

On the 4th of february 89 a new law will be implemented in spite of Reagan's opposition :employers must give 60 days notice before closing their firm.To keep within the law , the two papers immediately give this notice to their 4,400 employees;it is sheer blackmail:500 would be made redundant through the merger but , if the merger is refused the 'Detroit Free Press 'will disappear ,and 4,400 sacked.So on the 27 of january ,an appeal allowed the merger,Still the possibility of another appeal to the Supreme Court .

The Teamsters now ,In August 88 ,the Teamsters Executive Committee put W.J.Mc Carthy as head of the union , Jacky Presser being dead after a long illness .Mc Carthy not only has to consolidate his power with his lieutenants (some of them had been removed) but to cope with new problems .

Rank and file opposition is growing...A majority has voted against two agreements concerning 250,000 members because they were too advantageous to employers.Legally , the agreements were adopted because the union status asks for a 2/3 majority to reject an agreement , but the vote reveals a disillusion which allows the 'Teamsters for a democratic union ' to develop a campaign for a democratic and combative union .

More , as usual , the Teamsters have some problems with the court.Delayed by the Presser illness, the Cleveland trial is going ahead without him , Teamsters bureaucracy and FBI agents are involved in a squalid plot of informers and corruption.Anyway it is nothing compared with a trial planned for the 27 of february when the Justice department will ask for the removal of the Teamsters top leaders, the controle of the union by the government and the exclusion of 26 supposed gangsters of all union activity .In spite of some success against the Mafia, the gouvernement thinks these measures are needed to break the links between the Teamsters and 'organised crime '.About 10 unions leaders have already accepted the government conditions and won't have to come to the court .The teamsters sees this situation a very serious one but the government has a difficult task ,Unions - though paper tigers- will protest and public opinion -as far as having some influence - is bored ; Teamsters'depravity is nothing compared with the manipulations of the Texas gentlemen speculators . More important is the doubt about the efficacy of government control.An example is given by the Teamster local 560 in New Jersey, For more than 30 years , this local was ruled by Tony Provenzano , his family and his associates .Tony Provenzano (who died in a federal prison in january) was formerly Teamsters vice president and supposed to be a 'capo ' in the Genovese Mafia family .According to some persistant rumours he was responsible for the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa , Teamsters President in 1975 .The local 560 history led by

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, 97/98supplément, 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

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 (ICO) (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)

À 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 - Pannekeek - Spartacus - (20 F)

* Réponse à Lénine - Gorter- Spartacus - (20 F)

* Remarques générales sur la question de l'organisation - Pannekoek - Vlam Canada - (5 F)

to read Collegamenti articles. I don't know if you have seen Wildcat-Info. This is a kind of bulletin issued in the months when an 'ordinary' Wildcat issue does not appear. It's not sold but only available in subscription, and contains other material than in Wildcat itself. Anyone reading Wildcat should also be interested in Info.

R. H.

-end of p. 21-

Alternatif", "Les Cahiers du Doute", Liaisons " et " Echanges ", as well as developments of class struggle in this direction when they are not by chance going on wildcat strikes every ten or twenty years. All these papers were silent on this important aspect of classe struggle.

T.S. 1988

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)

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 CQBAS. -A new rank and file movement - Italy 1986-1997 - David Brown (60 p)

Provenzano and his lieutenants is a long list of murders (dissenters strangled with piano strings or burnt in incinerators) and of limitless corruption. After a judgment in 1984 the local was placed under government control in 1986 and in december 1988 'real' elections were organised -by correspondence -.The last Provenzano men heading the local then were ineligible but they pushed ahead instead of members of their families.Their list won against a list of 'reformers' by a large majority. Provenzano photo and a good leader of the worker movement will reappear in union offices. Anyway, the local 560 administrator is optimistic, hoping that the Teamsters will use better methods even if they have chosen to keep the same men as their leaders.

The teamsters new leader, Mc Carthy declared in favour of reforms but with no more precisions. The new management is elected for 5 years on the proposals of the executive committee, by a Congress where the local bureaucrats are the majority. A suggested reform from Mc Carthy involving such a congress every three years sounds like a joke appreciated only by bureaucrats looking for paid trips. Reintegrating the Teamsters in the AFL-CIO stopped their 'raids' against the typos and mailers locals. An agreement with the Communications Workers of America (which absorbed the International Typographical Union) has decided upon the status of the 'locals' sharply disputed between the two unions. The weight of CWA has limited the effects of a strike launched in 1985 by typos, mailers and pressmen against the Chicago Tribune. The paper was not stopped at all, 50 typos having been ordered by the union to resume work received important wage rises and all other lock-outed workers lump payments. Mailers and pressmen are still without a job; it was a defeat but not a disaster.

The Columbia review of Journalism (january-february) published a very interesting article on the Newspaper Guild, a small union of journalists and paper clerks. Unlike other print unions, the Guild face an anti union and greedy boss opposition which make a strike a kind of suicide. When it was not completely eliminated, it had to agree to a lot of concessions. The Guild has 33,000 members and is a small and very vulnerable organisation in a developing industry. A reporter beginner with low pay is not always ready to assimilate his condition and interests with those of a small clerk. Managers know this situation very well and use it cleverly in their interests. The only existence and survival of the Guild (affiliated to AFL-CIO) are in themselves a kind of an exploit; when the union membership declined by 16% since 1980, the Guild increased it by 4%; perhaps a reason for optimism?

P.L. spring 89

Daad en Gedachte (Action and Thought)(monthly paper of a dutch councillorist group with the same name - Schouw 48-11 - 8232 BD Lelystad - Holland) (in dutch)

April 89 -Criticism of a persistent misconception of people still thinking that Russia , China , Cuba and Eastern Europe are 'socialist ' and when criticising these countries situation think they are criticising 'socialism '-The union movement is not on the way to recovery as a lot of people still think;its 'crisis' and'a pretended new life are only the logical development of its very character .-Review of a book on unemployed life betwen the two world wars-Answer to a spanish comrade on the 14/12/88 strike(see this text in the section 'Spain ') -On the dutch nurses struggle .

may 89:Comments on the commemoration of Görter by all kind of hypocritical people-On the Limburg belgian miners'strike and their fight with the police (Rijkswacht)- On the relationship between workers and intellectuals-Answer from the spanish comrade (see the section Spain)- The new elections in Holland;christian-democrats or socio-democrats ,it is the same thing -Translation of a small english pamphlet written by a member of the 'Iron Column '

july-august 89 -Translation of Michael Seidman 's pamphlet on the refusal of work during the Popular Front in Spain and in France (see Echanges n°56)

september 89 -The dutch nurses strike (the end) -Comment on the Chinese events -Russian miners strike - Comment on the Gorbachev speech in Paris (Sorbonne)- Wildcat strike in two dutch newspapers -On the death of Janos Kadar in Hungary - Analysis of the situation in Poland ,

october 89 - English dockers strike - Analysis of the situation in China - Poland ;it is the time to remove the mask -Report of a discussion with a spanish comrade ,

The nurses struggle

For months , even years , nurses and other hospitals workers wages did not stop decreasing ,Unions did not move to change

Wildcat -Info ,c/o J.Kuri , Postfach 35.31 ,3300 Braunschweig
Thekla

(All publications in German)

-I have received a lot of material from them. I now have W. itself from no 36, some issues of their theoretical journal TheKla, and some issues of Wildcat-Info. Altogether this is many hundred pages to read, maybe over a thousand, and it will take some time. So for the time being I am very uncertain about this group.

Firstly, I am in doubt about the organisational aspect. It appears to me that it has grown to a more national thing, with a number of groups more or less participating in, and at least writing in, the journal, but I'm not sure what 'unites' them. And that leads to my second uncertainty, what this group stands for politically. From the various articles, it appears that they write about almost everything: class struggle, political refugees, occupation of houses, organisation of unemployed, struggles in connection with the social security system, nuclear power etc. Furthermore, it appears to me that they're engaged in conciously sending 'members' to work in certain factories/industries with the aim both of provoking conflicts and gaining information. Concerning this, there is a strong 'Italian connection'. They have a concept called 'Militante Arbeiteruntersuchung' (Militant workers investigation) which obviously comes from Italian groups in the 60s and 70s. A number of issues of TheKla have Italian material. One issue about 'workers investigation at FIAT' is translations of material from Quaderni Rossi, Classe Operaia etc. from the first half of the 60s. Another issue is a very long M.Tronti text. They have even published texts about 'factory guerilla in Milano 1980/81' dealing with the experience of a certain 'column' there of the Red Brigades. Another issue of TheKla (I don't have all of these - every issue is as thick as a book) is about discussions about this factory guerilla and riots in the UK.

The material about 'factories'/industries' are often a very detailed description of the production process, the various groups of skilled/unskilled workers etc., and as such they both useful and interesting. But the main question - which I can't answer now - is what lays behind everything they do. I am not sure what their 'political positions' are. You know me well enough to understand that I'm not looking for a set of political positions from they which they try to intervene with, like the ICC for example. But irrespective of whether one sees it as important to propagate such positions, we still have them. If we for example take Daad en Gedachte, the journal is not full of these kind of proclamations about the unions, nationalism, parliamentarism etc. But the group, and I, and I suppose you, still have a view about this, about the Russian revolution etc.etc. Concerning Wildcat, I have no idea about what they mean about things like this, and really not about something more immediately relevant either: a general view of the grade union movement, the development of class consciousness, 'the role (or lack of role) of revolutionaries' etc. One thing of interest to know is that Wildcat offices, and homes of 'members', have been subjected to razzias from the police.

-But at least Wildcat is very useful for me to read. It contains a lot of translations from languages I don't read like French and Italian - for example it's the only possibility for me to be able .

NURSES. BELGIUM.

There are things going on among nurses and in the health sector in a number of countries: France, UK and Holland are the countries we know most about. My impression is that there was a difference between on the one hand what took place in France last Autumn and on the other hand what took place in the UK both in the Spring of 88 and the regrading dispute in the Autumn - namely that whereas the demonstrations and meetings in France were very 'spectacular', had a great attendance and support among the workforce and received a lot of attention, the daily running of the hospitals during this period was more or less uninterrupted, but in the UK the functioning of the hospitals was more interrupted and that there was a more widespread daily resistance and discontent even if it didn't take the more 'spectacular' form and public attention of the French coordination movement.

Apart from the three above mentioned countries things are happening, but not on the same scale, in Germany - Wildcat has had some material about it. There are possibilities of things happening in Italy, where there are protest against cuts in the public sector. In Naples I think there has been a lot of protest by the patients themselves, and during these protests in April 4000 doctors and hospital employees declared their solidarity with the patients by not treating them.

In Belgium there has been actions in the health sector for some time. Firstly, in the institutions for the disabled (both mentally and physically), where there has been open discontent for around 6 months and where 94 percent of the employees of 250 institutions participate. It's actually not a strike because it is a sector where it's kind of difficult just to leave the patients on their own, but there has been a lot of various actions, including large demonstrations. The demands are about a wage increase and hiring of more people. In the hospitals it has been a kind of rolling strike with various institutions striking at various times. At the end of April 20 hospitals were on strike. 3 days later - 1 of May - there was 50. I won't say anything more about this right now, and my sources about this are limited to a large article in a Norwegian leftwing paper.

In Belgium some months ago there was also strikes among the Limburg miners, and more recently a large demonstration. Both involved violent clashes with the police. I just mention this in case you haven't noticed it because I'm sure it's something which interest you. Cajo has written an article about it.

I'm not sure if anything can be said or written linking this happening in the health sector. There are obvious differences: -in the forms and levels and actions and discontent -in the level of unionisation and the extent to which the workers are organised in various unions -the organisation of the health sector as far as private/public ownership/control is concerned. But also many things in common like the distrust, in the case of France and Holland, of the unions, cuts in public spending etc.

