

ECHANGES

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ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT  
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Great Britain

PUBLICATIONS

SOUTH AFRICA

Class Struggle in South Africa 1976-1980 (BM Combustion London WC1 N 3 XX), in English, one pamphlet - good though incomplete study (and rare indeed) - from a situationist point of view - on class struggle in South Africa, far from the usual leftist rubbish "against apartheid" considering things only from the liberal (capitalist) and humanitarian point of view on "Black Rights" in a "Democratic State".

BELGIUM

Action Communiste (from the International Communist Group BP 54 Bruxelles 312 1060 Bruxelles Belgique), in French, N. 11 - April 1984 - very controversial texts on struggles in France and in Belgium (mainly in the steel industry) with a lot of condemnations and "revolutionary calls" and very few on the struggles themselves. A very schematic text on the hunger riots in Tunisia and Morocco leaving aside the real analysis considering the economical situation and class relationship in countries completely dominated by US imperialism. For instance, the comparison of these events with the Polish situation does not go beyond the identification of a street demonstration against the

prices rising and their bloody repression: the failure of these struggles is equally imputed to "their weakness" and a lack of "continuity, of organisation, of centralisation, in a word, a party". Action Communiste does not consider at all the capital fact that in 1970 in Poland, the industrial proletariat was in the street and that, after their bloody repression, workers organised themselves in the factories (e.g. the powerful strike committees at Gdansk and Szczecin): the balance of struggle was then completely different and the consequences lasted years and years after til today. The Tunisian or Moroccan proletariat (in an underdeveloped country) is very different: a mixture of jobless transferred peasants, small factory workers, etc. . . . . Once repressed in the street, they are unable to change the balance of struggle because of their situation and of the structures of the country. It is wrong to write that "the struggle is the same everywhere"; if we think so, we understand nothing to these events. Another article on the miners strike in Great Britain is pretty inaccurate (e.g. we can read of a "national vote on the 29th of March, 1984" which never took place) and that "no coal was moved in England since the beginning of April" (which is completely wrong).

Le Communiste (central bulletin of the same group same address) in French and Spanish N. 18 November '83 texts on Feuerbach (commentaries) - Prisons against Proletariat - some consideration on the housing problems. N. 19 February 1984 - Communism against Democracy - Thesis on democracy - Workers' memory: the democratic mystification - Criticism of the armed reformism.

BRASIL

A propos de la campagne pour les "directes" - la peur de l'explosion sociale. Pamphlet in French

from an autonomous collective in Sao Paulo - Rio de Janeiro (copies from Echanges). This text deals with the demagogic campaign for direct elections (the "direct") of the President (which finally failed); it shows well the democratic mystification and the terror of the national bourgeoisie who needs the support of the proletariat against the army. It's former weakness remains but it requires a larger part inside the State in order to have a state apparatus more convenient to its economical interests. But it has to remove the military dic-

tatorship and to do so has to get a "popular support". The result is that the "popular appeals" are followed by a lot of manipulations to maintain both workers' and peasants' movement under a strict control. Both movements try constantly to go their own way and to break the political system. The text explains well the ambiguity of the present agitation but it falls short of a class analysis which could only explain why things are presently going that way. The political conflict is between the landowner and the industrial bourgeoisie; the social conflicts are between the workers and the capitalists on one side, the poor peasants (or farm worker) and the landowners on the other side. This situation can be compared with the difficult conquest of the State by the French bourgeoisie during the 19th century. It was also rather weak in front of the land aristocracy and had constantly as well to get the support of the proletariat. This unnatural tendency balanced for a long time between a "controlled" alliance and a bloody repression, thus the situation opening the door to Bonapartism.

COLUMBIA

Columbia is not what it looks like from Europe: it's economical, social, and political situation is about the same as other Latino-American countries. The economy is very dependant on industrialised countries (USA, Europe, Japan); coffee covers practically all exports: over exploitation of workers either in the country or in transport and processing plants. Poor having only the choice to starve either in farm working or unemployed in shanty towns around the major cities: they are 60%-70% of the population. Besides the rich (a very limited ruling-class), it remains the middle-class and waged people (civil servants, white collar, and manual workers). The latter are unionized and strikes are frequent. But all of these struggles are very corporatist and all these workers are fighting to get a larger part in the consumer society. They reuse all kind of solidarity with the majority of the population living in inhuman conditions where life and death don't matter. We can see there the same situation as in industrialised countries where most of the

workers don't bother that half of the world population is more exploited and oppressed than themselves . . . . The military and police regime tightly maintain this exploitation system. State of emergency, killing of militant people, all kinds of pretexts (guerilla, drug traffic, etc.) are used to keep things "in order". What is unexpected for an European coming there for the first time is not only the poverty, especially in Bogota, but the architecture in the rich and middle-class districts: everything is closed and guarded: strong gates, armed guards, locks, padlocks everywhere. At night everyone barricades themselves as well as possible, in the country as well as in the towns. (From a letter).

CANADA

Resistance - Documents and Analysis of the Illegal Front (Friends of Durruti Publications P.O. Box

790 Station A Vancouver BC Canada V6C2N6) N. 7 Spring '84, in English, the interest is only in the documents on various armed groups having chosen the guerilla action to perform their political aims (more exactly on their repression). This time from Canada, USA, West Germany, and Spain.

SPAIN

In Echanges 37-38 p. 17, we have quoted two texts in Spanish on Syndicalism and on anarcho-syndi-

calism and proposed to send copies of them. The importance of these texts (41 and 94 pages) prevents us copying this material. To get copies and contacts you can write to Et Cetera Apartado de Correo 1363, Barcelona Spain.

Et Cetera - Correspondence of social war n. 2 - July '84 - in Spanish - contains only Mattick's writings - capital accumulation and Marxian theory of crisis. Marxism yesterday and today - World crisis and workers movement.

N. 3 - July '84 - Industrial restructuring in Spain - Sagonte (steel industry) - Great Britain: again the class struggle (translation from Echanges).

FRANCE

De l'usage de Marx en Temps de Crise (The use of Marx in period of crisis)(Spartacus 5 rue St.

Croix de la Bretonnerie 75004 Paris), in French, various texts from different persons having answered the question: "What could be the use of Marx in period of crisis?" All answers show the limits of Marx works (the limits of his time), but they bring many differences. Some reassert the present value of Marxist thesis (though seeing it from different points of view, method, utopy, ideological criticism, economical analysis); others present a more radical criticism, even if it takes arguments in Marx writings.

