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COUNTER INFORMATION

Sept/Oct 1987

COAL CONFLICTS

Miners are resisting British Coal's latest attacks. In July the National Union of Mineworkers [NUM] conference voted to oppose British Coal's plans for 6 day working and 9 - 9½ hour shifts. This "flexible working" would mean more stress, more danger and considerable disruption to social and family life.

In August a 77% majority voted for a national overtime ban against British Coal's oppressive new disciplinary code. This code - covers miners' conduct AWAY from the workplace - allows management to appoint the "defence" in disciplinary hearings - is so wide it effectively makes any union work a breach of discipline.

A blow was struck against the new code in July when 14,000 miners in 16 Yorkshire pits took part in a week-long unofficial strike against the suspension of 5 Frickley men. 200 flying pickets from Frickley successfully persuaded other miners to strike. But opposition from Yorks area

HOMES FIT FOR PEOPLE

In Westminster, London, tenants on the Elgin estate have, so far, successfully, prevented their eviction to make way for the sale of their homes 'en bloc'.

In Portsmouth an action group has been formed by the tenants on the Portsea estate. The council had planned to demolish part of the estate and sell the land for luxury houses and a hotel. Now, after a sustained campaign, the action group's spokesperson, Eva Allaway, comments: "This council won't do a thing

NUM leaders and some branch officials ended the strike.

ENEMY

British Coal also aims to weaken the miners by boosting the Union of Democratic Mineworkers(UDM). The UDM accepts the new disciplinary code and 6 day working. British Coal are insisting that new collieries like Hawkhurst Moor be UDM only.

The miners also face "the enemy within". Some NUM leaders support 6 day working. They might push a sell-out deal, trading British Coal "concessions" on the disciplinary code for 6 day working.

British Coal's attacks are another government attempt to smash the miners. This is in preparation for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, and the privatisation of the coal industry in the early 1990's.

ACTION

As we write, Yorks miners are set to take action again, to win NUM Branch Secretary, Ted Scott, his job back at Stillingfleet. British Coal victimised him for his opposition to 6 day coal production. They want to transfer him to Wheldale Colliery, due to close in April 1988. Strike action could also develop out of the overtime

now without talking to us first."

The London borough of Tower Hamlets announced plans to close two of its hostels for single homeless people. Tower House and Princes Lodge provide accommodation for over 600 people. The Council themselves admit that many of the residents will have no alternative accommodation.

MASS STRIKES IN KOREA

Since government concessions to student rioters at the end of June, S. Korean workers have started to make their own demands. By mid-August there had been 300 industrial disputes. Meanwhile, the new democratic opposition complained that strikes, "Will give anti-democratic forces an excuse to hamper democratisation".

The Hyundai manufacturing complex in Ulsan is a focus of unrest. 24,000 shipyard workers, locked out on August 6th, broke in and held mass rallies in between fighting off the police. On the same day car workers went on strike.

On August 18th 100,00 workers and supporters gathered in Ulsan. Frightened, the company recognised independent trade unions, agreed to

negotiate on wages and promised no victimisations. Shipyards and car factories were also occupied in Changwon and Koje.

MINERS

15,000 miners struck in the East Korean coalfields. On 10th August 1,000 miners occupied a railway station and key crossroads in Kohan for 15 hrs. despite police attacks. Days later, miners fought a 3 day battle with 1,500 riot police in the coalfields. This ended after mineowners offered a pay rise.

However, violence flared again when riot police attacked 400 miners blocking railway tracks in central South Korea.

Fierce battles flared on 3rd September in which one worker was killed. Strikers used bulldozers and dumpers against Police lines.



BEFORE THE STATE CLAMP DOWN IN SEPTEMBER

Photo FM/PSI

ban, as British Coal discipline miners who refuse to work "normally".

The July Yorkshire strike defied British Coal's sacking threats and the government's anti-picketing laws. In the

next major struggle much will depend on the mining communities also developing the self-confidence and self-organisation to maintain and spread the strike in defiance of any opposition from NUM leaders.

