

Echanges

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This bulletin, in its temporary form, is, for a group of comrades sharing similar positions and being 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 the others. He will of course determine the nature, the importance and the regularity of such a contribution himself.

ADDRESS for all correspondence, payments and subscriptions (no bulletins will be sent free)
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Subscription: payment of 10F (or the equivalent value) to cover a period of time which will be determined by the cost of each bulletin (specify whether you want the French or English version). To obtain the texts mentioned in the bulletin, write directly to the addresses given. Only the texts mentioned as produced by "Echanges" will be sent by us after payment of the price indicated.

DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

NEW MOVEMENT - English translation by Solidarity Southampton (available Grass Roots, 109 Oxford Road, Manchester 13, England) A new edition is envisaged by Solidarity London with a first criticism and discussion (c/o 123, Lathom Road, London, E.6. England)

INTERNATIONAL GET-TOGETHER (provisional proposals)

Object : Information, news and analysis of the struggle throughout the world and of capitalism to try and draw out in a concrete way the trends in the New Movement.

Date : To be fixed - a week-end in autumn 1975

Place : According to who participates: Boulogne, Paris, Strasbourg or Pontarlier (Jura, franco-Swiss border) (collective financing of the meeting proposed to equal out the differences in transport costs)

Individuals or groups interested, please write before September 1st.

LES CONSEILS OUVRIERS (Workers Councils - Pannekoek) - French edition: We repeat: all enquiries about lost orders to Hélibaste, 28 rue Henri Barbusse - 75005 Paris. There is an incomplete edition (only the first three sections) in Italian but with additional material (the development of world revolution and the strategy of communism - Socialisation) published by Feltrinelli. The first three sections were also republished in English by the American Group Root and Branch (no longer in existence). They are reproduced in an interesting collection of texts on struggles in USA and elsewhere in a book called Root and Branch - The rise of the workers' movement - A Fawcett Crest Book - Fawcett Publications Inc., Greenwich, Conn. USA

SELF-MANAGEMENT - Discussion (in English) arising out of an article by M.B. in Solidarity n° 12 Vol. 7 entitled "The Malaise on the Left! Various replies to this article in a Solidarity discussion bulletin: "Self-management and the limits of recuperation" (from Solidarity, London). Another criticism of self-management arising out of a view of the Lip strike was published in French by Negation: "Lip et la contre-révolution autogestionnaire" (Cicero, 64 rue Daguerre, 75014-Paris).

Basic works still available (in French) from Echanges Pannekoek: Lépine Philosophe (6F)
Börter : Réponse à Lénine (5F)

N° 6 of Commune published under the title "Petite bibliographie sur les traces de Marx et Freud" first part "Le champ marxien" an exhaustive list of all publications and works available in French touching upon every conceivable nuance of the "ultra-left" (Michel Laugier - Commune - 19 - rue des cinq diamants, 75013 - Paris)

In German : "Spontaneität und Organisation, Vier Versuche über praktische und theoretische Probleme der Arbeiterbewegung" (Spontaneity and organisation, four essays on the theoretical and practical problems of the workers' movement) 125 pages, Published by Suhrkamp - Frankfurt/Main edited by Paul Mattick, containing an essay on Otto Rühle and the German Workers' movement, another on "Spontaneity and organisation, one on "The need to criticise

Marxism by Marx, a look at the work of Karl Korsch" and the last on : "Accumulation, value and development, on the components of the marxist critique of political economy".

NEWS AND DISCUSSIONS ON STRUGGLES AND PUBLICATIONS AND TEXTS ABOUT THEM

SPAIN

The Dutch weekly "Internationale Korrespondentie" in its n° 2 has two interesting articles on Spain. One is a sort of analysis of the present situation in that country, the other is an interview with a worker from SEAT (Barcelona car factory linked to Fiat) which gives a vivid impression of what happens among the spanish working class (extracts in French and ,if sufficient demand, in English from Brandel, 23A Berlioz street, Amersfoort, Holland)

Enseignements de la Revolution Espagnole (Lessons on the Spanish Revolution) by Vernon Richards, English Anarchist now translated in French. Also followed by an up to date bibliography on the revolution 36-39 in Spain, which is unfortunately rather too brief.

