

ECHANGES 70/71

Nr. 1-2/92

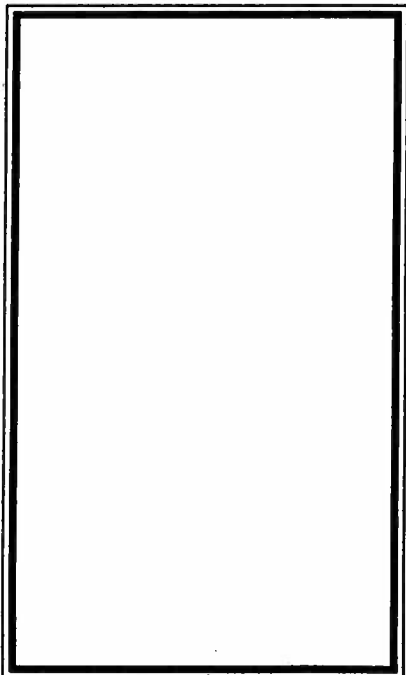
BULLETIN OF THE NETWORK "ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT"

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BROCHURE
PAMPHLET

TO



ECHANGES

Bulletin of the network 'Echanges et Mouvement'.

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or**

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THE PRODUCTION OF ECHANGES

In an issue of the English bulletin 'Subversion' the following was said about Echanges: *'ECHANGES' is a well established, cheaply produced, bulletin which regularly reviews and summarises the contents of many interesting radical and revolutionary publications from across the world. It also translates and reprints longer articles reporting on and analysing the international class struggle. Although rarely bang up to date, it provides some valuable background information for understanding the nitty gritty of class struggle in many different countries.*

Apparently these comrades, like many others, see the main interest of Echanges as the mentioning or reviewing of all kinds of journals as well as translated and reprinted material. Ourselves we see it somewhat differently. Even if the content of an issue of Echanges can vary, the backbone of the project is the participants' own ideas and writing of articles on the various aspects of class struggle - ideas and analysis which we will argue that in important respects differ strongly from the material and journals of various groups regularly mentioned in our pages. However, we have always had a completely 'unsectarian' attitude towards 'advertising' or using the material of others in Echanges.

We can not at all disagree with the view that Echanges "rarely are bang up to date". It has mostly been like that through our 13 years of publication, but this has hardly been seen by participants

PUBLICATIONS IN GERMAN

Advocom Verlag (Steinbrecherstrasse 16, 3300 Braunschweig, Germany) has reprinted a number of Echanges pamphlets which has been added to our list of English and French publications. The following old and new material is also available from Advocom and can be ordered either from Advocom or Echanges:

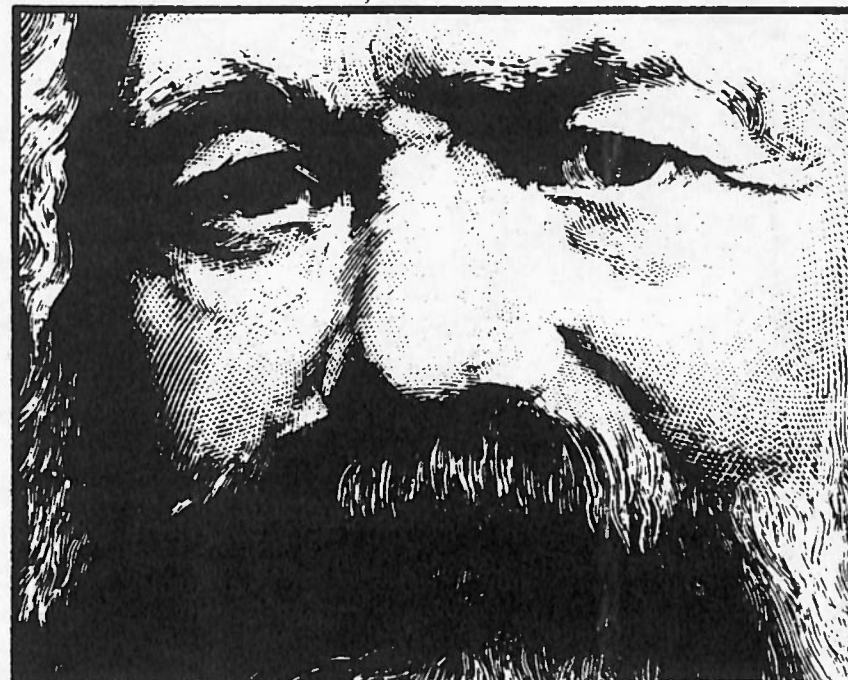
Kritik des Leninschen Bolschewismus - Cajo Brendel - 45 Seiten. Contains the two articles "Kritik der Leninschen Revolutionstheorie" and "Lenin als Stratege der bürgerlichen Revolution"; dealing with Russia and the Bolsheviki in general and in particular commenting two of Lenin's most important texts: 'State and Revolution' and 'Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder'.

Indien und der IWF (International Monetary Fund) - Theo Sander - 100 Seiten, DM 8.-
"Des grossen Planes Stimm' und Gang". **Bildungsplanung als Illusion** - Theo Sander - 216 Seiten, DM 17,80 - On the DDR (see Germany section in this Echanges)

FIAT. Arbeiterkämpfe in Turin 1974-1980 - Anthology of articles mainly from Italian journals - 75 Seiten, DM 6.-

Umweltpolitik in Thailand. Ein Land zwischen dauerhafter Entwicklung und schrittweiser Zerstörung - Ingvar Sander - 191 Seiten, DM 12.-

Polens Arbeiter auf dem Wege der Selbstbefreiung - H. Simon - German version of Simon's book on Poland 80-82 - 60 Seiten - DM 4,50.



Bewick Editions

Echanges has received for sale a limited number of the following material (for a presentation, see Echanges no.65 p.17-18):

The American Worker - Paul Romano and Ria Stone (£1.50)

Wartime strikes. The struggle against the no-strike pledge in the Union of Auto Workers (UAW) - Martin Glaberman (£3)

'Be his payment high or low'. The American working class in the 60's - M. Glaberman - (50p)

Punching out - M. Glaberman (25p)

PUBLICATIONS IN FRENCH

ECHANGES - Bulletin - specimen sur demande - abonnement 60F par an donnant droit a 4 bulletins et aux brochures ou livres publiés dans l'anne - Des exemplaires des anciens numeros peuvent etre obtenus au prix des photocopies (0,40F une double page format A4) et des frais postaux.

Echanges et Mouvement. Presentation brochure

LIAISONS - numeros déjà parus; 10F; No.1,2,3. No.4/5 (35FF).

***INFORMATIONS CORRESPONDANCE OUVRIERES (ICO)** - ancien numeros (5F chaque)

La greve generalisee en France, mai 1968 - ICO (10F)

***Hongrie 1956** - A. Anderson - Echanges (10F)

***Un conflit decisif; Les syndicats combattent la revolte contre le travail** - J.Zerzan - Echanges (5F)

Wildcat, Dodge Truck, 1974 - Black and Red - Echanges (5)

***Le 25 juin 1976 en Pologne** - H.Simon - Echanges (10F)

Pologne 80-82. Lutte de classe et crise du capital - H.Simon - Spartacus (20F)

L'insurrection ouvriere en Allemagne de l'Est, juin 1953 - C.Brendel - Echanges (10F)

A l'Ouest rien de nouveau, USA 1978 - Echanges (10F)

***Lutte de classe autonome en Grande Bretagne** - C.Brendel - Echanges (20F)

To the bitter end - Greve des mineurs en Grande Bretagne - Mars 84 - mars 85 - H. Simon - Acratie (30F)

***Thèses sur la revolution chinoise** - C.Brendel - Echanges (10F)

Grève à General Motors - collectif de Strasbourg (5F)

Espagne, de l'antifranquisme à l'après-franquisme - C.Brendel et H.Simon - Echanges (20F)

Cwmbach mineurs et femmes de mineurs parlent (5F)

***Chronique de la revolution espagnole** - H.Chaze/Union Communiste - Spartacus (20F)

***Lenine philosophe** - H.Gorter - Spartacus (20F)

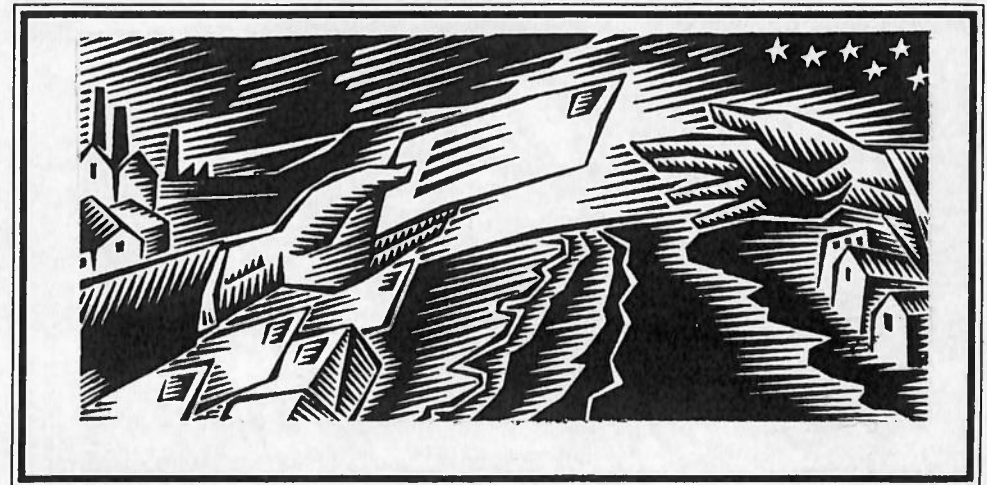
***Reponse à Lenine** - H.Gorter - Spartacus (20F)

as a problem because their concern has never been the 'intervention' in struggles like so many others are concerned with.

However, as has been the case for a long time now, another issue of the English edition of Echanges appears very long after schedule. In no. 65, 66/67 and 68/69 we have commented on some reasons for this which it has not been possible to solve properly. Additional reasons this time includes a comrade's strong involvement in an industrial dispute for half a year, partly overlapping with preparations for moving to another country.

There are however good reasons to hope that this situation will gradually improve. Many comrades involved in the production of Echanges now live closer to each other and we also have the possibility to use PCs to a greater extent to exchange material in preparation for issues of Echanges. As mentioned in a previous issue, it will be of help if material for Echanges is sent on a discette. (For the English edition, WP versions 5.1 or lower, on a 3 1/2 inch disc, is the best.)

It is not possible for Echanges to follow in detail events in all countries. We are therefore interested in material or articles on struggles or social and economic conditions - either written by readers for Echanges or material which can be reprinted from newspapers, journals, books etc. Irrespective of whether this material is used directly in Echanges or not, it will still be of value, because much of the time of the participants of Echanges is used on circulating material for information or discussion for the benefit of themselves and others. Frequently we get hold of material about a strike, but not follow-up material about the end of it or what happened afterwards. Or even if we have the material, there isn't the time to write about it. Another problem is the translation from French to English and vice versa to have the same material in



our French and English editions. These editions were originally intended to be similar, but in reality they are not. This is only partly caused by the delays with the English edition - another reason is the ability and capacity for translations. For all these reasons, all help from readers in the collection, translation and writing of material, etc., is welcome.

ADDRESS - CORRESPONDENCE AND ORDERS

Although our London post office box address is still valid, letters, orders for material/subscriptions, or proposals for meeting, discussion and participation in Echanges activity will be answered more quickly if sent to our Paris address. However, everything sent to England is collected at more or less regular intervals. For more details about subscriptions and available material, see the List of publications in this issue.

Despite the problems lately of producing the normal number of issues per. year, readers who have a subscription, or those wanting to take out one, will of course receive the full value of their money.

For new readers, or others interested in extra copies, there is available for free an **Echanges et Mouvement. Presentation pamphlet** in English and French, giving a summary of the history of and the basic ideas of Echanges. This text has been the subject of discussion both during the production of it and afterwards, and some of this might be published. However, since the text is not a final product, comments are still welcome.

For an updating of the list of those who receive Echanges, and wish to continue to do so, we strongly ask those who have a new address to send it to us and those not interested in receiving it to tell us. Regularly copies of Echanges are returned by the post authorities without having been passed on to a new address, and there are surely cases where copies are sent to a new address without us knowing about it.



LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

We have a limited stock of the publications marked with * and they might not all be available from us when the order is received (but could still be available from bookshops or other publishers/distributors). Prices are in pound sterling for the publications in English and in French francs for the publications in French. Cheques or postal orders have to be in sterling or francs. Notes in any other currency could be sent if they are the countervalue of the total order. Prices include postage. Orders will be answered only if the corresponding payment is joined. Orders can be sent to the following addresses, with an in most cases quicker answer if the Paris address is used:

ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT, BP 241, 75866 PARIS CEDEX 18

or

**ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT, BM BOX 91,
LONDON WC1N3XX, UK.**

PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

ECHANGES - Current issue of the bulletin Echanges is available free. Subscription (4-5 issues) is £6 and includes pamphlets and possible books published. Back issues are available, for most of them at the price of photocopying (4p pr. A4 double page) and postage.

Echanges et Mouvement. Presentation pamphlet (free)

Shake it and break it. Class and politics in Britain 1979/1989 - H.Simon, D.Brown - Echanges (90p)

Workers Councils - A.Pannekoek - Echanges

*Part 1 and 2 (£1) Part 3 (50p), Part 4 (50p)

The Hungarian Revolution - Council Communist Pamphlet (60p)

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

***Cwmbach miners and women speak out** (From the 84-85 miners strike in a mining village in Wales) (60p)

Poland 1980-1982. Class struggle and the crisis of capital - H.Simon - Black and Red (£2)

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

France - Winter 86-87 - An attempt at autonomous organisation - The railway strike - Echanges (50p)

The COBAS - A new rank and file movement - Italy 1986-87 - D.Brown - Echanges (£1,50)

The refusal of work. Facts and discussions - Various contributors - Echanges (£1,50)

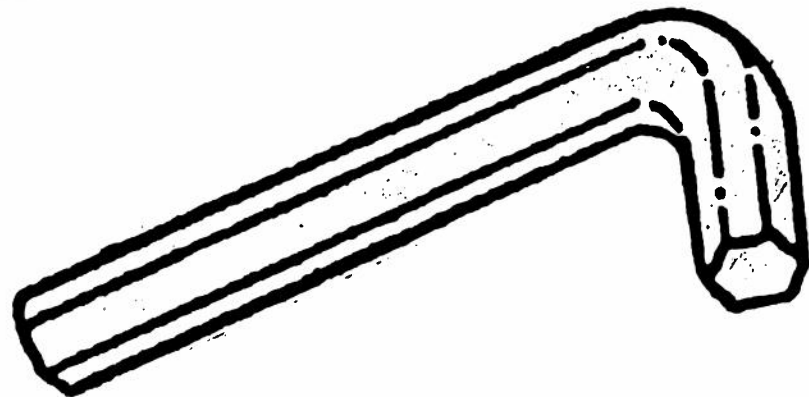
Düsseldorf 1848: A 1 page reprint (in German) of the demands of the working class of Düsseldorf in April 1848 to the city council - concerning a doubling of the wages, number of workdays and working hours...and "an umbrella per worker, to be able to work also when it's raining".

F.Engels über Norwegen: A pamphlet with reprint of letters by Engels written during or in connection with his journey through Norway in 1890.

Das Exekutivkomitee der 3.Internationale und die Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands: A 25 page reprint of a 1920 KAPD pamphlet with the texts: "Bericht der nach Moskau entsandten Delegation" (report from a KAPD delegation to Moscow) - "Offenes Schreiben des Exekutiv-Komitees an die Mitglieder der KAPD" (open letter from the Executive Committee of the Third International to the KAPD - reproduced here in an English version) - "An den zweiten Konkress der 3.Internationale" (A KAPD letter to the second congress of the Third International). For those interested in this kind of material, the texts are a valuable source of information about some KAPD ideas and arguments. An edition with all these texts in English might be published, but there are more important things to do...

Communist International: A 2 page chronology of its congresses and enlarged executive committee plenums, with illustrations from C.I. journals.

RK/CR - Tekster A pamphlet in Norwegian with texts by and an interview with a person who was a member of the group Revolutionäre Kommunisten - Communistes Revolutionnaires. This group started out as a more or less trotskyist group in Austria in the mid-30s, was repressed by the Austrian regime, and many militants went abroad and continued their work throughout the 30s and 40s, to a large extent in other occupied countries. The group participated at the founding congress of the 4th International but opposed its formation, and developed away from trotskyism on questions of opposition to all sides in the war, the nature of Russia etc. These discussions and the group's practical activity is a fascinating story which the pamphlets throws some light on, based on previously published material in German which is no longer in general circulation.



VULNERABILITY OF MODERN WORK ORGANISATION.

**SOME STRIKES IN BELGIUM AND FRANCE OF STEELWORK
COMPUTER WORKERS, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TECHNICIANS
AND METRO MAINTENANCE WORKERS.**

COMPUTER WORKERS STOP COCKERILL-SAMBRE STEELWORK

A short article in the French management periodical 'Usine Nouvelle' 20/12/90 brought to light a small but very significant, although almost ignored, conflict at the steelwork in Liege, Belgium of the European industrial complex Cockerill-Sambre.

On Monday 3 December 1990, three temporary workers frustrated by not being definitely engaged at the end of their contract, stopped work. They worked in the computer center which controls all operations in this automated, fully integrated factory. The 21 other computer workers, though not concerned directly by the problem of their three colleagues, immediately went on strike too. Their wildcat strike was threatening in a very short time to completely disturb the factory work. The strike was illegal because in Belgium a legal strike can only take place after a long negotiation and 'cooling off' period, aimed precisely at preventing any strike in very sensitive working processes.

Unions and management were completely surprised by this strike. They tried everything to stop it and to prevent not so much its direct consequences as the strike demonstrating to other workers that a tiny group can be powerful enough to suddenly and completely bring a big factory to a standstill. Through their pressure the unions succeeded in persuading the workers to suspend their strike the evening of Tuesday 4. December to the opening of discussions the following Thursday. But the workers refused to consider that their strike would be finally over and declared that they would resume it if something was going wrong. The top management preferred not to go ahead with such a situation. They closed most of the factory, laying off 13.000 workers until the 24 computer workers definitely stop their action. Apparently this move intended to set workers against workers, but it was more to avoid a visible lessons of a few workers blocking a factory and to get the time to take some emergency measures to prevent such a situation to rise again.

On Thursday, after several hours of discussions, unions and management agreed to postpone for three months the decision concerning the three original strikers - the time of course to build some technical or managerial system preventing the rise and consequences of such actions. The strike was over.

