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THE "FIFTH INTERNATIONAL?": DISSIDENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE*

by Wieland Zademach

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A new "ghost" seems to be stalking in Europe, and particularly in Eastern Europe, in the shape of civil rightists, dissidents, and defenders of human rights. The Polish writer A. Szczypiorski said two years ago that "no other political figure has had such a flourishing career in European intellectual life during the last few years as the dissident." And clearly this career is giving increasingly frequent headaches to governments in Eastern Europe.

Today's dissidents no longer face governments merely as political opponents—they demand rights. They refer particularly to "Basket Three" of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference of 1975 and demand the civil and human rights to which their own governments have subscribed. Thus the tables have been turned. Governments are violating laws, vested rights such as freedom of opinion and participation are not respected, and it is the opposition which defends the law.

Eastern European dissidents no longer feel or behave as if they are in an illegal situation. This tactic has allowed the opposition in a number of Eastern European countries to reach a kind of semi- legality. Although they are faced with prison and find a number of jobs closed to them, the underground literature produced by dissidents flourishes; in many countries the volume of publications produced by the opposition is almost equal to that of official publishing houses. Alternative universities compete with the dullness of the official faculties (e.g., the "flying university" in Poland and the "Patocka university" in Czechoslovakia); the alternative cultural scene provides a successful alternative to the official cultural desert.

It is true that conditions for public action vary greatly from country to country. In Prague the spokespersons for Charter 77 are so restricted in representing the Charter that they are just a kind of display sign. They can do little actually to promote the movement until they are no longer spokespersons—if then they are out of prison. The spokesperson for the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) in Warsaw seems in comparison to have more freedom. This can be explained by the fact that there is a politically dangerous situation in Poland because of popular dissatisfaction with the con-
tinuing material difficulties of everyday life and also because the working class has a strong feeling of solidarity. The government cannot therefore take vigorous action against the civil rights movements. The Communist Party of Soviet Russia on the other hand need have no such consideration, as the banning of Nobel Prize winner A. Sacharov has recently shown.

But all the suppressive and restrictive measures have failed to prevent the dissident movement from growing from a tender plant into a strong bush with many branches and ramifications and roots that grow deeper into the earth daily. But only the future will tell whether this plant will one day become a kind of "burning bush." In the following pages I shall try to describe the various currents of the dissident movement in the USSR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, setting out their differing—but often related—motivations and aims. I have deliberately confined myself to the movements in these three countries because they have radiated furthest and are in some ways interconnected. Opposition movements in countries like Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania are only in their infancy or are structured quite differently. A description of the dissident scene in the German Democratic Republic is deliberately excluded because it would go far beyond the framework of this essay.

The Situation in the USSR after the Helsinki Conference

Opposition groups, critics of the government, civil rights groups—however you wish to describe the dissidents—make a varied and multi-colored picture. But the majority of the groups has at least one common characteristic: anti-Stalinism, i.e., strong anti-totalitarian feelings. The turning point which combined the different currents into a seemingly irresistible avalanche was the publication in the official publications of the Eastern bloc countries of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. "The human rights theme turned out to be the biggest bit of political dynamite since Stalin's death." In attempting to describe the particularities of the main groups, I am quite aware that their motivations and aims often overlap and that differentiation is more a matter of methods than of fundamentals.

The Neo-Marxists

Among civil rights movements in the USSR the weakest (as far as numbers are concerned) are the Neo-Marxists. Theirs is a splinter movement without much popular support or echo either among the laboring classes or the non-Russian colonial peoples; they are isolated both at home and in exile. One of their representatives, an ex-prisoner called Boris Weil, who emigrated in 1978, says himself: "In Russia nowadays there is no philosophy as unpopular as Marxism. The broad masses of the population are not interested in Marxism because they loathe anything that has been forced on them."
The historian Roy Medveyev is the most important representative of this movement. He demands the following for a Marxist Russia: civil, political, social, and economic rights for the workers; freedom of the press, of opinion, and of speech; the right to opposition; and freedom of assembly and of political organization. However, he rejects the parliamentary system and is also against religion as a moral foundation for a new Russia. Medveyev aims his attacks at the administration and bureaucracy of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. In his plans for a Marxist reform, Medveyev sees technocrats as possible partners, because in his view they could substitute modern management methods for the present planned-economy system.

