View from the West: Independent Movements of Eastern Europe

JUDITH HEMPFLING

This article builds on one in the December issue of RESIST calling on those in the Western peace movement to articulate a democratic foreign policy in cooperation with independent activists in the East Bloc. It reflects the view of a growing number of radicals, socialist and non-socialist, who believe it is crucial for the Left to propose alternatives to both superpower blocs. Responses from RESIST's readers are welcome.

Following World War II and the division of Europe into Soviet and North American spheres of influence, as delineated at Yalta, East Bloc Communist governments, under Soviet influence, consolidated their power in such a way as to leave little if any space for social activity not controlled by the state. Although some governments were forced to accept some compromise, as in the role of the Catholic Church in Poland, independent organization has always been viewed as a threat to state power. Democratic uprisings which took place in East Germany in '53, Hungary in '56, Poland in '56, '68, and the '70s, and Czechoslovakia in '68, were brutally crushed and little residue for ongoing struggle remained after each suppression.

Since the late 1970s, however, independent movements have developed more or less permanent organizational forms — of which Solidarity in Poland is the most powerful example. Though the independent trade union was repressed in December, 1981, with the imposition of martial law, it continues to claim several hundred thousand dues-paying supporters. A thriving underground press, under the auspices of Solidarity, continues to operate and there has been a flowering of independent peace, human rights and environmental movements throughout East and Central Europe.

These include Charter 77, the Czech human rights movement; Freedom and Peace in Poland; the Moscow Trust Group; East German Swords into Plowshares and Women for Peace; the Hungarian democratic opposition based around such underground (samizdat) publications as Beszelo, and the environmental group The Blues; and the Ljubljana Peace Group in Yugoslavia. Musicians and artists continued on page two
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from the cultural underground are insisting on their right to free artistic expression. A growing number of youth, disaffected with the system, look to figures such as John Lennon as a symbol for their aspirations for peace, their resistance to military conscription, and the preservation of the planet in the face of a deepening ecological crisis.

There are great differences among these movements, but they share a democratic vision and a realization that their fates are linked to each other and to movements in the West with similar visions. This realization becomes concrete in the East-West Dialogue—the growing discourse and cooperative work between movements East to East and with parts of the Western peace movement.

A central theme for all of the independent movements has been the reclamation of civil society from the state. This is based on the necessity of claiming space for the free exchange of ideas and of gaining access to independent sources of information. The movements seek to curtail state power in relation to each government’s citizens and to other nations, and also, given the growing urgency of ecological problems, to pressure governments to create policies that respect the natural environment. The concept has been expressed as the restoration of the citizen as a subject of history rather than as an object controlled by the state.

The need to reclaim civil society is in reaction to the reality of the last twenty years during which East Bloc governments have relied less on bloody repression of the sort used in earlier years and more on social control of all aspects of human life. Because the state is, in most cases, the sole provider of employment, education, housing, health care and many other aspects of life, it has enormous power over people, aided, of course, by a large and powerful police force. Consequently, the danger to state control posed by independent activity is as much in the fact of their independence as in the actual content of their discourse or activity.

Czechoslovakia and Charter 77

The oldest organization of this young phenomenon is Charter 77, the

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So far the response to our twentieth anniversary issue has been very supportive. We’ve been commended for trying to articulate some of the internal dialog that goes on at Resist, and that’s a process that continues today as we examine our process and priorities for upcoming years. Here are a few of the comments you’ve sent us—

“I loved the twentieth anniversary newsletter and I remember writing the 1985 letter (which appeared in the newsletter). You folks are great... hope I can help out in the future.”

“I am writing to let you know that I have had to suspend my monthly subscription payments. I am in-between jobs, but please continue to send my newsletters and I will make up the difference as soon as I possibly can... I am very glad you have taken a strong clear stand on gay/lesbian issues as ones warranting your assistance. Good job. The more women and people of color in the Board room the better!”

“We enjoyed your anniversary newsletter. Over the past year, RESIST has been very supportive of the Chinese Progressive Association in our efforts to organize immigrant workers for their rights. I think this is a good indication of RESIST’s move toward greater diversity in the areas of race and class. Congratulations to RESIST for struggling through twenty years!”

“I give personally to all those to whom you offer grants, plus many more organizations. I am sending an additional donation to you for your twentieth anniversary even though I am unemployed....”

“Thanks so much for your struggle to include gay and lesbian issues in the agenda for the left. Wish I could give more.”

