

ROOT & BRANCH

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REVOLT AGAINST WORK ■ NEW WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT IN SPAIN ■ INTERVIEW WITH PAUL MATTICK ■ NEW CLASS THEORY?

Introduction

After eight years of sporadic publication, Root & Branch will now appear quarterly. Since its inception, Root & Branch has undergone both growth and contraction as people who worked with us for a while left to pursue interests elsewhere. At one time it was nearly defunct. During the past two years, however, a more or less stable group of about 12 people have coalesced and breathed new life into Root & Branch. At first our purpose was simply to discuss among ourselves what we saw as important ideas and new political developments, topics such as: is there an energy crisis, is housework surplus-value-producing labor, the strikes in Spain and Portugal, the value-price transformation problem, what is Socialism, the occupation at Seabrook, N.H., the current state of the economy, what does "class" mean, and many more. As one would expect, these discussions led to disagreement and controversy about basic points as well as incidental ones. They were as ultimately invigorating as they were often frustrating. Through these discussions, many of us, mainly for purposes of self-clarification, were encouraged to write down our own ideas about these and many other topics. From this, the idea of renewing publication of Root & Branch emerged quite naturally. It was the growing belief that we could contribute fruitfully to ongoing debates on social issues, however, that finally provided the impetus to actually produce this inaugural issue of the new Root & Branch.

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | |
| Revolt Against Work, or Fight for the Right to Be Lazy? | 5 |
| The Weakening of the Work Ethic | 8 |
| SPAIN: Some Aspects of the New Workers' Movement | 10 |
| Three Interviews: | |
| J. Gomez Casas (CNT National Committee) | 25 |
| Luis Andrés Edo and Luis Burro (Barcelona CNT) | 28 |
| Mujeres Libres | 31 |
| Interview with Paul Mattick | 33 |
| A New Class Theory | 37 |

In the current issue we discuss several important topics: the "revolt against work" ideology popularized by John Zerzan, Zerowork, and others; the revival of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) in the context of the reemergence of working class movements in Spain; the current economic crisis and the possibility of revolution; and the question of whether professionals, technicians, etc., constitute a new class.

During the past several years it has become increasingly clear that the capitalist world is entering a period of profound social crisis. This is evident through the gradual emergence of myriad phenomena: simultaneous high levels of inflation and unemployment, the spread of urban decay, economic stagnation, currency turmoil, trade imbalances, an increase in social violence, farmers' strikes, the replacement of a common notion of the general good by uncountable special interest lobbies, etc. This deepening crisis brings with it renewed possibilities of revolutionary activity. In this context, discussions about the nature of capitalist society, the origins of the present crisis, and the future possibilities of creating a new socialist society take on a more concrete and practical meaning than they would otherwise. The desire to participate in such discussions, and in the activities which will emerge from them, is, ultimately our principal reason for wanting to publish Root & Branch once again.

We have, as you will see in this and subsequent issues, conflicting opinions concerning these topics. But there are several basic ideas which we share and which will give a common perspective to the articles that appear on these pages:

- in our attempt to understand current and past crises, we make use of Marx's theory of capital accumulation;
- we believe that the development of social relations in capitalism creates the practical possibility of socialism, since capitalism creates both individual producers who have no formal bond (i.e., master-slave) tying them together, and the mutual interdependence of each on the other for the material necessities of survival;
- we believe that the transformation of capitalism into socialism can occur not through hierarchical forms of organization, but only through the direct cooperation among workers; and
- we believe that such cooperation will arise from necessity in the common attempt to survive a capitalist crisis rather than from a shared ideology.

In our opinion, this viewpoint provides the most fruitful approach to discussing and solving the problems we all face.

The notion of a revolt against work itself had its origins in the spread of industrial sabotage and absenteeism in the early 1970's, as well as in the popular debates concerning the "blue collar blues." These events were seen as marking a fundamental change in working class attitudes and activities which would quickly lead to new working class organizations struggling, not just to kick the capitalists out of the work place, but to abolish work. In part at least, this new theory represents another attempt to explain the absence of revolutionary movements in the past while maintaining the basis for hope in their possible emergence in the future. In his critique of the 'revolt against work' theory, Charles Reeve shows that, far from being a new phenomena, sabotage and absenteeism are as old as the working class itself. Reeve further contends that today such activities are manifestations of workers' weakness, and have grown out of an economic situation which is now disappearing. On the other hand, D.J.'s brief essay, "The Weakening of the Work Ethic," points out that large numbers of the younger generation of workers have rejected their parents' belief in the intrinsic virtue of work, taking jobs only because they need an income to survive. Together, these articles point to a complex reality in which today's workers engage in activities similar to those of previous generations of workers, but for different reasons.

With the ending of the Franco era, Spain has entered a period of intensified political activity, including the development of numerous strike movements, the expansion and legalization of vanguardist/reformist parties of differing political persuasion, and the revival of the CNT. In "Spain: Some Aspects of the New Workers' Movement," Jorge and Paco describe some of the dimensions of the recent strike movements in Madrid, Barcelona, and elsewhere, the attempts of the Spanish Communist Party and other parties of the left to contain the strikes, and some possible consequences of these multi-sided conflicts. They conclude that while the Communists and other reformist parties will probably succeed in directing worker activities toward traditional trade union demands, the striking workers have gained invaluable experience in autonomous radical action. In addition, Jorge and Paco examine the re-emergence of the CNT as a political force among the working class, but they note the growing dispute within the CNT between the old-time syndicalists and the younger anarchists. Two interviews, once with J. Gomez Casas of the national committee of the

CNT, and the other with two CNT militants from Barcelona, further illustrate this controversy. A third interview with several members of Mujeres Libres shows how some CNT women are attempting to integrate their struggles as women and workers. Although the interviews are a year old and don't necessarily reflect the current state or problems of the CNT, this collection presents an interesting picture of the convoluted development of some Spanish workers' movements.

In an interview for the Italian newspaper Lotta Continua, Paul Mattick discusses the current economic crisis and its causes, the reformism of the so-called Communist parties, and the possibilities for revolutionary activity. The roots of the current crisis, Mattick argues, are to be found in the inability of Keynesian inflationary techniques to restore capital's lost profitability and thus permit a renewed period of expansion and accumulation. The prospects, in his view, are for continued decline. The chances for revolutionary upheavals in the major capitalist centers remain slim, however, since necessity, not ideology, "bring the masses into revolutionary motion." The necessity for revolution arises when the crisis has produced widespread social disintegration. The ideas outlined in this interview follow the major themes developed in his writing over the past fifty years. American readers can most readily find a more detailed discussion of these ideas in his book, Marx and Keynes: The Limits of the Mixed Economy (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969).

Leftists always seem to be inventing new class theories or revising old ones. Recently, Barbara and John Ehrenreich have attempted to show that professionals, managers and technicians constitute a new class that has emerged in the 20th century. In criticizing their argument, Gary Roth, a Root & Branch member, draws a clear distinction between Marx's notion of class based on the relation to the means of production and modern sociological definitions of class based on categories of income, culture, heritage and ideology.

We said above that Root & Branch would appear quarterly. We believe that this is a realistic goal; the next issue, due in mid-May, is already on the drawing board. But we certainly can use your help. First of all, let us know what you think of this issue, both positive and negative. Secondly, if you have written, are writing, or planning to write an article which you would like to see printed in Root & Branch, send it to us and we'll consider it. Thirdly, we need money to continue doing this. If you can contribute anything, please do. Ultimately, Root & Branch, like any other small leftist publication, depends on your intellectual and financial support for survival. Thanks.

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With the 1960's the eternal prosperity, the managed economy, and the attendant 'death of ideology' of the post-World War II period came to an end. The combination of unemployment and inflation in the capitalist West and the inability of the state-run systems of the East to satisfy their working classes are producing unsettling effects throughout 'industrial society': the deterioration of conditions in the big cities, which nonetheless draw an increasing proportion of the world's population; the brutalization of the seemingly permanent army of the unemployed which has been accumulating in these urban centers; the instability of governments in the democracies, in the absence of any clear policy alternatives, inspiring a drift towards open authoritarianism; the development of opposition to the party dictatorships in the East, both in the form of liberalism among the intelligentsia and, more significantly, in that of strike movements among the working classes; and the continuing decay of ideologies and social norms. All this testifies to the basic character of the 'limits of growth' that modern society is coming up against.

Whatever disappointments Nature has in store for us in the future, the limits we are encountering now are not ecological but social ones. It is not even socially caused, environmental disaster but the third world war which most directly threatens our extinction. That a fascination with zero-growth has replaced the nineteenth century's discovery of eternal progressive development is only the ideological form of the experience of the bankruptcy as a social system of capitalism and its state-run analog.

As yet we cannot speak of the existence anywhere in the world of forces or social movements which represent a real possibility of social revolution. But, while in no way inevitable, social revolution is clearly necessary if possibilities for an enjoyable and decent life are to be realized--and perhaps if human life is to be preserved at all. For this reason we see the overthrow of the present order of society as the goal to which we as a group wish to contribute. While the ideal we aim for has been called by a variety of names--communism, socialism, anarchism--what is important to us is the idea of a system in which social life is controlled by those whose activities make it up. Capitalism has

BRANCH

created the basis of such a system by so interweaving the production and consumption of all producers that only collective solutions are possible to meet the producers' need to control the means and processes of production and distribution. To eliminate the problems caused by the subordination of social production to capital's need for profit, the working class must take direct responsibility for what it already produces. This means opposition not only to the existing ruling class of capitalists and politicians but to any future managers or party leaders seeking to hold power in our name. Root and Branch, therefore, holds to the tradition of the worker's movement expressed in the Provisional Rules of the First International, beginning with the consideration "that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."

From the past we draw only only inspiration and still-meaningful ideas but also lessons on mistakes to be avoided. The fundamental idea of the old labor movement, that the working class can build up its forces in large organizations in preparation for the 'final conflict' has proven false. Whether the organization was that of reformist or of revolutionary parties, producer or consumer cooperatives, or trade unions, its success has always turned out to be a success in adapting to the exigencies of survival within capitalism. The bolshevik alternative of the small vanguard of revolutionaries preparing for the day when they would lead the masses to the conquest of state power has also proven useless for our purposes. Such parties have had a role to play only in the unindustrialized areas of the world, where they have provided the ruling class needed to carry out the work of forced economic development unrealized by the native bourgeoisie. In the developed countries they have been condemned either to sectarian insignificance or to transformation into reformist parties of the social-democratic types.

While history has thus indicated that there can be no revolutionary movement except in periods of revolution, the principles of such a future movement must guide the activity of those who wish to contribute to its creation. These principles--in contrast to those of the old labor movement--must signify a total break with the foundation of capitalist society, the relation between wage-labor and

capital. As our goal is that of worker's control over social life, our principles must be those of direct, collective action. Direct, because the struggle for control of society begins with the struggle to control our fight against the current order. Collective, because the only successes which have a future are those involving (if only in principle) the class as a whole. We recognize that the working class does not have one uniform identity, and thus experiences oppression under capitalism differently according to age, sex, race, nationality, etc. However, what defines and thus unites the working class is its exploitation by capital, even if the character of that exploitation varies giving the appearance of separate problems and thus separate solutions. While it is true that the struggle against capitalism will not by itself solve these problems, overcoming capitalist exploitation raises the possibility of their solutions. Thus, each working class struggle, even if it does not address an issue experienced by the class as a whole, must be aimed at the real enemy, capital, and not other members of the class. In the same way, we think workers must overcome in action the division between employed and unemployed, between unionized and non-unionized members of their class. Such a view automaticall brings us to opposition to existing organizations like trade unions, which exist by representing the short-term interests of particular groups of workers within the existing social structure. Similarly, we are in conflict with the parties and sects which see their own dominance over any future movement as the key to its success.

We see ourselves as neither leaders nor bystanders but as part of the struggle. We are for a florescence of groups like ours and also for cooperation in common tasks. We initiate and participate in activity where we work study, and live. As a group, we would like to be of some use in making information available about past and present struggles and in discussing the conclusions to be drawn from this history and its future extention. We organize lectures and study groups. Since 1969 we have published a journal and series of pamphlets. We hope others will join us to discuss the ideas and the materials we publish and that they will help us to develop new ideas and means to circulate and realize them.

COMING SOON FROM ROOT & BRANCH!

PUBLICATIONS
OF INTEREST TO READERS OF ROOT & BRANCH

WHO RUNS CHINA'S FACTORIES?
The Limits of 'Participatory Management'
by
William Russell

COLLEGAMENTI

Per l'organizzazione diretta di classe
Gianni Carrozza
C.P. 1362
50100 Firenze, Italy

The last issue had articles on the new Italian left, the crisis, the nature of the labor movement, "economic cycle and class struggle in the crisis."

MARXIANA

C.P. 5
Bari-Palombaio
70036 Italy

Marxiana 2 contained a previously unprinted manuscript by Marx, Paul Mattick on "councils and party," letters of Korsch, etc.

SPARTACUS

5, rue Sainte-Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie
Paris 4, France

The Nov.-Dec. 1977 issue had articles on Spain, Portugal, Eurocommunism, Marxism, the French official left, etc.

RED MENACE

P.O. Box 171
Station D
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Vol. 2:1 had articles on work, Canadian politics, libertarian socialism, "the crisis of dialectical materialism."

SYNTHESIS

P.O. Box 1858
San Pedro, CA 90733

"Cata Logut" about libertarian groups and publications all over the country.

THE NEW SOCIALIST

Box 18026
Denver, Colorado 80218

Jan.-Feb. issue contained articles on consumerism, TV, Fascism, punk rock, etc.

NOW & AFTER

A World to Win
P.O. Box 1587
San Francisco, CA 94101

The last issue contained articles on ecology, the workers' movement in Britain, gay rights, and Portugal. A new issue is coming out as we go to print.

An analysis and critique of the Maoist theory of workers' participation in management. The pamphlet begins with a detailed account of the system of management that emerged from the Cultural Revolution, as described by Charles Bettelheim, Victor Nee, Maurice Meisner, and others. Also covered in this section is the history of 'democratic management' in China since 1949, as summarized by Stephen Andors, William Brugger, etc. Finally, Maoist management theory is shown to rest on certain Leninist assumptions about the nature of socialist society. The second section presents a brief history of the relations between the Communist Party and the Chinese proletariat since 1949 (based on an extensively documented book-length study in preparation). Among the conclusions drawn is that it was precisely at the height of Maoist influence, during the Great Leap Forward, that Chinese workers were subjected to the most extreme exploitation. This historical reality contrasts sharply with the Maoist image of democratic management in the GLF. In section three, the author goes on to argue that even if the Maoist theory were applied in reality, it would still not provide the necessary conditions for real workers' control over their own labor process. Returning to the literature summarized in the first section, Comrade Russell shows that even on the evidence provided by sympathetic writers, the Maoist management system does not go beyond the limited participation proposed by such bourgeois schemes as the Scanlon Plan and West German co-determination. The author closes with a modest attempt to sketch out some of the minimal conditions which must be met in order to have genuine workers' self-management.

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM ROOT & BRANCH

Root & Branch Pamphlet 1: Workers Councils, by Anton Pennekoek. \$1.00

Root & Branch Pamphlet 6: Portugal: Anti-Fascism or Anti-Capitalism? \$1.50

Paul Mattick, Marx & Keynes: Limits of the Mixed Economy (paper) \$4.95

A subscription to Root & Branch costs \$6.00 for 4 issues (Institutions: \$15.00).

The Revolt Against Work, or Fight for the Right to Be Lazy?

Have you ever heard of a boss satisfied with his employees' labor? Certainly not; and, if we are to believe John Zerzan's text on "The Critical Contest,"⁽¹⁾ this even holds for today's American capitalists as well as for their faithful servants, the unions.

According to its author, the aim of this text is to discuss "the conservative nature of official strikes, the growth of union centralization and autocracy, and the increasing institutionalization of business-labor-government collusion and cooperation . . . against the backdrop of such manifestations of heightened workers' resistance as rising absenteeism and turnover rates, declining productivity, and a much greater anti-union tendency."⁽²⁾ However, after reading it, one feels the absence of a critical analysis of these questions. In its place one finds a long list of quotations and thoughts of the American ruling class and its faithful sociologists. Of course, the author tries to use all this "thought" of the ruling class to show how the revolt of the American working class is today reaching a critical point[!?] These are the limits imposed by the academic approach of the author; the article was originally published in a radical journal of an American university. Neither the text added to the English publication, and certainly not the quotation from A. Pannekoek inserted among pounds of reflections of industrial sociologists, can compensate for the absence of reference to the experiences of struggle and to the way in which they were perceived by American workers. And when the author promises to say something about the "state of mind of the American wage-earner," we remain hungry. In short, the objective of the text--to show how the revolt against work constitutes the new, radical tendency of the class struggle--appears to me to be far from

achieved. Uncritical confidence in the opinions of the ruling class on this subject don't seem to me to be a sufficient argument for accepting such a thesis.

Nevertheless, this text presents, in my opinion, two interesting points. First of all, in a condensed but clear form it refers to the most recent struggles of American workers and shows the existence of ever closer relations between the union machines and the capitalist state apparatus. Secondly, with reference to tendencies which it claims to discern in the current phase of struggles in the U.S.A., "The Critical Contest" provokes a discussion of some questions now fashionable in a number of radical circles. This "revolt against work," absenteeism, sabotage--are these new tendencies within the workers' movement? Does the absence of the work ethic ideology among young workers imply a radical attack on the system? Do these forms of revolt go beyond the traditional forms of struggle to call into question the very functioning of the system? Today there exist everywhere little leftist tendencies who would answer "yes" to these questions and who erect the "revolt against work" as the principle of the new revolutionary movement.

II

First of all, is sabotage of production a new aspect of the class struggle, or is it one of the forms of resistance which workers have always used against the violence of wage-labor from the very beginnings of industrialization? In Dynamite, an extraordinary book on class violence in America, Louis Adamic (a former Wobbly) describes how sabotage became one of the favorite forms of action of revolutionary American workers around the turn of the century.

For American and European revolutionary syndicalists sabotage was a conscious class response to capitalist barbarism. In addition to the IWW's black cat, we remember the famous text on Sabotage by Pouget, the vice-secretary of the CGT when it was a revolutionary syndicalist organization. To present sabotage as something new in the working-class movement can only suggest little acquaintance with that movement's history.

It is nonetheless true that with the integration of the unions into capitalism, that which was a principle of union action now appears only in wildcat actions. Sabotage has changed its form and also its meaning, while other forms of "revolt" appear. With the transformation of capitalism, with the end of liberal capitalism and the development of the modern form of state intervention, the union movement takes on a new function, that of managing the "social services" permitted by this new development. The violence of wage labor increases together with the integration of the workers by the setting up of systems of social security and various sorts of relief. All this has the aim of reducing conflict in the process of reproduction. But these systems of social aid (the "social wage," as they've been called) also offer the workers new possibilities for resistance to work.* The system permits this as long as capital accumulation continues without serious arrests, for these forms of resistance are lesser evils for capitalists. After all, isn't the struggle against capitalism superfluous as long as one can "profit" from unemployment and welfare?

