

THIS BULLETIN IS, in its temporary form, for a group of comrades sharing similar positions and in close contact with one another, a means of exchanging news on struggles, discussions and criticisms and of publications based essentially on the New Movement i.e. on all the struggles of all kinds carried out by those directly concerned for their own emancipation. It is, therefore, important that each recipient make his own contribution to this end, in exchange for what he expects from others. He will, of course, determine the nature, the importance and the regularity of such contributions himself.

Correspondence and payments either to:

France: Echanges et Mouvement, B.P.241, 75866 Paris Cedex 18 (C.C.P. La Source 31708)

Great Britain: H. Simon, B.M. Box 91, London WC IV 6 XX

Holland: Daad en Gedachte, Schouw 48-11, Lelystad

Spain: MDP, Apartado de Correos 9240, Barcelona Gracia

Germany: Th. Sander, Steinbrecherstr. 16, D 3300 Braunschweig

ECHANGES ET MOUVEMENT

Renewal of subscriptions:

The number indicating the beginning of your subscription (payment of 10FF or equivalent) was forgotten on the strip of the last issue (no. 17). You can read it on the strip of this issue (no. 18). If this number is 11 or another up to eleven, you should renew your subscription. The average cost per page is 0,25FF and you have received from no. 11 up to no. 17 (present issue not included) 42 pages. Without payment of 10FF (or equivalent) with no other notice we shall not send any further bulletins.

To the subscribers of the English edition

Personal problems of those who had been responsible for the English edition require us to modify the London address (as shown above) and to make an appeal to English speaking comrades who could help with the translation and possibly with the publication of the English edition.

Meetings

Following the meeting of Toulouse (see Echanges no. 16 and 17) a comrade wrote a few pages "Reflexions sur Echanges" (internal letter of M.B. addressed by him to a number of closest comrades). Those who did not receive may ask for it at Echanges. Replies to the text should be distributed in the same way as a debate preparatory to the meeting planned for the end of the year. Send these texts to Echanges which will send them on.

Publications

"L'insurrection ouvrière en Allemagne de l'Est, juin 1953, lutte de classe contre le bolchevisme" by Cajo Brendel, available in French from Echanges. English edition to come. Price 5 FF

"De l'antifranquisme à l'après franquisme" is a text on Spain in French to be published by us in September.

"Refusal of work", facts and discussions, English edition is to be published this month.

TEXTS AND DOCUMENTS

General

"Must democracy be capitalist?, Politics and markets: the world's political economic systems" by Charles E. Lindblom. At Echanges are copies of a review of this book by M. Walzer in the N.Y. Review.

"Karl Korsch, Au coeur de la conception matérialiste de l'histoire" a pamphlet by Spartacus, 5 Rue Ste Croix de la Bretonnerie, 75004 Paris.

"Suicide for Socialism" a supplement to Solidarity no. 7 of March-April '79 on the collective suicide of Jim Jones' sect in Guyana, written by M. Brinton (address Solidarity: 23 Solar Ct Etchingham Park Road, London N3).

"Usines, les robots arrivent", an article in Le Nouvel Economiste no. 179 of 16.4.1979.

A copy in French available from Echanges.

"La micro électronique menace-t-elle l'emploi?" an article in Problèmes Economiques no. 1618 of 11.4.1979. A copy in French is available from Echanges.

Iran

"Les luttes de classe en Iran" a pamphlet published by Théorie Communiste, written by C. Charrier, address: B.P. 318, Marseille Cedex 1 6 13213, France

Three excellent articles on Iran published by Le Monde Diplomatique of 4.12.1978, all available as a copy from Echanges:

"La croissance miraculeuse et le bouleversement" by Behrouz Montazami et Khosrow Naraghi who have used much information you will not find elsewhere and who give an account of the economic and social developments of the last 25 years in Iran.

"Puissance et ambiguïtés du mouvement religieux" by Claude van Engeland, an analysis of the economic significance in the past of the religious Islamic sect of Khomeiny and its influence now.

"Les mercenaires en col blanc" by Michael T. Klare on the new type of intervention in the Middle East.

