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# ECHANGES 65

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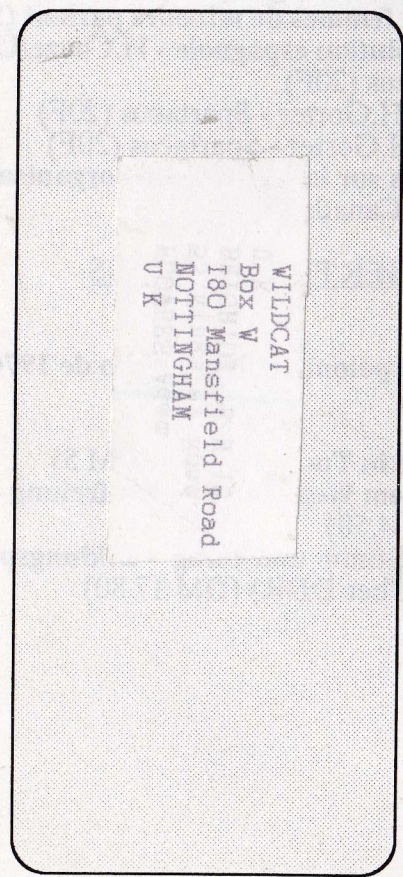
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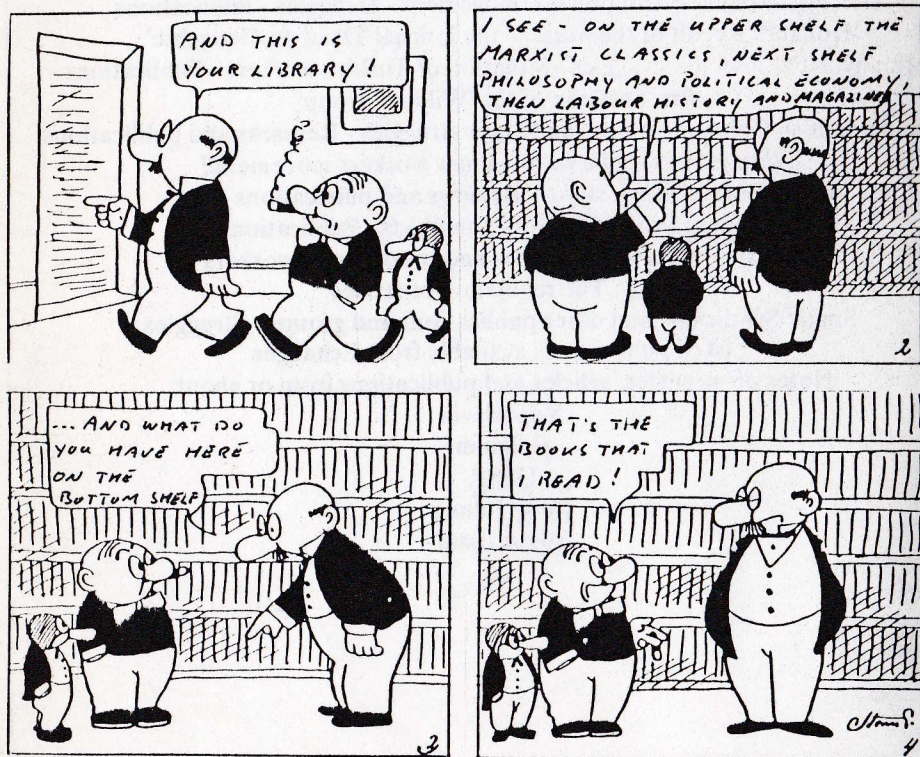




## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION OF ÉCHANGES

The production of an issue of Echanges is unfortunately a difficult matter - complicated by a lack of economic means and by the fact that the small numbers of comrades taking charge of this (discussions of material to appear, writing of material, correspondence, typing, editing, translating, printing, distribution, etc.) all live far away from each other and mostly in different countries. When practical problems cause a delay for any of these comrades, the bulletin easily gets delayed - as has been the case with this issue no.65 appearing many months after schedule. We can only regret this.

However, the time which has elapsed has also been used to complete or nearly complete a number of other projects, such as: The no.59 in English, which is a translation, plus updated material, of the analysis of the 1988 UK Ford strike already published in the French edition of Echanges - The production of an Echanges presentation pamphlet - A long text in French analysing the French 'co-ordination committees' - Reprints of a number of old pamphlets - A new pamphlet on the UK - Meetings between Echanges comrades and with comrades from other journals.



## INDIA

### Debate with Kamunist Kranti

In Echanges no.63 we published an analysis of a textile workers strike from an issue of F.M.S. (Faridabad Workers News), a Hindi paper of the Faridabad based group Kamunist Kranti - followed by a critical letter to KK about the article from a Dutch comrade. This debate has continued, but will due to lack of space be published in Echanges no.66.

We also tried to include some remarks, based on a talk with an Indian friend, about Kamunist Kranti, F.M.S. and Faridabad (p.6). In connection with this we have received the following corrections and additional remarks from KK (letter 13/7/90): "Faridabad is a *major* industrial city of northern India. It has come up after 1947. It is a 22 kms long industrial complex and the distance of its centre from the heart of Dehli is 30 kms - in continuity with this sprawling industrial complex is an industrial area in Dehli which extends well into the capital city. In the industrial ring surrounding the Indian capitol, Faridabad is a major factor and of strategic importance, especially during revolutionary situations. There are around four thousand factories and more than ten thousand workshops in Faridabad. These factories cover a very wide range of industrial production - tractors (Escorts, Ford, Eicher, Pratap, more than 40 percent of production in India), motorcycles (40 percent of production in India), refrigerators (major portion of production in India), mini-steel plants, tyres (Good Year), textiles, footwear, chemicals and plastics, rubber, printing, asbestos sheets, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, glass, paper, electronic, etc, etc. Workers from all parts of India and Nepal work here. And unlike most old industrial areas and some new ones as well in India, in Faridabad workers of different regions, religions and castes live and work together with region-religion-caste-language having **not** become major barriers to workers unity today. Thus favourable conditions for the development of revolutionary working class movement exist in Faridabad.

And Faridabad Majdoor Samachar (FMS) is a *one page* monthly paper in the Hindi language. It has no subtitle since two years, instead it carries classical positions - "Workers have no country of their own", "Workers of the world, unite", "Liberation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves" and "To transform the world the workers will have to transform themselves" - on its mast head. FMS carries reports and analysis of working class struggles in India and abroad."

The Accumulation of capital by Rosa Luxemburg. Kamunist Kranti has published an abridged version (in English) of this work, with an introduction and a number of appendixes - altogether 240 pages. The price is 6 dollars plus postage. KK calls for help in the distribution of the book.

Remarks about this publication will follow in a later issue of Echanges.



**Contents of FMS**

An Indian friend has translated for us the titles of the articles in a number of issues of FMS. To know this complements the remarks above about Faridabad and could be of interest to those who might be interested in contacting Kamunist Kranti, so these contents lists are reproduced below.

Letters to KK should be addressed only as follows: Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, Near Bata Chowk, N.I.T. Faridabad - 121001, India.

मजदूरों का अपना कोई देश नहीं होता ।

दुनियाँ के मजदूरों, एक हो !

## फरीदाबाद मजदूर समाचार

कम्युनिस्ट क्रान्ति का एक जुझारू

नई सीरीज नम्बर 5

नवम्बर 1987

RN42233

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**Faridabad Mahoor Samachar 1988:** Dec: Human society today and its evolution from pre-historic times - View on workers' struggles today - Batanagar lockout - Struggles in Faridabad factories: Sovrin/Escorts/E.S.I. (health service)/Gadore/Thermal power house 1989: Jan: Changing faces of representatives of capital - Workers struggles in the world today - Position in Jute factories - Strike in a compressor factory - Position in Kamla Cinetax - Letter from a worker, highlighting connections between trade union leaders and Hindu fundamentalist organisations Feb: reality and its demands Workers struggle in the world - Changes in the workers' movement- Industrial strike in Haryanna for 3 days - Situation in Kerala - Situation in Autopin factory - Situation in Bumpy factory March: Social turmoil and workers - Workers struggles in Iran - Kanpur, 35000 cotton mill workers stopped trains - On a left stalinist/maoist group in Nagpur called *Spark* - Letter from a worker/reader - Report of small strikes and struggles April: Escorts factory - East India cotton mill - letters from workers/readers - Strikes of Indian migrant workers in Quwait May: Meaning of the 8 hour day - Article about the situation in a nearby factory - Workers' struggles in Korea June: Russia and China - Comments on the situation in certain factories July: Workers movement and technology - Commens on the situation in certain factories - Letter from a worker/reader Aug: Workers and country - Strikes in USSR - Reports on small strikes around Faridabad Sep: Guns or bread (Bofors scandal) - Reporting from some factories - Workers movement and technology Nov: Religious festivals and workers - Elections and workers - Strikes in Canada - Report from a factory - Letter from a worker Dec: Bourgeois elections, a circus - Strikes in USA - Certain struggles during elections in Faridabad 1990 Jan: Programme of Faridabad workers group/party/forum - Trade unionists in Faridabad - Strike of workers in Dehli - Letter from a worker Feb: The

'other' way of seeing things - Fake communists - Reporting March: The 'other' way of seeing things - Strikes in USA - Reporting.

**Communist Internationalist** This is a group adhering to the International Communist Current (ICC) - see Echanges 55 and 63. They have put out the first issue of their journal (Jan-April 90) with the name Communist Internationalist, and the translations from Hindu of the titles of the articles are: East or West: Capitalism is bankrupt: Communism is the future - Communist Internationalist, a new beginning - 'National front government', a new economic crisis - Kashmir - 'Workers participation' in management; self-exploitation - Communism is the future - Romania - Poland: from stalinism to democracy.

Those interested in contacting this group, should write via the British ICC section -letter to be addressed as follows: BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX.

**INDIAN WORKERS FIGHT RUNAWAY SHOPS:** A report from the Kamani Employees' Union notes that employers routinely shut down operations either to relocate production in (even) lower-wage areas (often to cash in on government subsidies aimed at luring industry to impoverished areas), or to cash in on rising land values. Many more workers lose their jobs as a result of modernization and automation, despite legislation purportedly protecting Indian workers' rights to job security. The Kamani workers successfully combatted the planned closing of their factory, but found in the process that it was practically impossible for workers to gain access to the necessary technical, financial and legal advice. They condemn the Indian government, which "is not concerned with the plight of workers," and argue that workers establish their own centre which would bring together experts to aid unions and workers in fighting plant closings and layoffs. They conclude by calling for "national campaigns to ensure that unions and workers are able to check the 'mismanagement' by the management and contribute to the health of the industrial 'life.' They can do this as they are more concerned about the industries than the so-called owners, whose sole motive is to ensure their personal gains and prosperity, irrespective of the damage they inflict upon social resources in the process." (Kamani Employees' Union, l.b. shastri marg, kurla, Bombay -400 070)

Libertarian Labour Review #8 Winter 89-90

### Class struggles in India

Finally, we reprint an article on class struggles in India from no.9 of the US journal *Midnight Notes* (on M.N., see USA section).

Later we hope to be able to publish a summary in English of a long text by a German comrade about India and the International Monetary Fund.



# Resistance To The Plan Has Been Heavy:

## The Class Struggles of the Green Revolution of India

by John Roosa

*From the market everyday at sunset  
The reporters brought the rates of grain  
prices;  
All those rates were laid before the King,  
One by one, every evening.*

— The poet/historian Ishami  
(1350 A.D.) on the price control  
system of the king Alauddin Khalji  
(1296-1316 A.D.) for the city of  
Delhi.

The two most important staples of the Indian diet are wheat and rice; wheat most commonly consumed in the form of an unleavened flat bread and rice in the form of boiled white rice. These were the two crops Indian capitalist's planners, in conjunction with Western global planners, targeted after 1965 to develop under the direct control of the government. The strategy went under the name New Agricultural Strategy or under the more popular term, the Green Revolution (G.R. from now on). This article is a brief survey of the circuit of wheat and rice in India, that is to say, a survey of the various struggles over wheat and rice. By analyzing the circuit as a whole, from production to consumption, we will be able to see how seemingly disparate struggles are related, and ultimately how these struggles are related to international capital. It has now been twenty years since the G.R. was adopted as capital's primary plan to control the two basic means of subsistence of the Indian working class. What we are now witnessing is the full explosion of the contradictions of this strategy; the chickens have come home to roost.

### The Green Counterrevolution

Following Independence the first strategies Indian capital developed for agriculture were the Community Development program (C.D.) and land reform. After spending at least three decades trying to channel peasant protests into a solely anti-British movement, and after spending the first four years of Independence trying to militarily defeat a large scale peasant rebellion (Telangana), capitalist planners sought to create and enforce "egalitarian" social relations in the villages. In looking for a practical social peace in

which agricultural production and growth could take place, they envisioned a village system based more upon owner proprietors and farmer cooperatives than on large landlords and tenants. The landlords would be bypassed so the government could organize, amalgamate, and control farmers directly. (The land reform legislation was called "abolition of intermediaries.")

But the planners' airy dreams barely had an impact in the villages and where their plans were implemented the lower castes and small landowners waged their own form of a "non-cooperation movement" with the government's cooperative strategy. Every C.D. project became manipulated at the village level for the benefit of the large landlords.

There was hardly ever a possibility that the villagers were going to perform "voluntary labor," which was one of the principles of C.D., when the labor went unpaid and the benefit accrued to a landlord. And certainly the landlords were not going to willingly give up any property despite the moralistic exhortations of the Gandhians. Regardless of the facts that the villagers would not cooperate with their overlords and the overlords would not cooperate with the government, the planners' primary disappointment with the C.D. strategy was that agricultural growth remained stagnant.

In 1957, when the price of foodgrains soared and the government was forced into importing even more wheat, the planners headed back to the drawing board. Their rethinking went along two paths: one was a refurbishing of the C.D. program to make it more "democratic," (this was the "panchayati raj program"); and the other was the Intensive Agricultural District Program (IADP). The latter was designed to target individual farmers in limited regions of the

country, unlike the C.D. program whose effects, at least in theory, were to benefit villages as a whole and whose coverage was to be nationwide.<sup>3</sup>

The initial appeal of the C.D. strategy for the planners was that the goal of agricultural growth was combined with the goal of pacifying the countryside. The planners counted on obtaining enough food for the urban and industrial working class while also stabilizing rural class relations. In the context of Telangana, China, the Philippines, etc., the Asian peasant revolution was frightening reality for both Indian and global planners. The accumulation of an urban population could not proceed controllably without first arranging agrarian social relations into some workable pattern. Yet within a decade the planners recognized that their method of killing two birds with one stone didn't even bag one bird. The social relations in the villages were not evolving into peaceful village republics. Nor was a marketable surplus forthcoming.

The effective emphasis in the first two Five Year Plans (1952-62) was industrialization, especially of 'heavy industry,' e.g. steel, coal and cement. But the crisis of 1957-8 revealed what one U.S. chronicler of India's State Plans called the "contradictions of rapid industrialization and gradual agrarian reform."<sup>4</sup> The growth of a marketable surplus was not keeping pace with the growth of the urban working class.

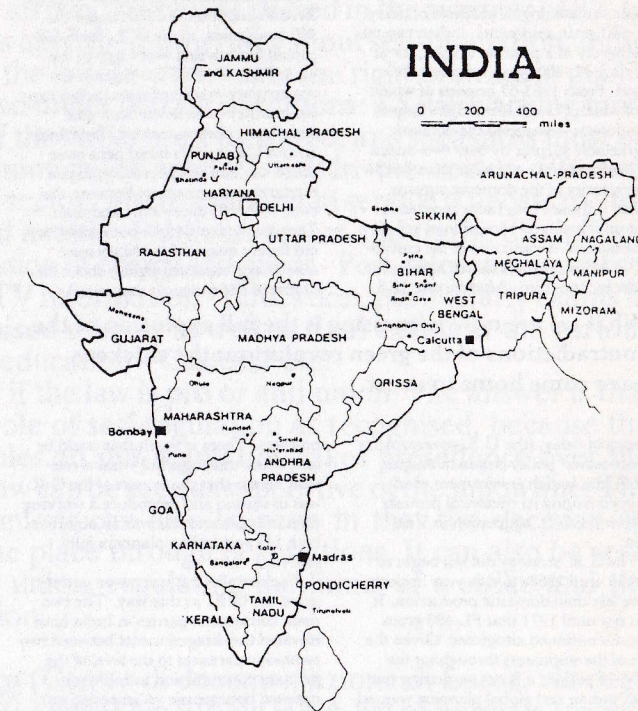
Indian factory owners considered themselves blessed by God with a seemingly infinite supply of labor from the villages. In the brutal nomenclature of neoclassical economics, which is put to good use by socialist state planners, there were too many workers in agriculture. Many people could be "siphoned off" — 17 million according to one economist in 1966 — "without ad-

versely affecting agricultural output."<sup>4</sup> The promotion of industry would provide a "pull" away from agriculture. Yet after expropriating people from the villages, the government then faced the problem of feeding them in the cities, at least at a subsistence level. For the government, uncontrolled price rises in foodgrains meant demands for higher wages, looting of grain shops, street protests, etc. With the rapid accumulation of a proletariat in the cities, the food shortages were becoming acute. One U.S. economist writing in 1962 thought that the food "unavailability" could cause a "backflow," an entire disruption of the "pull model," meaning the people would return to the villages.<sup>5</sup> However, the more likely possibility was that they would continue what they had been doing: tearing up the cities.

Thus, despite God's generosity in labor power, the factory owners and the state planners considered themselves cursed with an inability to induce enough surplus food from the villagers that remained behind. The only way they coped with this problem up to the late 1960's was through importing tons of US wheat and rice through the PL-480 program (Food for Peace). The first shipments were made in 1956. The sum total of these shipments was enormous: about \$5 billion worth. By 1973 the debt the Indian government had incurred on the PL-480 account, which was repayable in rupees, equaled one-third of India's total money supply.

A second round of price increases in foodgrains in 1962, threatening "another inflationary price spiral" (with all its connotations of an infinite uncontrolled progression), forced the planners into some further rethinking. They decided to concentrate on the IADP strategy for quick agricultural growth. 1962 was also the beginning of the war with China which was another factor prompting the planners to "put agriculture on a war-footing."<sup>6</sup>

The G.R. grew out of the IADP strategy. It emerged fully in 1965 with the establishment of the government agency the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the announcement of the "New Agricultural Strategy." With the G.R., the government decided to go beyond attempts at regulating the market (primarily through the dispersal of PL-480 stocks) and reforming the villages to the ambitious plan of directly controlling the production and distribution of foodgrains. The G.R. can be outlined as follows: the government facilitates and finances productivity-increasing farming techniques in well-irrigated districts (as per the IADP), offers price incentives to the farmers for



wheat and rice, procures and stockpiles this grain, and then sells it to the urban working class through the Public Distribution System (PDS).

The government advertised this strategy as "food self-reliance" and "food self-discipline;" it was supposedly intended to reduce the dependency on the US for grain. But at the same time the government was advancing this *swadeshi* argument, the US government was insisting that India adopt the G.R. Thus, the G.R. has been interpreted both as an escape from and a capitulation to US imperialism. In actuality, both the US and Indian planners viewed the G.R. as the most practical solution to save capitalism in India. Both the national and global planners wanted a food system that would prevent workers from tearing up the cities and inflation from tearing up the plan. The G.R. itself did not mark a reduction nor an intensification of dependency on the US. However, it did change the form of that dependency. In exchange for the massive dependency on the PL-480 imports, there was to be the dependency on further investments of foreign capital, (e.g. fertilizer com-

panies and the World Bank).

The real impetus behind the switch to the G.R. strategy came not from the U.S. government but from the Indian peasants and workers. Accompanying the intractable resistance of the peasants mentioned above, which shattered the initial C.D. plans for domestic agricultural growth, came an offensive of the industrial working class. Beginning in 1965, Indian capital was faced with the largest strike wave since the post-war years of 1946-7. The number of man days lost due to industrial strikes in 1965 was more than double the 1964 figure. After this sudden increase the figure steadily rose until the Emergency of 1975. The strength of this growing strike wave ensured that capital was unable to make the industrial working class pay for the agricultural crisis. (See the Ministry of Labor's annual reports.)

The role of the U.S. government in the G.R. might be described as that of a cruel midwife. It wanted to see the birth of India's own food system and so offered assistance throughout the birth. Yet it also exacerbated the labor pains: the U.S. government used the agricultural crisis to force some concessions



from Indian capital. In 1965 the U.S. began threatening to withhold or delay PL-480 grain shipments. Indian capital was hardly in a position to fight, for at the time PL-480 grain was their life's blood. From 1963-67 imports of wheat — of which PL-480 formed the largest component — exceeded the domestic marketable surplus by over two-thirds. In 1966 imports were more than double the quantity of the domestic surplus. Thus, in June 1966, India acceded to that quintessential neo-colonial act of capitulation: devaluation of the currency. The rupee was devalued against the dollar by one-third. After further U.S.

**What we are now witnessing is the full explosion of the contradictions of the green revolution: the chickens have come home to roost.**

threats of delay, (the U.S. government's "short-tether" policy begun in August 1966), the Indian government even stopped issuing its rhetorical protests against the U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

The G.R. strategy did not begin to kick in until 1968. In that year imports were less than domestic production. It was not until 1971 that PL-480 grain was discontinued altogether. Given the size of the shipments throughout the 1956-71 period, it is not surprising that both Indian and global planners wanted to switch the strategy. The U.S. had to bolster other parts of the world with its wheat politics; India, with the second largest population in the world, appeared as though it would claim all the grain. The consensus of the planners was that India would have to gain control over its own agricultural producers. They could not continue to rest upon the successes of U.S. capital's century-long struggles in the American midwest. Although the planners considered a government engineering of a domestic food system a "colossal undertaking" that was fraught with "perilous ventures,"<sup>10</sup> it was time for their own rite of passage, their own walkabout, their own conquest. The Indian would have to pioneer forth in regions Uncle Sam never knew.

One of the most significant themes of India's post-Independence agricultural strategy has been the participation of US capital via the government, foundations, corporations, and the World Bank. From the C.D. program, which was designed, implemented, and funded in conjunction with the Ford Foundation, to the IADP which was first proposed by a team of World Bank officials in 1959 and then signed as a

"Memorandum of Agreement" with the Ford Foundation in 1960, to the PL-480 foodgrains, to the G.R. itself, US capital has advised every step of the State Plan. The US has taken every opportunity to subordinate Indian capital but they have never been able completely dominate them. Both Indian and US capital's hired pens have called it a "two-track" relationship: a fundamental agreement between the two, with tiffs every now and then.<sup>11</sup> They know that despite occasional "sordid family quarrels" (as Marx once called inter-capitalist fights) about the degree of dependency, they remain

brothers. There is much that could be said about this topic but what is relevant here is that the import of the G.R. was to sustain and reproduce a working class in India and this was an objective both US and Indian planners fully shared.

The socialist left has never understood the G.R. in this way. The two main communist parties in India have elevated the disagreements between two symbiotic parasites to the level of the primary contradiction in India (the national bourgeoisie vs. imperialism). They support the government's PDS and, in general, "economic growth" (meaning of course capital accumulation). In fact, the point of their critiques of government policy is to argue that accumulation would proceed quicker without any kind of foreign dependency. To other leftist writers, the G.R. was "a complex system for foreign agribusiness domination,"<sup>12</sup> a sabotage of India's industrialization,<sup>13</sup> or a compromise with imperialism that was necessitated by the Indian bourgeoisie's previous compromise with "feudalism" (by not enforcing land reform legislation).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, we also have the argument that the G.R. was a progressive development of the productive forces, which by creating more proletarians in agricultural production, would eventually provide the precondition for a "red revolution."<sup>15</sup> In the same way the left has displaced the simple fact that the G.R. was a means to allow Indian capital to expropriate more people from the land, and has sometimes cheered on this expropriation, they have misunderstood the array of contradictions arising from the implementation of the G.R. This array is the subject to which we will now turn.

### The Waters of Expropriation

Within the State Plan, "inputs" form the first stage of the G.R., so we'll begin there. The G.R. is most closely associated with a number of productivity-raising inputs: High Yielding Variety seeds (HYVs), chemical fertilizers, toxic pesticides, and tractors. The particular input that we will focus on is irrigation. The HYVs require intensive irrigation so it has become even more of a priority since the adoption of the G.R. Brief mention will also be made of the explosion of Union Carbide Corporation's pesticide factory in Bhopal.

Irrigation primarily means dams. They are used either to provide water directly to farms via canals or to generate electricity to power tubewells. This is their significance for capital, but for the people their significance is expropriation — direct and immediate displacement:

India has the dubious distinction of having displaced the highest number of people due to the construction of man-made reservoirs among all countries in the world. In the absence of a compendium of exact figures it is difficult to say exactly how many. However, from only 10 selected river-valley development projects an estimated 910,000 persons have either been displaced or will soon be displaced. Considering the fact that over 1,500 major dams have been built or are going to be built in the country, the magnitude of forced relocations of populations necessitated by submergence can be imagined.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the dams are not just for irrigation but the water devoted to agricultural production forms a significant part: "Between 1951 and 1982 forty-six major irrigation projects and 517 medium projects were completed, with fifty more projects nearly finished."<sup>17</sup>

The government has been able to evict millions of people with the help of World Bank and US government loans. Dam construction has been the largest single category for World Bank loans and this is no small sum, given that India presently holds the largest debt to the World Bank among all countries.

It would be impossible to adequately describe the agony and trauma that the dam-displaced people have gone through. Since the water of the dams is intended for use by farms in the plains, they are usually built upstream in relatively remote hill areas. In these areas, the people, most often tribals, (*adivasis* — literally native inhabitants),

have so far been able to escape most of capital's power. As with Native Americans, they have a strong attachment to the land, the forests, and the animals. One *adivasi* slogan in the state of Maharashtra during a "Land Day" protest in 1973 was "the rain falls on everyone, the sun shines on everyone, and the land belongs to everyone."<sup>18</sup> Their sudden separation from the land means a complete destruction of their way of life. A few commit suicide rather than face a bleak future. The government never provides land for resettlement nor even monetary compensation without a fight. Even then their written promises for compensation are never fully implemented. Ironically, the displaced people often wind up working on the farms in the plains that benefitted from their displacement or on other dam construction sites.<sup>19</sup>

But not all the tribals and villagers have obediently allowed their homes to be submerged. Only rarely have they been able to stop the construction of a dam or even gain better terms for their removal, yet their resistance is growing. Organizations against dams have demanded guaranteed land for relocation (sometimes for land within the area to be covered by the dam) and for guaranteed monetary compensation. But Omvedt notes that "organizers of resistance are beginning to change their tendency to say 'the dam must be built but . . .'"<sup>20</sup> Once the demand becomes a total rejection of the dam the crucial question will be how the people to be displaced will unite with the people who are employed to actually construct the dam, who are themselves recent victims of dispossession.

