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United Kingdom

Radiation - 'You can't feel it, see it, smell it or taste it, but it can kill you'. Anonymous leaflet on the effects of radiation. (copy at Echanges)

Counter Information - Box 81, c/o 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh.
- N° 10 - May/June '86. Stopping Wapping. Strikes and pressure at Monktonhall Colliery - Contracts LTD (French Connection): strikers sold out by unions - Morris' Furniture factory (near Glasgow): for 39 hours a week - The unwaged and the traditional Labour Movement.
- N° 11 - August/September '86. Under Siege (South Africa) - Battling on (on the fight of the sacked News International print workers) - Getting our own back (on massive coal stealing by unemployed people) - 18 Weeks of strike at Pumpsells Printing-Bath.


Einstein is no laughing matter (Financial Times 17/10/85) Employees at a Taiwanese computer company in Telford (Shropshire) have been banned from laughing at work. It is only one example of the rules imposed on workers in the high-technology sector. Other examples have included the banning of beards and the prohibition of smoking, drinking and eating in production areas. (copy at Echanges)

Picket (see Echanges N° 47) - c/o Housmans' Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N 1 9 DX - is still published and available at the same address. Wapping pickets and demonstrations are still bringing their weekly harvest of guerilla actions. This printers' fight will get soon its first year birthday.
Serious accidents at work continue to increase (Financial Times 16/10/85). Serious and fatal injuries rose last year (1985) to 87 for every 100,000 manufacturing workers. It was 79 in 1983, 74 in 1982 and 71 in 1981. The most dangerous sectors are construction and demolition (3 killed each week in 1984) and maintenance (2 killed).

Jobs, pay and politics (Financial Times 31/1/86). Referring to an OECD-analysis, in UK. manufacturing, where employment is 25% lower now than in 1979 and is still falling, wages have been growing at an annual rate of 9%, more rapidly than elsewhere... UK's labour market is a bizarre laboratory specimen. Their defeatist conclusion is that government policies are essentially along the correct lines but are most unlikely to show results in so strange an environment: 'The British are different.. The OECD is the first to admit that the Thatcher government has done a great deal to bolster the economy's supply side: employment legislation, tax reform, privatisation, etc... But none of these measures have had any significant impact on wages, which have grown faster in real terms than under the last Labour government'. (copy at Echanges)

Another article on this subject: High pay settlements defy jobless figures (Times 29/3/86). It insists - with figures from the CBI - on the fact that the important differences in the rate of unemployment in the different parts of the UK are without influence on the wages, which are rising the same rate everywhere.

Servicing the economy (The Economist 30/11/85). With twice as much workers in services as in industry, Britain should more accurately be described as a 'service economy'. However, although real personal disposable income in Britain has more than doubled since 1950, the volume of spending on services has fallen slightly as a portion of consumer's expenditure. Over the past 30 years, the price of services has risen by a factor of 12, the price of consumer durables by only 6. People have satisfied their demand for services by buying durable goods and producing services themselves at home. In 1954 56% of household expenditure was supplied by services and 44% by goods. Last year (1984) the share of services was down to 17%. (copy at Echanges) —— (charts page 3) ——

Secret ballots do more harm than silver bullets (Guardian 11/2/86). How the new laws are used as a tool against management. The government hoped that the secret ballot would galvanise union members into expressing what the government and management would call 'the voice of reason', less eagerness to take extremes of action. Managers think now that the 'modernized democratic system' has been used as an effective tool devastating to management. On the basis of a show of hands, the company would be confident that actual support for actions would be less strong than the vote results had suggested. The vote provided everybody with the evidence that the workers really intended to strike. Union and managers had so to agree on an increased pay offer. (copy at Echanges)
Some figures on economical trends: 1970 - 1985

Sheffield steel strike ends after 16 weeks. Sheffield Forgemasters, forging and casting group, set up jointly by BSC and Johnson at Firth Brown, was restructuring its various factories, and centralising on the way the union representation and bargaining committees. Against the stewards recommendation 300 workers in the aerospace products division at Atlas site went on strike - joined by a further 450 workers - on 17/10/85. The dispute springs from a lot of grievances, including the abolition of the traditional post of full time union representative and the removal of the joint shop stewards committee at Atlas. After striking six weeks the main union ISTC instructed its members to return to work, and at the same time the company issued dismissal notices to employees who would remain on strike. The workers stayed on strike and 700 were sacked at the beginning of December 1985. Sacked workers mounted pickets outside other factories of the group. At the River Don plant only 12 out of 1,000 workers crossed the picket line. On the 31st of January 1986 the 700 workers accepted an agreement. A joint shop steward committee will be settled covering Atlas and Don sites but pay and productivity negotiations will shift to every factory level. All workers will be reinstated and the other claims (wages, redundancy guarantees, etc) will go to the conciliation service ACAS.

International Labour Reports - 2/4 Oxford Road, Manchester M1 5QA - is not a new paper. If one knows that it is published - every two months - by the left of Labour and the TUC, one knows how to read the apparently well documented articles. N° 17 (september/october '86) gives an interview of Eric Hammond, general secretary of EEPTU. Reading it we can understand what a 'modern' union. See complete text bottom of pages 12 to 27.