Six articles published in the Guardian Weekly on Iran (some of them are translated articles of Le Monde, can someone provide us with the French versions??):

"Religious minorities in Iran, looking fearfully to the future" by Paul Balta

"How to put Iran army together again?" by M. Woollacoot in Tehran

"Iran's new regime, uphill task for Khomeiny's men" by Paul Balta

"What chance success for a destiny built on the past?" by Altaf Gauhar. He reports on the Islam and the need for change

"Iran: 'US imperialism the greatest danger threatening Iranians'" an article by the expert Eric Rouleau on the background of the executions in Iran

"Middle East - another Balkans in prospect" by André Fontaine

Copies are also available of a review on a solid book "Iran, the illusion of power" by Robert Graham published in the Guardian Weekly of 25.2.1979.

For those who want to have a short marxist non-superficial insight in the past and actual problems of the Middle East and especially Saudi Arabia, we suggest to read "Arabia without Sultans" by Fred Halliday, a Penguin-Pelican book published in 1974 (a)

South Yemen

"South Yemen: waiting for the fruits of scientific socialism" an article in the Guardian Weekly written by Jean Gueyras (11.3.1979). Copies available from Echanges.

Portugal

"Aspects économiques de l'intégration de la réforme agraire" an article in Spartacus of March-May 1979. Address see above.

U.R.S.S.

"Black Market causes red faces" an article in the Financial Times of 12.4.79 by Paul Landvai. A comment:

It is not enough to give numerous scandalous big examples of what is usually called the "black market"; every article on the Eastern Countries always contains an impressive list but it is quite difficult to describe its real dimension. The facts which are known and repressed are the tip of the iceberg and the capitalist countries of the East are not very concerned with giving precise indications on the elements which thus escape the State economy. Not for ideological reasons, but because the 'socialist' system must admit that its equilibrium is partly due to this private capitalist balance in the mar-

gin of State capitalism. And because the more important this balance is, the more it questions the role of the high managers. One part of this black market results from class struggle, workers stealing tools and materials to carry on a parallel independent activity which is absolutely necessary for their survival, in the same way as the peasants exploit their individual plot or as people building their own houses. But this "independent activity" is also the gateway to a real private capitalism. Many examples of real clandestine companies of a real commercial network covering the whole of Russia are cited in the article. One can ask about the pressure put upon the State system by this privatisation of capital. This article sees here merely a check on the "moral transformation of socialist man", but it is quite a different thing. If at the actual level of economic development in Russia, a fraction of the ruling class is not the blind and greedy instrument of the development of capital on the western model.

Recent studies on the Eastern countries are distributed by the "committee of coordination and anti-authoritarian liaison on the Eastern countries", address: Coordination Est, 51 Rue de Lappe, 75011 Paris, France.

U.S.A.

The American group "A world to win" has decided to dissolve and to stop the publication of "Now and After". The group's inability to break its isolation is the cause of the decision. The isolation also contributed to sharpen the different tendencies inside the group and to brake all political clarification. The group's comrades continue their activities as individuals in the region of San Francisco with other groups or individuals while waiting for circumstances to allow the formation of a real organisation on a more solid base (from a communique sent by the ex-members of the group. They also ask not to address mail to the old addresses of the group and of their bulletin)

"Battles on the land and farmers fight for survival" is an article in American Owl, address: Am. Owl, c/o Mattera, 417 East 65th Street, New York City 10021.

"Agriculture et concentration aux Etats Unis, la production traditionnelle de canne à sucre menacée en Louisiana" an article in Le Monde Diplomatique of December 1978 by Georges Frelastre. Copies from Echanges.

"Baltimore's Icy Blues" is an article in Newsweek of 5.3.1979. Here is the text: "Twenty inches of snow had just fallen, and Ron Starr was the only police officer within a mile of Baltimore's new Oldtown Mall shopping center. Suddenly Starr saw several hundred looters leaving stores with refrigerators and televisions strapped on their backs and jewelry bulging in the pockets. Starr

held his ground and pulled his gun. The looters considered for a moment and dropped the goods - then went back inside for more and left by different exits. By the time other policemen arrived, the mall had been thoroughly plundered. "It looked like the locusts hit", Starr shrugged.