**Ethical Socialists**

In this category we find groups of both undogmatic and religious socialists who call for "socialism with a human face." Their fundamental trend is anti-technocratic both in regard to state capitalism in communist countries and in regard to liberal capitalism in the West. They see themselves as anti-imperialists and call for the decolonization of the multi-national Russian state and the formation of independent national republics. "A people which enslaves others forges its own chains" (Karl Marx). "It is impossible for a victorious proletariat to force any kind of happiness on a foreign nation without undermining its own victory" (F. Engels). "If one day Finland, Poland, or the Ukraine detach themselves from Russia, this is not a bad thing. Anyone who asserts the contrary is a chauvinist. It would be madness to continue the politics of Tsar Nicholas. No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations" (W. I. Lenin).

The most important representative of this group is the Ukrainian specialist in cybernetics, Leonid Pliouschch, prisoner and emigrant, who—together with Vadim Belozerkovsky, Anatol Levitin-Krasnov, Julia Vishnyevskaya, and Evgeny Kushev—coined the slogan "democratic alternatives." Pliouschch recognizes a number of symptoms of a coming world catastrophe, such as moral decline, class egotism, the profit motive, materialism as a lifestyle, the ecological time bomb. "Not only the west but the whole world is on the edge of the abyss. We are faced with extinction because we are destroying our environment through a constantly growing amoralism."

**The Liberals**

They are of outstanding importance and can be described as classic democrats in the Western sense. The movement grew out of the "Democratic Movement in Russia, the Baltic States, and the Ukraine," which was founded as early as 1969 by people such as A. Sacharov, J. Orlov, P. Grigorienko, A Shcharansky, A. Ginsburg, and A. Amalrik. It came to group together Russians and non-Russians, ex-Marxists, ex-socialists, and ex-Party members, and it includes mainly scientists, officers, and writers. But hardly
any manual workers.

Judged by their views of the future, these liberals are true opponents of the system—non- or even anti-communists. They look upon the Marxist system as false, disproved, and terrorist; Marxism is seen as the ideology of the past, without a moral right to existence in either the present or the future. The liberals want to see a multi-party democracy based on the parliamentary system; they advocate political and intellectual pluralism and the elimination of state capitalism, although they reject the restoration of economic structures based on private capitalism.

The Neo-Slavophiles

These also have considerable influence. They wish to abolish the present system, are extremely critical of both present-day communism and liberalism, and preach a return to the national and religious traditions of pre-Bolshevist Russia. They combine a wish for national revival and a return to religious consciousness with what for them is a God-given principle of ethnno-pluralism. They also reject the capitalist economic system for a post-communist Russia. Instead they picture a natural order of society based on the moral criteria of patriotism, solidarity, an austere lifestyle, tolerance, and love of the soil, of work, of truth, and of the Orthodox faith.

There are a number of branches among the new slavophiles. The best known is that of Russophiles, with A. Solzhenitsin, A. Maximov, and A. Sinyavsky as eminent members. Another branch is that of the ethical socialists already mentioned who reject the idea of Russian Messiahship held by the group around Solzhenitsin. Part of this group includes the so-called village prosaists around F. Abramov, W. Belov, W. Soluchin, and V. Lichonossow, to mention only the better-known members. Their writings idealize the indestructible character of the humiliated peasant—patriot, Christ, rebel—and provide the intellectual premise for political change. The official publication is Nasch Sowremennik (Our Contemporary); its circulation is approximately 200,000.