I.L.R = International Labour Report

E.H. = Eric Hammond

Italy

Maelström - Accademia dei Testardi, CP 16, 55061 Carrara, Italy. November 1985 - On Wolf Woland 'Radical Theory and Class Struggle (and terrorism)' Discussion of this text which is an introduction to Vaneigem 'Terrorism and Revolution'. - Recent Past, a series of articles on the group Cementismo of the early 70's and a more interesting description of 1977 in Rome (the movement(s), etc. (Also several other articles)

FIAT - 4 articles in La Republica entitled 'Discovering new production systems' (27/6/86; 1+3/7/86 and 5/7/86).

A recent survey among workers at FIAT conducted by the CIGIL trade union found that the workers were more inclined to discuss work problems with their foremen than with the union representatives. This weakness of the unions in FIAT is also beginning to seriously worry the owners and managers. Six years ago, when FIAT began sackings and lay-offs, the owner, Agnelli, made this statement in an interview:
Q. You've put the union in a tight corner.
A. I know, and I'm not pleased at all. You know why things go wrong in Italy? Because the unions are disunited and weak very often. In FIAT, union membership is 41%...below the national average of 60%. (La Repubblica, 10/10/79)

Now the unions are weaker still (for years nobody stood for election as representative in the plant, the referenda campaigns were almost inexistent), so the situation (for the management) is even worse. In the recent interview, the manager of FIAT-Auto, Ghidella, showed that he was worried about the "Japanization" of work and wished to push the idea of 'worker-manager' ('operaio conduttore') in place of the famous mass worker 'operaio di massa', the protagonist of the 60's and 70's. What this new figure is, is still unclear: it is a kind of hybrid of the workers and the lower level white collar grades in the same work area. This obviously creates new tensions: the white collar workers saw their pay advantages eroded by the inflation linked pay increases and did not support the strikes of the 70's. So in this marriage:

'Unfortunately in this, the old-minded unions are of little help.'
Q. 6 Years ago there were wildcat conflicts (in FIAT).
A. In that period I managed RIV*, and despite a strong and paleo-marxist union, there wasn't the hysterical conflict like at FIAT. (*RIV - once the bearings section of FIAT, its factories are mainly in and around the Agnelli home town, then sold to the Swedish SKF when it had financial difficulties)

Thus the productive system, having changed work relations and coincidentally having massacred the paleo unions, now has to call for a new type of union. The union is no longer thought of as a conveyor belt, nor even as the robotized work area, but as an automatic work station, linked to others by the objective situation of production.

USA - Fighting off unions Ingersoll-Rand (machine tools) uses wide range of tactics.

It moves plants, drops lines and wins workers votes (Wall Street Journal 14/6/85). In the past few years Ingersoll Rand has moved production from union plants in the North to non-union plants in the South. Similar strategies are being employed successfully by other big industrial companies that once were union strongholds. Union power has been fading in such troubled industries as steel and coal where companies typically confront a single union. But the loss of union strength is even more pronounced in companies that, like Ingersoll-Rand, lack one dominant union. When we see the details of the management anti-union tactic, we can see it is only part in a wide puzzle to remove all non-profitable business. In such periods with the threat of closing factories, it is even easier to persuade workers to vote to decertify the union. After that, the next move is to restructure, moving, sacking workers or increasing exploitation. (copy at Echanges)

How power will be balanced on Saturn's shopfloor (Business Week 5/5/85).

General Motors launches an experiment in self-management in order to increase productivity. This new car factory is supposed to start production in 1989 and its organisation is discussed with UAW. This project called Saturn will give to 6,000 car workers (80% of the workforce) a job for life - except in the case of 'catastrophic events'. The traditional hierarchy of bosses will give way to management union committees. The basic groups will be work units of 6 to 15 UAW-workers who will elect a 'counselor' amongst them and the team will decide who does which job. It will also maintain equipment, order supplies and set the relief and vacation schedules of its members; it will have a personal computer for keeping tabs on business data. Three to six work units will be part of a 'work unit module' led by a company adviser. A business unit made up of company representatives and elected union advisers plus specialists will coordinate plant level operators. A manufacturing advisory committee with the same kind of representatives will oversee Saturn complex. At the top, a strategic advisory committee will be the usual staff of high managers plus a top UAW adviser. (copy at Echanges)

Organized Labor at the crossroads (Ray Guardian) describes the situation of the Unions in California and analyses a report produced by a committee AFL-CIO: 'The changing situation of workers and their unions'. This report includes 28 recommendations, that unions adopt 'new approaches' to dealing with employees particularly in 'non-adversarial relations'. So the remedy proposed to overcome the present union crisis is a reinforcement of union bureaucracy and a bigger support to management. (copy at Echanges)

Wheeling-Pittsburgh strike (Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia). The first strike against a major steel producer since 1909, against an attempt to bring lower wages. A judge ruled that the company could legally annul its existing contract and a new contract was presented to the unions: wages and benefits cut by 18%. The strike begun on the 21/7/85 and was lost at the end. (various articles - copies at Echanges)

Factory automation - a surprisingly rough ride for almost everybody (Financial Times 7/7/86). The article deals with the difficulties many companies (including Japanese ones) are having to make profits from advanced factory automation systems. These difficulties stem from the main causes: because of the fierce competition, the anticipated growth has not yet happened and with it no profits and no returns for capital. The time and the cost of computer programming are notoriously unpredictable in most applications. Industry is filled with horror stories of automation projects running late and over budget because of software problems. Another sobering discovery for top managers is that large automation projects tend to have major impact on how a factory and even the entire company operates. (copy at Echanges)

31, No. 4: Mexico in ferment: strikes, protests, discussions, challenge ruling powers. 5,000 Rally in Hormel strikers' defence. A second look at Marx's mathematical manuscripts. July '86: AT&T: the strike as seen by the pickets.