PORTUGAL 17-6-75 "We are the first Soviet of Revolutionary Portugal" stated an official of the shipyards of Lisnave at the June 17th demonstration, where thousands of workers, soldiers and sailors of the "revolutionary councils" demanded at Lisbon a "Popular Government". These councils set up on the initiative of more or less Maoist groups (The Proletarian Revolutionary Party -Red Base -PRP-BR; The democratic Popular Movement UDP; The Movement for the Reconstruction of The Proletarian Party MRPP) which seem to be at the same time organisations of grass roots origin, but also pushed from above by a faction inside the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) (headed by General de Carvalho, leader of COPCON organ of activity of the MFA); there are also some situationists who claim responsibility ... Two projects seem to have resulted: One a committee of Defence of the Revolution (Cuban style), the other a Revolutionary Workers' Council (CRT) more on the Bolshevick model of Russia 1917 (Photocopies of articles in the French Press about this development from Echanges)

The book (in French) "Portugal, l'autre Combat" mentioned in Echanges n°1 has now been published (Spartacus:Lefevre -5 rue St. Croix de la Bretonnerie 75004 Paris)

HOLLAND In the last few months, conflicts with occupations against redundancies . In most cases such action is supported by the Unions, who, after a period of collaboration with employers closer than ever, cannot allow themselves at this moment of time an attitude of hostility towards grass roots struggles, which is too open. What is characteristic, however, is that all these conflicts were a total failure except one. And this one was precisely an occupation entirely independent of the Unions, a completely wild-cat and autonomous movement, which prevented the closing down of a factory. The Unions criticised " The weakness of a struggle which was not led by us" but it ended with a result that the so-called powerful Unions have not been able to obtain anywhere. (Further information from Brandel, Amersfoort)

JAPAN Solidarity Motor Bulletin n° 3 contains a series of articles on conditions of work and conflicts in Japanese car factories (From Solidarity, London)

GERMANY - The Cement Works Seibel and Sons at Erwitte near Dusseldorf occupied since March 10th was evacuated by the workers after the sackings pronounced against them were declared illegal by an arbitration tribunal. But the strike to prevent the closure of the factory continues. Eight Union delegates of a metal factory nearby went on a hunger strike for three days in front of the headquarters of Mannesmann at Dusseldorf to prevent the closing down of Demag at Kalldorf (where unemployment is at 15%). They threaten to occupy the factory if negotiations do not succeed.

CHINA Critique of three books (recently published in French) on China -Prisonnier de Mao, Ombres Chinoises and Revo.Cul. dans la Chine Pop. (see Echanges n°1) in Le Module Enragé n°6 -staff magazine of the University of Paris VII (separate reproduction of this article from Echanges)

GREAT BRITAIN -Continuation and intensification of working class combativity as seen during the past years. The very high rate of inflation, the deepening ballance of payments deficit, the falling value of the pound etc. occasion grim forecasts in all media, warning

workers of disaster, if they continue to demand higher wages without increased productivity, which is preventing increased investment by British capitalism in sufficient quantity.

The present average wage increases obtained are now the equivalent of about 30%. The Trade Unions have been unable to restrain large sections of workers. The new Wilson government tried to persuade the workers to cooperate with the Unions by introducing a "Social Compact", but this has been largely ignored. The government and Unions are now trying to negotiate a "new" social contract. Unions have even been forced to "lead" militant struggles in order to keep in touch with pressure from the rank and file. Massive redundancies or threats of same have been resisted at plant level with great effect. Since the fall of the Heath government, which failed to defeat the miners, the Wilson government has not attempted to confront the bigger groups of workers. Miners, electrical power workers, steel workers, car workers, transport workers, dockers, public service workers, teachers, nurses, civil servants, postal workers and, just recently, railway workers (who have just obtained their 30% after threatening a national rail strike) have all had substantial wage rises. Since 1972 there have been far fewer official strikes, but a massive increase in unofficial wildcat actions of all kinds with varying results. The railways are a typical example which also explains why the NUR (Majority rail workers' Union) leadership threatened a national strike with such apparent militancy. The number of unofficial stoppages by operating staff, drivers, porters, signalemen etc. must number several dozen. Most of the sections of workers mentioned above have all engaged in hundreds of wildcat strikes, work to rules and other unofficial action, difficult to document, because most are not reported in the national press.

Only the strikes where the effects are visible (like those of the petrol tanker drivers and the dustmen of Glasgow and Liverpool last winter) or involving spectacular action (like more recently those of the farmers, fishermen, stable lads and TV technicians) are widely reported.