It appears to me very questionable to claim, as Zerzan along with many others of the "revolt against work" school do, that absenteeism and other anti-work activities are the principal source of capitalism's current crisis of productivity. The falling profitability of capital, the low level of investment in new productive capital, the low rate of utilization of existing productive capacity are so many sources of the productivity crisis. The strike at the Lordstown GM factory, of which Zerzan speaks, is a good example. Driven to the wall by a drop in profitability, the automobile sector, in which Taylorism pushed the division of manual labor the furthest, still sought, by means of a sizeable investment in new machinery, to increase the division of manual tasks, to reduce the violence of labor. It is this capitalist need to surpass a formerly sufficient level of productivity that preceded and provoked the revolt of the workers at Lordstown. The failure of this attempt shows the limits of Taylorism and poses as a question fundamental to the survival of the system, whether or not it has the capacity to completely reorganize industrial labor on new bases.

From another point of view, one can say that the apparent permanence of the present day

*Absenteeism, use of unemployment insurance, etc., appear to a growing number of workers as new possibilities for resistance.

crisis of profitability will not fail to call into question the famous "social wage," which, like all state expenditure, depends on the steady functioning of productive capital. In all capitalist countries, the necessity of tightening the social welfare belt is freely discussed with appropriate steps being taken as they are politically feasible. Once the possibility of drawing on the "social wage" is reduced, we will see the collapse of the myth of absenteeism as a radical form of struggle, in the same way as today already the slogan of the "revolt against work" is collapsing in the face of rising unemployment. As always there will then remain for the workers only an open struggle against the wage system or else submission to it and to the barbarism it engenders.

III

This leads us back to the question of absenteeism and sabotage as forms of struggle. Where these have become in the last few years mass phenomena (as in the automobile industry in Italy), some revolutionary militants, after a period of euphoria, are beginning to draw some critical conclusions. Thus, in an analysis of mass absenteeism, we discover that:

Although it represents an important form of labor action, it has contradictory consequences on the level of organization. To stay away the workers must establish an informal organization; but once they are out of the plant, they find themselves isolated in their neighborhoods and in practice they lead individual existences. It is common, for example, for absenteeism to be allied with holding down two jobs . . . or for it to isolate workers who practice it spontaneously from their shop and thus open the way to employer repression. . . . This form of action should not be confused with the revolt against wage labor, a revolt which can express itself only inside the factory in a collective fashion and the action of the proletariat as a whole. (4)

This poses in a clear way the essential question raised by these forms of refusal: their relation to the collective and conscious action of the workers. Certainly the productivity ideology and the work ethic are in crisis, a crisis inseparable from the development of the division of labor. This attitude can have revolutionary significance if it is expressed in connection with collective and autonomous working-class action. But it is also true that this revolt often manifests a privatistic desire to "take it easy" (itself a product of the increasing division of the workers by modern organization of the labor process), a desire which, while understandable, is without any consciously radical meaning. Ultimately, what counts is the desire and determination to fight capitalism and, in this regard, the attitude towards work is not, to start with, decisive. If for the revolutionary worker of the beginning of the

century sabotage went hand in hand with a "craft pride," today the absence of the work ethic often accompanies a rebirth of working-class privatism. Already in the late 1920's survivors of the American revolutionary syndicalist movement stressed the privatistic content of the new forms of sabotage, the loss of what they called the "social vision of sabotage." Adamic notes in this connection that sabotage then became the expression of "individual radicalism, . . . forms of vengeance that the American working-class used blindly, unconsciously, desperately . . ." and no longer "a force controlled by those who practiced it and the consequences of which did not escape them."

Rather than a new form of struggle, sabotage and the rest of the "revolt against work" are in fact the result, the manifestation of weakness of the workers, a demonstration of their incapacity to take on capitalism in a conscious, independent, and collective fashion.

IV

Its privatist content marks the "revolt against work" as an inevitable consequence of the violence of the wages system, a product of the defeat and division of workers in capitalism. The principles of revolutionary action remain unchanged. Only the collective, organized, autonomous, and conscious action of the producers can lead to the end of wage labor. Such action alone creates solidarity, the spirit of initiative and imagination, a readiness to frame desires and to make decisions, the mental qualities necessary to get rid of the world we know. When someone says, as John Zerzan does, that workers today exhibit a tendency in their struggles to aim at taking control over the forces of production, it's hard to see how the "revolt against work" and sabotage can be "critical" forms of the modern revolutionary struggle! In fact, it's only from collective struggle that these new tendencies to re-appropriate power over the productive apparatus can arise.*

The confusion made in the slogan, "revolt against work," between work as labor, human activity indispensable to the functioning of any society, and work as wage labor, only conjures away the real issue of the revolutionary transformation of society. The "revolt against work" (or "zero work") has no originality as a slogan --it has been that of the bourgeois class and its flunkies since the beginning! It's hard not

*However, struggles in which these tendencies show themselves, in a more or less confused way, don't seem to inspire the worshippers of the "revolt against work" with much more than paternalistic scorn: see for example, Negation, Lip and the Self-Managed Counter-Revolution, Detroit: Black and Red, 1975. For contrasting views see Lip, Une Brèche dans le Vieux Mouvement Ouvrier, Mise-au-Point, Paris, 1974, and La Grève de Lip, Echanges, Paris, 1975.

to smile when John Zerzan teaches us that the "contempt for work" is "nearly unanimous" "from welders to editors to former executives" (p. 3). Overworked bosses are certainly a new feature in working-class solidarity.

Among revolutionary workers, the daily horror of wage labor only reinforces their conviction that the radical transformation of society consists essentially in the reorganization of production and in the putting to productive work that whole mass of people who now live off our exploitation: bourgeois, bureaucrats, cops of all sorts, military men and women, and other parasites. For, contrary to what goes on in capitalist society, it will be on the basis of participation in socially necessary labor that we will be able to work out principles of production and distribution in the new society. Only in this way will we realize the old desire of the working-class movement, whose meaning is today much clearer--the abolition of wage labor and . . . the right to be lazy.

Charles Reeve
Paris, 1976

NOTES

- (1) John Zerzan, "Organized Labor versus 'The Revolt against Work': The Critical Contest," Telos 21 (Fall 1974); reprinted by Black and Red, Detroit.
- (2) John Zerzan, "More on 'Organized Labor versus 'The Revolt Against Work''" in J. Zerzan, Trade Unionism or Socialism, Solidarity Pamphlet 47, London, 1976.
- (3) A number of new books can be recommended to the reader looking for a serious and critical analysis of the American workers' movement today: J. Brecher, Strike!, Fawcett, 1974; J. Brecher & T. Costello, Common Sense for Hard Times, Two Continents/IPS, 1976; Root & Branch, eds., Root & Branch, Fawcett, 1975.
- (4) Collegamenti No. 7, bulletin of the "Communist Center for Research on Proletarian Autonomy" (c/o M. Maiolani, CP 4046, Milano 20100, Italy).

This article originally appeared as "Rufus du Travail' ou Lutte pour le Droit à la Paresse" in Spartacus, juillet-août 1976 (5, rue Ste-Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie, Paris IV).

The Weakening of the Work Ethic

The work ethic, like all other ethics, grows out of peoples' living situations. In societies where most peoples' choices boil down to either starvation or being worked like a beast of burden, work comes to be seen as a virtue as well as an absolute necessity. That people must spend most of their lives numbed by both the routine and regimen of work as well as by physical exhaustion appears normal. When the capitalist system in this country began to afford some upward mobility to large numbers of workers so they could rise to the level of prosperity the ideologues of sociology see fit to describe as "middle class," the work ethic was strengthened. Now hard work was not only a necessity but also was seen by most workers as a means to a truly better life, if not for themselves at least for their children. The capitalist class, the employers whose system is held together from day to day by the acceptance of hard work with long hours as both a necessity and a virtue, might have thought this rosy situation would last forever. Sure, the workers sometimes went on strike. Sometimes they even rebelled, but only under unusual and exceptional circumstances. As a norm they acquiesced and obeyed from day to day and saw it as in their interest to do so. Why should a new generation of workers rock the boat? Three different groups each had their own reasons.

For some layers of the American working class, minorities in particular, the American dream was too unrealistic to get the majority dreaming. Blacks never did get that mule and forty acres. Before the Great Depression, when work and mere survival went hand and hand, because social benefits were nonexistent, one can

speculate that the work ethic was even stronger among blacks than whites. Blacks had to work even harder than whites merely to survive. But in the post-depression era when hard work meant a sharp rise in the standard of living for many white workers, black workers were overwhelmingly kept in the less desirable and lower paying positions. Not surprisingly, enthusiasm for hard work among many blacks dropped in proportion to their being excluded from its supposed rewards. The strong work ethic of black parents was frequently transformed into a strong anti-work ethic among their disillusioned children. When the Black Pride movement became widespread, accepting discipline from (mostly white) supervisors became not only more difficult, but was seen by many as a sign of cowardice or betrayal.

Soldiers never happily accept discipline whether or not they are in a combat situation. Obedience is a pain in the ass and gets old fast for even the most gung-ho. But however evil military regimentation and discipline might have been, they used to be accepted because they were seen as absolutely necessary evils by World War II and Korean War era troops. And why not? The overwhelming majority of the troops during World War II believed that an Axis victory would mean conquest and enslavement of the U.S. and with it them, their families and loved ones. Similarly, in the Korean War the enemy was seen as monolithic "Communism" which had just conquered Eastern Europe and China and was steadily marching towards our shores. After years of voluntarily accepting discipline soldiers got used to it. And when they returned to civilian life they were considered by prospective employers to be ideal recruits for the discipline of the work

place. Then came the Vietnam War and people responded differently. The war was unpopular from the beginning and soon there was massive resistance to it and the draft within the U.S. itself. With individuals being drafted not for the duration but rather for only two years, it wasn't long before thousands of anti-war youths were drafted and spreading their ideas inside the military. The more the war dragged on, the more dissatisfaction grew among increasing numbers of troops, who began to see the war as unwinnable, wrong, or both and certainly not worth killing for. Even those soldiers who continued to support the government's objectives in theory became rebellious in practice. While the much ballyhooed "fraggings" (assassinations of NCOs and officers) were rare, virtually every other kind of indiscipline, whether subtle or blatant, both individual and collective, became common. And like their fathers before them, returning vets continued to bring attitudes learned in the military home with them to civilian life and the work place.

Youth culture and youth rebellion began around the same time as the anti-war movement and overlapped and grew with it. "Freaks" as they came to be known, proudly adopting the slur directed against them by "straight" society, were by no means a homogeneous group. But most had in common several likes, including rock music, marijuana, a non-acquisitive lifestyle based on various forms of sharing, and several dislikes including the war, sexual constraint, and in general work, discipline, and especially work discipline. Many freaks had parents who were success stories, and this was the reason that they rejected the American dream and the way of life necessary for achieving it. Their parents worked hard, sacrificed, and got the

**WORK HARD
with honesty, diligence, and
discipline...**



AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED!

house in the suburbs, color TV, and two cars that they thought would bring them security and happiness. Yet often they had neither. Success looked a lot like failure to the young who saw their parents as being tight-assed, isolated, docile, and afraid to live even on the weekends. Success to the freaks meant living happily, with many meaningful relationships, and doing it seven days a week. Taking flack from authority of any kind was out of the question. Time never stands still however, and even the freaks grew up, got married and raised families, as well as accepted their own form of commercialism. This meant accepting jobs and to some extent discipline, and eventually fading away as a separate group. But they left their imprint on the work place with their rejection of the lifestyle of obedience.

I have briefly dealt with three groups of people and why they tended in the late 1960's and through the 1970's to be less willing to accept the work-related norms of the larger society. In fact these were not distinctly separate groups as one can be both black and a Vietnam veteran, both a vet and a freak, etc. There was rather a mesh of people, generally young, who identified with one another for many reasons including a shared hatred for authority, externally imposed rules, and discipline, who merged together and who remain as a mass of discontented workers who have infected others on the job with their discontent. This is not surprising since the standard of living has been dropping for years. While few workers are in any type of open rebellion, many do resist the regimen of the work place, and many more, who once took pride in their work and accepted their place, now frankly don't give a shit.

While conclusions must remain tentative, several points of interest emerge from this situation. (1) Anti-work ethic and work discipline attitudes have manifested themselves in a partial rejection of work. Living off of unemployment or welfare checks, once strongly stigmatized, is now increasingly acceptable. Absenteeism is rising sharply for those who do have a full-time job. The control that the bosses have over workers on the job has been greatly weakened. (2) It is not clear how the present economic crisis will affect this situation. The cutbacks in social services and lowered standard of living in general, make it much more difficult for even people supporting just themselves to live without working a forty hour week. Hard times make losing one's job a much more serious affair. The balance of power is gradually shifting back in favor of the bosses. (3) But in spite of these setbacks, workers continue to resist and will continue to modify their resistance to keep it appropriate for the situation as it changes. (4) The acceptance of hard work and long hours without complaint as natural and the acceptance of "pride in one's work" ideology are things of the past for millions of workers.

D.J.
February 1978

SPAIN: SOME ASPECTS OF THE NEW WORKERS'



In Spain today, an obsolete fascist regime, incapable of adapting to the dynamic of modern capitalism, is being dismantled, to be replaced by a modern parliamentary democracy. But this transformation of political institutions is not without its perils--the recent example of Portugal stands as a warning to the Spanish bourgeoisie. For several reasons, however, the risks of a complete social breakdown are less in Spain than in Portugal: the absence of a stalemated colonial war capable of demoralizing the military apparatus, the existence of real economic development since the world war, and most importantly the political ascendancy of a vigorous modern bourgeoisie determined to push forward with political reforms.

The object of the following text, however, is not to analyze this transformation of the Spanish state to meet the requirements of modern capital. Rather, we are concerned here with another consequence of these social developments: the formation of a proletarian mass whose growing militancy has become, in the 1970's, a new political factor, not only destructive of the fascist regime but also a serious obstacle to the plans of the bourgeois reformers and their occasional allies among the opposition parties. Not that it is a matter of indifference to the workers whether they live under a democratic or fascist state, but it seems increasingly unlikely that their aspirations can be reduced to the programs of the more or less 'clandestine' 'oppositions.' If they take account during their struggles of the political crisis, they do so not--as the Leninist theory of necessary stages has it--by fighting for the benefit of bourgeois democracy, but by conducting their strike movements in accord with the principles of direct workers' democracy. For the organizations of the opposition, this poses a challenge: their ability to channel and restrain the workers' movement is their passport to a secure position within the new political arrangement.

MOVEMENT

Coming out into the open after a decade of quiescence, the Spanish labor movement is regathering its forces and renewing its class consciousness through the ups and downs of the struggles that break out from time to time. The massive strike wave in the Madrid region in January 1976 was one of the most powerful of the post-war movements, remarkable for the forms of organization which arose in the course of the struggle and for the problems it raised concerning the relations between the workers and the political underground. Information on the political life of Spain is abundant; when it comes to the social movement, however, there has been very little news. It is no surprise, then, that it is only after a year of silence that one can begin to lift the veil a little. For this purpose, a small book, Trabajadores en huelga, published in Madrid by a group of journalists who seem close to the USO,* is of great interest. It offers an analysis of the causes of the movement, a fairly comprehensive chronology of a month of struggles and, the richest part of the book, a discussion between two rank and file union militants of different political tendencies who participated in the strikes. Starting with this book, and making use of other documents and information, we will discuss some of the issues raised by the new workers' movement in Spain. The following is not, of course, a definitive analysis, but a contribution to what we hope will be an ongoing discussion.

Starting with the Madrid strikes, we will go on to examine some new organizational aspects of the recent struggles, the strategies of the opposition (focussing on the PCE) and the difficulties they are currently encountering, and, finally, the rise of the new CNT.**

*Union Sindical Obrera: see the list of abbreviations for more information.

**Partido Comunista Español; Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores.

1. Madrid, January 1976: The Vanguard Left Behind

The crisis of world capitalism struck the Spanish economy especially hard, for its new industries were completely tied to the foreign capital which had been attracted by the high post-war profit rate. By the end of 1975 the unemployment rate was 8% in Spain, and the rate of inflation was the highest in Europe. If we add to this the fact that labor contracts (signed every other year) were up for renewal, it's easy to see why the social situation appeared 'strained,' why the government continually repeated that 'this is a grave moment,' that 'the country is living beyond its means.'

In mid-December 1975, the 'clandestine organizations' called for a 'day of struggle' for amnesty and against the wage freeze; in most of the country, there was little response.* Such calls had become commonplace, and served not so much to invigorate the social movement as to keep the apparatchiki occupied and to dissipate the workers' sense of grievance harmlessly. But in the Madrid region, where strikes had already been going on for several days, the mobilization was extensive, amounting to some 70,000 strikers--too extensive, in fact: far from being absorbed by the 'day of struggle,' the movement took on a momentum of its own.

From January 4 on, strikes broke out everywhere, starting in the large metal-working enterprises of the Madrid region: Chrysler, Helvinator, Electromecanica, etc. On the 5th and 6th, the Métro was paralyzed, the stations occupied by thousands of workers. The police

*The "opposition organizations" group the CC.OO., USO, UGT, PCE, PSOE and PSUC, the Socialist and Communist parties and unions (see list of abbreviations).

drove them out, but the meetings continued in the churches. The activity of the Métro workers was to be the barometer of the strike movement. The Métro is essential for the functioning of industry, since it transports the workforce: when it stops, the strike becomes an inescapable daily fact. It was here, and in other sectors where workers' struggles have the most decisive consequences for social life (PTT, Renfé), that the rulers of Spanish capital concentrated their efforts in attempting to halt the spread of the movement.**

The strikes extended to the post office, the banks, ITT, and Standard Electric. On the 12th, the construction workers struck; they were at the forefront of autonomous organization. In Madrid alone there were, between the 12th and the 17th, 100,000 strikers in construction, 180,000 in metallurgy, 15,000 in banking and insurance, and 20,000 in public services. The initial demands, very egalitarian, were essentially salarial, "the defense of working-class purchasing power."⁽¹⁾ However, political instability--the end of the Franco period--favored the widening of the struggles; it was the right moment to 'take to the streets.'

