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KLEBANOV AND NIKITIN

**The story of two Ukranian miners' fight
against the Soviet bureaucracy**

By John Cunningham

£1.00

Preface

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This pamphlet is necessary for the movement in this country should know about the life of Vladimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin, two ordinary people who took on the Soviet bureaucracy and all its apparatus in a Goliath struggle whose dimensions are difficult to grasp.

It is doubly necessary for the movement should be aware of the shameful repression of Klebanov and Nikitin by many leading British trade unionists.

In writing this pamphlet I have borrowed freely from a number of publications. There is no doubt that the life and work of these two men and present it to the reader in what I hope is an interesting manner.

Appended to the main text are various documents and letters which I or other people have written or received while campaigning on behalf of these two men. Virtually all these documents were never intended for publication but I make no apology for presenting them to the reader for his/her judgement. Should anyone be offended by the publication of this correspondence then that is unfortunate but I believe the issues at stake are ultimately more important than the sensibilities of particular individuals.

I owe the following individuals and organisations a deep debt of thanks for help in activity to free Klebanov and Nikitin and in the production of this pamphlet: Terry Liddle, Anna Paczuska, Christine Shaw, the staff of Amnesty International, Taras Kuzio, George Miller, Socialist Organiser, Socialist Worker, P. Tymoszczuk, Alec Skandrij, John Archer, Bonn AI group, Bohdan Krawchenko, The Conference of Ukrainians in Britain, finally all the rank and file miners who supported the campaign from many areas of the British coalfield. My apologies to anyone who has been unintentionally left out.

It only remains to say that the views expressed in the main text of the pamphlet are entirely my own.

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Preface

This pamphlet is necessary. The working class movement in this country should know about the life and struggles of Valdimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin, two ordinary Ukrainian miners who took on the Soviet bureaucracy and all its machinery in a David and Goliath struggle whose dimensions are difficult to imagine in Britain.

It is doubly necessary because people in the movement should be aware of the shameful response to the plight of Klebanov and Nikitin by many leading British trade unionists. Finally a triple necessity arises because the fight started by Klebanov and Nikitin is being carried on by others and it is essential that they receive the support that, by and large, Klebanov and Nikitin did not get.

In writing this pamphlet I have borrowed freely from a number of publications. There is nothing original in these pages, all I have attempted to do is to bring together the most salient points about the life and work of these two men and present it to the reader in what I hope is an interesting manner.

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Introduction

Donetsk, the centre of the Donbas coalfield in the Soviet Ukraine is known as the city of a million roses. And:

"If you wander through Donetsk on a summer evening you will be struck by the beauty of the illuminated roses standing proudly in the centre of well-tended lawns, a tribute to the miners who supply the country with 'black gold', to their wives, loyal assistants who are usually employed in the coal industry as well, and to their sons, the miners of the future. They are the miners' roses."

The preceding quote doesn't come from a glossy travel brochure issued by Intourist but from a Novosti publication called *Miners' Rights* by B. Nifontov and Y. Tsimerman, published in Moscow in 1981. Its 38 pages are crammed with information about the supposed good life of the Soviet miners, their right to education, their right to work, their healthy working conditions, their right to housing and social security, etc. Clearly these "roses" are well cared for. The reality is however different. Away from the lawns and the rose beds here is what one Western observer saw in a Donbas mining community close to Donetsk:

"We visited one family where an 80 year old man who had lost his legs in the mines 40 years earlier lived on a bed in a communal kitchen. His son worked in the mine and his wife shared another room which had no running water and yet another room belonged to another family in this one communal flat. People told us these conditions were typical. One 80 year old lady told us that when she approached the director of a mine whom she had known as a child, about the possibility of getting coal without paying for it, she was told that since she had a room and had a stove that was enough for her. The money that she paid for coal deprived her of the opportunity to buy milk."

(David Slatter — Radio 4 File on Four)

Given such conditions it is not surprising that the Soviet Ukraine has long been a centre of working class resistance to the Kremlin bureaucracy, a struggle heightened and intensified by Ukrainian aspirations for self-determination.

Insufficient investment in Ukrainian mines has led to serious deterioration of safety standards and working conditions. Reports have emerged from the Donbas of miners having to *share* a lamp because there are not enough to go round! Workers' income in the Ukraine was 3% below the average of the Soviet Union in the 1960s and fell to 12% by 1979. There are shortages of consumer goods and food which is particularly galling to the Ukrainians as their region, both in industry and agriculture, is among the richest and most productive in the whole Soviet Union.

Since Stalin's death in March 1953, strikes and unrest have sporadically broken out in the Ukraine, as one Ukrainian worker-dissident has stated:

"Being on the lowest rung of the Soviet social ladder, labouring as a worker, I directly and immediately experienced the burden of economic, socio-political, and national oppression. Many workers hold similar views. And there are more and more such workers with every day..."

(Mykola Pohyba quoted in *Soviet Nationality Survey* Vol 1, 9/10)

Two Ukrainian miners, Vladimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin, the latter now dead, have come to symbolise the struggle of the Ukrainian workers and indeed all Soviet workers against the Kremlin bureaucracy. The struggle for workers' right, the right to strike, for a living wage and most of all for free and independent trade unions.

This then is the story of these two miners, who against overwhelming odds and often totally alone, conducted a struggle for the rights of the working class in the Soviet Union. It is important that the workers movement in the West knows about Klebanov and Nikitin, for here are two "dissidents" who are not writers, scientists, poets, artists or intellectuals. In the West we can too easily slip into the notion that opposition comes only from such celebrated figures as Andrei Sakharov, but it is the Soviet workers who daily, hour by hour, suffer the full brunt of the Soviet bureaucracy's oppression.

It may perhaps be said that the fight of Klebanov and Nikitin was somehow "premature", that they were mad to go on for so long, alone and with little chance of success, but all struggles for emancipation start "prematurely" and no matter what the odds it is necessary for someone to cast the first stone. To wait for a mass movement can mean waiting for ever.

Despite the small numbers involved, the struggle of Klebanov and Nikitin assumes historical importance, for out of it emerged the short-lived *Free Trade Union Association*, the first independent workers organisation to exist in the Soviet Union since the 1920s. Other workers since have taken up the banner of free trade unionism in the Soviet Union. For them to succeed and develop into a mass movement like Solidarity in Poland it is essential that they receive maximum support from the workers movement in the West.

The case of Vladimir Aleksandrovich Klebanov

Vladimir Aleksandrovich Klebanov was born in 1932. After spending the war as an evacuee in Central Asia, he entered a military-medical college in Kiev, but never completed his studies and eventually moved to the Donbas.

Originally working as a boilermaker, he went underground at the Makeyevka Mine, near Donetsk, and from 1951 he was an operator on a coal-cutting machine. In 1952 he married. By 1961 he was made foreman. Klebanov tried to use his position to ensure safe working conditions and strict adherence to the Soviet Labour Code. He was in a strong position to challenge the management:

"I demanded the correct wage payments and, in particular, an end to the concealment of industrial injuries in official reports, the correct definition of invalid categories and proper compensation for miners who suffered injuries through the fault of management. I demanded prosecution of the criminals who steal valuable materials — men in important industrial and Soviet positions — an end to bribery, the incorrect allocation of the housing fund and so on. (for ten years) I was the instigator of collective complaints and collected the workers' signatures."

(NB: all quotes from Klebanov are taken from his unfinished autobiographical essay which is reprinted in *Workers Against the Gulag*, Haynes and Semyonova, Pluto Press, 1979).

Support for Klebanov's allegations and complaints came from the journal *Coal of the Ukraine*, the official organ of the Ukrainian Ministry of Mines. It was admitted that there was insufficient mechanisation and that safety standards were poor. Further a survey carried out in 1978 showed that 65% of the deeper mines were "highly dangerous", particularly with regard to mine ventilation.

The miners themselves were exhorted to take action to remedy this situation, but the efforts of Klebanov were not appreciated by the local mine management who continually blocked and then started harassing him. Attempts were made on a number of occasions to victimise him.

On November 2nd 1959 Klebanov was involved in an accident underground and his eyesight suffered as a result of it. After treatment and an examination he was diagnosed as a Category 3 invalid and returned to work where he maintained his agitations over working conditions and management malpractices. Already in 1959 he had been suspended for 20 days and in 1961 he was reported to the KGB by the mine management.

Despite the fact that Klebanov complained directly to the highest authorities in Moscow who upheld his complaints, the persecution

continued. In 1964 he went in person to Moscow where he was arrested in the reception room of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Court. It was in Moscow that Klebanov was to receive his first taste of the treatment handed out to those who dare to protest. He was committed to Kashchenko City Psychiatric Hospital and kept there for 20 days. He was diagnosed as having a "... paranoid development of the personality". On his release he returned to the Ukraine.

Back at Makeyevka Klebanov found that he had been sacked on the pretext that he "left work on his own initiative..." Despite having had his invalid status rescinded it appeared that the management were trying to use his injury to prevent him getting work at the mine. Details of the "diagnosis" from Kashchenko would almost certainly have been made available to the management and it is quite possible that this also was used against Klebanov.

A period of 3 years unemployment followed and in 1965 the police tried to throw Klebanov and his wife out of their flat "...but miners from where I worked prevented this arbitrary act". Like most Soviet workers, Klebanov's flat was tied to his job. Housing allocation is usually handled by the unions, so it looks very much as if the union agreed to this attempt to have Klebanov thrown out onto the street.

While unemployed Klebanov fought the authorities on his right to a job at the mine. Eventually he was taken back and employed as a design engineer with the mine administration, working in the offices. It is a remarkable testament to Klebanov's personal determination that all through this difficult period he had been studying by correspondence course which enabled him to get this job.

Makeyevka mine had won the Lenin's Banner Award for its record output 3 years in succession. This success was however only achieved by increasing the speed of the work process until safety was at a minimum. Corners were continually being cut and a new wages system only increased the mounting dissatisfaction. Not much is known about what happened next but it appears that the unrest caused by the adverse conditions and a new wage system exploded in September 1968. There were protests, possibly strikes at Makeyevka and probably other mines as well.

Klebanov's role is unknown but on September 12th he was arrested, charged with Article 187-1 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR (discrediting the Soviet Social and Political system) and put into Donetsk Number 1 Prison. In the following months many miners were "transferred" to other mines in the Soviet Union, some being forced to work in such bad conditions that they quit.

Klebanov was first sent to a psychiatric hospital in Igren for a forensic-psychiatric examination, though Klebanov has denied that he was ever examined there. Despite this the Peoples Court of the City Centre of Makeyevka decided to send him for compulsory psychiatric treatment.

In February of the following year Klebanov was sent to Dnepropetrovsk

Special Psychiatric hospital, ward 6 for compulsory "treatment". Dnepropetrovsk has a reputation of being a place where you only leave "feet first".

From this time until his release in 1973 Klebanov was kept in a succession of Psychiatric Hospitals and Prisons. Such was his isolation from the rest of the world that his wife thought he was dead. As a protest against his arrest and detainment Klebanov went on hunger strike. The authorities replied with typical brutality by throwing him in an isolation cell:

"There was no glass in the window. It was damp. The cold rose up to my ears. The late September wind blew in. On the second day I was beaten ... by a Junior Lieutenant of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Security) who first shackled my hands and feet, then threw me on the ground and kicked me."

The MVD then tried to make Klebanov eat by putting a man in his cell who had been on hunger strike for a long time:

"He looked terrible. A skeleton... We see such men only in films about German concentration camps."

After 20 days on hunger strike he was shackled and force fed by having a tube pushed down his nose. Finally he came off hunger strike because "no one knew about it". While being taken to Dnepropetrovsk his possessions were stolen by orderlies. When he protested Klebanov was told he wouldn't need them as he wouldn't come out alive.

"The Psychiatrist's job was to beat out of my head what was 'socially dangerous'; over a number of years and in particular in 1960, I was the instigator of a collective complaint and collected workers signatures. I took their complaints to the Soviet and Party organs. As a Trade Union organiser, I came out with criticisms of the management. This was 'undermining' their authority. This is what they try to cure people of here!"

