



SINEWS



ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CNT-U AND OTHER SPANISH UNIONS
WITH ANARCHIST FORMS OF ORGANISATION.

NO. 5 (86~7)

40p

SPAIN~50 YEARS ON FROM '36, REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR



2 BACKGROUND

THE TWO CNT.

At present there are two groups in Spain calling themselves the CNT. One of these organises its international contacts through the AIT and it therefore known as the CNT-AIT. The other, which formed from the unification of two groups which left the CNT-AIT, at a congress of unification in 1984, will be referred to as the CNT-U. Both groups have the same aims and about the same number of members distributed in all the regions of Spain, ie roughly 10,000. Where the two groups differ is in the way they try to achieve their aims.

The CNT-AIT sticks to the classic concept of 'no compromise anarchism', though at times this is more of a posture than a reality. The CNT-U is more experimental and pragmatic in its outlook, which can make it more radical in some ways, as well as less principled in others.

The most obvious expression of these different attitudes is in relation to the Works Committees which were set up after Franco's death to carry out negotiations between the bosses and workers in each workplace.

The CNT-AIT boycotts them, because they represent a bureaucracy which is detached from the workers and tries to set up grass root assemblies instead. The CNT-U on the other hand is willing to stand for election to Works Committees as they believe a boycott will lead to the CNT's marginalisation. Once on the committees though they aim to use the influence and information this gives them to destroy them from within and set up assemblies to replace them. The next set of national elections to the works committees will be held in 1986 and be for 4 years.

In some ways this difference is not very significant and I'd say the dogmatic way in which some members of the CNT-AIT tried to prevent an open discussion of the tactic of boycott was a more significant cause of the split. This dogmatic attitude on the part of the CNT-AIT and some of its supporters in Britain made it impossible for them to stomach some of the criticisms which have appeared in *Sinews* so, as a result, the paper no longer carries information about the CNT-AIT and will continue to be critically supportive of the CNT-U.

(All articles in this issue have been written or translated by me - Mick Larkin).

CORRECTION.

The picture on p.9 of *Sinews* no.4, which was reproduced from a CNT-U paper for the Basque Country in which it was implied (but not actually stated) that it was a demo they held in November, was actually of an earlier demo by the CNT-AIT.

CNT (Confederation National de Trabajo): National Confederation of Work(ers), is the Anarchist/Syndicalist union, formed 1910.

UGT: The Socialist party's trade union, which is now a lackey of the government.

PSOE: The Spanish socialist party which was elected in '82 and has been selling out ever since.

CCOO: The Communist party's trade union.

CEOE: Spain's equivalent to the CBI.

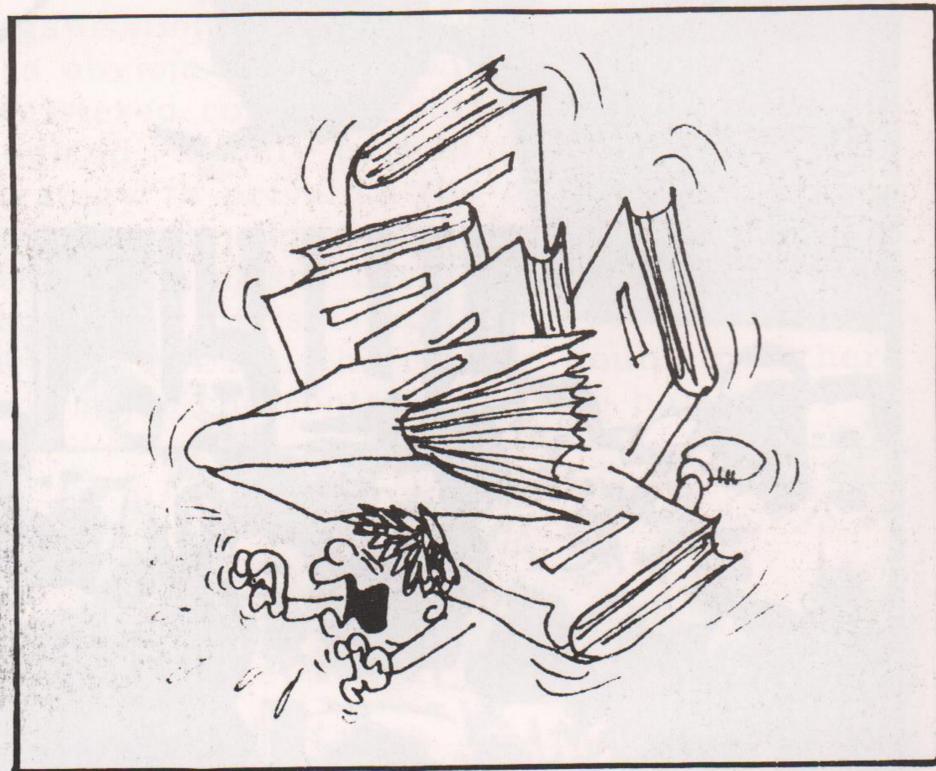
WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THE CNT?

Syndicalism is the belief that the best way to alter society is through the revolutionary direct action of a militant trade union, which develops the structures which will run things after the present system has been brought down by a general strike, and thus makes political parties unnecessary.

Anarchism says that the essential problem in society is the existence of authority and attempts to develop new forms of organisation which minimise the existence of authority

The CNT as an anarcho-syndicalist group is therefore fighting for the usual demands which affect our everyday lives as workers, but at the same time it is organising itself as a prototype of the kind of structure which could co-ordinate society in an anarchist world.

The main demand of the CNT at the moment is for negotiations with the management to be controlled by an assembly of all workers, rather than by union bureaucrats over whom the members have little control in reality. Instead of representatives elected for a fixed period the CNT uses delegates who have a specific mandate from the general assembly, or at least subject to instant recall.



ALURA LIBRE (Free Classroom) is a quarterly journal for libertarian teachers, brought out by the CNT-U in Granada.

SPAIN - 50 YEARS ON FROM '36

CIVIL WAR AND REVOLUTION.

It was July 18th, 1936 when a military uprising began the Spanish Civil War and revolution which was to end, 3 years later, with the proclamation of Franco as national dictator.

Although the socialist government of the time showed itself totally unprepared for, and incapable of opposing the attempted coup, Spain's unions (the CNT and UGT*) armed the workers and, with the help of those armed police who remained loyal, were able to surround then capture the army in about half of the country, including the capital Madrid.

It was in the regions around Barcelona (Catalonia and Aragon) that the CNT was strongest and here the workers took advantage of the power vacuum to take over the running of tramways, factories, hydro-electric power stations, etc. Everything from barbers to hospitals were collectivised and expensive hotels were requisitioned to give food to workers or militia members on leave from the fighting round Zaragoza or Madrid. The countryside was also collectivised and technical improvements introduced.#

Unfortunately there were severe strains within the forces opposing the generals who were organised as a 'Popular Front'. Though the CNT's anarchist principles should have made it rely instead on the armed workers, organised through their two unions, some of its leading militants were unable to resist the 'logic' of party politics and even went on to become government ministers. This was a disaster as the Popular Front was totally manipulated by the communists who, though virtually non-existent before the war, were able to wield immense power on the basis that Russia was the only power willing to supply (ie. sell!) those who opposed the coup with arms.

