

THIS BULLETIN IS, in its temporary form, for a group of comrades sharing similar positions and in close contact with one another, a means of exchanging news on struggles, discussions and criticisms and of publications based essentially on the New Movement i.e. on all the struggles of all kinds carried out by those directly concerned for their own emancipation. It is, therefore, important that each recipient make his own contribution to this end, in exchange for what he expects from others. He will, of course, determine the nature, the importance and the regularity of such contributions himself.

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ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT

Renewal of subscriptions

Important REMINDER concerning most of the subscribers, mainly the French ones: their subscription is over with the present issue. If the number on the strip of this issue is 14 or another up to 14 you should renew your subscription. We do not want and we cannot carry on the work of this news and links letter (which is not an information or propaganda paper) without a minimum financial participation. We would prefer to cut down the circulation to allow us to do other things.

International meeting

As said in no. 19 of Echanges this meeting has been postponed to Easter 1980. (5,6,7 April 1980) in Paris. Considering the length and number of the texts already received, it is impossible to send them to all the subscribers. These texts and correspondences on the meeting will be sent only to people having written for it. We will publish in Echanges only an abstract of every text so that everybody can get an idea of its content. Some are at the end of the bulletin. We have to mail them together, so ask for, if possible, before the 10th of February. We will try to send another issue (21) before the meeting to give an abstract of the last texts.

Criticism

Some comrades complained about letters and texts not published or mentioned in Echanges (e.g. on the 'Refusal of work'). It is true: these writings are kept to be published with other ones separately.

Publications

Chronique de la Revolution Espagnole, in 'Union Communiste (1933-1939)'. Selection of texts about Spain published in the *Internationale*, paper of the Union Communiste, from 20.3.1936 up to 7.1939. The Union Communiste was practically the only group in France before 1939 near the council communist position. At the very beginning members were expelled from the Communist Party and through merging and breaking with other groups, got new positions on the role of the URSS, the integration of the Trade Unions and the function of the revolutionary party. In a foreword and a postface, H. Chazé, who was one of the leaders of the group, and who made the selection of the published articles, explains the meaning and the outlines of that *Chronique* ... 'mainly facts, explained and discussed in the heat of the moment' and their link to the struggles of today. (18 FF, Spartacus, 5 Rue Ste. Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris, in French) (We will come back to this book in the review on different books on Spain - see Echanges no. 19)

In preparation

A pamphlet with texts on the USA among others two articles of John Lippert about Fleetwood published in *Radical America* in 1978.

Translation of a Dutch pamphlet "Some thoughts on the socialist society", similar to the out of print ICO pamphlet 'Fondements de l'économie communiste' brought up to date.

TEXTS AND DOCUMENTS

General

L'imperatif automobile (in *Le Nouvel Economiste*, no. 204, 15-10-79) in French about the share of the car industry in the western economy (in 1978 France took 1/4 of its budget resources and 1/10 of the added value out of it) and about the merging of world trusts in a competition more fierce than ever.

Les escrocs à l'information (in *Le Nouvel Economiste* 202, 1-10-79) in French; explains the difficulties of capital to control the more and more elaborated techniques which make the technicians more powerful than the managers.

Sans frontières, paper in French on the immigration problems in France. Editorial staff is close to the French newspaper 'Libération'; some people are more interesting who have only part of the control and will lose it certainly. All are free participants and most of them are immigrants. They are involved in a lot of activities around Barbès-La Chapelle (libraries, bookshops, illiteracy, assistance, etc.). Most of these activities are rather ambiguous and full of contradiction.

Red Eye, no. 1 in English, Box 1200, 2000 Center Street, Berkely, Ca 94704 USA; very interesting theoretical articles (see further on). Asking for subscribers. 1.50\$ to get the next issue.

Critique of the Situationist International, in English in *Red Eye*. Translation of an article of Jean Burrot with a critical foreword.

On the same subject but on the situationist side this time *An open letter to Larry Law*, in English, 'a critique of the Anarchist situationism in the UM' (BM Fantomas, London WCIV 6XX).

For those interested in *discussion on Leninism* the 2nd and 3rd Internationals and all the tendencies that divided them, *L'Internationale*, paper of the 'Gauche Internationaliste', BP 353, 69200 Venissieux-Miuguettes contains a stringly argued debate which we can only follow if we are very learned in marxism. It pretends to be a radical criticism of leninism which certainly they supported in the past. An evolution going ahead? (in French)

Código de la Comunidad by Th. Dezamy (1842) (Code of the community) and *La Comunidad* by R. Bremond (1938). Both pamphlets in Spanish, translated from French at Etcétera, Apartado de Correos 1363, Barcelona.