Chronique des Stratégies Prèsentes (central publications of the communication Le Frondeur BP 105 94402 Vitry Cedex France), in French, n. 3 - June '84 - some theoretical aspects and some practical assertions concerning the terrorism of the Algerian military security. A long interesting text on the present situation of the crisis of capital and it's consequences - Up from scratch we went into poverty - the illusion of the end, see Echanges n. 39 for a file of correspondence between Echanges and Le Frondeur (ask for copy).

Courant Alternatif (Organisation Communiste Libertaire OCL Egregore BP 1213 51058 Reims Cedex France), in French, n. 37 - June '84 - Poland of the 80's - texts on Islam squatters - Third world debt: no thoroughfare for capitalism - Steelworkers struggles (Longwy) - Restructuring in the lorry factories (R.V.I. Caen). N. 38 - Summer '84 - Steel industry (Longwy/Fos) - Rail workers and the 354 - The national question (on the regionalist movements especially the basque movements) - The state files.

Agoza (BP 1214 31037 Toulouse Cedex France) libertarian review, in French, n. 21 - Spring '84 - articles on the CNT (Barcelona, noise and furore) - Ten years ago, the Mil (the execution of Puig Antich)(on the same subject - a study in Spanish by Telefero Tujeulo "El Mil Puig Antich y los Gari - Ruedo Igerico - Paris).

Insécurité Sociale (BP 243 75564 Paris Cedex 12) pamphlet in English, wage labour and demand struggles - in

French, leaflet for the 1st of May "You work, you don't work, you die nevertheless".

Mea Culpa (Céline), in French - with a study - Céline on the impossible humanisation - Carpe dieu (ask Echanges for copies).

Jalons (c/o L'Horbe rouge 1 bis rue d'Alésia 75014 Paris France), in French, Marxist research and study - Perspectives of work for a review aimed at the "political vanguard of the proletariat" and claiming to be in the general ideas and views of the different tendencies of the International Communist Left, but trying to integrate the other internationalist tendencies: propagation of the communist principles, study of the struggles of the world proletariat, discussion with the revolutionary current - These positions are explained in a distinct manifesto: "For the revolution in the whole world". N. 1 - Defence, actuality and method of Marxism - An old text of the left tendency of the PCI (Bilau n. 23). Off the CP, instrument of the world capitalism - Morocco: fight and die for one's bread. Two periods: Moscow-Warsaw (1920); Moscow-Kaboul (1980). N. 2 - May '68 in France - some notes on two groups now disappeared: ICO and GLAT.

Parti de classe (paper of the G.C.I. in France - see Belgium - G.C.I. c/o L'Horbe Rouge 1 bis rue d'Alésia 75014 Paris), in French - n. 5 August '83 - Unemployed against their solidarity, be selfish. Citroën strikes (only the '82 strikes in which the control of labour force shifted from the boss union to the Communist Party controlled CGT) - Criticism of the group "chômeurs en colère" (angry unemployed).

A Propos du Laxisme - small pamphlet in French - open letter to Badinter, Justice Minister in France, from Charles Baner sentenced 20 years in prison for some robberies in the early 60's actually for his former political activity as a member of the Youth Communists in the Marseille Port at the end of the Algerian war. He describes from inside the prison conditions and some famous prisoners (Goldman, Mesrine, etc...)

Bulletin de Discussion (see Echanges n. 40 - c/o Eric Burmann, Impasse du Marché 37320 Evres sur Indre France), in French, n. 2 - June '84 - Class struggle in

Great Britain (translation of a new bulletin "A Communist Effort" see further on) - Above the volcano (criticism of a leaflet "There are more and more foreigners around the world) - Discussion between revolutionaries - Nails for the infant Jesus (answer to the previous text) - Do studies mean something?

Revolution Sociale (BP 30316 75767 Paris Cedex 16), in French, n. 17 - June '84 - Restructuring - Leaflet imitation of the CP daily paper - L'Humaité: the treason (on the steel industry).

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GREAT BRITAIN

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Britain at work - Hard at work or out of it - 5 years of Mrs. Thatcher's Britain (The Economist - 5 May 1984), in English, A survey of the economical and political English situation with a lot of documents giving landmarks in a complex evolution.

Government Intervention in Disputes is "Unhelpful" - from the Financial Times (9-4-84), in English - summing up a study "Survey of Industrial Relation and Employees Communications - Spring '84" confirming what was said in Echanges n. 40 p. 4 - These texts show the disarray of the ruling-class in the difficult choice on what to do in order to overcome the crisis, mainly how to attack the variable capital to restore the rate of profit. The capitalist front is not united, no more than the labour front, every firm or branch of industry try to adapt it's politics according to it's own immediate interest.

Workers' Playtime - Popular yarns of class war (c/o 84b White Chapel High Street London E1), in English, June '84 - Long article 'on the miners' strike - Opium wars '84 (on the use of drugs) - Playtime International (struggles in Italy, France, West Germany and Belgium). Lebanon (notes on the P.L.O.). August '84 What we're standing in: coming clean on the miners' strike - The miners' strike in Lancashire. Art/Class - Chance of strike lost in post - Class struggle and the idea of revolution - New economic miracle (on West Germany strikes - On Romania.



GREAT BRITAIN

Miners' Strike (see Echanges n. 40)

The miners' strike is presently in its sixth month and there is no indication of a near end. Everybody in the government, ~~and~~ and the capitalist circles hoped for a quick collapse of the strike all have reasons to be very disappointed by the hard fight of the miners. This long period of strike and the combativeness of the miners, the self-organisation of struggles and survival (through a wide solidarity) push ahead all the contradictions of the system not only for all the political organisation but for the repressive organisations as well; police or unions. It is too early to try to draw the lessons of one of the most important strikes of the English workers movement. It is still impossible presently to foresee what could be the end of the strike or how it could rebound (as it happened twice with the dockers). In this issue you will find only two reports showing what the strike at the rank-and-file level is.

The Miners' strike in Great Britain:  
Some impressions of a stay in South Wales

'In that valley were 14 pits, now there is one left. There, behind those hills, there were 23, now there is one left.' This I was told when I stayed for a week with striking miners in South Wales in the middle of July. The above mentioned statement explains right away the determination of the workers to go on: they fight for their future, for themselves, and for their children. 'We're on strike for 18 weeks now, if necessary we'll go on for 18 months.'