"I've never seen anything like the capacity for struggle which I observed in this strike. . . . Concretely, on two occasions at Casa and I think several times at Standard, the vanguard was left behind. That demonstrated an impressive will to struggle, which frightened not only the employers but also the vanguard, who asked themselves at a certain point where all this was leading, for the workers themselves became the vanguard and, at a certain point, the strike escaped the control of the leaders."⁽²⁾ These words of a union militant sum up the situation. Just when the illegal organizations thought they had gotten control of the workers, the latter spontaneously set themselves into motion, took the initiative and carried out a course of actions independent of the plans of the organizations, and did so in a much more affirmative way than before. "The fundamental characteristic of this strike--one worker said-- was that there was no general strike order, but that it was a process which spread little by little with the incorporation of new sectors and factories."⁽³⁾

The industrial suburbs of Madrid--Getafe, Vallecas, Alcala, Torrejon--were totally paralyzed, and in these new workers' towns the strike went from the factories to the streets, in demonstrations and confrontations with the police. Despite a boycott by the 'clandestine' organizations, the movement also reached other regions: Barcelona, Bajo Llobregat, the Asturias, the construction industry of Valencia, the Renault factories at Valladolid. The extent of the movement was new, as was the fact that it reached not only the large plants where the illegal organizations are entrenched and where

there is a tradition of struggle, but also the small factories dominated by passivity and paternalism, which had always been untouched by the 'days of action' called by the illegal unions.

On January 12, when "in almost all sectors, the workers showed themselves ready to go on strike"⁽⁴⁾ and a general strike seemed possible, the illegal union organizations persuaded the Métro workers to go back to work without any of their demands having been met. (The frustration and rebelliousness which such practices on the part of the reformist organizations have provoked among a significant number of workers will no doubt have its effects.) At the same time, repression came down hard and fast. The army intervened in the Métro, PTT and Renfé; eight PTT workers were brought before a military court, and there were mass arrests and about 1,300 firings. The earlier wage demands were replaced by new slogans: rehiring of the fired, an end to police pursuits, freeing of the imprisoned. The turning-point came around the 20th, when the return to work began, though it did not proceed perfectly smoothly. In many cases, penalties were revoked and firings restrained, but wage demands went unanswered. Only in the construction industry did the workers obtain wage increases (on the order of 38%) and improvements in working conditions. The militancy and unity demonstrated in this sector, and the forms of direct action employed by the workers, certainly had something to do with this outcome.

The Madrid strike wave was the first social upheaval on such a scale of the postwar period. Several months later the insurreccional strike at Vitoria, and more recently the struggle of the Roca workers in Barcelona, showed that Madrid was not an isolated case but a sign of a fundamental change in the relations between the Spanish workers' movement and the illegal organizations, the latter being no longer able to contain the former.

2. Organization and Solidarity in the New Spanish Workers' Movement

For the reformists, the PCE, the political content of any struggle is measured above all by the response which its party slogans (amnesty, democracy) evoke among the workers. But the recent workers' struggles, from the January strike movement in Madrid to the dock workers' and Roca strikes in Barcelona, express a political content, a class consciousness, which goes well beyond party slogans and simple economism. This is especially evident in the area of organization. A new tendency is coming into view, a tendency to make the workers' assemblies the deliberative and directing organ of the struggle, with control over all the actions and decisions of the "workers' representatives."

It has been said of the Madrid strikes: "In general, according to all the information we have received or directly observed, decisions

**Métro = mass transit; PTT = communications; Renfé = railroads.

were made in open and democratic General Assemblies (AGs), the union representatives or workers' agents acting as emissaries and negotiators without any definitive decision-making power. Several leaders of union organizations (banks, construction, metallurgy and public sector) were in agreement in affirming that, 'In every case, the assemblies had the prerogative of ratifying or refusing the final decisions.'⁽⁵⁾ A Métro delegate confirms the point: "For me, what was good about this struggle was that the rank and file made an important leap forward in understanding; it was always the masses who negotiated, and it was they who set the pace. We did nothing but negotiate in their name and according to their directives."⁽⁶⁾ In the Roca strike, which began in November 1976 and rapidly moved towards a violent confrontation with state power, the use of sovereign assemblies was the crux of the movement. The delegating of power was done exclusively through the AGs, and all the delegates were revocable by them.

"The strike committee was formed by the elected representatives; its function was to develop and apply all the agreements and decisions made by the workers in their periodic Assemblies. The Committee proposed initiatives which were then discussed in the Assemblies. This was scrupulously respected during the conflict, and more than once the Assembly limited, made precise, or disavowed the role and functions of the delegates."⁽⁷⁾

One of the main consequences of this control of the struggle by the rank and file has been to short-circuit the vanguardist organizations which have habitually manipulated the delegates, who often are more their representatives than the workers'. "It is the assemblies which are the vanguard; they are the only real vanguard that I have known in this strike," said a Madrid worker in January 1976. But the danger is far from over, for the traditionalistic groups are capable of adapting to the new

List of Abbreviations

Parties

- ORT Organizacion Revolucionaria de Trabajadores, Revolutionary Workers Organization: orthodox Maoist.
- PCE Partido Comunista Español, Spanish Communist Party.
- PSOE Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Spanish Socialist Workers Party: the social-democratic party, under strong control of the European social democrats.
- PSUC Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña, Catalan United Socialist Party; the Carillo-tendency CP of Catalonia.
- PTE Partido del Trabajo de España, Labor Party of Spain: orthodox Maoist.

Unions

- CC.OO. Comisiones Obreras, Workers Commissions: now completely controlled by the PCE.
- CNS Confederacion Nacional Sindical, National Syndical Federation: the official union under Franco, organized on a corporatist basis, i.e., bosses and workers in an industry belong to the same organization. The workers' dues were taken directly from their wages by the bosses or the state. At the end of the old regime, the apparatus was practically part of the state, while the lower levels were much controlled by the CC.OO. and the USO, which worked within the CNS, presenting candidates for stewards, during the fascist period. The CNS has now been dissolved by

the new regime, and the bosses have had to create their own organizations. As the CNS was a powerful and rich bureaucracy, controlling banks, real estate, etc., there is now a big struggle going on among the left unions for control of the financial and material remains.

- CNT Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo, National Federation of Labor: the anarcho-syndicalist union federation, founded in 1910.
- COS Cordinacion Organisations Sindicales, Union Organizations Coordination: organized collaboration between the CC.OO., USO, and UGT in the period just after Franco died; now disintegrating.
- JOC Juventude Obreros Catolicos, Catholic Worker Youth: socialist-influenced group during the Franco period, helped to create the USO.
- SU Sindicatos Unitarios, Unity Unions: unions created by Maoists expelled from the CC.OO., strong in some areas and very active; they sometimes work with the CNT in strikes, as in last summer's hotel strike.
- UGT Union Generale de Trabajadores, General Union of Workers: the old socialist union from the Civil War, when it was controlled by the PCE; now under strong control of the PSOE; growing quickly.
- USO Union Sindical Obrera, Workers Syndical Union: socialist, for "self-management," close to the French CFDT.

situation, redirecting their manipulative activity towards the assemblies. It is important to avoid taking the tempting step of making a new fetish of the General Assemblies. In the most radical struggles, it is true, they have served as an organizational form which prefigures the emancipation of the working class under socialism. On the other hand, in those movements which proceed along the path marked out by traditional unionism, neither the bourgeoisie nor the 'leftist' parties has anything to fear from the GAs--a fact which has been recognized by the current government which in its newly-proposed law on union activity, institutionalizes the Assembly as a union organ.

Today, even a Stalinist leader of the CC.OO. isn't afraid to say, "Everyone accepts the principle that one must negotiate with the workers elected by the AGs . . . whether they hold union posts or not. . . ." (8) No organizational form, including the GA, can guarantee workers' autonomy. What is essential is the application of certain principles--open discussion, democratic decision-making, revocability of delegates, direct responsibility of all representative bodies to the workers--and for these purposes, appropriate organizational forms such as the Assembly are a necessary but not sufficient condition.

Besides the assemblies, other organizational forms have appeared, always based on the same principles. These 'unofficial representative organs,' as they are called, are elected by the rank-and-file: the 'Committee of Eight' in the postal service, the 'Committee of Seven' for the hospital workers, the 'Leading Committee' in construction and in the banks, the strike committees of the dock workers and the Roca workers. Created in the struggle, these organizations exist only during the struggle. In January 1976, the bank workers were organized on a national scale. Each assembly elected a delegate; these in turn elected a regional committee (15-20 members, in Madrid). The delegates of the various regional committees constituted a national committee, which included "official [union] delegates as well as rank-and-file workers; that is, all those who were elected by the AGs." (9) Similar organizations appeared in November, at Barcelona, with the United Workers' Collectives (CUT). The Madrid construction workers organized for direct action. They elected 'workshop delegates' and formed mobile strike pickets, capable of spreading the strike, of opposing the scabs and the employers' maneuvers at each building site.

At Vittoria, the situation was similar: "Vittoria, in these months from January to March 1976, was a great school of working class unity and solidarity, but above all Vittoria represented for the rest of the working class a movement which brought new ideas. . . . [T]he political structures which appeared here went beyond the orthodox projects of traditional syndicalism. The Workers' Assembly elects its representatives and can revoke them. The Representative Commit-

tees are constituted exclusively by these delegates. . . . From the beginning many political militants were part of the committees, but one could see that, at any moment, no political organization had a sufficient following to impose its analysis and strategy. . . . Soon after the conflicts began, the strictly economist positions were already abandoned. . . . [The workers] went so far as to refuse individual solutions for the various factories.

"Factory assemblies met in the churches and working class neighborhoods; womens' and neighborhood assemblies also proliferated. At a certain point, a situation was reached where the entire population was organized in assemblies, in a type of democracy totally different from formal bourgeois democracy. It was this which Fraga Iribane, then a Minister, underlined when he declared to Le Monde, 'What happened then at Vittoria was not simple demonstrations by the workers; it was an insurrection similar to that of May '68.'" (10)

Solidarity between workers from different factories was frequently manifested on a local, and even national, level. In the Madrid movement, solidarity was demonstrated by the way the strikes spread in a chain reaction. Then it appeared in the streets of the working-class suburbs, where demonstrations, occupations, mutual aid and confrontations with the police became daily occurrences. Even in factories where the demands had been met, the workers went back on strike, realizing that more was at stake than their own immediate interests. Entire urban regions experienced moments of social revolt; the most extreme case occurred at Vittoria. Often, strikes broke out in solidarity with fired workers: "All or none," said the strikers at the Roca factories. In this latter instance, the workers explicitly posed the problem of the powerlessness of an isolated struggle. Addressing themselves to their entire class, the Roca workers proposed in their strike bulletin an organizational model based on the assemblies and on coordinated strike action.*

Such political consciousness is limited, however, to a minority of the workers; the majority show no signs of wanting a revolution and remain in the final analysis amenable to the 'reasonable' arguments of the reformists. But it is one thing to acknowledge the minority character of the radical tendencies, and quite another to pretend that movements of such breadth, such thorough-going radicalism, are nothing more than economic conflicts, invested with political significance only by the parties' slogans. For these were not struggles against individual bosses, but against an entire system of social relations, as is made clear in the

*The new CNT movement played an important role in spreading the news about the Roca strike, both inside Spain and outside; a meeting was held in Paris in January 1977, in which strikers participated. Such behavior is sufficiently rare to be worthy of special mention.

vivid account of the January movement contained in Trabajadores en huelga. Likewise, in Barcelona at the time of the Roca strikes, an entire working-class suburb (Gafa) was thrown into turmoil. The significance of these events should not be minimized.

3. The Communists, the Workers' Commissions and the Fascist Syndicate

The Spanish workers' movement did not remain inactive for long after the end of the civil war. Already, in the immediate post-war years, powerful strike movements broke out in Catalonia--most notably, the CNT-led general strike of 1951--and the Asturias. But it was the development of Spanish capitalism in the 1950's and 1960's, the expansion of modern industry, which was to permit the opening up of a new phase of struggle and factory organization.

The first Workers' Commissions (CC.OO.) were created spontaneously during the 1962 strikes; they were strongest in Barcelona, Madrid, the Basque country, and the Seville construction trades. At first, they were a product of the workers' autonomous activity.⁽¹¹⁾ However, they immediately became a battleground for inter-party struggles, with the PCE in the vanguard. "In 1965, the Party was the organization best prepared to take control of the Commissions and, through them, of the entire workers' movement throughout the country. . . .The only group then organized on a national level was the PCE and as a result, the national coordination of this new organization was not able to escape its control."⁽¹²⁾

The ease with which the Party took over the CC.OO. is explained in large part by the limitations of the movement itself. The Commissions existed only in the large-scale modern industries. In this sector, the employers had adopted the European system of collective agreements by plant.* The factory-level workers' organizations were a response to this new policy; they arose out of unconnected struggles

*The 1958 Law of Collective Contracts allowed each employer to negotiate directly with the workers in his factory; this measure was introduced on the initiative of the modernizing bourgeoisie. On the political plane, the modernizers were organized in a quasi-religious body known as the 'Work of God.' When the post-war economic quarantine was lifted and Spain was re-integrated into the 'community of nations,' Franco jilted the Falange and invited members of the 'Work of God' into the government. Collective bargaining was part of the program of limited reforms with which the modernizers hoped to meet the complementary goals of appeasing the gods of international finance and liberating the invisible hand from the shackles of Francoist economics. When the world economic crisis revealed the impracticability of their technocratic vision, the 'Work of God' ministers were thrown out of the government, one by one.

to win gains specific to a particular factory. Hence the CC.OO. often expressed purely localist demands, and suffered from a certain corporate egotism. They did not become a general movement of the type that exists in periods of all-out social struggle, like the Factory Council movement in Hungary 1956 or the Workers' Commission movement in Portugal after 25 April 1974. Instead, they were captured by the PCE and subordinated to its over-all strategy.

Little by little, the constant shifts in the Party's policy--shifts which were not responses to the immediate situation facing the workers, but to the political needs of the Party--destroyed the hopes which the workers had placed in the CC.OO. and deprived them of any mass base. At one point, the PCE suddenly adopted a legalist line: 'The CC.OO. cannot be clandestine.' The consequences were grave: "The contortions of the organizational nucleus caused the best cadres to fall into the hands of the police, facilitated repression and alienated the majority of the workers from that frantic activism which bore no fruits except a propaganda bluff whose sole objective was to serve a particular policy." Then the policy was changed to total clandestinity, "making barren any possibility of action or development."⁽¹³⁾ And so forth...

Still, in each new period of struggle the CC.OO. were reborn, most of the time independently of the political organizations. As a result of a growing awareness of the PCE's manipulations, new political tendencies were able to find a response among the workers. Thus the USO was set up, led by cadres of the Catholic JOC. Later, around 1974, the social-democratic UGT reappeared (along with the PSOE); by that time the influence of the PCE "among the workers [had] diminished perceptibly by comparison with the period when the Commissions were born, when it enjoyed a near-total monopoly of the market."⁽¹⁴⁾ Two orthodox Maoist groups (ORT and PTE) have also gained a foothold, the former even sharing power, for a time at least, in a few CC.OO.* Finally, there is the new CNT--of which we will have more to say below.

From the start, the PCE strove to assimilate the CC.OO. to its own strategy. In 1948 the Communists adopted the tactic of infiltrating its militants into the fascist CNS, the 'vertical syndicate,' as it is called.** In the

*Juventude Obreros Catolicos; Union Generale de Trabajadores; Partido Socialista Obrera Espagnol; Organizacion Revolucionaria de Trabajadores; Partido del Trabajo de España.

**Confederacion Nacional Sindical: the 'vertical syndicate' is a corporative body on the usual fascist model; workers and employers both belong to it. Up to 1958 wages were set, at subsistence level, by state decree. Employers had autocratic powers within the plant, for while worker representatives were present on the lowest level of the syndical apparatus, the

aftermath of deStalinization, Carillo launched the new slogan of 'national reconciliation,' and the Party threw itself into the task of forming 'democratic fronts,' of which today's is only the latest incarnation. Among the groups to whom the PCE extended its hand was a dissident 'leftist' minority of Falangists in the CNS; "Those who wear the blue shirt," said La Pasionaria, "can defend openly, within the enemy camp, the interests of the working class." When the fascist regime introduced the system of election of CNS delegates,*** it was only logical that the PCE seized upon the opportunity and put the CC.OO. to work in the syndical elections. After 1966, the activity of the Commissions was practically reduced to participating in these elections. The other clandestine organizations eventually followed suit, likewise presenting their candidates as 'democratic delegates.' The participation of these organizations helped to legitimate the syndicate, and in fact it was now their militants who made up the base of the CNS.

For the Party, then, control of the CC.OO. and "boring from within" were complementary. "The key positions obtained [in the elections] were the legal arm of the CC.OO."⁽¹⁵⁾ The objective behind both tactics was clear: to gain a dominant position in the syndical apparatus, making use of the CC.OO., in order to bargain later for the legalization of the Party [achieved since these words were written]. Once the 'democratic regime' is installed, it will then be easy for the PCE to maintain its grip on the unions. In pursuit of the same goal the Portuguese CP appeared in 1974 at the head of the Intersyndical. In Portugal, the relative weakness of the workers' movement before the military putsch--there had never been a mass movement comparable to the CC.OO.--allowed the Party to appear immediately afterwards as the sole force operating within the fascist syndicate. In Spain, by contrast, the strength of the workers' struggles during the last years of fascism has produced organizations outside the official syndicate, wherein diverse tendencies have grown up. The recent strikes favor the growth of opposition unionism and the end of the PCE's monopoly.

4. A Modern Unionism in an Obsolete Regime

Spanish unionism functions--despite the clandestine organizations' claims that there is no 'true unionism' in Spain--just as in the capitalist democracies. (To be sure, it is restricted to the enterprise level--the syndical

'plant council,' they were bribed or coerced into submission. The higher levels of the CNS bureaucracy were staffed by Falangists; the syndicate was one of their last strongholds.

