

War crimes in Cambodia

It is interesting to note the lack of press and public attention to Communist war crimes in what is now known as Kampuchea (Cambodia). The Vietnamese, backed by the Soviet Union, are in the process of annihilating an entire population. Press reports from the devastated area are few and far between, but if we are to believe the CBC National News (Tues. Oct. 17), of the 7 million Cambodians before the war started, 2 million have already died and another 2½ million are in danger because of starvation and disease.

Western nations, seemingly, have washed their hands of the affair but at the same time have forgotten the propaganda possibilities opened by this Communist genocide. For once, there are no "imperialists" to be seen anywhere, the Communists are killing each other. Why doesn't the world get daily reports? Why don't we see Communist soldiers killing innocent women and children and burning out villages? Why does the Western world accept the fact that Communists exploited every stray American bomb and bullet in Vietnam while now the Communists are committing atrocities unheard of since the Second World War and are getting away with it? Why is it that American wrong-doings are splattered in banner headlines across the world's newspapers while Soviet and Cuban expansionism and interference around the globe is kept in admirable silence?

Why do we accept Soviet expansionism as "a fact of life" but have a very different set of values for the United States? Any day in the life of Leonid Brezhnev has been 100 times as vile as the vilest day in the life of Richard Nixon. The Western world must stop trying to be morally superior, (it obviously isn't working), and fight fire with fire.

Nicolas Dimic
Arts I



Quixote

by David Marples

At 8:00 a.m. yesterday in Courtroom 8:1 of Prague's Mestsky Soud in Kardovo Street, Judge Antonin Kaspar opened the trial of six Czechoslovak political prisoners accused of subversion of the Republic through collaboration with a foreign power. Although this trial is not expected to last longer than a few days, it is, without doubt, one of the most important human rights trials ever to take place. It marks the culmination of a brutal campaign on the part of the Czechoslovak government against spokesmen of the Charter 77 movement and the independent group known as the Committee in Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted Persons (VONS).

The six accused stem from a wide variety of professions. Otka Bednarova and Jiri Dienstbier are both prominent journalists who worked for Radio Prague prior to the Soviet invasion of 1968. Vaclav Benda is a mathematician and philosopher, Dana Nemcova is a psychologist and Peter Uhl is a qualified engineer.

Finally, Vaclav Havel is one of the country's best known playwrights. All are members of both Charter 77 and VONS. Five of the accused face five-year sentences, whilst Peter Uhl is being held on the more serious charge of subversion on a large and dangerous scale and could receive a ten year period of imprisonment.

The Charter 77 movement arose after the signing of the two Helsinki Pacts by the Czechoslovak government in 1975. The Pacts became effective in Czechoslovakia from March 23, 1976. The Charter signatories indicated that although the government had signed the Pacts, it was openly violating the very clauses it had agreed to. In particular, the Chartists stressed that the Husak regime was curtailing the right of freedom of expression and the right "to seek, receive and spread information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, orally, in writing or in print," (Point 2, Article 13 of the first Pact).

The Chartists also took issue over the government's refusal to grant an education to all, regardless of viewpoints, and the fact that, in cases of conflict with the authorities, an individual has no impartial institution to which he can turn. It should be emphasized that Charter 77 and VONS are neither official organizations nor coordinated opposition movements. It is somewhat ironic that the 1,000 people who added their signatures to the document in

LETTERS

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Second Wind

Ken Daskewech

Contained in the Oct. 16th edition of the *Gateway* was a story on Glen Gallinger, ex-SU vp finance. Mr. Gallinger's incompetence is not the complete story.

A large part of the tale revolves around the self-serving opportunism of the other members of the executive, as evidenced by the quotations from Dean Olmstead, Chanchal Bhattacharya, and Sharon Bell, contained in the story. Criticisms lodged against Gallinger, ex-chairman of the Administration Board, by those who were his fellow Admin Board members are little more than an attempt to divert attention from their own lethargy which is primarily responsible for the situation developing as it did.

Aside from Gallinger, the other four members of the executive occupied positions on the Admin Board; they had no less a role in the making of controversial decisions (e.g., those regarding various engineering clubs) than did the chairman whom they so boldly and self-righteously criticized. And yet nothing was done or publicly mentioned by these critics in their capacity either as executive members or board members.