So all activity of a big factory and 13000 workers had been totally stopped for one week, if not directly by the strike of 24 workers so indirectly by a management decision giving the same result. Such strikes show the vulnerability of modern work organisation. We can compare it with some strikes in France, for instance of the technicians doing repairs and maintenance of the radar and communication equipment used by air traffic controllers or the light maintenance workers on the metro trains in Paris. The article said that unions and management will do their best to prevent such spontaneous actions and to know how to cope with what they call "the fragility of the system which the strike has revealed". This "fragility" can't be completely removed because the pressure of the competitive costs constantly obliges management to take half measures to solve this problem, giving rise at the same time to new fragilities with the introduction of new techniques. On the other hand we can ask why workers are not more frequently taking advantage of such situations allowing them to act independently and by themselves, because they have such an immediate power in their daily work which gives them precisely the opportunity for such autonomy.

Such actions when they take place are most of the time hidden in the heart of the factory; they can take various forms, most of them not having the direct evident consequences as in this Belgian example. More subtle distortions of the work process can take place - see for example the letter from a computer worker of English Gas in *Echanges* 49/50. On the other hand, the threat of such actions is often sufficient for workers getting what they demand, and often even the conditions offered to those workers placed in such situations are fixed unilaterally in order to prevent some very damaging actions. Of course all this depends closely on the balance of struggle and can vary according to the factories, the national or international conjuncture and to the techniques involved. In such moving situations, as capital is presently trying to adapt more and more quickly to the imperatives of the market, competition and profits, the class struggle is moving too at the same pace, making it difficult to follow as it is even more hidden in small units and more based on individual or small groups' reactions.

HS

YUGOSLAVIA

Yougoslavery no.1: Yougoslavia - Summer 90 - Some basic ingredients of Yougoslav ideology (BM Blob, London WC1N 3XX, UK)

Most of this pamphlet/periodical is the translation of texts written in French by Yougoslavian and Bulgarian immigrants living in France. After a short history of Yougoslavia after the first world war, the text tries to give a complete and detailed view of the national question: How it is presently used as an ideological means of containment/regimentation of Yougoslavian social contradictions, emphasising "the relativity of the national question" (developing some aspects of these manipulations according to the local particularisms). These texts are interesting but limited to the political and ideological aspects. There is very little on the class struggle apart from at the end and then mainly the last two pages about Albana miners strikes and a short review of the strikes in the Spring of 1987.

See also some brief notes about Yougoslavia 1991 in *Echanges* 68/69.

MOTIVA FORLAG

Circular letters with information about the USSR and about Scandinavia from comrades using the name Motiva Forlag, have previously been published in *Echanges* and other journals. Originals of the circulars used in *Echanges* as well as some other material they have made is available from Motiva Forlag at the address: Postboks 9340 Vålerenga, 0610 Oslo, Norway. Much of the material is also available on discettes (see *Echanges* 66/67, p.3). There is no particular price for any of it. All kinds of material (publications, articles...) is however always welcome in exchange, and the comrades are in particular asking for material about struggles and conditions in the former USSR. Among the available material is:

Norway: The end of social peace: A brief letter about Norway from 1982 (published in the paper *Workers Voice*).

Norway 1988: Published in *Echanges* 61. Available in English, French and Italian.

Norway 1989: Published in *Echanges* 62. Also contains a critique of the writings of the 'International Communist Current' on class struggle in Norway. Available in English and French.

Class struggle in the USSR 1990-91. Norway and Sweden in 1990: Published in *Echanges* 66/67 and 68/69 respectively. USSR text available in English, French and Italian.

Class struggle in the USSR 1991. Finland in 1991: Published in *Echanges* 68/69 and 70/71 respectively.

exactly who their enemy is. All the people in our group are working class and we know as a sombre but nevertheless very definite fact that the majority of members of our class are not clearly aware of who our class enemy is.

The 'revolutionaries' we criticise are also fully aware of this situation. But they do not want the working class to clearly recognize the middle class as their enemy. Hence, this is the main thrust of our pamphlet. We are accusing the whole of the Left, particularly the so-called revolutionary groups and parties, of deliberately indoctrinating militant working class activists with lies. They address their papers and magazines to working class readers and, as they have done for decades, continually refer to the enemy as 'the ruling class' (or sometimes 'the capitalist class' or 'the boss class') without ever a definition of who these people are. We believe the reason for this is because all of the 'revolutionary' groups and parties are run by middle class people who simply are not honest enough to call for open war against their own class.

If they believe (as some parts of your review suggests that you do) that the working class do not need to know who their real enemy is, why do they continually fill their papers with calls to the working class to 'smash the ruling class'? If the working class are ever to free themselves from the domination of another class, it is absolutely crucial that they first become aware of who that other class is.

As we have said at the beginning, your review is sometimes unclear. A particular example is your last paragraph in which you appear to accept that the middle class is the class-enemy of the working class. But instead of proclaiming this fact loud and clear - to combat generations of Left propaganda which covered this up and still continues to do so - you collaborate in the deception by repeating the excuse we have already referred to above: that the working class people don't need to know who their class enemy is because, through their fight, they know exactly who it is.

Serious discussion about crucial questions should not include statements like this - as if they were sacred and eternal truths. If, despite all we have said in the pamphlet and here, you still hold to this view, then surely you will agree that a much more detailed explanation is required.



STRIKE OF FRENCH AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TECHNICIANS

1100 technicians are in charge of the maintenance of the computers, radars, radios and other equipment which is used in the daily work of the air traffic controllers in the 5 area control centers responsible for air traffic over France. The technicians are civil servants under the Ministry of Transport and work in the five centers located in Athis Mons, Reims, Aix en Provence, Bordeaux and Brest. These centers deal only with civil aircraft. Military traffic is controlled through special military radar stations/centers with military staff under the Ministry of Defence. According to the strike regulations of all civil control centers, unions (both of controllers and technicians) have to inform management about a strike three days on beforehand. They also have to organise a "minimum service" to allow a certain number of aircraft to fly. If a strike of the air traffic controllers is deeply and immediately disturbing or stopping the traffic, a strike of the technicians does not have the same consequences. If for example a radar console is out of order, an automatic device transfers information to another console. So a strike of the technicians causes few immediate problems in a center like Athis Mons, the main center in France controlling the airspace around Paris, which currently has 20 consoles in working order. This equipment is very reliable and seldom out of service (in average there is one or two quickly repaired bugs during 24 hours in a center).

This is the reason why the official strike warning by the two technicians' unions (USA, linked to the CGT and the autonomous union SAPAC) hardly was considered by the airline operators as something which would cause noticeable disturbances to the air traffic, even if the strike was to begin on Friday 8 November 1991 and last for several days during a busy weekend.

Even if the strike was not a surprise, the way it was performed and the consequences surely was. On the morning of the 8th, when the air traffic controllers in Athis Mons came to work at 7 am, they discovered that 14 of the 20 consoles were out of service. It was the same in other centers: for example 7 of 10 out of service in Brest. The three technicians on duty in Athis Mons obliged to work the "minimum service" required and immediately repair the consoles, declared that they were "completely unusable and not reparable in the near future". Since the traffic controlled by the Athis Mons center includes the two main Paris airports Charles de Gaulle and Orly (as well as a large number of other airports, and flights overflying France) the companies had to severely reduce their departures and landings. Because flights on short notice had to take other routes and land at other airports than normal, French airspace and French airports were in a complete mess even for those centers where the maintenance was 'normal'.

The reaction of the authorities was twoway. At first they tried to limit the consequences of the action by stopping all military air activity over French territory and to use military air traffic

controllers as scabs to take charge of the civilian French and foreign air traffic. (This was not that reliable because the last time the government used this method to break an air traffic controller strike, a mishandling of the air traffic brought a crash near Nantes with a lot of deaths). Secondly they threatened the technicians with an official inquiry to try to discover who was responsible for "actions going beyond the normal use of the right to strike", as the minister of transport expressed it. They can't even use the traditional argument that "security was threatened" because the effect of the strike was to bring traffic to a complete standstill and the government only had the responsibility to use less reliable air control centers.

Even if the strike was proclaimed by the unions, it was more or less a wildcat strike. Last July some unions had signed an agreement in order to "solve the problems of the technicians". The two unions involved in the strike had not signed the agreement and support the claims which still haven't been met: the immediate engagement of 120 more technicians and the same basic wage as the air traffic controllers (which means a monthly rise of FF 500 beyond an average of FF 23.000).

On Friday evening 12 out of 20 consoles in Athis Mons were repaired, but air traffic over France was generally deeply disturbed for the three days of the strike.

What we have to underline is the vulnerability of the modern system of production and the use of some very limited number of workers can make of it. In 1988 we had something similar with the workers in charge of the daily maintenance of small defects on the metro trains in Paris. They brought some metro lines to a complete standstill. Beyond that we can compare this action with some recent strikes in France where workers on a bigger scale used the organisation of production to stop the production in a factory or in a number of factories. For instance, the strike of a very limited number of workers on a line at the Renault Cleon factory, the occupation of an electronic transformer by workers of a Bull factory in the east of France, the sit-in in a big highly automated distribution center for mail orders in the north of France, etc... This is not new, but it is more evident that the companies are squeezed between the constant needs of higher productivity and the consequent vulnerability of their organisation of production. They try to find 'solutions' to this central problem of modern methods of production and restructuring, trying desperately to have the workers as reliable as machinery. This situation is at the origin of all the attempts to bring employees to participate and to get their close collaboration with the company's objectives. But even so they bring even more vulnerability as they can't remove the fundamental contradiction of the exploitation.

HS.

Answer by the authors on behalf of the Splat Collective

There are parts of the review which are unclear to us - due no doubt to the translation into English...we think it would make discussion more meaningful if we could see the finalized review... In the meantime, we want to ask you to deal with our basic criticisms: the 'revolutionaries' profuse and continual use of the terms Democracy, Socialism and Anarchist/Anarchism, without ever defining what these terms mean; and their constant exhortations that the working class should 'smash the State' without ever explaining that the State was created by, and is constantly sustained and strengthened by a certain class - indeed, that the State is the final means by which this class suppresses and dominates another class.

As far as we can understand your draft review, you too appear to see Capitalism as something other than an economic system that principally suits and benefits a dominating class, that it is therefore a system that is cherished and protected by this dominating class through their State. But you do not explain how and why an economic system should be seen as an enemy to be smashed before dealing with the class of people who manage and control it. May we therefore suggest that you read again pages 4, 11 and 12 of our pamphlet and attempt to show why you think we are wrong in what we say.

When it comes to our by-far most important criticism of all, namely the 'revolutionaries' faulty use of the terms Ruling/Capitalist/Boss class to describe the class that dominates the lives of us working class people, your review is very obscure if not evasive and equivocal.

The middle class is not what you several times call "a new ruling class". It is the class which has dominated the working class for at least the last hundred years.

It does not help a discussion when you adopt the simplistic argument that the "boundaries between the working class and the middle class are less clear now". To us, it is obvious that - inevitably in a class-divided society - there can be no clear-cut line between working class and middle class. A few people do move back and forth from one class to another; this area is what the sociologists refer to as 'the blurring of class lines'. And it is this small number of people in the 'blurred area' whom many of the middle class Left (including the 'revolutionaries') point to in their desperate attempts to show that the middle class are not the main enemy of the working class.

We therefore particularly ask you to include in your review a description of who, i.e. what class and how we can identify them, is the enemy of the working class if you do not agree that it is the middle class.

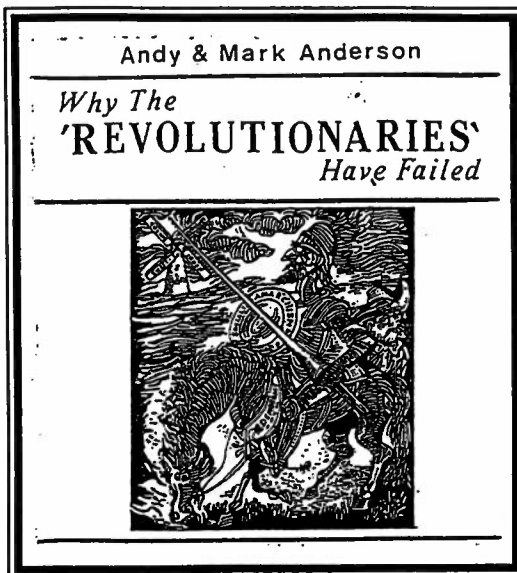
Another way in which you evade this question is by saying that workers in their daily life know

It is difficult to sum up our differences with different aspects of the pamphlet. At first we consider the most important one. As we said earlier, we think that the people of the AWG and their critics share the same position of being active 'revolutionaries' in order to bring consciousness to the workers. This is obviously very far from our view of the class struggle as it is explained for example in our 'Presentaion pamphlet'. In a few words we will answer that workers know perfectly well in their daily life who they have to fight. Their action is their struggle and defines their conscience - not what other people, either the 'middle class', the 'revolutionaries' or anybody else, could try to put in their mind about accepting or rejecting present society.

When we wrote that the questions asked by A & M Anderson were relevant, we thought that we could have posed the same question: "Why the 'revolutionaries' failed?" The answer would have been completely different because we don't think it is a matter of missing the real target. The failure of 'revolutionaries' or 'revolutionary groups' comes from the fact that the evolution of present capitalist society has made them and their concepts completely obsolete. It is a failure only if we consider their efforts to 'raise the consciousness of the workers' to be a relevant activity. For us it is not a failure, but only wasted time in an outdated activity. So this discussion on the almost complete domination of the working class and on the need to point out to the workers their correct enemies in order to help or bring them to 'refuse' their domination (in other words to become 'conscious' is irrelevant for us.

Now, the last question about the middle class having become the ruling class is something we could consider, to only to criticise it and seeing it as something interesting to know and understand in modern capitalism. However, it is not an essential point as we consider that we don't have to bring something to the workers and that their fight leads them to know exactly who their foes are and at the same time develops their 'consciousness'. It is this workers' fight which teach them and us the decisive points of the opposition between Labour and capital.

H.S. 5/92



ARGENTINA

ARGENTINE ANTIAUTHORITARIANS APPEAL FOR SOLIDARITY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Echanges no. 64 mentioned that Grupo Impulso Autogestionaria and other groups in the big Argentinian town Rosario appealed for support to maintain an accomodation from where to keep up their activities. We also published a leaflet by the groups with the title Argentina: Poverty and the militarisation of society. Since then the groups have had to move several times. They have circulated another appeal for support published below.

"El Grupo Impulso Augestionario (Group for the Encouragement of Self-management), la Biblioteca "Alberto Ghirardo" (library) and the Centro De Estudios Sociales "Rafael Garrett" social studies center, together with the Union Socialista Libertaria (Libertarian Socialist Alliance) and the Taller Ecologista (Ecology Workshop) have all had to move once again. In the last five years we have had to move three times, and this has made our functioning much more difficult because it has taken a lot of our time and energy.

We have had to move so often because of economic problems. And now the same kind of problems are threatening the continuation of our endeavors. In order to deal with present needs and to work toward acquiring our own building, we are appealing for solidarity and support from our comrades abroad, especially in the socalled "developed" countries. The current depressed economic situation in Argentina is making it impossible for us to continue with our activities and projects aithout outside economic help.

We would therefore appreciate any and all donations, no matter how small. We would also be grateful for any help you can give in reproducing and distributing this appeal. Checks or money orders should be made out to Carlos Solero and sent to: C.C. 984, 2000 Rosario, Argentina.

We will tell those who send donations about how the money is used, about the activitites we undertake and the outcomes of our projects. Finally, we'd like to thank all of our comrades and sympathizers in advance for their solidarity. From Rosario, we send you our fraternal libertarian greetings."

⌈

Ideaction Grupa Impulso Augestionaria (Casilla de Correo 984, 2000 Rosario) No.15/2nd quarter 1990: This issue is made up of various texts mainly on general problems considered from an anarchist point of view; very little information on class struggle in Argentina.

Material about class struggle in Argentina certainly exists, but Echanges doesn't have the necessary detailed knowledge and/or the capacity to produce something. Any help with material or articles (in English or French, alternatively Spanish) would be welcome.

UK

ANARCHIST YEARBOOK 1992

This is a yearly publication from Phoenix Press and it's available in alternative bookshops or for 2 pounds (postage included) from A K Press, 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, FK8 3RD). It's a guide to things going on in the anarchist and libertarian movement and this year it contains: *A comprehensive list of libertarian magazines and publishers. **"Anarchism today", about the situation of British anarchism and the various groups and tendencies. *Reprint of the article series "The State of Anarchy" in the Economic League's journal 'Analysis', which is a detailed, but not so very accurate attempt at looking at the various UK anarchist groups and journals. *A section on the national and local anarchist organisations. *Articles on 'Green anarchism' and 'The new world reaches on'. *Brief reviews of new books. Altogether a publication well worth the price and containing material relevant also after 1992.

JOE JACOBS: OUT OF THE GHETTO

The autobiography of Joe Jacobs, who participated in Echanges in the later parts of his life not covered in this book, has earlier been distributed by us. It is now in print again from Phoenix Press (price: 9 pounds) and is available through many bookshops, distributors or from Echanges. In 'Anarchist Yearbook 1992' it is mentioned as follows:

"320 page autobiography of the East End, Jewish working class militant who was kicked out of the Communist Party in 1938 for his uncompromising opposition to Fascism. Fascinating inside story."

TUBE WATCH (PO Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St., London E 8)

This 4 page more or less regular bulletin has been published since 1988 and is about public transport issues, focussing on the London area. You will find a lot about the tube, railway and buses system, a system which is rather out of date

and in a complete mess since the deregulation, the investment cuts and the disbanding of central regulation. What is interesting with this bulletin is that it is not a 'neutral' or 'professional' publication just reporting on and giving information about the system, but that it is 'partisan' with articles trying to provide a complete view of problems of class struggle, conditions of work and the consequences for everybody - workers and commuters - of the new management

situation?: "A society in which one class dominates another can only continue as long as the dominated class more or less accepts its position." Such a statement sends us back again to a very traditional anarchist or libertarian position and to the role of 'revolutionaries' and 'revolutionary groups' to fight this ruling class by persuading the workers to refuse their position, in other words to be 'conscious'.

But who and where is the foe? How does The Middle Class dominate? According to the pamphlet, all the components of the State, all governments, all people running industries or finance are...Middle Class. All the places we work in or live in have designed by middle class people, all leisure activities are in the control and management of the Middle Class...and so on with the Press, Education, etc. Through the media and education system the middle class "seek to remove from the mind of working class people whatever awareness they have of being a dominated class and it is this awareness which is at the root of what we call working class consciousness". The authors think that in this way "the middle class have some degree of success".