The scene was not unusual in Baltimore last week as the worst snowstorm in more than a decade unexpectedly struck the corridor from South Carolina to Connecticut. Looters quickly discovered that police had a hard time responding to calls and declared a "Washington's Birthday sale" of their own, jamming one citizen's band radio channel with news of the choicest targets and carting everything from liquor to living-room suites out of about 500 stores.

In Oldtown Mayor William D. Schaefer responded with a 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew and Maryland Gov. Harry Hughes sent in 100 state troopers and ordered the National Guard to provide four-wheel-drive vehicles to get through the snow. Authorities arrested 492 people for looting and 634 for curfew violations, and state's attorney William A. Swisher angrily vowed to process the cases quickly. By then, the combination of the storm and the looting spree had cost the city an estimated \$ 30 million.

The looting was a particularly serious blow to Baltimore because it began in the Oldtown Mall, one of the centerpieces of the city's acclaimed urban-renewal effort. Schaefer had praised Oldtown as the country's first inner city mall, a \$ 5 million project that has attracted urban planners eager to learn how a city can be restored. The area had only recently been rebuilt from the ashes of the 1968 riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. "We had just finished three years of remodeling because of the mall, and now this happens" groaned jewelry-store owner Arnold Swain. "I do not know if I have the heart to put this together again!" Many other merchants felt the same way last week, and it was left to Schaefer to try once again to repair the city's image."

For an article on the here also mentioned use of the CB-radio see the Echanges-pamphlets "USA, a changing reality" and "A l' Ouest rien de nouveau?" for an article on the looting in New York during the black out of 13-14th July 1977.

France

An article in the next number of Echanges will study the strikes and actions in the metal industry placing them in the framework of the class struggle in France.

"Pratiques ou les cahiers de la médecine utopique" (address: B.P. 8, 9220 Bagneux, France) published a special number concerned with the employer medical control in France to add to the dossier of absenteeism (see the pamphlet on the "Refusal of work")

In "Les raisons de la colère", no. 1 of March 1979 (available from P. Blachier, B.P. 14, 92360 Meudon la Forêt) an article on the consequences of industrial restructuring and more interesting interviews with militant workers, ship builders at St. Nazaire and people from a telephone centre, transport company and from the ship repair.

West Germany

Number 17 of Echanges spoke of the discontent of the steelworkers since the end of the strike. Many facts have given a clear confirmation that the base reacted violently against the policy of the IG Metall trade union. This reaction went so far that the bourgeois press spoke of "insurrection of the trade unionists", of "rebellion" and of "rebellion from below".

First of all the reactions took the form of a personal criticism of Kurt Herb, the regional representative of IG Metall in Essen. Delegates of a factory adopted by 73 votes against 60 with 10 abstentions a resolution which demanded the resignation of Herb. A similar resolution gained a still larger majority at another steelwork: 400 votes against 32 asked Herb's resignation. The resolution said that the people in whom the workers had lost all confidence could never conduct negotiations with any chance of success. There were violent discussions concerning the attitude of the trade unions. The opinion was that also the principal leaders of the IG Metall like president Loderer and Janssen and Myer had to resign.

The deputy leaders of IG Metall agreed with the workers on this point. They thought that the capitulation of the trade unions was not at all justified: at the very moment the union bosses gave way to the employers, the first breaches in their united front were apparent, because the clients of the steelworks began to feel the effect of the strike on their supply of steel.

The criticism of the base brought to light the bureaucratic manipulations that had ended the strike. The negotiation commission which had voted to begin work again was mainly made up of delegates who did not belong to the factories on strike, so an artificial majority. Herb was accused of that the IG Metall's policy was very ambiguous and that he could express the demands of the workers. One factory committee demanded the democratisation of the trade unions, what may appear naive and shows that the trade union myth is still alive, but it expresses also the disappointment of the workers.