Determination, bitterness, and an enormous solidarity from a big part of the British working-class and especially in the miners' towns that I have visited, that's what I've noticed. I will not try to analyse or give a detailed survey of this doubtless important strike, but I'll confine myself to telling what I've seen and witnessed.

How do you manage to be on strike with so many thousands from March 6th with barely any income? The National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) supports the strike,

but as usual in Great Britain, does not have strike funds. Picketing workers get £2 a day. In the beginning they got £3 but that became too expensive for the NUM. The wives of the miners and their children receive some sort of support from local authorities, but that amount is decreased by £15 that the men are supposed to get from their union. Dirty theft is the only thing you can call that. But they are collecting at shopping centres, in the streets, and they get a lot of money from that. At one shop a pensioned miner, about 70 years old was asking for food everyday. 'Buy some extra for the miners when you're shopping', was written on a sign. What he gathered was impressive. Everybody I talked to told me that they managed to go on because of the food parcels they received. They don't contain fruit and fresh vegetables because they don't last very long. So the strikers and their families mainly eat canned food. For this reason the women in the support groups saw to it that from now on the food parcels include potatoes.

In mentioning the women, I come to a second indispensable support for the strike. Without their active support, the strike would have long been over, everyone assured me. The women play an important role in the distribution of the food parcels, e.g. they assemble them. So far you could consider this a rather traditional role, being a housewife. But even if this would be all that the women do, there would be an enormous difference with most of the other strikes. 'Normally' the women are at home doing the household and taking care of the children and the main thing they notice from a strike is the radical decrease in income. Now, women are actively involved in the strike, even if it's only a minority that are participating in the support groups. But there is more and that is quite essential. The women actively participate in picketing, so they are directly involved in the fight, in the most literal meaning of the word. Picketing at the mines is not necessary in South Wales. Everybody is on strike and nobody wants to go back. At the beginning of the strike there was picketing but it became rapidly clear that picketing would be mainly symbolic. The pickets were maintained for all eventualities and to keep an eye on the pit. Very many miners and their wives have traveled through Great Britain to pickets in other mining

districts. There they have witnessed events that look like a civil war. Nottinghamshire, the county where most of the pits are still working, has been almost closed to the outside world by the police. Miles outside the mining villages workers are stopped; often they had to walk long distances through fields to get to their destiny. At the picket lines the police (among whom there were many soldiers in police uniforms) often beat the hell out of the miners. During these trips through the country the miners started a solidarity campaign. Now there are often direct ties between workers in different places along which information and money are being sent. So the women in South Wales are mainly active in secondary picketing (see below). As a result of this active participation of the women, the strike has very different consequences that nobody expected before. The women see and feel themselves how hard the fight is, the necessity of the fight doesn't need any explication to a worker. One of the most important consequences of this participation is or I am told, that the relations among people change. Of course the relations between workers change in every strike, but now it is not restricted to the men only, but it extends itself to both men and women. People talk a lot more with each other, they get to know each other in different ways, and they respect each other. This is a slow and difficult process as became clear at a disco night that miners' wives had organised for the children. That afternoon, 9 children, 5 mothers, and 1 man showed up, although in that little town there are 900 miners. The women who had organised it were very angry about this lack of cooperation, but they would do something about it. We do all the work for love, they said. They don't get a penny for picketing and besides all that the household keeps them very busy now.

I just mentioned secondary picketing (which is forbidden by law now in Great Britain). This means that workers try to stop production in factories that are not directly involved in the dispute. In South Wales, this concerns two steelworks, one in Port Talbot and one in Llanwern. Normally these steelworks operate for the biggest part on coal from South Wales, but now coal is being brought by ship to Port Talbot, where there is a harbour at the steelworks. Iron ore is always imported this way and then transported by train to Llanwern,

for there is no harbour there. The miners and BSC have agreed that the strikers will allow that enough coal and iron ore are imported in order to keep the two steelworks in operation. The NUM permitted this because BSC threatens to sack many steelworkers (thousands and thousands of them have been sacked over the last years). The miners don't want more steelworkers to become unemployed and they are trying to avoid the two groups of workers being played off against each other. BSC doesn't accept this agreement and wants to go on producing at full scale. Because the railway workers refuse to cross the picket line, refuse to transport coal and iron ore, BSC tries to transport it to Llanwern in lorries. Secondary picketing South Wales therefore takes place at the two steelworks and on the 50 mile motorway between them.

The lorry drivers get £13 per ride. They make the trip 2 or 3 times a day. In order to earn some £100 a miner has to work hard for a whole week. This scab job gets paid so well because the government and the NCB do their utmost to break the strike and to pretend that the strike doesn't cause any harm. Furthermore, this job pays so well because it is dangerous. Several times lorries have been set on fire and in the night, July 7-8 the offices of one of the biggest transportation companies in South Wales was burnt to ashes. During the time I was in Port Talbot and participated in secondary picketing the workers outnumbered the police only once. Right afterwards and on the other days as well there were relatively few strikers and two to three times as many cops. Monday morning, July 16 at 6:30 a.m., there were about 400 miners and some 300 cops. Because blocking off the road effectively proved to be impossible, there were too many cops, we spread along the motorway. In high speed, a convoy of some 100 lorries drove out of the factory. The rest of the traffic was stopped by the police who tried to keep the strikers off the road by forming a cordon along the pavement. There were enough bricks on the road and the picketers smashed some 50 windscreens. At least one chauffeur was wounded on the head. Many trucks have a special screen in front of their window which makes them invulnerable to stones but most of the lorries that morning didn't have that. If the miners would have managed to hit a driver so badly that he would have lost control over his lorry

and would have skidded blocking the rest of the convoy in doing this, then a lot of drivers would not have been able to be scabs for a very long time. Later that morning, the police were reinforced to some 700 men while the number of picketers decreased to some 150-200 men. That day, 42 workers were arrested and thrown roughly into the police vans. I do not wish to get involved in the ridiculous discussion here about the violence question; the workers fight for their existence and to me and certainly to them that is enough justification to act against the scabs and the police.

