

SUBSCRIBE.

A subscription to Sinews helps to keep our finances out of the red. Money can be sent as second class stamps, notes of foreign currency, or made payable to Spanish Information Network.

(Account number 7036256150, Co-op Bank, Durham, Code number 08-90-70.)

Britain and Ireland: 1 copy - 50p

Abroad: 1 sample copy - 40p. Usual price-70p. 4 copies - £2.00. 8 copies - £3.60.

Europe: Air Mail. Outside: Surface Mail.

AIR MAIL OUTSIDE EUROPE.

Sample copy, 90p. Usual price, £1.30.

Anyone whose subscription is in credit will receive the subscriber's supplement which comes out occasionally giving background information. If your sub is about to run out you'll get notification.

Published by: Spanish Information Network,
37, South Terrace,
Esh Winning,
County Durham,
England.
DH7 9PS.

Printed by: Tyneside Free Press.

WITHOUT WORDS.

Sin palabras...



DOCKERS' STRIKES AGAINST PRIVATISATION.

The three national one day strikes against privatisation, on April 16th and May the 3rd and 23rd, were carried out successfully. On the 23rd in Barcelona, the strike was so complete that even the 'servicio minimo' of unloading goods that would be likely to rot if left on ship was not carried out.

More details in the article on page number 3.

MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS.

By way of an exception that proves the rule, the UGT has fallen out with the government over it's plans to down grade state pensions. For this reason Phillippe Gonzales, the President, was not present at their rally.

The other bit of information which has come in before going to print is that the CNT-U suggested holding a joint celebration with the CCOO, but this was rejected. Background information on this slightly strange idea will hopefully be in the next supplement.



Cranes stand idle during on of the national docks strikes against privatisation.

① SINEWS CNT

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CNT-U, AN ANARCHIST/SYNDICALIST TRADE UNION IN SPAIN.

No4 (85~6)

40p

MURAL AGAINST THE MILITARY.



'LA MILI NO MOLA' - THE MILITARY'S NOT FOR ME.

Wall Mural in Sant Andreu, Barcelona, advertising a demonstration against the military on March the 15th. 'Everything for the Fatherland?'

ALSO INSIDE...
A JOURNEY ACROSS SPAIN.
DOCKERS SHOW THE WAY.
WOMEN IN THE CNT.
POSTAL STRIKE.
GLOBALISM.
BASQUES.
NATO.

2 BACKGROUND

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

UGT: The socialist party's trade union, lackey of the socialist government.

CCOO: The communist parties trade union.

PSOE: The 'socialist' party, in government since 1982.

CEOE: Spanish equivalent of the CBI.

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 is 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 reunification in 1984, is known as the CNT-U. Both groups have the same aims and are distributed throughout Spain at roughly the same strength, about 10,000 each. Where they differ is in the way they hope 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 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 them as they believe a boycott will lead to the CNT's marginalisation. Once on the committees though they aim to use the information and influence this gives them to destroy them from within and set up assemblies to replace them.

In some ways this difference is not very significant, in fact I'd say the dogmatic way in which certain members of the CNT-AIT tried to prevent an open discussion of the tactic of boycott was a more significant cause of the split.

*See letters in subscriber's supplement.

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, culminating in a general strike, rather than a political party.

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 organisation is therefore dedicated to fighting for the usual demands which effect our immediate 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 the representative elected for a fixed period, the CNT uses delegates with a specific mandate from the assembly who are subject to recall.

DEATH OF AN OBSERVER.

When I first began producing Sinews, in the Spring of 1984, my aim was to provide a forum for an open minded discussion of developments in both CNT and information about what is still the best example of a mass working class organisation guided by anarchist principles. Unfortunately the criticisms I had of the CNT-AIT were too much for some members of the British section of the AIT, known as the DAM, and they chose to expel me from that organisation in February of '85, rather than debate the subject. The main effect of this has been to make the CNT-AIT break off contact with me. As a result of all this, though as Editor I am still willing to print or distribute information put out by the CNT-AIT if it gets sent to me, Sinews will from now on probably take an attitude which is critically supportive of the CNT-U and more or less ignore the CNT-AIT.

Mick Larkin. (All unsigned articles are written by me.)

DOCKERS SHOW THE WAY.

UGT? NEVER HEARD OF THEM.

It is a little known fact...that nearly all Spain's dock workers are organised along anarchist/syndicalist lines. Their organisation, The Co-ordinadora, makes up over 80% of dock workers in the country, with northern Spain being the only area where the bigger unions, such as the UGT, get a look in.

CNT? DON'T RING US...

Although there are good relations with the CNT (about 100 dockers in Barcelona are CNT members as well, 95% of these being in the CNT-U, posters from the CNT get displayed, etc.) the Co-ordinadora has not joined the CNT, mainly because of the internal dissension there has been over the last few years. It would also be true to say that they've done a better job of applying anarcho-syndicalism in practice, so they are waiting for one or other of the CNT to prove itself. To quote one docker, who is also a member of the CNT-U in Barcelona: 'We have got excellent relations with the Co-ordinadora and those of us in the docks aren't in any rush for them to join the CNT. At the moment they are providing a good example of how things should be done.'

B.M.BLOB? COULD BE ANYONE.

