cooperative, then it's not stealing.

So this would be something completely different for Czechoslovakia?

A: There have been some half-hearted attempts by the central authorities to allow greater leeway for free enterprise. But the fact is that the intermediate and local levels of government have sabotaged any such type of reform from the top, because they're not used to thinking that way. For example, you can apply to work a second job independently — as a plumber or other type of serviceman — if you can prove you already hold a regular job in the state-run economy. But the application procedure is very difficult, and very few have bothered with it. Everybody does it informally.

Then why would anybody go through the process of registering?

A: Because you're breaking the law if you do it informally. But since everybody does it, if you only break the rules a little and steal a little, you can usually get away with it. And that's part of the problem — here, when you speak of entrepreneurship, one tends to think of people breaking the law, of people out to rob you, of people getting rich too fast. That the entrepreneur has a bona fide role to play in society is something that even critical and thoughtful people — and I don't just mean intelligent communists — still don't agree with.

What about agriculture?

A: In this area we have been rather successful.

Has there been any talk of distributing small parcels of land to the peasants?

A: Nobody would want it; things would have to change enormously for something like that to happen. Also, it's really not correct to say that we have "peasants."

Let's call them "cooperative agricultural workers." Are they satisfied with their work, their income?

A: Yes, because they steal a lot — their stealing is fantastic. I have a cottage out in the country, where everybody steals. In fact, it's not even called stealing. I asked them why everybody steals so much, and they said I shouldn't call it "stealing." Stealing is when I take something from you, but if I take it from the cooperative, then it's not stealing. I think this is why our rural inhabitants have a very high standard of living.

In fact they have the best of both worlds, because they work both for the agricultural cooperatives and for light industries. We don't have any purely agricultural regions. We have a very dense transportation network, and small-scale industry everywhere. So one member of a family might work in a cooperative, another in a factory, and at home there might be a pig and a few chickens; it all adds up to quite a high standard of living. I think that the rural population is a support for the government.

Yet agricultural production, just like industrial production, is not efficient. In spite of that fact, the Czech experiment in collectivization, at least socially speaking, has been a success. Today, people remember how traumatic collectivization was, the injustice of being forced off their land. But it's done, and I think very few people would want to take back their land.

But isn't there a basic human impulse to own land — especially among those who work as farmers?

A: I think this impulse is satisfied by having that pig, and a garden with fresh produce. Even city-dwellers want to have these things, not just people from the countryside. That's one of the reasons this government is so strong — because everybody is turned inside himself and his family. People try to grow their own food, because that which is offered to the public is frequently so bad. Maybe people would have family farms if they could. But it's not like Russia, where the kolkhozes are something completely distant and isolated, and those who live there are poor. Here they are not so poor, and everybody has a garden, and there's a big system of favors: somebody makes something, trades it for something else — it's not even monetary, but a barter system. If a city dweller can find his way into this system, it offsets the limited supplies and low quality of the state system. I have some very good sausages in homemade cans, and when my sausagemaker needs something in Prague, I buy it for him; it's a complex and time-consuming system, but everybody is more or less satisfied with it.

But you said that even among intelligent people, few recognize the consequences of too much state ownership. To what extent is this attitude prevalent among the opposition?

A: There is a great diversity of opinion within Charter 77. If things get too liberal we will be practically at each others' throats; we would split into separate political groups. Yet through Charter 77 I've made friends with people with whom I would have never, under any circumstances, come into contact.

Still, the differences of opinion on various issues are huge. Take unemployment, for example. Many people will tell you that unemployment is absolutely unacceptable, and in the final analysis, they will come out for socialism. Others will tell you that socialism cannot function economically. Those who hold the latter opinion are definitely in the minority. If a referendum were to be held tomorrow on whether the supply and quality of consumer goods should be increased, together with an increase in unemployment and income differences, I think people would reject it. Czechs are rather egalitarian. Nobody wants to have rich people. I could be wrong, though; there has never been a public survey on the matter. But I think that Czechs, including young people, would reject capitalism. The ideals, the values of socialism are deeply ingrained here, in spite of the fact that we're against the Russians and the Communists.

So in your opinion, Husák succeeded in a way.

A: Not only Husák, but the Communist Party over the course of the last 40 years. They've succeeded in influencing people's thinking. □

Ivan Polanský Sentenced

In our first issue we reported on the case of Ivan Polanský, who was arrested on November 5, 1987 after police seized samizdat literature — primarily of a religious character — at his home.

On June 17, 1988, the District Court in Banská Bystrica pronounced Ivan Polanský guilty of the criminal act of "Subversion of the Republic" (Art. 98, Par. 1 and 2b of the Penal Code) and sentenced him to four years' imprisonment. Both the prosecutor and the defense reserved the right to appeal the sentence.

To all appearances, the trial was conducted in a relatively correct manner. Between thirty and forty friends of the accused and a representative of the American embassy were allowed to attend the main session of the trial. However, it is necessary to point out two curious aspects of the proceedings: the District Prosecutor in Banská Bystrica, Dr. Alois Mikušinec, is still under investigation in connection with the so-called Babinský scandal [a scandal which has brought to light extensive corruption in the upper echelons of the government]. Also, it has been discovered that one of the jurors works for the personnel department of the enterprise where Ivan Polanský was employed before his arrest, and forbade all the factory employees to at-

tend the trial. In ordinary circumstances these facts would convincingly prove the partiality of the court and its judgment would have to be invalidated.

The sentencing of Ivan Polanský is a shocking event, the worst of its kind in Czechoslovakia in the past five years. It is difficult to guess what the authorities' intentions were in this case: Did they intend to deepen national conflicts [Ivan Polanský published *samizdat* mainly in Slovak and about Slovak history and problems]? Did they want to lay down the limits of *perestroika* and *glasnost*? Or was this trial intended to be a warning signal to all religious and *samizdat* activities? What is certain is that an innocent man whose activity was beneficial to the public was severely punished.

We demand the immediate abrogation of this sentence, which makes a mockery of even the present laws. We urge public opinion both here and abroad to take a strong stand against Ivan Polanský's sentencing. Obviously, the government is only testing the wind to see how far it can crack down on independent activities without protest. If we do not respond to this attempt to turn back the clock, Czechoslovakia will once more become a country where all independent thought and activity are suppressed. □

Prague, June 19, 1988

VONS, Communiqué No. 777

Augustin Navrátil Ordered to Psychiatric Hospital

Augustin Navrátil — a Catholic activist from Moravia, signatory to Charter 77 and author of the thirty-one point petition for religious rights, which has been signed by about 550,000 Czechoslovak citizens — has received a court order, in which he is directed to appear on June 16, 1988 at the psychiatric clinic in Olomouc for an examination. Under the best of circumstances this means that Augustin Navrátil will be held for several weeks in the hospital and subjected to medical treatment over which he will have no control.

The events preceding this decision were as follows: On November 12, 1985 Navrátil was charged with "incitement against the state" and taken into custody, as part of a sweeping action against Moravian Catholic *samizdat*. His companions were released after spending several months in jail without trial, or were sentenced to suspended terms; Navrátil, however, was ultimately forced into a program of "preventive" psychiatric care. In the spring of 1987, the district prosecutor submitted a proposal for a renewal of institutional care. The court attempted to accommodate the prosecutor's proposal, but the

two experts who had originally testified refused for the second time to concur with the prosecution, which would undoubtedly have meant jeopardizing their professional honor. It took 14 months to find experts who were willing to participate in this charade.

Augustin Navrátil has been one of the most steadfast activists in the struggle for religious and human rights, and for this reason he is also, unfortunately, one of the oldest and most loyal clients of VONS [Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted]. The authorities consider his dedication, in the face of increasingly severe repression against him and his family, evidence of insanity, and have been trying to find cooperative psychiatrists who would confirm this. For us, Navrátil's attitude is — quite the opposite — an example of courage and civic fortitude. □

VONS, Communiqué No. 775

Ukraine Under Gorbachev

During the last three years, Ukraine has experienced a surge in independent activity and a national revival unparalleled since Stalin ended the Ukrainization drive of the 1920s. Official and unofficial groups have confronted the problems of Ukrainian culture and language, atomic energy and other environmental issues, and the Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox churches. Independent newspapers, cultural organizations and even political parties have come into being, challenging the limits of *glasnost* at every step.

The official press has spoken out on the abysmal state of Ukrainian language. Many demands have since been raised for changes in the law to make Ukrainian the state language, to introduce wide-sweeping Ukrainization of every sector of Ukrainian life, and to amend the Draft Statute on General Secondary Education to make the study of Ukrainian compulsory — and not voluntary — in schools. Clubs, such as *Ridne Slovo*, have been formed to promote respect for Ukrainian culture and language in Kiev, Lvov and many other cities and towns. These clubs — which are under the patronage of the Ukrainian Writers' Union — organize seminars, meetings, literary evenings and expeditions. In the last few months, the Soviet press has announced that the works of Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Mykola Khvylovy will be republished for the first time since the 1920s. Newspapers like the weekly *Literaturna Ukraina*, organ of the Writers' Union, have become de facto "opposition papers," with each issue covering persecuted and murdered Ukrainian writers from the 1930s and 1960s, ecological problems, opposition to nuclear power, and other previously taboo subjects.

Opposition to nuclear power in the aftermath of Chernobyl and concern for the environment is widespread among both the official intelligentsia as well as unofficial groups. Open letters to *Literaturna Ukraina* by scientists, mathematicians and other academics have called for a review of plans for the expansion of nuclear power, for a halt to the building of plants near population centers, for the use of alternative energy resources, for referendums on nuclear power in Ukraine, and for including organizations besides the Ministry of Atomic Energy — such as the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences — in making decisions about nuclear power. An open letter addressed to the 19th Party Conference and signed by 6000 people, including intellectuals in both scientific and humanistic disciplines, points out that the Ministry of Atomic Energy has ignored the wishes of the public by continuing to expand nuclear power. There are technical mistakes in the selection of power stations, strained water resources, and shortages in building materials. The let-

ter called for the closing of Chernobyl and for a 10-15 year freeze in the construction of power stations.

In March this year the Ukrainian Green World Association was formed with the support of the Writers' Union. Its founding conference gave the following as its main concerns: ecological threats to future generations, Chernobyl and the secrecy surrounding the emission of radiation, the continued expansion of nuclear power, the use of referenda on nuclear power, and the publication of a newspaper devoted to ecological problems.

The Moscow and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainian press have brought up the subject of the 1932-33 famine to a degree unheard of before. Articles in *Ogonyok* — the flagship of *glasnost* — have discussed the falsification of the 1937 census results, which revealed a sizable decline in population during the previous years. Letters to *Ogonyok* have asked "Was the famine a fatal inevitability, or was it man-made?" and have also noted that more people died in Ukraine during the famine than during the Second World War.

Since 1982, when the Initiative Group to Defend the Rights and Believers of the Church in Ukraine was established, there has been widespread activity in support of legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church [Uniate]. In 1984, the Group launched *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Ukraine*, of which over 33 issues have appeared to date. The Soviet response to this campaign has not changed under Gorbachev: *Izvestiia* has advanced the usual claims that the Uniate Church faithfully served the Polish gentry and Nazis, and that today, "no Ukrainian Catholic Church exists in our country as a religious association."

Yet the authorities themselves conducted a survey last year entitled "An Analysis of the General Ideas People Have on Religion and Atheism," and found that in some regions of the western Ukraine, up to 20% of the respondents stated that they were members of this non-existent church. An apparition of the Virgin Mary was sighted on the second anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster and soon attracted over a half-million faithful to the western Ukraine, an event which further testified to the strength of the Church (and which exasperated the authorities in their attempts to explain it away).

Ukrainian Catholic activists arrived in Moscow in December 1987 to submit a petition, signed by 1543 people, to the Supreme Soviet. This document pointed out that despite *glasnost*, repression against their church had intensified. Some of the Church activists, such as Reverend Myhailo Havryliv, whose

memoirs were published in the West last year, were drafted into the Soviet army and sent to do clean-up work at Chernobyl. Ivan Hel, chairman of the Committee in Defense of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, reported that in February he had brought another petition with 5,451 signatures to Moscow, but this time the authorities refused to accept it. He said that the campaign to collect more signatures would continue, and he believed that there were now already over 10,000 signatures.

An open letter from the Committee in Defense of the Ukrainian Catholic Church to the Vienna Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe earlier this year stated that, "Today, Stalin's policies are officially rejected. But only on paper. Look at us: for almost half a century we have been forced to live underground..." The letter also describes "a deliberate policy of ethnocide" that "resorts to immoral and illegal actions" against Ukrainian Catholics, including provocation in the press, dismissal from work, and fines. Moreover, Ukrainian Catholics are "exposed to sordid defamation as well as questioning, imprisonment, and exile."

There have also been calls for the legalization of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which was destroyed in the late 1920s. The Committee in Defense of the Ukrainian Catholic Church called for all Orthodox parishes in Ukraine to be placed under Ukrainian Autocephalic control. And in June, the Baptists made their presence felt by holding an unofficial Millennium celebration, which attracted 13,000.

One of the keystones of the whole independent movement is the Ukrainian Cultural Club, which was founded a year ago and now has branches in five cities. According to a member, the Club aims "to reawaken national consciousness and to cleanse the national spirit of the detrimental effects of distrust and national nihilism." In addition to discussing the blank spots of Ukrainian history and the destruction of Ukrainian language and culture, the Club has also called for the preservation of historical buildings and statues as well as the erection of a monument to Ukrainian patriots who died at the hands of the regime. Environmental issues and nuclear power are also among the Club's interests. In numerous attacks in *Vechirna Kiev* and *Radyanska Ukraina*, the authorities have accused the Club of using *glasnost* to promote "demagoguery" and "anarchy," and have denounced it as anti-Soviet on the grounds that its constitution does not include references to Marxism-Leninism or opposition to "bourgeois nationalism." Perhaps most disturbing to the authorities has been the Club's allegation that the famine of 1933 was artificially created.

