

SINEWS NO. 6

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**SINEWS FROM SPAIN:**

The more observant amongst you will have already noticed that Sinews is now coming to you from Spain, or to be more accurate, the Basque country (Euskadi). This explains it's reduced format as I no longer have access to a printer willing to work for nothing, but as a compensation it will be more frequent. It is now only sent to subscribers.

The new address doesn't mean that Sinews is now a part of the CNT-U (though I am now a member of that illustrious union) - it's simply that this way I don't have to pay out for a P.O. Box, but if the first word on the letter isn't 'CNT' the porter won't know what to do with it. The address in Durham is still operating for mail only or cheques payable to S/I/N. Any fears for my continuing (relative) impartiality will soon disappear as you read on. For one thing nobody at C/Bailen speaks English and they don't get to see what I am writing in the first place, so there's no question of pressure from them to toe the line.

**THE SITUATION IN EUSKADI:**

One reason I chose to live in Euskadi is that the CNT-U in Vitoria (the region's capital) has more or less got it right in terms of using the Works Committees to remain in touch with ordinary workers, but still keeping a militant outlook and critical attitude towards this tactic (see Supplement no.4). They would ideally like to see a full reunion of the two CNT which dumped the reformists on one side and the anarcho-jesuits on the other. For example, one comrade told me he has more in common with the CNT-AIT in Gijon than the CNT-U there. They produce a very good little paper 'Oveja Negra' (Black Sheep) and are at:

C/Manuel Iradier, 72, 1, izq, 01080 Vitoria.

The Assoc. Isacc Puente keeps an archive in Vitoria which would like regular copies of any publications relating to anarchism. The AIP tries to keep above the differences in the two CNT, although most are member of the CNT-U's education union. Publications can be sent to the following address:

Assoc Isacc Puente, Apto 1687, 01080 Vitoria.

The CNT-AIT in Vitoria is tiny (though it does have an upstairs office on the same street as the bus station). Most CNT-U militants are ex-CNT-AIT, rather than coming from other unions after the re-unification congress.

In Bilbao the CNT-AIT is a bit bigger than the CNT-U, and even has a second office in the industrial sprawl town of Dos Caminos. There is also a purely anarchist group 'Arkadia' associated with the CNT-AIT, but they're nothing to write home about. They and the CNT-AIT can both be contacted at the following address:

CNT-AIT, C/Santa Maria, 9, Bilbao.

In Santander, which is actually outside Euskadi, there are about 12 CNT-U activists, with some ordinary members, but they don't have an office yet. The original one remains with the CNT-AIT, who are apparently a lot older. Both CNT have embryonic groups in Pamplona, San Sebastian, etc.

Euskadi is an area of heavy industry which has lost a lot of jobs in the socialist (?) reconversion. As a result, strikes and demos (regularly involving buses being hi-jacked and used to block roads, etc) are everyday events which most people (including the bus drivers) accept with a shrug of the shoulders. The riot police are sometimes an exception to this generalisation...

## VICTORY AT CONTENEMAR:

I have been assured that the dockers are about to win their struggle against Contenemar, the only company which has tried to apply the new regulations of the privatisation decree, such as using non-registered dockers. However Bilbao is one of the few weak ports for the Co-ordinadora (which once again got 85% of all seats nationally in the recent elections to works committees) so it is taking me a while to get the details.

Until then, I can reveal that 12 office workers of Contenemar in Bilbao who refused to work with scab dockers on sub-contracts, and were therefore sacked on the 3rd of November, have won back 9 of their jobs after a 4 month occupation of the offices (for which time all 12 will receive their full wages). They also conducted an imaginative campaign of direct action, one example of which was simply following the directors around their favourite bars and taking photos of them when they got upset.

A notable feature of the struggle was the involvement of women (both as employees and as wives). Where any other small group of workers might have caved in when confronted by a company which employs more than 3,000 people nationwide (including dockers in other ports, though not in Bilbao), these 12 took the bull by the horns and from the first day of the strike fought back with courage and imagination.

Despite the willingness of the CCOO in Vigo to organise scabs to handle cargo which was diverted there from Bilbao by rail, the 12 finally won, if not a total victory, at least a very impressive one.