Though most of the men felt rather satisfied about the fact that they had been able to smash so many wind-screens and that they had shown that they hadn't accepted the convoys, it still left them with a moral hang-over. There are some 20,000 miners in South Wales and there were only about 400 of them at Port Talbot that morning. The week before, there had been sharp discussions because the NUM doesn't feel like organising secondary picketing. Only after a lot of pressure from the rank-and-file the union had decided to organise a mass picket. But there can be no doubt that the small attendance is due to the half-hearted support of the NUM leadership.

It was remarkable that of the 400 miners that Monday morning, some 90 came from Maesteg, a little town where there is 1 pit left. Although Maesteg is only some 12 miles from Port Talbot the great activity of these miners is striking. The more so since the miners from Maesteg's pit, St. Johns, had voted against the strike. In '81 and '82 they had struck against the closure plans of the NCB but then there wasn't enough support from other miners in Great Britain. Now, in 1984 the men from Maesteg didn't want to strike in the beginning. But once the strike had begun, miners from St. Johns showed an incredible activity. They were the first from South Wales to roam the whole country to raise food and money. At actions throughout Great Britain miners from Maesteg were involved. A shop steward from St. Johns told me that in one or two years this pit will be closed down too, at least that's what the NCB's plans are. The NCB wants to start a new colliery some 2 miles further on which is to be a private mine (at the moment all British pits are government property). At Markham, where this new mine should come, there is

a whole lot of first quality coal. Building this new pit will take 7 years and will cost some £400 m. If they would dig to that coal from St. Johns, it would take only 2 years at a cost of £100 m. This example shows also that the government and the NCB want to smash the miners. Twice workers have wrecked a government, and Thatcher wants to deal with the workers now once and for all. When the miners have been crushed, the other workers won't cause any more troubles. Whether this reasoning will turn out to be true is yet to be seen.

N.V.

## THE MINERS STRIKE IN LANC S

### BACKGROUND

In the Lancashire area, there are eight pits owned by the NCB, employing 6,500 miners. It is a shrinking area of coal production. The closure of Cronton pit was announced on March 2nd. 1984, and it is now only operating salvage work. At Agecroft pit in Salford, there is only one coal face working. All the other pits are remnants of the old mining community around Wigan and St. Helens, and they are threatened with redundancies.

The 1977 productivity deal, initiated by Tony Benn and forced through by the NUM executive despite a National Ballot rejecting it, led to differences in pay between areas. A faceworkers basic wage is £130 a week before stoppages (surface workers get less.) Productivity bonuses can be up to £100 at the most productive pits in the country - none of which are in Lancashire.

Wildcat regarded the overtime ban - begun in November 1983 - as a diversion from a strike. Whether this was deliberate or not, its effect was to make the less

militant miners reluctant to strike because they were short of money. However, it is defended by militant pickets, who claim the ban was effective in lowering coal stocks.

The result of the ballot in Lancs., on whether or not to strike against the NCB's redundancy and pay plans for 1984-5, was announced on March 16th. Only Bold pit had a majority in favour of striking. At the other pits (apart from Agecroft, which voted decisively against), the result was close. Overall, 59% of those who voted were against strike action. 3 days later, pickets from Yorkshire arrived throughout the Lancs. coalfield. The strike spread, thousands of miners went on strike, and coal production - for the time being - was stopped.

### LIMITATIONS ON THE STRIKE : THE POLICE

The police responded to the mass picketing by setting up roadblocks on all roads out of Yorkshire, and on the motorway exits in Manchester. We were told of pickets turned away three times and escorted back to Yorkshire, before getting through. The police have mainly been con-



centrating on Agecroft, as the 'show pit' to be kept working. Only with the arrival of hundreds of pickets from Northumberland and Durham on May 1st., did the police become more aggressive and make more arrests. But they have been resisted. We were told of three Northumberland miners who were arrested and locked in a police van with a superintendent - they threatened to break his neck unless he let them out. He did !

**LIMITATIONS ON THE STRIKE :  
THE MEDIA**

One of the main concerns of the pickets has been the media, particularly the TV news portrayal of strikers, lies about the numbers of miners working in the local papers, and the journalists and camera crews touring the picket lines looking for violence. The 'Sun' is singled out by the miners we talked to as the worst offender. We had the pleasure of taking part in the removal of 'Daily Express' reporters from a mass picket at Golborne pit. The media is not just an enemy of the strikers in its bias and lies, but is equally effective in its suppression of information. Miners from Northumberland say that there are no power stations working in Northumberland and all the power workers are laid off. There is no news of these examples of the picketing's effectiveness, or of workers struggles taking place in other countries.

**LIMITATIONS ON THE STRIKE :  
THE N.U.M.**

The Lancashire NUM officials made explicit that they had no wish to see the class violence of mass picketting remain on 'their' territory. Frank King, NUM Branch President of Parkside pit, said that pickets calling out 'scab' and 'blackleg', "make it hard to cross the picket line". What did he expect the pickets to say ?! Gaskell, NUM

Branch Secretary at Golborne pit, commented that the "pickets were jeering and shouting", and "had a bad effect on the afternoon shift". These officials wanted control of the Lancashire area. They called a one-week official strike, for March 26th-30th, it was said to "press for a national ballot". Gaskell, however, revealed the real reasons : "Things were getting too hot with the pickets ... we decided to quieten the situation". The effect was to remove the pickets from Yorkshire, and send the Lancashire miners home.

Only the most militant miners came out to picket. At Bold pit a strike committee was elected to organise picketting. Miners were told to picket only their own pits. Consequently, they had no information, and we had to tell them what was happening at other pits we had visited. There was some 'unofficial' picketting of power stations, but the pickets were told not to do that until union leaders had met. The pickets we spoke to said they didn't want a national ballot - it was unnecessary as the strike was growing. At Sutton Manor and Bold pits, there were disputes about safety cover. Pickets at these pits told us "we're staying out next week whatever the Lancs NUM decide."

**CONFUSION**

What the Lancs NUM did decide, at a delegate meeting on March 31st, was to call off the strike action. This set the scene of confusion which has plagued the Lancashire miners ever since. Agecroft returned to work, Bold and Sutton Manor stayed out, Cronton kept working salvage, and miners at other pits were divided. The pickets didn't know what the local NUM was doing, or what the officials' attitude to the strike was.