The undermining of workers' power and its replacement by Russia's favoured option, a bourgeois 'democracy', plus the military intervention of Germany and Italy on the generals' side while Britain and France stood by, eventually decided the outcome of the War. Nevertheless, the Spanish Civil War showed, in concrete terms, that a revolution based on anarchist principles involving the transformation of an advanced industrial country can work.

#A good introduction to the atmosphere of this period is provided by George Orwell's book, *Homage to Catalonia*.

*The UGT of the '30s was a completely different kind of organisation to the one which bears the same name today.



'THE REVOLUTION - DON'T KEEP IT IN'

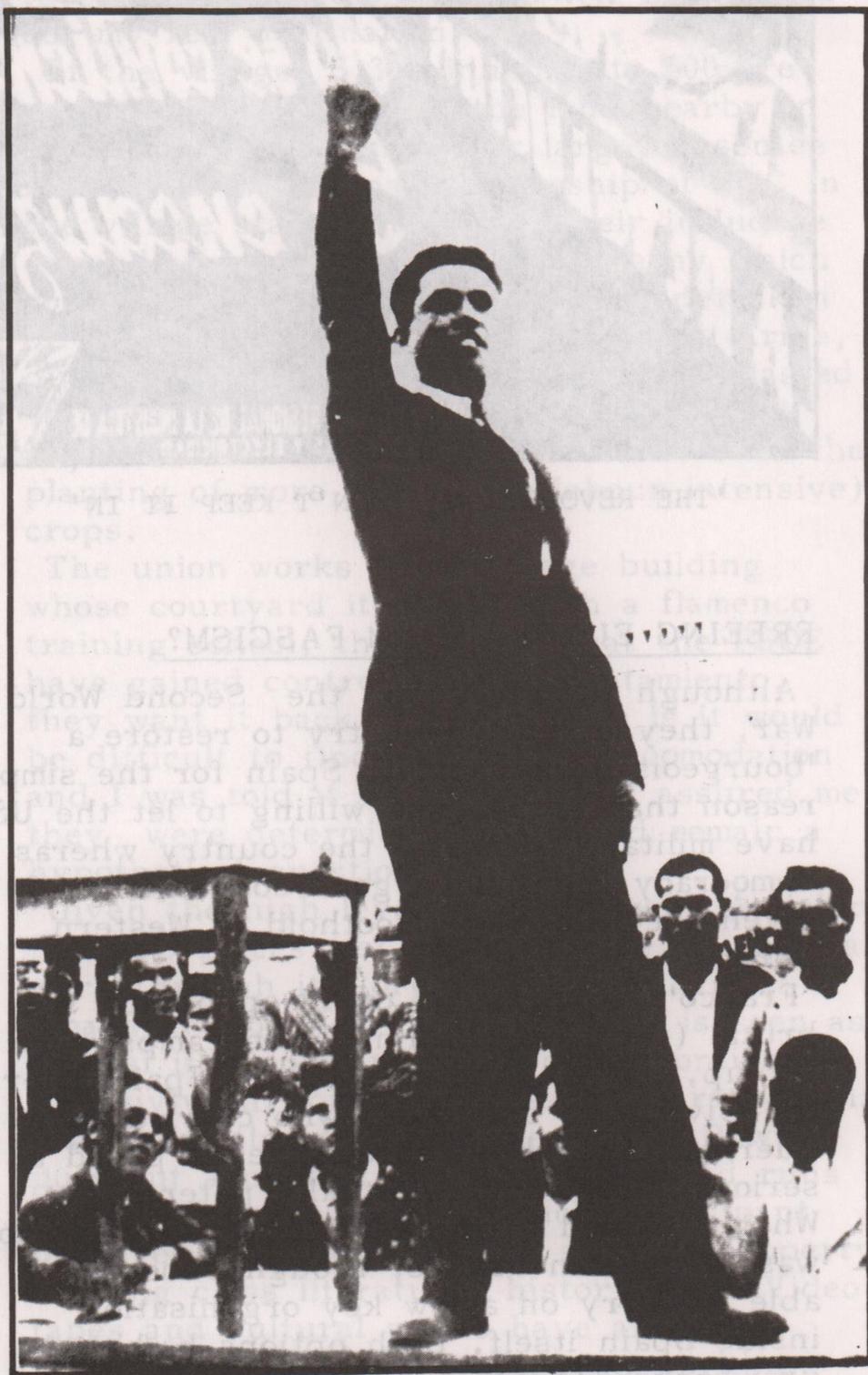
FREEING EUROPE FROM FASCISM?

Although the allies won the Second World War, they did not even try to restore a 'bourgeois democracy' to Spain for the simple reason that Franco was willing to let the USA have military access to the country whereas a democracy might have gone communist and given the Russians a foothold in Western Europe.

Franco's suppression of all opposition was brutal (the first extermination camps were set up, not in Germany, but in Spain after the Civil War) and those who carried on a guerilla war, whilst heroic, never posed a serious threat and eventually petered out. What remained of the CNT as an organisation was in exile in France, though some were able to carry on a low key organisation inside Spain itself. Both options had their drawbacks. Those in exile tended to become detached from what was happening inside Spain and get involved in dogmatic in-fights. Those who remained, if they were to have any influence as trade unionists, inevitably became involved to some extent in the sham 'vertical' unions set up by Franco cont. ►

FRANCOISM WITHOUT FRANCO?

Although Franco was a skillful manipulator and hung on to power till the end of his long life, his form of government was doomed to die with. For one thing he lacked a really coherent ideology (in this respect he was a big disappointment to genuine fascists who he tended to ignore during their life then promote as heroes when they were safely dead). More to the point, western capitalism had no need for a fascist style dictatorship by the time he died and Spain was seen as out of step with the consumer boom of 'enterprise capitalism'. When Franco's only plausible successor was sent flying over a block of flats on the wrong end of a bomb in the Basque country it became obvious that something would have to change when he finally kicked the bucket, which he did in 1975.



Durruti, the famous anarchist militant, hails a taxi to take him to the militia columns on the Madrid front during the Spanish Civil War.



REBUILDING THE CNT.

In the years leading up to Franco's death unrest began to develop with workers and students organising strikes and demos. As there was a lack of established channels by which these could develop the obvious way to let everyone get involved, control by mass assemblies, was chosen.

The CNT took this opportunity to begin organising openly in Spain again and found itself in a situation of immense enthusiasm for freedom and revolutionary change, but where people lacked practical experience of anarchist forms of organisation or clearly thought out political ideas. As a result the CNT mushroomed in the years after Franco's death but in a way which meant it could have easily have lost its identity, or been taken over by the usual ruthless Lenninist groups. Without doubt this was a very real danger, but it seems that those who came back from exile over-reacted and set themselves up in judgement as to who could or couldn't join the CNT and began a series of expulsions and exclusions which became excessive.

The result of this attitude can still be seen today with several unions, most notably the dockers (see Sinews no.4) and agricultural day labourers, existing outside the CNT despite having virtually identical forms of organisation, because they were put off by dogmatism and divisions.* The split between purity and pragmatism gave rise to a split in the CNT itself with the result that there are now two groups claiming the title CNT. (See 'Background', page 2)

* Maintaing the anarchist content of any mass organisation such as the CNT is by no means an eaisy task as the usual authoritarian kind of solution is, or at least should be, out of the question, though the use of a dogmatic authodoxy is one example of such a solution. Further information on this subject will be part of the revised version of the pamphlet 'Organising an A/S trade union' which is out of print at the moment.

'BRITAIN'S CIVILISING ROLE'.

