

# **ÉCHANGES**

For information about Echanges, subscriptions, and also pamphlets, write to the following address which is the only one dealing with centralising payments:

ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT  
8M Box 91, LONDON WC 1V 6 XX  
Great Britain

-----

---

---

**ATTENTION: CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

---

---

After this current issue, all correspondence and payments should be sent to the above address. Payments should be made by cheque or money-order in French Francs or Pounds Sterling to the account of Echanges et Mouvement, or in cash in any currency. Please do not use any of the previous addresses again. A circular will shortly be sent giving details of new arrangements arising out of this change of address, and of currently available publications.

---

---

**BELGIUM**

---

---

During the second half of September '83, all public services in Belgium were paralysed by mass strikes. The trade union (indicated further by t.u.) movement had in no way taken the initiative. Base level action began on Thursday, September 8th with a wildcat strike by railway workers in Charleroi. They had stopped work spontaneously in protest against measures intended by Martens' government to stimulate the Belgian economy at the expense of the workers. All sections of workers were to be affected by these measures, except civil servants; therefore railway workers as public service employees in part-

icular. The movement spread immediately, or first into other Walloon towns - Liège, Namur, and Mone; then into Flemish towns like Ostend, Courtrai, etc. On Monday, September 12th, only a few local trains were running in Flanders and shortly afterwards rail traffic came to a halt throughout the entire country. The railway workers' struggle served, you could say, as a signal for many other categories of workers who reacted swiftly and for the same reasons.

People's anxiety and discontent had reached a dimension such as provoked a brutal explosion. The post office, telephone, and the cleaning services were out as well as many other of the public service sector. What was developing was the beginning of a "hot autumn". As a postal worker said, "The t.u. movement moved off in the bus of yesterday, but the workers took a high-speed train".

The discontent at base level, and pressure from the entire movement on the various unions meant that the latter could no longer go on ignoring the movement and turning a deaf ear to working class demands. The confederation of social democrat unions (FGTB or ABW), like the confederation of christian unions (CSC or ACV), had no other option than to line up behind the spontaneous movement by declaring it an official strike on Monday, 12 September. For the next ten days, there was hardly any public transport, no mail was delivered, and precious few telex or telegrams. Workers in the radio and television networks were periodically interrupting work. Bank employees, council workers, and teachers joined the strike; all work stopped in the port of Anvers; not a single car ferry left Belgium. The strike was beginning to affect a number of private firms where all activity had to close down through lack of supplies.

The Belgian employers' confederation reacted violently. They indignantly declared that the strikes jeopardised the future of Belgian industry, and that "responsible trade unions which professed to an awareness of the country's financial difficulties should take as soon as possible every possible measure to end a situation which was becoming intolerable". In putting it like this, the employers were demonstrating precisely what is the function of the t.u. movement in capitalist society. But they showed by the same token their imperfect understanding of the way in which this function might be fulfilled and by

which best method. Their reproaches vis-avis the t.u. movement had not "officialised" unofficial strikes in order to create an "intolerable" situation. They had officialised unofficial strikes because they also regarded the situation as "intolerable". They were acting this way because they had no other choice, because it was, for them, their only possible means of regaining control of the workers. And because this way enabled them to put an end to the struggle without losing face.

But what was not quite clear to the employers was, on the contrary, abundantly clear to the workers. "The t.u. leadership is composed of arse-holes who want to keep us under their thumb.", explained a Belgian worker - which constitutes an accurate or precise manner of depicting the position of the t.u. movement on the one hand, and of the workers on the other. It was possible to discover from the Belgian Press that not only were the workers resisting the government's measures, but that the trades union executive, according to itself, would also be reacting violently to the cabinet's proposals. These were purely verbal reactions, and which lasted, moreover, only till the moment when the workers came out spontaneously in struggle. This "anger" of the unions amounted to very little. It arose above all from the fact of the government's failure to negotiate with the unions before announcing the reduction in salaries, thereby confronting them with a fait accompli. It was the government's attitude which had put them in this position of having to recognise the unofficial strikes. Not to have done so would have lost them any credit with the workers.

This account of the situation explains why it took them longer than is usual in such conflicts to attempt to put an end to the "intolerable situation". It became obvious as soon as this attempt saw daylight, that the union bureaucrats had been confronted with a more difficult job than usual. It was accomplished in two moves, with firstly the christian executive breaking up the broad unity of the strikes; and then, with a good deal of malice, the bureaucrats of the socialist executive following suit. Pressure from the base level to continue the strike remained stronger than ever.

A group of workers at Anvers railway station told a journalist that "if we don't force the fifth Martens government to give in with this strike, then nothing will be

able to stop them making really heavy attacks on the working class". The government itself shared this opinion. They did all they could to remain in control of the situation and their efforts to appease the workers consisted of measures of no importance: a few fairly vague promises about the industrial code, and that pensions would not be affected. But they stood by the financial "sacrifices" they claimed to be imposing on public employees and council workers, and what was more, took advantage of the very moment of the trade union movements regaining control of the situation to disperse with the traditional bi-yearly increase. Are the Antwerp rail-strikers right, or not, in the opinions they expressed? In our view, the Belgian government will never give in to an official strike, but will do so with an unofficial strike. Events in Poland in 1980 have given us proof of that. And this precisely is why the unions declared themselves behind the base level struggles. If the bosses failed to understand this position of the union bureaucracy's, the government was in no doubt at all on the matter. This precisely was why the government stayed firm. They were waiting for the union movement to do the work for them. They had confidence in the "arse-holes" and the "arse-holes" proved themselves worthy of that confidence.

