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EAST EUROPEAN DISSIDENTS' APPEAL ON HUNGARIAN
REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY

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Summary: A joint statement, signed by 122 dissidents from Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, and Poland, has been issued to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising. It appealed for political democracy, independence, and pluralism based on the principles of self-government for those countries, respect for the rights of all minorities there, and for the peaceful reunification of divided Europe.

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A joint statement was issued by 122 dissidents from Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, and Poland to mark the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising. It was the first time that dissidents from four East European countries had coordinated a joint statement outlining their broad beliefs and affirming their determination to support one another in the future. (The text of statement appears at the end of this paper.)

Earlier joint statements by dissidents mostly concerned common ground in regard to particular policies of the East European regimes, such as the Czechoslovak-East German opposition to the stationing of Soviet nuclear missiles, or protests by dissidents from one country against specific incidents of persecution in another. More recently, Polish activists and Charter 77 spokesmen, who had previously spoken in each other's defense and in 1978 even organized two joint meetings, have exchanged messages and other items for publication in their respective samizdat periodicals.

The signatories' choice of the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution as the occasion for the recent joint statement lends it a much wider significance than the earlier

joint stands. For the statement is more than just an historical recollection. It takes the events in Hungary in 1956 as an epitome of the struggle for "independence, democracy, and neutrality," a struggle that it maintained must go on. The signatories said that the experience and tradition of the Hungarian Revolution "remain our common heritage and inspiration." They could have chosen any of several other themes for establishing a consensus, such as peace, human rights, or the threat to the environment. Instead, they went much further and found a common voice in calling for a system-related change:

We declare our joint determination to struggle for political democracy in our countries, their independence, pluralism based on [the] principles of self-government, [the] peaceful reunification of divided Europe and its democratic integration, as well as the rights of all minorities.

In this way, the objectives expressed in the statement go beyond the "dialogue and reform" tenor that has so far been typical of large segments of the dissident community in Eastern Europe. The statement amounts to an expression of a basic, noncommunist philosophical and political creed. It does not, however, rule out the gradual approach to change, because it does not discuss the methods for attaining these stated aims. It simply refers to mutual support "in our current attempts for a better, free, and decent life in our countr[ies] and the whole world."

Tellingly, the Hungarian signatories encompass virtually all sections of dissent, including environmentalists and some people who have not figured on earlier proclamations. Private sources say that the East German signatories played an active role in preparing the statement; they include peace activists, antimilitarists, evangelical Christians, former Marxists, and human rights campaigners, as well as a few names that are new to outside observers. The Polish contingent also covers a range of intellectuals and includes former NCR members and Solidarity activists; but none of the Polish signatories from the constituency normally known as lay Catholics can be identified. The Czechoslovaks--who include two Slovaks, one ethnic Hungarian (Miklos Duray), and one Czech who lives in Slovakia--are a typical Charter 77 cross-section of democrats, former Communists, Catholics, Protestants, and "radical Socialists."

Rather than commenting on any gaps in the spectrum of dissidents represented by the statement, it would perhaps be more apposite to point out the great difficulties faced by East European dissidents in communicating with one another inside their own countries, let alone across national borders. Also, the writing and signing of public statements is obviously not the only kind of activity that the oppositions in communist-ruled countries pursue. A division of labor, as it were, among

the dissident community within each country evolved long ago; it is more important for some people (and groups) not to sign than to sign. When, for example, the public exposure that would result from signing (as in the present case) might jeopardize their possible attainments in other areas. The fact that many more people believe in the aims expressed in the statement than have actually signed it can be taken for granted.

Similarly, the absence of signatories from Bulgaria and Rumania does not in any way signify that courageous opponents of the system do not exist there. The difficulty of communication may be the main reason why their names do not appear on the statement. Circumstances have made it impossible on those who can establish contact to speak in the name of those who cannot. One can safely assume that this applies to many dissidents in the Soviet Union as well. It is the history of dissent throughout Eastern Europe and its manifold manifestations of opposition to communism that truly endorse the present statement, not just the 122 people who have found some way of affixing their name to it.

In fact, on October 31, a message from three Rumanian dissidents, all members of the now outlawed National Peasant Party, was read out at a press conference in London. They endorsed the joint statement and expressed their recognition of the objectives of the Hungarian Revolution.

It would be wrong to consider the statement as immediately ushering in a period of "concerted action against communist rule." The reality of East European communism does not permit this, and it will not have changed because of the statement. Nevertheless, the word and the spirit are important and powerful opponents of communism, and so is the joining of hands across borders. In this sense, the statement is worthwhile, and it will certainly bear fruit.