Not much is known of how Klebanov was treated inside Dnepropetrovsk, but the Soviet dissident, Leonid Plyusch spent some 4 years there, 1973-76, and he had this to say of his experience there:

"Most of the inhabitants of Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital are mentally deranged — murderers, rapists, hooligans. There are about 60 political prisoners, in general mentally healthy people ... the horror of the madhouse gripped me from the start. In the ward there were more patients than beds. I was put as a 3rd person on 2 beds that had been pushed together. One man's tongue was lolling out, another man was rolling his eyes, a 3rd walked around unnaturally bent over. Some lay and groaned with pain — they had been given injections of sulphur*. As they explained to me, they were being punished for bad behaviour."

The vile practice of dispatching sane and healthy people to mental and psychiatric institutions can be self-justifying — a sane person can end up mad after prolonged exposure to such an environment. This actually happened to one man who was known to the dissident Vladimir Bukovsky:

*Actually Sulfazine — a 1% preparation of purified sulphur mixed with Peach Oil. It has not been used in the West since the 1930s. It has no therapeutic value whatsoever and is used solely for punishment.

"Another of my friends in the madhouse was, for example, a French Communist of Rumanian origin who had lived for more than 10 years in Marseilles and who came to the Soviet Union to learn, to see what Communism was like in practice. He went to work in a shoe factory in Moldavia and worked there a long time. But he was displeased that the workers there received such low wages. He told his workmates that they ought to fight for better pay — they went on strike, he was arrested and declared insane. In the hospital he just couldn't understand what had happened to him, how Communists could do such things. For him Communism and the struggle for a better life were more or less the same thing — he just couldn't understand. Towards the end of his stay he really began to go out of his mind, it seems to me, because he was telling everyone that the Soviet Government was under the influence of the Vatican."

Klebanov, however, not only managed somehow to keep his sanity, but continued to argue and fight his case. He demanded a pension for his wife (they were both by this time totally destitute) and the authorities replied that she could have one if she signed a document stating that her husband was mad. She refused.

In September 1970, the Donetsk Regional Court ordered him to be transferred to an isolation cell in Donetsk. He appeared again in Court and was asked to admit his supposed insanity, which he refused to do. For a period after this he was moved from one prison or psychiatric hospital to another — he spent more than one spell in Makeyevka Psychiatric Hospital No. 1; Serbsky Institute, Donetsk, Kharkov and Butynsk prison.

Finally on June 7th 1973 the compulsory "treatment" which Klebanov had always resisted ceased. He went home, but, as often happens, he was refused work. Wherever he went he found he was "blacklisted" despite having had his invalid status finally and definitely rescinded. All Soviet workers have to carry a "labour book" which contains a history of the individual's work record. The mine-management at Makeyevka had written in his "Dismissed in connection with arrest". Klebanov's requests to have this illegal endorsement removed were refused or ignored.

Repeated appeals and letters to the State and Party institutions finally procured partial financial compensation for his period of unemployment, though it was only 50% of the figure that Klebanov thought he was entitled to. If it was intended as a bribe then it failed, for he carried on.

He was forced again, like so many others in his position, to go to Moscow and take his case up there. It is not exactly clear when Klebanov went to Moscow, nor whether he stayed there (which was against Soviet Law — as he had no permit to do so), or whether he visited regularly.

Over the years 1975-1978 Klebanov began to meet more and more people like himself, who had made the long and costly trip to Moscow in an attempt to seek justice. For all these unfortunate people, the vast majority of them ordinary workers, it was thankless and painful grinding slog — endless queues, forms to be filled, endless questions, more queues, often till an individual's savings were exhausted and they then had to make the long trek home with nothing gained. Many, because they could not obtain resident's permits, slept in railway stations.

On one occasion, according to an eye witness "... before the eyes of hundreds of citizens from various cities across the country, one petitioner, driven to despair, committed suicide." This final despairing act — it is difficult to imagine a more grotesque judgement on "Soviet justice" — was actually inflicted in the waiting room of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

Finally a band of petitioners, among them Klebanov, came together and began to act collectively:

"We are Soviet citizens from various towns of the Soviet Union — united in bitterness. We have been ... sacked and left without means of livelihood ... for speaking out against wasters of socialist property, poor working conditions, low pay, high rates of injury at work, speed up and increased output norms ... the only response we get to our requests is continuous persecution .. a dog would not have the kind of humiliation and derision that we have suffered."

Vladimir Klebanov was prominent amongst these people. On May 20th 1977 an *Open Letter to International Opinion* was addressed to the West, signed by eight people. A further *Open Letter* (from which the above extract is taken) was issued on September 18th 1977, this time signed by 25 people. Copies were sent to the press of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU but they were never acknowledged or printed.

Finally on February 1st 1978 an *Appeal to the International Labour Organisation and the Trade Unions in the West* was issued and signed by 43 people — members of the newly formed *Free Trade Union Association of Working People in the Soviet Union**. Amongst the signatories was Vladimir Klebanov who played a leading role in its formation. Indeed, according to one source of information, Klebanov originally intended the FTUA to be a miners union, but changed his mind when other people showed an interest. Of the original 108 names published by FTUA, 9 were miners (including Klebanov).

Along with the "Appeal" were issued the statutes of the FTUA signed by the 43 original members. There were another 160 members, whose names, for various reasons, were not published. Members of the FTUA "... should be manual and non-manual workers whose rights and interests have been illegally flouted by the administrative, Soviet, Party and judicial organs." Unlike the official "unions", the FTUA officials "... from top to bottom are elected by the members and accountable to them."

The final section (4) stated:

"As soon as the FTUA is recognised by the ILO or trade unions of foreign countries, as soon as it receives moral and financial support, the Statute will be reviewed in the light of the special situation of working people in our country. The review will be carried out not earlier than one year after the foundation of the Association."

*Hereafter referred to as FTUA.

The promised "review" never happened. The FTUA was stamped out by the KGB almost as soon as it made its first public appearance. As one of the leading figures in the FTUA, Klebanov was one of the first to be arrested. On February 10th he was taken by the KGB to a Moscow Police Station where a psychiatrist was waiting for him. He was accused of placing a bomb in the Moscow Metro. (There had actually been an explosion in the Metro in January.) He was then sent to No. 7 Psychiatric Hospital in Moscow and was released two months later.

On his release Klebanov and his comrades in the FTUA held their first press conference at which journalists from the West attended. Further arrests followed. The owner of the flat where the conference was held was arrested and Klebanov and two colleagues were arrested on December 19th while walking down Gorky Street in Moscow. Klebanov was separated from his colleagues and again taken to No. 7 Psychiatric Hospital. From here he was taken South to Donetsk.

Protests from fellow FTUA members and supporters secured his release and Klebanov soon returned to Moscow. Another attempt was made to arrest him on January 28th 1978, again in Gorky Street, Moscow. A fight followed in which Klebanov with the aid of some FTUA members and passers-by beat off the KGB. Around this time Klebanov went of his own free will to be examined by an independent psychiatrist, Dr Alexander Voloshonovich who was also a consultant to the Working Committee to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes.

In a 6 page report Dr Voloshonovich reached the following conclusion about Klebanov's state of health:

"On the basis of my questioning and an objective examination of Vladimir Klebanov one can draw the conclusion that Victor Alexandrovich Klebanov has an underdeveloped personality which shows a degree of hypersensitivity not amounting to psychiatric disturbance, at the present time, as during the period of the offences he was charged with (1964, 1968) he has been aware of his actions and has been able to direct them. He is responsible for his actions."

Obviously Klebanov was not, in any sense, insane.

This was not the end, however. On February 7th the KGB pounced again. Only this time they succeeded and Klebanov was taken to Donetsk Psychiatric Hospital, later being transferred to the Special Psychiatric Hospital in Dnepropetrovsk. While in either Donetsk or Dnepropetrovsk he was tried in his absence by the Donetsk Court. Even his wife wasn't allowed to be present.

In Dnepropetrovsk Klebanov was subjected to intensive "treatment" by behaviour modification drugs and his physical and mental condition deteriorated to such an extent that grave fears were expressed as to his well-being. One of the last reports to come out of the Soviet Union, reported in the *Sunday Observer* in November 1980 stated that he had been administered large doses of behaviour modification drugs intended for use

with severe paranoids or schitzophrenics; possibly including the following drugs: Aminazin (known in the West as Largactil), Haloperidol, Steladol and Cyclodol. (NB: Largactil/Aminazin is used in British Prisons and is sometimes referred to as the "liquid cosh"). His face was severely swollen and his features distorted, his complexion was yellow and physical movement was impaired. As well as suffering all this, Klebanov was forbidden to walk in the hospital and allowed out only for one hour's exercise a day.

In February 1982 Klebanov was moved out of Dnepropetrovsk and reports which were never entirely confirmed suggested he was then placed in an Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital in Donetsk. Sometime early in 1984, reports from dissident sources, again unconfirmed, suggest that he has finally been released, though at the time of going to press Klebanov has not been in contact with any of his old colleagues in the Free Trade Union movement. SMOT sources are also unable to provide any information about his condition and whereabouts.

The case of Alexei Vasilievich Nikitin

The case of *Alexei Vasilievich Nikitin* is depressingly similar to that of his fellow miner Vladimir Klebanov.

The youngest of 10 children, born in the village of Federovoskoye, in the Bryansk oblast, Nikitin completed his military service in 1962 and returned to the Butovka mine in Donetsk where he had first worked as an electrical mechanic. He was a busy, and by all accounts a popular man. As well as his work he studied at evening classes, did voluntary work and headed the "mass culture" section in the mine. He was also a member of a section "initiative group of workers and communists". In a nutshell, Alexei Nikitin was a model worker and Soviet citizen.

Like Klebanov, however, he was not blind to the injustices going on around him and he led a protest of miners against unfair bonus payments, malpractices in the allocation of appartments, requisition of goods by management, etc. Initially he scored some successes and as a result of the protests the mine manager at Butovka was expelled from the party and then sacked.

In 1965 Nikitin married and in the same year, probably influenced by his wife who was a longstanding Party member, he joined the CPSU. Promotion followed and he became an underground foreman. He still, however, took the workers' side and continued to act on their behalf. It is possible that the mine management thought that by promoting Nikitin they could buy him off, but if they did, they failed.

The management began to look upon him in an increasingly unfavourable light and persecution and harassment began to follow. They gave him the lowest salary, the smallest bonus and the smallest appartment. According to witnesses and people who knew him, he was totally unselfish, he never complained for himself and took everything that was thrown at him, but he continued to petition on behalf of his fellow miners. This led to his immense popularity at Butovka and in the surrounding community.

The conditions under which the Ukranian miners lived and worked have already been noted in the introduction: there was obviously much for a person like Nikitin to complain about.

In December 1969, Nikitin led a delegation of miners to the head of the Butovka mine, Viktor Savich, to complain about unpaid bonus. They received no satisfaction, so Nikitin and 129 other miners wrote direct to the Central Committee of the CPSU. The letter was set back to Donetsk, to the Regional Party Committee, the only outcome being that the allegations

were judged to be unfounded and shortly after Nikitin was expelled from the Party.

Soon after he was sacked by management.

Following in the footsteps of Klebanov he then began the grinding rounds of petitioning, writing letters and complaining to the authorities. The Party suggested to his wife that she write letters to discredit him, which she did. Nikitin then divorced her.

He appealed as an ex-member of the Party to the 1971 Party Congress, but again he was ignored. Probably in an act of desperation he went to the Norwegian Embassy on April 15th 1971 and gave them copies of the documentation relating to his case, hoping for resulting international publicity. An attempt to visit the US Embassy was thwarted by the KGB and he was sent back to Donetsk, where he could find no work.