“I regret that I have now retired and must subsist only on social security. I find your newsletter most essential and informative.”

“I applaud your self-awareness about intellectual elitism. Much of the truth comes from the heart, not the head, I’ve found.”

“Thanks for the twentieth anniversary newsletter. Inspiring!”

Any Writers Out There?

RESIST would like our newsletter to be a place where movement strategy is discussed and debated. Do you have an opinion on the SANE/FREEZE merger? AIDS organizing? The Left’s relation to electoral politics? Union organizing in social change and peace groups? The Left’s commitment to disability rights? If you have an idea or know of a good potential author contact our newsletter editor, Tatiana Schreiber, at RESIST, One Summer Street, Somerville, MA 02143. We look forward to hearing from you!
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human rights movement of Czechoslovakia. Charter 77 was formed in 1977 by former journalists, writers and politicians who had been banned from public life after 1968. The founders initially came together in support of a non-conformist punk rock band, the Plastic People of the Universe, whose members had been imprisoned and put on trial for their irreverent lyrics and insistence on free cultural expression.

As early as 1981 the Charter issued a declaration in support of the Western peace movement. In the same statement it proclaimed what has become the central thesis of independent peace movements throughout East and Central Europe; that peace and human rights are inextricably linked. This began Charter’s important theoretical contribution to the East-West dialogue. In April, 1983, Jaraslov Sabata, a former Charter spokesperson, coined the term “democratic peace,” in a letter to European Nuclear Disarmament (END) leader E.P. Thompson. He meant that peace requires more than an end to hostility between states and the dismantling of weapons, but must be based on respect for civil liberties and a commitment to justice.

Another of Charter’s important contributions was the Prague Appeal, written to the July, 1985 END convention. The Appeal described the division of Europe as one of the main sources of tension between the superpowers, causing permanent danger of nuclear war. The writers challenged bilateralist assumptions which grant the US and USSR the right to determine policy concerning European security. Instead, they argued, all European countries should act as equal partners towards the goal of a reunified Europe. In pursuit of this goal, they called for consideration of the “German Question” (concerning German reunification), the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the removal of all nuclear weapons, and the withdrawal of US and Soviet troops from the territories of their European allies.

The Prague Appeal was the impetus behind an ambitious project launched by the European Network for East-West Dialogue which moved cooperation another impressive step forward. The Network is an organization of Western (mostly European) peace activists and East independent activists which was formed at the 1984 END convention. In the Fall of 1985, it initiated a truly joint document by East and West activists which would be addressed to participants at the November, 1986, Helsinki review conference in Vienna. The ten page document, entitled “Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Accords,” was the beginning of a common program and strategy.

Central to its analysis was the indivisibility of peace and human rights. It made policy proposals ranging from a rejection of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence—declaring it the “driving force of the arms race”—to calls for alternative service for conscientious objectors, release of all political prisoners, abolition of the death penalty, respect for the rights of ethnic and national minorities, free travel, dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and an end to intervention by the US and USSR in Nicaragua and Afghanistan. The section on Economic and Ecological Cooperation declared that, “half the research efforts in the country to future generations?”

In order to carry out their plans the forces of aggression had first to disperse the institutions of democratic control and imprison citizens with differing opinions in jails and concentration camps. Drawing a lesson from this bitter experience we say: Peace is not threatened only where new aggressive weapons are being prepared. Peace is threatened everywhere that the voice of a critical citizen is silenced.

Particularly since Chernobyl, environmental issues have become a focus of growing concern throughout the East Bloc, but even before that disaster, the gravity of environmental pollution had been recognized. In 1978, Charter established a working group on the environment, and has been the primary independent source of environmental information. Even the Czech government admitted to the seriousness of the situation in 1981, with the release of a report on acid rain, the chemicalization of agriculture and water pollution. The report’s conclusions were grim: 45-60% of Czech forests will be destroyed by the year 2000, acid rain is an extremely serious problem, and contaminated drinking water has led to epidemics of disease such as typhoid and dysentery. In April, 1987, Charter 77 issued a document entitled “Let the People Breathe,” focused on air pollution and calling for the installation of filter equipment in plants using coal, and the use of energy saving technology. It also discussed the danger of nuclear power.

So why the hell are WE afraid of THEM?”