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In some cases the construction of irrigation facilities does not simply create more landless people but is used as a direct attack upon the landless. In 1974, the government began the Command Area Development Program expressly to impose the Green Revolution model in certain areas by integrating irrigation and other "development" work with the police and military. The World Bank has funded a large part of these command area projects. The first district the W.B. and the Indian government targeted was the Chambal valley along the border of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. This valley has



been notorious for its *dacoity* (banditry) and the most famous *dacoits* in Independent India have been from there: Man Singh, Malkan Singh, and Phoolan Devi. (There was a popular film being made about the latter who was only a teenager when she was the leader of a *dacoit* band. She is an untouchable and even though she is now imprisoned she remains a powerful symbol of rebellion against the upper caste-class.) Like the Thugs who looted from both the Mughals and the British in this same region, these armed *dacoits* steal from high-caste landowners and road travellers. Since 1974, while the *dacoits* have been ruthlessly repressed, irriga-

tion projects are actually completed, the government then faces the demands of the technicians and electrical workers who run the dams. These workers are relatively better paid and usually organized into trade unions. They frequently go on strike causing blackouts. (I can testify to the militancy of these workers in a small town in Uttar Pradesh where some of the reading for this article was done by candlelight.) The government also faces the demands of the construction workers who are rendered redundant by the dam's completion. Omvedt described a dam workers strike at an irrigation dam in Maharashtra (built for large sugar farmers). She quotes one organizer: "Our demand was that simply because the dam is finished the workers can't stop living! The dam makes the land bear fruit, production will increase ten times, the surrounding district will benefit — and the workers who built the dam can't be let down! So we said."<sup>21</sup>

Eventually the workers were "let down," but they went on to work on a large farm nearby and to organize a union on the farm. No longer dam workers, they continued to fight as agricultural laborers.

At the level of dams then, we are introduced to the recently displaced population of India. They migrate across the countryside, they work at seasonal and temporary jobs. They often give themselves over to "contractors" who makes the arrangements for their migration and labor, a situation which in effect means bonded labor. One non-governmental agency, the Gandhi Peace Foundation, estimated



that there were 2.6 million bonded laborers in India.

But some of the displaced population migrates to the cities. You will see their settlements of huts scattered in and around every Indian city. They squat on any piece of vacant land and try to make some sort of home. Once in the cities they just might meet the urban flipside to the G.R.: the fertilizer and pesticide industries. This is where the Dec. 1984 disaster in Bhopal comes in.

### An 'Accident' of the Green Revolution

Union Carbide began its pesticide plant in 1969 just on the edge of the city of Bhopal. In 1984 a chemical chain reaction in a storage tank produced a huge cloud of poisonous gas that blew across the city. It is easy to see how this murderous gas cloud was a result of Union Carbide's profit motive (the violations of safety precautions are far too numerous to mention) and how, on a deeper level, it was the result of the G.R.'s promotion of pesticides for the production of an agricultural surplus.<sup>21</sup> Yet the experience of the slum-dwellers of Bhopal reveals another side to Bhopal as a result of the G.R.

Throughout the 1970's and 80's, while Union Carbide was pumping out its toxic pesticide, tens of thousands of displaced people from the countryside were "pumped" into Bhopal. They settled on the cheapest, most devalued land: that around the U.C. plant. Some of these people were perhaps displaced by the dams along the Indravati river in Madhya Pradesh, the state of which Bhopal is the capital. The new immigrants were continually poisoned by the regular "accidental" discharges of gas from the factory. Today the survivors continue to work as milkmen, cigarette rollers and sellers, tonga drivers, cycle and automobile mechanics, and office peons. None worked at the U.C. plant

**While Union Carbide was pumping out its toxic pesticide, tens of thousands of displaced people from the countryside were "pumped" into Bhopal.**

itself nor did they earn as much money as U.C. wage-laborers. Neither the slum-dwellers nor the plant's workers were organized well-enough to stop their poisonings (at least two workers died of poisoning in the plant's 15 year history), nor were they strong enough to prevent the ultimate mass murder of Dec. 3, 1984. At least 2,500 people were killed by the poison cloud and

literally hundreds of thousands more have been left injured, blinded, traumatized, . . .

Most of the victims — it is essential to realize this — were slum-dwellers. When the plant began to leak out its lethal gases in the early morning hours of Dec. 3, the first thing the slum-dwellers grabbed before they fled from their makeshift shacks was the legal title to that shack, the putta (literally, address). This little fact tells a tale.

To get their addresses, the people in the slum colonies had been waging a struggle. A legally recognized address enables one to get a ration card with which one has access to government controlled commodities that are sold at subsidized prices, e.g. kerosene, sugar, wheat, and rice. (Similarly, one can not get welfare checks or credit cards in the US without an address.) The putta is also some guarantee, though one often violated, that the government will not evict you. It is a sign of ownership of land even if the land is only 40 square feet. After being expropriated from the villages, the address was their claim for the right to live in the city.

### Wheat Production in Punjab

A large share of the inputs, pesticides, fertilizers, etc., is planned for use in a geographically specific area. The two northern states of Punjab and Haryana and the adjacent western section of Uttar Pradesh consume a disproportionate share of inputs in relation to their share in India's total grain production. This region is the heartland of the G.R. After feeding inputs into the region, the government then procures much of the output; in most years the area accounts for over 90% of the government's wheat procurement.

One U.S. Agency for International Development bureaucrat, reviewing the

achievements of the G.R., wrote that the "first and most significant" lesson of the G.R. was, "the successful transformation of agriculture in Punjab and Haryana [which] provided the government of India with a stable and administratively manageable source for its food reserve stock."<sup>24</sup>

This successful transformation received its highest expression in Punjab.

In only two years since 1972 has its contribution to the reserve stock dipped below 50% of the total stock, and in some years it has gone as high as 75%.<sup>25</sup> Considering that Punjab has only 2% of India's population and produces approximately 22% of India's total wheat production, its contribution to the government's circuit is remarkable.

In Punjab the transformation of the state into the government's "breadbasket" has been nearly total. There is little agricultural production besides wheat and rice (usually farmers grow both crops in a year, wheat being harvested in April-May and rice in Oct.-Nov.) and very little industry. The state's entire economy is dependent on the government's procurement price. The government buys at least 75% of the wheat which is brought to market, and their procurement price functions as a minimum support price. Almost the entire production of the farmers is sold on the wholesale market — 93% for wheat and 64% for rice (1978-79 figures). This is unlike all other states in India where, on the average, only 30% of either crop is brought to wholesale markets (meaning 70% is consumed by the grower, handed over to a landlord, or sold locally).<sup>26</sup>

The struggle over the procurement price is the essence of the present "Punjab crisis" which recently has been in the news so much.<sup>27</sup> Particularly from 1981, the Punjab farmers, who are nearly all Sikhs, have been demanding higher procurement prices and lower input prices. For the small to medium sized farmers (usually defined as holding under 10 acres), a break even rate of return is essential for their continued existence as landowners. Although the farmers are highly stratified by size — one-half of Punjab's land is owned by less than 10% of the landowners — to some extent their religious solidarity has served to unify them both organizationally and ideologically. The Akali Dal is a political party which is based in Punjab's 700-odd gurdwaras (loosely, temples) and is explicitly a Sikh political party. And when the leaders of the Akali Dal state that in Punjab "farmer and Sikh are interchangeable terms," one can easily see what the party stands for.<sup>28</sup>

The Akali Dal, along with a Punjab farmers trade union, the BKU, has led the fight against the government. The farmers have often been acting on their demands for more political power and for more concessions from the government by direct action: blockading the grain transport on the roads and railroads, boycotting the wholesale markets



Photo by John Roosa

(that is, refusing to sell their grain), and refusing to pay back bank loans.<sup>29</sup>

The government's response has been state terror. Given Punjab's strategic position within the government's food-grain commodity circuit, these farmers' struggles have a profound impact. The government has spared no expense to make Punjab "administratively manageable." The state has been, in effect, under military rule since 1983, with curfews and police raids becoming a regular and fearful part of life for Punjabis. Over a thousand Sikhs have been killed and many more thousands have been imprisoned and tortured.<sup>30</sup>

The government has justified martial law in the state by portraying the Sikhs as religious fanatics, terrorists, and secessionists. The government has actively promoted a communal divide between Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus ever since Independence. (After all, the government had just executed a huge and tragic communal divide between Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs by creating Pakistan and India. In Punjab 8-10 million people were displaced by Partition.) In 1966, it split the state along communal lines by forming Haryana (mainly Hindu) and Punjab (mainly Sikh). In Haryana, both the Congress Party and the opposition party, the Lok Dal, have been trying to lead the farmers movement in a communal direction. They have blatantly sponsored Hindu chauvinism and at times engineered communal "riots" (i.e. attacks on the Sikhs in Haryana). There have been actions of solidarity between the Punjabi Sikh and the Haryanvi

Hindu farmers, but it is increasingly difficult for them to overcome the government's repression and communalization.

During this period of military rule in Punjab, the government has barely increased the procurement prices for wheat and rice. In fact, taking inflation into account, they have decreased it. The government is now trying to end its price incentive strategy for these two crops. It now considers that enough production has been stimulated over the last 20 years, and it should now target its money for other crops. But the Punjabi Sikh farmers consider the 25% rate of return they got in the early 1970's as the norm. The smaller farmers whose costs of production are higher will hardly tolerate the negative profit rate the government is now proffering.

### The struggle over the grain procurement price is the essence of the present "Punjab crisis."

The groups that the government labels as terrorist, extremist, and Sikh communal in actuality embody the demands of the farmers. For one example, a resolution of the group the *Damdani Taksal* reads in part:

If the hard earned income of the people or the natural resources of any nation or region are forcibly plundered; the goods produced by them set at arbitrarily determined prices while the goods bought by them are sold at high prices in order to carry this process of

economic exploitation to its logical conclusion, the human rights of a people are crushed, then these are the indices of slavery of that nation, region, or people.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, some Sikh "extremist" groups have adopted a Red Brigadist strategy — assassinating Congress Party politicians, right-wing Hindus, and some Sikhs whom they deem collaborators of the Congress — but they have always denied responsibility for the random killings of Hindus.

Despite the government's decrease in the procurement price (in real terms) and the Sikh farmers' resistance, the government has procured record amounts of wheat and rice since 1984. By 1986, there wasn't enough storage space for all their stockpiles of grain. This huge surplus, bought on the cheap, was one of the intended results of martial law. The procurement process became in effect a military operation. Once again, in May 1987, the Punjab state government was dismissed and central government rule was declared (meaning military rule). Why May? Because that is when the majority of the wheat arrives in the wholesale markets.

The contradiction between the farmers and the government will certainly continue. The Finance Ministry states that "wheat stocks are already far in excess of the country's requirements and any further increase in these stocks is not considered desirable."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the government will continue to keep the procurement price low. Even though it insists that it will maintain a "remunerative price" for wheat and rice-growing farmers, this does not mean that the price will be remunerative for all farmers. Smaller farmers will no doubt still be driven out of business.

Farmers throughout India continue to resist the State agricultural plan by stealing electricity for irrigation, not

paying irrigation bills on canals, and not repaying bank loans. For all of India, the government estimates that 45% of total "rural credit" is overdue for repayment (equivalent to about \$1 billion). Also there is a 10% loss of electricity due to theft, and the figure is higher for the G.R. states of north India. (Incidentally, the slum-dwellers of Bhopal lighted their shacks by illegal connections to Union Carbide power lines.) Farmers organizations such as those in Punjab are well organized throughout the country, though primarily on a regional basis.<sup>33</sup>



### Migrant Labor in Punjab

It was mentioned before that one of the jobs the seasonal and migrant laborers take up is agricultural labor. Most of Punjab's G.R. farmers hire migrant laborers. According to one survey of a Punjab district, the majority of the harvesting work was done by migrant laborers.<sup>14</sup> During the peak months of April-May (for wheat) and Oct. (for rice), another study estimated that 200-300,000 men arrive in the state for work.<sup>15</sup> This is perhaps the largest regular migration of people in India. They come by train, jam-packed in the cars or riding on the roofs. The vast majority come from north Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) where the average daily wage is about 2-3 times lower than Punjab's, (which is now about \$ 50-1.00, and that for about 10 hours of hard work).

This phenomenon of migrant labor, where Bihar serves as the Mexico to Punjab's California, stems from the farmers' desire to break the power of the local Punjabi laborers. With the rapid expansion of agriculture in Punjab after 1965, the local laborers were able to demand higher wages. In the terminology of the economists, the demand for labor outstripped the supply. In reality, there was no "shortage of labor;" there was only a shortage of farmers' power to drive down wages. The farmers were furious after losing so many haggles with their hired hands. The importation of laborers was begun almost immediately, yet it was not really successful in curbing the power of the workers until the mid-1970's. The farmers were able to acquire a new tactic in addition to their age-old *nakabandi* (the prevention of the striking workers from the use of the village common lands for grazing cattle, gathering fodder, and defecating, and the boycott of the workers by the local shopkeepers). The farmers were able to employ the migrant workers for the most toilsome and back-breaking jobs (e.g. transplanting rice) and pay them less. This division of labor and this wage hierarchy have severely hampered the power of both the migrant and local farm workers' struggle.

Yet the daily and persistent struggles of the laborers was an important factor behind the Punjab farmers movement. For the farmers, it appeared easier to turn on the central government than on the workers. The Akali Dal, the BKU, and the numerous "extremist" groups thought they had a better chance of increasing their rate of profit by fighting the central government than by fighting the workers. However, once

the farmers were defeated by all the imprisonment, killings, and martial law, they began turning on the workers. In April, 1987, a group known for Sikh communalism and extremism, the All-India Sikh Students Federation, betrayed its true class character by organizing a campaign to lower harvesting wages. It is encouraging to note that the workers have so far been able to resist the *nakabandis* and the physical assaults. They have prevented any decrease in the wage. One reason for their success is the present lack of migrant labor: many eastern workers have stayed away from Punjab in the last several years due to all the violence.<sup>16</sup>

Within the G.R., Bihar and eastern U.P. have served as the productive sites of a relative surplus population. This is a role the region has played for almost 200 years, ever since the British conquest. In this century, hundreds of thousands of men from this region worked in the jute mills of Bengal.

Today one will find their descendants scattered throughout the country, working in the industrial belt along the Bihar-West Bengal border, working on roads in Kashmir, living in the slums of Delhi... Indian state capital has been content to allow large landlords in this region to extract as much rent and labor out of their tenants (and massacre them if they object) without one concern for the productivity of agriculture with which it is obsessed in Punjab.

In this century also, the agrarian struggles in Bihar and eastern U.P. have been among the most militant and large-scale of any in India. It was in this region that Nehru and Gandhi received their initiations into the practice of pacifying peasant revolts.<sup>17</sup>

To them and to other state planners, the region epitomized the non-viability of the landlord-tenant relations of production for maintaining the modicum of social peace requisite for the government's rule over agricultural production. But, as noted earlier, the planners'

### For the Punjab farmers, it appeared easier to turn against the central government than on the workers. Once the farmers were defeated, then they turned on the workers.

early naive hopes of social reform being imposed from above were quickly dashed. As one socialist planner later recalled, Bihar and eastern U.P. have been "the graveyard of many economic planners' sturdy hopes."<sup>18</sup> But if the "graveyard" was not an "administratively manageable" site for agricultural production, under the G.R. it has been good for the production of living labor.

Today Bihar and eastern U.P. are virtually synonymous with class struggle. Tenants and farm workers are well-organized and militant but they face repression from the state police, private armies of the landlords, and central government paramilitary troops. The clearest spectre of a red revolution growing out of the G.R. has come not from the area the G.R. developed (Punjab) but the area it underdeveloped. A question now is how this experience of struggle will be brought into Punjab by the migrant laborers. So far, the exact opposite of struggle has been brought in: a Bihar army regiment was one of several regiments the government used to assault the holiest Sikh gurdwara, the Golden Temple, in June 1984. (At least 800 Sikhs were massacred in this assault.)

### Closing the Circuit

Once the farmers get the workers to produce the grain and once the government gets the farmers to sell the grain, it distributes the majority of the grain among its 322,000 "fair-price" and ration shops. All of these shops are located in the cities. Thus, the villagers are virtually excluded from the Public Distribution System (PDS). The system is further lopsided by the fact that the government sends one-half of the grain to only four states: West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Kerala, (in order of decreasing amount). The former three states contain the cities Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, respectively. These are the three largest cities in India, meaning the three largest concentrations of an industrial working class. The government sends a lot of wheat and rice to Kerala, not just because it produces little of its own, but also because it contains very powerful working class and peasant movements, a fact obliquely reflected in the social

democratic state government of the Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M).

The overall picture of the G.R. strategy can now be seen. The grain which is grown with all of the productivity-increasing measures in the Punjab area is sent into the cities to feed the industrial working class. The whole circuit is under governmental planning

and control. For government planners, it all appears to be a rational economic machine. For socialists it also appears to be eminently rational but hindered by the bad management of intra-ruling class conflicts (the primary one in their view is that between the industrial bourgeoisie and the "rich farmers," i.e. the G.R. farmers).<sup>19</sup> But while technocrats complain about bad management, for the working class the circuit is commodity production purely and simply. It is a system that is not fundamentally different from the food circuit in the USA where it is under the control of a handful of companies and the government. One important difference to note, however, is that it is less extensive in India; presently it covers only 17% of India's total rice production and 20% of its wheat production.

The government tries to set the price to cover at least the costs of procuring, transporting, and storing the grain (which it calls the "economic cost"). Yet as one analyst writing for the Rockefeller Foundation's G.R. research center in Mexico, the one which helped develop the HYV seeds, wrote in 1979: "If grain prices are arbitrarily pegged too high, the urban labor will demand higher wages which will push up the cost curves in the industrial sector leading the economy into an inflationary spiral."<sup>20</sup>

When 60% of urban labor's consumption expenditure is devoted to food, the government's prices translate into one of the crucial determinates of industrial sector profits.

As stated earlier, the G.R. was originally intended to control the prices of foodgrains and thus prevent "inflationary spirals" provoked by working class struggles from ruining their entire plans of capital accumulation. Because the state planners have been scared of repeating the earlier crises, they have tried to keep the selling price of wheat and rice as low as possible. In 1986 the government was procuring wheat at Rs. 162 per 100 kilos and its "economic cost" was Rs. 220. Yet at the same time the government was selling it at Rs. 190, which means they were subsidizing the price by Rs. 30. The government would like to end this subsidy but this it has not been able to do, at least not yet: The struggles of the farmers impose limits on any decreases in the procurement price and the struggles of the urban working class impose limits on any increases in the selling price.

For the people in the cities dependent on government grain, the two crucial questions are its quality and its price. The first strains of HYV wheat that the government promoted were widely dis-

liked because they were not good for making Indian bread. The HYV wheat might have grown bigger and faster than indigenous Indian strains, but its taste and the consistency of its flour were terrible. It was only after years of further tinkering that the government was able to import an HYV strain more acceptable to the people's tastes.



Photo by John Roosa

As for the price: every government attempt to raise the price of foodgrains (or any of the other "essential commodities" it sells) is met with protests and riots. These protests are usually led by women. They buy the food, prepare the bread dough, roll out the circular *chapatis*, and cook them over the fire or stove (usually kerosene stove). Gail Omvedt described some actions by the Women's Anti-Price Rise Committee in Bombay which began in 1972:

Women storming into the streets, women not marching in hundreds or thousands but in tens of thousands beneath the crowded apartments and the endless tiny shops, beating their steel or brass serving plates with heavy spoons to raise a thunderous din, women barricading the cars of politicians and storming the offices of Bombay merchant kings; women confronting the Minister for Food Supplies in his own kitchen to find out if his family eats the ration food they have to eat; women chasing after Indira Gandhi herself to call her to account for the unbearably rising prices and food shortages that are driving their families into starvation.

In the fall of 1973 they held a 20,000 women-strong Rolling Pin March:

And now the badge of the movement has become the rolling pin brandished in a clenched fist as a weapon of revolt.<sup>41</sup>

Movements against price hikes form just one part of the urban struggle. In India, as in most Third World coun-

tries, 50% or more of a city's population lives in slums. When we talk about an urban working class we are especially talking about slum dwellers. These are the people who have been expropriated by the various facets of the G.R. in the countryside. The rural to urban migration in the last 20 years has been astounding. The capital city of Delhi for instance receives about 200,000 immigrants from the villages every year. Thus, there has been an explosion of urban struggles.

For the past several years in Bombay the fight against slum demolitions by the city government and its bulldozers has become a rallying point for many other sectors of the urban working class. The demand for an address by the slum dwellers in Bhopal was mentioned before. In every Indian city there is a struggle for land, for a space to live, and at the very same time for access to food grown in the countryside. The Congress Party and city governments have tried to repress the slum dwellers with the police, bulldozers, and forced sterilization, divert them with religious communalism, and coopt them with drug, gambling, and liquor rackets. For the state planners it has been the boomerang principle with a vengeance.



### Strange Loops

The strange loop phenomenon "occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started."<sup>41</sup> Now that we have outlined the circuit, we can look at the ways in which it loops back on itself.

The most dreadful loop was the massacre of over 5,000 Sikhs in Delhi and thousands more in other cities in Nov. 1984, one month before the Bhopal disaster. After a Sikh body-guard murdered Indira Gandhi in revenge for the assault on the Golden

### Every government attempt to raise the price of food-grains is met with protests and riots led by women.

Temple, the Congress Party organized the mass killing of Sikhs in cities under their control. The cities affected worst were those where the Congress was well-organized. Thus the capital city of Delhi experienced the worst carnage. There were no attacks on Sikhs in opposition party-led states like West Bengal. The fact that the Congress did it is undeniable, why they did it is an open question. Most probably it was a power grab within the Congress Party itself. But the question relevant here is how they did it.<sup>42</sup>

During the Emergency from 1975-77, the Congress demolished all the slums in and around Delhi and moved the people to the outskirts of the city. The housing colonies built by the Congress government made control over the people much easier than in makeshift and crowded slums. Within these housing colonies, the Congress organized a patronage system wherein the people were dependent upon local party bosses, *dadas*, for jobs. These *dadas* have promoted right-wing Hindu groups (which now proliferate in Delhi) and have maintained Mafia-like crime rackets. For the Sikh massacre, the *dadas* organized the men underneath them to loot and kill the Sikhs. Thus, *the mass killings of Delhi Sikhs occurred only in these Congress-controlled slum colonies on the outskirts of Delhi.*<sup>44</sup>

The killing was done systematically. The bands of looters and murderers held the ration lists of the housing colonies which gave everyone's name and address. From the names they knew who was Sikh, and from the addresses knew where they lived. The bands also had quantities of kerosene from the government ration shops

which they used to burn the Sikhs to death.

There are two important points to recognize about the Sikh massacre: first of all, the Hindu chauvinism the government whipped up to suppress the Sikh farmers in Punjab was turned against the Sikh working class in the cities; and secondly the public distribution system serves as a means of social control in the cities.

Another strange loop is the Food for Work Program. Once the government developed this circuit to feed the expropriated population in the cities, it decided to also use the surplus food against the landless in the countryside.

In 1977 it began to put people to work by paying them in foodgrains. During the period 1977-80, it used 9% of its total foodgrain procurement to "generate" 99 million man-days of work. After 1980, the program was renamed and cash wages were added to the payment in grain. The work that the government has delegated to this program is road construction, which, according to a government reference manual, "provides facilities for trade and commerce." Once again, the expropriated are employed to further build the very means of their expropriation.

Another loop of the G.R. is the decline in the production of lentils and oilseeds. By offering high prices for only wheat and rice, two other staples of the Indian diet, lentils (*dal*) and cooking oil (*tel*), have been implicitly discouraged. The per capita consumption of both these staples has declined since Independence. The government is now preparing for the Seventh Five-Year Plan, a program to shift the price incentive strategy to lentils and oilseeds. In 1986 a business and government team from the USA offered a new hybrid strain of an oilseed plant that has a high oil yield and promised "a new G.R. in oilseeds." History repeats itself.

One aspect of this program is geographical; the planners want to extend the G.R. model beyond the Punjab area. Presently the centers of oilseed production are the states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, so this is likely to be where the next round of "development" will be.

A fourth loop is Operation Flood, which was a World Bank financed project for milk. The expropriation of

people from the land in India is at the same time the expropriation of people from cows. Everyone knows that one of the principles of Hinduism is reverence for the cow. A central point in any villager's life is the cow: taking her to graze, gathering fodder, collecting the dung, shaping it into patties and letting them dry for use as fuel, milking her, and making clarified butter from the milk (*ghee*). For migrant laborers and urban workers, milk is expensive if available at all. Since the early 1970's, the State Planners have extended the G.R. model to milk. With subsidies from the World Bank and the EEC, they established a system (for Bombay and Delhi in particular) to collect milk in rural and suburban areas, process and refrigerate it in large factories, and then sell it in the cities.

The subsidy from the W.B. and the EEC was in the form of dried milk. The Indian government sold this dried milk and kept the revenue to build the indigenous milk circuit. (Dried milk tastes awful, especially after being shipped across the ocean.) The European countries (and the USA by the way) have tremendous surpluses of milk and milk products which they have been giving away. India was just one recipient. But today the EEC countries and the USA are trying to end their subsidies to dairy farmers. This subject was even a top item on the agenda of the Vienna summit of the Big Seven industrialized countries in May 1987. There were street protests of European dairy farmers in the same month.<sup>45</sup>

A final loop of the circuit that needs to be mentioned is the suppression mechanism. Since the early 1970's the government has been rapidly increasing the numbers of policemen, paramilitary soldiers, and Army soldiers to suppress all the contradictions of the circuit outlined above. But these gunworkers have often been recruited from the ranks of the landless and the recently dispossessed (as we saw with regard to Punjab and Bihar), so even here the government is having problems. With the rise in the number of gunworkers, there has been a corresponding rise in the number of police strikes and riots. A 1983 survey of police strikes by an American scholar observed, "the lower ranks of the police are now prepared to emulate the tactics of militant labor. They will strike and they will organize."<sup>46</sup>

One of the reasons they have been striking is the lousy working conditions; much of their work is now concerned with attacking riots and demonstrations of workers. According to this overly empirical scholar, the incidence of riot-

ing "per unit of population" (?) has doubled from 1965 to 1977. In 1977, the government estimated that there were 76,000 riots of five or more people.

### The Ecological Counterrevolution

Besides these various social struggles which have emerged and intensified because of the G.R., there are also profound ecological contradictions. First of all: desertification. The accumulation of water in certain areas by dams means the depletion of water in other areas. In this way dam irrigation directly contributes to the creation of deserts in downstream areas. Additionally, the cultivation of crops with inorganic fertilizer, pesticides and monocropping depletes the topsoil. In areas where the G.R. farming techniques have been introduced, the fertility of the land has rapidly declined. As one study put it, the "G.R. is threatening to convert even fairly good lands into desert."<sup>47</sup>

Secondly: soil salinization. With all the underground water being pumped up by tubewells in Punjab, the soil is becoming increasingly more saline, (and thus infertile).

Thirdly: soil erosion. The overall process of deforestation (through the submerging of forest by dams, the drying up of some forest lands by desertification, the clearing of forests for farm land, and timber harvesting) leads directly to soil erosion. Ultimately, deforestation translates into further desertification. The G.R. farming techniques also contribute to erosion. Fourthly: this soil erosion loops back onto the dams. Many of the dams are rapidly silted up from the erosion and becoming inoperable sooner than the government expects.

For the Indian people, these four processes mean a deterioration in the use-value of the fundamentals of life: the land and the water. Both desertification and deforestation have led to the expropriation of people from the land. For capital, they mean a decline in the land and the water's exchange value, i.e. a decline in agricultural production. Thus, capital's planners have been trying to cope with land reclamation and afforestation projects. The World Bank has been advising and financing the Indian government for both strategies.