An example of an important struggle which was only reported when the forces of law and order intervened, was the Massey Ferguson occupation for an increase in wages. This factory was occupied for four weeks before the press reported their expulsion. A more traditional, unofficial strike continued for another two weeks. Finally the workers accepted a 7.89p a week increase against the advice of their shop stewards (some of the shop stewards are influenced by the trotskyist group IS)

Also interesting and more widely reported was the recent strike at the Chrysler car plant at Coventry. Here the workers obtained 8 a week increase, but rejected the firm's plans for "workers participation" including a 100 bonus for each worker if they would agree to cooperate. They accepted only the 8 offer and continue to press for a further large wage demand. Industrial relations at Chrysler continue to "deteriorate"

A feature of recent struggles in the car industry (Chrysler and Ford, especially) and in the Docks, is a greater degree of autonomous decision making at plant level, often amounting to a rejection of some recommendations of their own elected shop stewards.

There is also an increase in struggles outside the factory re. housing, local government issues, anti-abortion legislation, education, the national health service, pollution and ecological issues. Traditional organisations, Trade Unions, political parties, leftist groups are often being by-passed in favour of local actions by the participants themselves.

The BLMC car factory at Cowley What happened in this factory can illustrate perfectly what autonomous struggle makes of outside political organisations. Here one of the Trotskyist groups, the so-called Workers Revolutionary Party, had one of its key "industrial militants" and shop steward sacked with no support from the workers (who have a militant record) and subsequently lost practically all its working class base in Britain. There is a detailed article about this in Solidarity (London) Vol 8 n° 1 called "What happened at Cowley"

Scotland There is an article in n° 3 of World Revolution on the important strike wave in Scotland at the end of last year. The author has a traditional vanguardist approach and we would not subscribe at all to his commentaries. However, his description of these strikes, all unofficial, enables the reader to draw his own conclusions.

These struggles, including those of Glasgow dustmen, bus and underground workers, teachers, lorry drivers, and workers at the Hoover and Rolls Royce factories paralysed the Scottish economy and the town of Glasgow. Article from World Revolution - Box 56, 197 King's Cross Road, London WC1 (a brief résumé , 1 page long, in French, is obtainable from Echanges)

Motor Bulletin publish news, information and comment on conflicts in the car industry in England and elsewhere and ask for an exchange of information on this subject (From Solidarity, London)

U S A - The "crisis" means roughly : 9% unemployed (16% among blacks, 20% for young people and 42% for young blacks), average length of working week 36h, real wages lower than in 1962, fantastic debts by the Federal Government and States, of firms, banks and individuals; the factories work at between 50% - 60% of their capacity, 20% of industry is for armements (professional army of "mercenaries 100% of 2 million men).

Wildcat Strikes by the rank and file have sprung up almost everywhere often smothered by the all powerful Union bureaucracy and masked by the capitalist press.

WILDCAT Dodge Truck, June 1974 pamphlet on the unofficial strike at the Chrysler factory at Detroit 11 - 14 June 1974 (Black and Red - Box 9546 - Detroit - Mi. 148202) .Text reproduced in Motor Bulletin n° 4 (Solidarity) - in the process of being translated into French for possible publication.

Organised Labour versus the revolt against work - the decisive conflict by John Zeman Telos -Departement of Sociology -Washington University -St.Louis -Mo. 63130 - N° 21, 1974 Text also to be reproduced possibly by Solidarity and has been translated into French with a view to eventual publication by Echanges.

Information about the Farm workers Struggle in California (The grape and lettuce boycotts etc.) initiated by Chavez who helped to create active Union sections of migrant farm workers attached to AFL-CIO which were able to impose contracts on the ranch owners after several years of struggle and effective boycott. The intervention of the Teamsters Union (Truck drivers Union originally, but now becoming a general Union), powerful and rich and using gangster tactics and selling itself to the highest bidder, bosses or Unions, allowed the bosses, when the contracts were up for renewal, to destroy the farm workers Union very rapidly. In two years it fell from 100,000 to 10,000 members. An illustration of the impossibility of Revolutionary Syndicalism really working.

The ecological movement All the successes gained by the patient and sustained effort of this movement were ruined in a few months by the capitalist counter-attack, caused by the rise in petrol prices and built around economic nationalism.

New Currents at rank and file level, neighbourhood and factory movements seem to be emerging, as yet in an embryonic state.

Job Now Rally Demo. 60,000 against unemployment organised at Washington 26 April by AFL-CIO, by workers well selected and protected and limited by the Unions using their usual tactics. A large number of marchers when considering Union obstruction, but a very small turnout considering the high unemployment which seems to show the lack of interest for such a struggle, above all when led by the bureaucracy. It is interesting, however, that, even workers, supposed to be chosen as more moderate, invaded the stadium where the rally ended and howled down the speakers prevented them from speaking; the Unions had to call the police ... to re-establish law and order. Conclusion of one of the leaders. "Its becoming clear that people are getting anxious. They don't want words anymore. They want action."