In October of last year, the Ukrainian Association of Independent Creative Intelligentsia (U.A.N.T.I.) was formed by artists, poets and writers who believed that the official Writers' Union "does not fully represent the spiritual, literary, and cultural movements that are spreading among intellectuals in Ukraine with growing momentum." Three issues of their *samizdat* literary journal *Kafedra* have appeared under the editorship of Mykhailo Osadchy and Stepan Sepaliak. This journal

covers environmental issues, the cultural activities of U.A.N.T.I., and banned Ukrainian culture. Another independent literary journal entitled *Evshen Zilya* began publication in November of last year. Iryna Kalynets, its editor, explained that the journal's purpose was "to retrieve forgotten names, to examine the past, and to explore the unpublished works of both noted and little-known cultural figures." In February, U.A.N.T.I. and the editors of *Evshen Zilya* organized a meeting to honor the composer Vasyl Barvinsky on the centenary of his birth; 600 people attended.

Three mass demonstrations were held in Lvov on June 16, June 21, and July 7 — at which Party delegates to the Nineteenth Party Conference were sharply criticized. At the June 16 demonstration, Ukrainian dissidents discussed the fate of political prisoners, the lack of republican rights, and also called for greater autonomy and an end to the privileged status of Communist Party officials. On June 21, crowds estimated at 30,000-50,000 came to the soccer stadium bearing placards in support of the Ukrainian language, the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and the election of Party delegates.

The Ukrainian Herald, an independent journal, was relaunched last September after a 15 year hiatus. It has representatives in six Ukrainian cities and is funded solely by private donations. Six issues have appeared to date. Issue number 9-10 observed that, "during the last three months, the number of our authors, sympathizers, and helpers has greatly increased." There are separate sections in each issue devoted to Literature and Art, History and Politics, and Religion and Letters. Issue 11-12, for example, included an anonymous article by a high-ranking Party member on Leninist nationality policy along with an essay on repressed literature of the 1930s and 1960s, a discussion on the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and a chronicle of independent cultural activity in Ukraine. Since last December, the *Ukrainian Herald* has been the official organ of the revived Ukrainian Helsinki Group.

The Ukrainian Helsinki Group, headed by Lev Lukianenko, has vigorously campaigned on behalf of the remaining Ukrainian political prisoners and has pointed out that Ukrainian Helsinki monitors remain imprisoned. "Democratization," he claims, "is incompatible with the continued incarceration of these prisoners." The Group also criticizes the authorities' refusal to rehabilitate former prisoners.

A new opposition party, the Democratic Union, now has branches in three Ukrainian cities. At its founding meetings it called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, western Ukraine and the Baltic Republics and the introduction of a multiparty system.

In January, Ukrainians joined with Armenians and Georgians in forming an "All-Union Committee for the Defense of Prisoners of Conscience." At their third meeting in Lvov in June, the Ukrainians, Armenians and Georgians were joined by representatives of the three Baltic republics, and together they formed the Coordinating Committee of Patriotic

Movements of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R. The non-Russians considered themselves representatives of nations that were "forcibly incorporated into the U.S.S.R." They criticized the inability of the authorities to resolve the national question and called for the release of political prisoners and investigations into the circumstances surrounding their deaths. They agreed to meet again in Riga to establish a common program, and called upon all "democratic national movements" in the U.S.S.R. to support them.

Other examples of unofficial activity include the widespread "neformalny" (unofficial) youth groups. These groups are often antagonistic towards the authorities and Komsomol (Com-

munist Youth), and are frequently composed of punks, hippies and other non-conformists. Finally, in Lvov, the Trust Group — an unofficial peace movement — has demonstrated regularly against the occupation of Afghanistan and in support of conscientious objection, environmental issues, and striking students in Poland. It maintains close relations with its Polish counterpart Freedom and Peace. □

Taras Kuzio
Ukrainian Press Agency



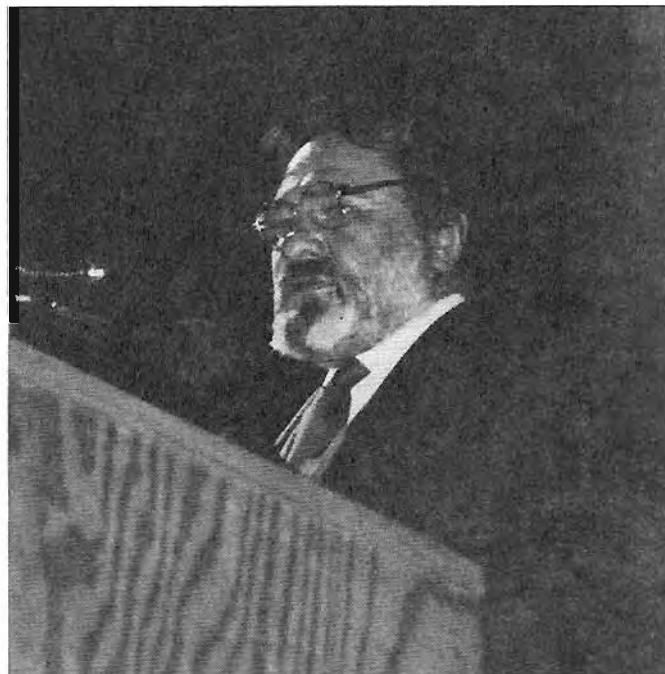
The June 16, 1988 demonstration in Lvov, which drew 8,000 people.

After Seventy Years: Still Fighting to Save a Culture

An Interview With Mykola Rudenko

Mykola Rudenko, 68, is a co-founder of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, which was established in November 1976. A year later, the noted poet was arrested and sentenced to seven years in a strict-regimen labor camp and three years' internal exile for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." The son of a Ukrainian coal miner, Rudenko was a student at Kiev University when he was drafted into the Red Army in 1939. In the army, Rudenko — then a member of the Communist Party — served as a political commissar. After the war, he returned to Kiev, where his first book was published in 1947. Rudenko became secretary of the Communist Party organization in the Ukrainian Writers' Union and editor of the journal Dnipro in 1947-48. His first doubts about the Party emerged in 1949, when he was forced to take part in a campaign against Jewish intellectuals during the Party's "battle against cosmopolitanism." His apostasy deepened in 1956 after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress, when he became convinced that the communist system was ruining the Soviet Union economically. He grew increasingly active in dissident circles during the 1960s and 1970s. After his arrest in 1977, Rudenko was imprisoned in a Mordavian labor camp, where he was forced to work despite his invalid status. He was subsequently exiled to Siberia where he was joined by his wife, who had served five years hard labor for smuggling her husband's poetry out of the labor camp. The couple was allowed to emigrate to the West in late 1987. Mr. Rudenko's works include "Economic Monologues" and several collections of poetry, among them Za Gratamy [Behind Bars]. Mr. Rudenko was interviewed by George Zarycky for Uncaptive Minds. Mr. Zarycky is Research Director at the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and frequently writes on East European affairs.

George Zarycky: Popular dissent has been mounting in the Baltic republics, Soviet Central Asia and Armenia, where we have seen mass demonstrations, and political demands put forward even by official structures. Yet, barring a small circle of veteran dissidents, Ukraine — with 45 million people and a long history of oftentimes violent opposition to Soviet-Russian rule — has remained relatively quiet. Why?



Mikola Rudenko

Mykola Rudenko: I don't feel at all that Ukraine is as quiet or docile as it seems to you. I would call attention to a recent demonstration in Kiev organized by the independent Ukrainian Culturological Club. As a matter of fact, today [June 29] there are reports of a very large demonstration in Lvov which attracted 50,000 people. I was told that one of the demonstrators' chief demands was that a stop be put to the Russification of the Ukrainian population. The demonstration was also in protest against the special Party Congress going on in Moscow, specifically against the delegates from Ukraine — Brezhnevites selected by Vladimir Shcherbitsky, the Ukrainian Party boss. They do not represent Ukrainians or even for that matter Ukrainian communists. Ukrainians are aware of the crimes committed over a 20-year period by Shcherbitsky, who, in Brezhnev's interest and with the help of his massive apparatus, oversaw the official denigration of the Ukrainian language and culture.

But you do have a point about the relative inactivity in Ukraine compared to other republics. First we must keep in mind that circumstances in Ukraine are completely different from those in Armenia or elsewhere. Those republics are, by

and large, ethnically homogeneous. Because of Russification, Ukrainian cities are no longer peopled primarily by Ukrainians: they are filled with Russians. And even though some Ukrainians have been Russified, they remember the Ukrainian language and would use it freely if it were not for the predominance of Russians, who have been systematically and methodically settled in these cities. The Soviet government has used

The issue is not Gorbachev. For some reason, everyone seems to link everything that happens exclusively with Gorbachev.

every possible form of Russification, no doubt because it foresaw unfavorable times ahead and understood that it needed Russian outposts in Ukraine — above all, in the large cities. Historically, major social and national movements have begun in the cities, and the countryside has always followed the cities' lead. Today, while the countryside is still Ukrainian in character, there are no large cities in Ukraine — particularly in the east — where Ukrainians dominate.

And this comes at a time of accelerated urbanization in Ukraine.

Rudenko: But remember that Ukrainians have never been allowed to move freely to the cities in their own republic. Ukrainians could not freely settle in Kiev or in Kharkiv because they required a special registration visa. And as for the major Ukrainian cities, people from the villages — that is Ukrainians — simply do not get permission to live there. In the Soviet Union, movement is so strictly controlled that one can't even spend the night in a major city without official permission.

What methods has the government used to implement this policy of Russification?

Rudenko: Russification began before World War II in institutions of higher learning, particularly in technical and medical faculties, and continues to this day. One of the few places where the authorities have not yet gotten around to replacing Ukrainian as the language of instruction with Russian are teacher-training colleges, as well as journalism faculties. But that is about all. The other faculties are Russified, especially those in the technical fields. Naturally, Ukrainian parents want their children to have the same opportunities to attend university as Russian children. Because college entrance exams are in Russian, those educated in Ukrainian would be at a disadvantage, so the parents make sure their children go to Russian-language schools. Furthermore, there are no Ukrainian technical dictionaries in engineering, chemistry, physics, or other fields where Russification first began. There is a master plan behind the Russification of the U.S.S.R. and the realization of this plan really

got underway during the Brezhnev years under the slogan of "one Soviet people" — starting with Ukraine. Under Shcherbitsky, all Party business in Ukraine began to be conducted in Russian. Collective farmers at mass meetings were forced to speak in a monstrous hodge-podge of Ukrainian and Russian, an awful mixture that undermined the Ukrainian language, and therefore, from the government's point of view, had a positive effect.

They organized Russian kindergartens and appointed Russian teachers. How are Ukrainian children going to develop when they go first to kindergarten, then to a Russian-language school, and then to a university where instruction is in Russian? This is why, on the whole, the members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia studied Ukrainian philology. Almost all Ukrainian political prisoners are poets, writers, and historians.

It appears that the Communist Party in some republics is taking measured steps toward responding to people's demands for more political and cultural autonomy. In the past, the Communist Party of Ukraine made similar efforts, such as the period of "Ukrainianization" under Skrypnyk in the 1920s and the short-lived flowering of Ukrainian language and culture under Shelest in the 1960s. Do you see any hope of reform in the Ukrainian Party?

Rudenko: First, I don't think that the situation in the other republics is as promising as you suggest. Far from it. In Armenia it is the people, not the Party, who are initiating demands. Also, the central authorities have traditionally never given too much weight to events in other republics. The Armenians are not secessionists and most certainly won't join Turkey. But Ukraine has a history of nationalist activism — the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (U.P.A.), for example.* The government, therefore, takes a different approach to Ukraine.

I am very saddened by the fact that today there appears to be little amity between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities in the West.

You ask about the future. I believe in the future. I believe in the resurrection of the Ukrainian nation. I believe in it because the break-up of the Soviet empire is imminent.

But you don't anticipate any changes under Shcherbitsky?

Rudenko: No, I don't think that anything will change under

* The U.P.A. was formed during World War II and waged guerrilla warfare against the Germans — and then against the Soviets until well after the war's close — to try to win independence for Ukraine.

Shcherbitsky. I also feel that right now Shcherbitsky is not good for Moscow's current plans, although it remains to be seen if he will be replaced.

It is widely believed that Ukrainian nationalism is limited to western Ukraine and that the majority of Ukrainians living in the larger eastern part of the country are generally Russified. Is this an accurate assessment and, if so, can you foresee circumstances under which this may change?

Rudenko: There is some truth in this view. The history of western, and trans-Carpathian Ukraine, is different from the history of eastern Ukraine, which has been under Moscow's domination for over 300 years. Under the Czars, the Ukrainian intelligentsia could not easily go among the people and explain to them who they were as a nation. They were persecuted, the Ukrainian language was forbidden, and there were a series of attempts made to Russify the Ukrainian population. From generation to generation, the Ukrainian intelligentsia was drawn to St. Petersburg, and rarely returned to Ukraine. True, for a brief time under Soviet rule we saw a Ukrainian cultural renaissance, the so-called "Ukrainization" under Skrypnyk. But when Stalin came to power and began building his empire, he put an end to it. And under Brezhnev we saw a resurrection of Stalinism. He even tried to rehabilitate Stalin, but the entire Soviet intelligentsia rebelled and wouldn't allow it...

If there is anything Brezhnev ever did that was positive, it was the signing of the Helsinki Accords — an act which ultimately worked against him.

Today things are changing in eastern Ukraine, largely because of the maturity and commitment of the nationally-conscious Ukrainian intelligentsia. Teachers who have finished liberal arts university are taking their knowledge and achievements to the people. In general, activity and ideas from western Ukraine permeate east. Moreover, the unification of Ukraine by Stalin, even though it was accomplished by draconian methods, saved the Ukrainian nation.* It brought on the outpouring of a new and powerful spirit of national self-awareness that continues to this day.