R. H.

this situation and we can easily understand why only 7% of the 160,000 nurses were members of a union. In such a situation, some rank and file claims calculated that the wage gap with similar activities was more than 12%; these claims proposed to fill the gap in three years: 5% in 89 and 5% in each of the next years. Out of question, said the government, indefensible answered the unions.

Some nurses thought to act by themselves; they advertised in the newspapers about their claim asking the nurses interested to come to a meeting in Utrecht on the Saturday 11 of February; 5 of them had paid for the reservation of a room with their money. Coming from all parts of Holland, 6,000 nurses followed the meeting. The unions made a U turn, asking for the 5%. The same day, the 6,000 nurses agreed to form an organisation committee with the name 'Nurses in revolt'. The unions asked for contacts but met a great defiance; the nurses did not refuse to work with them but they wanted to keep everything in their own hands.

Differences were evident at once; the unions wanted everything made 'legally' and no disturbance in nurses work which could bring some anxiety among the patients. The nurses had the doctors and patients support because they did not claim only for wages but for a lot of practical measures greatly disturbing and frustrating (shortage of staff, lack of money, etc...); the union position made them furious.

One week later, delegates from the unions, the president of the Hospital Council (organism distributing the money to the hospitals) and some rank and file nurses came together on TV to agree on the fact that the government was hostile to the 5% claim for lack of money; during the discussion, the unions pretended they always had supported the 5% claim which was so evident a lie it was very easy for the nurses to brush away. The president of the Hospitals Council though agreeing with the general nurses claims declared that the wage rise could only be 3,8%; the nurses considered it far from what they wanted.

In the following weeks various autonomous local actions were organised by the nurses; street demonstrations, work to rule strike. The 'Nurses in revolt' committee called for a day of action on the 15th of March; to defuse this action, the unions organised a day of action on the 18th of March. The committee 'Nurses in revolt' protested against the sabotage of its project but called for the nurses to participate as well in the union day of action. Even so, the nurses day of action was a great success and the union one a failure. On the 15th of March big a crowd of nurses met in various Dutch towns: 24,000 in The Hague, 6,000 in

Arnhem ,6,000 in Maastricht ,36,000 for Holland .In The Hague , the nurses having pushed past the police succeeded in entering the square housing the ministry and parliament buildings.The Health Minister said he was very impressed by these demonstrations but that he had nothing to give to the nurses,On the 18th , the unions brought only the evidence they were unable to mobilise the nurses .

The struggle was going ahead ; it was locally completely in the hands of the nurses who organised local lightning actions; the unions were left completely aside and powerless .These actions were very different;

-sudden blockade of the motorways at different points, once during a rush hour so quickly that the police could do nothing , a second time the police could break the blockade but the third time the nurses carried on to the motorway beds and all kind of material in such a way that the police were again powerless.

-occupation of the ministry once inside to prevent civil servants from working , another time outside to prevent them going in

-occupation of the seat of the Hospital council; once , they surrounded it with sheet knotted end to end;another time had a sit in inside .

At this point of the struggle , the unions declared they agreed with the proposals of 3.8%;'Nurses in revolt ' refusing all kind of agreement broke with the unions following its own way independently .In an interview , a nurse member of the committee was asked if they intended to build another union.The answer was:

* ; 'we don't know ' , 'Nurses in revolt ' is neither a union, nor an action committee ; it has no administration ,no organisation ' and to the question 'How do you know what you are for ?'the answer was ' When thousands are coming to demonstrate , it is enough ' .

A new day of action was organised in The Hague where 60,000 nurses from all over Holland demonstrated.Again the unions tried to catch the band wagon pretending that , if they were ready to sign fo 3.8% ,it did not mean they were against the 5%.

Even if the nurses had large support among the public,a 'patients committee 'asked a court at this moment to forbid any nurses action with the threat of a daily payment.The judge stated that the nurses had the right to struggle and to protest but as well as that they had to ' respect the patients interests and not to neglect in their action their duties and the public general interest'.Everyday in may ,newspapers could print that the nurses autonomous action was weaker and weaker and the protest from the 'Nurses in revolt 'committee could not hide this fact for

Recently the proposed budgets for next year in the different communities have been published. They have one thing in common: cuts, reductions of services, and higher fees. Throughout the country perhaps as many as 14000 jobs in the state and local administrations will disappear next year. In Oslo for instance large cuts have been proposed, and also reductions of jobs. Also, the government of Oslo has proposed to sell municipal enterprises to private companies. So far this budget has provoked the unions, and they organised a three hour demonstration strike on November the 2nd by some 30000 municipal workers, and a demonstration on the same day with 10000 participants. Other demonstrations have been announced this autumn.

In Halden, a town with approximately 26000 inhabitants, there was a "general strike" on November the 3rd with 10000 on strike and taking part in a demonstratic The unions had organised this action to protest against the proposed closing down of the local hospital. Even though Halden is only 120 kilometres from Oslo, the newspapers here wrote nothing about this strike. The only exception was the social-democratic daily which carried a small notice.

In Sauda, a small town on the west coast of Norway, 3000 of the 5500 inhabitants took part in a demonstration to protest against the closing of the local hospital on November the 14th.

The real wages have been attacked slowly and in different ways. This might explain why rather big reductions have not produced widespread open responses from the workers. The low levels of unemployment up till recently might also be part of an explanation, many workers think that at least they still have a job even if it is not paid as well as before. The workers have little experience of class struggle. The unions and the left still have a large influence. Perhaps the influence of the union leadership is not as strong as it used to be, but the local trade union officials still have a strong influence. Within the unions and the left there are some initiatives to try and radicalise the unions. An opposition is growing and have organised two national opposition conferences.

Open workers struggles and strikes (except political demonstration strikes) have been few in recent years, and wildcat strikes have been very few. At the end of 1987 there was an illegal strike by kindergarten teachers in Oslo, followed by a countrywide teachers strike at the beginning of this year. Approximately 7000 teachers were on strike at the most. The teachers strike was peculiar in the sense that it was the first wildcat strike I can remember which was not utterly condemned by all of the "establishment". The strike and the situation of the teachers was "understood" or "supported" by forces which usually are the strongest enemies of illegal strikes, e.g. the press, the leaders of the "bourgeois" parties etc. When workers go on wildcat strikes they usually meet the total condemnation of these same forces. Both these strikes were dominated by the unions even if they were not officially supported by the unions.

Many of the local struggles taking place are not over the questions of wages or layoffs, but against changes of ownership, mergers, and other changes of the company, or against attacks and harassments of union officials. Thus for about half a week in the middle of October the workers and staff in the company that is flying workers to the oil platforms staged a sitdown strike. They struck against harassments of union officials and the proposed merger of this company with another company. The workers feared that this merger would only be for the benefit of the other company (a real estate company) and thus draining resources from their own company. 450 workers in five different towns took part in this strike.

Wages have been declining for several years. This year wage rises were restricted to 1 krone per hour, and a law was passed banning all further rises. This law was protested against by more than 300000 going on a two hour demonstration strike on March 11th. This strike was called by the trade union federations outside LO but also supported by some of the locals of LO. Last year there was no general wage rises and only certain groups of workers with local negotiations managed to get any wage rises. To illustrate the development of wages: figures have been published showing that as many as 250000 families have suffered a yearly reduction of wages of one monthly wage or more.

Many workers have large debts on housing, rates of interest are high, and the rules for tax exemptions for paid interests have been changed to the worse. The level of taxation is one of the highest in the world, both for direct- and indirect taxes. The thinking of the workers will easily be diverted towards for instance questions of taxation and the level of rates of interest.

In addition to the wages, the living standard is constituted by the so called social wage - benefits and services rendered by the state and local authorities. The state is trying hard to reduce this public consumption. Much of these attacks are made through the local administrations. A whole series of attacks are presented as a specific "crisis" of the local authorities and their economies. These attacks are spread out and will be different from one local community to another.

long. It was also the time for the unions to sign a new agreement which was the formal end of any action.

Of course the nurses did not with their spectacular action get what they were initially claiming. Most of the newspapers expressing the government, minister and union bureaucrats positions could write that a 'solution' had been found but a close examination showed that this 'solution' was practically nothing. This new agreement brought only the conclusion that, in the end, the union bureaucrats had succeeded in imposing on a tired and disappointed rank and file a compromise they had refused all throughout their action.

The agreement brought a wage rise of 3% plus an average benefit of 1,25% for 80,000 nurses over periods of irregular timing. Separately these were offered £ 13 m to ease the work pressure with new recruits. There was proposal to improve the 'working atmosphere' in order to encourage the nurses 'good will'.

Such measures are only bread for to-morrow. It is true that the nurses will get 4,25% not too far from the 5% they claimed at first. But the trick is that part of this increase will be covered by a reduction in the retirement contribution (1,74%). So what the government will pay is 1,76%, 1% more than the 0,75% offered when the struggle began.

More importantly all the actual causes of the action were completely neglected. The union movement did everything to break the autonomous nurses organisation (which could be compared with the 'coordinating committees' in France). Unions planned actions without any agreement from the rank and file; they built obstacles to the autonomous action and spread a mountain of propaganda to hide the fact that the struggle was not for a new agreement and wages but for the whole activity of nurses in hospitals. No need to say that unions are fundamentally against any kind of rank and file organisation they try to conquer and manipulate or to breaking as far as they are not a pure appendage of their bureaucracy.

In a daily paper, a medical assistant fiercely criticised the union attitude: 'The unions told us we had to take vigilant actions. A vigilant union' is something I never heard of. They tried to have us accepting 1,5%. Very vigilant indeed. During the struggle we heard a lot of declaration that they would never drop the 5%. After they have agreed with 3-4,5% Their propaganda cost them a lot of money for nothing. Money from their members'. On the Monday 10 of July a union paper was distributed in the hospitals; it was a kind of report on the nurses struggle. We

could read printed in colour on several pages 'Struggle together for the 5%'. But at this precise moment, the unions had already dropped the 5% and agreed with a compromise which represent nothing. The lies were not only on wages; most of the report distorted the real facts and was silent of course on the dubious role of the unions. Since July nothing has been heard about the nurses struggle; the curtain was pulled but only for a time because the last word belongs to the rank and file.

SPAIN

Comments on the article 'The 14th of december strike.' (see Echanges n°58 - 2/89 - p 1)

(from a dutch comrade)

The article shows we have a similar position on the unions function and on their place in the capitalist society. It agrees with us in characterizing unions as institutions which rule and organise buying and selling of the labour force and whose main task is to maintain the industrial peace. That we agree in such way can't avoid the fact there is a difference between us. We can explain this by the fact that opinions are the product of a social reality. This reality in Spain is not the same as that surrounding us. There will still be differences even if industrial relations in Spain become more and more similar to ours. Spain is quickly filling the gap accumulated for centuries when compared with the rest of Europe; the article underline well this fact several times.

If we observe capital accumulation, the pace of investments and of new industries with modern technologies, we can see that differences between Spain and other european countries are quickly fading away. But if we consider the organisations, the myths and social illusions, these things appears quite differently. Moving always far slower in these matters.

In the recent past, i.e. in the pre-franquist period, Spain had a workers movement expressing the backwardness of industrial relations in a still partly semi feudal society. The industrialisation begun under the franquist regime was accelerated after his death. For this reason, Spain is becoming a modern capitalist state and of course such a development has an important influence on the union movement.

Levels of productive investments fell by approximately 20 per cent from 1987 to 1988 and are likely to fall by another 11 per cent from 1988 to 1989, and at the same time existing plants are closed or threatened with closure. Investments in new oil production fields are low, and this has of course its effects on the industry producing oil production platforms and equipment. The building trades have less work. The newspaper industry is in difficulties; due to large reductions in the earnings from advertisements the whole newspaper business is in difficulties. At least two papers have already closed down, and even the "richest" newspaper company will have to reduce manning and cut costs. The print industry is in trouble, many companies have closed down this year and many printing workers are unemployed. To give one example of the overaccumulation in the printing industry: The capacity for scanning for the print industry in Norway is supposed to be big enough to fill the demand for scanning of all Western Europe. It is said to be a larger number of scanner in Norway than in Great Britain.