Strange explanations were given by the bourgeois press for the criticism of the base "A manifestation of an authoritarian tendency against democratic organisations" and there is no need to add that the newspapers did not explain how a "democratic" organisation

could end a struggle against the wishes of its members! However one newspaper put the finger on an essential point: "The IG Metall avoided a revolution from below."

Italy

About illegal work

Evaluation:

There is the greatest confusion. According to the ISTAT (the national institute for statistics) illegal work is no more than 5 to 10% of the GNP. The Agnelli Foundation (of Fiat) calculate that the importance of illegal work was about 25% of the GNP and some spoke even of 40%, but this was a group of economists of extreme right who probably wanted to exaggerate its importance for reasons that are clearly political. The methods of calculation are very problematical. For example: as far as industrial production is concerned one can calculate the consumption of industrial electric energy and compare it with official production. The increase of consumption is clearly higher than it should be.

The sections concerned:

Here also there exists a series of phenomena which are quite diverse. There is traditional illegal work and some new areas where illegal work is in expansion. The traditional areas are themselves very different. Two examples: In Naples there has always existed a network of work done at home (textile, shoes etc.) on which a large part of the population depends. Further 40.000 people are employed with the contraband of cigarettes. They form a recognised social force so that when the police increases its repression, the reply is collective (demonstrations, strikes and political pressure). In Prato in the Florence region the textile sector is almost entirely organised around work in the homes (looms in the houses). Naturally it is very easy to go from work at home to illegal work. The same can be said for an enormous number of people who work at home. Some facts on the new sectors where illegal work is expansion:

in the last five years there has been an immigration into Italy of about half a million of Africans who are employed clandestinely in various sectors: in the south in fishing and agriculture, in the north in the docks, building industry, public works. In Milan alone there are 80.000 who work in the cinemas, restaurants, as loaders, cleaners etc.

In the central sectors of the industry illegal work is accompanied by a decentralisation of production. Practically, the big companies stop recruiting and they decentralised work towards little factories who can more easily provide home work or in some way perform illegal work, for instance double work. One thing which has suddenly been seen in Milan is that many workers have 2 or 3 jobs, the first legal, the other black.

The 'casa integrazione' has favoured black work; many of the workers on the C.I.G. have time to carry another job in the small industry. There are firms which specialise in the employment of these illegal workers. For instance a big poster company employed only workers on the CIG; other use on the contrary illegal immigration. A traditional sector which has undergone a big expansion is that of "cooperative of transport and removals", which for the most part is controlled by gangsters and in some cases by the trade unions. Only in Milan there are already 40.000 workers in this sector.

The proletarian sectors concerned:

These are various and can be classed as follows: illegal immigrants, unemployed and under-employed, young people (divided between those who want a permanent job and those who prefer temporary work), women and children in the traditional work at home and the workers who have 2 or 3 jobs. Therefore the result is that these people have different attitudes towards the use of black work. It is different if you do it to consolidate the family budget or when you do it to escape from a permanent job. Some sectors of illegal work are underpaid and others are well paid for like mechanics, salesmen.

The attitude of political and employers group

Illegal work is judged in a contradictory manner. On the one hand it is seen as productive of wealth, the saviour of the Italian economy. On the other hand it makes problems for the employers, trade unions and political parties. For the employers it is a double problem: black work creates a double competition between those who work illegally and those who work legally. Next, it is an important factor in the fiscal crisis of the State (given the fact that these workers do not pay any taxes but benefit by means of their family of public funds). Although black work is an excellent means to reduce the costs of labour power, the objective is rather to obtain the reduction of the costs of legal labour power, either by agreement with the trade unions or with the help of the State which absorbs an important part of the contribution the employers must pay for the workers. For the political parties and the trade unions the problem arises of social control over a production network which is even more atomised. Naturally the Christian Democrats are in favour of black labour because it enlarges the sector of small entrepreneurs (in reality intermediary) and weaken the trade unions and the left. The trade unions and the left parties are worried by the erosion of their social basis and seek for remedies. The mechanisms proposed range from the reform of wage structure, i.e. the modification of the relation between direct and indirect wages, legalisation of various forms of temporary work, the development of various forms of auto-exploitation (cooperatives), measures to help the employers of young people, the reorganisa-

tion of the trade unions on a geographical basis. But often these measures are only words.