* The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact paved the way for the Soviet invasion on September 17, 1939 of Poland's eastern territories, among them western Ukraine. The Soviet proceeded to hold "elections" — after importing most of the candidates from the Soviet Union itself and terrorizing the local population — and on November 1, 1939, the newly elected National Assembly of Western Ukraine's "request" was granted and Western Ukraine was admitted into the U.S.S.R. and joined together with the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

The Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Khvyloviy argued that the Soviet government has tried to reduce Ukrainian culture to simple national folklore. It emphasizes folk customs, dancing, and the like, while suppressing pre- and post-revolutionary Ukrainian intellectual history and actively discouraging serious Ukrainian literature, art, music, historiography, etc.

Rudenko: This is true, and has been for a long time. And there's not much I can add to this point. The authorities have tolerated national costumes at parades, Ukrainian dances, Ukrainian songs, and even some literature. But what kind of literature? Not intellectually sophisticated literature, but literature that can be called ethnographic in character. Of course, the really talented writers did manage to break through and find their way. But later some of them were destroyed, like Hryhoriy Tiutiunyk, who committed suicide, as did Wasyl Zemlia, or Boiko, a very talented children's writer whose work kept the Ukrainian language alive for children. It was the Party bureaucracy that put these authors' necks in the noose.

Do you feel that under glasnost some Ukrainian writers, like Khvyloviy — a Ukrainian Bolshevik — or yourself, will be rehabilitated? Are there any writers you would particularly like to see rehabilitated?

Rudenko: Well, as for me, I don't expect to be rehabilitated in my lifetime. I have spoken out, as in this interview, and this clearly won't expedite my return to the regime's good graces. But I did not come to the West to await rehabilitation. Who would I like to see rehabilitated? Well, they've already started to publish some works by Vynnechenko and Khvyloviy. But to date they have done nothing daring. They have not even published the major works of these authors. Khvyloviy's slogan "away from Moscow!" is no more acceptable for today's rulers than it was for Stalin.

As a former leader in the official Ukrainian Writers' Union, can you comment on the state of Ukrainian literature, both official and underground? Is there a chance under Gorbachev of the kind of literary revival we saw in Ukraine in the early 1960s?

Rudenko: The Ukrainian literary revival has already begun. Among the young, many authentic, original writers and poets are emerging. The poet Lina Kostenko, though she is not young, is a brilliant example of the Ukrainian literary world. And I am overjoyed by the success of the writer Valery Shevchuk, who is an exceptional talent. I can't at the moment give you a complete list. But I can attest to the rebirth of our literature.

But isn't it true that the number of books in print by these authors is relatively small, especially compared to Russian-language writers?

Rudenko: That's not exactly true. Lina Kostenko's books, for example, have print-runs of 100,000 copies, whereas the average for poetry is usually 8,000.

Yet there is a difference between the numbers of books published in Russian and Ukrainian.

Rudenko: There is a large difference, but that's only to be expected. There are more Russian readers. But you are right that the number of Ukrainian-language publications is shrinking because of Russification and the diminished standing accorded the Ukrainian language.

Will this situation change under Gorbachev?

Rudenko: The issue is not Gorbachev. For some reason, everyone seems to link everything that happens exclusively with Gorbachev. The Soviet Union, or more accurately, the Soviet empire — because it was never a true union of republics, but a facade — has fallen so dramatically — economically, morally, politically, philosophically and spiritually — that people today don't know what to believe in. People used to believe in communism; today, in my view, Gorbachev himself does not believe in communism, although the Party remains nominally Communist. Imagine the spiritual state of a person when there is no God, no communism, nothing sacred: What is left?

...it is the collapse of agriculture that will bring on the collapse of the system.

What do you think of the underground literature that has appeared in Visnyk [Ukrainian Herald] and Kafedra [Pulpit]?

Rudenko: This is not underground literature. It is not yet published in official Soviet journals, but these people have already emerged from the underground into a broader arena. The *Ukrainian Herald* — judging from the issues that I have seen — is excellent.

Several years ago, 22 Soviet dissidents in the West called for the abrogation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords, pointing out that they legitimized post-war European frontiers without adequately safeguarding human rights. As co-founder and head of the Ukrainian Helsinki group, what is your view on the Helsinki process? Does it have meaning today?

Rudenko: If there is anything Brezhnev ever did that was positive, it was the signing of the Helsinki Accords — an act which ultimately worked against him. He thought he could trick the West and gain some serious political capital by getting the West to agree to the existing division of Europe. The West made a

very smart decision, agreeing but at the same time raising the issue of the 'Universal' Declaration of Human Rights. This proved to be so strong and effective that I imagine the Soviet leadership has been unhappy ever since that it let the genie out of the bottle — especially when the arrests began, when they arrested me, Yuri Orlov, Anatoly Shcharansky, and many others. That was a time of despair. It appeared that the regime had won, that it had crushed our movement. But, we can see today that that period was short-lived, that the Helsinki movement has gained broad international recognition and that it has sprouted powerful wings. And today, the Ukrainian Helsinki Group is known all over Ukraine, it is very authoritative, and it publishes the *Herald*, the journal I mentioned. The Ukrainian Helsinki Group never dissolved. The Moscow Group disbanded, possibly because the members wanted to step back and fortify themselves. But the members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group revived the Group after their release.

What about the Helsinki review process. Does it have value?

Rudenko: Absolutely. The Helsinki process has such credibility around the world that it cannot be silenced or suspended. It is no longer a matter of governments, but of citizens.

As a human rights activist and political prisoner, you had an opportunity to meet, work, and serve time with Russian, Jewish, Georgian, and other dissidents. Can you describe relations between Ukrainian and other dissidents?

Rudenko: Let me begin by saying that the Ukrainian Helsinki Group was organized in close cooperation with the Moscow Helsinki Group. The Moscow organization had the means to widely disseminate our memoranda, something we ourselves could not do. General Petro Grigorenko was our representative in the Moscow group, and he worked very closely with them and the international press. We also worked closely with the Lithuanian Helsinki Group, and I spent seven years in a labor camp with members of the group, where we practically ate out of the same bowl. They were our brothers...

Did you share the same political goals as these other national groups?

Rudenko: We had the same goals: human and national rights. Without national rights there can be no genuine human rights. We began by focusing on the broad question of human rights for all peoples. But all of us in the Helsinki Group, as you can read in our publications, freely admit that we are nationalists.

Getting back to relations with other groups, such as the Jewish refuseniks...

Rudenko: Ukrainian-Jewish relations have been good in the dissident movement. I'll give you an example. When I was arrested, the Moscow Helsinki Group spoke out in my defense.

When I read the list of those that signed the statement, I noticed that — with the exception of Yuri Orlov, the head of the Moscow group — all signatories were Jewish. The Jewish contingent in the dissident movement, particularly in Moscow, is very strong. And they have been our close allies and our friends. I am very saddened by the fact that today there appears to be little amity between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities in the West. In Ukraine, there are close to one million Jews. We must understand each other and work together.

When you were head of the Helsinki Group, did you have ties with other opposition groups in Eastern Europe?

... today, in my view, Gorbachev himself does not believe in communism, although the Party remains nominally Communist. Imagine the spiritual state of a person when there is no God, no communism, nothing sacred: What is left?

Rudenko: This was extremely difficult, if not impossible. The K.G.B. was breathing down my neck. There were K.G.B. guards outside my apartment at all times and K.G.B. cars outside my building. They were constantly trying to plant listening devices in my home, but I quickly picked up on their methods and ripped the bugs out. The persecution by the K.G.B. was so intense that we were practically suffocating from the pressure. So how could we forge ties with other groups, especially outside the Soviet Union? It was impossible.

Seventy years of communist rule seem to have undermined the spirit and initiative of the Soviet people to the point that they would rather suffer continued stagnation than risk the insecurities engendered by profound economic restructuring. How can Gorbachev overcome this apparent fear and distrust and revitalize a moribund society, or can he?

Rudenko: The people of the Soviet Union have lived through and endured so much, and have already suffered through so

many so-called experiments, that they can't be bought with cheap slogans. Slogans are slogans. But the people can see the reality of the world, the reality of socialist development, and the state of the Soviet economy. I am telling you, the country is on the brink of starvation. Families, even the families of the most qualified workers, or academics with relatively high status, are finding it difficult to make ends meet. And for the average worker or pensioner, it is far, far more difficult. When I was released from labor camp, my status as a war invalid was automatically restored. I was told to go to the special store for invalids to get my rations. I was overjoyed, thinking I would finally get some decent food. I showed up at the store, presented my papers confirming that I was an invalid war veteran, and what did I get? Five kilograms of barley! This is what I ate every night in the prison camp! So what else can I say? This is a country on the verge of starvation.

But how can this change?

Rudenko: Through the downfall of the communist system, that's how. The system is heading for collapse. I find it funny to read articles in the American press that say that the capitalist West will help save the U.S.S.R. How are they going to save it? Perhaps they can suggest some changes in the management of industry. And what about Soviet agriculture? It is in serious trouble, and it is the collapse of agriculture that will bring on the collapse of the system. Gorbachev's proposals calling for the expansion of private plots for collective farmers will not save the land. The soil has been depleted through improper utilization. It is in such poor condition because the private-plot farmer has never been concerned about properly cultivating or replenishing the soil. It is not his land, so he has no incentive to invest in it. Historically, tenant farmers have never really cared for the land they tilled. Leasing land for private plots is not the answer. Socialist totalitarianism already has one foot in the grave, and the other foot is being dragged in after it. First this collapse must occur — then one can think about change. Ukrainians and others in the West must realize that this will happen within the next ten years. □

The Baltic Republics: Between Anti-Stalinism and Anti-Communism

By Józef Darski

Józef Darski writes frequently about independent movements in Eastern Europe and the republics of the Soviet Union for the underground press in Poland and the Polish-language press in the West.

The current political ferment in the Baltic republics of the Soviet Union dates back to July 1986, when the Latvians Rajmond Bitenieks, Linas Grantins and Martin Bariss founded "Helsinki '86." The group's original program did not go much beyond the defense of Latvian culture and language against Russification, and a call for a UN-supervised Soviet withdrawal from Latvia. The group was able to undertake broader action only after these activists were released from prison or house arrest at the end of 1986 and the beginning of 1987.

The "Helsinki '86" group's first large-scale undertaking was a demonstration which took place in front of the Monument to Freedom in Riga on June 14, 1987 — the 46th anniversary of the mass deportations to Siberia. The demonstration drew 2-3,000 participants. A month later, on August 23, the same location was besieged by 10,000 Latvians demanding the publication of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the liquidation of its consequences: namely, the incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union.

Estonia's first demonstration took place on the same day. Organized by the Group for the Full Disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (M.R.P. — A.E.G.), the protest drew 2-3,000 demonstrators to Hirve Park in Tallinn. Soon thereafter, the Group's demand gained the support of Estonia's official artistic and creative unions. In the fall of 1987 the political atmosphere became more radical; demonstrations occurred on October 21 in Võru and November 7 in Pärnu calling for the rebuilding of monuments in honor of those who died in the war for independence against the Bolsheviks from 1918 to 1920. Under the influence of public opinion, reformist tendencies began to surface within official circles. The banner of anti-Stalinism was raised — but not that of anti-communism, as the Party applied repressive measures against the more radical members of the opposition.

Later that autumn, on November 18, another demonstration took place in Riga, commemorating the 69th anniversary

of Latvia's attainment of independence as well as the exiling of a number of "Helsinki '86" members to the West.

Lithuania was quiet in the fall of 1987, although a demonstration attracting 1,500 people took place on August 23 in Vilnius.

In January 1988, the M.R.P. — A.E.G. called upon the Estonian people to demonstrate in Tartu on February 2 to mark the anniversary of the 1920 peace treaty with Soviet Russia, which guaranteed Estonian independence. Over 1,000 people showed up at the designated time and place, and skirmishes with the police ensued. Simultaneously, a rally was held in the auditorium of Tartu university at which the programmatic declaration of the Estonian National Independence Party — founded by well-known oppositionists of all ages — was read. The Independence Party's primary objective is the transformation of Estonia by peaceful means into a parliamentary democracy with a market economy. Although independence is the goal of those involved, the Party states that its immediate aim is to make the republic Estonian in character within the borders of the Soviet Union — albeit as a separate, autonomous unit.

On February 16, 1988 Lithuanian national activists, including Nijolė Sadūnaitė, Petras Gražulis and Antanas Terleckas, organized a mass rally on the 70th anniversary of Lithuania's achievement of independence. Two days earlier, on a Sunday, processions took place after mass in which many thousands of Lithuanians participated all over the country. Then on Tuesday, 10-15,000 people gathered in front of St. Nicholas' church in Vilnius. When they tried to march to the statue of Mickiewicz [the great Polish poet of Lithuanian descent], special police units, complete with dogs, were used to disperse the demonstrators. People were beaten, rounded up and dumped outside the city. Approximately 160 people had to be hospitalized for injuries sustained during the police attack. Yet the banned Lithuanian national flag was flying from three buildings in the city.

In Kaunas, nearly 2,000 demonstrators tried to walk from the city's cathedral to the statue of Maironis, the national poet of Lithuania. Participants chanted "freedom" and "referendum" (in the matter of Lithuania's continuing membership in the U.S.S.R.), and — as in Vilnius — violent confrontations took place with the police. Several dozen people were detained, although a number of the detainees managed to escape shortly

after being thrown into the police trucks. However, Western journalists, under the care of the K.G.B., informed the world that all was quiet in Lithuania on February 16.

The M.R.P. — A.E.G. called for a demonstration in Tallinn on February 24, the 70th anniversary of Estonia's achievement of independence. The crowd that gathered at the statue of Tammsaare, Estonia's national poet, was estimated at 8-20,000 people. The same unit of riot police that attacked demonstrators in Vilnius a week earlier was used to scatter the crowd in Tallinn.

