

# ECHANGES-7

This bulletin is, for a number of comrades with similar positions and close contacts, a way of exchanging information on struggles and of exchanging discussions, criticisms and news of publications based essentially on the New Movement, i.e. that whole group of struggles of every sort carried out by those directly concerned themselves for their own emancipation. It is, therefore, important that everyone brings his own contribution in this sense in exchange for what he expects from others, a contribution whose nature, importance and regularity he will determine himself.

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## DOCUMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS - ON CAPITALISM AND CAPITALIST STRUCTURES

"Theoretical Texts on Capitalism - Elements for a Marxist critique of the State", in French written by a Danish group (available from Postbox 61, 2880 Bagsvaerd, Denmark)

"Crises - Historical forms of their appearance and recuperation", English edition of a Portuguese text (written by Combate), taken from a Portuguese pamphlet "The present economic crisis in the American capitalist sphere". This text tries to explain how capitalism gets over its own crises, especially through state intervention. (It is available from Edicoes e Livraria Contra a corrente, 204-206 rua Atalaia, Lisboa 2, Portugal.)

"Capital Monopoliste d'Etat", (State Monopoly Capitalism) by Paul Mattick. An historical and theoretical critique of the struggle against Monopoly State Capitalism. The 'left' parties, who support this position "are looking for a capitalist solution to capitalist contradictions. ... This 'opposition' to Monopoly Capitalism presents itself in the form of the demand for a widespread takeover - finally total - by the state of the economy, with the object of liquidating all possibility of social upheaval". (This article in French is in the July-August '76 Edition of Spartacus, available from Lefevre, 5 rue St. Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris.)

"La médecine malade du Capitale", (Medecin, sick man of capitalism), in the journal Lutte de classes (available from R. Togny, B.P. 620-09, 75241 Paris Cedex 09).

"Urban devastation", by James Finlayson. A Solidarity National Pamphlet (from Solidarity, 15 Charles Street, Oxford, England.) "At present most struggles take place in the limited area of increased rents, dangers from traffic penetration and preservation of the existing environment. At best such struggles are fights concerning the best deal within capitalism. ... These questions as they deal directly with the urban planning of a new society, must not be seen in isolation. They are intrinsically tied up with the political impetus of the new post-revolutionary society and would be answered only when decisions regarding priorities and goals are taken at a wider level by the whole population ...".

## DOCUMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS - ON MOVEMENTS OF STRUGGLE

"Workers' participation, workers control and self management", from an American comrade. He writes: "For the moment, I can make the following observations: (1) The tendency in the USA for workers to takeover and buy up their own factories has definitely decreased over the last 18 months. (2) Where this has occurred, a certain number of characteristics can be seen: a. the workers involved are fairly old, mostly over 45-50 years old; b. the industries involved are not very complex either in the organization of work or the marketing of their products (e.g. plywood in the northwest, and granite in the northeast); c. the region in which the industry is located, is relatively underdeveloped, which increases the difficulty these workers would have in looking for jobs, should their firm close; d. both the organization of work

and the capital structure of the firm remain relatively unchanged: they sell stock, continue to perform the same tasks, alter neither the division of labour nor the hierarchy of wages. In short, their activities have little interest for the revolutionary transformation of capitalism - nor are they part of the wave of the New Movement." (July '76)

"Refus du Travail ou Lutte pour le droit à la paresse?", (refusal of work or the struggle for the right to be lazy?) by C. Reeve in the August-Sept. '76 Number of Spartacus (available from Lefevre, 5 rue St. Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris). A criticism of this text by John Zerzan: "A decisif battle - Organised labour versus the revolt against work" (available from Telos/U.S.A., Solidarity/London, Echanges/France - in French). It is rather an affirmation of the authors positions than a close criticism of the pamphlet. It criticises, on the one hand, the 'individualistic content' of the revolt against work, opposing it to the 'autonomous, conscious, organised collective action of the producers', according to the 'principles of Revolutionary Action'. On the other hand 'the refusal of waged work' (capitalist) is opposed to the necessity for human activity in a communist society.