Following the National NUM conferences in Sheffield on April 12th and 19th, when

the ballot rules were changed, and the area strikes re-affirmed, Lancashire leaders were concerned not to return to mass picketting where they were not in control. At an area NUM delegate meeting in Bolton on April 27th, a decision was taken to "ask" miners to join the strike. It was later reported that "many branch secretaries had no mandate to vote either way." There had been no consultation at all with the miners. The union removed workers completely from decision-making, while obviously they wanted to participate. There was mass-lobbying of all union meetings. We were told at Sutton Manor pit that half the miners there wanted to attend the first area delegate meeting, but only one coach was going.

The pickets told us that the last Lancs NUM meeting was arranged to find a way of sending them back to work, which is why thirty of the lobbying miners organised a sit-in and occupied the NUM headquarters at Bolton. They wanted to prevent further meetings, saying "you don't need a meeting to run the strike - only to call it off." Sid Vincent, Lancs NUM General Secretary, is hated by the strikers for saying different things to different people. During the sit-in he said NUM meetings were cancelled because he wouldn't cross the picket line at Bolton.

While this sit-in was going on, the message from the union on the picket lines at the pits is "Work normally and don't cross the official picket lines." No-one knows what this means ! On May 5th a striking miner from Golborne pit showed a letter saying "from this afternoon, the strike is official at Golborne." He had been on strike for eight weeks.

On May 8th, Vincent declared the strike in Lancashire official. The sit-in ended, but there was some feeling that they should have stayed and used the NUM facilities to

print leaflets themselves. Everyone on the picket lines knew that many fewer miners had been working, due to the presence of 300 Northumberland and Durham pickets - not due to Sid Vincent.

**DEMANDS OF THE STRIKE**

Miners told us that the strike was to make sure that no pits were shut until they were worked out. It is obvious that when a pit is 'worked out', it is not that there is literally no coal left, nor is it anything to do with peoples' need for coal or jobs; it is what is considered economically viable by the bosses. We argued the need to go beyond this, at least to include the pay claim and grievances over working conditions. This would be one way to involve miners who were reluctant to strike. Some miners thought that once pit closures were settled, then the pay claim and all other matters would be settled. No-one thought they could alter the demands of the strike. It was up to Scargill.

**YORKSHIRE PICKETS**

Lancashire miners were suspicious of 'their' local union, and consequently were more interested in ideas of self-organisation, such as organising picketting themselves, and tape-recording union meetings. On the whole, older miners had less faith in Scargill than the younger ones - who mainly made up the mass pickets. The pickets from Yorkshire were more keen to defend all NUM actions, although we heard an interesting story from a picket from Selby in Yorkshire. We asked why Yorkshire miners did not support the South Wales fight over redundancies in January 1983. He told us that pickets from South Wales arrived at Selby, a meeting was called, and the miners there agreed to strike. But the Branch NUM officials were divided, and as a result of their equivocations, the action ended in a one-day token strike. He said he

thought it would have been better to strike then, last year, when there was more support.

### COAL MOVEMENTS

Coal is only supposedly being moved from pitheads to hospitals, old and handicapped peoples' homes, schools and miners' families. In fact, union officials are issuing vast numbers of dispensations for factories using coal. Pickets at Sutton Manor told us that union convenors at local factories had made agreements with the NUM to take coal if it was used for heating the factories, and not for manufacturing. If workers had had collections for the miners, coal was being taken to those workplaces. At Plesseys in Liverpool, workers were being made redundant. The unions there were campaigning for higher redundancy payments - and arranging with the NUM for coal to go in and keep the factory operating!

### ON THE PICKET LINES

The numbers of active Lancashire pickets is tiny. Since the strike began, at any time there has been a maximum of about 100. Thousands of miners are at home, for the whole idea of being on strike is based on not turning up to work, and waiting for victory to be negotiated. The active pickets realise the need to combat this. They said they need more pickets to stop all the mines, the power stations, and all coal moving. They have had some successes: the NCB machinery works has been closed, 90% of train drivers are refusing to move coal from Warrington and Wigan, and despite what the papers say, very little coal has actually been mined here since the start of the strike.

We argued the crucial importance of active participation in actually controlling the strike, and the strength of collective action. The pickets agreed, saying how you

"saw things from the other side" when you were actively picketting. But the shortage of pickets led to demoralisation, as day after day, they watched local miners going in to work. They were unable to picket power stations as there were too few of them to resist police aggression, and they were unable to stop coal moving from a massive local coal dump. This led to desperation, the lowest point being before the arrival of the Northumberland pickets on May 1st. The Lancashire miners turned to sabotage: NCB lorry tyres were slashed, nails spread, and conveyor belts cut through. We were told: "If we can't stop them one way, we have to do it another."

### SPREAD THE STRIKE!

The crucial point about the limitations of the strike so far, is that *all* the miners we have talked to, are aware of how vital the strike is for the whole working class - in the fight for our interests; to show workers can get the upper hand over the bosses. *But* there is a reluctance to argue that the strike should therefore be spread beyond the miners. Time and again they say "we must get all the miners out first." We say it's the same fight for all workers, that no jobs or working conditions are safe in this crisis but the miners have been approaching other workers as trade union members. For example, there are two opencast pits in the area, not owned by the NCB, and with workers in the TGWU not the NUM, so they are still mining coal even though they are in their own dispute over pay and conditions. Lorry drivers in the TGWU who have been threatened with the sack if they refuse to cross picket lines, are left isolated in a personal dilemma, and so pickets have let them cross. The response must be collective, from the workers themselves, not directives of general support from union leaders to individual members.

Active miners had visited local factories to collect money, and told of their embarrassment and humiliation when doing this. We said that the arguments of the strike, not buckets for money, should be taken to other workers, especially those with their own struggles. Rather than diverting all energy into picketing Nottinghamshire and Agecroft pit in Lancashire, if miners joined their strike with other workers, the scab miners would see the potential in a strong movement and join in.

Even within the mines, on the picket lines the first question is "what union are you in?" On a picket line at Parkside pit, we saw all non-NUM members drive in to work, not stopped at all by the pickets. When we visited Bold pit in May, the pickets we spoke to thought that the canteen workers ought to be on strike too. But, they said that *they* couldn't tell them that. "I'm just a worker - I've no authority" was what they said, and asked us to go to the strike committee, as they couldn't leave the picket line! This is what being in a strong union means - workers unable to have confidence in themselves as workers, without the backing of the NUM.