* * *

The mass demonstrations of February in Lithuania and Estonia marked the end of the first phase in the development of the situation. As it turned out, the authorities' strategy of limited repression (*glasnost* has probably prevented them from more thoroughly cracking down on the opposition) was not enough to control the growing national movements of the Baltic region. The next phase has been characterized by deportations of leading activists in the movement together with government attempts to organize parallel demonstrations under the banner of "national communism" and the "struggle with the distortions of Stalinism." Official artistic and creative unions, as well as members of the cultural establishment, have now appeared to take the initiative from the independent activists and organizations.

The Union of Latvian writers has formed a committee to rehabilitate the victims of Stalinism. When "Helsinki '86" called for a demonstration in honor of those deported on March 25, 1949, the writers' union responded with a call to attend a parallel demonstration. In the end, two separate demonstrations occurred; the estimated crowd of 3,000 at the independent demonstration was broken up by the police.

On the same day in Estonia, 5,000 people demonstrated at the Tammsaare monument in Tallinn at the behest of the M.R.P. — A.E.G. to honor those deported to Siberia on that date 39 years ago.

On May 10, independent Lithuanian activists issued a statement calling for a demonstration, to be held on May 22, in memory of those deported east on May 20, 1946. The government, however, tried to beat them to the punch: as early as April, preparations were announced for an official observance of the anniversary on May 21. On that day, 4,000 people gathered before the statue of the pre-war Lithuanian communist Angarctis, who died during the purges of 1937. The rally took place under the banner of "the struggle against the distortions of socialism."

Three to five thousand people gathered at Gedymin square in Vilnius on May 22. A resolution passed at the rally demanded the punishment of those responsible for the deportations, the publication of all statistical records connected with the deportations, material and moral compensation to their victims, and the erection of a monument to commemorate them. At the same

time, an additional 3-5,000 Lithuanians demonstrated in front of the city hall in Kaunas, voicing the same demands.

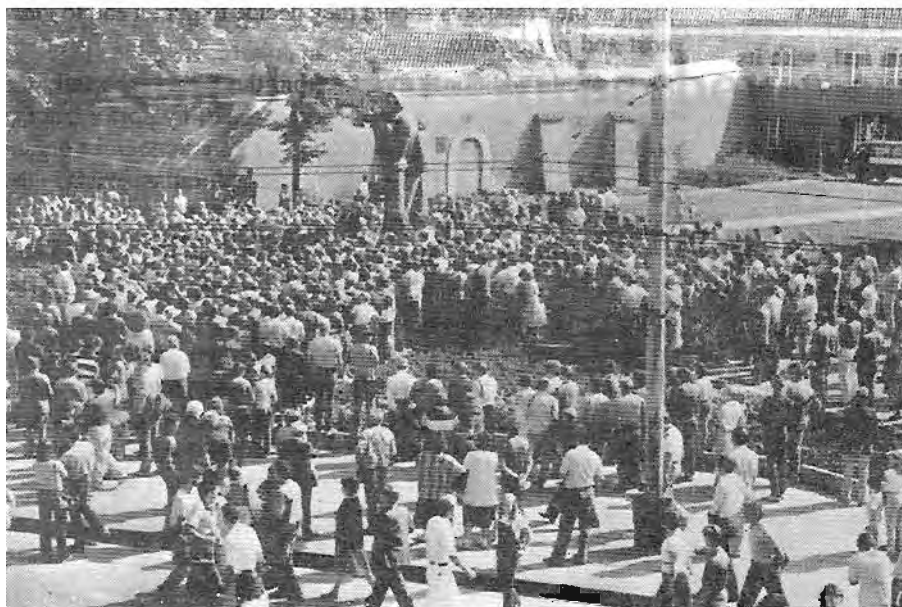
When the authorities realized that neither limited repression nor the strategy of parallel rallies would quell the independent activity, they decided to outbid the independent movements and take the lead in the struggle for national aims and against the remaining "distortions" of Stalinism. Estonia was chosen as a testing ground for the new strategy.

At the beginning of April, the Estonian authorities created the "People's Front in Support of Perestroika," headed by members of the Communist Party intelligentsia and non-Party representatives of the cultural elite. The immediate goal of the Front was to fill a slate of candidates for the Party Conference in Moscow held last June. In the press, members of the Front have defended Estonian national rights and attacked Stalinism. On April 1, Estonian artistic and creative unions, in a special declaration, joined the Front in advancing national demands, which included the transformation of Estonia into an autonomous economic and cultural zone, and more specifically, the recognition of separate Estonian citizenship and a special status for the Estonian language. Then the Estonian Komsomol [the Communist youth organization] declared its support of the reformists' demands, even going so far as to call for outright political pluralism.

At the beginning of June, the artistic and creative unions of Latvia voted to advance demands almost identical with those put forward by their counterparts in Estonia. The Latvians stressed that the U.S.S.R. should become a union of genuinely sovereign republics.

June 3 saw the creation of the "Movement in Support of Perestroika" in Lithuania, closely modeled after the Estonian "Front." On the same day, the Lithuanian Freedom League was reactivated. The League — which counts among its most important members Antanas Terleckas, Vytautas Bogus and Thomas Petkivicius — was active as an underground organization from 1978 to 1980. Its goal is the restoration of freedom to Lithuania within a free Europe. An intermediate stage to this goal is to be the transformation of the U.S.S.R. into a union of genuinely sovereign republics — which, on the other hand, constitutes the final objective for the "Movement."

The League puts out a journal, which states that each republic within the Soviet Union should constitute an economically independent state, and that the central authorities should only be concerned with defense, foreign policy and inter-republic relations. The League's demands include: reserving the most important positions in the Lithuanian government for Lithuanians, the active participation of the Catholic Church in public life, the introduction of optional religious instruction to the curricula of grade schools and high schools, the recognition of Lithuanian as the obligatory language of communication for all non-Lithuanians residing on Lithuanian territory, the circulation of Lithuanian currency and coinage, the raising of a volunteer Lithuanian army, the payment of reparations to



Lithuanians gathered at the statue of Adam Mickiewicz in Vilnius on August 23, 1987 in memory of Stalin's and the Nazis' victims and demanded the abolition of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. (Photo: Lithuanian Information Center)

the victims of repression, the erection of monuments in honor of the partisans who fought the Soviets, and guarantees for freedom of speech, assembly and the right to emigrate.

Also June 3, a group of fifteen Latvians and two Russians issued a statement calling for the creation of the "Patriotic Movement in Support of Perestroika." Among the 17 signatories, five held high positions in the Party establishment, primarily connected with propaganda. The appeal was printed in the official press, and on July 3, the Latvian *Pravda* stated that organizational work had already begun on the political platform of the "Movement."

In June, 40 people — including Eduards Berklavs, who was removed from the politburo of the Latvian Communist Party in 1959 for "National Bolshevism" — founded the Latvian National Independence Movement. This group's program is a mixture of symbolic demands (restoration of the national flag, building of monuments, changing of street names) with demands of an anti-communist nature (multi-party system, end to censorship) and of a national nature (raising of a Latvian army, encouraging the emigration of non-Latvians from Latvian territory). These last two types of demands have not appeared in any of the artistic and creative unions' statements.

On June 14, 1988, Latvian artistic and creative unions, independent groups, and Party representatives organized an official, nationwide observance of the 47th anniversary of the first deportation. A rally in Riga attracted 50-100,000 people. Representatives of the authorities as well as former political prisoners made speeches. The slogans "Freedom for Latvia,"

"A free Latvia in a free Europe," and "Red Army out of Latvia," — but also "All power to the Soviets" — were chanted. Rallies also took place in Liepaja, Daugavpils, Krustpils and Rezekne.

On that very day, in the fields outside Tallinn, 150-170,000 people came to a mass rally organized by the Estonian "Popular Front." The purpose of the rally was to vote on instructions to be given to the Estonian delegation to the special Communist Party Conference in Moscow. They were told to secure for Estonia an agreement that would allow it to be transformed into a sovereign republic, the right to set prices on Estonian goods, amnesty for political prisoners, a final condemnation of Stalinism, an end to Russification, and support for Estonian culture and language. However, neither the one-party system nor Estonia's membership in the Soviet Union

were questioned. Rallies were held in the cities of Tartu and Pärnu as well.

On June 24, the Lithuanian "Movement in Support of *Perestroika*" organized — just as its sister organizations in the other Baltic republics — a mass meeting in Vilnius with the delegates selected for the Party Conference in Moscow. Some 60,000 people came to hear the secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party present the platform of the new "Movement," which essentially consisted of demanding economic and cultural autonomy for Lithuanians. The participants of the rally carried banners that declared "Lithuania for Lithuanians," "Freedom for political prisoners," and "Stalin is dead." On July 9, a crowd estimated at 100,000 people attended a follow-up meeting with the delegation sent to Moscow. Yet another rally was held in Vilnius just three days later, on the 68th anniversary of the signing of the peace treaty between independent Lithuania and Soviet Russia. Even the previously underground Lithuanian Freedom League was allowed to participate in the organization of this event.

* * *

In the face of this surging tide of national demands, Moscow has decided to make only symbolic concessions. In Lithuania, permission was granted to build a monument in honor of those who were deported; in Estonia, the national flag has been restored. Cosmetic changes in the status of the Baltic republics are being considered with a view toward inducing the United States and Western Europe to recognize them as constituent parts of the Soviet Union — a strategem to which some in Moscow have already admitted.

In my view, Gorbachev's fronts, movements, or groups

in support of *perestroika* are meant to fulfill four tasks:

- to gain the active support of the intelligentsia and, with its help, mobilize society for the sake of the central authorities under the banner of *perestroika* and national communism. As many of the old Party structures become increasingly irrelevant, these new organizations may come to play the role of "transmission belts" from the Party to the masses. A possible side effect could be the appearance of genuine reformist tendencies within the Party.
- to take the initiative away from the opposition groups, relegating them to a marginal role in the over-all liberalization movement and thereby limiting the movement's objectives to the struggle against Stalinism and making it impossible for anti-communist orientations and groups to emerge; also, to absorb and assimilate independent groups, as well as to prepare the means by which the authorities can liquidate the whole move-

ment at the grassroots should they decide to put an end to *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

- to obtain additional support from the West, especially the support of the European and American left, by portraying the various "fronts" and "movements" as non-communist organizations — thereby proving that political pluralism exists in the Soviet Union.
- to create instruments to pressure that segment of the Party *nomenklatura* which is resisting reform, but which would, at the same time, leave the K.G.B. in peace.

I'm afraid to say that, in this battle to win people's hearts and minds, the independent opposition groups are destined to lose, since arrayed against them are both the propaganda machine of the Soviet Union as well as Western mass media, which inform the world of everything Moscow has to say. □

Opposition as Self-Defense

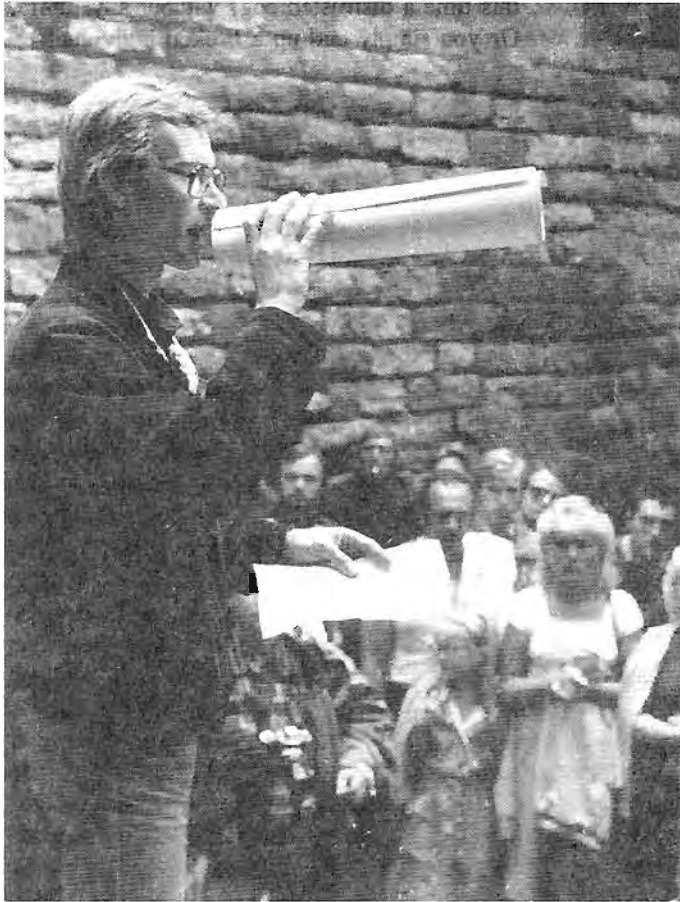
An Interview with Heiki Ahonen

On March 5, 1988, Estonian national activist Heiki Ahonen, 32, was taken from Patarei prison in Tallinn and put on board a flight to Stockholm. This forced emigration was the last in a series of persecutions Ahonen has had to endure since he began his dissident activities 11 years ago. During that period he has been imprisoned three times — including four years at the Perm labor camp — and subjected to interrogations, beatings, and confiscations of his property.

A native of Pärnu and a surveyor by profession, Ahonen began the activities which he describes as "simply a form of self-defense" in 1977, upon his release from military service. During the period 1980-83 these activities included the drafting of letters protesting the arrests of various human rights activists, including Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov. He also promoted awareness of the effects of Russification in Estonia, and signed a letter supporting the establishment of a nuclear free zone in northern Europe that would include the Baltic republics. Ahonen was imprisoned in December 1983 for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda," but granted an early release in February 1987. In July of that year, he became

a founding member of the Estonian Group for the Full Disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [M.R.P. — A.E.G.], which was created as a way to test *glasnost*. This group, whose demonstrations in Tallinn in August 1987 attracted worldwide attention, has since become a rallying point for a broad-based national movement. In December 1987 Ahonen gave an interview to a French television station in which he demanded the democratization of the Soviet Union, Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the right of nations to self-determination. In January 1988 he signed the platform of the Estonian National Independence Party, which, among other things, demands the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Baltic republics. On February 1, the day before the scheduled M.R.P. — A.E.G. demonstrations commemorating the signing of the Peace Treaty of Tartu (in which the Soviet Union relinquished all claims to Estonia in 1920 and recognized its independence), Ahonen was ordered to report for military duty. Upon his refusal he was arrested and thrown in prison, where he remained until his deportation.