Banking is in difficulties. After two years of heavy losses and expecting losses also next year, the banks have begun to reduce the number of employees. The largest Norwegian bank - Den norske Creditbank - have begun to fire 1050 employees which is one quarter of the staff. Also other banks are firing employees - up to one third of the staff for some of the smaller banks. Several thousand bank employees might loose their job in the near future.

Unemployment is currently more than 54000 and in addition to this more than 20000 are working under special programmes funded by the state. Approximately half of the workers in the textile industry are unemployed, perhaps as many as 30000 building and construction workers will loose their jobs. Figures have been published showing that 89000 workplaces will disappear next year, and that unemployment will reach 100000 this winter.

The last couple of years have seen several struggles by workers against the closing of factories or reductions of the number employed. Because these factories are very often the only important one in the town, the resistance to closure is fought not only by the workers, but by the whole population of the town. In this way the workers resistance has been immediately transformed into a popular resistance, supported by almost everyone in the town. The workers have not been able to develop an independent class response to the attacks. The method of these struggles are very often the sending of delegations to the capital to petition government, parliament and the company owners; with the aim of either to rescue their factory or to demand the development of new industry. Often the companies make the continuation of one plant dependent on the closure of another plant in another part of the country, thus setting the workers of different plants against each other. To give just one example: a major food production company was going to close down one plant. This led to a big resistance by the workers, unions and politicians of that district. The company yielded, but just as the company had decided not to close this plant it immediately announced the closure of another plant in another part of the country. This in turn has produced heavy resistance by the workers of this plant and the district, leading the local trade unions to call a half-day "general strike" by 2200 workers.

Then came "suspensions" of this right to negotiations or restrictions on the wage rises allowed. Then this year there was a total ban on such negotiations and local wage rises of any kind.

By law and agreements all strikes are illegal except when there are no valid agreement. This means that a strike is legal only in the period when one agreement has expired and a new one has not yet been decided. Even in this period there exists a lot of rules which conducts the possibilities of strikes, rules for arbitration etc. In practice these rules means that only the national unions or the union federation can call a legal strike, and this can only be done in the process of bargaining a new agreement. As soon as an agreement is in effect, all strikes are illegal except for short political demonstration strikes which shall be of limited duration and shall not change the wages or working conditions of the workers striking (i.e. all matters ruled by agreements).

All trade union officials - also those at the workplaces - are obliged to try to prevent illegal strikes, and condemn illegal strikes if they should break out. Officials can be prosecuted, fined and/or loose their recognition if they do not do this. Union officials at the workplaces are elected by the union members, but their status as officials is confirmed by the employers. The employers can withdraw this recognition if the officials do not stand firmly against illegal strikes. Because of these rules trade unions never support illegal strikes, even if the unions in some cases give secret support. At the workplaces the union officials usually resign from their positions if there is an illegal strike that they support. Then it is common that a strike committee is set up, and usually the officials will be found in these committees. Apparently the strikes are not led by the unions, but by an independent strike committee elected by the workers.

The oil industry is as mentioned above rather important to the Norwegian economy. Oil revenues have been able to offset many effects of the crisis, buying Norwegian capital out of most of the effects which the crisis has had internationally. Now this has changed. Oil revenues have declined rapidly with falling oil prices, and the deep crisis of Norwegian economy can no longer be hidden. Now the crisis is hitting Norwegian capitalism, with full force and developing rapidly. "Investments in Norwegian industry rose by approximately 50 billion kroner in the period 1984-87. But this expansion of investments made poor profits. Figures from the Norwegian Bank Association demonstrate that profits from fixed capital ... fell with 1.3 billion kroner in the same period, in spite of the higher investments. This results in a negative profit for these last 50 billion of approximately 2.5%." (Aftenposten 07.09.88)

Overaccumulation has led to large capitals not productively employed being thrown into the fields of speculation. The stock market and the real estate market as well as the building trades saw a boom which ended abruptly in October 1987 with the stock market crash. Much of this speculation was funded on credit. After the sudden collapse in '87, fortunes of speculation capital were destroyed, and unlike in most other countries the stock market has not recovered. Almost all banks are making big losses for the second consecutive year.

Union movement is developing in Spain according to the same process as the union movement in other capitalist countries of Western Europe. It is the reason why for instance, in the post franquist period, CNT importance and meaning have declined as UGT importance and meaning has been growing. This can explain as well why the CCDD (born in the franquist period) have lost most of the sympathy they attracted formerly.

To explain this CCDD loss of influence the article points at the conflicts inside the spanish CP, we have to say that the conflicts inside the CP are also coming from the development of a modern capitalism to which a party with the CP character and structure is not at all adapted.

Anyway the difference with the article is in the fact that, when observing very well the consequences of the development of a modern capitalism for the union movement, the author consider the situation in a too general way. We could draw the conclusion that he considers the prospect of the union movement in Spain as the prospect of the union movement in general as such. Generalising, even if it is not wrong, must refer not to a specific situation, but to a more general basis; the spanish basis is in our opinion too narrow to allow to jump to such general conclusions. We have the feeling that the author does not see that the spanish union movement in the process of adapting itself to the "to-morrow capitalism" is only the yesterday and sometimes to-day traditional union movement in western capitalism.

When the article says that workers are not ready to act by themselves, we hesitate because, of course, to judge this, we have to get a detailed knowledge of the struggle we have not. Nevertheless we are convinced that the autonomous action of the working class appears and is only possible when a certain capitalist development has been attained. As far as it is not attained -and even for a long period after- myths and illusions still apply and exert a role.

Even so, we think that the spanish comrade analysis has great value. We can add that dutch newspapers tried to accredit the opinion that the prime minister Gonzales had given up to the strike. He would have refused at once to negotiate with the unions and then would have changed his mind under the strike pressure. It is not true. Unions afraid of the mass movements as well as the government had from the beginning limited the strike to 24 hours (this is well underlined in the article). When Gonzales declared he was ready to discuss with the unions, nothing was obliging him to do so. At his time there was no strike. He was following this course because he had begun to understand -as well

as the government and the managers - that they needed the unions. We think that Gonzales understood too that it was very important at this moment for the government and the ruling class to give some life to the illusion they were somewhat giving in to the unions. So the union movement picture can be improved and a union with a good reputation is more useful for itself and for the bourgeoisie. On this point we perfectly agree.

C.B. 23/3/89

Answer from a spanish comrade.

I have no objection to your commentaries I found very accurate. I want only to add some complements. You are right when speaking of Spain and especially the worker movement reflecting semi-feudal industrial relations. As you know the proletarianisation process in Spain - i.e. the formation of an industrial working class - is slow and concentrated in some small parts of the country (Catalonia, Basque Country, Asturias). More recently, since the 'stabilising plan' in 1959, industrialisation was jumping again in this traditional centers (with migrations from Andalusia, Castille, Galicia, Estramadura...) and in new centers as Valladolid, Saragossa, Madrid suburbs. Most of the workers were people rooted out from farming work in the country; they formed the social basis of the proletarian struggles under franquism and of the 'autonomous' movements. Even limited, my personal experience was important in this respect. During the Renault strikes (mid 70's) when I lived in Valladolid I had close relationship with 'self organised workers' (not UGT or CCOO members). Their factory experience was recent and got for a very short time, most of them having worked in the industry for 5/10 years (the youngest and most militant ones). A large part of them had still some working relations with their family in the country (working for instance in family farms after their day's factory work). We can find there the explanation for their indiscipline, inadaptation, resistance, etc., to the industrial relations expressed by the unions but too for most of the illusions and myths as referred to in your letter. We could extrapolate to most of the 'autonomous' struggles of this period. What you wrote on the spanish CP is right. All their attempts to adapt to the new conditions of the capitalist development in Spain are doomed and the party is more and more outside of the social and political spanish reality. Their failure is linked to the process of adaptation in self obliging them to play a mediation role in the capitalist productive system. The unbalanced development of industrial relations and of the proletarian fractions in spanish society affects directly the CP modernizing process provoking

already in 1887 they had taken part in establishing the social democratic party. All through its history the trade union federation has been dominated by social democracy. There have been no other important federation of trade unions for workers; the syndicalists for instance had at its most approximately 3500 members in the early 1920's. Today there are some national federations, mostly for employees and other groups, which are so-called unpolitical and with approximately 450000 members altogether. The LO has today more than 750000 members.

In the years before and during the 1. World War a new and radical tendency grew within the social-democratic party and the trade unions. This tendency took part in the Zimmerwald movement. In 1918 this tendency took the power in the party and the party joined the 3. International in 1919. The whole party broke with the 2. International and joined the 3. International. Only in 1921 did a small "reformist" social-democratic party split off. The labour party was still very much a social democratic party, and in 1923 it broke with the 3. International. In 1928 the first social-democratic government was formed which lasted 3 weeks. In 1935 the party formed government again, and has been in government more or less since then. "Bourgeois" parties have formed government in the 60's, 70's, and 80's, but have not been able to establish themselves in government for longer periods.

The communist party was established in 1923 and declined rapidly. Only in the years immediately after the 2. World War did it have any strength in elections. It used to have some strength in the unions, but today it is weak also there. In 1961 a "third road" socialist party was formed by a split-off from the social-democratic party. Together with elements from the communist- and socialdemocratic party it formed a left-socialist party in 1973 which today has some strength. A maoist party grew up in the late 60's and still exists; though less maoist and more general leftist. This party still have a daily paper. Trotskyism has never been strong in Norway, a very small group existed in the late 30's. Today two small groups of trotskyist tendencies exists, one sharing the positions of the British SWP and the other comprising supporters of the Mandel tendency and other elements. The extreme left has never been strong here, and many of the tendencies existing internationally does not have any known supporters here.

Trade unions and the laws and customs governing them are different from country to country. I shall therefore give some informations on general conditions and peculiarities of the Norwegian unions.

Usually the unions and employers have agreements running for two years, and usually these agreements have provisions for wage negotiations after one year. Almost all agreements expire in the same year, so that every two years there are negotiations of almost all agreements. In some agreements there are provisions for local negotiations of wages in addition to the national negotiat in other agreements such local negotiations are outright banned. Traditionally the groups of workers who can negotiate local wage rises have been able to defend their wages better than those who can not have local negotiations. These local negotiations have gradually been restricted; some years ago it was common with two or more each year. Then only one such negotiation was allowed.

Norway is a member of the NATO, and is one of the two NATO countries with a common border with Russia. In the north, few kilometres from the border to Norway, Russia has one of its most important naval bases and a number of air bases. The Russian North Fleet, perhaps the most important Russian fleet, has its bases here on the Kola peninsula. The North Fleet has a large number of submarines carrying nuclear missiles, and also a large conventional fleet. This northern part of Russia is one of the few which is ice free throughout the winter and with a direct access to the oceans.

One of the main tasks of the Russian naval and air forces in this area is the attack on the Atlantic supply lines of NATO. In the event of war, the larger part of reinforcements and supplies from USA/Canada will have to be carried by sea across the Atlantic. It is supposed to be about 800 shiploads military and 1500 shiploads civilian supplies each month.

"Holst (the minister of defence) said that if NATO should lose a battle over the control of the Norwegian Sea, of which Norway is a very important strategic part, the possibilities of the alliance (i.e. NATO) to be victorious in a battle over the control of the Atlantic will be fundamentally reduced. If NATO should lose the control there, the possibilities of meeting and resisting an attack against the central front in Europe would be seriously reduced. The strategical importance of Norway is inextricably bound up with the supply lines across the Atlantic." (Aftenposten 11.10.88)

US military doctrine in this area is in the process of change. USA is developing a strategy of attacking the North Fleet at its bases or close to them; thus US naval forces will have to go high up in the Norwegian Sea. Earlier the line of defence for NATO was between Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom; now this line has been pushed closer to Russia. The new strategy is more offensive, and is based on the use of several aircraft carrier groups.