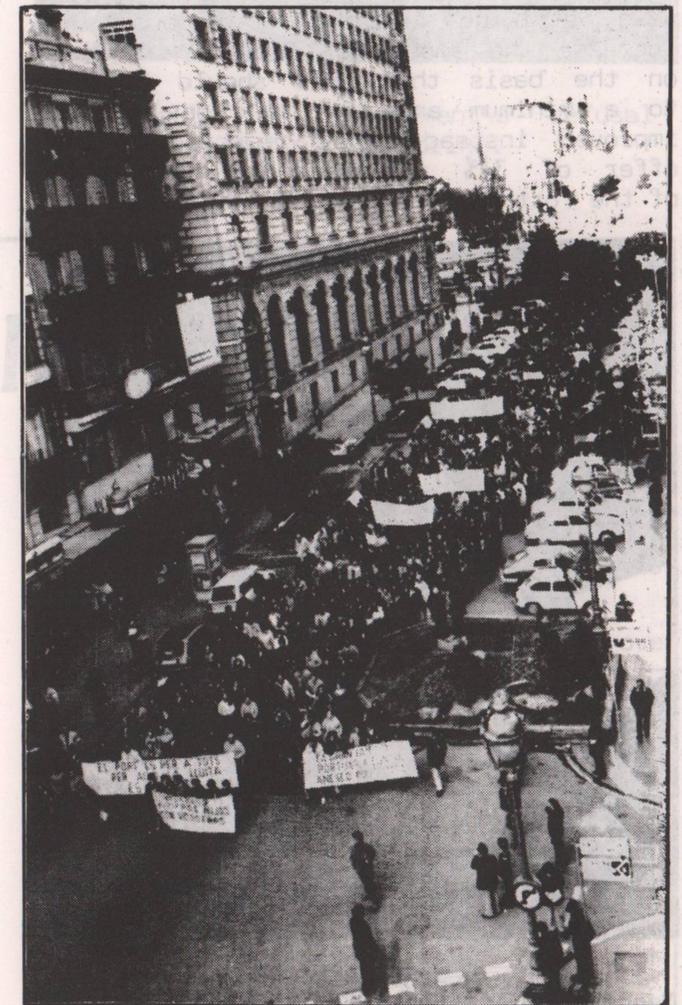
An excellent publication containing masses of information on the Co-ordinadora (including details of how they managed to actually win an important strike in 1982) has recently been published by 'certain individuals' who prefer to remain enigmatic and is available from: B.M.BLOB. London WC1N 3XX for £1 plus postage. The following resume of how the dockers have organised themselves is from their statutes as translated in this publication, 'International Dockers' Struggles of the Eighties'.

ASSEMBLY WAS NEVER LIKE THAT AT OUR SCHOOL.

The OEPB (Organisation of Barcelona Dockworkers) is made up solely of dockers, all of which have the right to represent their comrades and must do a certain amount of work for the organisation each month.* It is controlled by the General Assembly of dockers and pensioners which holds regular meeting every two months, with delegates being elected at the first general meeting of the new year. Extraordinary general assemblies can be called if a delegate or 10% of the membership requires one, or to deal with a subject which can not be delegated by the assembly, eg. expulsion, changing statutes, revoking delegates, etc.

There are eight delegate committees, ranging from culture to economic or safety at work and consisting of 25 delegates in total, whose purpose is to implement decisions reached at the assemblies. The delegates also introduce motions to the Assembly or make known their opposition to any motions, present the management's recommendations, co-ordinate activities, etc. All delegates are subject to instant dismissal by the assembly and the delegate assembly (which is made up of the members of these eight committees and occur every fortnight), are open to all members as observers. Likewise, the meetings of the individual committees, which are once a week.

Each member pays a weekly due and the OEPB can only be dissolved by an absolute majority of its members in an assembly, in which case all assets will be given to the pensioners' organisation for safe keeping.



Barcelona: 13.4.85. One of three national one day stoppages against privatisation of Spain's docks.

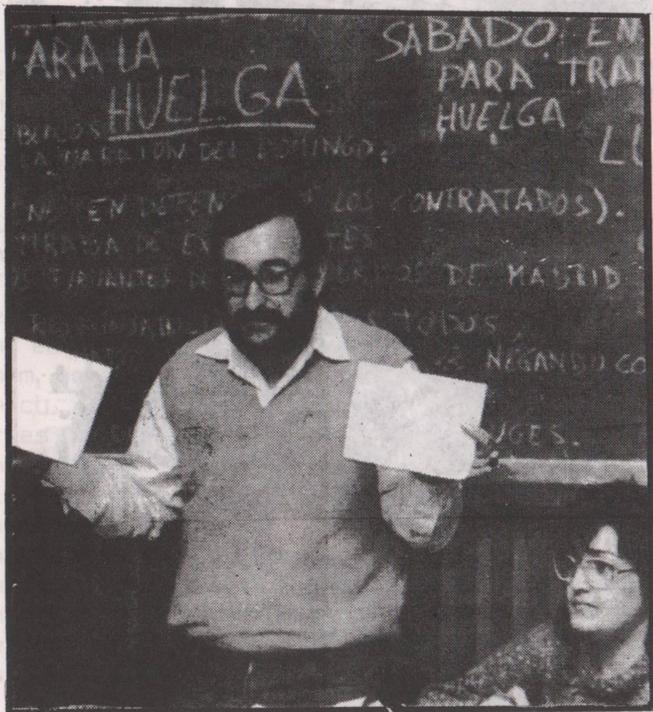
*I doubt if this occurs in practice.

'POST SCARCITY ANARCHISM'

WORKERS ON TRIAL... FOR 5 YEARS.

A recent strike of postal workers in the Barcelona area was one of the biggest in the public sector for several years. The CNT-U played a prominent role from the start, along with the CCOO, and the strike was controlled by daily assemblies of the workforce throughout, with an average attendance of 800 to 1000. The UGT was, as usual, conspicuous by its absence.

The strike, which was supported by about 80% of the 5,700 strong workforce, began on Febuary 28th and revolved around conditions of service. 35% of those who work in the postal service are on temporary contracts of as little as 1 month, even though some of them have been working there for up to 5 years. These workers receive only 56% of the wage given to permanant staff, which is itself only 62,000 pts, £310, per month. They were also striking against a proposal to increase the amount of Saturday working, on the basis that this should be kept to a minimum and the week day service improved instead. They rejected a pay offer of 3½% and demanded information of the forthcoming 'communications law'.



Members of the CNT-U, at one of the daily assemblies which organised the strike, holding up the management's notification that they considered the strike illegal.

POSTAL WORKERS - VITAL, BUT NOT VALUED.

The CCOO's proposal of only striking on Mondays was rejected by the first assembly in favour of an all out strike, but unfortunately it was not possible to spread this to other parts of Spain.

The bosses refused to negotiate at any stage, threatened to bring in the military on the grounds that the post is a 'vital' service and eventually declared the strike illegal. Spanish law also allows the bosses to set a level of 'servicios minimos' then direct a certain number of those on strike to turn up for work, on the same grounds of the service being vital.