He now lives in Sweden, where he is active in the Relief Center for Estonian Prisoners of Conscience.



Heiki Ahonen speaks at a rally called by the M.R.P.-A.E.G. on August 23, 1987.

Uncaptive Minds: In spite of the Western media's recent, more thoroughgoing coverage of events in the Baltic republics, few in the West are familiar with individuals, such as yourself, who have been active in the independent and national movements. What led you to become a member of the Estonian opposition?

Heiki Ahonen: I have lived in Estonia all my life, and what I have been doing — and will continue to do — I simply consider a form of self-defense. My association with the Estonian national and independence movements dates back to 1978. I was arrested in 1983, although prior to that the authorities had been trying to intimidate me with house searches, detentions, etc.

Actually, one of my most important experiences was my service in the Soviet Army from 1975 to 1977, because there the structure of the Soviet totalitarian system is laid bare.

In what way?

Ahonen: Everything in the Soviet army is a vivid, concrete expression of Soviet totalitarian power. One can really see what this power is all about because the whole totalitarian state is

mirrored there, clearly and simply, right down to the barbed wire, uniforms and barracks.

When I spent time in prison camps later on, I realized that the two experiences — prison and military service — are similar. In prison, however, you know at least that you are being punished; in the army, you are fulfilling your "duty to the socialist state." There are, of course, further differences between prison and the army, but, as in the novel *Good Soldier Schweik*, the army serves as an outstanding example of the abuse of unbridled power. During the two years I served in the army, for example, I only had one night's leave from camp.

How are conscripts from the various nationalities treated in the army? For example, did you serve together with Estonians, or were you kept separated?

Ahonen: I wasn't completely isolated, but there were only 10 other Estonians in my unit. Of course, everyone in the Soviet Union abhors the service because army conditions are so bad. Everyone tries to find some way to get out of it; medical exemptions are especially sought after. However, the army authorities keep lowering physical standards for service, and now they'll take almost anyone, even the physically handicapped.

My question pertains more to your highly political attitude toward military service.

Ahonen: Most people probably don't think of military service in my abstract terms. My sense is, however, that they have similar views on the subject. It is the same with demonstrations: a large number of Estonians are sympathetic to the idea of demonstrating for independence and so forth, but they do not come out for fear of the consequences. Neither will people openly express their opinions about military service. As for our treatment in the army, Tiit Madisson* was in the same unit as I, and we both got into altercations with the Russians. We were not the only ones. It is clear, both in the structure of the armed forces and in the way military service is conducted, that the Soviets try to set one nationality against another and to use the hostility thus generated to keep the nationalities under control. In each unit, the various nationalities would form groups — Moslems, Caucasians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Russians, etc. — and fights between them were inevitable, even if you tried to avoid them. If you are isolated in your unit, you can be terrorized.

* Tiit Madisson is a founder of the M.R.P. — A.E.G. 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. *Uncaptive Minds* published an interview with him in its second issue.



Estonians gather in Tallinn to protest the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1987.

The officers, employing an old strategy, blame the fights and aggravation of hostilities on those people who have strong nationalistic sentiments. Such individuals are then labelled "enemies of the Soviet state."

You said that your activities outside the camp were simply a means of self-defense.

Ahonen: Totalitarian society is similar to a caste system, in which you cannot move out of the position into which you were born, as opposed to a democratic system, where it is possible to move upwards, sideways or downwards. I could not accept this: I did not want to be simply a cog in the machine. And let me stress that my decision to oppose the system was not made lightly, since it meant forsaking any hope for a career.

So you felt you had no other choice?

Ahonen: Not exactly. First, such a decision is not sudden and dramatic. One doesn't wake up in the morning and decide to be a dissident. It is a gradual process: You stop going to Kom-somol [the Communist youth organization] meetings, you ask a pointed question in history class at school, you make certain statements, and after a while you find yourself involved. Once you are engaged in national or dissident activities, it is very difficult to return to "normalcy." If you do, there are only two options: either return to being that cog in the machine — but

this time a distrusted cog, without any future. Or you simply end up a broken individual.

Or an informer.

Ahonen: But that is a given. Informing is the main purpose in life for many Soviet citizens.

You spent four years in prison, from 1983 to 1987. Soon after your release, you formed the M.R.P. — A.E.G., or the Committee for the Full Disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This was two years after Gorbachev's ascension to power and the beginning of glasnost. What was your goal in forming the M.R.P. — A.E.G.? Did you foresee that it would form the nucleus of a mass movement?

Ahonen: The M.R.P. — A.E.G. was formed to test *glasnost*, by focusing attention on efforts to publicize one specific document — the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact [according to which the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany divided Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries into "spheres of influence," the latter being assigned to Soviet domination]. Under *glasnost*, we are supposed to have open access to various historical materials that have been under lock and key until now. It is telling that the Soviet authorities do not admit the existence of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Not only are they unpublished, but the authorities deny that the secret protocols exist altogether. We are asking for the one thing they appear not to want to give up.**

Is this the official response to your call for the disclosure of the secret protocols?

Ahonen: Officially, they do not respond to anything. But articles in the official press challenge the legitimacy of our demand on the grounds that the Pact has already been published. There are no secret protocols and so there can be no demand for their disclosure. The group only makes one request, but since the authorities have not satisfied it, the M.R.P. — A.E.G. has expanded its focus and moved on to address broader questions that were raised by the authorities' refusal.

** On August 10, 1988 articles began to appear in the official Estonian media, disclosing details of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, specifically about the secret additional protocols which allowed for the Soviet occupation of the three Baltic countries. But on August 16, Soviet officials reiterated the official Soviet view of the question: namely that the secret protocols — which were published by the Allies after they uncovered them in German archives at the end of the war — never existed, or had been lost, and thus the version circulating in the West was either a total fabrication or a distorted version of the original.

So it was not your original purpose to create an organization for pressing the national concerns of Estonians?

Ahonen: It evolved naturally. The secret protocols are a natural rallying point for Estonians.

The M.R.P. — A.E.G. has become a broad movement. Its demonstrations marking the anniversaries of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and of Estonian's attainment of independence drew tens of thousands of people, a remarkable feat in a nation of less than one million. Did you foresee the appeal that the M.R.P. — A.E.G. would have in Estonia?

Ahonen: No — we could never have anticipated the overwhelming response to our movement, which reinforced our belief that Estonians have not forsaken their national aspirations. Before we launched the M.R.P. — A.E.G., we knew, or rather, sensed that the majority of people were sympathetic to the independence movement and concerned with the survival of the Estonian nation, but this sympathy and support had never been concretely demonstrated until the founding of the M.R.P. — A.E.G. and the heeding of our calls to protest. Last August 23, on the anniversary of the signing of the Pact, we did not know how many people would show up. For us, success would have been 50-100 people. Instead we were joined by many thousands who came out in solidarity.

Last year's demonstrations are perhaps most striking in that the authorities permitted them to take place at all. In February, the police did use tear gas and violently dispersed demonstrators, but on other occasions your demonstrations have come off without police interference. Why have the authorities tolerated you to this degree? Have you received legal permission to demonstrate?

Ahonen: We have never received a permit to demonstrate. We simply notify the authorities of our intention to do so. We requested permission once, but we were denied, which put us in the position of acting illegally. We are in a different position when we simply announce that there will be a demonstration. Permission is not denied since we don't ask for it.

Since the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the authorities don't know how to react to these challenges. They're worried about their own skins, too. And they want to put on a good face for the West as well as their own people — especially since Western governments focused attention on the demonstration on Estonian Independence Day and its aftermath. When there was less publicity, the police decided to act, as on February 2, 1988 [when Estonians demonstrated to commemorate the peace treaty signed between the Soviet Union and Estonia in 1920].

The M.R.P. — A.E.G. has become the focal point of the Estonian national movement and spawned the Estonian National

Independence Party. How would you characterize the movement? For example, in the West the Baltic movements are often referred to as nationalist, suggesting that demands for independence or national rights are parochial and limited. Do members of the M.R.P. — A.E.G. and the Estonian National Independence Party consider themselves part of a strictly nationalist movement, or do they also believe that they are fighting to create a different type of political system?

Ahonen: Of course the movement has much wider implications. It would be absurd to view these issues from a narrowly nationalist perspective. In every political battle, one must have a conceptual framework around which to unite people. National independence is indeed that which unites us, but what we are fighting for is democracy.

In the proposal to create the Estonian National Independence Party there are much broader considerations than nationalism. The Party's platform is still in the process of formation. Since we feel that democracy flows from the people, we don't want to impose anything or declare a platform and ask people to sign it. Rather, we want to challenge people to come up with alternatives to the current system.

The importance placed on the democratic process has its roots in the period of Estonian independence — well within living memory — which was democratic. The Estonians' knowledge of their political past has shaped the way they conceive of independence. Ours is a Western heritage.

Many nations of the Soviet bloc have little or no experience with democracy; in the case of those countries that have gone through a democratic period, the long years of Soviet rule may have washed those memories away. Is there still much influence from the West, or have the Soviets succeeded in isolating Estonia and the other Baltic countries in the post-war period?

Ahonen: Even though we in the younger generation have not directly experienced democracy, we have a good idea of what it should be from Western books. Any book — no matter how inconsequential — becomes a bible for us, from which we can pick up the various elements of the democratic tradition.

Let me clarify something I said before: the proposal to form the Estonian National Independence Party is just that. In fact, we don't want simply one opposition party; we hope that many people will respond to our challenge to come up with alternatives, and that parties will be formed around different ideas.

Although we have a sense of what democracy is all about, we need to relearn the rudiments of the democratic process. That is what we hope to do: to go to the people themselves and find out at the grass-roots level what the concerns of Estonians are.

Is there much independent social activity in the fields of publishing, education, or culture?

Ahonen: To get our message out, we need the various modern forms of communication, such as copying machines, video and tape recorders, which we are sorely lacking.

Our demonstrations are very difficult to organize because we must print all the leaflets by hand. It took a week to crank out 16,000 leaflets, and of course this is fraught with danger. The need is great, although well within the means of funding sources that seek to promote democracy.

What are the goals of the M.R.P. – A.E.G. and the Estonian National Independence Party?

Ahonen: The basic demand of the M.R.P. – A.E.G. remains the same, since it has not been fulfilled and the secret protocols remain unpublished. But the broader issues are being addressed within the framework of the proposed Estonian National Independence Party: withdrawal of Soviet troops from Estonia, as well as Latvia and Lithuania; democratic institutions, free elections, an Estonian army — that is to say, national independence. In addition to this, there are those who would demand justice for Russians who have committed crimes, and reparations for crimes against Estonians and the Estonian nation. Certain conditions must also be established such as the use of Estonian by those who are not Estonian: currently Russians in Estonia speak Russian and Estonians Estonian. We are also, for example, subject to Soviet and not Estonian law. All these demands must be considered, as would be the right of any normal country.

In Estonia, what are the basic mechanisms of the power structure, and to what degree do Estonians participate in that structure?

Ahonen: The most important areas of the economy and state structure are controlled by Russians. The police, the army, transportation, communications — all are dominated by Russians.

In other respects, I cannot answer your question because I am not an expert on the power structure. But I can tell you one thing: despite the appearances of an Estonian Government and an Estonian Communist Party with Estonians, all basic decisions are made in Moscow. There is no independence or autonomy. This is a country where the Communist Party had but 200 members in 1939, and those Estonians who are members today belong principally for opportunistic reasons.

But there are many Estonians in official structures such as unions, associations, and institutions. If these have no relevance to the exercise of power, what is the significance of the many demands that have emanated from these unions and groups, for example the Writers' Union and the Lawyers' Association, each of which made rather extensive demands to the Party conference in Moscow for autonomy and democracy? Does the un

official — or actually illegal — independence movement have any relationship with the official structures that are making rather similar demands?

Ahonen: It would be difficult to describe these organizations as belonging to the power structure. The demands put forward by the official groups, such as the lawyers' association, are attempts on the part of the power structure itself to seize the initiative after having lost it during the turbulent events of the past year. For example, there is the creation of the Popular Front, which appears to be making demands made by the national movement [calling for autonomy, the use of the Estonian language in all governmental and other deliberations, and greater economic freedom]. Also, Karl Vaino has been dismissed as the head of the Estonian Communist Party. But one should note that his replacement, Vaino Vajlas, was the Soviet ambassador to Nicaragua. The only difference is that he speaks Estonian and Karl Vaino didn't. Another example of such tactics is that the law has been changed to allow the blue, black and white Estonian flag — which has been forbidden since the early days of the occupation and which has been a symbol of Estonian national aspirations and the image of the opposition — to be displayed as a national flag. Since they couldn't stop people from unfurling the Estonian flag, they've decided to allow it to be displayed, thus taking away its effectiveness as a symbol of opposition.

Is that your view of the demands being made by the cultural unions and the lawyers' union for autonomy, judicial reform, the redress of Estonian interests? These appear to be more sincere and not tactical diversions of the power structure.

Ahonen: These are not connected to the independent opposition movement, and we have no direct relations, so I cannot answer your question precisely. But those groups do appear to be part of the overall change in Estonia.

One must remember that many of the members of the Estonian cultural unions and others have had to walk around with their fists clenched in their pockets for forty years and have never dared to speak out about anything. Now they have begun to make themselves heard. But I think it is the opposition movement's success that has given these people the courage to speak out and act more openly. And they are merely saying things that we have been trying to achieve. □

Polish Independent Culture In the Era of *Glasnost*

By Jacek Fedorowicz

Jacek Fedorowicz is one of the best known and most versatile independent figures in Poland. He is an actor, humorist, and graphic artist whose drawings and articles often appear in the underground press. The following is the text of a lecture Fedorowicz gave this spring in the U.S.