The Democratic Nationalists

The different currents of democratic nationalism are apparently as influential as the Neo-Slavophiles; there are, after all, 135 million non-Russians living in the USSR. The leading elements are Armenians, people from Azerbaydzhan and the Ukraine, as well as other minorities. In 1970, Valentin Moros began to use the slogan, "the rebirth of nations," and this allowed the chief demands of non-Russians to be compressed into a relatively homogeneous program for the future. It calls for the decolonization of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, secession of national groups from the USSR, independent nationhood, national democracy, and sovereignty. It demands liberation from economic russification and state capitalism through the establishment of a social order based on national values, models, traditions, and on moral codes based on reli-
gion. It calls for realizable human rights, including personal, religious, and social freedoms.

Summary

We have seen that dissident movements in the USSR vary greatly in their character. Besides the main movements, there are others such as the "Catacomb Christians," dissidents among the manual workers, the Jewish opposition, women's resistance movements, and the not inconsiderable opposition within the Red Army. These are all less known to the public, and their degree of organization is not so high.

The largest group is without doubt that of the representatives of national republics who, faced with the increasingly strong pressure toward more russification, are fighting for their own language, culture, and national independence. The West is obviously not yet sufficiently aware of the role the nationality question is likely to play in the future of the USSR. Their information media focus mainly on the civil rights movement in Moscow. But, if we take into account the social and economic situation in the USSR, it is clear that the growing national opposition in the non-Russian republics is likely to create difficulties for the Soviet Union in the future. That those in power are quite aware of the danger on the periphery is shown by the fact that punishments for political dissidents become more severe the further one penetrates into the provinces. "In 1970 both Valentin Moroz and A. Amalrik were condemned at the same time for anti-soviet agitation. But whereas Amalrik (in Moscow) was given three years, Valentin Moroz was sentenced to nine years in prison and an additional banishment for five years."  

Russia's internal policy in regard to nationalities is reflected also in the national composition of prisoners. In the camps in Mordovskaya and the Urals, thirty to forty percent are members of the Baltic states. Fewer than thirty percent are Russians of other nationalities. The invasion of Afghanistan must also be seen as a form of intimidation of nationalist aspirations in the Asian periphery of the USSR. Dissident circles agree in their estimates that there are not fewer than three million prisoners "and that the total number of persons condemned to forced labour is at least five million, that is to say 2% of the total population."  

Soviet dissidents are of the opinion that they are greatly helped when Western press and information media continue to point to individual cases of violations of human rights in the Soviet Union: "Every group of persons, whatever the nationality, which has fought for social, national, religious and general human rights and which has been persecuted because of this is given much moral support when world opinion hears about its actions and defends them."
The Situation in Poland

Polish opposition movements encounter far more favorable conditions and traditions than those in Russia. For one thing, the Polish opposition is supported by workers whose self-confidence is unequalled in Eastern Europe; for instance, the strikes in 1970 and 1976 shook the regime and forced the government to go back on measures they had planned to take. Another factor is the strength of the Catholic Church, which forced the regime to allow it a certain cultural liberty from which the whole opposition has been able to profit.

Committee for Social Self-Defense

The Polish opposition is grouped in a "Committee for Social Self-Defense" (KOR), formerly known as the "Workers' Defense Committee," Its leader is Jacek Kuron, who published in 1964 an "open letter" outlining a Marxist program for an anti-bureaucratic revolution. The social democrat Edward Lipinski and the left-wing Catholic priest Jan Zieja of Warsaw both have great influence in the movement.

The Committee for Social Self-Defense was set up after the strikes and demonstrations in Radom, Warsaw, and other Polish towns in July, 1976. Its task was to defend the imprisoned workers who were being maltreated by the police, and it was instrumental in making the workers' demands known throughout the country. Although in the beginning discussion was confined to intellectual circles, by 1978 it had spread to the workers, and this led to the founding of free trade unions. By the middle of 1978, the whole population was actively taking part.