Norway has an agreement with USA whereby a number of Norwegian air fields have been equipped and trained to be used by airplanes from US carriers. Recently it has been known that discussions have taken place between USA and Norway where USA proposes to establish storage of ammunition, fuel and spare parts for its aircraft carriers, and also workshops for repairing their aircraft carriers.

Official Norwegian policy is that in times of peace there shall be no foreign bases or troops permanently in Norway; and there shall be no nuclear warheads. However, the heavy equipment of one US-Marines regiment is stored in Mid-Norway and provisions have been made for sending Canadian, British and Dutch forces. All these forces train in Norway regularly each winter.

The military power of Norway is small. Due to its small number of inhabitants manpower is low, and due to its small economy expenditures on weapons are low.

The first working class organisation of importance was created in 1848, and before it was crushed by the state in 1851 it had some 20000 or more members. At that time there were only about 13000 industrial workers in the country; and many members of this organisation were farm labourers, fishermen, forest workers etc. After being crushed it left very few organisational remains, and only in the 1870's were the first trade unions formed. The trade unions formed a national federation (Landsorganisasjonen - abbreviated LO) in 1899, and

numerous split inside the party. I wonder sometimes if the only possible adaptation for the CP in a developed capitalist society is only its complete disappearance.

There is something I have not very well understood in the last paragraph of your letter (see above) because in fact I agree with what you wrote that the Spanish union movement in the process of adapting itself to the "to-morrow capitalism" was nothing else than the traditional union movement. But, as for the Spanish CP, the question is to know if the traditional union movement is able to adapt to the new conditions imposed by capital without losing completely its own identity based on a 'demand' culture which implied the implicit recognition of an opposition of interest between capital and labour. The new 'self management' and 'participation' formula are pushing outside of the syndicalist and social integrating process most of the proletarian strata product of the restructuring process.

When I wrote that the workers were not ready to act by themselves, I only observe a reality - a casual one of course - which, referring to Spain, is what workers are doing in a lot of conflicts. I don't think that autonomous proletarian action is something of the part. On the contrary, the more unadapted are the traditional organisation of mediation between capital and labour (and new ones very difficult to build), the more will open a 'critical' space for autonomous actions. In fact it is the actual autonomous process for the proletariat in front of the actual autonomous process of capital expressed as well in the deepening gap between the capital power (impossible to legitimate and to control) and the proletarian subjectivity. I see the actual possibility of a proletarian autonomous intervention in this present development of capital.

Since my last letter everything is still the same if we refer to the comedy between unions and government. They have succeeded in pushing in to life 'a plan for youth employment' with the usual tricks; union protests, threat of action but at the end doing nothing. The government has not given in even to the small money concessions asked by the unions. The alliance technocratic, banks and employers are in a strong position; but little by little strikes are growing (controlled by the unions always with the fear of a large conflict in the background). Managers are somewhat anxious. Strikes rising could threaten economical growth and discourage foreign investments. The social peace is precarious and has to be got with a minimum of guarantees; settled relationship with the unions as it was proposed recently by the president of the Spanish boss union.

C.V. 22/4/89

from a letter of a spanish comrade

on the farmworkers union S.O.C.

This movement is presently relatively quiet. In fact a kind of welfare, the PER helps the population to cope with with a very precarious but not very deprived situation. The unemployed farmworkers from Andalusia receive special benefits from the State which is a peculiar solution of a permanently potential conflict. On one hand it maintains the poverty within tolerable limits, on the other hand it helps the 'senoritos' (landowners) to keep the control over the workers (even unemployed) through an astute system of benefits payment. To get his money when he is unemployed, a farmworker has to justify a minimum of working days (less than in others branches of industry); but it is the employer who has to sign the document giving the proof of the required days of work. Which means as most of the workers have not this required minimum, the need to keep 'good relationship' with the employers for a farmworker to get the State money for unemployment. We can see that 'clientelism' and the survival of the vicious feudal practices of 'caciquismo' still exist in postmodern Spain.

Even so, the movement is still alive though with uneven distribution throughout all Andalusia (the SOC is strong in west Andalusia, Cadix and Sevilla). For the last months, land occupations have stopped but the national press says not a word about these movements which give a bad picture of Spain.

On the CNT

...Information about the determinant events in the life of revolutionary syndicalism and of the CNT during the past years are relatively accurate, even if some anarchist papers are on the side of the CNT-AIT like 'Black Flag' or on the side of the 'renovados' like 'Ideas and Action'. Generally the figures are blown up. CNT-AIT has no more than 2,000 militants all over Spain. I can be wrong, but their presence in the conflicts and in the worker movement is almost nonexistent. In fact, most members are either old militants, almost all retired or on the other side, attracted by their verbal radicalism, some young 'punks

In 1814 Norway was transferred from the Danish to the Swedish kingdom, and in this process the Norwegian bourgeoisie fought to establish an independent national state. This was partly successful as Norway from 1814 was a state in union with Sweden, having its own constitution and parliament. From the late 1840's modern industry grew up; first in the form of textile and engineering industry. The invention of producing paper from timber gave rise to an important pulp and paper industry from the 1870's. The next important step in the development of industrial capitalism came with the invention and industrial use of hydroelectrical power. Norway is rich on waterfalls and from about the turn of the century these were developed, to a great extent by foreign capital. Factories grew up producing aluminium, fertilizers etc. All this industry has one thing in common; they are situated close to the source of power. Thus along most of southern Norway there are small towns with usually one big factory, and perhaps as little as a few thousand inhabitants.

In 1905 the bourgeoisie finally succeeded in achieving their independent state. It is a small state, having today only a little more than 4 million inhabitants spread out over some 380000 square kilometres of land. Very large scale manufacturing industry does not exist, for instance there is no auto industry; and there are no large concentrations of industry and workers. A large steelworks was only built in the 1940's and this can be explained by the almost total lack of iron and coal resources.

Since the 1970's oil production in the North Sea has grown to become an important industry. The oil production is small in relation to world production, but it has become important to the Norwegian economy. Another fairly new industry of importance is the rearing of fish - i.e. the industrial raising of fish; at the same time catching of fish is declining because there is not very much fish left in the seas.

The engineering and shipbuilding industries have been declining for years, and what is left of the shipbuilding industry is almost exclusively producing for the oil industry. As the developments of new oil fields is not very rapid at the moment, this industry is suffering.

The Norwegian merchant fleet used to be one of the largest in the world. For years the number of ships registered in Norway has been falling, and the ships have been transferred to countries with low wages for sailors. To counter this development and to keep a fleet under Norwegian flag, a ship register was established which makes possible the employment of sailors from countries with low wages.

Some statistical illustrations taken from official statistics:
the population is approximately 4.2 million

"	665000 are workers
"	1.2 million are employees
"	80000 are farmers and fishermen
"	2.1 million are children, pensioners, under education

Something like 700000 are employed in the state and municipal sectors. The capital and largest city, Oslo, has 450000 inhabitants. Within 200 kilometres of Oslo lives something like 1.5 million.

Dear comrades,

Norway is one of the lesser known parts of the world, and things going on here seldom reach international attention. Until now little has happened that should change this. As you will read further on, some important developments seem to be taking place. Therefore there might be no coincidence that this letter is written now.

Even among comrades who are in a favourable position to follow developments here we find a great lack of knowledge. Thus there is no wonder if comrades who don't even understand the local language are quite unfamiliar with our part of the world.

This presentation has a very restricted scope and its aim is to furnish you with some background and information.

Some words about the "revolutionary milieu" in Norway. In 1976 a quite large number of people were in the process of breaking with leftism (mainly anarchism) and gradually constituted themselves into a marxist milieu. Out of this process came some small groups adhering to revolutionary positions. Developing a certain activity both locally and internationally we ended up with one group of about 10 comrades, calling the group Kommunistisk PropagandaLag (KPL) (Communist Propaganda Group).

In Scandinavia there were a series of conferences between 1976 and 1982, where different groups here in Scandinavia took part. At some of these conferences the ICC and the CWO took part. Towards the end of this period the ICC section in Sweden was formed.

The KPL and most of this Scandinavian milieu disintegrated. Today we are only two comrades left here in Norway who hold revolutionary positions and who wish to do something. We constitute no group or circle, but we meet regularly and have a certain common work. At the best of our means we try to keep up international political contacts. As far as we know the other former comrades of the KPL neither have a political activity nor want to have one.

Our address is:

Motiva Forlag
Postboks 9340 Vålerenga
N-0610 Oslo 6
Norway

The Black Death (1348-50) led to the practical extinction of the Norwegian state as an independent state. From then and until 1814 Norway was a part of the Danish kingdom. In this period before the industrial revolution the economical development was taking place mainly in the form of trading and exploitation of natural resources such as fish, timber, and metals. Together with this went a development of merchant shipping. The agriculture is weak because nature is barren. Only about 4 per cent of the territory of present Norway is arable. There are some larger agriculture areas, but also lots of small plots where a family could hardly make a living.

'sympathetic to the movement; the latter are perhaps more radical but we can't say that neither they are CNT militants nor they have a lot in common with the old keepers of the anarchist Graal. CNT-AIT is completely marginal in relation to what is happening presently in Spain. Their slogan (and the reason for the split with the 'renovados') is the boycott of the union elections which they have no possibility to propagate considering their weakness in the worker milieu. Because of this boycott, according to the 'renovados' they have lost all possibilities to build a representative union force. In my opinion this failure is elsewhere; the inadequacy of the anarcho-syndicalist project for present Spanish reality (see the discussion with a Dutch comrade above). My own personal experience during the last years of franquism (during the process of rebuilding the CNT from inside Spain) showed me the rigid ideology of the old Spanish anarchist, their organisational fetishism (the CNT like a church), the bureaucratisation of the relations and the inside struggle between the historic fractions (revolutionary syndicalists, anarcho-syndicalists, faists, renovados, etc...). Struggles sometimes ridiculous and always sterile and discouraging. Considering the situation we can say they have dilapidated a militant human potential which was hoping to find in the CNT and in anarchism some kind of social-political intervention aside from the techniques of democratic domination. But the CNT wants only to repeat the catechism from the Saragossa Congress (1936); for most of the members time has not elapsed. Even now their style and their language recall only the past.

on the 'renovados'

The 'renovados' on the contrary have accepted participation in the factory committees where they have succeeded in gaining some delegates. Difficult to know the exact number of their militants (perhaps 5,000/7,000). We have to consider that this union like other unions is obliged to help its members on small juridical problems like contracts, notices, etc., which often need the use of a solicitor. Workers apply rather for that kind of help, paying monthly dues rather than as militants. The 'renovados' have played this role in attempts to become the 'third force'. Their 'radicalism' follows the attempt to recuperate the discontent (partly at least) of members of the big brothers (UGT and CCDD). The success of the 'renovados' lies only in this factor

presenting themselves as the heirs to the historical prestigious anarcho-syndicalism somewhat adapted to the needs of a modern society.