Two good critical analyses and discussions about *marxism and the different theories of the crisis*. In English in *Red Eye* (see above)

Paul Mattick and the crisis of the World Economy by Peter Rachleff and *Economic law and class struggle: the limit of Mattick's economics* by Ron Rothbart.

These texts are both an easy to read abstract of the different theses and polemics on the role of the class struggle in the crisis of capital. A French comrade, beginning with the same criticism of Mattick's ideas develops them in a different way - towards an active intervention in the struggles; he starts with our quotation of Mattick in the last paragraph of the book on Spain (Echanges) *Illusions politiques et luttes de classe...* "an unfortunate quotation of Mattick, more than ever mechanist not to say fatalist and indeed a 'wait and see' position. I had underlined this kind of deviation, against which Pannekoek has always criticised, in my review of 'Lenine Philosophe' (in *Spartacus*) (ICOW 100, 12-70). Paul Mattick was very inconsistent on the subject; some pages further on he could write: "What determined the social development was not the natural struggle for life but the social fight for such or such form of the social organisation". We can compare that with the 'revolutionary connotations out of any consciousness' (see your quotation). It is to be blind to the dynamic of class struggle which creates this consciousness against parties and unions ... In a time when the alternative 'Socialism or Barbarism' is more than ever up to date, to rely on a 'constant decline of capitalism' as P. Mattick (we have done that since 1914) is grievous. Capitalism has shown it could last (fascism, nazism, francoism, state capitalism, totalitarianism, etc.) This realistic and lucid perspective leads us to a total involvement in class struggle and to an unwearing propaganda for a socialist solution. If we raise the discussion, it is the future of mankind which is at stake."

Bulletin critique, no. 3 and 4, October 1979, by the 'Cercle Marxiste of Rouen', in French, Hervé Arsou, BP 244, 76120 Grand Quevilly; contains an article on Eastern countries and 'Criticism of the propriety; foresee a lot of theoretical articles.

Jeu de Taupes, no. 28, organe of the PIC, 10.11.79 gives notice of the publication of a 'Bulletin de Discussion Internationale' calling for joining their initial group (PIC, Collegamenti pour l'autonomie ouvrière, Madrid) Kronstadt Kids GB, 4 FF Librairie Parallèle, 47 Rue St Honoré, 75001 Paris.

The Tender Trap, about the nuclear modern family, in English, in 'Solidarity' no. 10 of Oct.-Nov.1979, c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E6

CENDOCRI, Centre de Documentation Critique Internationale, 11 rue Barrault, 75013 Paris - asks for all kinds of papers on the revolutionary movement.

On the U.S.A.

A French comrade indicates an issue of 'Problèmes Economiques (20.9.79) in French on the USA (industry, temporary work etc.)

W.W.Z. - Books on human conflict, 3 Bleecker Street, NYC, 10012 USA. Alternative book store/information center on the struggle now. Interested by the current situation in Europe, the autonomous strggles, the refusal of work, immigration issues, etc.

On Australia

Anatomy of an industrial struggle, Garry Hill, in English, written by a Chrysler factory worker in Tousley Park (Adelaide). An issue of the Motor Bulletin inscrted in Solidarity no. 10, oct.-nov.1979. The preceding issues give a view of the struggles in the car industry all over the world.

On Spain

In Jeune Taupe no. 28 and 29 articles on *The Illusions about the 'Basque Nation'* and *Thoughts on the General Situation in the Spanish State* in French, PIC, Librairie Parall.

Sélection of articles from Bilan, in French, collection 10/18, no. 1311, collected by Jean Burrot with a long preface and copious footnote which end with "the only realistic thing was to make a theoretical analysis ..." We will come back to this book in a review of all books on Spain we have quoted (see Echanges no. 19).

Some mistakes in the book on Spain (Echanges), in French, 'Illusions politiques et luttes de classe' (Brendel et Simon):

Twice, p. 7, last paragraph and p. 18, last paragraph, it is written "comme le signaent Joaquim Maurin en 1937". The quoted book was written between the insurrection (and the repression) of the Asturian miners and 1936, 1937 is the date of the French translation. At this date we had no news from Maurin. In July 1936, he was in a part quickly occupied by France troops in the South of Spain. He was later freed by Franco under the pressure of the English government (and of the ILP) and went to Mexico. As a condition of his freeing he never wrote again.

In the Annexe, p. 164, it is stated that the politico-military branch of ETA is linked to the IV International (trotskyist). It is wrong because that link is only trough a small minority which, for a time tried to form a basque nationalist group linked to the trotskyist organisations.