The regime set up after Franco's death was modelled on the British style 'constitutional monarchy' in an attempt to establish what is basically the kind of centre-right capitalist system we 'enjoy' over here... when there isn't a recession on. The idea was to allow the Spanish economy to be integrated into western Europe and avoid the embarrassment of 'a dictatorship on our doorstep'.

One myth that has developed since Franco's death is that the king has proved his worth as a stabilising influence against the not too remote possibility of another military coup. For example, it is said that his rejection of those who tried just this in 1981, when a General Tejero held the parliament at gun-point, was decisive in causing their failure. In fact, the king let this attempted coup go just far enough to frighten off anyone who was thinking of pushing for real reforms to the system before stopping it.



An early correspondant of the Spanish Info. Networks sends his constructively critical comments on the day's events to the central processing offices in Esh Winning for wider distribution.



SOCIALISTS SELL-OUT 'FOR A CHANGE'.

In 1982 the socialist party (PSOE) under Fillipe Gonzales, took power and have been back sliding ever since, despite their slogan 'For a Change', at a rate which would even embarass Kinnock. They have pushed on with the kind of industrial 'rationalisation' which Thatcher has achieved here and are intending to introduce a law (LOLS) which will do away with all unions except their own trained poodle, the UGT, and the communist CCOO.

These two unions have, to date also got a massive slice of the union funds siezed by Franco (the 'Patromonio Historico) even though half of this belongs to the CNT-U which has not even received a peseta. As a result, the two 'majority' unions have got all the premises and paid officials they could want# (as someone put it in a recent letter, 'All they need now is a fleet of taxis to collect people when there's a meeting on'). whilst the CNT has to struggle to make ends meet.

Nevertheless, the memorys of the Civil War and the changes this brought about, plus the experience in workers assemblies at the time of Franco's death and since, will not lie down and die without a fight.

A woman from one of the CNT's militia columns illustrates the feminist slogan: 'Beneath each woman's curve... a muscle'.

#Neither CNT is interested in having paid officials, but they could use the money for premises and publicity

6 ANDALUCIA

Andalucia, southern Spain, makes up one sixth of the country's area and the same proportion of its inhabitants, having a population of $\frac{1}{2}$ million, of whom 400,000 are agricultural day labourers, or 'journaleros'. Most agriculture takes place on the Guadalquivir valley or on the coast between Malaga and Almeria where the earliest vegetables in Europe are grown. It is considered the best land in Spain and is used to grow rice, cotton, olives, grapes, sugar beet, chick peas, cereals and market garden produce. 60% of the land belongs to 2,500 large land owners, or 'latifundi', ie 2% of the population.

The reconquest of Spain by the medieval catholic kings put an end to the relatively open minded society run by the Moors and led to the ruination of the advanced system of irrigation they had developed. Ever since the history of Andalucia has been one of continual revolts. The CNT began organising agricultural labourers here in 1913 and the region grew to be one of its most important.

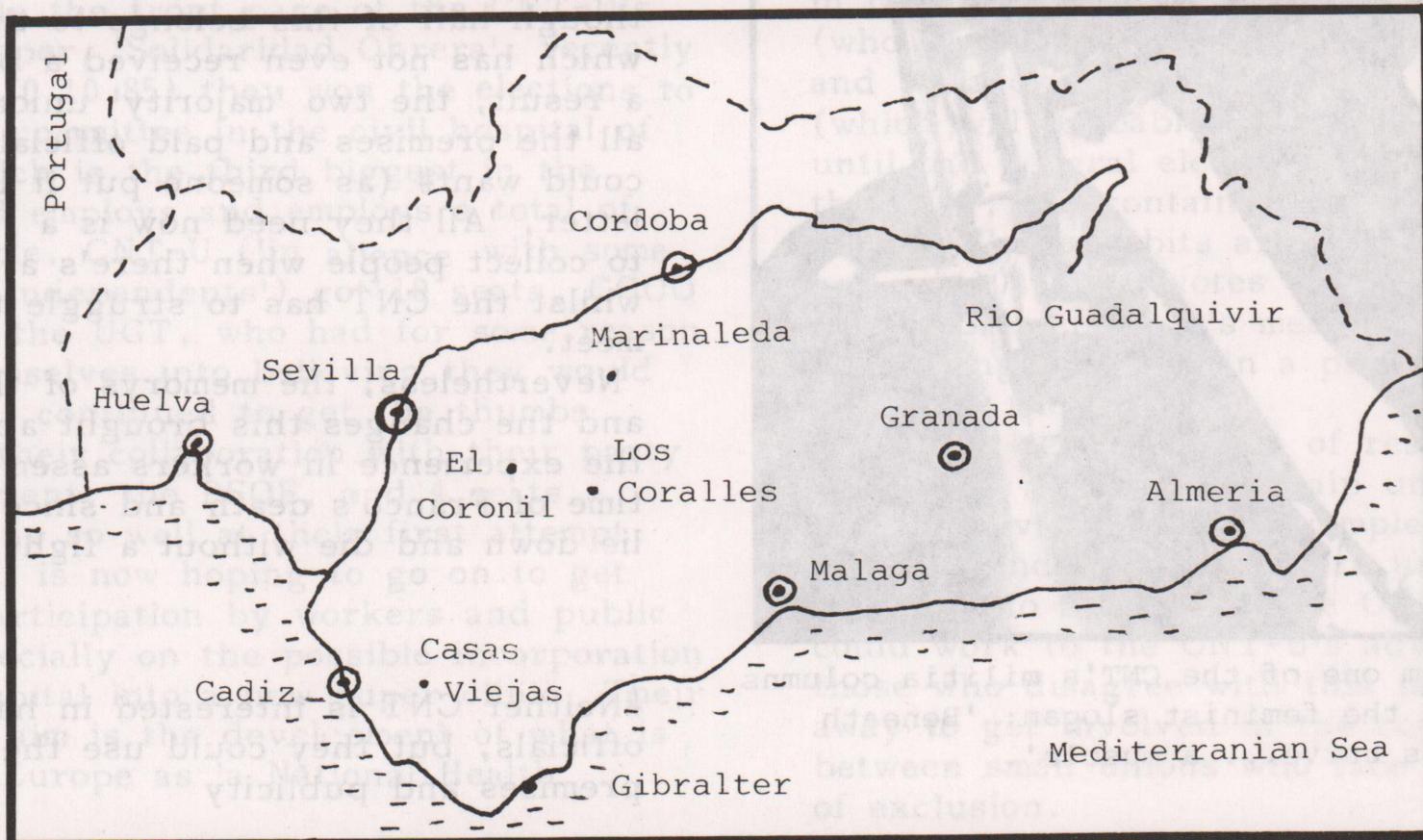
The election of a left wing government in 1931 produced only minimal land reforms, so in 1933 the CNT launched a general strike in Andalucia, leading to street fighting in Sevilla and Cadiz. When a group of rebels took refuge in a hut at a village called Casas Viejas, the 8 of them, including a child, were burnt to death as a result of shelling by the Guardia Civil. Outrage at this incident was one reason why many followed the CNT's call to boycott the next elections and a right wing government was elected the same year.

In 1936 the CNT dropped its boycott so as to get its prisoners released in the general amnesty which followed the election of a left wing government. The more effective land reform they introduced, as well as the CNT's campaign of direct actions, was a major cause of the attempted coup in '36 which led to the Spanish Civil War. Sevilla was used as a landing point for Arab troops flown in from Morocco by German planes and a brutal repression followed. This was met by an equally stiff resistance with the result that the CNT was literally wiped out in Andalucia.