To resume: the expansion of black work is for the employers a way of breaking a certain structure of the working class and of guaranteeing the rate of power on the cycle of production. It is a question of making it profitable by a partial legislation. For the workers it is a means of keeping the family budget sufficient in the face of inflation and it is necessary for the unemployed.

Voluntary illegal work:

Given this fact it cannot be denied that some sectors of educated young workers see black work as freedom from the boredom of a permanent job. From this real need is born the theory of proletarian auto-valorisation, according to which the proletariat has a tendency to valorise directly its labour power. Without stopping on sorting out this argument, two things can be noted:

on the one hand the wide spread refusal to consider work as the central element of the proletariat today can result in a tendency towards massive reduction of the labour time; on the other hand a sort of marginal economy is produced where forms of auto-exploitation are often very severe and a sort of philosophy of poverty can be produced. The relation between these two tendencies should be carefully studied especially if one considers the tendency of advanced capitalism to allow certain social forms of self management of their own exploitation as a means of reducing social tensions and to effect some economies in the reproduction of labour power (alternative social services, re-establishing of forms of hand work and agriculture which could not be developed in the traditional way because of excessive costs). On the other hand the reduction of wage labour can be a function of the State tendency to give the family a role which was previously filled at the public expense (part time labour for women for instance). At the same time, it is clear that the massive reduction of permanent employment can be used as a means to develop an alternative society among workers, to develop a growing antagonism between the State and the proletarian civil society and this should not be underestimated.

Spain

"A new world in our hearts, the face of Spanish anarchism" published by Cienfeugos Press, Over the water, Sanday, Orkney KW 17 2 BL.

A review:

the title is borrowed from Durruti's words in August 1936: "We carry a new world here, in our hearts, and that world is growing in this

moment. This booklet is in fact more a collection of different texts than a detailed study. Most of the articles concern the period of 1936 and the collectives (precisely the world of Durruti); there is little on the CNT and the Spain of today, little on the place of the CNT in the struggles of the Spanish bourgeoisie against the feudal system in the thirties, little on its place in today's workers' struggles against modern capital, although there is a sketch of these points in the preface of Frank Mintz. And in the conclusion A. Meltzer begins by writing: "The great debate which is now taking place in the Spanish anarchist movement concerns the nature of a libertarian organisation in a period of struggle" It is of course the question for any form of organisation but the text only gives a few indications of an answer. There is certainly some useful information on the struggles of the base in Spain, but very little on the ambiguous role that was and still is played by the "official" anarchist organisations and the CNT in particular. There is still less on the relation between its roles and the specific situations in Spain in the radically different periods of 1936, the sixties and '76-'78.

The "great debate" would have been improved by introducing criticisms from other anarchists, or non-leninist marxists (e.g. the council communist critique). The new world is not that which is in our hearts, but that which our hearts calls for at every moment, but which can only arise from the struggles themselves, in the framework of each particular situation: its dimension, its limits, its destiny, its form arise from a interaction of these two poles: the revolt against a world which is destroying us and what we can make of it at the moment when it results in a struggle which is fashioned by its own conditions. As far as the CNT is concerned, the question of its very existence will not be decided by debates on the form of an "anarchist organisation", however big or modern it may be. The answer will be given and in our opinion has already been more or less given by the struggle itself. Some recent examples, e.g. the second strike of the gasolineras in Barcelona (see Echanges no. 17) invalidate in our opinion, some of the -understandably somewhat overconfident aspects of the Spanish experience in '76 and '77. (april 1979).