On China

The Rebellion of the Educated Youth by an eye witness in Solidarity no. 10, oct.nov.79.

Minus 5, c/o 1984 bookshop, 180 Lockhart Road, 1st floor, Wanchai, Hong Kong, publishes an important and copious issue (august 1979) on the new economical and political tendencies

in China. In English "Peking Spring. The Deng Xiaoping Line and the Class Struggle" Pragmatists versus Maoists. Resolutions on the Chinese situation. Shanghai Mass Rally. Eye witness account.

Minus 5 asks for a financial support and for exchange of publications to send to the 1984 bookshop. Books and essays already published:

- The Revolution is Dead. Long live the Revolution (in English)
- The greening of the Revolution (in Chinese)
- Tragic souls (in Chinese)
- Revelations that move the earth to tears (in Chinese)
- Three essays on the new mandarins (in English)

Leaflet in French, "From Mao to Feng: thirty years of capitalist exploitation in China", publ. by OCL, PIC and Libertarian communist Chinese when Hua Kuo Feng came to France.

On China and Far-East

From a comrade: "The experience and the material which I collected in the Far East proves that capitalism is still expanding and at a very fast speed. In ten years South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong have become from poor third world countries rather developed nations with a large working class, a bourgeoisie and a fast expanding industry. The crisis of the mid seventies lasted in Taiwan and Hong Kong less then two years. They view it in certain ways as a cooling down, which they say was necessary, of a over heated economy. Now already Taiwanese capitalistst are building up their own multinationals and invest in countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The wooing of China by the US, EEC and Japan is no accident. It is a very interesting place to invest once the management and the workers problems are solved. Multinationals have good experience with Chinese labour, so why not go to the country itself? But through these investments from abroad those countries like China are able to accumulate more and faster capital. This in turn will vcreate more capital, a working class with a high consciousness. This new created capital, in China, once big enough is also going to expand abroad. Already China is the biggest investor in Hong Kong, after second America. Bankoffices are opened now in London, Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong, Luxemburg and pretty soon in Los Angeles and New York. A very interesting aspect is the role played by the trade unions. The wages are not the result of negotiations between unions and employers (state or private). The rather high rise in wages in those countries are set by the factories themselves. In Singapore for example the

the government is busy is setting up a new wage rise programm for the coming years. Each year the wages should rise with 20%, with an inflation of around 4%. The idea is the creating of a high technology industry with expensive but highly skilled labour. In Hong Kong I did a survey of the relations between Hong Kong and China. In fact the real bosses of Hong Kong are the Chinese who tolerate the British as their administrators. These Chinese businessmen are organised in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce which is a pro-Chinese organisation of which members represent Hong Kong in the Chinese Peoples Congress, the Chinese version of a parliament." (W.v.D., 4.11.1979)

On Belgium

From a comrade: "A very interesting strike was that of the tram and busdrivers in Antwerp. They organised an action committee of their own outside the unions (the unions are represented in the management) which led a strike against the 38-hours week. At the moment of the strike they worked already 35 hours. So instead of working less they have to work more now. Another interesting fact concerning the unions' struggle for the 38-hours week is that they organised a strike of one day in the ministries for the reason that they wanted to work for 40 hours a week and collect the hours to one complete day off each four weeks. Some think this is good for the organisers of leisure like ... the ACV (the catholic union). The ACV has invested a lot in Gevaert photoproducts and has a rather well-doing travelbureau Ultra Montes. ... Now what happened is that they may collect it unto a halve day, get gliding hours and ... get their working hours controlled very strictly through a time clock. So instead of working 25 to 35 hours they'll have to work 38 hours for the same money. Of course the leftist as far as I know do not talk about this time clock. Unions only know victories." (WvD, 4.11.79)

On Iran

If it not too late (due to postal problems) following on the texts about Iran (Echanges no. 18 and 19) in German Tages Zeitung - July-August 1979 published articles on the SAVAK activity before the overthrow of the Shah. "Iran, von der ökonomischen Krise zur sozialen Revolution", M. Massarat, pamphlet in German. Address: Am Natrupper Steinbruch 10, 45 Osnabrück, W. Germany,

On France

Rent strike in SONACOTRA houses

For five years the immigrant workers living in many of these houses have been on rent strike demanding a tenancy agreement (to

get rid of racist managerism, for the right to have visits and meetings; to forbid control in the rooms, etc.) and for lower rents (400 FF a month for 6 m2 at the moment).