The Committee works on the principle of the greatest possible openness and publicity, insofar as this is possible when one cannot use any of the official media. It is nevertheless astonishing how many copies of unofficial newspapers circulate in Poland and how much internal information they provide. Six thousand copies a month are printed of the Biuletyn Informacyjny, which provides a connecting link for the movement. Small one-sheet newspapers such as the influential Robotnik have a circulation of over 10,000 and have their own clearly named offices in towns such as Sopot, Radom, Cracow, Gliwice, Lodz, etc. Each issue provides the reader with an exact statement of the paper's financial situation. In each issue of the Biuletyn, the members of the committee give their names and the full address and telephone number; one of the regular names is that of the well-known philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski, who has lived in exile in Oxford for many years. His name carries the remark "temporarily resident abroad."

Different Forms of Opposition

In October, 1977, a draft of a social program was published under the title "Declaration of the Democratic Movement"; it had been worked out by the Committee
for Social Self-Defense and was signed by over 100 people. The result of reflection on this declaration was published on October 10, 1978, as a "Call to the Nation." It includes a program for social self-organization and sees itself as an "alternative to the growing danger of spontaneous social revolution which could cause a national catastrophe."9

In the last few years a number of independent social initiatives have been started which obviously support this program--the fortnightly paper Robotnik, mentioned above, has taken over the defense of the workers. In Danzig and various other towns in Silesia support groups have been formed for the creation of free trade unions. In 1978, too, "Provisional Committees for the Defense of the Farmer" were founded, one in the Lublin and one in the Grojec region. They are independent committees and represent about twenty villages in each region. The fortnightly Gospodorn speaks to the problems of village life.

In the universities "student solidarity committees" have been formed; they aim to break the monopoly of the official "socialist student associations" and thereby create an independent movement which will represent the interests of students and universities. An "association for university courses" was also created. In the last two years a group of several dozen eminent scientists have organized academic courses in which several hundred students "were able to experience science in an atmosphere of seriousness and honesty, not hemmed in by any kind of censorship or political phraseology."10

The press is becoming increasingly independent and was able to break the state monopoly of publications. The "Independent Publishing House" publishes works by authors condemned to silence by official circles.

All of this does not amount to much, but it is a convincing beginning. And it does show that "independent, organized, efficient social action is possible." The Polish opposition is quite sure of one thing--and this should give courage to other progressive movements--"the larger the independent organizations, the smaller the danger that their members will encounter reprisals and the more effective their activities."11

Czechoslovakia: Charter 77

This is what happened to the music critic Ivan Medek, a Catholic wing member of Charter 77 now living in exile in Austria. On his way home from the central state security offices, he was kidnapped on a street by two men who pushed him into a car and set him down in the night in the middle of a forest, after beating him unconscious. "It was only chance and my own will to live that brought me home alive,"
What makes the state behave like a terrorist, while the opposition appeals for justice, law, and the constitution? Obviously the apathy engendered by the Soviet invasion in 1968 has given way since 1976 to growing intellectual opposition. "Something opened up in our society," recalls Ladislav Hejdanek, the Protestant spokesperson for Charter 77.  

**From the Prague Spring to Charter 77**

The Charter movement grew out of a demonstration of solidarity at the time of the trial of the "Plastic People of the Universe" music group. Some intellectuals and former communist activists who had been excluded from the Party in 1968 got together; people such as Cerny, Kriegel, Mlynar, Patocka, and Seifert wrote a joint letter of protest against the trials. It was the first open action in the country since "normalization."

There was also the example of the Soviet and Polish citizens' movements. Thus inspired, the Charter 77 was published on January 1, 1977. It calls for the observance of the human rights provided for in the constitution and Final Act of Helsinki ("Basket Three"). At the beginning the document had 143 signatures; today there are over 1,200. In April, 1978, the Charter movement founded a "Committee for the Defense of the Innocently Persecuted," based on the Polish Committee.