Although there have been examples of mass refusals to comply with this, such an action requires a high level of solidarity as it can lead to the sack. On this occasion the assembly called for those doing this work to go slow.

HIT 'EM WHERE IT HURTS... NOT YET THANKS.

Following a national agreement signed by the postal workers' brances of the UGT and CCOO with the bosses in Madrid on March 8th, the latter claimed this made the strike illegal, though the CCOO denied this, and even more workers joined the strike in defiance of the threat of sackings.

On the 14th, police tried to prevent the workers meeting in assembly and on the morning of the 15th, 26 vans belonging to the Post Office were smashed up by 4 workers after they had tied up the person guarding them in a private garage. There had also been several cases of vans out delivering mail being attacked in the street previous to this.

800 workers, meeting in assembly after this attack, denounced it as unhelpful to their cause and the CNT-U said it was the work of 'uncontrollables'. This comment should be seen in the context of the state's continued attempts to label the CNT as terrorists, rather than trade unionists, for example in the Scala frame up, a few years back.

Following a management threat that those who didn't turn up for work on the 19th of March would be sacked, an assembly on the same day decided to 'momentarily suspend' the strike and return to work.

continued over

A VICTORY FOR MILITANCY, AND THE CNT-U.

Obviously this is hardly a successful outcome to the strike, though it is rare for unions to win long strikes in Spain, especially against government employers, as few of them can afford to give strike pay. The level of militancy is however now much higher amongst postal workers and they are intending to call another strike on a national level this time.

As regards the 100 or so members of the CNT-U who work on the post,* the strike was an enormous boost to their prestige, as they were seen to be willing to stand up to the bosses and their idea of control of the strike by an assembly of all workers was taken up from the word 'go'.

As it is generally accepted that the best way for a trade union in Spain to gain credibility is to be involved in an important strike, this one may have come at just the right time for the CNT-U in Barcelona which, having sorted out its internal dynamics at the congress in '84, wants to make an impression before the national elections to works committees in 1986.

* The CNT-AIT does not organise amongst postal workers in Barcelona.

MILITARY MEANS MURDER.

LA MILI NO MOLI. (MILITARY'S NOT FOR ME).

Spain's military minds (?) have yet to catch on to the possibilities of a professional army in terms of riot control, so Spain's youths are still expected to do a year's military service at the age of 19, after which they are subject to recall for 35 years. Their active service is designed more to educate them in the macho 'virtues' of agression and obedience, than to improve Spain's army. Given this kind of atmosphere it's not suprising there are many suicides and 'accidents', etc.

Under Franco those who refused could face up to 6 years in jail, though this law had more or less been suspended since his death. On 27th of December '84 it was decide that those who wish to be excused on the grounds of conciencious objection will now have to prove their eligability before a tribunal which will collect evidence from neighbours and work-mates, etc on the person's attitudes.



The result of management's refusal to negotiate during the strike.

This new regulation, which is being put into practice as we go to print, has not gone unopposed. For example, a demo in Barcelona on March 15th, in which the CNT-U took part, condemned this form of 'legalised kidnap'.

continued over



MILITARY SERVICE - LEGALISED KIDNAP.

NO TO NATO.

PROPOSALS ON NATO FROM THE CNT-U IN ARAGON.

(A summary of the document sent to the national plenum held on March 7th, 1985.)

Certain questions come to mind when considering the desirability of lending our weight to a campaign to get Spain out of NATO through the referendum that has been promised by the government.

Could we win? - Obviously the state and the military have better access to the means of communication than we do but on the other hand there is a strong sentiment in Spain against NATO, even extending to the left wing of the PSOE. Our work in this field, as part of a broad based, non parliamentary movement, has had the effect of turning public opinion around and demonstrating to people how out of touch with their aspirations the political parties are. We believe the referendum could be won and would quote the example of Uruguay in terms of what can be done if there is a strong popular feeling on a particular theme.

What are the alternative tactics? - As we have now reached the stage where a referendum on NATO has been accepted as desirable by a large section of the people it would only serve to throw our forces into confusion if we decided to abstain now without a viable alternative which is acceptable to the majority of those against NATO. Armed struggle and sabotage are not impossible, but we doubt if a significant number of people are ready at this point to take an active part in such a campaign. The general strike could however be very useful in putting pressure on the government to keep the referendum question simple and direct, if this becomes necessary, and as a way of pressurising them into implementing a vote to leave NATO.

Although the CNT's usual policy is that of boycotting elections, given our preference for more direct forms of democracy, we have already deviated from this in standing for elections to the works committees and we feel our attitudes should, in any case, be open to self criticism and development. So, for the reasons already stated, we support the CNT's limited involvement in this particular form of democracy.

THE MILITARY - A DEADLY INFLUENCE.

The military exerts its influence of all aspects of society.

In terms of politics, we have only to look at the succession of coups and military dictatorships in Spanish history, which have continued up to the present day, to see their blatant opposition to any kind of progressive development. The law of mobilisation also allows for all 'essential' services to be militarised in a strike, as has happened in the postal service or on the railways.

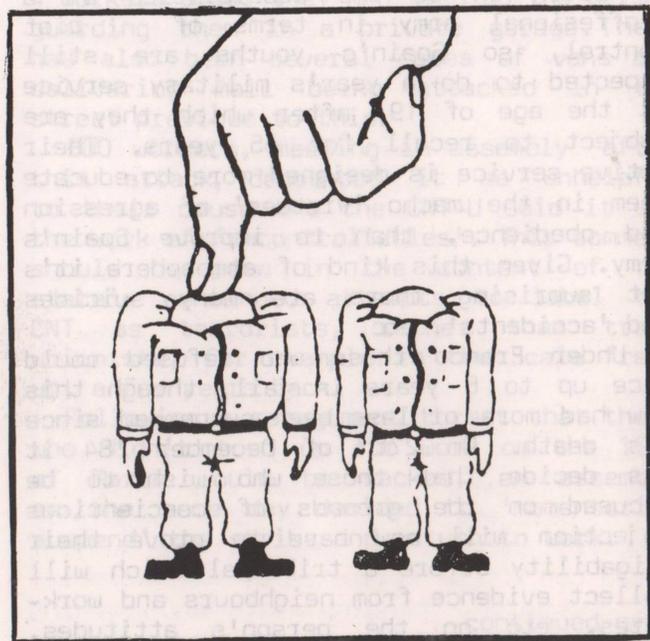
In terms of culture the effect of a year's military service is obvious.

