

RADICAL PHILOSOPHY ELEVEN

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Open Meeting June 7th

The next Open Meeting of the Radical Philosophy Group will be held from 11am at North London Polytechnic, Kentish Town Road. The meeting will be in two parts. The first session will be concerned with the organisation of course criticism and alternative ways of learning, and will be introduced by students from 'Ideas in Education for Sussex' ('ie - Sussex). The second session will be a 'business' meeting, discussing the magazine and conferences, and, most important, the possibilities of revising, reviving and improvising, the organisation of a network of local radical philosophy groups. Definite proposals will be presented to the meeting.

Belgrade Protest

In the last three issues of *Radical Philosophy* we reported on the continued harassment of philosophers in Yugoslavia. The following letter from eight Belgrade philosophy professors was sent to the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia earlier this year

The seven year long campaign against us - in which, in a way unprecedented in the postwar history of this country, all repressive propaganda means were used and many political authorities mobilised, the present ones and some past ones - has by the force of mechanical necessity reached its climax. By an arbitrary decision which is contrary to the basic legal acts and the principles of self-government on which the very foundations of the existing order should rest, we have been ousted from our teaching positions at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade.

This was done because all the pressures and threats used against us during those seven years, intended to split us and to compel us to capitulate, eventually failed. The banning of books and journals; elimination from mass media, from official cultural and scholarly institutions and from all public life; suspension of financing for the projects of research in which we participated; the spreading of insulting rumours, confiscating passports; harassing and arresting the students who dared to support us; attempts at corruption; threats of closing the Faculty of Philosophy; and of splitting it into two parts; of abolishing self-management and introducing compulsory management - none of these measures turned out to be sufficient to ensure either our voluntary withdrawal or our democratic removal by the self-governing bodies of the Faculty.

The Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, although exposed to long, constant pressure, refused to act contrary to its beliefs and to bow to sheer arbitrary force. With impressive dignity and courage the Faculty has maintained its firm conviction that it must take its decisions in an independent, democratic way with full moral integrity. It evaluated all proposals and demands only with respect to publicly declared reasons and evidence, only on the grounds of the basic principles of our socialist society and of university self-management and not with respect to the political authorities behind them. In the history of Yugoslav socialism the Faculty of Philosophy is the first and, until now, the only institution that was able to resist bureaucratic pressure and successfully to defend basic university and human rights: the right to freedom of research and scholarly publication, the right to assume a critical attitude towards the existing social reality and towards every ideology, the right to be equal with any political figures, the right to autonomous decision-making. As a consequence of the need to adjust the law to arbitrary bureaucratic will, the University law was drastically changed twice in one year, and exclusively for the Republic of Serbia. First, in 1973, the demand was incorporated into the law that the university professors must satisfy moral and political criteria in addition to scholarly ones. At the same time, university self-management was transformed into co-management by including half outside members on the Faculty Council. The second change of the University law in November 1974 made complete violation of self-management possible by giving the right to the Republican Assembly to fire all those professors who allegedly 'damaged social interests'

Until this very day the Yugoslav mass media, which have produced an incredible amount of misinformations and untruths about us, never confirmed the result of the legally prescribed, self-governing procedure of examining our 'moral and political suitability', namely that committees composed of thirty-five outstanding scholars from various Yugoslav universities wrote very favourable reports about our activity and that these reports were accepted by an overwhelming majority in all self-governing bodies of the Faculty in July 1974. Although, according to the Constitution and to the existing laws that decision had to be considered final, it did not satisfy political authorities. They continued to demand our elimination from the Faculty.

In the interests of normalizing the work of the Faculty of Philosophy we have expressed our readiness temporarily to abstain from teaching and to take leave for scientific research. We only requested minimal guarantees that persecution of the students and further pressures on the Faculty would be stopped. But the authorities were not satisfied with anything but unconditional capitulation.