To gain these demands they have formed a democratic organisation: general assembly, residents committee in each group of houses and a coordination committee formed by delegates elected by each local committee. Since 1975, the management of the Sonacotra houses has refused to negotiate and life in the houses that are on strike is in the hands of the residents. From the start all the political organisations (from the PS to the leftist and ultra-leftists) and the trade unions have tried to manipulate the strike by many means (division, threats, slander, denunciation, negotiating without consulting the strikers, conditional support etc.) The residents and the coordination committee have always managed to keep their independence while accepting any support that is concrete and respects their struggle (they have had to write a platform for help to make clear the type of solidarity they need).

From 1975 to 1978 the struggle intensified: 40.000 immigrants from 23 countries were involved in a hundred groups of houses. The authorities never let up the repression.

In 1976 18 delegates were deported but various demonstrations forced the French state to allow 16 of them to return. Since then the repression increased and the struggle became more and more isolated, ignored by the media and by all the political parties and the trade unions, who could not take control and who fully played their part by sabotage and helping the State. Evictions became widespread, at first by tens, later on entire groups of houses.

Resistance was organised (Garges, Strasbourg, Sannois, Nanterre, etc.) with coordination between the evicted and the tenants in the other houses, always without intermediaries.

But the isolation of the struggles in the face of repression and in the absence of mass solidarity from other french and immigrant workers (on 17.11.1979 we were about 30 french out of 500 people at the meeting in St. Denis after 21.000 leaflets had been distributed) obliged the strikers to change their strategy and to rewrite their demands. After a month of debate in the houses (43 are still on strike) they made a clear statement in a new text (the difficult history of their struggle and the present situation) and a certain number of essential demands which were presented in an other way. For instance the strikers no longer demand national negotiation between the coordination committee and SONACOTRA but, if they accept a house by

house negotiation they demand that no agreement be signed without the approval of all the committees, etc. ...

The present decline of the struggle is also caused by internal developments. As one resident of Bagnolet said to me "When you are on strike in a factory you lose money while the rent strike pays us. The repression and the length of the struggle, the stoppage of wages, the racism, the lack of solidarity (in the housing for instance) especially after the evictions discouraged many of us. So many people are going back home. Cultural differences and analphabetism are also obstacles despite the fact we took control of our houses and we have learned a lot from the struggle, which is also useful to us in our struggle in the factories and places where we work. It is the most important thing. And nothing stops us from winning the struggle in the houses that always depends on the balance of struggle and it is for this reason that we need more than ever real solidarity from other workers."

If readers of this text want further information about this struggle and to support it concretely they can either go directly to the houses on strike or write to the coordination committee, 14 rue de Nanteuil, 75015 Paris, or write through Echanges, Paris.

M.B. 22.11.1979

Eaton - St. Nazaire

All the attempts to establish links between St. Nazaire and Worsley (near Manchester), another factory of the Eaton group, have failed.

This would have been especially useful since the English factory was completely destroyed by fire during the summer and the production was transferred in part to the French factory.

A comrade from St. Nazaire writes: "I knew that the English factory had been burnt. At the same time, the management announced 10 were sacked. The workers went on strike for about 10 days. Now they have gone back to work.

What happened exactly? For a long time the management has planned to increase the profitability of the factory of St. Nazaire by a 60% productivity increase. To do this it needs the agreement of the workers, i.e. a complete collaboration from the trade unions and exemplary docility from the workers. It could not obtain the former: the management even approached the local unions to ask them to influence the sections at Eaton. The latter is more complex. In this strike against repression, only 60 activists out of 200 workers - many workers have stayed at work - not to mention those in the offices.

These workers stayed at work for various reasons: threat from the management, fear of unemployment and in my opinion, little confidence in the possibility of a success-

full struggle. However what is at stake in this conflict is relatively important. It is neither more or less the erection of a fascist trade union in the factory at St. Nazaire. The struggle at Eaton remained isolated. There was only some solidarity from the dockers. The local unions thought from the start of the strike they have to negotiate on the sacking. The most important union sections considered the struggles as a minority struggle and did not want to do anything. As for the local unions, they are more or less fearful and useless. They do not control the Eaton sections and are afraid that the factory (a small part of a powerful multinational) will move.

The big sections - principally shipyards - are tending towards top level negotiations including the CFDT.

So to regard Eaton, everyone went back to work on Monday. The sacked people stay sacked. The management demands a 45 hour week. They want 3 shifts with a night shift from Manchester.

M.H. 19.10.1979

(a journalistic account of the same events appeared in the french newspaper Liberation)

Alsthom Atlantique

The strike of Alsthom Atlantique among other struggles of the last six months in France underlines the characteristics of the struggles described in no. 19 of Echanges in march 1979.

