

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT  
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PRESENTED BY BARBARA AND STEVE (NY TEACHERS  
BRANCH) AS BACKGROUND TO BRANCH RESOLUTION  
ON PORTUGAL AND THE P.R.P.

## THE PRP AND THE SITUATION IN PORTUGAL TODAY

In the recent period within our international movement there has arisen a considerable, if at times muted, discussion of some aspects of PRP policy -- their concept of the party, participation in unions, elections, the role of immediate demands in a revolutionary situation, etc. Unfortunately, these discussions have tended to be conducted in a somewhat abstract manner. The revolutionary attitude to these questions in the concrete, in Portugal, depends upon one's perception of two more basic questions: (1) What is the road to power in Portugal? and, (2) What is the content of the formulation "Socialism or Fascism"? \*

### I. PORTUGAL: THE ROAD TO POWER

The PRP correctly believes that Portugal has been in a revolutionary situation for well over a year.

But the path to power is often tortuous and prolonged, and Portugal is no exception. A "revolutionary situation" can even last for years and can not be equated with "the moment for the seizure of power". It is therefore no criticism to say that the PRP's road to workers' power has changed, often sharply, at different stages in the revolutionary process.

Through all these stages, the PRP was always conscious of the major obstacle to the actual seizure of power -- the dangerous disparity between, on the one hand, the objective possibilities, and, on the other, the development of working class political consciousness and organizations. (As evidence of this disparity they cite the widespread belief within the class that the MFA

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\* The sources of the information which provides the basis for this discussion article are (1) interviews with about a dozen Workers Commissions (WCs); (2) interviews with about a dozen PRP cadres and WC activists in several cities; (3) a file of Revolução; (4) the PRP-BR Manifesto of March 10, 1975; (5) the PRP report on the first CRTSM Congress; (6) the PRP Nov. 10, 1975 pamphlet, Contra a guerra civil: Insurreição Armada (Against Civil War: Armed Insurrection), hereafter referred to as the Nov. 10 pamphlet; (7) the official PRP analysis of the Nov. 25 defeat; (8) the PRP's May 1, 1976 pamphlet, E Agora? O Proletariado Na Hora Das Grandes Escolhas (And Now? The Proletariat in the Hour of Great Options), hereafter referred to as E Agora, page references being to the PRP's mimeographed translation into French. Note should be made that the PRP promised an English translation before the Portuguese presidential elections. (8) a considerable number of PRP

and the military in general would solve their political problems, would even make the socialist revolution. (E Agora, p. 13)) PRP policies essentially revolve around the task of trying to overcome this disparity.

The first stage was from March through August 1975. Relatively little is known, documented on this stage and this report will not focus on it. The PRP actively pursued the work of organizing (embryo) soviets -- the CRTs and Interimpresa (a body of delegates from 45 Workers Commissions in the Lisbon area).

At the same time, the PRP won considerable and growing influence among the military, and its influence was found even in the July 8 MFA document, the "MFA-People Project", which proposed to establish local "popular assemblies" with a view to regional and national coordinating bodies. Although the PRP is not responsible for the fact that under the MFA document the popular assemblies were all ultimately under military control.

The MFA-People document legitimized the PRP's concept of building popular power, CRTs, etc. But it was also a response to the PRP's work, and, to some, an attempt to outflank the PRP's nascent creations. In fact, it seems to have undercut the CRTs whose second Congress, later in July, was very sparsely attended -- while the MFA's "popular assemblies" never came into existence. Subsequently, the PRP all but abandoned the project of building the CRTs in the factories (more on this below).

Also during the summer of '75, the PRP intensified its work in the army, and in mid-August emerged the famous COPCON document, posing the issue of popular power more firmly and clearly than ever before in the military Left. (Though even there the governing body would be an alliance of the MFA Left and revolutionary organizations that approved the document.)

It was during this period that the PRP developed the concept that the taking of workers' power in Portugal would assume a unique form. In E Agora (p. 19) we read:

"Until the end of the 5th Government ((the last government to be headed by Gonçaves, a man believed by the PRP to be to the left of the CP and independent of it -- our comment)) the left was in such a majority within the political and also within the military power, that a rupture within the power would have been possible, expelling the right and constituting a revolutionary government with a revolutionary program. That was our proposal, but it was not possible because of the weakness of (the individuals of) the left military within the political military power." 1

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1. An explanation of this PRP strategy, by a Lisbon area PRP organizer, was

No doubt the PRP, in urging this course, hoped thereby to close the gap between the objective situation and the lagging subjective side. But all this was to be done under conditions of mass illusions in the MFA, no independent regional or national organizations (soviets at best embryonic). The PRP, not being "the unique and true party of the working class" could only influence the left military, not lead.