While the council consider who to sell the hostel to, the residents and staff are considering occupying the hostels

With 250,000 homeless people and thousands of properties lying unused, many people are looking to squatting to meet their housing needs. If people are not provided with decent housing, then they have a

right to occupy and use any empty property they can find.

Complaints that squatting council houses deprives other people of housing ignores the facts. An increasing number of council houses are deliberately left empty so that they can later be sold to anybody rich enough to afford them.

WORKING AT GUNPOINT

The trial of strength is over. 340,000 black miners were mobilised, a figure in excess of N.U.M. membership, in South Africa's Gold and Coalfields.

The major employer, Anglo-American, which controls 40% of gold production and dominates the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, has lost its liberal image.

All the companies employed Paramilitary armies backed up by the States 'Defence Force' to terrorise strikers using armoured cars ("Hippos"), Helicopters, and shooting from point-blank range.

In less unionised mines such as 'Harmony' (Rand Mines) workers were forced underground at gun point and staged a defiant sit-in. At others shots were fired into hostels (Vaal Reefs) or during battles (Deep Level, 78 shot at an Anglo-American mine).

The impact of the strike gave encouragement to other disputes involving 15,000 chemical workers, 7,000 steelworkers, metalworkers at Mercedes Benz, 15,000 Postalworkers and other municipal workers, and 900 teapickers in Natal.

The strike had the Chamber of Mines worried with £30 million losses in the first six days alone.

Yet the confrontation failed to win the 30% wage demand. The 23.4% imposed did not fully take into account inflation. The gains in holiday pay and indemnities for families of mining deaths (681 in 'accidents' in 1986) were significant but not as crucial.

The weakness of the strike lay in the large 'reserve army of labour' in Lesotho and homelands such as Ciskei. 44,000 miners had been dismissed including many key activists victimised or set up for arrest. Faced with mass recruitment amongst poverty stricken labour the union decided to make a "tactical move sideways" to avoid being seriously weakened.

They live to fight another day. A central objective remains the battle to win rights or organisation amongst the 50% of workers under virtual military discipline by companies such as Glencor. There will also be a struggle to achieve Full Reinstatement. The 'liberals' like Anglo-American remain committed to tying up union militancy in consultative machinery and thus drive a wedge between the 'workerism' of work struggles and the 'populism' of neighbourhood resistance.

EXCHANGE IS THEFT

A ray of hope emerged in communal strife torn Beirut at the end of August. Crowds, several hundred strong, marched on the Central Bank and when deterred by Syrian troops smashed their way into Foreign Exchange shops carrying off thousands of dollars in non-Lebanese currencies.

value and this has encouraged the street violence and rioting which broke out.

One of the rioters expressed it as such: "We have started to smash everything." "Today we dealt with exchange dealers and tomorrow we will deal with supermarkets and then the homes of the politicians."

In one year alone the Lebanese Pound has lost 71% of its [Saiid, 23, quoted in 'The Independent.']

Watch out Laura !

ON AUGUST 15TH, ADLER, ONE OF GERMANY'S LARGER clothing firms, had eight of its branches fire bombed, almost simultaneously, in eight different towns!

Claiming responsibility, Red Zora, a loose association of feminists, say it was in response to the exploitation and use of 'Third World' women as cheap labour in Adler's factories. Adler employ over 3,000 people in S.Korea and Sri Lanka.

No-one was hurt in the attacks and the total damage done was over £11 million! Watch out, Laura!



THE SPIRIT OF DEFIANCE DESPITE THE ODDS

Danish Stations Sizzle

The last 6 months has seen an encouraging increase in direct action in Denmark, most of it directed against Shell - to force them to pull out of S.Africa, by hitting them here in their economic back-yard, where it hurts!

Attacks on Shell filling stations, offices and companies as well as actions against newspapers and buses that carry Shell adverts.

The filling stations have been sabotaged by various means such as cutting the hoses, smashing the pumps, pouring sugar, or paint, into the underground tanks (this being particularly effective because it means that the tanks have to be dug up and replaced!) also smashing windows and throwing butyric acid stink bombs (they smell of rancid butter!) into the offices.

These actions have been condemned by left-wing parties and the anti-apartheid organisation - The S.Africa Committee, who constantly preach for a lawful method of protest.