***The first elections were held in 1963. The PCE led the way in participating in the 1966 round of elections, against the initial opposition of the other clandestine parties.

apparatus remaining, though not for long, in the hands of the Francoist old guard--and even more narrowly to the level of the modern enterprise, as the small employers are intransigently opposed to union negotiations. But these limitations apply equally to unionism elsewhere.) For years, the 'democratic delegates' have been playing the role of traditional unionists in the signing of collective agreements. At Siemens (Bajo Llobregat, Catalonia) in the early 1970's, "the delegates, who have considerable prestige, . . . can mobilise the workers whenever they choose. . . . They do so once a year, when the contract is being discussed, thanks to which they win the largest raises in the region. Then, during the rest of the year, they strike for ten or twelve hours in solidarity with the most important struggles. In exchange, the delegates guarantee to the enterprise that production will proceed as planned, that there will be no wildcats. If an unforeseen conflict breaks out, the Personnel Manager calls one of the delegates to resolve it. Each year the company enters on its books the acceptable hours of strikes and the raises to which it will consent in the next contract, as a result of 'the great struggle conducted by the workers under the leadership of the militant delegates.' These latter, of course, are worth their weight in gold to the directors, for thanks to them, Siemens has had fewer strikes than any other enterprise in Bajo Llobregat since 1962, despite the size of its workforce (2,000). The biggest problem for management consists in convincing the police to keep their hands off the delegates, because for the cops an illegal meeting is illegal, and that's that. If they are arrested, the company intervenes in their behalf, and keeps their jobs open for them."⁽¹⁶⁾

The situation is the same in many other modern factories: the system of collective agreements has become the best means for maintaining 'social peace.' A delegate from Standard Electric in Madrid explains that the syndicate there had already signed five agreements before the January strike. Before signing the last one, the 'democratic delegates' made comprehensive studies on "the company's ability to yield to the workers' demands without endangering its financial position."⁽¹⁷⁾ Even before being legalized, even while still distant from the centers of power, the Party already includes the interests of the bosses--baptized for the occasion 'the general interest'--as a basic principle of its negotiations! Something to break us in for the future... And if the workers refuse the bargain and proceed resolutely to strike, as happened in this case, the delegates are astonished. "We thought that it was a good contract."⁽¹⁸⁾

As the example suggests, the participation of the illegal organizations in the 'vertical syndicate' has had contradictory effects. No doubt it helps, in periods of calm, to improve the image of the organizations, which can take credit for any improvements. But when a broad-scale struggle breaks out, the representatives

are left behind by the workers; and when they place themselves on the side of the bosses and try to rein in the movement, as they often do, they can only suffer a loss of prestige. At such moments, their collusion with the employers, and even with the state, appears most clearly. What happened in Madrid is a good example. In the Métro, well before the January strike, the delegates forewarned the officials of the syndicate and even the Minister of Labor. "Something is going to happen in the Métro--we syndical representatives know it and we want you to know it--since the company refuses to negotiate."⁽¹⁹⁾ Once the movement started, it was these same 'democratic' delegates, and not the syndicalists of the official apparatus, with whom the state and the employers conducted their talks. Unable to prevent the strike from occurring, the clandestine organizations continued to oppose it. On 25 January, when the movement was still growing, they met in Madrid. Representatives of the CC.OO., USO, UGT, PTE and ORT were present. "The majority preferred to negotiate, rather than push on with the struggle."⁽²⁰⁾ Such a broad anti-strike coalition, extending from the Maoists to the social democrats, is no accident; it is to be explained in terms of the goals and tactics of the clandestine organizations.

5. The Political Opposition: Projects and Difficulties

For all of the opposition organizations, the development of democracy provides opportunities which they would like to see realized as quickly as possible. If capitalism is to grant them their place in the sun, they must establish control over the workforce; they must show themselves capable of containing workers' struggles within the bounds of respect for capitalist institutions, emptying them of all political content and reducing them to simple and predictable unionism, with which the bosses can negotiate. On this point, the goals of the reformists and of the partisans of a modernized capitalism coincide--and both groups, in opposing spontaneous actions by the workers, invoke the same enemy: the Francoist right. For the 'modernizers,' the point is to avoid weakening their position relative to the forces supporting the ancien regime. The Party shares this concern, and also wishes to demonstrate to the entire bourgeoisie that it has retained its hold on the workers. In January 1976, the Minister of Labor pressed for a speedy resolution of the negotiations "because the 'bunker' [Franco's entourage] is trying to profit from the strike."⁽²¹⁾ At the same time, the PCE claimed that "the intransigent right is trying to prolong the conflict"⁽²²⁾ and deplored the sad lot of the small employers, to whom the strike was doing an injustice.* A year later, with the events of Tocha Street in Madrid, the logic of these strategies created a new situation: faced with the ultra-Rights, the democratic opposition joined with the modernizing bourgeoisie in a new "Sacred Union."^{***}

While all of the oppositionists, and even a section of the bourgeoisie, are in agreement on the need to channel workers' struggles within parliamentary-democratic institutions, they are at the same time in competition for control of these institutions. In this regard, the most important recent development is the resurrection (with the financial aid, as in Portugal, of the German social-democrats) of the social-democratic party, with which international capitalism hopes to counter the PCE. In a matter of months, the PSOE, once practically extinct, became a political force capable of competing with the Communists for control of the State apparatus.

On the local level, as well, the PCE's plans are running into obstacles--but in this case, from a quite different source. The Party would like to repeat its success with the CC.OO. by appropriating the function of coordinating the Neighborhood Committees, which have been developing (often in a spontaneous and politically independent manner) since 1976 in the working-class districts. The goal is to use these organizations as stepping stones to governmental posts at the local or municipal level. However, there is a strong federalist tendency within the Neighborhood Committees, which identifies itself with the CNT and is resisting the PCE's centralizing tactics.

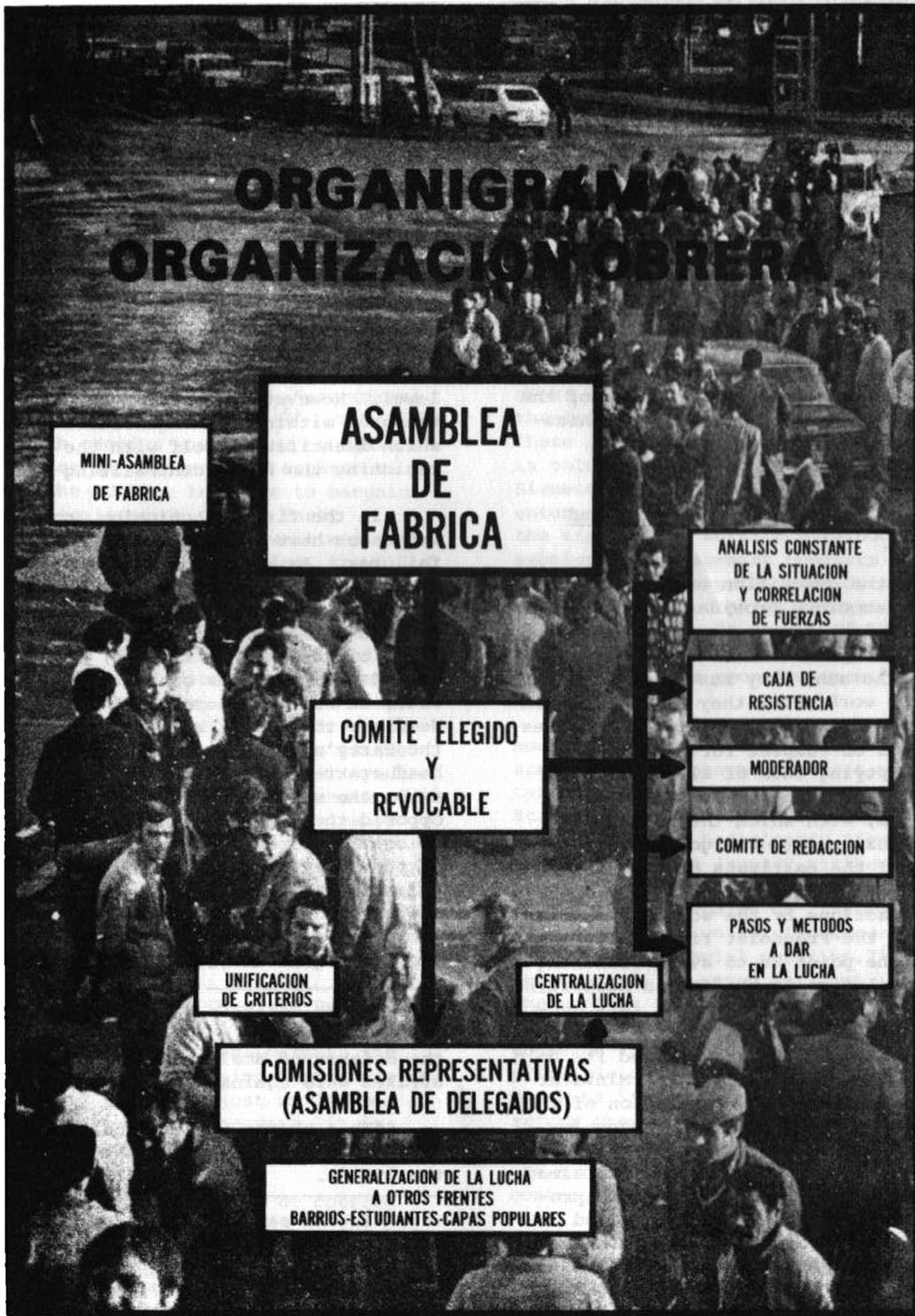
In the field of unionism, too, the Party's successes have been partially cancelled by its failures. As we have seen above, the PCE has pursued the tactic of participation in the 'vertical syndicate.' In 1974, the PCE called for the formation of a 'sindicato obrero unico' ('one big union,' as it were) crystallized around the positions won in the vertical syndicate, in order to strengthen the working class. Needless to say, it would also serve to bolster the Party's hegemony, since it already has a head start in this direction. Wishing to preserve the system of the single union, it has opposed the legalization of a plurality of unions; this position is to be seen in the light of the Party's state-capitalist ambitions. Like a fascist regime, the state-capitalist project calls for centralized, planned control of the workforce.* For the social-democratic opposition, the goal is just the opposite--to disman-

*Again, this is reminiscent of the situation in Portugal in 1974, when the PCP took up the defense of small capital and argued that strikes were against the general interest.

**This phrase was originally used by Maurice Thorez to describe the French Popular Front of the 1930's.

*In the same vein, the Maoist organizations also demand a single union. The ORT and PTE, which together broke with the CC.OO. late in 1976, split in March 1977, each creating its own single union. This parting of the ways was carried out with the usual Maoist-Stalinist folklore, with armed commando groups, head-breaking and reciprocal accusations.

The Strike Organization at Roca



tle the single-union system, as the Soares government is doing in Portugal.

On this terrain, the PCE has already been stalemated, despite its initial gains. The strategy of 'entrism' has, as we have seen, had its benefits for both the syndicate and the Party; the latter even succeeded in taking full command of a few syndicate locals, for instance, in the Madrid suburb of Getafe. But the CNS itself is now in crisis, and during the recent struggles the PCE's predominance in the syndicate was of no use in steering the strikes into acceptable channels. The movement set itself in motion and organized itself outside the syndicate, and the only role which the Party could play via the CNS was that of strikebreaker. As the USO and UGT pointed out, workers supported the opposition militants only when the latter acted outside the official organization; for example, the strike committees set up by the PCE in Getafe and elsewhere in January 1976 remained "totally inoperative"⁽²³⁾ because of their connection with the UTT. The workers' attitude towards the 'vertical syndicate' was amply demonstrated by their repeated sacking of its offices. Its deterioration is so far advanced that even a CC.OO. leader has called it "practically destroyed" and has stated that "Neither the workers nor the bosses want to hear another word about the CNS; everything happens outside of this monster."⁽²⁴⁾ Its local offices are no longer open, and opportunism and corruption have reached the point of selling off the office furniture.

Faced with the collapse of the CNS and the impossibility of preserving a single-union system, the Party decided in late 1976 to make of the CC.OO. its own union, in competition with the USO and UGT. The Party launched a membership drive for the CC.OO., federations of CC.OO. by branch of industry were set up, and the first Congress of the Syndical Confederation of Workers' Commissions was held. "The democratic union organizations have entered, without doubt, upon a new phase of their history. The time of clandestinity and systematic repression is past. The virtual disappearance of the CNS, the relative tolerance which our organizations enjoy permit an enlargement of their field of action, and an accelerated process of organization."⁽²⁵⁾ While thus obliged to accept 'union pluralism,' the PCE has still refused to give up the ground it has gained within the syndicate; it prefers to hold on to its right of inheritance, for whatever it may be worth.

6. 'Eurocommunism' and the Working Class

The abandonment of the concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'--i.e., the dictate to respect the rules of the parliamentary game--is the hallmark of the new phenomenon known as 'Eurocommunism.' This new line is often compared to Social-democracy; in both cases, we find a mass party claiming to be

engaged in transforming capitalist society by using the bourgeois state apparatus, proposing a peaceful road to state socialism. Like their social-democratic counterparts, the Eurocommunist CPs accept private enterprise as an essential element of the 'new society' they wish to build. On this point, of course, the bourgeoisie has its suspicions, knowing well that the relationship between the private and state sectors is antagonistic. And they are right to doubt, for the CPs still ultimately hold to the state-capitalist project. Under pressure from growing leftist tendencies among the working class, the Eurocommunists find it difficult to openly adopt the corollary of social-democratic respect for capitalist private property, i.e., the co-management of wage exploitation. Their response to pressure from the left can only be the replacement of private employers by the state as employer.

For the working class, the turn to Eurocommunism brings nothing new. The PCE must periodically demonstrate its 'responsibility' by restraining the movement. It will encourage mobilization only in support of its own goals; aside from that, it will offer the workers only as much support as is needed to prevent mass defection from its ranks. All of this follows naturally from the political strategy which the PCE has chosen to adopt. In the preceding pages we have frequently touched upon the demoralizing effect which Party policy has had upon the Spanish working class. In the next few pages, we will deal more specifically with this aspect of the situation, by examining two particular instances: La Roca and Sabadell.

The Roca strike, along with the Vitoria movement, marked the high point of last year's struggles. It was over the issue of election of representatives that the Roca conflict broke out: management refused to recognize the delegates chosen by the Workers' Assembly. The Assembly also insisted that all delegates resign any positions they held in the official syndicate, a demand that clashed with the tactics of the union leaderships. The unionists opposed the strike from the start; only the CNT lent its support. Given the influence that the party/union leaders wielded in Bajo Llobregat, their support could have been decisive in winning the strike.

The government, acting through the CNS, openly tried to force the strikers to accept the leadership of the 'democratic unionists' by refusing to begin negotiations until the workers accepted two conditions: election of delegates by secret ballot and the presence of leaders of the union opposition on the Representative Committee. To this the workers replied, "According to the CNS, members of the union headquarters must be included on the Committee, while these very unions never cease to criticize our delegate movement and our methods of struggle. This Committee would be something exterior to the workers, a totally bureaucratized organ would thus be created, eliminating the dynamic

of self-organization...." They saw the proposed secret ballot as a ruse designed to undermine the more radical forms of organization already in use: "As far as the secret ballot goes, it will lead to the end of the principles of democratic election and of revocability, at all times, by the Assembly." (26)

From November 1976 to February 1977, the regime and the democratic opposition were engaged in working out a *modus vivendi*; hence the government's enthusiastic promotion of the unions. Hence also the opposition's coolness to the strike, for any struggle "dissociated from union control, outside of its sphere of influence, could be an obstacle to the dialogue between government and oppositon." Legalization of the unions and parties was on the agenda, but in return the workers' demands had to be set aside. This explains why "during the period between the last months of 1976 and the moment when the government and the opposition concluded the first formal accords, the response of the unions to the economic measures decreed by the government and to the provisions concerning the freedom to lay off workers was so indecisive, and even practically nonexistent." There was nothing new or unsettling in this for the parties; they have always believed that the workers' movement ought to adapt itself to the requirements of their strategies in the waiting rooms of the bourgeois state. Nonetheless, in the face of worker militancy, the parties cannot go too far in placating the bourgeoisie, lest they lose their mass base. The two goals which they must pursue simultaneously, recruiting workers and gaining a foothold in the state, "have come into contradiction with each other more than once (at Sabadell, in the Madrid transport strike, and at the Ford plant in Valencia)." (27) Reconciling these conflicting goals has not always been easy.

After 95 days of strike, the Roca workers, unable to overcome the isolation contrived by the parties, had to give in and accept the settlement arranged for them by union and management. The role played by the unionists was expressed clearly in the bourgeois press: "We don't think--said a Bajo Llobregat employer--that the conflict at La Roca can degenerate into a general solidarity strike. The agreement obtained in the negotiations for the metal-workers' contract was the means to stop the extension of the movement. The good will of the labor leaders made this agreement possible." (28)

The same pattern is evident in the Sabadell strike movement. In November and December 1976, 20,000 metal-workers from the Sabadell region of Barcelona went on strike. The movement united, for the first time, workers from both large and small enterprises. The CC.OO. had the largest following among the workers; the USO was also present, but only tagged along behind the CC.OO. Some of the most militant activists came from the Anti-Capitalist Workers' Commissions, a predominantly Maoist opposition tendency which existed at that time within the CC.OO.

The struggle was characterized by a high level of solidarity between shops, attempts to spread the movement beyond the metal-working sector, and the use of General Assemblies as decision-making bodies. Through the Assemblies, a significant number of non-party radical workers were able to take an active part in the struggle. "It must be emphasized that, throughout the strike, many scrapping workers, independent of every existing organization, took part and played an important role in the struggle. . . . The rank-and-file workers, unorganized, ensured that the Assemblies were not just window-dressing: they insisted that their opinions, their voices be respected, so that the labor organizations were forced to respond to the workers' determination. . . ." (29) While accepting the Assemblies, however, the organizations succeeded in getting the workers to accept the bureaucratic autonomy of the directing organ, the delegates' assembly. In order for this committee to exercise real leadership, said one Sabadell worker, it "would have had to be transformed, enlarged with delegates elected in the shops and elsewhere; the mandates of the delegates already elected would have had to be revoked to allow us to reaffirm our confidence in them, or to dismiss them. . . . The main problem was the fact that the working rank-and-file did not really control the delegates' assembly and the representative committee charged with negotiating." (30)

The actions of the CC.OO. and the USO were determined by the same political calculations which guided them at La Roca. "The Sabadell strike is . . . the first to suffer the consequences of the policy of the 'social contract' proposed by the Suarez government." Mass mobilization had to be blocked, for it not only "aggravated the crisis of the capitalist system," but also "threatened to create a dangerous element of instability for the project of political reform." (31) And so the unions opposed the workers' attempts to spread the strike and condemned the formation of strike pickets. (32) At the same time, the Eurocommunists tried to safeguard their support among the bourgeoisie, especially the small businessmen. In an open letter to the Catalan bourgeoisie, the PSUC* reassured them that the strike was no threat to them, attributed worker dissatisfaction to "the absence of democratic liberties," and asked the employers to be generous to the workers and accept negotiations. Given the behavior of the democratic opposition, and the workers' ultimate dependence on them, it comes as no surprise that the Sabadell strike ended in total defeat: none of the demands were met, and about 500 strikers were fired.