In economic terms, the military is one of the most powerful and well funded sectors which plays an important part in controlling countries allied to the super powers. Military spending is an enormous burden on the third world and this can lead to more wars because of it's destabilising effects.

Already 60% of all scientists and 40 million workers are employed on military projects and a million dollars a minute is spent on armaments world wide.

If we want a world of solidarity, based on the autonomy and independence of all peoples, the military is the exact opposite of this.

From a leaflet produced by CNT-U (Aragon).



THE RIGHT TO ABORTION - WE DECIDE.

(Summary of a pamphlet from Mujeres Libres, putting the question of abortion in the general context of workers' exploitation.)

WHAT IS A FETUS.

Up to eight weeks old a fetus is really just a group of cells which are starting to divide themselves up. These reactions have more in common with plant processes than animal ones and there is no recordable brain activity. If the latter is taken as a sign of clinical death in an adult, can we not apply the same criterion to conception?

For us a human being is more than just a body, it is a person who thinks, feels, and has a social life. These are the things which differentiate man (sic) from the animals and make him an intelligent social being. A person is not a fetus. A person, such as the mother, has feelings and reason, she must weigh up her situation and decide to bring a child into the world, care for and educate it.

OTHER KINDS OF ABORTION.

As feminists we are in favour of abortion and life, for this reason we object to the many cases of involuntary abortion which occur in our society. For example, in the textile industry 20% of women abort due to the kind of work they do in hot and humid atmospheres. Also, industrial poisoning leads to an alarming rate of impotence in men. In recent years 21,000 people have been affected by colza acid (including 350 deaths) of which 70% are women because the poison has a hormonal effect. It tends to aggravate problems during pregnancy and affect menstrual cycles. In hospitals the inhalation of anaesthetics can cause terminations and fumes associated with the chemical or metal industry in general have the same effect, as well as causing sterility.

WHERE ARE THE 'DEFENDERS OF LIFE' NOW?

How is it that those who oppose abortion accept alliances with the USA which has brought so much misery and death to South America? If they think so much of human life, why do they support a society based on anguish and isolation? Their nuclear reactors are destroying the environment and creating congenital malformations or cancer.

The church, because it so strongly objects to abortion, has had to play down its objection to single mothers, but this doesn't stop them sacking women teachers,

students or cleaners who find themselves in this position. With all their power and wealth, what has the church done about disarmament, marginalisation, etc.?

THE FIGURES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

The fact that 30,000 women go abroad for abortions and 3,000 die in back street abortions each year demonstrates that abortion is not a whim, it is a necessity. The government's legal changes will have little effect, so Spain remains, along with Switzerland, Belgium and Portugal, one of the few European countries in which abortion is still effectively illegal.

What are you supposed to do if you get pregnant and you can't afford to have the child? What if you need to stay in full time work, if you are single, young, or already have two children and can't afford a third?

OUR OPINIONS.

- Sexuality doesn't have to mean maternity.
- The laws on abortion were made by men, men judge us and criticise us, but they're our bodies and we should be allowed to decide what we do with them and our futures.
- Every child that is born should be wanted.
- More sex education in schools, new forms of contraception and sexuality, acceptance of homosexuality.
- Centres for health and sexual education in all neighbourhoods controlled by women.
- Free abortion on demand.



8 CNT BASQUES IN THE LIMELIGHT.

TRADE UNIONISTS BRANDED AS TERRORISTS.

In the early morning of November 27th and 29th of 1984, 7 members of the CNT-U, an ex member and a member of the UGT, were arrested under the anti terrorist law and held incommunicado for nine days. Although the UGT member was quickly set free and four of the others were later released on bail, three members of the CNT-U still remain in detention in the notorious Carabanchel prison in Madrid.

Following the arrest of another CNT-U member near Seville, 40,000 people took to the streets and he was released. A strike of similar proportions in Vitoria and almost daily demonstrations has succeeded in putting the government on the defensive. For example, the prisoners are now visited each day by a medic, which is important given the reputation Spanish prisons have for torture and the statements made by those who have been released so far.

The crimes of which those arrested were finally accused were: Belonging to various terrorist groups (FIGA, CC.AA.AA. and GAM); Attacking one Sr Casanova, director of Michelin; Attacking banks; Raising a revolutionary levy; Sabotage. However the usual stash of arms was not produced and it seems all this was done using only (pointed?) wooden sticks.

Even if those arrested are eventually found innocent, the state will have still have achieved it's aim of once more linking the CNT with terrorism rather than militant and revolutionary trade unionism. However, if the support to date is anything to go by, it looks as if their campaign may yet backfire on them.

THE 'ANTI-TERRORIST' LAW.

The present situation is even worse than what existed under Franco, yet it was introduced by the PSOE, as this law applies not only to 'terrorists', but also to 'subversives', which could mean just about anyone. The law makes it legal to tap phones or put a watch on people's houses without judicial permission. The state can declare associations or parties illegal and dissolve them or close down papers. People arrested under this law can be held incommunicado for up to ten days and this has led to so many cases of torture that Amnesty International have asked for the resignation of the Minister for the Interior.



'Another dangerous terrorist was captured yesterday by the forces of law and order'

THE NINE ARRESTED.

INAQUI PAGAZAURTUNDUA - UGT: Later set free, though not before his arrest, on the 29th, had caused the UGT to abandon it's original claim that the CNT-U was over reacting.

RAMON RODRIGUEZ - EX CNT: Arrested in Zaragoza, later released on conditional freedom.

GUILLERO GUERRERO - CNT-U: Released on bail of 400,000 pts. (ie £2,000)

GUILLERO ARGOS - CNT-U: Released on bail of 150,000 pts. (£750)

ANDRES SANCHEZ - CNT-U: Still held in detention, as of May '85.

VINCENTE ALVARADO - CNT-U: Still detained, Secretary of chemical workers union.