Through making these criticisms, Wildcat is now greeted on the picket lines as "You're the ones who support the miners but not the union".

### SIGNS OF RADICALISATION

It was the desperation of the most militant pickets in Lancashire, and the ineffectiveness of the struggle as it was being run by the union, that created an awareness of the need for more radical action. Wildcat produced a leaflet with the agreement of these pickets, urging all members of the working class to join the picket lines, and to transform the struggles of other workers into immediate joint strike action

with the miners. It was to be given out as widely as possible, by the pickets as well as Wildcat members. If large numbers of non-miners turned up to the picket lines - which was not inconceivable, given local community support - then not only the present organisation, but the trade unionist preconceptions of the strike would have been challenged, and, we thought, significantly altered.

As it was, although the leaflet was well-received, it was inappropriate. We had over-estimated how far the radicalisation of the Lancashire pickets went. And after talk of solidarity by Scargill, NUR and ASLEF bosses put a stop to any strike movement on the railways, and went to negotiate. The leaflet also coincided with a change in the NUM's tactics for controlling the strike, which pushed the pickets further back into the union's grasp. About 300 miners from Northumberland and Durham arrived to form daily mass pickets throughout the Lancashire coalfield. In contrast to self-organised mass picketting being an expression of the collective strength of the working class, what is happening at the moment is a totally controlled, military-style operation. Scargill is himself directing mass picketting nationally. The individuals involved are simply so much cannon-fodder, in set-piece confrontations with the police, such as at Agecroft pit, or, on a larger scale, at the Orgreave coke works in Yorkshire. The local NUM officials have little fear of such rituals. Militant workers are given their role to play in the strike in these mass pickets, giving the illusion of positive activity while preventing them from radicalising their own tactics and demands.

Miners in Lancashire feel there is less need to become involved, as the strike has been taken out of their hands. The strike committee organises pickets from a locked



room at Bold Miners Welfare Club, which is being used to accommodate people. The initiative for action and the ability to move the strike forward beyond its original aims, has been removed. The NUM seems to have

captured this potential and diverted it onto strictly limited terrain. The recent attempt of Lancashire NUM to expel the miners who are still working, is another way of re-capturing the loyalty of militants.

(From *Workers Playtime*, August 1984)

A Communist Effort (Box ACE C1 Metropolitan Wharf Wapping Wall London E1) - n. 1 - March '84, in English, A new publication advocating a "coherent communist critique and intervention", making a funny distinction between "static critique" and "living critique" learning lessons from its own practice. As if class struggle was not in itself this permanent "living critique" outside of all kinds of individuals (coming from voluntary groups of so self called "revolutionaries"). So we can understand what his basic position is for: the centre is "intervention" and "intervention must be strategic". Of course, as for all militant individuals or groups; the real class struggle and the workers movement as a whole is too autonomous now to allow such so-called revolutionaries to speak, like party people one century ago to teach workers what to do and how to do it. Because the positions summed up above could bring some confusion on the meaning of "intervention", it is not surprising to find in the same statement, the assertion that "there is no substitute for the real autonomous movement proletarians towards organising themselves in a mass class combat" to add immediately "those proletarians who are revolutionary now, who are a product of course of the whole movement (of course - note from *Echanges*) must know how to intervene in this". "NOT" as blah, blah, blah, ... BUT as those who want to organise a communist intervention..." New words are very old ideas forgetting the essential: individuals or groups are never revolutionaries but only situations are revolutionaries because people involved in these situations are acting according to their own real interests as an exploited class in a society based on the class domination for the sake of capital. Not at all

because these people want to be revolutionaries or to act according to some pattern, communist or not, we can understand why most of the articles of the Bulletin concern the action of the police, if the union etc. . . : from the need to find their strategy in order to elaborate a counter strategy (it was more or less the position of the operaist movement in Italy in the '70's). This issue contains a discussion on the secret communication center - GCHQ at Cheltenham from where unions were recently banished - The next issue will discuss the security services and in particular their prime role of counter insurgence . . . .

The "progression of the movement" is the title of a contribution to a discussion begun in *Intercom* (see previous *Echanges*). This title is in itself a bit confusing: which movement is progressing through such a discussion? Notwithstanding our basic disagreements with this publication we can write it is worth reading because it is well documented and argued and open to discussion. We don't know if the asserted attempt to "go beyond the theoretical division between libertarian councillorist, situationist ..." will succeed: for us, divisions between groups or evolution of the theory, are not the result of some well intentioned efforts but the result of the new characters of class struggle. We can see that clearly not only in England, but in all countries - all capitalist of course - too. It is only the practice of workers action and its analysis which can bring us to overcome the divisions and the theoretical dead-lock and not at all the study of the repressive structures. Class struggle works in a dialectical relationship with this repression; actually it is the true capitalist domination at the work place and the core itself of exploitation. But the answers of the workers movement are exactly the contrary of what the "revolutionaries" try constantly to do: workers have no other choice to escape it as living it in a daily practice. It is not at all a matter of choice, of knowledge, of analysis, of some will to go beyond . . . .

Intercom - Revolutionary discussion bulletin, (c/o 84b White Chapel High Street London E1), in English, n. 6 Anti-militarist direct action in Italy (with some addresses of groups involved in the International conference on Social Movements and repression in Pudoue -

April '84. A comment on the discussion on sexual struggle at the last Intercom conference - What is meaningful activity - Groups and the left - Various leaflets on the miners' strike - What distinguishes Wildcat (see Echanges n. 40 p. 3).

Minor Conflicts, Major Contradictions - (BM Combustion London WC1 N 3 XX), in English - July '84 - pilot issue of "Get fucked" - On the miners' strike from a situationist point of view. A lot of interesting striking facts well interpreted but linked up with some other facts in such a way that we are swinging between a very machiavelic vision of capital and a world proletariat marching on determinedly towards revolution.

Careless Talk - Revolutionary anarchist paper - (c/o W. Smith 14 Elliot Street Newcastle Staffs U.K.), in English most part on the miners' strike.

Solidarity - (c/o 123 Lathom Road London E6), in English, vol 1 n. 5 Crisis in print - The story of coastal press - The Amway experience - Modern Socialism and Revolution - More on Socialism - Book reviews.