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TEXT OF THE STATEMENT

Preamble

On the Anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution thirty years ago, on 23 October 1956, workers, students, and soldiers stormed the building of the radio in Budapest because they were fed up with the official lies and wished to hear the truth and to voice their demands. They destroyed Stalin's statue and the credibility of the regime, which called itself the dictatorship of the proletariat and the republic of the people. The struggle made it clear that what the Hungarian people really wanted was independence, democracy, and neutrality. They wanted to live in peace, in a free and decent society.

The Hungarian Revolution, as well as the uprising in East Berlin and the Prague Spring and the social movement of the free trade union, Solidarity, in Poland, were suppressed either by Soviet intervention or domestic military violence. Over the past 30 years life has become easier for many, some people grew up without being thrown into jail. But the basic demands of revolutionaries have not been realized.

Appeal

On the day of the anniversary, we appeal to our friends around the world to join us in commemorating the 1956 Revolution in Hungary. We declare our joint determination to struggle for political democracy in our countries, their independence, pluralism based on principles of self-government, peaceful reunification of divided Europe and its democratic integration, as well as for the rights of all minorities.

We emphasize support for one another in our current attempts for a better, free and decent life in our country and the whole world.

The tradition and the experience of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 remain our common heritage and inspiration.

Budapest, Berlin (GDR), Prague, Warsaw
23 October 1985

Hungarian List of Signatories

Ivan Baka
Attila Bogar
Peter Bokros
Géza Buda
Sándor Csörgő
István Csűrös
Gábor Demszky
Ólga Sziostegi
Árpád Göncz
Béla Góndos
Judit Gyöngös
Anikó Halász
Niklós Harsanyi
János Kenedi
Eszik Keszthelyi
János Kis
Károly Kisboly
György Koszov

Tibor Molnar
János Nagy
János Papp
Tibor Pákh
Ferenc Pálfi
Gyula Pálfi
György Péter
Sándor Pász
Sándor Pásztor
László Pász
László Pusai
György Solt
Niklós Sulipov
János Széll
Márgit Szécsi
Sándor Szilágyi
Pál Szécsi
József Tóth

Csaba Konczol
 Ferenc Keszeg
 Gyorgy Krassó
 Isolt Krokoway
 Gabriella Lereyvel
 Sándor Lénak
 Fruzsina Magyar
 Inra Meca
 Miklós Mészöly
 Tamás Mikes

Gáspár Miklós Tamás
 Mihály Vajda
 Domokos Varga
 Lajos Vargyas
 Judit Vasarhelyi
 Miklós Vasarhelyi

GDR List

Martin Boettger
 Beatebel Bohley
 Rainer Dietrich
 Werner Fischer
 Peter Grimm
 Monika Haeger
 Ralf Hirsch
 Herbert Miaslitz

Lutz Nagorski
 Gerd Poppe
 Ulrike Poppe
 Wolfgang Rudderklau
 Mike Schonfeld
 Regina Tempin
 Wolfgang Tempin
 Mario Wetzy

Czechoslovak List

Rudolf Battak
 Vaclav Benda
 Jan Carnogursky
 Jiri Dienstbier
 Miklos Dura y
 Jiri Gruntorad
 Jiri Hajek
 Vaclav Havel
 Ladislav Hejzlanek
 Eva Karturkova
 Jan Kosiak
 Miroslav Ruzý

Ivan Lamber
 Ladislav Lis
 Vaclav Malý
 Anna Marvanová
 Martin Palous
 Jiri Foml
 Jaroslav Sabata
 Anna Sabatová
 Libuse Silhanova
 Milan Simceka
 Frantisek Starek
 Peter Uhl

Polish List

Konrad Bielinski
 Marian Brandys
 Jacek Czaprowski
 Marek Edelman
 Jacek Fedorowicz
 Jan Andrzej Gorny
 Jaruzs Gzelski
 Zbigniew Janas
 Jan Kielesowski
 Wiktor Kulcrski
 Wladislaw Kurcicki-Goldfinger
 Zofia Kuratowska
 Jacek Kuron
 Jan Josef Lipski

Jan Litynski
 Barbara Malak
 Wojciech Maziarzski
 Adam Michalik
 Leszek Moczulski
 Piotr Niemczyka
 Zofia Romaszewska
 Zbigniew Romaszewski
 Krystyna Starczewska
 Stefan Starczewski
 Anetia Steinsbergowa
 Klemens Szaniawski
 Jacek Szymanderski
 Henryk Wujec