JOSE COLLADO - CNT-U: Still detained. Offer of 400,000 pts bail revoked, possibly because Michelin was in the process of negotiating it's annual agreement.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

Money can be sent to the campaign to support those arrested at:
Casa Laboral Popular, Vitoria.
Account no. 110.1.01651-6.
In the name of Marcelo de la Torre.

MICHELIN

COMMUNISTS IN BID TO BE BOSSES' LACKEYS.

At Michelin, Vitoria's biggest employer, the majority groups on the works committee are the CNT-U and CUIM (ex CCOO) on one side, with the 'Independants' (ie. pro-bosses) on the other. The UGT, CCOO AND ELA (Basque regional union) are minorities.

The role of bosses' stooge seems to be passing from the independents to the CCOO who object to the CNT's policy of undermining the committees and transferring power to the assemblies, so that it becomes just a meeting place for the various unions rather than a decision making body.

'CNT MILITANTS SPEAK'.

The following is a summary of an interview with Ricardo Alcacer and Enrique Barrigon, general secretary of CNT-U for Michelin.

- What do you make of the CCOO's platform this year?

- Basically favourable to the bosses which is probably why they were unwilling to discuss it openly. They just said that if we didn't follow their line they would block negotiations. They are trying to convince the bosses, rather than the other unions, that their platform is best.



Demonstration against the arrests in Vitoria



- What happened on the question of the 'Four teams'?

- They want to split us into four teams which will work rotating shifts so that weekends are covered by those who take their days off in the middle of the week. If this system was introduced our summer holidays would be rotated during the four months from June to September, with the teams which are not on holiday working 48 hours a week during these months to cover for the one which was. Obviously this is an attempt to increase production without taking on more workers, but the CCOO is supporting it.

- What's your position on the present system of giving holidays in blocks?

- The CNT was the only union to oppose this when it was introduced in '84 and we have refused to sign the agreement implementing it. It was accepted by the assembly because people didn't realise what it meant, but now, when they are told they have to take their annual holiday in January, they start to think 'Fuck this, I thought that... etc.' and they see why we took the position we did.

- What about the CCOO's recent attacks on you?

- Having been rejected by the workers in assembly they are trying to appeal to the ignorance of those who don't go to assemblies through the company's notice boards. We've avoided getting involved because we see fighting the CCOO as a distraction. Basically they, like the bosses, are worried that we have succeeded in removing power from the committees and putting it in the hands of the union branches. They can see that workers are starting to control their own struggles through their unions rather than have the committee making decisions for them. So, people are learning about direct action and the value of participation rather than mediation, choosing an active presence in the negotiations rather than being controlled by the committees.

Source: Elkartusuna (CNT-U paper for Euskadi/The Basque Country) Febuary '85.

NEW AGREEMENT AT MICHELIN VITORIA.

REFORMIST UNIONS BOW TO BOSSES' BLACKMAIL.

The latest agreement has once again shown the UGT and CCOO in their true light. After an assembly in which the majority of people there were those who don't even believe in assemblies, an agreement was signed which gives away much of what has been won over the years at Michelin.

In the first session of negotiations the management made their final offer and left. The UGT and CCOO tried to convince the workers that they had no option but to accept, whilst the CNT-U (together with the ELA and CUIM) began a campaign for real negotiations. The agreement was finally accepted in assembly by a margin of only 100 votes.

The CNT-U refused to sign the agreement for the following reasons: It had been negotiated behind the workers' backs; It said nothing about reducing hours; It obliges holidays to be taken in blocks; There will be a loss of purchasing power; It doesn't reduce wage differentials; It gives no guarantee of job security; It says nothing about modernisation; It is for two years rather than one; It was imposed by blackmail;

Source: Elkartasuna March '85.

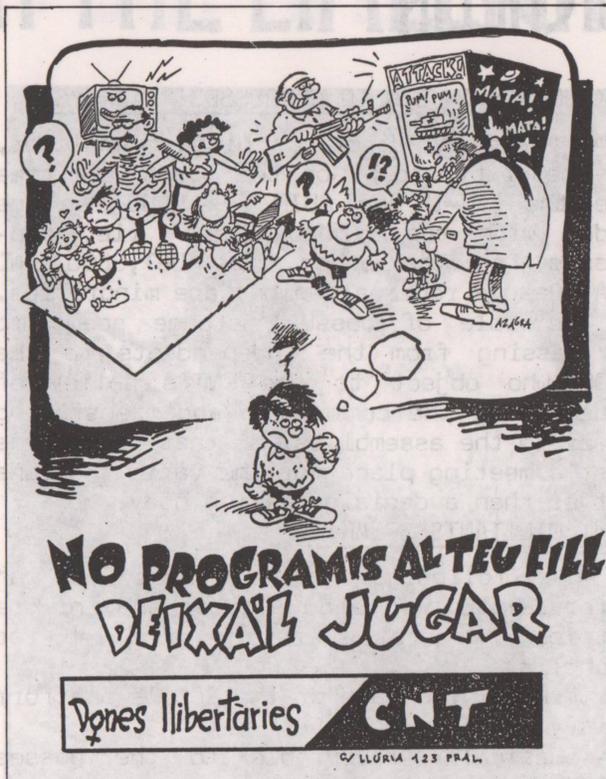
GROWTH IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY.

The Basque Country, or Euskadi, is one of the main growth areas for the CNT-U, and it is interesting to note that this area which has been one of the most successful in terms of elections to the works committees is also one of the most radical.

One example of the CNT-U's gains in the area is FASA, a company employing 2,000 people where the CNT-U is the only union with enough support to set up a functioning branch there. In Gesa-Sakvat a modern graphic arts which employs 530 workers, the CNT-U has 8 of the 17 seats on the works committee. After a struggle to reinstate two sacked workers at a private cleaning company was successful the workforce there left the ELA on mass to join the CNT-U. Cement workers is also a strong area for membership in the region.

Events like these supply the obvious motive for the present state frame up of the CNT-U in Vitoria.

Source: Elkartasuna.



DONT PROGRAMME YOUR KIDS,
JUST LET THEM PLAY.

WOMEN IN THE CNT - A SURVEY.

