

échanges 57

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ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT, BM Box 91, London WC1 N3 XX United Kingdom

SPAIN

La Estiba - Voz de los puertos (Bulletin of the Coordinadora - Centro de Estudio - c/del Mar 97 - 08003 Barcelona - in Spanish)

N° 39/Sept. '88: Collective discussions. SEAT: criticism of the bureaucratic syndicalism (on the CNT and other unions). Strike of the fishermen on the Sahara banks.

Odio al capitalismo (Criticism, programme, struggle, organization - International Party - Av Vida Natural - Apartado de Correos 25 - 27080 Lugo -Spain - in Spanish). Programme elaboration. Notes on struggles (France, Palestine, Poland, etc.). Presentation of the first issues of 'A contre courant' (Belgian & Spanish paper).

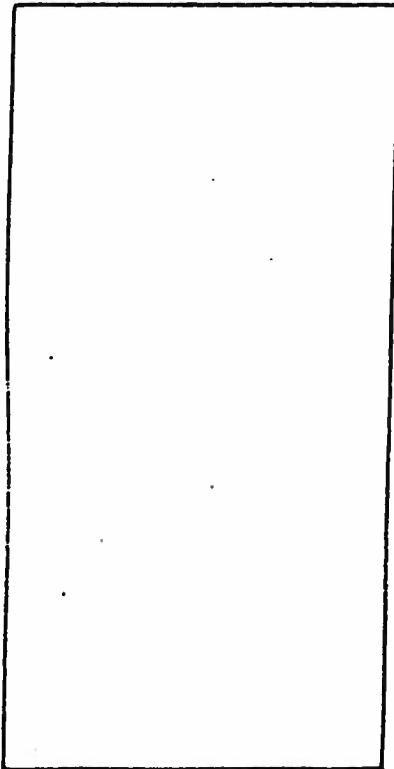
On the Spanish dockers (see Echanges issues N° 48, 49/50, 54)

From a Spanish comrade, 15/7/88: 'I want to begin where I left the analysis of the port restructuring process in my last letter. The government tried to implement the new decree in Bilbao and the Canary Islands as a last attempt to break the Coordinadora; as it failed, it understood that the only way to break the dockers resistance was to negotiate either with the unions, or with the Coordinadora, which was a step back from the previous position. On the other side, the dockers were tired by the length of the conflict and hoped for a quick end of it. The discussions took place in Madrid and paradoxically the Coordinadora receded not only on the words but on the content of the agreement. Anyway, some of its articles would not easily get the support of the Coordinadora dockers. Though voted everywhere in the Coordinadora assemblies, the Madrid agreement not only did not solve the actual problems but brought other problems. The Coordinadora pushed ahead the negotiations in January '88 as if it was in a hurry to end them, as if it wanted to end in one week a hard struggle lasting for two years. It would be too long to describe every step of the situation

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in the ports and the discussions during this period (for more details, see La Estiba issues of January, February and March). The result was that the Coordinadora leaders succeeded to get the support of a majority of dockers in all the assemblies for the agreement signed in Madrid with the boss union, the other workers' unions and the administration. This haste cannot prevent to consider that the apparent convergence of interest between leaders and the rank and file did not put a final full-stop to the actual situation in the ports, even if the Coordinadora had drawn back on some important points.

This situation was a paradoxical one: the Coordinadora came to the discussions with a strong position (the government had agreed to meet it) even if the struggle spirit was somewhat fading away. Just after the signature of the agreement, the dockers of Bilbao and Tenerife refused to have it implemented: dockers were breaking with the Coordinadora and the struggle unity it represented was no longer existing. In the agreement, the Coordinadora had agreed with a compulsory retirement of the eldest dockers which were not to be replaced by new ones and without special redundancy payments for those leaving; in the agreement there was as well an 'employment plan' to implement in five years: the firms could so achieve the adjustment of their labour force to their activity level. During the periods of redundancy, the dockers would be paid by the new firms organized by the decree for the ports exploitation; the money would be paid by the INEM (National Institute for Employment) up to 18 months of unemployment. I.e. the new firms would borrow the state money according to the dockers number and the maximum possible days of unemployment, to manage it and to pay eventually the non-worked days to the dockers. This would be a step towards the privatization of the ports labour force; the various companies would be integrated in the new firm and the dockers' collectives would be scattered all over the port. This pool of companies would capitalize as its own capital the money coming from (and only eventually for) the redundancy payments. In a certain way we could say that the workers would fund their own elimination: we can foresee a situation in which some dockers having been paid the maximum available days of unemployment (18 months) for three or four years would be definitely sacked with no right at all, no redundancy payments, no unemployment benefits. It would be very long and difficult to explain all the details and swindling possibilities for the management; more and more the labour agreements aimed at reinforcing the control on the workers threatened constantly by the juridical subtleties of the regulation.

Considering this point, we can observe that during the assemblies having ratified the agreement, all the criticisms underlining its ambiguous and dangerous sentences, always were supported by a minority of the workers.

The result of this situation was in fact that the agreement provided a kind of general frame for the local agreements in each port but till now, it has been impossible to go this way. The port companies supposed to receive the unemployment payments are as well supposed to sign a local agreement regulating the use of the labour force in this port: so they have to propose the dockers

smarter really means. Their sum can be far from little. Just such low-tech, low-capital, incremental improvements are at the heart of much of Japanese success.

American management's undeclared war on skilled employees destroys vital cooperation and knowledge in the workplace. It explains, more than anything else, why enormous high-tech investments throughout the economy have produced little or no measurable improvement in productivity.

America can be internationally competitive and have a high standard of living. Rather than cut people and watch as productive skills are lost and businesses are abandoned, management must retain skilled, experienced employees and give them more training and on-the-job authority to use their abilities. It must also pay them more as they raise productivity. Japan prospered by following such a course with workers who were initially far less skilled than America's.

We must change the assumptions underlying the labor-cutting that continue to over-automate industry. We must also guard against sending jobs, capital, technology and marketing knowhow overseas. Sending work overseas has already cost more than one million managers and professionals their jobs.

Ironically, the best hope for change lies in what management perceives to be its own worst enemy: unions and new associations of professional employees and managers. Such employee groups have the means and self-interest, to re-examine false assumptions about labor and to help managers use skilled American employees much more intelligently. When mutual economic benefits are clear, negotiations can be done internally, without acrimony.

EMPLOYEE groups also have the means and self-interest to publicize questionable management practices, such as the decision of the General Electric Company to sell the RCA Corporation's American television plants to the Thomson Group, the French company. This decision was arrived at despite a G.E. study that concluded that RCA's American-made televisions could be world leaders in price and quality.

If employee groups organize and utilize their members' knowledge, they could provide employers with valuable marketing services, such as product testing, new product ideas and designs, and information about foreign countries to aid exports. Small businesses, which lack capital for much of these activities, could get a terrific boost.

Employee groups could also help governments develop better economic data, publish periodicals and books with their own analyses, sponsor independent writers and academic studies, testify before and lobby more successfully in Congress, conduct public demonstrations, propose new laws and run candidates for office.

Armed with better information, employee groups could steer companies and money managers toward more human-oriented long-term investments and demand that pension and government funds be used for such purposes. Meanwhile, they could push for changes in, and better enforcement of, tax, antitrust and prudent-investment laws, to slow down the incessant buying and selling of companies, which is liquidating much of America's productive base.

By helping managers pursue a high-skill rather than a low-wage strategy for competitiveness, employee groups could begin the much desired rebuilding of America. ■

A new tendency in the methods of exploitation of the labour force ?

Labor accounts for 10 percent of costs but 75 percent of cuts.