For example, the W.B. has been promoting eucalyptus tree cultivation for afforestation. However, this tree uses up a lot of water and provides neither fuelwood, fodder, nor shade for

### The World Bank has been promoting the eucalyptus tree, which uses a lot of water and provides neither fuelwood, fodder nor shade for the villagers.

the villagers. Its appeal for the W.B. is that it grows quickly and can be used for paper and rayon production; it is an "income generating" strategy for the villagers. There is nothing like profiting from both the creation of the disease (deforestation) and the selling of the cure (afforestation). The W.B. knows that the present need is to profit from all the destruction they've been able to inflict in the past forty years: in May 1987 it announced the tripling of its environmental staff in Washington D.C.

The Indian planners' response to droughts and desertification has been weather prediction. Part of their satellite program (arranged with NASA) and part of their super-computer program (negotiated with the US government in 1986) is weather monitoring.

### Shortcircuits

Now that we have gone through the circuit and come full circle, from the satellites floating overhead in the sky to the expropriated people of India floating across the countryside, we must leave the concluding statements to one of those who have been uprooted. An elderly woman, who was working on a dam in Maharashtra, explained to Gail Omvedt her view on food and the class struggle:

Plenty of grain is grown in India. But we workers buy it at high prices. We have to eat one-half or one-fourth of a *bhakri* [a flat bread similar to a *chapati* made with millet] and when we

This will help them predict agricultural production. If there is decreased rainfall they can plan for foodgrain imports to control any revolts in the cities due to increased prices of grain, and they can plan for some water delivery schemes to control any potential rebellions in the countryside due to drought. Indian brahmins used to impose their social power through their control of the weather and their monopoly on any communication with the gods. Now they impose their agricultural strategy with the help of satellites bought from Boston brahmins. Their new mantras are the binary computer languages. (Is it any coincidence that the high-tech yuppies of Boston are into the mysticism of Eastern religions?)

remember the land we used to have we can't digest that! We don't even have clothes for our body. As for food, if we get *jawar* [millet] then we eat *jawar*, if we get *milo* [sorghum] we eat *milo*, if we get vegetables we eat them, if not then *chilis*. We have to eat dry *bhakri*. There is no milk. Where would we get milk? We have to drink *jaggery* [brown sugar] tea without milk. If grain is available we eat, if not we drink water and go to sleep.

The woman said she was ready to go raid a rich merchant's house and "pull and drag a big sack of grain" even though she was old. Then she said:





Those who go out on marches, who act for the protection of their stomachs, they will survive. Those who have no hope, who give up and stay away because they are afraid, they will not live!\*

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## Footnotes

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6. Frankel 1978:216.
7. M.S. Krishnamurthy, *The Impact of the Emergency on the Indian Economy* (C. Nagiah Chetty: Madras, n.d., probably 1963:94).
8. Frankel 1978:226 & Ch.6 in general.
9. See J.W. Bjorkman, 'PL-480 and the Politics of Self Help and Short Tether,' in L. Rudolph & S. Rudolph, *The Regional Imperative* (Humanities Press: Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1973).
10. B.R. Shenoy, 'The Indian Economic Scene - Some Aspects,' *The Indian Journal*, April 1958:349. This article was Shenoy's Presidential Address to the 40th conference of the Indian Economic Association in December 1957.
11. N.D. Palmer, *The United States and India* (Praeger: New York, 1984:2).
12. S. George, *How the Other Half Dies* (Allanheld, Osmund & Co., Montclair, NJ, 1977:93).
13. D. Thorne, 'Ploving the Plan Under,' in D. Thorne & A. Thorne, *Land and Labor in India* (Asia Publishing: New York 1962).

14. P. Patnaik, 'Imperialism and the Growth of Indian Capitalism,' in R. Blackburn, ed., *Explation in a Subcontinent* (Penguin: London, 1975:78).
15. H.P. Sharma, 'The Green Revolution in India: A Prelude to a Red One?' in H. Sharma & K. Gough, *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* (Monthly Review Press: New York, 1973).
16. K. Mankodi, 'The Political Economy of Irrigation,' in *Lokayan* (New Delhi) V.3, N.4:5-85.
17. Gail Omvedt, 'India's Green Movements,' in *Race and Class*, Spring 1987:32.
18. G. Omvedt, *We Will Seize this Prison! Indian Women in Struggle* (Zed: London, 1980:90).
19. B. Dogra, *Poverty, Development and Poverty: India 1947-84* (New Delhi, 1984:76). Marx noted, 'The laboring population therefore produces, along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population.'
20. Omvedt 1987:33.
21. *India Today*, 'From Guns to Tractors,' August 15, 1986. See also *Socio-Economic Development of a Distant-Affected Area in Chambal Valley* (New Delhi, 1976).
22. Omvedt 1980:64.
23. By far the best account of the disaster itself is Larry Everest, *Behind the Poison Cloud* (Banner: Chicago, 1985). His analysis of why the disaster occurred is restricted to the First World vs. Third World perspective.
24. N. Nicholson, 'The Green Revolution and Rural Poor in South Asia: Institutional Requirement,' in Anderson, Brass, Levy & Morrison, eds., *Science, Politics, and the Agricultural Revolution in Asia* (Westview: Boulder 1982:463). Also in that book, Harry Cleaver, 'Technology as Political Weaponry,' which describes the Green Revolution as 'mobilizing science and technology in the service of counterrevolution.'
25. P. Singh, *Emerging Patterns in Punjab Economy* (Sterling: New Delhi, 1985:32).
26. *Indian Agriculture in Brief* (Govt. of India: New Delhi, 1985:353-4).
27. I have developed the theme of military rule in Punjab as a response to the farmers' struggles further in my paper 'Punjab's Farmers and the Indian Government's Guns' (unpublished).
28. H.K. Puri, 'Green Revolution' and its Impact on Punjab Politics,' *Indian Political Science Review*, January 1983:108.
29. S.S. Gill & K.C. Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation: Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture,' *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay) Oct. 5, 1984.
30. An independent human rights and civil liberties group, Citizens for Democracy, issued a report of an investigation they made in Punjab in 1985. The booklet, *Oppression in Punjab*, was banned in India and the publisher was briefly jailed. The Sikh Religious and Educational Trust in the U.S. has published the report. It is the most revealing source on police repression in Punjab.

31. P. Singh, 'Two Facets of Religious Revivalism,' *Shackles and Women*, May-August 1986:28. Singh notes the existence of 'communal' and 'fanatic' factions within Sikh movement, but suggests they are in the minority.
32. Govt. of India, Finance Ministry, *Economic Survey 1985-86*: 55.
33. An informative general discussion on the farmers movement in India is T.J. Byres, 'The New Technology, Class Formation, and Class Action in the Indian Countryside,' *Journal of Peasant Studies*, July 1981.
34. B. Dogra, op. cit: 175.
35. M. Singh & K. Gopal Iyer, 'Migrant Laborers in Rural Punjab,' in U. Patnaik & M. Dhanraj, *Class of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India* (Sangam Books: Delhi, 1985:228).
36. For a very detailed and informative discussion of this recent struggle, see 'Other side of Punjab Crisis: Agricultural Workers' Struggle,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 15, 1987, by an anonymous correspondent. For another revealing study of an agricultural wage struggle, see A.P. Singh, 'Farm Workers vs. Rich Farmers: Gate and Class in a Punjab Village,' *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1979.
37. A. Das, 'Agrarian Change from Above and Below, Bihar 1947-48,' in R. Guba, ed., *Subaltern Studies II* (Oxford: New Delhi, 1983).
38. P. Bandhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India* (Oxford: New Delhi, 1984:13).
39. *Ibid.* See also M.R. Bhagwan, 'India's Economic Policies in 1947-1987,' *Monthly Review* July-August 1987.
40. D.S. Sindhu, *Price Policy for Wheat in India* (S. Chaudh & Co: New Delhi, 1979:71).
41. Omvedt 1980:77-78. There were nationwide protests against a price hike for wheat and rice in February 1986. In New Delhi alone, 100,000 people went out in the streets (*Washington Post*, Feb. 21, 1986:A31).
42. D. Hoistadter, *Gold, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (Vintage: New York 1979:10).
43. One of the only analyses to appear in the US on the Sikh massacres was Amrita & Kesselman, 'Class, Communalism, and Official Conspiracy: India After Indira,' *Monthly Review*, January 1985. The analysis is incomplete and flawed but nonetheless edifying.
44. The best analysis of the massacres in Delhi is I. Mohan, 'Resettlement: The Other Delhi,' *Lokayan Bulletin: Voices From a Scarred City*, V.3, N.1.
45. After 17 years of Operation Flood, the indigenous milk circuit is still inchoate. Indian planners are now relying on greater quantities of EEC dried milk than ever before. They are extremely worried since it is clear that the EEC will soon stop providing it gratis.
46. D. Bayley, 'The Police and Political Order in India,' *Arian Survey*, April 1983.
47. 'Drought, Desertification, and Famine - A Report of a Dialogue,' *Lokayan Bulletin*, V.4, N.3-4.
48. Omvedt 1980:65-66.



**Bewick Editions** (P.O.Box 14140, Detroit, Michigan 48214) has produced or distributes a number of pamphlets and books which could be of interest to readers of *Echanges*. Among the available titles are:

-**"Wartime Strikes. The struggle against the no-strike pledge in the UAW during World War II"** by Martin Glaberman. A highly recommendable book dealing with wildcat strikes of the rank and file of the Union of Auto Workers. Firstly, the book is a history of these struggles against the so-called 'no-strike pledge' of the UAW during the war. A majority of workers voted in support of this pledge, but on the other hand a majority of them went anyway on wildcat strikes for their interests. Things like this are by many persons, but not by the author of this book, seen as a contradiction, and the second objective of the book is to give an analysis of working class consciousness in the light of this experience, comparing and contrasting working class activity with working class statements of belief. This book contains important material and analysis on the relationship between action and consciousness, and a review will appear in a later issue of *Echanges*. (158 pages -6 dollars)

-**"The American Worker"** by Paul Romano and Ria Stone. Contains the two texts 'Life in the factory' and 'The Reconstruction of Society'. The first was written in the 50s by a worker in a General Motors plant and is a description and analysis of the life of workers in modern mass production. (70 pages - 2 dollars)

-**"Punching Out"** by Martin Glaberman. This small pamphlet analysis the development of the unions, particularly after their establishment in the US auto industry in the mid-30s. Many examples and points of view are based on the author's own experience from the plants. It deals with questions like:

"Why does a working man or woman chosen by his or hers fellows to represent them, sooner or later turn against them? Why does a worker, when he is elected to union office, turn against his own kind?," and points out that for the workers "the union and the contract have outlived their usefulness". (Written 1952. 32 pages - 0,50 dollar)

-**"Mao as a Dialectician"** by Martin Glaberman. Many persons not supporting the Chinese revolution or any kind of maoism have expressed





a greater or smaller appreciation of many of Mao's 'philosophical' works. This pamphlet deals particularly with "On Contradiction", "On Practice" and "On the Correct Handling of Contradiction Among the People", on the basis of Hegel and Lenin's studies of Hegel. It does not simply dismiss Mao's 'philosophy' as crude and trivial, but shows that it is a complete departure from dialectics and have nothing whatsoever to do with philosophy. The last of the above mentioned works is summarized as follows:

"The role of the Communist Party as the maker of history instead of the masses...The categories (working class, bourgeoisie) made so rigid and meaningless that they are juggled any way which pleases Mao. Classes without class struggle (or, if necessary, class struggle without classes)." The pamphlet also contains the article "Lenin vs. Althusser". (25 pages -1 dollar)

-"**Essays on Marx's Theory of Value**" by I.I.Rubin. Simply one of the best works on this subject. (5 dollars)

-"**Hungary '56**" by A.Anderson. (5 dollars. Has also been distributed by Echanges for many years in English and French.)

-"**Poland 1970 71 Capitalism and Class Struggle**" by Henri Simon. (117 pages, 5 dollars) Written by among others a participant in Echanges. Important for an understanding of the class nature of the then Eastern European countries and the struggles that took place under these regimes.

-"**'Be His Payment High or Low': The American Working Class in the 60's**" by Martin Glaberman. Deals with the conflict between unions and rank and file workers, with examples primarily from auto and steel. Also includes the article "UAW Strongman: Reuther in Retrospect". (24 pages - 0,50 dollar)

-"**The Working Class & Social Change**" by M.Glaberman. A collection of 'four essays on the working class': "Marxist Views of the Working Class", "Unions versus Workers in the Seventies: The Rise of Militancy in the Auto Industry", a review of S. Aronowitz's 'False promises', and "The American Working Class in Historical Perspective" (a discussion of J.Brecher's book 'Strike!'). (42 pages -1 dollar)

-"**Theory and Practice**" by M.Glaberman. A political report to a 1968 conference of the Facing Reality group. (18 pages - 1 dollar)

-**C.L.R.James**. A number of works by James are distributed, among them "Notes on Dialectics" (231 pages - 6.95 dollars), "Facing Reality" (with Grace Lee and Pierre Chaulieu, 174 pages - 6 dollars) and "State Capitalism and World Revolution" (7.95 dollars), as well as the Paul Buhle anthology "C.L.R.James: His Life and Work".

Discussion Bulletin (P.O.Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501) No.38/Nov.89: -Description of the UK Anarchist Communist Federation -

Critique, from a 'left communist', of the Interrogations text "Countering the mystique of the proletariat" -Leaflets of the Socialist Party of Canada ("The Federal elections - Should we leave politics to the politicians?" and the Socialist Labor Party ("Capitalism: It can't last forever") - Leaflet of Wildcat/Subversion ("The Left - Enemy of the working class" -Larry Gambone: Two Mensheviks, Axelrod and Martov (A brief attempt at giving another view of two 'left Mensheviks' than the traditional leninist one, focusing on questions like the elite/professional party and the possibility of socialism in Russia, with reference to discussions and events at the time, and saying for example that Axelrod in 1903 characterised Lenin as a 'Jacobin' and that Martov foresaw state capitalism in Russia. This article has been translated, with a critical comment, in a recent issue of the Dutch journal Daad en Gedachte). We can only recommend the Discussion Bulletin, which contains many interesting articles and discussions. There are important differences between Echanges and the concerns of the DB as well as much of the material in it, but we will return to these questions as well as information about other issues of the journal in a later issue.

Factsheet Five (Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Ave., Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502) Echanges has received a number of copies of Factsheet Five and will regularly review it from now on. This is a quite remarkable journal, which many people will find extremely useful. FF is published six times a year and each issue is around 130 pages. What you basically find in each issues are hundreds of review of magazines, journals, pamphlets, comics, poetry publications, music journals, videos records/tapes/CDs etc, as well as addresses and prices of this. The journal clearly has a kind of 'libertarian' leaning and the name of the publisher will be known by some people from leftwing publications like Discussion Bulletin. You find (almost always very brief) reviews of all kinds of socialist/labour/history/social publications like Workers Democracy, Industrial Worker, The Socialist, Anarchist Labor Bulletin, Blueprint for Social Justice, Ecosocialist Bulletin, Pittsburg History, Directory of Libertarian Periodicals, Green Anarchist, Left Business Observer, New Unionist, Anarchy etc.etc.etc..... But you also find everything else: Caribbean Newsletter - The Chaos Network - Gay Community News - The Shaman Papers - Climbing - Monster & Movies - Wrestling Perspective - Vegetarian Voice..... Factsheet Five also contains a lot on alternative publishing. The journal is distributed on all continents and is an excellent way to get knowledge about a lot of material as well as for publishers to make their material known to others. A faithful description of it is difficult to give, so we suggest that those who are interested send for an issue (3 dollars in the US, 7 dollars outside US) to see what it's like and to get all details about subscriptions and payment.



**Labor Notes** (7435 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210. Monthly, around 16 pages, subscription in the US 10 dollars) No.133/April 90: Will peace cost jobs? (on the consequences of the end of the cold war on the US economy) -Pittston miners strike: Health care issues remains as strikers return to work - Greyhound workers battle strikebreakers to stop third concessionary contract. No.134/May 90: Puerto Rico general strike demands, 'Stop privatization' - Cleveland teachers organizing to control their schools - Greyhound still can't fill buses; files 30 million dollar suit against union - Several texts on the Teamsters and the Teamsters Reform candidate for union presidency.

**Anarchy - A journal of Desire Armed** (c/o CAL POB 1446, Columbia, MO 65205) Special issue on Eastern countries - The Mass Psychology of Misery (John Zerzan) - Environmental crisis in Eastern Europe.

**Fifth Estate** (4632 Second Avenue, Detroit, MI 48201) Vol.25, no.1/Summer 90: 50 years after her death; Emma Goldman, an appreciation - 20 years later, State murder of a Black Panther, FBI war on the Black Panthers - Book review; Re-visioning 'The Strait' by Fredy Perlman (Black and Red) (Taking the Michigan Peninsula as setting the Strait sings of those who resisted the European invader telling us how and why) - The solution to pollution is revolution; Earth Day or Capital Spectacle; we want a festival of the oppressed -Recycling and liberal reform - Who can stop the Apocalypse (Rudolph Bahro) - Review of the film 'Roger and Me'.

**Midnight Notes** (Box 204, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130) In Echanges no.64 we used articles from this journal on struggles of garment workers and teachers in Mexico, and in this issue we publish an article from it on class struggles in India. We know nothing about the group behind this journal, but there obviously a link with the journal 'Zerowork' from the 70's. Midnight Notes contains a number of articles of interest. The issues we have seen are:

Vol.II/No.1 1980): The work/energy crisis and the apocalypse (Published this year in German, together with two other Midnight Notes articles, as an issue of 'Thekla', a journal of the German Wildcat group. The text is presented by them as part of the analysis of the M.N. collective of the 'international class situation', focusing on the 'energy crisis' from 1974 onwards and the connections between 'energy crisis' and class struggles, the development of capitalism as a result of the class struggles in its various forms and areas: technical composition of capital and thereby labour, ideology and the role of natural sciences, reproduction of the

commodity labour power and domestic work...)

No.7 (1984): Lemming Notes (On the left and the working class: "We've seen our needs and the underlying motion of the class in *the refusal of work and the demand for the wealth* we have already produced, an end to capitalist command in all areas of our life; and we have seen the class struggle make visible the possibilities and the desires. But, we think, the left in this cycle of struggles has had little or nothing to do with our desires or with the struggles of the class. Rather, despite important action on many issues, the left, at root, ended up attacking the demands of the class and thus helped to destroy a cycle of struggle which propelled capital into deep crisis." These notes include a review of Andre Gorz' 'Farewell to the working class'.) - Struggles of students at Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn.

No.8 (1985): A conceptualisation of the law in the manifolds of work - Policing us -Prison work notes - The delivery of Newgate - Substruction in the class/room struggle - Negri beyond Marx & Marx beyond midnight.

No.9 (1988): Social struggles in Mexico: Introduction/Las costureras (women garment workers)/The uses of an earthquake/Teachers' struggles in Chiapas -Rambo on the Barbary Shore: Libya, the oil price and the U.S. polled - Resistance to the plan has been heavy: The class struggles of the Green Revolution of India.

The issues of Midnight Notes which we haven't seen, have the following titles:

Strange victories - No future notes - Space notes - Computer state notes - Posthumous notes.

Subscriptions for two issues 7 dollars in the US and 10 dollars outside - back issues are 4 and 5 dollars respectively for each issue.

**Workers Info Rag** See UK section.

**Middle East conflict** Extracts from a letter from a comrade on the US west coast (Sept.90):

Nothing much happens here. The activity in what we call "the Left" is at point zero. Without any doubt, many people feel that serious thinking is more necessary than ever now that most of our vocabulary is meaningless...what is, what could be socialism? It will take some time...what will take place in East Europe will be most important.

There has been *very little organized opposition* to the military adventure in the Middle East, nothing comparable even to the sizeable activity against US involvement in Central America...Many reasons: 1) The above mentioned atmosphere of discouragement 2) The fact, difficult to swallow for many pragmatist Americans, that you *cannot choose* = you can be with Ho Chi Minh or Ortega against Nixon or Reagan...you cannot be with Saddam Hussein... 3) The possible involvement of Israel



inhibits, I think, a certain number of people who consider themselves as Jews...

Now, the attitude of the population *may* change...So far, *no blood* has been shed...Also the cost - with Arab help - is not catastrophic *but* that may change...Everybody knows that that time *war* would not be for democracy, freedom or even Jesus Christ! The reasons for that adventure are multiple...I think that the US desire to anchor solidly its power (and it means oil) on Israel and Saudi Arabia is the main one, but many Americans know *also* that domestic interests play a role: revalorization of US petrole, new profits for war industry, more prestige for the Army, taking the public attention away for the coming elections, etc..., wait and see...

**Falling wages belie claims of 'low' unemployment** The following extracts from an article with this title in the Sep.9, 1989 issue of **The People** should be seen together with the 'Union bargaining report' from the same paper reproduced in Echanges no. 60 p.25:

"...the buying power of workers' average weekly wages isn't going up at all. *It's going down*, despite the economic recovery and expansion economists say began in November 1982.

...according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, average weekly earnings were only 3,2 percent 'higher' in June 1989 than in June 1988. But the cost of living rose 5,2 percent during the same period, according to government figures that notoriously understate what it takes for workers to make ends meet.

The result was a decline in wages' buying power. In fact, buying power in June was lower than in November 1982.

Workers in big unions aren't doing much, if any, better. First-year wage increases in contracts negotiated during the first six months of 1989 nominally averaged 3,7 percent. But consumer prices rose at an annual rate of 5,9 percent during the same period.

Moreover, average effective wage increases for 6 million workers covered by major union contracts were only 1,5 percent during the first six months of the year - about half the reported rise in the cost of living.

...there is nothing really all that low about 5,2 percent unemployment, the official figure for July. That still means almost 6,5 million jobless by the government's account, with million more jobless workers not even counted. That's more than enough competition to help keep wages down.

'Some economists consider the low unemployment rate misleading', the *Times* reported. 'Parttime employees and temporary workers, for example, are counted among the employed, helping to hold down the (official) unemployment rate. (They represent more than 20 percent of

of all jobholders.) But they do not push so hard for higher wages as do fulltimers. Employers, knowing this, keep wage pressures down by maintaining a mix of parttimers, temporary workers and fulltimers, said J.Norwood, commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.'

Other factors the *Times* cites as contributing to the ongoing erosion of wages include: 'the mass layoffs of the early 1980s, the erosion of union power, the frequency with which employers closed factories and switched production to low-wage countries and the great concern over job security.'

(**The People**, 914 Industrial Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94303, is the fortnightly paper of the **Socialist Labor Party**. For a review of the paper, see Echanges no.62 p.51.

**Libertarian Labor Review - A Journal of Anarcho-Syndicalist Ideas and Discussion** (Box 2824 Station A, Champaign, IL 61820) We have seen some issues of this journal, and the contents lists of other issues. LLR adheres to the 'Principles of revolutionary syndicalism' adopted at the 1922 Berlin congress of The International Workers Association - reproduced in each issue of the journal.

**No.1:** Anarchism and modern technology - The four hour day - Labor law today -Bolivia. **No.2:** The Spanish revolution - Protectionism - Anti-labor law, part II. **No.3/Summer 87:** Revolutionary union news (on syndicalist unions/groups in Bolivia, Spain, Holland, Brazil and the IWW in the US) - Rebuilding the Italian syndicalist union - Struggles in European ports (from La Estiba, Dec.86) - New unions in Central and North America (Guatemala, USA, Mexico, including about Mexican garment workers - see Echanges 64) - Independent unionism in Eastern Europe - Origins of anarcho syndicalism (by veteran syndicalist Sam Dolgoff) - Ben Fletcher, Pioneer Black Syndicalist (on the activity of a veteran IWW member: organisation of Philadelphia black dockers in 1913, activity during WWI...) - Which way for labor after Hormel? - Book reveiws and letters. **No.4:** The IWW and revolutionary unionism - Selfmanagement in the Russian revolution - South Africa: Nationalization or workers control. **No.5:** Nicaragua - Worker ownership - High tech and direct action - The suicidal decline of the business unions - The (conservative) role of Marxism in the labor movement - Debates on Technology and the four hour day. **No.6:** The sections 'Wobbles' and 'International notes' contains brief remarks on syndicalist organisations, unions, strikes, leftwing groups and meetings, etc - Anarcho syndicalism and the environmental movement - Revolutionary unionism confronts deep ecology - Revolutionary unionism in Brazil: the COB - Bakunin on union democracy - Reviews of books on labor and labor history (Among them, "Min-Ju No Jo: South Korea's New Trade Unions", "The Fragile



Bridge: Paterson Silk Strike 1913", "New Orleans dockworkers", "Taking on General Motors: A Case Study of the UAW Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open") - Letters on Nicaragua, the journal 'Workers Democracy' and the environment.

LLR is published twice a year. Even if we would have differences with some ideas expressed in the journal, a subscription can be recommended. Apart from being a very well produced journal, it contains much analysis and information which are useful. Further remarks on LLR and other issues of the journal will appear in future issues of Echanges.

**Deepening Slump Hits Auto Industry** Extracts from this article in **The People** Jan.13, 1990: "Last November sales of cars and trucks were almost 12 percent lower than in November 1988....The auto companies are cutting back production and laying off workers. The Big Three will have 45 of their 63 assembly plants in the US and Canada closed at some time during this month. Almost 120.000 auto workers will be on short-term layoff sometime during the month....The Big Three are said to be uncompetitive with their Japanese rivals. Import quotas have backfired, with several Japanese companies opening plants in the US and outcompeting Detroit with cars built here..."

**"Invisible workers" seek their rights** Extracts from an article in **News & Letters** Jan-Feb 1990:

"New York. -The 'invisible worker' that keep the economy going just as sure as those in large-scale industry are usually unseen by the press unless a tragedy happens, as occurred this fall with the crash of a van carrying Haitian workers from Brooklyn to their jobs in various Long island factories...But the daily tragedy of the living and working conditions of hundreds of thousands of workers like these goes unrecorded.

I have many friends who are "undocumented" workers. That is, they are violating the government's "pass laws" by living and working here. They do not look or act any different than other workers. They want the same things...

My friend from Uruguay sold his labor power at a supermarket: "I worked hard, 16 hours straight with just 40 minutes off. They paid me 18 dollars. Another man who works there puts in 12 to 14 hours every day and gets 200 dollars a week. See how they take advantage when they know you have no papers..."

An older worker from Peru, Tio, went to work for a man who owns five dry cleaners in the Bronx, who said he wanted to train him to manage one of the stores. Tio worked 12 hours a day plus 10 hours on Saturdays. Six months later he realizes he's been had, because the boss knows he has no

papers and has no intention of letting him learn pressing or spot removing or anything that would let him get another job.

**We know that workers everywhere long for a better way of life. That is humanity asserting itself. How can these "invisible workers", living in the cracks of society, with no rights, no voice, no union, no vacations, no medical benefits; for the most parts no social security, no compensation, no disability; how can these workers resist this exploitation?**

Because I do not want to jeopardize anyone, let us just say that there are many creative ways workers have found to get around the repressive immigration laws. "Undocumented" immigration has **not** been stopped. There are new "undocumented" workers finding a way to survive and support their families every day.

Getting around the law often costs thousands of dollars. That means getting loans, finding credit, then the constant hustle to pay off creditors. There is time only for work, finding extra jobs, odd jobs. Sunday is no different than Monday. Five to fifteen workers share one apartment, several families share an apartment. They don't do it "because they like to live that way", as I have heard some insensitive or stupid people say. With rents in N.Y. at \$1,000 there is no other way.

