

SINEWS No. 15

SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK, c/o 39 VESTA ROAD, BROCKLEY, LONDON, SE4 2JN.

Once again the New Year break has spawned another copy of Sinews (with yet another new address - more permanent this time,) I won't make any promises about when the next issue is coming out, though there may be some more to say about the results of the elections soon, and I still live in hope that I'll find someone who speaks Swedish to translate some articles out of 'SAC Kontakt'.

Number 16 may well be a special issue dedicated to the Spanish Dockers - recent developments in their union being relevant to another project which I am trying to get off the ground, namely the Direct Democracy Network. (See end of this issue.)

**ELECTION RESULTS:**

So far (ie as of 'Rojo y Negro' for November) the CGT seems to have made a steady, but not spectacular, improvement in its position. (See Sinews no. 11, 12 & 13 for the background to the following stories.)

**SEAT:** In the elections celebrated on October 5th the CGT's delegates in all four sites went from 22 to 20 (out of a total of 148). The spectacular rise in the 'Zona Franca' factory of 1988 - from 5 to 17 - has fallen back to 11, but at the same time they now have 4 delegates in 'El Prat' (\*) where previously they had none. Essentially, they are pleased to consolidate the gains of '88 at this level, bearing in mind the equally meteoric rise and fall of the CGT's Metro branch in Barcelona a few years before.

The CC00 has continued its decline (from 62 in 1986, to 42 now) and the UGT, despite gaining 8 extra delegates to give it 70 is still short of having an overall majority. LAB (the Basque union which works closely with CGT) has almost doubled its numbers to 7, whilst ELA (the reformist Basque union) has lost its last remaining delegate.

CGT and LAB are the only unions at SEAT who are fighting to prevent the Spanish factories being reduced to mere assembly plants. They are also against the 'efficiency pact' signed by UGT and CC (technicians union) which guarantees peace for two years in return for a token wage increase. About 90 workers have still refused to individually sign this pact, even though this means they do not get the increase in pay. (See also a similar story from Michelin, Sinews no.13, p.8)

CGT recently merged with CIS (Izquierda Sindical) and CUOA, as well as having close links with CTCT - all three of which are groups who broke with the CC00 because of their reformism.

The CGT's affiliation has grown from around a hundred in '86 to one thousand, and three and a half times this number of workers voted for CGT candidates.

Five days after the elections were over SEAT announced that 800 temporary workers would not have their contracts renewed.

The twelfth pact at SEAT - signed by UGT and CC only, in May 89 - was declared illegal in June this year following on objections from CGT that it did not get the minimum 60% of committee votes required by law.

(\*) 'Prat' is the catalan word for a hollow in the ground, alright?

**MICHELIN:** 96% of the workforce voted in the latest elections at Michelin in Vitoria (capital of the Basque country) and CGT got a third of the vote taking it from 5 to 7 delegates out of a total of 20. CC00 also got 7 delegates, and UGT got 4 (both losing one delegate compared to 1986) The smaller unions (UST and CUIS) are in agreement with the CGT's rejection of the 'fifth shift system', so the 4 delegates that they got between them gives an even split between 'yes' and 'no' on the committee. In terms of actual votes, there was a slight majority against the fifth shift (1,500 vs 1,300) which is similar to the result of a previous referendum.

As of the celebrations to mark one year of preventing the implementation of the fifth shift there had been about 50 demonstrations and strikes took place each weekend.

**FORD:** A referendum, held during March at the Ford factory in Almussafes - for which UGT proposed a vote in favour of the agreement they had negotiated - was defeated by 5,500 votes to 4,000 following a joint campaign by CGT and CC00, even though UGT has 19 delegates and the other unions have only 6 and 12 respectively. The turnout was 90%

Following on from this result, CGT, CC00 and UGT all backed a series of 4 hour strikes in each of the 4 shifts to force the management to return to the negotiating table. As a result a new agreement was reached, which made 26% (ie 600) of the part-time workers full-time and gave wage rises of 2.5% and 1.5% ahead of inflation for low and high paid workers respectively. This was accepted by 2 to 1 in a referendum.

Ford held its elections early, on July 26th, but the next issue of R y N (no.21) says nothing about the results... curious.

**BANKING:** The CGT's increase in delegates from 230 in '86 to 377 now would have been more of a cause for celebration if it weren't for the fact that they had hoped to get above the 10% of delegates needed to give them negotiating rights on a national level. As it is, they have reached 6.07% which is not bad.

In March of this year, Izquierda Sindical Banco (ISB) - a group which broke away from CC00 when it signed an agreement in '88 even though this had been defeated by referendum - affiliated to the CGT's banking section, FESIBAC, after a special conference. They have around 400 members and 70 delegates, being especially strong in Banco Bilbao. (See page 3 for comment.)

In April the Banco Exterior section of CAT (an autonomous union) also affiliated to CGT.