Many questions come to the fore about this perspective. But, in any case, with the fall of the Gonçaves government, this strategy was no longer possible and the PRP had to evolve a new strategy. Which they did "immediately": an armed insurrection would be necessary.

#### WHY IS ARMED INSURRECTION ON THE AGENDA?

On the one hand, says the PRP, the bourgeoisie had been frightened by the massive class struggle and had given up the perspective of democratic development. But at the same time the bourgeoisie was unable to make a civil war. "The right does not control the army in Portugal... the commune of Lisbon already exists from North to South". Therefore, the bourgeoisie must go for a coup, "relying upon mercenaries hired in Spain or simply invaders from NATO or the U.S." in order to wage a "civil war". (Nov. 10 pamphlet, pp. 2-3)

In response to this situation, the PRP developed (or at least clarified for itself) a revolutionary strategy for Portugal (a semi-industrialized country but one with a working class several times larger, proportionately, than Russia in 1917). This view is developed in their Nov. 10 pamphlet. In the absence of a revolutionary party or soviets, and with the CP and SP dominant, the PRP decided that the only solution now (unlike the Gonçaves period) was a preventative armed insurrection.

"Objective conditions can not wait for organization." (p. 1) An insurrection was to be organized.

But how or who would make the insurrection in the absence of party or soviet is never really answered.

Since the PRP was deadly serious about the insurrection, only two alternatives are implicit. Either the masses would be roused by propaganda and agitation to make the insurrection themselves, or, the PRP (and FUR?) in alliance with the military left would at least initiate the action with the expecta-

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that although illusions in the MFA as a whole had had a demobilizing effect on the working class, if there had been a left-right split within the MFA and the wing "identifying with the workers" had moved for power, that would not have demobilized the class. That wing taking power would have established the "MFA-People Alliance, which would have been the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat", a "transitional gov't to allow a workers' revolution."

tion that the masses would follow. Ultimately, as the danger of a right wing coup loomed (Nov. 25), the PRP appears to have moved toward the latter alternative and pressed the left military for decisive action. On Nov. 21 they finally succeeded in generating the "Manifesto of the 18"(revolutionary army officers).

However, the insurrection itself would "as in the case of Castro" represent only the first stage of the revolution. The working class was ready for insurrection, and it would be mobilized by the revolutionary process and would by-pass the CP leadership. Therefore, as a result of the insurrection, soviets would appear (the PRP by then had given up on forming them ahead of the insurrection). Furthermore, the insurrection would generate, for the first time, a real workers party "selected by the workers, not self-appointed". (This view that the party would be formed only in the process of insurrection was expressed as early as the PRP Manifesto of March '75). This party and soviets would then proceed to the stage of forming a revolutionary government based on organs of popular power.

#### A CORRECT STRATEGY?

There are some obvious problems.

(1) For our movement, the classical road (revolution by the masses organized into soviets, in which a revolutionary workers party predominates) was generated by the 1917 revolution. But, as we all know, a "classic model" does not mean one which must be "repeated". A classic model may occur only once and still be classic (for example: the non-recurring yet still classic bourgeois French Revolution). The PRP's digression from the 1917 model therefore does not prove the PRP is wrong. But if the Portuguese model is "correct", legitimate, then surely it raises many questions about our previous analyses of the Cuban and Chinese revolutions!

(2) The Portuguese "road to power", though heavily influenced by Castro (and Mao?) is not the same, even though the PRP comrades do not trouble to make the distinction clear -- i. e. they never contrast their views to Castro/Mao. To them, it's "We have to study the concrete reality. This is Portugal 1976." Other Countries -- Other Forms. For the PRP insists that their revolutionary road does not by-pass soviets and the party. It just reverses the order of their appearance. First the insurrection, then the soviets and party. Unless and until they appear (implies the PRP) the revolution will only be in its first, and reversible, stage.

The PRP road therefore opens the door to a freeze of power after the "first stage" (as in Cuba?). Power, if taken by small revolutionary groups allied with a military leader who is not subordinate to the party but just a "partner", raises the likelihood that the revolution would, despite the PRP's intentions,



end up as Castrist (Baathist, Boumedienne, etc....) Carvalho, it will be remembered, is an open admirer of Castro. (Is it significant that the PRP book stalls are almost exclusively devoted to work of 3rd world revolutionaries: Castro, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Cabral, etc.?)