One station in Noerum was burnt down!

Other events have happened in Denmark away from Shell. On 10th March diplomatic cars had their tyres slashed, 87 buses with Shell adverts were "repainted", fur shops were attacked and 100 banks had their locks glued, IBM offices had their offices attacked with butyric acid, D.A.C. (a company involved in building a radar base in Greenland) had their offices "lit-up" and Sperry, who make components for cruise missiles, also had their offices "visited".

On March 21st after an anti-apartheid demo a small group broke away and smashed bank windows and smashed a pornography shop.

This is only a small portion of what is happening in Denmark, we have a fuller account and you can have it for a s.a.e. It's worth reading!

Info: Tonto, Copenhagen.

BASHFUL ARSON

Oslo [AP] A group calling itself the "Young Bashful Heroes" claimed responsibility for a fire bomb attack on a Shell petrol station, and demanded that the company sever its connections with South Africa (26.8.87).

CAN'T PAY WON'T PAY

Hundreds of households in Council Tenants Committees in north east Italy are refusing to pay recent rent increases. And, the committees are also involved in squatting in empty houses in the Veneto region.

In Padova, in early February, 300 tenants occupied the headquarters of the organisation responsible for Council Housing.

On 20th March more than 500 tenants clashed with police during a demo in Venice.

Self-organised & independent of Political parties, these groups are struggling for "the right to have a home" as a social service, rejecting collaboration with the interests of the bosses & the state.

Info: Autonomia, Vicolo Ponte Corvo 1, Padova, Italy.

ALL GO IN YUGO!

A huge wave of strikes has hit Yugoslavia since the beginning of March. With inflation running at over 100% the government is bringing in severe 'austerity' measures which includes wage freezes, price increases and closing down loss making enterprises. Such widespread class conflict shows that contrary to official propaganda, genuine workers self-management has yet to be created in Yugoslavia.

The strikes started in the city Zagreb on the 7th March.

17th March: Strikes spread with over 14,000 on strike in Croatia alone.

18th March: new strikes at textile mill in Southern Serbia and among sewerage and construction workers in Croatia.

21st March: The Prime Minister, Branko Mikulic, gets affected by the strike wave. He goes to a restaurant for dinner and the waiters walk out!

Health workers strike at Belgrade Hospital and 1,000's of shipbuilders at Split and Pula.

March 22nd: The Prime Minister (angered at having his night out ruined?) makes a T.V. broadcast to the nation threatening to send in the troops (the Peoples Army!) to defend the communist systemmore strikes break out!

8th April: 1,700 miners walk out in the republic of Croatia at the Rasa coal mines in Labin demanding the dismissal of the bosses and a 150% pay rise.

17th April: union bureaucrats withdraw their support.

21st April: miners aided by a new strike wave including the biggest steel plant outside Belgrade, a rolling stock firm and other smaller enterprises throughout the country.

8th May: management and unions organise a ballot to end the miners strike but this is disrupted by the strikers who remain solid.

12th May: Mining bosses give in offering their resignation (which, of course, is readily accepted!) and a pay increase of 46% - they had been offered 18%.

As other workers hear of the victory more strikes break out all over the country. For instance in July more than 1,500 striking workers at a wood processing plant won a 55% pay rise and the resignation of their management looks like it's catching on!!

Info: War News

ACTION

Haringey Council implemented their plans to block traffic rat-runs through some residential streets. However, car drivers found a new route through Broadwater Farm which quickly turned into a highway. Angry residents solved the problem immediately by barricading both ends of the road through the estate with skips, as cops watched, terrified of intervening. Council officials jumped into action and suspended their plans in order to 're-think'.... So, if you're fed up with danger, noise and pollution on your street... direct action works!

Claimants are occupying Camden Unemployment Action Centre to stop Labour controlled Camden Council closing it down. The Council cut off funds to the Centre after its involvement in claimants occupations of Council premises to demand emergency payments during recent civil servants' strikes.

Broadwater Farm residents have organised a march from their estate to Downing Street to demand the immediate release of the innocent youths framed and convicted after the October 1985 uprising.

Meet 10 a.m. Broadwater Farm. Saturday 3rd October.