Under Franco Andalucia returned to the medieval system which largely remains today and was used as an internal colony to supply materials and cheap labour to the rest of Spain. Between 1960 and '73 some 1.3 million people left Andalucia for other parts of the country (over half going to Catalonia) and 1.2 million emigrated to Europe due to the mechanisation of agriculture and the drive to replace labour intensive crops such as sugar beet by cereals. The only part of Andalucia to receive any industrial kind of development was Huelva where all of Spain's most polluting industries were concentrated.

In the 60's Franco was able to mask the economic failings of the country to a large extent by open it up to tourism, largely centered on the Andalucian coast line. The effects of this 'sweat exchange' (they sweated in our kitchens, we sweated on their beaches) are summed up by the destruction of the quiet fishing village of Torremolinos.

MAP OF ANDALUCIA - SOUTHERN SPAIN.



REBIRTH OF VILLAGE ASSEMBLIES

'A LATTER DAY CNT'.

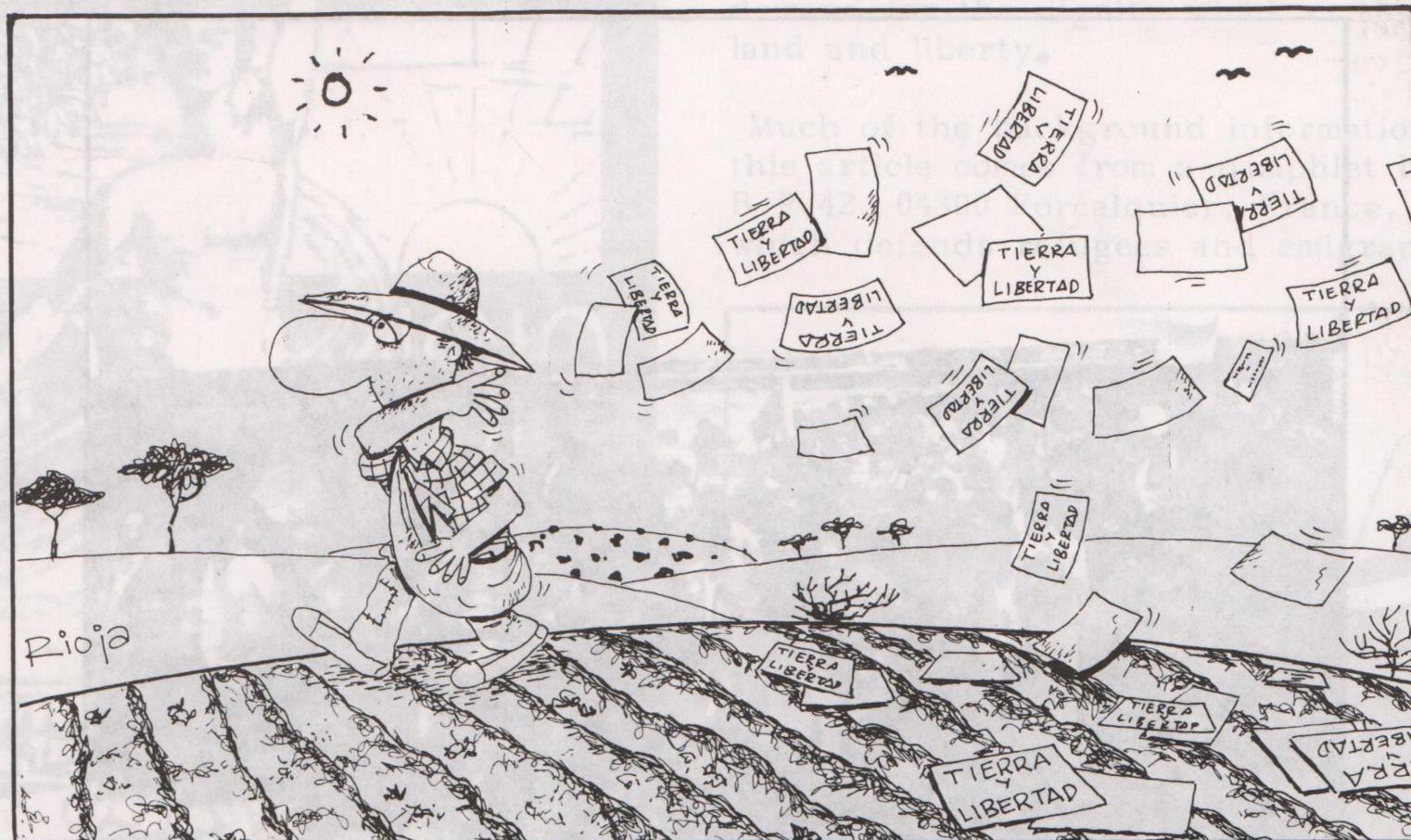
With the death of Franco the role of the CNT in Andalucia before his dictatorship was taken up by the Agricultural Workers' Union, Sindicato de Obreros del Campo, or SOC. The SOC's structures are virtually identical to those of the CNT, it has no officials, descisions are made by assemblies of all those affected, delegates are mandated, revokable, subject to instant recall and rotated. It's 20,000 members and supporters are serviced by a small executive of 5 people, one of whom is the general secretary, and the organisation's guiding policys are made every 2 years at national (ie.regional) congresses, with national assemblies every 2 months. A certain passion for nationalism as far as Andalucia is concerned is perhaps the only significant difference between the SOC and the CNT. Delegates to all these 'natioanl' events are elected at general assemblies in each village which are first announced by someone with a megaphone touring the streets on a moped.

The SOC began organising illegally under Franco towards the end of his regime and infiltrated the vertical unions which were a part of his system as a cover for their activities. They left these organisations a bit before Franco's death, being legalised and holding their first meeting, which had delegates from 80 villages, in 1976. They organised their first land occupations in '78 and in 1979 members of the Worker's Unity Canditature (CUT) stood for election with the SOC's support to municiple elections.

There are a few afiliates to both CNT in the Andalucian countryside and the SOC's relations with the CNT-U are good, though the CNT-AIT are seen as being too dogmatic by most SOC members. The only union which has any influence in the countryside, apart from the SOC, is the CCOO with whom relations are said to be 'reasonable'. The UGT has no influence whatsoever, except for occasional reactionary interventions when members are brought in from the city. Their political masters, the ruling socialist party, PSOE, have gone out of their way to try and slander the SOC.

LAND AND DIGNITY.

Faced with a growing rate of unemployment in the region, presently at 25%, made worse by the recession in Europe generally which has forced many emigrants to return home, the SOC's demands are simple - land and dignity. On the basis that land, like air or sunlight, can not be taken as the private property of one person, the SOC has staged a series of occupations all over the eastern side of Andalucia and is demanding the expropriation of land belonging to large owners, eg. plots over 100acres if it is irrigated land. This land would be formed into co-ops with mountains being recovered with forests, extensive irrigation undertaken and the creation of dust bowls reversed. Although not opposed to mechanisation in principle if it is under workers' control, the SOC has a medium term goal of demanding more labour intensive (or 'social crops' as they call them) such as sugar beet or olives, rather than those which can be highly mechanised, such as cereals.