The strike is over but it goes without saying that the discontent or anger is still there. The union movement extinguished the social blaze but the fire goes on smouldering beneath the ashes. This is the conclusion of a good many Belgians at the grass roots level; it's obvious to them, in the Wallons and in Flanders alike, that a deep crisis of confidence in the trade union movement has developed now. The unions can see the rapid disappearance of their influence, and their officials and bureaucrats are facing violent criticism in numerous meetings all over Belgium. The atmosphere at these meetings, in the opinion of some people, is such that we could well be seeing, ever the slightest incident, a resumption of the great strike movement of '60-'61, but most certainly this time in a different form: i.e. this time as a movement from the base level. (1)

The trade union movement has done it's best to apologise, that is defend it's attitudes to it's members. The

christian executive was particularly in this position, having been the first to put down the struggle, and was exposed to violent criticism on that score. It goes without saying that these violent criticisms are based partly on illusions with regard to unionism. When the christian executive's bosses claimed that they'd had no other option, that they couldn't possibly have an anti-government policy when that government included some political friends and even officials of the union; no one could challenge them because it is the fact. But it's facts like these that are germinating ideas in the heads of Belgian workers that they might possibly take hold of their own destinies with their own hands. No one can be certain that that will indeed happen in the near future. The Martens government announced recently that Belgium finds that it's at a crossroads. That's true for the Belgian working class as well. Which path it will take remains as yet to be seen.

(1) You can get some idea about '60-'61 movement by consulting (if possible) the following documents:

- Socialisme ou Barbarie - avril-juin 1961, n. 32 - Les grèves belges
- Pouvoir Ouvrier - n. 25
- I C O n. 26, janvier 1961
- Belgium, the General Strike - brochure en anglais de Solidarity (n. 2)
- "Austerity measures", and "a touché" equals "affected" Echanges n. 31 - juin 1982

---

#### GREAT BRITAIN

---

#### Niggling but very significant dispute

This strike happened in an oil-rig construction shipyard at Nigg near Aberdeen, far North-east of Scotland. The Nigg yard owned by Highland Fabricators was one year behind on the construction on a hull for a tension leg oil platform for the Conoco Company. The instructions laid down by Conoco for the welding work on the platform legs specified a very high temperature inside the legs. For

this reason none could work in this environment for more than half an hour at a time. The delay for the completion of this work was caused by this technical problem as well as by the resistance of workers to the bad conditions of work. As a result of these resistances, welders had received special "advantages": free showers, free orange juice at will, shelters for resting in summer-time, etc. . .

There is no other order presently for the yard and when this work is completed, a certain number of workers would be made redundant: 650 out of 3,000 at first. The background of this dispute has as well to be considered in an industry - shipbuilding - very depressed and in a very depressed country, Scotland.

On returning to work from holiday on August 8th, the welders were told that all existing agreements were ended and that as a result they were losing many of their "privileges": orange juice, showers, travel allowances, etc. . . . The welders' refusal to work under these conditions led the Company to sacking them which in turn caused them to strike; the rest of the workforce (2,000) quickly followed. On the 12th of August, the yard was in total strike. On the 25th of August the Company announced the sacking of the entire workforce and then offered 1,600 selected workers re-employment under worse conditions (no washing up, no showers, no phone facilities, etc. . . .) but with 4.50% more wages.

The Company then tried to reopen the yard using the workers who had individually accepted the new conditions (250 out of 2,000). On the 29th, only 21 workers crossed the picket line. Attempts to bus in the scabs were frustrated by three days of mass picketing (sometimes involving up to 1,000 pickets) which was supported by the wives and families of the strikers. One useful tactic involved distracting the police with the legal six pickets at the gate, then as the buses approached a whistle blew and a few hundred more rushed out of a nearby carpark and blocked the road.

It was a wildcat strike from the very beginning and it was never made official by the union though negotiators discussed a deal in London with the Company, very far from the yards, so workers couldn't interfere. On September 5th a mass meeting rejected this deal involving the withdrawal of redundancies but not much else. Work in the yard resumed only on September 18th after a second

meeting where the shop stewards recommended that the workers return to work with the threat of redundancies lifted but the other "details" still "to be negotiated . . . ." What has happened after is not known.

If we quote this strike, it is to underline that it is in line with the conclusions of the article published in *Echanges* (n. 35-36) about the "washing up strike" at British Leyland (Cowley). We don't think it is very important to look for the fact that the bosses tried, beyond the cut in its expenses, to build a situation in which the redundancies could be effective without paying redundancy money. What is important is that the workers answered immediately with their own fight and that during one month they could go ahead with it pushing aside all the union or bosses attempts to end the strike. On one side, it is true that the strike was ended without a clear result and that the unions succeeded in taking the control of the strike i.e. to end it. But, on the other side, and the most important one, these workers fought by themselves and managed to organise a very efficient action; to keep their strike alive. We can get in the niggling dispute, the measure of the present social trends and the political orientation of the government and of the unions.

### British wages - The problems of success

**W**ORKERS at Vauxhall Motors, buoyed up by the success of the company's Cavalier saloon, last week walked out on strike immediately on learning of a pay offer first put at 4 per cent - but which was quickly raised to 5 per cent.

Lightning strikes such as this, particularly over pay, and especially in the private sector, have been virtually unknown since the onset of the recession.

At present, the Vauxhall walkouts are only an isolated

example. But pay negotiators on both sides of British industry are bracing themselves for the possibility of a tough winter of wage bargaining because of a new factor in the pay equation: the prospect of economic recovery.

Figures just published by the CBI show that the industrial recovery, though limited, is gathering pace. Output over the whole economy is expected to carry on rising by 1.8 per cent; company profits will continue to rise, to 6.5 per cent by next year; and inflation, now

3.7 per cent, will rise to 6 per cent by the end of the year.

The independent Incomes Data Research group notes that: "Managing success' has now become the major worry for a number of companies and industries where efficiency has improved dramatically since the onset of the recession in 1979-1980."

The examples are already there, most notably at BL. After pushing through far-reaching productivity improvements in its factories, the company ran into a bitter dispute over the ending of washing-up time at Cowley—significantly, after some labour recruitment and the successful launch of the new Maestro.

Other examples of companies being faced with problems after new investment or an upturn in orders include Aveling-Barford in Grantham, GEC-Hitachi, Bonar Long in Dundee, and British Shipbuilders' Cammell Laird yard in Birkenhead.

In previous recoveries earnings have risen much faster than productivity: the wages boom of Mrs Thatcher's first year in office is only the most recent example. Accordingly, employers recognise the potentially crucial importance of the coming wage bargaining season—though they are confident that continued falling settlements can still be obtained, provided managements stand firm.