The lack of clarity in the PRP's goals, reflected in their own praise of Castro/Mao/the NLF, certainly would encourage and support such a natural tendency on the part of the Left officers (and perhaps part of the PRP itself?) under pressure. This same lack of theoretical clarity therefore creates a situation wherein the revolutionary effort contains a strong potential of degenerating into a coup, against the wishes of the PRP.

(3) The PRP's defense of anti-partyism among the masses is more than a new left prejudice.<sup>2</sup> Anti-partyism is one of the few conceptions they do expressly link up with the orthodox Marxist tradition via their deep admiration for Rosa Luxemburg, and her supposed "spontaneity".

Revolutionary Marxists have always understood that behind spontaneism as a theory actually lie elitism and its twin, substitutionism, despite the spontaneists' horrified denial of that fact. In the last instance some one has to decide to act (as our own New Left discovered as it passed over from Luxemburg to Stalin and Mao).

The PRP road to revolution, which is closely, not just casually, linked to spontaneist traditions, demonstrates again this Leninist perception. For the PRP's "road" opens the door to the paternalistic elitist Carvalho (backed by a movement, not a party, and therefore independent of any party). Thus, just as the PRP's focus on armed insurrection without soviets or party opened the door to what could become a Left military coup, so despite its intent, the PRP road in practice threatens to become an expression of the very substitutionism that they abhor -- revolution in the name of the class, for (?) the class, but not by the class.

It is regrettable, to say the least, that the PRP's concept of the revolutionary process remains undeveloped and contradictory. It is in part a price of the fact that the PRP has come into existence practically in the middle of the revolution. But it may prove to be a heavy price. And it is doubly dangerous in our own movement, in the capitalist industrialized countries, if we allow this concept to pass unexamined<sup>3</sup>, and worse, even unmentioned. That is not the road to revolutionary clarity. We have the time to learn from Portugal, and it would be the height of irresponsibility not to do so.

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2. The a-partyism among workers is seen by the PRP as evidence that they are correct in their own a-partyism; it is not the cause of their a-partyism.
  3. The PRP's theory can not be rejected out of hand. Indeed, if the PRP or others were concerned to defend or elaborate their theory within a more "classic"

(4) Lastly, even if the PRP road is sound, is it perhaps obsolete today, or at best premature? Given the new current state of the army, the practical elimination of the influence of the left officers and the loss of most of the soldier militants due to demobilization -- given also, unlike Cuba, the presence of a now well organized trade union movement under CP control, the PRP road to power which might have had a chance of "success", pre-November, has even more questionable possibilities today.

Today, in fact, the role of a mass workers party and of soviets is, if anything, even more indispensable than in that glorious period of mass mobilizations prior to Nov. 25. Given the changed situation since then, one would expect some change in the PRP's tactical perspective for power. Regrettably, the call for armed insurrection remains (as we demonstrate below) the near exclusive propaganda and agitational focus of PRP policy.

#### THE STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

Armed with its conception, the PRP acted on it, even if "belatedly". (In a post-Nov. 25 self critique, the PRP apologized for the fact that it had not raised the question of armed insurrection widely enough or early enough). On Nov. 10, the PRP utilized a press conference to announce dramatically the separation of the Revolutionary Brigades (BR) from the PRP, and to call for the pressing immediate need for armed insurrection, to avoid a right-wing coup.

They failed. Not through lack of trying. They succeeded only, inadvertently, in giving the CP (which sought to use the PRP efforts as a ploy to gain a stronger position in the government) a new negotiating instrument with the government "left", Melo Antunes. Also, the PRP was forced, through weakness, fatally, to tolerate the CP's double dealing in another area, to watch the CP cynically maneuvering with the left officers while preparing to betray them. It was not that the PRP had illusions in the CP. It was a wing of their officer allies who

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model, they could, for example, point to the phenomena of workers revolutions in Eastern Europe. Here, in the absence of a party, the revolution took a different form. (Is that why it failed?) In Hungary, the revolution started with direct action by masses of students and workers. Only after the first stage, when power was transferred to the left-wing of the CP (Nagy and Pal Maleter, who, unlike Dubcek, were prepared to, and did, take up arms against the Russians) only then did workers Soviets arise, and they carried out the fight for two more months, until they were literally starved out.