Synthesis, A newsletter and journal for social ecology, deep ecology and bioregionalism - PO Box 1858, San Pedro, Ca 90733. April '86, No 22: Green movement or green politics? Green politics in Canada. Review of 'Deep Ecology' (collection of articles) and of 'Bilding the Green Movement' (collection of interviews and Essays of Rudolf Bahro, author of 'The Alternative in Eastern Europe'). Bahro's conclusion is quoted (when he resigned from the German Greens).

'This experience is the end of traditional political experience altogether. At last, I have understood that a party is a counter productive tool, that the given political space is a trap into which life-energy disappears, indeed where it is rededicated to the spiral of death... It is directed not at the original project which is today called 'fundamental', but at the party... I am not becoming unpolarical. I want to contribute to creating a new place and new practice'.

Processed World, 55 Sutter Street, Apt 829, San Francisco, Ca. 94104. No 16/Spring '86: Correspondence. The Dossier Society. South Africa: laboratory
Unions divided: the revolt of the rank and file (Business Week 11/8/86). In industry after industry, locals are defying the national leadership. We can see worker dissent causing problems in recent struggles (GM workers -1983; Kruger stores -1984; General Electric - 1985; Watsonville Canning -1985; Hormel -1985; City of Detroit -1986. (copy at Echanges)

At Sanyo's Arkansas plant the magic is not working (Business Week 14/7/86). This article describes a violent strike in Forrest City (Arkansas), Sanyo-factory. It is supposed to show the difficulties of modern capitalism (Japanese one in this case) to have its new methods working well in a very traditional (they will say backward) environment. But doing so, it shows something else far more important: the real nature of class struggle. We can understand it from two declarations. One from a community leader: 'People here are still trying to get over the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on integration of schools, yet Sanyo is asking them to accept Japanese ideas and technology'. The other one is from a top manager, the Sanyo vice-president: 'In a community as small as Forrest City, it's hard to understand that people who live down the street from you would destroy your personal property'. In fact during the strike 'windows were broken, guns were fired, cars were overturned and at one point the plant was nearly overrun by the strikers'. So nobody understood the reaction of people 'uneducated, poor and apprehensive of change' in a 'small, isolated town of conservative values'. What they could not understand is that class struggle is not connected to their education or opinions in the society or milieu, but directly bursts up from being considered as mere objects in the system of exploitation either modern or out of date. (copy at Echanges)

Hong Kong Letter. 2/9/86
You will recall that almost 2 years ago I published a left-communist journal called 'International Correspondence'. In the english supplement of N° 2 I mentioned having written and published two texts in chinese, one on the politico-economic nature of the so-called 'socialist societies', the other on the degeneration of the russian revolution. In fact I gave an extremely brief outline of the structure of the two texts. Over the past 1½ years or so, I have written english versions of these two texts for the purpose of the international distribution, as I believe they, with an analysis which is radically different from the 'mainstream' left-communist analysis of the questions/topics concerned offered by the International Communist Current, the Communist Workers Organization, etc., are of some importance. I am now publishing these english versions (not translations) in book-form and I am seeking assistance to distribute the book internationally. The book is 300-pages long and is priced at US$5/£4 which is just enough to cover costs and seamail postage (add US$2/£150 for airmail). The reason I am writing to you now is twofold:

1) To see if you can help distribute it to your contacts and to bookshops anywhere in the world that you are able to cover; for this purpose, I would appreciate it if you could inform me as soon as possible, stating the number of copies that you need and which cities in which countries you can cover.

2) To see if you can publish this letter in your newsletter together with my address, so that the readers who are interested can contact me directly. For this second purpose, allow me to enumerate the sections of the two texts as follows. The first text: Preface, Value, Commodity, the Law of Value, Capitalism & Current 'Socialism', What is socialism?, Addendum. The second text: In Defense of the Socialist Nature of the Russian Revolution, Method & Analytical Framework, The Economic Theory & Practice of the Russian Revolution: part one (Industry) and part two (Agriculture), The Establishment & Destruction of the Dictatorship of the proletariat, The Russian Revolution's Theory & Practice - a/b) The organization of the Soviet Government: Theory & Practice (parts One and Two); c) The Relationship between the Party, the State & the Working Masses; d) The Crushing of Kronstadt: the final defeat of the Russian Revolution, Exporting the Revolution, Conclusions.

Address - (without any other mention) - PO Box 44007, Shaukeiwan Post Office, Hong Kong.

HOW JAPAN IS LENDING MONEY TO THE U.S.
INVESTORS ARE SNAPPING UP BUSHELS OF U.S. BONDS... AND BANKS ARE ON A LENDING SPREE

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Data: Merrill Lynch Capital Markets, Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., BW Estimates
ILR: The electronics industry is notorious for moving production around the world, picking and choosing where it will invest. Do you as a union have any particular policies on how to overcome those problems?

EI: Well, I deal with it on two levels. One is being responsible to our members, but also I deal with it as a member of the Industrial Development Advisory Board which advises government on new investments. Very often a possible investment is being haggled about a number of countries and it becomes an auction. Our effort is to say, "Look, we can do this particular process, make this particular product, as well as it can be made anywhere, but our members are properly skilled and that there's an environment in which that particular industry can prosper. It really is to make the industrial environment as attractive as possible.

EI: it's not a matter of concessions. Our approach is a new one. We say, "Look, if you're prepared to do this, then you can have a much more effective and stable set-up." The number one factor which we put to anyone we're negotiating with under these new rules is that we want equality of status. Instead of what I call the obscurity of industrial apathy, which is what pertains in most British industry, we want equality right across the board.