A Dutch comrade draws our attention to a series of articles in Dutch in the revue "International Correspondence" on Taylorism and adds: "The discussion is centered around the refusal of work, but between the lines, there is a tone of "I do not know what this has to do with socialism", but for me and some others, the sabotage is the creation of a world for ourselves ... not the sabotage of the Baader-Meinhof group etc. ... or the preplanned sabotage, but individual sabotage, as a pathway towards a better world". (Texts available from Piet Rademakers, Beatrixstraat 36-1, Hengelo, Holland.)

"A world to win", from a californian group, together since May 1976. (This 10-page pamphlet is in English available from Echanges, send 1 FF in stamps or write directly to the californian group, P.O. Box 1587, San Francisco 94101, U.S.A.) This group rejects all Marxist or Anarchist labels and all vanguardist activity. They feel linked to the Council Communists current, while discussing the analyses of the Echanges pamphlet "New Movement" and those of various American radical groups.

The criticisms we have of this text should be taken as a contribution to the debate about revolutionary activity. For a French comrade this text seem to contain two ambiguities: (1) There is a risk of mystification in defining socialism as management by 'workers councils' of 'work made voluntary'. Does this mean that the mass of workers cannot without the mediation of institutions? Also we think work is not an eternal category, but the result of a social division. To the notion 'socialism of the producers', we prefer abolition of the separation between work and leisure: creativity instead of slavery. (2) The talk of a 'socialist programme' is to reintroduce an Utopia for tomorrow ("We will do this and that etc. ...") to which is opposed the platitude of the present - "The present movement is confused, diffuse, uncertain, etc. ...". This leads the authors to establish a type of legal guarantee against monolithism (rotation of tasks, coordination etc.) which tends to justify the organization, rather than to observe what is happening and which is really original in new social behaviour. In order to give a more positive tone to this criticism, I think that instead of debating this text on a general level, we should better confront our reflexions on the transformations and conflicts actually going on, which will decide our behaviour much more than our theories. The exchange between groups can only begin this process." (September '76)

#### STRUGGLES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND ANALYSES

Portugal: we have been informed of the existence of the MARP (Movimento para a autogestao revolucionaria de proletariado, 11 Av. de Azaguei, 11 ave-esc. Jisboa) They have published a pamphlet "Autogestao revolucionaria". Copies of their manifesto available from Echanges.

China: some comrades will soon be able to have more information on China. For those who want more direct information, here are some addresses and references to texts:

- Echanges no. 3, first list of books on China
  - Minus 8, 180 Lockhart road, 1st floor, Wanchai, Hong Kong ("Libertarian Socialist")
  - Libero International, c/o CIRA Nippon SIC, CPO Box 1065, Kobe, Japan 650.91
  - China News Analysis, P.O. Box 13.225, Hong Kong (48 numbers per year)
- Also in western papers, two articles on the cultural revolution in
- Fifth Estate, Vol. II, no. 11, August 1976, address: 4403 Ind. Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48201, USA
  - Freedom, vol. 37, no. 16 of 7-8-1976, address: 84 Whitechapel High St., London E.1.
- And the following pamphlets:

- Mao as a dialectician, by M. Glaberman (address: Berwick E 1443, Berwick, Detroit, Michigan 40214, USA)
- Mao's China and the proletarian 'cultural revolution', by R. Dunayevskaya (from News and Letters, 1900 E. Jefferson, Detroit, Michigan 48207)
- China: voices of revolt (also from News and Letters)
- The origins of the anarchist movement in China, (from the Coptic Press, London)
- The Chinese Anarchist Movement, by Scalapino and Geo Yu, (from the Centre for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley/California, USA)