It will not be possible in a short review to properly discuss and criticise this idea of the domination of the middle class. Of course this petit bourgeoisie supporting capitalism has presently a new face together with the transformation of the methods of production. But anyway, it has always existed with the same function. We can even say more: The boundaries between the proletariat and the middle class are even less clear now and the hope of a lot of workers is to be part of this middle class as the middle class constantly tries to preserve its privileges. On the other hand it is evident that capitalist society can't work without this hierarchical structure where men are involved at all levels - but the real domination is not the domination of men but the domination of capital through the exploitation of labour. The text criticises the "irrational use of the word 'capitalism'" and of other 'general' concepts like 'ruling class' by the AWG and other groups. Perhaps the authors are right in their criticism of the AWG, but how can they explain that present capitalist society is more than ever pushed ahead only by the need to get more profits by increasing the rate of exploitation of labour, even in the sectors they consider as middle class kingdom: if this middle class rules society, why does it have to fight to maintain its 'privileges'? In a certain way, this theory of the middle class has to be related to all the various versions of a 'managerial society' or something like the 'dictatorship of the intellectuals' etc... A lot has been written about all that: the great contradiction of present society is in the opposition between Capital and Labour and all other contradictions must be considered in the framework of the former. One of these contradictions could be between this 'middle class' and the rest of the workers, which at the same time is an expression of two different modes of life and hence of differences of interests. The relation between the middle class and the workers will shift in the same way as the relation between Capital and Labour will proceed towards its abolition.

be discussed, the simple fact to ask these questions is something like a crime of *lese-majeste* for people whose life it is "to be revolutionaries". Therefore the refusal to discuss the arguments but at first to consider the question: for them it is a non-relevant question. The introduction was right to address the pamphlet to all "revolutionary groups": anarchist, libertarian or marxist. Beyond all their differences - and apparently they are wide and deep if we are to consider, as the introduction invites us to, the number and fast moving disappearances, splits and resurgences of the groups - they all effectively share a common political position which is to work for workers' emancipation and the end of capitalist society.

The refused article began with these "crucial questions": "Why is it that, to day, despite many decades of struggles and suffering by the working class through thousands of strikes, campaigns and demonstrations, as well as their continual daily grind and conflict whether in work or out, they are still a dominated class no nearer real emancipation, to freedom, than ever they were?" Some lines reproduced on the cover ask more questions: "What class are we struggling against? Who are they? Where is this 'ruling class' you are always on about?"

After trying to explain what "democracy, socialism, anarchism" is and who the enemies of the working class are, the authors explain what the ruling class is according to themselves by stating: "The reality is that the class of people who dominates the life of working people is the middle class" (which they say is a better term than the "bourgeoisie"). So all the revolutionaries are basically right in their action and they have the right weaponry, but they are firing and shouting at ghosts, at fake targets ('ruling class', 'bourgeoisie'...) supposed to be full of enemies where there in reality is nobody. This is according to the authors the main reason for the failure of the 'revolutionaries' - and of the working class, supposed to share the same illusions or to be influenced by these wrong ideas about who the enemy is giving them a false consciousness.

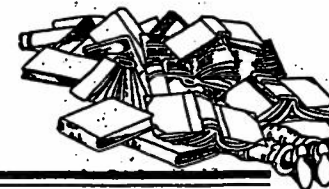
The last pages of the pamphlet give some clue not only about the meaning but also the authors' reason for such questions: ...despite the gloomy perspective, we want to be involved in the discussions and actions concerning the many important and difficult problems *confronting us in building an effective working class revolutionary movement*....we fully agree that a radical transformation is essential and urgent....it must be begun at the beginning..." (emphasis by Echanges).

So the pamphlet tries to bring to the 'revolutionaries' new targets and eventually new weapons to "build the revolutionary movement". It takes it for granted that a "revolutionary movement" (the anarchist or libertarian one in this example) is the unquestionable basis for the "urgent radical transformations". It clears out the question of the role of 'revolutionaries' in the modern capitalism. In a manichean view on one hand of a completely dominated working class even dispossessed of its 'consciousness' and on the other hand of a new ruling class, 'the middle class', the authors raise without clearly answering it the question what to do in such a

methods of 'business orientation' and trying to implement 'austerity' packages of cuts. The first issue we saw said the following about the bulletin: "Just as 1989 was the year of the mass campaigns over pay on tube and rail services, we believe that 1990 will witness the beginnings of action over jobs, conditions and services within London and the south east....Tubewatch will be there reporting on the issues."

No.10/Feb.90: A national scandal (On the situation of the London Underground) - A tale of two cities (About transport in Victoria and Melbourne in Australia) - Gondaliers of the people fight back (About a struggle of the Melbourne tram workers against tram and rail jobs cuts, with tramworkers taking the trams out of the depots and blocking the streets. The press carried headlines like 'Tram Hijack' and 'Stalemate City') - Book review of 'In Transit': about the Transport Workers Union in New York (J.B. Freeman - Oxford University Press) - Bring back the tube guards - British Rail: Part-time railway? (About productivity and savings plans).

No.12/July 90: Come clean of safety, London Underground (On the background of tube accidents and fires the last years, about further undermining of staff and passenger safety through cost-cutting) - Black workers fight back (against discrimination and racism on London Transport) - On British Rail driver-only-operation - About 'consumer unionism' and British rail unions (See separate entry below) - Book review: 'The amazing electric tube. A history of the City and South London Railway' (P.P.Holman - L.T. Museum Publication) - Walkout on Central Line (See separate entry below). No.13/Sep.90: "A railway for the 21st century...Public affluence or private squalor?" A special issue on British Rail with the following articles: Safety the first casualty (About the effects for workers and passengers of the BR principles "Organising for Quality", loaded with references to 'bottom-line financial responsibility', 'competitive units costs' and 'areas of competitive advantage') - Why did Paul die? (On the death of a worker doing construction work at a BR station) - Reader letter about the future of public transport - Book review: 'The world the railways made' (N. Faith - The Bodley Head. About the spreading of the railways throughout history and its impact of society). No.14: Article on the rail crash at a City station, Canon Street (2 killed and 300 wounded) - On a new package planning to shake out 2000 tube staff with longterm consequences on passenger safety - On the effect of deregulation on the bus services outside and inside London - Review of the book 'The first tube' (Mike Horn and Bob Bayman - Capital Transport): the history of the famous Northern Line (now called 'Misery Line' by many) which was overcrowded already in the mid-30s and had the privilege to see the first sit-in by passengers on a train. No.15/April 91: Tube workers strike a blow for safety - Crisis, what crisis? - LUL's secret strategy - Section 12 sedition - Safety at the forefront - Book review: The story of the metro (R.Deiter - Interurban Press).



'CONSUMER UNIONISM' AND THE 1989 LONDON RAIL STRIKES

A letter in Tubewatch no. 12 by a BR guard discussed the rail unions and the role of the rank and file, on the background of the 1989 London rail strikes (London underground). These strikes were unfortunately not covered in Echanges. The letter says that even if this function isn't new for unions, they are now consciously adopting a 'new realism' and an outlook of 'Consumer unionism' serving their members through benefits ranging from loans to discounts - any notion of rank and file workers as active participants and transforming working conditions is gone. The letter further says: "*Consumer unionism has not achieved dominance within the rail unions - some areas retain strong and lively local branch and workplace traditions. However, the unions face the disintegration of local organisations - a trend reinforced by consumer unionism. It's no good pointing to the successful strikes on British rail last year - this has left little of lasting value at the base and has, if anything, reinforced the belief that the bureaucracy can handle things...The '89 strikes demonstrated the undeniable strengths of mass action, the left within the unions should attempt to build on this and get itself out of the ghetto of electoral politics.*"

LOCAL STRIKE ON CENTRAL LINE

Tubewatch no.12 reported a small strike by drivers and guards of the Loughton depot on the Central Line, a typical small conflict surely never coming to the attention of the public. A local safety representative was instructed to use a non-registered taxi to take him from one station to another during a bomb scare. He refused when management would not guarantee insurance cover in a non-registered taxi, and was taken off duty and given 4 days suspension. The reaction of the workers was to walk out first and talk later, and management quickly gave in. Tubewatch's comment is that "this episode is a reminder that the rank and file spirit of '89 is still present on the tubes albeit hidden from public view".

Subversion! (c/o Dept 10, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW - Note new address) This journal by the group of the same name is distributed for free, but all contributions are welcome towards its production as well as if ordering copies of your own or for distribution (cheques or postal orders to be payable to R.Knight). Some of the 1991 issues published but not mentioned in Echanges contain: No.5: Gulf War, No; Class war, Yes - Turkish miners strike - The 'Left' and the poll tax - A letter by a member of Class War criticising an earlier Subversion 'attack' (as it is called) on miners union leader A. Scargill, and an answer from Subversion saying why they don't support, and in general have no need to have or to support, 'leaders' like Scargill or others - The War in Ireland (an article dealing with the armed struggle and nationalist struggle of IRA/Sinn Fein, arguing why it should not be supported. No.6: Local government ...jobs ...poll tax: Cutting to the bone - Profit and hunger (on famine, aid to and wars in 'the

'WHY THE 'REVOLUTIONARIES' HAVE FAILED''

What follows is a critical review of a pamphlet with the above title, written by Andy & Mark Anderson and published by the Splat Collective, c/o 5 Cadbury Road, Mosely, Birmingham 13, UK. The price of the pamphlet is 1,50 pounds plus 50p for postage. Readers interested in ordering it should know that almost all members of the Splat Collective are on Income Support, so they can't afford sending a copy without first receiving payment. Cheques etc. should be made payable to Mark Anderson.

A review which originally was intended as a draft only, was translated from French to English and sent to the authors. Their answer which is also published below, was an answer to what they rightly thought would be a somewhat different final review, and this is the reason for their remarks about answering some questions/criticisms from them in the final review. The draft however ended up being more or less the final review (except for some mainly grammatical changes made before publishing it in this issue).

Review by a French comrade

Andy Anderson's name is known to many readers of Echanges: In the list of publications distributed by us you will find the book "Hungary 1956" written by him in 1964 when he was a member of Solidarity. Anderson explains briefly in his polemic text his disagreements with this group when it began to closely follow the ideas of Castoriadis.

An introduction explains the genesis of the pamphlet. The English journal "Socialism from below", published by the Anarchist Workers Group (AWG) and with the subtitle 'Discussion Forum', was proposed to and agreed - in principle - to publish an article by the Andersons criticising this journal. When it was written and sent to the journal, it was at first completely ignored, then when the AWG was asked for an explanation it was refused with irrational excuses.

Of course the proposed text was not that innocent. It offered a good opportunity to discuss some basic problems not special to the AWG but all kinds of so-called "revolutionary groups", problems whose discussion could shake the existence of these groups if considered seriously. Even without considering A & M Anderson's answers to these questions which of course could

The important step was then to widen the gap between the better paid and the lesser well paid in the sector of the government and so the salaries were increased by 11% to fight inflation. Only it doesn't mean very much to anyone with a low pension since things have doubled in the last couple of years.

But the real talk is about **privatisation**. The people, for the most part, seem to think that all of this is necessary for their welfare; the xenophobia, already evident in Spain, has yet to show its face here." (Nov.91)

"Every day, one syndicat or another organises a strike but any real general strike doesn't even seem to be in their mind. Prices are forever rising and a 9% increase of salaries for those who have jobs hardly makes things better since we're dealing with the lower salaries of western Europe and with prices which, except for some foods, are higher than elsewhere.

At the surface, you see all the small businesses modernising and attaching a computer to their tables of operation. For the moment they think they'll be able to make it and pay the loans. The picture was already so clear when I was in the US or Canada; the rate of bankruptcy is clear enough. Also 'le mot d'ordre' is privatisation and even that comes just a bit too late, out of fashion if I must say so." (March 92)

SWITZERLAND

Confrontations Bulletin in French of the Organisation Socialiste Libertaire (OSL, c/o CRAC, Bd Carl Vogt 7, 1205 Geneve) No. 10/Sep.90: Immigration - **Federal census** 1990 (the census as an instrument of power) - Anarchist activity in Poland. No. 11/dec.90: News from the Gulf war front - First aid solidarity with Uruguay. No. 12/March 91: Gulf war - The census - From colonialism...to the imperialist war - Interview with an Iraqi left militant giving a complete picture of the balance of political groups inside Iraq - Review of the book "The other communism" (G. Fontenis - Ed. Acratie).



third world") - Events in Eastern Europe - Gulf war: Bring the war home. No. 7: Class solidarity against unemployment and wage cuts - Charity makes us sick - Struggles in the schools against the National Curriculum and the Standard Assessment Tasks.

RADICAL CHAINS, 'COMMUNIST ANTICIPATIONS' (BM Radical Chains, London WC 1N3 XX. Each issue £ 2.50, orders to 'Lava'.) This English review is deliberately marxist. The Radical Chains editorial collective formed itself within and on the basis of a London reading group initially established to study Marx's 'Grundrisse' in relation to the modern world. Their common concern is to participate in the development of an 'anti-stalinist marxist current'. (We observe they don't look for an anti-leninist marxist current, which could lead to some prejudice in our review).

We have seen three issues of the journal. Each contains a one page 'statement of intent'. There it is explained that "Communism is freely associating people creating themselves through conscious social planning". The introduction of this notion of 'social planning' comes from the central idea that "The world in which we live is driven by a contradiction between the latent law of planning and the corrupted law of value". They nevertheless recognize that "Marx's method...remains the foundation of revolutionary thought and action in the epoch of bourgeois decay". (The last part of this sentence in the first issue was changed in issue n° 3 to read "in the current epoch"... this could perhaps bring another prejudice.) These statements consider "the social and economic conquest of October" without a special analysis of the nature and content of the Russian Revolution and the "conquests", but only considering the external political forces which succeed to "contain" or "destroy" October and to transform Russia "into a center of reaction penetrating the world labour movement". We are not far from all the former political discussions, even more out of date today, on the 'revolutionary content' of 1917 and on the 'degeneration' of the revolution. This statement of intent clearly considers that even if Russia in a certain way preserved the law of value and only attempted to limit it, the 'prevention of communism' was and still is for capital "the pressing requirement". (It is difficult to know if Radical Chains considers this requirement to be the result of an objective situation or of bureaucrats wanting to "prevent communism".)

Radical Chains wants to develop a "revolutionary critique" and though declaring that it is "not a party" thinks that the "revolutionary party of the proletariat will not come into being without a revolutionary movement in the working class".

Furthermore they say that it is yet premature to declare a political party nucleus, which would "create yet another barrier against proletarian self-formation". Apparently they are far from our idea that a new society will be the movement itself; these ideas of "self-formation of the proletariat" and of the "prematurity" of the party were for a long time part of an everlasting question of "organisation".

No.1 (Winter 89/90): The first article is about the question of planning mentioned above, entitled 'The decay of capitalism, the prevention of communism and the need for planning'. It develops the idea that "social democracy and stalinism are bourgeois mutations, not communist anticipations". In this text we can find some explanations of what RC calls 'social planning': "Planning is the social presence of the freely associating proletariat and beyond that, the human form of existence". What is the exact meaning of such a sentence? A long article on the "Desintegration of Gorbachev" develops a pessimistic view of Russia. An introduction about Noah Ablett is followed by a review of his book 'Easy outlines of economics' (the theory of marginal utility versus the marxian theory of value). Some texts on the 84-85 miners' strike, mainly the review of the book 'Coal crisis and conflict: The 84-85 miners' strike in Yorkshire' (J & R Winterston) underline "the inability of the authors to analyse the political roots of the strategic disaster". We observe again this tendency to look at political situations and not at economical ones. **No.2 (Winter 90-91):** The first article tries to dismantle the 'myth of working class passivity' with the progression of "Commodity, Fetichism, Class formation and proletarian self emancipation". We found the same ideas already developed in issue no.1: "October Revolution: the working class seized power under adverse circumstances and lost it, but to avoid globalising the revolution, capital was...etc...". The long article 'Anton Pannekoek and the theory of transition' places Pannekoek's life and ideas in the context of events, ideas and revolutionary organisations of this period. It contains a lot of references and quotations not only of Pannekoek, but also the excellent book by Serge Bricanier ('Pannekoek and the Workers Councils' - Telos Press). Nothing about the important reprint of Pannekoek's book 'Workers Councils' by Echanges, but something about the ideas of the philosopher Joseph Dietzgen. There is also a reprint of Guy Aldred's 1919 article 'Trade Unionism and the class war' and a review of Toni Negri's book 'The revolution retrieved and the politics of subversion'. **No. 3 (1991-92):** First there is a long intellectual and again political discussion 'On Lenin' in three parts: 1/The hidden political economy of the Left, 2/After Zimmerwald and 3/ Consciousness and the Critique of Political Economy (review of Franz Jakubowski's works). Furthermore polemic on a German political and theoretical thinker Carl Schmitt: 'Dangerous Liaisons: Carl Schmitt and the Left', and a reprint of the article 'Modern Thought' on Karl Marx by Belfort Bax (1881). Finally a short biography of Joseph Dietzgen. (In a later issue of Echanges we might come back to this philosopher, who was important both to Marx and Pannekoek and who was widely read in the working class movement before its 'bolshevisation'.)

HS 5/92

56a INFO-BOOKSHOP This anarchist-orientated bookshop is located in Southwark, South London, close to the Elephant and Castle tube and rail stations - inside the Fareshares Food Co-Op at the address 56 Crampton St., London SE17. Probably not open daily but we don't have the exact days/hours - it used to be Monday and Friday afternoon.

Additional remarks by Echanges

Regular readers of Echanges will have seen our debate with Kamunist Kranti in previous issues on questions of workers struggles and class consciousness and therefore know we don't agree at all with the views put forward in the last part of the letter above about the role of 'communists' and the significance of the lack of 'communist work' in India.

This debate started in no.63 with a reprint of a KK article on a textile workers strike in India and a critical comment to it by a Dutch comrade. No.65 contained other material about India and Kamunist Kranti, whereas the debate continued in no.66/67. Some other remarks relevant to these questions also appeared in no. 68/69.

With reference to our letter above to Kamunist Kranti, we would also like to draw attention to the article "Resistance to the plan has been heavy: The class struggles of the Green Revolution of India" in Echanges no.65. This article we reprinted because it in our opinion contained a lot of valuable information and explanations about the class situation in that country. It tried to explain "how seemingly disparate struggles are related, and how these struggles are related to international capital". As part of this it also dealt with the state Punjab of northern India, the background to the struggles of Sikh farmers there and the portraiture of them as struggles of extremists and religious fanatics, and the whole article can with advantage be read again.

From Echanges or directly from the publisher (see our List of publications in this issue) is also available Theo Sander's book *Indien und der IWF* (India and the International Monetary Fund).

PORTUGAL

Fatima miracle or the triumph of liberalism in Portugal (by C. Reeve, from *Les Temps Modernes* no.535, Feb.91) A long article on the economical, social and political evolution in the recent period and mainly on the consequences of its integration in the EEC; the surprising political careers of the former actors of the "pink revolution" of 1974-75. (Copy at Echanges.)