ILR: Accepting the logic of competition for investment it may be argued that you have as an union agreed to bargain away certain traditional rights. How far would you be prepared to go in giving away trade union rights, for example, to compete with not just Japanese but South Korean or Filipino workforce?

EI: Well, dealing with it this particular process, make this particular product, as well as it can be made anywhere, but our members are properly skilled and that there's an environment in which that particular industry can prosper. It really is to make the industrial environment as attractive as possible.

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Jalons - Research, marxist studies for the revolutionary struggle.

Jalons - Research, marxist studies for the revolutionary struggle.

La Banquise - a review of social criticism

Réseau Info Santé

Ce monde n'est pas la nôtre

Tertiary Sector: the annual cost of a typist increased while that of a word processor decreased (from a study performed in the U.K. in 1977-81. (Published by APEX - Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff, London)

Secondary sector: the hourly cost of a robot is falling and is now well below that of the workers it is replacing. (From a study made in 1982 in the USA in the motor-vehicle sector). Capital's very logic leads to man being replaced by the machine.

ILR: This is the so-called 'pendulum' (see previous page).

EH: That's right. What it really poses is: are there agreements in Britain which are 'strike agreements'? Because if we have a 'no-strike agreement' then the others must be 'strike agreements' (in which) it must be legal to strike, as if strikes are something of value in themselves. Of course, there are people, sects and nuts, who actually believe that in being involved in strikes workers find out how to struggle and this leads them on for the revolution. My view is that the trade union function is to deal with matters in a way which doesn't involve workers in industrial action.
50 years ago: the Spanish Revolution
(Spartacus – 5 Rue St. Croix de la Bretonnerie – 75004 Paris, two new publications in French: Spain 1936-7 by Henri Plochter - The War consumes the Revolution (90 Fr). Along the path of the Spanish Revolution by Nicolas Lazarevitch (reprint 35 Fr).

Héritage Rouge (Chez Félix – 65 Rue Bichat, 75010 Paris, France – in French), no. 1 Set.-Oct. 1986. This publication follows on a split in the group which published LR and explains "why a new libertarian magazine?"


No. 54, March 1986: Flexibility in the Rhone Poulenc Vitry factory – Hypermarkets: the beginning of Sunday opening – Disneyland in France: mainly on the American group’s needs as regards working conditions – Lane duck nuclear industry: the revolt of Plogoff, an attempt to reunite with the present (on a new nuclear power station in Britain) – SHAF: the Maghrebians regain their culture – RATIF: there are still young people who make an effort – On the borders of the Force Ouvrière union and free-masonry: the MPFT (Movement for a workers’ party) party once founds the already known alliance of anarcho-syndicalism, libertarians, the Trotskyist Lambert, and the "socialist" Bergeron.


Chronicle of present strategies (in French) No. 4, November 1985: This issue is taken up entirely by a long text announcing the closure of the publication which had succeeded La Frondeur. Too much, it seems is being "left out" along with accusations against "the others", to allow for a bold and lucid examination of this pass, thus leaving in the shade some of the contradictions which we could all discuss.

The statement does not contain, as the text says, a "past debt" since the statement of being "resolutely facing up to the future" and the "refusal to fall into despair" appears to be the antidote to well known developments. The end contains an appeal to confront and debate over a possible "going beyond" of their reflections and for possible meetings. The previous box number has been kept: EP105, Le Frondeur-9402 Vitry Cedex, France.


H.R: There are cases where you have created agreements on behalf of a workforce which is not even in place. How do you overcome the problem, the agreement without the workforce itself, deciding its own agreements? What happens if they run counter to the agreements you have settled in advance?

EH: A number of these are not 'green field' (new site) situations, they're collapse situations in which the workforce and the unions don't have many cards to play. Hitachi in South Wales was one of those. GEC just walked away from it and Hitachi had to be persuaded to stay. They...
Tunisia: trade union resistance - On the ecologists: a trip through the green galaxy - 50 years ago: Spain 1936, the black and the red. Nothing human can be enforced by fear (a leaflet in French). By the De Cangaceiros on "Paris under a state of siege".

Strikers sentenced to pay damages to non-strikers
The Amiens Court of Appeal has confirmed the magistrates judgment which sentenced 24 strikers in a factory (600 workers, production of suitcases) to pay damages to 128 non-strikers to cover wages lost ($25,000). This exceptional judgment, for France, is to be considered in the context of a legal regulation in the U.K. which makes it possible to seek damages if they feel they have been hit by "illegal" strike action. Here a recent judgment even awarded damages to a traveller to cover his costs arising from an "illegal" strike on the railways and which the ASLEF union will have to pay. Financial sanctions against strikes falling on the workers' shoulders seem therefore to be an addition to and possible later replacement of those the owner can use against the workers or the union. This indirect limitation to the right to strike shows more clearly than ever that the relations between workers and owners result directly from the balance of power, quite outside the channels of mediation.

Thirty years of workers' struggles in the USSR - pamphlet by the OCL/Courant Alternatif by Denis Jean, (address on p. 4 supra)
This publication provides information we have on the struggles that took place in the USSR between 1953 and 1983. Its great merit is to have attempted to start from simple facts in situating these struggles in the context of the economic and political evolution of Russia. This helps to make the text clear, especially difficult in an area where the tremendous lack of information (itself this speaks volume) means that the facts we get to hear about must be considered as a few short glimpses into a huge struggle, considering the size and the level of industrialization of the state of the USSR. It is certainly all too easy to extrapolate and interpret, but the text refuses to fall into this trap by outlining the existence and the limits to the movements of individual and collective resistance and the current called "free trade unions". Indirectly, it also puts its correct place what the west exploits under the cover of "dissidence".