Info: Tel. 01 - 808 1667

SPANISH HEATWAVE

Puerto Real near Cadiz in Spain is entirely dependent on ship-building for the town's livelihood.

Last November, the management tried to close the ship-yards down - they were immediately occupied by the workers. Fighting then broke out between the workers and the paramilitary police.

This eventually led to the rest of the community of Puerto Real getting involved in the struggle.

The ship-yards being enormous have allowed plenty scope to hit back against the police attacks; over the last few months barricades, home made bazookas, and long range catapults were used against massive clouds of toxic teargas and plastic bullets used by the police.

On June 16th women from the town held their own demonstration, blocking the Cadiz-Puerto Real road, despite police using tear gas and truncheon attacks. In fact a couple of pigs were injured and another one was almost pushed under a moving lorry.

Just now all is quiet but some workers are awaiting trial and all support for these comrades is most needed.

Send support to:
Sindicato CNT de Puerto Real,
Aparto de correos 47,
Puerto Real, Cadiz, SPAIN.

Riots in Rio

Photo for P.I.!



GROWING ACTION AGAINST GOVERNMENT PRICE RISES

TWO YEARS AGO BRAZIL, THE WORLDS BIGGEST debtor nation, became a "democracy" Nothing has changed. Wages are amongst the lowest in the world. Dissent is suppressed using the old national security laws.

After threatening non-payment, President Sarney made a deal with the multinational banks in June. Overnight wages were frozen and the currency devalued. Forewarned, businessmen raised the price of necessities like bread, milk and electricity.

BATTLEGROUND

Discontent simmered. Angry workers stoned the presidential bus. Riots erupted on June 29th when workers arriving at bus stops heard that fares had increased 50%. Buses were burned, banks and offices attacked and supermarkets looted. The centre of Rio became a battleground as rioters fought police amongst clouds of teargas and smoke.

The fare increases were withdrawn - but workers still go hungry. On July 14th 300 slum dwellers liberated 100 tonnes of soya beans and coffee from two trains in Guaruja.

SUNNY SPAIN AGAIN!

People in the Spanish town of Villamuera del Arzobispo enraged at a proposed 2,000% rise in local taxes, held the mayor in a local radio station for 36 hours until a local government official agreed that the increase would be suspended!

END OF MUSIC

Political punk concerts organised in Glasgow, Leeds, London and Edinburgh have been disrupted by fascists' intervention which has given the Police the opportunity to stop the music.

Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow, was one such Concert on the 1st August. A crowd of 400, mainly punk and anarchist had enjoyed four hours of music when a group of nazi skinheads jumped the stage and shouted "White Power". This was met by vigorous resistance which in turn led to the Police vans intervening. As the fascists vanished, fighting broke out with the police who had waded in indiscriminately with their truncheons. 45 people were arrested and charged with mobbing, breach of the peace or rioting. A support group has been set up to raise money for fines and to gather evidence of police violence. Contact: Faslane Peace Camp, Shandon, Nr. Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire Tel: 0436 820901.

With friends like these...

Printers involved in the Midlands Trader dispute have been forced to call off their fight but pledge to return and picket if a scab workforce is used to re-open the factory.

After 7 months struggle for reinstatement relations between the printers and their union (NGA) finally broke. On June 26th the printers voted to end the strike knowing that if they did not, the NGA would call off the dispute regardless.

At a recent meeting Tony Dubbins (NGA boss) demanded that the strike be stopped and that full strike pay be given only to those who had canvassed for the Labour Party and half pay to those who did not. This latter demand was

rejected.

In the last weeks of the strike the printers held an unofficial picket of the Welshpool factory in Wales where NGA printers were scabbing. Again this brought the wrath of the Union on their heads.

Despite the Union much has been learnt. The printers acted together to run their own dispute and are now editing their own video of their struggle. Throughout the strike they have shown their willingness to take on the bosses and their anger towards the Union and its kowtowing to the bosses and the law won't be easily forgotten.

Info Rich Cross.

SLAVERY GUARANTEED

It is the government's intention to guarantee cheap labour schemes for claimants of all ages.