There are some signs already, though, that the wage

round may sorely test that confidence:

● In spite of the expected announcement of a public service cash limit pay factor of 3 per cent, the police have been awarded an embarrassingly high rise of 8.4 per cent from today. Firemen's pay rises, linked to rises in average earnings, will also be higher than any pay limit.

● The second stages of some previously-agreed long-term pay deals are now coming through, and will help shape the settlement pattern: 7 per cent for Scottish and Newcastle brewery workers this month; 5 per cent for BL workers from November; 5 per cent for Veedor Root workers and 6 per cent for Timex workers in December; and 4.5 per cent for National Health Service workers from next April.

● Some early settlements have already been reached: 6 per cent for Smiths Industries in Cheltenham; the same for Ulster construction workers; and a 6 per cent increase for 120,000 low-paid catering workers, in spite of strong and direct Government pressure against it.

● Early indications of key claims are emerging. The Ford claim, always a pacesetter, is likely to follow the crucial engineering industry claim in its strong emphasis on hours, coupled with a call for an as-yet-unspecified flat-rate pay increase; the Transport and

General Workers' Union has formulated a £6 claim for lorry drivers, and some haulage companies are already concluding deals higher than this at £7.

Behind these immediate indications is a range of pressures building up which have been identified by both sides of industry as likely to be instrumental in forthcoming negotiations.

Inflation is the first of these. Pay settlement levels have been running ahead of inflation—many current estimates put them on average 2 per cent clear. Employers believe that the upturn in inflation may well lead to unions pressing for higher settlements to maintain living standards, and to catch up after recent sacrifices.

Managements are likely to argue, though, that the rise is relatively small, and inflation still very low. Since settlements have stayed ahead of inflation, the gap is merely narrowing. Further, they are likely to show that those in work have fared well since real take-home pay has either risen, or at least stayed stable. Further, the management of pay increases now will have a direct effect on inflation. The real test of whether settlements will maintain their current relationship with inflation will not come until early next year.

Profits are the second major issue. Employers are likely to argue that the recovery is from a very low level, and that

after interest payments and tax, real rates of return are still very low. Further, Britain's labour costs per unit of output make it 20 per cent less competitive compared with an average of OECD competitors than it was in the mid-'70s. Pay-related costs account for 80 per cent of all UK industrial costs.

Productivity, the third issue, is closely linked. Employers can hardly deny the dramatic productivity improvement of the last few years as labour has been shaken out. Increases in manufacturing productivity have been better than the UK's main competitors, rising by 3.5 per cent in 1981, and by more than 5 per cent last year, compared to an average in the 1970s of only about 2 per cent. However, once again managers are likely to argue that this is simply recovering lost ground.

Such arguments, though, may well not deter workers who link their company's improved performance to higher production, particularly if this has been won or imposed as an alternative to going under.

Furthermore — and this is something management can do little about — bonus payments from productivity-linked schemes may start to rise rapidly if, as the CBI predicts, the increase in output is sustained. While not a widespread problem, it is already becoming apparent. At GEC-Hitachi,

bonus payments went up with the launch of a new model, and at GKN Sankey in Telford a return to full production led to a sharp increase in bonus payments — beyond their expected 1983 levels.

Then, fourth, there is the question of working time. On September 12, the engineering claim will be submitted. For the first time since the 1979 deal it will include a claim for shorter hours. Employers already believe they have made substantial concessions on hours in the past few years, though such deals slackened markedly last year. They will therefore want to resist any further concessions, particularly the TUC campaign for pace-setting settlements to bring lagging sectors into line.

In engineering, a national-level reduction in hours might be avoided this year, but there is a likelihood of piecemeal plant-level cuts, leading to further pressures—on comparability grounds—from other, similar workers.

However the unions will not be able to have it all their own way. Unemployment is still high, but it has stopped rising so quickly, and some commentators believe it is reaching a plateau. The coming round may well test whether it is the size of, or the rate of increase in, unemployment which has held down wage increases.

Government pay policy is

also a key factor. Clearly, the Government is committed to a policy of holding down settlement levels generally by its own example. The Treasury's 1 per cent cut in central cash

limits and the expected announcement of a 3 per cent cash limit on pay rises this year for its own direct civil service employees, are both clear indications of continued determination on pay.

Finally, the recovery looks fragile. The hard lessons of the recession are still fresh in the minds of those still in work: strikes continue to decline.

There is still, though, remarkable unanimity—and relative equanimity—about current and future pay levels among analysts. The CBI puts the current settlement level at about 6 per cent, within a range of 3 to 8 per cent. IDS puts it at about the same, within a range of 4.5 to 7.5 per cent. The National Institute for Economic and Social Research matches the IDS range and the CBI overall figure. The Department of Employment sees a current underlying increase in earnings—always a point or so higher than settlements—of about 7 per cent.

For the future, the CBI is eschewing a figure, and IDS believes settlements are likely to remain stable. The National Institute forecasts an out-turn of 6½ per cent, within a range of 4 to 7½ per cent. Most economists' and stockbrokers'

forecasting put the rise in earnings at an average of about 7.5 per cent, within a range of 7 to 9 per cent.

Beneath the forecasts lie some lessons from the 1982-83 bargaining season which are likely to have a continuing impact this winter.

The spread of settlements, reported by all sides of industry, proved there was no norm, no going rate. Companies have in the main settled for what they could afford, and the CBI expects this to continue.

Generally, settlements now—with exceptions such as the water strike—are being reached more quickly, with little industrial trouble. Last year, companies such as GEC and Lucas managed to strike very low deals, but in the main the private sector settled at a higher level than the public sector. The National Institute forecast for 1983-84, for example, the Civil Service and local government settling at about 4 per cent, the manufacturing private sector at 5.5 per cent and the non-manufacturing private sector at 7.75 per cent.

And last year the unions remained in disarray. The TUC's co-ordination of public sector claims had little real success. At the election the TUC-Labour Party's cloudy and confused National Economic Assessment, which skirted round controlling wages, appeared incomprehensible to union members, and was rejected by many of them.

