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BRITISH EMBASSY

BUDAPEST

14

2 July 1980

C Bleach Esq
United Nations Department
FOO

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REGISTRY NO. 15
08 JUL 1980
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RJG

Dear Bleach

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

1. Please refer to your letter and enclosure of 13 June.
2. Generally speaking, I have little to add to Christopher Long's excellent assessment in his letter to Beattie of 20 July 1977. The Hungarian record on Human Rights (as the Hungarians understand it) is, on paper, perfect - but it proves in practice to be based on a very different concept of "human rights" to the concept which prevails in the West. In Hungary, in common with other Marxist orientated states, Hegel's principle that "the individual only has rights insofar as he is a member of the State apparatus" has a rather literal meaning. In the case of any conflict between the individual and the State, the State will always assume priority. As Long said in his letter "this is a police state, in which the Government, under the guidance of the Party, has absolute control over individuals ... in practice the majority of the basic rights on your check list are habitually denied by administrative means."
3. It is of course difficult to produce any concrete evidence of abuse of human rights, as media control by state organisations means that unfavourable pictures rarely, if ever, come to light. But it may perhaps be useful to cite one or two examples - of whose reliability we can be fairly sure - as an illustration of the point.

a) Religion

The Hungarian report states, in paragraph 13, that religion in the Hungarian People's Republic is considered a private affair of citizens. The reality, however, is shown two paragraphs later when the report says "every Church and denomination has its own organisational statutes approved by the State Office for Church affairs". We know of several instances of religious discrimination, notably in the field of youth education. Children are given the choice between either going to Sunday School or joining the Young Pioneers Movement - they cannot be a member of both. (Needless to say, membership of the Young Pioneers Movement

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carries with it several advantages in status for the parents as well as a better social outlook for the child). We understand that boys leaving the Catholic School at Pannonhalma are not allowed to go straight to University but have to go for military service first - presumably a rather unobtrusive method of knocking out any undesirable ideas they may have accumulated in school before these can be reinforced at University.

b) Elections

The principle of being able to vote, and of voting in a secret ballot is, of course, safeguarded in Hungary, but elections, particularly those for the Parliament, are a sad travesty of anything that we know in the West; with the single candidate usually receiving 99 per cent of the vote.

c) Freedom of Movement including the right to leave the country

The restrictions on freedom of movement are too well known to be listed in detail. A border incident on the Austrian border two weeks ago resulted in two seriously wounded Hungarians being pulled back into Hungary.

d) Freedom of opinion and expression

Some 200 people signed a declaration in October last year supporting the Vons/Charter 77 Group in Czechoslovakia. Several of the signatories had also indulged in "Samizdat" publishing as well. Several of them were called to the relevant Ministry to account for their actions and although no direct action was taken against them, we understand that several of them were threatened with the loss of their jobs or with expulsion from the organisations for which they worked.

3. As Long says, all this will be known to you and to EESD and, we suppose, it is also well known to Sir Vincent Evans. We would not wish to suggest by the above that the situation in Hungary is worse than it is in other Eastern European countries: in fact it is considerably better. At the same time, the very nature of the system itself means that there will be little real meeting of minds between delegates from the East and West talking about their own, separate concepts of "Human Rights". I cannot do better than to echo Long's comment that if one wishes to develop a "constructive dialogue" with the Eastern European States, one must limit oneself to suggestions that paper guarantees of Human Rights must be shown to be carried out in everyday practice before they can acquire much reality.

Yours ever
 Michael Atkinson
 M W Atkinson

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P.S. Since dictating this letter, we have read Caroline Elmes's letter from Prague to Robert Faray (EESD) of 20 June, on contacts between dissidents in E. Europe. The letter gives a very good impression of Humpfen's methods in this field.



BRITISH EMBASSY

BUDAPEST

5 February 1980

cc without attachment to

/CS/ELT

QID

C C R Battiscombe Esq
 Eastern European Dept
 FCO

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INDEX	PA	SECTION TAKEN

Dear Christopher

DISSIDENTS IN HUNGARY

1. We have already reported on the open letter and petition to the Hungarian Authorities in support of the Charter 77 movement (my letter to you of 2 January 1980) and I now enclose a partial list of signatories of the letter to János Kádár on 26 October 1979. There were approximately 240 signatories in all, and so this list represents almost half of them. The abbreviations as you can see are in Italian.

2. It is interesting to note that four of the people on this new list also appeared on the list of Hungarian signatories in support of the original "Charter 77" (Merry's letter to Millington of 26 January 1977), namely György Bencze, János Kiss, Ferenc Janossy and Ersebet Vezer. They are still as little known to us now as they were then. Other than that and the fact that number 32 on the attached list was the President of the Presidential Council before 1956, most of the names are unknown to us. They do, however, cover a wide spread of Hungarian intellectual life and this fact must have some considerable significance in itself.

3. We are still without direct, firm information as to how the Hungarian authorities have reacted to the signatories. Rumours here have it that some writers have been expelled from the Writer's Union; others speak of "psychiatric treatment", but these are as yet unsubstantiated and unrelated to particular individuals. The only definite information I have had has come from our locally-engaged employee, István Zalatnay. He has told me that some of the signatories he knows were asked to go to a government office to sign a statement to the effect that their motives in signing the petitions had been humanitarian rather than political. Those who had agreed to this suggestion heard no more, those who dissented were told that if they acted in a similar way again, their jobs would be at risk.

Yours ever

Michael

cc: A H Hardie Esq
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 I F M Lancaster Esq
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