As we have seen from these two examples, the consequences of the Eurocommunists' strategy have been quite grim for the working class. But it is by no means certain that the PCE will

*Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia, United Socialist Party of Catalonia, under PCE control.

succeed in carrying out its plans, for while its goals have remained constant throughout recent years, the environment in which it must act has changed. The deepening world economic crisis has made the technocratic dreams of the 'Work of God'--dreams which the PCE shares--seem more and more utopian. And the smoldering militancy of the Spanish working class, expressed most powerfully in the rise of the new CNT, may prove too much for the PCE to handle. Faced with these new realities, however, the Spanish Communists (like their Italian counterparts) remain fixated on old strategies.

7. Revolutionary Tendencies Among the Workers: the 'New CNT'

The CNT meeting in Madrid on 27 March 1977, which drew a crowd of more than 20,000, forced people's attention to this new element specific to the Spanish political scene. None can deny it, the CNT is once more a real presence in Spain; the most convincing proof of its existence is that the other opposition organizations are obliged to accept its participation in strike committees and unitary meetings. From Vigo to Ténérife, from Alicante to Santander, in the factories and in the offices, cells of militants spring up, proclaiming their fealty to the CNT. The local activities of these groups, their meetings and debates, attract large and excited crowds, made up mostly of young people. The movement is all the richer for the fact that its cells and organizations are not the creation of an apparatus but arise from the rank-and-file; as a member of the Catalonia committee stated apropos of the neighborhood groups, "we can't keep up with them."⁽³³⁾ The publications of these groups, diverse and rich in discussion, can be found scattered everywhere, in the neighborhoods as well as places of work. Union branches are being organized--for the moment, in a not too centralized fashion--in metallurgy, graphic arts, the building trade, the banks, the entertainment industry, education and textiles; even among the agricultural proletariat of Andalusia, CNT cells are reappearing. It is here, among wage workers, that the libertarian mass movement has its firmest roots, and it is through their actions in this sphere that the militants are best known.

During the most important recent strikes, from Madrid in January to Barcelona in December, this revolutionary current has been in the forefront of the struggle. The rejuvenation of the CNT (as well as the rise of cells of revolutionaries linked to the USO and UGT) is the result of a new content of the workers' struggles, in search of organizational forms permitting direct action and the refusal to delegate power. The militants of the CNT identify most readily with these principles. The CNTists' way of approaching workers' struggles--and not the 'correctness' of some program or platform--is the source of their appeal to the most militant workers. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the principles of action of the CNTists.

When the labor contracts for the building trades in Aragon were being discussed, the two CNT members elected to the Joint Labor/Management Committee refused to sign anything, demanding that all decisions be ratified by mass meetings of the workers concerned.⁽³⁴⁾ During the 2 November 1976 'day of strike' against the government's economic policies, CNT members were part of the Committee of delegates in Barcelona which was to 'direct' the strike, side by side with representatives of the USO, UGT and CC.OO. The CNTists began by publicly declaring that they did not recognize the legitimacy of the Committee, and advocated its replacement by local strike committees elected by the rank-and-file. Moreover, they denounced the manoeuvrings of the Committee and of the political organizations. In the long run, in a situation of acute social crisis, such practices will draw the most determined militants into the CNT. About 90% of the new members are young people, and according to the national secretary, "many of our best militants come from the PCE."⁽³⁵⁾

Is this renascent CNT a faithful copy of the CNT of the 1930's, the memory of which has been religiously embalmed by the clandestine cells within Spain and the nostalgics in exile? For the moment, it seems more accurate to see the CNT as "not a mass organization, but rather a large movement uniting libertarians."⁽³⁶⁾ As one militant put it, "Most of the time, the CNT acts as an autonomous movement rather than a structured union."⁽³⁷⁾

The CNT movement is distinguished from the other political groupings by three essential characteristics: "Above all, this unifying dynamic [of the CNT] is not frontist, in the sense that the debate on the nature of the new organization is not closed. Anarchist, certainly, but of very diverse groups and origins: formerly autonomous anarchist groups, more or less councilist fractions, traditional anarcho-syndicalists, . . . groups formed during the students' and workers' struggles of 1968-72." Secondly, "it is the only union organization which has refused any compromise not only with Francoism but even with its new monarchist variant, which has refused to play the game of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, refused to trade off its legalization against its entry into a united front government, refused to calmly prepare 'the passage to democracy.'" Finally, the CNT has not fallen into the trap of parliamentarism, which conceals the problems raised by the social struggle and absorbs all of the energies of the political opposition. Against parliamentarism, the CNT proposes a subversive alternative: "What must be discussed today among the workers is the problem of workers' autonomy."⁽³⁸⁾

This approach--the negation of the principles of unionism--cannot help but create contradictions for an organization which some members would like to transform into a union. It is precisely on this question that disagreements are arising within the CNT, between a traditionalist tendency supporting the immediate

formation of a central mass union and a group which opposes this project and points to the errors of the past. And in fact, it's hard to see how the revolutionary principles of direct action, class struggle, and refusal of permanent delegation of power can survive the requirements of the daily tasks imposed on unions by their role within the capitalist system. "We are practicing anti-syndicalism," says one militant, justly noting that, "All unions are established according to capitalist structures."⁽³⁹⁾ For the survivors of the old, pre-War directing bureaucracy, however, it is the syndicalist perspective which must prevail, and they are already on the offensive against a reluctant rank-and-file. "It is time to construct, seriously and in a responsible fashion, majority unions of laborers, whose strength and ability can obtain the best results. Let us not fall into the error of reducing the unions to minorities of theoreticians. . . . We must not be identified with separatist attitudes."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Juan Casas, National Secretary of the CNT, puts the argument more strongly: "These young militants, through lack of experience and through ignorance of the nature of anarcho-syndicalism, because they have not lived through it, are creating problems. . . . The CNT cannot function in the same manner as an anarchist group. . . . [T]here has even been a certain revulsion against all representative organs, such as the national or regional committees."⁽⁴¹⁾ Notice how political questions of representation and organizational forms are sidestepped--in purest bureaucratic style!--through a paternalistic appeal to 'experience'--as if it weren't precisely the experiences of the past which force the new militants to pose these issues.

A concrete example of the confrontation between the two currents within the CNT is provided by the recent debates in Valencia and Catalonia on the question of alliances between the CNT and UGT. On 5 December 1976 a proposal by the traditionalists on this issue was discussed in a regional meeting in Catalonia, in which more than 150 organizations were represented. The majority declared against the proposal. Without rejecting the principle of alliances, they stressed that it was up to the rank-and-file and not the leaders to decide, taking each particular situation into account, to create unitary ties between workers of different organizations.⁽⁴²⁾

8. A New Kind of Unionism?

In the 1940's, Anton Pannekoek described the ambiguities of the workers' movement in the following terms: "Whereas in their conscious thinking old watchwords and theories play a role in determining their arguments and opinions, at the moment of decision on which weal and woe depend, a strong intuition of real conditions breaks forth, determining their actions. . . . [T]wo forms of organization and struggle stand opposed, the old one of trade unions and regulated strikes, and the new one

of spontaneous strikes and workers' councils. This does not mean that the former at some time will simply be replaced by the latter. Intermediate forms may be conceived, attempts to correct the evils and weaknesses of trade unionism while preserving its valid principles. . . . An example of such a union may be found in the great American union, 'Industrial Workers of the World' . . . Similar forms of struggle and organization may arise elsewhere, when in big strikes the workers stand up, without as yet having the necessary self-confidence to take matters entirely into their hands. But only as temporary transitional forms."⁽⁴³⁾

Pannekoek might just as well be describing the current situation in Spain. The spontaneous action of the rank-and-file and their consistent refusal to submit to outside leadership permit us to see in today's movement the germs of a more radical future. In the Madrid region, in shops where there was no tradition of struggle and where the workforce was often young and female, the workers use the term 'union' to describe any organization which functions on the basis of rank-and-file democracy and revocability of delegates, in a sort of modern renaissance of revolutionary syndicalism.

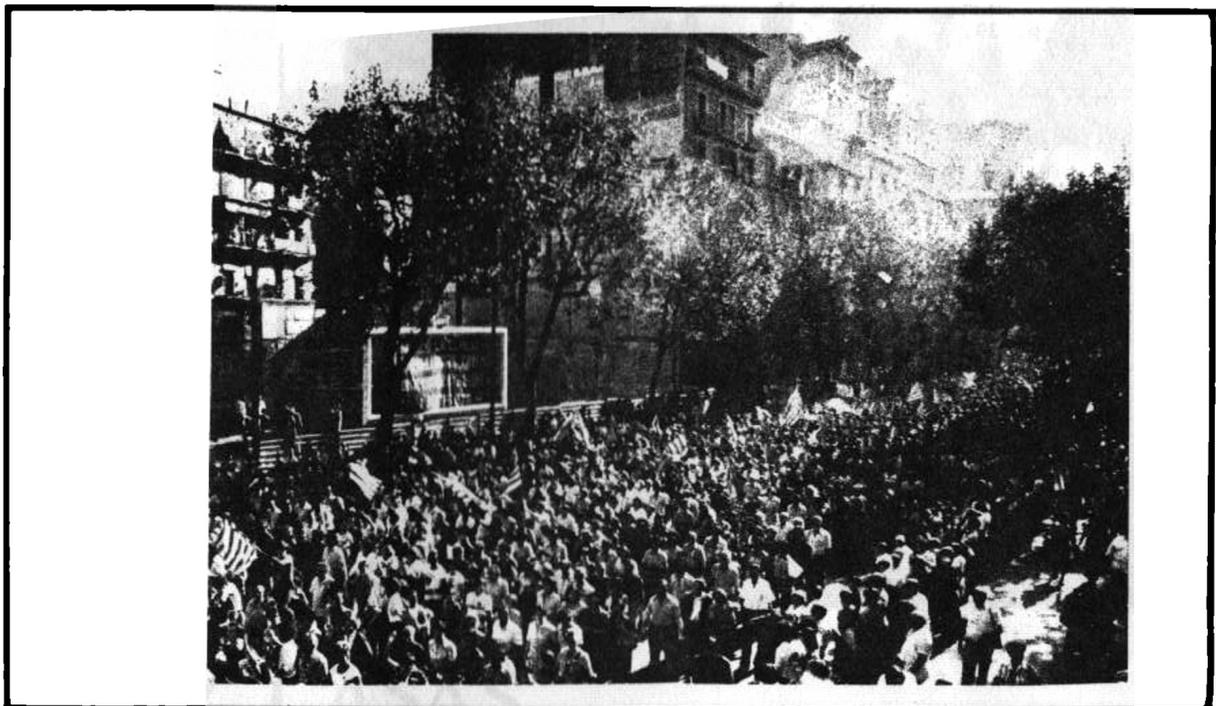
But for those who believe in the potentially revolutionary character of those forms of organization which stand halfway between the union and the autonomous rank-and-file group, for those who believe in the possibility of 'building a new unionism,' failure is certain--just as certain as it was in Portugal, where the majority of the leftist political movement tried to set up non-reformist 'class unions' starting from the Workers' Commissions. The new forms of organization could flourish only in the context of wide-scale social conflict; when this period came to a close, it was once again the problems of day-to-day survival which preoccupied the workers. Such daily issues can be handled most easily by a traditional union, whose functioning is based on class conciliation, permanent delegation of power, and absence of rank-and-file democracy; and the 'new unions' were forced to adapt themselves to these imperatives. In this game, the CP-controlled unions, with their tight organization and high degree of centralization, hold the winning hand. Those who would organize the CNT as a mass union should be aware that they can only create an insignificant miniature replica of the great reformist unions.

Perhaps for some the PCE's success is appealing. But such 'success' has nothing to offer the revolutionary, for it is predicated on the workers' defeat. Today in Spain, as yesterday in Portugal, Communist reformism develops only after the labor struggles have been smashed. The Party recruits on the basis of defeatism: 'To be a revolutionary gets you nowhere, come to us. . . .' Lest the reader think this an exaggeration, I want to point out an incident that occurred during the December 1976 Renfe strikes: the Communists brought workers fired during other strikes to the mass meetings of the Madrid

railroad men . . . to illustrate the consequences of 'irresponsible' and 'thoughtless' action! In the future, we can expect more of the same from the reformist organizations: they will try to keep 'politics' and 'unionism' strictly separated, placate revolutionary desires with reforms, and isolate the movements shop by shop, breaking that sentiment of class solidarity which was so evident in the recent struggles.

For the present, the reformists, whose strength derives from the material and ideological integration of the majority of the workers into capitalism, are in a strong position. The workers' frustration and lack of confidence in their own power may open the way for the 'social

peace' desired by the reform bourgeoisie and for the parliamentary democracy desired by the political opposition. Yet we should not write off the prospects for renewed revolutionary struggles. All observers agree that in the conflicts of the last few years the workers have demonstrated a strong capacity for autonomous action, going beyond the bounds of the oppositional apparatus. And there is a radical tendency, small but determined, with a rich tradition and clear anti-capitalist goals, which has firm roots in Spanish society and a significant impact on the workers' struggles. The result of the conflict between this tendency and the reformists will have an importance which is not limited to Spain alone.



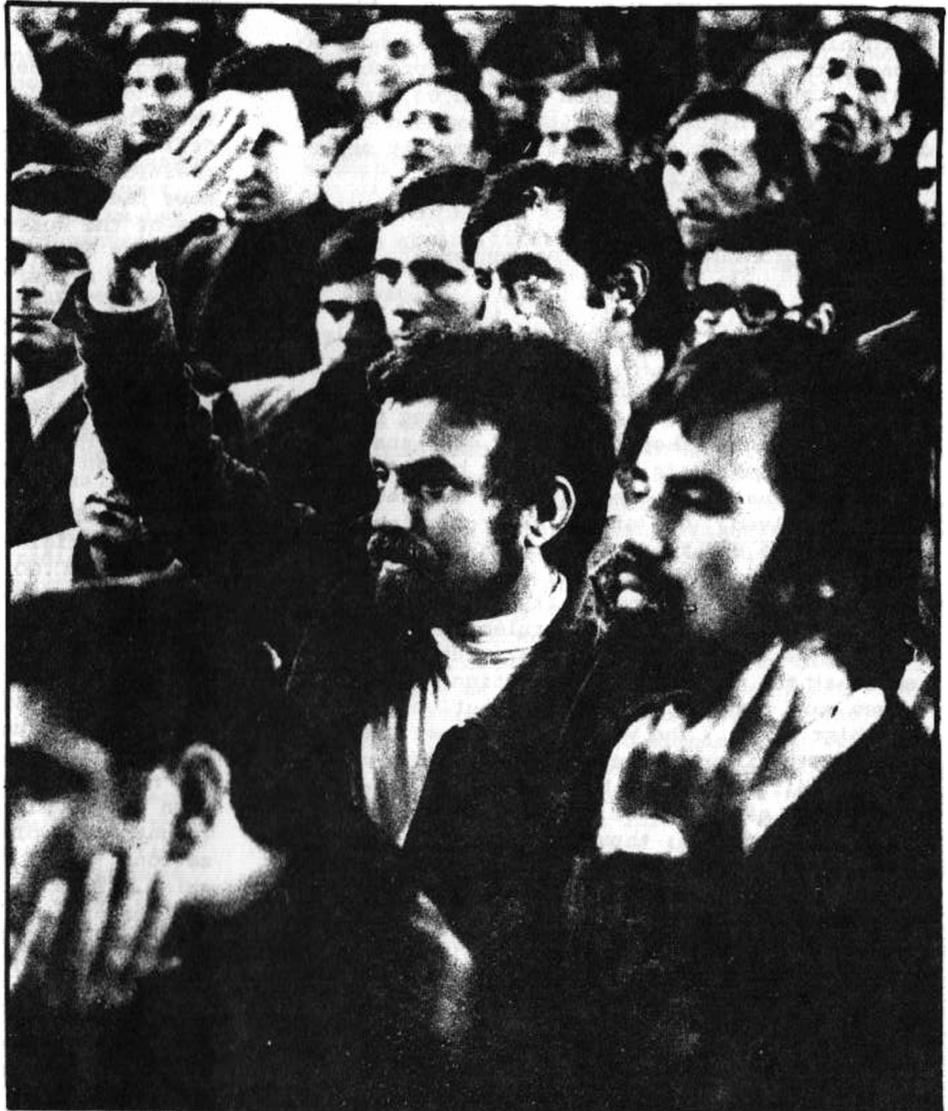
Notes

- (1) Trabajadores en huelga (Madrid: Editorial popular, 1976).
- (2) Ibid., p. 127.
- (3) Ibid., p. 121.
- (4) Ibid., p. 32.
- (5) Ibid., p. 37.
- (6) Ibid., p. 113.
- (7) Dionisio Giménez Plaza, Roca: organización obrera y desinformación (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1977), p. 22.
- (8) N. Sartorius, "Panoramica Sindical," Triunfo, 18 December 1976.
- (9) Trabajadores en huelga, p. 140.
- (10) Giménez Plaza, op. cit., p. 6. See also, [Collective;] Informe Vitoria, Ed. Alternativa: Vitoria, 1976, a very complete work with analyses and documents.
- (11) Senz Oller, one of the founders of the C.O. at the SEAT auto plants in Barcelona, describes this period in his book, Entre el fraude y la esperanza (Paris: Ruedo Iberico, 1972).

- (12) Oller, op. cit., p. 67.
- (13) Ibid., pp. 77, 80.
- (14) Ibid., p. 250.
- (15) Ibid., p. 284
- (16) Ibid., p. 287.
- (17) Trabajadores en huelga, p. 95.
- (18) Ibid., p. 114.
- (19) Ibid., p. 112.
- (20) Ibid., p. 39.
- (21) Ibid., p. 125.
- (22) Ibid., p. 39.
- (23) Ibid., p. 92.
- (24) Sartorius, op. cit.
- (25) Ibid.
- (26) Manifesto of the Strike Committee, cited in Gimenez Plaza, op. cit.
- (27) Gimenez Plaza, op. cit.
- (28) El Correo Catalan, 11 December 1976, cited in Gimenez Plaza, op. cit.
- (29) Diego Fábregas and Dionisio Giménez, La huelga y la reforma (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1977), p. 31.
- (30) Ibid., p. 46.
- (31) Ibid., p. 22.
- (32) Ibid., p. 34.
- (33) Luis Eddo, interview in Libération (Paris), 15 April 1977.
- (34) Frente Libertario, December 1976.
- (35) Juan G. Casas, interview in Sindicalismo, April 1977.
- (36) Martin, "La reconstruction de la CNT," La Lanterne Noire, November 1977.
- (37) Eddo, op. cit.
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) Ibid.
- (40) Editorial, Solidaridad obrera, Catalanian Regional Committee of the CNT, November 1976.
- (41) See the interview in this issue of Root & Branch.
- (42) Frente Libertario, January 1977.
- (43) Workers Councils, Root & Branch Pamphlet 1, pp. 70-71; in Root & Branch (Fawcett, 1975), pp. 458-460.