I am a satirical writer and I used to present my texts over radio or on the stage. I live in Warsaw, Poland. This year, for the first time since the imposition of martial law in 1981, the government gave me a passport. I suppose you know that a citizen of the Polish People's Republic is not allowed to go abroad without first obtaining permission from the authorities. The passport they give you is something like a holiday pass from prison. Sure you can go, but only for as long as they let you, when they let you, and to the country they allow you to visit. The only thing they don't control is the color of your suitcase and the way you dress for the journey. They *do* instruct you, however, how to behave abroad. No interviews, no public activities; you're not to write something and have it published, or give lectures, without official permission. It follows, then, that at the moment I am engaging in dangerous criminal activity.

I won't deny it: I am dangerous because I stand with many thousands of others who act outside the limitations of censorship. We are active in all those areas — the arts, scholarship, the dissemination of information — in which every word was strictly controlled by the authorities only ten years ago. We call this phenomenon "independent culture." The current state of independent culture is the subject of this lecture.

In order to understand the importance of the fact that independent culture exists in Poland, one should be to some extent acquainted with the situation in Eastern Europe. The totalitarian state or, to be more precise, any state which tries to be totalitarian, barricades itself behind laws which attempt to ensure that every word published or uttered publicly is first approved by state censors. These laws are also intended to guarantee that the state is the sole possessor of the facilities needed to spread the censored words. And not just words. In order to use my own serigraphic workshop [serigraphy is a simple silk screening technique which allows the printing of a large num-

ber of copies in a short period of time] in my own home, I need a special permit. Of course, I cannot obtain one, because I am a known dissident. So, I did not ask for permission, but I am using the workshop anyhow. The authorities know about it and choose to ignore it. But that is a separate matter, since we are now talking about the existing regulations which, incidentally, vary from one Eastern European country to another. In Poland you cannot have a serigraphic workshop, offset printer, or photocopier, but you are allowed to have a typewriter and even a computer printer. In Romania, all typewriters must be registered. In fact, the act of typing cannot be performed without permission from the state authorities. I don't know what it's like in Albania — perhaps you have to fill out forms before they let you use a pencil.

Note that this is not necessarily a joke. We satirists must be careful, because any bit of nonsense has the potential to become law in Eastern bloc countries. For instance, would you believe me if I told you that, back in Poland, the censor determines the number of advertising posters to be published, as well as their size and the type of font to be used in printing them? Or that the censor even tries to control the audience's reactions at cabaret performances? An employee at the censor's office once said to a friend of mine: "In the text you make a reference to the Soviet Union. Why don't you read this part quickly, without emphasis, so that not everyone gets the point. You see, if there is too much laughter from the audience, I will have to cross it out."

Perhaps such efforts don't make much sense to you. But from the state's point of view, they make all the sense in the world. We can easily find in the history of fascism — or communism — instances in which a massive propaganda campaign was able to change the conscience of a whole society. Communists well know Goebbels' guiding principle: lie as much as you can so long as you keep a straight face.

The invention of television was very helpful in this respect. All programs are given special attention by the central propaganda authorities. The viewer is not offered a choice of programs — he can only choose to switch the TV set on or off. The medium of television enables the authorities to pass on information to society quickly and efficiently. Television is also an effective propaganda tool because its audience is composed of individuals who are isolated from each other in their own homes. So just imagine the 1970s in Poland: our viewer sees

from morning to evening the successes of the socialist economy; he hears that he is living in a paradise; he is told that his country is rapidly developing and about to catch up with the United States; he is assured that everyone, absolutely everyone in Poland loves socialism and supports the authorities.

The viewer in question doesn't particularly love socialism, nor support the authorities, but slowly he begins to believe that he is an exception, that only he can see the approaching crisis, that he is the only one who was not fooled. At the same time he is unable to find out how the rest of society feels, since there are no means of communication available outside the state-owned and controlled media, which say: Don't worry, it's OK, and if you don't see that it's OK, you must be blind!

Under these circumstances, the Pope's visit in 1979 was extremely important, if only because people came out into the streets (for the first time they could do so legally and in large numbers), and they saw with their own eyes how many people were *not* communists. "Oh, so I am not alone!" says the lone television viewer to himself. "Others think the same way I do!" Many sociologists maintain that this seemingly ordinary visit resulted some time later in the creation of Solidarity.

Well, I'm not a sociologist, but I do know one thing: the authorities can manipulate social awareness in any way they like only if they have a monopoly on the dissemination of information, that is, as long as they can isolate the public from independent thought and prevent it from freely exchanging information and ideas. It follows that those who defy police threats are confined to the smallest possible circles, so that their thinking is similar to the lone TV viewer I mentioned before, who thinks that he is the only one dissatisfied in an ocean of compatriots happy with the system.

In Poland, this sort of situation is a thing of the past. It's a whole new ball game now, unlike anything else in the history of totalitarian communist states.

First and foremost, the information monopoly of the state has been broken. Poles are no longer limited to the state-owned press and television. A massive independent publishing operation exists, which produces countless uncensored texts, newspapers, tapes and video cassettes. I have just used the term "countless," which is imprecise. Unfortunately, research into the subject will be impossible for as long as it takes place in a police state and the publishers are working underground. The so-called security services, that is the secret police, are carrying out very intensive research, but they do not make their data readily available. Only fragments of their research reach us from time to time, in the form of reports from court cases during which independent printers and distributors are sentenced for, and I quote, "spreading false information."

But precise numbers are not the most important thing. What is important is the fact that the state's monopoly on information has been broken, which is obvious even to an unprepared observer. Today, everyone has access to independent information, to uncensored journals and books. Of course, it is nec-

essary to make an effort — a much greater effort than, say, turning on the TV. The interested citizen must demonstrate some courage, because — while no one will punish him for watching TV — he may be punished for watching a banned video tape. But opportunities to pursue independent culture do indeed exist, and many people take advantage of them. I happen to know one statistic, which I read in an official newspaper, on the extent of independent culture in Poland: in a country of some thirty-six million people, whose economy lies in ruins, it is estimated there are one million video recorders — which puts Poland in the world's top ten.

How can this be? First of all, one should remember that civilized nations do not live by bread alone. Secondly, one should keep in mind that in Eastern bloc countries, society and the state are two separate entities. The interests of the two are contrary. If the President of the United States goes crazy tomorrow and gives the Polish government one billion dollars, Poles will gain no advantage from it — unless they're soldiers, in which case they might be able to exchange their old, dingy tanks for newer, more comfortable models. Other Poles benefit from foreign aid only under one condition: if the money is given to them privately, which usually means the donors are relatives and friends living abroad. Roughly one fifth of all Poles live outside the borders of Poland; since they are all too well aware of the situation back home, they help their countrymen as much as they can. Western governments also help, especially the United States. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for this help — especially for the assistance which Congress voted to give Solidarity, since it will benefit the citizens, and not the rulers, of Poland. The state continually tries to get these "presents" from its citizens, but this is a separate subject and I won't dwell on it now.

So there are a million video recorders and this in itself is a disaster for the authorities: even if the owner of such equipment does not watch cassettes produced by independent filmmakers, he watches American films, family videos, etc., and during that time he does *not* watch official programming, since there is only one screen on the TV set. The viewer has an alternative, he has the right to choose, which is extremely important. And he usually chooses to watch independent productions at some point anyway. For instance, I can assure you that almost every educated person in Poland has seen the film "The Interrogation," which was banned. The film was secretly copied onto video cassettes, and — handed on from person to person — has been seen by almost everybody interested.

The state now has competition that cannot be easily disposed of. The degree of repression and mobilization of police forces necessary to accomplish the liquidation of the underground movement is probably beyond the means of the government, especially if we remember that underground publications enjoy strong support from the majority of people, support which is limited only by fear. And this fear decreases day by day. But economic factors also play an important role here. It is said that the underground publishing movement be-

came a permanent feature of Polish life when it became apparent that underground publishing was more lucrative than working a similar job in the state-sponsored publishing industry. During the last ten years, thousands of wonderful specialists have emerged who can print anything, with almost anything, on anything. Material is printed on proper printing machines, primitive copiers, mesh frames, or secretly in state-owned printing shops. When there is no ink, car paint is used, or paint diluted in scrubbing solution — it is not so strong, but lasts longer. I myself had to use ladies' handkerchiefs as "mesh" and windshield wipers as "squeegees" for many months.

Underground printers are not only excellent professionals, but very good conspirators as well. The security systems of the underground press are very impressive. Take the weekly *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, for example. It is published in 30,000 copies of four pages each, which must be written, edited, transported to the printer's, and printed on difficult-to-obtain paper. Then it must be supplied to distributors, who make sure all the copies reach the readers. It is amazing how many people are involved in this process and how careful they must be, for all this is happening in a country in which every policeman's dream is to uncover a secret printing press and get a medal, reward, or promotion; in a country where a policeman can stop any person in the street and search for prohibited materials; a country where a car is confiscated by the state if such materials are found inside. The scale of underground publishing in Poland and the obstacles it must overcome demonstrate better than street protests the degree of resistance in Polish society, how much this society wants to be free.

You may have noticed a trace of bitterness here. But it seems that Western public opinion only reacts when spectacular actions are involved. Nothing is happening in Poland, because there are no crowds demonstrating in the streets chanting "Gestapo!" "Gestapo!" at charging riot police. I know that police truncheons and blood look better on color TV, and that it is much more difficult to show the less spectacular work of hundreds of thousands of people involved in maintaining and developing independent thought. But totalitarian dictatorships will never cease to threaten the world until independent thought develops in them to at least the same degree as it has in my country. I keep repeating that one underground printing press is a much more effective weapon than a Pershing missile. It is a pity that free societies do not always keep this in mind — unlike the authorities of totalitarian states, who are all too well aware of this fact.

Though the authorities understand this, they have not been able to put a stop to independent publishing so far. They've tried various methods. Elated by the unexpected ease with which they imposed martial law — when Polish society demonstrated surprising wisdom by not accepting a challenge to arms — they imagined that liquidating independent thought would be a brief and nearly effortless affair; that it would be enough to hand down a number of stiff sentences to make the printers, distributors, writers and intellectuals give up the fight. Prison sen-

tences at the beginning of martial law were indeed draconian. But they didn't cut down on "crime." To be fair, I must add that artists and intellectuals were treated with more leniency than union and other opposition activists. While they were locked up in jail I, an artist, only had my car destroyed. In a communist country, the deliberate burning of someone's car should be treated as a delicate slap on the bottom administered by a parent to a naughty child. The car was burned by so-called "unknown persons" in a parking lot near a police station. It was interesting to see the serious faces of the policemen involved in the "investigation," who totally disregarded one small detail: the roof of my car had been melted down with chemicals normally used to burn through tank armor, which under no circumstances could have been in a private criminal's possession. Not everyone, however, was able to remain serious during this farce. A young policeman was the first investigator on the scene, and the first person he questioned was my neighbor. "Whom do you suspect?" he asked in a matter-of-fact tone. "I don't know," answered the neighbor, who then insolently added, "It was either the secret police, or you." The police investigator thought it over for a moment, then replied, "Probably it was us — they always give us the worst jobs."

Repression did not help, and the competition did not give up, so the communist authorities began gradually, under the influence of world public opinion — particularly that of those countries, like the United States, that cherish freedom — to give up the practice of meting out long prison terms to those involved in the work of independent culture. Unfortunately, they resorted to a new method: financial harassment. Today fines equaling at least two months' wages are handed down, and private cars, tape recorders, and typewriters are confiscated. The confiscation of a car is an especially severe penalty, since even a second-hand car costs as much as three years' wages. The underground has responded by creating an insurance fund. The head of the Intervention Committee of Solidarity, Zbigniew Romaszewski states that so far it has been possible to reimburse people for at least part of the cash value of private cars that were taken by the state. But the cost to underground activists has been high — all the more so in that fines are often followed by criminal charges.

Nowadays an independent publisher caught printing an uncensored book is no longer charged with spreading false information, anti-state propaganda, or ridiculing the highest state authorities, as used to be the case in the past, but with the theft of paint, paper, or printing machines. The choice of the object that is the basis for the charge depends only on the penalty for which the independent publisher is to be sentenced. The publisher goes to jail as a thief — and public opinion outside Poland is no longer interested in him. He ceases to be a freedom fighter, an oppressed dissident in whom international organizations such as Amnesty International are interested. He is a private person and a common criminal, while the regime which imprisoned him is considered lenient because it isn't holding any political prisoners.

At this point I owe you another explanation: every citizen of the Polish People's Republic can be charged with theft at almost any moment, and there will probably be some grounds for the accusation. There is no one in an Eastern bloc country who doesn't have something that has been stolen. The majority of common, everyday items simply are not readily available in state stores. You either have to buy what you need from someone who has already stolen it, or steal the thing yourself. For instance, if you ask a private plumber to repair a leaking pipe, he will come and do it for you using nuts that he bought in a shop and a stolen pipe, plaster and wire. From the moment he completes the job you are an accessory to his theft and can be charged and sentenced, especially as the pipe was stolen state property. Look at me: my clothing was bought in a shop, but the paper I am using was stolen from a TV station; my glasses were properly purchased, but they are not falling apart, because I fixed them with a stolen screw.

It is interesting that in Poland, a civilized country that is religious and concerned with questions of morality, the theft of the pipe mentioned above would not be considered a crime at all, provided it was stolen from the state. Even some priests would not treat it as a sin if you mentioned it during confession. By stealing from the state, the citizen is simply taking back what the state has stolen from him. I don't mean the pipe here, of course, but the citizen's right to decide his own fate. This right has been stolen from us by the state. It is pretty obvious that if Poles were suddenly given the opportunity to decide their own fate, the socialist system would survive an hour, maybe two. Oh well, maybe four hours somewhere in an isolated hut in the middle of a vast forest. It would survive there until a neighbor came, sweaty and out of breath after a long run, shouting: "The Russians have gone! They have gone! We are alone!" That would be the end of it.