From letters from a Portugese friend: (See also Echanges n.63.)

"...New banks, money machines at every step you take, fancy stores with the merchandise overpriced (many things are now more expensive than elsewhere and still there's no choice; these are the leftover goods which don't sell as well somewhere else). Yuppies dance around and, of course, the new prime minister is a professor of economics.

Indonesia-Malaysia, India or South America or Africa, the scenario does not change. When the discontent of hundreds of millions of peasants/artisans and petty-bourgeois and proletarians was expressing itself through the strengthening of the state capitalist tendencies, whether in their stalinist or maoist or Che guevarist or trotskyist colours, these struggles had been labelled "revolutionary" and "progressive". The increasing bankruptcy of the state capitalist tendencies calling themselves communist was concomitant with the growth of what is known as the Khomeini phenomenon. The content was the same, even the forms of its expression was almost the same but a mere change of some words gave rise to a lot of blabber about obscurantism, religious revivalism, resurgence of Hindu caste consciousness and what not.

And coming to the current situation in India. With the December 1989 elections, the parliamentary circus in India reached the stage of a farce. In their attempts to become 'popular', every parliamentary faction of a party, nay even every parliamentarian started desperately looking for straws to reach parliamentary pinnacle. If one looks at the issues that have been attempted to be raised in the past twelve months, one will have to appreciate the desperate attempts to find the Midas touch - that there is hardly any creative thinking remaining in parliamentary politics is of course a general reflection of the present state of this institution and the parliamentary knights have as a rule not risen above the material constraints.

If one were to look at the situation in India through the eyes of the bourgeois press, one would find resurgence of caste consciousness but also resurgence of religious consciousness; one would not only find resurgence of regional (read national) consciousness, one would also find resurgence of Indian consciousness. The Indian faction of capital is presently more and more unable to tackle the growing discontent within the bounds of parliamentary democracy. To put this genie in the bottle is the present need of the representatives of capital. A Hindu Hitler or a military Hitler is on the agenda of capital's representatives here.

In the above write-up one might wonder at the absence of any mention of the role of the working class in India. In fact, the working class movement in India has not been able to acquire an independent status to date. This is largely due to the specific situation in India and the absence of significant communist work - an absence which has led to the non-development of conscious revolutionary working class movement in India. Many a spontaneous outburst of working class movement have been led by the diverse state capitalist tendencies into state capitalist marsh or have withered away. And thus has the extreme discontent of the labouring masses not been able to play a revolutionary role. In this situation, the most foremost task in our opinion is the formation of a communist organisation in India that works for the development of a consciousness revolutionary working class movement by concentrating on the industrial workers and besides works for the development of an independent working class position....

Kamunist Kranti, Dec. '90

In addition to selling books, pamphlets, papers, T-shirts and comics and having coffee and reading space, the place is also supposed to be an activity center and produces a bulletin with material about struggles and actions.

Internationalist Perspective (BM Box 8154, London WC1N 3XX; or IP, Suite 131, 551 Valley Road, Montclair, NJ 07043, USA) Journal of 'The external Fraction of the I.C.C. No.20/3rd quarter 91: With a front page saying "'Communism' must die for communism to live" this issue is partly devoted to events in eastern Europe with the articles: Let the statues fall and The new clothes of Russian capitalism. Other articles are about: Fourth conference of Internationalist Perspective - The evolution of inter-imperialist tensions - The historic responsibilities of the working class - The revolutionary milieu: For a living practice of marxist thought.

JAPAN

In Echanges no.66/67 we published material about the day labourers in Osaka, giving a picture of conditions and attitudes of workers in Japan which is different from what is usually presented in western media. For the same reason we publish below an article on overtime work in Japanese industry. In Echanges no.46 (p.9-10) there can be found summaries of some articles about Japan. Apparently there is little class struggle in this country, but this picture is created partly because of lack of published or available information. In reality open class struggle certainly takes place, not to mention more hidden class conflicts and discontent with working and social conditions in general. We want to publish more about Japan and are interested in articles and material from readers.

'ZANGYO' (OVERTIME WORK) IN JAPANESE COMPANIES.

Unfair dismissal in the Hitachi Musashi plant

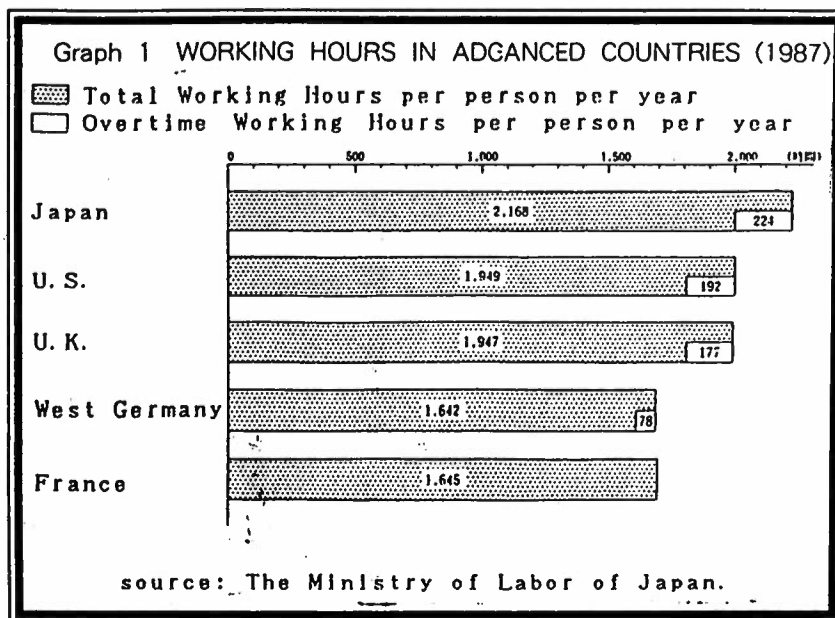
Below we reproduce extracts from this pamphlet published in English in connection with the struggle of a Hitachi worker fired in 1967 because he refused to accept that management had the right to order him to do overtime work. Since then, he has tried to get his job back. The pamphlet describes his long fight, similar to that of James Schenkel against Peugeot in France. However, the general interest of this pamphlet lies in the remarks about working hours, overtime

work etc. - reproduced in full below - as part of the background to Japanese 'competitiveness'.)

What is the secret of Japanese manufacturers' "global competitiveness"?

This pamphlet is to provide a clue for the secret from the perspective of working conditions and the management's exploitation of labor in Japan. For that purpose, we will visit a case of unfair dismissal of a worker in the Hitachi Co., a leading Japanese electronic manufacturer.

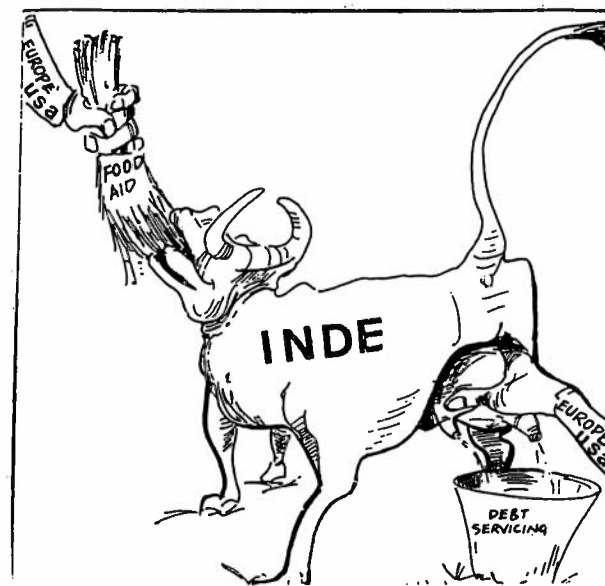
Japanese workers have been internationally notorious for their long working hours (See Graph). Thanks to workers' sacrifice, Japanese manufacturers have been able to export quality products at very competitive prices. Trade imbalance, a global economic problem which many foreign countries have had with Japan, is in a sense a net result of exploitation of Japanese labor.



Long working hours in the Japanese companies became particularly notable after 1975 (See Graph). (1) After the first oil shock in 1973, while regular working hours remained unchanged, overtime work (*zangyo*) had markedly increased. As a result, the number of annual total working hours per worker has sharply gone up (See Graph). (2) Large manufacturers, who had begun overall cost reduction (*genryou keiei*) coping with the oil crisis, had demanded longer and harder work from the remaining employees. As such, the so-called "service overtime" (without pay), which is obviously against labor law, became a widespread practice in contemporary Japanese shop floor.

No Japanese laborer is willing to work in such condition. Japanese workers suffer from fatigue and mental stress. They are not the only victims. Workers' children, watching their fathers' pain

of millions of this pauperised mass. Millions migrated to Americas, Australia, South Africa and openings were found for some in colonial administrations. But the hundreds of millions who are facing a similar situation in countries like India have nowhere to go. Hundreds of thousands are able to migrate by hook or crook to America, Canada, Europe, oil producing Arab countries,



but this simply an insignificant number of those desperately looking for an outlet. There are no outlets in the world at large for the hundreds of millions facing social death in countries like India. This is an objective situation for incessant violent struggles with their high and low points and brutal suppression by the state. Incidentally, rapid increase in the size of the military-bureaucratic apparatus in countries like India is basically a reply to the growing discontent of the masses - that the expenses incurred on this vast machine for oppression in its turn deepens the crisis faced by the concerned fraction of weak capital is one of

those vicious grips which now and then give rise to a lot of liberal blabber about the need to cut down expenses on the military-bureaucratic machine and "spend instead on development that would be in the welfare of all".

With hundreds of millions on the brink of bankruptcy at all times, even in the most democratic countries and even during normal times in them (India and its long duration of parliamentary democracy provides a lot of such examples), the level of social discontent and its brutal suppression is of such an order that a person looking through west-european eyes at the last 40 years' events in India will hardly find anything democratic in them. besides killing people in police firing, cold-blooded murder of prisoners by the police and paramilitary is a daily occurrence in India even after 1947 and upto the present - the pace and number of such murders is constantly rising. The discontent born of this objective situation was expressing itself in the strengthening of state capitalist tendencies calling themselves communist. The increasing discontent expressing itself in extremely violent upheavals and armed struggles on maoist/guerrilla format were a natural culmination of this. Whether one looks at Indo-China or

Hindu class consciousness" - of course to eliminate the temptation to look for "class consciousness".

We think that the accent given to these events certainly hides the actual class struggle. Presently, all over the world, the crisis in the developed countries is transferred when it is possible and as much as possible on the developing countries. Tensions are growing in these countries and in such a way that the lowest classes have to afford the unbearable and then to revolt. Even if it is difficult to develop the same analysis for these revolts in all countries (developed and developing ones), they have nevertheless the same background.

Answer from Kamunist Kranti

The deepening crisis of the world capitalist system is magnified in India because the faction of capital that rules here is weak. This is a normal situation for capital - strong capitals 'oppress' weak capitals in whatever areas they are functioning. To avoid any misunderstanding we would like to clarify here that capital is a social relation: wage labour based commodity production being its essence, hence capital does not have a nationality. World capital is not a homogeneous entity. Global capital today is made up of factions of capital essentially organised on nation/country basis. There are visible differences in different factions of global capital as well as in different parts of each faction...but capital has no nationality.

The world capitalist system's epochal and other crisis are incessantly deepening. This is giving rise to social turmoil throughout the world. This turmoil is magnified in areas under the rule of weaker capitals - their own specificity is the major reason for this enhancement, though transfer of parts of their loads by strong capitals onto the shoulders of weak capitals also plays a role in this.

This is the global setting for the present turmoil in India. An area under the rule of a weak faction of capital, the specificity of the social situation in India that is putting its imprint on the ongoing events is this: In India there are hundreds of millions peasants and artisans (simple commodity producers); tens of millions petty bourgeois; tens of millions wage-workers with a substantial section of industrial workers; tens of million lumpen-proletariat; and millions of representatives of capital. This distribution is not even, but all the same, when large enough areas are taken into consideration they are more or less spread out evenly in the country. Now this is where capitalist development is taking place - and capitalist development that is taking place in the the era of capitalism's decadence and that too in an area under the rule of a weak faction of capital. The capitalist development in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe itself gave rise to pauperisation/proletarianisation of tens of millions of peasants/artisans and of those belonging to the petty bourgeoisie. The capitalist system in Europe could absorb only a portion of the tens

and despair, no more believe in the wholesomeness of labor. Workers' wives hardly find time to talk with their husbands. The situation has been aggravated to the extent that a new term - karoshi (sudden death due to overwork) - came to horrify Japanese people in the 1980s.

Hitachi, for example, has an agreement with labor, which set the regular annual working hours as 1984 hours. However, in 1988 for instance, the annual average overtime working hours per worker exceeded 366 hours. In the past two years, sixty to seventy members of the Hitachi labor union were reported to have died. Among them, as much as fifteen percent have committed suicide. Two mournful suicides took place recently at Hitachi. In both cases, workers' wives burned themselves to death, protesting against inhumane overwork of their husbands, which resulted in virtual destruction of their own home life.

Why do Japanese workers have to work so hard?

A principal reason for the unwilling sacrifice of Japanese workers lies in the weakness of labor unions. Not developed as industry-wide organizations, Japanese unions are forced to accept large-scale layoffs and low wage. Therefore, overtime pay becomes critical for Japanese laborers to make living (See Graph). (3) As housing, education and indispensable goods are unbearably high in Japan, relatively high nominal wage provides only subsistence-level living for most Japanese laborers, even with overtime work.

There are additional factors peculiar to Japan which make it extremely difficult for workers to refuse overtime work orders. Once a worker refuses the order, he or she will be unfavorably judged regarding promotion and allocation of merit supplement or job-level supplement. Moreover, big business and the government share an opinion that the refusal is an illegal act. This illegality on the part of big business and the government should be condemned.

Tanaka gets fired for refusing overtime work

Mr. Hideyuki Tanaka, an employee of the Hitachi Musashi plant, was an active union member. He also joined an appeal for fellow workers who were dismissed from the company. One day in September 1967, Tanaka's boss ordered overtime work only fifteen minutes prior to the closing of regular work. Tanaka did one hour overtime and then quitted work because he had an appointment with friends. Tanaka did not entirely refuse the order. In fact, he had finished the job the next day working until 9 p.m. Nevertheless, his boss ordered him not to work for two weeks. As such he was disciplined for the "refusal" of overtime work for the first time.

Since then Hitachi persistently pressed for him to concede that workers should not have the right to refuse an overtime work order. Although he said he would cooperate with the company, he would not concede that management holds this right. Hitachi finally fired him. For the past twenty years, Tanaka has been fighting, demanding his reinstatement.

Background of the Tanaka case

Labor dispute in Hitachi dates back to the year 1950 when more than 5500 workers were fired. In this dispute, the labor union at Hitachi recorded a big defeat with a number of its active members purged as communists. In the 50s and 60s Hitachi tried to deform it into a "yellow union" by expelling or discriminating militant members as scapegoats.

The notorious Hitachi case was also discussed at the National Diet and it was found that the company transferred many resisting female workers to a glass-walled room for strict and constant supervision. Another worker sued Hitachi for unfair labor practice; in his case, wage discrimination against him amounted to 3 million yen a year. Therefore, Tanaka and his supporters are convinced that his case is only one of numerous incidents of unfair labor practice at Hitachi.

In his famous book *British Factory and Japanese Factory* R.Dore analyzed industrial relations in Japan. In his case study of Hitachi, he noted that money incentives were used to make laborers work harder. If he had paid attention to unfair labor practices, his book would have been more complete. No one doubts that Hitachi's huge earnings and the collaboration of the company-supported labor union are all outcomes of its intimidating labor policies.

Points at issue in the Tanaka case

Whether a worker has the duty of overtime work: Hitachi claims that work rules and the collective agreement provide management with the right to order overtime and that if an agreement on overtime is reached in accordance with the Labor Standards Act management does not need to obtain consent of each individual worker for overtime. This will mean that the workers' after-work private hours are also subjected to the control of management, and will squarely be in contrast with the Labor Standards Act which strictly regulate the number of working hours. A court ruling has supported Hitachi, but an appeal against this ruling refers to several disputes similar to the Tanaka case where judgements were made in favor of labor, requiring strict regulations of overtime and the consent of each individual worker.

Whether management can dismiss workers on the ground of their own judgement of worker's attitude toward overtime: Hitachi claims that Tanaka was dismissed according to the article of the work rules of the company regarding discipline, which allows management to dismiss workers who appear not to repent despite repeated reprimand or admonishment for negligence. By the word "repent" is meant that Tanaka should submit to Hitachi a written declaration, admitting that his refusal of overtime is a violation of work rules and swearing that he will never refuse it again and will accept disciplinary punishment of any kind for such refusal.

Tanaka actually agreed to overtime but did not concede that a refusal is a violation of work rules.... Given this response, Hitachi assumed that he did not repent for his negligence.

17 January: 7 of the 22 arrested were released on bail, not allowed to leave the country and must report to the police twice a month.

Further...The teargas used appears to be of a kind so dangerous that an overdose "can cause serious illness or death". The Union of Hospital Doctors has discovered that it contains the same toxic gas the Israelis use against Palestinians...The newspapers write about "the chemical war in the city" and the hospitals were filled with more than 150 people who suffered injuries from gas and beating-up.

23 January: There are still some schools occupied, all the university schools in Athens are still occupied.

INDIA

A LOOK AT REALITY - INDIA

Class struggle in India is not widely covered in the international media. The opposite is however the case with riots and violence referred to as 'caste disputes' which has regularly occurred in India for many years now. Below we therefore publish something written a while ago but not used in Echanges: a letter to the group Kamunist Kranti about these questions and their answer. The Kamunist Kranti letter has appeared as a text with the title "A look at reality - India" in some other journals.

Letter from Echanges

We have read a lot of articles on the recent riots and bloodsheds in North India at the end of September 1990. In general, these events are presented not as social conflicts in itself related to class struggle, but as caste disputes. It is done in such a way that it is rather impossible to know how these struggles are related to the economic situation in India or to a certain level of political manipulation.

Would it be possible to get more information about these events and to know your own explanation and criticism of what an article in the *Financial Times* called "the resurgence of

and popular anger was unloaded with Molotovs and stones. Omonia square, one of the main squares in Athens, was occupied. The police replied with teargas and choking gas irrespective of what was happening. Then for some reason the police fired a gas cannister into a bookshop, setting fire to a neighbouring cloth shop. In the building 4 people died of suffocation. An autopsy report says that one of them was beaten to death, i.e. he didn't die because of the fire. The press blamed "anarchists" once more, but the shopowner and others have testified that it was the police. To cover up the dead body that was already there? The fire brigade while trying to put out the fire and save people, was bombed with tear gas from the police.