Privatisation, regionalisation and legislation are still combining with unemployment to weaken trade union power. British Gas is only the latest in the Government's privatisation firing line; Mr Ian MacGregor's success at British Steel in moving away from national pay rises to local, productivity-based deals is likely to be tried again after he takes over at the National Coal Board today, though the miners may be a tougher nut to crack than the demoralised steelworkers. Mr Norman Tebbit's White Paper on union democracy will further push power, and with it bargaining strength, away from union leaders to their more moderate members.

No-strike deals are also likely to become a reality this pay round. Mr Tebbit, in talks expected with the TUC on such deals in the essential services, may well build on the audacity of tying the nurses' no-strike clause not to a prohibitively high buy-out, as was the received wisdom about such deals, but to rises already promised through the mechanism of the pay review body.

Longer-term wage deals—endorsed by Mrs Thatcher and recommended by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas)—are now firmly part of the pay pattern. They cover some 1.2m workers.

While one of their attractions was supposed to be their ability to take the bargaining heat out

of companies' industrial relations, long-term deals have not been without their problems. Indeed, IDS has noted that many companies with such deals have suffered perhaps more than their fair share of difficulties: a continuing series of disputes at Hoover, short-time working and now closures at Caterpillar Tractor, lay-offs at International Harvester, and a strike over wet weather money at Aberdeen docks. Perhaps the very security of longer-term deals—

next year's rise, and therefore next year's job, is guaranteed—lead to greater management complacency and greater workforce militancy.

Vauxhall workers are now causing further difficulties for the company by planning to black all imports. Managers, determined to hold the line of pay moderation, will be hoping that such signs as this will not once again, make it impossible for them to take full advantage of the long-awaited upturn.

( From the "Financial Times" )  
from September 1, 1983.

From page 28:

Between the Church and Jaruzelski a compromise has been built to keep the social peace. The Church will contribute to a fund who help the peasants and have them ( 30% of the population) keeping quiet. The success of the Pope's visit to Poland is a success for the regime as well. The declaration of the Church has not attained the symbolic importance of Walesa; in a certain way this symbol, objectively is a support for the system; the existence of the symbol Walesa reconciles the oppressed with their oppression.  
C.B.

GROUPS, BOOKS, PAMPHLETS, ETC.

Generalities and theory

Echanges: we are preparing;

- an English translation of the Poland pamphlet, with some complements to be published by Black and Red in the USA
- a new edition of Pannekoek's "Workers' Councils", a reprint of the only edition to be published in four separate pamphlets; the first one soon we hope
- the reports of the Osnabrück (1982) and Belgium (1983) meetings with some new texts and correspondence. To be sent only to the participants and to anyone asking for it
- some texts summing up a discussion about China

De l'usage de Marx en temps de crise

(The use of Marx in time of crisis)  
Les Cahiers Spartacus (5 Rue Se Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris) call for all kinds of contributions to a discussion on this theme: write for information. Communism and it's tactics by Sylvia Pankhurst, in English, with an introduction by Mark Shipway - reprint of different articles of Sylvia Pankhurst published in 1921-22 Workers Dreadnought. 'Separately', a facsimile of Workers Dreadnought July 1937 with an article of Sylvia Pankhurst "Stop the War" (wildcat group see further down, Great Britain).

International Blacklist an antiauthoritarian directory (719 Ashbury Street San Francisco CA 94117) well documented on all the antiauthoritarian and anticapitalist groups all over the world to help everybody to contact eachother - sent free against \$2.50 - asking for exchanging publication; groups classified by countries, alphabetical index of groups, bookshops, documentation centers, and publications dealing with Eastern countries.

Quelques réflexions sur un projet éditorial unitaire  
Revolution Sociale (BP 39 Bordeaux Nansouty 33034 Bordeaux Cedex) in French; some thoughts on a unitarian publishing project: Subjective thinking on revolutionary activity; Theory against class struggle; what to do? (perhaps more discussion later on these texts)

Salariat et luttes revendicatives - pamphlet from Insecurité Sociale (BP 243 75564 Paris Cedex 12) in

French; forms and contents of the struggle - the syndicalist carcan - The direct organisation of proletarian struggle - No thoroughfare for industrial struggles - Beyond demands (we will come back on these texts)

L'unique et son ombre (n. 1 - June 1983 - BP 180 - 75463 Paris Cedex 10) in French; new review from where we give some excerpts of the presentation: ". . . for a long time we have identified our imperative desire to abolish the present condition of our life with the revolutionary proletarian project. Most of the time it was in pushing deeply in ourselves the other ways to express this desire, for us and for other people in whom we recognize ourselves. At the best, we gave them a private place, the social part being monopolized by the hegemonic revolutionary proletariat . . . we wanted . . . contribute to put all these individual revolts towards a revolutionary perspective, trying to have this term losing its narrow social meaning . . . We would like to have the possibility to go beyond on the way of removing the partition between the different forms of critical expression: theoretical lamoonist, poetical as well as fiction, without excluding graphic and music . . . Similarly and complementary we will wish to follow more the way of unifying the various criticism the individuals develop from what they are, considering that they are not only proletarian or women or artists or old or young but seeing them at first and essentially as individuals they can criticize radically these limitations of themselves which are the conditions of proletarian, artist, woman, old, young . . . This issue is mainly devoted to "Hate" - The ideas summed up above are expressed in a text "Democracy against individuals and conversely".

Theorie Communiste (n. 5 C Charrier - BP 2318 - 13213 Marseille Cedex 02) in French; devoted to 'the production of the communist theory' with these chapters: theory is the theory of class struggle; the deadlock of the theoretical production and present dynamics of theoretical production. The introduction contains a good explanation of the perspectives of this group. We could agree with certain positions expressed in this text, for instance with this assertion: "We have nothing to promote in the struggles 'or' conversely, we have nothing peculiar to attack". But if we could express the same

ideas though with other words, concerning the dialectical relationship between class struggle and capital as part of a whole, we don't understand very well this attempt to compare all other groups with a 'milieu' seeing in every struggle the 'basis for a coming revolution', attempt apparently drawn to shape the relationship of this group with other groups.

Echoes of the past - English translation of an article of Jacques Camatte, Echo du temps, published in Invariance (Série III, n. 7 1980) Bojybob Press c/o 417 King Street, Newton, NVW 2042 Australia - List of other English translations of Camatte.