The SOC's paper - Land and Liberty.

cont. over

8 REBIRTH OF VILLAGE ASSEMBLIES CONT.

The SOC's use of direct action has led to numerous clashes with the state in the form of the Guardia Civil, and more than 400 SOC members are waiting trial at this moment. Fines of 5,000pts (£25) have been given for working on after the end of a one day contract under the charge of 'coercion' which also covers chaining yourself to olive trees. 8 members of the SOC from the village of El Coronil recently received a total of 5½ years for taking part in peaceful occupations. (see seperate article). The CUT mayor of Los Corrales was given 6 months in prison for closing down the village's town hall for the day on July 29th in solidarity with a one day strike. The next day after this sentence was passed (10.8.85) a general strike was called in the village by an assembly of 1000 people out of a total population of 3,700.

COSMETIC REFORMS.

The reformist solutions of the socialists in government go no way towards solving the problems of Andalucias 'journaleros' or small farmers, and can be summed up as charity and cosmetic change. It's 'land reform bill' tries to use the historic connotations of it's title to mask a totally inefective reform, but even this would not have been forthcoming without pressure from the SOC, and people from 10 villages staged simultaneous land occupations in early '85 to denounce it.

The main aim is to modernise Spanish agriculture, by removing the worst excesses of the present system, so it will be more competitive in the Common Market, which Spain joined in January '86.

The PER, or rural employment plan, is a system of public works such as creating parks, new pavements, etc, for which the journaleros involved are paid and can add the days on to their total to try and reach the magic number 60. Although the work is meant to revitalise the countryside PER has been used to build new barracks for the Guardia Civil! There was also a tendency for projects to go to villages with socialist mayors and for work to be given to PSOE militants, but the SOC has now achieved some say and distributes the resources in a way which is more equal. There are also clashes over delays of PER money, eg. in December '84 30 people were wounded by the Guardia Civil near Cadiz with one of these losing an eye.

The government also runs a few training schemes but, suprise, suprise, these seldom lead to jobs at the end of them.

After an elaborate survey, any holding which is less than half as productive as the average can be 'expropriated' which means compulsory letting to the government for up to 12 years. In fact this will only affect the 2nd division latifundi (ie. large land owners) with poor quality land and even this is being held up by falsified figures and endless legal rangles.

For the present, the government has got a system of unemployment benefit with those journaleros who did over 60 days of work in agriculture in the year before receiving 18,000 pts (£90)/month with a sliding scale down to 1,000 pts/month for those who only did 10 days. Unfortunately, only 30% of journaleros qualified for the 60 day sum in '84 and 37% had not even done 10 days. At present half Andalucia's families live on less 50,000 pts (£250)/month and 15% get less than half of this.



Journaleros on the march and in occupation (opposite) - 28/2/78

In 1983 the government nationalised RUMASA a company on the verge of bankruptcy whose holdings include 15,000 acres of land near Jerez in Anadalucia. One of it's plots, 'El Indiano', which consists of 740 acres, has been occupied several times by members of the SOC including one occupation by 200 jornaleros from the 1st to the 8th of June '83. The government appointed manager is waiting till after the general elections in '86 to decide what to do with the land. He has promised it will not be sold to private companys, but the SOC is demanding it be made into co-operatives.

The government's standard solution for Spain's problems is entry into the Common Market, but this will be particularly bad for agriculture, or at least for the people who work in this industry, leading to some of the latifundi being replaced by multi-nationals and even more mechanisation. The 1986 crop is expected to be a 40% mechanised harvest and the number of tractors has risen 8 fold from 1960 to 400,000 now. Over the last 10 years 60% of Spain's olive trees have been uprooted and half the remaining 200 million are over 100 years old and need replacing. Instead the Common Market is to give grants for uprooting vineyards, further encourage the growth of crops that use more machinery, leading to more profit and more unemployment.



The SOC is not trying to put the clock back but it refuses to go along with mechanisation when this is done in such a way as to just increase the general level of misery and give the bosses more profit. Quite reasonably, they expect to share in the benefits of scientific research which, like the land to which it is being applied, cannot reasonably be said to belong to any individual.

In 1986 the SOC will be continuing it's campaigns of direct action, for example they intend to prevent a mechanised harvest in the village of Marismillas, in persuit of their demand for the dignity which comes from land and liberty.

Much of the background information for this article comes from a pamphlet by CEDRI, B.P.42, 04300 Forcalquier, France, a group which defends refugees and emigrants.



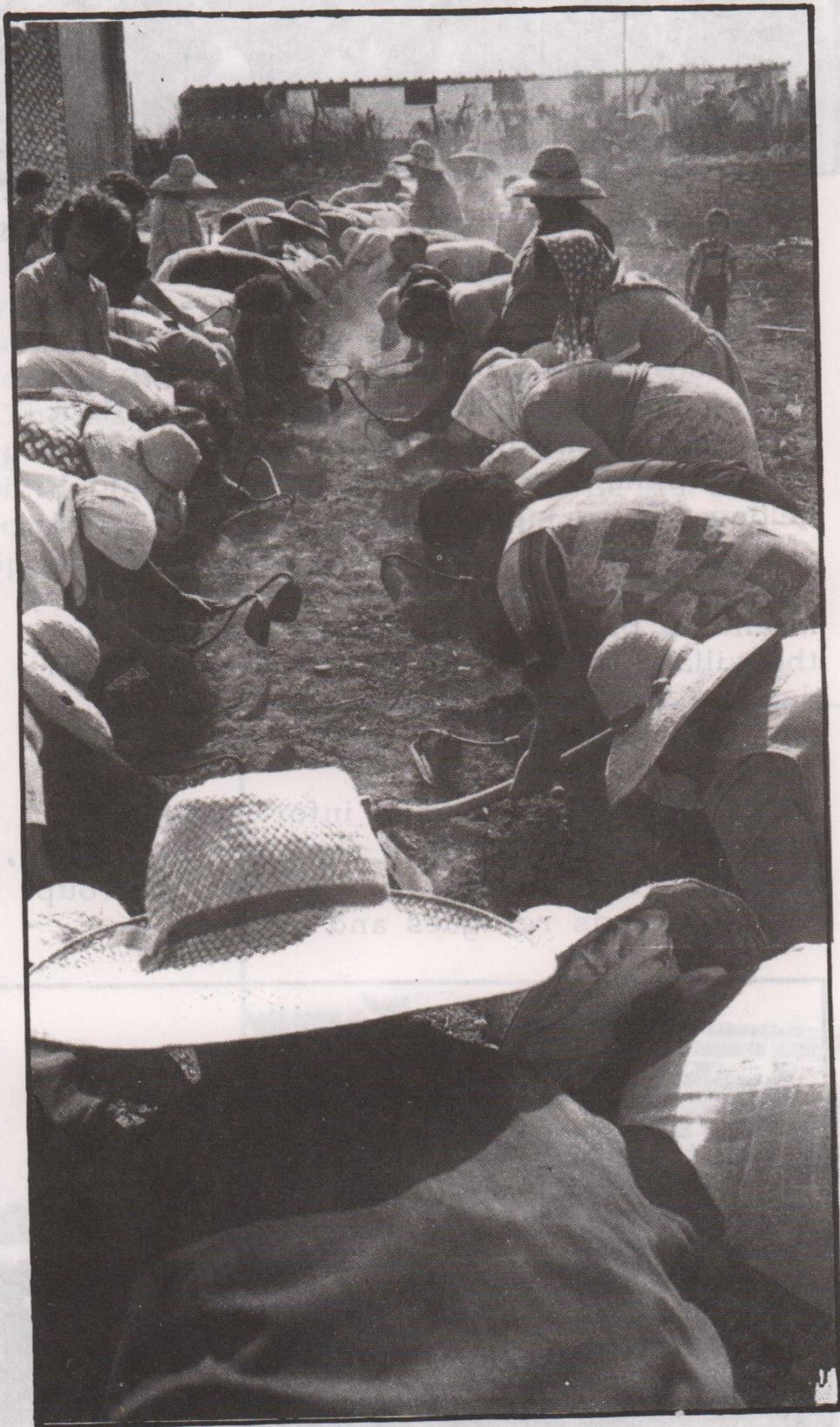
The CNT also had a paper called...