**FASA-RENAULT:** The number of CGT delegates in all the company's sites has doubled to 22, even though they did not have any candidates in Madrid or Sevilla. Nevertheless their delegates in Palencia and the main sites in Valladolid (both about 100 miles north west of Madrid) gives them 20.1% of the delegates nationally, which even allows them to overcome a special agreement which prevents unions having national negotiating rights at FASA-RENAULT unless they get 15% of the vote.

## CGT OPPOSITION - ALIVE, BUT NOT KICKING.

The following reports were drawn from various papers and informed by a letter from Graham Kelsey, sent in May this year. Unfortunately he has now left Spain, which will be a serious blow to Sinews. (Apologies to Graham for some minor errors in reproducing his report on the 11th congress in Sinews no.14)

The radical opposition within CGT which arose following the 11th Congress in December '89 doesn't seem to have made much impact. The Andalusian region came to a separate agreement with the national committee which involved delays in implementing the new constitution in that region and the next national plenum (on February 24th, '90) calling an extraordinary congress in the first quarter of 1991 to deal exclusively with the subject of the organisation's statutes. (Graham also confirmed my impression that Malaga is more radical than the other parts of Andalucia.)

In Madrid, the branch at Banco Central have pulled out of the organisation altogether, setting up with their own local under the name 'Alternativa Libertaria' (see below). The Metro branch organised a successful strike in April despite opposition from the reformist unions... but using the initials CNT. Nevertheless they were supported by the CGT. A similar strike by the autonomous group 'Platforma Sindical' against the EMT bus company was a massive success. (See p.4) The teachers union suspended all payments to the organisation, pending a congress which it hoped to organise with the two unions mentioned above in June '90 (Presumably this didn't happen.)

**LA RAZON:** So far I have only received the first, Mayday, copy of this new magazine from the radicals who oppose the changes in CGT, but it has some interesting stuff in it. Contact: C / Ciceron 8, 28020 Madrid

**HEALTH WORKERS OF MALAGA:** At the eleventh congress small mathematical majorities were allowed to outweigh dialogue and compromise, but although we attended the meeting at San Fernando de Henares (see Sinews no.13) we do not wish to cause further splits within the organisation. We ask comrades to adopt a reasonable attitude, but even so we are unable to accept any agreement reached by a 30% vote (see ISB, below), proportional votes in the plenaries, or the use of 'commissions of conflict' to decide disagreements. We welcome the comrades from Izquierda Sindical, but have to ask why the organisation paid such a high price to get them.

**BANCO CENTRAL:** The 11th congress was a disaster for anarcho-syndicalism, especially the decision to remove the ultimate power of decision from the assemblies, in favour of the delegates on the committee. [That's a new one on me - M.P.] Rather than pretend it is still possible to work within the CGT, we will follow the examples of EMT and the Madrid Metro, by setting ourselves up as an autonomous union which is going to be known as **Alternativa Libertaria, C/ Reina 15, Madrid, Tel: 522.1186.**

**IZQUIERDA SINDICAL:** (an article by Miguel Angel Pascual of Banco Hispano Americano.) The modifications necessary to lubricate this merger were made between members of La Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR) and important members of the CGT, prior to the 11th congress - specifically permitting members of political parties to hold office in the CGT, giving political recognition to minorities of 30% or more [meaning what?], and giving union plenums decision making powers over the heads of the general assemblies.

Although these points were smoothed over at the latest plenum of the confederal committee [on February 24th, 1990.], this will only weaken the opposition movement, without really improving things.

Affiliations from IS have only occurred in SEAT, Banco Madrid and Metalworkers Barcelona and the members of CGT in Canaries, Aragon (eg Zaragoza) and Galicia have been especially disgruntled by the outcome of the congress.

## ON THE BUSES...

EMT & METRO STRIKE; two summarised articles.

From La Estiba, by Santi.

The 22 day EMT strike paralised the city of Madrid and was held in defiance of the Works Committee, which is run by the reformist unions. EMT has 7,000 workers in 6 different sites. They organised via assemblies and a strike committee, which published 6,500 copies of a daily bulletin at 5.30 each morning to explain what had happened the day before and make proposals to be discussed in that day's assemblies.

In August 1988 a few comrades formed 'Platforma Sindical' (PS). When the negotiations between UGT/CCOO and the 'ajuntamiento' (city council) gave the workers at EMT a rise of only 3.5%, the PS formed a strike committee of 7 members and demanded a better wage rise, improved pensions, a 38 hour week and the readmission of two comrades sacked in 1989. On March 16th a general assembly launched the strike, and from then on all types of workers attended, including a delegation of pensioners. The assembly elected people to carry their decisions to the negotiating table. Threatened with sackings, the bulletin replied that this would result in only five buses running in Madrid,, those driven by the Mayor, the leader of the PSOE's transport section, etc. On the fifth day of the strike a massive demonstration was held which included the families of the workers as well. Informative meetings were also held in various neighbourhoods.