The other form of resistance is the cooperation among immigrant workers. My friends constantly seek work or better work not only for themselves, but for a friend or family member. When one has a job, he or she supports others, sometimes nearly strangers, till they get a job.

This cooperation seemed so natural to me, I did not think of it as a form of resistance to the employers and the state. But without that solidarity, I don't know how these workers would survive."

**News & Letters** (59 E. Van Buren, Room 707, Chicago, IL 60605) Jan.90 also contains the following as well as other material: The world after Malta summit: Bush's Panama invasion; Gorbachev and the East European uprisings - Boston's racism unmasked - Two documents on Raya Dunayevskaya and the black question: The article "Dunayevskaya vs. Lukacs on the creativity of cognition.Paths to internalizing the Idea of Freedom" and R.D.'s own article "World View of Black Dimension" - A lot of readers' letters - Eyewitness report: El Salvador at war - Brazil elections: why Lula lost - East German youth in protest - India after elections -

**United Automobile Workers (UAW) aids Chrysler closing** (A surprising - for the workers - announcement in November 89 of the closure in a couple of months of the Chrysler Jefferson plant in Detroit. The workers' answered by withdrawing from all cooperative programs agreed in the union contract - the same contract that 'guaranteed' employment until the new Jefferson plant was supposed to be in operation in 1991... Workers feel 'betrayed' both by management and union) -



Taking back control of job and life (A talk with some of the 150 **sanitation workers** of Western Waste Management Company in **Detroit** who walked off the job in December 89 in a one-day **wildcat against the company and the Teamsters union**. The wildcat was sparked off by the workers getting a 50 cent wage increase without being consulted by the union at all. But the main demand was against forced overtime. Even if the strike was not a victory, the workers at least got overtime pay, and a feeling that they could take matters in their own hands independent of the union.)

### **Capital, Unions and the State**

A letter with this title from an American comrade in Echanges no.61 contained remarks on the situation in the press and the print unions, including the difficult situation of the Newspaper Guild. The following article from Financial Times 19/9/90 gives some additional information:

“New York Post reprieved after staff agree pay cuts.

The New York post, one of New York's three tabloids, has been hauled back from the brink of closure as all 10 unions represented at the newspaper finally agreed to take big pay cuts...

The last union to decide was the Newspaper Guild, representing more than 350 journalists and workers in advertising and circulation. Members voted on the deal at a packed and highly charged meeting - approving it by a vote of 242 to 45.

The owner of the loss-making Post since 1988, has said he would no longer cover the paper's deficits in the absence of a deal. He had been looking for wage cuts of 20 million \$.

The proposals hammered out with the various unions involved Guild workers switching to a four day week and thus an effective 20 percent wage cut. This will save an estimated 5 million \$. Other unions agreed last week to cuts worth about 15 million \$ in total.

Yesterday edition of the Post celebrated the Guild's vote in typical style. “Yes!” was blazoned across its front page in letters at least five inches high, with the picture of a beaming production worker alongside. “Union vote saves Post”, ran the accompanying strapline.

The Guild reached its decision after a painful and sometimes passionate debate. Many members felt the choice had become stark and that cuts or closure were the only scenarios - a stance which Guild officials backed.

However, some employees remained more sceptical, suggesting that workers were “knuckling under” to the owner's demands. Views on how long the Post's reprieve may last also vary. Some industry analysts remain cautious, questioning whether the city can support four daily papers.”

# AUSTRALIA

*-From Australian or other readers we are interested in receiving articles, newspaper cuttings etc. on class struggle and social conditions in Australia and New Zealand. Australia has seen important conflicts the last years, like the pilots strike, Melbourne tramway workers, Melbourne Board of Works maintenance workers, teachers strikes, steelworkers, Cockatoo Dockyard workers, train drivers at Robe River - many of them conflicts which we know too little about.*

*-In a future issue we will try to give some information about alternative publications we know about from Australia and New Zealand, but could need the help from readers also in this.*

*-The article we publish below deal with something else, namely a small group of Greens in Sydney. It was first published in September 87 in the Dutch journal **Daad en Gedachte** and later in German in the journal **Die Aktion**. (Those who can make use of versions in these languages can get it from Echanges.)*

*The following English translation by the author has recently been somewhat corrected and a few footnotes added. It is published here not only because an English translation now exists. Apart from that Australia is a country about which little has appeared in Echanges, a number of countries, and lately also Australia, has seen a growth in Green movements/ parties - and important changes in these groups from 'alternative movements' to more traditional political parties as they grow and gain political influence. This article deals with a small group which has no such aspirations, but having ideas it is useful to look at fraternally, but critically.*

RH 9/90

### **IN AUSTRALIA THE GREENS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE GREENS ELSEWHERE**

*“We are not interested in exercising power over people. We are not a party interested in the government of people....Our aim, if you like, is the minimum of government by the maximum number....When people say*



they don't want this or that in their locality they are implicitly claiming the right to determine what happens in their locality....But we do not believe the aspiration for freedom and self-determination is just local....It comes to the fore whenever the people decide to take a hand in making their history: Poland 1980-81, France 1968, the Tchechoslovak capital Prague 1968, Spain 1936-37, Germany 1918, Russia 1917, the Paris Commune 1871, the Chartists..."

The words quoted above are from a draft manifesto of a presentation to the public by the Greens in Sydney. We saw the text recently, but it was written two years ago. Since then, these Greens attracted little attention. Outside Sydney they are hardly known and to be true they are only known in certain parts of this town also, where they have been very active and opposed the plans of project operators and speculators.

If we are right, one of the reasons why these Greens are unknown and not very numerous and why they are without a big political influence, is that they - totally different from the Greens in west Germany who assert themselves as a political party - don't strive for success, many members, influence or power for themselves. (1) What they have done so far, is the distribution of publications in which they stressed that they didn't want to develop dogmatic opinions, were not trying to build a cadre, didn't go forth to recruit followers - but only wanted to make it very clear to people that they should take their own fate in their own hands and decide matters by themselves, and that if they didn't, others would decide for them.

In the text we speak about, the Greens in Sydney don't talk about the social development of the capitalist mode of production nor about the class contradiction which is its consequence. They are without any doubt 'idealists'. They trace the shape of society as they want it and conceive it. However, the most important thing in this draft manifesto is that they oppose very clearly a 'democracy from below' to the 'bourgeois democracy' which exists also in Australia. They develop a sort of economic program in which they advocate 'self-determination and democratic control of production' and 'economic equality'. And with 'economic equality' they mean that the producers must have authority over the productive process so that everybody can in the same way dispose of the produced goods.

The Sydney Greens don't present us with a social analysis, don't speak about the contradiction between capital and labour (or hardly not) and don't speak about workers councils. Nevertheless, they have opinions on the subject of how decisions should be made in the future society which reminds us of the praxis of workers councils. We said, and repeat, that these Greens have ideas about the way in which decisions **should** be

made. They don't pay any attention to the way the future society is rising out of the existing one. They draw up what they want and wish. They explain their ideals.

However, if one can see from their draft manifesto that the foundation of the new society will be the existence of democratic units of government, directly accountable to their electors and that probably the municipality will be the basic unit where decisions will be taken about the use of resources and raw materials or in which way economic activities shall take place - then the similarity with workers councils comes to the foreground. Especially because they say that all this is self-determination in the factories and in the workplaces and that there will be an immediate relation between the place of work and the place of living and not a contradiction between factory and residential quarter.

All this may be 'idealistic' because it is not based on a social analysis or a historical perspective, but one can't deny that the ideas and program of these Sydney Greens have a distinctively anti-capitalist tendency. This was also very clear from what one of them told us when we talked with them. During these talks we learned that just like ourselves, they did absolutely not appreciate the so-called traditional 'labour movement' which you of course also find on the Australian continent. About this traditional movement they said the same things as we say here in Europe about the 'old labour movement', namely that it promotes the interests of the progressive part of the ruling class and that one can't see much difference between the Australian Labour Party and its liberal and conservative opponents. (2)

The Greens we met were surely workers and their opinions about the political parties and politicians in Australia were just the same as the opinions of European workers about parties and politicians here. However, we had the impression that these Australians expressed themselves in a terminology which was used by workers in some European countries long ago. They were Australian workers but they were 'idealistic' workers. We were not surprised that when referring to historical examples, the French events of May '68 and the Spanish experiences of '36-'37 were put forward, but for example **not** those of Hungary '56 or East Germany '53. As we see it, this is because the 'idealism' of the Sydney Greens is an anarchist inspired idealism. Inspired by anarchism, but not identical with it. (3)

When we discussed, one of the Greens referred to the theories of Rudolf Bahro, former citizen of East Germany and a critic of its system who had emigrated to West Germany. Bahro defends what he calls 'a socialist point of view'. More or less he has a position similar to the Czechs who in '68 strived for 'communism with a human face'. That is, we think, the reason why in the draft manifesto the Czech events are



mentioned. However, we don't think that what is defended by Bahro and his Czech companions has anything to do with socialism if this is understood as proletarian democracy, self-determination of the producers over the means of production or social equality. It seems that the Sydney Greens don't see this because of their 'idealism'. (4)

In the part of their program about 'democracy from below', the Sydney Greens speak about the transformation of the existing institutions of power into institutions which directly obey the will of the people. As institutions not obeying the demands of the people, they see the State, the parties and the trade unions (just like we do). They add that so-called vanguard parties and trade unions never wanted to create anything else than a reformed State. Logically, they also oppose the different types of bolshevism. So they reject any form of domination and every type of hierarchic structure. Nevertheless, the Sydney Greens took part - in the past and in 1987 - in local elections. They acted as candidates who wanted first of all to promote the interest of the inhabitants of the quarters. (The elections were held to choose councils in the quarters.) These candidates wanted to oppose pollution and to protect the city green which was threatened. In this respect the Sydney Greens stand for the same things as the Greens elsewhere. Likewise they oppose the increasing poisoning of the soil, the use of land for the only purpose of making profit, and the use of nuclear energy.

In the 'economic part' of their program they point to the necessity that members of local organs must be recalled if necessary. This on behalf of their wish to democratise these institutions. They also make it clear that what they understand by 'self-determination' has nothing to do with the so-called 'participation of the workers' or the so-called 'workers control' in a nationalised industry.

In the same paragraph they advocate 'a guaranteed minimum wage for everybody over 15, - or good public conveniences, a better tax system and such a reform of the wage system so that wage differences become smaller and an aristocracy of better paid workers will disappear'. It is precisely this demand which proves that the Sydney Greens don't realise the essence of the wages system and the commodity producing system. The logical consequence of this is a clear utopian and idealist, and sometimes a little bit naive, character of what they want to be realised.

The program we deal with contains - of course we should say - a large chapter on the municipal environment and city planning. We don't want to describe this in detail, because our readers can guess what it contains. But the Greens in Sydney say very clear, and more clearly than Greens elsewhere, that the planning of the authorities in office is a planning in favour of the rich and that it totally neglects the wishes and interests of the common woman or man.

Here and elsewhere in their program they oppose the strivings towards a continuous industrial and technical growth, which they consider a threat to the survival of society. But they don't link this to the activity of capital and its strive for accumulation. That is why their demands in the field of municipal development to us seem idealistic once again. Here we also have to do with a program of wishes - they don't have the character of an analysis of developments and necessities. Furthermore, the mere fact that these Greens hardly speak about the struggle of the working class, the fact that they also - despite their critical attitude towards the trade unions - attribute to these institutions a function in the new society, gives a good insight into their position. We want to call them a group of very sympathetic and goodwilling people, free from aspirations for power, not effected by the political corruption which is typical for the old labour movement and not integrated into the existing society as for example the Greens in West Germany.

Of course the 'idealism' of the Sydney Greens has a bourgeois root as idealism always has and as such it is doomed to infertility. Reading some old anarchist publications, we discover a language and an atmosphere which in many respects is similar to what we find in the text of the Sydney Greens. That is not accidental, we think. It is not exactly the same language and atmosphere. There are differences which partly can be explained by the fact that the Sydney Greens are operating in and have formulated their demands and ideals in another time and period of capitalist development. We see them as children of a time wherein the old labour movement has lost its meaning for the working class and a new movement of the workers themselves has not yet or hardly come into being. In such a situation groups like these Greens, to which if we are not wrong many workers belong, operate in a vacuum.

Even if as we said above they are not integrated in capitalist society like the West German Greens, this tells us little about what they can be or will be tomorrow. If they will develop in the same direction as the German Greens or not, depends less on their will than on the social conditions, which in general less and less favours any form of idealism.

(1) The development of the west German Greens have been covered in many articles in Daad en Gedachte, but these articles have not appeared in Echanges.

(2) For some material on Australia in recent issues of Echanges, see no. 54 and 63.

(3) About East Germany '53, Hungary '56 and France '68 some material is available from Echanges - see the List of publications in this issue.

(4) About this and other points relevant also to what we say in this article, see the critique of the East German 'United Left' in Echanges no. 64.



# UNITED KINGDOM

## UK POST WORKERS:

-For an analysis of the resistance of the post workers and the 1988 strike, see Echanges no.58.

**Letter Bomb** (c/o Box 14, 136 Kingsland High St., London E8)

No.1 contains practically only one article on the UCW (Union of Communication Workers). It is a comment on the opinion of a branch secretary of the this union that the workers must not show their dissatisfaction with the UCW over certain issues "in front of the Post Office management" and that the workers have to agree "with a new style management" (which includes for example Sunday collection of mail).

No.2 "Our strike". It is a good example of local strikes in the Post Office. This time a nine day strike for the defence of a worker "suspended for refusing to start coding 18 minutes earlier than had previously been agreed". The strike ended abruptly with a back to work agreement signed by the union amongst a lot of manipulations.

No.2 contains this short presentation:

"The writers of this leaflet are completely opposed to all social systems based on authority, work and the exchange of commodities, i.e. everything that, in most parts of the world, turns life into a mere struggle for survival. We look forward to the day when this office, and all other industrial complexes, will be burnt to the ground or put to better use (eg parties). We are not in any political party and are opposed to all such organisations, be they Left or Right, because we believe that the emancipation of the proletariat (the oppressed majority) can only be achieved by the proletariat itself, without leaders or representatives."

No.3 On the sacking of a postman (who also was a union official) and the manipulation of the secret ballot to prevent a wildcat strike.

**Internationalist Perspective** - Journal of the 'External Fraction of the

ICC' - see Belgium section in this issue of Echanges.

## **Radical Magazines - Booksellers - Publishers**

'Radical Bookseller' (265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DE) is a journal trying to give regular reports of 'developments in radical publishing and radical bookselling', and each issue contains 'listings of new radical titles compiled by the London Labour Library'. It has published special issues with lists of Radical Publishers and 150 Radical Bookshops in Britain and Ireland and the recent no. 71 is a special issue (24 pages) on Radical Magazines, Newspapers and Journals. Prices for each of these are 1,50 pounds plus 25p postage. The list in no.71 is compiled mainly via UK bookshops and contains also non-UK material. Echanges is mentioned in this issue, describing itself in the following way:

**"Editions in French and English, articles on class struggle all over the world; discussions on its meaning and the evolution of capitalism, plus reviews"**.

The journal and the special issues could be of interest for many individuals, groups and journals. Subscriptions are 10 pounds, and advertising rates are 60 pounds for a full A-4 page and pro-rata for half, quarter and one-sixth pages.

**SINEWS** - bulletin of the Spanish Information Network. See Spain section in this issue of Echanges.

## **Anti poll tax movement**

Papers of the left is naturally full of material on this struggle, as can be seen also from the reviews below.

In Echanges no.63 we published the article "**United Kingdom. Some considerations on recent events**". This article tried to avoid the traps of focussing only on the specific violent actions in these struggles, seeing this struggle in isolation etc., but instead to situate it in the context of the general development of the basic **class conflict** in British society after the second world war. It could with advantage be read again.

Readers could also be interested in the article "**Who's afraid of the security state?**" in Echanges no.56. At a time we considered republishing this article in connection with the poll tax struggles. It deals with a different subject: the control and surveillance in West Germany,



opposition to the 1988 national census and the attempts to organise this opposition. But it contains some highly relevant informations and analysis about the whole radical spectrum's failed attempts to organise and express the widespread opposition to the national census and giving the information the government wanted.

**Workers' Info-Rag** No.7/April 90: This is a 4 page special issue on the poll tax riot 31 March, '90 entitled 'The destruction of the UK's mirror of consumption'. A short presentation tells us that: 'The British poll tax is something exasperating to understand for most people outside the UK. The response to it is not so difficult to understand. The following text sent by some friends who saw and understood what was happening is a unique piece of reporting. The piece speaks for itself.'

It is indeed a reportage and its tune is given at first for 'the biggest riot central London has experienced this century and possibly the biggest since the glorious days of the Gordon riots of 1780' and it is like it up to the conclusion of the article: 'Many are reckoning on further big trouble throughout UK society saying a May 68 is in the air.' It is somewhat difficult to follow this overestimation of these events even if we can agree with most of the remarks and analysis. The weakness of the text is precisely its reportage qualities; the lack of an economic and social global analysis.

Workers' Info-Rag, whose previous issues has been mentioned in back issues of Echanges, presents itself in the following way: "Workers' Info-Rag is an occasional information bulletin relating to anti-capitalist and anti-state struggles. It is not affiliated with any political party, trade union or leftist group nor does it seek any such affiliation. Letters, requests and donations should be sent to Zamisdat Press, GPO Box 1265, Gracie Station, New York, N.Y. 10028, USA."

**Counter Information** (Pigeonhole CI, c/o 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh) C.I. is a 4 page bulletin published 4-5 times a year with brief articles/notes on strikes, demonstrations, direct action and repression all over the world. It has a clear anarchist/autonomist tendency, but is not a bulletin for ideological discussions or long analysis of the events it documents, and it's one of the libertarian publications where the class struggle is **not** missing. A journal we can recommend for the purposes it is intended to serve.

C.I. is distributed for free, but the publishers encourage donations as

well as taking bundles of it to distribute and to send articles and information.

**No.26/Feb.90** includes articles on: Protests and occupations against a Greek policeman acquitted for the murder of a youth - Protests against the **Poll Tax** (C.I. has a regular coverage of resistance against the Poll Tax, from the viewpoint of 'autonomous' anti-poll tax groups as opposed to the ones led by leftists like the Militant group) - Breakup of Eastern Europe - Poland: Demonstrations of anarchists (Against unemployment and military service - Attacking Solidarnosc headquarters and destroying all pictures of Walesa) - Spain: struggles against military service - Pittston coal miners strike - Canada: Police shooting of black woman - UK: Right of abortion campaigns - Edinburgh women against pornography - Resistance against nuclear plant in Wackersdorf, West Germany - Protests of US prisoners - Strike wave in Yugoslavia (see Yugoslavia in this Echanges).

**No.27/June 90: Poll tax resistance** (Quotations from the article: "Working class and community resistance to the poll tax is on a scale never seen in this country for decades. More than a year after the introduction of the tax in Scotland over one million people haven't paid a penny or are at least four months in arrears, that represents almost 30 % of the adult population. In some areas like the Western Isles this figure is nearer 50 %. In the city of Glasgow it's 42 %. The introduction of the tax in England and Wales on 1 April sparked a huge wave of protest: We have reports of demonstrations and disrupted meetings in over 30 towns and cities. In some cases up to 3000 took part, in Hackney they rioted for hours.....On 31 March 200000 marched in London, 40000 in Glasgow, smaller towns like Arbroath and Cheltenham also had No Poll Tax demos.....It is important that workers involved in administering and collecting the poll tax do everything in their power to stop it. This could include losing files, sabotage, and strikes. In Edinburgh workers have already taken action. -On April 3rd the Lothian Region branch of NALGO (National Association of Local Government Officers) took a half day strike. 200 People joined the rally outside the council chambers. -In Sheffield 400 housing department staff went on strike for three days because of staffing shortages. They are now on a work to rule, refusing to carry out any extra work. -In Hackney a housing worker was suspended for his involvement in 'Class War'. On 6 April 50 fellow workers including some janitors walked out in his support. -Student nurses in London occupied the admin. office of Charing Cross Hospital, the health authority backed down completely over their plans to deduct the poll tax directly from their wages. -Elsewhere workers have forced statements from their bosses that no-one will be sacked for non-



payment. This has been done by workers organising amongst themselves....In this article there is also given the address to 'Refuse and Resist', the paper of the independent anti Poll Tax groups: 31 Leven St., Glasgow, G41 2JD) -

Strangeway prison revolt - Hunger strikes to death against oppressive prison conditions in US prisons - Italian students protests against privatisation of universities and social services - Actions of Scottish Women Against Pornography

- Riot to work (Throughout March and April **mass protests by unemployed groups** have swept **Naples, Italy**...Occupation of the Mayor's office for a week, of the town hall, street blockades, buses set on fire...demanding paid work, there is no 'income support' system as in Britain).

**Class War** (PO Box 499, Bristol BS99, and a lot of local addresses all over UK in the paper) **No.40** Among a lot of short articles on violence in the UK, we find longer texts on the poll tax (the battle of Trafalgar), the prison riots (Strangeways and a lot of other places at the same time) and the background to the football world cup. **No.41**: Struggles against the poll tax - Slicing the greens - World Cup rip off.

Class War also advertise a lot of badges, T-shirts as well as back issues of the paper. This material as well as subscriptions (£2 for 5 issues, £4 for 10) should be sent to Bristol address, with cheques payable to Class War. Recently a book has been published on '**Poll Tax Riot**' (£1 and SAE (28p) from London Class War, PO Box 467, London E8).

**Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign** (c/o Haldane Society of Lawyers, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1 X OAP) Leaflets in defence of anti-poll tax activists arrested at the 'Bloody Battle of Trafalgar' and other locations during the anti-poll tax campaign. These texts could bring a more complete inside view of the still rising widespread action against the poll tax.

**ORGANISE! for class struggle anarchism** (National magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation: ACF, P.O.Box 263, Sheffield S1 3EX) **No.17/Nov.89-Jan.90**:

The rising tide of racism in UK - Poland: Solidarity promise to crush resistance

- IMF: stitching up the world economy - Anarchism in the Eastern bloc: Russia, Poland - Aims and Principles of the ACF - **Militant and other parasites on the poll tax struggle** (This article deals with the reasons for the Labour Party 'entrust' Militant group's involvement in this struggle, which has not to do with defeating the poll tax. They seek to change Labour from within, bring it to power through the ballot box and create

through the House of Commons its centralised state 'socialism' by legislating it into existence... When the dream of 'municipal socialism' came to an end with the abolition of the Metropolitan Authorities...Militant struggled on, desperate to find a new campaign that could rebuild their power base...Then came the poll tax...the most fruitful area for finding party recruits would be in building 'community', not workplace organisation...In Scotland, Labour enjoy massive electoral support. But often where the seats are safest the active membership of the local party branch is at its smallest, not difficult for an entryist group to coup...As the campaign unfolds, so will the chronological list of demands they seek to rally the forces they control around. Labour councils: don't implement the poll tax', will be followed by demands that they don't fine non-payers. Once this fails, they will demand that Labour councils call of the bailiffs, and don't take non-payers to court. Once that in turn fails, they will demand that labour councils don't send people to jail. And lastly, that Labour councils free those people they have imprisoned. The ritual condemnation of Labour's 'sell-out' that will follow each stage...Militant's influence and that of the rest of the authoritarian left, does not stretch through anything like the whole of the campaign. Many poll tax groups have told the parasites to pack their bags. Militant's claim to have 'built' the mass non-payment campaign is laughable...)

This issue also contained no.2 of **Common Cause**, a 2 page bulletin of ACF/London (c/o 84B Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX), with the article "1992: for a Campaign Against Fortress Europe".

(Remarks from a Norwegian comrade: The claim to have 'built' and to 'lead' this campaign is used also by the Militant tendency outside the UK. At the first public meeting of the tendency's group in Norway this year, a main argument put forward as a reason to support this tendency was its ability to 'lead' mass struggles, for example the struggles of Spanish pupils or the struggles against the poll tax - and that because of Militant's leadership of the latter, the Labour Party could be able to win the elections. What a perspective!)

**'Is anarchism ways forward and blind alleys?'** (Box A, The Rainbow Centre, Mansfield Road, Nottingham) This text was written for a meeting by the journal 'Socialist Organiser' on Anarchism. With a call for comments.

**Subversion** (PO Box 145, Oldham OL4 4WW)

When the Wildcat group fell apart in 1988, some of the participants



continued to publish a journal called Wildcat, some others started the new journal/group Subversion. As far as we know, only one ordinary issue of Subversion was put out. After that there has been a number of leaflets and a series of four pamphlets published in connection with a 1989 conference (all these pamphlets have been mentioned in previous issues of Echanges). This year they started to publish Subversion again, this time as something in-between a leaflet and a journal - 4 to 6 pages in each issue. Subversion is handed out for free.

No.1/May90: Stuff the **Poll Tax!** (One quote from this article: "Workers in dole offices must follow the example of London and Scotland and refuse to deduct the tax from the benefits.") - Labour leaders support the poll tax - The riot - East meets west.

No.2/June 90: Down with the poll tax. Down with all taxes (This article also contains information about **local government cuts** and the Local Management of Schools system. "Under the guise of reducing bureaucracy and giving more power to school governors, the government has been busily engaged in a cost cutting operation in schools." LMS simply means "school governors get to hire and fire staff, school budgets are cut and expensive no-redundancy deals are scrapped" resulting in "teacher redundancies and worsening education"... "The poll tax makes everything worse. It too cuts government spending. Councils were desperate to keep the tax as low as possible. Education is local government's largest expenditure, and salaries make up 70-80 percent of that. So once again jobs must go...**Strikes** have already taken place in Bradford and Barnsley, where up to one tenth of teaching jobs are under threat.") - Class struggle and revolution (A text about the ideas of Subversion.)

No.3: Mandela versus the working class (An article denouncing the ANC and ending with the appeal "FORWARD TO COMMUNIST REVOLUTION" (!)) - Welcome to freedom, you're fired (On eastern Germany) - **Council workers, it's time to fight** ("All over the country small groups of public sector workers have been striking, occupying council buildings, demonstrating and protesting against the impacts of cuts in their workplaces... Only when councils have tried to make cuts 'without fully consulting the unions' have those unions protested... Many of the small groups of workers now taking action to defend their interests have in previous years, or even months, voted at union meetings for cooperation with the employers, only to find now what that means... This apparent contradiction is being exploited by the unions who wave the flag of 'democracy' against anyone who refuses to cooperate... In Barnsley thousands of teachers went on strike against job cuts... As Manchester City Council goes about implementing the government cuts a number of small disputes have arisen in the libraries, housing departments and

elsewhere over things like collection of the poll tax, covering for vacancies and so on. In each case the NALGO has sought to keep them isolated and avoid any generalised resistance to the cuts. Their job has been made easier because the majority of workers have previously been persuaded to cooperate with the Labour council..." The article then shows how the unions in Manchester managed to get this majority vote/ 'agreement' and makes the same point as mentioned just above of how this 'fact' is used when workers later strikes.) - About ourselves (This text briefly presents the group and its political positions. It also mentions the groups/journals they consider to be more or less close to these positions. That Echanges is not included here is not by accident.