Spontaneous occupation of the Belfort company, half of the strike committee was elected directly by the general assembly at the factory at St. Ouen (Paris), continuation of the strike after repeated voting during 58 days by strong majority, all that testify to a strong pressure from the grass root democracy.

This formal democracy did not extend beyond the trade unions grouped together to dominate the strike, especially the CGT, which was able and obliged to manoeuvres to keep the strike within the legal limits and finally to obtain a return to work after some wage agreement. Being able to express itself openly, this base democracy overcomes the formal structures for the organisation of the strike under trade union control to become established in a practical attack against capitalist property and against individuals.

The thing at stake in this strike is quite different from the question of wages which was generally discussed. It was a spontaneous reaction, which arose over a minor problem, against nearly two years of forced rationalisation which had removed many small benefits and reduced the work force by 1600. It was the reaction of skilled workers

now considered as unskilled workers and middle managers whose promotion was blocked. Even though this was marked by a narrow professionalism at the start, directly committed to capitalist exploitation, it underlay the violence which appeared immediately in the struggle. Some of the spontaneous actions were immediately covered by the trade unions (pirate radio, dismantling of the essential machine parts which succeeded at St. Ouen, but failed at Belfort, direct intervention in the negotiating meeting) all this shows that autonomy lies neither in the form of action, nor in violence but in those who give birth to and control these forms of struggle right to the end. Other action on the other hand cannot be recuperated: theft of material, sabotage, by explosives against the prototype of a new high speed train, stocks of improvised weapons to make a violent opposition to a take-over by the police, violence against the managers, including trade union representatives. The strength of this autonomous base action obliges the trade unions - the CGT in this case - to play directly - once again - the part of the police. It is the teams of the CGT who at Belfort made arms collection to hand it to the police and threatened to give to the police names of the 'undisciplined elements'.

This happened towards the end of the struggle when the balance of power was somewhat changed after two months of strike with no results and hardly any effective solidarity.

Sufficient to allow action by the CGT police, not enough for the official police. At the beginning of the conflict this same balance of power had led the court to refuse to order the evacuation of the factory with the excuse that 'everything was in order inside the premises'. In reality because an intervention by the police would have been too explosive.

It is perhaps one of the new aspects of the struggles now that a factory could be occupied for two months before the trade union police could put an end to the occupation. At the factory of St. Ouen, despite a more democratic strike committee and more radical actions, the police was able to have the factory evacuated without problems happening in most struggles. The context was very different at Belfort (where the struggle risked generalising into an urban guerilla like at Longwy and Denan at the beginning of the year) and in Paris where until now the struggles are isolated. even in an industrial network like in St. Ouen, because of the separation of the factories and a total lack of solidarity. This comparison also shows that some forms of control of the struggles will not necessarily develop into a more radical form. Just a formal trade union control can hide radical forms.

This latent violence and this repressed burst of autonomy must be considered to-

gether with what happened in France not only in the steel industry but also in more recent struggles (Merlin Gérin at Grenoble, Cherbourg, Rhône-Poulenc, Ducellier, Dassault, contrôleurs aériens, etc.).

All the trade union efforts have as their goal not so much the resumption of work but as to avoid that the struggle spills over/directly political action which /to had begun to happen in various instances where the possible generalisation automatically meant a more important development.

H.S. 12.79

On Holland

In the last week of August the tugs in the port of Rotterdam went on strike. Within a few days the dockers of Amsterdam began an action just for a few days. In the middle of september, workers in the cardboard industry in the east of the province of Groningen stopped work for 24 hours. Apart from that there were a few short strikes in the petro-chemical industry in the Europoort of Rotterdam; another strike in the Shell Refineries in the same region was announced by the trade unions after the end of the dock strike. It was an official gesture clearly intended to restore the trade union image which had certainly been tarnished during the struggles before. This last strike which was hardly a serious one was clearly only a soap bubble which quickly burst. The unofficial struggles all had the same reason: purchasing power was reduced more and more, the trade unions refused to act because their hands were tied partly by collective agreements, partly by a political agreement withing the government.

About one year and a half ago the government (a liberal and christian-democratic coalition) came to power with a program including two main promises: 1. purchasing power would definitely be maintained 2. unemployment would decrease provided that wages stayed the same.

In these cases, according to them, company profits could be used to create new jobs. The trade unions accepted this poor philosophy. They promised not to press for higher wages. The government presented its program as giving possibilities to the national economy to overcome the crisis, while the trade unions presented the same thing to their members as a policy of solidarity with the unemployed. The real meaning was simply to make agreements with the bosses behind the back of the workers, agreements which were quite disadvantageous for the workforce.