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HUNGARY

1956, The Hungarian Revolution - Council Communist pamphlet n. 1 Scorch Publications - Box n. 56 c/o 1.O.B. Bookshop 108 Salisbury Road Cardiff Wales in English, A good summing up of this revolution and the role of workers councils - (we will bring a longer review of this text). The pamphlet is the first one of a series dealing with councils Communism.

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ITALY

Collegamenti Wobbly - G. Carozza CP 1362 50100 Firenze Italy - in Italian, n. 13 - Spring/Summer 1984 - Union crisis and sliding scale of wages - Tax injustice as class injustice - France: notes on the industrial situation - Modern times - The end of the discourse - New biological technology - Social science and subjective auto constitution - Developing the under development.

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JAPAN

Paul Sharkey - The Friends of Durruti - pamphlet in English - Isoja Takero c/o Tokiwa -so Minami-kase 2516-Saiwai-ha Kawasaki-shi 211 Japan. This small pamphlet is not at all on Japan. It is a kind of chronology of the events in Barcelona from September '36 to July '37. You will find very little indeed on the May '37 movement, this workers revolution inside the bourgeois revolution and its repression by all the bourgeois forces, including the Stalinist and the anarchist of the FAI. It is more a polemical discussion on what was the Friends of Durruti positions these days, their political project of a revolutionary junta and their relationship with other anarchist or non-Stalinist Marxist groups.

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POLAND

Sous le Drapeau du Socialisme (paper of the international revolutionary Marxist tendency - 42 rue d'Avron 75020 Paris France), in French, n. 95-96 - December '83 - January '84 - publishes the complete translation of the accusation report against KOR militants - Kuron - Michnik, Wajek, and Romaszewski - (they are free now).

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USSR

The Concept of Soviet - Paño Vassilev - Volouté anarchiste - Groupe Fresnes Antony 34 rue de Fresnes 92160 Antony - in French - pamphlet written in 1933 in Bulgarian - The author killed by the police in 1933 was an anarcho-syndicalist militant who attempted to build unions in Bulgaria. He explains that the Soviets in 1905 in Russia were the spontaneous building up by the workers who transformed the committees of strike into organisms taking all decisions for the management of society as a whole. They have to do so because there is no other organisation (union for instance) to help them in their struggle. The attitude of the political organisation is very convincing: the Bolcheviki ignored the Soviets at first, then tried to manipulate them, the anarchists were deeply divided: very few anarcho-syndicalists saw them as an original form of

struggle and of social emancipation quite a few considered them as a temporary form of organisation to get casual demands. This convergence positions about worker councils is striking though quite understandable. Both Bolcheviks and most of anarchists despised workers organisations unable, according to them, to perform the political revolution: they were only eventually interested using them under their strict control to conquer the State. So did the Bolcheviks. When an anarcho-syndicalist like Vassilev criticizes the fragility of the ideas of most Russian anarchists and another one explains why most anarcho-communists not only ignore the mass workers' organisation, but even attacked them, we have to go beyond their conclusion that these "sectarian and wrong positions will be mortal to the Russian anarchism and revolution". We have to try to understand that these positions - Bolchevik and anarchist - were linked to the real character of the Russian Revolution which was coming up inexorably. It was a bourgeois revolution which needs the support of workers on one side, of peasants, on the other side and which needs as well to build up a strict domination (i. e. to break all kinds of organisation aiming at the defence of their own interests) on them. The political ideologies of this time were deeply influenced by this situation even before the bursting up of the revolution. Russia was a country poorly industrialised with more than 90% of peasants still half in serfdom, with its development more or less blocked by the imperialist competition. The interest of the pamphlet is to help to understand how anarchist conceptions in Russia were impregnated by the confusion between social and bourgeois revolution: it was not at all the author's ideas but he brings materials for that.

USA

Synthesis - A newsletter and journal for social ecology - (P.O. Box 1858 San Pedro CA 90733)

In English, April '84 n. 16 (see previous Echanges issues) - North American Bioregional Congress - Institute for Social Ecology Summer Program - The Green Movement in the USA - Putting "realism" in touch with reality or responding to anti-criticism of the West German greens New Alchemy Institute.

The History of May Day - Chicago 1886 - Barcelona 1937, Paris 1968, text from Tampa Narcissus - (P.O. Box 16000 SC Tampa FL 33687 USA), in English, as far as we can see the 1968 events in France are seen through the highly controversial situationist glasses. The description is very partial and sometimes completely inaccurate: it considers the action of a tiny minority group as the vanguard of proletariat action and misses what was really this proletariat action.

Several texts from anti-authoritarian studies - (300 Eshelman Hall 4C Berkely CA 94720 USA), Petra Kelly Comes to Berkeley - Civil obedience by Keith Sorel - (a good description of what are really the Greens in West Germany) - Socialism in quotation marks (on Nicaragua and the sandinist revolution) - On the I.W.W.

Europeans try to cope with mixed results of shorter work week - a study in Wall Street Journal (5/14/84) on the problems of capital when cutting work week.

Fifth Estate - (5928 Second Avenue Detroit MI 48202), in English - Spring '84 - Turn it off (on T.V.'s impact on our lives referring to a book - Four arguments for the elimination of T.V. by Jerry Mander - Squatting in Puerto Rico - Aborigines, resist genocide - Rudolph Bahro on Industrial Civilisation - review of the book "Socialism and Survival" (Heretic Books London) and Domestication of Language - review of "Shadow Work" (Ivan Illich - Marion Boyer - London 1981)

To Cure Technophobia you need illusion that works - leaflets in English from anti-authoritarians anonymous (P.O. Box 11331 Eugene OR 97440 USA).

Discussion Bulletin - (P.O. Box 1564 Grand Rapids MI 49501), in English n. 6 - June '84 - attempt to start a discussion among non-Leninist and non-social democrats, "to provide a form for exchanging ideas, challenging assumptions presenting theories and perhaps resolving differences and beginning the first stages of limited cooperation.

FRANCE

Capital restructuring and labour resistance - We can see what happens actually in France in sever-

al ways, according to our political positions. We can give more importance to some aspects of the crisis and of the restructuring it speeds up. We can look either for the political agents of it, or for their methods and their efficiency, or for the workers resistance and its success (or failure). This last aspect interests us at first even if it is evident that the workers action has to be replaced at every moment inside the capital-labour dialectic.