Three Inter- views

J. GOMEZ CASAS
(CNT National Committee)



QUESTION:

How do things stand today with the CNT, in Madrid in particular and in Spain generally?

ANSWER:

It can't be said that things are the same in Madrid and the Central region as in Valencia, Andalusia, and Catalonia; each area has its own situation which derives from its particular history, the different aspects of the current scene, and the political organizations present. This was true when the CNT was started up, primarily thanks to the impetus of young libertarian militants, especially anarchists. Until two months ago, the CNT existed only in the form of a national committee which was such in name only. With the rebirth of anarchism and the

immediate objective of reconstituting the CNT, anarcho-syndicalist groups began to develop all over Spain, giving the first real life to local, then regional, and finally national organizations. A meeting of 300 comrades in Madrid in December 1975 was the beginning of the development of the CNT in Madrid; then the unions began to develop. The first was the construction workers', formed by young, very dynamic people, very combative. The process of reconstitution was the same in all the regions, in Andalusia, the Basque country, in Cantabria, Asturias, Extremadura. It is going on now in Galicia and Aragon, where regional committees have not been formed but where there are many groups. In effect, the collective memory dating from the civil war still exists: the young people under-

stand our history and the old remember it. The reorganization process culminated in the nomination of the national committee last September [1976]. The national plenum decided on the election of a national committee composed of one delegate from each region and a permanent secretariat composed of five members.

QUESTION:

What problems have you encountered?

ANSWER:

I would say, the problems of an extremely young organization. In fact, we can say that 90% of the members of the CNT are young, and that this is very lucky; but these young people lack experience. They don't know what anarcho-syndicalism really is because they haven't lived it. This creates problems, which, however, are easily resolved. One of the major problems with which we have had to deal was with young people coming from anarchist groups, who entered the CNT with an anarchist mentality, thinking that a union can be run by the same rules and in the same way as their little groups. But to the extent that the CNT is an organization which involves many workers, it cannot function like an anarchist group. The young people must learn this from their own experience--they have now, and this difficulty has been overcome. There is also a kind of revulsion at any sort of representative structure; thus the regional or the national committee was seen as a sort of bureaucracy. But those who had such worries have seen that the committee made no decisions but only followed the decisions made by the various unions. There was a generation gap between the old and the young; but today a process of clarification, of discussion, of the confrontation of views is going on. In this way difficulties are resolved little by little. The CNT today is thus much more radical in its content than it ever was, thanks to the enormous quantity of anarchists inside it. This constitutes the guarantee that the CNT of today will become what the classical CNT was, but adapted to the present day historical situation and therefore very different from the organization of '36--and yet with its content, its anti-state and anti-parliamentary philosophy.

To sum up, you can say that the CNT is a new CNT, young, vintage 1977, but connected directly to the whole of its past history. At present, in this process of clarification which implies both confusions and tensions, we have a difficult and complex organization in which not everything runs smoothly but which is very lively and very dynamic.

QUESTION:

What is the spectrum of political organizations? How does the CNT fit into this spectrum? What problems are there in the CNT's relations with the other organizations?

ANSWER:

We have been disorganized and dispersed as

a result of the repression of the last 40 years, and we started in a weak position, significantly behind the other left groups. In addition, we have never had a professional apparatus, unlike the others. At present, the CNT has no paid officials, and all those who fill representative positions live from their labor. Thus we don't have the efficiency of the professional apparatus of the Workers' Commissions, or of the PCE with its 50 or 100 full-time workers. But this gives us a position of moral superiority because we don't live from the organization. It must not be forgotten that the other political forces have been able to enjoy some continuity even in clandestinity; a continuity constituted by their professional apparatus which could count on economic support from the great powers: the USSR, the German Social Democrats, etc.

But while the Workers' Commissions thus had an initial advantage over us, the image which the CC.OO. enjoy abroad as the only workers' organization is a myth, because the UGT exists as the second largest organization of the Spanish proletariat, and the CNT also exists. The Spanish Communist Party wished to use the Workers' Commissions as a basis for realizing their idea of union unity, which would mean, as in Portugal, a single central union. But they did not succeed in this, thanks to the opposition of the UGT and the CNT. We, in particular, fought for a plurality of tendencies and organizations, based on the real differences which exist. This battle ended in victory, and now the Workers' Commissions have had to abandon their plan and deal with the fact that there are other forces which they cannot overpower: the UGT and the CNT. For the moment, the CC.OO. still have the majority position even if in Catalonia, for example, the CNT is beginning to have some influence. But we believe that in a while the relations of strength will change.

On the other hand, we have one great advantage over the other forces: they claim to be autonomous, independent of political parties, and this is false; the UGT depends directly on the Socialist Party, the CC.OO. on the Communist Party, the USO is tied to several socialist groups connected to the PSOE, and the only organization tied to no one is the CNT. This gives us a great theoretical advantage, because we call attention to the fact that no one imposes a line on us, and the workers have no trouble understanding this. When we say that we have no leaders, that the mass meeting is sovereign, that everyone has the power of decision, they understand what we are talking about.

Today in Spain, after 40 years of dictatorship, there is a rediscovery of Proudhonian concepts of federalism, regionalism, and autonomy. There exists a real revolutionary fervor, all the groups talk about self-management, including the PCE. Evidently all this gives us an advantage, since we are the only coherent spokespeople for self-management, and we can demonstrate it in the facts. All the groups or parties which talk of self-management have a hierarch-

ical structure, all wish to integrate themselves into the state and the parliament--which has nothing to do with self-management. Self-management means self-government, and that means anarchy; and this people understand very well. Even the autonomist demands of the Spanish regions, and not only of Catalonia and the Basque country but also of regions which have never advanced such ideas, are favorable for us because this means movement towards decentralization, towards Proudhonian federalism. Of course, our job is to push these demands further, giving them a libertarian socialist content. It is obvious that we can't be interested in replacing one government with six or seven; but we must defend the concepts of autonomy and of regionalization from the point of view of libertarian federalism. All of what I have said here means that despite the thousand difficulties, we find ourselves in a favorable situation, in which our coherence puts us in a position to unmask, before the workers' eyes, the contradictions and the mystifications of the other parties.

QUESTION:

What specifically anarchist groups exist, and what are the relations between them and the CNT?

ANSWER:

I can begin by saying that we don't recognize the official existence of the FAI at this moment; we know that a multitude of specific groups exist almost everywhere, and that some are FAI groups, but the FAI is not organized nationally. There are many anarchisms in the country, with many forms: collectives, cultural groups, student and youth groups. All this anarchism cannot be integrated under one label, not even that of the FAI. I have just finished a book on the history of the FAI, and I conclude it with the thought that what is important to the anarchists is not the FAI, but anarchism.

Many anarchists are active in neighborhood organization. There are a hundred such here; some work with us, others not, for there is an anti-union tendency--anarchism in Spain has many sides. It must be said that the development of anarchism in this country is very closely connected with the development of the CNT. The CNT is a kind of bulwark; we neither ought nor wish to lose our influence over the labor movement. If we were to lose our battle in the workers' movement we would suffer the hegemony of the Marxists and the Communists for many years. The movement is extremely important at this moment because not only manual workers but all who play a part in the general relations of production are part of it: from university professors to technicians of various skill grades, to laborers--all those people who are not parasites and who fill a more or less productive function. And if we were to lose our influence on this movement, in the narrow sense, even anarchism, in all its aspects, would experience a defeat, because the existence of a strong and numerically large CNT is necessary to the development of the specifically anarchist movement. If we lose our battle

as the CNT in the world of labor, we will only be able to get together with other anarchists in the bars, to drink a beer and talk about anarchism: what then would be our influence on reality?

QUESTION:

I would like to know whether, during the reconstruction of the CNT, there have been attempts at infiltration by the Communists or, worse, by members of the (fascist) vertical syndicates?

ANSWER:

The CGT was created by anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists; now many people come to us out of the Marxist groups, disgusted by the political leaders of the Workers' Commissions. Many of our best militants, now convinced anarchists, come from the PCE. Up to now, there has thus been no Communist infiltration, also because our current form of organization doesn't permit this. As far as infiltration by verticalist elements goes, there is even less. In Catalonia there were people who had been in the vertical syndicate in that they were elected by the workers as their representatives, but without ever sharing the political line of the syndicate. There are many Communists who were and still are in the syndicate because they have the practical possibility to infiltrate it, but there is no verticalist influence inside the CNT. What we defend today is trade union liberty, which will permit open activity--today we are still illegal, though tolerated. The police and the government know we exist; indeed the minister of social relations invited the CNT to a meeting--which of course we refused.

QUESTION:

What are the strongest unions in the CNT?

ANSWER:

At this time, in Madrid, the strongest union is the teachers', with 200 members, including teachers, students, school workers in general. Another very strong sector is that of the graphic arts, with many journalists and writers; the metalworkers' union and construction, and the bank workers' and woodworkers' unions, are strong.

QUESTION:

What is the strategy of the CNT?

ANSWER:

I would say, to begin with, that we ought to affirm the autonomy and the independence of our movement, and our historical characteristics: anti-capitalism, anti-statism, and anti-parliamentarism; direct action, self-management, impenetrable struggle against those in power. And then we ought to make maximum use of an irreversible phenomenon now in progress: the integration into the bourgeois democratic system of all the political groups, without exception, which up to now have been regarded as a political opposition. Everyone is waiting for the general elections to join the fray, on the national or on the municipi-

pal level, and their behavior will do nothing but prove that we are the only revolutionary and autonomous organization in the country, and that we are the opposition even to the opposition.

QUESTION:

When I asked about the strategy of the CNT, you answered with very clear principles, but I wanted to know something else. The Spain of 1977 is not that of 1936; it has become an industrialized, advanced country, with a new social structure linked to the development of industrial capitalism; this evolution is reflected in the structure of the workers' movement. Given all this, what is the strategy of the CNT?

ANSWER:

I would say that the economic and social situation of Spain has changed, and it is true that the situation of the working classes is not the same as in '36, but in the months to come the conditions of the working class will become very hard as a result of the economic crisis. The workers' living conditions are very bad, and their worsening points towards social conflict. I do not believe that there is a real possibility that the working class will be lulled to sleep by living too well, since such a prosperity does not exist and will not exist in the future. The workers will have to fight hard to survive, and this opens the possibility for us to get into contact with them and to offer them

our ideas. We have a real alternative to offer. For example, when the process of democratization is completed, the political organizations will fight each other for the nationalization of the deficit-producing sectors of the Spanish economy, like coal. Our duty, as I see it, will be to fight against statification and for workers' management of this sector, and to begin to create rank-and-file structures already now, in this society, for we cannot wait for the arrival of libertarian communism. We must already now give very precise ideas of it. For example, the Madrid subway runs a heavy deficit and there is talk of nationalizing it. We ought to propose, in contrast, that the subway should be run by the workers and the users, through the creation of a new type of self-managed administration. We know very well that real self-management can exist only in a libertarian society, but this society can certainly not be created magically from one day to the next. It is with such proposals that we can, starting now, advance in this direction.

Finally, I believe that our strategy ought to be continually to weaken the state, by taking all we can from it, till we come to a direct clash. This differentiates us from all the other political forces which, on the contrary, tend to reinforce the state by giving it new powers, such as the nationalization of private enterprises.

Madrid, 5 January 1977

LUIS ANDRÉS EDO and LUIS BURRO, Barcelona CNT

QUESTION:

What is the situation in Barcelona today?

EDO:

To begin with, it must be said that at this time all the organizational levels of the CNT both exist formally and at the same time don't exist. The National Committee doesn't function, nor do the regional committees and the local federations, nor even the unions, and nevertheless, all these organs certainly exist. This holds for all levels, in all the regions, in all the provinces, and it is not a problem due to particular people or to a particular form of organization. It is a phenomenon in itself. Each level of the organization, from the assembly delegate up to the National Committee, does what it can, but we are powerless to overcome something which will not be resolved in assemblies or plenums, necessary though they are, but only through the process, now beginning, of actually constructing the organization. This is the background to the session of the Catalan regional plenum--the only one in Spain, as the

others are plenums only in name. Another factor to be kept in mind is the political situation, which is going through a process of rapid democratization which can't be stopped, and which no one can control. We must thus start from the CNT as it is today, well aware that the problems it encounters have aspects similar to those encountered by all organizations and parties in this type of phase. The regional plenum of Catalonia, which took place after two and a half months of weekly meetings of about 250 delegates from the unions, was a very important event because out of it came a very clear statement of the will of the militants, mostly young, to fight any attempt at manipulation, and thus the will to control all decisions directly. The government itself hoped to use a few agents to manipulate the CNT. But this plenum destroyed illusions and hopes of this type. There were hundreds of hours of discussion, of committee work, and all this means that the organization is functioning, even if it doesn't function as an organization. In effect, the new militants, authentically libertarian, wish to control an

organization not run by anyone. It is out of this that the mechanisms and forms of organization will develop, by a natural and spontaneous process.

BURRO:

One could say that 29 February 1976 was the date when the CNT began to function in an organic way; this functioning, more or less effective, continued until the plenum of which comrade Edo was speaking. It was a plenum which looked to the long term, and which today is bearing fruit. I would like to speak of the period before the plenum. In my opinion, the reconstitution of the CNT on 29 February was carried out from the top down by elements who had things as they wished until this plenum. That is to say that a few people set up a prefabricated organization, and afterwards welcomed others, the militants, into it. From this came a committee of contacts which became a regional committee without really being one, and which functioned without any control by the militants. This is typically authoritarian organization; it's not at all libertarian and even less anarcho-syndicalist. During all these months, therefore, the CNT was run vertically and not horizontally as it ought to be.

The regional plenum broke with this practice. The government hoped that we would become a simply anti-communist organization, but this maneuver didn't succeed. After 29 February there was also a maneuver by the state syndicate to infiltrate the CNT by having various prestigious individuals enter it, but this also didn't succeed: we threw these people out. A few have remained, but their ability to maneuver has become derisory. Now I would say that we are engaged in gathering the fruits of the plenum. After two months of very heavy discussions, the militants have come to terms with the stagnation due to our collective incapacity: aside from two unions which function perfectly, the others are undergoing a process of transformation. A certain number of CNT unions are shadow-unions without any real meaning; they produce well made newsletters but they represent only a handful of nobodies who one sees nowhere. This is a contradiction within the CNT. But we must not forget that we are emerging from 40 years of dictatorship and that 80% of the militants have an average age of 22 years, and that they are therefore neither mature nor prepared. The function of the plenum was exactly that of educating the young militants.

QUESTION:

What you say is rather different from what Gomez Casas told me in Madrid; he said that the organizations function very well, even if there are some practical problems. You, on the contrary, say that the organization does not function very well, but that the militants function. This seems to me to indicate that the process of reconstructing the CNT differs from one city to another, and that, therefore, there exists a spectrum of militants and of organizations.

EDO:

I respect every comrade's opinions and also that of Gomez Casas, who has been my friend for many years, but I don't agree with his opinions, and that also is the richness of the CNT. I have just returned from Madrid where there was a meeting of the National Committee at which we debated (Gomez Casas participating) at great length the theses I've put forward to you. My theses were accepted by the majority. In fact, the problem of the non-functioning of the CNT mechanism exists throughout Spain to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the size and influence of the CNT. Catalonia is the region where things are going the best; on the other hand it's absolutely normal that after 40 years, in a new organization, and a non-authoritarian one, we have such problems.

QUESTION:

What are the activities you say are going so well here?

EDO:

In Catalonia, in the last three months, the universities, trade schools, workers from different firms and neighborhood groups asked the various union organizations to give presentation of their positions and activities. We have already made over a hundred such presentations and we'll be doing more. There are also presentations together with the Workers' Commissions, the USO, the UGT, with great polemics and discussions.

QUESTION:

Since you're talking about these forces, can you say what are the strongest unions in Barcelona, and what are the relations between the CNT and the other unions?

EDO:

First of all, today no one has any real influence over the labor movement. Many labor organizations, with their apparatuses, are trying to fool the workers, but at the moment they haven't succeeded. It is, therefore, impossible to speak of numerically stronger unions. On the other hand, one can talk about influence, and from this point of view I would say that the influence of the CNT has begun to develop in various regions, because it is organized from the bottom up, and not the other way around like the other political organizations; because of its refusal of union unity, which means the hegemony of the Spanish Communist Party (it must be said that all the forces in the labor movement--including the Workers' Commissions--have been forced to come out for union pluralism); and, finally, because of the CNT's refusal to make deals with the bosses, or sign a social pact with the government.

QUESTION:

What is the situation of the specifically anarchist movement in Barcelona, and what are its relations with the CNT?

EDO:

In general, the majority of anarchists support the reconstruction of the CNT. Personally, and unlike some other comrades, I believe that the CNT ought to become more and more anarchist in its content not by having this imposed on it in some way, but through a continuing dialogue, a permanent confrontation between the different tendencies within it, just as happened for the CNT in '36, because it is exactly in being this kind of organization that the Confederation has its strength.

Without this character, there would not have been actualizations of our ideas like the collectives in the past, and today we wouldn't succeed in doing anything. Without this confrontation between the different anarchist tendencies, the CNT could have no influence on the workers' movement and would fall into ordinary unionism. But this organization with its strategy, its content, its history, is essentially anti-syndicalist, that is, precisely against all the schemas of traditional unionism. The fact that today the CNT contains many active com-

rades who come from a new, anti-syndicalist anarchism is, in my view, an absolutely necessary condition for the very life of the CNT. It must, however, be added that there are also purely syndicalist currents in the CNT. I think they are wrong, because it is really from the confrontation and the synthesis between anarchism and syndicalism that the anarcho-syndicalist movement was born.

QUESTION:

What are the strongest unions of the CNT in Barcelona?

EDO:

That depends on what you mean by "strongest": the number of militants or their quality. Numerically the two strongest unions, with more than 200 militants, are the entertainment union and the textile union; on the other hand, those which are strong in combativeness are those of the metalurgical, teaching, and graphic arts workers.

MANIFESTO

Mujeres Libres,* a libertarian organization which began shortly before July 1936 and developed its activities up to 1939, has returned to activity with the appearance of a group of women who, as libertarian as ever, wish to continue, actualize, and widen the work of women's advancement and emancipation, with the goal of a restructuring of society which would permit men and women to live as persons, with total equality of rights and obligations.

For Mujeres Libres the fundamental question is not the liberation of women per se, but the placing of this liberation in the widest framework of the emancipation of the laboring class in a libertarian perspective.