Collegamenti (G. Carozza CP 1362 50100 Firenze, n. 10 autumn '83 with the name of Collegamenti Wobby, in Italian; from the social conflict to the core of rationalising, Crisis of the model and size of the possibilities, The instability of State, On the situation in Italy (unemployment, clandestine immigration). Great Britain: again the class struggle. This new start is explained as follows:

- the rising of a lot of important struggles in some sectors; education, hospitals, workers on reduced time, unemployed . . .
- the changing attitude of industrial workers which develop now in facts, a criticism of the traditional politics, unions and parties -, a strong combativeness on some specific general matters (e.g. sliding scale) but on the other side a great passiveness to deal with the problems of restructuring for instance.
- the growing combativeness of the traditional underground business, of the old and new middle classes which fight the State successfully to attain improvement of their situation.
- the crisis of the political parties expressed as a result either of a bureaucratic development or of a criminal internal political war.

La Banquise (n.2 BP 214 75623 Paris Cedex) in French; contains mainly a long text entitled 'the novel about our origins' which is presented no more as the 'synthesis of modern revolutionary movement'. A bit too much for a self-criticism, sometimes complacent, sometimes self-indulgent from some comrades having followed a common political way.

Journées de Rencontres et réflexions anti autoritaires

Some people met in Paris last June to discuss the following themes: ideology and politics, labour and business, struggles and alternative experiments, and synthesis. Reports available in French; Jean Dupont 70 Avenue Jean Jaurès 93000 Le Pré St Gervais.

Bulletin de Discussion Internationale - été 83 - 2 série n. 3 (on the previous International Discussion Bulletins see Echanges n. 12, 28, and 34); (Révolution Sociale BP 39 33034 Bordeaux Cedex) in French; Big pamphlet of 60 pages: 'More than one year after the International meeting (Toulouse) the report is published of what was said with participants criticism and various letters and texts. The report was made and printed by the GVC which asserts again 'it's purpose to be present and to push in a voluntary way the largest possible discussion between revolutionary individuals, groups, or cores'. The best judgement comes, according to us, from an English participant, "Some interesting things, nothing very clear." Very few were apparently pleased with these eternal discussions in the ghetto of the self-defined 'revolutionary groups'. But we can get the measure of their impotence as well as of the total unawareness of it's being so and why.

Concerning SOCIALISME OU BARBARIE: a re-assessment

What follows are the essential passages from a letter by Cajo Brendel and Henri Simon addressed to Cornélius Castoriadis (hereafter referred to under the pseudonym P. Chaulieu). "In issue n. 8 of the "Cahiers du Communisme de Conseil" (C.C.C.), May 1977, there appeared an article signed by Cajo Brendel concerning an exchange of correspondence between the late A. Pannekoek and Chaulieu; two of these letters had been published in the Socialisme ou Barbarie (n. 14, April-June 1954), the others had not. From conversations with Pannekoek, C. Brendel had managed to find out about the second letter which Pannekoek had written to Socialisme ou Barbarie. In the above quoted issue of C.C.C. appeared Pannekoek's two letters and the one of Chaulieu. C. Brendel introduced them, with a general commentary on the Socialisme ou Barbarie group which laid emphasis on the reasons which might have led to Pannekoek's 2nd letter having

been consigned to silence. On the basis of the recollected impressions of certain ex-workers of Socialisme ou Barbarie, amongst whom is H. Simon, C. Brendel brought this behaviour within the Socialisme ou Barbarie group into question, notably in this passage: "The reason Chaulieu suppressed Pannekoek's 2nd letter, as did Stalin suppress Lenin's last testament will be clear to any reader . . . etc."

In the republication of the 10 - 15 collection of Socialisme ou Barbarie in articles which you had published, under various pseudonyms unsigned, you reproduced the 3 letters in question (i.e. including Pannekoek's 2nd letter) which entirely refutes C. Brendel's allegations. At the actual period of the Pannekoek/Chaulieu correspondence, currently dated reports were being made for subscribers in the provinces or for those unable to attend meetings (a decision taken at the meeting of 22-07-54). H. Simon was originally responsible for the reportage, the text of which was read out at the next meeting and then typed-up and distributed.

H. Simon had kept the file containing nearly all of these reports from July '54 to '58, and had entrusted it to an Italian comrade who was preparing a thesis on Socialisme ou Barbarie, in autumn '68: since which date despite innumerable requests he has been unable to recover it and had considered it as lost. It was only relatively recently, during an international meeting, that the said file was returned, and that it has been possible to ascertain what had been happening with the Pannekoek/Chaulieu polemic within the core of the Socialisme ou Barbarie group.

The report, albeit of necessity brief and incomplete, nonetheless suggests as I read it that, contrary to what C. Brendel had said in the above quoted text, it was not Chaulieu who had "suppressed" Pannekoek's 2nd letter, but rather that it had been agreed by the majority of the members present at the meeting of the 9th of September '54 not to publish it in the Socialisme ou Barbarie magazine. Consequently, if the polemic arising from this matter still remains valid as a point for discussion and for consideration of the non-publication of Pannekoek's letter, it on the other hand absolves you from any suspicion of having manipulated the Socialisme ou Barbarie group from having acted without it's knowledge on this partic-

ular point . . ."

This re-assessment may be reprinted in full, or summarized by any publication which might so wish to do.

An Enquiry into the death of Lin Biao by Yao Mingle published by Robert Laffont

At the time of Biao's death, 12-09-71, he was the most powerful man in China apart from one: Mao. From 1959 without any break he had been Defense Minister of the People's Republic of China, and from 1966, Vice-President of the self-styled C.C.P. During the last years of his life, he was increasingly often mentioned in the same breath as Mao. He was also spoken of as the most loyal comrade-in-arms of the great leader. In 1969, he was designated as Mao's official heir. For weeks, even months, his death was concealed not only from the general public, but even amongst quite extensive levels of the Party hierarchy. It was not until June '72 that the Central Committee announced that Biao had plotted against Mao, with the aim of assassinating him. On this discovery of the plot, Lin, his wife, and his son had fled by plane towards Russia, but, it was added, his plane had crashed through shortage of fuel, and all passengers had perished. This official announcement was followed by an extremely harsh criticism of Lin Biao and his acolytes.