By ERNEST D. LIEBERMAN

ADANGEROUS, virtually unquestioned assumption has taken hold of American management — that the best way to be competitive is to cut people, wages and salaries. This assumption has led to the trade deficits that are bankrupting America, and it is making our nation dependent on foreign powers for all manner of capital, products and — increasingly — technology. Yet this assumption is indefensible. Consider:

In manufacturing, direct labor averages only 10 percent of costs, but draws 75 percent of cost-cutting efforts. This means 90 percent of true costs, such as technology, capital, inventory turnover and embedded waste, are barely touched.

As one result, companies run up huge non-labor costs that are not tracked accurately on their bottom lines when they automate or send jobs overseas. The General Motors Corporation spent \$40 billion on labor-cutting machinery and went from being the low-cost producer to being the high-cost producer. Shipping costs, slow response times, disorganization and quality problems of foreign production can combine to ruin a busi-

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ness. And foreign producers, nurtured and subsidized by American companies, can grow so powerful as to shove aside the American businesses that contracted with them.

Preoccupied with labor and betrayed by a faulty accounting, American management is unable to apply solutions that are at hand. Design, quality, productivity, market responsiveness and a host of other ways to work smarter count for much more than wages. And one way to work smarter is to produce products in the markets where they are sold.

Management also is unaware of the extraordinarily skilled employees it has. American steelworkers, for example, are routinely reviled, but they have led the world during much of the past decade by producing steel with the fewest man-hours per ton, despite working in an industry with notoriously obsolete equipment, that is also undercapitalized and badly managed. Meanwhile, professional engineers, who are vital to industrial success, are treated as obsolete only five years after their graduations.

Worst of all, while worries mount about "labor shortages" and education crises, American management is cutting millions of highly productive — and well-paid — people throughout the economy. So many skilled people are being eliminated that as a nation we are quickly losing the ability to work at world-class levels.

Low wages simply are not "cheap" when huge costs and reduced business effectiveness are incurred to get them. High wages can be cheap when a skilled work force produces goods productively and of high quality.

American employees' abilities go far beyond technical or job-specific skills. Virtually every person on the job sees some kind of bottleneck, confusion or waste that could be reduced with better organization. These "little" things are part of what working

something they can't agree with: less work team, flexibility, etc. If the dockers agree with these proposals, the balance of struggle in the ports will move to the capital side. It is the actual object of the port restructuring. Now a majority of dockers have approved the national agreement, they see at their local level the real consequences, that in the restructuring process they will lose their control on the working process and that their present power will move to capital.

Hence their refusal to 'cooperate' even though the company can refer to the Coordinadora signed agreement. Now the agreement is six months old. It can't be implemented because workers and companies are reading the same words with different meanings. For this time work is going ahead in the ports with the old system and some specialists both sides try to elucidate the real meaning of some kind of esoteric language. There is in this situation an ever present potential conflict: in the medium and small ports, without new agreements and so without money to pay the unemployment benefits, the transport firms would have to pay the non-worked days, which means bankruptcy for a lot of them. So the restructuring is not going well even if its early retirement is reducing the dockers' number. The strike threat is permanent and some strikes spring up here and there.

On the teachers' strike

Teachers' strike developed mainly in May & June: primary and secondary schools were involved. Some millions of students were sent home so families and media made a big fuss around it. It was a corporatist action in a non-productive branch of the economy (polemics were running at time about their 'social productivity' as a means of youth control). Claims were practically about to bring into harmony teachers and civil servants wages. If you want more details on this strike, see 'La Estiba' N° 38 (mentioned above); the article was written by a teacher friend. There was no special conflict between the rank and file and the unions: we have to consider that in Spain the teachers have a very corporatist attitude and no struggle tradition. At first their mobilization was spectacular, followed almost unanimously, but answering practically to the unions manipulations. This sector (primary and secondary schools) practically is not unionized and their conditions of work are poorer than the civil servants ones (though slightly improved recently).

The stability of their job and their teaching function make easy their union integration, easier than the precarious workers for instance. They represent as well — as the civil servants — an increasingly important milieu for the unions. They could compensate their losses in the industrial branches if they succeeded to affiliate most of the teachers and civil servants. Doing so, they will increase their power and regain their mediation power within the State: it is the reason why they are so strongly engaged in this conflict.

On the other side, even though the government has refused the teachers' claims, it is evident that its interest is the same as the union's one: the integration

of the teachers in the institutions of the so-called Spanish civil society. The present transformations in Spain suppose the total disappearance of the social structures of the previous period and a quick general transformation of the society as a whole; the structural contradictions of capitalism and their working in a country like Spain are creating a deep gap between the civilian society and the State apparatus which threatens the democratic fetishism trying to legitimate the new state of affairs in Spain. The abstention level for instance is one symptom of this situation, expressing an evident defiance of the population to the institutions in the daily life. It is what we could call a legitimization crisis and indirectly the political milieu recognizes it. In other words, there is not in Spain the level of practical consensus and the relationship between civilian society and State apparatus we can find in other democratic countries (which does not mean it expresses revolutionary conditions). Technocrats are well aware of this situation and try to create some kind of 'society space'. It is the bureaucracy orders at the local level, what we can observe in the innumerable rock concerts, sports events, etc., organized to create some illusions. Another good example is for instance the attempt to make the Olympic Games in Barcelona a concern for all citizens. The spectacle of 'culture' must be the simulation of a society corresponding to the present form of capital domination. We can find here what remains of Spanish history with a State, the oldest in Europe, which never succeeds in building a civil society adapted to a modern project of domination, even though it was highly centralized.

Back to the teachers' strike, we can link it to these problems of attempts to build a legitimacy for the present regime. The struggle process will end in a kind of natural selection between the competing union bureaucracies. The union succeeding in imposing its authority on the strike collective will be the 'legitimate' one and if it succeeds to pull the strike out of the struggle ritual process, it will be the one recognized by the State to control and represent the whole teachers' staff, a civilian category not unionized till now, whose importance in the control of society and the limitation of the youth conflict potential is so important.

USA

Workers Vanguard (Paper of the Spartacist League of the USA - Box 1377 GPO - New York, NY 10116 - USA - in English) N° 463-21/10/88:

Yugoslavia in flames: workers' protests spread, nationalist agitation deepens. Genocide to USA. Klan lynchings target Philly (Philadelphia). N° 464 - 4/11/88: Skinheads: killers psychology in freedom. Trotsky and Gorbachev's school of falsification.

Green Synthesis (League for Ecological Democracy - PO Box 1858 - San Pedro-California 90733 - USA - in English) N° 28/Sept. '88: The deep ecology versus

The Hungarian Revolution - Council Communist pamphlet (60 p)The experience of the factory committees in the Russian Revolution - Council Communist pamphlet (60 p.)

*Cwmbach miners and women speak out - (50 p.)

Poland 1980-1982 ,class struggle and the crisis of capital- H.Simon - Black and Red - (2,00)

*Theses on the Chinese Revolution - C. Brendel - Solidarity (1,00)

*The New Movement - H. Simon - Solidarity - (1,00)

* The refusal of work - Echanges - (1,00)

*A.Pannekoek- His life and work - Marxism - General remarks on the question of organisation - Work Press Pamphlet (50 p.)

France -winter 86_87 , an attempt at autonomous organisation - the railways strike - Echanges - (50 p.)

The COBAS -A new rank and file movement - Italy 1986-1987 - David Brown (60 p)

AUTRES PUBLICATIONS

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

en espagnol - in spanish

* la huelga salvaje en polonia el 25 de junio de 1976 - H.Simon - La Piqueta

en allemand - in german

Abschied vom friedfertigen Proletariat - Frankreichs Anachronistischer Sozialismus - (DM 6)

Fiat - Arbeiterkämpfe in Turin - 1974-1980- (DM 5)

Polens Arbeiter auf dem Wege der Selbstbefreiung (DM 4,50)

Der Grossen Planes Stimm'und Gang - Bildungsplanung als Illusion - T Sander - (DM 17,80)

ECHANGES :bulletin -spécimen sur demande - abonnement 40 F par an donnant droit à 4 bulletins et aux brochures ou livres publiés dans l'année - Des exemplaires des anciens numéros peuvent être obtenus au prix des photocopies et frais postaux .