This survey was carried out by women from Zaragoza who sent a questionnaire to all regions in the CNT-U, but only 19 of the 50 sent were returned, mainly from areas in the north of Spain. The position of women in the CNT-AIT is, if anything, worse than that described below.

- Out of 2,800 members sampled, only 354 (12%) were women. In the Basque Country (Euskadi), it was only 8%

- 44% of these women worked in secondary industries, of which 3/4 were in textiles. 31% worked in third level industries, of which 1/3 were cleaners. 25% were on the dole or doing odd jobs. Only 0.5% worked in the primary industries.

- Half the local federations which did respond said no women held positions of responsibility, in the others it averaged out at about 30% of the positions being held by women. Only two of the eleven federations said that women participated equally in public events.

To quote from the survey: 'One way to explain these figures would be to say that women work is traditionally isolated and badly paid, but what we want to know is, where are all the companeras of the men in the CNT?'

HISTORY AND AIMS OF MUJERES LIBRES.

Mujeres Libres was formed in 1936 by women of the CNT. They helped in the Civil War, driving ambulances, working the land, or giving educational classes, publishing feminist papers, etc.

The present branch in Madrid began a few years ago to deal with the fact that womens' questions did not receive enough attention from the CNT, and to fight on two fronts, as women in a society based on machismo and workers under capitalism. They aim to take part in all the struggles going on in society, not just strictly feminist ones and see their aim as the development of womens' potential, rather than confrontation with men. For this reason they are open to the active participation of men in the group, in the hope that they will gradually be integrated into their struggles.**

They describe their aims as equal rights for women at work, better education, free abortion, etc. They declare themselves in opposition to divorce, on the grounds that they are opposed to marriage in the first place, preferring relationships based on equality.

Source: Interview in Soli (U).

**This seems a bit muddle headed to me because if a load of men did actually join the group (despite the fact it's called 'Free Women') they could become a majority and start taking decisions against the wishes of the women. Surely the best thing would be for the men to get off their butts and organise themselves into a group against patriarchy, then for the two groups to work together but remain autonomous in regard to their own organisation and aims. M.L.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

On the 2nd and 3rd of March, in Zaragoza, collectives of Mujeres Libres from that city as well as Barcelona, Granada, Valencia, Burgos and Madrid, held their conference on 'women at work'.

The main conclusions reached were that unemployment has hit women worse than men, and that many women work in black market jobs where they have no union protection. One alternative to capitalist relations for workers was seen as the formation of co-ops.

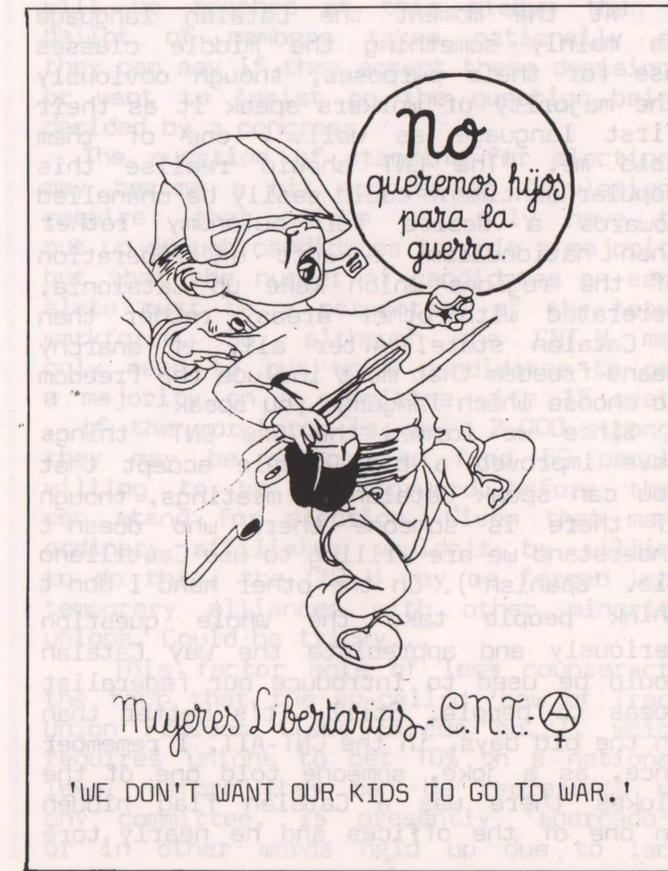
About 2000 women demonstrated on the streets of Zaragoza for international womens' day, March the 8th. This did not include the various men who turned up with Mujeres Libres, but were asked to leave. In contrast, the demo in Barcelona was celebrated as a mixed event.

WORKING WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Positions of work exist for only 1/4 of Spanish women of working age, which means that 10 million of them must work for nothing in the isolation of their own homes. Those who do have jobs normally do the housework as well, but apart from that they get lower wages, tend to be the first to be sacked and are effectively excluded from the better paid professions.

The following are our immediate demands for progress towards equality with men: Jobs should not be advertised for men only. Social security should not be given out in terms of families or 'head of the household', but on the basis of the needs of the individual. Government statistics should be broken down in terms of gender. The state should set an example by taking on more women. Courses for women who want to go back to work after pregnancy. Non sexist education in schools. Maternity and paternity leave without loss of any benefits. Time off work when a child is sick. 1 hour off work for the mother or father each day, for the first year of a child's life. Child care services. Contraception and free abortion.

Source: Leaflet produced by Mujeres Libres and women from other unions, etc.



12 A JOURNEY ACROSS SPAIN.

NEW BROOMS SWEEP CLEAN.

The CNT-U in Barcelona recently acquired new offices, not far from Paseo de Gracia which is a pretty smart part of the city. At 125,000pts, ie £625, a month I couldn't help thinking it was a bit of a waste of money, especially as they are still waiting for government to cough up for the union property seized by Franco at the end of the civil war (the Patrimonio Syndical). The explanation lies in the general desire to brake with the past and try out new possibilities.

'The CNT has always been associated with the red light districts', one of the people I met there told me, 'and anyone who wanted to get to us had to walk for miles down backstreets covered in dog shit. Here we're more central.' Fair point, and obviously very important for women comrades, but I still reckon they've gone a bit over the top.