There was an explosion at the Butovka Mine on December 22nd — an event which Nikitin had predicted because of the inadequate ventilation. Seven miners were killed and a number injured. There was widespread discontent at the mine about the explosion and this quite probably became linked to Nikitin's expulsion from work. Possibly as a result of this, KGB surveillance of Nikitin was stepped up and in early 1972 he was arrested and after a time sent to Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital. He was charged under article 187 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code ("Dissemination of knowingly false fabrications discrediting the Soviet social and political system"). He was kept there for two years and nine months, being diagnosed as psychopathic. He was not forcibly administered heavy doses of drugs and his early treatment, in comparison to what he was to receive later, was relatively light. He was ordered to take one tablet of Majeptil a day only.

He worked for a time on a building job in the hospital grounds and later as an orderly in the hospital. He was then transferred to the Donetsk Regional Hospital, where after one and a half years he was discharged in 1976.

Nikitin's problems, however, continued. The local police took 5 months to get him registration documents and even after registration he could still not find work. Again the requests, letters, petitions to regional and State authorities, and again no response.

In 1977 he returned to the Norwegian Embassy in Moscow, this time asking for political asylum. On leaving the Embassy he was snatched by the KGB and imprisoned in Moscow. A short time later he was taken back to Donetsk and placed in the City Psychiatric Hospital from which he escaped after only one and a half hours and hid in the Bryansk forest.

When he was re-captured, Nikitin was sent instead to Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital where he was incarcerated for two years with a further year in Donetsk. It was in this period that he was first treated with the behaviour modification drugs, Penicyazine and Chloprothixene. He was released in May 1980, and applied for permission to emigrate, but

this was either ignored or turned down by the authorities.

On September 6th, 1980, Nikitin too allowed himself to be examined by an independent psychiatrist, the eminent Dr Anatoly Koryagin, also a consultant to the Moscow Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes. This was Koryagin's conclusion:

"On the basis of his personal history and my examination it should be concluded that Aleksei Vasilievich Nikitin suffers no psychiatric illness or character disorders, and there is no evidence that he has ever had either of these conditions. His admissions to the Special Psychiatric Hospital (in 1972 and 1974) should be considered totally unjustified."

For this diagnosis and for other related activity with dissidents Koryagin was later to come foul of the authorities and is now serving seven years in a labour camp to be followed by 5 years internal exile. Unable to find work, penniless and homeless, Nikitin was accommodated by his sister and eked out a living by doing odd jobs.

There is no available evidence to show that Nikitin ever joined the FTUA though he knew about it and is almost certain to have heard of Klebanov. According to one source they met in Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital sometime between 1972 and 1973. What is definitely known, however, is that Nikitin sympathised with the ideas of free trade unionism as was demonstrated by his letter to the British TUC on November 3rd 1980, which contained the following:

"Bearing in mind the fine traditions of trade unionism ... developed in the bitter struggle for workers' rights ... we seek aid and assistance from the trade union associations of Great Britain for an action group working to organise free trade unions in the USSR..."

In December 1980, he had two visitors, Kevin Klose and David Satter, two journalists (Klose — *Washington Post*; Satter — *Financial Times*). Klose and Satter spent three days with Nikitin, speaking to him about the impact of the Polish events on the Ukraine, safety in the mines and going around Donetsk meeting miners and their families (see introduction).

After they left Nikitin had another visit — from the KGB. He was forcibly injected and taken in an ambulance to Donetsk Psychiatric Hospital No. 2. His treatment this time was so bad that his sister, when she was finally allowed to visit him couldn't recognise him. On January 6 1981 he was transferred to Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital where he was treated with heavy doses of drugs which caused him severe pain, dizziness and loss of weight. It was 3 months before his family were allowed to visit him.

Sometime in 1982 he was transferred to the Special Psychiatric Hospital at Talgar, near Alma-Ata on the Soviet-China border (the place where Stalin had Trotsky exiled to in 1929). He was totally isolated there, several thousand miles from his family. There was no news of his mental and physical condition for some time except that his eyesight had suffered during this last period of incarceration.

In November 1983 Amnesty International received information which suggested that Nikitin had left the Hospital, possibly to an Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital. However, it was later discovered that Nikitin had developed severe stomach cancer and in either late February or early March of 1984 he died in the Donetsk Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital. There is no available information on his treatment nor whether the cancer was related to his detention and the deprivations he suffered, but such a connection cannot be ruled out.

Psychiatric abuse in the Soviet Union

One of the most repulsive aspects of the persecution of Klebanov and Nikitin is the use of psychiatric hospitals as prisons to cow and beat down and ultimately break the dissident. This is not a new development and has been used many times in the past against dissidents such as Leonid Plyusch, Vladimir Bukovsky and Pytor Grigorenko to name only a few.

There are a number of reasons why psychiatry is abused in this way in the Soviet Union. Broadly speaking internment of dissenters in psychiatric institutions provides a convenient way to i) avoid the expense and often unwelcome publicity sometimes associated with normal criminal proceedings, ii) suppress ideas and actions not acceptable to the Soviet bureaucracy by labelling those responsible as "insane", thus attempting to discredit and deprive them of potential support while at the same time propagating the official view that only an insane person could criticise the Soviet system or certain of its operations, iii) punish the dissenter and produce "recantation", that is a return to "normality" — an acceptance of the Soviet State and its system.

The extensive use of psychiatry against dissenters goes back to the early post-Stalin era under Krushchev. There were some cases of dissidents and oppositionists being confined in mental asylums in the '30s and '40s but it was not a particularly widespread phenomenon then.* Indeed in some cases oppositionists feigned insanity to procure a place in a mental hospital in order to avoid the rigours and hardships of the "Gulag" Labour Camps.

With the death of Stalin Krushchev became eager to show the World that the "mistakes" and "excesses" of the Stalin period were over and that people were no longer imprisoned for their political beliefs in the Soviet Union. This was attempted in a number of ways. Firstly large numbers of prisoners were released; secondly the Labour Camps became Labour "Colonies" and increasingly the authorities began to label opponents of the regime as insane and imprison them in Ordinary and Special Psychiatric Hospitals.

*The Bolsheviks attempted once or twice to use "diagnoses" of mental illness against political opponents, e.g. the cases of Maria Spridonova, the Left S-R and Angelica Balabanoff, who although a Bolshevik was critical of certain of their policies.

In 1959, in an article in "Pravda" Krushchev said:

"A crime is a deviation from the generally recognised standard of behaviour, frequently caused by mental disorder. Can there be diseases, nervous disorders among certain people in the Communist Society (of the future)? Evidently there can be. If that is so, then there will also be offences which are characteristic of people with abnormal minds... To those who start calling for opposition to Communism on this 'basis', we can say that now, too, there are people who fight against Communism ... but clearly the mental state of such people is not normal."

The publication in the west in 1965 of *Ward 7* by the Soviet dissident Valery Tarsis first aroused international attention to psychiatric abuse in the Soviet Union. In *Ward 7* Tarsis describes his own experience in a psychiatric hospital. Of the 150 in his section Tarsis estimated that only one person was actually insane. The case of Evgeny Belov was the first to receive really widespread coverage in the west and this was followed by the case of the mathematician Alexander Volpin.

Since the early '60s many other cases have come to light too numerous to mention and it is now a fairly common method of suppressing dissenters in the Soviet Union. Nor is it a method used solely against scientists and intellectuals. Many working class oppositionists have been subjected to this abuse; at least 39 members of the FTUA have been detained in psychiatric institutions of one sort or another at some time.

The actual extent of psychiatric abuse is almost impossible to estimate. One Western psychiatrist, Dr Norman Hirst, estimated the number of people subjected to psychiatric abuse for political ends at around 7,000 (*Vancouver Sun* 18 April 1973). S. Bloch and P. Reddaway in their book *Russia's Political Hospitals*, however, believe this figure to be exaggerated. Amnesty International is non-committal on a figure, but their *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR* (1976 edition) estimates that there are at least 10,000 political and religious prisoners in the USSR, but the majority of these are detained in Labour Colonies or prisons, not in psychiatric institutions. Perhaps a comment of Bloch and Reddaway is most appropriate here:

"... We do not believe in the context of psychiatric abuse statistics are the most important consideration."

Labour movement response in the West

The response in the West to cases of persecution and psychiatric abuse has often depended on just who the victim is. Put crudely an internationally known scientist or writer has more chance of getting his or her case publicised in the West, and, possibly being released as a result of this attention, than does a street cleaner, or a miner.

This may at first seem strange, for if the unions in the West took up the cases of workers victimised by the Soviet authorities then there would be a large body of opinion to which the Soviet authorities would be inclined to respond. In the case of Klebanov and Nikitin however this has not generally happened.

There have been exceptions. The French Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT), part of the Prague based World Federation of Trade Unions, has protested about both the suppression of the FTUA and the imprisonment of Klebanov and Nikitin. Other French trade unions have also voiced their protest. In Britain the TUC simply accepted the Soviet version of events both about the FTUA and Klebanov and Nikitin. Expectations that the NUM would act on behalf of their fellow miners have generally, despite enquiries, been disappointed. Indeed the response, or lack of it, from the NUM Executive is one of the more sordid aspects of this whole affair.

The NUM knew about Klebanov's plight more or less from the time he was put in Dnepropetrovsk for his last confinement. Joe Gormley, then the NUM President, wrote to E. Effremenko, the President of the Soviet Coal Miners Union, on March 15th 1978 enquiring about Klebanov. Effremenko's reply was, in Gormley's words, "unsatisfactory" and it was decided that an NUM delegation to Poland later that same year would use the opportunity to raise the issue with Effremenko who would also be in Poland at the same time.

The meeting took place, in the Polish mining town of Katowice, where the British delegates questioned Effremenko for two hours. A report of the meeting was then written up by Syd Vincent, the Lancashire Area President who acted as the delegation's reporting secretary. The report was submitted to the NUM National Executive Committee for its consideration. (See Appendix 4)

The outcome of the discussion on the NEC was, to cut a long story short, that the NEC accepted Effremenko's account of the events of Klebanov's arrest, his "mental illness" and also allegations about Klebanov as a "womaniser" and as someone not interested in work of any

kind. In Gormley's own words:

"The decision taken by our NEC was not an either/or in favour of Mr Klebanov or the Soviet system, but whether we, as a union, could proceed with the matter in a constructive and logical manner. It was decided that as a trade union we had exhausted all channels of influence."

(*The Miner* May/June 1981)

Syd Vincent in a typically churlish and philistine interview with Radio 4's *File on Four* programme epitomised, in the extreme, the inaction and spineless attitude of the NUM NEC majority on this issue:

"He (Effremenko) went to very great lengths to explain to us that Klebanov had some kind of mental condition. He'd been examined on numerous occasions by Soviet doctors and he, at the present moment in time, he wasn't fit to walk the streets. One thing that came out at that meeting was that Klebanov had left his wife and gone to Moscow to live with another woman. Well, I, there are many people throughout the World who do this kind of thing, I believe that's an occupational hazard of being married, leaving your wife and going to live with someone else, many people do it. I haven't done it yet by the way. But this is my personal feeling, I felt there could have been a better case. Once you put forward a case and it's not, what you would say, pure white, then people can hang the rat on the things that a person has done in his private life. They have a tendency to do this. I personally felt that it did weaken Klebanov's case."

There is no need for further comment, Vincent condemns himself out of his own mouth.

When Nikitin's plight first became known in the West, Gormley wrote again to the President of the Soviet Coal Miners Union who was now M.A. Srebny. This change has significance in as much as Effremenko was by this time in a state of disgrace having been sacked from his post for organising an illegal hunting trip where he reportedly shot protected species from an helicopter and caused hundreds of pounds of damage. Effremenko may himself now be in prison, yet it was this man, that Gormley and his associates were quite prepared to believe hook, line and sinker.

It took Srebny some time to reply. By the time his letter arrived at Euston Road the NUM itself had a new President.

Little was done in the period remaining of Gormley's Presidency, though he was forced to write a letter to the *Sunday Times* (15th April 1981) in response to criticism from the right wing journalist Bernard Levin. In the following year the issue appeared again, if only briefly. Ted Mackay, the North Wales Area Secretary, wrote along and perceptive article in the February/March 1982 issue of *The Miner*. Mackay's concluding words are worth repeating, for in many ways they sum up the essence of the Klebanov/Nikitin affair for NUM members in Britain:

"Alexei Nikitin and Vladimir Klebanov were incarcerated for no more than what we in the NUM do almost every day of our working lives. ... I conclude with what I said at the Annual Conference: if the same criteria applied in Britain for 'slandering the system' then every NUM official would be in a psychiatric Hospital."