LIAISONS :numéros déjà parus : 10 F : n° 1 , 2 , 3

La grève généralisée en France , mai 1968 (10 F)
 *Hongrie 1956 (Anderson) -Echanges - (10 F)
 Un conflit décisif ; les syndicats combattent la révolte contre le travail- (Zerzan) -Echanges - (5 F)
 Wildcat , Dodge Truck , 1974 , Black and Red - Echanges -(5 F)
 *Le 25 juin 1976 en Pologne -H. Simon - Echanges - (10 F)
 Pologne 80-82;lutte de classe et crise du capital - H.Simon - Spartacus - (20 F)
 L'insurrection ouvrière en Allemagne de l'Est - juin 1953 - C. Brendel - Echanges -(10 F)
 A l'Ouest rien de nouveau , USA 1978 - Echanges - (10 F)
 *Lutte de classe autonome en Grande Bretagne- C.Brendel-Echanges - (20 F)
 To the bitter end- Grève des mineurs en Grande Bretagne - mars 84- mars 85 - H. Simon - , Acratie -(30 F)
 *Thèses sur la révolution chinoise - C.Brendel -Echanges (10 F)
 Grève à General Motors - collectif de Strasbourg - (5 F)
 Espagne , de l'antifranquisme à l'après-franquisme -C.Brendel et H.Simon - Echanges (20 F)
 Cwmbach :mineurs et femmes de mineurs parlent (5 F)
 *Chronique de la révolution espagnole - H.Chazé - Spartacus (20 F)
 * Lénine philosophe - Pannekeok - Spartacus - (20 F)
 * Réponse à Lénine - Gorter- Spartacus - (20 F)
 * Remarques générales sur la question de l'organisation - Pannekoek - Vlam Canada -(5 F)

PUBLICATIONS EN ANGLAIS
PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

ECHANGES :bulletin- current issue available free- subscription ; 4 pounds for one year including pamphlets and eventually books published during the year . Former issues available at the cost of photocopies and postage.

Workers' Councils - Pannekoek -Echanges - * part one and two(1.00) , part three (50 p) , part four (50 p)

social ecology debate. Five questions for green parties. Review of The German Greens: a social and political profile (W. Hülsberg).

Processed World (55 Sutter Street, Apt 1829, San Francisco, Ca. 94104, USA- in English) N° 22/Summer '88: Dollars and ecology (different shades of green). Bad ecotude everywhere (even environmental activists become trapped into manipulating nature for their bosses' greater glory). Primitive Thought. Mudshark for hire. Our neglected cities. Auto-destruction. Plants bursting with energy.

Perspective Internationalist (in English, USA - PO Box 1748, Montclair, NJ 07042; UK - BM Box 8154, London WC 1 N 3 XX; in French: Belgium - Destryker-BP 1181, Centre Monnaie, 1000 Bruxelles) N° 11/Summer 88: Riots in Palestine: stone throwing for a nationalist orgy. Class struggle in the world: Poland again at the forefront. Rank and file syndicalism: new sirens to wreck class struggle. Problems in the transition period.

Discussion Bulletin (PO Box 1564, Grand Rapids, Mi 49501 - USA - in English) Discussion on 'a new revolutionary strategy' (Robin Cox, Adam Buick). 'Base' and 'superstructure': a libertarian view (Tom Wetzel, evaluation of some Marxian concepts from an anarcho-syndicalist perspective). Statement of principles and purposes (regional committee for Marxist - Delonism). Book review: Questioning technology, a critical anthology (J. Zerzan and A. Carness), Freedom Press, London.

FRANCE

Spartacus (5 rue St Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris - temporary address) Following René Lefevre's death, the 'Association des

Amis de Spartacus' has to solve various serious problems to maintain the publishing activities of Spartacus. Their possibilities to continue René's publishing work depends on the unity, the choice, the non-sectarianism and the effective work of a small team. This small team needs as well the help (any kind of help) of all people having appreciated Spartacus activities and hoping to see them going ahead. Write to know the evolution of the situation and the real needs of the present Spartacus.

A.F.A.P.P. (Bulletin of the 'Association des familles et amis des prisonniers politiques', BP 716 - 75612 Paris - Cedex 04 - in French) N° 1/Sépt. 88: Discussion with Catherine Régulier and Henri Lefebvre. Debating on the political prisoners status. The prisoners' fight, part of the general social struggle (Baudrillard and Benoit). About the political prisoners (Oriach). Positions of the AFAPP.

C.R.H.M.S.S. (Centre de recherche sur l'histoire des mouvements sociaux et du

syndicalisme - 9 rue Malher - 75004 Paris - in French) Bulletin N° 11 1988: Among the university thesis summed in this bulletin some can be worth reading: Fruitier Stéphane: 1968 events in the Somme country; Hassenteufel Patrick: Citroën Paris in May-June 68 dualism of the strike.

Le capitalisme high tech (The high tech capitalism), J.P. Garnier, Spartacus (address above) Summary: The new technologies of alienation. The media spaa: a new place for the social imaginarieness. The technopoles: unbalanced metropol- is? Localised utopia.

L'Aube Internationaliste (l'Herbe Rouge - 1bis rue d'Alesia - 75014 Paris- in French) Sept/Oct. 88: The SNECMA strike (aircraft industry: March-May 1988). Prisons. Was the POF a Marxist party? Crisis for the Senegalese democra- cy. Geronimo; prisoner of the American capitalism.

Courant Alternatif (monthly paper of the-libertarian - OCL/Egrogore - BP 1213 - 51058 Reims Cedex - in French) N° 79/Oct. 88: Housing: how it works in Paris. Minimum guaranteed income. Kanaky. Sport: Olympic Games. C.A. is launching a subscription to finance the selling through distribution networks.

UNITED KINGDOM

About Wildcat Echanges et Mouvement has received the following letter from some comrades ex-members of the dissolved group

Wildcat: 'The announcement in March 1988 that the Wildcat group had dissolved itself, followed by the appearance of two issues of a 'Wildcat' magazine, claim- ing continuity with earlier publications, has clearly caused a lot of confusi- on.

For the record let us state again that the old Wildcat group has dissolved. One of its ex-members who refused to take part in any of the preliminary dis- cussion of a possible dissolution, subsequently got together with two or three other individuals to bring out two issues of what is really a new 'Wildcat' publication. Whilst there is clearly some political continuity with the old group it is quite false of these people to claim any organizational continuity. The other ex-members of Wildcat subsequently got together with various sympathi- zers and have been working together under the title of SUBVERSION.

The politics of the two new groups are not as dissimilar as the new 'Wildcat' would make out although their mode of operation probably is.

The SUBVERSION group holds more-or-less to the politics outlined in the old Wildcat statement 'Capitalism and its Revolutionary Destruction' (as clarified in correspondence with you), we are not sure that the new 'Wildcat' group does. M.B. for Subversion, November 1988

Box W c/o Raven Press - 75 Piccadilly -Manchester M1 2 BU England.

of working class' interests. This is likewise a consequence of perestroika, because a policy, aiming to free the state enterprise from bureaucratic control by Gosplan and giving them room for independent financial running, unavoidably creates greater contradictions in the factories itself. Contradictions of this sort no longer can be absorbed by the trade unions which are concentrating their activities mainly on excursions of the workforce or on vacation colonies.

In short: the trade union movement in Russia can serve perestroika best by a 'militant' attitude. It's doubtful however if by doing so, it will be able to change its bad reputation, the result of 60 years of officiousness on behalf of the ruling class. The coming period of perestroika will rather be the scene of leaders of a new type, if not the type of Makarov, may be the type of rebels who so often came to the fore in Russian history. What will be heard out of the loudspeakers in the factories: the Internationale or the songs of the brigand Stenka Razin?