—Excerpt from the song “100 Percent” by the Czechoslovakian punk-rock band Plastic People of the Universe.
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Vigils are held, and participants are often harassed and interrogated. In a 1985 demonstration nearly a thousand young people marched through the streets of Prague chanting "We want freedom, We want peace, Do away with the SS20s and do away with the army!" Although police constantly checked papers, took notes and photographed those present, the demonstrators kept singing and chanting for hours. On May 26, 1986, a group of young people attempted to register "Young Art for Peace" as a legal organization and were greeted with threats of arrest, loss of jobs, and loss of access to higher education.

East-West Dialogue and the "Anatomy of Reticence"

As independent peace movements in the East Bloc continue to develop, so has an attitude that has been called the "anatomy of reticence" on the part of East Europeans towards the Western peace movement. The problem is illustrated by what has happened in Poland. In the early '80s a mass grassroots peace movement was growing in Western Europe at the same time that Solidarity was transforming Polish society. Though Solidarity has used non-violent protests and strikes, passive resistance, and boycotts, it has not aligned itself with the peace movement. In part this can be explained by a Polish understanding of recent history that equates pacifism and the peace movement with passivity and the appeasement of Hitler.

Then too, the enthusiasm of East Bloc governments for Western peace movements, and the often naive participation of many Western activists in Pugwash (official peace events) has done much to discredit us in the eyes of Eastern Europeans. This insensitivity was demonstrated in the summer of 1982, when Western activists participated in an officially sponsored peace conference in Warsaw, apparently oblivious to the Polish government's use of water cannons at that very moment to stop street demonstrations in memory of the Gdansk Accords. The fact that the Dutch Interchurch Council (IKV) and the German Greens sharply criticized the government's actions did little to dampen the outrage felt by many Poles.

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Charter 77 activist Vaclav Havel revealed another dimension of this attitude by pointing out that the Czech government has robbed the word peace of real meaning by equating Soviet foreign policy with the "struggle for peace". During May Day celebrations in Czechoslovakia the streets are plastered with banners claiming "The fight for Socialism is the fight for Peace". Just as Reagan robs concepts of democracy and human rights of their integrity and meaning by calling the Contras "Freedom Fighters," and by justifying the support of dictatorships around the world in the name of democracy, so too the Communist governments of the East bloc use the emancipatory language of socialism to justify repression. Part of the East-West discussion has been devoted to searching for a common vocabulary by which we can understand each other.

The suspicions themselves became the initial content of the exchange, with the publishing in Solidarity's underground journal, KOS, an article titled "What do Western Pacifists Want?" written by END spokesperson S.H. Green. While recognizing the Soviet government's use of Western peace activism, he also explained how anti-communism has been used in the West to justify the arms race. In his conclusion he asserted that:

The nuclear threat has deprived all citizens of the globe of the right to decide their own destinies. In this sense all of us are unfree. Wherever on earth men and women take control of their own lives, they give an example of strength that extends to all people. By setting such an example, Solidarity continues to be an inspiration not only in Poland but around the world.

This was followed in May, 1983, by the KOS "Open Letter to Activists in the Peace Movement," in which they acknowledged the threat of nuclear annihilation and declared their view that protests against the arms race were a "defense of the most basic human right, the right to live."

In September, 1983, KOS published letters from the US peace movement; from the War Resisters League and from Randy Kehler of the Freeze. WRL described its evenhanded condemnation of superpower intervention and Kehler described the Freeze's bilateral approach to nuclear disarmament. The KOS editors articulated their disappointment with these views. The first KOS point was that Soviet interventionism is more dangerous than similar action by the US government because of the lack of social institutions that might control that foreign policy, and because the model being exported similarly advocates the extinguishing of such institutions. The second KOS point, in response to Kehler, was that the bilateral approach accepts the political status quo in Europe; "the right of the superpowers to make ultimate decisions over Europe."

The first KOS point was taken up more recently in the ongoing debate by Joanne Landy of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy East and West, published in the Freedom and Peace Bulletin.

I am well aware of the political rights that Americans and citizens of most advanced capitalist countries currently enjoy, although this is not an inevitable or necessarily permanent feature of our societies . . . (But it is a leap) from the fact that most of us in the West today have important freedoms at home to the conclusion that US foreign policy is somehow fundamentally more peaceful and
democratic than the USSR's. I'm afraid this is an example of the "necessary but not sufficient" problem. . . . The sordid history of the foreign policies of advanced Western countries over the past decade is solid proof that democracy is not enough. . . .