This group proposes:

- to create a conscious and responsible feminine force, that is to say, to sensitize all those women presently alienated in their complete acceptance of the role of dependence on men and of the social habits determined by an unjust class society;
- to establish to this end schools, lecture series, courses, journals, etc., with the aim of the liberation of woman and of her emancipation from the three-fold slavery to which she has been and continues to be subjected: slavery of ignorance, slavery as a woman, slavery as a producer;
- to fight against the economic and social inequality of women, which is the primary cause of the sexual problem whose victims we are;
- to fight not against men but against the structures, both political and mental, responsible for the clashes between men and women;

- to modify the socio-legal norms of work, education, and human relations; this being only a means to our real end: that of changing the norms, behaviors, usages, customs, social forms, fashions and beliefs of people with respect to men and women;
- to eliminate every sort of rulers (political, cultural, economic, etc.) even if they are women, for we think that the hierarchy has never been a way for the emancipation of the individual, whether man or woman;
- to refuse every sort of particular culture, whether feminist, macho, bourgeois, etc.

With respect to political parties, we think that every "female section" of a party, or every feminist movement whose leaders are party figures, is condemned to serve the interests of that party, before that of the women for which it pretends to fight. We therefore accept no sort of leadership or of manipulation from parties, nor any sort of compromise with them, except for tactical reasons in a particular struggle, and if our participation is in conditions of total freedom.

This movement (ML) exists at Madrid, Valencia, Andalusia and other regions of the peninsula; it is little by little structuring itself as a federation of local groups in order to arrive at a complete coordination for the peninsula as a whole.

*Mujeres Libres
c/o Mendez Núñez 14, I, 24
Barcelona 3 -- Spain

QUESTION:

And neighborhood work?

BURRO:

At this time there is an attempt to create a federation of neighborhood committees. There exist groups which work not on the anarcho-syndicalist level, but on the anarchist level; many anarchists are not in the CNT and prefer to center their activity in the neighborhoods where they live and which offer enormous potential for the diffusion of anarchist ideas. Where I live, for example, at Santa Colloma de Gramanet, a vast working class dormitory-city, the anarchists are the main political force, both qualitatively and quantitatively, but they have no form of coordination with people in other neighborhoods. This is why we are trying to create a federation of neighborhood committees.

EDO:

I would like to make clear that when I said that the CNT has broken all the traditional union schemas I also meant to say that there exists no organization which extends its activity beyond the workplace to the places where people live after work, i.e., the neighborhoods. We think the neighborhoods are enormously important and we believe that if the CNT really wants to become a union different from the others it must unify the two areas of life, for the activity of a working class organization ought not be limited to bread-and-butter demands, but ought also to cover all aspects of the workers' life.

BURRO:

I personally believe that the CNT shouldn't have been started up on 29 February for a particular reason: its statutes date from 1910

and since then many things have happened. Multinational companies have come into existence, a capitalism with completely new characteristics has developed; it is thus necessary to verify if the structures adopted by the CNT are still valid. Personally, I have doubts about this, because I have noticed that many unions only make demands of the regular trade union type, while I think that the goal of the CNT is to insist on the different aspects of life. We ought to begin building another society right now, and thus the CNT ought to be the organization which contains the premises of this new society in embryo. But given that the CNT is structured by unions, it seems to me very difficult to succeed in this. I am a member of the health workers' union and I can say that at the present time this union is in crisis; one part of the militants think they are in the CNT to defend their professional and wage interests while others think they are in the CNT to construct a new society. These two tendencies have given rise to a division of the union into two parallel sections with different aims. The section to which I belong thinks that a health workers' union, in an organization like the CNT, which ought to fight for social change, doesn't make much sense. Even the very name, "health workers, is restrictive and implies demands on our employers, while we think that it would be more significant to create a "Public Health and Hygiene" union, which would fight for preventative medicine such as one could certainly not do in hospitals, while we work only in hospitals. Our work ought to go on in the neighborhoods, because it's just there that illnesses arise, because of living conditions and overwork.

Barcelona, 10 January 1977

MUJERES LIBRES

QUESTION:

I would like to know first of all if a feminist movement exists in Spain; if so, what are its positions, and what are your relations, if any, with the feminist groups?

ANTONIA:

The Spanish feminist movement is very young, for obvious reasons. The movement began a year and a half ago. It has no unified positions because it contains many tendencies: there are more radical groups of feminists which see men as the principal enemy and for whom women constitute a well-defined class which ought to defend its interests by detaching the special problem of women from social reality as a whole. Other groups have relatively moderate positions, others yet are formed by libertarian women. The majority of these feminist groups, however, use the Marxist method of analysis. The feminist

movement had its first great public moment with the "Catalan Women's Days" organized in a series of meetings in which nearly 4,000 women participated, and which concluded with the unanimous approval of a platform of demands. With this as a starting point, the different groups expressed a need for links and created the Cordinadora, a weekly coordination meeting, in which we anarchists participate only as observers.

With respect to our relations with this movement, I would say that, at least for the moment, they are non-existent because we find ourselves in total disagreement on basic issues: the struggle against men, looking at women as a class, the inter-classism which characterizes many groups, and the Marxist analysis. This doesn't mean that if in the future we should see that it is possible to carry out some specific and time-bound action with these groups, we wouldn't consider this.

QUESTION:

Before turning to Mujeres Libres, I would like to know how your organization deals with the woman question from the anarchist point of view. To whom do you address yourselves?

CLARA:

Above all we don't define ourselves as feminists, because of the deep and important differences that separate us from the feminist movement. Obviously we are women and so want to fight for women's emancipation, but we are also anarchists and we are quite aware that if we really want to change the totality of life we can't stop at a single aspect of inequality but have to remember that there is a whole series of social categories excluded and discriminated against. You only have to think of children, old people, homosexuals, lesbians, invalids; these people have problems that don't seem to exist for the feminists. Besides, we think that men are exploited, conditioned, and alienated like us, and that's the reason why we wonder what sense there is in fighting against them instead of with them. Always, of course, if we wish to change all of society in its structures and the mentality it produces. It is necessary to destroy this hierarchical society which is based on antagonism, on divisions, and on competition. We ask if it makes sense to fight for sexual equality in the job hierarchy. It seems to us in fact that to succeed in having as many female as male executives or government officials means reinforcing hierarchical structures and the division of labor instead of destroying them, and therefore ultimately means strengthening the credibility of this exploitative society.

With respect to the people we address ourselves to, I would say that we would choose as comrades in struggle, exploited women, those at the bottom of the social pyramid since they are exploited economically as well as oppressed sexually. Bourgeois women, who are only sexually oppressed, don't interest us, as long as they don't make a choice of class and renounce their privileges. We understand that that is very difficult to do.

QUESTION:

What type of activity have you been engaged in up to now?

KATIE:

Presently, we are doing some support work for the La Roca workers, who have been on strike for two months now. We are doing this in collaboration with libertarians from different neighborhoods, collecting money and other stuff to help the families to live, toys for the children, and we try to give our solidarity as many forms as possible. The first thing we did was a pamphlet called The Women of La Roca Speak, in which we collected first-person accounts by these women about the situation they confront, and the problems they have lived through during this time. We are distributing this pamphlet. In this connection, I'd like to tell a revealing story: some women from La Roca went to a feminist meeting where more than 400 women were

present and tried to speak on La Roca. Well, they were refused the floor and none of the women present spoke up for them.... We have a program and a series of writings on various subjects--marriage, divorce, abortion--and we try to explain what Mujeres Libres is in the various neighborhoods. Besides this, we are setting up a clinic.

QUESTION:

What are your relations with the specifically anarchist groups and with the CNT?

TERESA:

As a group, Mujeres Libres is completely autonomous, but since we are anarchists or libertarians, some of us are also in the CNT. They do anarcho-syndicalist work there, because the ideological framework is the same as ours.

QUESTION: Do you have a program and any activities around abortion?

CHRISTINA:

The problem of abortion is certainly very important, but in our opinion the problem of prevention is even more so. That is, we think it is very urgent to give people the knowledge necessary to use contraceptives so that they won't need abortions. At a time like today, the problem is strongly felt. We think that our task is not to campaign for legalized abortion, because we're not interested in making deals with the state, but we think we ought to create illegal structures to which proletarian women can go for abortions without risking their lives. And this is what we are in the process of setting up in collaboration with some doctors. The problem of abortion is a little like that of divorce. We don't believe in the state, we fight the state, so it would be simply absurd to demand the legalization of anything. All our initiatives ought to be undertaken outside of the logic of the state and with our own forces, under our control and by those women who identify with our struggle. As far as abortion goes, we believe concretely that with the Karman method, anybody can practice it. Thus the problem is to take from the doctors the knowledge which they have engrossed in order to have power over our bodies.

QUESTION:

Do you intend to put out a journal, Mujeres Libres, later?

ANTONIA:

Yes, it's a project we have, but evidently this magazine will be very different from that of 1936.

Barcelona, 10 January 1977

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Interview with PAUL MATTICK

QUESTION: WE SEEM TO BE ENTERING INTO A NEW PERIOD OF SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CRISIS. WHAT ARE THE NEW FEATURES OF THIS PERIOD, IN COMPARISON WITH THE 1930's?

ANSWER: The basic reasons for the current crisis are the same as those which caused all previous capitalist crises. But all crises have also specific features with respect to their initiation, the reactions released by them, and their outcome. The changing capital structure accounts for these peculiarities. Generally, a crisis follows in the wake of a period of successful capital accumulation, wherein the profits produced and realized are sufficient to maintain a given rate of expansion. This state of capitalistic prosperity requires a steadily increasing productivity of labor, large enough to offset the relative decline of profitability resulting from the changing capital structure. The competitive and therefore blind pursuit of profit on the part of individual capitals cannot help but ignore the changing capital/labor composition of the social capital. The crisis erupts, when an arising disproportionality between a required rate of profit for the social capital and its necessary rate of accumulation forbids its further expansion. This underlying but empirically unascertainable discrepancy comes to the fore in terms of market relations as a lack of effective demand, which is only another expression for a lack of accumulation on which the effective demand depends.

Prior to 1930 periods of depression were answered by deflationary procedures, that is, by letting the "laws of the market" run their course in the expectation that sooner or later the declining economic activity would restore the lost equilibrium of supply and demand and thus revive the profitability of capital. The crisis of 1930, however, was too deep and too extensive to allow for this traditional way of coping with it. It was answered by inflationary procedures--that is, by governmental interventions in the market mechanism, up to the point of international warfare, for the restructuring of the world

economy through a forced centralization of capital at the expense of weaker national capitals, and by the outright destruction of capital in both its monetary and physical forms. Financed by way of government deficits, that is, by inflationary methods, the results were still deflationary, but on a far larger scale than had been accomplished previously by passive reliance on the "laws of the market." The long depression period and the second world war, and the attendant enormous destruction of capital, created conditions for an extraordinarily long period of capital expansion in the leading Western nations.

Both deflation and inflation led then to the same result, to a new upswing of capital, and were subsequently and alternately utilized in the attempt to secure the newly-won economic and social stability. Undoubtedly, it is possible by way of deficit-financing, that is, by way of credit, to enliven a stagnant economy. But it is not possible to maintain the rate of profit on capital in this manner and thereby perpetuate the conditions of prosperity. It was then only a question of time until the crisis-mechanism of capital production would reassert itself. By now it is obvious that the mere availability of credit to expand production is no solution to crisis, but a fleeting make-shift policy with only temporary "positive" effects. If not followed up by a genuine upswing of capital, based on larger profits, it must collapse in itself. The "Keynesian remedy" has led merely to a new crisis situation with growing unemployment and growing inflation--both equally detrimental to the capitalist system.

The present crisis has not as yet reached that degree of devastation which, in the 1930's, led from depression to war. Although unable to overcome the current crisis, the anti-depression measures alleviate to some extent the social misery caused by the decline of economic activity. But in a stagnating capitalist economy, these measures become themselves elements in its further deterioration. They make it more difficult to regain a starting-point for a new upswing. Also the

degree of international "integration" of the capitalist economy, by way of liberal trade policies and monetary arrangements, is steadily undermined by the deepening depression. Protectionist tendencies disturb the world market still further. As the depression cannot be overcome, except at the expense of the working population, the bourgeoisie must try all available means, economic as well as political, to reduce the living standard of the workers. The increase of unemployment, though of some help, is not enough to cut wages sufficiently to increase the profitability of capital. The incomes of all non-capitalist layers of society must be reduced, the so-called welfare measures diminished, in an attempt to reach that profitability of capital which allows for its further expansion. Although a rapid rate of inflation has this effect, it also finds its limitations in the increasing anarchy of capitalist production and in society in general. As a permanent policy it threatens the existence of the system itself.

QUESTION: IN THIS CONNECTION, HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF THE LEFT, ESPECIALLY THE COMMUNIST PARTY; WHAT IS THE MEANING OF EUROCOMMUNISM?

ANSWER: One must distinguish between the "objective left" in society, that is, the proletariat as such, and the organized left, which is not strictly of a proletarian nature. Within the organized left, at any rate in Italy, the Communist Party holds the dominating position. At this particular time, it most probably determines "left policies," despite opposition from other organizations either to its left or to its right. But the Communist Party is not a communist organization in the traditional sense. Long since it turned into a social-democratic formation, a reformist party, at home within the capitalist system and therefore offering itself as a supporting instrument. Practically, it exists to satisfy the bourgeois aspirations of its leadership and the needs of its bureaucracy, by mediating between labor and capital in order to secure the social status quo. The fact of its large working-class following indicates the worker's unreadiness, or unwillingness, to overthrow the capitalist system and their desire to find, instead, accommodation within it. The illusion that this is possible supports the opportunist policies of the Communist Party. Because a prolonged depression threatens to destroy the capitalist system, it is essential for the Communist Party, as well as for other reformist organizations, to help the bourgeoisie to overcome the crisis conditions. They must therefore try to prevent working-class actions which may delay, or prevent a capitalist recovery. Their reformist and opportunist policies take on an open counter-revolutionary character as soon as the system finds itself endangered by working-class activities that cannot be satisfied within

the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The "Eurocommunism" sported by the Communist Party has no meaning because communism is not a geographic but a social category. This empty term marks an attempt on the part of European communist parties to differentiate their present attitudes from past policies; it is a declaration that the former, albeit long forgotten, state-capitalist goal has been given up in favor of the mixed economy of present-day capitalism. "Eurocommunism" is a request for official recognition and for full integration into the capitalist system, which implies, of course, an integration into the various nation-states that comprise the European territory. It is a quest for larger "responsibilities" within the capitalist system and its governments, and a promise not to disrupt the limited degree of cooperation reached by capitalist nations in the European context, and to abstain from all activities that may disturb the apparent consensus between the East and the West. It does not imply a radical break with the state-capitalist part of the world, but merely the recognition that this part, too, is not interested in the extension of state-capitalist systems by revolutionary means, but rather into a fuller integration into the capitalist world-market, despite the remaining socio-economic differences between the private- and the state-capitalist systems.

QUESTION: WHAT POSSIBILITIES ARE THERE FOR REVOLUTIONARY ACTION, OR ACTION WHICH WANTS TO PREPARE FOR A FUTURE REVOLUTION? WHAT POSSIBILITIES DO YOU SEE FOR WORKERS, UNEMPLOYED, STUDENTS, THE LEFT-WING GROUPS?

ANSWER: Revolutionary actions are directed against the system as a whole--for its overthrow. This presupposes a general disruption of society which escapes political control. Thus far, such revolutionary actions have occurred only in connection with social catastrophes, such as were released by lost wars and the associated economic dislocations. This does not mean that such situations are an absolute precondition for revolution, but it indicates the extent of social disintegration that precedes revolutionary upheavals. Revolution must involve a majority of the active population. Not ideology but necessity brings the masses into revolutionary motion. The resulting activities produce their own revolutionary ideology, namely an understanding of what has to be done to emerge victoriously out of the struggle against the system's defenders. At the present time the possibilities for revolutionary action are extremely dim, because the chances of success are practically nil. Because of previous experiences, the ruling classes expect revolutionary activities and have armed themselves accordingly. Their military power is not as yet threatened by internal dissension; politically they still have the support of the large labor organiza-

tions and of the majority of the population; they have not as yet exhausted the mechanisms for manipulating the economy, and, despite an increasing international competition for the shrinking profits of the work economy, they are united world-wide against proletarian upheavals wherever they may occur. In this common front are also to be found the so-called socialist regimes; in the defence of their own exploitative class relations.

While a socialist revolution at this stage of development seems more than doubtful, all working-class activities in defense of their own interests possess a potential revolutionary character because capitalism finds itself in a state of decay that might last for a long time. No one is able to predict the dimensions of the depression for lack of relevant data. But everyone faces the actual crisis and has to react to it; the bourgeoisie in its way, the working class in opposite ways. In periods of relative economic stability the worker's struggle itself hastens the accumulation of capital, by forcing the bourgeoisie to adopt more effective ways to increase the productivity of labor, so as to retain a necessary rate of profit. Wages and profits may rise together without disturbing the expansion of capital. A depression, however, brings this simultaneous (though unequal) rise of profits and wages to an end. The profitability of capital must be restored before the accumulation process can be resumed. The struggle between labor and capital now involves the system's very existence, bound as it is to its continuous expansion. Objectively, the ordinary economic struggle takes on revolutionary implications and thus, political forms, because one class can only succeed at the expense of the other. The working class does not need to conceive of its struggle as the road to revolution, within a state of persistent capitalistic decline its struggles take on revolutionary connotations quite apart from all awareness.

Of course, the workers might be prepared to accept, within limits, a decreasing share of the social product, if only to avoid the miseries of drawn-out confrontations with the bourgeoisie and its state. But this might not be sufficient to bring about a new economic upswing and therewith not enough to halt the growing unemployment. The division between employed and unemployed, while a capitalist necessity, turns into a capitalist dilemma with a steadily growing unemployment under conditions of economic stagnation and decline. If one wishes to suggest to the workers how to react to the deepening crisis, all that could be said is to organize both employed and unemployed into organizations under their own direct control, and to fight for immediate needs, regardless of the state of the economy and the class-collaborationism of the official labor movement. In other words to fight the class struggle as it is fought by the bourgeoisie. The advantage on

the part of the bourgeoisie, its state apparatus, must be matched by a greater power, which, at first, can only be the continuous disruption of the production process, which is the basis of all capitalist power, and by relentless activities of the unemployed to force from the bourgeoisie the means of existence. As far as the radical students and revolutionary groups are concerned, in order to be effective at all they must submerge themselves in the movements of the workers and unemployed; not to realize any special program of their own, but to articulate the meaning of the impending class struggle and the directions it has to take due to the imminent laws of capital production.

QUESTION: WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR VIOLENCE, AND IN PARTICULAR FOR ARMED STRUGGLE, IN RADICAL ACTIVITY?