The Czechoslovak civil rights movement makes use of the experience gained during the Prague Spring—such as socialism with party pluralism, workers' committees, and self-administration, all things abolished after the Soviet occupation. The "normalization" excluded all true socialists from Party and state, and it is natural therefore that the core of Charter 77 is made up of the former socialist opposition. "Because of pressure from above and in spite of differences in outlook and beginnings, we have become quite unified. We now have a strange situation in which communists, non-communists, and perhaps even people who are psychologically anti-communist (although they have nothing in common with reactionary anti-communism in the West) come together in a common front. There is much solidarity." This is how Charter spokesperson Jaroslav Sabata described the situation of the civil rights movement in July, 1978. All movements have in common the striving for more democratic rights; they see the concept of "democratic self-government" as an alternative to the Real Sozialismus (actual socialism) as it exists in Eastern Europe.

**Various Trends within the Charter Movement**

Although there is much solidarity and community, one can discern various trends within the Charter, based on motivation and ideological background. Let me describe some of the more prominent groups:
1. The biggest and most influential group is probably that of the Euro-communists. They are former members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, whose ideas are close to those of the Spanish and Italian Communist Parties. Jiří Hajek, Jiří Dienstbier, Jaroslav Sabata, and František Kriegel belong to this group. Hajek, born in 1913, was an official of the Social Democratic Party during the 1930's, then in a German concentration camp, 1939-45; during 1945-48, he was again active in the Social Democratic Party; then, after its fusion with the Communist Party, he became professor of history and international relations. He was in the diplomatic service, 1955-65; during 1965-68, minister for education; and, in 1968, minister for foreign affairs. He was relieved of his office after the Soviet invasion and excluded from the Party in 1970. In 1977-78, he was spokesperson for Charter 77. Sabata, born in 1927, worked at Brünn University as a social psychologist; he became Party secretary in Brünn in 1968 and was elected to the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. He was excluded from it in 1969 and, in 1972, was condemned to six years in prison for "subversion." Five years later he was released and became a laborer. As spokesperson for Charter 77 he was arrested on October 1, 1978, after a meeting with Polish dissidents; on January 12, 1979, he was condemned to nine months in prison for "attacks on an official," Dienstbier, a journalist and writer, was condemned to three years in prison at the infamous Charter trials in October, 1979.

2. The second group consists of revolutionary Marxists who defend the idea of the workers' democracy. They are all young people who have no immediate connection with the Prague Spring. The main representative of this trend is Petr Uhl, born in 1941, a student leader in 1968, and an engineer by profession. In 1970 he was condemned to many years in prison at the spectacular "Trotzky Trials" because of the founding of a "Revolutionary Socialist Party." In October, 1979, he was again condemned to five years' imprisonment as one of the initiators and co-sponsors of Charter 77.

3. There is a third group consisting of independent socialists such as Jiří Müller, Rudolf Battek, and Jaroslav Mezník. They stand for social democratic ideas and plead for a parliamentary system. Müller was one of the best-known student leaders during the Prague Spring; he was in prison during 1972-76.

4. Christian concepts led Protestants such as Ladislav Hejdanek and Catholics such as Jiří Nemec and Vaclav Benda to join in the Charter movement. Hejdanek, a Charter spokesperson in 1978-79, is strongly in favor of democratic pluralism. "We non-communists wish to cooperate with communists. We must be able to distinguish between the different communists and cooperate with those who are truly willing to support democracy. Only those communists who have stopped trying to force their
hegemony on us can become our partners. Under democratic conditions the communists
could be in power for a certain time, but then they must become one party among others.
Otherwise, they will disappear from the political stage." 15 Benda, a mathematician
and philosopher, aged 33, was condemned to four years' prison during the October trials.

5. We may single out another group within the Charter movement, this group being
composed of independent intellectuals, among them well-known names such as Jiri Grusa;
the exiled Pavel Kohout; Ludvic Vaculik, author of the "2,000-Word Manifesto" of
1968; and Vaclav Havel, who was given the heaviest sentence in the scandalous trials

This description of the various trends within Charter 77 is certainly not complete,
particularly because the groupings are fluid, and it is difficult to fit them into
distinct categories.