In mid april 1979, the collective contract for workers on the tugs was thus made, the vase protested with no result. Finally they rejected the contract. The transports trade union replied: the april contract

cannot be changes because we have already signed it. The base replied in turn with a wild cat strike which broke out 23th August. The trade union bureaucracy ordered the resumption of work but without any result. The workers explained: we did not make the contract, we are not bound by it. Your policy is stupid. You have been duped by the government and the management. A few days ago, the prime minister was obliged to acknowledge that despite his promise, purchasing power went down, unemployment has not decreased, on the contrary increased.

As soon as the workers on the tugs went on strike, the boss (SMIT) prosecuted them. 16 workers had to appear before the judge who decided that the strike was illegal because it broke the contract. He decided further that the strikers' demand (50 guilders a week more) contradicted the government's policy. So the judge ordered the 16 to resume work immediately or to pay a fine of 500 guilders (about \$ 250) a day if they refused. The arrest had no importance because it could not be effective. The workers mocked it. So they formed a picket line thus preventing their comrades from going aboard.

The strike continued. The company threatened to put all the strikers on trial, but never did so, because just as the second trial was prepared, there was a result from the first trial that frightened the company. The arrest of the 16 had been a signal which had mobilised other workers. As soon as the arrest was announced, the dockers went on strike apparently to show their solidarity, in fact because they had the same problems as the tug workers. No contract had yet been signed for the dockers but there was a proposal far from what the workers wanted. The dockers strike was also a wildcat.

But, to what extent did the workers self-managed their struggle?

As to the tug workers, there was a strike committee under the presidency of a certain Cor van de Zanden, a member of the communist party. Of course his political and ideological opinions influenced his actions and suggestions. Against his manipulations worked the fact, that the strike committee met on board of one of the tugs with the strikers on other tugs alongside, so the strikers had more or less direct control and there was little scope for intrigues or shady business. Although the committee behaved as an independent body taking care of everything and leaving no room for initiatives of below, the fact that there was a sort of permanent control perhaps explains why the tug workers held out better than the dockers and why their struggle lasted longer.

The dockers case is much simpler. Their struggle was in no way autonomous. The strike committee was formally elected but practically took charge of the struggle thus preventing any activity from the base. It behaved like a management deciding from above what the dockers should do. The strike was not official, but its structure was nevertheless hierarchical and traditional. In these circumstances, the size of the port of Rotterdam (45 km in length) prevented a supervision by the base and in turn contributed to the failure of the struggle.

From the start and even before the constitution of the committee, there was a violent struggle for power. At first there were various committees competing with each other on an ideological base. The formation of a 'united committee' changed little. The manoeuvres of a communist party member Flip Schults came to nothing at the start because the workers resisted him. He was forced to share power with other people in whom the strikers had more confidence. On the other hand no one could stop this Flip Schults from becoming a member of the committee. Then he became the most influential member by means of tricks which the others could not deal with. Especially as the latter wanted to keep up an appearance of unity. One of the members of the committee explained after the struggle that Schults for example held back as much as possible; he wanted to limit the strike to 24 hours and later he was against everything that could have extended the strike. He did not succeed completely in this, but the efforts to spread the strike were very ineffective. Although it can be said that only workers were member of the committee, they belonged nevertheless to several political tendencies. It is true that the OVB (a trade union formed directly after the war) played no part, there was however since the big strikes in 1970 in the port a trade union organisation in Rotterdam among which the 'Federative Union of the Port' is important. In any case, as stated above, the committee gave instructions and the workers simply obeyed. This made the strike weak and is responsible for the total failure of the strike.

To give an example: the strikers did not in mass to the companies which were not yet affected. The committee sent little groups of about 200 people who of course could not convince the colleagues that 12.000 were on strike. These little groups could not also resist the brutal actions of the police.

The strike committee organised ineffective demonstrations, it made the workers march several times to a small hall where they shouted without frightening anybody.

One can compare that with the march on Brussels during the Belgium strike of '60-'61. Some thing further: in the strike committee were people who criticised the trade unions but who did not understand that the attitude and policy of the leaders were determined by the very character and function of the trade union movement. Consequently the main activity of the committee was to appeal to the trade union which should - so they thought - support the strike in accordance with their tradition. This idea stimulated the traditional illusions and also stopped self managed activity by the strikers.