* * *

The three chapters were published in the monthly 'Daad en Gedachte' ('Act and Thought') in Holland in the issues of July, August and September 1988.

LISTE DES PUBLICATIONS LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Publications marked with a * are practically out of print and no longer available when the order is received. Prices are in french francs for the publications in french and in sterling for the ones in english. Cheques or postal orders have to be in francs or in sterlings; notes in any currency could be sent as far as they are the countervalue of the total of the order. Marked prices include postage. Orders will be answered only if the corresponding payment is joined. They can be sent indifferently to the above addresses as well as any proposal of meeting, discussion or participation to the Echanges activity.

PUBLICATIONS EN FRANCAIS PUBLICATIONS IN FRENCH

*SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE - anciens numéros (10 F chaque) : 3, 4, 5/6, 23
*INFORMATIONS CORRESPONDANCE OUVRIERES (ICO)-anciens numéros (5 F chaque)
81, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 97/98 supplément, 99, 100, 101/102, 103/104, 105, 106/107,
108/109, 112/113, 115/116, 117, 118, 119, 121; 122
*LANTERNE NOIRE : anciens numéros 9, 10, 11
*RAISONS DE LA COLERE : ancien numéro 1

on of perestroika and the so-called democratization, the management, pure as a matter of form, raised the question in the workers' collectives first and afterwards in the new organ of the factory's autonomy.

The sixty workers' collectives thought that going to work on eight Saturdays would be more than enough and so they told the newly formed organ. This council in question however was presided, not by a working class representative but by the factory's managing director, part of perestroika which generally is kept secret in the propaganda. As a result, the new organ of so-called factory autonomy agreed with the managerial plans, i.e. with fifteen Saturdays' work instead of eight. This seemed to have worked as a red rag to the workforce. In any case, the car-workers did what they could to prevent the management from realizing what it was after.

To smash the workers' resistance, the management called a meeting of representatives of the workers' collectives and put pressure upon them even before the meeting had begun. As a final result the ballot was in favour of the management. Its proposals were accepted with a small majority and with the restriction that in 1989 only eight Saturdays would be a working day.

A key position in all this had been kept by the 'informal' leader of the workers, who was called Makarov. Though the workers were furious, he succeeded to steer their resistance in orderly ways and to avoid an open conflict with the authorities. His attitude earned for him the praise of papers like the Izvestija, which in other cases don't hesitate to call 'leaders of the workers' 'vagabonds' or 'hooligans'. One may conclude that the Soviet authorities consider the conduct of the people like Makarov as a sign that future resistance of the workers can be led into far from dangerous channels. That those working class' action will occur is as certain as that perestroika will introduce more modern production relations in Russia, which will be directed at the market. The sociologists, consulted by the Central Committee, declared on the ground of an inquiry in 25 factories that 69 percent of the workforce favoured actions as those in the car-factory of Jaroslav and even 46 percent was prepared to defend its position 'to the bitter end'¹³.

Under these circumstances the official trade union organization played its role. It didn't criticize the tendency of the economic reform (what in the Russian conditions would have been unthinkable for a public institution), neither did it criticize the conduct of the Jaroslav management. The trade union president Sjalajev urged democratization and blamed 'the abuse of power' of the management in the organs for 'enterprise autonomy'. These organs, he says, should not be the advisors of the management only. But the question is if this sort of critic ever will liberate the trade unions from their position as docile carriers of the interests of managers and party leaders. The trade union movement seems ready to present itself more than hitherto as the defender

13) Izvestija from January 7th, 1988.

Miners' strike (1984-1985) The following discussion concerns the publication of the book 'To the bitter end - 1984 - '85' (H. Simon - in French - Edition Acratie - available at Echanges). See previous correspondence in N° 54, p 6 (from a Spanish comrade) and N° 55, p 24 (from a Dutch comrade).

from an American comrade (18/4/88)

I was ignorant of many of the events and developments, so I appreciate your historical summary. It is a complicated story and you made the over-all picture quite clear. I approved of your insistence that the Labour government would not have been more sympathetic to the miners.

You are adept at showing how workers resist manipulation. Naturally they resist the bosses' manipulation, the government's and the cops'. Each social upheaval provides new examples of their rejection of the union's manipulation -and that's what makes the story interesting.

Many questions about solidarity were raised by this history. I found it quite moving that diverse towns and enterprises made direct links with individual mines. That kind of support for a workers' struggle surely must undermine the confidence of the ruling class. On the other hand, the lack of solidarity between miners of different regions was shocking. (Shocking, in spite of your plausible explanations.)

I wonder if anyone has investigated a question that remains with me: What did the non-picketing strikers do with their days and nights during those many months? For people used to working 40 or 50 hours a week, the free time must have made quite a change in their lives. According to your report, the active pickets were a definite minority.

This question ties with one of the subjects you say you are thinking of writing about: the refusal of work. I would be interested in hearing your observations on that subject.

from an Italian comrade (reply to the Spanish comrade - letter in Echanges N° 54)

Why the fragmentation of interests so that the strike is not general? Why the rank and file movement stops its rising and comes back under the bureaucratic control? They are objective questions, the reply given is: 'this talking of "time for oneself" that it is bringing proletarian people to loose links with the tasks the movement is requiring when the struggle is jumping from the daily life (factory or some limited sector) into a more general activity asking for more time from the strikes'.

The reply is wholly inadequate. The class struggle, the revolutionary movement cannot depend on such voluntarism, subjective availability.

Immediately after, the same comrade gives another different objective reply: 'The restructuring' of the class (which is the consequence of the mines restructuring) will bring the miners more identity with other workers in already restructured industrial sectors'.

But once again, contradicting himself, he continues: 'I agree with the analysis but will this "objective unity" become practical subjective unity? I am doubtful about it. I think that the restructuring of the working class and of the proletarianised society will cut workers according to their 'objective' situation in sectors separated by deep ditches.... New technology .. new hierarchy among workers ...'

The comrade concludes: '..these common interests can only be expressed through fragmented sectors in which we are all closely jailed. Up to which degree?'. The comrade avoids a conclusive reply, limiting himself to consider objective and subjective factors, but not arriving at their synthesis. I will reply by his assertion: 'The total domination of capital is bringing an unification of interests of workers because it brings a very deep proletarianization'. Undoubtedly there are two opposing tendencies: The economic crisis makes it more difficult to struggle, but at last the same more and more heavy crisis obliges to struggle. The objective situation causes the subjective one. The workers are obliged to struggle overcoming all their internal resistances and fears. The struggle, the revolution is necessary so that mankind can survive. Only if we found our analysis on pure materialist criteria, scientifically remarkable, we can conclude something of precise. Otherwise no conclusion is possible: indeed the comrade fails in it.

Answer to the letter of the Dutch comrade from the Spanish comrade (see Echanges N° 55)

At first, you criticize my opinion on the 'existing gap between the various categories of the working class' corresponding to the technical development, as you underline the proletarianization process brought by the new technologies. I agree but my doubts are rising precisely from this point, when I try to find the link between this process at a general level and the day to day reality inside the factory and the workers movement. Of course the new technologies determine a homogenization of the labour conditions, then a more and more developed proletarianization. What we can observe at this analysis level (the actual tendency) is not exactly translated in the same terms at the factory or branch level. Most part of the population, including new industrialized countries workers, are dominated by the same alienation and the same capital exploitation; but the concrete terms of this exploitation, i.e. the day to day conditions of living and working in this situation are very differentiated. I think that in the restructuring periods and consequently the proletariat recomposition as a class, these concrete circumstances are determining the reality or absence of struggles - more than the real and general tendencies of the capitalist evolution.