The reformist unions negotiated a new agreement on the second day of the strike, but when they called a mass assembly on the 27th of March to explain their attitude there was such a strength of feeling against them that they ended up having to recognise the Strike Committee. Eventually a much improved offer (with certain drawbacks, such as a 2 year duration) was accepted by the assembly and the strike ended in a victory which has had repercussions all over Spain.

From Black Flag (Nov '90?)

After 5 years of falling living standards the Metro workers put in a claim for a 25% pay rise and two rest days a week instead of one. The UGT and CCOO said they were bound by an agreement they had signed without any consultation, so the Metro drivers approached the CGT to help promote mass assemblies of all workers. After a total strike of 1½ days, which ignored the legal requirement for 'minimum' services, the drivers' commission recognised that the rest of the workers were not content with the original demands so, when the CGT refused to negotiate for them as a separate body, they went ahead on their own and accepted a management offer. Faced with the drivers' return to work and a 12% offer negotiated by UGT/CCOO the assembly reluctantly called off the strike.

'Platforma Sindical', a Trotskyist united front, called the <sup>EMT</sup> strike, with the same demands as the Metro workers. Control was vested in the daily mass assemblies, with PS ~~forming~~ members forming the strike committee and no role for the Works Committee.

The strike was solid and well supported, but after about 2 weeks there was some demoralisation when CCOO and UGT managed to call a general assembly (via newspaper adverts), the workers overestimated the effects of a solidarity strike on the Metro (?) and management began to threaten workers with dismissal. Eventually PS asked the Works Committee to take over negotiations and this led to an offer which involved a slight reduction in the working week and a 25% increase, but over 2 years. This was reluctantly accepted.

Obviously PS saw the strike as a stepping stone towards their 'natural' goal as the workers' leaders on the Works Committee. CNT rejected the offer of a place on the original strike committee because it was not elected by the general assembly. In the Metro strike the small CNT branch declined to oppose the CGT's use of their name so as not to cause confusion.

## SOME STUFF ON SWEDEN.

**24th CONGRESS;** Held from the 9th to the 16th of June this congress comited the SAC to work towards revitalising international links between anarcho-syndicalists, following on from the work they have been doing in eastern Europe. Annika Hjelm was re-elected as international secretary. The congress was attended by members of 35 organisations, including D.A.M. and Black Flag (as individuals), as well as the CGT's international secretary, Jose Olaizola.

**SAC NEWSLETTER;** So far I've only received the first and third issue of this very welcome wee newsletter, which came out in March, but promised to be quarterly,, with a larger 'bulletin' in prospect as well.

The main story in the first issue concerns a strike in Sweden on February 15th to defend the right to strike. Over 1000 syndicalist took part, in defiance of the "anti-crisis package" signed by the social-democratic government and LO (reformist union) would remove the right to strike and freeze wages.

The no-strike clause was removed before the legislation got to parliament, but even so it was voted down by the conservatives. Returning to power the social-democrats replaced their original ideas with a national mediator who has, as yet, no formal powers of decision, but is instructed to oversee all negotiations.

Since 1980 municipal workers have effectively lost one months wages per year, and industrial workers in Sweden are receiving wages lower than those in competing countries. SAC blames the high profits taken by Swedish companies for the accelerating rate of inflation.

The third issue takes up the same theme of workers paying for Capital's crisis with details of the new package put before the Swedish parliament - mainly involving cuts in benefits, raising interest rates and shrinking the public sector. The 'Rehnberg-commission' has been appointed to minimize salary increases during '91.

A preview of a report to be presented in January also shows the government intends to legislate against long conflicts, with increased damages that will be payable by union leaders.

As well as various small scale ideological victories, against working on military ships or delivering junk mail, SAC workers at the PRIPPS brewery refused to work on dangerous machinery and now risk dismissal.

**MUJER TRABAJADORA;** this magazine will be published from October. Secretaria de Accion Social CGT, C/Sagunto 15, 28010 Madrid.

**"WE NEED MORE DEBATE,"** As an expression of this sentiment, certain members of the CGT in Catalunya have begun to organise monthly meetings for open discussion at the old AISS building in Barcelona. The first was on June 28th, but I've been unable to get any further information since then.

**DIRECT DEMOCRACY NETWORK;** This will be an international project which aims to produce some practical analysis of direct democracy (its strengths and weaknesses) with a special interest in mass organisations which use rotation of delegates (eg. the Spanish dockers' co-ordinadora, or the CGT-CNT branch at Michelin in the Basque Country.)

We would like to hear from anyone with practical experience, or who is interested in giving their criticisms of draft texts, doing translations (we hope to work in Spanish and English), or in any way getting involved.

Various already existing texts on the subject will be sent to anyone who is interested.

Please reproduce this announcement in any publication which seems suitable. Correspondence can be in Spanish or English.

Contact: Mick Parkin, 39 Vesta Road, Brockley, London, SE4 2NJ.