10 WOMEN IN THE S.O.C.

The Andalucian countryside is still a very patriarchal society with women's sphere being the home, men's the outside world, and the two sexes often socialise seperately. It therefore comes as no suprise that the majority of SOC members are men, though I was told that the women of the village do sometimes hold seperate meetigs before the general assemblies so they can deal with any common problems and work on ideas they want to put across as a group.

One magazine which takes a dim view of the position of women in the SOC is the Sevilla feminist quaterly 'Mujeres del Sur' (ie. Women of the South) who recently caried an article critisising what they saw as the manipulation of a women's march to the city organised by SOC.



'Women work in the fields then go home and are expected to do the housework'



The SOC has organised several marches on Sevilla, including one in August '83, though the march in question was on a more modest scale involving 80 women from the village of Maranaleda where 120 people are awaiting trial. At the final rally the women were given 'a pep talk' in the form of a speech by the mayor of their village, Sanchez Gordillo, who is also a 'leading militant' in the SOC. This speech angered the women from M del S because it defined women's problems as the worst aspect of men's oppression rather an autonomous struggle.

'we are not opposed to women working with men in economic struggles' they write, 'but these same men must acknowlege the part they have played in oppressing the women concerned'. They then go on to describe the classic situation of women having less job security, lower pay and being expected to do all the housework as well, while the men go down the union to 'discuss things' and play draughts, etc.

There is no doubt these critisisms are to a large extent justified, though the SOC has also struggled for women's emancipation, eg a strike inthe village of Osuna for one week during the olive harvest won equal pay for the women and a protest by women at a village near Huelva in November won them a fairer share of the PER money available.

Unfortunately, the attitudes of the women themselves are not always conducive to change, for example, a recent survey showed that while about 70% of women felt that their situation was unjust, 86% still held the view that a women's place is in the home, etc.

'Mujeres del Sur' can be contacted at:
C/Zaragoza, 36, Sevilla, Spain.

THE EL CORONIL 8

The village of El Coronil is about 30 miles east of Sevilla and has 5,300 inhabitants. During 1984 they organised several land occupations on a site known as 'El Garratol' including one which lasted for 11 days and involved 200 people at the end of September.

8 of those involved were working on public works under the PER system at the time and had a fortnights pay (8,500pts or £40) taken off them for absenteeism. This is despite a sworn statement from the village's mayor which pointed out that the men were paid to do certain tasks, not by the hour, and that they had completed these tasks. In protest at this treatment the 8 organised a peaceful occupation of the town hall. Although one of the buildings' three doors was left unlocked throughout the Guardia Civil preferred to use an explosive known as Goma-2 to blow the lock off the main door, then had the cheek to bring charges of 'disturbing the peace'.

The original bail of 100,000pts each (in the context of 1 month dole being only 180,000pts) was reduced to 20,000pts because of protests and they went to court in Sevilla on March the 12th.

Although the original demand for 17 years in jail was not realised, 7 of the defendents (one of whom was the present secretary of SOC) received 6 months, and one, Manuel Lara, got 2 years because he was involved in a similar occupation in '81.

These sentences are a travesty and they have deprived several households of their income. Financial support can be sent to:

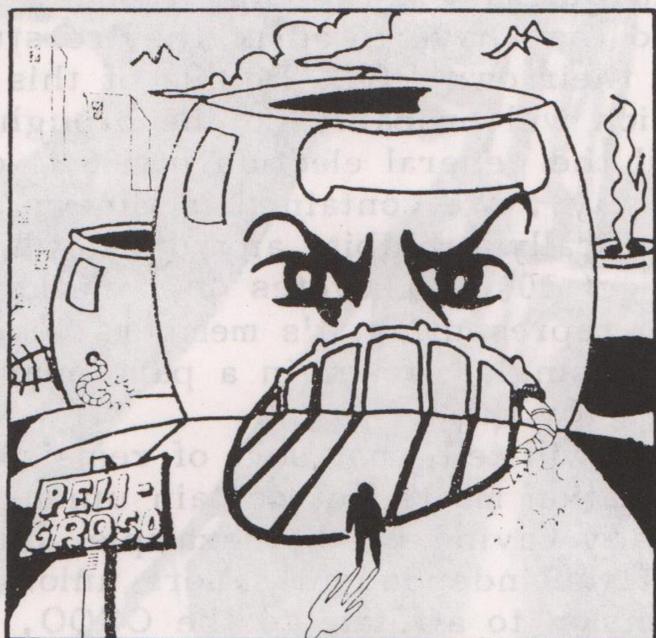
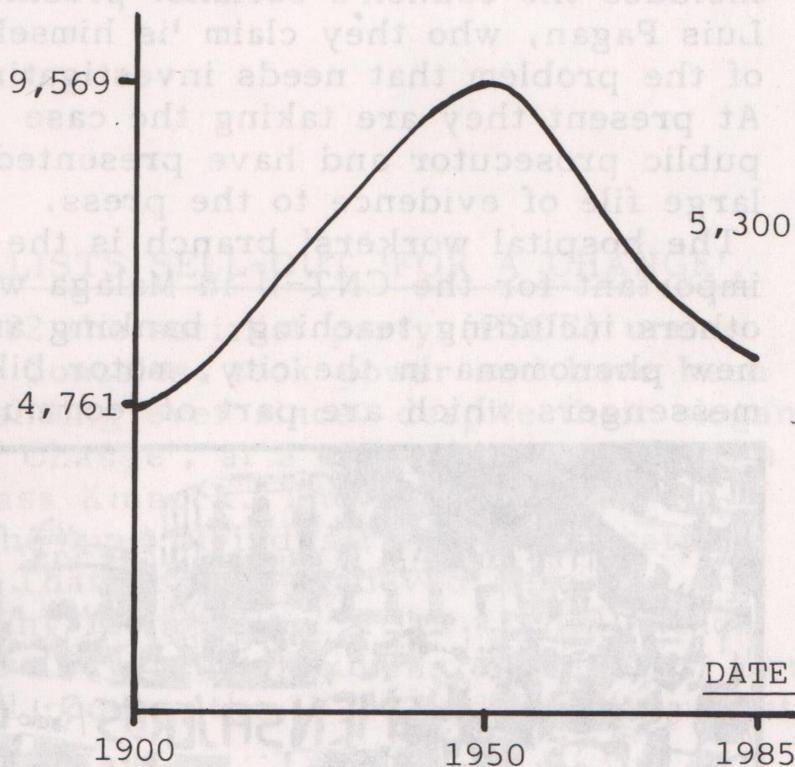
S.O.C., cuenta no. 60-5931-01,
Banco Popular Espanol, Oficina Principal,
Avda de la Constitution, Sevilla.

POPULATION OF EL CORONIL.