I linked the formal decomposition, fragmentation of the proletariat to the technical development; it was because, I thought, that this development expressed well the growing isolation of struggles and the indifference of other workers' categories about other workers problems - as I can observe it in Spain. If you

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So far we've pointed out that the 'democratization' about which Gorbachev and his supporters constantly speak is anything but a workers' democracy. We gathered this from the character of the present development of the Soviet society and from the character that the present reforms consequently must have. It will be very difficult to find any Russian worker, who doesn't understand that perestroika comes to harder working at the utmost for the same wage. How workers will react upon the severe changes in their position? This is a crucial question and the rulers watch them accurately. Workers' resistance, class struggle, is the last thing the partisans of Gorbachev have use for.

As in December 1987 labour unrest sprang up in the car-factory of Jaroslav, the authorities called in the assistance of a team of sociologists. They wanted to know what exactly was the reaction of workers elsewhere in the country upon the demonstrations in Jaroslav. They were sure that the matter would not end by these. Apart from the more or less nationalistic mass-strikes in Estonia, Armenia and other places, many labour conflicts already broke out and in each case the situation of the workers was at stake. As the reform of the Soviet economy makes progress these conflicts certainly will increase in number and extent.

One of the show-pieces of perestroika is the new State Enterprise Act. It lays down that the enterprises in Russia can have more autonomy and must have the opportunity to pay for themselves. Of course the precondition is, that the workers practice the ultimate discipline. Without that a firm cannot proceed on the Soviet-market or the world-market without losses and be able to compete. In conformity with its ideas on 'democratization' the Gorbachev government wanted to promote that workers would be concerned in the production, giving them the look-out of a part of the profit and by introducing a certain form of say. All this however is more conducive to the trading-results than to the so-called 'socialist self-management' which should be created by this and other legislation. This came to light in the case of Jaroslav¹².

What exactly happened? On the one side, there had been an extensive propaganda-campaign with the purpose that the workforce would be drawn into the efforts to find solutions for urgent problems with the production. At the same time however, the management continued with the realization of its own plans, which had already been drafted. One of these plans was the arrangement of the work. Management decided that in 1988 fifteen Saturdays would be working days. As usual, the trade unions gave their unqualified support. In considerati-

12) Our description of the vents is based on outspoken information in the Russian papers Izvestija, Trud and Sovetskaja Rossija from December 1987 and January 1988 and also based on a comment in the Research Bulletin of Radio Free Europe from February 22nd, 1988.

fact he reveals what's behind perestroika. Its ideas and projects have been set into being by the laws of the development of capitalist enterprise. That the process is irreversible one can also read in his book.

However, that perestroika is irreversible, doesn't mean that Gorbachev's opponents can't bring him to a downfall, nor that it should be impossible to temporarily stop the process of perestroika. Something like this also happened in the sixties. One could see then that social developments not always go smoothly and sometimes have interruptions. In the long run, we believe, the managers' victory over the bureaucrats is certain. This victory has been heralded in the course of more than twenty years. If it will be gained now, i.e. in a short time, is difficult to foretell. But it will come, with Gorbachev or eventually with somebody else.

In his book, Gorbachev deals at length with the consequences of perestroika for the relations between Russia and the rest of the world. His vision is, that perestroika leads to a peaceful foreign policy, to better relations between Moscow and Washington and between Russia and all the other countries. In the political field, he says, perestroika means international co-operation instead of confrontation.

It's a matter of course that in this second part of his book Gorbachev is demonstrating all his abilities as a diplomat and as a political propagandist. But we would be wrong if we would not take him serious for that reason. One should realize, that the Russian managerial class is as much interested in co-operation as any middle-class. Carry on trade is what it wants and one of the reasons why it aims at reforms, is that it wants to compete with its commodities on the world-market. She wants to bomb other countries not with SS-missiles or shrapnel, but with cheap goods.

The wish doesn't date back from yesterday. Bolshevik managers gave evidence of it before. When the Hungarian revolution in 1956 was culminating, Mikojan was prepared to a withdrawal of the Russian troops and he was also prepared to accept Hungary's rupture with the Warsaw-pact¹¹. Twelve years later Kosygin, likewise a typical manager, was against a Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Gorbachev says: 'Perestroika will make the world more livable.. Peaceful competition between different social systems will develop itself unhindered ... people in all countries will know prosperity, welfare and happiness..' It sounds like the voice of the liberal free-traders of the young British industrial middle-class in the early days of capitalism. We don't mean this sarcastically. We only remark this to show the essence of perestroika, to show what Gorbachev is representing, to demonstrate the visible resemblance between one capitalist class and the other one, even when they are not totally identical.

answer that the technical development is actually recomposing the various layers of the proletariat in unifying them according to their working condition, I agree; but the question we have to answer would have to be: how could we explain this difference between formal and actual conditions or in other words what are the contradictions explaining this difference? I think we have to go further ahead in this analysis. If not either we will be lost in a superficial and phenomenological analysis of events without understanding their actual tendencies, or we are limiting our analysis at such a level neglecting the most immediate contradictions of the day to day struggles. Another question appears at this point: do the productive process transformations produce a qualitative mutation inside the working class and at the same time of the analysis instruments; I must express my doubts there when I am considering the difficulties to understand and explain some peculiar facts of the struggles in using the tools of the general capitalist tendencies.

On an other side, I agree with what you wrote about the growing vulnerability of the modern society linked to the growing complexity of the valorization process of capital. This consideration brings another question linked to the previous one. Decentralizing the production process means the disappearance of the 'fordist' factory and consequently the proletariat 'disintegration'.. When I consider that the previous elements of proletariat unification are disappearing, I can't observe, at the same time, around which elements there is a class recomposition. It is from this point of view that I wrote on the objective and practical weakness of the proletariat as a class; the conditions you quote as expressing a potential unity remain very abstract when we observe how they work in the most immediate practical ground.

It is true that my letter expressed a certain disappointment; it is somewhat difficult to cut his personal life from the social events we are part of. Anyway, I want to explain some points on the individual interests and the leaders ability to bring back struggles under their control. What I wanted to stress in my previous letter was the converging points of the workers individual interests and of the bureaucracy interests, considering only the actual struggles conditions; i.e., if the leaders are succeeding in controlling the movement, it is because they are hoping for the agreement of the rank and file. Of course, it is not workers blindness but rather a kind of delegation reproducing the hierarchical labour divisions inside the working class.

I think it is the reason why most of the struggles are not going beyond the level from which we could see a complete transformation of the day to day life: because of that, the conflict reproduces the capitalist relationship. In my first letter on the miners' strike, I underlined this aspect, stressing on the fact it was the only way to trespass the technical delegation of functions to the 'leaders'. Either the struggle, staying separated from the day to day life even with some advances towards assemblies, fightings, etc.. always is divided between two different times: time for the struggle, time out of the struggle, even at the most progressive periods: we have then

11) See: Tibor Meray, 'Ten days that shook the Kremlin'.

assemblies, demonstrations, etc., one kind of life very different from the usual life at home outside the factory. Or the struggle is a part of life not different from the lifetime. In found there the very interesting aspect of the miners' strike; the struggle time was another way of living. Such a transformation can only appear when the level of the conflict is going beyond the usual level of struggles for the concerned fraction of the proletariat. The questions as asked were related to this situation: the separation between the individual interest and the 'workers leaders' interest as well as the convergence of these interests (the delegation to 'specialists' of the manoeuvre ability to solve the concrete problems the same way it happens in the day to day life). Conflicts between the rank and file and the leaders always existed in the workers movement; what I questioned was either if these conflicts brought some new elements in the past years, considering what has happened in the past, or if they are only the new clothes of permanent domination structures in a kind of self-adaption to the various social and historical levels.