In 1985, Poland saw the birth of its first independent peace group, Freedom and Peace. WiP is the Polish acronym. WiP activists, who refer to their organization as a child of Solidarity, are in general young people. They first gathered in support of jailed conscientious objector Marek Adamkiewicz. In its declaration of principles WiP emphasized its belief that peace and human rights were indivisibly linked. They also acknowledged that "many Poles are not aware of the seriousness of the threat of nuclear war, and treat it as an invention of Communist Propaganda," and they declare the need to change this situation one of their primary goals.

Poland, like Czechoslovakia, has severe pollution problems, with the government admitting that in highly industrialized Silesia, 90% of the children suffer from chronic respiratory infections because of air pollution. One report has warned that a third of the Polish population now living is likely to acquire diseases such as cancers and chronic respiratory ailments unless something is done to reduce pollution of air, soil and water. WiP has called for full disclosure of information on environmental issues and has been in the forefront of protests following Chernobyl. They continue their campaign against proposed construction of two nuclear power plants in Poland.

Hungary

Hungary's independent activity has revolved largely around a small democratic opposition, primarily intellectuals, who have organized around an energetic samizdat (underground) press, and around environmental issues. The Peace Group for Dialogue (Dialogus), was a unique experiment tried in 1982-83 by activists who attempted to place themselves apart from the official peace committee and from the democratic opposition. They attempted to find a space between the opposition and the government, and to separate the issues of peace and human rights. Subjected first to attempts by the official Hungarian Peace Committee to coopt the Dialogue Group, and then harassment by the authorities, the Group disbanded in July of 1983, declaring that its goal of dialogue with the government had become impossible.

The Hungarian environmental movement has focused most of its attention at preventing the Gabčíkov–Nagymaros Dam from being built on the Danube River. The Blues, formed in 1985, have done the major organizing against the dam project, pointing out the ecological devastation which will result. Like Dialogus, the environmental groups differentiate themselves from the opposition, and have often attempted to acquire legal status, and have been denied. This has forced them into a more oppositional role. As a result, the environmental movement has become increasingly a movement for democratization.
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East Germany, Yugoslavia and the Youth Movement

As in Poland, East German and Yugoslavian independent peace activists are predominantly youth. In East Germany, in 1981, the symbol of "Swords into Plowshares" became synonymous with youthful protest against medium range missile deployment by both superpowers, as well as the growing militarization of East German society. Anti-militarism continues to be the focus of their activities; calling for peace studies, alternative service for conscientious objectors, and for conversion of military production to aid for the Third World. Feminist independent activists have formed Women for Peace to work against drafting women, and to look at the issue of militarism in children's education.

The Lutheran Church has played an important but contradictory role in relation to peace and environmental activism, offering institutional protection on one hand and at the same time attempting to moderate politicization of the issues. There has been growing tension between the Church and elements of the peace movement who have become vocal about issues of civil rights. Peace activists have grown increasingly critical of the Church's accommodation to state power.

In the summer of 1986, the Church canceled a youth peace workshop, Freidenswerkstatt, which had been held for each of the six previous years. The cancellation was met by protests from pastors where the event was to take place. Young people responded by organizing a "Kirchentag von Unten" (Church day from below) and on June 24, 2000 young people held a demonstration at a church in East Berlin. After negotiations with Church officials, the young people were provided with space to meet at two parishes. At one more place? ... Or is equality women-at-home, on the job and now one more place? ... Or is equality something that can be redefined? ... Why not say-emancipation?"

The Soviet Union, Glasnost and the Moscow Trust Group

Just one week before the massive June 12, 1982 disarmament demonstration in New York City's Central Park, the Moscow Trust Group held a press conference announcing its existence to the Western press, and offering such slogans as "Peace through trust, not fear." To the extent that our movement has been aware of independent groups in the East Bloc, it has been the Trust Group that people have heard about. The Trust Group was founded by a group of Moscow scientists, many Jewish refuseniks, and young artists and writers from the alternative culture and "hippie" movements.

In its founding Appeal, the Trust Group declared its opposition to nuclear weapons and called for a four-sided dialogue between the US, the USSR and citizens of both superpowers. In the face of constant police harassment, with members incarcerated in jails and psychiatric hospitals, the Group continued organizing discussions on peace and ecological issues, which members and Western supporters attended. Their public activities have included planting "peace gardens," demonstrating against war toys and military education (which is compulsory for all school age children), and demonstrating in front of the British Embassy in support of the women at Greenham Common. After Chernobyl, they passed out information on the streets of Moscow about the dangers of fallout.