Great Britain

"A guide to underground economics" an article in the Financial Times of 9.4.79 by David Freud. A comment:

The article is not exhaustive, but gives some indications which complement what can be said about other countries (see

Echanges no.17 for the USA). The president of the British Revenue Board estimated the underground economy at 7,5% of the GNP for England (1978). But these figures, based on tax evasions, are widely underestimated according to the author. One part of black work is integrated in the calculation of the GNP and another part is deliberately left aside (handwork, gardening, cleaning, etc.). The article discusses the possibility of evaluating illegal work by monetary circulation - since payment is always in cash and especially with "big" notes. He cites the example of the USA where, despite the use of cheques, the circulation of \$ 100 notes grew by 250% from 1967-1977, compared with 125% for total money. For Great Britain, the value of £ 10 and £ 20 notes in circulation grew by 470% from 1972-1978 (15% in 1972 and 40% in 1978) while total monetary circulation only grew by 110% and total consumer expenditure by 140%. An important part of the savings for a deferred consumption of durable goods, would thus come from the underground economy.

Belgium

Who really leads an autonomous struggle?

On September 1st 1978 (see Echanges no. 16) the Belgian refinery RBP in Antwerp was occupied by the workers. By this occupation (which was still continuing at the time of writing) the workers and the trade union leaders wanted to prevent the closure of the American company O.P. of California. It was thus a mixture of official and unofficial action, as is often found in the course of struggles. The occupation began spontaneously, but the trade union recognised it immediately to avoid losing face completely. The trade unions announced a strike throughout the Belgian petrol industry. During this national official strike the same phenomena appeared as in the English miners' strikes of '72 and '74. The workers, very militant, developed their own initiatives to such an extent that the trade union movement and the socialist government ministers were quite frightened. Consequently the traditional organisations of the workers movement, parties and trade unions, tried to put an end to the strike as quickly as possible.

The Rijkswacht (some kind of tough federal police) with the socialist minister Boel responsible came on the scene; after two weeks of struggle, the trade union movement announced the end of the strike. The socialist minister Spitaels demanded that the workers occupying the factory should leave the property at once. Thus the national strike ended after three weeks, but not without difficulty. The petrolworkers were furious. Two T.U. secretaries S. and J. were delegated to explain the recommencement of work to the mass of the workers. According to the Belgian press the secretaries had a hard time. (1) One worker asked if it was not possible to continue with a regional strike. He did not get an answer. S. was

unwilling to discuss this alternative and shrugged his shoulders. But, all attempts to end the occupation of the R.B.P. failed, the workers stayed on. Formally their action was a wildcat from this moment, but in practice their struggle hardly differed from an official action. This example shows that a wild strike is not automatically autonomous. On January 3rd during the fifth month of the occupation, the Belgian weekly "Humo" published a two-page article on the struggle at RBP. The article contains some passages underlining what we have said above. Especially in an interview between the journalist Leo de Haes and the delegate Honoré Kerschaever: he is also a worker at RBP and he is in favour of the occupation, but at the same time he is the company delegate of the socialist trade union. To quote:

L. de Haes:

"As leader of this occupation you have a big responsibility, don't you feel a lot of tension?"

Kerschaever:

"Every morning at 9 'clock the occupation committee meets to discuss all the technical and personal problems... tension is not always visible, because I try to stay calm, but it's not easy... the personal problems are especially hard to solve, I must recognise all that. Luckily the workers have faith in me and I'm not afraid of taking on responsibility. From time to time it's too much for me and I cry like a child during the night. But in the morning I carry on. And I tell myself: the men see you as a leader, behave like one."

L. de Haes:

"How do you win the workers' faith?"

Kerschaever:

"In the past, I often banged my fist on the table and I always give correct information to "my" men. I've always had the workers' interests at heart. It's not for nothing that they call me the "Pope". In the past I was fired, but I don't give a damn. For me, solidarity counts above everything. In '72 we (2) were behind the strike of the RBP employees. I'm a little disappointed that the employees are not struggling now. It's the fault of the trade unions also of course. Why should the employees be organised separately? and get a better deal than the workers? It doesn't make sense. The drama of our Belgian workers movement is that it cannot show enough solidarity, not even in a struggle as essential as ours. They didn't do it for us and it's a shame. If the dockers and the steel workers stopped work, a solution would be found straight away. But what do you expect? Our movement is not orientated like that. For me, it would be the happiest day of my life if we could leave the company as victors. Besides, with this type of worker, you cannot lose..."