The flames and the indiscriminating gassing stirred up the demonstrators. For the next 12 hours the police tried to gas people off the streets around the Polytechnic - attempts fought off with stones, Molotovs and sheer resolve. Barricades were built across the street where the Polytechnic is and buses were set alight and used to block the streets. The cops went on firing thousands of rounds of teargas. In the morning of 11 Jan. the police made a final assault on the Polytechnic, firing gas before withdrawing. 2 were arrested and hundreds were injured, among them 28 cops.

11 January: People are still awake (and lots who are politically dormant) march to parliament, jeering the PASOK (socialist) party, and then back to the Polytechnic.... Again gas, barricades, cars burnt and damage to banks and state buildings...a few shops were looted...About 50 people were arrested, some of them, under 14, released quickly.

12 January: The cops again unsuccessfully attempt to take the Polytechnic. Across Greece other actions have taken place. In Thessaloniki the police stormed the university. In Patras there was rioting and in Chania (Crete) a demonstration of 5000 marched unopposed into the prefecture. All over Greece the occupations continue to challenge state power - a challenge that so far neither the politicians nor the cops can crush.

What happens in the next weeks remains to be seen.

14 January: 22 people appear before the Prosecutor, among them pupils and students, accused of mutiny, illegal construction, possession and use of explosives, blocking traffic, injuring cops. Representatives of the Students Union (EFEE) and of the squatting committees of the Polytechnic demanded the immediate release of all of them, saying that the arrested people had no relation with the provocation events that had happened and that the arrests were based only on the testimonies of the police, without any other witnesses. Also the Europarliament member Dessylas said to the Prosecutor that "there are murderers who walk around unarrested", like those who killed the teacher in Patras but the police arrests the students and you will understand that this will cause justified reactions...The arrested students declared that they were just trying to get away from the teargas...In prison they were beaten by police forcing them to shout "long live Melistas" (the cop who on 17/11/85 murdered a 15 year old.)

...a group of scholars submitted an appeal to the Supreme Court...M.Kumazawa, an expert on labor affairs, wrote an article on a labor dispute in the Toshiba Fuchu Plant, another leading Japanese electronic manufacturer, titled "Democracy coming to a standstill in front of factory gates". (4)

During 1986 and 1987, Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries, one of the largest heavy machinery makers, pressed a large number of employees to "leave work voluntarily" and succeeded in only a few months to obtain concessions for layoff from some 7000 workers, one third of its employees. But a case was reported that hundreds of workers brainwashed by management crowded round and threatened the worker who refused concession.

Present situation of the Tanaka case - Asking your support

Tanaka has appealed to the Supreme Court..... The Ministry of Labor, referring to a High Court decision, states that individual workers have no right to refuse overtime orders, if they are prescribed by work rules or collective agreements or other contracts concluded between labor representatives and management at the shop level.

The pamphlet was published in 1989 by:
 Joint Committee of Trade Unions,
 Supporting "Mr. Tanaka's Trial",
 2-13-4, Iwamoto-Cho,
 Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo 101
 Japan.

Notes by Echanges

(1) This Graph - 'The trajectory of total working hours in advanced countries' with the Ministry of Labor of Japan as source - is not reproduced in Echanges. It shows for 1987 around 2150 hours in Japan as compared with between 1650 and 1930 hours in US, UK, West Germany and France.

The 1975 figure for Japan was around 2150 hours.

(2) This Graph - 'The total working hours of electric workers in Japan' also with the Ministry of Labor as source - is not reproduced. It shows among other things:

Total working hours of electric workers per person per year: 2146.

Total regular working hours of electric workers: 1895.

Total overtime working hours of electric workers: 251.

(3) This Graph - 'The strong dependency of Japanese worker's life on their overtime pay (electric workers)' - is not reproduced. It contains the question "How do you get along without your overtime pay?" and the percentage of each of the following answers: I cannot make my living - I have to cut down my living standard - I cannot keep my savings - No influence on my life - I receive only a little overtime pay.

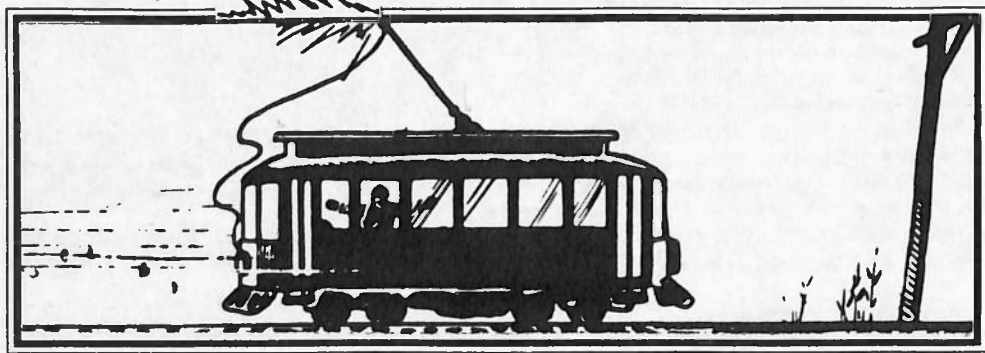
(4) The pamphlet does not give any details about this conflict. In a future issue of Echanges we hope to provide some information about this Toshiba plant and a conflict there - it might be the same one.

MIGHTY MITSUBISHI IS ON THE MOVE.

HANDS ACROSS AMERICA: THE RISE OF MITSUBISHI

These two articles are part of a Business Week (24/9/90) cover story about the biggest Japanese industrial group Mitsubishi, with the subtitles "Its hundreds of interdependent companies are building an empire that stretches from Rockefeller to Riyadh" and "A huge network of companies is challenging antitrust laws - and the American business culture" respectively. The core of the group is some 28 industrial or financial companies, like Mitsubishi Motor (cars and trucks), Mitsubishi Electric (television, phones) and Mitsubishi Bank. The first article shows that internationally the group is expanding strongly through alliances, takeovers and an increasing number of products. The Japanese industrial groups, or *keiretsu* as they're called, are organised in a less formal and centralised way than what is usual in the west, rather like a family of independent companies competing between themselves and not necessarily preferring another company in the group for a contract. But in reality they appear to constitute a group effectively bound together by cross-ownership and other financial ties, long-term business relations and social and historical links that recognise their mutual interest. The second article shows how the Mitsubishi empire has built a huge network of companies especially in the USA (25 companies) to challenge anti-trust laws. Formally the Mitsubishi structure doesn't conflict with these laws because they're all legally independent companies. Most of their US factories are in the south near the Mexican border, some in the most depressed areas in the mid-West. Both internationally and in the US this particular form of *keiretsu* organisation is causing concern and criticism from other governments and capitalists. (Copy at Echanges)

AMPO Vol.22 #1-4 (\$28/4 issues from PO Box 5250, Tokyo Int'l, Japan) "This 'Japan-Asia Quarterly Review' goes in for theme-oriented in-depth articles, throwing light on subjects that most of us know nothing about. #1 is a terrifying and sobering account of the history of Suharto's Indonesia. #4 looks at tourism, from the mythification of Japanese prostitution to the staggering economic and environmental impact of Japanese golf courses." (Short review from the US journal 'Factsheet Five')



privatisation, student loans and closures of halls of residence and subsidised cafeterias. At the same time private colleges are allowed to get away with illegal employment practices and fraudulent claims of connection with foreign universities. The education proposals should also be seen in the context of anti-strike and anti-"terrorism" laws and attempts to rehabilitate the imprisoned members of the '67-'74 military junta.



At the start of the occupations all of the tertiary schools in Thessaloniki and Rethymnon (Crete) were occupied, and this spread quickly across the country and into other levels of school (different schools often share buildings, so the effect was even greater). From the very start the self-organisation of the students was very important. Occupations spread to the Polytechnic and colleges. A large demonstration in Athens on 6 December ended in fighting with police who attempted to attack the Polytechnic. The next demonstration on 8 Dec. passed off without attack. Afterwards police cars were attacked in different parts of the city centre.

Demonstrations continued throughout December and the government showed signs of backing down; agreeing to "talks" and saying that the "point system" was withdrawn and hoping that the Christmas holiday would break the occupations. At Grava school in Athens police beat up a student and broke his back.

Over Christmas and New Year many schools remained occupied. After the holiday many more were reoccupied but the impetus and support was dropping. "Angry parents" featured in the news, but teachers began 3-hour strikes in support.

8 January fascist groups and ONNED (New Democracy - the ruling party's youth group) attacked schools in different parts of the country. In Patras some teachers and parents came to help the students and a teacher was killed. Later it appeared that he was murdered by 3 men who a few years ago were close collaborators of the present prime minister Mitsotakis. All 3 of them are arrested. The TV initially blamed "anarchists" but the truth spread quickly. Teachers across Greece went on strike and the occupations strengthened once more. The education minister resigned. His successor "withdrew" the proposals and called for talks.

10 January there was a huge demonstration in central Athens. State murder must be resisted

GREECE

Greece is country which for years has seen widespread strikes and discontent in many spheres of society, to a larger extent than is known to most people (see for example some small notes in Echanges no.46 and 48). An account of all this can not be given here, both for reasons of time and because we don't have enough or good enough material for making a documentation or analysis ourselves. Any material will be welcome. What we publish below is a chronology from no.2 of the anarchist newsletter A-INFOS from Greece with information about school and college occupations, mainly in Athens, in the period Dec.90/Jan.91. We start here with the earliest newsletter we have, even if the events are not recent, and will in the next issue publish extracts from the couple of issues we have have received after this. A-Infos Athens can be contacted at: c/o ABC Athens, 8 Aristidou str., 10559 Athens. More information about the network it is part of can be found in Echanges no. 68/69 p.4

OCCUPATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES DEC.90/JAN.91

10 and 11 January 1991 saw hours of the most serious violence in Athens for many years. The occupations of schools and colleges have become not only resistance to government education proposals, but a real challenge to state power and a generalised spreading of resistance to state repression and enforced austerity in the "unification" into the European megastate.

The occupation of schools started in early December 1990 as a reaction to government proposals about education. Controversial plans introduced a "points system" - a grade for attendance and behaviour both in and out of school. Students failing to achieve the required grade would have to repeat the year. Also the "asylum" (from the police) of schools and colleges would be abolished. Other proposals were about exams, books to be bought by students and banning of political activity of any independent nature.

Greece's education system is archaic and ineffective. Most students need extra lessons in foreign language and even science and mathematics. Books are old and often there are not enough teachers, despite huge waiting lists of unemployed teachers. School buildings are old and run down, crumped and cold and built like the social prisons that they are.

Proposals about further education had already resulted in some occupations in universities -

USA

THE 1991 RAIL STRIKE - SOME FOLLOW-UP MATERIAL

In Echanges 68/69 we published an article by Peter Rachleff on the April 1991 rail strike. In the same issue we also said that often there is a problem with getting hold of material about what happens after a strike or an event. What is for sure is that the Congress imposed a contract more or less in accordance with what the railroad companies had demanded in the negotiations prior to the conflict. Below we publish some other material on this conflict or its aftermath. This material is preceded by some extracts from the article American Labor in the 1980s by Peter Rachleff, the author of the article in Echanges 68/69. It is taken from the anthology Within the shell of the old: Essays on workers' self-organisation published by Charles H. Kerr. Echanges is also distributing a number of books and pamphlets about American workers from Bewick Editions - see our List of publications.

AMERICAN LABOR IN THE 1980s

The American labor movement entered a period of deep crisis in the 1980s, a period in which the "social contract" which has nourished business unionism for more than a generation has become a dead letter. At the same time, here and there, rank-and-file initiatives and experiments have appeared. While the conflict between bureaucratic business unionism and rank-and-file self-activity is hardly new, in the specific historical context in which we find ourselves a new resolution - one which will bring forth new institutions and new movements - looms on the horizon...

The "social contract" has evaporated, both at the broad social level and more specifically between employers and employees. This "truce" had rested on the economic growth generated by Keynesian policies, by America's international economic dominance, by high wages and workers' ability to consume. Large employers, in most cases, tolerated unions. Throughout basic industry, wage patterns dominated - in steel, meat-packing etc. Both unions and employers agreed that they were trying to take wages out of competition. This system also linked productivity with wages. During this period of the "social contract", most unions had a weak shopfloor presence. In order to get these wages linked to productivity, in order to assure union recognition, the dues check-off and institutional stability, they had given up their resistance to changes in work rules and technology. They gave up trying to have an impact on how work was organized on a day-to-day basis. They were also willing, in case after case, to trade off the right to strike for arbitration of grievances...

We are living through a period in which American business has essentially quit abiding by the terms of this "social contract"... We could spend days exploring why there has been this change of stance. Is it because of..... For whatever reasons, the period of the "social contract" is indeed over...

Not only has business stopped practicing it, but the government has stopped enforcing it. In the 1980s, we've seen the executive branch of the federal government, through president Reagan and the different departments under his command, break the air traffic controllers (PATCO) union, undermine OSHA....

The legislative branch of the government has not been far behind. Take the case of the Chicago Northwestern Railroad. A federal Emergency Board (appointed by Reagan under the terms of the Railway Labor Act) proposed a settlement that called for the elimination of 700 jobs. There was a brief strike that lasted for two hours - and fell between the morning and afternoon rush hours, so the union did not disrupt commuter traffic. In that short hiatus, the US Congress and Senate unanimously passed legislation making the "recommendations" of the Emergency Board binding. In short, they had taken the right to strike out of the hands of the railroad workers and imposed a contract to which workers had not agreed.

Of course, the judicial branch of the government has followed along. In the early 80s, the supreme court legitimized the notion of "permanent replacements" and protected their "rights" ahead of those of strikers. Federal judges all across the country have been quick with the gavel and the injunction...

At the state and local level, we find the same kind of behaviour by the government. In the Hormel strike, as well as the Phelps-Dodge conflict, a Democratic governor sent in the National Guard to break the strike...

So, on the state level, the local level, the federal level, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government have all withdrawn their enforcement of the "social contract" which dominated industrial relations in this country from the end of World War II...

For their part the unions have refused to recognize that management is no longer playing by the same rules and that the government has lost its interest in enforcing those rules. Union officials have shown some willingness to experiment with new techniques - corporate campaigns, internal organizing and the like - but they have seen this more as some fine-tuning of well-worn methods than as the beginning of a new approach to capital-labor relations altogether.

Back in the first decade of the 20th century, the biggest corporate leaders in America sat down with the biggest union leaders in the National Civic Federation (NCF). They worked out a "truce" - national recognition of the unions in exchange for the unions backing off on their resistance to technological change and the reorganization of work. But this trade-off was unacceptable to rank-and-file workers. In Chicago, machinists struck in 1902 when management throughout the city informed workers that they would now be expected to operate two machines, in violation of the traditional "one man, one machine". "But your unions signed this contract", the Metal Trades Association complained. "Then let them come and work two machines",

in case of a taking over of bankrupt firms or parts of firms by a new owner, the dismissal protection is being cancelled.

DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES OF EAST GERMAN INDUSTRY

Until the end of September 1991, THA has privatized 3 788 firms and parts of firms out of 8 000 in the beginning, out of which 156 have been sold to non-German European bidders, 11 to US bidders. Out of the former 2.9 THA workers, until the end of 1991 only 1.6 mill. are to remain. Following BDI (Bund Deutscher Industrie - German industrial employers' association) in March 1991 in the average of the processing trade only one sixth of the West sales per employed person has been reached. Unprofitable firms are being closed. For instance, in the chemistry industry at the end of the reconstruction process 50% of the jobs will be lost through closures and restructuring. At the biggest heavy machinery combine in GDR times TAKRAF, out of 29 sites only 10-12 with less than one third of the staff shall remain.

Production firms increasingly sign cooperation treaties with Western partners, whereby they often function as extended workbenches, e.g. in the shoe industry for Salamander or in the textile industry for Steilmann - here, prices have been set in a way that East German firms were forced to disperse parts of the production into third countries. Siemens intends to invest 1 bill. DM into joint ventures with 30 firms (25-30 000 workers) in three years, mainly in communications electronics. Since March 1990, Opel has a joint venture with Wartburg in Eisenach: the former 9 900 workers are to be reduced to 7000 until 1993. In 1994, 2 600 workers are to assemble 150 000 Kadett a year. Investment costs are being estimated 1 bill. DM. At the moment, 200 workers assemble 10 000 Vectra a year in the 20 mill. DM factory. The BfA organises and pays for the training of 3 000 workers for the future work at Opel.

In the mechanical engineering sector there are mainly takeovers or participations by medium-size firms. Apart from this, the building up of sales networks and branches dominates. Another tendency is to build up new works instead of restructuring old ones. Gramke, the restructurer of the Ruhrgebiet, says that crashes are the cure for ill regions. The Heidelberger Druck AG is building a completely new factory near Brandenburg, likewise the Herlitz AG in Falkensee near Berlin. Daimler Benz are building a new truck factory on the IFA site South of Berlin. In September 1991, the building up of a new VW factory on the former IFA site in Mosel has been started. Production in the new halls is to start until the end of 1993. Meanwhile in the old Trabant halls the Golf is being assembled out of parts coming from Spain and Germany.



Berlin, Nov. 5, 1991

Bavarian metal workers. The agreed for 100% assimilation of wages in the metal sector is scheduled for 1994, in the Berlin construction branch for 1992. Referring to the development of the general agreements (on conditions etc.), negotiations partly have not been terminated yet.

In the first quarter of 1991, income statistics that have been cleared of differences in spending power between East and West Germany state a minus of 20% for all East German workers' households. With prices for rent, public transport, energy etc. rising, spending power of East Germans probably has been sinking again fall 1991. Private consuming in 1991 has decreased by 7%. The standard of consumer durables partly has been assimilated very quickly: 90% of East German households have color TV (87% in the West) and 66% of East households have a car (68% in the West). Comparing average incomes of East and West German pensioners, DIW states a minus of East pensioners of 36% for the first quarter of 1991, differences in spending power being taken into consideration. Early 1992, pensions will rise by 11.65%.

Investment and Restructuring of Production

Conditions for economic development

Early March 1991 the federal government decided to start the Gemeinschaftswerk Aufschwung Ost (common work recovery East) with each 12 bill. DM for 1991 and 1992 for the promotion of municipal investment, ABM, traffic etc. This adds to federal financial subsidies and tax reductions of nearly 11 bill. DM for allowances for company investment and subsidies for conversion of agriculture and housing.