We can refer readers to the critique of the old Wildcat pamphlet '**Capitalism and its revolutionary destruction**' in Echanges no.51, which is still relevant to many of the ideas of Subversion and the 'milieu' it considers itself to be part of. It can be fruitfully read again because it gives a brief but easily understandable account of some basic ideas of Echanges. This even more because a member of Subversion has submitted this text to a recent issue of the US journal **Discussion Bulletin** - for debate, but adding that it "still stands as a good statement of the basic positions of council communism".

Subversion holds local meetings - details can be gotten from the above address. From the group the following pamphlets are available:  
 - "**Class War on the Home Front**" (On revolutionary opposition to WWII)  
 - "**Notes on the Class Struggle in the USSR**"  
 - "**The State and Capital in Japan**"  
 - "**Beating the poll tax**" (Anarchist Communist Federation pamphlet). (Prices incl. postage pounds 1,20 - 0,70 - 0,70 and 1,20 respectively.)

**Wildcat** (address letters only as follows: BMCAT, London WC1N3XX)  
No.14/Summer 90: Poll tax: Victory at Trafalgar Square (Actually a long article not only dealing with the riots. We have quoted above from some journals about **workers action in connection with the poll tax** - this article in addition says: "Housing benefit workers in Haringey are boycotting the tax, and housing council workers in Sheffield are refusing to do poll tax work, which means that none can be collected. Social security workers in South London refused to hand over claimants' details.") - Herman Gorter's 'Open Letter to Comrade Lenin' - its historical context (About a new Wildcat edition of this text - see below) - Death to Perestroika - Poland: Solidarity with the ruling class - Romania - The Fourth Reich (on German reunification) - ANC fails to suppress the class struggle - Liberty for the prisoners of democracy (Leaflet by the Argentinian group Emancipacion Obrera) - see Echanges no.55 for



some remarks - following the **May 89 riots in Argentina** where poor workers looted the supermarkets - Militant scum will grass you up (On the Militant group's condemnation of anti poll tax violence) - **Spanish dockers:** Workers democracy against the workers (An article from the Spanish journal 'Odio al capitalismo' criticising the Spanish dockers union Coordinadora).

A four-issue subscription to Wildcat costs £3 - £5 gets you a sub plus any pamphlets produced. Payment in cash, UK stamps or postal orders, or blank cheques.

**Hermann Gorter: Open letter to Comrade Lenin** An English edition of this pamphlet has been produced by the Wildcat group. 44 pages, A-4, £2,50 incl. postage. Overseas rate \$5 US.

This 1920 text has been heavily reprinted in a number of languages. As far as we know this is the only pamphlet edition available in English today. It is a fairly important historical document, but one can today question the relevance of many of the remarks in it and the reasons put forward by today's publishers for reprinting it. In our opinion it is to some extent an **outdated** document, but that is an argument we can't develop here but might return to later on.

**Solidarity** (c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E6 2EA) No.24/Summer 90: Mahatma Gandhi: Cosmic wheeler-dealer (A review by Geoffrey Ostergaard of four books on Gandhi) - Review of two books with writings of George Woodcock - Readers letters - Ten months that shook the world (On the **fall of Communism in eastern Europe**. We would question some of ideas put forward in this article, including:

-Statements of the type that only 'libertarians' foresaw and were not surprised by the fall of these regimes: "...regimes tumbled like nine-pins in the sky...only libertarians can claim to have shown no surprise." - "If libertarians alone were unsurprised by the collapse..."

-On the question of 'which way will the countries of Eastern Europe go now?', there are remarks about the support in Germany for the Christian Democrats but that 'it is far from clear that the East German population knows and wants the policies for which the Christian Democrats stand', about these countries probably 'opting for some kind of social-democratic system', etc. Then follows this remark:

"But it should not be entirely forgotten that there are long-buried traditions of libertarian socialism in Eastern Europe. Bulgaria, to give but one instance, had a significant anarchist movement up to the second world war. If people are given the chance to get used to democracy the time will surely arrive when they will again ask whether it should stop at the factory gate."

Very briefly, we will say that we don't think that events in Eastern Europe, or Western Europe, will be influenced by any old tradition of anarchism or libertarian socialism or that the existence of such ideas in the past would make opportunities better in some areas for a development in the 'wanted' direction. You will only believe this if you think that the class struggle takes the form of being initiated by ideas about, realising or confirming some kind of -ism or practices inherent in this -ism. If there is something the development of the class struggle for very many years now shows us, it's more or less the opposite.

-"Attempts at democratisation - the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968..." We would not at all describe the Hungarian revolution as having anything to do with 'democratisation' (it's enough here to refer to the book distributed by Solidarity and by Echanges for many years, A.Anderson's 'Hungary 56') nor in any way place it any way alongside the 1968 events in the CSSR.

## YUGOSLAVIA

**Strike wave in Yugoslavia** An article in the UK bulletin Counter Information no.26/Feb.90 mentions strikes among miners, dockers, factory workers, teachers, civil servants. "At the car plant in Kragujevac, 3000 workers raised a loaf of bread halfmast on the pole where the national flag is usually flown. At the military industries factory at Trstenik 13000 workers demanded a doubling of wages and sacked all the management. Parliament was besieged after Christmas by thousands of workers chanting 'give us bread'. The immiseration follows IMF loan conditions and a monthly inflation of over 60 percent."





# HEALTH SECTOR

The interest mentioned in Echanges 63, p.9 for a project/pamphlet on the health sector has not really got off the ground, even if a lot of material is available in various journals. We are still interested in material from readers. Material in recent issues of Echanges has been in no.60 (UK), 61 (Holland, Belgium) and 64 (UK ambulance strike). In this issue there is material on Holland and Canada. Liaisons No. 4-5 (available from Echanges) contains material on France. In no.2 (1986) of *Liaisons* there can be found the article "La grève des manipulateurs radio. Un début d'organisation autonome.1985".

A lot has been published in the German journal *Wildcat* (see Germany section). From the summer 89 issue of this journal we quote: "*It looks like a west European chain reaction. In the beginning of 88 the nurses and hospital workers in UK went on strike. In September/October in France first the nurses and then other hospital workers took to the streets. In January 89 there was strikes in Belgian hospitals. In Holland it was first the doctors, who striked in December 88, then demonstrates also the nursing personell and an action committee has been formed. In Italy union organised strikes take place. In May 89 in West Germany 50000 health workers went on strike on an appeal from the union ÖTV.*" Since then further developments have taken place, for example in Holland as shown by articles in Echanges.

## HOLLAND

### Struggles in the Dutch health sector 1989 and 1990

These struggles have been covered in a number of articles in the journal *Daad en Gedachte*. A summary of the 1989 events were written for Echanges and published in no.61. The following article also written for Echanges is a summary of both the 1989 and 1990 events. Some of the remarks to the article on the Canadian nurses strike in this issue, is also relevant to these articles.

## REVOLT OF THE NURSES

In 1989 and also in 1990 the Dutch nurses and medical attendants struggled for a pay rise and better working conditions. Both times they did not obtain what they were demanding. Both times the trade unions agreed to a governmental proposal, which was characterised by a large majority of the workers in the health service and hospitals as a "dirty compromise" and which in 89 was not accepted and not signed by two 'non-official' rank and file organisations who right from the beginning didn't want anything to do with the official trade union movement.

Last year it started with a huge meeting, convoked by some nurses who felt that the general discontent should be transformed into some form of action. The wages in the health service had fallen about 12 percent compared with that of other workers. Lack of personell had caused widespread stress among all those who already were overburdened with too much work and responsibilities. Their working conditions constituted a serious risk for the patients. More than 6000 nurses responded to the appeal. They unanimously welcomed the suggestion that a spontaneous action committee, which was set up for the purpose, should claim a pay rise of 5 percent for that year as a first step to close the wages gap.

The new formed committee was called "Nurses and medical attendants in revolt" and was ever since the nightmare of the trade union movement because of its spontaneous rank and file character. Up to then, the unions had completely neglected the women in question. When negotiations for a collective agreement took place early in 89, the employers - the hospital management - offered a pay rise of 0,53 percent while the unions were asking for 1,5 percent. Frightened by the response to the call for the meeting and very impressed by the militancy of these nurses, who in a large majority were not union organised at all and who didn't fail to fiercely criticise the union negotiators - the unions immediately changed their position and publicly declared that they "of course" supported the demand of 5 percent and would start industrial action.

After many years of union idleness, the nurses were very sceptical and decided to organise their actions themselves. They did it in an inventive way which would never have come to the mind of any union leader and which strongly impressed public opinion:

They occupied the office of the employers. They occupied for a short



time the Ministry of Health. They blocked a motorway during the morning peak hour with empty hospital beds and the police, not prepared for such a blockade, were powerless. They went by thousands and thousands to The Hague, where the government resides, and the streets of that city were whitened by the nurses in uniform - they penetrated as far as the government buildings in spite of the protecting policeforce, which refused to use any violence against women. They worked to rule. They organised Sunday services on weekdays. They appeared on the TV screen and swepted the floor with union officials, hospital board directors or MPs.

In September 89 union officials, government spokesmen and the media announced a "solution", a "settlement". A close examination learned that the new collective agreement was anything but what the nurses wanted. On the very day that the unions told anybody who wanted to believe it that they still supported the 5 percent claim, -they had compromised and agreed with what **seemed** to be 3,5 percent. A closer look at the details of this agreement showed that the result was well below this figure. (See the article in Echanges no.61). Not only all the unorganised, but also the trade union members were very disappointed.

Early in 1990 the unorganised nurses organised a meeting for the second time. Members of the "Nurses and Medical Attendants in Revolt" told the participants that if the negotiations about the annual renewal of the collective agreement would be as disappointing as in '89, more militancy and stronger and harder actions would be necessary. The pay claim should now be 8 percent. Then two trade union officials entered the platform and in vain tried to speak. They were bood.

The trade unions realised very well the militancy of the nurses, so this time they demanded a pay rise of 6 percent. When negotiations broke down, two kinds of action started: those organised and supported by the unions and those undertaken by the nurses themselves.

In many respects the history of what happened in '89 repeated itself, but there was also something different. The situation in the hospitals and in other health service institutions had become worse and worse. In consequence, a particular event occurred. The hospital managements supported the struggle of the nurses and asked for substantial economic measures from the government. The whole Spring and the early part of the Summer there were occupations, there were work to rule, there were all the same phenomena as the year before - but now so frequent and so energetic that in some cases hospital departments (intensive care for

instance) and a few homes for old aged persons were forced to limit the services and even were threatened by a close-down.

Month after month the government said: "We can't give the hospitals enough to satisfy the nurses. Besides, as we see it, the lack of hospital workers and the bad situation in the health service - we admit that it exists - must be improved. So this has priority and therefore wages can only increase slowly." In mid-July -the situation had become worse and worse - there was an offer

which **apparently** was better:

a) A general wage increase of 4 percent; b) 0,39 percent increase for nurses with special tasks; c) 10 percent wage increase for trainees; d) 675 Dutch guilders to be paid to everybody at once (but not the trainees); e) 100 Dutch guilders more pocket money for trainees.

The trade unions welcomed this offer, although according to it there should not be an annual agreement - it should be in force for two years because the government wanted "peace" in the health sector as the Undersecretary of State declared. "It is a great victory", the unions said. It was **not**.

The general wage increase was less than what the unions had claimed and far less than what the nurses were asking for. In fact it was not a pure wage increase at all but (partly) an improvement in the income reached by lowering the pension contribution. As many, many nurses didn't pay such a contribution, they did not benefit from this measure. So wages in the health service remained very low. For this reason the profession still is little attractive for young girls or for those who left it in the past. As far as they found other jobs, they earned more. It was an illusion that the hospitals, with the money available for this purpose, would be able to recruit more workers. And one should not forget: if girls or women could be recruited, only the number of trainees would go up and for the time being the tasks graduated nurses would have it as hard as before.

What the unions called a "victory", was a fake. Even the hospital management were far from enthusiastic. "The problems in the health service are absolutely not solved", a spokesman said. Some representatives of the nurses told the media: "With the proposed collective agreement there is no improvement at all. The only thing it guarantees is that the gap between our wages and the wages of other workers will not widen. Nothing less and nothing more!"



There was two collective agreements: One for the hospitals, described above, and one for district nursing which was even worse. The union officials tried to convince the rank and file that it would be wise to accept them. The agreement for the hospital nurses was accepted with a small majority. The one for district nursing was not. A large majority of the rank and file rejected it. But the unions still signed the agreement against the will of the majority. The directories in this branch however - and very unique indeed - refused to sign. "With this agreement", they said, "there will still be bottlenecks in district nursing and some of them must disappear!" The government was forced to improve some details.

As we have pointed out, most of the nurses are not organised. Nevertheless, a collective agreement, signed by unions organising only a small part of the workforce, is in force for the unorganised as well. The total number of people working in the health service in Holland is 320.000. The "Nurses and Medical Attendants in Revolt" accounts for only 10.000 and so does the "Dutch Society of Nursing" (the other organisation which considers itself a union, but has nothing to do with the official trade union movement). Last year these two organisations refused to sign the collective agreement. This time, with the approval of their members, they signed, arguing that by signing they were not 'off-side'. They signed an agreement which they defined as "very, very bad".

Both nurses and management are absolutely convinced that in spite of what the government and union officials may believe, there will be no peace in the health service.

C.B.

### Daad en Gedachte

(Act and Thought - a Dutch monthly journal - address: Schouw 48-11, 8232 BD Lelystad)

No.5/June 90: The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the Dutch bolsheviks (A review of a book by a Dutch CP member on the history of this party 1939-41) - What kind of society was created by the Russian October revolution? A reply (A reply by Marcel v.d. Linden, author of a book on Western marxists and the analysis of Russia, reviewed and criticised in the 3 previous issues of DeG) - The revolt of the Dutch nurses continues - The Prague Spring of 1968 was something different from the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

No.6/July 90: On the dissolution of the UK Social Democratic Party - Reflection in the woods (About a conference of the Dutch Labour Party - PvdA) About a radical group in West Germany (The new journal 'Kritik & Krise') - What are the Dutch nurses doing? - The Dutch Labour Party, the invisible party - A Chinese oppositionist on China - What exactly is the matter with Trotski in the east and the west? (On an academic congress in West Germany about Trotski) - **Why does the trade union movement worry about the level of organisation?** (Even if the number of organised might be increasing, it does not increase proportional to the increase in the number of employees - so the level of organisation is actually going down. How can the unions claim to represent the employees? The article quotes a union official saying that: "Today 24 percent of Dutch employees are members of a union, in 1975 it was 39 percent. When it gets below 20 percent, our representativity can be questioned.")

No.7/Aug.90: **What does the strikes of the Russian miners show us?** (On the summer 89 strike wave and the July 90 24 hour strike. The article questions the views of many persons of the intelligentsia that the workers are engaged in **political** strikes in the sense this is seen and wanted by these people, and tries to show that basically they strike for their economic/material interests and that real significance of the strikes is of a **social** character) - Once again on the struggles in the Dutch health sector - Jacques de Kadt was permanently wrong (A review of a book on the ideas of this leftwing, later social democratic politician) - **A strike of the union or a strike of the workers?** (A strike at the Flexovit factory in Einbergen in Holland. Apparently a union led strike, and presented as such by the union and the media, in connection with negotiations at this factory. In reality a strike called by the union, but where the workers took their own initiatives not in accordance with normal union practices or ordered by the union, and where the result was reached precisely due to this fact) - What are the perspectives for the Chinese Peoples Republic? (China after the June 89 events. These events does not mean the end of Deng's policy of economic reforms) - **Hungary 1956**, a peoples revolution or a workers revolution? (In Hungary today the 1956 events are called 'a peoples revolution'. The fact that the majority of the participants were workers and the others were just a minority, and particularly the methods of struggles - especially the formation of workers councils all over the country which persisted long after the disappearance of other forms of protest, show that the **essential** character of the revolution was a workers revolution).



# GERMANY

**Die Aktion** (Edition Nautilus, Hassestr.22, 2050 Hamburg 80). A journal of 'politics, literature and art' - in German) No.60-63/Jan.90: A special issue with documents of left wing groups in East Germany. No.64-66/Apr.90: Memories of the DDR and something else - Masked ball; the end of Marxism as a state doctrine - The 'hacienda' has to be built - Poem without a title - Egon Ganove, the eternal - Walter Ulbricht and me - The leaps of the grasshopper; marginal notes on Hans M. Enzensberger.

**The United Left (Vereinigte Linke)** The critique of the United Left in Echanges no.64 was to a large extent based on documents from Die Aktion no.60-63. The critique also exists in a German version, but it appears that it will not be published in Die Aktion. Those who can make use of the German version, can get one from the Echanges address.

**Telegraph** (Schliemannstr.22, Berlin 1058) This is a journal in German with the subtitles 'Independent and hostile to the authorities. Suppressed news, commentaries. Discussions.' We have seen two issues from April 90, published by 'Umwelt-Bibliothek' in East Berlin. This is apparently a journal not linked to any leftist group, but concerned with all kinds of issues and campaigns on the left - the left of libertarians, peace activists, ecological activists etc. This is indicated by the list in each issue of all kinds of meetings, on subjects like anarchism, feminism, resistance to military conscription, anti-war meetings, and so on. Each issue contains a lot of small articles, on subjects like: Nazi attacks - Officers propose demilitarisation and dissolution of the DDR army - Alternative journals blocked by postal distribution - From the secret police STASI to the 'struggle against extremism' - Open letter from local Green group to their parliamentary representatives - Nuclear energy - Student and pupils demonstrations - Police actions against occupied houses - Why did the regime break down? On the mobilisations in Leipzig Oct.89 - On the activity of ex-STASI people and the future use of the STASI archives...

The two issues we have seen contained some interesting material on East Germany, much of it of course seen through the eyes of and selected according to the concerns of the leftwing milieu this journal obviously is a part of. But many of the issues dealt with are also concerns of ordinary people not politically active in all these issues, and the

journal anyway gives an informative impression of the upsurge of all kinds of political activities in East Germany involving a lot of people. We don't know if Telegraph is still published, but the issues we have, said that it was published twice a month, with a price of DM1,50 pr.issue and subscription DM41 a year.

## **'THE WILDCAT GROUP'**

This group publish a number of journals, pamphlets and books with a lot of material which ought to be of interest to Echanges readers understanding German. We can disagree with some or many of their ideas and concerns and see the Echanges project as something quite different than what these people are involved with, but the fact remains that this group publish a much material on the class struggle and other issues from a point of view that we can have more sympathy for and learn something from than many other views. Wildcat also publish a lot of translations of material from journals in other countries (including material from or by participants in 'Echanges', 'Liaisons', 'Collegamenti', 'Etcetera'...), something which is of great use for comrades who can understand German but not some of these other languages. One can therefore only recommend a subscription to their journals.

Information on and from back issues of their journals 'Wildcat' and 'Wildcat-Info' can be found in previous issues of Echanges. Some remarks on the group and their material can be found in Echanges no.61 p.48 (from a letter, not really written for publication, from an Norwegian comrade just introduced to their material).

Some of their material is mentioned below - information on a lot of other material will follow in the next issues of Echanges. Wildcat has local addresses in Berlin, Köln, Hamburg, Freiburg and Ludwigshafen. Letters to the Berlin address from which to order material, should be addressed as follows: Sisina, Postfach 360 527, 1000 Berlin 36.

**WILDCAT** is the main publication and the one giving these people their name. The price for an issue is DM4, subscription for six issues is DM20. No.47/Summer 89 contains mainly material on the **health sector** and on **turkish workers: More than six months stop in publication. What is wrong with Wildcat?** (Reflections on the usefulness or not of publishing the journal, because this stands in opposition the participation in practical political activity and initiatives. The journal holds high the banner of class struggle, but can not intervene in it with discussions and proposals but only comment it afterwards. Here it is also mentioned that they are often asked a question also raised in the above mentioned letter in Echanges no.61: Why there doesn't exist a kind of 'statement' or 'platform' explaining the basic positions and ideas of the group.)

**Mobilisations in the white factory.** (Wildcat has for a long time paid attention to the **health sector**, particularly the hospitals, under the concept of 'The white factory'. Attention is here paid to developments in this sector: The imperative to run it in a more business-like manner and the consequences of this for the system and the personnel as a



whole as well as for the relations between the various categories of personell, - explaining in this way, and in great detail from a good knowledge of what is going on, the reasons for the much publicised 'crisis' in this sector and the struggles of and daily discontent and resistance of health sector workers. We can agree with this approach.

In this issue the material is about **West Germany 88 - 89**. A summary of the first article follows below:

“ ‘Nursing crisis’ from above... ”:

In the Autumn of 1988 independent groups of health workers organised small demonstrations. In November demonstrations were organised by the union OTV, largely a public sector union, and the professional union of the nurses (DBfK) followed up in the next months. The article says that in many cases these mobilisations were supported in various practical ways by local managements (by giving the workers time off, changing shift plans, organising buses etc.) and that they hoped that by this the professional union would be able to keep the mobilisations under control.

“...and mobilisation from below”:

The article says that the situation in the hospitals became more and more explosive from 1985-86. Again and again we have heard about small, 'underground' actions in the last years. In the wards it is tried to reduce the number of patients, by giving false information about the number of available beds - in wards for intensive care similar things take place concerning equipment, to reduce the number of patients - demands are forced through by threats of collective resignations.

In a number of cities it is set up small groups or organise assemblies ('Versammlungen') independent of the unions, and the positive response is a surprise to the people taking these initiatives. Through these initiatives demonstrations are organised in January and February 89, without any union banners. The workers brought their own slogans, beds from the hospitals...and a widespread concern that noone should take matters away from their own hands.

“Problems of organisation and struggle”

The independent groups and assemblies had a different character in various cities. In some cities, the unions did nothing, in other cases the groups oriented themselves from the beginning towards a cooperation with the unions. Some times the activity emerged from groups directly linked to the hospitals/wards, some times from assemblies which had no basis in the hospitals and just brought together for the first time the unsatisfied and militant from various hospitals.

Discussions took place about how to organise to go on with effective methods of struggle. It became more clear that our only effective pressure was in the refusal of work. Individually, thousands do that every year by leaving the job or ending the training. "Working to grade" or "strike" were the slogans of the day. "Working to grade" can have different meanings and objectives. For some it is mainly an effective method of struggle as long as we can't strike. For others, for example the professional union it is simply a practical expression of its emphasis on

the professional status of 'nursing' as a special, qualified occupation.

The groups with a basis in the hospitals also have a different understanding of their role. Either they see themselves as action groups, and is often easily lead to a cooperation with or dependence on the OTV. Or they aim at immediate changes through talks with management - sit down together with the management and the doctors and become dependent on them.

In the assemblies with people from various hospitals, there is less a problem with dependance on structures of the establishment. But without a basis in the hospitals they can only organise actions from the 'outside'. There is a danger of 'actionism', functioning as a safety-vale for the built-up discontent.

The assemblies therefore easily end up in the role of a 'representation' ('Vertretung'), a kind of 'substitute union' ('Ersatzgewerkschaft') which talks, acts and puts forward demands on behalf of the workers. Through the hostile attitude to the meetings/assemblies from the OTV, which sees a danger to its pretensions to alone represent the workers, the assemblies have easily moved into this competing situation which they not at all wanted to. In some cities the assemblies saw themselves from the beginning as an opposition in the union.

This orientation towards representation was expressed by the too large importance attributed to the **demands** by some groups and by the attempted nationwide coordination. At once demands are set up, then the question arise: for who? and who negotiates about them? The example of the 1988 actions in France and its nationwide Coordination committee was an example and was judged too uncritical. On the one hand this Coordination committee made it possible for the first time to have a nationwide strike independent of the passive unions. Also the attempts at a nationwide coordination at two meetings in Köln gave impulses to an independent mobilisation (for example the action day on 15 April). But the French example should also be a warning: Insofar as the Coordination committee acted as a **representation** of the profession and not primarily conceived itself as a Coordination of the practical struggles, it more and more became a 'substitute union'. The here in Germany widely spread demand for a wage increase of 500 D-Mark for everybody, can only have the function of expressing the discontent with the unions' contract negotiations and contribute to bringing us closer together. As a demand for the same increase for all, it opposes wage divisions, but it can not replace the **practical unity** in the struggles. More important than all demands and their concretisations is the practical steps to in common develop our power.

The first phase of the big assemblies and their militant mood and lively discussions, is over. Either people disappointed leave these assemblies, which can not solve the problem of how to struggle in ones own workplace. Or the conscious and correct orientation back to the organisation in ones own workplace make the assemblies little important. In addition comes that the OTV now decides the events. Under the pressure of the independent mobilisation it was forced during the contract negotiations period to place itself in the 'forefront' of the struggle by organising strikes.



Where do we stand today? An important mobilisation has taken place against the tradition of 'social peace', -in a sector the fact that wage labour means exploitation for long has been hidden behind ideals of 'helping' and 'sacrifice'. This mobilisation carries many of the marks of an independent activity from below. This affects especially a union like the OTV, which is used to from above to mobilise its battalions to strike. The present union strikes in the hospitals and old-age institutions are a play with fire: on the one hand it will again take the initiative, on the other hand strike experiences are made possible. Especially where these strikes are supported and prepared through independent activities, they can disrupt hospital daily life. The basic problem of the strikes in the hospitals remain unsolved: in most cases it only amounted to a temporarily 'delay' of work, tasks which were not performed during the strikes where in many cases done on overtime afterwards. And any wage increase from the negotiations will disappoint most of the people, because the old problem of the working conditions will remain.

### Florence N. goes wild - Contradictions in the movement in the hospitals.

This article also deals with the movement in Germany, and is summarised below. Its starting point is that in the mobilisations there is, very simplified, two 'lines'. In the practical actions both are contained and constitute a contradictory unity. The one contains a perspective directed against this society, the other is oriented to an improvement in existing conditions and therefore to a stabilisation of the existing society.

A) Is it a question of the simple problems of every wage labourer: you **must** work to earn for your daily bread, knowing that your labour makes others rich; what we call exploitation. The struggle against this is directed **against work** and for a better life, which under the present conditions firstly means **increased wages**.

In hospitals and old-age institutions exploitation is not as apparent as in another factory. Doctors in leading positions or the medicine industry make much money, but we are not paid by them but through public resources. Apparently it is then a matter of public interests, of the wellbeing of other people and this picture characterise our daily work: quite concretely we 'help' people.

...From our work the whole economic system benefits, for which a (from its point of view) functioning hospital is important: a place to 'repair' damaged labour power and a control of those who consciously or unconsciously tries to escape the coercion to work by 'illness'. With our work we contribute to a better exploitation of other workers. That is also the case with the at first sight unprofitable nursing of old people in hospitals and old-age institutions. The 'social peace' depends on the exploited in the factories knowing that at old age and when their ability to work is exhausted, they can be kept alive and taken care of....Alone for this reason is there old-age institutions and care.

When we see the function of our work in this way, there is not a question of anything in common with the managers of hospitals, but of the struggle against our own exploitation and against the whole system of exploitation which we assist through our work.

In the movement both these points comes up all the time: at last to be

able to speak out about **our** terrible working conditions, not only the critical situation and poverty of nursing but of the nursing personell...And for many the question arise about what we actually do, if we compensate the destructive effects of this society by our endless willingness to help. This critique leads on the other hand to a reformist perspective. Our struggle shall make the hospital human again, work for a change in nursing inside this society, we take ourselves the responsibility for the reform of the health system. This is the second line;

B) Is it the question of a special, qualified **profession** concerned with its recognition in this society. This line wants to have a special status within the hospital and separates itself from the other categories - from the doctors as well as the cleaners, ancillary staff etc. The various kind of work shall be strictly divided between different professions, yes even further proposals in this direction is put forward so that this group can devote itself entirely to the work with the patients ('nursing'): introduction of secretaries on the wards, separate services for transport of patients, cleaning- and disinfection work by non-ward staff etc.