However, the strike frightened both managers and trade unions. The trade union came back on its refusal to change the contract for the tug workers. It convinced the management that a little improvement was necessary to pacify the strikers. And this little improvement would be also included in the contract of the dockers. Defending what they had

obtained the trade union said that this was the last concession which the management could make. The strikers rejected this compromise and the two strikes continued. Even so, this small improvement would have been impossible without a strike.

So the strikers wanted apparently to fight, but the strike committee did not. The situation stayed the same. After almost five weeks the committee, seeing no possible alternative, was ready to reconciliation. But how? The management was prepared to pay the strikers f 1.000 for their lost hours on the condition they resumed work immediately. The Rotterdam council promised also to advance the cash. The president of the employers federation said they guaranteed repayment of the sum needed before the end of the year. (at the moment they have informed the council that they are unwilling and unable to keep this promise; the Rotterdam council will now have to increase the port taxes).

think
This offer which made the committee it had found a way out of the impasse finished the strike before the dockers obtained anything else. The committee ended the strike and there was even no discussion of the improvement proposed to the tug workers.

As for the latter they continued their struggle for about ten days. Then they accepted the compromise proposed by the employers and the trade union.

C.B. 15.12.79

On Great Britain

British Leyland (B.L.) state company can give a picture of capitalism in Great Britain. The rank and file struggles, unofficial and often very divided, have maintained low productivity and high wages, have made impossible any restructuring of the mixture of very different firms composing B.L. and have made any modernisation dependent of

State grants or bank credits instead of self-financed programmes (through the extension of surplus value).

In the end such a situation has put B.L. in a very difficult situation and its share in the English market has not stopped declining. BL has no other choice as any capitalist firm than to take drastic measures meant to avoid liquidation. The measures are required both by the state and the banks and the crisis made them all the more urgent. Till now, factory closures or threat of closures have not done much in the internal balance of the struggle. But the class struggle in the context of a capitalist company cannot escape the fact that a succession of victorious struggles about wages and productivity undermine the capitalist capabilities of that company and lead straight ahead towards a clash capital-workers. It is the present situation of BL (and also that of capital in England which gives a test value to what happens at BL), Indeed, the restructuring plan gives not much choice to the workers:

1. either apparently to agree with the figures of capital about the survival plan;
2. or 'defeatism' and struggling only to get more money in every opportunity;
3. go on with the present struggles to maintain the present situation and not bother about how the capitalists will solve their problems; such a struggle could by degrees become integrated in a very important struggle because there would be no other solution.

BL workers have apparently decided for 1: 70% out of 165.000 BL workers voted (with 20% abstentions and 10% against) for the reconstruction plan (25.000 made redundant, 13 factories closed, in two years). All the unions agreed for the vote but the TGWU (70% of the BL workers). The shopstewards organised into the British Leyland combined trade union committee were against. But the meaning of the vote is perhaps less evident than the managers have thought. Muc Garry, TGWU governer of Coventry, could say: "The workers who voted for Edwards survival plan were given to understand that a yes vote would mean better redundancy terms than normal."

The discussions about wages, during the same period were more important, not because the unions claimed 30% BL proposes only 5% to 10% more to a fast and high increase of productivity, tied BL management wants no less than to dis-mantle the 'mutuality system' which through the shop stewards is more or less a rank and file control on time and motion and of the contents: all the resistance organised against the attempt to increase productivity was based on this 'mutuality system'.

In the most important companies, the shop-stewards are organised in unofficial 'combines'; separately from the trade union bureaucracy (too much involved in their economical and political functions), the combines, nearer to the rank and file, try to adopt other politics for the same function. It is clear at BL: Terry Duffy, president of AUEW, one of the big engineering unions (a minority at BL) calls on the government to assist BL 'to regenerate the economy of this country'; at the same moment, Derek Robinson, president of the shop-stewards committee can say that the survival plan is disastrous for BL and for all the British car industries. When Robinson is sacked, a journalist could write: "M. Robinson cannot be excused of being consistently anti-management. Indeed, in occasions he has been surprisingly articulate in swinging the 20,000 workers behind a management plan. But the pledge of resisting unconstitutional strikes was one he was not always able to keep". Robinson himself declared on the 25th November to the Sunday Times: "Part of my function as convenor was to ensure that the unions operated the agreement which we had signed with the company". And he added in the Morning Star (paper of CP of England) on the 24th of November: "We shop-stewards want to buy motors, you want to destroy the capacity to do so. We are fighting to keep our jobs to put Britain on top."

So three groups are competing to dominate labour, either to have it behind them or to repress it directly: BL management, trade union bureaucracy and shop-stewards in the 'combine'. These groups are not united: some problems of immediate interest linked to particular situations can divide them and degenerate into conflicts. We cannot understand what happens at BL if that is not constantly in mind.