The Crisis is cushioned by a whole series of government interventions in all sectors (in the same way as is done in Europe, contrary to the myth general of American "Free" enterprise). These include unemployment benefit (earnings related) and when this runs out or doesn't apply Welfare, a form of Social security including largely aid distributed in kind (food coupons etc. Largely distributed sometimes without justification by leftists, ex-students etc; who have colonised the Welfare service). The lack of grass roots reaction to the economic situation through traditional channels can be explained partly by these measures and partly by suspicion of the Unions. All seems to be transferred to other preoccupations and paths of action. In no way does this crisis the counter measures and the reactions resemble what happened during the "Great Depression" of the 1930's

Strike (Straight Arrow books, San Francisco) a short history of the workers movement

in the States between 1877 and 1970, A basic work, now translated into German in an abridged version (abridged by the author himself); title - "Streiks uns Arbeiter revoltieren"

FRANCE June 1975, from 50 to 100 factories occupied. A quasi-permanent situation with as a backcloth symbolic occupations of bankrupt firms (some since last year) and up stage the shorter conflicts, in all sectors, for all kinds of dispersed and varied demands. Very hard methods of struggle, unanimous support for the strikes when they break out and during the conflicts, expulsion of scabs, sequestration of bosses, confiscation or blocking of material, commandos for spot actions; long strikes, hesitant active solidarity. Repressive response to these hard conflicts (intervention of police, private militia, police dogs etc. mobilisation of anti-strike management staff, intransigence, leaving the strikes to peter out after months etc.). Demagoguery of Unions (immediate declaration of occupations controlled by them, close control of the organs of strike and all outside actions, refusal of offensive or defensive violence, except if strictly directed towards a precise goal (e.g. to save all the power of the Union Machinery in the Parisien press, virtual CGT closed-shop, as in the conflict around the occupation of the daily paper Le Parisien Libéré). Roughly speaking, on the whole, in the traditional aspects, it can be said that despite fierce conflicts (The postal workers, Renault factory at Le Mans, Usinor Dunkerque, Sidérurgie Lorraine and P&S - all steelworks -, Cables de Lyon, Chausson car components firm etc....) the French workers are being made to pay for the "crisis" by the employers (increased unemployment, short time working, inflation etc....). For the present autonomous struggle only appears in a partial way in: - the spontaneity of the way in which conflicts break out and spread in the same branch or in different factories of the same group (The Post Office or Chausson) unprompted by the Unions and almost unanimously.

- Combativity which leads to a long struggle (often more than a month)

- High demands for wages and important demands about work conditions

- A slow, silent struggle with localised walk-outs, go-slows (as in the post office) i.e. actions where workers keep control. In contrast to the failure of the Unions to spread and control actions or demonstrations.

On the other hand, no independent form of organisation of struggles or of solidarity or coordination has appeared. The Unions can easily take over struggles, and lead the negotiations with employers without their power being contested by the determination of workers, who had started the strikes without them and who continue until they get what they want or are forced by lack of money to return to work.

After last year's attacks on living standards (inflation, unemployment etc), reactions are coming especially from the low paid (immigrants, workers in the provinces, the weakest industrial sectors where insecurity and exploitation are the greatest). The present struggles are very important because, if the employers cede, they will open a breach in the system built up to save them from the "crisis".

The intermediary role of the Unions is increasingly threatened; their margin of action reduced as they are forced to give more illegal or violent recommendations, while at the same time being forced to put a break on movements they don't control. They cannot reply (or leave the bosses to reply) to the growing questions of workers about their lived and the usefulness of the struggles they pursue (Union solidarity, response or lack of) to expulsion, coordination etc). Many important strikes have been failures or half failures (Usinor, the Post, SAFE in Lorraine). Of course workers themselves are looking for practical and autonomous replies to what is lacking in their struggles against the attacks of capital on their present living standards.

DENMARK - High unemployment (14% this winter; 11% in June). Many movements, demos and hard strikes repressed largely by court judgements and employer Union agreements for punishment by fines. But the form of struggle most practised seems still to be absenteeism, frequent changing of jobs etc ... which is at a particularly high rate here and which the development of unemployment doesn't seem to have lessened.

PORTUGAL - again - a new pamphlet (bilingual French-Portuguese) on the Revolutionary Workers' Council movement, referred to above, "La question de l'organisation révolutionnaire: une position de travailleurs portugais immigrés" (Echanges and Escartin BP 41 - 92190 Meudon)