Now let us look for a moment at the reform from above program of Glasnost. Because of the space that Glasnost has provided in Soviet society, there has been a flowering of discussion groups at the grassroots level, focusing on a range of subjects; the economy, cultural activity, and environmental issues. Glasnost, or more accurately Perestroika, is Gorbachev's attempt to bring efficiency and modernization to an economy which is not working. In the face of systemic crisis, he is attempting to strengthen and renew a social system which is stagnating.

Nevertheless, Gorbachev believes in the leading role of the Party which precludes the development of political pluralism. What is important about Glasnost is not that Gorbachev is going to present democracy to the populations of the East Bloc countries, for as Martin Luther King said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." What is important about Glasnost is the space it has provided for movements from below. These movements can, in turn, organize

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pressure to ensure that this openness is maintained and enlarged so that qualitative structural change can occur and genuine democracy emerge.

East to East Cooperation
The strengthening of East to East contact is an attempt to learn from history that to be divided is to be conquered. The contact between groups like Charter 77 and Solidarity have recently moved beyond their ad hoc nature. A joint appeal on the thirtieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, facilitated by the London-based East European Cultural Foundation, was signed by 122 individual East Bloc signatories. The appeal asserted that signers would "support one another in [their] current struggles for a better, more decent and freer life in [their] countries and in the whole world."

In discussions that followed, concerning the formulation of more detailed policy statements, three issues emerged: lack of free travel within the Soviet Bloc, alternative service for conscientious objectors, and ecological problems and their consequences. Other actions of mutual support have included campaigns like that organized on behalf of Petr Pospichal, a 27-year-old Czech worker and Charter 77 supporter who was imprisoned and charged with subversion of the republic of Poland because of his contact with Solidarity.

More recently, on the anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, a new group called the Circle of Friends of Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, including many leading Solidarity and Charter 77 activists, met on the Polish-Czech border and issued a joint statement on shared aims and basic goals. Petr Uhl, the editor of a Czech samizdat periodical, recently reflected on the importance of East-East cooperation: "Governments are extraordinarily afraid of any coordination of resistance. . . . In order to withstand their oppression and to overcome it we need to unite as well."

East-South and East-West Cooperation
Most exciting are the growing contacts between the East European independents and Third World activists, particularly in Latin America. Charter 77 and Solidarity have in past years sent messages of support to the South African anti-apartheid struggle, and there has been a particularly close relationship between Solidarity and the Brazilian trade union movement. Leading independent activists declared their opposition to US intervention in Central America by signing an appeal published in the New York Times in December, 1985, and this support and statement was a powerful argument used in the US Congress against Contra aid.

At the July, 1987, US Green Party conference, which 1500 people attended, two East-South workshops were organized by the Amherst based Peace Activists East and West. Ecological and Green activists from Puerto Rico, Brazil, Haiti, Argentina, Costa Rica and India exchanged information with two Polish peace and Solidarity activists. Many of the Latin Americans acknowledged the powerful influence that the birth of Solidarity had had on the Latin American Left and on the development of their political thinking. They then challenged the Polish activists to take more of an interest in Latin America and to communicate to their associates in Poland about their special problems and needs.

The major peace groups of Western Europe such as British END, the West German Greens and the Dutch IKV (Interchurch Council), have been involved in the dialogue with their East European counterparts for the last few years. The US peace movement, however, has thus far failed to see both the moral and practical significance of such a relationship. Guilt about US foreign policy coupled with the fear of feeding into the Cold War, seems to immobilize the critical thinking and compassion of the movement, and as a result, it is afraid to challenge East Bloc repression and injustice in a direct and consistent fashion.

Still, at the same time that Gorbachev is becoming the hero of some peace activists, there is also a slowly growing interest in the movements from below. The Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters League have been faithful supporters of the Trust Group in particular, and more recently they have cooperated with Freedom and Peace. In the last year the radical Christian magazine, Sojourners, has made a major commitment to working with the independent movements of the East, devoting large sections of the last two issues to informing its readership about them.

US Greens are also expressing a commitment to developing this relationship. Several organizations including Campaign for Peace and Democracy East and West, Peace Activists East and West, and Across Frontiers magazine promote this grassroots cooperation and a perspective on non-alignment with either superpower.

US and Soviet domination over world affairs, with all its human and environmental costs, has been the sad reality of our world for forty years. Every struggle for justice runs up against the Cold War. The superpowers would have it no other way. Because their power is ultimately based on their ability to destroy the planet, their domination appears frozen and eternal. In the last few years, however, peace, human rights and environmental activists have begun to reach across the divided continent of Europe and across the North-South Divide with a vision of human emancipation that challenges the Bloc system itself. Let us hope the US peace movement will soon become a strong participant in this process.