(C. 15/7/88)

Counter Information (p/4 CI - 11 Forth Str - Edinburgh - EH 1 - in English)
 N° 21/Oct-Nov. 88: Employment training blasted (new slave labour scheme starts).
 China crisis. A democracy of resistance. All out to non-pay (against the poll tax).

ITALY

Collegamenti Wobbly (Angelo Caruso - Via Felice Casati 26 - 20124 Milano - Italy - in Italian) N° 22/Autumn-Winter 88: What

is labour?. Ecology at the crossing. Great Britain: Ford strike and the car industry (87-88). Railways: Macchinisti uniti (study on the productivity in the railways). About a delayed selling. Geneva: on industrial restructuring. Cobas: a glossary.

SWITZERLAND

Confrontations (Bulletin of the Libertarian Socialist Organization - OSL/Genève - c/o Crac - Bd Carl Vogt - 1205 Genève. OSL/Vand-

CP 289 - Lausanne 9. OSL/FLN - CP 621 - 2300 La Chana de Fonds)

This new bulletin has published a manifesto giving the OSL positions in the libertarian movement (January 86 - all publications are in French) N° 1/Jan. 86: Information on Switzerland. Tempo dei Cobas (on the Italian Cobas). N° 1/May 88: Love, autonomy and anarchy in Switzerland. The USCG congress (a Genève union). May 68 in France (interview of a unionist railway worker). CNT and anarcho-syndicalism in present Spain. N° 2/Sept. 88: Popular initiative in Switzerland: a mean of struggle or a trick? France: June 1988, the Etats Généraux for the immigration. Special issue: on South Africa.

The proof of this all can be found on those pages of Gorbachev's book where he declares without any reserve, that 'the party has to fulfil its task', be it that he has a party in mind which is a little bit different from the existing one. The reform, indicated by the word perestroika is a reform indeed, not an overthrow of the economic system in Russia. It consequently also means an adapted reform of the party, which already underwent several reforms in the past. If Gorbachev is advocating 'glasnost', openness, discussion and critic, if he in several ways is pleading for 'democracy', he means 'democracy for the managers', thus for a 'democracy' of and for the ruling class, as likewise is the Western democracy.

Whatever this 'democracy' - being far from a workers' democracy - could really mean to the Russian workers, is something with which Gorbachev scarcely deals with in his book 'Perestroika'. He does it where he points out that perestroika not at last is urgently needed because the economic situation is asking for more discipline of the labour force and higher productivity. Again he writes and speaks about it in a concealing way. Nevertheless, there certainly will be no Russian worker who doesn't understand that this comes to harder working and at utmost without any wage-increase as perestroika wants to make firms more appropriate for competition. The economic advisors of Gorbachev didn't hesitate to advocate the acceptance of a certain degree of unemployment as a part of the reform. They see it as a logical consequence of perestroika. But Gorbachev himself, the public relations man of the managers and the one who has to 'sell' perestroika, kept aloof from such consequences. All this makes it understandable that the Russian workers don't show great enthusiasm for perestroika and far less enthusiasm as Gorbachev wants to make us belief in his book.

But, if the Russian working class is not very enthusiastic and if the party bureaucrats, who only have to loose if perestroika will be realized and the managers will have more power, behave themselves hostile, what does this mean for perestroika's chances? Is the mere fact that Gorbachev had to dismiss one of his most zealous followers last year not an indication that his position is very unstable? Of course we refer to the dismissal of Boris Yeltsin, one of those at the top of the Moscow party organization, a man who was not afraid to advocate far more radical reforms as were advocated by Gorbachev himself, the latter being a skilful diplomat and well up in public relations.

As we see it, in spite of the violent and sometimes secret resistance or sabotage of the bureaucrats, perestroika is not in danger. Even though the important changes of the Russian economy are still to come, the economist Aganbegjan called perestroika inevitable and irreversible. The changes, hitherto realised make a return to the previous system impossible, he says. 'We have no choice', he adds. His colleague Sjmeljov shared his opinion. He has declared: 'Without perestroika we will end along the sideline of history and we will degrade to the ranks of an underdeveloped country'. In other words, but with the same amount of stress Gorbachev has pointed to the necessity of reforms. 'We can no longer tolerate a standstill', he says in his book. With that, in

Anyhow, Gorbachev conceals, that the Soviets ever since January 1918, i.e. two months after the Bolsheviks seized power, didn't have a real meaning anymore⁹. Deprived of any power they became and remained ornaments. In Russia, decisions have not been taken and are not taken by the Soviets, which became more unlike real workers' councils as ever before since then. And this was the case under Lenin and under his successors as well. So the names Soviet Russia or Soviet Union are by no means justified.

The reason why Gorbachev is far from concrete and inaccurate whenever he speaks about the Soviets' past can easily be found. Even if he declares that he wants to rehabilitate them as an organ of political power, he doesn't mean that he wants to make them real workers' councils. So, he doesn't mention the big difference between the factory committees (or even the Soviets of 1917) and what was no more than their shadow ever since the Bolsheviks steered the Russian revolution in an orderly way. If he would have pointed to this difference, he would have been obliged to explain straight out and without frills whether he wanted or not to restore the Soviets in their original form and power. Remaining vague he was able to raise illusion. For instance such illusions as one could meet in the letter we have quoted before.

Gorbachev, the representative and the spokesman of the more and more influential managerial class in Russia, certainly doesn't want to restore the position the Soviets had once upon a time at the eve of the October revolution and during the first weeks after its outbreak¹⁰. He talks of the 'extension of the rights and the autonomy of firms'. He does not say, that he wants to give rights or any possibility to take decisions by themselves, to the workers of those firms. He's critical about the 'substitution' of the Soviets by institutions of the party, but he puts the word 'substitution' between quotation marks, and so suggests that these Soviets have never been completely disappeared. From the whole context one can see, that with the use of the word 'substitution', he doesn't refer to the events of 1918. If Gorbachev emphatically declares: 'Of course we will not change the Soviet power!', he refers to the existing Soviet power, which isn't a Soviet power at all.

1922. A term like 'proletarian state' is a typical bolshevik expression which totally overlooks, that the workers only can seize power by destroying the apparatus of the state. Wherever a state apparatus exists, workers wield no power.

- 9) On January 3rd, 1918, a decree was promulgated which brought all the power, hitherto exercised by councils, in the hands of the Supreme Economic Council. On February 27th followed an order which subordinated the councils in enterprises to the state controlled trade unions.
- 10) Aside from the fact that many Soviets were no real workers' councils. But even these Soviets were not the ornament they became later on. Even these ornaments are not welcomed by Gorbachev.

WEST - GERMANY

Wildcat (Sisina - Postfach 360.527 - 1000 Berlin 36 - in German) N° 44/April 88:

Militant research in the white factory. Part of a project about the class struggles in the hospitals and the 'industrialization' of the health services, in Germany and internationally. Interview with nurses. Against psychiatry. Texts in connection with a project on workers' migration: Multinational labour in Hamburg/Experiences from a refugee initiative/Vietnamese workers in Eastern Europe/Foreign workers in Italy/ Material on European migration/Theses on proletarian movement of labour and class struggle. Rheinhausen steel workers' struggle; despite the spontaneous actions of the workers, the unions, church and state has managed to transform this into a media event. For the unions the struggle has become a lever to ensure its participation in reconstruction and flexibility in the industry - the workers demands to secure the jobs is 'interpreted' by the unions as a struggle for alternative jobs and 'reasonable alternatives'. Struggles '83-87 of workers of Euskalduna and other shipyards in Bilbao (Spain).

Wildcat-Info (c/o J. Kuri - Postfach 35 31 - 3300 Braunschweig - in German) Info is published in the months when Wildcat does not appear. N° 21/May 88: Theses on capitalism and housework. Speech at March 8 demonstration. Gulf war or class war. Work place report from a post sorting office. As part of a 'discussion on the concept of revolutionary organization' Info publish: Resume of Lenin's 'What is to be done'/Excerpts from a Kollontai biography and from Alix Holt's 'The bolsheviks and the oppression of women. Letter from Sheffield on the UK 'inner city' riots.