USSR/East Europe - Itzok Libertarian review on East Europe (BP 161-09 - 75422 Paris Cedex 09, France) (in French) No. 12, March 1986: Poland Homek: libertarian magazine - Interview with H. Wujec - East Germany outline of East German contestation and the soft revolt of youth - Algeria - Bulgaria the Bulgarian woman - USSR the death of V. Livinov - Announcement of an irregular "Itzok Letter", a circular to supplement to review - available on order.

The text does not really contain any new material, except the indirect confirmation that the movement of class struggle in 1980 developed in such a way that any attempted control and manipulation by the embryonic apparatuses which constituted small circles of intellectuals and militants (notably around the KOR) could only fail. The authors state furthermore that the intellectuals "hypotheses on the mood of the proletariat are based on the opinions of a very small but very active minority". The text explicitly that in 1980 "the strike started suddenly and was too decentralized for the intellectuals to be able to moderate it in any way". This text runs through the whole text that the workers in struggle are to be moderated. This moderation should act through the channel of the "workers' organizations".

We have a joint course for firms that have got these sort of agreements December last year – the first of its kind – which was concerned with how to convey and how to understand
aries, and political wisdom tempered their crude and brutal language; this tempering being the work of Solidarity (following the intellectuals' advice) and considered as one of its "main contributions to the workers". This was, in fact, precisely the role of Solidarity and those around it, but which should be expressed more fully as the accomplishment of the function of a trade union in a society based on exploitation. This would lead one to understand the blocking of Solidarity and then its repression, because it was precisely this "unrealistic radicalism" which was quite concrete on the workers' part that prevented Solidarity and the intellectuals from playing this role.

Autogestione Quarterly review for anarcho-syndicalist action (N.B. New address: c/o Mario Filigola - CP 4904 - 00182 Roma Appio Italy) (in Italian); No. 7, Dec. 1985; Pamphlet on the budget law. No. 12, May-July 1986; The national energy plan - Restructuring: employees' struggle and ideology in a factory in an advanced sector; the case of Foster Wheeler (Italy) - The vicious circle of wages - Technological innovation and professionalism: a new mode of production: self-management at Ford Argentina - The IMF: the excuse of the bourgeois-left and the left in the Argentinian situation - War and the Indian question in Guatemala - Note on East-West relations - Poland: Solidarity betrayed - Spartaco Stagnetti: an anarcho-syndicalist in the struggles of the Roman workers' movement.

Haelstrom Accademia dei Testardi (GF 16 - 55061 Carraia, Italy) (in Italian) November 1985: On Wald Woland "Radical theory and class struggle (and terrorism)" - Discussion of this text, an introduction to Vaneigem. Terrorism and revolution - On the recent past: a series of articles on the group Comontismo in the early 70s and a more interesting description of Rome in 1977 (the movements etc.) - Other articles. One can find in Le Banquise, (no. 4, see p. 2 above), entitled Italy 1977 a letter of explanation from an Italian comrade of Haelstrom describing the practice of the "militants of autonomy", "Leninists à la Negri" as "a modern leninism, because one is no longer dealing with a formal organization bringing consciousness from the outside, but a compact ensemble rich in military prestige which influences the rank and file movement in which it is implanted so as to lead it by the spectacular effect of its actions and its organizational capacity as compared with all the other components of the movement... Rosso (the newspaper-group ed.) tends to be taken for the movement, taking it over and, at the same time, communicating actions and movements as those of a particular organization: such a group tends to mystify, to shuffle the cards, to present itself not merely as a part, but also as the representative of the whole of the social autonomy and thus to struggle in all the situations: where the proletarians fight the unions and the CP, but also in certain cases to withdraw militants from the struggles to reinforce the organization, or even to put a brake on the movement, so as to mould it to its particular organizational needs..."

FIAT has signed an agreement with the unions to take back all laid-off workers, in February 1986. In October 1980, 23,000 workers (15% of the workforce) were made redundant and placed on 80% of their gross earnings. One had at any price to avoid that these "privileged unemployed" became part of an explosive situation. Today, the remaining 5,500 beneficiaries of this system (the others have since found other jobs or have retired) are to be progressively taken back by FIAT. The unions accepted this in order by conceding major increases in flexibility in the FIAT factor (weekend working, third night shift... when production requires it). Throughout Italy there are still 500,000 laid off workers working only part time out of 3 million "official" unemployed.

Greece Very little has been published about the strike wave against the socialist government's austerity programme in March and April. Alongside the trade unions linked to the socialist party which tried to play for time, a left wing opposition tried to exploit the conflicts, but entered into competition (two communist parties and a section of ex-socialists). Another type of agitation developed in parallel among the peasantry and the middle classes which the right and the extreme right tried to exploit. All sections of the economy seem to have been involved in strikes of greater or lesser length and with violent struggles against the police.