Robinson (AUEW member) with three other shop stewards (TGWU members), Lee Brunidle, Adams and Mike Clark, resp vice-president, secretary and treasurer of the combine, signed a pamphlet of 16 pages: "a trade union Response to the Edwards plan", calling for full support in his campaign against the closure of plants (if necessary through occupations and work-in).

In doing so Robinson is doing his job as a delegate: most of his power is based on the mutuality system involving as many workers as possible. The Edwards plan is a direct attack against this power by different ways. Robinson himself is even more threatened because 'his' factory - Longbridge - will be automated by numerous robots for the production of a new model 'Metro-mini'. We can understand the attack on Robinson who was dismissed on 19th November, the three others being given only 'disciplinary warnings'. Giving the reasons of these sanctions BL shows clearly where it wants to go. A copy calling itself the Leyland

combine trade union committee has published a booklet which is now circulating in BL plants. The combined committee is in fact an unofficial and unrepresentative body. It is recognised neither by the company nor the trade unions whose interests it claims to represent."

The walk-outs which followed that sacking were limited both in their location, mainly in the Midlands and in the factories to be closed, and in their length from 19-30th November, in spite of the fact that the main BL union, TGWU made the strike official on the 27th November. It is impossible to say that the refusal of the AUEW, Robinsons union, to do the same after a secret meeting with Edward, was the main reason for the failure of the strike. The AUEW position as well as the TGWU's one could easily be explained: AUEW is only a minority union at BL and tries constantly to get more power through direct discussion with the top management; on the contrary TGWU looks for power through the support of the shop-stewards who take over their own power partly from the rank and file action. In fact BL workers did not want to have a battle on a matter of principles which the Robinson's case was: it is for that reason that the unions could have divergent positions because in that circumstance, their interests were different; in front of a united strong rank and file action they would have had a unitary position to repress it. There is only one conclusion: the real struggles against the restructuring has not yet begun. The formal appearance of the management victories are of no use for the future. They are only a tendency towards a different power sharing inside the domination structure. The workers will struggle - for their interests - when the consequences of the survival plan and wages agreements appear at the rank and file level.

Figure for 1979: the total of the first ten months of working days lost through strikes is the highest since the General Strike in 1926.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING

The following texts are abstracts of texts already received. Other abstracts will be sent in February. Everybody sending a text is asked to enclose a summary.

Great Britain (text in French by H. Simon and D. Krajka) The Social and political crisis in Great Britain. The strikes and the fall of the Labour government (16 pp. sept, 1979)

The text deals with a year of struggles; the most important since the general strike of 1926. It is not limited to

an analysis of the various autonomy forms and their efficacy could be linked to the day to day attitudes of the workers in the capitalist system to go on to the conclusion that the most important crisis is perhaps the ideological crisis of the system. Pannekoek has written in "Workers Councils" some pages which seem very relevant to the present situation

In a state where the industrial and urban milieu is more concentrated than anywhere else the fall of a never attained imperialism and the crisis mixed together to a dialectical situation: on one side the workers without any political or unionist illusion, on the other side a capital more or less powerless at home seeking for profits everywhere possible all over the world. As it cannot directly attack the need to raise the rate of exploitation, the tory government has no other means than playing again the role of world capital, hoping that indirect pressures will weaken the resistance of the workers. The struggles in the winter of '78-'79 have shown that autonomy could take so many different forms from one struggle to another one that is impossible to foresee what will be the next struggle.

France The steel industry crisis and the strikes of the winter 1978-79.

G. Lionet, in French, 12 pages.

The struggle in the steel industry is a good example of the level of struggle in France. The government was obliged to solve very quickly a situation made more acute by the crisis. This situation was partly artificially created for political reasons with the agreement as well of the trade unions as of political parties. A kind of nationalisation of the steel industry was necessary but at the same time too a restructuring of all the French steel industries with redundancies, early retirements, factory closures etc.

The revolt of these workers was even stronger as they used to follow the local professional unions and political traditions. This fact gives content and form to a localised violence easily controlled because it centered on traditional political issues. The CGT - strongest union in the steel industry - can easily absorb the local uprising into the 'big demonstration' in Paris. Some incidents will still occur, but the restructuring plan will go ahead with some concessions obtained by the action from the base but claimed as a trade union victory.

In the next issue we will give summaries of the following texts: (and of other texts to come)

- on Germany (in German)
on Spain (in French); on consciousness-raising (in English), the new movement (in English)

These texts can be sent now in the indicated languages. We will try to have translations available before the meeting.