This Spring saw the publication of a book entitled "Enquête sur la mort de Lin Biao", in which Biao's end is presented quite differently, and which unfolds for the reader a hitherto unknown series of details about the missing plot. The author, who uses the pseudonym Yao Mingle, is a citizen of the P.R. of China who had been able to gain access to confidential State documents. Briefly, his account of events is that Biao and his wife were not killed in an aeroplane accident, but were assassinated in Peking on the orders of Mao after a very pleasant dinner and evening at the latter's home.

The book contains a forward by the well known sinologue, Simon Leys. In it he declares that the very sinister political milieu which is described in the book will shock many readers in the West, but that the psychology, behavior, and life-style of the Chinese ruling-class is nonetheless quite accurately described. We are not amongst those who will be shocked, having had no very high opinion of the Chinese ruling-class even before reading the book. We were not even very surprised by Mingle's account of events.

Shortly after the Chinese authorities made their announcement about the death of Biao, Simon Leys had already in his book "Chinese Shadows" (Ombres Chinoises) related how Biao had been under medical treatment in Russia for a considerable time, and that there therefore existed knowledge of quite important medical, including dental, identification details about him. So the Russians were capable of identifying Biao's body with no difficulty. Since it was the Russian authorities who had recovered the victims' bodies, a Russian diplomat posted in Peking had been able to assure Simon Leys that it was absolutely certain that Biao had not been a passenger on the crashed plane. To this information, Simon Leys added in the same book that he found the official explanation of Biao's death to be totally unrealistic, and incapable of withstanding the slightest critical analysis.

In his foreward to this book, Leys says it goes without saying that he has had no control over the anonymous author's sources, and that he therefore cannot answer for the verocity of the account. However, he does seem to say that Mingle's account agrees with all the available information. The book has a certain main thread, and a certain logic, which cannot be said of the official explanation given by the then Chinese authorities. He questions some aspects of the book, but this does not alter the book's general importance, because it's importance is derived above all from it's description of the political milieu, of the deeds and actions of the Chinese ruling-class. I share this opinion. It is this very description which makes the book so fascinating to the reader. But while we have no hesitation in calling this a fascinating book, we must immediately add that the deeds and actions of the ruling mob and it's lifestyle at the heights of Chinese society are no more interesting than any other State. Whether the criminals of history are named Lin Biao, Zhou, Enlai, or Mao alters not a jot the fact that it is a criminal history we have to deal with, a history of hates and jealousies, and power-hunger, where the lowest instincts imaginable; arrogance, self-seeking, treachery, etc . . ., all play their part from beginning to end. But what this book does not do is to reveal the underlying contradictions and reciprocal animosities, nor the reasons why it's "heroes" behave as they do. Whatever the interest afforded by Mingle's book it is for sure no kind of a social analysis.

Mingle's book completely ignores the relations of production in China and the social developments arising therefrom. According to him, the plot against Mao fell out of the blue. The reader learns nothing about the cause or reasons which led Biao to act against Mao, or Mao to act against Biao. All the same, Mingle depicts the ruling-class of China as women and men of flesh and blood and describes them with all their faults. Mingle certainly states that he is writing in the "cause of history". But he doesn't behave at all like a historian: he conducts himself like a detective carefully carrying out his inquiry into a detective mystery. Wherever his account is not based on official or confidential documents, he refers to the memoirs of a Chinese police official.

As to Leys' doubts about certain aspects of the book, he wonders why Biao, who at the time of his death was one of China's most powerful figures, had any need for a plot. If there really had been a plot, it could only have been at the very last moment that Biao realised that Mao had become his enemy. This is the point upon which Leys places a questionmark beside certain passages in the book. We are far less able than S. Leys to ascertain the accuracy of his account. Our own assessment is based on the observation that despite the impressive quantity of the facts he has amassed, he has contributed hardly anything at all to any deeper understanding of Chinese society. Anyone wishing to know why things happen as they do in the People's Republic of China and why events take this direction rather than any other, will in no way be enlightened by Y. Mingle's book. We found ourselves repeatedly asking, as we read this book, to what extent the matters and the manner of relating them were essential for an understanding of the social and therefore political development of China. Our answers were almost always in the negative. By this we do not mean that the facts he relates were without significance; only, that they can have no significance without being considered within their social context. And this Y. Mingle fails to do.

---

---

GROUPS AND STRUGGLES IN THE WORLD

---

---

Belgium Internationalism - organ of the Courant Communiste Internationaliste en Belgique (BP 13 Brussels 31 - n. 76, 77, and 78) - in French. Some insights into the struggles in Belgium, but much move into the Courant Communiste Internationaliste's positions. Two pages on the Antwerp dockers' strike in April '73 (n. 78).

Spain A Spanish comrade has sent 2 long texts in Spanish, one on syndicalism and the other on anarcho-syndicalism (copies of which texts may be obtained on request).

This work responds to a personal need in myself to clarify (after my estrangement from the CNT) some questions in connection with: the failure of principles and practices which were becoming divorced from the real struggle of the proletariat in Spain; what they were about; and with the class struggle in Spain after the death of Franco. After the ebullience of the anti-franco struggles, there I was, suddenly, isolated because there was no attempt at debate after the departure of the old CNT friends, and because all attempts failed at rapprochement with other groups - themselves in process of disintegrating (for eg. "Anti-Capitalist Platforms"). For this reason, confronted with "the abyss" and with isolation, I've undertaken this completely individual retrospective review: the first stage of which will be a general critique of syndicalism, and the second of anarcho-syndicalism, particularly since I refer to it's evolution and characteristics within the context of the CNT's history. I began this approximative critique of syndicalism from the starting-point of the theorisings that had taken root throughout the working-class movements in Europe between the two wars, i.e., within the "councillorist" perspective: this theorisation having developed because it was expressing the feelings of the movements of the masses in those countries where syndicalism had lagged behind the

needs of the proletariat and had taken on an entryist role into the development of the class struggle. You have to realise also that the writings of Korsh, Mattick, Pannekoek . . . had arrived very much later in Spain then, fragmentarily and always for the minority. On the other hand, assemblist movements which were despised by the bureaucratic ideology because they represented negativity leading to nowhere, signified in real terms that syndicalism was the only form of working-class struggle, well theorised about, transcending in a serious historical sense, in that otherwise there could but ensue only totally confusing spontaneous actions, 'wildcat', etc., . . . with no way of articulating itself and organising within the counter-offensive against capital.