The Annual Conference to which Ted Mackay refers was the NUM Annual Conference of 1981, held in Jersey, at which a comprehensive resolution was passed on the question of human rights. In his contribution to the discussion Ted Mackay made the following comments:

"... Chairman, I appreciate it is not easy to get unity on the Soviet Union, but the systematic psychiatric abuse in Eastern Europe of those who dissent must be condemned. ... If this resolution is passed it commits the NUM to be actively involved in the field of human rights. It commits the NUM not to take sides, and to be silent, Chairman, is to take sides, and important chairman, it commits you and your successor to such matters as Klebanov and Nikitin."

When Gormley at last departed to the House of Lords, his successor, Arthur Scargill, replied to the letter from Srebny; in it he made the following statement:

"I must confess that I find the explanation in your letter a little difficult to accept in total bearing in mind that you had to spend a long time obtaining the facts."

Despite the fact that Scargill apparently didn't believe Srebny the issue doesn't appear to have been pursued any further.

Since that time Scargill's attitude appears to have hardened. On 26th April 1983, the author of this pamphlet, at the time a member of the NUM Branch Committee at Dinnington Colliery in South Yorkshire wrote a personal letter to Scargill (now installed in Sheffield) asking him if he would make enquiries as to the well-being and whereabouts of Klebanov and Nikitin. This was Scargill's reply in part:

"I have nothing further to add to the previous public statement made by the NUM apart from saying that I only wish that the people who constantly inundate this office with letters about the above two people do not appear to show any concern or very little about the tragedy in El Salvador and Nicaragua where more people are dying in a day than have been killed in the Soviet Union in the last ten years."

A further letter from myself to Scargill in which I asked for an apology for what I considered an "evasive, derogatory and insulting" letter merely elicited a refusal to apologise and allegations about "... an orchestrated campaign taking place directed towards my office." At least Scargill did bother to write, which is more than can be said for Owen Briscoe, the Yorkshire Area General Secretary, who has still to reply to a letter addressed to him on 4th April 1983.

One thing that is particularly striking about Scargill's letter is its evasiveness. It is a common ploy of someone unwilling to discuss a particular issue that they shift the ground of discussion to some other subject — whether it be Nicaragua, El Salvador or whatever. The same reluctance to discuss the real issues of the Klebanov and Nikitin issue was displayed by Ken Gill of AUEW-TASS when he was also interviewed by *File on Four*:

"I share with most Trade Unionists a certain amount of suspicion of people who find they cannot operate within the existing organisations and try to set up rival organisations often without a social, economic or trade union style base... In the Socialist countries there is plenty of evidence to show that the trade unions tend to be bureaucratic, but on the other hand they play a role, say within the factory, which is often much more powerful and effective than anything we can show in Britain. If you're asking me whether someone who disagrees with the trade union structure or any democratic institution should finish up inside being accused of being mentally disturbed when he isn't, I'm absolutely opposed to that. You have to be a fairly brave person to protest in Britain against your employer... the level of mental instability in Britain is rising phenomenally because of mass unemployment and the feeling that hundreds of thousands are no longer wanted by society... In the USSR security of employment is more or less guaranteed and even if, and it seems fairly clear, that individuals are being persecuted it's not quite the same as allowing 3 million to be unemployed in Great Britain."

The response of many trade union leaders in this country to the treatment of Klebanov and Nikitin is, unfortunately, very similar to that of Scargill and Gill, usually only varying in degrees of crassness or sophistication. Of course there are many who have simply ignored the question. In the ranks of the Labour Party probably the most consistent critic of the Soviet Union's treatment of Klebanov and Nikitin and its suppression of workers rights has been Eric Heffer MP.

Correspondance between John Cunningham and David Blunkett (Leader of Sheffield City Council), the prominent left-winger, is carried in the appendices. This correspondance is important for two reasons, firstly because Sheffield is twinned with Donetsk and secondly because it shows the response of the Leader of what is often thought of as the most left-wing council in the country. Blunkett's letters do not actually inspire one with confidence that he was actually prepared to do very much, even after the resolution passed at Sheffield District Labour Party in October 1983 (see appendix 10). The reader can however form his/her own opinion by reading the correspondance.

To sum up briefly the response from the Labour and Trade Union movement in Britain has often been inadequate, very often non-existent and in certain instances nothing short of shameful. There are a number of reasons why this is so.

One major reason is the hostility of the official trade union machinery in Britain to "unofficial" movements and organisations anywhere. Evidence of this has already been demonstrated by Gill's comments and of course Scargill's denunciation of Solidarity. Along with this hostility towards unofficial movements goes a large dose of sheer bureaucratic inertia, probably nowhere better (or worse) illustrated than in Transport Houses, the home of the TUC.

The TUC as an organisation has over many years developed relations with other such bodies overseas and is reluctant to see its cosy world disturbed by such things as the establishment of free trade unions or the

plight of individuals like Klebanov and Nikitin. The TUC has a relatively stable relationship with the Soviet "Trade Unions", there are, for example, visits and exchanges, all of which encourages a "don't rock the boat" attitude. Even Tom Jackson, ex General Secretary of the Postworkers Union and one time Chair of the TUC's International Committee, has gone on record as describing the TUC General Council as "apparatchniks" (though one might conclude by saying physician heal thyself!).

The TUC opposed an ILO investigation of mistreatment of Soviet workers. According to the *Observer*, 2nd July 1978, Jack Jones said the investigation would be a "mistake" and justified this by saying there was too little information available (!). The TUC General Secretary did write to Shibaev (Chairman of the Soviet Trade Unions) asking for their views on the FTUA. The *Observer* for 26th May 1978 reported that Shibaev's reply "made a favourable impression on the TUC International Committee".

Probably the best evidence of the sloth like response of the TUC to "unofficial" events came, not with the persecution of Klebanov and Nikitin, nor the formation of the FTUA, but with the rise of Solidarnosc in Poland. The TUC did nothing to aid Solidarnosc, refused to recognise it and simply bumbled along in the old bureaucratic way. Eventually the world shattering events in Poland forced the apparatchniks to sit up and finally, grudgingly, the existence of Solidarnosc was acknowledged. To force this reluctant recognition out of the TUC, Solidarnosc had to recruit several million members in a month!

As well as sheer bureaucratic inertia there is also the legacy of Stalinism still clinging to the Labour movement like a tumor that won't quite lie down and die. This often manifests itself in an uncritical attitude to the Soviet Union though even someone like Ken Gill is forced to admit that the garden is not all that rosy. At its most blatant it can mean people like Maurice Jones, a Communist Party member and now editor of *The Miner* printing Effremenko's reply to Gormley in the *Yorkshire Miner* of January 1979 (when he was editor of that paper). If Effremenko's letter was printed as a contribution to a discussion on the question that wouldn't have been a bad thing, but to Jones it was the last word, nothing more was left to say, his master's voice had spoken and the dog was for ever silent. (See Appendix 7 for more on this).

Jones' other master, Arthur Scargill, is full of the virtues of working in the Soviet Union and on a number of occasions assails his audiences with claims of the short working day, frequent holidays, early retirement and other benefits enjoyed by Soviet miners. Clearly some of Scargill's claims for the miners' paradise of the USSR are open to grave doubt, one only needs to look again at the account by David Satter.

Nor is Scargill particularly consistent on the question. Here is what he said to *New Left Review* when asked the question "Do you think there should be a right to strike (in a socialist society)?" Scargill's answer

contained the following:

"... if we have socialism, and as I keep repeating only if we have socialism, then you should have conditions alien to strike action because you would be striking against yourself. Before we conclude, I should say that no one has more criticisms than I do of the Soviet Union in this respect. I think the way they treat writers is very bad. The people who want to leave should be allowed to leave. They should not deny basic freedom in the Soviet Union which is the first Communist state. This is the condemnation I have of Eastern Europe."

(*New Left Review*, No. 92, July-August 1975)

Yet, while in Moscow in 1983, he was quoted by, amongst others, the *Sunday Times* as saying at a public meeting that he was:

"... not prepared to be a party to attacks on the Soviet Union which had established a socialist system and wants to improve the quality of life of its people."

(*Sunday Times*, 28.8.83)

This is quite an about-turn in opinion and one which has yet to be explained. For whatever reason there are some people in the labour movement in this country who still believe that the Soviet Union is a Socialist country of some description and this is not a belief confined by any means to the "pro-Moscow" hardliners of the so-called New Communist Party or the old guard still festering in the ranks of the "old" Communist Party. One of the arguments used by these people, and it is one that is often genuinely felt, is that criticism of the Soviet Union plays into the hands of the Thatcherites and the right wing within the labour and trade union movement.

Another reason sometimes cited for not criticising the Soviet Union, and again it often springs from a genuine concern, is the re-emergence of cold war politics, particularly in this country since Thatcher came to power and in the USA under Reagan. Many people, quite rightly, do not want to be identified, or even risk identification, with the likes of Reagan and Thatcher, so they do not take up the questions of repression in the USSR, for fear it may be used in cold war propaganda.

However genuine these opinions are, they are nevertheless wrong. As long as workers in this country see in the Soviet Union only a bureaucratic monster treading ruthlessly on the rights of workers they will understandably be reluctant to embrace socialist ideals here in the fear that it would end up the same. "Socialism's all right in theory, but look at Russia" is common sentiment. So a part of the struggle for socialism here must include a criticism of the Eastern European and Soviet states, to demonstrate to people that we don't want a bureaucratic monolith, that we want workers' democracy, and that we can and are learning from the experiences (in this respect negative) of other countries.

Even if the Soviet Union is a socialist country (which by even the most basic definitions it isn't) this would not be an argument for not criticising

their treatment of Klebanov and Nikitin, assuming a socialist country would treat them in this way. A socialist country could be guilty of individual mistakes and bureaucratic errors and blindness and it would be the duty of other socialists to point this out.

The re-emergence of the cold-war should not mean that we dampen or silence our criticism of the Soviet Union bureaucracy. It may mean that socialists here may well have to be more precise in their use of certain words or phrases, it may well mean a certain distancing between ourselves and the right-wing whenever the subject is raised; but in the last analysis these considerations are only tactical and we have a duty to our fellow workers in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to describe reality, to help them, cold-war or no cold-war. To allow our political actions and analysis to be dictated to by the likes of Reagan and Thatcher, to be browbeaten into silence by them, is unworthy of anyone considering themselves a socialist and ultimately is unworthy of the millions of workers in the Soviet Union who need our support. Finally it is unworthy and indeed shameful when compared to the courage, tenacity and integrity shown by, amongst others, Klebanov and Nikitin.

The Soviet trade unions

But, some may ask, what about the official trade unions in the Soviet Union? Surely they can do something about this terrible picture that is being painted? The short answer to this is they can't. Because the official trade unions, and again there are many in this country who seem to be either unaware of this, or blind to it, are not trade unions as we know them.

The Soviet Trade Unions play the role of a Ministry of Labour. Their primary functions are organising labour resources, increasing productivity and controlling the workforce. They also run such things as holidays, pensions and housing. Their control of these important welfare provisions is however often used as an instrument of political patronage, providing incentives to those loyal to the Party apparatus and punishment (by being withdrawn or restricted) to those who are not. The Soviet trade unions are therefore a part, indeed an integral part, of the Soviet state apparatus.