What happened at SEAT is described in La Estiba (september 88 p 3). In brief, we can say that the CNT (renovados) succeeded in gaining the majority of the seats in the factory committee of SEAT in Barcelona which was formerly a CCOD-UGT fortress and the historical example for unions in Spain. Once again the workers' discontent towards CCOD and UGT manipulations was met by the militant activity of the CNT. Both unions had signed an agreement in which because of its weak representation the CNT had been marginalised. The workers were very disappointed. Immediately, the CNT began to question the legality of the factory committee launching a petition calling for new elections. After some juridical peripeties and to the surprise of the 'big' unions which had underestimated the real possibilities of a small core of militants around the CNT at SEAT, new elections gave the majority to the CNT. Everybody following the union bureaucrats agreed to consider this success as an epiphenomenon. But the CCOD national secretary came to Barcelona to sermonise the CCOD SEAT leaders who let themselves be robbed of the hegemony in the most important and prestigious factory of Spain. The day after the elections, CNT delegates were called in by the top managers and so recognized as democratically elected interlocutors. They were even offered a trip abroad to familiarise themselves with new working conditions and modern technologies, etc., but some months later, when the management tried to push through a restructuring of working-hours, the CNT organised a mobilisation with a strike and a huge demonstration in Barcelona at the seat of the catalan government. The Volkswagen president (controlling SEAT) declared that discussion was impossible with certain forms of unions which threaten the peace of industrial relations. Of course, the CNT must push ahead its radicalism as a mean of gaining some influence among the workers. Though a very small minority, this union is present in a lot of conflicts and in some factory committees of big industrial firms or services (Renault, Post Office). There is no doubt it represents an alternative in a period of relative expansion though always on the band wagon of CCOD and UGT failures. In fact the only possibility for the CNT to expand in spanish social life is to conquer the syndicalist support from workers formerly supporting CCOD and UGT both now too close to factory management.

the destruction of all kinds of determinist phenomena.

The increasing spontaneity of the working class in the U.S.S.R. has never been described anywhere to this day. But I have no doubt that it has already reached very high levels and that it has assumed an irreversible character.

The continuous rise of proletarian spontaneity against capitalist planning - this is the final and most important reason for the impossibility of planning in the U.S.S.R. It has been the major force prompting the rapid changes in the top echelons of the Russian ruling class in favour of so-called reformers and pushing the capitalist class along the path of completely overhauling its traditional strategies of class struggle, which have failed miserably. But that in itself can be no reason for allowing ourselves to be fooled by the endless stream of Russian propaganda since Gorbachev came to power. Never in Russian history has planning played any effective role because it has always been planning of a purely fictitious system governed by purely fictitious laws. Any talk about the shift from planning to a greater use of market mechanisms can only be regarded as pure nonsense. Planning has always been a lofty matter restricted to ivory towers of planning agencies and otherwise ^{being} unimportant for the development of everyday class struggle, while contrary to a widespread myth market mechanisms have always existed abundantly (including of course mechanisms of the labour market) ever since the breakthrough of capitalism in Russia. Such market mechanisms don't have to be created, they have only to be acknowledged. This is what the Russian ruling class has reluctantly done in recent years, and in fact only partially and half-heartedly. The fundamental question, however, will not be if the capitalist class of the U.S.S.R. will succeed in introducing or acknowledging market mechanisms because they are indeed very secondary elements in any capitalist society. The question will rather be how the Russian capitalist class can possibly survive (with or without Gorbachev, that is utterly unimportant), squeezed in between the rigid demands of the falling tendency of the profit rate and the threats of another leap in the development of working class spontaneity.

"The suppression of any freedom and the impossibility of any open struggle in Russia have a precise effect: The 'job contract' becomes an empty shell, and it is no longer possible to speak of a 'wage system' except in a formal way. It follows not only that we are confronted with an exploitation of labour power which is more extreme than elsewhere. The suppression of any possibility for the working class and the population as a whole to influence events openly allows bureaucratic irrationality to unfold without restraint, and leads to a monstrous waste of human labour and of productive resources in general, which is indeed the main characteristic of Russian economy /.../. (Le régime social de la Russie, p. 8)

It is really hard to believe that someone like Castoriadis (whose ideas are absolutely typical for most of the rest of leftist thinking on these matters) who has always fought tenaciously - at least on paper - against determinism and in favour of creation by people, against organisation and in favour of spontaneity of people, should be able to descend to the lowest levels of the most primitive determinism and organisational fetishism whenever he talks about the role of the working class. In fact this is not a matter of a few carefully selected citations from his works, but of a general and permanent attitude. His writings abound with contemptuous, derogatory, denigrating remarks on the working class, and they are a single hymn of profound admiration for the limitless capabilities of the bureaucracy in their ruthless efforts at subjugating the working class. There is no question for him about the desirability of human creative activity, of human spontaneity, but unfortunately this stupid and unreliable working class has never and nowhere done him the favour of demonstrating such creativity and spontaneity, except perhaps far, far back in the fifties in Hungary and Poland - so he wants to make us believe. We have been fed with such stuff for a very long time by all kinds of Social-Democrat, Leninist, Trotskyist, Stalinist, Maoist etc. pretenders to the throne, but endless repetition hasn't made the argument more acceptable. Spontaneity and creation would stand little chance in the U.S.S.R., if their development depended on individual people, preferably exhorted by their leftist mentors, waking up one bright and sunny morning and saying: Let's be spontaneous! Fortunately capitalist society have a more reliable and efficient mechanism for producing spontaneity and creative behaviour - the falling tendency of the profit rate or, in other words, the inevitability of class struggle. Once again it becomes clear how senseless it would be to preach spontaneity against determinism since they are tied in a dynamic relationship which historically leads to

As the Volkswagen president considered the situation, the CNT presence (and its need to maintain its legitimacy with radical demands) in Spanish labour relations somewhat disturbs the government. The differences between the government and the big unions though expressing a kind of spectacular comedy, also expressed the real difficulty they find in controlling the labour force in society as a whole. In my opinion, the CNT represents in this situation a destabilising factor because this organisation needs constantly to push forwards with those demands always present for most of the rank and file workers but usually repressed by the unions. The present complexity of the relationship between the big unions, managers and the government would be even more complex with this CNT presence. Perhaps this is the real meaning of the decision of the Appeal Court on the proprietorship of the name and historical possessions of the CNT.

For years the two CNT fractions (AIT and 'renovados') have tried to get 'official recognition' as heirs of the historical anarcho-syndicalist movement. It was more than a symbolic legitimacy enshrined in the name and its historical identity because it was the restitution of all the belongings of organisations linked to the libertarian movement (CNT, FAI, Ateneums ...) taken by the fascists after 1939 (according to the CNT-AIT several milliards pesetas). End of march, the Central Madrid Court decided that the 'historical' CNT-AIT only could get this official recognition. I think it is a political manoeuvre aiming to give the name and all the belongings to a marginal organisation like the present CNT-AIT; there is no risk of a renewal of the anarcho-syndicalist movement. In fact, the CNT-AIT has no possibility of reorganising itself even with all the money it might get for its belongings taken by the franquist state. On the other hand, the court decision is a blow to the 'renovados': they have to change their name taking until their next congress the name of CGT - General Confederation of Workers - having missed new finance which would have helped them to build up the union as an institution at the very moment that they might hope to become the 'third force' among the union world, which is their more immediate aim.

C.V. 7/5/89

IS DIRECT DEMOCRACY REALLY POSSIBLE ?

Thirteen years ago the monthly paper of the Italian Socialist Party 'Mondoperaio' launched a discussion on the problem of the State among socialists, communists and leftists in publishing an article from Professor Norberto Bobbio, a top figure among the Italian political culture, asking the question: "What are the alternatives to the representative democracy?" After a quick examination of left and right arguments against democracy in general and representative system in particular, Bobbio should

"It is the democratic rebuilding the whole society through family, school, workshop, office, district, commune, region and of course the State which gives the key to the answer for the dual crisis of authority and responsibility. Socialist Party, 1980

admit the conclusion that a valid and convincing alternative does not exist and that even those wanting the radical man emancipation beyond political emancipation should accept and defend representative democracy as a necessary preparatory step.

On this last point everybody agreed with the exception of two or three opposing voices: we have to be resolutely for representative democracy and against direct democracy.

We are used seeing leftist movements and left intellectuals moving in this same system of references but adopting a reverse position: we have to be resolutely for direct democracy and against representative democracy. It was already the choice in 1968 and it is still the choice of the leftist movement to-day, as we can see when considering the comments in the alternative press about the events in November /December and January 86/87 in France (student struggles and SNCF strike). No other position could be seen. What is remarkable in the most recent comments is the certitude clearly expressed by some of them that there is a real historical tendency towards direct democracy in working class struggles. I will try shortly to explain why I think that direct democracy has nothing to do with the self emancipation of the working class (except for the fact that aborted pseudo direct democracy experiences ease the self emancipation process), that it had never existed and that it was impossible to practice it in the post war period.

1 - Representative democracy does not exist and never existed neither in working places, nor in any other place, either in France or elsewhere. Among the structures built to limit freedom,

"The bureaucracy can at any moment 'statically' use the means of production and products. It can do with them 'whatever it wants' physically and economically, just as - and even more than - a capitalist 'can do what he wants' with his capital. But above all it can use it 'dynamically'. It can decide on the means aimed at extracting surplus value from the working population, on the rate of this surplus value and on its destination (on its distribution between bureaucratic consumption and accumulation, as well as on the orientation of this accumulation." (Le régime social de la Russie /The Social Regime in Russia/, p. 5)

Evidently Castoriadis doesn't hesitate to copy and present the wildest tales of Russian propaganda as if they were pure and plain truth. In fact the capitalist class in the U.S.S.R. never does what it wants and never knows what it does. It knows nothing either of the ambiguity of its ideology or of the ambiguity of its politics. It has no means of escaping from this ambiguity of its politics before the complete destruction of the capitalist system - which is of course not in its own interests since it would imply its disappearance as a capitalist class, as a ruling class. An absurdity? Not greater than the absurdity of class society, of social antagonism and class struggle, hidden behind these ambiguities and being their deepest cause. Ideological and political ambiguity express the same truths about capitalist society in the U.S.S.R.: There is a social antagonism between the capitalist class and the working class, and the class struggle causes this antagonism and these classes to vanish.

Do the analyses of Castoriadis and other leftists provide any insight into what happens at the level of class struggle in the U.S.S.R.? I am afraid, not. A single page of the Moscow telephone directory contains more useful informations on the working class in the U.S.S.R. than all the writings of Castoriadis and other leftists (and he wrote a lot, this Castoriadis!). In fact he has very little to say about the working class and about class struggle. To give a few examples:

"Its essence /he writes about capitalist planning/ consists, as with capitalist production, in reducing the direct producers to the status of simple order takers, orders being given by a peculiar strata which follows its own interests." (La société bureaucratique, vol. 2, p. 279)

"The stable and immovable character of this bureaucracy in its totality /---/, parallel to the totalitarian structure of the State, removes from the workers all possibilities of having the slightest influence on the management of the economy and of society in general. The result is that the bureaucracy alone in its totality decides everything concerning the use of the means of production." (La société bureaucratique, vol. 1, p. 251)

where they reinforce each other and where it becomes virtually impossible to stop the fall in the rentability of investments which is just the unwelcome result of the mechanism's functioning. Marxist theory has no problem in localising the origins of this development in a policy of investment aiming constantly to change the ratio of constant and variable capital. This is in fact the main weapon of the capitalist class in its struggle with the working class, and that weapon, as we have seen, is part of the destruction of capitalism. Does it really come as a surprise to discover the same kind of ambiguity on the political level, in the activities of the capitalist class, as found on the ideological level? On one hand there is no doubt about the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. defining precise objectives (above all regular increases in the rate of exploitation through raising the level of productivity). If we consider the entire history of capitalism in the U. S. S. R., the capitalist class, in particular in its bolshevist form, has made good progress in this field, even if more slowly than its Western competitors and some of its Eastern competitors as well. On the other hand, the policy of increasing the rate of exploitation contributes directly to the fall of the profit rate, because it constantly reduces the possibilities of using living labour, the main source of surplus value. Of course these things have nothing to do either with the divergences between the 'centre' and the 'periphery' of the capitalist class or with internal conflicts within the capitalist class, and it is impossible to understand them on the basis of a primitive sociology of power. Power in itself is an ambiguous element in the context of class relations, and political ambiguity is an essential feature of the capitalist class seen in its totality and its unity. Hence a second conclusion: What excludes any form of capitalist planning in the U. S. S. R., is that the capitalist class, by its very activity, sabotages not only its own plans, but also and above all its own future, the future of capitalism.