Spain Restructuring in the Spanish ports: Four months of dockers' struggles we cannot give a detailed chronological account of the strike here: one has already been made available in the dockers' publication La Banquise. What I want to do is to provide an analysis. According to me, this was a "classic" conflict, exemplified many times over in the last few years in Spain: workers' resistance to restructuring (or reconversion as one would prefer to say). But there is a difference in the dockers' case: the main unions (CCOO and UGT) are practically inexistant in the sector. The majority of the Spanish dockers belong to a different model of a union, the Coordinadora, the structure and function of which are linked to the assemblyist tradition from the period of the fall of franquisme. The Coordinadora comprises about 90% of the dockers from all the Spanish ports. As in every union body, one can find tendencies towards bureaucratization, but these are rather reduced by the practice of speaking "openly", the dynamic of assemblies, the revocability of the members' boards, All this makes it possible for the dockers to carry out a more or less continuous form of pressure against the company.

ILR: Despite this image of being the market union, there have still been times when you've shown distinct signs of solidarity. I was thinking, for example, of GCHQ (see previous page), where the EETPU has been vehement in its criticism.

EH: We saw it as a matter of basic human rights.

ILR: So what if a Nissan or Hitachi worker in Japan asked for your solidarity to put pressure on the company right up to taking industrial action against the company, would that be a possibility?

EH: A possibility, but effective international action has been very thin on the ground and I can hardly see people in Britain endangering their
ity of the representatives etc., and in the fact that there were no permanent representatives. All in all, it was a trade union that did not accept the principles of negotiations already imposed by the main unions in the country.

Restructuring in the ports was imposed by a socialist government decree and there had already been an attempt to reconvert the ports in 1980, but with the resistance of the bosses and the coast administration (which belongs to the state) led to the UCD plans being withdrawn. Five years later, in October 1985, the High Court declared the law invalid (see La Razon, Oct. 1985). The socialist government replied to this set-back with a new decree, which although it was completely new in form and seemed to accept the dockers' demands, was completely unacceptable for the dockers as it foresaw 3,000 dismissals, the division of the present dockers' collective into four categories (i.e., destroying the unity and homogeneity from which the dockers derive their strength) and above all removing the dockers from the control over the work process, transferring this to the entrepreneurs and port managers (the dockers' power on the dockside is very important).

At the same time, the new decree, even if it favoured the managers position as regards work conditions, simultaneously caused a process of capital concentration there are still many companies working in the ports (27 in Barcelona alone). The decree envisaged the setting up of mixed companies (majority state shareholding) so as to provide the managers with some control over the workforce to begin with, then to offer concessions to private companies, especially multinationals, which in fact control shipping movements, as one saw at Algeciras.

The government's tactic was to last out until the elections so as to avoid conflict during the election run up. For this reason the dockers came out so as to force the government to publish the decree and to start negotiations. Strike calls began in March 1986: these were the general limited strikes, but their length was to be extended progressively as the elections approached. They were effective enough to cause shortages (blown up by the press to attract public opinion against the strikers) in the Canary and Balearic Islands.

The strike cycle was initially supported by the CCOO and the very poorly represented CNT even if the latter was part of the Coordinadora in Barcelona. It was a success because it was supported by the dockers and large except where the UGT had a majority position (Galicia, Fasajes, the Basque region). On the other hand, certain ports saw very spectacular events clashes with the police at Gijon and Bilbao (where the strike had begun on April 25th), in Barcelona, where the strikers occupied the OTP offices (the body which runs the port on behalf of the state) and placed the regional autonomous government under pressure by using all the vehicles and locomotives of the port to block the roads and rumbias (boulevards) along with the square in front of the Town Hall and the Generalitat. The experience of the 1980 strike was very important in the fact that the government and businessmen did not take on strike breakers (some were ambushed and injured during the daily raffles with the dockers). This explains that the "minimum levels" of service fixed by the civil governors during the strike were never respected, as they were then considered an abuse. The only boats to be unloaded (or loaded) were those carrying medical and hygiene products or perishable goods. The agreement of the dockers was always required. Only one boat was loaded under police and Guardia Civil protection.

There are two very significant points concerning this struggle. Firstly, in the manner in which the press reported it: it was unwanted. It was never viewed as a matter ofdockers - the dockers are considered one of the "privileges" of Franquism (the OTP had been established by Franco's fascist minister Giron during the 1940's) or even fascists, the IAFP Coordinadora running the corruption in the ports... Certainly the job of the press is to do what its masters call for, but this time the cynicism and manipulation of the facts reached new heights. From reading the papers, one would gain the impression that the workers struggling to hold onto the gains won during the struggles at the end of Franquism were privileged simply because they refused to be thrown into the same miserable situation as other workers. This is the political philosophy of socialism.