Most of the people there, the majority of whom are in their 20's or 30's, were still working on decorating the place and setting up the offices for unions representing most industries as well as a section for Donnas Libertarias, which is Catalan for Mujeres Libres, or Free Women. So what about all this Catalan nationalism then?*

CATALONIA, STATE OR FEDERATION?

'At the moment the Catalan language is mainly something the middle classes use for their purposes, though obviously the majority of workers speak it as their first language as well.', one of them told me. 'The CNT should realise this popular sentiment could easily be channelled towards a desire for autonomy rather than nationalism, a sort of federation of the regions which make up Catalonia, fererated with other areas, rather than a Catalan state. After all, if anarchy means freedom that must include the freedom to choose which language you speak

Since we formed the new CNT things have improved a bit, people accept that you can speak Catalan at meetings, though if there is someone there who doesn't understand we are willing to use Castellano (ie. 'Spanish'). On the other hand I don't think people take the whole question seriously and appreciate the way Catalan could be used to introduce our federalist ideas to people. Still, it's better than in the old days, in the CNT-AIT. I remember once, as a joke, someone told one of the blokes there was a Catalan flag hidden in one of the offices and he nearly tore

the place apart trying to find it. Some of them hate Catalan and I think that's a big mistake.'



'There must be an answer somewhere...'

A BLOW FOR ANARCHY?

In Catalonia relations between the two CNT are still very bad, though in other regions of Spain they seem to have more or less agreed to ignore each other. After a demo in Barcelona last Febuary against the 'Anti-terrorist law' in which the they were both trying to be in front of the other, a member of the CNT-U was followed by members of the CNT-AIT and had his head split open. This could be another reason why the CNT-U has settled in a different part of the city.

At the other two demos which ocured in Barcelona while I was in Spain, for international women's day and against military service, the CNT-AIT did not show up, supporting the idea that they tend to confine themselves more to strictly union activities. All these demos were organised by 'co-ordinadoras' of the various groups involved, ranging from Maoists, majority unions, women's groups and one or both of the CNT.

The Catalan regional secretary and the national secretary of the CNT-U both had a reputation as hardliners when they were in the CNT-AIT, but all that's behind them now, except that the former seems to have lost the ability to smile. This was in sharp contrast to the women who typed out the note saying I could be an observer at the forthcoming plenum in Madrid and who is as nutty as a fruit cake. She's been nominated for regional secretary when the position undergoes its annual rotation, so I hope she gets it.

* Catalonia is the region around Barcelona.

ACROSS THE PLAINS OF CASTILLE.

Clutching my (badly typed) note I set off for the Plenum in Madrid which began on March 16th, but first I was going to drop in on Zaragoza (also known, in Brit. speak, as Saragossa).

Zaragosa is the largest concentration of people in the region surrounding it, which is known as Aragon, in fact 70% of the region's population live there. Until recently the CNT-U in this city were in partnership with a group called CSUT who are Maoist/Council communists, the latter attitude being very similar to anarcho-syndicalism. Anyway, the CSUT recently decided to dissolve itself in Zaragoza and merge with the CNT-U. As the CSUT is the main union in Aragon's only other large town, Huesca, the CNT-U are hoping that their 3000 strong branch will follow this example. The CNT-U itself in Zaragoza is 500 strong, of which perhaps 50 are active militants. Unlike the other regions of Spain, the CNT in Aragon gives full rights to non-union groups who are organised around social questions (see article on 'Globalism'), so it is not suprising that this is the main centre for Mujeres Libres, with a group which has been going for about 5 years. The teachers' union is the strongest one here and they publish their own magazine on the subject of education.

MADRID, 'THE IMPOSSIBLE CITY'.

'Madrid, the impossible city, rises from the empty Castillian plains like a lunar metropolis, or perhaps a prison city...'

The CNT-U acquired their new offices in June, situated not far from the red light district, but they're really not big enough for them. Of the 1000 or so paid up members in the central region the biggest part (250) are in the banking union, which is not suprising as Madrid is an administrative city and the CNT-AIT's union came over on mass after the last split.

During my brief visit I was able to confirm that none of the CNT-U members who hold positions of responsibility are paid for doing so, instead they work during the day and do union work in their spare time, as is traditional. I was also told that their policy of requiring those elected to works committees to submit a signed letter of resignation so that they are effectivly subject to instant recall, is being applied in practice and working well.



Spanish migrant workers
THE PRESSURES OF MODERN LIVING.

The week long Plenum, of which I could only stay for the first day, was a meeting of about 100 delegates from all the regions to decide the CNT-U's statutes, it's attitude to the promised referndum on Spain leaving NATO and tactics for the elections to the works committees which will be held on a national level in 1986. Because of time pressure all these subjects need to be sorted out fairly quickly, so rather than wait till the next congress which is planned for '86, an agreement will be reached at this plenum then a ballot of members taken nationally so they can say if they accept these decisions or want to insist on the question being decided by a congress.

The question of standing for elections may become a bit complex as regulations require that unions not only have to put up enough candidates to gain a majority but that the number of candidates on each slate must be a percentage of the total workforce. So, although the CNT-U may only need to put up 8 candidates to get a majority on a committee with 15 seats, if the workforce is, say, 2,000 strong, they may be obliged to find 50 people willing to be put forward before they can stand for election. Given that many ordinary affiliates wouldn't be willing to do this, the CNT-U may be forced into temporary alliances with other minority unions. Could be tricky...

This factor more of less counteracts the fact that the so-called 'Law of Trade Union Freedom' (see Sinews no.2), which requires unions to get 10% on a national level before they can be representd on any committee, is presently 'aparcado', or in other words held up due to lack

PAID UP MEMBERS OF THE CNT-U.

