

SINEWS NO. 8

37, SOUTH TERRACE, ESH WINNING, CO DURHAM, ENG., DH7 9PS. NOVEMBER 1987

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As a further contribution to revitalising the anarchist tradition of self-criticism there now follows a shortened translation of an article from 'Oveja Negra'- Black Sheep, April 87.

What's the idea of this expression 'autonomous unionism' (sindicalismo autonomo) which is being used as a substitute for anarcho-syndicalist, and I mean a substitute, not a synonym. When CNT decided it needed a new image the term 'autonomous unionism' was invented to express the fact that we are not a conveyor belt for any political party, but beneath this banner we seem to be marching towards a bland, reformist electioneering in direct contradiction to what was decided at our last congress (*)

What do we mean by 'autonomous'? The CEOE (Spain's CBI) is autonomous, the word just means that an organisation decides its own norms. So what are our norms? My impression is that in following the idea of 'possibilismo' we've just ended up tagging along behind the CCOO and becoming more alienated from the CNT-AIT. If that's what autonomous unionism means, we don't want it!

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The row centres on the government's budget proposals for '88 which would limit increases in pensions and civil service salaries to 4% (despite an official inflation rate of 5.5%) and thus set a norm for industrial settlements as well.

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On top of all this the leader of what left wing the PSOE still has (an organisation called Izquierda Socialista, Socialist Left) resigned the day before as a result of a row centering around his accusations that many PSOE leaders had made a fortune out of crooked business deals whilst in office. According to the Guardian, the PSOE's leader, Felipe Gonzales, is becoming increasingly isolated from reality and intolerant of criticism. The paper even suggests that he has a paranoid fear of suffering the same fate as Jim Callaghan (remember him?) whose government fell after he lost control of the unions. Is this fear justified? In the absence of a trained psychiatrist my opinion is that the UGT's revolt will stop short of anything really serious, but only time will tell...

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According to an interview with Pepe Gomez in issue no.2 of The Syndicalist Bulletin (*) the CNT-AIT in Cadiz, which has been spearheading a bitter confrontation with the government over shipyard redundancies, has good relations with members of the CNT-U in that city. He goes on to suggest that the CNT-AIT's national committee should be moved from Barcelona to Bilbao so as to minimise the personality clashes that he sees as a major factor in aggravating the split between the two organisations. Bilbao seems to be the CNT-AIT's third biggest centre nationally, for example they have an office in the industrial suburb of Dos Caminos as well as in the city centre.

ACROSS THE PYRENEES: In the same issue of the S.B. it is revealed that the CNT-AIT's equivalent in France (also known as the CNT-AIT) voted at its 21st congress in May to allow public sector unions to stand for elections in the work place as its private sector ones have since its 20th congress. Will this flexibility spread south?

(*) Copies of the S.B. are available from: Syndicalist Bulletin, P.O. Box 102, Hull. £1.50 for six issues.

After this mailing your sub stands at...

' VITORIA SIX' COME UP FOR TRIAL

Six members of the CNT trade union in Vitoria, capital city of the Basque country, have finally received the dates for their trial, 4 years after they were arrested. The trials will be on:

OCTOBER 28th and DECEMBER 1st, at THE AUDIENCIA NACIONAL,
C/ GARCIA GUTIERREZ, MADRID, AT 10.30 am

The six accused are: GUILLERO GUERRERO, SANTIAGO ABAD, VICENTE ALVARADO,
JOSE COLLADO, GUILLERMO ARGOS and ANDRES SANCHEZ

The first four worked at Michelin until their arrest and the last two were at Explosivos Rio Tinto and Canon, respectively. All six are outstanding militants of the CNT in Vitoria.

At the first trial the prosecution is asking for sentences totaling 50 years on charges of arson, hold-ups and menacing scabs at the factory. At the second the charge is attempted assassination of Snr Casanova Salazar, Chief of personel at Michelin and the sentences could total 105 years in jail.

The only evidence against them is confessions signed by the six when they were held *incommunicado* for from 7 to 9 days under Spain's draconian 'anti-terrorist' laws. Under this law, which was strengthened by the 'socialist' PSOE government, around 150 people a month are arrested in the Basque Country, though only about 10% of these are ever brought to trial. During their detention the six were subjected to torture such as thumping and kicking, or having bags full of asphyxiating spray put over their heads, as well as threats to their families. They confirmed their confessions when taken to Madrid as they were still disorientated and under threat, but all six immediately renounced them on their release and have continue to do so despite attempts to intimidate them further, eg one of them was attacked in the street by 3 police agents acting incognito. Attempting to prove these tortures is virtually impossible because of the 'profesional' way in which they were inflicted and the use of anti-inflammatory creams.

The charges go back to events which took place in 1979/80 when Michelin refused to negotiate a collective agreement with the unions at its four spanish factories and began trying to impose new working practices and speed-ups. This led to a series of strikes and violent confrontations with scabs, organised in a 'non affiliated union' and there were casualties on both sides. Eventually an agreement was signed which was favourable to the workforce. Before this, in Febuary '79, a director of Michelin was kidnapped by ETA, but released when the Works Committee at Vitoria (on which the CNT was the major union) publically asked them to do so. On the 16th of May Snr Salazar was attacked and seriously wounded. This is the main crime which the 6 have been accused of, in league with Jose Merino, who is already serving a sentence for assassination.

It is significant that the six were arrested in '84 when the CNT was experiencing a renewed growth in Alava, the region around Vitoria, and have finally been brought to trial at the time of the CNT's tenth congress thus dashing plans to transfer the unions national committee to Vitoria. 75% of the original charges have been dropped (including one of holding up a savings bank which it turned out had never actually been held up) and the six have been put at provisional liberty which is unknown for charges of this seriousness. Above all the fact that nothing incriminating was ever found in searches of the accused houses and that the prosecution has to rely completely on confessions, strongly suggests that this is a case of framing trade unionists in an attempt to destroy effective, militant and genuinely democratic organisation by the workers at the region's largest factory.

28.10.87: Sentances of 2 months each, except Alvarado who got 4 years for bank robbery.

SEND MONEY FOR SUPPORT OF FAMILIES (payable to S.I.N.) to SPANISH INFORMATION NETWORK,
37, SOUTH TERRACE, ESH WINNING, CO. DURHAM, ENGLAND, DH7 9PS.

(Published by S.I.N. as supplement to newsletter no.8, Nov. 87. Subscription: £1)

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MICK