If it can be agreed easily that the capitalist class is unable to organise production, it cannot be denied that it is equally incapable to organise constraint. The only thing it is really able to do is to organise the destruction of capitalism. Nevertheless it would be aberrant to think of the capitalist class as 'deciding' on its activities and 'choosing' between possible alternatives, as Castoriadis implicitly does:

"We managed to be united to act at Paris-Nord, but the unions did not give us the answer we deserve; we deserve them to be like us, to try to agree and to unite. We will obliged them to do so. Perhaps that will harm the present union leaders but it will be good for syndicalism".
-Mais encore ! avril 1987

"The LCR brought the evidence, in the SNCF strike as with the young, the teachers, it was able, within the limits of its forces to help the progress of the movement, its cohesion and its democratic organisation. The LCR will do everything to go ahead with the building of a real workers party considering self-organisation and workers democracy as its main task."
Dossier Rouge, n°21, 2eme trimestre 87

parliaments could be considered as the most important. On one hand the sovereignty of those supposed to be represented is a pure fiction. The electorate is not a collection of equals and free men but an heterogenous collection of exploiters and exploited, of rulers and ruled, of assisted and assistants. When sovereign people is a fiction, then the delegation of this people's sovereignty to a group of MP's in the election and the people's representation are fictions too. On the other hand it is exactly from this fiction that parliament draws its imaginary character of a democratic institution helping parliamentary decisions to appear as legal and right decisions and mainly to make these decisions compulsory for everybody. In this process called constitutionalisation of the non constitutional it is not important to know that parliamentary decisions are taken against the will of the people's majority or against its more elementary needs. Once the legislative act is voted, the popular will has to find its limit - especially the

limit of all forms of resistance-within the law. Executive and judiciary power are there to control it is respected. What remains of democracy is the regular repetition of pseudo-democratic rituals;

elections of representants are widely spread; in factories and offices, in schools and universities, in Social Security, in parties and unions, in associations etc...; the electoral battles between several groups or individuals; reports of responsible people; broadcasting of debates on radio and TV...
2 So why fight for or against a representative democracy which does not exist and is impossible in class societies? It's the secret of the leftist movement. What exists and is perfectly possible and is a basic need in a capitalist system is:

"For the LCR, self-organised structures and strike committees are a superior form of unity and workers democracy. These committees are often lead by militants or most combative workers, they have to represent all workers with their opinions and organisations... Because self organisation allows to see the emergence of some elements of alternative substitutes for the union-bureaucracies and to settle the superiority of direct democracy forms, Dossier Rouge, n°21, 2d term 1987

rights, to quote only the most fundamental ones,
 b) Non democratic State power whose only task is the mediation between two antagonistic classes to maintain the capitalist system's stability (mediation is something completely different from State neutrality or autonomy both impossible to exist); the instruments of this power are schools and universities, army, police, mass media, justice, social security, etc...
 Linked with the rules of a "representative democracy" even the very existence of the working class is characterised by illegality. Its organisation is already given by its situation as a class the unity of which being always reinforced by the other

"Other powers will take over our unions if we don't succeed to give them a united strength". (Mais encore ! April 87)

the capitalist class about the rate of profit which is the nervus rerum of the capitalist system. Nobody has a choice not to participate (except by suicide) in this daily struggle and a separation between economical and political struggle is impossible. Struggle or vote is a nonexistent alternative for the working class; a worker can vote when he participates in the political or union elections but he votes too when he struggles. At the level of State power (and of the unions too), this vote through struggle has almost destroyed all possibility of a mediation between classes; rejection of representativity, contempt of legality, blockade of State administration, crumbling of State finances, split of employees

a) the ideology of representative democracy as we know it well; popular sovereignty, popular representation through elected MPs, division of powers, the legal State, the principle of legality, the public character of State affairs, equal and general taxation, human and citizen

class activity; its consciousness is more clearly expressed through its collective actions against

to believe, why not send the oppositional cliques within the capitalist class to Siberia or, after the French fashion, to the guillotine (didn't somebody try all this in Russia already, without much success)? Even more naive is the idea of a capitalist class simply dominating the working class, and I will have to return to that strange view in the tradition of Bernstein-Kautsky-Hilferding later. I will suggest a different interpretation, contrary to the accepted myth of power relations, by focusing on the old-fashioned and (especially in self-styled Marxist circles) very unpopular idea of class dialectics. To begin with, it seems appropriate to remind the reader that capitalist planning in Russia is determined by some kind of illusion, while the economic activity of the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. is determined by the falling tendency of the profit rate. This implies the existence of regular and permanent divergences between planned and actual activities of the capitalist class itself, divergences in all spheres of social life. The most spectacular instance, and with enormous consequences, is that of investment. One might think the capitalist class of the U. S. S. R. to be capable of investing more or less exactly the capital envisaged by the plan. Experience shows that practically never (except by chance) does it manage to achieve the investment levels envisaged in the plan although these plans in themselves may well be seen as coherent and logical enough (whereas Castoriadis considers planning in the U. S. S. R. to be essentially chaotic and irrational).

This is, however, but a preliminary aspect concealing still the basic problem. Sticking to the example of investments and their results, there is no doubt that the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. tries constantly to improve labour productivity and to increase the rate of exploitation through investing in constant capital. But when we analyze the growth of the national product in connection with investments, we find a tendency for the rentability of investment to fall in the long run. The capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. actually finds itself in the worst of all possible situations: It has been unable to maintain a fast and stable pace of investment (which means a quick slowdown of technical progress and of the possibilities of producing relative surplus value). It has been unable to stabilize the growth of the national product which has steadily declined, and it now seems that some definite limits have been reached in value production (which means a quick slowdown in accumulation). These two factors are closely linked in a mechanism,

It is the perfect expression of an ambiguity which is the essential feature of any capitalist ideology: legitimise the system with all its contradictions in pretending they are not; criticize the system with all its contradictions in presenting the vision of an egalitarian and just society. A superficial understanding would emphasize the element of non-truth in capitalist ideology. At a deeper level, however, this ideology expresses an irrefutable truth: the reality of a class society and of a system of exploitation, the historical limits of such a society, the need and the possibility of its transformation into a classless society. Both the truth and non-truth of capitalist ideology in the U.S.S.R. are only faces of the same coin. Planning is part of this ideological ambiguity.

But this can only be the beginning of an analysis of planning problems. It is one thing to state that capitalist ideology is characterized by ambiguity in the above sense. But what about planning in the context of class politics, of the practical activities of classes, of everyday class struggle? On this matter of social antagonism Castoriadis, like the rest of vulgar economy and sociology, sticks to a rather primitive concept of power, of the fragmentation of power, which again is totally inadequate in explaining the basic problems of capitalist planning in the U.S.S.R.:

"In the second place, the entire organisation of production is built against the interests of workers, who one way or another are always asked for more and more work without receiving an equivalent. Invariably management orders encounter bitter resistance from those who are supposed to be carrying them out. So the managing apparatus, whether in France, in Poland, in the U.S.A. or in Russia, spends most of its time exercising direct or indirect pressure rather than organising production. In the third place, the bureaucratic managing apparatus as much, if not more than in a private capitalist factory, is deeply divided by internal conflicts; the various professional categories of bureaucrats, their superimposed political 'coteries', and even clans or cliques (whose struggles in a bureaucratized system are a basic sociological fact) fight and cheat each other, and pass the buck of responsibility back and forth etc. Hence bureaucratic 'planning' is a mixture of rationality and absurdity causing a degree of wastage similar to that of a traditional capitalist economy." (p. 279 s.)

How is it possible to understand causes and effects of the economic activity of the capitalist class on the basis of vulgar sociology such as this? If this question of the fragmentation of power were really so important, as Castoriadis wants us

inside the State apparatus are the most significant aspects of evidence. More and more the logic of mediation is replaced by the logic of confrontation, of antagonism.

"At first appears the need of a self organisation. To be efficient it has to count on workers unity, overcome the unions and political divisions. Only the widest direct democracy can enable achievement of these objectives -Cahiers du Douce, mai 1987.

3) Now the 100,000 \$ dollars question: What is the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy? Wait a moment

before repeating your answer which was wrong ... Correct answer: practically nothing even if we take the most perfect situation (general assembly of all concerned workers, regular meetings eg every day, unanimous votes, executive committee with members dismissible at any moment, regular and compulsory reports, imperative mandate, duties rota, ...etc...)

a) Both those advocating direct democracy and representative democracy express the same need to build a "political organisation outside the organisation already existing through class antagonism, an organisation to discuss, to present alternative solutions, decide together strategy and tactics (a separation between struggle and discussion, vote and struggle). It is nothing other than intellectual contempt, often too complete ignorance of the daily struggle around the rate of profit and overestimation of the value of discussion and 'consciousness' as a purely intellectual process.

b) Neither regular elections in representative democracy, nor general workers assemblies all over France, even if they were taking place every day would change anything even marginally in the capitalist system of exploitation. On the contrary, facts about exploitation, inequalities, categorical interests, uneven access to education and information, etc. will unavoidably determine the functioning and the structures of general assemblies. It is not by chance if most of the time the "militants" are the only ones to speak in the assemblies, if manipulations about the 'power of speaking' can take place, if practically only those 'militant' outside the strike are the members of the strike committees if local, regional or national coordinating committees have to be 'organised' by bonapartist people, if strike committees or national coordinations self proclaim they are representative of thousands of workers. It is the 'normal' functioning and

"It is said there is a lot of unions militants and it is normal that people acting(!) out of the period of strike are to be found the committees. In the same time we see that, during the strike, non unionised especially young and active workers wanting to do something and to organise themselves(!) They were not like that in the place of work and in the struggle they reveal being militants like us(!), strike militants ...
Courant Alternatif, february 1987

inevitability of direct democracy, of rank and file democracy, of assemblyist democracy or of any other pompous concept invented to dissimulate the actual character of these institutions. Representative democracy can only reproduce inequality of the capitalist system.
b) We are told that general assemblies are set up to provide unity beyond the unions and political divisions; but in fact this unity is a pure fiction, as fictitious as the 'peuple de France' which is the basis of 'representative democracy'. When a general assembly is set up it is said that the workers are not yet organised, a naive ignorance of the primary organisation built through class antagonism, workers are considered as individuals without an organisation, as an amorphous mass completely atomised. So everybody is considered as equal, free and agreed and there is unity (because if all

As for representativity intercategory the coordinating committee was essentially formed with strike committees of Paris South-West, but even so 12,000 strikers were concerned (was not it a self proclaimed committee?); the ADC coordinating committee even if it represented(?) 32 depots out of 94 could count only some thousands of the strikers. As for democracy (?) the coordinating committee met a lot of time with delegates mandated by strikers general assemblies; on the contrary the ADC coordinating committee met only two times and in its strike committees some seats were reserved for union officials who were not elected or dismissible."
Courant Alternatif, march 1987

the participants see themselves as equals it is 'normal' the the number of heads is counted for the decisions). The utmost unity degree is when unionists and non-unionists altogether raise their hands voting yes or no. Fortunately this magic transforming of a proletarian identity (basis of the daily struggle) into an assemblyist 'autonomous' identity of 'militant workers' inside and for their secondary 'organisation', in the defence of an imaginary unity is doomed to fail,

this fundamental fact the capitalist class in the U.S.S.R. knows no more than Western researchers and politicians - and that is practically nothing.