The trade unions are demonstrably not independent. Perhaps one way of illustrating this is by the cross-fertilisation of top posts in the Soviet bureaucracy. For example, Shibaev, current head of the Soviet trade unions was previously 1st secretary of the Saratov Regional Committee of the CPSU. More ominously, his predecessor, A. Shelpin*, was formerly chair of the KGB! That the former head of the dreaded secret police can become head of the trade unions is a good indication of the monolithic nature of the bureaucracy. Of course, Shelpin, Shibaev and all other officials have one thing in common — they are all members of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union). Membership of the CPSU is essential to “get on”; Nikitin himself was a Party member. Without membership of the CPSU it is impossible to take up any important position in Soviet trade unions either at plant, regional or national level (or in just about most other walks of life). Some services, as already mentioned, are performed by the unions which are of benefit, but as the famous Marxist historian, Isaac Deutscher, once argued, this does not, and cannot, hide their true nature:

*Interestingly enough, however, this move was regarded as a *demotion*. It was a sign that his career had been broken. In the “workers’ state” the head of the secret police is more prestigious and powerful than the head of the trade unions!

“As the organisation designed to forge the workers’ solidarity in their struggle for better living conditions, they (the unions) have suffered complete atrophy. As bodies entrusted with the management of social insurance and as welfare institutions, they have performed and are still performing, very useful services; but these, whatever the official Soviet theory may be, they have performed as subsidiaries of the State administration, not as autonomous social bodies or working class organs in the accepted sense.”

(*Soviet Trade Unions*, I. Deutscher, 1950)

This is how one of the documents of the FTUA explained the situation:

“In our country, there is no organ which objectively defends the workers interests. Soviet trade unions do not defend our rights and do not have the necessary authority. For key posts are held by Communists who do not make the grade in their Party organisations. They are all technicians and engineers who, if they are not re-elected for a new term, return to their position of dependence on one or other higher management official. And if only for these reasons, they always have to heed the opinions of top management.

Trade Union elections take place in a purely formal manner: the chairmen of trade union committees are elected and appointed by the management of the enterprise, the Party organiser, and the regional committee of the CPSU...”

Occasionally abuses of privilege and malpractice by management and union officials are so great, that in order to pacify criticism, some action has to be taken and we have already seen how Nikitin’s actions resulted in the dismissal of the mine manager at Butovka. Likewise occasional accounts of abuse and malpractice find their way into the pages of *Trud* the official trade union paper. Whatever the motives of the trade union tops for allowing this (perhaps to discredit some apparatchnik who has gone “over the top” and therefore threatens the cosy life of all), it does nevertheless allow a glance into the sordid machinations of the trade union and management officials. The dimensions of the iceberg under this occasionally visible tip can only be guessed at, but they must surely be enormous. One example, from *Trud*, 20th January 1978:

“The statement of face-workers A.L. Todoseichuk (of Yenakiyevo, Donetsk) from the platform of the election and review conference is understandable to many at the mine. A.L. Todoseichuk severely criticised the chairman of the mine committee, V.S. Sigarev, for allowing violations of the Labour Code and for improper allocation of material benefits. The worker produced concrete examples. He said: year after year, the same people enjoy the privilege of spells at Health resorts. Worse still: D. Ganzhyuk was given a holiday as a reward for absenteeism, and soon after their stay in a drunk-tank* E. Litvin and A. Melikhov got permits for one too. And what’s this? The managers of the mine — the general director of the Ordzhonikidze Coal Association, N.F. Syomchenko, the secretary of the Association’s Party Committee, V.I. Gromov, and the chairman of the

*Most Soviet towns have a “drunk-tank” where alcoholics go to “dry-out”. This is indicative of the widespread drink problem in the USSR.

Yenakiyev territorial committee of coal industry trade unions, V.I. Kozlitsin, all of whom are on the Presidium, let this pass. The reaction was unexpected. A.L. Todoseichuk was a member of the mine committee. Previously he had been recommended for re-election. But when it came to considering the candidates, the Presidium did not nominate Todsoeichuk. He was not included in the list for secret voting, even though this was proposed from the floor. ...the bureaucrats moved to protect Sigarev, disregarding the opinions of those who openly spoke the truth about his improper behaviour..."

Clearly then the Soviet trade unions are not organisations that defend workers' rights, but are in fact, part of the "corrosive mould of bureaucratism" to use a phrase from the FTUA document already quoted.

The banner of free trade unionism which the small FTUA briefly raised, although brutally crushed underfoot by the KGB, has been picked up and hoisted by yet another group of Soviet workers. Shortly after the FTUA disappeared from Soviet life, another free trade union appeared, called the Free Inter-Union of Professional Workers, popularly known as SMOT from its Russian acronym. One of the main SMOT activists, Yevgeny Nikolayev, was also an FTUA member. Other activists include Vladimir Borisov, a worker who since an early age has been fighting the authorities, and Lyudmila Agapova, the wife of a merchant seaman who jumped ship in Sweden in 1974.

SMOT has learnt from the mistakes of the FTUA. It has stopped publishing lists of its members and now operates on a clandestine basis. Although most of its leading members have now been arrested and imprisoned, it is still alive and active in a number of USSR cities and also has a European office in Paris. It is believed that one SMOT activist, Mark Morozov, has died due to his treatment in a labour colony. He was approached by miners in the Vorkuta region (once a notorious "Gulag" camp) while serving a period of exile and was subsequently arrested. Despite his bad health he was sentenced to 8 years in a "strict regime" Colony which was tantamount to a death sentence.

The struggle for basic workers' rights in the Soviet Union still continues through the work of SMOT; it is the same struggle which Klebanov and Nikitin fought for and deserves the fullest support of the workers' movement in the west. Without Klebanov and Nikitin it is difficult to see how SMOT could have started up. Their sacrifice and courage has inspired others to carry on: let it also inspire us in the west to renew and redouble our efforts to support our fellow workers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Vladimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin should be recognised here for what they are — two courageous working class activists who are symbols of the Soviet workers' struggle against the bureaucratic monsters of the Kremlin and a clear indication that the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion that Russian workers were so admired for in the Revolution of 1917 is not dead. They could have kept their mouths shut, they could have recanted,

but they didn't. They made their stand and despite all the trials, tribulations and torture they suffered at the hands of the KGB, MVD and the quack "psychiatrists" of the Soviet mental prisons, they carried on.

Their courage and devotion to their ideals should be an inspiration to workers the world over.

Enclosure 1: Summary of the information that has been reported in the British press and other publications about the activities of the Soviet trade union movement. I must apologise for the delay in providing this information to you. It is not a commentary on the situation in the Soviet Union but a summary of the information that has been reported in the British press and other publications about the activities of the Soviet trade union movement. I must apologise for the delay in providing this information to you. It is not a commentary on the situation in the Soviet Union but a summary of the information that has been reported in the British press and other publications about the activities of the Soviet trade union movement.

Thank you in anticipation of your co-operation and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Joe G. G. G.

J. G. G.

APPENDICES

1. Letter from Joe Gormley (NUM President) to E. Effremenko, President, Soviet Coal Miners Union. 15th March 1978.
2. Translation of reply by Effremenko to above letter. Date of receipt not known.
3. Lawrence Daly (Secretary, NUM) to Pat Duffy (Trade Union Officer, Amnesty International). 17th November 1978.
4. Extract from report by Syd Vincent on discussion between Effremenko and NUM delegation in Poland. 1978.
5. Letter to Joe Gormley, but received by Arthur Scargill, from M.A. Srebny, President Soviet Coal Miners Union (Successor to Effremenko). 2nd April 1982.
6. Reply by Arthur Scargill, 12th May 1982, to the above letter from M.A. Srebny.
7. Letter from Pat Duffy to Arthur Scargill. 26th January 1979.
8. Correspondance between John Cunningham and Arthur Scargill. 1983.
9. Correspondance between David Blunkett (Leader of Sheffield Council) and John Cunningham. 1983.
10. Text of resolution passed by Sheffield District Labour Party. 11th October 1983.

Appendix 1. Letter from Joe Gormley (NUM President) to E. Effremenko, President, Soviet Coal Miners Union. 15th March 1978.

NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

222 EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, NW1 2EX

President J. GORMLEY, O.B.E.

Secretary L. DALY

Telephone 01-347 7631/8

Please quote our reference in reply:

Your Ref:

Our Ref: JG/VOSJ/VW/173.

15th March, 1978

Mr. E. Effremenko,
President,
Soviet Coal Miners Union,
Moscow B-119,
Leninsky Prospekt 42,
USSR

Dear Mr. Effremenko,

In recent editions of the more respected British newspapers a number of articles have appeared concerning a group of unemployed Soviet workers who have associated together to protest against violations of their Trade Union freedom and human rights. Several prominent members of the British labour movement have expressed serious concern about the contents of the newspaper articles.

The National Executive Committee of the National Union of Mineworkers expressed serious concern about this matter and have asked me to correspond with you. Consequently I would welcome your observations because I know that the Soviet labour movement is concerned about the violation of human rights and trade union freedom. Indeed, one of our Executive Committee members heard a delegate from the All Union Central Trade Union Council give a wonderful address on this very subject to the Enquiry concerning the violation of human rights in China which assembled in Algiers during late January this year.

The enclosed schedule represents a summary of the information that has been reported in the British press and other publications. I must emphasise that the schedule is not a commentary on the situation in the USSR by either myself, or the NUM but has been formulated from the texts of newspaper articles and documents that have been published in the United Kingdom.

Thank you in anticipation of your co-operation and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

J. Gormley

Appendix 2. Translation of reply by Effremenko to above letter. Date of receipt not known.

TRANSLATION

Mr. Joe Gormley, O.B.E.,
President,
National Union of Mineworkers,
222 Euston Road,
London, England.

Dear Mr. Gormley,

In your letter of 15th March 1978 you sent us a collection of newspaper articles about a group of the so called "unemployed Soviet workers" led by Klebanov, a former miner, who allegedly tries to organize an independent union on the grounds that the existing unions do not defend their rights and interests.

Recently, I gave an interview to a Radio Moscow correspondent for broadcasting abroad in which I answered some questions concerning the aims, tasks and main aspects of the activities of the Soviet Coalminers' Union and the rights and benefits of miners. I also touched upon the questions raised in your letter.

Frankly speaking, it was only after we received your newspaper clippings that we learnt about Klebanov and other persons mentioned in the articles. Klebanov has never approached with any request either the Central Committee of our Union or the Makeevsky Territorial Committee of the Union located in his former working area. As we found out, it is true that Klebanov worked at Donbass mines for some years. Then, as a result of a head injury he became a 3rd Group invalid. He was given a pension and an additional payment from the mine for partial disability. The total sum of money that he receives monthly after leaving the mine exceeds the maximum coalminers' pension. As regards his employment, during the last years he was offered a number of various positions with consideration for his profession and state of health, including at the "Makeevougol" Group of Mines where he had worked before. However, he kept turning down all the jobs offered to him. If all his behaviour is unbiassely weighed, it will be apparent that this man is not in the least interested in getting a job, but evidently pursues some other aims.

As regards the organization of a new union, we do not understand the mere statement of this question and the ardent support given to it by the bourgeois propaganda. I would like to remind you here that attacks on the Soviet trade unions on the part of the bourgeois press are nothing new. There was even a period after the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 when the West did not recognise the Soviet trade unions. And even now attempts are made from time to time to create a wrong impression of the functions and facilities of our unions and of the nature of their activities. The Soviet

.... /2

miners are quite satisfied with the trade union which they set up at the dawn of the Soviet State. Their trade union has most extensive rights that guarantee the protection of the workers' interests, effective participation in production, in labour protection, in the solution of social and other problems relating to every aspect of life of our society. The numerous delegations of British miners that visited our country were able to see it for themselves, and there is no need to give a detailed account of it, but in relation to the questions touched upon in your letter concerning dismissals and "unemployed" miners I want to say that in this country the administration has no right to discharge a worker or an employee without the consent of the trade union. And the trade union organizations keep a vigilant eye on that. Besides, it is well known that at present our coalmining industry and practically every coal mine experiences a shortage of labour, and any one can get a job according to his speciality.

One can judge how our union looks after its members from the following facts. The wages of the Soviet miners are among the highest in the country. They enjoy early retirement at the age of 50 with a pension that is 30% higher than the pension of other industrial workers. If a miner continues his work after reaching the retirement age, he receives both his full pension and full wages. It was on our initiative that the coalminers began to switch over in 1976 to a 30-hour working week - the shortest one in the world coalmining history. During the last five years the wages of the miners increased by over a quarter while the prices for the main foodstuffs and industrial commodities remained stable.