This line could easily be in more or less accordance with management plans for breaking down old structures and a new system of further breaking down 'qualifications' in the hospitals.

Both these lines have their origin in the concrete work situation and can therefore not be schematically separated from each other. And which of them which will be dominant, will not be decided in academic discussions. We must understand why these contradictory orientations arise.

### "How to struggle - in a divided situation?"

The present movement from the start emerged from the wards, from the 'nursing personnel'. But it was not exclusively the really qualified work force in the wards, the qualified nurses, which started it - but often trainee/student nurses, extra personnel or conscientious objectors doing their 'military' service in a ward. (The same could be seen in the UK nurses' struggle - see Echanges no.60 p.42.) The workers in other departments of the hospitals - ancillary staff, kitchen personnel, cleaners etc. - were not mobilised, even if attempts to involve them took place in some cities and even if they also have experienced an increased pressure. And the educated or those under education in the wards separate themselves from the other occupations. With the slogan **nursing crisis** (or -revolt) it is focused on ones own peculiarity. There are two sides to this:

-It expresses a 'professionalist' attitude. Higher wages is not only demanded because we need more money to live, but with reference to ones special qualifications. The hierarchy of the personnel in the hospitals shall not be abolished, but be made more fair etc. It is attitudes like this which is meant when the nurses here or in France are called 'corporatist'.

-Secondly, this separation from others is an expression of the real divisions which have emerged in the hospitals as well as in industry as a whole the last 10 - 15 years. Various work have been removed from the



wards and centralised in separate departments: Kitchen service, sterilisation etc. Cleaning is often done by outside companies. This splits the workforce. When a department or a group of workers begins to struggle, the mobilisation will necessarily be characterised by all these divisions. In such a situation the unions firstly calls for class unity, to be able to control the situation. With this they try to prevent that single groups of workers start to struggle independently and give impulses to others to struggle also.

#### “Who works in the white factory?”

The restructuring in the hospitals have lead to changes in the numerical relationship between the categories of personnel. Differently from other parts of industry, employment in the health sector has seen a large increase the last 15 years. Today there is 3000 hospitals in West Germany with 680.000 beds (half of them in public hospitals, the rest in private or church institutions). While this is a small decrease, the numbers of treated patients increased by 30 percent. With hospital personnel - altogether 800000, of them 600000 women - the development is contradictory. A large increase in medical (85000), nursing (320000), medical-technical (46000) and administrative (63000) personnel. A decrease in ancillary and similar personnel (today 180000) because these tasks to a large extent has been given to outside companies or are done by temporary personell (not appearing in the statistics).

The ward personell is therefore the largest group in the hospitals. But inside the ward personnel there has been important changes. The number of examined nurses have doubled, while the number of assisting nurses have clearly decreased and the number of student nurses increase more slowly - this trend is not changed even if we include the number of conscientious objectors employed in the hospitals. This corresponds with complaints from the nurses that in the last years there has been less and less assisting personnel in the wards.

It is more and more the nurses which must be in charge of the overall work to be done. In the wards there has been a ‘unification’ (‘Vereinheitlichung’). But the situation in other departments have become more disunited.

Another factor unifying the ward personnel is caused by the short time people stay in this occupation. Because of this it is to a large extent young women who work together in the wards. In the last years a new generation has been employed in the hospitals not only concerned with ideals about ‘nursing’ but wanting a job enabling them to live an independent life. (For similar considerations concerning UK nurses, see Echanges no.58 p.38.) Hospital work and the low wages attributed to it was linked to the traditional role of women taking care of and nursing other people within the family. When women today question this role, they develop explosive demands and attitudes also as wage workers.

This also affects the hospital hierchies. Due to the high turnover, wards are often led by young nurses without a wish to command and not functioning as part of the chain of command from above and downwards. (This ‘crisis of lower management’ is discussed in Wildcat no.44.)

The separation from other professions are understood better when we look at the changes in the concrete work in the wards. The moving away of various tasks means on the one hand the disappearance of burdensome work like cooking etc. On the other hand all work from the other departments come together in the wards where they must be coordinated and seen in connection. With the argument of this reduction of ward tasks, the assisting personnel in the wards are reduced, but there remains work which can’t be moved away. Everything that can’t be transferred to the other departments remains in the wards. For example that part of cleaning and cooking which can’t be moved because things to clean or the hunger of patients don’t take place at prescribed times. In addition comes new tasks, like the supervision of unfamiliar cleaners...

The ward personnel becomes confronted with more functions and is at the same time in the weakest position to resist this accumulation of functions, because they are directly confronted with the people. In the reactions against this we find here a typical workers’ attitude: sticking to the prescribed tasks and rejection the rest. It is not only the formal rules which make this refusal possible. The workers develop their strength from the fact that the product depends on their common work. Only when all work together does the shop function. Together they therefore have a power with which they can reduce the pressure exerted upon them.

But this particular power is also their weakness. In the total hospital machinery it is they who transfer the functions of all other departments on to and in direct contact with the patients. All forms of refusal of work are therefore immediately directed against the ‘wellbeing of the patients’. And as qualified workers the nurses identify more strongly with their work than other workers.

From this weakness arise the demand to the state for a separation of ‘nursing’ activity from other tasks. The profession (‘Beruf’) shall become a protection against too much work and at the same time a reason for increased wages. At this point they must therefore act as a profession and raise their demands in competition to others. In this situation it is unrealistic that common proposals and demands for all hospital or other workers are put forward.

But as soon as it a question of the real power within the labour process, the profession becomes unimportant. In the strike noone is asked if she is qualified, under training, assisting labour etc. - it can only be effective when everybody participates. And when the kitchen or cleaning personnel also strikes, even better!

We therefore see how the two lines schematically expressed above develop from the position of the ward personnel in the hospital. The real concerns of the movement which causes the struggles, connects them with other workers. But it is expressed in a form which accepts and strengthens the existing divisions within the wage workers.

This is what we mean when we say that the two lines constitute a contradictory unity. For the activity this means that all fixed opinions on



this movement are premature; and that it is not a question of **theoretically** to criticise the movement, but if and how the struggles are waged.

(The above is only preliminary remarks and nothing fixed, but a contribution to examine these questions together and in practice. The question of professionalism, the development of a common power in the white factory etc. is not a question of the right or false ideological line... When we brought the concept of the "white factory" into the discussion, we wanted to point out that the workers in the hospital only could develop their power independent of professional or departmental divisions and also only when the division between workers and patients was overcome. In the movement the "white factory" is understood in quite a different way: human concerns versus factory...)

### **Hunger strike at VDO Frankfurt, March 89**

The Vereinigte Deuta Ota Adolf Schindling factory, with assembly lines as well as individual and group piecework, produce parts for the auto industry. At the end of February 89 the VDO estate in Bockenheim was sold to a Swedish company. By 1992 production shall be moved to Karben, where VDO has bought an estate, and production be completely reorganised. Only half of the present 2000 employees will be needed, and the reduction will especially effect the foreign workers, a majority of which are Turkish women. (Karben is outside the area organised by the Frankfurt district of the IG-Metall union.) From 1983 VDO operated with 4 month contracts, normally renewed only once, so that thousands of workers have been employed in the factory. A lot of overtime is worked, now and then work on Saturdays. Absence due to illness is at 20 percent.

In January and February 89 some workers received dismissal notes, including some Turkish IG-Metall shop stewards. In March two of the stewards put up a tent in front of the factory gate and started a hunger strike, demanding no dismissals, VDO to remain in Bockenheim, an end to overtime and weekend work etc. A solidarity committee was set up with people not working at the factory, creating publicity and supported by other workers distributing leaflets in their factories. After a week Turkish VDO workers organised a 'canteen strike' lasting for several days.

A management proposal for reinstatement at another factory until the case could be dealt with by the labour court, was turned down. After 18 days there was a demonstration by 700 people and after 20 days VDO workers organised an occupation of the office of the factory council ('Betriebsrat'). 70 workers, mainly Turkish women, participated, and in some departments of the factory no work was done. Despite threats of dismissal they remained firm, and the management agreed to reinstate the two stewards if they ended the hunger strike at once. In addition 40 percent of the dismissals were withdrawn and the piece work rates were to be reconsidered.

During the hunger strike the workers had to fight on many fronts: Against the **management**, against the **right wing IG-Metall factory council majority** (not opposing the dismissals and against reinstatement),

the **IG-Metall** (demanding the new factory to be set up within the Frankfurt area, so as to keep the membership dues of the workers) and the **solidarity committee** (whose communist party, KPD, majority with their party logic wanted to centralise and to exclude other VDO workers and workers from other factories).

The IG Metall does little except to react to the initiatives of the hunger strikers and the solidarity committee, with the aim of ending or reducing the effects of the action.

The solidarity committee, created by the hunger strikers, tried to take the initiative of their hands. The strikers had at the beginning imagined a committee of workers from the factory. In fact, those who came were the KPD-people and comrades from their Turkish sister party TDKP. With their majority they tried to enforce that no more people should attend the committee, to be able to keep the political control. They wanted to prescribe to the hunger strikers when to sleep and that they shouldn't smoke ('you must take care of yourself'), to make them into 'patients'. Not the workers participating in the action, but the committee should decide on further steps - and the result of the action then attributed to the party.

The hunger strikers did not capitulate to this, but gave interviews, spoke at meetings, discussed with VDO colleagues about the situation inside the factory and further steps and with workers from other factories and distributed leaflets.

### **Interviews with Turkish workers in Berlin.**

The first interview is with workers previously members of Turkish 'revolutionary' organisations. It gives information about Turkish workers in Germany. In addition there is a lot about Turkish 'revolutionary' organisations, of which there is a large number in Berlin. Generally these are criticised for not being interested in the Turkish workers in the workplaces, about struggles, organising and discussions there, but only active in connection with and discussing at their own organisational meetings. This despite the fact that there are a large number of Turkish workers there and that the majority of the members of these organisations also are workers. According to one of the workers: "They need the working class to come to power. They don't want to bring the workers into the organisation - they shall organise in the unions and only support the party. All these leftists say: 'the working class must come to power and build its own state' - but that is a lie, they want a state of the intellectuals, not of the workers."

The second interview is with workers in a particular factory. One of the things discussed is the nationalist feelings of many Turkish workers, and that in recent elections many have voiced support for the extreme right wing German republican party. Further, there is a lot on the situation at the assembly lines at this factory: The different attitudes and behaviour of various nationalities of foreign workers concerning absence, assembly line speed, problems of organising work slowdowns. (One example of the latter: Some people at a line tried to initiate to work slowly, but have no idea how this should be organised. They work mid-way down the line and from there it is difficult to organise it - it must start at the beginning



of the line.) Altogether there is in the interview a lot of interest for those interested in details about the concrete situation, organisation of work and production processes in factories - something you in general find a lot about in Wildcat.

### Turkey - the emergence of a new labour movement.

For a summary of this, see on Turkey in this issue of Echanges.

**WILDCAT-INFO** This journal used to be published in the months when a regular issue of Wildcat didn't appear. It doesn't appear any more. The last issue was no.25/April 89, with the following material:

**-El Salvador:** The political situation (First there is an article by Wildcat about the situation. Concerning El Salvador media pay much attention to guerilla/military/political groups and actions. After an account of developments and events in this sphere, the article remarks that in addition to this comes the decisive role of the by us often underestimated mass movement (organising in unions, demonstrations, strikes). Secondly there is an interview with a leader of the largest union association, the UNTS, set up in 1986) - What is work? (From Collegamenti no.25) - On the housing crisis in West Germany - Actions against violence against women - Italy: the regulation of strikes (see Italy in this Echanges).

**TheKla** (SISINA, Postfach 360 527, 1000 Berlin 36) TheKla (Theorie und Klassenkampf) is a more theoretical journal put out by the people who produce Wildcat.

**No.9** contains a 1965 text by the Italian 'operaiist' theoretician **Mario Tronti**, with the title "Marx, Arbeitskraft, Arbeiterklasse" - together with an introduction by TheKla situating this text in the development of the workers struggles, particularly the FIAT workers, in the 50s and 60s. (232 pages, 9DM incl. postage.)

**No.10** has the title "ZEROWORK - Politischen Materialien aus den USA 1975 und 1977 zum nordamerikanischen und internationalen Klassenkampf". This is a complete translation of the two issues (1975, 1977) of the US journal 'ZEROWORK, Political Materials' and contains articles on: The class composition in the USA in the 1960s: Capital's 'New Dimensions': Kennedy's initiative - Remarks on the international crisis - Crisis in the auto industry - Postal workers against the state - Wildcats in the coal fields - Universities in crisis- The struggle of the working class against the crisis: The self-reduction of prices in Italy - Food, hunger and the international crisis - National liberation, socialism and the struggle against work: the case of Vietnam - Money in the world crisis: the new basis of capitalist power - New York develop and underdevelop. (288 pages - DM12).

There is a connection between Zerowork and the journal 'Midnight Notes' (see USA section in this Echanges).

(This section on the Wildcat group, including articles summarised elsewhere in this issue of Echanges, was unfortunately made in a hurry and possibly contains a lot of printing and translation errors. RH 9/90.)

# CANADA

## Nurses and healthcare workers strikes, Summer 1989

*The following article on a strike in Summer 1989 of the nurses in the province British Columbia is reprinted from the No.1/Fall 1989 issue of the Canadian journal Class Struggle Bulletin.*

## NURSES' STRIKE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

As in many other 'welfare' capitalist states in the past few years, Canada has seen severe government budget reductions of expenditures on social and health services. And as in many other such countries, this has led to resistance by workers directly affected by these cut-backs. Such was the strike which erupted on June 13 by the nurses of British Columbia (Canadian nurses are organized and bargain on a province by province basis). As a result of the state's reduction of spending on public health, nurses' wages have lagged far behind the cost of living for many years, leading to a largescale exodus from 'professional employment'. This in turn has led to a widespread nursing shortage in a number of countries, which of course means a significant increase in workload for all nurses--both work speed-up and ever more overtime. These, in short, are the reasons for the militant class struggle nurses have exhibited over the past few years in Britain, France, Canada, the U.S., and elsewhere.

The 17,500 nurses of British Columbia (B.C.) decided overwhelmingly to strike rather than accept an offer of 18% wage increases over three years. Their demands were for an immediate increase of 22% and 7.5% in each of the second and third years, increases in overtime, shift, and weekend pay, and improved working conditions. Only by means of a significant immediate wage increase for starting nurses, they argued, could more nurses be attracted--the only way to increase staffing levels, and so reduce the presently intolerable workload.

Right from the beginning of the strike the union collaborated with the hospitals' management and the government on fixing 'essential staffing levels' at approximately 70% of the workforce, so that there were never more than 5,500 nurses actually withdrawing their labour

at any one time. Although most nurses remained on the job, the effectiveness of the strike was strengthened by the refusal of the 29,000 workers (actually about 21,000 not deemed likewise 'essential') within the Hospital Employees Union (HEU), consisting of nurses' aides, orderlies, clerks, janitors, etc., to cross the nurses' picket lines. Then on June 22 the healthcare workers in the HEU joined the strike. Although this extension of the strike was not a matter of nurses convincing healthcare workers to unite with them in one fight for a common set of demands, since it was confined to 'normal union procedures', and both unions did their best to keep the disputes and the demands separate, there was a real unity on the picket lines and this undoubtedly increased pressure on the hospitals (and the government, which funds them).

The striking nurses' militancy and obvious public (ie. predominantly working class) support for their struggle--despite the campaign by the media to portray the the nurses as 'endangering public health'--led the hospitals to increase their wage offer on June 26 to 29.5% over three years. (These numbers were deceiving, however, since increases were to take place every six months, instead of every year, thereby lowering the overall increase; the immediate increase was to be 6.25%, followed by ones of 6.25, 3.0, 4.0, 3.0, 4.0, and 3.0%.)

Up to this point in the strike the nurses showed no apparent dissatisfaction with the union; while B.C. nurses had not previously gone on strike, the union nevertheless was prepared and flexible enough to contain the nurses' anger. However, when the union immediately accepted ('tentatively') the new offer and began using its propaganda machinery to 'encourage' its acceptance by the rank and file, many nurses began



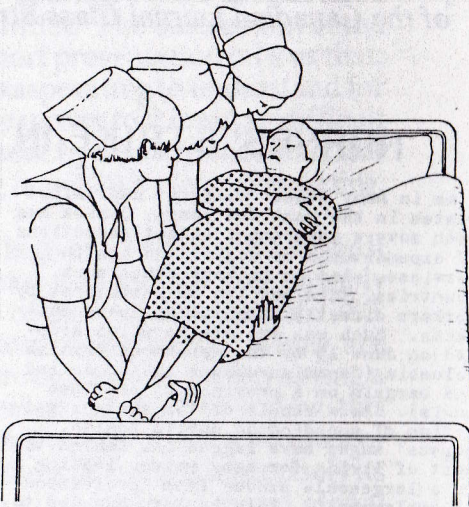
to see that the union was not representing their interests.

Mass anger exploded over the next several days, as hundreds of Vancouver area nurses forced the union leadership--including on one occasion by storming their way into the union's head offices--to explain what seemed to them as a betrayal of their interests. This display of combativity and autonomous action must have scared the union, as it certainly caught the relatively inexperienced union president off guard. In the heat of the moment--undoubtedly thinking of her career as a union leader--she imagined herself a benign dictator and unilaterally withdrew the support of the union's executive for the offer it had just agreed to and was actively promoting around the province. Of course, the union couldn't tolerate this degree of responsiveness--it would destroy their reputation as a responsible, 'good faith' bargaining agent--and so the next day the self-same union president shamefacedly admitted she had violated the 'democratic procedure' by which the union executive decides whether to recommend acceptance or rejection of a contract offer.

From then on the union adamantly insisted, in concert with the hospitals, that not a penny more could possibly be gained by the nurses since 'there's no more money in the hospitals' coffers'. In addition, a number of the province's most prominent union leaders, including the head of the B.C. Federation of Labour, spoke out that the nurses would be fools not to accept this 'great' offer. The nurses refused, in the face of this spectacle, to moderate their militant opposition. While they normally would have gone back to work on the 'tentative acceptance' of the contract offer by the union leadership, the healthcare workers strike meant continued picketing in solidarity. However, that strike ended June 30 when the HEU 'tentatively accepted' a contract providing wage increases far below what had been demanded. This situation provided a crossroads for the nurses. Instead of remaining on strike and taking the struggle outside of and against 'their' union, they returned to work over the weekend of July 1-2.

Nevertheless, about 1,000 nurses, roughly half of the nursing staff at Vancouver General Hospital (the province's largest) organized a mass assembly July 1 on the basis of opposition to the contract offer supported by the union. This is where an anti-union orientation could have led to the struggle breaking out on its own. However, while some of that consciousness may have been present at that assembly, it was far from dominating as rank and

file unionists captured control of this 'dissident movement'. The result was the creation of a 'Vote No' campaign complete with fundraising so that the new 'dissident leaders' (a shop steward and another low level union functionary)--whether genuinely elected or self-appointed is unknown, the latter being more likely--could spread the 'Vote No' message around the province.



The rank and filists carried on their campaign of diversion and deflation of anger by directing 'dissident' nurses safely back into the union straight-jacket, first, by helping to organize, within the union, an 'information meeting' for July 4 for all nurses in greater Vancouver to learn what 'options' they had. It became clear that the option the dissident leaders were promoting was simply 'vote no' and re-open negotiations with a new bargaining committee (presumably composed of a majority of themselves and their supporters); and even this option, they argued, could be pursued without going back on strike! It was a classic case of base unionist recuperation.

The union leadership was shrewd enough to set the date for contract 'ratification' voting for July 12, eleven days after the nurses had returned to work. The nurses immediately recognized this as a tactic to demoralize them into voting 'yes', and this was clearly reflected in their 'dissident' anger of June 27 to July 4. But this anger never really broke out of the confines of base unionism. And the media aided in this

project of derailment by giving much exposure to the two dissident leaders who travelled around the province to spread their 'Vote No' message. The union leadership also did its part in this charade by playing the 'bad cop', by also sending a delegation around the province to counter the dissidents' message, openly threatening nurses by telling them that if they didn't approve the offer, the government would unquestionably prevent them from going back on strike and force them to live with the contract they were supposed to be freely voting on (this was openly said to be based on reliable 'inside information'), and accusing the dissidents of being 'renegades' who were trying to 'split the union'. The dissident leaders responded, of course, by renewing their commitment to the union, and claiming to be campaigning only for openness and democracy within the union--which was undeniably true.

This display of faction fighting and the media's willingness to continuously publicize it undoubtedly led to increasing popularity for the dissident leaders at the expense of the existing leadership. However, there is no doubt that when the nurses did finally vote and decide by 65% to reject the offer their principal motivation was simple recognition that it didn't come close to meeting what they required, what they had gone on strike for.

Following the vote of July 12 the union virtually disappeared from sight and media attention. Apparently, their strategy of 'laying low' was really to wait and see how the nurses would react--would they begin increasing pressure for renewal of strike action? would they spontaneously go out on a wildcat? or would they only demand a new bargaining committee? The strategy worked because the only reaction of nurses was a relatively weak demand for a new bargaining committee--which even nurses who had voted for the deal thought was necessary now. Evidently, the substitutionist delegation of 'dissident' leadership to the base unionists had left most nurses passive and atomized.

The union's response was to not discontinue the ban on overtime and 'non-nursing' work which had in force since the strike ended--which had made nurses' work just tolerable enough for them to be willing to 'sit tight and hope'--while adding only one new 'dissident' to the bargaining committee. Even the rank and filists did little; perhaps they wanted to outwait the leadership and then react; but they refused to call for a renewal of the strike or even any escalation of job action. By this point

they had completed their key mission of recuperation, and weren't about to re-open any doors to potential 'chaos' (i.e. autonomous struggle).

Union-management bargaining, under a mutually agreed upon mediator, was finally renewed August 8. The union demanded the same amount of money that had already been offered by the hospitals, but to be given over a two year, rather than a three year, term. The provincial government, after three days of publicly announced 'stalemate', and at the urging of the hospitals' bargaining agent, threatened to end the 'free' bargaining and have a deal imposed by binding arbitration. So on August 14 the union, ever-so 'reluctantly', agreed to have a deal bindingly imposed by the mediator that was already presiding over the negotiations. Its leaders argued that they 'had no choice' ('what can you do?'), what with the government's threats, and that at least the mediator was 'impartial' and 'aware of nurses' concerns'. The union agreed at the same time to immediately end the overtime and non-nursing work bans. Lo and behold, the new deal contained exactly the same wage increases as the earlier one, the one nurses had rejected, had over the first two years--that was the only difference, that it would be for two rather than three years.

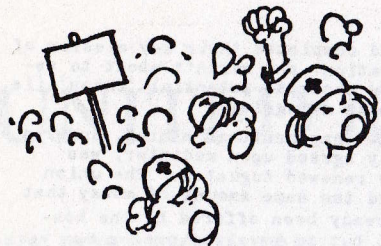
Once nurses realized what they were stuck with for the next two years and that they must go back to their intolerable levels of overtime work, it was clear that all their anger had returned. But by now they felt helpless and defeated. For some, perhaps more than ever before, the only option they see themselves as having is to quit. Others will refuse some or all overtime work they are 'requested' to do. The union has said such action will be a purely 'individual' matter--in other words, such nurses can expect no union support--but since it may well be widespread, the base unionists, in order to retain a semblance of credibility, have taken on the task of 'supporting' and identifying themselves with an overtime boycott.

For now, it appears the ruling class, from the government and the media to the unions and the base unionists, have succeeded in 'taming' the nurses of B.C. However, it can be said with confidence that the nurses will return, more combative than ever, and having learned a few lessons from this experience about what not to do next time.

#### PERSPECTIVES

The attacks on and the conditions suffered by B.C.'s nurses show clearly what





capitalism has in store for the whole working class. Capitalism no longer has any option--whether it is the Right such as Mulroney in Canada or Thatcher in Britain, or the Left such as Mitterand in France or Gonzalez in Spain, which is in power--but to severely attack the living and working conditions of the working class everywhere. Squeezing more and more out of us is the only way capitalism's rulers can reduce their debts and make their various national capitals more competitive on the world market.

The nurses' struggle shows clearly that deteriorating living and working conditions force even the most inexperienced sections of the working class in the capitalist metropolises to strike back with great militancy. It also shows vividly the impotency of struggling within the unions. The unions today will only contain and defuse workers' militancy. The nurses' strike this summer is further proof of this for anyone who still needs it.

The first steps of both self-organization and extension were exhibited in this strike, but there was not a clear consciousness of the necessity of both today if workers are to move forward in their struggles. On the question of extension particularly, B.C. nurses showed that they are especially prone to corporatist illusions (notably of the 'professionalist' variety), just as nurses in France, Britain, and elsewhere are.

The 'extension' of the strike to the healthcare workers in the HEU--the bulk of hospital workers in B.C.--was in fact a completely legal affair wholly under union control. Even though it is certain that most healthcare workers realized that striking alongside the nurses was preferable to striking alone, even though many nurses must have come to realize that the healthcare workers' strike strengthened their own, and even though there was clearly a great deal of solidarity between nurses and healthcare workers both on the picket line and in the hospitals (for those workers both unions forced to continue working to

provide 'essential services')--and all of these factors undoubtedly advanced the class consciousness of nurses and healthcare workers; nevertheless, the 'extension' of the strike was not a genuine extension because it was neither under the control of the workers themselves nor forced on the unions by the workers' self-initiative, and because it did not lead to a genuinely united strike with common demands and commitments on both 'sides' to not return to work before the 'others' but only when all the common demands have been met and a majority of all strikers choose to end the strike. There was clearly a certain amount of corporative distrust between the two 'sides': the nurses had a much more militant and determined consciousness, a clear recognition that the state is their enemy (albeit not a clear recognition that 'their' union is a part of that state), and an intransigent refusal to accept any 'best offers' which didn't meet their demands; while none of this was evident in the healthcare workers, who ended up accepting an offer representing less than half the wage increases they had demanded, and only barely above the present (and ever-rising) rate of inflation. At the same time the nurses perceived themselves--and the media and the leftists also propagated the view--as uniquely under attack from a 'vicious right-wing government' and uniquely deserving of a 'great deal'.

The nurses did indeed take the first step of self-organization once they realized the union was openly acting against them, but their general assembly was immediately captured by rank and file unionists who succeeded in diverting the militancy and self-initiative back into the union by focusing all anger at the existing leadership and initiating a faction fight of shop stewards and other low level union functionaries against the leadership, who were portrayed (as they always are by rank and filists) as 'out of touch with the rank and file'.