Secondly there were the use of technology as a means of eliminating workers' control and the role of the dockers' collective. So the practical application of the decree showed that all the machines working on the dockside were to be used by only one of the four categories mentioned in the decree, this was not a question of professionalism in the selection, but merely one concerning the conditions of work, that is, the handling of the machines would be taken over by those directly employed by the companies and probably with greater job security. This meant that the more important operations would no longer be carried out by the dockers in the present sense of the word, but by employees without the same conditions as the others. It is evident that new technology (software and hardware) are increasingly important in the ports. The way in which it is introduced lies entirely in the hands of capital and even more so in this case than in others because the consequences are not merely quantitative (reduction in the size of the workforce), but also qualitative (transformation of the work process leading to the physical elimination of the dockers in terms of their function and presence). During the final days before the general election, the National Labour Director asked the dockers to observe a truce seeing that, since the government had not made its final opinion known, this meant that it was favourable to negotiations. But only to negotiations to decide the way in which to apply the decree. From a certain point of view, one could say that the discussions on this basis were somewhat of a world, that there's no way you could stop the Chinese making those products and that we had better be looking at some more developed product, to get at the leading edge of technology.
The discussion recommenced at the beginning of July. Even though the dockers had shown a unitary solidarity in action, their cohesion was always precarious. One should not forget the possibility of inter-port competition to win new traffic. Nor should one forget that this strike was the direct result of the deep transformation in the organization of maritime traffic worldwide over the last few years. The oligopolistic system of traffic control which fixed tariffs and shared out the shipping lanes for goods in regular conferences (of large transport organizations headed by Lloyds) was coming unstuck because of outsider competition (new companies not part of the conferences, e.g., Evergreen) which "unfairly" cut freight rates and offered permanent services on routes round the world. All this must be added to the new chance for the Mediterranean in overturning the relations of power existing up to the present between the ports in different countries or even within the same country. Trade union negotiations deriving their strategy in relation to these problems would readopt the logic of capital in preserving employment in its own port. The offer of better work conditions would inevitably lead to a division of forces and the breakdown of the dockers' solidarity, this was the most dangerous trap the strike could fall in to. Naturally, negotiations had to be undertaken because we are not dealing with a struggle leading to the abolition of wage labour, but of one to maintain that part of control over their own work which the dockers had won and which the socialist government wished to undo.

One must add that there were already differences among the dockers which could become determinant in the outcome to the struggle. For example, the composition of the work squads on the dockside differed from port to port, meaning a lower cost in freight handling which is the key point in competition between enterprises. Thus the fear of losing traffic (company could at any time select another port for future trade) could give rise to a tactic in which everyone would support the interest of "his" port. If such a tactic were to prevail in this protectionist way, the strike would collapse. Since solidarity can only be based on the real cohesion of material conditions of work, there was the threat, a latent divide among the companies blackmailing with threats to switch traffic was already an argument which weighed heavily on the discussions and consciousness of the collective and could lead to an extremely bad defeat for the dockers if it became determinant in the strike strategy. I feel that it was a question of a potential dividing line which could lead to a real split in the class unity in this sector. That would all depend on the dockers' capacity to react with a general point of view: the only consideration of their short term interests could thus create the most favourable conditions for developing links of solidarity going beyond the particularity of each port.

One cannot leave out the political manœuvreure of the government in this restructuring of the ports: they wished to eliminate the last case of a rank and file workers' movement still existing in Spain. To the extent that the dockers were organized in an "atypical" union which was subject to unforeseen and uncontrollable rank and file reaction (there was no real bureaucratic control of the classical kind), the manoeuvre wished to force the union to become a "responsible" one or simply to eliminate it. The ports would fall under the control of the UGT with the usual policy of "having connections" found in the PSOE. The strike at Algeciras (see Estiba no. 11) was the first attempt, a preliminary test before setting a... and the decade and the balance of power to be struggles over. The concession to Sea-Land of a new container terminal in the port was an attempt to break the dockers' organization's monopoly in recruitment. To achieve this aim, they tried the direct recruitment of new dockers not on the lists of dockers held by the dockers' rank and file organization. Naturally these dockers were to be signed up by the UGT, the management of the multinational and the government representatives were taken by surprise by the speed of the dockers' response and the size of the threat of mobilization. They held back at Algeciras to start negotiations... but they had certainly profited from this lesson and it would come in useful in the next round.

Reconversion in this sector was not undertaken in the same way as in the shipyards. Here we are not dealing with an obsolete, but a dynamic sector, with a bright future and of capital importance for Spain (80% imports and 90% exports pass through the ports). This situation was the one that laid the basis of class action. Besides, as the struggle at Algeciras showed, however strong capital is, it can be made to "see reason" when workers' action involves a vulnerable sector in the economy in a forceful way. The dockers knew this and were able to avoid all the traps and tricks to use this force. But they also knew that it would be a long struggle given their isolation and the government's margin of advantage. They understood that the set backs to struggles against restructuring in other sectors could not be taken into consideration as they were a completely different kettle of fish.

(Another text will appear in the next Echanges in this strike).

For more details see la Estiba: organ of the Coordinadora nos. 16-18. These articles have now been translated in Spanish Dock Strike 1986 (BN Bloc - London WC1XX).

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or: FAC (Federación Autónoma de Colectivos) - Calle Rec Comtal 18, 1, 1 A - Barcelona

ILR: Are you affiliated to any international trade secretariat?

EH: I can't see that they're a major factor in international industrial affairs. We've sought in recent years to have more bilateral contacts with friendly unions, for example with the Scandinavian unions and with the All China Federation of Trade Unions. We have set up a college to up-grade the technical training of our electricians. We sell that training to industry and we use the profit to retain our unemployed workers in the western world that's in technical education but we've not kept it to ourselves, we've helped our colleagues in China, not in a market union.
The Animals on the Farm (Association pour la Communaute Humaine Mondiale, BP 39, 33034 Bordeaux Cedex, France - in French).

The brochure deals with "An essay on the social question in the so-called 'Third World'" and also contains a text recalling the old militant Gaston Davoust (The Refusal to succeed). Send 45 FF made out to D. Coscuillula. This brochure will be reviewed later.

ILR: In this investment auction, do you see yourself in competition with workers say in West Germany or Japan or in the United States?

EH: Most certainly, yes. I also see myself in competition with my colleagues in the British trade union movement. Soon after I became General Secretary we produced a brochure, a prospectus of the union, saying what we stood for and what we felt was distinctive about our attitudes, and with some commendations from ministers and industrialists. We translated that into Japanese and sent a trade union mission to speak to companies out there. Because of explaining ourselves in that way I think we have a more than even chance of a company looking our way if they come here from Japan.