The Admin Board is comprised of members of the Executive Committee, with vp finance acting as Chairman, four other student council members, four members at large, and the Clubs Commissioner. Through the month of September the actual voting membership of the Board was seven; positions for two students at large and three councillors were vacant. Four of these seven votes belonged to members of the executive. While Students' Council is responsible for not filling the respective vacancies, they are also party to the poor decisions made by the Board.

Yet in spite of all this, it took until the 16th of October for the executive to publicly an-

nounce that problems existed with the functioning of the Board. Obviously, throughout September bad decisions were made by the Board with the approval of the executive - a minimum of one member must have voted for each decision, otherwise a majority decision could not have been reached.

If for whatever reason the Board had been improperly informed by Gallinger, information could have been provided by the remaining members of the executive.

By refusing to take action over the summer, when it was obvious that Kyle Peterson, the vp finance who preceded Gallinger, did not qualify for the position, the members of the executive are responsible for the dismal state of affairs surrounding the finance portfolio. Furthermore, the executive comprised a large portion of the committee which eventually selected Mr. Gallinger as Peterson's replacement, and according to Bhattacharya the committee did a very poor job of checking Gallinger's references. It appears that political expediency came before intelligent decision-making.

In reading the comments made by members of the executive, one cannot help but feel that those remarks were calculated to take advantage of Friday's election date. With the polls and Gallinger in mind, it is easy to see just how shallow the attempt by the executive to disavow their own responsibility for Admin Board affairs really is.

Furthermore, their statements were made only after it became apparent that *The Gateway* was about to run a story attempting to untangle the Admin Board mess.

With roughly six months remaining in their term, it will be interesting to see how the executive manages to avoid responsibility in the future.

January 1977 sought but one thing; that the government should recognize the legal document it had signed, thereby guaranteeing the most basic civil rights of its people.

Yet there is no indication that the current regime is prepared to tolerate any departure from the official line. Thousands of artists, scientists, physicians, teachers and journalists have been deprived of their jobs for daring to express alternative viewpoints. The exiled playwright and former party member Pavel Kohout reflected recently that he knows of three historians who are now repairing central heating systems and two leading literary critics, one of whom is an usher in a theater and the other a window cleaner. The principal scapegoats, however, have been the signatories of the Charter who have been subjected to a series of arrests and constant harassment over the past two years.

On May 29, 1979, the Czechoslovak State Security conducted a carefully-planned operation against the Chartists. Sixteen were arrested, houses were searched and documents, materials and even money taken. The one Charter spokesman not detained. Mrs. Zdena Tominova was savagely beaten up in her own home. Those arrested were informed in interrogations that VONS was an illegal organization with foreign contacts. The crackdown was timed to coincide with the Pope's visit to Poland, in order that the arrests would receive less coverage in Western Press and TV reports.

The arrests have, nonetheless, been widely protested in the West. Simultaneously British, French and American lawyers have applied for visas to enter Czechoslovakia in order to defend the six on trial. To date, their efforts have been unsuccessful. Instead, the dissidents are to be represented by the Edmonton lawyer, Mr. Gordon Wright, the only candidate to be accepted by the Czechoslovak authorities. Mr. Wright agreed to go to Prague at the behest of the Committee in Defense of Soviet Political Prisoners, based in Edmonton. His very presence at the trials is in itself a remarkable achievement on the part of the latter Committee.

However, Mr. Wright faces a difficult task. The charges are clearly fabricated and there is every likelihood that the verdicts have been decided beforehand. Although the prosecutors are unable to provide evidence of the "foreign contacts", they are utilizing the fact that protests sent by the accused have subsequently been used by foreign powers against Czechoslovakia. The distinction is a subtle one, but then this is essentially a rigged trial, the purpose of which is to finally destroy the Charter 77 movement. Hard evidence is not required.

The days of the trial are being marked by angry protests in Europe. Yesterday the French Communist Party picketed the Czech Embassy in Paris. Today there will be demonstrations in Paris and Cologne, organized by French and German socialist parties: What chance have they of pressurizing the regime into freeing the accused? Has Gordon Wright any hope of success? The chances are extremely slim. In the final analysis however, Mr. Wright does not expect the prisoners to be acquitted. His role is rather to show Havel and his colleagues that they have not been forgotten in the West; to provide a glimmer of hope for the Chartists of an end to the tyranny of this unrelenting, authoritarian regime.

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