Self-organization which does not involve a refusal to recognize anyone participating as privileged or deserving of a special status because of their position within the union, a complete openness to all workers involved to voice their views, and decisions about what collective actions to undertake made by a simple majority of a show of hands (after debate, of course), is only stunted and partial self-organization. Workers cannot elect a few leaders to 'carry out the necessary tasks'. It can never be that simple. Rather, they must decide, on the basis of thorough and open discussion, what actions will be taken by all the workers involved. And they must continue to meet regularly

outside of the union so they can decide on any further actions to take or alter their previous plans, and so workers not already involved can also take part. They must also send delegations of themselves to other workplaces so as to spread the struggle and link up. After all, the more workers involved in the struggle, the more effective it will be. (We can say specifically in the case of the nurses that their assembly should have been made open to healthcare workers as well.) If this orientation succeeds, and the struggle breaks out of union(s), then the workers in their various assemblies can elect mandated and revocable delegates to a central strike committee to co-ordinate the overall struggle.

For the nurses and the whole working class of B.C. this strike represents a significant step forward from the state of affairs that had prevailed here for

a number of years, that is, a lack of open combativity--even though living and working conditions were (and continue to be) slowly eroding--and a thoroughgoing identification with the unions (even if there is a widespread recognition that the unions 'can't really do anything for us'). The B.C. nurses' strike exhibited small signs of the way forward for all workers today: militant refusal to compromise with the state, extension and self-organization of the struggle. For workers to take up this course they must shed their illusions in corporatism and unionism by recognizing that such illusions render impotent every struggle to defend our living conditions today.





## Remarks from a Norwegian comrade about this article and about Canada:

### On the C.S.B. article

We have little other information on this nurses' strike and have therefore reprinted the article above in full from *Class Struggle Bulletin*.

We could have wanted some more information on certain questions; to give a few examples: -Simply, what is the **name** of the B.C. nurses union? -What is the percentage of unionisation? (Nurses' struggles in for example France and Holland have taken place among a workforce where only a small minority is organised. In the US as far as we know only about 15 percent of so-called 'Registered Nurses' work under 'collective agreements') -How is the health sector in B.C. organised (public/private ownership/funding) and what is the corresponding system of union organisation? -The article mentions a heavy workload for the nurses and dissatisfaction with this. But does this dissatisfaction take other forms than such a strike and the various activities associated with it (and is the only perspective the one propagated by the C.S.B. at the end of the article about the nurses in an organised way holding assemblies, linking up with other workers in a common struggle for common demands etc.)? The article does say that the B.C. nurses never previously went on strike, and that many nurses have left 'professional employment'. But is there more to say, about local strikes, absenteeism, working to grade, various 'individual' forms of protest or dissatisfaction, etc.?

Our reason for saying this is not an obsession with all kinds of factual information or with 'individual' forms of protest. But, on the one hand our general experience with the 'analysis' of strikes from journals of the political spectrum which C.S.B. identifies with (see more about the bulletin below) - even if this only to a small extent applies to this C.S.B. article - is that they give precious little as far as a long and detailed analysis of any strike is concerned, seldom providing any real **information, knowledge and understanding for the reader**, but leaving her/him to accept the scattered information given, the brief generalities about a strike or wave of strikes said to be taking place, etc. On the other hand, the information/questions asked above would then enable us to get precisely this understanding - both about the B.C. nurses and health sector, the situation elsewhere in Canada, and compared with the nurses and health sector in other countries (for example Britain, France and the US - countries mentioned by the C.S.B. itself in the article).

A **comparison** does not only mean the oh-so-correct phrases about the capitalist crisis, the attacks of the ruling class, the speed-ups in a certain or all sectors, etc, and the corresponding ones about the need for selforganisation, extension of the struggles, common demands, break with the union, break with professionalism/corporatism, etc. But also, by seeing it as important to give also this 'information, knowledge and understanding' as we just phrased it, to be able to point out and explain (by addressing questions like the ones we raised above, as well as giving

detailed information about the working conditions, technological developments etc. and changes in these) the obvious **differences** between for example health sector struggles and other struggles in a country or health sector struggles in different countries. And in the context of this particular B.C. nurses struggle, it would for example enable us to know for sure, instead of asking questions about, if this was a strike of a union which organise practically all the nurses, if there is a large number of unorganised, if there is a private health sector with different conditions, and so on.

As an example relevant to the remarks above, we can refer to the article on the UK nurses struggle in **Echanges** no.60 (as well as to a series of articles in various issues - many of them not yet mentioned in *Echanges* - of the German journal **Wildcat** analysing the health sector developments under the title 'The white factory'). As a different way of 'analysing', we can refer to the writings of the ICC criticised by Norwegian comrades in **Echanges** no. 62.

From what we have said above, it will not come as a surprise that we have some reservations about some parts of the C.S.B. article. A number of things we would have seen and/or expressed differently. When C.S.B. talk about a mass meeting where an "anti-union orientation could have led to...", about the B.C. nurses being "especially prone to corporatist illusions (notably of the 'professionalist' variety)", that "the nurses had a much more militant and determined consciousness" (than other health sector workers) etc., we are not with the C.S.B. neither in their particular language nor in the ideas and concerns which this language express. This discussion can not be raised within the limits of these remarks. Suffice to say we do not ascribe this kind of ideas of a 'consciousness' to workers struggles - that a 'consciousness' in the sense meant by these small political groups and expressed in their platforms and 'political positions' is something which is needed prior to and determines what happens during these struggles. Neither does very 'militant' expressions about being 'anti-union', nor the accusations about 'corporatism' when the elements for explaining this 'corporatism' (its reasons as well as weaknesses and strengths) are more or less lacking.

Our views about this can be found in previous and certainly in future *Echanges* publications. At this point we can however quote from the article on the UK nurses struggle (*Echanges* no.60, p.48-49):

*"A lot was said about the 'professionalism' of the nurses actions leading to their isolation...if the hospital strikes could find some comparison it would be with the postal strike (analysed in Echanges no.58) because at the very origin of this action is the deep conflict for management between the imperative to rule a public service according to business-like politics...and the present competition for workers...between the different branches of industry (the most prosperous ones being able to offer better conditions which a public service threatened constantly by cuts can't do). The balance of struggle in the hospitals as in the Post Office arises from this situation...the strike...exacerbated the contradictions, gave the measure of what could be done and what could not be done and as well the experience of fighting for oneself....in the*



NHS the staff was deeply divided in different categories and the nurses were more threatened by disqualification than other categories of non-qualified ancillary workers; their fight has to be based on their professional qualification and the wages attached to it; this was their strength as well as their isolation and weakness. Another difference is the consequence of the nature of work. P O workers could withdraw their work in totality which gave them a great strength -for a lot of reasons nurses could not do the same, even if taking very original forms these actions were not never as effective as the P O strike; their creeping strike lasted for one year to end in ruins and in apparent disillusion. In the present global situation they could not have done more and what they did was enough, for the time being, to seriously shake the health building; the more business like management of hospitals is bringing a more militant category of health workers overcoming the traditional ways of thinking and closer to other workers. The elimination of professionalism would not come about from any kind of propaganda bringing consciousness to this category of workers but from their new conditions of work which put them in the same conditions as other workers, a situation which will givebirth to new ways of thinking.

### Other struggles

Some other Canadian struggles are mentioned in this issue of C.S.B.:

- "...In Vancouver this summer there was also a strike of workers in the **fish catching and processing** sector - which is relatively sizeable here - which 'their' union effectively sabotaged".

- "...the strikes by **nurses and other public sector workers in Quebec** in September".

No more information is given in C.S.B., but they ask for a "decent account, from a revolutionary perspective" of this strike. We would say that we would like to see some information about this from C.S.B. itself, whether it is particularly 'revolutionary' or not, rather than not seeing anything at all. Having written something on the nurses in a particular region of Canada, it would be natural to distribute something about another region also, precisely to be able to get an overall view of the situation.

The strike referred to here, could be a strike mentioned in the following way in the March 90 issue of *Labor Notes*:

*"During the past few years, nurses across the US and Canada have defied no*

*-strike laws in order to win significant victories. The Quebec nurses union, for example, launched a seven-day illegal strike last year which earned them double-digit wage increases as well as additional compensation for evening and weekend work."*

**Class Struggle Bulletin** (C.S.B., P.O.Box 69804, Station K, Vancouver, B.C. V5K 4Y7) No.1/Fall 1989: According to the publishers, the main reason for this issue is to "publicize the facts of, and the lessons to be drawn from, the nurses strike in B.C. this summer." They write that it is uncertain if another issue in the same form will appear, and we have not yet seen anything else published by the C.S.B. group. They also ask for international discussions and exchange of material.

This issue also contains the text "The outlook for class struggle today", which clearly situates the C.S.B. in the 'milieu' of small 'left communist' groups worldwide. This is further shown by what appears to be the main concern of the C.S.B.: discussions with and contributions of a member of C.S.B. in various journals of such groups.

Letters from the C.S.B. have been received and answered by Echanges as well as by Norwegian comrades, but no response has been received and nothing else distributed by them, so we can give no further information about this group. The letter from Norway commented this 'left communist' milieu as well as asked for more background information on the B.C. nurses strike and the other strikes mentioned in C.S.B. as well as the publication of something about them. In the letter to Echanges it is said that the group will report on important movements of class struggle in their region, and also that "we are essentially a discussion group which identifies itself politically as left communist (in particular we identify our 'programmatic' origins in the KAPD, KAPN, Gorter and Pannekoek of the early 20s)." Part of the answer from Echanges said that, from our publications "you will see that, like you, we are interested at first by the important moments of class struggle of today. We are like you as well more a discussion network and most of us have connections with the council communist movement. We certainly have differences when you refer to programmatic origins of early 20s that we consider as relevant to this period of capitalist development but not at all to the present situation but we think that such a discussion has to be related to the class struggle we talked about above."

### 'Modernisation' of the trade union movement

*The Canadian Labor Congress is a national federation of unions of 2,3 million members. The following is reprinted from Labor Notes:*

*"The Toronto magazine Our Times reports that the Canadian Labor Congress has told its staff to stop using the phrase 'In Solidarity' to sign letters because it "gives the wrong message". The preferred phrase, used by CLC President Shirley Carr, is 'Yours fraternally'."*

**Solidarity Bulletin** (Vancouver IWW, PO Box 65635, Station F, Vancouver, B.C. V5N 5K5) We have seen two issues of this bulletin of the Vancouver branch of the Industrial Workers of the World. Others



Canadian IWW branches are found in Ottawa and Toronto. S.B. is a small 8 - 12 page bulletin which has been published since 1983. No.9/88: Indian blockade (on the struggle on the Gitskan Wet'suwet'en people to protect their land) - The opening of B.C.'s first freestanding abortion clinic - On IWW campaign to organise Northwest U.S. non-profit institutions - On the (2 person) IWW branch at the Vancouver student paper *Gleaner* - Interview with secretary of the IWW General Defence Committee (a committee to defend and support IWW members and other labor activists and prisoners) - IWW solidarity with striking workers of the White Spot restaurant chain and with Canadian farmworkers - Free trade demystified (on trade agreements between Canada and the US) - Vancouver IWW branch minutes. No.3/89: IWW members at the Vancouver 'Walk for peace' - IWW protest against Ottawa international weapons fair - Toronto and Vancouver IWW activities - Norway faces wage freeze, social services cuts (Summary of the text about Norway in Echanges no.61. In a letter (April 89) from the Vancouver IWW to the writer of this text it is said:

*"I was especially interested in the situation of the Norwegian working class under a social democratic government. Here in Vancouver (and in most of Canada as well) the vast majority of the left are sympathetic with social democracy and its Canadian branch, the "New Democratic Party". The NDP has never been in power on a national level but they have controlled a few of the provincial governments from time to time. Here in British Columbia, they legislated striking workers back to their jobs in 1975. Everytime they take power, it's the same strikebreaking, social service cutbacks, etc. that is standard fare with liberal and conservative governments."*

This last issue we have seen says that the bulletin is published 11 times a year and that the (negotiable) subscription price is \$10 a year.

From the Vancouver IWW there is also other material available. We have seen the pamphlets "One Big Union of the Industrial Workers of the World" and "Looking for a decent union? What the IWW offers you", and the leaflets "The power of property. How private should property be?", "The forgotten libertarians - The One Big Union movement and "All rights (p)reserved - management and democracy".

Material by and about the Canadian IWW can also be found in the IWW paper **Industrial Worker**.

RH 9/90

# TURKEY

## The emergence of a new workers movement

No.47/Summer 89 of the German language journal *Wildcat* contains material on this, which we summarise below:

## The April 89 actions and some backgrounds:

### New workers struggles after the coup

At the end of the 70s there was a strong revolutionary movement in Turkey. The left organisations counted hundreds of thousands of members and armed clashes were frequent. As the strike movement in September 80 ended in a general strike, the Turkish generals and NATO answered with a military coup. Under conditions of hard repression the measures of the International Monetary Fund was forced through. The generals forced the workers back to work. The leftwing union federation DISK was forbidden as well as demonstrations and strikes. Working hours were increased, Saturday work introduced. Labour laws concerning dismissals were not changed, and every year contract negotiations took place.

There was no workers offensive against the coup. Leftist actions was mainly concerning prisons and repression. Organised workers' protest in the factories was strongly repressed, but there was all the time small strikes. But only after some years took the first workers demonstrations and meetings place through the state sector union Türk Is, trying to prevent any political influence and to outmaneuver the left. To be able to control the growing workers protests, the government for two years partly restored the right to strike.

Since 1986 strikes increased especially in the private sector, for example by Netas (Siemens) and leather factories in Istanbul. The main demands: Wage increases, reduced working hours, increased holiday. In 1988 the 12000 workers in all paper factories struck for 3 months. The strike wave which started in the beginning of 89 comprised for the first time almost the whole state sector.

The strikes are the result of the sharp deterioration of the living conditions of the workers in the cities and the countryside. Parallel to the adaption of Turkish production to world market conditions, income has been greatly reduced by inflation.



### The state sector

There is a number of state owned production factories with 600000 employees. This includes branches like steel production, metal manufacturing, shipyards, shoe and textiles production, drink and cigarette industry. Some of these factories are owned by the Turkish army and here special labour laws applies and strikes are prohibited. The aim of the government is to privatise the state sector. All workers in this sector receive the same government guaranteed minimum wage - there are no wage differences. This wage is below that in the private sector. Because of this products from the state sector to the private sector industries are relatively cheap, and many capitalists are not that interested in this privatisation. Daimler Benz for example produce cheaply in Turkey auto parts which are exclusively made for export. In 85 there was a strike of the union Petrol Is as well as by steel and aluminium workers. But altogether there is no strike tradition in the state sector.

### The recent movements

From the beginning of 89 the state sector workers demand an immediate wage increase. At first they put their demands to the unions, because of the forthcoming contract negotiations. But within weeks they develop struggles with a participation and variety of methods of struggle never before seen in Turkey. The workers all the time find new ways to evade the repression. It is important that all the workers of the factories participate in the actions irrespective of their political ideas - leftwing, social democratic, even right wing and strongly religious workers take to the streets together.

On the 14 March 1000 angry workers from the weapons factory of Kirikkale near Ankara storm the union building. That is the start of a number of workers actions.

On 15 March the workers of a military textile factory in Istanbul drive the union officials out of the factory, because they oppose actions. The next day 1500 of them block a main road and it comes to clashes with the police. The union headquarter in Ankara oppose any militant action but pledge support through 'passive' actions like beard strikes (see below) and boycott of eating in the canteens.

Also in cities where strikes have not yet taken place, it comes to collective protests, with new forms of struggle spontaneously arising. Bus boycott for example, meaning that the workers walk to work arriving many hours late. Or instead of an open strike, all the workers go to the hospital to register as sick. The employer must even pay wages for that day. The collective walk through the city becomes a protest demonstration which partly blocks the traffic. Eating boycott, meaning

that the workers meet in the canteen but instead of eating held a meeting. In the military factories, where it is forbidden to have a beard, the workers protest is expressed through shaving boycotts. Because meetings are not allowed here, they are held in the workers living quarters. In one city hundreds of workers seek divorce, with the argument that they're not able to feed their family. Others announce their children for sale in the newspaper. Other places the workers march barefoot, to demonstrate their poverty. All the time it is emphasised that the actions "are not political", because political actions are forbidden and can lead to military intervention. It also comes to more offensive actions like strikes and occupations of main roads. Strikes among electricity workers are particularly effective : in some cities the lights frequently go out and factories must stop production.

An important role is played by the 3000 workers in the steelwork Demir Celik in Karabük, one of the large steel complexes put up by Russia in the 70s. On 24 March the workers announce a strike, which the authorities (without any legal right to do so) postpone for 60 days. In protest the whole city strikes for one day. But the steelworkers stifle production. The management complains that more and more machines don't function. That is more serious than a strike and wages must also be paid.

Throughout March ten thousands of workers are in action. On 13 April contract negotiations start between the government and the state sector unions and a social democratic party official. The workers demand 400 percent, the unions reduce their demands to 160-170 percent, the government will only pay 100-120 percent.

### The April actions

The actions on 13 and 14 April were the high points of the movements. Altogether more than 100000 workers from the state sector participate. The struggles start in the military factories in Istanbul, where the shipyard and textile workers are best organised. Without a national coordinating organ they spread spontaneously all over the country.

In Ankara 1200 workers leave a factory and block the main road to Istanbul for 3 hours. In Istanbul 20000 workers go to the hospitals to register as sick. The whole day traffic is jammed. In the cigarette factory Tekel 30000 workers, mainly women, go on sit down strike in front of the factory and then go to the hospital. At the end of the shift they return to the factory and demand the resignation of their union leader.

The article gives further examples of actions in cities like Izmit, Canakkali, Gölcük, Adana, Bursa, Tavsanlı, Diyarbakir, Usak, Siirt, Erzurum and Malatya - a look at a map of Turkey shows that these actions take place in most parts of the country. The forms of actions are



sit down strikes, canteen boycotts, marches to the hospitals, blocking of traffic...

On 20 April there is still no result from the contract negotiations, so actions are resumed all over the country. 36000 rail workers register as sick. Workers in a factory in Ostanatolien sit down in front of the factory and announce a hospital march the next day. At demonstrations in Istanbul (where 10000 shipyard workers participate) and Ankara it comes to hour long clashes with police.

The common demand for all these struggles is the increase of the minimum wage. Therefore the movement only to a small extent spreads to the private sector, even if state and private factories often are situated in the same industrial areas. In 183 private factories 20000 workers striked in April, mostly in small factories. The important auto and electro industry was not affected. In these industries there is also piece work, so that wages are somewhat higher.

The boss of a large private factory sees the situation like this: "In the private factories there won't be such actions, because we pay more and like to pay more than the state."

### 1 of May

Great expectations existed in Istanbul for this day, which has a special significance for the revolutionary organisations since after the coup all demonstrations were forbidden. This day powerful demonstrations was envisaged, and on the foregoing days calls for a 'general strike' circulated. The government threatened to use force against all actions. Türk Is propose a march to the hospital, the social democrats want to support the union, but at the end the unions withdraw all calls for demonstrations. It ends with 6000 leftist in confrontation with the police, with one worker being shot.

A general strike by the unions is announced in connection with the negotiations, but no preparations are made. Some hours before it was supposed to start in the whole state sector, Türk Is agree to a contract with a 141 percent wage increase. Many expect that the workers won't accept this, and some unions and stewards have expressed their dissatisfaction and consider further actions.

### New forms of organisation of the workers?

The movement this spring has bypassed the union bureaucracy; the leadership had no influence on the methods of struggle.

All the leftist try, with different arguments, to work in the unions. Some currents try to build a kind of 'base union' ('Basisgewerkschaft'). Apart from the unions in the federation Türk Is, there are a number of unions covering only a factory or a region. In some of them the left play an

important role, for example in Karabük. In general their organisational concepts are limited to the legalising of DISK. It is consciously 'forgotten' that after its founding in 1967, DISK like any other union developed into a bureaucratic apparatus controlling the struggles.

We have little information about how the workers organised their struggles in the next months. There was 'temporary committees' which were not understood as organisations, but was set up and then dissolved. These committees organised assemblies in the canteen or in areas of the city ("workers councils") where working conditions and methods of struggle were discussed. Meetings or studies on certain themes were also organised. An important role was played in these committees by revolutionaries which came from the organisation Dev Yol and since 1980 existed 'underground' in the factories. In the factories in Istanbul, Ankara and Gölcük there is a number of such groups, which build up parallel structures to the unions. If this is the germ for the development of a workers autonomy or will end in an alternative trade union movement, is still open.

### Interview about the new tendencies in the movement

This is an interview with a former leader of THKP-C - a revolutionary party which advocated armed struggle - surviving a massacre liquidating the leadership of that party and in jail until 1986. Today he advocates the cooperation of the left groups and an orientation towards the mass struggles.

Question: In the 70s the Turkish labour movement under the leadership of DISK (Revolutionary Union Federation) reached a large influence and extension. This spring we have seen for the first time since 1980 mass action in the factories. This movement differs fundamentally from the union movement of the 70s. What are the differences?

Answer: In the 70s DISK mainly organised private factories and left the state factories and public sector to Türk Is. However, as it came to confrontations in connection with the contract negotiations, it became necessary to advocate DISK as the organisation for all workers. DISK had problems to fulfil the expectations. We can characterise this period as the juvenile period of the union movement in Turkey.

Concerning the present movement in the factories, formally it mostly involves Türk Is members, but this movement has bypassed both Türk Is and the former DISK. It is really a movement of the workers, a movement which has developed despite of the unions. This movement doesn't follow any road prescribed by the functionaries, but has decided on its own road and leaders. The unions have remained well behind the movement - that is the main difference with the 70s.

The leaders which the workers movement has chosen are mainly people from the socialist movement which after 1980 have become



workers or managed not to be thrown out of the unions. But I must emphasise that they all keep a great distance to the concerns of the leftwing organisations. Neither do they stick to the old union structures. Workers councils and workers representatives play a bigger role to them than the union hierarchy. Some days ago I participated in a meeting where the workers voiced their distrust of the unions. They only identify with the structures they have built themselves in the factories. Like this it has not been in Turkey previously. We are in a transitional situation. The influence of the unions is not completely broken and the workers councils have not completely established themselves. Most importantly they have not formulated any political demands in addition to the economical.

There is another important difference from the 70s: the methods of struggle. Then, struggles quickly developed into hard and militant conflicts. Today we see that the workers put more emphasis on convincing each individual. Also when they leave the legal framework, the struggles are waged by large numbers of workers. And they appear legitimate in the eyes of the mass of the workers and the population. The workers show a great creativity and manage to include also those who don't want to take a great risk by struggling.

I must now come to the last and most important difference: the workers movement of the 70s had not completely broken with the bourgeoisie. Then the attitudes of large parts of the working class was influenced by the hope to ascend into the petit bourgeoisie. Today the workers realise the impossibility of this. In my opinion there exists for the first time among the workers a consciousness of "us and them", they feel the contradiction between them and the bourgeoisie. That was not the case in the 70s.

#### **Interview with workers of the Istanbul cigarette factory Tekel**

This interview gives details about the worsened living conditions of the workers and how actions took place in the factory. First a canteen boycott, then all together "to the doctor". The unions talked to them about a 250 percent wage increase. Later they heard that the unions only demanded 90 percent from the government - that is less than the 1989 inflation rate.

*(The above is offered as a summary of events which we think are not very well known. Echanges could give a different interpretation of the meaning of workers action in such a country, of the role of 'revolutionaries' etc. Many remarks about the latter in the Wildcat material has not been included.*

*RH 9/90)*

# FRANCE

## **French bank strike, Dec.89 - Feb.90**

No.13 of the French journal 'L'Aube Internationaliste' contains material on a two month strike at **B.N.P.** (State bank in France). It is a complete report of the strike which began 12/12/89 on a wages claim in the Foreign operation center, to last two months up to mid-February 90. Even if very strong in this part of the bank and even if spreading all over the country, the strike remained a minority strike.

A strike committee was established, consisting of union and non-union people. This committee was to be revocable by and its decisions subordinate to the general assembly of the Paris strikers. At first, the strike got the support of the unions, participating to the strike committee and controlling the discussions with management. Even so, the strikers in Paris kept the general assembly every day to decide how to go ahead with their movement, published a special independent paper ('Tache d'huile'), organised a lot of blackades of offices and public manifestations, and made a lot of different attempts to spread their strike. A coordinating committee for the offices in struggle was also established.

The unions in the strike were a trojan horse. As usual, they tried to keep the strike quiet, preventing its spreading, and organising useless token demonstrations. At the end, four of them (of the five unions involved) signed a deal with management and ordered the end of the strike without putting it to a vote at the strikers' general assembly; the strikers attacked and ransacked the local offices of the unions. Apparently only one union, the communist party dominated CGT, supported the strike to the end - but strikers denounced this union's double dealing using radical words in front of the strikers and doing everything to break the strength of the strike behind the curtain.

(L'Aube Internationaliste contains a detailed chronology of the strike and some reprints from the strikers leaflets and papers.)

**L'Aube Internationaliste** (address letters as follows: M Duchemin, c/o L'Herbe Rouge, 1 bis rue d'Alesia, 75014 Paris) **No.13** also contains the following material: USSR: the long march towards democracy (with the chapters Some principles on capital - The various attempts of democratisation of the Russian state - The nature of the Russian revolution) - Extracts from the press of the 'milieu' (from 'Echanges' no.63 on UK poll tax riots - 'Internationalist Perspective' on strikes in Russia - 'Communisme' on Algeria and Burma).



No subscription price is given, but the price of this issue is 5 francs.

L'Aube Internationaliste participates in the project putting out the journal 'Revue Internationale du Mouvement Communiste', together with the journals/groups Comunismo (Mexico), Kamunist Kranti (India) and the French groups Communisme ou Civilisation and L'Union Proletarienne. A presentation text of L'Aube... has been published in this journal. This text says that after some years of studies on questions like democracy and state, the character of the wars, socialism in one country, liberation struggles, parliamentarism...some people decided in 1983 to make a definite break with the 'marxist leninist movement'. The rejection of 'the democratic principle' moved these people closer to 'the communist left', particularly the Italian left with Bordiga and the German left with Karl Korsch. Then follows a commented list of theoretical texts from back issues of L'Aube Internationaliste.

**The Programme of the Communist Revolution. Special issue** This is a special issue (May 90) in English of the journal of a group we believed didn't exist any more, the **Groupe Communiste Mondial** or **World Communist Group** as it is called in this English language journal. The GCM has its origin in the in the 'bordiguist' milieu in France in the 60s and 70s and for many years published the journal 'Le programme de la societe communiste'. The main document in this special issue is "World Communist Group, Programme". It also contains quotations or extracts from texts of Marx/Engels and 'The communist left of Italy'. Included is also a long list of 'Basic texts of our Marxist Historical line' (texts 1912-89, mainly of the 'Italian left') which they say is 'available in French only'. They might be available from the GCM in French only, but a lot of these texts exist - many of them in quite easily available editions also today - in other languages like German and English.

On the front page of the journal there is a kind of presentation text with the headline 'The line of the Historical Communist Party'. In the section of the text on 'Yesterday' the GCM adheres to the 'Historical invariance of the Communist Programme' (of Marx/Engels, Communist League, 1st International, the left of the 2nd International, 3rd International, Italian Communist Left). In 'Today' they talk about the 'Organic continuity...of the programmatic restoration of the World Communist Party with the view to its reformation...'. In 'Tomorrow' it predicts the 'Organisation of the Proletariat into class thus into Communist Party, centralist, organic and worldwide, for the realisation of the Communist Programme...'

The GCM calls for distribution of and subscriptions to the journal. No subscription price is given, but the price of this issue is £1. Letters should be addressed to: Le programme de la revolution communiste, BP 26, 75965 Paris Cedex 20.