If the reporter has given a correct report of Kerschaevers words, one can form a fairly good impression of his personality. He seems to be the sort of delegate whose position is ambiguous: he is a workers himself and works at RBP and so has a natural solidarity with the occupiers; a solidarity totally lacking in men like the trade union secretarie S.

A worker Kerschaever has no hesitation in criticising, to a certain extent, the workers' movement in general and the trade unions in particular. But because he has been brought up in the traditional trade union movement and especially because he is a delegate in this movement and, consequently, his manner of thinking is fundamentally the same as trade union thinking. His criticism is moderate and very limited and is based inside the traditional movement. But he doesn't go beyond. This is why, for example, he said to a another journalist that he understood very well the position of the already mentioned secretaries of the union. At the same time, despite his criticism, Kerschaever acts like an apparatus man, as is seen by the fact that despite his solidarity for his workmates, he distinguishes himself from them. Not only by declaring that he is a leader, he doesn't protest at the nickname "Pope", he also says "with this type of worker we cannot lose" whereas any other worker, i.e. a worker having no position in the union, would have simply said "we cannot lose".

With this remark we approach the subject of this article: the question "What characteristics of a wild-cat action make it autonomous?" The reply is not that an autonomous action is characterised by the fact that it has no leaders. That is a quite different matter. The characteristics of an autonomous struggle are:

- a) that the leaders do not belong to the gang of trade union officials outside the group of workers in the struggle;
- b) that they are chosen by the workers themselves from among themselves;
- c) that they are always responsible to the workers and can be recalled at once if the strikers' or workers' assembly thinks it necessary.

In other words in an autonomous struggle it are the workers that decide. If they form a committee for the struggle, it is an executive committee and in no way the deciding authority. The workers do not have to act on the orders of the committee, but vice versa. The workers decide together and consequently have all the responsibility of the struggle. This occupation did not appear in the occupation of RBP. If it is true that, as Kerschaever said, an occupation exists that discusses the problems every morning, it is also true that it does not consult the other occupiers and what is more: it is not even the committee that decides, but Kerschaever: he takes all decisions and organises what must be organised. And that's why he sleeps badly.

The author of the article in Humo cites not only Kerschaever, but also some other occupiers. One of them declares: "The Pope taught us how an occupation should be done." Such a statement would have been impossible if the struggle at RBP had been autonomous, then the worker would have said: "We have learned in practice to deal with all the problems of an occupation and the needs of such an action." And if the struggle had been autonomous the workers would have shown a different spirit. Kerschaever would not have let himself called the Pope and the workers would never have thought of calling him that. And he would not have tried to behave like a leader.

How can one explain that the struggle at RBP did not take the form of an autonomous struggle? Kerschaever himself gives the explanation: "RBP is known for its developed trade union consciousness" he says. That means that among the RBP workers the trade union tradition is extremely strong, stronger than e.g. of the dockers who during a strike went to the union's office to show their hostility towards their "own" organisation. It is the trade union consciousness among the RBP workers which stopped them developing a feeling for their own strength and confidence in themselves.

We mentioned Kerschaever's statement that he could "understand" the attitude of the union's secretaries. Does that mean that we don't understand their attitude? Not at all, but we understand it in a different way: they wanted to end the strike because of the function they have to fullfil in capitalist society as a trade union, what means a contradiction between the union and the workers, who escape the control of the unions. Of this contradiction Kerschaever understands nothing. According to him, a union movement that does not want to conduct a prolonged strike should mobilise all the unions and he thinks it is a "fault" it did not do so. And he does not understand that the movement did not mobilise all its forces because its goal is social peace. In a word, his understanding of the secretaries means that he excuses them. We understand something different.

For Kerschaever it's logical that they wanted to end the strike, because the trade union movement was not ready to declare strikes in other industrial sectors. He suggests this "failure" is due to the corruption of some of its leaders, underlining so the difference between his view and ours.