The 8 defendents are: Antonio Cabezas, Antonio Alfaro, Francisco Alfaro, Antonio Fernandez, Juan de Sola Ruiz, Diego Canamero, Manuel Lara and Juan Ocana

POPULATION



The CNT-U in Malaga has brought out a comic describing the dangers of a site to the west of the city where 'Empetrol' store petrol in a series of huge tanks.



Radio Libre is run from the premises of the CNT-U in Sevilla and began in December '85.

12 'COSTA DEL SOLIDARIDAD'

'MAKE MINE MALAGA...'

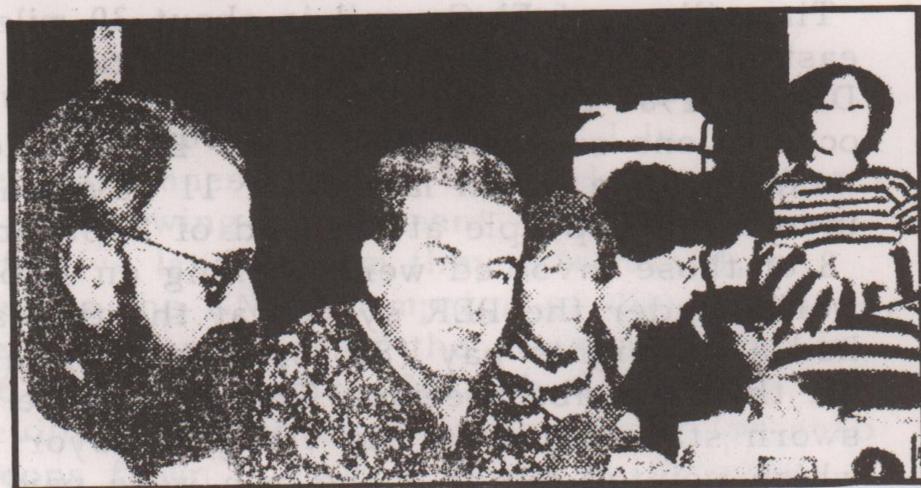
Thanks to the package tour 'price wars', which no doubt signifies the long awaited final crisis of capitalism, I was able to spend a week in sunny Andalucia just before Xmas, checking out the locals for their anarcho-syndicalist tendencies.

The comrades of the CNT-U in Malaga were in high spirits on the day of my arrival, as they had got an article in the front half of 'El Pais', the Spanish equivalent of The Guardian. (Union news normally goes in the back, just before sport). The story concerns the investigation of the city's psychiatric hospital, launched by the local council as a result of 'irregularities' which included the death of 4 patients due to neglect, falsification of documents, etc. The CNT-U's branch at the hospital is not happy with the make up of this commission, which includes the council's socialist president, Luis Pagan, who they claim 'is himself part of the problem that needs investigating'. At present they are taking the case to the public prosecutor and have presented a large file of evidence to the press.

The hospital workers' branch is the most important for the CNT-U in Malaga with the others including teaching, banking and a new phenomena in the city, motor bike messengers which are part of 'communications'.



They made the front page of the CNT-U's national paper, 'Solidaridad Obrera', recently when (on 10.10.85) they won the elections to the works committee in the civil hospital of Malaga which is the third biggest in the region and employs a total of 1,760 people. CNT-U ('in alliance with some respected independents') got 10 seats, CCOO got 9 and the UGT, who had for some reason fooled themselves into believing they would come first, continued to get the thumbs down for their collaboration with their party in government, the PSOE, and 4 seats. Having done so well at their first attempt, the CNT-U is now hoping to go on to get greater participation by workers and public alike; especially on the possible incorporation of the hospital into a new super clinic. Their long term aim is the development of what is known in Europe as 'a National Health Service'.



Members of the CNT-U's medical union in Malaga.

TWO'S COMPANY...

Rising at the crack of dawn the next day I was able to catch the independent dockers' union in assembly before the days work had begun. Unfortunately a boat was coming in that day and everyone was preoccupied with sharing out the work available according to a rota run by the union. Over an early morning fix of 'cafe con leche' in a crowded bar next door I was, however, able to get into conversation with some of the comrades about Spain's many independent trade unions.

Some of these are pretty aimless set ups, for example, an independent telephone workers union has just been set up in the city which seems to basically revolve around personal friendships and a vague reaction to the established bureaucracies. Many of them, however have their roots in the workers' mass assemblies which organised the semi-illegal struggles at the end of the Franco period and have preserved this 'assemblyist' form of organisation.

The government has responded to this diversity by framing legislation, known as LOLS, with the specific aim of destroying these smaller unions, including the CNT, in favour of the two bigger ones, CCOO (who they have to admit they're stuck with), and their own UGT. Details of this legislation (which will probably not be brought forward until the general election in '86 is out of the way), are contained in Sinews no.2, but it basically prohibits any union which does not get 10% of all votes on a national level, from representing its members, even if every single worker in a particular factory votes for them.

Time will tell what sort of resistance this legislation meets but certain unions are already caving in. For example, during my visit the independent sailors union made a decision to affiliate to the CCOO, but this could work to the CNT-U's advantage with those who disagree with this policy breaking away to get involved in the co-operation between small unions who face the possibility of exclusion.

Pausing only for a quick kip under an olive tree, I pressed on to Sevilla, capital city of Andalucia.

Back in '83 the CNT-U here acquired a big warehouse that used to be used by a joinery firm and set about converting it to provide offices for their branches in metal, transport and communication, and 'oficinas varios' (ie. mixed trades, where the number of members is above 5 but below the 25 needed to form a separate branch). These include banking and construction.

The CNT-U's presence in the city's metal industry is most significant in the largest employer in Sevilla the military aircraft makers, CASA. Of the 1,000 strong workforce, 150 are in the CNT-U and it has 15 members on the works committee, making it the largest union amongst manual workers in the company's main factory and it is now starting to get a foothold in the other ones in Sevilla, in Huelva and the offices at Madrid. As an illustration of how much the unions in Spain can vary from one industry to another or from region to region, it's the CCOO who represent the main opposition to the CNT at CASA whilst they recently made an agreement with the UGT to enable them to get a foothold in organising the company's clerical workers.

As a result of the CNT-U's presence at CASA there are far more assemblies than is usual, ie once or twice a month and every day when there is an annual agreement to be signed. The increase in militancy around these times is the reason why employers, such as CASA, want to make the agreements bi-annual, but the CNT-U is totally against this.

The main tactic of CASA is to try and soften up union members on the works committees by such things as flying them to Madrid for any negotiations and putting them up in flash hotels. The CNT-U's delegates recently made a stand by refusing to have any part in a company 'open day' in Madrid which would have included hotel accommodation for them and their families, but it would be true to say that some CNT-U members elected to the works committees have lost touch with their fellow workers and are getting caught up in bureaucratic power games. (For more info on this see the subscribers' supplement).



Symbol of CNT-U's postal union.



'WHERE THERE'S A WILL...'

The postal workers branch in Sevilla also seems to be flourishing and although they only have 30 members the CCOO, which is the biggest, has only 100. Anyway, as one bloke put it, 'It's not who's got the most members that counts, it's who the majority of the workforce will follow it there's some kind of action'. For example, the CNT-U was mainly responsible for organising the postal workers in Sevilla in response to the general strike on July 20th against reduced pensions, even though this was initiated on a national level by the CCOO. Similarly, at CASA in 1984, the CCOO called for 3 days of passive demos in Madrid but the CNT-U organised militant actions around Sevilla instead and got a lot more support. 4 flights were prevented from leaving from the city's airport by an occupation and the regional and national ministries of work were taken over.