Spain: "La Lanterne Noire", no. 5 (available from Blachier, B.P. 14, 92360 Mendon-la-Forêt, France) contains a study of the Anarchist Movement in Spain in recent years, centred around an analysis of the activity and activism of small groups and the attempts to reconstruct the C.N.T. around anarcho-syndicalism. The article cannot help including, however, the existence of spontaneous movements and the development of movements in all spheres of life, which refuse to adhere to the old ideologies. The article leaves us unsatisfied, for, if it teaches us much up the different initials and activities of miniscule cells of anarchist tendencies (one could write an identical article about the Trotskyist, Maoists or even the Social Democrats or the C.P. etc.), it teaches us nothing about the real movement of struggle and the rank and file initiatives it has surely aroused, nor in addition are we informed about the links between all these groups and the reality of their struggles. This would have, however, allowed us to discuss the 'perspectives' of a Union, whatever its label, in the capitalist society of present day Spain. For information, see above pamphlet and "Action anarcho-syndicaliste. Reconstruction de la CNT" (from Amoros Solon, B.P. 3187, 31027 Toulouse Cedex, France).

Italy: "Le mouvement prolétarien autonome en Italie", (The autonomous workers movement in Italy), by M. Desblancs in the Aug.-Sept. '76 number of Spartacus (from Lefevre, 5 rue St. Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris). First article analysing new tendencies in struggles in Italy since 1969. See also "Notes on Italy"; in number of Solidarity, vol. 8, nr. 4 (address: Lathom road 123, London E. 6, England).

U.S.A.: "Unionization in America", article by Zerzan in the American paper "Fifth Estate", and in the review Telos. "The struggle for Unionization in the 1930's" has always been shrouded in myth and revered by both the labor movement and the left as a period of labor militancy. A closer look at these developments show a much different picture than was generally thought to be the case and exposes what the real role of the Unions was. (from Fifth Estate, 4403 Second Ave., Detroit, Michigan USA, with texts about the miners' strike, a strike at Westinghouse and other information, brought back from the USA by some French comrades, who were able to meet a number of contacts and friends during a two-month visit.

Poland: a pamphlet is in preparation on the beginning of a general strike on 25 June which forced the government to cancel all austerity measures imposed on the workers. But as much as this open battle, there has been the daily struggle since December 1970 and the international capitalist context and its struggles which pose to State Capitalism the same insoluble problems as 'free' Capitalism in the West

France: "Nanterre la Noire", pamphlet on the strikes and student demonstrations of spring 1976. A group of texts, which try to place these struggles in their real setting with their limitations and original aspects (from Spartacus, 5 rue de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris). The three conflicts, which are described below give a complementary picture to the analyses given in Echanges, no. 6, page 7.

(1) Strike at General Motors Strasbourg: a new factory (1968) set up with various grants (state and municipal) to create 3000 jobs (1,400 was the maximum ever employed, 700 today). Production of gear boxes for Opel-Germany (70%), Fiat-Milan (20%), Peugeot-France (5%). Since September 1975 350 new men taken on, mostly young people coming from the countryside (up to 40 km away), to be semi-skilled production line workers (although many are schoolleavers with skilled trades diplomas from technical schools). The unskilled line work is done by immigrants (Turks, Mauriciens, Marocains) and women on checking. 1974: working week reduced to 32 hours; an attempted strike ended in failure and the departure of many, including the most militant. Beginning 1975: occupation of the independent compressed air power plant for wage rises. Lock-out and end of strike through onset of holidays. February 1976: working day lengthened from 8 to 9 hours, without Union reaction, shop floor walk-outs for a reduction of hours and 250 FF (£ 30 about) a month increase for all. The night shift (workers who arrive at their home around one or two o'clock in the morning) went to the management to ask for an overlapping of hours. The next day 100 out of the 500 morning shift stopped work for half an hour. The majority of the night shift - after