Is Kerschaever's influence so big as he wants it to appear? His position as a delegate makes such an attitude almost inevitable: he must be regarded by his mates as an irreplaceable man and for the leaders of the union he must be such a person. He cannot maintain himself otherwise. But real Pope or not, the characteristics of the RBP occupation remain as they are: at this moment there are negotiations going on: the union agree with sel-

ling the refinery and firing 140 men, Kerschae-
ver suggests that workers who would be fired get
some money to soften their problems and the
workers remain silent and look angry and very
disappointed after having struggled so long
not for this, but for keeping their job and
a good pay.

(march/june 1979)

(1) During his speech the back rows were -
according to the bourgeois press - somewhat agi-
tated, due to the presence of about 40 workers
of the Albatros refinery, also threatened with
closure. They had come to the meeting to de-
mand that the strike would be continued, but
they were not allowed to speak: the decision
to recommence work had already been taken by
the central committee of the trade union in
question: not at a workers' meeting.

(2) by "we" he means the central trade union
which he represents.

Platform for Echanges: a proposition

This bulletin was started by several people as
a means of spreading and receiving information.
Originally in 1975 those participating in this
project decided not to bother with the clarifi-
cation of standpoints held in common which
usually accompanies the appearance of a new
group and to accept the existing fait agreem-
ent. The basic implicit agreement which under-
lies the content and form of the information
published was still badly defined, but as the
project developed, it revealed a unified ap-
proach even if the participants were very di-
verse, both in their background (some partici-
pated in groups like S on B, ICO, other had
no group activities) and in their life-styles
and ideas.

What our approaches have in common can be ex-
pressed by the following general principles:

1) we live in an age where all the condi-
tions exist - in different degrees - for a
radical transformation of society (total des-
truction of capital and the social relations
imposed by capital).

2) Such a transformation can only be effect-
ed by a large number of individuals acting by
themselves, for themselves and collectively.

3) the movement which will lead to this
transformation is already underway, we are part
of it and this is why each of us tries to
understand his individual development in rela-
tion to the development of this social move-
ment.

These simple principles lead us to try and in-
tegrate the individual and collective acts
which take place every day in a more general
understanding of the world (critique of exist-
ing theories).

To do this we must have information about these
acts. If, inside Echanges, we sometimes draw
differing conclusions from one/another / or
set of facts, we still think that the informa-
tion which describes these facts should have
certain qualities. Here too, a few simple

principles guide our way of seeing the
information published in the bulletin:

1) the raison d'être of the bulletin
is directly determined by the double insuf-
ficiency of the official means of informa-
tion" lack of information on social conflicts
exaggeration of political and economic in-
formation (two ways of masking reality).

2) hence the double task of researching
information concerning the individual and
collective experience of struggles of all
sorts and of making a meaningful choice
from the mass of political, diplomatic and
economic news.

3) concerning the way that the facts
are presented, our method of judgement is
empirical: one story is considered interes-
ting, another not. But there are discernable
reasons for some of these judgements.
Something is considered interesting when it
expresses the truth for the person giving
it, i.e. when the person giving it does not
try to hide his own view of things and when
he avoids bluff and empty rethoric. Then,
information is considered interesting if
it is rich, i.e. presenting the relation-
ship between facts and contradictions
movement.....

The bulletin Echanges as its name indicates
want to be something else than a unilateral
means of information. It is conceived rather
as a collective letter, to which each reader
contributes according to his own possibili-
ties and needs. But several years experience
show that one cannot, just by wanting to,
escape from certain traditional forms. At
present both the contribution of texts and
the practical production of the bulletin
are the work of a minority, as opposed to
the majority of the readers. But the origi-
nal conception is still the goal of Echanges
and the opening of several post-office
boxes in Paris, London, Barcelona, Holland
is a decentralising factor adequate to this
goal.

This text is intended for discussion.

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(a) While typing this bulletin we heard
of a new book of Fred Halliday: "Iran,
dictatorship and development" also published
by Penguin this year. In Holland a review
said "a detailed standardwork with much
basic information on Iran".