It was in this direction that I proposed to get round this false dichotomy between syndicalism or nothing, by trying, to the best of my abilities, to understand the working-class and syndicalist movements in their own context. I tried to co-ordinate various aspects of critiques scattered throughout works that I knew by councillorist theoreticians. So my work is really a systematisation of the critique of syndicalism based on known texts and from the standpoint of my own brief experience, rather than a project of research.

Beyond this, I have extended the critique to include the concrete reality of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain. The reason I have extended this critique with regard to the Marxist critique of left (non-Leninist) communists is because in my opinion, and always with reference to the writings at my disposal, their critique has had considerable coherence and validity when endeavoring to analyse the nature and contradictors of syndicalism; but when it came to anarcho-syndicalism, the necessity arose to stand still at certain of its specific characteristics. If from some points of view it is a part of the general contradictions within syndicalism, to some extent it also represents a superior form, in concept and practice, of the syndicalism so severely criticised by the councillorists. This is the method by which I've tried to approach a critique of anarcho-syndicalism from the Germanic-Dutch left-wing perspective; but recognising through the evolution of the CNT, its different quality as a union, which it has predominantly been, at the core of the working-class movement. I felt a specific critique of anarcho-

syndicalism was needed: a critique, as I've already said that has barely been developed by the councillorists. The central theme of the text might well be entitled: the process of ideological fixation in anarchism, right through events in Spain from before the civil war, during it and afterwards, in exile. I shall explain myself: what I intended to do was draw attention to the fact that anarchism, during the period of its ties with the real movement, i.e. with the working-class movement, constituted more than a definable theory, more a suggestion for action: (direct action biased with the economic and political struggle). In other words, anarchism was a principle both of action and for action; although organised into a syndicate-type structure (anarcho-syndicalism), this enabled it to avoid succumbing to the bureaucracy, or, more or less, allowed it to limit and emasculate this tendency. The CNT was, above all, an organisation whose flexibility made it possible to be seen as an organisation of agitational struggle, visibly finding its "raison d'être" in action and agitation. This prevented the CNT from ideologising, from moulding itself into an ideological form, (which was what happened when the FAI anarchists took control of the entire CNT into their hands) because it still remained quite simply a form of struggle. It was through participation in government during the civil war, paradoxically with FAI ministers, that the CNT and anarcho-syndicalism became fixed ideological forms, which opened the way for expansions of doctrinaire concepts of revolution (already introduced by Bakounine). Finally, exile represented the last and definitive phase of the ideological fixation of anarcho-syndicalism along with the orthodoxy by then well fixed at the summit of the national committee of a CNT which, in exile, has immobilised itself in its own problematical internal dynamic, deprived of every kind of activity and having no relation to the mass struggle. C.G.V.

---

France Chronique des strategies presentes June '93 in  
French; Le Frondeur (BP 105 94402 Vitry Cedex)  
Dialectical consideration concerning the  
school teenagers - who killed Ned Ludd? (J. Zerzan - The  
game of playing a role concerning a strategy among the

new revolutionary generation). Though we would express ourselves in a quite different way, we take this for good criticism of revolutionary sects; surely we would say in essence the same things about these great heads who throw definite judgements on the actual movement of the workers the latter showing a capital sin, i.e. not to follow the way some people trace as 'the only good one'.

Collectif Bévières Centre de documentation (2 Rue Bévières 38000 Grenoble) Some squatters try to build a documentation center collection reviews and information on the following items: houses, squatting, unemployment, alternatives for work, minorities, third-world, disarmament, anti-militarism, ecology, . . . Ask for all kinds of publications.

Eveil Internationaliste (BP 221 44604 St Nazaire) two leaflets in French; on the Chad War - La Ronde des Charognards - Safari en Afrique.

Courant Alternatif (OCL/Egregore BP 1213 50058 Reims Cedex) in French; n. 28 October 1983 - Restructuring; political and economical choices and their consequences with three examples: Fiat, Talbot and General Motors - Energy; the institutionalized waste.

---

Great Britain

---

Solidarity - vol 1 n. 3 (c/o Latham Road London E 6) in English - notes on the Labour Left - On Socialism - More about Castoriadis (see previous issues): Facing reality, Facing Death, Facing Russia - Bookchin mystifies (review of Murray Bookchin's book: The Ecology of Freedom - Castoriadis' economics revisited. An unconvincing attempt to rehabilitate Castoriadis' theory of the '60's swept away by the crisis and its developments).

Intercom n. 3 - Revolutionary discussion bulletin (Wildcat c/o Autonomy center 8/10 Great Ancoats Street - Manchester M45 4U) Report of the Intercom Conference (3-7-83) presented as follows: 'Various individuals seem to have lost interest in the Intercom project and we have failed to involve others, such as the ex-ICC people and some of the class struggle orientated anarchists. Also we have failed to generate as much real discussion as we

wanted'. This issue contains a lot of correspondence, an article on the Socialist Workers Party: Confusion or Rank Hypocrisy, a reply to Simon Leefe's article in Intercom n. 2 "An Engineer writes: Capitalism and the Recession" - texts on the Labour Party (Rotten to the Core) and on the CND (the case for Ultra Left 'entrism' with the "peace" movement, and leaflets on different subjects.)

London Workers Bulletin 14 - October 1983 (Box LWC C 1 Metropolitan Wharf Wapping Hall London E 1) in English; The Crisis of Reformism, The Revolution is not a party affair (translated from Otto Ruhle); more on the S 5 Strike (Birmingham) and a lot of correspondence.

Workers Playtime August-September and October-November 83 in English; same address as London Workers Group Bulletin mainly on strikes: Airc Valley Yarns (Asian Workers); Urango-juice strike (shipyard in Scotland); good articles on the situation in the printing industry trying to bring some light in the complexity of strikes, union, . . . facing the new technology; British Telecom. The summer issue contains two texts on France: one on the politics of the 'socialist' government, the other on the middle class actions in the Spring '83. The autumn issue brings a translation of part of the Insécurité Sociale pamphlet mentioned above (on worker's demands).