the management's refusal to see them - went home. After joint Union meetings, the C.G.T. announce a temporary walk-out. The next day, after leaflets were distributed, the distributors and a small group of workers ran round the factory shouting "250 francs, slower speeds on the lines, overlapping hours". The night shift voted for a strike with raised hands. The following day, 300 workers occupied the workshops, went up to the offices and blocked the personnel officer and the plant director in their offices. The third day the compressed air plant was occupied and the compressed air cut off. The factory, still working but at a very reduced speed, was locked out. A strike committee is set up, at first refused and then accepted by the factory Union delegates, but contested by the local branches of the CGT and CFDT. The CGT/Communist Party delegate gave in, but not the CFDT delegate. Commissions were formed (finance, popularisation, leisure activities, supplies, internal organization). The Union representatives tried to control them, but did not manage to, because the rank and file expressed themselves very actively. Not many occupied the factory: 100 by day, 30 by night. The strike lasted three weeks. The solidarity was very active: collections in other factories and at a demonstration against the Berufsverboten (the new German anti-terrorist measures etc.). The experience of the strike the year before at nearby Clark-Equipement was used by those at General Motors, who knew this factory. Position of the Unions was: negotiate, make concessions, the strike is a minority strike. Position of bosses was: leave the compressed air plant and we will discuss, force the most timid to act against the most active. The workers accept evacuation of the comp. air plant, but 30 points remain to be discussed as a result of negotiation. This remains so and the strike spreads. Propositions accepted by the Unions were: 100 FF for the days lost through strike, 100 FF per month wage rise, nothing on the speed of the line, 10 minute break (which existed already in practice). This agreement is rejected by the rank and file. The comp. air plant is re-occupied, evacuated, reoccupied. The compressors bought in to by-pass the effects of this occupation were sabotaged. The rank and file organised a gala (the Unions refuse to put "organised by all the strikers" instead of "the Union" on their posters). A meeting is organised between the CFDT and the German Union DGB of Opel (lay-offs at Opel through lack of supplies). Pressure by CGT to make the workers accept the bosses' propositions. Only 300 workers remain on strike. The vote to go back to work is taken: 28 for, 15 against. (Text by a few General Motors workers, who are preparing a pamphlet on the strike.)

(2) LIP: is gone. The firm is again bankrupt. 900 men are redundant, on full unemployment pay. New occupation, hardly one third of the workers occupy, but without much conviction. In more than 250 firms the situation is much the same. The most interesting fact of this occupation, is the attempt to create around LIP and other factories a "National Coordination of firms occupied against closure" (June '76). This experiment is more or less the result of the impetus of leftists (PSU, Trotskyists, Maoists), but this attempt finds a great echo in the powerless anger of the workers at the shop-floor level, at their isolation and at the role of the Unions as agents of the restructuration of capital. Its failure is caused as much by the extreme hostility between CFDT and CGT as by the politisation by the leftist groups. But the essential base current, which this expresses, can only emerge again on other autonomous direction. The formula "modern capitalism" supported by the CFDT only interests the capitalists if it is profitable. The workers' combativity, the crisis, the new techniques, the reconstruction of the watch industry around small firms, form a whole network of divergent forces in "capitalist rationality". This does not change the fact, that LIP was in 1973 an important moment in class struggle. Notes: 3 pamphlets on LIP '73: "LIP - une brèche dans le vieux mouvement ouvrier" (Mise au point - available from Spartacus/Paris); "La grève chez LIP" (from Echanges) and "LIP ou la contrarévolution autogestionnaire" (from Négation).

On the present struggles: detailed information from Echanges, and documents of the CFDT section LIP (from LIP unité, U.L./CFDT, 3 rue Champrond, 25000 Basançon).