Wildcat N° 45/Summer 88: Reports about attempts by German militants to 'set something in motion': intervene in factories to collect information, create contacts, organize workers and strikes (Siemens electronics factory and companies providing temporary workers to factories). Theses of a 'workers' network'. Echanges article about UK Ford strike (abbreviated). Liaisons article about the strike movement in the Paris aircraft industry (abbreviated). South Korea strike wave April-May 88. Against psychiatry. Material on hospitals: 'The white factory' part 2/Report from a US hospital/Interview with part-time workers in a Freiburg hospital/UK health service strikes.

Wildcat-Info N°22/June 88: Full versions of Ford and Paris aircraft articles in Wildcat 45. Strike at Chausson (French auto factory) Febr. 88. Article from Collegamenti/Wobbly on the movement among Italian train drivers (1987). The end of the Rheinhausen steelworkers struggle. Critique of the natural sciences. Leaflets from militant German hospital workers. Frankfurt taxi drivers collective. Proposal about a project on class struggle in the US, and two texts: 'After the Black Monday - the crisis of crisis regulation' (Collegamenti N° 21) and 'Money and class struggle'.

WHOM OR WHAT DOES GORBACHEV REPRESENT
AND WHAT'S BEHIND PERESTROIKA?

I

ANNA SANDOR, a Hungarian publicist, who studied political economy at the Budapest Karl Marx University and has commented since 1977 upon developments in Eastern Europe for several newspapers, has called Mikhail Gorbachev 'a manager'¹. It seems to us, that there can hardly be a better characterization. Once upon a time the late Anastas Mikojan used to be considered the typical representative of the Russian managership, which has long ago been described as a 'new class' by the Yugoslav Milovan Djilas. What applies to Mikojan is even more relevant to Gorbachev. The present top dignitary is an intellectual trained in law and has wide personal contacts among the Russian intelligentsia². He has nothing in common with a bureaucrat. However, it would be wrong to consider him as the driving force heading for reforms. It is rather a result of an urgent need of reforms that Gorbachev was put in the fore. Add to this, that the reforms, far from undermining or reducing the position or the power of the new ruling class, on the contrary consolidate its position and strengthen its power. The proof of all this can be found on about every page of Gorbachev's book 'Perestroika'.

The Russian word 'perestroika' means 'reorganization' or 'reform'. In the thus titled book - in which Gorbachev deals with all the subjects he has dealt with in many speeches in practically the same way - the author defines right from the beginning what perestroika is and how it has to be understood. He, too, sees it as an urgent need, proceeding from drastic developments in the Russian society, which is ripe for change. The want for it, he continues, exists a long time.

The want Gorbachev refers to was felt already about a quarter of a century ago by Alexej Kosygin, who at that time was the second man in Russia after the fall of Nikita Khrushchev. Kosygin was a close friend of Mikojan and a typical manager like him. He too advocated changes, namely to the effect that his class should have more elbow-room. Kosygin observed an economical crisis. To face it he wanted to award the managers more independence at the cost of the central planning³.

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- 1) Anna Sándor, born 1944, married to a Dutchman, is living in the Netherlands since 1974 and contributes to different western newspapers.
 - 2) Prof. Louis Menashe in the American magazine 'Democratic Left' from November/December 1987.
 - 3) The reason why Kosygin could not realize his reforms was, that at the time the power of the new managerial class was not strong enough.

Wherever Gorbachev brings the Soviets on the carpet or the part assigned to them as a result of perestroika, either he turns to very loose phrases or he plays fast and loose with historical truth. Gorbachev, one of his critics has written, 'has no feel for history. His historical analysis is downright primitive compared with his grasp of economics and his relatively sophisticated discussion of social problems'⁶. But, as Gorbachev hardly makes historical analysis, or even not at all, therefore he neither makes 'primitive' ones. As far for his feelings: we don't dare to say, that he doesn't know the difference between a fairy-tale and reality. Nevertheless, he dishes up fairy-tales. And though it was precisely him who declared that there should be full daylight on the recent past and that the blind spots in Russia's history should disappear at last, he himself keeps in the dark as many things as possible as soon as he deals with history or as soon as he makes historical comparisons.

What Gorbachev directly or indirectly declares is, that it little by little went wrong with the Soviets, that they have been pushed back, without saying in which way or how. A system of government, based on administrative arrangements and disposals has come into being, he says. The reader involuntarily sees the hand of the dictator Stalin, leaving nothing of Lenin's work. That's what's suggested indeed, in spite of the fact that Gorbachev takes care not to mention him. This suggestion however in no sense does line up with the facts.

The Russian revolution of 1917 has been a *bourgeois* revolution. Lenin has known it and has said it straight. The difference with the bourgeois revolution in W-Europe however has been, that it only could be carried through by the working-class because of the weakness of the Russian middle-class⁷.

The Soviets, no matter what they were: real workers' councils, like the factory committees for instance, or so-called workers' councils, formed not by workers but by intellectual representatives of more or less 'left' parties, didn't at all fit in with the social relations which arose from this sort of a revolution. A parliament of western model - like the short-living Constituant - didn't fit in with them either. That's the reason why after 1917 the Bolsheviks acted quite different with those institutions as one could have been expected, starting from what Lenin ever wrote about the Constituant or about the Soviets.

What went very well with the new (state capitalist) society was the power of the party, which was called 'dictatorship of the proletariat', though in reality it was a dictatorship *o v e r* the proletariat. And very well with this party went a state apparatus, which again was called the public service of the 'proletarian state', but which was nothing else as the apparatus of the *o l d* state⁸.

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- 6) Peter Reddaway in the American magazine The New Republic, Feb 1st, 88.
 - 7) Lenin, Collected Works (German edition), Tome XI, Part 1, p. 28-79.
 - 8) See: Lenin, Protocol of the Fourth congress of the III. International,

wrote to say: ...'For the first time in so many years people of the party leadership and the government have shown a human face .. What are people thinking about your policy? I will not fool you.. I will not speak about the privileged class of the society. It's clear what they want. Many of them prefer to keep the life they lead now.. I want to speak about the proletarians, those people for whom perestroika is introduced. It is a pity that they don't understand yet the full meaning of your policy and hitherto they mistrust it.. Brains don't thaw very quickly..'

The intention is clear. What matters are those words, pretending that perestroika has been introduced for the sake of the workers. That the letter in question frankly declares that there are proletarians in Russia and a privileged class as well, is something that mattered nothing to Gorbachev. Why should it? He knows from experience that if one is unceasingly repeating that there's 'socialism' in Russia, many people swallow everything: the existence of a ruling class, the existence of proletarians, and even the existence of exploitation and oppression.

Brains which have to be unfreezed? Not the brains of the Russian workers, it seems to us. There's nothing wrong with them. Gorbachev can't mislead them and they still mistrust perestroika.

I I

Mikhail Gorbachev's book 'Perestroika' is like a clarion call. It's a writing which is zealous for reform, its purpose is to carry along the reader and to convince him. The text is a weapon in a war against the Russian party bureaucracy. The lively style, the penetrative argumentation, all this is to strengthen the spirit of the troops which have gone into battle, are prepared to go or still hesitate to do so. And as it always is the case in such writings, the number of the own troops is represented as favorable as possible, the enemy is described as weak and practically conquered. Gorbachev lets off verbal fireworks aiming to rouse as much enthusiasm as possible among the broadest group of the population.