An issue of a journal in French (no.3) is also available from the group, on 'The dictatorship of the proletariat'.

**The letter of Cavales (Commission Prison Répression, BP 163, 75463 Paris Cedex 10 - in French) No.4/March 90:** The trial of the Clairvaux

**mutineers** - The trial of the St Maur mutineers - Spain: hunger strike of political prisoners (PCE(r) and GRAPO).

Leaflet in support of a movement, 'dead prison', initiated by prisoners in the Moulins prison for several claims concerning all prisons, and leaflet distributed by these prisoners (28/5/90).

**Radio Tomate** (BP 182, 75623 Paris Cedex 13) Bulletin of a free radio giving short informations of the various groups using this radio.

**Nouvelles de nulle part - Bulletin d'Informations Libertaires Est-Ouest** (c/o CNT, 33 rue des Vignoles, 75020 Paris) **No.0/June 90:** For the support of a libertarian movement in the East - The appearances of an anarchist activity in Poland - Reports and interviews from the Trieste meeting (participants from Poland, Yougoslavia, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Russian anarchosindicalist group KAS - List of addresses of anarchist groups in these countries.

For a pamphlet in French on 'Russia 1989' available from the above address, see USSR section in this Echanges.

**A contre courant syndical et politique** (Against the political and syndicalist current) (4 rue des Iris, 52100 St Dizier) **No.13/march 90:** When the west is moving east - The condition of women in Maghreb today - USSR: the cracks in an empire - Struggles in a factory: Case Poclair, St Dizier. **No.14/April-May 90:** The Socialist Party washes whiter - Who is responsible? (On the function of the unions and workers self organisation) - On the transformation of the Post Office in France (first step to a privatisation) - Nuclear power without a future.

**Courant Alternatif** - journal of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire (OCL/Egregore, BP 1213, 51058 Reims Cedex)

**No.92/Jan.90:** Romania (When capitalism support a revolution) - El Salvador: near the volcanos - The school and the immigrants' children - Restructuring the **PTT (post and telecom)** - Anti-nuclear struggle.

**No.95/April 90:** Inquiry on homes in Lyon and Bordeaux - 10 years of **struggles in French prisons** - Chile: the first difficulties for the popular Chilean movement - Poland: an anrcho-punk group.

**No.96/May 90:** Against the racist crimes - Against the government project of restructuring the **PTT**, a general strike? - The prisons on trial.

**No.97/June 90:** The third world debt - The rising of nationalisms in the East - France, the leader of militarism - **PTT: the defeat of the strike** against the government projects - Housing policy in Ile de France.

**Iztok** - libertarian review in French on the eastern countries (BP 70, 75563 Paris Cedex 12) **No.18-19/June 90:** Special issue on **China**. The decline of the Deng dynasty. A society in crisis. The events of April-June 1989. The Peking massacres; a lot of documents on the events of



the last year, direct interviews of students and workers involved and comments on the present situation in China.

**L'Intersyndicaliste** (GSED, 11 rue St Vincent de Paul, 13004 Marseille) No.30/April-June 90: 1790-1990: the revolution goes ahead - The end to all what was forgotten, repressed and not said... - Everybody with James Schenkel.

**TGV (fast speed train project)** To enlarge the basis of the struggle against the TGV and the management of land - leaflet in French 1979/90 from 'The mutineers of the living people roundabout'. (No address - copy at Echanges)

**Interrogations pour la communauté humaine** (Interrogations for a human community) (c/o I.S., BP 243, 75564 Paris Cedex 12) June 90: Presentation text of the group (Our ideas, our activity, who are we?, life in France) - Translations from and an afterword to Bob Black: 'The abolition of work' - Correspondence (Mainly critiques from 'marxists' of the humanitarian position of Interrogations and answers to these letters) - List of available material - List of journals developing views similar to Interrogations: The American journals 'Anarchy', 'Demolition Derby' and 'Fifth Estate'.

(No subscription price is given - price of this issue is 10 francs.)

Available in English is a 1 page text: 'On crisis ideology' (a critique of marxist theories and assumptions).

**Le Brise Glace** (BP 214, 75623 Paris Cedex 13) No.4/Summer 90: We have to guess what will come later - A worker mafia (discussion between Brise Glace and Alberto Francheschini, author of the book - in Italian - 'Mara, Renato and me; history of the founders of the Red Brigades - Zionism, abortion of the workers movement - Reports of interventions and leaflets on China, evictions, etc...)

**"Nous voulons encore parler" (We still want to speak)** Included with Le Brise Glace is a call for a new magazine in French to appear in September, asking for participation and money (indicated price is 10 francs/1£). It will be 'dedicated to subversion of the social order' and will publish: 'Information concerning struggles, strikes, riots and any open or latent form of resistance to capitalist domestication' - Information on modern alienation, new techniques of suppression, economic trends, etc...' Write to: Les Archives de l'Avenir, 7 rue J F Gerbillon, 75006 Paris.

**Le Frondeur** (BP 105, 94402 Vitry Cedex) From this address a number of journals appeared throughout the years. The last one was **L'Unisme**, but differences developed between participants to this project - see Echanges 64 p.2. A new series of **Le Frondeur** now appears. No.1/July-Sep.90: Editorial - Money: the impossible question - Revolution and appearances - On the pamphlet 'Potentialites situationnistes'.

Subscription to Le Frondeur is 30 francs. The pamphlet 'Potentialites situationnistes - Propos sur la communication libre et ses ennemis' by Y. Ioannidis is 40 francs incl. postage.

## BELGIUM

**Perspective Internationaliste** - Journal of the 'External Fraction of the ICC (In French and English. Available from the following names/addresses: Destryker, BP 1181, Centre Monnaie, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium; IP, PO Box 395, Montclair, N.J. 07042, USA; BM Box 8154, London WC1N 3XX, UK) No.16/Winter 90: Section on "The economic situation": Bankruptcy in the Third World, Collapse in the East, Debt and Unemployment in the West: "Everything is fine" - Section on "Eastern Europe: Dictatorship or Democracy, One Disaster after another", with these articles: What is happening in the Eastern Bloc? The debate in our Fraction - Romania: Dictatorship or democracy, one disaster follows another - The ICC and Eastern Europe; a degenerating organisation makes a flip-flop - The changing face of imperialism.

**Communisme** - Central paper of Groupe Communiste Internationaliste (In French, from BP 54, BXL 31, 1000 Bruxelles 1, or GCI, c/o L'Herbe Rouge, 1 bis rue d'Alesia, 75014 Paris) No.31/July 90: An issue devoted to **Romania** with the title 'Proletarian struggle and bourgeois control in Romania, Dec.1989' and the articles: Introduction - The 'socialist' accumulation - Management crisis in Romania; the bourgeois offensive - Revolt and control; the tragedy of the 'common happiness'. In addition chapter 4 of the series 'Contribution to a critique of economy'.

**Comunismo** - Central paper in Spanish of the GCI (from BP 54, BXL 31, 1000 Bruxelles 1) No.27/April 90: "1984".85..87..89: worse than predicted - Argentina. the Monteneros accomplishes of the democratic consolidation of the impunity for torturers and murderers - The relationship of world forces between classes - Proposals for an international meeting.

**Mouvement Communiste pour la formation du parti communiste mondial** (In French, from BP 1666, Centre Monnaie, 1000 Bruxelles 1, or Editions M.C., c/o L'Herbe Rouge, 1 bis rue d'Alesia, 75014 Paris) No.1/Spring 90: Looking attentively at the USA - The USA State: main anticycle capitalist weapon - Nothing new in thee East, except for the capitalist recognition of the crisis - The modalities of capitalist exploitation - Romania: between state restructuring and proletarian outbursts. (This last article is also published as a pamphlet.)

This journal, meaning the 'Communist movement for the formation of the world communist party', is a regroupment of two journals previously



# SWEDEN

Echanges has started to receive some material from Sweden this year. We welcome this because both among Echanges participants and subscribers there are a number of Scandinavians.

## An independent, fighting trades union: The Syndicalists

This is a presentation pamphlet in English (it also exist in a number of other languages) of the Swedish syndicalist union SAC: Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation - Central Organisation of Swedish Workers).

Differently from a lot of other syndicalist organisations, this is to a large extent a functioning union, with around 13000 members. This pamphlet presents the SAC over 6 pages under the headlines: -SAC: a democratic union -SAC: a politically independent union -SAC: a socialist union -SAC's industrial programme -SAC and the fight against unemployment -SAC and the environment -SAC for international solidarity.

Address: SAC, Sveavagen 98, 113 50 Stockholm. SAC has recently started to publish an international bulletin in English, but this we haven't seen.

**Brand** (Box 150 15, 104 65 Stockholm) Brand is a Swedish anarchist paper, quite widely read as far as we know. We have received a number of issues (most of them containing a separate sheet with at least the headlines of each article translated into English) and will make a more proper presentation in another issue of Echanges. No.34/Feb.90: Swedish refugee policy - A discussion on occupation of houses (On the basis of a concrete example from Sweden, what should those arrested say in court? Should fines be paid?... ) - Occupations in Amsterdam, Berlin and Hamburg - War in Copenhagen (On the attempts to crush the militant political milieu **BZ** and the houses they have occupied) - Actions internationally and in Sweden against the Shell oil company presence in South Africa - Political war against the Kurds (On a West German trials against Kurdish political activists of the Kurdish party PKK) - Strike! A talk with the SAC secretary (About a **strike on the 12th of Feb.90 against the social democratic government 'crisis package'**, eventually defeated in parliament, to impose a price and wages freeze, restrictions of the right to strike etc. In this strike movement many members of the SAC participated, and the strike contributed to the resignation of the government (followed some days later, it must be added, by a new social democratic government under the same prime

minister). This interview concentrates on the SAC activity and problems of mobilising their members. Reproduced is also a speech from a SAC demonstration against the government) - Crazy anarchists stir up strikes? (On accusations about anarchists being behind a **wildcat strike among assisting nurses at a hospital in the city of Malmö** in January) - **The history of Shell** (This article says that at the beginning of the century Shell had strong interests in Russia and that in the aftermath of a large strike in Baku in 1904 they bought most of the oilfields. Shell's most important factories and refineries were in the Kaukasus area where the largest oil fields were situated. Large profits were made during WWI. With the building of workers councils in the 1917 Russian revolution, one of the first tasks is to expropriate the oil industry and Shell's empire breaks into pieces. When a number of Western countries goes to war against Russia after the revolution, Shell convinces the british government to send troops against Baku and the oil fields. After 5 months of struggles Baku falls, but the British army tries to advance further on so the oil companies set up their own army called 'the wild division'. The people of Baku take up arms and struggles goes on for 3 days before 'the wild division' flies. For the second time the oil industry is expropriated. But British and tsarist troops besiege the city, leading to a famine, and eventually capitulation. The British took over the city again and a strike breaking out some days after is brutally repressed. Shell then financed the tsarist general Denim who with his forces ravaged though Georgia and Kaukasus plundering and burning the cities supporting the revolution. Eventually the regimew of Denim falls and Shell looses its oilfields for the third time. Shell then attempted a boycott of Russian oil and succeeded in making among others England and Italy to forbid Russian oil in their harbours. Shell's largest competitor Standard Oil saw its chance and started to negotiate directly with Russia. Shell also controlled oilfields in Turkey and Romania, and enormous profits were made during WWI and WWII, selling oil and petrol to 'both sides'. During the 30s Shell was one of the companies contributing financially to the German nazi movement and supporting Franco in Spain.)- **Boycott the 1990 national census** (This article calls for a boycott of the census and argues that a boycott campaign could be successful. The 1985 census was boycotted by 57000 persons, around 1 percent of the population, but there was no boycott campaign. 2 weeks after the deadline 200000 persons had not sent in the registration forms, and it took the government a year to reduce this to 57000. The article says that a boycott of 5 percent is a bad result (from the government point of view) - with a 10 percent boycott the result is without value from a statistical viewpoint. There are references to the West German census and the opposition to it some years ago - on this we can refer to the article "Who's afraid of the security state" in Echanges no.56)



Subscription to Brand is SKR 90 for 10 issues, payable to the postal giro account no. 478 24 80 - 0.

**No Nation Bulletin No.4/May90:** This is a handwritten 12 page bulletin of the People to People Friendship Association. There are references to a Manifesto, which we haven't seen, and that this Manifesto has been spread to all continents. This issue does not enable us to say precisely what the PPFA is, but apparently it has to do with contacts and exchange of information, culture etc. between people from the developed and underdeveloped countries. It contains material about: PPFA-group formed in Lagos, Nigeria - Nigeria, my country (Remarks on Nigerian society) - Letters from contacts in various countries - About the situation in **Palau** (A United Nations Mandate, administered by USA since WWI and one of the US-Trust Territories in the Pacific Ocean - now with a self-governing status but not fully independent. The Palauan constitution prohibits chemical and nuclear weapons on its territory. There is a strong pressure from the USA, linked to possible financial contributions, to allow this and other US military equipment and installations. The situation of the people of Palau is not well known and the PPFA urges the spreading of information and protests against US pressure. (No Nation Bulletin is published 4 times a year. Subscription is 5 US\$ or the equivalent, money order or postal giro account 4807294-6, to PPFA, c/o Sören Groth, Nygårdsplatån 36, 610 70 Vagnhäräd.)

## U.S.S.R.

**Summer of discontent** (Newsweek 9/7/90): In the Soviet Union, it's time to brace strikes -and possibly worse.

**First congress of miners** (Nouvelles de Moscou 29/6/90): Report in French of the congress and the attitude of miners in Donetsk since the strikes of Summer 89.

**Political failure, a condition of the economic success?** (L'autre journal no.2, June 90): An analysis in French of the political situation in the U.S.S.R.

**Mutinies in the army** (Nouvelles de Moscou 8/6/90): A lot of information in French on the disintegration of the Russian army. (A copy of all these articles are available at Echanges.)

given). One part is an account of all kinds of political parties and groups, independent unions, environmental groups etc. with contact addresses and telephone numbers. Another part is a chronology of strikes, demonstrations etc. for the whole 1989. (Can be ordered from Nouvelles de nulle, c/o CNT, 33 rue des Vignoles, 75020 Paris.)

**Wen oder was vertritt Gorbatschow? Zum Wesen der Perestroika** This is a German version of the article on Gorbachev and perestroika which appeared in Echanges no.61. It has been published in no.55-57 of the journal Die Aktion, and those who can make use of a German version can write to Echanges.

## MEXICO

### **Ford and other struggles**

An exchange of material on Mexico has taken place for a while between a Norwegian and a French comrade, and some material on Mexico appeared in Echanges no.64. The sending of some material from US leftwing papers about showing solidarity with the Ford workers against company repression and the murder of a worker, and giving the address of a 'Movimiento Democrático de Trabajadores de la Ford', brought the following remarks from the French comrade (July 90):

"The American radical papers are full of addresses and of calls for solidarity with the Mexican workers and the attempt to build 'independent' unions. There was even a boycott campaign against some beer made in a Mexican brewery on strike for weeks (see Echanges 64). There are two interesting aspects concerning these struggles:

-More and more US firms are involved in the Mexican economy transferring their factories to this country and so developing more and more links with the US workers.

-The attempt to build 'independent' unions is more complex. On one hand the US left unionists can find some similarities with their own fight against the bureaucracy of their union and a combativity they are looking for among American workers. (I think they are very wrong on this point.) On the other hand the official US unions can show some support as part of the bureaucracy strategy to settle the relationship labour-capital in the US."



It should be mentioned that Mexico the last years has seen a number of large struggles in other sectors than the ones mentioned in Echanges no.64. This includes health workers, other car workers than at Ford, gasworkers, university teachers, telephone workers, electricity workers...

Reprinted from Industrial Worker (IWW) Feb.90:

### Mexican copper workers strike

"Last Fall, copper workers employed by the Cananea Mine - Mexico's largest - struck the the 100th time since a 1906 strike was broken by U.S.Rangers. Then, as now, workers struck for better wages and benefits. Now that Mexico is secure in its sovereignty, our fellow workers south of the border need not fear U.S. intervention to break their strikes - today the Mexican army takes care of such matters. A Mexican historian found that with the wages that drove Cananea miners to strike in 1906, workers today in Mexico's Federal District can buy only half as much food. "It's not that things were good for Cananea workers in 1906", Ruiz Harrell explains, "but that mexican workers in the Federal District today have it very bad." (Information from Latin American News Update)."

-For the address of and information about the journal Midnight Notes, which we reprinted some Mexico articles from in Echanges 64, see USA section in this issue.

## ITALY

### The regulation of strikes

(Interview with a labour lawyer, from no.29 of the journal Primo Maggio. In German in no.25 of 'Wildcat Info' - see Germany section in this issue of Echanges.)

The interview is about the passing of laws regulating strikes mainly in the public sector. The main point about this law is that it actually exists. Concerning strikes, article 40 of the Italian constitution only says that the right to strike can be exercised "according to the laws which regulates it". For 40 years the unions have been opposed to a regulation of strikes through laws, seeing it as a dangerous involvement of the state in its own sphere and as a threat to their freedom of action. The line of the unions was the 'self-regulation' of strikes.

In Autumn 87 however the union UIL (the smallest of the three main

national union federations CGIL - CISL - UIL) demanded a regulation by law of public sector strikes, which was passed in the summer of 89. In cases where the unions have their own rules about self-regulation, these take precedence over the law. In other cases the right of strike in public sectors can be exercised under certain conditions: a 5 day warning must be given, the length of the strike must be stated, and measures must be taken to allow a minimum of services within the sector affected. Examples are given of sectors where a minimum service is necessary, for example: Hygiene and health - Public transport and traffic discipline - Production and distribution of energy and goods - Post, telecommunication and public radio and TV information - Education, particularly exams in public or state recognised schools as well as final exams at the various stages of a university education - Customs etc.

The question is asked if the law is pro or anti union. The answer is that the unions see their role of self-regulation as recognised, because the law says that union rules on self-regulation takes precedence over the law. In this sense the law can be seen as supportive of the union line. The appreciation of the unions can also be seen in that the decision on minimum services take place through negotiations. It can also be seen and practiced as anti union, regulating the limits of a strike and the union freedom of action.

**Bolletina Bibliografico** (Centro di documentazione di Lucca, via degli Asili 10, CP 308, 55100 Lucca) No.9/June 90: A list of journals (mostly Italian) received and kept at this documentation center. It contains descriptions of the contents of the journals as well as addresses and prices. (No price given for the bulletin.)

This center has material of the left publications in Italy and on movements in various countries. More complete catalogues as well as photocopies of material is available.

## SPAIN

**SINEWS** is the newsletter (in English) of the *Spanish Information Network* (note new address: 131 Spencer Place, Chapeltown, Leeds LS74DU, England) and has been published since 1984 - currently with two or three issues pr. year. SINEWS is a syndicalist publication providing information from the Spanish labour movement, particularly the syndicalist part of it. It is openly in favour of the CNT-U/CGT, which however does not mean that the views of the CNT-AIT is not paid attention to. (About these groups, see Echanges 61 p.13 as well as Echanges no.63 and 64.).



The contents is partly the publishers' information about the syndicalist groups or the situation in various factories (mainly those with a relatively strong syndicalist presence), and summaries or translations of articles in various syndicalist papers independent ones like the dockers union paper *La Estiba*. (There has also been material about unions outside Spain, like the Dutch OVB and the Swedish SAC.) SINEWS is therefore a valuable publication for those interested in Spain and not reading Spanish publications themselves and a newsletter we can recommend a subscription to.

Most back issues should be available and the calculations of the price for this and a subscription is a bit complicated so we suggest that those who are interested write to the above address themselves. Those writing should be aware that SINEWS is a publication with few economic resources, so you won't get anything for free.

No.14/May 90 contains the following material: Eleventh Congress of CGT/CNT (Apart from some factual information, this article also gives interesting, but not surprising, details about tactical manoeuvres, competition for influence etc. which you also find in these kind of organisations - in this case between 'reformist' and 'radical' unions on questions like the composition of/voting power on various committees, if members of political parties can hold office in the CGT and the influence of large vs. small affiliated unions) - Opposition group forms in CGT (Against statutes revisions at the congress increasing the influence of the unions with many members) - A short report from the **FASA-Renault factory** (CGT opposition to planned redundancies supported by the other unions in the factory) -- A contribution in an ongoing polemic between SINEWS and the UK journal *Black Flag* - Report from the Michelin factory (reprinted below - a typical example of some of the material which appears in SINEWS).

Michelin united against new shift system of '5th Team' (from SINEWS no.14/May 90):

*"Rojo y Negro number 16, for January 90, reports that all the unions at the Michelin factory in Vitoria have been implementing a ban on Weekend working for six months. This is in opposition to the implementation of a fifth shift, which would bring Vitoria (presently working three shifts) in line with the company's other factories which have already moved from four to five. The unity of all the unions involved, which is a phenomena unknown for over ten years, has converted the Works Committee into a genuine Coordinadora, and the workers are kept continually informed via regular assemblies. (At the present the composition of the Committee is CCOO:8, UGT: 8, CGT: 5, ESK-CUIS: 3. Massive demonstrations are held every Thursday, and*

*only 200 of the 9000 strong workforce is attempting to scab, although the ban on Weekend working makes this impossible anyway. Almost 2000 members of the workforce are paying 600 pts (£3) a month into the resistance fund.*

*At the end of December national officials from UGT and CCOO attempted to begin negotiations on the fifth team system, but the local officials of both unions distanced themselves from this move and it had to be abandoned."*

(Note from Echanges: An article we saw in April 90 said that the struggle of the Michelin workers against around the clock operation of the factory was going on - then in its tenth month.)

La Estiba - bulletin of the Spanish dockers union *Coordinadora* (c/. del Mar,97, 08003 Barcelona) No.55/April-May 90: On the bus struggle in Madrid (chronology and commentaries) - The plan for competitiveness: a qualitative jump in concerted strategy - Agreement for the US Pittston miners - Reports from Spanish ports and the dockers struggle.

Etcetera - Correspondencia de la guerra social (Ap.1363, 08080 Barcelona) No.16/July 90: Against democracy (The invention of democracy - Democracy and the market - The real democracy) -From Lenin-Robespierre to Gorbachev-Napoleon (by A.Ciliga) -Reflections on past and present - Workers struggles in Madrid (bus drivers - see Echanges 64 p.21) and Barcelona (hospital) - Great Britain: the poll tax (a letter from a UK contact, and the article on UK from Echanges no.63) - Correspondence from readers in Spain, USA, France and Germany - Reviews (Of various journals, and of: Book in Spanish by A.Guillamón on 'Militantism and political thought of A.Bordiga 1910-30 - Book by Tavares/Ilena on anarchism and syndicalism in Portugal since 1975).

Odio al capitalismo (address letter as follows without mention of the name of the journal: AVVN, Apartado numero 25, 27080 Lugo) No.9/July-Sep 90: Capitalist trends in Eastern Europe and the USSR, class struggle and war - The marxist left in the Second International: Antimilitarism and war (a part of the series 'Programmatic development') - Class struggle in the world: two problems and one necessity (On the limitations and weak points in the present proletarian upsurges and a criticism of economism, from an analysis of recent conflicts).

Cultura Libertaria - publication of Asociacion Isaac Puente (Juan Gomez, Apdo de Correos 1687, 01080 Vitoria) No.18/June 90: The death of a friend



'Fontaura' - Books, periodicals and documents - Portuguese books review: 'A revolution inside the social revolution' (José de Brito); 'Education and workers movement' (Paulo Ghirardelli); 'Crime does not exist' (A.Da Silva Diaz); 'Anarchist utopia' (F.Luizetto).

Associacion Isaac Puente keeps an archive in Vitoria which would like regular copies of any publications relating to anarchism.

## NEW GUINEA

(Countries analysed or mentioned in Echanges are necessarily limited, due to the participants' capacities, interests and material available to them, as well as of course some kind of idea of the 'importance' of the different countries - even if this last point should not be overestimated. One of the countries not having been mentioned is New Guinea. We would like to reprint the following small item which we overlooked when it appeared, about strikes taking place quite some time ago in Autumn 1988 (taken from the Feb.89 issue of Counter Information). Anyone having more on this or later events could pass it on.)

"1000 Papuan miners barricaded an airstrip in Tahubil, New Guinea in October when O.K. Tedi Ltd. refused to negotiate over wages and conditions. A pitched battle with tear gas throwing cops and soldiers followed. Strikers kept their spirits up by free shopping in bars and shops.

December: The giant Bougainville copper mine ground to a halt when Papuans sabotaged power supplies."

## SWITZERLAND

**Confrontations** Bulletin in French of the OSL (Libertarian Socialist Organisation) (OSL, c/o CRAC, Bd Carl Vogt 7, 1205 Geneve, or / Vaud, CP 289, 1000 Lausanne 9) No.9/June 90: Democracy: the word and the thing - Report from libertarian meeting in Trieste - With the Perestroika, the KGB - The Russian empire between crisis and restructuring - Farewell to Vladimir Illitch - The phantasm of Tien An Men Square - Immigration: two of three things I know about it.

**Against fascism and racism; Visit in brown (shit colour)** Leaflet in French about the activity of fascist groups in Switzerland. No name and address - only the reference to two magazines: 'Reflexes', 14 rue de Nanteuil, 75015 Paris (French journal) and 'Antifa N-S-K', postfach 1203, 8036 Zürich (journal in German).

### LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Publications marked with \* are practically out of print and might not be available when the order is received. Prices are in 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 currence 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. They can be sent to the following addresses as well as any proposal for meeting, discussion or participation the the Echanges activity:

ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT  
BM BOX 91  
LONDON WC1N3XX

or  
ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT  
BP 241  
75866 Paris Cedex 13  
France

### PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

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



**Workers Councils - A.Pannekoek - Echanges**

\*Part 1 and 2 (1,00)

Part 3 (50p), Part 4 (50p)

\***Anton Pannekoek - His life and work - "Marxism" - "General remarks on the question of organisation - Work Press Pamphlet (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 (2,00)**\***Theses on the Chinese Revolution - C.Brendel - Solidarity (1,00)**\***The New Movement - H.Simon - Solidarity (1,00)****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)**PUBLICATIONS IN FRENCH**ECHANGES - Bulletin - specimen sur demande - abonnement 50F par an donnant droit a 4 bulletins et aux brochures ou livres publiés dans l'annee - Des exemplaires des anciens numeros peuvent etre obtenus au prix des photocopies (0,40F une double page format A4) et des frais postaux.****LIAISONS - numeros déjà parus; 10F; No.1,2,3.**\***SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE - ancien numeros (10F chaque): 5/6,23**\***INFORMATIONS CORRESPONDANCE OUVRIERES (ICO) - ancien numeros (5F chaque)**\***LANTERNE NOIRE - ancien numeros; 9,10,11**\***RAISONS DE LA COLERE - ancien numero; 1****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 miniers 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)**\***Remarques generales sur la question de l'organisation - A.Pannekoek - Vlam Canada (5F)**OTHER PUBLICATIONSEspagnol\***La huelga salvaje en polonia el 25 de junio de 1976 - H.Simon - La Piqueta**Deutsch**Fiat - Arbeiterkämpfe in Turin 1974-80 (DM 5)****Polens Arbeiter auf dem Wege der Selbstbefreiung - H.Simon (Polen 1980-82) (DM 4,50)****Der Grossen Planes 'Stimm und Gang' - Bildungsplan als Illusion - T.Sander (Über DDR) (DM 17,80)**