ILR: If you're taking a very competitive attitude towards getting investment to this country and the Chinese are doing the same into their free trade zones, don't you feel that you are being played off against other trade unions by the transnationals? Isn't there a Dutch auction between unions to offer more and more preferential deals to the companies?

EH: I don't think the industrial relations scene or an agreement is decisive about whether they're going to come or not. I think the decisive things would be the general level of earnings and skills in the country they were considering. Is it there a Dutch auction but...
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
The U.S. can be inflexible too - article in the Financial Times by N. Priore:
It is widely, and incorrectly, held in Europe that in the USA there is greater freedom to 'hire and fire' and that American employers have more freedom in this matter than their European counterparts. This may be partially correct, especially in relation to their French fellows; but all the same they are obliged to obey a series of rigid laws and procedures protecting employees and to assure equality in the division of labour. This entails certain costs in sacking workers and leads to the slowing of growth in Europe.
This by and large covers the distribution of jobs within the firm. The management does not control which worker does which job, nor which worker in the job affected is to be sacked, nor, for those remaining, will do what. This is decided by collective agreements (collective bargaining) made with the unions and, in non-unionized factories, there is a series of regulations based on the model of the unionized ones. These rules give great importance to seniority which implies that in cases of sackings followed by re-hiring, the more "senior" workers have to be re-hired before any new workers are taken on. This very rigid system works in the following way: each worker is given a certain job when he is taken on and is placed on a pay ladder based on seniority. The worker that earns most is the one hired the longest time ago. If he dies or retires, all the other workers take one step up the ladder. This leads to enormous costs of movement: if a factory with 150 workers has to replace one of them, all 150 of them must be moved. If the employer wishes to cut one job, he has to move the remaining 149 to other jobs. And, on top, these costs are increased by those of training for the new jobs.

There is another area of rigidity which worries American employers, perhaps even more so than the one already mentioned. Employers are obliged to respect the "rules of work" which define precisely the content of each post. The employers would gladly get rid of this and have turned their attention to Europe which is more flexible in the matter. They attribute stagnation in productivity in America to these over-rigid rules.

What we have mentioned mainly affects blue collar workers while work rules and the seniority system are largely absent in the white collar sector, mainly because until now there has been no job loss in that sector. The kind of jobs that might correspond to the image one tries to spread in Europe is that of office or shopworkers (jobs taken in the main by women and at the lowest end of the scale). The rapid introduction of bank and insurance computerization could for the first time lead to massive sackings.
Paul Blumberg has studied the changes in wages since 1947 and this sociologist clearly shows in his book Inequality in the Age of Decline (1980) that:
- since 1965 real wages have ceased to rise, affecting different sectors in different ways
- according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the overall real wage bill for workers has fallen by about 2% between 1965 and 1979
- if one takes individual sectors, mining is the only sector where significant real gains (+20% 1968-78) have been made, with +7.4% in industrial manufacturing, +1.6% in building, +4.2% in services, but with falls in shops (-3.6%), banking and insurance (-2%).
- one takes individual professions, the blue collar workers in traditional industries with strong unions have been able to increase their buying power between 1969 and 1978 considerably. This little group includes car workers, steel workers and miners. The real wages of a steel worker have risen 34.9%, a coalminer 34.4% and those of a car worker 25.4%.

Workers in the shoe making and textile sectors have seen their wages fall by 4% to 7%, bank employees by 7.9%, employees in insurance companies by 3.7% and college professors by 7.1%, finally librarians by 10.3%.
- one should note that the wages of blue collar workers in the protected sectors have risen much more than those of shop and bank workers. Expressed in a percentage of the wages of these workers, a car worker earns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank worker</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker in a large store</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- the erosion of wages in the public sector was very rapid in the 70s: between 1971 and 1976 the real wages of council workers in many cities fell: - 33% in Buffalo, - 27% in Pittsburgh, - 26% in Atlanta, - 22% in San Francisco and New York, - 16% in Chicago.

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At Sanyo’s Arkansas Plant
The Magic Isn’t Working

It’s a new American folktale—popularized even in a recent movie, *Gung Ho*. U.S. managers run a once-successful factory into the ground. The Japanese arrive, pour in capital, and apply legendary management skills. Productivity soars, and Americans and Japanese walk together into the sunset.

Sanyo runs a huge television and microwave factory. It’s a new American folktale-popularized even in a recent movie, *Gung Ho*. The Japanese experience here, they could accept Japanese ideas and technology.

The cultural gap is wide. The Piggly Wiggly supermarket may stock bamboo shoots these days, but Forrest City remains a small, isolated town of conservative values in eastern Arkansas. Many workers, half of them white and half black, are uneducated, poor, and apprehensive of change.

People here are still trying to get over the 1984 Supreme Court ruling on integration of schools,” says one community leader, “yet Sanyo is asking them to accept Japanese ideas and technology.”

Tension between workers and managers has a long history. Early on, Sanyo wanted to try quality circles but couldn’t enlist much support for them. Then frustrated American managers began taking a harder line with labor, according to one former employee. In May, 1985, open talks on a new contract, it axed the local union president. When talks began in October, Sanyo pressed for greater worker-rule flexibility and reduced medical benefits. Management, however, failed to convince union leaders that concessions were necessary.

The demands sparked a 21-day strike. Pickets carried signs that read: “Japs Go Home” and “Remember Pearl Har-