Although the CNT-U's postal branch was originally excluded from negotiations with management by the works committee system, following the series of strikes throughout the postal industry last year (see Sinews no.4) they used this new level of militancy to insist on a place in negotiations and the other unions were too embarrassed to call in the forces of law and order to expel them.

During my visit I was able to attend the first of a series of discussions which the CNT-U was holding on the works committees. Whilst acknowledging the dangers of co-optation these committees pose, it was basically felt that to boycott them would only lead to marginalisation. The importance of getting more people involved beyond just paying their dues as well as developing the general level of awareness amongst existing militants was seen as central if the work load on those who presently do all the paperwork, etc was to be reduced, allowing them to maintain the radical dimension in their work. In other words, the the CNT-U cannot allow it's recruitment of passive members to outstrip it's development of committed militants.

NOT EXACTLY 'THE ARCHERS'.

Given the close relationship they have with the CNT-U, I didn't have any trouble getting an interview with someone from the SOC, Andalucia's independant, 'assemblyist' union for agricultural day labourers, or 'journaleros'. After a short while grappling with what is the characteristic apathy and 'willful ignorance' of the person at the information desk at the city's bus station, I managed to make my way to El Coronil, a village to the west, in which the main hobby seems to be sweeping the street outside the whitewashed houses which line every street. Really committed ones, ie women, even give their side of the road the once over.

The SOC is 'the only union in the village', and although I originally made the mistake of asking for the ayuntamiento, or town hall, which stands opposite their offices, there was a marked increase in enthusiasm from those giving me directions when they found out my real destination.

Of the villages 5,300 inhabitants 600 are unemployed with 85% of the land nearby in the hands of 'latifundi', or large, absentee land owners. Nominal membership of SOC in the village stands at 70 but their influence depends more on a general sympathy which comes out whenever actions are undertaken or an assembly celebrated. A typical strike, during the beet harvest in '83, which lasted 40 days, won the planting of 15,000 work days worth of beet and negotiations over the planting of more 'social' (ie labour intensive) crops.

The union works from a large building whose courtyard it shares with a flamenco training school, though now that the PSOE have gained control at the ayuntamiento, they want it back. I asked them is it would be difficult to find alternative accomodation and I was told it would but they assured me they were determined this would remain a hypothetical question.

Given the high level of illiteracy in Andalucia the SOC places alot of importance on cultural work through it's organisation 'Nueva Amanacer', or New Dawn. Culture is seen as critical if people are to have the confidence to actively participate in assemblies rather than just passively attending them. New Dawn puts out a photostated newspaper and runs political courses in which each participant prepares a talk on subjects such as property, working class literature, history, etc. Video tapes and cultural weeks have also been used. Some journaleros are even working on a small 'museum' where coins that they have found locally (including one they showed me made of silver from the Roman period) can be shown locally rather than being kidnapped and put in the basement of some museum in Sevilla.

'TAKE ME TO YOUR MANDATED DELEGATE'

Diego Canamero, the general secretary of the SOC, who is due for reselection at the next conference, in '86, after 2 years in the position, lives in El Coronil and I was able to spend the night at his house. It is one of 50 in the street which belongs to the government but for which they have not received rent for over 2 years. The nature of an organisation's 'leading militants' can sometimes tell you more than studying it's constitution, etc, and in this context I was impressed by Diego Canamero who had none of the 'liderismo' for which some in the SOC have been criticised.

One of 11 children who began work in the fields at 8 and now, at the age of 28, the father of 2 children, he finds no difficulty relating to the struggles and aspirations of those around him. Along with 7 other men from the village he is now serving a 6 month prison sentence (see separate article) and had already been put away 5 times before this.

Given the generosity of the comrades there, it was with mixed feelings that I set off back towards 'Old Blighty' and the latest excesses of 'Thatcherismo' ●

MOVEMENT FOR CONCIENCIOUS OBJECTORS.

The Movement for Concientious Objectors (MOC) has 5,000 members nationally who have refused to do military service. They have also rejected the government's latest alternative, social service, without the reduction in their numbers which could have followed such an increase in radicalism. The whole subject is in suspension, with no action being taken by the government until the general election of '86 is out of the way.

The 2nd regional conference of the CNT-U in Catalonia was held in November '85 with the union announcing that 300 delegates had attended, representing 45 unions and 5,000 delegates from the region.

The SOC can be contacted at:
SOC, C/Santas Patronas, 24, Sevilla.
Telephone: Sevilla 213259



LIBERTARIAN FEMINISM DEFINED.



At a reunion in Valencia of the feminist group attached to the CNT-U, Mujers Libres, ie 'Liberated Women', it was decided to work within mixed anti-military groups and to demand 'free abortion without penalty' as opposed to 'legalised abortion' which could be seen as asking for more laws in this area.

Feminism was defined as 'An attitude, posture and way of life which opposes the marginalisation, oppression and manipulation that women suffer', with the nature of their own form, libertarian feminism being defined as 'An attack on all forms of power for the liberation of all people'.

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THE PRIVATISATION OF SPAIN'S DOCKS. GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS.

The present state employer (OTP) would disappear and be replaced by a corporation of employers in each port, with a reservoir of unemployed workers, rather than the present system which means that available work is rotated.

The government would set a (reduced) figure for the workforce and renegotiate the hours of work and other agreements, with the creation of new disciplinary procedures.

The state would pay the costs of making workers redundant, etc.

ANESCO-CEOE (The Employers).

Their proposals are the same as those of the government, except that they want to get rid of 'registered dockers' so they can take on whoever they want, set the figure for the workforce themselves and replace the present union by different ones for each of the employers.

LA CO-ORDINADORA (The Dockers).

The union is trying to maintain the ports as a unified public service without any reduction in the workforce, one workers organisation present in each port and the maximum decentralisation in the way the ports are organised.

STRIKE IN THE PORT OF ALGECIRAS

Algeciras, in Andalucia, has been chosen by multi national companys such as SEA-LAND, through their Spanish subsidury NOSA, to become perhaps the most important port in Spain.

The reason for this, apart from it's position on the straits of Gibraltar, is the assistance they have received from the government to set up ultra modern container terminals and exploit the weakness of union organisation at the port to ignore all the usual kind of agreements which cover dock workers.

NOSA have been using non registered labour, overtime in excess of the legal limit and have planted spies in the unions. The director of the port is in the PSOE and has a policy of giving new jobs to party members.

It therefore came as no surprise, when the docker's 'assemblyist' union, the Co-ordinadora, called a strike on the 12th of October, that the UGT and PSOE did their best to put it in a bad light, even organising a back to work march on the 16th which tried to use slogans such as 'Barcelona for the Catalans, Algeciras for the Andalucians' against the presence of some dockers from Barcelona who came to show their solidarity. This obvious petty regionalism backfired on them and after two weeks in which the docks were kept under almost constant surveillance by those on strike, an agreement was extracted from management which improved things to some extent.

The attempt to exclude effective union organisation from Algeciras, a situation which has obvious parallels with some of the non-registered container ports in South East England, is only part of the government's strategy to privatise the docks and weaken the Co-ordinadora. For example, the law of 1980 which makes dock work a 'special job', requiring registration, etc, was revoked in October '84 and there is no doubt that there is a major confrontation on the horizon.



The UGT's back to work demo - as pictured in the local newspaper for Algeciras.