(3) Press: The CGT Printers Union has a total closed shop monopoly in the Parisien Press. The attempt of the paper 'Parisien Libéré' to break this monopoly using the technical upheavals in the printing industry, led to occupation of the old print shop, which in no way prevented the paper from coming out, because it was printed in a new print works with non CGT labour. There was a very hard guerrilla battle against the paper (especially commandos to stop the distribution of the paper) and a financial 'solidarity' for the strikers (the pay of the strikers has been assured for 18 months by a Union 'extra-sub.' taken out of the wages of all CGT press print workers, which gave the illusion of effective struggle). This violence - under total Union control - was only an arm in the discussion with other newspapers and

could only finally reinforce the strangle-hold of the Union for the maintenance of a monopoly contested as much by the workers as by some bosses. The end has been the signing of a protocol agreement between CGU (Paris Press) and the Paris newspapers, which will plan for the next 3 years the utilisation and reclassing of workers for the setting up of modern techniques. This agreement shows that the Union can still fully play its role as re-arranger of the labour force, if it wants to keep its power over that labour force (it does not matter by what means). The agreement provides the framework for particular agreements to be resolved firm by firm. (Text of the agreement from Echanges.) Hersault, one of the newspapers trusts, has just signed such an agreement for France Soir and Le Figaro.

Great Britain: (see also Echanges, no.6) Recent events in the motor industry and among seamen especially, show that, although the "Social Contract" between the Labour Government, employers and the Trade Unions, has contributed towards less industrial unrest (official and wild cat strikes), it has not realised the objectives of both Capital and "Labour". Government figures show that during "phase 1" of the contract, incomes rose by 19,5%, while prices rose by 13,5%. The "Social Contract" seems to have persuaded many people that inflation could only be controlled by halting the previous steeply rising wage demands, i.e. lowering the standard of living. 1,5 Million unemployed and savage cuts in social services (hospitals, schools etc.) do represent a drop in living standards, but employed workers and others have not suffered a very big reduction in real incomes, so far, as an effect of the "Social Contract".

Now recently there has been a whole series of "wildcat" strikes in the motor industry, especially at British Leyland, not based on specific wage demands, but over greater control of bonus payments, overtime, against redundancies, working conditions, demarcation disputes, walk-outs against speed-ups etc. These walk-outs affected more than 21,000 workers at British Leylands in Birmingham. One Union leader condemned "the 'anarchy' of Longbridge (Birmingham factory) stoppages, before the disputes procedure had been exhausted" and accused "a cell of political wreckers" as being responsible (London Evening Standard, Sept. 6th).

This factory's 200 toolsetters held up all production in early Sept., then the maintenance men also walked-out. 3,500 men at another Birmingham factory were also affected by disputes between electricians and other workers. All these disputes have been temporarily settled, except the five weeks old conflict by delivery drivers in a small firm, which held up delivery of Leyland and Chrysler cars from the factories. This dispute is over the sacking of 17 drivers. Over 18,000 workers were laid off at Leylands during recent disputes, and the government threatened to withdraw financial support to the firm. Workers at Leyland received free copies of the firm's own journal with this threat supported by the leaders of two major Unions, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon.

The biggest threat to the "Social Contract" has, however, come from the seamen. Just before "phase 1", they had negotiated a 39,5% wage rise to be spread over a period. This ran into the "phase 1" period, where £6 per week maximum wage rises during one year was the rule. The men were deprived of the £6, through the arbitrary fixing of a date, which was applied to the previous agreement. The Unions and the employers refused to make a "special case" for the seamen, remembering how dangerous it had been to make a "special case" of the miners in the past. The Seamen's Union has only 38,000 members, most of them away at sea most of the time with difficult contacts between them. Nevertheless feeling was high and at least two unofficial stoppages including a well-organised strike at the passengers port of Lowestoft, broke out over the issue of the £6. The National Union was forced to hold a ballot about a national strike. Only 37% voted, but then most members were at sea. The majority for a strike was only 400, but the pressure of unofficial action was such, that the National leadership decided to call a national seamen's strike for 13th Sept. This, while the Trades Union Congress was holding its annual conference. There was panic on all sides, press, tv etc. spoke of attacks on the "national interest" etc. The TUC attacked the seamen for "sabotaging" the "Social Contract". The government hinted at the declaration of a possible "state of emergency" and employers said they were bound by the "social contract" not to grant the £6. On the last day before the strike the TUC managed to get last minute negotiations with the Seamen's Union executive, who agreed by a majority of 2 to postpone the strike for a fortnight pending negotiations. In these negotiations a way was found to effectively give the £6 without appearing on the surface to break the famous "social contract". No increased wages were granted, but "fringe benefits" were agreed, i.e. bonus payments, favourable currency rates of exchange in foreign ports, payment of time spent waiting in port while not working, etc. These were accepted by the employers and the strike averted within a matter of days.