So now the authorities try to crush independent culture by pretending that they are fighting common criminals. Charging someone with theft is just one of many different tactics at their disposal. The legal system of every Eastern bloc country has been constructed in such a way that no one is innocent. We are all guilty of something and the only reason we have not been imprisoned yet is that the "people's authority" is just and magnanimous. But do something that antagonizes the government, and all the goodness and leniency are gone, an appropriate paragraph is found in the penal code, and you've had it.

Here is another example. Every Pole shops from time to time in "Pewex" stores, where you can buy all those things that are not available in other shops — such as baby formula or razor blades. Only you have to pay for them in U.S. dollars. One cannot exchange Polish zloty for U.S. dollars legally, which means then that you have to buy dollars on the black market. There is not a single Pole who has not bought dollars like this at some time in his life. Yet only one man in all of Poland was charged in the last two years with purchasing dollars on the black market — Stefan Bratkowski, who happens to be President of

the illegal Association of Journalists, and who has been active in independent culture for many years.

However, Stefan Bratkowski did not go to prison. I also remain free, and have even received permission to leave the country, although for over a year I have been charged with operating a small business without permission, an offense which could cost me millions of zlotys in fines. Also, during my presentations, various materials such as graphics and books are sold. Officially, the authorities claim they have nothing against the content of my lectures — after all, we have freedom of speech under socialism. The authorities are only concerned with illegal vending — that is, they treat the sale of my work in much the same way as selling soft drinks at the railway station or cabbage in the market square. So, I am not in jail, because public opinion in Poland, maybe even abroad, would not believe that the reason behind my imprisonment is illegal vending, and in the case of Bratkowski, dealings with the black market, or in the case of Wałęsa, lending out his Nobel prize money at usurious rates. Well-known people can feel safe at the moment. Unfortunately, there are many lesser-known or anonymous creative and technical contributors involved in the production and distribution of independent culture who cannot feel safe. They continue to pay exorbitant fines and sometimes even go to jail, but nobody puts in a word for them because world public opinion, manipulated by the communists, treats them as common criminals, tax evaders, bad daddies who don't pay child support, or tramps avoiding honest work.

A number of people in the West believe in these idiotic pretexts because they want to believe in them. Such faith is often convenient. The belief that communist countries are on the way to becoming democratic countries that respect human rights and fulfill their international obligations is handy for assuaging the consciences of those who would like to do business with them. The communists well know this secret desire of the West, so they say: from now on we'll be good, we now understand that it is not nice to imprison people, we will stop arming ourselves, withdraw from Afghanistan, open a McDonald's on Red Square and a Coca-Cola stand in Siberia — just sell us a few of your inventions. There are a number of people in the West who dream of selling those inventions, and they are usually very surprised when they find out that the computers they sold for a hospital somehow found their way into a new generation of tanks.

Everyone knows Lenin's famous statement about capitalists selling the rope with which the communists will hang them. Present-day communists have improved on his idea: They want the capitalists to sell the rope for borrowed money, deliver it, and put up the gallows — but instead of hanging them right away, they'll be ordered to work until they're no longer useful. To top it off, the communists say, "you are to work for us not because you are threatened, but out of sympathy. You are to give us things because we are nice, civilized, and concerned about the world situation; moreover, we are trying our best to reform, we are doing the *perestroika* and the *glasnost*."

Glasnost was actually raging in Poland just as I was leaving. Official newspapers were vying with one another in criticizing socialism. Radio and television journalists were speaking up about economic and environmental disasters. I don't know if it is widely known or not in the West, but Poland is one of the few countries of the civilized world where the average life span of its citizens is constantly *dropping*. We are being systematically killed off by polluted air, poisoned water, and radioactive food. This has already been largely revealed to the populace. And there is every indication that the most credibility-damaging "blank spot" — the murder of thousands of Polish officers by the Russians during World War II at Katyn — will soon be filled in.

Is freedom of speech, then, finally a reality in Poland? Not!! This is another attempt to deceive public opinion, both in Poland and abroad. All these revelations have been known to every child in Poland for years. Everyone knows that socialism is inefficient, that the economy is falling to pieces, that the communist rulers were imposed upon Poles against their will, and that the electoral system excludes the possibility of electing anybody who would be a genuine representative of society. These are all continuing and lasting elements of a system that will remain in place for quite some time to come.

Any real changes in the economic system would be impossible, not only because the Soviet Union would not agree, but also because a wealthy society would be very inconvenient for the authorities; it would be much more difficult, if not impossible, to control.

Although the authorities are now telling the truth more or less about the poor performance of the system, they present the facts as if the system were afflicted by a disease, something like A.I.D.S., for which there is no known cure. These statements are supposed to build the impression that the government — which fully realizes what sort of predicament the country is in — is trying hard to ease the pain, to diminish the worst effects of the unavoidable crisis. These last statements are lies, but only the independent press points that out. The authorities write a lot about the crisis, but they are not doing a single thing that could actually change the situation. Under pressure from the World Bank, they announce that they would carry out serious economic reform and even promised to introduce a free market economy — but only in certain factories at first. Poles scornfully remark that this would be similar to the English deciding to change from driving on the left side of the road to the right, but having only buses change over at the beginning.

I tried a moment ago to convey to you a view that is very popular in Poland, namely that all this *glasnost* and *perestroika* is nothing else but another attempt to deceive the West. This does not mean that good things are not happening: people are coming out of labor camps and psychiatric hospitals, they can travel to the West and say whatever they please. The Polish authorities knew that I would speak my mind when they let me travel abroad, and I owe it all to Gorbachev — but I will stub-

bornly continue to say that he should be carefully watched. After all, his goal is to strengthen the Soviet Union. This view is shared by the majority of independent commentators in Poland.

Yet there are also those who see the consequences of the recent changes differently: they think that the introduction of essentially illusory reforms will touch off an avalanche of genuine changes — that the process of renewal, which is still controlled from above, will get out of hand. Others say that before this happens, the main "controller" himself will be changed: the Communist Party nomenklatura will kick Gorbachev off the throne the moment it sees real danger to the old, entrenched system.

All these views are given their due in the independent press, and will be largely ignored in the official press for some time to come. This is our strong point and this is why readers are still interested in what we have to say. Yet the continuing liberalization has made it increasingly difficult to compete with the official mass media. The government's greatest ally is simple human laziness. It is easier and more pleasant to read a newspaper in which the print is clear than to squint in an effort to understand the underground's sometimes illegible newsheets. It is easier to switch on a TV set and watch a critical program in color than to watch a blurred video, without color, that's just a little more critical. For many, we are only a bit more attractive in content, and much less attractive in form. We have to face up to the reality that independent culture also has to fight for its market share. We have to make sure that our independent thought is served attractively, in an interesting and intelligent manner. Of course, we are not doing it to "sell ourselves" better than they do, nor to achieve a propaganda scoop, but to maintain the right of free speech for everyone.

* * *

At this moment there are four independent producers of video cassettes in Poland, only one of which is professionally equipped. Many enterprises are involved only in the copying of tapes which are produced inside Poland or abroad. One independent firm has been housed and protected by the Catholic Bishopric in Gdańsk, and has just begun to distribute uncensored video cassettes in the open. What will come of it is not yet known. Films and video tapes are still shown mainly in private homes, although there are student clubs and parishes which are brave enough to arrange public presentations. Some of the more wealthy Catholic parishes are planning to buy equipment that would allow them to show video programs on a large screen, making independent productions more attractive for large audiences.

Clubs, parish halls and private homes are also used for performances of the "home theater" — theatrical groups presenting uncensored plays. In previous years these groups were continually harassed by the police. Now the authorities pretend

that they no longer bother with this form of independent culture, but whenever they get the chance, they harass the theater groups financially. For instance, a Wrocław theater recently had their entire light and sound system confiscated under some idiotic pretext. I know eight active home theaters, and there are probably more. Each show takes place in a different apartment. The audience is invited privately by the resident, or hears of it by word of mouth, because the phones are often bugged. The audience consists of 30, maybe 50 people. There are no tickets; after the performance a hat is usually passed around and everyone throws in what he can. Before a performance begins, one of the actors will usually stand before the audience to make an appeal that has probably never been heard anywhere else in the world: he asks the spectators not to applaud. Clapping, laughter or other crowd noises could lead to a police raid.

Once a Warsaw home theater group was performing a play by the Czech playwright Pavel Kohout. The play depicts an investigation at a police station. Suddenly, genuine policemen burst into the apartment and tried to check the identity cards of the audience. Despite the appeal before the play, the audience greeted the police with loud laughter and applause; everyone was delighted, because they thought the intruders were actors, and that the whole incident was part of the show.

The underground press is the area of independent culture that is best known and documented in the West, since it is easy to send newspapers, books, posters and photos abroad. But it is difficult to convey to other countries home theater performances, hence little is known about them outside Poland. Even less is said about the most widespread form of independent culture: lectures given in churches or private homes. There is not a single independent commentator, artist, historian, writer, sociologist, film director or poet who has not received requests for appearances all over the country. Those who are better known could appear every day in a different place and still wouldn't satisfy the demand. There is no city in Poland in which such lectures are not held regularly, and most villages and small towns have at least one speaker per month.

These lectures are carefully recorded by the local secret police agent, but also by the public. They are then copied and passed on to other people. Whenever I give a lecture, I don't need to look at my watch, since the sound of cassettes being turned over fills the whole room every half hour.

Well, I hope you've enjoyed this lecture, and can find it in your hearts to forgive my poor English. I have been putting off learning your language until the time they send me to prison, which is the best place to learn any language. Maybe when I go back to Poland, the authorities will secure for me the isolation I need as a reward for my activities here in the United States. □

The plight of the Romanian population has prompted opposition groups throughout Eastern Europe to declare their solidarity with their Romanian neighbors. At the beginning of this year an international campaign called for all Europeans to show their support and demonstrate on February 1 against President Ceaușescu's policies. On that day, demonstrators, numbering several hundred in Warsaw and Budapest, marched to the Romanian embassy. In Prague, several Charter 77 signatories were detained near the Romanian embassy as they tried to present a petition. The following is the text of a leaflet written by a Romanian opposition group and distributed in Poland before the protests.

Appeal to Polish Society

We beg you not to buy any food products labeled "Made in Romania." Keep in mind that the citizens of our country suffer from disgraceful malnourishment resulting from the export of basic foodstuffs. Each citizen of Romania has the right to 300 grams [11.8 ounces] of bread a day, and no more than one kilogram [2.2 pounds] of meat, 50 grams [less than 2 ounces] of butter, and eight eggs per month — all on ration tickets. Those who aren't lucky won't even get this minimal ration from the stores. Ceaușescu's regime has nothing in common with socialism. We ask you to support our social protest against this tyrant. Help us to isolate his regime all over the world. During your protest actions, demand *glasnost* and *perestroika* for Romania as well. If you set out to visit our country, tell your family, friends and acquaintances to turn off the lights in their apartments every day at 10:00 PM for three minutes as a sign of protest. Only the universal isolation of the despot Ceaușescu can bring us freedom!

Signed: "The Movement to Liberate Romania"
Bucharest, December 1987

—from the *Information Bulletin* of "Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity," Issue No. 4, 1988

Against Everything That Surrounds Him

Janusz Szpotański Speaks His Mind

Janusz Szpotański is a highly-regarded author, although none of his writings has ever been published officially. He first gained public recognition in the mid-sixties when his opera "Cisi i Gegacze" — sometimes called the "Three Year Opera," since this is the term to which Szpotański was sentenced for writing it — was performed at private gatherings.

His works, published in Paris by Instytut Literacki and in the underground press in Poland, sardonically analyze the system in Poland. Quoted, sung, and recited, they are an important element of the unofficial intellectual culture.

This interview with Szpotański, which we present in excerpted form, is taken from the Paris quarterly, Libertas, issue no. 10–11, 1988.

Bogusław Sonik: ...[How were you able to resist the blandishments of the communists — blandishments to which many other intellectuals succumbed — after World War II?]

Janusz Szpotański: In that jungle of baboons I managed to retain my intellectual independence by behaving selfishly. I came to the conclusion that if I were content with small accomplishments, didn't overwork myself, and completely opposed everything that surrounded me, it would be possible to live. Writers, philosophers, and intellectuals all have a narcissistic streak; they want to be talked about, written about, to be listed in the textbooks — in short, to be somebody. But I am essentially not very ambitious, and perhaps that is why I was somewhat successful.

You're not afraid to put it in such terms? You're not afraid that somebody might ask, "What about honor? Where are your ideals?"

Szpotański: There are some people who condemn me from the top of their ivory towers. O.K. fine, so I'm a man without honor and without ideals. I am a singular example of a man who — after 1944 — kept his wits about him when everybody else was going crazy. Did I set a good example? Certainly not, because, in a certain sense, my life has been insane.

Is your opposition to the system related to the fact that you were born before the war?

Szpotański: Yes it is, because before the war I lived in a normal world, and therefore I have had a point of reference. Of course there was much to criticize, but the essential fabric of the nation was normal and European. The communists, however, tore it apart and destroyed it. There had been a free market just as in the West; the "base" had been normal. Today, nobody even knows how to begin restoring some kind of normalcy to our country. Maniacal ideologies are dangerous to a nation in so far as they harm the "base." The Germans are a good example; after 12 years of living under the Third Reich, they succeeded in climbing out of the hole into which they had fallen. But communism has proven far more effective at destroying societies. It is much more difficult to overcome. Communism renders people incapable of taking initiative, and turns against anything that might contribute to progress. From the moment I came in contact with Marxism, I could see that it was reactionary to the core. It aimed to destroy that which the French Revolution bequeathed us, and to replace it with a kind of feudal system based on privileges....

What changes have you perceived in the communist system over the last few decades? Does it make any sense to speak about the reformability of communism?

Szpotański: The communists stubbornly maintain that their system is reformable, although anyone who tried to say as much in the 1950s or 1960s was sent to prison. On the other hand, the opposition claims that the system cannot be reformed, although nobody has logically proved that this could never be done under any circumstances.