## ELECTION RESULTS:

Number of seats won: Catalonia - 381, Madrid - 271, Valencia - 139, Andalucia - 103, Euskadi - 73, Aragon - 33, Asturias - 8, Others - 96.

Total: 1,114 (Out of 132,000 nationally)

In these elections to the works committees, held between October and December 1986, the CNT-U only won about 1% of the seats, with the UGT and CCOO more or less splitting the rest in half, except for some won by regional, autonomous or 'independent' (ie. boss's) unions.

It is on the basis of these results that the acquired patrimony will be split up later this year. The acquired patrimony is the dues paid to the fascist 'trade union' (FNS) set up by Franco, and quite different from the historic patrimony. The CNT has been allocated about 254 million pts as compensation for the latter, ie for their buildings etc stolen by Franco at the end of the Civil War. This is a lot less than the it has claimed and also will not be paid until a decision is made as to which of the two is the real CNT.

The UGT got a very handy 4,260 million pts (about £21.3 million) just before the election campaign began which helped it's propaganda to swamp what the CNT-U could put out on it's 50,000 pts. Some of the UGT's money was spent on a bonus scheme for it's full time organisers which meant they got more money the more votes were cast for UGT in their factories!

CNT-U had little success in terms of reaching the magic 10% set by LOLS (the so-called Law of Trade Union Freedoms) - an achievement which would have given them certain negotiating rights. Although they did get 10% in many individual workplaces, and as such are recognised there as 'representative' unions, they did not get 10% of the votes for any industry at a regional level

This would have given them negotiating rights in terms of industry wide conventions, which are about the only thing (on a day to day level) that are of interest to workers in small 'family' firms. Added together, these small firms still make up the majority of Spain's workers and it was in such places that fraud by the reformists unions was most rampant. The nearest CNT-U got to 10% on a national basis was in banking where they ended up with 7% of all seats.

This result is not useless for the CNT-U as, even without reaching 10%, they can still use the one or two members they have on committees to get information for the mass assemblies and use the free time they get as committee members (horas sindical) to have part-time organisers helping to promote the union and do the donkey work. As long as they stay part-time I think they can be useful without undermining ordinary workers' involvement.

Finally: Spain has 13 million active workers of which 3 million are not in work. Of the remaining 10 million, only 4.5 million are eligible to vote (the others being in firms which have less than 6 workers and are therefore too small to have a committee, etc) and in the end 3 million (23%) actually did make their mark in these elections.

**COMMENTS:** The CNT-U's success in Banking possibly arose because there had been a genuine reunion of the two organisations from the bottom up (as opposed to a hand shake between leading militants.) One result of this was that the CNT-AIT had to close it's banking branch in Madrid as it had less than the 5 members needed to form a separate section within the finance union. Members of the CNT-U's banking branch that I spoke to in Madrid stressed that they saw the elections as only a first step and now needed to develop and educate the new members who had been drawn to them during the campaign.

Now that the elections are out of the way for another 4 years the CNT-U can perhaps turn it's attention to more important matters and will hopefully feel free to develop some self-criticism at its forthcoming 10th congress.

**S.O.C.:** On the 27th of August '86, twenty town halls in Andalucia were occupied to prevent the union's general secretary, Diago Canamero, going to jail for taking part in a peaceful land occupation. On this occasion they succeeded but there are still some 600 similar cases outstanding.

**NEW ADDRESS FOR THE CNT-U IN MADRID:** CNT C/Sagunto, 15, 28010 Madrid. Tel: 447-0572/5769. This is the address for the international secretary. I was told towards the end of March that they are on the verge of sending out their history of the last 5 years, as mentioned in a previous subscriber's supplement.

**SPAIN STILL A POLICE STATE - OFFICIAL:** "It is not political power which must direct the police, but they who have the right to observe and control the political powers, their organisations and the country's citizens." - Rafael del Rio, PSOE director of police, July '86, quoted in Oveja Negra.

**PRAGMATISM:** I recently saw this defined as 'concern with short term practical results', but surely this is a better definition of opportunism...

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