ANSWER: This is not a question which can be answered by allotting to violence either a positive or negative role. Violence is imminent to the system and thus a necessity for both labor and capital. Just as the bourgeoisie can only exist by virtue of its control over the means of production, so it must defend this control by extra-economic means, through its monopoly over the means of suppression. Already a refusal to work makes the possession of the means of production meaningless, for it is only the laboring process which yields the capitalist profit. A "purely economic" struggle between labor and capital is therefore out of the question; the bourgeoisie will always supplement this struggle with violence wherever it threatens its existence by seriously threatening the profitability of capital. It does not allow the workers to choose between non-violent and violent methods of class struggle. It is the bourgeoisie, in possession of the state apparatus, which determines which one it will be on any particular occasion. Violence can only be answered by violence, even if the weapons employed are unequal to the extreme. No question of principle enters here, but merely the reality of the social class structure.

However, the question posed is whether or not the radical elements in anti-capitalist struggles should take the initiative in the use of violence, instead of leaving the decision to the bourgeoisie and its mercenaries. There might be situations, of course, which find the bourgeoisie unprepared and where a violent clash with its armed forces might favor the revolutionaries. But the whole history of radical movements shows clearly that such accidental occurrences are of no avail. In military terms, the bourgeoisie will always have the upper hand, unless the revolutionary movement takes on such proportions as to affect the state-apparatus itself, by splitting or dissolving its armed forces. It is only in conjunction with great

mass movements, which totally disrupt the social fabric, that it becomes possible to wrest the means of suppression and therewith the means of production from the ruling classes.

The futility of badly-matched military confrontations has not been able to prevent them. There do arise situations, moreover, where such confrontations release the trigger for greater things and may lead to mass movements, such as are generally the preconditions for revolutionary violence. It is for this reason that it is so dangerous to insist upon non-violence and to make violence the exclusive privilege of the ruling class. But here we speak of highly critical situations, not such as exist presently in the capitalist countries, and also about large and sufficiently armed forces able to wage their struggle for a considerable length of time. In the absence of such highly critical situations, such actions amount to no more than collective suicide, not unwelcome to the bourgeoisie. They may be appreciated in moral or even esthetic terms, but they do not serve the course of the proletarian revolution, except by entering into revolutionary folklore.

For revolutionaries it is psychologically quite difficult, if not impossible, to raise their voices against the futile application of "revolutionary justice" by terroristic groups and individuals. Even Marx, who despised all forms of nihilistic actions, could not help being elated by the terroristic feats of the Russian "Peoples' Will." As a matter of fact, the counter-terror of revolutionary groups cannot be prevented by mere recognition of its futility. Their perpetrators are not moved by the conviction that their actions will lead directly to social change, but by their inability to accept the unchallenged, the perpetual terror of the bourgeoisie unchallenged. And once engaged in illegal terror, the legal terror forces them to continue their activities until the bitter end. This type of people is itself a product of the classridden society and a response to its increasing brutalization. There is no sense in forming a consensus with the bourgeoisie and condemning their activities also from a proletarian point of view. It is enough to recognize their futility and to look for more effective ways to overcome the ever-present capitalist terror by the class actions of the proletariat.

Paul Mattick
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LA NOUVELLE CLASSE OUVRIERE AMERICAINE

Etudes du groupe américain Root & Branch, traduit par un collectif Spartacus.

Il a été longtemps traditionnel, en France et en Europe en général, de considérer que la lutte de classe aux Etats-Unis n'était qu'une pâle caricature. Pour les uns, les travailleurs américains se divisent en ouvriers blancs bien payés, et, par conséquent, réformistes et/ou réactionnaires, et une masse pauvre et impuissante, formée essentiellement de gens de couleur. Pour d'autres, cet état de fait n'est pas discutable mais ils l'attribuent à l'existence d'organisations du travail auxquelles manquent la bonne «théorie marxiste» et une tradition et un passé révolutionnaires. Dans l'un comme dans l'autre cas, la situation américaine est considérée avec une certaine condescendance.

Pourtant certaines explosions, comme celles des Noirs à Watts, certaines grandes grèves, le mouvement étudiant, l'opposition à la guerre du Viet-nam (autrefois importante que celle qui exista en France contre la guerre d'Algérie) ont montré que la société américaine ne rentre pas si facilement dans ces schémas. Mais cela a eu le plus souvent comme résultat, en Europe, de déclencher une vague de sentimentalisme autour des Black Panthers, des Weather men, etc..., toute une spéculation sur le «rachat révolutionnaire» par les plus défavorisés (une sorte d'avatar de la théorie de la rédemption par le Tiers Monde), ou un romantisme de la violence qui se poursuit aujourd'hui.

Ce qui paraît caractériser toutes ces opinions c'est d'une part une méconnaissance profonde de l'histoire du mouvement social américain, d'autre part une absence quasi totale d'analyse de la situation présente; ce qui surprend lorsqu'on se rappelle que les Etats-Unis sont, quand même, la première puissance économique du monde.

Pourtant les événements de 1968 qui, d'un côté, ont inquiété le système dominant et, d'un autre, ont ébranlé la confiance que pouvait avoir la gauche française et européenne dans ses schémas traditionnels (tant officiels, comme ceux du PC et de la CGT, etc... que révolutionnaires supposés, comme ceux de la plupart des groupuscules) auraient dû mener à autre chose qu'à un examen superficiel du Mouvement américain de la décennie 1960-1970.

Actif de 1969 à 1974, le groupe américain Root & Branch tente au contraire, une analyse en profondeur de la situation américaine contemporaine. Plus qu'un groupe traditionnel, Root & Branch est l'un de ces noyaux radicaux de type nouveau marqué par le renouveau du mouvement social américain, les luttes étudiantes des années soixante, cherchant des liens organisationnels souples, refusant des rapports aliénants entre le militantisme politique et la vie quotidienne, faisant de l'opposition au sectarisme idéologique la condition nécessaire à tout travail théorique. Très sensibles aux contradictions de la réalité sociale, des mouvements étudiants, aux luttes de la nouvelle classe ouvrière américaine, les camarades de R & B ont su assimiler les nouveaux éléments de critique apportés à la théorie révolutionnaire par les luttes sociales des années soixante tout en gardant présents les principes de la théorie communiste non-léniniste mis en évidence dans les luttes du passé.

Cet état d'esprit est bien illustré par ce livre que nous proposons au lecteur de langue française. Il y retrouvera un certain nombre d'articles publiés par R & B et qui présentent aussi bien des descriptions critiques de luttes «sauvages» de travailleurs, dirigées tant contre la hiérarchie syndicale que contre le patronat et/ou l'Etat, que des bilans de luttes passées, comme celle du mouvement étudiant, que des études du caractère contradictoire des attitudes des ouvriers blancs ou noirs, ou une mise en évidence des liens entre la révolte des jeunes et leur situation socio-économique réelle, vue à travers des «indicateurs» qu'on n'a guère l'habitude de manipuler ici mais qui sont révélateurs.

Le lecteur rencontrera donc dans cet ouvrage, non seulement une description et une information critiques de la réalité américaine, mais aussi bien des enseignements valables pour la situation européenne d'aujourd'hui. Car au-delà des différences de structure juridico-politique et de tradition historique (l'édition française contient les notes nécessaires pour donner au lecteur les repères indispensables) il s'agit du même combat, contre le même ennemi, de ce côté comme de l'autre de l'Atlantique.

A New Class Theory

Before the turn of the century, no one predicted the appearance of a distinct and large stratum of professionals and managers. Bourgeois social scientists were quick to see in this new 'middle class' a confirmation that social classes would eventually evolve out of existence. The tremendous technological and material progress which accompanied capital accumulation meant an improved living standard for most despite the fits-and-starts of economic cycles and continued inequalities in the distribution of wealth.

Marxists, though, because they saw the persistence of a working class in the industrialized countries and its constant creation in all newly-capitalized areas of the world, were slower to pay attention to the new trends. The growth through the century in size and power of this new group created a debate and crisis for Marxist theoreticians, for it seemed that Marx's theory could only account for a society with a growing division into capitalists and wage-laborers. In the last several decades, one major debate between bourgeois social science and Marxism has been over whether the new stratum represents a 'new middle class' or a 'new working class.'

Barbara and John Ehrenreich follow this debate, and attempt to synthesize the results in a new Marxist theory which accords the professional-managerial stratum a class status alongside the two traditional groupings. The North American New Left, from whose perspective they wish to view the new conditions, had some influ-

ence on, but little support from the working class. This, they think, is because the Left shares with the professional-managerial class a common social position and a common view of socialism in which technical efficiency and technological rationality play the role of the future ideal. In turn, this explains the confusion of many leftists about their own class position, since many of them come from professional and upper-class backgrounds. While the Ehrenreichs applaud the Left for its attempt to overcome this position, they remain disturbed because their analysis implies that the Left's isolation is not merely historical. It is not that the Left has a consciousness which the working class has yet to develop; rather, the divergence in consciousness comes from fundamental social and theoretical differences.

In order to orient the Left towards an alliance with the working class, which they see as essential for a successful revolution, they show that professional-managerial conceptions of socialism are different from and opposed to working class conceptions. Unfortunately, the Ehrenreichs do not describe working class perceptions of socialism except to mention in passing that they are concerned with 'cultural' as well as 'bread and butter' issues. To prove their thesis, they have drawn on the appropriate theory and history, all of which is accomplished in two short magazine articles. (1)

According to the Ehrenreichs, "a class is characterized by a common relation to the econo-

mic foundations of society" which "arise from the place occupied by groups in the broad social division of labor, and from the basic patterns of control over access to the means of production and of appropriation of the social surplus."

(Part I, page 12) Unlike the petty bourgeoisie, which existed at the beginnings of capitalism and then declined in stature due to its uncompetitive position, the professional-managerial class has "taken form in monopoly capitalist society" (I,12); that is, it is a creation of the 20th century. The new class differs from the working class in that its role is "the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations" (I,13) while the working class has been left with the physical task of producing goods. The new class is, furthermore, "predicated on the atomization of working class life and culture and the appropriation of skills once vested in the working class." (II,19) In other words, the Ehrenreichs supply a theoretical basis to the recognized division of the work force into mental and manual workers, or white-collar and blue-collar employees, only they see the distinction as between reproductive and productive work.

Marx's conceptual use of class already accounted for the Ehrenreich's ideas. Class referred not to a 'social division of labor,' but to the division in society between workers and the users of workers. Marx was interested in the conditions which would lead to the creation, the development, and the abolition of the working class. To explain these phenomena, he used the concept of abstract labor because it described the general relationship through which laboring activity is used and directed in capitalist society. The capital/wage-labor relation explained the production of wealth, its necessary uses, and the evolution of the system through prosperity and collapse. Abstract labor had an empirical meaning since the possible exchange of every commodity for every other commodity implied that every type of labor was being equated with all other labor. Only labor produced wealth, and wealth in capitalism had importance for the system solely in the form of exchangeable commodities.

Because all labor was equated and also equalized to one standard kind through the market mechanism, and because all laborers had an identical relationship to the means of production, the economic reality of capitalism meant the existence of a unified and homogeneous working class regardless of the more observable differences due to the division of labor. Socialism was to overcome the split between the owners and the creators of the social wealth. For the working class, this meant taking direct control over its own creation.

Marx used the separation of society into capitalists and wage-laborers because it answered many questions about the functioning of capitalism, and because it provided some clues for overcoming working class problems--problems which grew in magnitude and importance as the

working class came to include a larger and larger proportion of the population. For Marx, it was the generalization of these problems which concerned him.

The Ehrenreichs have not addressed any of these questions about accumulation and revolution in their proposed theory. Instead, they have focused on a segment of the population to which the capitalists have turned over the day to day management of their firms and social system, and which has grown because of the ever-more severe separation of mental from manual work. In summary, Marx examined the overall features which characterized and motivated the capitalist system. Its exact evolution over time, however, could only be estimated. The Ehrenreichs are bothered by the inexactness of his estimations, particularly as they apply to



Scientists travelling through a hitherto unexplored region on New Guinea have discovered what they believe to be a new social class, number 347 on the Ehwrongberg Chart. The scientists believe that these are the first people to be found wearing wristwatches on their big toes, a cultural trait never seen before. Confirmation awaits a positive sighting.

the appearance and growth of the professional/managerial stratum. To overcome what they see as vagueness in Marx's predictions, they have redefined the concept of class.

Marx, of course, was well aware of the technical and social divisions within the working population. Capital is full of references to the "separation of the workers into skilled and unskilled."⁽²⁾ It also contains sections on some of the special ways in which women and children are used by capital. When Marx wrote the draft of Capital, he simultaneously worked as a newspaper journalist where he wrote on topics such as the American Civil War, describing, for instance, the race prejudice of the Northern population, and the reasons for the confusing results in the 1862 elections. At the beginning of his career, Marx has been encouraged by Engels to study economic theory and the working class. These were studies which Engels had already begun and from which he gained the respect of Marx and his notoriety as a left-wing critic.⁽³⁾ When Marx published Capital twenty-five years later, he still praised Engels for his detailed discussions of working class life.

The Ehrenreichs are correct, though, to say that Marx spent little time analyzing the difference between the managers and the producers of capital. Throughout the 19th century this difference was only one among many which characterized the working population. Marx mentioned this distinction, for instance in the closing pages of Capital where he says that even in the most developed capitalist nation, England, "the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form" as "middle and intermediate strata obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere."⁽⁴⁾ But because it did not have the visual and technical importance that it has today, he saw no need to dwell on it at any length. Marx did not expect that capitalism would continue in existence as long as it has, and for many 20th century developments he proved to be no soothsayer. Marx, however, provided a theory of capitalism in which this distinction was not crucial, but was merely a further and specific elaboration of a trend within the system.

Even though the Ehrenreichs acknowledge that the professional-managerial class is "a derivative class" in that it is an outgrowth of the capital/wage-labor relation; nonetheless, they claim that it is a class because it is "specializing in the reproduction of capitalist class relationships." (I,15) Here too, Marx used the notion of production and reproduction for purposes which make their definitions arbitrary and one-sided. The working class does produce physical goods, but because the product is owned by the capitalists the workers must once again sell their working abilities if they are to survive. The act of production is simultaneously one of reproduction, for when workers produce goods they reproduce themselves as wage-laborers.

It is also misleading for the Ehrenreichs to view managerial and professional work as merely 'reproductive' and "essentially nonproductive." (I,15) Human activity is involved, and this requires work, regardless of whether it contributes to the procreation of profit. Bourgeois standards on the definition of work are no reason to pooch-pooch someone's place in society.

Feminist theory popularized some of the cultural implications of production and reproduction. Their purpose was to show that one need not work directly for capital to perform an essential and necessary part in the social system. By doing so, they corrected a bias which has characterized much of the history of Marxism. The Ehrenreichs have used these popular notions, but have adapted them for different purposes. While feminists criticized the Left's fixation on the bourgeois conception of work in order to show the importance of women in the social system, the Ehrenreichs accept the bourgeois definition straight-forwardly to defend their ideas on class.

When Marx used the concepts of productive and unproductive labor, they had nothing to do with a person's class position or their political allegiances. Only workers perform labor, and they do so regardless of the ultimate usefulness of their labor to the system. These concepts referred to the production of value and surplus-value, which were the keys to understanding the success of the system as well as its falterings. An exact definition was needed in order to indicate the future possibilities for capitalism, but not to classify the population.

As a corollary to their definition of class, the Ehrenreichs say that "a class is characterized by a coherent social and cultural existence; members of a class share a common life style, educational background, kinship networks, consumption patterns, work habits, beliefs." (I,12) E.P. Thompson pioneered this approach in his description of the formation of the English working class in the early 1800's. He wrote that "class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."⁽⁵⁾ Thompson, however, admitted that a homogeneous English working class culture was possible only if the Scotch, Welsh, and Irish workers were "neglected,"⁽⁶⁾ even though these workers were directly connected to the economic developments in England. Cultural and national differences continue to this day in Great Britain, for instance, with the nationalist movements in both Ireland and Scotland.

Cultural differences are even more complicated in the United States, which began with almost no indigenous population. There are few cultural similarities between Chicano agricultural workers who have a 6th grade education and

white, skilled trade unionists who live in the suburbs of Boston. At the very least, they are unified by an economic interdependence and by a common relation to the means of production; and while this is a form of culture, the similarity need not extend further. If an all-embracing culture defined a class, there would be some thirty or forty social classes in the United States today.

The Ehrenreichs go on to explain the lack of a common working class culture by recognizing that "culture has a memory," (I,12) and thus may be a holdover from previous social conditions. It is true that with time working class culture becomes more and more alike, as capitalist production generates work disciplines and consumption patterns which are established throughout the system. If, however, a homogeneous culture is the trademark of a class, it can be said that the United States is still without a working class. At best, this cultural definition holds true only for the ruling and the professional-managerial segments of the population.

The Ehrenreichs claim that they can explain phenomena which Marx's 'two-class model' never took into account, but with which many leftists are concerned--like the rise in power and size of professionals and managers, the gulf separating the Left from the working class, and the appeal of technocratic conceptions of socialism. In itself, this is not a critique of Marx's theory, which the Ehrenreichs seem to have little familiarity with except in broad, generalized terms. Marxism was never meant as a replacement for sociological insight and detailed descriptions of people and social movements, a point which the Ehrenreichs confuse. In fact, the European population of the 1800's already accepted the analysis of capitalists versus workers before the field of sociology was developed as an academic discipline. "It would be more correct to say that 'sociology' is a reaction against modern socialism," (7) a means to discuss social problems without the harsh conclusions of a class theory.

Marxism provides the context, the system-wide analysis, within which sociology can help explain the day-to-day realities of working class life, the economic and cultural differences, and many other tangents of social existence. The theory addresses the overall trends and features of the system. For Marx, the capital/wage-labor relation produces the system, a system which evolves along many avenues, destroying some features while creating others, including the difference between mental and manual work.

The Ehrenreichs have taken this particular division of labor to be a class distinction, and have revised Marx's theory in order to draw attention to it. In other words, they have taken the sociological concepts of middle and working class, altered their definitions slightly, and supplied them with a Marxist

terminology--an ironic undertaking for Marxists. At the present time, it is difficult to understand what anyone in the United States has to gain, either personally or scientifically, by following suit.

Gary Roth
7 January 1978

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NOTES

- (1) Radical America, Part I, "The Professional-Managerial Class," March-April 1977; Part II, "The New Left and the Professional-Managerial Class," May-June 1977.
- (2) Capital, Vol. 1, p. 470, Penguin Books Edition, 1976.
- (3) The Condition of the Working Class in England, Friedrich Engels, published in 1845.
- (4) Capital, Vol. III, p. 885, Progress Publishers Edition.
- (5) The Making of the English Working Class, E.P. Thompson, p. 9, Vintage Books, 1966.
- (6) Ibid., p. 13.
- (7) Three Essays on Marxism, Karl Korsch, p. 12, Monthly Review Press, 1971.

Barroom Banter





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