The Soviet Union is enormously powerful, yet there are Russians who now believe that it cannot maintain its position in the world if it is to retain the communist system as it has been functioning up to now. They know that the system is destructive, that sooner or later it will lead to disaster, and that something must be done to change it. Communism is a system based on slavery; its goal is the Platonic ideal: a society divided into a group of wise rulers and a shapeless mass of humanity which can easily be controlled. Now it seems that modern technology has made such a political system unworkable. But if the masses don't have access to information, the rulers can't accomplish very much with them. Since the Soviet Union still has imperial ambitions, those who think rationally may soon realize how costly this system has been. But it will take generations for this process to unfold; at this point there's

no reason to get excited. It is only naive Western Europeans who think that something must be happening because Sakharov was allowed to return to Moscow. The Russians can build Potemkin villages whenever they have to. The West knows Russia only from its showcase cities: Moscow and Leningrad. But if you go just 30 miles outside them, you'll see to what extent people have been incapacitated, how stupid and servile they've become. It will be difficult indeed to transform a nation of such people.

What do you think about Gorbachev?

Szpotanski: I don't know what he's really like — who could? We have to wait and see.

If Gorbachev initiated this process, then it's to his credit — but it won't necessarily succeed. On the other hand, it might be an attempt to trick the West, so that it dismantles its missiles, disarms, and puts itself at the East's mercy. It's hard to say just what lies behind all this.

The world has not been going in the direction the great bearded philosopher of the 19th century thought it would. The one major element of Marxism that will survive is its assignment of great significance to the role that economic forces play in history, although Marx wasn't the first to hit upon this idea. The rest of Marxism is so much drivel. The United States is in the vanguard of history — not the Soviet Union. America has been responsible for the greatest inventions and the most advanced ideas, which the whole world makes use of, including the Russians. Soviet Russia, besides its genius for destruction, hasn't shown the world anything. Its one great accomplishment — sending the first man into orbit — could never have been achieved without the help of captured German scientists (although, to be fair, the American space program also relied heavily on German scientists). However, they weren't the first to send a man to the moon, although they very much wanted to be.

What about their empire?

Szpotanski: True, they've managed to build an empire, but it hasn't done them much good. When the British empire was at its zenith, England itself blossomed, but the Russian empire has been of little benefit to the Russian people. It is a strange empire indeed in which the colonies live better than the mother country. This shows just how stiff, how absurd this system is. You simply can't control everything from the center. This whole economic structure must be changed; it is necessary to privatize, to allow people to take the initiative — only then will any kind of economic recovery take place.

There have been some changes in this area in Poland, such as the establishment of Polonia firms [businesses operating in Poland but partially financed by Poles living in the West].

Szpotanski: True, but what have they produced? Some unpalatable brand of mustard; in any case, these firms are no more than a drop in the bucket. To make any kind of dent in the economic crisis, all light industry should be privatized, as well as many other sectors of the economy.

Are you aware of any interesting initiatives in this area on the part of the Polish opposition?

Szpotanski: The opposition is mired in activity of a different sort. It devotes its efforts to flogging a dead horse, berating the government as it does, and one must admit that it has been fairly successful at this. Of course, nowadays you can criticize just about anything, but it won't do you any good. The opposition is almost exclusively concerned with unmasking the communists' intentions, both now and in the past. They confuse Stalinism with the current times. Compared to the 1950s, everything is permitted. Back then some believed that if we won the right to play Jazz music, the whole system would crumble. Now we are in principle allowed to say anything, only most of what I've heard so far has been nonsense. The communists remain adamant about the basic organization of the economy; they think they can overcome the crisis within the existing framework — a centrally-planned economy combined with a profitless free market. This, by the way, is their latest brilliant idea: to permit a free market in which nobody makes any money. If someone does make a profit, he is immediately denounced as a speculator. The communists fail to realize that it is part of human nature to desire profit, and that's why their latest initiative is bound to fail.

Yet they've managed to fool a number of Western intellectuals.

Szpotanski: Intellectuals are a monstrous group. They think that if they write a good poem or article, everybody should immediately kneel before them. They would like to have the power of the state behind them. Yet wherever they appear, they are a destructive factor. They make good critics, and in this regard their work can be useful, but they are completely useless as builders. Intellectuals are one of the two groups which totalitarianism has been enormously successful at using to its own advantage, upon which it is in fact based. For intellectuals, the deaths of millions are a trifle — they just sit at their desks and calculate everything. Young people are the other group susceptible to these idiotic ideologies, especially those who have problems with their families and who suffer from sexual anxieties. Such youths, along with the intellectuals, constitute very unstable groups that are highly prone to radicalization. However, European civilization has been largely the work of its ordinary members, who have experience in the real world. Let the intellectuals think up their revolutionary ideas, but it is the common sense of the middle classes which must act as the engine of progress. □

Why the Country Didn't Support the April-May Strikes

Following the wave of strikes this past spring, a number of articles appeared in the Polish underground press which attempted to answer the question: "Why didn't the strikes succeed?" We felt this was the most thorough and concise answer, printed as a "non-nuclear extra" in the Atomic Research Institute's independent journal W Okopach, No. B 94, May 20, 1988.

We cannot ignore this question if we are to learn anything from the April-May strikes. I don't think there is a single answer. Those with whom I've spoken have told me:

- People are apathetic, since they don't think they can win. A large proportion of Solidarity activists share this view.
- The Communists have convinced the majority of the people not to get involved in politics, because nothing would come of it and the effects of such involvement might even be negative.
- People didn't understand (or pretended not to understand) what the strikes were all about.
- Things don't appear to have gotten so bad that people's desperation would overcome their fear — especially since the

"quiet strikes" of April were followed by "quiet pay-hikes."

- Many believed the propaganda argument that "the strikes won't accomplish anything, and only fuel inflation," or that "the strikes will wreck the reforms," and "Solidarity has no constructive program."
- Solidarity has lost its authority by playing politics and pleading for an agreement with an arrogant partner — the government.
- Solidarity has become overly concerned with taking responsibility for the fate of the nation, forgetting about the interests of the workers.
- Everybody cares about himself and has neither the time nor the inclination to think about others.
- Unrest in Poland might harm Gorbachev.
- The whole thing was a provocation.

Personally, I think the first reply is the most representative, although I could be wrong. I hope that independent sociologists will soon take up this matter, and though I believe the mood in this country is quite similar to what it was ten years ago, it is changing in a way that is harder to predict, which means that the next round of strikes may be unavoidable. □



Meeting of the Strike Committee with the crew of the slabbing mill at Nowa Huta, May 1, 1988. (Photo: Dementi)



A clergyman tries to diffuse a potentially explosive situation during a counter-demonstration on May Day in Wroclaw. (Photo: Dementi)



A well-wisher hands flowers to students on strike at the University of Wroclaw, May 6, 1988. (Photo: Dementi)



"We will avenge [Nowa] Huta!" Kraków, May 1988. (Photo: Dementi)

Middle-Class Opposition in a Communist Country

A Conversation with György Konrád

In our last issue, we reported on three independent organizations that have been recently established: the Network of Free Initiatives, the Federation of Young Democrats, and the first independent Hungarian labor union in 40 years, the Democratic Union of Scientific and Academic Workers. Alongside these more structured organizations there are many more informal ones, such as discussion clubs and environmental or student groups. There has also been a drastic increase this year in the number of demonstrations, as well as the number of people participating in them. On March 15 — a national holiday commemorating the failed uprising against Austria in 1848 — 10,000 people marched through Budapest and listened to speeches by members of the democratic opposition. Some oppositionists were detained for the duration of the demonstration, but otherwise the police did not interfere. On June 16, however, riot police brutally and repeatedly attacked a group of about 500 people during a demonstration on the 30th anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy. June 27 saw the biggest demonstration since the 1956 revolution: about 50,000 people marched to the Romanian Embassy to protest President Ceaușescu's plan to destroy more than half the villages of Romania, many populated by ethnic Hungarians.

György Konrád, a writer and member of the Hungarian democratic opposition, spoke with Uncaptive Minds a few days after the June 16 demonstration.

Uncaptive Minds: Following the recent demonstration in Budapest and other developments this year, do you have a sense of déjà-vu? Is there anything in Hungary today that reminds you of the atmosphere in 1956?

György Konrád: Yes, I am reminded of the spring and summer of 1956, which was also a period of accelerated social change. Now, as in 1956, ideas forbidden one month surface as commonplaces the next. Today we are witnesses to another period of inflated rhetoric — and a time when dabblers in dissent join along with long-time oppositionists. And now, as then, the unity of the opposition is breaking apart; the common de-

mand that fundamental human rights should not be violated is no longer enough. As society becomes increasingly politicized, controversial issues, reform proposals, and opposition groups are proliferating.

There are groups that want to reach an agreement with the government and others that prefer to act independently. Is this difference in outlook responsible for the growing disunity of the opposition? Or do these divisions simply reflect a normal process of formulating different types of demands?

Konrád: I think this is a normal process. The country is experiencing a period of political ferment and different groups are articulating different demands. And of course there are differences in the strategies various groups propose. The communist party itself is splitting into different factions, and the main issue in the party's discussions is the question of how much liberty the factions should have and to what extent the party should give up democratic centralism. In this respect the party conference, which was partially televised, was very interesting. Unknown party members became quite tough and outspokenly critical of the leadership.

What are the differences between the present situation and that of 1956?

Konrád: First of all, people are not reacting with moral outrage at the cruelty of the regime as they did then. The mass terror of those days is only a memory. Today, we aren't fighting for people to come out of prison because there are only a few political prisoners left. Instead, it is the regime's mismanagement of the country that is increasingly upsetting people. Take the national debt, for example. In the early 1970s it was only \$1 billion; now it stands at \$17 billion. That money was simply wasted on subsidies for industries and branches of the economy which are, by definition, money-losing. On top of that, there is now a new tax system. Everybody has to pay taxes, Western-style taxes, and the citizens' pockets have become very light. Because people are angry about having to pay these taxes, they are starting to ask what is being done with their money. So we have a new phenomenon: the taxpayer-citizen. Thus the opposition is essentially a middle class opposition and not a working class movement. This change is probably also related

to the fact that the industries we developed during the 1950s are now completely obsolete, and, as a result, many workers are worried that the government's economic reforms will lead to massive unemployment in certain industries. The working class, therefore, does not necessarily support reforms that would lead to a market economy.

The trend today is towards demanding the rule of law in public life, a new constitutionalism, a *Rechtstaat*. There are demands for a new constitution that would guarantee freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. The state budget would be opened to the tax-payers' scrutiny. What had initially been a human rights movement is now demanding a social contract between society and the state. It has chosen gradual methods, calling for a modification of the constitution as its first step.

I am surprised to hear that the state budget plays such an important role in Hungary. In other communist countries, even if taxes are collected, they are mostly a fictitious construction because prices are meaningless.

Konrád: I wouldn't say that prices are completely meaningless. Prices have been rising, not only because of inflation but also because the various factories have been setting the prices of the goods they produce. One can say that in Hungary we now have a limited market economy. In an effort to attract Western capital, for example, a law has been passed to provide certain guarantees to Western investors. The government is also trying to lure the capital of its citizens into various capitalist-type ventures. After 20 years of reforms, this country has arrived at a situation where competition for the ownership of the means of production is conceivable in the next few years.

Getting back to your comment, the budget problem is of real concern. It has become something of an obsession with the man in the street and is a subject of conversation with almost every cab driver and shop attendant you meet.

We were talking about the differences between the present situation and that of 1956....

Konrád: Yes, another difference is that we have a middle class that is probably better prepared intellectually today than in the 1950s. The revolution then was started by disappointed communists, the so-called "revisionists." This is no longer the case. There are even people in the communist party who say that they are really social democrats. I would also say that the public sphere outside of party control is getting larger. It is generally understood that the party has no intellectual support at all.

Yet the Beszélő group, the largest group in the democratic opposition, addressed its political program [the "Social Contract"] to the party and not to society.

Konrád: You have to remember that the party's sphere of influence remains very large. However, it is slowly withdrawing

from the economy, society, and culture. So the question now is how to incorporate this gradual withdrawal into law. The creation of a democracy and a multi-party state out of a one-party state without fundamentally changing the system appears to be a rather hopeless endeavor. So we will probably see the creation of a number of groups and party-like organizations — none of them, however, representing a real political alternative. But this will be a new form of organization. Through these groups, we'll discover the real interests of society beyond fundamental human rights.

What had initially been a human rights movement is now demanding a social contract between society and the state.

Nobody is interested in creating massive unemployment, but everybody is for eliminating subsidies to unprofitable industries. Of the state's 660 billion forint budget, 200 billion go to subsidies for money-losing enterprises. This kind of economic structure has to be changed radically, but that type of change would create such great social tensions that the government doesn't dare do anything about the economy. Thus, there is a need for other centers of authority, moral authority that is, to help control the process of change.

The recent proliferation of discussion clubs seems reminiscent of the situation in 1956. They serve as centers for people to formulate demands and, at the same time, they help the government understand what the aspirations of society are. What is your opinion of these clubs?

Konrád: The most interesting clubs are the Democratic Forum, which is run by the so-called Populists, and the Network of Free Initiatives, which encompasses the democratic opposition, the new democratic youth organization, the new free trade union of academics and researchers, religious groups, and ecological groups. The Network comprises a large segment of the political spectrum, but the groups that belong to it have not yet learned to work together effectively. There are terribly long discussions going on now with a view towards issuing a common declaration. The main issues being discussed are, first of all, how to come up with concrete proposals for the economy. Then there is the issue of how to deal with the nationality questions, with domestic ethnic groups, such as the Gypsies. There are discussions about whether to take seriously the so-called "social contract" proposals — that is, the proposals to accept the party as a given reality, but with legal restrictions on its powers. The people who are proposing such a social contract advocate a sort of constitutional monarchy, at least as a transitional phase, and it seems they have some allies within the party for this idea. □