Such are the facts of our reality and I am sure that an unbiassed person will draw only one conclusion.

Fraternally yours,

Evgueny Efremenko,
President of Soviet Coalminers' Union

Appendix 3. Lawrence Daly (Secretary, NUM) to Pat Duffy (Trade Union Officer, Amnesty International). 17th November 1978.

NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

222 EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, NW1 2BX

President J. GORMLEY, O.B.E.

Secretary L. DALY

Telephone 01-387 7631/8

Please quote our reference in reply:

17th November, 1978.

Your Ref:

Our Ref: LD/1B.

P. Duffy, Esq.,
Trade Union Officer,
Amnesty International,
British Section,
Tower House,
8-14, Southampton Street,
London WC2E 7HH.

Dear Mr. Duffy,

Re: Vladimir Klebanov - U.S.S.R.

Many thanks for your letter of the 26th September. I apologise for the delay in replying but I have been abroad a good deal in recent weeks.

I can advise you, however, that the case of Vladimir Klebanov was discussed at our monthly National Executive Committee meeting on the 12th October last, when it was suggested that Mr. Effremenko's letter was misleading (in reply to the letter we had sent after our N.E.C. Meeting in March of this year). After a long discussion it was finally agreed -

"That Mr. Effremenko's reply be accepted, but the matter be further discussed with him by the NUM's delegation to the European Miners' Safety Conference in Poland".

The above Conference is being held this week, with our President and some of our Safety Representatives present. When Mr. Gormley returns to the office next week I shall discuss the matter with him and then the N.E.C. when it meets in December, and receives his report, can decide whether to take any further action.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence Daly

Secretary.

Appendix 4. Extract from report by Syd Vincent on discussion between Effremenko and NUM delegation in Poland. 1978.

At the October 12 NUM National Executive Committee meeting, a letter from Mr Effremenko, Soviet Mineworkers' President, in connection with USSR human rights was accepted but it was agreed that the Union's participants to this Conference should raise with Mr Effremenko personally the matter of Klebanov, a Soviet mineworker allegedly confined in a psychiatric hospital in the Soviet Union against his wishes.

The British Delegation met Mr Effremenko and a Russian interpreter on the Thursday evening. The meeting went on for two hours and after an introduction by Joe Gormley, Effremenko said that after he had received the NUM's letter, he had made enquiries in this connection and that as president of over one million Soviet mineworkers, he would not be expected to know what was going on at any particular colliery or any details of any individual unless it was specifically brought to his notice.

Klebanov had been a machine operator underground and during the course of his employment he had met with a head accident, arising from which, he was off work for some considerable time. He was certified Medical Grade 3 (capable of light work) and had been retrained but since that time he had not been interested in any kind of work even though he had been offered suitable employment. At the present moment in time he was in a psychiatric hospital. Effremenko said he was not aware of the details and did not know whether Klebanov had elected to go there voluntarily for treatment or if he had been sent there by a Medical Commission, similar to the ones that are in existence in Great Britain.

He said he understood that Klebanov had been involved with other people in trying to form another mineworkers' trade union and that they could not help the Soviet mineworkers and were not supported by the Soviet mineworkers. They had no realistic policies — they were asking for early retirement at 40 years of age and wages that were completely unrealistic in comparison with what Soviet mineworkers were paid who, of course, were already the highest paid workers in the Soviet Union. These policies, if they could be brought into realisation, would mean economic disaster for the Soviet nation. He said that all Klebanov wanted to do was to live in Moscow with a woman much younger than himself, he having left his wife and two daughters.

A question was put to Effremenko asking if it was a fact that Klebanov had been put in prison for anti-Soviet activities. He replied saying he had no such details that Klebanov had been in prison but as far as he, Effremenko, was concerned, Klebanov was not a person who needed to be imprisoned, he did not present a threat to the Soviet Union. Mr Effremenko went on further to say that one had to realise that there were legal clauses in the Russian system which prohibited this kind of activity. After several more comments and replies, the discussion closed on a friendly note.

Appendix 5. Letter to Joe Gormley, but received by Arthur Scargill, from M.A. Srebny, President Soviet Coal Miners Union (Successor to Effremenko). 2nd April 1982.

TRANSLATION

Mr. Joe Gormley
President
National Union of Mineworkers
222 Euston Road
London NW1 2BX

2nd April, 1982

Dear Mr. Gormley,

A. Nikitin

I am sending hereby the promised information about Alexei V. Nikitin. It took us rather a long time to find out under what circumstances A. Nikitin got to a mental institution as he had never applied to this Union for either help or support, and I hope you do not mind this belated response.

Alexei V. Nikitin, 45, used to work at Butovka Colliery, Donetsk, Ukraine. In 1970 he was expelled from the C.P.S.U. after having been twice severely reprimanded for scandalous conduct (in fact he used to beat up his wife). In 1971 he was transferred to a surface job for breaking mining safety regulations but as it was, he refused the job and having never reported for work from February 7th to March 5th, 1971, he was dismissed from the pit for absenteeism. Because of his scandalous family conduct his wife gave him a divorce. Based on the results of a thorough medical examination, a court of law found A. Nikitin insane. He was sent to a mental hospital in 1971 where he was treated till 1977.

Shortly after his discharge A. Nikitin was detained by the militia while attempting to get into the premises of the Norwegian Embassy in Moscow. A. Nikitin was armed with a gun. Now by Soviet law to carry a firearm having no licence is a felony. So A. Nikitin was arrested and found still mentally unsound, was committed to a psychiatric hospital for a course of treatment till April 1980. There being no changes for the better in his condition, he was transferred for further treatment to the Dnepropetrovsk Psychiatric Hospital.

The Central Committee of this Union does not see any reason

why the opinion of competent psychiatrists should be questioned. The person in question is therefore no 'militant trade unionist' who has the working people's interests at heart but a mentally unsound man who indeed has for long been breaking the law.

As to 'miners being detained for criticising the conditions in Soviet coalmines' the idea itself and alone causes perplexity. As the allegation suggests that British miners may indeed get a wrong impression of our activities because of falsifications by the Amnesty International or other quarters, I would like to inform you that letters of complaints from workers drawing attention to instances of unsatisfactory labour and production organisation, non-compliance with labour legislation or safety regulations, etc., are without any delay considered to be taken specific decisions if necessary.

Here are some figures to prove the above-said. In 1981, 25 letters with reports of most flagrant wrongdoings at separate enterprises and organisations were examined on the instructions of the Central Committee Secretariat. 32 cases reported by workers were verified by the Committee right on the spot. As a result, relieved of their posts, at the request of the trade union bodies, were Mr. N.G. Grinenko, director of the Red October Colliery (Enakyevo) and Mr. Y.B. Ilyashevich, chief engineer of the Northern Colliery (Torez), for negligence of labour safety and failure to observe collective agreements. To spare you of further tiring instances, I would like just to stress that those are not the only powers of this Union. Its right to use sanctions against careless managers is officially fixed by Article 37 of the RSFSR Labour Code and by relevant articles of labour codes of the Union's Republics.

I am certain that an unbiased person can draw from these facts unequivocal conclusions.

With best wishes and regards,

Yours sincerely

Michael A. Srebny

President

Soviet Coalminers Union

**Appendix 6. Reply by Arthur Scargill, 12th May 1982,
to the above letter from M.A. Srebny.**

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS

222 EUSTON ROAD, LONDON, NW1 2BX

President A. SCARGILL

Secretary L. DALY

Telephone 01-387 7631

Please quote our reference in reply:

Your Ref:

Our Ref: AS/MM

12th May 1982

Mr. M.A. Srebny,
President,
Soviet Coalminers' Union,
Moscow V-119,
Leninsky Prospekt 42,
U.S.S.R..

Dear Mr. Srebny,

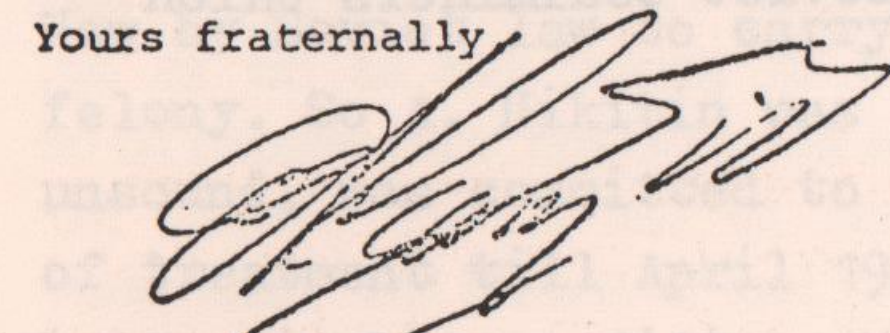
Mr. A. Nikitin

I am in receipt of your reply to Mr. Gormley dated 2nd April 1982 regarding the case of A. Nikitin. I have noted all the points made in relation to this case but I find it difficult to accept or understand that the Union had to take such a long time to find out the "truth" of the case.

I would have thought that with the catalogue of events described in your letter the Union would have been well aware of the position and able to respond instantly to any criticism from Amnesty International or anyone else. It may be that the accusation of miners being detained causes perplexity in your organisation but I can assure you that the information regarding these cases has and is given wide publicity in our press and media. I must confess that I find the explanation in your letter a little difficult to accept in total bearing in mind that you had to spend a long time obtaining the facts. If we had such a case in Britain I would be appraised of the matter immediately and in a position to respond instantly to any criticism levelled by anyone, national or international.

I will of course report your letter to our Executive and I conclude by expressing the hope that no miners or workers anywhere in the Soviet Union have or will be subject to the sort of treatment alleged of A. Nikitin.

Yours fraternally



A. Scargill
President

cc V. Jones (International)

**Appendix 7. Letter from Pat Duffy to Arthur Scargill.
26th January 1979.**

Dear Mr Scargill,

I read with deep concern the article in the January 1979 edition of the *Yorkshire Miner* entitled *The Other Side of the Story*. The article quotes the reply by Yevgeny Efremenko, the Soviet Miners' Union President to the enquiries initiated by the NUM into the acts surrounding the case of an examiner in the Soviet Union, Vladimir Alexandrovich Klebanov.

Amnesty International received information in early 1978 which we believe to be reliable, that V.A. Klebanov and other working class people attempted to form an organisation calling itself the "Association of Free Trades Unions of Workers in the Soviet Union". Following this attempt, Klebanov and some of his colleagues were imprisoned or confined to psychiatric hospitals.

The first reply of Yevgeny Efremenko and the news agency TASS, to these charges of human rights abuses was that Klebanov and his group did not exist. It seems for their later replies that they now agree that Klebanov worked as a miner in the Donbass mines for a number of years. They go on to say, however, that he was officially invalided out of a mine following a head injury, and had from then on received compensation in excess of "even the highest miners' pension". Furthermore, he had refused to accept all offers of other employment "so creating the impression that he was not interested in receiving employment at all but was pursuing other aims".

The Soviet Miners' President then went out to stress the good pay and conditions of Soviet miners, the absence of unemployment and the difficulties faced by managements in the USSR who wished to dismiss workers.

I scarcely need to tell you of the high regard with which we view the activities of your union in struggling to publicise and end human rights abuses all over the world. I have particularly in mind the actions of the NUM on Chile, and even more effectively, on Bolivia, and indeed the inquiries you initiated on Klebanov and his colleagues.

In the case of Klebanov and the "Association of Free Trades Unions of Workers in the Soviet Union", it must be emphasised that Amnesty's concern is not with the validity or not of their claim to be an independent trade union, or on the validity or otherwise of their claims regarding bad conditions or wages. Our concern, as ever, is with the human rights abuses the members of this organisation have suffered because of the peaceful pursuit of their beliefs.