If one's been told by Gorbachev that the Russian workers happened to be more and more estranged from their constitutional right to be drawn into public affairs, that power in Russia is exercised for instead by the workers, that he considers it necessary to rehabilitate the Soviets as an organ of political power and that the people should be the leader of the production, the conclusion enters, that we have too hastily denied that perestroika could be 'a revolution'. And if one finds Gorbachev repeatedly saying this sort of things without committing himself in any way but often referring to Lenin, he can perhaps gather that the author is up to t h a t Lenin who ever rose the slogan 'All power to the Soviets'. This impression is wrong however. We need not to take back our opinion on perestroika.

The similarity of his views with the ones that are developed in Gorbachev's book is obvious. There is talk of 'economic failures', 'stagnation', 'diminishing economic growth' and suchlike phenomena, which lead to 'the only possible conclusion' that 'the country was on the brink of a crisis'. The reform which has to put an end of stagnation and impending crisis is based on an important enlargement of the enterprises' independence and their transition to complete autonomy in the field of financial responsibilities and finance, Gorbachev says. He doesn't hide that this will be accompanied by less central planning.

The mere fact that Kosygin's and Gorbachev's views are very similar is a clear indication that these views did not arise in both heads but in the Russian society, i.e.: in several heads at the same time. As far as perestroika is concerned, this is undeniable. In the beginning of 1986 a Russian party congress was held. There, Gorbachev didn't announce economic reforms. Hardly the congress had come to an end, Abel Aganbegjan, a well-known economist, connected with the Economic Institute of the Soviet Academy of Science in Novosibirsk and an economic adviser of the Kremlin, declared that Gorbachev's economic policy felt short of what was required.

A 'radical reform' was needed, Aganbegjan argued. Meanwhile, some of his fellow-workers had developed progressive ideas, criticizing the existing social structure in Russia. Otherwise, these ideas were not yet very radical. Very soon however, others, like the economist Otto Latsis - in the 'Moskovskije Novosti' - and the economist Sjmeljov - in the monthly 'Novij Mir' - went further. They advocated fewer economic planning and more market economy, and the closing of firms which were working at a loss. At the same time they pleaded for mutual competition of Russian firms and for competition with firms abroad. They also advocated bank reform and several other changes. They are not or not yet all together part of what is now called perestroika.

Perestroika certainly has not been presented by Gorbachev in its final form. It took shape bit by bit. Everything points this way that Gorbachev often was the one who was pushed more than the one who was pushing. Likewise this is true for 'Glasnost', for the openness, the change in thought and the transformation of the political climate. Gorbachev, a fervent Stalinist as a young man, only hesitatingly went the way towards Glasnost. So recently as 1986 he declared in a conference of Russian authors one should be very reserved and careful when judging the Stalin-period. Next year, on July 10th, 1987, he spoke the same words which recur in his book 'Perestroika': 'We must never forgive or justify what happened in 1937 and 1938. Never! Those who were in office at the time are to blame for it'. But this was the case after he had clearly been pushed this way earlier in that year.

On March 13th '87 an article by Georgi Smirnov, one of Gorbachev's advisors, was published in the 'Pravda'. Smirnov messaged to the Soviet public that Khrushchev after the famous Twentieth Party Congress initiated modest measures of decentralization and democracy in an attempt to stop the process of economic stagnation. This policy, Smirnov says, was based upon and dictated by social

reality. However, those who were against it prevented it and brought Khrushchev down. The tendency of the article was clear enough: Smirnov argued the need of a return to the Twentieth Party Congress, its condemnation of Stalin and to everything which was aimed by it⁴.

Smirnov provided more or less the theoretical grounding for the process of perestroika. His theory, just as any other also, was not so much a program but rather a reflection of a real stage of development. Whatever the political consequences of this development, it has been in the first instance an economic one and unmistakably the increase of productivity was at stake. In his book, Gorbachev declares that 'openness' (glasnost) and a 'new way of thought' are preconditions of perestroika's success. As we see it, the indissoluble connection is quite different. Not a new way of thought opened the eyes to the need of economic reform. Its inevitability originated a 'new way of thought', which was an attendant circumstance.

Several times it has been remarked, that it's difficult to explain how a Central Committee, made up of a large number of strongly marked opponents of perestroika, of all candidates had chosen Gorbachev as the party's general-secretary. But this problem only exists if one takes glasnost and perestroika for Gorbachev's personal vision, a vision which he has to get accepted, a vision which he has to defend against critic and obstruction. True, this is the impression one gets from Gorbachev's book, by its style and its tone. This impression is wrong, however. One can conclude this from the fact that Stalin's collectivization, carried out with great cruelty, was strongly criticized in April 1987 in the 'Literaturnaya Gazeta'⁵, a little bit prior however was praised by Gorbachev as 'one of the achievements of the Soviet party and state'.

What is described as the so-called personal 'vision' of Gorbachev, appears to be a point of view which was formulated by others before and even more accurate. It's certainly not his opinion alone and moreover an opinion he obtained with great difficulty. New, as he pretends himself, this vision is neither. At the time of Kosygin the very same views which nowadays are developed by economists like Aganbegjan or Sjmeljov, then were brought up by professor Liberman. Thereupon prof. Ota Sik stood up for them in Czechoslovakia.

In his book, Gorbachev has called perestroika a 'revolution'. However, the reforms which are necessary and inevitable in Russia cannot be characterized with this word because they don't attack the relations of production. They don't attack wage-work, which is in Russian state-capitalism as well as in western

capitalism the basis of production and so they don't attack the organized control of the labour-force. What perestroika does attack is: the system of central planning, the system by which production and distribution are guided and arranged from several ministries or offices in Moscow. It means that trade and industry no longer are settled with pen and paper with the help of statistics which may be realistic but often are not. Instead of this economic categories like profit and loss, request and demand, and productivity as well, will play a far more important role.

Gorbachev makes it perfectly clear that this is at stake. He explains: 'The essential part of what we intend to do .. is to replace mainly administrative methods by chiefly economic methods'.

What's behind all this? In a society where wage-labour exists social life is governed by what you can call an invisible hand and mastered by economic categories like the value of the labour force or the surplus value. Such a society is likewise ruled by the law of the accumulation of capital. The amount of this accumulation by each single enterprise - i.e. the amount of the investment - cannot be administratively fixed. It depends on the results of production, in other words on the quantity of the surplus value produced. Once, Lenin complained that 'the engine slipped through the hands, went not in the direction the driver wanted, but went elsewhere'. Gorbachev in his turn complains that 'society becomes more and more unmanageable'. During a long historical period, which could be characterized as the period of 'primitive accumulation' or beginning industrialization the central planning and the power of the party bureaucracy was possibly unavoidable. Since, the point has been reached from where central planning is obstructing economic development.

The removal of this obstruction is perestroika. Gorbachev makes it obvious that it will diminish the influence of the bureaucracy and increase the influence of the managerial class, though he covers the increasing influence of the managers with the cloak of charity. All this he calls democratization, a flag which can cover different cargo. In this case it seems to be the packing of some political ideal. The truth is, that perestroika is an unescapable consequence of the capitalist method of production.

Of course Gorbachev doesn't characterize the existent Russian system of production as capitalism. He continuously speaks of 'socialism', of the 'socialist market', of 'socialist competition' and 'socialist construction'. But a market remains a market, although it is labelled in a different way. And wage-labour remains wage-labour, likewise the production of surplus value remains the production of surplus value, in spite of any sort of phraseology.

Gorbachev covers with the cloak of charity that an increasing power of the managers will be the immediate result of perestroika. He does even more. Appearing as the spokesman of the managerial class, he creates the impression that perestroika is something else than it really is. He does so for instance on those pages of his book, where he's quoting from letters directed to him.

One V.A. Brikovskis - whether this is a worker or not is not mentioned-

4) We reproduce the contents of Smirnov's article from a text from Dev Murarka in the American weekly The Nation from October 24, 1987.

5) The criticism we refer to was delivered by Vladimir Tikhonov, an expert on agriculture. His views are largely reproduced by Dev Murarka in The Nation from 24-10-'87.