Women's Graffiti (c/o Boomtown Book - 163 King Street Aberdeen) Leaflets in English; on Greenham Common (women's fight against the new missiles) - unemployment.

Subversive Graffiti (see previous issues of Echanges) is no longer being produced.

---

Holland The Loon Op Zand Exchange (Baas Moreel - van Hornerstraat 15 5175 CC Loon op Zand Holland) in English; (see Echanges n. 35-36 p. 4) - Review of publications published in Dutch language.

---

Italy Tutti a Cosimo (Via Conte Torino 1 97013 Cosimo) in Italian; unique bulletin against the building of a missile base in Sicily.

Wobby (Via Corregio 18 Milano) May '83 - in Italian; Political criticism of the new corporative state - on hospitals and on education.

---

Japan      The Origins of the Socialist Thought in Japan  
(John Crump St Martin Press - 16 Pounds) book  
in English.

---

USSR and Eastern Countries      Iztok n. 7 - September '83  
(26 Rue Piat) in French;  
All this issue is devoted

to pacifism: Marxism and War (M. Rubel) In face of which war (Wiebereleki), Discussion about Castoriadis positions on Russia (see previous issues of Echanges and of Solidarity above mentioned), Poland (news of the underground movement in Poland), China; short review of the book on the concentration camps in China "Six récits de l'école des cadres" by Yang Jiang (Bibliothèque Asiatique - C. Bourgeois).

Blood and Laughter: Caricatures from the 1905 Revolution  
(David King and Cathy Porter Cape - 6.95 Pounds) in English; a choice among the numerous satirical papers which were published during and some months after the 1905 Revolution in Russia.

---

USA      Fifth Estate summer 1983 (5928 Second Avenue  
Detroit MI 48202) in English; living in a  
city already bombed - Detroit - High tech and  
the widening cyre. Worldwide crisis: is the recovery  
really here? Under the title: Time, The First Lie of  
Social Life, three articles: Beginning of the Time, End  
of the Time (J. Zerzan), What Time Is It? A response to  
Zerzan (Bob Brubaker) - The Clock Foundation of the  
Machine Age (Lewid Mumford) - Review of books and papers.

Where Have the Jobs Gone? article of the New York Review  
30/6/83 review of four books about unemployment and crisis  
in the USA. It gives some useful figures on earnings  
and employment, unemployment. If we can agree that  
"There is a widespread suspicion that our economy will

not expand beyond it's present bounds and that the parts  
that will grow will be the ones that depend more on high  
technology than on labour". The "alternative for Public  
Policy" aiming at ending unemployment are no more than  
the Keynesian thesis (see Paul Mattick, Marx and Keynes)  
and "no one has clear ideas about what jobs or how many  
can be created for them". The interest of this text is to  
give basis for more useful thinking on crisis.

Anti-authoritarian Anonymous (P.O. Box 11331 Eugene OR  
97740) leaflets in English; An apology from the people  
who staged the fast for life - a warning to the bored,  
Mafia Union calls it quits.

Processed World (55 Sutter Street Apt 829 San Francisco  
CA 94104) in English; (ask for subscriptions - between  
\$5.00 and \$10.00 for 4 issues) - Letters - Power of know-  
ledge against power (review of C. Conrad's book 'The City  
Builder') - Bad Girl (comics) - The first strike of bank  
workers in Mexico - Blue Shields and the Unions - Techn-  
ology and Instability.

---

Poland

---

The end of Martial law has not changed the situation in  
Poland. Apparently a new chapter is open but only a new  
label is put on a move that happened already for a long  
time and that is not linked to a precise event.  
Solidarity could hope - and Walesa expressed this tenden-  
cy - to play the function of a traditional union. But  
till December 1981 it never could play this function, not  
because of the opposition of the legal power, but because  
class struggle of Polish workers prevented it to do so.  
Because it could not play this role, more and more it had  
to become a kind of political organisation aiming at tak-  
ing the place of the present power, becoming in a certain  
way part of the "popular democratic" system. When under-  
ground after the Martial law was established, it could  
only retain this last characteristic and so clandestine  
Solidarity became more and more the real organisation of  
the KOR.  
Walesa could not pretend to be the leader of such a sec-  
ret organisation with underground leaders and pursuing

political aims. It is inaccurate to tell that Solidarity has remained a union working underground as such because the organisation working under this name now is something very different from a union. Walesa still believes in the union and everytime he can speak he pretends to be a union leader only interested by union work. As Solidarity is no longer a union, but a political group under the leadership of KOR people, he is a syndicalist leader without troops. He has kept his popularity as a union leader a popularity he has kept only because Solidarity no longer exists, because Solidarity did not succeed to become a traditional union; if that had happened, he would have lost his popularity. This popularity still exists because of a misunderstanding because the Polish workers believed and still believe something that never was: that Solidarity expressed their interests. A legal Solidarity would have given them the proof of the contrary. Solidarity as a tendency towards a legal traditional union disappeared with the Martial law, before it could give this proof. In fact, this conflict between the union and the workers was constantly latent but never had it the opportunity to become evident and open because precisely the events and the worker's struggle prevent it to be recognised as such. Now there are two distinct things: on one side Solidarity, a political organisation, and on the other side, Walesa who has become a myth, a symbol. It is an important change and even the Catholic Church has to draw the consequences. It's influence comes from the peasants and among the workers it can still retain some control because of the recent move of peasants to the industry. To maintain it's positions it has to follow the way of conciliation and realism; it can only look for the dialogue and the social peace. The Pope and the Cardinal Glemp have only one way: to discuss with the present regime. They could keep their position as natural allies of Solidarity and of Walesa as far as these ones remained in the legality with a very precise function. But in the present situation of Solidarity sliding to a clandestine KOR on one side, of Walesa union leader without troops, the Catholic Church can only reject it's allies of the previous period. What happened with the Osservatore Romano was not at all by chance and it was not as well a mistake of one man; it was expressing the present interest of the Catholic Church.