Longtime socialist activist Judith Hempfling is a founding member of Peace Activists East and West, based in Amherst, MA.

Progressive Periodicals Directory

Ideas are being solicited for listings of periodicals to be included in a new directory of national progressive periodicals that are published in the US. The "Progressive Periodicals Directory" is published by Progressive Education, a non-profit organization. The upcoming Second Edition of the directory will include over 600 social change periodicals providing complete information and descriptions of periodicals that address peace, culture, health, civil and human rights, youth, environmental and other topics. Suggestions for listings should be sent to: Progressive Education, P.O. Box 120574, Nashville, TN 37212 as soon as possible.
The Resist Pledge System

The most important source of Resist’s income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledger!

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Since 1979 SCCOSH has become known as “the whistleblower of Santa Clara County” for achievements like a Hazards Hotline for electronics workers, a successful campaign to ban the suspected carcinogen TCE, and helping to pass California’s Right to Know law. In the four years since SCCOSH assisted 30 workers to establish IWU, it has expanded to include all injured workers in Santa Clara County. Recent efforts include the establishment of the first occupational Medicine Clinic, providing expert, unbiased care to workers in their own communities; occupational disease legislation covering workers in high-risk jobs; and helping to launch similar worker's groups elsewhere in California and in New Mexico.

IWU’s major campaign for 1987-88 concerns worker’s reproductive health and is a coalition effort to compel industry and government to remove chemicals dangerous to reproductive health, and to conduct a long-term study of the health of electronics workers. IWU is active in the fight to save Cal OSHA, which has been much stronger than the federal agency in the area of toxic chemical control. IWU and SCCOSH have also supported the Watsonville cannery strikers and efforts to unionize the electronics industry.

RESIST’s $400 grant went to print a new brochure intended to reach injured workers, supporters and funders. Watch for a future newsletter article with more details of SCCOSH’s work.

Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH)/Injured Workers United 760 North First St., No. 2, San Jose, CA 95112.

Despite its image as a wildly successful “clean” industry, California’s Silicon Valley has the highest occupational illness rate of any manufacturing industry in the US. Extensive use of toxic chemicals, including cyanide and arsine gas and known reproductive hazards such as the solvent cellosolve go largely unnoticed. Most of the 184,000 electronics workers are low paid assemblers, 70% are women and 40% are people of color (Latino and Asian). The industry is completely non-union on the West Coast and the state health and safety agency (Cal OSHA) has been scheduled for dismantling by the Governor. Workers injured on the job face an uphill battle for medical attention, compensation and rehabilitation because the worker’s compensation system functions to protect employers and insurers, not workers.

That’s why chemically disabled workers founded Injured Workers United in 1983, as a project of SCCOSH, a coalition of unions, workers, community activists, and health and legal professionals. IWU’s purpose is two-fold: to support ill and injured workers in their efforts to

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Since 1979 SCCOSH has become known as “the whistleblower of Santa Clara County” for achievements like a Hazards Hotline for electronics workers, a successful campaign to ban the suspected carcinogen TCE, and helping to pass California’s Right to Know law. In the four years since SCCOSH assisted 30 workers to establish IWU, it has expanded to include all injured workers in Santa Clara County. Recent efforts include the establishment of the first occupational Medicine Clinic, providing expert, unbiased care to workers in their own communities; occupational disease legislation covering workers in high-risk jobs; and helping to launch similar worker’s groups elsewhere in California and in New Mexico.

IWU’s major campaign for 1987-88 concerns worker’s reproductive health and is a coalition effort to compel industry and government to remove chemicals dangerous to reproductive health, and to conduct a long-term study of the health of electronics workers. IWU is active in the fight to save Cal OSHA, which has been much stronger than the federal agency in the area of toxic chemical control. IWU and SCCOSH have also supported the Watsonville cannery strikers and efforts to unionize the electronics industry.

RESIST’s $400 grant went to print a new brochure intended to reach injured workers, supporters and funders. Watch for a future newsletter article with more details of SCCOSH’s work.

The Resist Pledge System

The most important source of Resist’s income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledger!

Yes, I would like to pledge $ _______ monthly to the work of Resist.

Name ___________________________
Address _________________________
City___________________________State____Zip_____________________

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