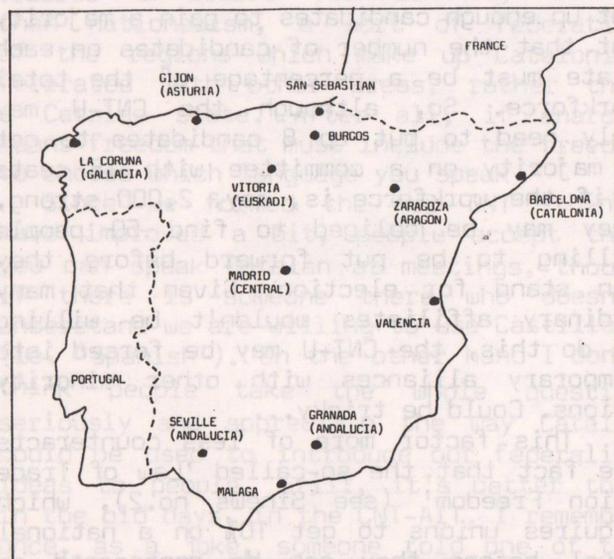
| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Catalonia - 3000. | Andalucia - 2000. |
| Valencia - 2000. | Euskadia - 1000. |
| Central - 1000. | Galacia - 1000. |
| Asturia - 500. | Aragon - 500. |
| Canary Isles - 500. | Santander - 300. |
| <u>Total - 11,800.</u> | |

Comment - Figures such as these can never be very accurate and obviously their source (the international secretary of the CNT-U) could be a bit biased.

Some tentative conclusions can be drawn though. Speaking roughly, these figures suggest the two CNT are about the same size, as the CNT-AIT was about 20,000 strong in '83 before the last split. The tendency shown here for Catalonia to be the biggest region is also more pronounced in the CNT-AIT.

One thing for certain is that the total number in both CNT has decreased as the ordinary members become disillusioned by the in-fighting. I reckon the next few years will tell if they are going to dwindle away to nothing or one of the two, possibly even a re-unified CNT, will go on to become a major force once more in Spanish politics. This is quite possible given the level of dissilusionment with the UGT and CCOO.

PRINCIPLE CENTRES OF THE CNT-U IN SPAIN.



A JOURNEY ACROSS SPAIN cont from over of parliamentary time and will probably not be brought forward in 1986 as this would cause alot of fuss in an election year for the government.

THERE'S NOWT AS QUEER AS FOLK.

Meanwhile, back at the plenum... we started late, of course, and spent the first hour discussing how the meeting was going to be organised, though most people thought this had allready been decided.* After that another couple of hours were spent on the complaints from Gallacia that these subjects should be dealt with by a congress although there had been a majority descision at the previous congress to do it this way. At last the working parties left to draw up reports on the subject of the new statutes and the main meeting turned to the subject of NATO.

The meeting was basically agreed that the CNT-U should reccomend a vote of 'yes' if the socialist government actually gets round to a referendum on whether Spain wants to leave NATO, unless the question is put in some obscure form, such as 'Do you approve of the government's foreign policy to date?', in which case they would call a general strike and boycott the referendum. (See seperate article).

However, the delegates from Asturia (which is in fact about 500 members in Gijon), were not in agreement with this and to the accompanymnt of several groans of despair or amazement, one of their delegates, Ramon Alvarez, began to explain how leaving NATO must be seen in the context of strengthening the Warsaw Pact and might lead to a Russian take over with the loss of what freedoms we do have under liberal capitalism. Obviously his confrontations with the Communist Party during the Civil War go some way towards explaining this attitude, but unfortunately he seems to have passed it on to the rest of the comrades in Gijon.

By this stage the cigarette smoke was starting to get to me and it was getting late anyway, so I left in time to catch the cinemas (only 175pts, which can't be bad) and the next day I set off home.

Mick Larkin.

The agreements reached at this plenum will be sent out in summarised form in the next subscriber's supplement.

* The Spanish Information Network pamphlet which gives details of how the CNT is organised is at present out of print, but an up dated version should be available some time in 1986.

GLOBALISM.

CAN SOCIETY BE TAKEN IN LIKE THIS?

Globalism is the belief that the CNT must be closely involved in all the struggles which effect workers and not just those which occur in the workplace. As these things go, it is quite strong in the CNT-U. The first issue of their national paper, Soli (U), says in it's editorial, 'Our vision can not just be restricted to labour questions. It must expand to take in the whole of society.'

OUT THERE... BEYOND THE FACTORY GATES.

Nowhere is this Globalist tendency more strong than in Zaragoza and their attitudes are summed up by the resolutions they sent to the congress of reunification in '84. A shortened version of these is reproduced below.

'Our oppression affects every aspect of our lives, so we must develop a response which deals with all these aspects. Though the CNT rejects the Marxist split which says that political/social questions are for the party and economic/labour ones are for the unions, this analysis is under developed in our organisation.

Women's oppression has been largely ignored by the CNT, in fact the same worker who fights for union rights can be totally macho in his personal relations.

Similarly, on an ecological front, our industrial struggles do not usually address themselves to the question of what is being produced in factorys where we are trying to maintain jobs.

Other important questions, such as the military, nationalism or youth do not receive enough atention either, but we cannot ignore these social questions if we wish to remain a vital force.

COULD I INTEREST YOU IN LIFE INSURANCE?

We believe the CNT will have to change it's structures if it is to carry out these tasks, just as they have been changed in the past. Otherwise, if we ignore these social questions, we could become little more than an insurance company which looks after workers' material security.

For example, in Aragon, the unions of the CNT are joined by two collectives dealing with women's problems and 'global struggles', ie ecology, anti-military and repression. It is our belief that this congress should be followed by a process of debate on how the next one could reach agreements on how a more global CNT would be structured.



'AN ATOMIC FUTURE FOR THEM'

ODDS 'N' SODS.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS.

The CNT-U's international secretary can read English so he may be interested in receiving news about what's going on over here. Similarly, you may want to put questions to him direct, but bear in mind that his English is not good and he is a busy man.

Contact: Paco Marcellan, CNT,
C/Infantas, 40, 1, Madrid.

SOLIDARIDAD OBRERA.

The CNT-U has now brought out it's own version of this famous anarchist newspaper, which is printed in Madrid and distributed nationally. As the CNT-AIT continues to publish it's paper of the same name from Barcelona, I will refer t them as 'Soli (U)' and 'Soli (A)', to avoid too much confusion.

MORE OF THE SAME.

Background information on any of the subjects raised in Sinews is available if you enclose a few second class stamps to cover photostating costs. Don't forget to say if you speak Spanish or not.