Mr Efremenko claims that "the total sum of money that he (Klebanov) receives monthly after leaving the mine exceeds the maximum coalminer's pension", thereby implying that all is well with him. According to the

most recent reports from sources within the Soviet Union whose reliability we have learned to trust, Mr Klebanov, far from living a life of relative ease, was moved from a psychiatric hospital to a prison in May 1978. Following a trial at which neither he or his wife were present, he is currently detained in the Dnepropetrovsk Special Psychiatric Hospital. Mr Efremenko's comment that Klebanov was not interested in getting a job but was "pursuing other aims" does little to reassure us as to his future treatment.

It may be of interest to you to know that shortly before his latest arrest, Klebanov, fearing another arbitrary incarceration, agreed to an independent psychiatric examination conducted by Dr Alexander Voloshanovich, a practising Russian psychiatrist highly regarded by, amongst others, prominent members of the Royal Society of Psychiatrists in this country. Dr Voloshanovich concluded his report by finding that "at the present time, as during the period of the breaches of the law of which he was accused (1964-68), he accounted for his activities and was able to direct them. He is responsible for his activities."

In assessing the Soviet responses on the Klebanov case, it is of no little interest to note what would seem to be an error in the official response on another case, that of his colleague, Yevgeni B. Nikolayev. In reply to an enquiry from the World Confederation of Labour, a leading member of the All-Union Central Council Trade Unions (AUCCTU) on 6th October 1978 declared that "Yevgeny Borisovich Nikolayev is genuinely suffering from a serious chronic mental disease and at present is undergoing an urgent course of treatment". In fact, Y.B. Nikolayev had been released in September and had once again engaged himself in attempting to organise an independent trade union. Indeed, this is proven by the fact that at this time he was seen at a press conference by journalists, including a Reuters representative. Incidentally, the same psychiatrist who examined Klebanov could find no sign of mental illness in Nikolayev.

If the AUCCTU could be so misled on the actual circumstances of Nikolayev, could not Mr Efremenko be poorly advised as to the condition of V.A. Klebanov?

The version given to, and accepted by, the NUM by the leader of the Soviet miners is at such odds with the facts as we know them, and challenges the credibility which we have striven so diligently to gain, that we have no hesitation in asking you to reconsider the possibility of investigating the case of Vladimir Klebanov in more detail, perhaps by the NUM, or the Yorkshire area, participating in an Amnesty delegation to interview him, and all other relevant persons. We would be pleased to give all possible support to such a venture, fully realising the major nature of such an initiative.

I look forward to hearing the views of your executive on this matter, and assure you of our continuing good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Pat Duffy

Trade Union Officer

P.S. In view of the seriousness of the situation of V.A. Klebanov, the contents of this letter may be publicised.

Yours faithfully,

John Cunningham

Appendix 8. Correspondance between John Cunningham and Arthur Scargill. 1983.

4 Barber Place,
Sheffield S10 1EG,
S. Yorkshire.

26th April 1983

Dear Arthur,

I am writing to you about the Ukranian miner dissidents Vladimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin. It is sometime now since anything has been heard about their well-being or whereabouts - certainly I have made enquiries and even Amnesty International don't know where they are. Would it not be possible for yourself to raise the question with the appropriate USSR body?

I know the issue has been discussed within the NUM in the past and I am aware that it was decided that enquiries could go no further, but that was over two years ago and I understand that Mr Effremenko who was then the Soviet Miners leader has since been expelled from his post. Would therefore you be good enough to make some enquiries afresh. It is a difficult issue to raise I know, particularly when so many right-wingers are waiting to jump on any anti-Soviet bandwagon they can find (witness Bernard Levin and the recent antics of Mr Butler here in Sheffield) but I don't believe any service to socialism is rendered by ignoring the fact of repression within the USSR and particularly the abomination of consigning dissidents to so-called 'psychiatric' hospitals. What's more, when all is said and done Mr Nikitin and Mr Klebanov are miners - our people, if we can't speak out for them who can?

Please understand, I am not anti-Soviet, I am not a right-winger, nor do I ignore repression in other parts of the World (witness my recent article in the Yorkshire Miner on the repression of miners in Turkey) but these 2 men have suffered terribly for doing, ^{what} basically myself, you and countless other NUM members do every day, that is, defend, to the best of our ability, the living standards and conditions of our members.

I have been told that a delegation of Soviet miners is attending our annual conference in Perth this year. If this is true could you raise the question with them, I'm sure you could do this without in any way offending our guests or compromising ourselves as hosts.

Perhaps it would be possible for me to call in at the new HQ and have a chat with you about the matter, but I realise that your time is limited so I will understand if this can't be done. I work at Dinnington Colliery but am a Sheffielder, I'm on the Branch Committee at Dinno' and NUM delegate to the Sheffield DIP also on the GMC of the new Sheffield Central CLP - of course I'm writing this letter in a personal capacity. I look forward very much to hearing from you.

fraternally
John Cunningham

NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

ST. JAMES' HOUSE, VICAR LANE,
SHEFFIELD, SOUTH YORKSHIRE S1 2EX

President A. SCARGILL

Secretary L. DALY

Telephone: 0742 700388

Please quote our reference in reply:

Your Ref:

Our Ref: N.O.01/AS/A0

6th May 1983

Mr. J. Cunningham,
4 Barber Place,
SHEFFIELD,
South Yorkshire.
S10 1EG

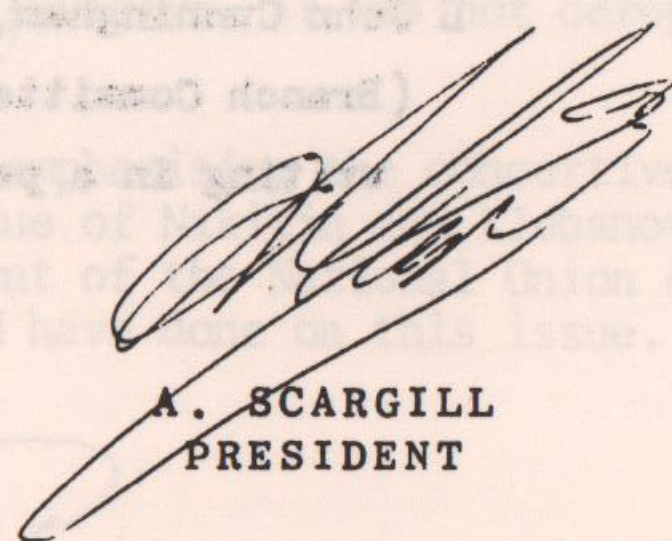
Dear Mr. Cunningham,

I am in receipt of your letter raising the question of V. Klebanov and A. Nikitin.

I have nothing further to add to the previous public statement made by the NUM apart from saying that I only wish that the people who constantly inundate this office with letters about the above two people do not appear to show any concern or very little about the tragedy in El Salvador and Nicaragua where more people are dying in a day than have been killed in the Soviet Union in the last ten years.

Could it be that there is some political bias and that attitudes and actions are directed on request of Nikitin and Klebanov because they are citizens of the Soviet Union or is it that people have not heard of the American intervention, the terror that they are striking at El Salvador and Nicaragua and indeed the whole of central and Latin America.

Yours sincerely,


A. SCARGILL
PRESIDENT

ARTHUR SCARGILL

Your ref: N. O. 01/AS/AO

4 Barber Place,
Sheffield S10 1EG,
South Yorkshire.

15 May 1983.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter (May 6th) in reply to my letter of 26th April.

I have no intention, in this letter, of pursuing the issue of Mr. Klebanov and Mr. Nikitin as you do not appear to be concerned by their plight. However I do protest most strongly about the nature of your reply.

As well as totally ignoring my questions you suggest that I am acting out of political bias and that I am either uncaring or ignorant of US intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador - all of which is totally untrue.

I believe it to be a disgrace for a person in your position to treat a fellow NUM member in such an evasive, derogatory and insulting manner and I think I deserve an apology from you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

E John Cunningham

(Branch Committee, Dinnington NUM
writing in a personal capacity)

NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

ST. JAMES' HOUSE, VICAR LANE,
SHEFFIELD, SOUTH YORKSHIRE S1 2EX

President A. SCARGILL

Secretary L. DALY

Telephone: 0742 700388

Please quote our reference in reply:

Your Ref:

Our Ref: N.O.01.AS.LAW

23 May 1983

Mr J Cunningham
4 Barber Place
SHEFFIELD
S10 1EG

Dear Mr Cunningham

I am in receipt of your further letter dated 15 May 1983 in which you suggest an apology is due from me for my previous letter dated 6 May.

I have no intention of issuing an apology for something that does not warrant one. I reiterate that the points made in my letter were in the context of the hundreds of letters I am receiving from various organisations and individuals about the cases of Klebanov and Nikitin, and it seems to me that there is an orchestrated campaign taking place directed towards my office.

It is well known that I have already made representations on behalf of Messrs Nikitin and Klebanov and my letter to the Russian Miners' President and his reply suddenly found themselves published in leading newspapers.

My letter to you was not evasive, it was not derogatory and it was not personally insulting.

My letter was certainly emphasising the concertive and orchestrated campaign, not on the issue of Nikitin and Klebanov, but of directing letters to me as President of the National Union of Mineworkers after it is known what the NUM have done on this issue.

Yours sincerely

A Scargill
President

Appendix 9. Correspondance between David Blunkett (Leader of Sheffield Council) and John Cunningham. 1983.

DAVID BLUNKETT.

4 Barber Place,
Sheffield S10 1EG,
S. Yorkshire.
23rd April 1983.

Dear Sir and Brother,

I am writing to you in connection with the Ukranian dissident miners, Vladimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin. As you may know both of these men have been institutionalised, both in ordinary prisons and in mental hospitals for some years now. There only crime, as far as I can possibly see, is that they have dared to challenge the Soviet authorities over such elementary issues as mine safety - in other words something which I and countless other NUM members do every day in the British coalfield.

Mr. Klebanov was a mining foreman at the Makeyevka mine which I believe is quite near Donetsk and Mr. Nikitin was mining engineer at the Butovka-Donetsk mine. In view of our City's twinning arrangement with Donetsk would it be possible for yourself or others to make enquiries about the whereabouts and well-being of messers Klebanov and Nikitin. The latest information I have about them is over two years old and organisations such as Amnesty International have not, so far, been able to help me.

I realise that this is not an easy time to raise such questions as people such as Francis Butler et al are only too ready to jump on any anti-soviet bandwagon they can find, but I do not believe anything is served by just ignoring repression in the USSR of dissidents. I am not a right-winger and I am not anti-Soviet, but as a miner and a working class activist I feel I can turn my back no longer on the plight of these fellow miners. All I want, at the moment, and this was a point I made to Bill Michie who I have discussed the issue with, is information as to the whereabouts and well-being of these 2 men. Perhaps if time permits we could meet and discuss the matter in more detail, I'm sure if we

did there would be much common ground between us.

I look forward to hearing from you.

fraternally

John Cunningham

(Dinnington NUM Branch Committee,

Dinnington NUM delegate to Sheffield

DLP,

Sheffield Central CIP)

((Writing in a personal capacity))



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Our ref DB/JM

Mr. John Cunningham
4 Barber Place
SHEFFIELD
S10 1EG.

Leader's Office
Town Hall
SHEFFIELD S1 2HH

27th April, 1983

Dear Mr. Cunningham

Thank you for writing.

I too am very concerned about those who may well have been dealt with severely for their trade union activities in the Ukraine. I am aware that some people were "re-located" for their disturbances in Ukranian mines some years ago and I would be very happy to think of the best way of raising this matter with representatives of our twin city of Donetsk.

As you rightly say, this is not an easy question to deal with as there is not an acceptance of the same set of values as we have and anyone stepping out of line is easily dubbed as a "traitor" to the country rather than someone with alternative views.

I very much appreciate the points you make.

Yours fraternally

P. Blunkett

DAVID BLUNKETT
Leader of the City Council

DAVID BLUNKETT

4 Barber Place,
Sheffield S10 1EG.
1st May 1983.

Dear Sir and Brother,

Fraternal greetings on May Day.