In 1991, in total 153 bill. DM are flowing into the new Länder which equals two thirds of the East German gross national product. Until 1993 the EC provides 6 bill. DM for East Germany. A large part of the sums flows into social expenditures (UB, welfare, pensions, health services and education, 8 bill. DM alone into rent subsidies etc.), 25 bill. DM into employment expenditures (7.7 bill. DM for qualification, 5.2 bill. DM for ABM, 4.7 bill. DM for short-time work, 5.5 bill. DM for early retirement). Agriculture is being subsidised with 5.5 bill. DM, shipbuilding and mining with 1 bill. DM each, the Reichsbahn gets 8 bill. DM. State subsidies for private investment are massive. Early 1991 it was decided to disclaim certain taxes on capital in the new Länder. Development of industrial area is being subsidised to a maximum of 90% of the costs. The maximum subsidies for commercial investment are 23%. All this adds to special write-offs. In the first year, subsidies are up to 40% of the purchasing costs. The state bears up to 33% of financing of equipment investments and more than 42% of expenditures for business buildings. In case of contaminated chemical works THA takes over the decontamination. In March the parliament enacted a package of laws for quicker privatisation limited to the end of 1992 and enabling the THA to sell firms against the will of their former owners. Furthermore,

rank-and-filers answered, "because we're not going to." Business leaders then withdrew from the NCF, telling union officials that they were not going to negotiate contracts with them if they could not deliver their side of a "bargain". Gompers and other national union leaders spent the next ten years chasing after these business leaders, begging them to come back to the NCF.

Business unionists in the 1980s are in the same position. Business unionism is unable to respond to the collapse of the "social contract" other than by begging management to come on back and give them another chance. We've seen unions run like and structured like businesses. We've seen unions dependent on lobbyists, lawyers, full-time staff, international officers - everything but their own rank-and-file...

THE RAIL STRIKE THAT WASN'T

(An issue of the US syndicalist journal ideas & action contained the following about the strike:)

"On April 17th (1990) 250,000 railroad workers represented by 13 different craft unions walked off their jobs in a magnificent display of labor unity. Their strike brought the freight rail system to a complete halt. But as sure as the sun rises, the U.S. House, Senate and President rushed to throw together an emergency measure to order the railroad workers back to their jobs.

Since their last contract expired in 1988 their has been an almost 50% reduction in the number of workers employed by the railroads. Coupled with the "spinning off" of 35,000 miles of track to "shortlines" (who have gutted union contracts or broken the unions outright) and massive wage, benefit and work rule concessions, the railworkers said they had had enough.

After ordering the workers back to their jobs, the government is now attempting to impose contracts that essentially represent the bosses "final offer". Under the law, the government has the right to impose contracts in the rail industry. The contracts they are trying to impose call for various economic concessions, as well as two-person crews for trains. Until the 1990s, the standard crew size had been four.

Labor Notes (5/91) reports that "here and there" rail unionists have been organizing independently of the union hierarchy. In Minneapolis, the Inter-Craft Association of Minnesota has been at it for 6 years, publishing a newspaper called Straight Track and organizing conferences. We hope that other railworkers will do the same and call for coordinated national actions to stop the still-powerful transportation bosses and to smash state intervention in labor struggles."

RAIL WORKERS AT A CROSSROADS.

HISTORY OF SUPPRESSION SHOWS NEED FOR NEW UNIONS

(The following are extracts of around one third of an article from The People, fortnightly paper of the US Socialist Labor Party. The SLP were the 'pioneers' of the so-called 'industrial unionism' tradition which of course is the reason for the headline's perspective about 'new

unions'. Even if these 'socialist industrial unions' are thought of as something completely different from the present unions, it is still as readers will know a perspective not shared by *Echanges*. That is however another discussion, and the parts of the article dealing with this is anyway not included in the extracts below. (See also the review of a book about the SLP below.) Other parts we haven't reproduced from the article are about developments in the rail industry in the 80's quite similar to the article in *Echanges* 68/69.)

Rail workers are at a crossroads. They have been put there by government intervention and strikebreaking, growing competition from the trucking industry, and the procapitalist union bureaucrats who have sold them out both to the rail companies and the federal government....

It is clear from the government's breaking of the recent rail strike, its "justification" for doing so, and its record of intervention that rail workers have, in every practical sense, no fundamental rights to strike as far as the capitalists' political state is concerned.

This marked the 16th time since 1985 that the government has bailed out rail capitalists by intervening to halt or prevent a strike. While "national emergencies" like wars have been the most common pretext for past government intervention, a simple "threat to the economy" has been used as the pretext for many of the most recent interventions, including the latest...

....it took only 19 hours after the strike was declared - in some cases before the unions had even begun organized picketing - to get the legislation ending the strike brought through both houses of Congress. In 1988, a strike by members of United Transportation Union against the Chicago and Northwestern railways was ended within 8 hours by similar legislation... In 1982, Congress and President Reagan aided the rail capitalists by declaring a nationwide rail workers' strike illegal and at the same time imposing the pro-industry recommendations of a presidentially appointed panel called a Presidential Emergency Board...

...Since 1980 rail employment dropped 44 percent - from 500.000 to 296.000. Productivity has doubled...

By the time of this year's strike, 3 of the 11 rail unions had already capitulated and signed new contracts that largely incorporated the recommendations of a 1990 Presidential Emergency Board. The bureaucratic heads of the remaining unions, to avoid the wrath of rank-and-file militancy resulting from the past decade of givebacks, were reportedly hoping for the same scenario Congress gave them in 1988 and 1982.

As a leading transportation industry publication, *The Journal of Commerce*, cynically wrote not long ago, "It serves both sides' [union bureaucrats and capitalists] interests to appear to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to a settlement that, for internal reasons, they cannot embrace publicly." Despite the fact that Congress denied the rail capitalists and their labor lieutenants such a settlement at the time it broke the strike, it has provided for the development of one...

As things stand, the future of rail workers looks grim indeed. Caught between the efforts of the railroad capitalists to keep wages down and spur productivity, the antilabor laws of the capitalist state, and a host of unions more concerned about retaining dues-paying members...

many sectors: alternative youth centers that often get more than ten ABM workers granted; teams of workers clear houses of junk; just fired workers tear down their former places of work or paint them multi-coloured - or in employment or service companies they decontaminate contaminated factory areas... Since the 1st of Sept. 1991, a regulation of the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (BfA), that provides cuts, is in force, but obviously at least partly it is being revised. Many institutions could not hire ABM workers anymore because they had to pay a part of the wages and materials themselves. Furthermore, the minister for economic affairs Möllemann and others demand significant wage cuts for ABM, because otherwise no one would work in the newly developing small and medium size firms.

Employment and qualification companies: Companies promoting work, employment and structure development under patronage of THA, unions, employers' associations and new Länder are to be built up, and those already existing are to be joint together organisationally, it has been decided and already begun to translate into action. At the time being, there are 200 of such companies in East Germany.

In 1991, the BfA may spend 6.8 bill. DM for the qualification of 550 000 workers. From September 1990 to September 1991, more than 700 000 have passed through professional qualification schemes. Since the 1st of July 1991, unemployed East Germans may retire early with 55 years of age and receive 65% of their last wages. This regulation is limited to the 31st of Dec. 1991, to begin with.

Commuters: Early October 1991, 5 000 are working in Hamburg, 12 000 in Niedersachsen, 30 000 in North Bavaria, in West Berlin every fourth worker is living in East Berlin or Brandenburg. They work mainly in the crafts, the health sector and gastronomy, furthermore in industrial production or stock/-dispatch. In total, four times as much men are commuting as women.

Resettlers: From fall 1989 to February 1991 nearly 400 000; in 1991, 200 000 are being estimated. They are mainly young and qualified people (in Oct. 1989: 15% from organisational, administrative and office professions, 8% engineers and natural scientists, nearly 8% from social and teaching professions, more than 8% mechanics). Preferably they move to Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Development of incomes: Following investigations of the Berlin institutes for economic research DIW and IAW (mid 1991), the average income of an East German household is only half as much as that of one in the West. At the time being, wages are between 60% and 80% of those in the West, following agreements (paper and textile: 60%; hotels and restaurants: 80%; East Berlin building cleaners: 100%), in reality though, at 40% to 50% because of worse paid holidays regulations, longer working hours, lower allowances and worse job categories. So, e.g., in July 1991, the actual earnings in Saxon metal industry lie at 39.9% of those of

by the shift of employment from agricultural/-forest economy and processing industry into the service sectors.

In 1989, the GDR population was about 16.4 million. Until 1995 a reduction to 15.5 million is being estimated (by resettlement and reduction of birth numbers: by 37.5% from Jan. to May 91, compared to 1990). In 1989, there were 9.6 mill. employed, for the end of 1991 the DIW (Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung - a German economic research institute) calculates some 4.590.000 fully employed, which means half of the employable population. The other half are short-time workers, unemployed, early retired, commuters, ABM-employed and (re-)trainees.

Labor market data for October 1991: (Source: Bundesanstalt für Arbeit - federal unemployment office, Nov. 1991)

Unemployed: 1.048.527 = 11.9%; out of whom 61% are women

Total number of workers: around 7 mill.

Affected by labor market political instruments, in total: 1.94 mill.; out of whom short-time workers:

1.2 mill. (57% of them work less than half of their normal hours)

Employed in job creation schemes (ABM): 348.000

Qualification schemes: 300.000

Early retired: around 600.000

Commuters: 500.000

Resettlers: 15.000 to 30.000 every month

Unemployed: The average monthly unemployment benefit is around 550 DM for women, for men 700 DM. From Jan. to Sept., the rate of unemployment amongst women has risen from 9.6% to 14.6%, amongst men from 7.6% to 9.6%.

Short-time work: The short-time work regulations for East Germany, which in contrast to the ones in the West allow short-time work benefits to be paid even if this may only shortly prevent lay-offs, are to expire on Dec. 31, 1991. Bundesrat and Länder governments put pressure on the federal government to extend the regulations for another half a year. People in short-time zero hours gain 85% of their former wages (with kids 90%), West workers only 63%. Together with ABM, the short-time regulation had already been extended by decision of the Bundesrat from March 8, 1991 (both were to expire on June 30). In April 1991, only around 25% of the short-time workers participated in qualification measures.

Job creation schemes (ABM): ABM places are being handed out to unemployed East Germans without restrictions. In August 91, the percentage of women in ABM lay at 36%. Two thirds of the jobs people have been supplied with by the unemployment offices were ABM. These affect

...workers reportedly face a determined effort from both union bureaucrats and rail capitalists to force a reorganization of the rail unions into one industrywide union - a formation the bureaucrats and capitalists previously opposed since it would make more difficult the organized scabbery the rail unions have always practised for the benefit of the rail capitalists. Lacking any evidence of significant rank-and-file militancy for decades, the companies now believe one industrywide union would help them more rapidly do away with more work rules that stand in the way of higher profits. Union bureaucrats are not expected to challenge the capitalists on this point, as long as they can retain their jobs through the reorganization...

RAILROAD UNION ELECTIONS

(This brief note appeared in the left-wing 'Labor Notes' Oct.91:)

"Railroad union presidents continue to be turned out of office by a membership angry at catastrophic new contracts imposed by Congress earlier this year. In the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, R. McLaughlin defeated incumbent president L. McFather in a runoff, 349-266. In the United Transportation Union, T. Dubose defeated longtime incumbent F. Hardin, 410-239. In each case, the new president was formerly a vice president. Officers of the two unions are elected by convention delegates."

"THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY 1876 - 1991 A SHORT HISTORY"



This book by Frank Girard and Ben Perry of around 100 pages is indeed a very short history of a party which, though small, has survived for more than 100 years in the USA, trying to maintain the flag of the fight for a socialist society. We can



clearly follow the evolution of this organisation, its splits (no more than seven), its bureaucratisation (one national secretary - Arnold Petersen - held this function for 55 years...a job for life), and the stubborn attempts to stand candidates in every presidential election between 1872 and 1976 (missing the last ones only because of the party's steady decline).

It has taken several years for the authors to complete the work we are unable to criticise because we know very little about how these socialist militants kept up with their ideals and activity in the ups and downs of American history. They were neither social democrats nor leninists or anarchists; though influenced by marxism they followed their own way, we could say their American way, strongly present in the activities of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) and with their own theoretician, Daniel DeLeon. But the SLP stuck all this time to the now odd idea that social ownership and control of the economy meaning the abolition of the state and of capitalism could be gotten through the "democratic" use of bourgeois parliamentary institutions. Even with these imperfections or failings (part of them being what the book underlines in that "typically the SLP made no effort then (in 1921) or later to make common cause with the KAPD and other groups opposing Lenin's international policies), we can follow the authors in their conclusion that the "SLP belief in working class self-reliance belongs to a tradition shared with other DeLeonists, anarchists, wobblies, council communists and others who have rejected social democratic and leninist programs of state control".

In the same afterword the authors avowed that "We are not agreed or even certain about the reasons for this decline" (of the SLP), yet thinking that the major cause seems to be its "uncompromising all or nothing revolutionary program". Perhaps they are right, but "compromising" groups are in the same situation. Such a statement stops half way from a real analysis of the role of a 'revolutionary group' in present-day capitalism. It is not by chance: even if it was the authors' choice to limit the book to this strict and somewhat lifeless history of the SLP organisation, they don't link this history to the evolution of American capitalism itself. Even if they sometimes are obliged to refer to political or social events, we have more the feeling in reading the whole book that the life of the SLP was more the result of political theoretical discussions than the irruption of social realities in what appears then to be a closed circle of militants.

The most interesting part of the text is about the period before and around the first world war when the USA was a melting pot of various European immigrants - quite a few with political backgrounds and bringing with them both their combativity, political ideologies... and the internal fights for these ideas. For a period, the SLP was more closely linked to and mixed with the social movement and this history book reflects this situation. The importance of the role of German immigrants is given by the fact that before 1900, the principal SLP paper was the daily *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, among other papers in German in different American towns. According to the chapter about the period 1880-1900, many conflicts arose: economic versus political action, trade union versus political action, anarchists against marxists. It was a period of great political confusion amongst passionate, often individual ideas and oppositions. We can't blame the authors not to give us the Ariadne thread to understand the general meaning of these debates marked by evictions, splits and individual departures - the voluntary limitation of their work prevents any extensive analysis. But this limitation could also come from what

On the 20th, there is a highway blockade of 3 000 at the Hermsdorf intersection in Thuringia. IGM has organised the blockade as a protest against the THA policy of closure and the cuts in ABM (ArbeitsBeschaffungsMaßnahme - job creation scheme). Originally, they had planned to block one lane for fifteen minutes but the action was extended spontaneously: for more than one hour all the four lanes were blocked. Simultaneously in Sömmerda, a conference between THA, management, works committee and local politicians takes place in the administrative building. The meeting is stormed by more than thousand workers. As the management's speaker starts to give declarations he is massively being hindered and thrown at with tomatoes.

End of September, 3 000 Charité employees demonstrate against the closure of the Universitätsklinik (university hospital). Early in October it is decided that the hospital will be maintained.

October 91: On the 16th, 200 workers of the Finsterwalder Tischfabrik (a furniture factory) by means of a demonstration in front of the Cottbus THA site demand payment of outstanding wages and the reorganisation of the factory before it is privatised. On the 20th, around 1 000 parents and childcare workers demonstrate in Berlin against the cuts of jobs in KiTas (KinderTagesstätten - a combination of crèche, day-nursery and kindergarden) and the reduction of opening hours. The post workers demand a strike because still there is no protection against job losses through rationalising, which means: unsecure jobs, lay-offs, lots of overtime work and no holidays... On the 28th, in Potsdam and Erfurt several hundred Post workers demonstrate against lay-offs and in favour of a Sozialvertrag (agreement on payments for lay-off). In Eisenhüttenstadt, more than 2.000 school students demonstrate for maintaining the EKO Stahl steelworks. On the 30th, employees of private security agencies in Potsdam and Frankfurt/Oder are out on token strikes for a general agreement and higher wages.

November 91: Early in November, token strikes close post offices in many cities, changing sites daily. East German post workers are fighting against planned lay-offs.

LABOUR MARKET AND INCOMES

The structure of employment in the former GDR was characterised by a very low unemployment rate, a high percentage of industrial workers with high percentage of women, companies with large numbers of employees (there were 220 combinates, out of which the 18 biggest had between 39 000 and 70 000 employees) - all this in relation to West German numbers. Furthermore there was a relative equality in incomes. These framing data presently are being rapidly assimilated to West German standards. Since Fall 1989, around 40% of the employed have lost their former jobs or got themselves new ones. It is said that every second will be affected

End of June, 200 hospital employees demonstrate against the deletion of 5.000 hospital beds in East Berlin.

July 91: 1.500 unemployed metal workers demonstrate in front of THA in Erfurt against the annihilation of their jobs. During the railway negotiations there are token strikes at the Berlin S-Bahn and in the Cottbus railways, then in the whole of East German railways. The rail workers' union GdED (Gewerkschaft der Eisenbahner Deutschlands) in the DGB does not participate, the strikes are being organised through the railways officials' unions. It's about money and the acknowledgement of their years of service.

A wildcat strike of 800 nurses of East Berlin Charité and Krankenhaus Friedrichshain (hospitals in East Berlin) takes place on the 24th about working conditions and acknowledgement of years of service, following an "angry debate" with ÖTV and hospital management. The union is against a strike, the management threatens with disciplinary measures.

During a talk between health minister, employers and employees' delegates in Berlin, 2.000 nurses from both parts of the town protest at the site of negotiations, shouting "We want 100%". All over the public services there was a growing unrest because of the non-acknowledgement of years of service in the agreement for eastern Germany.

August 91: Some hundred Charité nurses march to KH Friedrichshain demonstrating for 100% of West German wages. In mid-August, other hospital employees joins their demands with demonstrations and token strikes; ÖTV now covers this.

September 91: In Stralsund, 10.000 dockyard workers demonstrate against closures. Negotiations take place for the public services over the acknowledgement of years of service for the 1.4 million employees. Meanwhile, in many places and in nearly all sectors (offices, hospitals, public transport...) there are token strikes, demonstrations and road blockades with mass participation. On a rally of ÖTV and GEW (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft - union for education and science employees) in Berlin, banners attacking the ÖTV are seen. On the 10th, the Berlin BVB (Berliner VerkehrsBetriebe - Berlin public transport works) drivers bring the whole morning rush-hour to a stillstand by a wildcat strike from 4am to 8am. On the 25th, the years of service are being acknowledged for all employees of the public services and the railways, later also for the post workers. The job guarantees existing in the West are not taken over. Furthermore, in order "to balance", the 60% wages are extended for one month.

On the 4th, 10.000 people block all streets leading to Sömmerda for one hour because Robotron intends to fire all 9.600 workers on December 31 (more than 3.000 have already been kicked out). Works committee members and the union had called for this action. One week later 5.000 workers protest in front of the company's administrative building during a management meeting. On the 13th, they go to Berlin in 25 buses and present their demands at the THA.

we said above about the absence of a link between the economic and social evolution in the USA and the inside story of the SLP. For instance we could have expected more about different tendencies in the SLP than the word "fraction" to characterise the 'trade unionist tendency'. Another example concerning a peculiar point during these years of great social and political turmoil: after the Haymarket Square events (May 1886) followed by mass arrests and hard repression, the national committee of the SLP repudiated all connection with anarchism and anarchists, breaking even with Joseph Dietzgen who, though marxist, joined the anarchists in solidarity against the repression.