Czech opposition seems to be less strong than is Polish; in particular, it lacks
the close ties with the workers, who are not nearly so "rebellious" in Czechoslovakia.
The national motive also plays a role, since the dissident movement is practically
confined to Czechs; the Slovaks seem satisfied, at least for the time being, having
been granted a generous number of national rights. They have always been more con­
servative and rural. Yet people in power all over Eastern Europe, and above all those
in Moscow, are increasingly troubled by the growing internalization of the dissident
movement which is apparently difficult to stop.

The "Fifth International"

The internationalization of the movements is a source of much irritation to gov­
ernments in Eastern Europe. What might be called a "Fifth International" of dissi­
dents is in fact being formed and organized between Moscow, Prague, Warsaw, Budapest,
and even East Berlin, although the process is makeshift. A visible beginning was made
when representatives of the Polish Defense Committees and Charter 77 met in August/
September, 1978, at two conferences. Three members of each movement discussed common
questions of organization, strategy, and tactics. The second conference closed with
a manifesto addressed to the people of Armenia, White Russia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Lith­
uania, the German Democratic Republic, Russia, Rumania, the Ukraine, and Hungary, in­
viting them to join the civil rights movement and to work toward specific demands in
their own countries or national regions. On this occasion Hejdanek suggested that "a
European federation should be formed, consisting of Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, White
Russia, the Ukraine, and also Poland and Czechoslovakia." 16 It was because they feared
such calls to secession that Ukrainian Communist Party officials had in 1968 urged
the Politbureau of the Soviet Union to invade Czechoslovakia. However, at the third
conference, which took place on October 1, 1978, this exchange of views came to a
sudden halt when the police arrived and arrested every participant. Some have since
been condemned; others are still awaiting trial, and yet others have been set free. But even this "clean-up" could not prevent members of the Polish Defense Committee (Josef Rybicki) and Charter 77 from contact with A. Sacharov in Moscow. On this occasion Sacharov suggested to the Charter people that there should be "regular contacts so that we can combine our efforts in the fight for human rights in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union." The three Charter spokespersons, Hajek, Hejdanek, and Tominova, replied on November 6, 1979: "We will gladly take part." However, such contacts have since been prevented, because Moscow has banned the Sacharows to Gorki. Pargue's way of "cleaning up" this problem is quite clear: Pavel Kohout lost his civil rights, and V. Havel was offered a study trip to the USA (which he refused) just before his trial. It would seem that in 1980, the year of the Olympic Games in Moscow and the Helsinki Follow-Up Conference in Madrid, an Eastern dissident need only lift his hand to be deported.

The hopeful attempts at mutual communication have been much disturbed through this kind of repression, yet there still exists the quarterly Kritika, edited in Warsaw under the guidance of an international editorial committee. It provides a means of dialogue and information. Adam Michnik for Poland, V. Havel for the Czechs, a Soviet dissident, and the Hungarian writer Peter Haraszti are all members of the group of editors. A future edition is planned to include a collection of articles by opposition authors from the German Democratic Republic—from which we may conclude that there is already contact with groups in the GDR.

The Responsibility of the Western News Media

Since the official media in the Eastern European countries naturally do not write about the activities of dissident movement, the Western media should take on at least a part of this task. They should see to it that Eastern European governments take the opposition movements seriously. If the manifesto had not been simultaneously published in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Corriere della Sera, the Times, and Le Monde, the Prague regime might well have managed to destroy the core of the movement and by restrictive police methods made the manifesto a "non-event."

The news media in the West have become indispensable to the civil rights movements of Eastern Europe, because on them alone depends the degree of political effect achieved—without which no one would be able to continue. But this fact places a responsibility on the Western news media. Are they equal to it? If the diagnosis made by M. Djilas is true—that the people of Eastern Europe are today intellectually independent, and that it depends only on the international balance of power for this fact to influence the political scene—then the general evaluation of the situation made by leading civil rightists is politically explosive. "If the West did not support the Soviet system, our fight would be more successful."

(See footnotes at the bottom of p. 9.)