Thus the Russian capitalist class has the advantage of very accurate definitions of economic phenomena, superior analytical tools, a long experience in criticising capitalist systems, and an enormous mass of statistical data, too, data which may not be very "accurate", but cannot simply be regarded as useless, and yet the capitalist class has been unable, in spite of such ideal conditions, to have anything but a completely distorted image of Russian capitalism. Instead of deploring the lack of accurate and up-to-date information, as Castoriadis does, I suggest a different approach which seems to be more promising in the attempt to explain this seeming paradox: a discussion of capitalist ideology in the U.S.S.R. and its implications. Capitalist ideology, we know that since Marx wrote about it, is completely distinct from cheating, error, stupidity, and from false consciousness, even if all things could well be mixed with ideology in the same people's mind. What exactly is the nature of capitalist ideology in the U.S.S.R. (i.e. of the so-called Marxism-Leninism)? The capitalist class speaks of Soviet society as socialism, but in fact it is nothing but capitalism, with a continuity reaching back at least as far as 1860. They speak of a planned system, but in fact it is neither the plan nor the market which determines the development of the economy, but simply profit and exploitation. They present themselves as the working-class vanguard, but in fact they are its implacable opponent. They claim to continually improve the condition of the workers, but in fact the contradictions between the classes as well as relative and absolute poverty ^{of the working class} are growing constantly. In their imagination there is no room for doubt about their policy having the steady support of the working class, but in fact the working class struggles for destroying the capitalist system. First conclusion: Whatever has been made the object of capitalist planning in the U.S.S.R., its character has never been more than that of a purely fictitious, non-existing system, in short of the socialist system.

One more it must be emphasized: This is neither the proof of a bottomless stupidity of the capitalist class nor a very nasty attempt at playing a deliberate trick on the other part of the population, deceived as to the real character of the system, nor proof of any kind of false consciousness in the capitalist class.

Castoriadis and other vulgar economists regularly fail to take notice of a certain superiority of Soviet statistics in defining basic categories, especially productivity, if compared with statistics in the Western branch of capitalism. It is impossible to go into any detail here. On the other hand we don't think necessary once again to underline the overriding importance of a precise distinction between productive and unproductive labour in any capitalist system, because only productive labour can possibly contribute to the growth of capital. In this sphere the U. S. S. R. has more precise tools than the West, thus theoretically enabling the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. to have a rather more accurate idea of the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of commodities. The Russian economists have very successfully used these instruments in their critical analysis of the Western branch of capitalism. I have no doubt that the U. S. S. R. has always had a much more realistic picture of Western capitalist economy than the West of the Soviet economy, in spite of all the efforts and numerous publications on the part of the CIA and Western sovietology. (Isn't it significant that the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. has just decided to get rid of these analytic tools and to replace them more or less by the useless tools of Western vulgar economism?) Surplus value production and exploitation, the nature of periodical crises, the falling tendency of the profit rate, the structural crisis of traditional branches of industry etc. in the Western branch of capitalism have no secret for the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R. We have seen this over many decades in the past.

On the other hand, it is evident that the ruling class in the U. S. S. R. has been completely unable to use the same tools for an analysis of the capitalist system in the U. S. S. R. This paradox turns out to be even more puzzling once we try to analyse the Soviet economy with exactly the same methods, tools and concepts which Soviet economists are so fond of when dealing with Western capitalism; for the sake of the argument it is preferable to use nothing but the very data published regularly by the capitalist class in the U. S. S. R., and for the rest Western re-calculations have by no means proved superior. If we proceed in this manner, there is only one possible conclusion: The laws of development of the Western and the Eastern branches of capitalism are exactly the same. Of

d) Defenders of representative democracy as well as defenders of direct democracy insist on the need for delegating power (separation between electing and elected, rank and file and delegates). Nobody can be surprised that the relationship between the general assembly and the strike committee is reversed. This reversal is not a sign of a bad functioning of 'direct democracy' but a sign of its 'normal' functioning and all the pseudo-democratic rituals inherent in the 'assemblyist democracy' cannot at all prevent these things from happening.

4 We have to draw the conclusion that direct democracy does not exist and has never existed. "Representative democracy" and "direct democracy" are not democracy as a lie and democracy as a reality but only two different techniques of capitalist mediation and integration. Why then the fight for 'direct democracy'? Another secret of the leftist movement. For all people interested in real experiences of 'direct democracy' in the sense of a social practice, there are a lot of situations to study, mainly in the postwar period in France as in England, in Germany as in the USA, in Italy as in Spain. Even if we can't say that these experiences had been sufficiently studied (why look at the reality when we can dream?) we see that the working class in the most advanced capitalist countries has left direct democracy behind. This is true for french railways workers too.

"It is the first time in France that a movement of this importance develops in a complete autonomous way building at the same time autonomous organisations of direct democracy to control their struggle. Even if this attempt was a partial one, the movement tried to go beyond this rank and file organisations in building other autonomous regional and national structures. We can see here some steps towards the building of autonomous organisation of struggle, which could outline an organisation of the social life through committees closely linked to rank and file assemblies, taking in hand their own interests and eliminating in this process all the structures of the ruling society.

Liaisons n°2, 1986-87

the end
p. 50

This fortress of the secta- (and also the unitarian one) was fighting against integration through direct democracy' as well as through 'representative democracy' even if only for one week or two, a minority of workers overlooked this historical tendency of class struggle in France (and elsewhere). We can only regret one thing: apart from this inflated exaltation of 'direct democracy' in the SNCF strike, we have looked in vain for something on the daily struggle of the french railways workers in the pages of "Rouge", "Mais encore", "Lutte Ouvrière", "Courant

FRANCE GOES OFF THE RAILSThe movements in France, november 86-january 87

BM Blob , London WCI N 3 XX or BM Combustion , London WCI N 3XX

Unusual events took place in France during the winter 86-87. At first students, then railways workers went their own autonomous way to fight for the defence of their most elementary and immediate interests. Doing so and because they went their own way, they went to the highest level of class confrontation; though they did want their fight to be non-political and independant from the unions, they build up a dangerous challenge to government, political parties, managers and unions altogether.

A lot has been written in France about this movements. Most of it did not come from the studentss. Hundreds of different leaflets poured in the streets mainly during the student movement, from all kind of organisations, schools, small groups or individuals. Hundreds of articles or pamphlets came out from a wide range of sources during and mainly after this hectic period.

It was actually a difficult task to try to use such a huge amount of material to bring english speaking people closer to some understanding of what was at stake during these two months of 'unrest' all over France. Can we get this better understanding after reading this 44 page pamphlet? Out of these 44 pages, 8 concerns the facts themselves, 9 are photos, 19 a choice of leaflets, 7 comments on this production of leaflets in France.

It is a hard work to discuss in some lines what was written in 3 pages on the student movement and in 5 pages on the railways strike. Though this last text was the translation from a french pamphlet ("SNCF-décembre 86-janvier 87") it contains as many inaccuracies as the text on the student movement directly written from english sources. Only two examples of this amount of facts that would need corrections;

1) "...students have to be criticised...they claim they are 'apolitical' though all their leaders are former leftist bureaucrats..." (p 3). This quotation can only give a wrong view of the movement. Student unions are very weak; for instance the most important universities of Paris (VI and VII) regroup in the same location (Jussieu,) 60,000 students in the very centre of Paris; all the students unions compete in the elections for

La révolution prolétarienne contre la bureaucratie, in: Socialisme ou Barbarie no. 20/1956, newly edited in: La société bureaucratique, vol. 2, Paris 1973, p. 267 ss.; citation from p. 279)

In the same drift, he can assert:

"To begin with, planning is impossible without quick and accurate information, particularly about the results of current production. In a bureaucratic system, the situation of individual bureaucrats or of groups of bureaucrats occupying this or that place in the hierarchy depends on the results they have achieved - in reality or only apparently. Unless the central bureaucracy wants to build a control system with endless divisions, it is obliged most of the time to rely on apparent results. At most it can control the quantity of production, but not its quality. The result is an inescapable tendency for bureaucrats managing individual factories or a peculiar branch of the economy to inflate the results they have got - in such a way that central planning relies for a large part on imaginary figures." (p. 294)

Like the vulgar economists from whom he borrowed the argument of a lack of accurate information (cf. A. Bergson, A problem in Soviet statistics, in: Review of Economic Statistics 29/1947/4; A. Bergson, Reliability and usability of Soviet statistics: A summary appraisal, in: American Statistics 7/1953/3; A. Gerschenkron, Reliability of Soviet industrial and national income statistics, in: American Statistics 7/1953/2; A. Nove, Economic rationality and Soviet politics, or: Was Stalin really necessary? London 1964; V.G. Treml/J. P. Hardt (eds.), Soviet economic statistics, Durham, N.C., 1972; V.G. Treml, Studies in Soviet input-output analysis, New York 1977; A. Tretyakova/I. Birman, Input-output analysis in the USSR, in: Soviet Studies 28/1976/2; borrowing by Castoriadis of course ^{possible} only from the first three titles, the rest for comparison of the argument), Castoriadis remains completely on the surface of the problem. The availability of information, whether sufficient or insufficient, whether accurate or inaccurate, whether quickly or slowly available, is quite a matter of secondary importance in a capitalist system. Supposing for a moment that the capitalist class of the U.S.S.R. could really command sufficient, accurate and rapidly available information, does this make us believe more in the possibility of a higher degree of rationality in its politics? In greater realism in its central planning? In a greater impact of planning on economic and social development? In all three cases the answer can be only negative. Regarding the problem as to how planning works in the U.S.S.R., arguments of a lack of accurate data do not explain anything at all.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PLANNING IN THE U. S. S. R.

Some remarks on the meaning of the Gorbachev reforms

Today very few people would be readily fooled by some story about the appearance of the Virgin Mary. Yet at the same time even radical, leftist or self-styled marxist critics don't hesitate to speak resolutely of "central planning" and of "State property" as if they were a well evident and undeniable reality (see e. g. L. Huberman, *Man's Worldly Goods*, New York - London 1963, p. 285 ss.; J. Fantham/M. Machover, *The Century of the Unexpected*, London 1979; E. H. Carr/R. W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 1 and 2, Harmondsworth 1974, 1976; M. Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917*, London 1948; C. Castoriadis, *The Social Regime in Russia*, in: *Telos* 1978/79 and many others). In fact the actual content of these tales about central planning and State property, supposedly being the essence of a socialist society, is no different from the tales of the Virgin's appearance. The widespread incomprehension of the working of capitalist society in the U. S. S. R. reaches its highest level when experts begin to speak of a "gap" between plan goals and results, and of the "building" of a State capitalist society because of certain changes in juridical categories.

I will deal here only with the question of central planning, taking as a starting point a text by C. Castoriadis, claiming to be critical but in fact illustrating well the impotence of leftist radicalism (not to speak of established political science, history, economy and sociology) in grasping the very essence of the capitalist system in Russia and the laws governing its development. Analyzing the problems of making planning of an entire society work, Castoriadis explains:

"At first, the ruling bureaucracy does not know what to administer; the reality of production remains unknown to it, because this reality is nothing less than the producers' activity, and the producers do not inform the ruling class, whether private capitalists or bureaucrats, of what is actually happening: Very often they organise themselves in such a way that the managers cannot be informed (to avoid their increasing exploitation, to express their antagonism, or simply because of lack of interest - these are not their problems)." (C. Castoriadis,

seats in the university councils; less than 5% of these students vote and the 'most important' union, UNEF-ID, picks up about 3% (and has even less members). The leaders of UNEF-ID are former trotskyists having moved altogether recently to the Socialist Party (after the strike, some of them will move directly to the top bureaucracy of the SP). Could they be considered as 'leaders' of 97% of the students who did not care at all to be unionized? During the strike, these 'leaders' tried effectively to manipulate the strike committees but, during the rising period of the movement, they had no real control; even if it was a bit formal, they were obliged, by the rank and file pressure to remove all signs of political involvement; if they effectively planned the demonstrations (with the police as well) the first big demonstrations escaped totally the organizers and went their own way.

2) ... The SNCF (National Society of French Railways) is an entreprise with over 50% of its capital nationalised. Its private shareholders, not being a majority have the incomparable advantage never losing any money; the State agrees to cover any drop in the revenue from their shares." Only one cloud on this thoughtful paragraph; since 1/1/83, the State owns all the capital of the SNCF which no longer has private shareholders.