In a certain way, this SLP history is a sad story. Year after year the membership has continued to dwindle. Its newspaper *The People*, after the party had been "reorganised on its present marxist basis", was at first "The daily People", then weekly, then bi-weekly, but anyway, the Party always sticks to its line. (This could be the history of many groups even for a shorter period of time.) Even considering the deep transformations of the capitalist system, the past history and the strenuous efforts of past and present militants prevent any change. This blockade even makes it more imperius to "keep to the line" in a kind of vicious circle: treasures of militancy are lost in the ghetto of pointless and self-satisfying theoretical and/or practical, often very sectarian, activities. If reading the book could bring this reflexion among the extreme left political milieu, the authors would be more rewarded for their efforts than to have made a valuable work of political historians.

H.S.

Frank Girard/Ben Perry: THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY 1876-1991. A Short History. Published by Livra Books, 422 W. Upsal St., Philadelphia, PA 19119, USA. \$9, ISBN 0-9629315-0-0.

The book is 112 pages, paperback, and contains appendixes on sources, the SLPs of other countries, the foreign language publications, various statistics as well as 31 illustrations and an index.

See also review of *The People* in Echanges no.62 p.51.



Discussion Bulletin (P.O.Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501) This bulletin continues to be published with each issue containing a lot of letters and different debates impossible to summarise properly. It's intended as a bulletin for 'third camp' socialists, meaning all those on the far left who are not 'leninist', and recent issues have seen a strong emphasis by the publishers on the (Left) Green movement.

From our point of view it is interesting to note that recent issues has contained some translations of articles from the Dutch journal *Daad en Gedachte* written by a participant in Echanges. Unfortunately, but however to be expected by the DB, this is more theoretical/ideological articles and nothing from the important articles about class struggles published by our Dutch comrades.

Below we publish a facsimile from a recent issue with the DB's own explanation about their bulletin.

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It was designed to serve as the financially and politically independent forum of a little known sector of political thought. It places the great divide in the "left," not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's statist leftwing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. It is organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists.

The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism's wage, market, and money system along with capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often fiercely antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities, and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitations being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

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Send all correspondence to: Discussion Bulletin, P.O. Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

fades. A metal workers demonstration in Berlin in favour of maintaining jobs and equal living conditions is attended by some thousand instead of the 150,000 expected by IGM. On the 10th, 2,000 East Berlin hospital workers participate in a rally in front of the Rote Rathaus (town hall of East Berlin), by which they protest against the low wage agreements and the planned restructuring and for the acknowledgement of their years of service.

On the 18th in Berlin, Reichsbahn (East German railway) workers protest against slow negotiations. They want specific agreements because the connection to public services with their 60% would mean lower wages for half of them. They demand 75% following the wage structure of the DB (Deutsche Bundesbahn - West German railways).

May 91: "Demonstrating is mega-out!", one Narva (East German electric bulb enterprise) woman worker says referring to the 1st of May. Many have thought like this - union demonstrations turned out to be flops. Token strike on the 2nd in the Potsdam Sparkasse (savings bank) for higher wages. On his way to a meeting with 700 workers of the Buna Werke Schkopau in Halle on the 10th, rotten eggs are being thrown at chancellor Kohl. End of May smaller road blockades of 300 workers of the Berlin town farms concerning their status, re-trainings and a Sozialplan.

June 91: More than 1,000 Trabant (DDR car factory) workers in Zwickau occupy the factory for several days because the THA suddenly rejects the building-up of a retraining and employment firm agreed to earlier. This firm was to bridge the gap between the production of the last Trabant car on the 1st of July 1991 and that of the first VW Golf in Mosel 1994 for 3,600 workers. After three days THA gives in. Mid-June more than 10,000 workers of private transport companies in Saxonia participate in ÖTV token strikes covering the whole area. They put large parts of the Saxon infrastructure to a stillstand. It is about wages and general agreements, a five-day-week with 40 hours, more holidays and wage rises. On the third day, negotiations are taken up again. At the same time, the Scharfenstein/Saxonia (household utensils) is being occupied because THA has decided to close it. The TAKRAF works Leipzig and Asota Chemnitz are being occupied for the same reason.

On the 15th, teachers and childcare workers in Berlin demonstrate against lay-off plans and for punctual wage payment, and inhabitants of homes for the aged demonstrate against plans to raise the fees drastically.



in a demonstration in front of the Erfurt Landtag: they demand a change of the THA (Treuhand Anstalt, which owns all East German state enterprises and has been set up to sell/privatise or close them) policy and economic subsidies for Thuringia. Employees of the polyclinics in Brandenburg are out on strike because they don't get paid (some for two months). In several cities tenants' assemblies against the rent explosion take place.

March 91: A series of Monday demonstrations against mass unemployment and social cuts. On the 25th in Leipzig, 60 000 participate, in Eisenhüttenstadt they have the biggest demo after *the Wende* (German political term for the end of the DDR, beginning with November 1989 and the fall of the wall; Engl.: turn). Amongst the speakers on these demonstrations are party and union bosses too.

The agreements for the metal sector for East Brandenburg cause anger amongst the workers, many threaten to give back their union membership cards: wages partly sink down to 51% of the West German level. 100 works committee members try in vain to topple the agreement and demand the resignation of the regional IGM boss because of jabbering. On a IGM demo "against the regional economic and social decay" on the 15th in Berlin, IGM speakers are loudly being prevented for speaking. The IGM negotiations for the East German steel works are being accompanied by token strikes and demos at all steel sites, tens of thousands participate. The IGM demands wage rises to 65% of the West German wages as a first step.

In Schwerin, 2 000 farmers from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern demonstrate: "Kiechle, hand over the bucks!" Mid March 300 childcare students demonstrate in front of the Potsdam Landesregierung (regional government) against the insecurity of their education and the future of their profession.

April 91: Mid-April, the heads of the DGB (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund - national union federation like the English TUC) say that the unions intend to stay in front of the Monday demos to "counteract extreme social tensions". They draw back from the organisation of them though, as participation



Green Synthesis (League for Ecological Democracy, P.O.Box 1858, San Pedro CA, 90733-1858) The journal is part of the broad green movement in the US and says that it "wants to give an understanding of the intellectual interchange going on in the young and dynamic Green movement both nationally and internationally". The journal needs financial support and sellers/distributors. A subscription can be taken out for 2 years for 8 dollars. **No.35/March 92** issue contains among other things: Various reports of green conferences and gatherings - An invitation to a dialogue/discussion in future issues about **the population question**: "...the population question troubles many people that are environmentally aware. It is, however, a sensitive question and must be handled carefully. But it is also selfevident that there are limits to the human population which our planet can support" - The Green Party of California has ballot status (About the situation of the party, with over 100.000 registered members. The article says that proposals in the platform of the party about various issues and problems are good, but that there is "no indication why we are living in a society where these measures do not already exist and are taken for granted") - The experience of the German Green party (According to A party founder who left because all radical positions have been given up, the party became popular and successful with possibilities to spread 'radical ideas' to the public. But on the other hand "you are making an offer to integrate your radical movement into the state", people from small marxist-leninist group entered the party, parliamentary delegates became more or less corrupted...).

On Green liberalism

Green Synthesis no.35 also contains a discussion article criticising 'Green Liberalism': *"Liberalism prefers to elicit obedience to its laws through socialization, but ultimately it requires violent enforcement...Liberalism as a social practice has been characterised by.. individualism.. naturalism.. voluntarism.. idealism.. and moralism.... People who fancy themselves as Green thinkers are often unaware of the liberal elements in their thinking... Consider a recent article in Green Synthesis. It talks about "the need (political imperative) for designing (idealistically) a Green Economics (uniform policy) via a Green Political Administration (at the state level) exercising its power (higher will) to arrange 'the good' (proper values) and exercise 'stewardship' (power-over) via the 'moral yardstick' (moral truth) of the majority Green position (imposing agreement).... Greens have yet to take seriously the ecologically destructive elements of domination inherent to liberalism... Green liberalism calls for state-level remedies - more laws, policies, central fundings, rights, legal recognitions, and greater agency powers... The radicalism of the original green spirit will dissipate as the movement becomes a party and finally an eclipsed liberal left establishment. This has already happened in Germany."*

AUSTRALIA

THE 'GREENS' IN SYDNEY

Remarks from a Norwegian comrade: Echanges 65 contained an article by C.B. of the Dutch group Daaden Gedachte about a group of Australian 'Greens' in Sydney. It originally appeared in Dutch and then in a German version. An English translation/version was later made by the author. The very last part of the article is a bit different in the various translations/versions.

Before using the English version in Echanges, I edited it by making grammatical corrections and improvements and adding notes. But at the end I also added the concluding remarks of the German version, which is the part starting with the sentence "Even if as we said above..." ..). It later came to my attention that the English translation, made so that the Australians should be able to read and discuss the article with the author, was more or less agreed between the author and the Australians to end with the part starting with "Of course the idealism...". The last part of the article in Echanges, added by me, is therefore not in accordance with how the author wanted the final version to be.

For anybody who can make use of a copy of the article in French, German or Dutch, it is of course available from Echanges.

RH 4/91

Rebel Worker (A\$16/year from PO Box 92, Broadway, NSW 2007) Vol.10 No.1-2: "The major anarchosyndicalist paper in Australia, this one reminds me of such papers everywhere in its emphasis on grassroots organisations and the labor movement. They cover strikes and direct action and suggestions for making a better society in the future. A good way to keep up with what's going on down there." (This short review is quoted from no. 44 of the US journal 'Factsheet Five').

BELGIUM

Strike of Cockerill-Sambre computer workers See the section 'Vulnerability of modern work organisation' in this issue of Echanges.

Communisme Journal in French of Groupe Communiste Internationaliste (Address letters only as follows: BP 54, BXL 31, 1000 Bruxelles 1) No.32/Nov.90: Against war and peace - 1919: Revolution and counterrevolution in Hungary (This long study is presented as part of a work

and that all in all 26 000 out of 130 000 Post workers participate in. From January 21st to 23rd, a ballot for an unlimited strike is being held, in which 96% of the members vote in favour (in East Berlin, 21 000 are being employed at the Post, out of whom 19 000 are union members). The strike begins in the night of the 23rd to 24th, on the first day 51 Post offices are in strike. On the 26th, the strike is being suspended for one day, the negotiators have agreed for a compromise: a singular payment of 900 DM for the lower wage standards and 650 DM for the higher ones, plus for every child 150 DM one-time payment. The trainees' wages are increased by 40 DM per month. The strike ballots of the 30th and 31st result in 72.4% votes in favour.

In the paper, carton and plastic processing industry, the union's demand of assimilation to the structure of the West German standards is accompanied by token strikes. Demonstration of Eisenach car workers against stopping the production of the Wartburg car. IGM (metal union) and works committee members demand that the production stop is delayed to the end of the year. One and a half weeks later, more than 1 000 car workers block the Autobahn Berlin - Frankfurt/-Main. The IGM organises another big rally for the 30th.

During the negotiations for the paper industry, 3 000 workers participate in token strikes, at the same time a strike ballot is being held. Smaller token strikes on a community level, e.g. of savings bank employees, for melioration of standards. Berlin and Potsdam farmers and forest workers demonstrate against plans for Abwicklung and demand reorganisation instead of privatising.

February 91: 53 000 shipyard workers demonstrate in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern against the threatening mass lay-offs in ship-building. 30 000 workers demonstrate in Rostock against the closure of the Neptun shipyard.

During the metal industry negotiations for the Berlin-Brandenburg region (concerning 25 000 workers), tens of thousands of workers organise pressure by token strikes and street blockades. 65% of West German wages are being demanded. Furthermore, there are demonstrations, token strikes and occupations of firms against job reduction and closures in industry and services (teachers, sales staff, Interflug employees).

Some of the bigger actions are the protest rally of 20 000 Zeiss Jena employees, a rally of several thousand workers of the Mansfeld industrial area, demonstration of 35 000 metal workers at the end of the month in Chemnitz, occupations of the Neuruppin Elektro-Physikalische Werke by 2 480 workers and of the ermic-GmbH in Erfurt (both places staff keep on producing to avoid bankruptcy), two intersections occupied in Berlin by some thousand workers of the WF (Werk für Fernseh elektronik - TV electronics factory), KWO (Kabelwerk Oberspree - cable works) and Transformatorenwerk (transformer works).

The ÖTV call for a big rally in Leipzig "against the social decline" becomes a flop. Instead of the 50 000 expected only 5 000 show up, mainly wheeled there from Berlin. 40 000 participate

of job guarantee and a 400 DM wage rise). In the other sectors corresponding agreements are being made in July and August.

August 90: ÖTV (Öffentlicher Dienst, Transport und Verkehr - union for public services, transport and traffic) negotiations in the public services - accompanied by a wave of one- or two-hour strikes in public transport, of garbage workers and in hospitals, as well as demonstrations and rallies all over DDR. All in all more than 100.000 participate. The agreement on the 5th of Sept. includes wage rises of 200 DM - 350 DM had been demanded. Against "Abwicklung" of agricultural companies, 250 000 LPG (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft - agricultural production cooperative) employees are on strike for two hours all over the DDR and block some roads with their tractors.

September 90: 5.000 miners of the uranium mining at Wismut, being threatened by closure, are on strike and have a one-day occupation of four pits. They demand follow-up negotiations on the social agreement and by their action gain severance pay between 20 000 and 30 000 DM, additionally to the shorttime-work pay they get full miners' pensions.

Also for severance pay, 480 potash miners are on a hunger-strike near Straßberg. After three and a half days they get an approval for social plans. End of Sept., the building of the East German potash holding is being blocked by 500 workers in order to chase away the old functionaries. Revolts in 20 prisons.

November 90: Rail workers' strike for job security (60 000 are to be sacked) and for 50% of the West German wages. The union agrees with the board of directors the beginning of negotiations on wage rises and social plans and a stop of lay-offs until June 30. Only 45% of the employees give a yes vote to these results (which means it is agreed to). Furthermore, students' again protests against Abwicklung of universities and keep on till January '91.

December 90: Token strikes at the Post (postal services) accompanying negotiations on a singular equalisation payment (like already approved in the rest of the public services), shorter working hours, wage increases to 60% of the West German wages and the taking over of the West German protection against rationalisation. The post workers in reality have only 40%-45% of the West wages and a standard working time of 43 hours and 45 minutes per week. Before Christmas, the strikes are being suspended for the time being.

January 91: Mid-January the DPG (Deutsche Postgewerkschaft - union for Post employees) takes up the token strikes again, into which step by step all the new Länder are being included,



which aims at "the programmatic reevaluation of the present communist minorities through the study of the class struggles during the period 1917-23, attempting to draw a general estimate of strength, weakness and lessons we can learn from the last historical attempt to impose the proletarian dictatorship and the abolition of the wages system." No.35/Jan.92: Proletarian insurrection in Ukraine 1918-21 - The manifesto of the Workers Group of the Russian Communist Party (1923, Myasnikov group).

Communism Review in English of the GCI (address as above) No.6: From man's alienation to human community - Large scale massacres of prisoners in Peru - Massacre in Kurdish Halabja. No.7/April 92: War or revolution - A comrade's testimony of a journey to Irak - Burma: struggles and riots to be remembered - Concerning the 500th anniversary festivities of the so-called discovery of America.

The GCI also publish some journals we don't receive, in Spanish ('Comunismo'), Arabic ('Al Shu'aa') and Hungarian ('Kommunizmus'). Requests about these journals can be sent to the address above.

'DIRECT DEMOCRACY'

DIRECT DEMOCRACY NETWORK

No.15 of SINEWS, a UK journal dealing mainly with Spanish syndicalism (see Echanges 65 for a review) contained the following:

"Direct Democracy Network: This will be an international project which aims to produce some practical analysis of direct democracy (its strengths and weaknesses) with a special interest in mass organisations which use rotation of delegates (eg. the Spanish dockers' Coordinadora, or the CGT-CNT branch at Michelin in the Basque Country). We would like to hear from anyone with practical experience, or who is interested in giving their criticisms of draft texts, doing translations (we hope to work in Spanish and English), or in any way getting involved. Various already existing texts on the subject will be sent to anyone who is interested. Please reproduce this announcement in any publication which seems suitable."

SINEWS, Spanish Information Network, c/o 39 Vesta Road, Brockley, London SE4 2NJ (new address).

This is a question we hope to return to in forthcoming issues of Echanges in general and in connection with more material about the Spanish dockers' union 'Coordinadora'.

'IS DIRECT DEMOCRACY POSSIBLE?'

An article with the title "Is direct democracy possible?" was published in Echanges 61. With the French rail- and other strikes of 86/87 as an example, it contained among other things a critique of the way of analysing class struggle by Echanges and a number of other, some politically quite different, journals. One of the 'accusations' in the article was that too much attention was paid to or emphasis laid on 'open struggles' like strikes and the way they are organised through assemblies and elected delegates - at the expense of what really matters: the more 'daily' conflicts, resistance and discontent of various kinds.

These subjects and this criticism has been discussed in the context of Echanges, and most participants would not agree in full with the critique put forward in this article. But this discussion and a critique of the article has not been put down in writing for publication in Echanges.

Some material in respect of the latter can be found in the recently reprinted Echanges pamphlet "The refusal of work" and some precisions about Echanges' way of analysing can be found in the "Echanges et Mouvement. Presentation pamphlet".

The article in question also says: "...we have looked in vain for something on the daily struggles of the French railway workers in the pages of 'Rouge', 'Mais encore'...' Courant Alternatif', 'Liaisons' and 'Echanges' as well as developments of class struggle in this direction. Not only would material in this respect by the author not be in contradiction with the ideas of and the material wanted in Echanges, but would be very welcome for publication.

The article in Echanges 61 was translated in an issue of the Italian journal *Comidad* (see ITALY section in Echanges no.66/67), and a comrade from this journal sent the following letter:

"I read the criticism of direct democracy in Echanges and we have translated and published it in our bulletin with some comments. Our criticism of direct democracy is different. We too want the elimination of classes and capitalism, but we think that it only will be possible with the destruction of the political power. In another way, the problem is to deny anybody the possibility of making law, of governing, of controlling and passing sentences.

The democratic (or socialist) dictatorship finds its basis in this idea of 'Law'. The economical privilege could at the end, be in deep crisis, the State bureaucracy could be dismantled. But if the democratic discourse of the need of a political power stays, the economic privilege will have the possibility to come up again."

under union control opposing this. In some installations ways of struggle were being discussed. But management reduced this to admonitory watches and info-stands to hire conscientious objectors.