While the "Social Contract" is intact in form, in content the seamen have broken it. A relatively small number of determined workers, who know their own mind and can identify their own interest, are frustrating the efforts of employers, the government and the Trade Union leaders. The Sunday Times of 12th Sept. '76 spoke of the seamen's "fringe benefits" as adding up to even more than the 26 wage claim. It says that "captive time", i.e. time spent in port unable to leave the ship, which will now be paid, is exactly the same concept as "washing and waiting time", the payment of which led finally to the end of Mr. Heath's terminal confrontation with the miners in 1974. This article argues against the acceptance of such compromises to avoid conflict at all costs. To quote: "The greatest merit of the present day policy is its simplicity. It allows for virtually no loopholes or exceptions. That is a discipline that very many Unions, employees and employers at every level have accepted. Nor should they (the seamen) be allowed to destroy a policy, which is the very minimum necessary for economic recovery." They were allowed to destroy this policy.

At the end of September the Pound plunged to its lowest ever. Only more borrowing stopped it falling still further. Ford workers began talking of a 40% wage claim for the next round of wage negotiations.

Furthermore, many workers are refusing to be tools in the hands of the Communist Party and "leftist", i.e. Trotskyist groups. In the car industry, there seems to be more shop-floor autonomy, even if the visible result is the election of right-wing rather than "leftist" shop-stewards, the men are showing inventiveness and resourcefulness in their many actions against the employers. They are scaring the daylights out of the government and out of the Unions, who were very hostile to the seamen and are anxious to impress upon both government and bosses their usefulness as the brokers between capital and labour. If the Unions fail to enforce the social contract, their position as the most effective police force in controlling the workers will be undermined. The existence and many privileges of the Unions are at stake. They will make a strong fight back as the rank and file begin to act more independently in its own interests, even if the full implications of such actions are not immediately apparent to this rank and file. More and more its members are acting for themselves and by themselves. (Sept. '76)

West Germany: Strikes in German book publishers at the occasion of the renewal of Spring '76 wage contracts, led by the DGB (Social democrat union). But the strikes are hard fought with pickets, occupations and sit-ins to prevent the printing of papers by scabs. The police have intervened. At Reutlingen, the police arrested and beat-up 41 workers, who were preventing the coming-out of newspapers printed by strike-breakers. All 41 were charged with trespassing. There was a big solidarity movement for the 41. (Documents on the strike from Echanges or Helmut Haasis, Kammweg 73, D.741 Reutlingen, W. Germany)

#### VARIOUS INFORMATION

Subscriptions: the price of the first 6 numbers of Echanges comes to 3 30 FF (F 1 75 or £ 40 ). About 2 20 FF of this is postal charge. Each copy comes to about 0,55 FF, therefore. The increase in the number of pages or postal charges could increase the price considerably.

"Le champ freudien", (The Freudian field) no. 7 of "Commune" (from Michel Laugier, 19 rue des cinq Diamants, 75013 Paris) contains the second part of the list mentioned in Echanges no. 2 under the title "Petite Bibliographie sur les traces de Marx et Freud" (essential bibliography - copies from Echanges)

Act and Thought: Daad en Gedachte, Holland has a new address. See above!

Canada: Opening of a section of French publications in English language leftist bookshop in Montreal to serve as a meeting place for the French speaking Canadians (details from Echanges).

Coordination between different comrades in Europe and Latin America for the translation and diffusion of basic texts in Spanish (details from Echanges).