It is impossible to go ahead like this; we will fill more pages than the pamphlet itself. Anyway, I will mention (p 21) an incredible comparison between the English and French middle class from which I draw the conclusion that the author needs to learn a bit more on french social history. On this point about sources, I will criticize as well the choice of leaflets which could give an inaccurate view of their real meaning and implications. I will say more at the end of this review when dealing with the general discussion of these movements.

The text 'False Start' has a very definite position on french students and on the people who were the most active in these events of November - December 1986. I will not discuss what is considered as the politisation of the students in 1968 but only observe that these ideas express a very peculiar view of this period. Beyond any kind of disagreement with this point of view, it is developed in the pamphlet to meet a comparison with the students in 1986. "In 1986, students ... are the most concentrated reformist force in society ... (they) are the social basis of the new french ideology". So, to explain why the events turned another way, the pamphlet's authors have to call for the help of

"youths", "people", "non-students", who, it is said were constantly opposed by the "hostility of the vast majority of students" in their attempt to use "a reformist movement as a pretext to demonstrate their dissatisfaction". With this point of view, they bring to the forefront the most secondary events and doing so, the text misses completely the essential characters of the student movement of 1986.

It misses them partly through its ignorance of exactly who were the 'students' in this 'student movement', the 'people' striking, demonstrating, fighting in the streets. Roughly we can divide the 'students' in France in four categories:

1- The students over 18 following special schools for top managers, top civil servants, military and politicians; they will become as the text says "our enemies" and were not concerned neither by the reform, nor by the movement. It was different in May 68 but we can't tell more about it here.

2- Students in the universities between 18 and 25

3- 'Lycéens' in general secondary schools between 16 and 18 supposed to go to the university

4- 'Lycéens' in technical secondary schools who will never go to the university but directly to the factory or office or to the dole queue (most of them under 17).

All the 'students' classified under (2), (3), (4) were active in the movement but in very different ways. Most concerned by the reform were the "lycéens" under (3); they gave the movement its dynamism, its size in numbers and in geographical scale. The 'students' under (4) because they were already closer to the workers' action, were more radical and contributed to reinforce the more general aspects of the action. The text does not mention at all the fact that the student action was widespread all over France and not limited to Paris as we could believe it to have been from its partial report; this fact, a big difference with 1968 was certainly an important element in the government climb down.

Even if it was a very limited example raising some doubts about the real number of 'lycéens' having written this text, the leaflets of the "LEP électronique" (technical secondary school) expressed something common to this category of "students" and somewhat different from the other categories. But, if we insist on these differences (and even more if we develop the prejudice that the "students" were "the most concentrated reformist force in society"), we don't understand why this "student" movement

still vanguardist people willy nilly brought themselves to a point where they were equal to anybody else involved in these struggles. There was already a strong tendency in 1968 towards this paring of all kind of leadership; this tendency is even stronger in 1986 and all what happens with these leaflets is part of it.

There is no revolutionary model. What has happened in France as well as what has happened in England is part of a world situation. Workers or students react according to the practical situation they find in their country and the form of the repression they have to cope with. It is interesting to follow the text in its attempt to draw a comparison between the action of the French and English proletariat. Nevertheless, we can't oppose them. When it is written that "the UK has become increasingly a basket-case society", where is the difference with other workers? with French workers? The English proletariat blocked in the union straight jacket (even more since the last labour laws) has no other possibilities than wildcat strikes, violence, illegality. With somewhat different forms we could write the same for the French proletariat. The problem is not to look for the "perception" of each other proletariat (for what purpose?) but to try to understand how each proletariat answers to the same pressure of world capitalism and to sort, among differences in the forms of peculiar struggles as well as in the daily permanent struggle, the common denominator expressing the general tendencies of the class struggle around the world.

H.S -10/87

U S A

Rebuild America by rebuilding Labor (in english - copy at Echanges)

This article written by E.D. Liberman dans le NY Times (8/1/89) is interesting in two respects: on one hand in the analysis of the present structures of American productive system, on the other hand in the proposal made to meet the interest of capital to keep highly paid skilled employees and to change its attitude to unions which could become precious auxiliaries for managers. "In the industry the direct labour amount only to 10% of the total cost in average but it is only this labour that is the object of 3/4 of the management efforts, which means that 90% of the real costs including technology, capital, stocks turn over and waste are practically not changed." The conclusions gives some unusual advices to the managers on what should be their factory politics.

remain that of what every 'leafleter' consider as the 'role' of a leaflet. The authors are not very clear about the answer to their relevant question ; about the role of "written theory", "there's never been a sure answer to this" ; about the "historical influence", "can they serve as models for the future?" ; to say at the end that "the question requires something more complex that can be developed here in this text."

Actually, the authors have the answer in their own text. On one hand they told us about "the directly functional purpose of the leaflets" produced by the french railways wotkers ; but already, they don't check who are the pretended "railways workers" of most of these leaflets; they don't try to sort between the strikers' leaflets issued for the real immediate practical needs of their struggle and the far more numerous leaflets issued by all kinds of vanguardist groups or individuals. On the other hand, they have a good analysis of this "particular milieu" from which most of the leaflets came. Not being very certain of what could be the role of a leaflet (and apparently though not openly sticking to a kind of vanguardist position), they had some difficulties to move in the avalanche of leaflets coming more from the student movement than from the railways strike. They recognize the fact honestly though stopping half way of a complete explanation of this phenomenon. What they critically say about an "overestimation of the situation" is still contained in their own text when they write that in 86 "there were relatively far more situ-influenced tracts and far less leftist tracts". They don't see they have got mainly the peripheral leaflets (distributed worldly by the individuals or small groups having proudly issues them) and have not at all got a huge amount of either leftist leaflets or local ones (from a school for instance). The content of these last leaflets was very traditional, even very poor and except for the leftist groups, nobody cares to send them abroad.

There is some truth in the conclusions of this last text when it points to the kind of "competitiveness" between people from this "particular milieu" aimed mainly at "keeping a name in circulation". But are they not going too far in a kind of self flagellation? Beyond all these relevant but partial and peculiar explanations, we have to consider that this explosion of leaflets, in spite of the intents of their promoters or of their content, tried to achieve a communication and to bring a discussion both as wide as possible. It was surprising to see that most of these leaflets were anonymous ones, signed with nicknames and did not give an address for contacts. Most of these

unified such apparently separated categories in the most immense movement of youth ever seen in France.

The government project aimed at reinforcing the domination of capital on the university, on all people working inside the scholar system as "student". This domination has already taken insidious forms in the past, bringing about a proletarianisation of the students. The student movement at the same time both showed this proletarianisation and was possible because it formerly existed. Their fight, even with the peculiarities referring to each category of students could be joined by the technical school students and so expand widely. It was evident, throughout the struggle, that the "lycéens" were more radical and far less 'disciplined' than the university students. It will take too long to explain here the dialectical process between the bureaucratic control of the movement and its evident autonomous tendency. From this process sprang out the political radicalisation of a minority both in the streets and in the spontaneous organisation of the struggle.

This struggle could be supported and joined as well by the workers because it had a proletarian character. The workers' unions leaders were so conscious of this situation that they persuaded the government about the possibilities of a generalisation of the movement. It was the ghost of 1968 (though coming in a very different way) that brought this climb down, not the "not so mini riots" praised by the pamphlet; this apparent capitulation in front of the street demonstrations stopped the movement and the spreading of the strike. We could agree with the authors when they say that it is not what people think about the French student movement that counts and that "against their intentions, the students encouraged a Third Force". But it is difficult to follow them on what they call "the practical effect of Chirac's climb down on the world (eg Mexico, Spain, etc...)". It is already difficult to see this effect on the railways strike in France. As we said, the movement was only partially controlled by the students. It had not all the virtues it was given by the media reports; but these pretended virtues made an example and a successful model of what it had not actually been.

Even if we could somewhat follow this copycat explanation of the other movements in France or in the world, nothing would really be explained. All these movements of students or workers could be linked because they had the same background; the resistance to the domination of capital (the university politics in different countries is for capital part of the general process of formation of the labour force). The direct democracy of the student

movement and the autonomous strike of the railways workers have to be considered not in terms of influence but as the rank and file answer to this domination and to the lack of any kind of organisation able to defend their most immediate interest. Both struggles showed the same strong will (even if it was not always successful) not to be manipulated by political or union apparatus. When the students wanted to be 'apolitical', when a railways worker said: "If the unions took control of the strike, I would resume work immediately" (what actually happened), they expressed the same thing. Both movements don't really copy each other; their form was the result of the same global situation. We will oppose the same criticism to the conclusion of the text on the railways strike: "Through its exemplary quality, the movement has created in this country an incomparable precedent" (underlined in the text). It is true that for the first time in France, a national strike began, spread and organised itself completely outside the unions. Could we speak of exemplarity or of incomparable precedent? Wildcat strike were not an exception in France; what is really new is the self organisation of the movement as the text explains it. If it happens elsewhere it will more be the result of the same situation (workers having to build their own organisation for lack of something else helping them to defend their interest) rather than the copying of an exemplary precedent. We have to say more: this rank and file autonomous organisation failed because of the impossibility to build a unique coordinating national committee and to escape completely the union domination. We could discuss how these two problems were closely linked and how the unions can have managed (with the help of the direct police repression and of the government manipulations) to break the strike. A government deputy said expressly after the railways strike: "We were lucky when the CGT (CP dominated union) succeed to take the control of the movement. From the moment this union was pushing this strike into a political one, we were rescued; the railways workers stopped their strike because of that."

Government and unions are thinking of this "exemplary precedent" for the future strikes too. They will take (they have taken) measures to prevent them to follow the same way. Of course, they don't have the control of what could happen. They can't remove the economical pressure on the workers which was the basic reason of the workers action; on the other hand, they can't prevent the unions to play the same role because it is their function in this society; this same situation will bring the same kind of resistance, with certainly different forms

because the workers will have to consider new forms of repression.

"Trains of thought...and ideological platforms", six pages of comparison between French and English workers and an attempt to analyse the ideology behind all these leaflets spread during both movements, are certainly the best part of the pamphlet. Though missing important aspects of the struggle in France, this article goes well into the complexity of the workers movement in both countries and contains some other view of the student movement and of the 'milieu' from where all the majority of the leaflets came. Though this text opposes what comes from this 'particular milieu' to the leaflets produced by the French railways workers telling accurately the last ones "had a directly functional purpose", it fails the most important of these leaflets (and even to mention it); the leaflet issued at the very beginning of the railways strike by the Paris-Nord drivers, reproduced and distributed spontaneously by all railways workers all over France, which was actually the very beginning of the strike. Of course it has a very materialistic content, not calling lyrically for revolutionary stances, but why is it not worth to be mentioned?

According to the text, the leaflets produced in France "...are better than any such leaflets produced by striking workers in the UK who, nowadays, hardly ever think it worthwhile putting pen to paper... This was not the case in the period from the early 60's to 1974 when they were quite a number... After that, despite the intense strikes, there's been a virtual silence from struggling workers in the UK on this written level...". The explanation would be in the evolution of the rank and file movement, its atomisation; but the text jump suddenly to another point: "What the fuck do leaflets matter when in terms of sheer vandalism the UK has the most violent proletariat in Europe?" "The very destructive real movement in the UK certainly... influences each rebellious sector...". So, no need for leaflets? Another question comes immediately: "Can written theory play a part in changing?" we suppose gaps in consciousness, unconnected battles, etc... It is evident that the authors think that "written theory does have a concrete historical influence"; it is interesting to observe that the examples given refer only to the student movements and not to the worker movements. It will need along explanation (an historical and structural one) to bring some understanding of the existence of so many leaflets in unions, parties, groups or and individuals activities in France. The main question anyway would