The struggles were successful, though. Half a year later the educators received massive wage rises, but the menace of work intensification remains the same. Educators' possibilities to fight differ strongly from those of other workers. Communication is their daily job, assemblies are much easier organised here. But the educators tend to rely on the ability to communicate, too. Instead of a strike they bet on negotiations with the administration.

At the time being, discussions move in a circle. Educators don't see themselves as workers but argue with needs of the disabled and the children. Sure, in their demands for better working conditions they express their position as wage laborers. Yet this demand is formulated as follows: "More qualified staff for better care". However, with the myth of the 70s/80s about "Sense instead of Labor", the educators' behavior has nothing in common anymore.

Since the end of the 80s the educators have created different conditions themselves. Nobody is able to control how much is being done. There is rarely a profession where so much free space can be developed. Whilst educators lead a cushy life, their superiors use this form of refusal and develop new concepts disguised as new pedagogy. Where handicapped check things themselves for lack of personnel, obviously less educators are needed. So care is being reduced, certain services externalised and thus work intensified. Up to now, educators have successfully resisted surplus work. Perhaps against the new attacks new struggles will develop.

DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN GERMANY

STRUGGLES

June 90: Robotron workers gain social plan through occupation of factory yard. With a four-day strike 3000 East Berlin garbage workers gain 33% wage rises. In Rostock, 10.000 demonstrate for job creation schemes and social cushioning of the shipyard restructuring. At some universities movements against "Abwicklung" (liquidation) develop.

July 90: One-hour nationwide strike of east German rail workers. Strikes of 120.000 metal workers in Berlin and Brandenburg for financial compensation of wage losses. Prison revolt in Leipzig. The regional negotiations for the metal sector in East Berlin and Brandenburg are accompanied by token strikes of 30 000. The agreement of 13th of July gives 30% wage rises from Oct. 1st (300 DM), 20 days holidays, 40 hour week, job security until June 30, 1991, resp. March 31, 1991 for the ones already in "training schemes" (the demand had been two years

material published by the German 'Wildcat' group. The first article is "On the situation of the Educators" in the west German day-nurseries/kindergartens and homes for handicapped and their long strike in 1990. The second article called "Developments in East Germany" is an account of struggles June '90 - November '91 and information about labour market/incomes, investment/restructuring of production and development tendencies of East German industry. Later we hope to come back with some more recent material.

WESTERN GERMANY: ON THE SITUATION OF THE EDUCATORS

Note of translator: The terms "Erziehung" and "Erzieher" have been translated with "education" and "educators", which in Germany does not include teaching in schools or universities.

In 1989/1990, the educators of KiTas (Kindertagesstätten - a combination of crèche, day-nursery and kindergarten) and homes for handicapped were moving again. In January 1990 in 370 out of 398 state KiTas, in Berlin the longest strike since the last world war started. With their ten and a half weeks strike, the KiTa educators were fighting for a collective agreement, more personnel and qualification.

But for too long the educators hoped for an extension of their strike by the unions. ÖTV and GEW (unions for public services and teaching personnel) only asked for the solidarity of the parents concerned. After ten weeks of strike there were neither solidarity actions worth mentioning nor had the strike been extended into other sectors. Even educators in other cities were not reached.



Yet in summer 1989, there had been token strikes in different West German cities. Besides the KiTa workers, educators mainly working in private disabled homes resisted their bad working conditions.

In Hamburg, private disabled homes companies had been able to maintain a high rate of personnel (1 educator/2 inmates up to 1:1) by hiring masses of young men doing alternative service instead of serving the army (whilst many educators worked part-time). For one educator they could hire three conscientious objectors. Since the shortening of alternative service in Autumn 1990 many of these positions remained empty. There were demonstrations

THE REFUSAL OF WORK

This reprint of an Echanges pamphlet published in 1978 was for the most part a discussion on the meaning on the then trendy ideas around the "refusal of work". The debate started with some comments on Paul Lafargue's old book "The right to be lazy" and other more recent texts on the subject (e.g. John Zerzan's "The revolt against work"). Some considerations could seem out of date and irrelevant to the world crisis, but the various texts of the pamphlet still bring a lot of material and various opinions not at all out of date and still useful for an analysis of present tendencies of class struggle. (Price £1,50 from Echanges or bookshops.)

FINLAND

THE SITUATION IN FINLAND 1991

Finland is a country in a quite serious economic crisis with a high unemployment and big difficulties for many of its important industries. In Echanges there have just been brief notes about Finland and many readers know little about the country. The latter also goes for the rest of the Nordic countries. Therefore we have in Echanges the last years published material about Norway and Sweden from various circular letters of Norwegian comrades using the name Motiva Forlag (address: Boks 9340 Vålerenga, 0610 Oslo). The material below about Finland is taken from their circular letter no.4 (which also contained material about Russia published in Echanges 68/69). The comrades remark that they also know too little about Finland even if it is a neighbouring country to Norway (having a small common border in the north). What they have published is therefore not an analysis, but extracts from newspaper articles which can provide some information.

"At the end of 1990 trade minister Suominen agreed to an agreement demanded by Moscow to end the barter trade, which has transitory regulations for only six months. All trade is now made in hard currencies. The old clearing contracts must be fulfilled. Almost all Finnish enterprises must therefore re-negotiate their trade contracts with Soviet institutions or attain government credit guarantees, which are not very likely in face of the practical insolvency of Moscow. ... In the hey-days of Eastern trade the Soviet part of Finnish foreign trade was at 26 per cent, now it has been reduced to approximately 10 per cent. A further reduction by half is reconed by the ministry. The clearing trade, it is said in the trade political department of the foreign ministry, have had great advantages for Finland and meant a crisis proof order cushion for many enterprises. As oil prices have risen and the international trade cycles have been weak,

the Finnish trade with western countries have been correspondingly reduced, but the export in the Soviet Union has risen, as Moscow for the higher revenues from oil has had to purchase more. In the Finnish Industry Confederation is said that Moscow now have no more money for Finnish consumer goods like textiles, shoes or tooth paste." (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 25.02.91)

"Some industrial enterprises have already had to be closed, among them factories in textile and engineering. Most badly hit is the textile industry, which mainly has exclusively produced for the export to the Soviet Union, and now, completely caught by surprise, are not able on short notice to change their designs and marketing to the demands of the West. ... In 1990 the GNP grew by only 0.3 per cent, and in this year a reduction of 0.5 per cent is estimated." (Süddeutsche Zeitung 29.04.91)

"The decline in Finnish economy has accelerated fast only since the general elections in March. ... It has gone fast downhill with Finnish economy the past year. In the government statement of 26. April the reasons are pointed out: The international developments (declines on export markets) and imbalance in the Finnish economy (explosion of costs and consumption). In other words Finland's problems are astonishingly resembling the ones big brother Sweden has to cope with. The Finns were for many years the poor cousins in Scandinavia, with a level of wealth well below the neighbouring countries. The golden eighties ended this. The Finns became just as wealthy as Danes, Swedes and Norwegians. A decade of uninterrupted growth culminated in 1989 with a growth of 5.2 per cent in Finland's GNP - at the top end of OECD's growths. But then came a sudden stop. Last year the growth was a meagre 0.3 per cent, and this year it will decline. Unemployment was last year 3.5 per cent on average. In March this year it was 7 per cent, and due to seasonal variations unemployment of 10 per cent will be reached next winter the Finnish Industry Confederation believes." (Aftenposten 22.05.91)



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"During the summer Finland has fallen deeper and deeper into a crippling economical depression. Bankruptcies are frequent, more and more enterprises are laying off their employees. In addition to this unemployment continues to rise, and as a consequence of this the

brings them to propose from their top position some solutions to the modern "enterprise culture" which "forbids any real opposition and works like the system of a unique party". The solution of course is the self-management ideology, the modern flag of the CFDT. The conclusion, back to the Billancourt from these misty discussions on this "enterprise culture", gives an evidence that without valuable and responsible interlocutors (of course the unions) future conflicts would become "unmanageable". That is real good news such a recognition of union men of the impossibility of yoking workers and class struggle. In considering what is currently happening all over the world with the unions we can see that it is not for tomorrow that the workforce will become "unmanageable".

H.S.

Actions of air traffic control technicians and other groups of workers: See the section 'Vulnerability of modern work organisation' in this issue.

Mordicus (BP 11, 75622 Paris Cedex 13) For a presentation of this journal, see Echanges no.68. No.3: Is there any peace after the war? - The slaughter of the least evil - A journalist is in the foe. No.4: Suburbs on fire (recent riots in Paris suburbs with a special article about the Sartroville riots and how it was recuperated by the Moslem integrists) - That thousands cauldrons explode (on the riots of the Reunion island) - The mammas of capital: interview with a syndicalist peasant - Nationalism in the USSR - Work against human activity.

GERMANY

Material about Germany in some previous issues of Echanges includes:

- Notes about material on the early history of East Germany (no.68/69).
- "The desintegration of the East German army" (no.63).
- "East German capital in crisis" (no.63 and 64).
- "Mobilisations in the white factory" (health sector struggles), "Hunger strike at VDO Frankfurt" and "Interviews with Turkish workers in Berlin" (no.65).

In no. 66/67 we also published two articles about strikes in eastern Germany written by a Dutch comrade in the journal 'Daad en Gedachte'. The first was about the November '90 rail strike, the first big strike in 'unified Germany', and the other was about the January '91 post strike.

To put this material into a wider perspective of social conditions and other struggles which took place in the same period, we publish two texts below which are not recent. They are from

workforce, which the authors of course are unable to do. So the historical part of the book is rather superficial, dealing only with narrow political and trade union aspects of events at Billancourt.

It is the same when they try to explain the consequences of world competition. According to the authors, this competition pushed management to break the resistance of both unions and workers and so to go ahead with the complete closure of Billancourt. They don't at all see that the previous policy (nationalisation, social pact with the unions...) had exactly the same object. They see a fundamental difference, where there is none, between the past situation and the present situation with an everlasting management assault which brought about a completely new situation where "there is no possibility of escape". Production methods in the past needed this union power and a specific wage structure to keep workers in the factory; modern production methods no longer require that. The decline of the union and the different working conditions are not the result of a nasty management plot, but the result of a change in production methods imposed by world competition. Management policy is not the cause of the change, but the technical changes are the cause of the new management policy. As very frequently in attempted analysis of class struggle, the causes are taken for consequences and the consequences for causes.

This manichean view of "before and after" (we don't know exactly where the separating line is) contains the same contradiction. Formerly the dominant union, the CGT, could "in the Renault system control 30.000 workers of the Billancourt fortress with the help of a disciplined and efficient network of militants". However, the CFDT bureaucrat remembering the remote period where he was perhaps a worker or a rank and file militant, is retrospectively also full of admiration for the day to day resistance of the workers - a reality at Billancourt more important and efficient than the union-management control. The best pages of the book are when he gives examples of what he himself calls "the high and unknown degree of observation, intelligence" of the unskilled worker in escaping a "work divided to the utmost" and the "negation of the individual", giving evidence of workers taking everything possible from a system which attempts to "destroy their life".

Described in such a way, such a contradiction brings the reader to the idea that in the past union power (aiming at yoking the workers) and rank and file power (aiming at escaping this domination) not only coexisted but were more or less linked. This odd idea brings about the opposite opinion with the same contradiction: union power is now a lifeless zombie completely eliminated from what remains of Renault Billancourt and this elimination also means the complete elimination of the "tradition of revolt against work" so well described some lines before. We guess that the union bureaucrat is now so distanced from the rank and file that he is unable to know that the resistance he encountered in the past are still alive in different forms having had to adapt to the new forms of production and exploitation.

Of course there are good labour managers and their regretful sad nostalgia for past union power

state economy has come off balance. ... Unemployment is already close to 10 per cent." (Aftenposten 10.09.91)

"The Finnish central bank - Bank of Finland - took on Thursday over Sparbankernas Central-Aktie-Bank (SCAB), which is one of the countrys biggest commercial banks, in order to avert bankruptcy and a threatening collapse of all of the Finnish bank trade. ... But it is not only SCAB which is hit by big problems. Also the other banks have big problems." (Aftenposten 23.09.91)

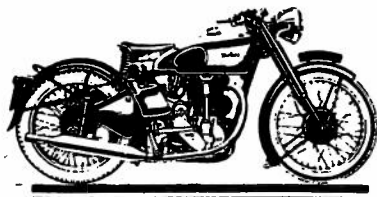
"Finnish ferry shipping companies are of the opinion that a proposed tax on travels are threatening jobs in the business. Yesterday the ground crew on Finnish airports struck against the proposal, and thus crippled almost all international air traffic from Finland. The strike was a protest against a proposal from a ministerial committee to tax all forms of travel abroad." (Aftenposten 18.09.91)

"After a dramatic night in the final stages of the Finnish wage negotiations, which included an intervention from president Mauno Koivisto, the employers and unions agreed to reduce the wages. ... The agreement is to reduce wages with 4 per cent, in addition to transfer 3 per cent of employers dues to the employees. ... The net effect is that incomes will be reduced with 4.1 per cent in 1992 and another 0.3 in the second year of the agreement. Employers costs will be reduced with almost 7 per cent. The wage reduction can be chosen; either through a direct cut in the wage, or longer working hours or a reduction in holiday pay." (Arbeiderbladet 23.10.91)

"After several months with resultless negotiations Finland has become a wage contract for the next two years. With the new wage contract it should be possible to make something concrete to better the countrys economy. The agreement which will reduce the enterprises cost level with almost 7 per cent is thus both unique and historic. But in spite of this it has not released any strong enthusiasm neither among politicians nor managers - and least of all among the workers. This is not only due to the fact that the contract negotiations are disputed which in worst case can lead to the agreement being turned down. It is also a growing recognition that it will not lead very far even if it is implemented as planned. ... By itself the estimations made about the results of the agreement are definitely positive. It should now be possible to turn around the long lasting economical downturn. Gross national product (GNP), which this year perhaps will fall with 5 per cent, will grow next year with 0.2 per cent and exports will grow with perhaps 6.5 per cent. Inflation might perhaps been lowered towards zero. Unemployment will however only be reduced very slowly. It is today at 10 per cent and is expected to be lowered to 9 per cent if even that much. For business it is estimated that the agreement will lead to a strenghtening of a total of approximately 4 billion Mark. This is of course welcome, but at the same time it is said that since 1988 business earnings have been reduced with 30 billion. Thus seen the agreement is most insufficient." (Aftenposten 29.10.91)

“A stormy period has been inaugurated in Finland. The Finnish capitalism finds itself in free fall. The conservative government has made a deal with the union bosses which lowers the wages with 7 per cent. At the same time some of the biggest protest demonstrations in the history of Finland have taken place and there are open disagreements even into the top union leadership. Two scenes. On the 4. October the workers and employees of all Finland rise in protest against the attempts by the employers and the bourgeois government to place the burdens of the economical crisis on the shoulders of the wage earners. Factories across the country stands still when the workers take part in the protest. Many have just left the factories to take part in a mass meeting in Helsinki. The mass meeting is arranged by FFC (Finnish national union federation), all unions take part. People come in busses from all over the country. The protest demonstration gathers 40 000 participants! The mood is irreconcilable and the prime minister Aho is not allowed to address the demonstration. Senate Square is filled with red flags and slogans. Next scene. Hardly two weeks later the FFC leadership agrees to a historical wage lowering contract amounting to 7 per cent. ... We now live in a world quickly changing. Three mass demonstrations (40 000 wage earners, 13 000 farmers, 20 000 pensioners) have within a short time protested against the politics of the bourgeois government. In addition to that the trade union for workers in food processing (and other such trades) industry has decided not to accept the wage lowering agreement and the union of engineering workers in Turku will make a campaign against the agreement within their national federation.” (Offensiv 31.10.91)

“In the crisis year 1931 industrial production in Finland fell with 8.3 per cent. So far this year industrial production has fallen 9.5 per cent, and more is expected. No other OECD country is so hard hit by the international crisis as Finland. The devaluation of the Finnish Mark came as ordered by the Finnish big companies. It comes on top of a wage reduction of at least 4 per cent which the six trade union federations has concended to. Our economical situation is perhaps the worst in this century minister of finances Viinanen says and he has figures to cover his statements. GNP has fallen with approximately 6 per cent. Unemployment is soon to reach 10 per cent; 15 per cent for those under 25 years. Investments will fall with 13 per cent this year and another 3.5 per cent next year based on a prognosis which is already obsolete. Private consumption will be reduced with 3 per cent this year.” (Klassekampen 23.11.91)



FRANCE

WHAT REMAINS OF BILLANCOURT?

About D. Labbé/F. Périn: *Que reste-t-il de Billancourt?* (Hachette).

The Renault factory at Billancourt (south-west close suburbs of Paris) has since the first world war been considered as the lighthouse of class struggle. A current saying proclaimed: “When Billancourt sneezes, France has caught a cold.” For a time it was the biggest factory in the Paris district and the biggest concentration of workers in France. It was normal that a struggle there raised a deep echo in other factories, but no more or no less than struggles in other big industrial concentrations of workers in France (for instance the miners strike in March 1963). The Billancourt myth was partly built after the second world war when the nationalised company became a kind of window display of state intervention in the economy, of social regulation of labour and at the same time the fortress of the communist party-dominated national union federation CGT. The evolution of the world economy and the fierce competition in the world car industry has broken this myth in two ways.

To face this competition, on one hand Renault had to build new factories elsewhere in more convenient and less expensive locations. On the other hand it had to exploit its workforce at the same level as its competitors, loosing little by little its pretended reputation as a ‘good’ factory (a situation which has pushed it into a constant slow decline behind its main competitors through not having accumulated enough capital by schrewing its labour). But breaking the myth gave birth to another myth about a longterm capitalist plan to break the workers power identified with CGT-Communist Party power in the Billancourt factory and with dismantling the state company through a backdoor privatisation.

This book written by a civil servant (labour inspector) and a union bureaucrat (secretary of the car branch of the christian modernist, social democratic union CFDT) does not go beyond these two complementary myths. After 1992 only the Renault headquarters, administrative and research offices will remain at Billancourt; the last big Renault workshop with a line - Ile Séguin - will be closed. It will be the end of a long process which began more than forty years ago with the building of new factories closer to the sea and the progressive consequent closure of main workshops at Billancourt. The Citroën company - with its main factories inside Paris, a private company, not at all a union fortress and with tight labour relations, therefore having nothing to break - did exactly the same. With this obsession with a persistent management attempt to break the workers power identified with union power, the book misses important points of the class struggle at Renault. Not to miss them would imply the recognition of the ups and downs of half a century of close collaboration between management and unions for tight control of the