Thank you for your prompt reply to my enquiry re the Ukrainian miners Klebanov and Nikitin. Since writing to you I have obtained reliable information that Nikitin is currently in a special psychiatric hospital in the town of Talgar which is near Alma-Ata on the Sino-Soviet border. Other information (as yet unconfirmed) suggests that Klebanov has been transferred from Dnepropetrovsk Special psychiatric hospital to an ordinary psychiatric hospital in Donetsk. I have also discovered that another Ukrainian miner from Donetsk, one Aleksandr Boiko, is being forcibly held in Moscow Number 7 special psychiatric hospital, however this information is quite dated and that particular situation may now have changed.

You mention in your letter your concern re the 're-location' of Ukrainian miners after the disturbances of a few years ago. I too am concerned about that, but the re-location issue wasn't the central point of my original letter. I should imagine there is little we here can do about the re-location of possibly quite large numbers of miners in the USSR. However surely we can do something about 3 specific cases of maltreatment - those of Klebanov, Nikitin and now Boiko - which of course was the thrust of my first letter.

You say you would be "very happy to think of the best way of raising this matter with representatives of our twin city of Donetsk". I wish I could also think of the best way of doing this, but I can't, I have never had any contacts with the people in Donetsk and am totally ignorant of the actual mechanics of the twinning arrangements - but surely a straight forward honest question, "where are these men? Why are they being detained in mental asylums? Why won't you release them?" is all that is necessary. The matter can then be taken ^{from} there and developed, depending of course on the reply. If the Donetsk representatives actually respect the twinning arrangement (which I have no reason to suspect they don't) then they'll give an honest answer.

What do you think? I repeat the request of my first letter - time and commitments allowing let us meet and discuss the situation, as I said previously I'm sure there will be much common ground between us.

fraternally John Cunningham.



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
Our ref DB/JM

Leader's Office
Town Hall
SHEFFIELD S1 2HH

6th May, 1983

Mr. John Cunningham
4 Barber Place
SHEFFIELD
S10 1EG.

Dear Mr. Cunningham

You will appreciate that we are in the thick of dealing with the immediate aftermath of the local elections and I am, therefore, replying briefly to your further letter.

One of the big difficulties in simply posing questions to the Donetsk visitors without any detailed back-up information, is that they often simply say that they have no immediate knowledge of the situation or case involved and would, therefore, need to take the matter back and give further consideration or investigation. This is, of course, exactly the sort of answer that we would be likely to give if we were personally unfamiliar with the case in point being dealt with by the judicial as opposed to the City or State Government.

Therefore, a detailed statement on the three persons concerned (perhaps an amplification of the information you have already given to me) would be something that I would be happy to consider placing in their hands explaining the concern people have about these particular men asking for a more detailed reply. I think this would be helpful in the sense that it would give something to follow up without making naive assumptions about the knowledge or even interest of a delegation on individual cases no matter how important they are to us.

This is one of the difficulties of conceptual differences about the nature of dissidence. It would appear from my two very different visits to the Soviet Union that a difficulty arises when those taking contrary views to the political regime can be dubbed as "subversive" and therefore considered to be a dangerous threat to the State, rather than people attempting to exercise freedom as we know it. The history of the Soviet Union actually makes this worse in view of the lack of experience that most people have had of free speech and assembly.

We see examples of course in our own country how many people who vehemently attack the Soviet Union would very much like to have the same system applied to Trade Unionists here. That is why all of us should be so keen both to defend what we have and promote the interests of Trade Unionists worldwide. Appreciating the enormity of the task is not to deny the need for action but to be realistic in undertaking that task.

Yours fraternally

P Blunkett

DAVID BLUNKETT
Leader of the City Council

DAVID BLUNKETT

4 Barber Place,
Sheffield S10 1EG,
S. Yorkshire.

15th May 1983.

Dear Mr. Blunkett,

Thank you for your letter of 6th May.

In response to your request for more information on the cases of V. Klebanov and A. Nikitin please find the attached sheets which contain all the information I currently have available. According to Amnesty International the 3rd winner I mentioned, Aleksandr Bolko, is no longer detained by the Soviet authorities.

I hope this knowledge will prove useful in eliciting a response from the authorities in Donetsk and I look forward to hearing from you in the future about further developments.

yours fraternally

John Cunningham

John Cunningham.

DAVID BLUNKETT

4 BARBER PLACE,
SHEFFIELD S10 1EG.
14th June 1983.

Dear Mr. Blunkett,

Further to my letter to you, of 15th May when I supplied you with information concerning the Ukrainian miners V. Klebanov and A. Nikitin, I am enquiring as to whether there has been any progress in eliciting a response from either the authorities in Donetsk or the members of the recent delegation.

I realise it has not been the easiest of times to raise this issue with the election being on top of us but I am hopeful that some progress has been, or soon will be made.

I have started to collect signatures for a petition on behalf of Klebanov and Nikitin to be handed in sometime in September to the Soviet Embassy. I have also been asked by Radio Sheffield to appear on one of their programmes to discuss the issue - it is an invitation I am quite willing to accept, but I am a little concerned that it may cut across and possibly jeopardise any approaches you may make with the authorities in Donetsk. What is your opinion of this? Perhaps my fears are unfounded but as I have said to you before I have no knowledge of the way the twinning arrangement works or whether the Donetsk people would be offended by such a broadcast or even if they would ever get to know of it? I would welcome your opinion on this, though of course in the last analysis I would have to use my own judgement.

I look forward to hearing from you.

yours fraternally

John Cunningham

John Cunningham.



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
Our ref DB/JM

Leader's Office
Town Hall
SHEFFIELD S1 2HH

23rd June, 1983

Mr. John Cunningham
4 Barber Place
SHEFFIELD
S10 1EG.

Dear Mr. Cunningham

Thank you for your further letter following the Donetsk visit.

As you indicate we had a hectic week with heightened tension due to the General Election. However, despite all the potential problems I think the strength of the twinning link was actually illustrated very powerfully by the ability to hold this visit at this particular time.

As well as the formal demonstrations which took place at both the tennis club, St. Paul's Gardens and in the Council Chamber on the day before the Election, informal exchange of views took place both in meetings and during the visits to various aspects of Sheffield life. Because of the demonstrations and letters that were handed in concentrated on the issue of individual dissidents who are well-known on the international scene such as Anatoly Scharansky, and those who believe that Soviet Jews are not dissidents, in general formed the major cause of concern, it actually hindered the opportunity to press very firmly on individual cases relating to other issues.

It was, therefore, only possible to raise the questions that you have brought to my attention in a general way rather than pressing for specific early replies. The reason for this is that it is possible only to retain a credible conversation in a way which doesn't result in a complete breakdown of communication of very different views, if there is not a barrage of hostile questioning with the backcloth of public demonstrations.

In fact the display of human rights and freedoms during the General Election, and the ability of people to express their views in a number of ways to the visitors, was extremely helpful and I think in developing further dialogue on the issues raised. Having raised the general issue it would therefore be possible to follow-up, especially through what we hope will be developing trade union links, issues relating to the treatment of other individuals on which concern has been expressed.

I am sure the Trades Council will now be able to help if we are to progress with the industrial and union links as suggested and agreed during the visit.

Yours fraternally

David Blunkett

DAVID BLUNKETT
Leader of the City Council

DAVID BLUNKETT.

Text of resolution passed by Sheffield Labour Party, 11th October 1983.

Ruskin College,
Walton St;
Oxford OX1 2HE.
14th Nov. 1983.

Dear David,

Some time ago I engaged in correspondence with on the issue of the Ukranian miners vladimir Klebanov and Alexei Nikitin (via my letters, 23 April; 1st May; 15 May; 14 June and your replies 27 April; 6 May; 23 June). I am enquiring as to whether or not there has been any response from the Donetsk authorities in response to any enquiries from yourself or other bodies in Sheffield. Would you also be kind enough to inform of what act/has been taken on the resolution passed at the DLP on October 11th regarding these two men - a motion which originated from a motion I moved in Netherthorpe branch, Central Constituency back in September.

As you will note from my address I am now studying full time at Ruskin College but I am still very concerned about the fate of these two men. I understand that fairly soon you are coming down here to speak at a meeting - would it be possible to set some time aside to discuss the issue of these two men?

I await your reply.

fraternally

John Cunningham.



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Our ref DB/JM

Councillor D. Blunkett
Leader
Sheffield City Council

Leader's Office
Town Hall
SHEFFIELD
S1 2HH Tel. 734101

16th November, 1983

Mr. John Cunningham
Ruskin College
Walton Street
OXFORD
OX1 2HE.

Dear John

I shall be at Ruskin College on the evening of Thursday, 1st December. No doubt there will be an opportunity to have a drink with you, although the same idea seems to have occurred to a number of people who want to get their hands on me.

The District Labour Party Resolution has now been put before the Labour Group. We have agreed that we will pursue the issue of trade unionists and persecution. We are, however, concentrating on a letter recently sent to the Leader of Donetsk, copy enclosed, regarding the situation of Anatoly Scharansky which has been of concern for several years.

You will appreciate that it is not easy to raise a number of issues at once if we are to make genuine progress rather than satisfy our own consciences, so we are trying to put pressure on issues at different times.

I look forward to seeing you on the 1st.*

Yours fraternally

[Handwritten signature: D. Blunkett]

DAVID BLUNKETT
Leader of the City Council

* Through nobody's fault the planned meeting never took place

DAVID BLUNKETT
Leader of the City Council

Appendix 10. Text of resolution passed by Sheffield District Labour Party. 11th October 1983.

"Sheffield DLP calls upon the Labour Group on Sheffield City Council to raise the issue of the imprisoned Ukrainian mines V. Klebanov and A. Nikitin with the authorities of Donetsk, Ukraine SSR. These enquiries to be pursued with the aim of securing these men's release from the mental asylums in which they have been unjustly imprisoned for a number of years."



Appendix 10: Text of resolution passed by Sheffield District Labour Party, 11th October 1983.

Sheffield City Council
Oct 1983

Labour Party
Sheffield
101457 Tel 734101

10th November, 1983

"Sheffield DLP calls upon the Labour Group on Sheffield City Council to raise the issue of the imprisoned Ukrainian miners V. Klichanov and A. Nikitin with the authorities of Donetsk, Ukraine SSR. These enquiries to be pursued with the aim of securing these men's release from the mental asylums in which they have been unjustly imprisoned for a number of years."

I shall be at Ruskin College on the evening of Thursday, 1st December. No doubt there will be an opportunity to have a drink with you, although the same could be said to be true of people who want to get their hands on me.

The District Labour Party Resolution has now been put before the Labour Group. We have agreed that we will pursue the issue of trade unionists and persecution. We are, however, concentrating on a letter recently sent to the leader of Donetsk, copy enclosed, regarding the situation of Andriy Scharansky which has been of concern for several years.

You will appreciate that it is not easy to raise a matter of human rights at once if we are to make genuine progress rather than satisfy our own consciences, so we are trying to put pressure on issues at different times.

I look forward to seeing you on the 1st.

Yours fraternally

DAVID MANNETT
Leader of the City Council

* Through nobody's fault the planned meeting never took place

Suggested Further Reading

Periodicals

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, Box 23, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.

Volya, 83 Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ.

Soviet Labour Review, 83 Baring Rd, London SE12 0JS.

Soviet Nationality Survey, Suchasnist Publishers, 15 Sherringham Ave, London N17 9RS.

Books

Soviet Political Psychiatry — The story of the Opposition. Published by The International Association on the Political Use of Psychiatry, 17 Norland Sq., London W11.

Russia's Political Hospitals, Bloch and Reddaway, Futura Publications, 1978.

Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, Amnesty International.

Workers Against the Gulag, Haynes and Semyonova, Pluto Press, 1979.

The Author

Born in Deepcar, just outside Sheffield, South Yorkshire, in 1949, John Cunningham has for many years been an activist in the labour and trade union movement. A former member of the AUEW, TGWU and the NUM, he is currently studying at Ruskin College, Oxford.

Note: This pamphlet was written in 1983, before the 1984-5 Miners' strike. Publication was deliberately held back until the strike finished. This was done so that the criticisms contained in the pamphlet of certain NUM leaders could not be used as an attack upon the NUM during the course of the dispute.