Everything has been said on the capitalist economy restructuring for the past ten years: it is the same in France as everywhere in the world and it is developing speedily through a fierce competition between State and multi-nationals. Amongst the economical, financial, social, and political consequences we will quote only a new international division of work, the reduction (in percentage and in cost) of the living labour share, the breaking up of the human communities and of all settled situations (build for the sake of capital during previous periods). All that is not especially new under capital. In every country the national capital tries to maintain its domination and this restructuring takes very specific characters. In the 70's, the old economical and political protectionism of peasants and middle class is still working in France and this situation influences deeply the need for capital to guarantee a higher standard of living to the working-class. To balance this, an important minority of the France proletariat - the foreign workers - was given the traditional insecurity of proletariat with lower wages; but since 1968, this minority fights more and more, which was partly linked to the coming on the labour market of the second generation of foreigners born or bred in France and rejecting the hard conditions imposed to (and more or less accepted) their parents. The economical restructuring is a social restructuring too: it is a matter of life or death for the national capital and the conservative government, discredited through 20 years of ruling could not be the agent of badly needed

reforms. It was the "task of the left" to try to reduce the "privileges of the middle-class, the settled positions of middle management and of a large part of the working-class, the share of immigrants in the labour force. The social democrat government is the result of this need. It is not important that the socialist party and the French communist party being associated to perform this "task": They have the same ideology of the transformation of private capitalism into State capitalism through decrees of the State. For a first period, they have built the instruments for this, mainly the "confidence" of the proletariat. Both parties could play their role: the socialist party with the "modernism" (inherited from 1968) directed towards the middle-class, the middle management and part of the workers; the communist party with the social peace of the most traditional part of the proletariat. Nationalisation, regionalisation, permanent discussions with bosses and workers unions reinforce this confidence. It is difficult to tell if the social democracy experienced quickly that capitalist economy is not ruled with decrees and that the world economy reduces to nothing the derisory attempts to overcome the laws of capital. It is possible they were conscious of that from the very beginning and that this first period was used only to shuffle the cards and to prepare the big sweep in the French economy. What happened is that the inexorable economical laws quickly imposed to push aside the modernist social language and technocratic pretensions and to practice the same politics as everywhere only covered with other rage. There is no other way to bring up the rate of profit only to bring up through any means the share of surplus value taken off from workers, i.e. to lower the share they get directly (wages, productivity) or indirectly (social services). Not only the workers were concerned by this politics, but the middle-class and the peasants too. The end of this article will be published in the next issue and will discuss more particularly the workers resistance to restructuring. The following text describes what happened at Talbot Poissy in December 1983 and shows what the restructuring means at the rank-and-file level, what are the union control and the worker resistance.



All sectors of activity are concerned. Another example is "Education Nationale" (Education): resistancees have to fight the unions as well. A pamphlet (in French), "Nous, enseignants du collége Paul Langevin briseurs de greve . . ." describes the strike in a college near Paris. We can see how the same forms of struggle appear opposing the same attempts of restructuring, with of course very different consequences according to the concerned activity. (Anne Simon 72 rue Myrrha 75018 Paris 10F).

JAPAN

Suicides up sharply among Japanese men.

(From *The Financial Times*, June 18th, 1984)

The rate of suicide among middle aged Japanese men jumped very sharply last year, apparently serving to underline some of the subtle changes and attendant strains at work in Japanese society.

An official government report, which dealt only in figures not analysis, put the overall number of recorded suicides last year at a record of nearly 25,000, 20 per cent up on 1982. But the increases for men in their 40s and 50s rose much more steeply, by 35 per cent and 47 per cent respectively.

Sociologists here, who have also been taking note of other relatively new phenomena such as sporadic outbreaks of teenage violence and the higher incidence of alcoholism among housewives, cite a number of reasons for the additional pressure that it prompting more men to take their own lives.

Some are connected with work, some with the prospect of extended retirement and some the result of financial burdens. But most are in some way linked to a growing perception that Japan, the post-war home of cradle-to-grave protection, is somehow less secure and pre-

dictable than it was—even though, by international standards, its womb-like characteristics remain strong.

For men in the 50-plus age bracket, thus nearing the end of their working lives, the combination of earlier retirement (often at 55) and a much longer life span (now over 73 years) apparently seems daunting. The number of divorces among couples whose male breadwinner has stopped working has also been increasing. A contributory cause is that the extended family, in which retired parents live with or very close to their children is becoming gradually less common as society becomes more mobile.

But those still in work also appear to be less satisfied. The immediate post-war generation sacrificed much, including, often, their family lives, in pursuing the task of rebuilding Japanese commerce and industry. But that imperative is less strong now that Japan has prospered.

Japanese companies, no more than a third of whom now practice lifetime employment, are today visibly more ruthless in shunting aside those em-

ployees who, it is felt, have no more to contribute. The Japanese themselves call this the "window-side" phenomenon, whereby the staffman on the downslope is given a seat where he has little else to do than gaze outside.

Although Japanese society is still very much built on the group ethic, it seems that the plight of the employee who is deprived of that security by being made to feel unwanted is emotionally severe, particularly if, as is likely, he has long since ceased to discuss his working life with his wife.

Another product of affluence, the rise in consumer credit, is also behind the increase in suicides. Largely neglected by the established financial institutions, the consumer loan need has been filled by the so-called "sarakin" (an abbreviation of "salaryman's money"), whose interest rates and collection methods are both on the severe side.

Thus, as recently as 1980, the Police Agency reports that only 204 suicides related to sarakin debts could be identified for the full year; in 1983, however,

the official estimate is that the rate was 135 a month, the majority the male heads of household.

More discursively, Japanese experts also point to a slow unravelling of the Confucian respect for the aged in society. It is commonplace to hear older Japanese men complain that the young, consumed in their "me too" lifestyle, no longer understand them; but this, in part, is because the older Japanese male, consumed with his work, often became in effect an absentee father, infrequently seen and rarely heard.

It is worth noting that Japanese women appear to have been able to adapt to social pressures better than men, at least if the suicide rate is anything to go by. However, the expectations of Japanese women have been, and still generally are, much lower than those of men.

Suicide, of course, is not a dishonourable way to die in Japan. But the Health and Welfare Ministry this week did concede it was alarmed by the growth in male suicides. It promised careful monitoring.



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