Under this plan all unemployed 16 - 17 year olds are "guaranteed" a place on the Y.T.S. Those refusing will have benefit withdrawn. Similarly 18 - 25 year olds, unemployed for over 6 months, are guaranteed a place on the Job Training Scheme (J.T.S.) Enterprise Allowance Scheme (E.A.S.) or the Job Club. J.T.S. means working full-time for your giro, plus travelling expenses.

25 - 50 year olds, unemployed for more than 12 months are guaranteed a place on J.T.S., E.A.S., Job Club or the revised Community Programme (C.P.) The new C.P. will be full time work for your benefit, plus a supplement of about £15 week. After deducting work expenses, bus fares etc., you are back on dole level wages.

Less Dole

From April 1988 those coming off schemes and signing on will not receive allowances like heating or laundry additions. Those under 25 may only qualify for the non-householder rate of benefit - a cut of £6.

All claimants are guaranteed a Restart interview every 6 months where they will be pressurised to join one of these schemes.

Recycled

Increased deskilling e.g. in printing, makes it easier to sack traditionally militant workers. They can be replaced by people from government schemes who have shown themselves to be docile and hardworking. Whole workforces can be recycled, filtering out troublemakers. Downward pressure on wages and conditions will be enormous.

N.A.L.G.O. is pressing the T.U.C. to oppose J.T.S. While union bosses dither shopworkers at Wm. Lows, Dundee and workers at Ferranti, Dalkeith, Midlothian, have stopped its introduction by strike threats. C.P.S.A. members in Bolton and West Bromwich have struck against the introduction of Y.T.S.

In Tottenham and Lothian claimants have picketed J.T.S. managing agents and disrupted J.T.S. induction meetings. Grass roots action must spread - Opposition Guaranteed!



TWO SNOOPERS HOUNDED IN EDINBURGH STREETS

SNOOPERS ON THE RUN

"You're harrassing me!" That was the plaintive cry from more than one snooper as claimants took action against "Fraud Teams" in Edinburgh recently.

From 17th August the Regional and Sector Benefit Fraud Teams combined with local snoopers to mount a 3 week operation at Tollerross and Torphichen St. Unemployment Benefit Offices. Their aim? To harrass and intimidate claimants into giving up their claims.

But some of us from the Claimants Union and the Unemployed Workers Centre got together to stop this. We photographed the snoopers and

printed the photos on leaflets and posters we distributed to claimants. We challenged the snoopers and, up to August 28th, had succeeded in chasing them off the street on five occasions.

Info: Lothian Claimants Union, c/o EUWC, 2 Cranston St., Edinburgh. Tel: 031 557 0718.

SHREWSBURY 6.7.87: 40 travellers smash up the D.H.S.S. office in Shrewsbury after being kept waiting for their giros. Chairs were ripped up, drawers emptied and smashed, panels bent, light switches and wires were pulled out - at least £1,000 worth of damage.

Needless to say the giros were given out sharpish!

Fed up of being ordered about and exploited? Sick of living in poverty while the profit system benefits a powerful few? Angry about men oppressing women? Disgusted at the many other injustices in today's society?

You're not alone. Lots of people round the globe are not only fed up, they're fighting back. In Counter Information we report this often-censored resistance, in the hope of encouraging more such activity.

We stress the importance of people directly controlling their struggles, outside the control of political parties, trade unions or any leaders. Replacing one set of rulers with another - as has happened in the 'Communist' Party - ruled regimes, and as left-wing parties and national liberation movements want - is no solution. We encourage today's resistance to aim for the complete overthrow of all relationships whereby some people oppress others. The world's resources should be owned and controlled by all, and used to satisfy human needs.

The Counter Information collective invites people to - send us articles and information - take bundles of the news-sheet to distribute - make a much needed donation towards our printing and postage costs - write for info on our Readers Meetings and the CI "Supplement" - contact us if they'd like to join the CI collective. We wish to co-operate with all who share our aims.

COUNTER INFORMATION, C/O 43 CANDLEMAKER ROW [PIGEONHOLE 81], EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND, U.K

NOTE: The views expressed in reports from outside the collective are not necessarily totally shared by Counter Information.