The successful road to power in Eastern Europe, where the formation of a mass party poses enormous problems, may well take at least some forms still unanticipated. But can that as yet undiscovered formula apply to Portugal?

did (the Goncalvists, who were to the left of the CP but had illusions in it). And the PRP could do nothing about the situation because they needed to keep these officers (including Carvalho), with their illusions in the CP (perhaps a cover for refusal to act?), within the projected bloc for the insurrection.

A fuller exposition of the PRP revolutionary strategy and of its practice during Nov. 10-25 remains to be written. It is a job of more than academic interest. It is vital to the future of the revolution in Portugal.

#### THE PRP'S "LESSONS OF NOVEMBER 25"

In retrospect, the PRP made several self-criticisms: (1) the self-criticism previously mentioned: not raising the issue of insurrection harder, earlier, and to a broader audience, as well as their failure to organize their cadre really to fight for this line in the plants (E Agora, pp. 18-20); (2) admission of their lack of a strong organization -- its size, cadre, solidity -- which made it difficult to implement their policies. This self-criticism must not be misconstrued. It did not negate their previous attitude on the desirability for a coalition (FUR and the Army Left) to carry out the insurrection, in the process of which, and only then, could the party be built, and not just "self-appointed". In fact they clearly reaffirmed this conception in the very same critique. It was therefore a quantitative, not qualitative change which was admitted and implemented. The self-criticism did not, and could not, represent a real reevaluation of their concept of the party because the nature of the party is organically linked to the form which the revolutionary process will take. One can not be changed without the other.

(3) One PRP spokesman added a third self-criticism, namely, that the PRP had over-estimated its ability to break the CP ranks from the party, in action, on the night of Nov. 25. But this self-critique does not appear in any of the PRP documents. It does not appear because it can not, since the PRP has developed no substitute strategy for winning the ranks of the CP to an essentially partyless insurrection. The notion of the CP-ranks' spontaneous movement to the PRP during an insurrection must be retained if (in spite of its failure in practice on Nov. 25) the insurrection is to claim a working class base. An underestimation of the difficulties of breaking workers from the CP is therefore an illusion built into the very chance of success for the PRP strategy of an insurrection without party or soviets. To this day, the PRP can not be said to have a strategy for breaking away the CP ranks.

(4) The PRP believes that FUR lacked political homogeneity and had no effective organizational forms for the tasks of the day, i. e. "no political revolutionary leadership capable of taking the initiative and leading the process existed". (E Agora, p. 17). The obvious question and conclusion flowing from this admission about the necessary role of party and soviets are not even mentioned. And no accident either. For, again, the fundamental policy which

led to FUR is reaffirmed and practiced today, despite their own critique. (Which is not to say that we do not support the policy of forming united revolutionary fronts like FUR was supposed to be).

(5) The military left is criticized for having failed to unleash its potential on Nov. 25 (though Otelo is implicitly absolved -- "He was retained in Belem palace", though why he went there under such circumstances is not explained). However, a Lisbon district organizer of the PRP candidly expressed a contrary view, "Otelo wavered, but there were other officers who were real revolutionaries."

In any case, no conclusion is drawn about the role of the workers party in relation to the military, and there is no recognition that, short of subordination to the party, the military will either use the party for their own purposes or capitulate, as most of the left officers did on Nov. 25. Consequently, it cannot be surprising that, despite their criticism, the PRP's fundamental strategy and role for the left military remains the same.

(6) While no strategy was reevaluated, there is a section in E-Agora which must be mentioned for its potential. The PRP expects large scale mass movements on economic demands, largely inflation. But it was left at that. Current discussions with PRP militants, as well as other current PRP materials demonstrate that there is no indication of the role that these demands could play on the road to power. (More on this in the section on unions, for example no proposal to start any campaign, not even slogans to be popularized, on wages, jobs, etc.)

The PRP's road to power, and its response to the events of Nov. 25 naturally raise the question, What about Today? It is therefore in the framework of their theory of power that it seems to us current PRP policy on the unions, elections, the party, the role of immediate demands, etc. can be understood.

## THE TRADE UNIONS

The PRP does not have a principled anti-trade union policy. And the fact is that they do work actively in the Workers Commissions indirectly supports this view, since WC work is increasingly a form of union work (except in the nationalized or worker-managed properties, where the situation is more complicated). This is because the WCs are very similar in function to that of shop stewards committees, and, increasingly owe their very existence to the craft nature of the Portuguese unions, as in Great Britain.

It must be added that (1) there is no explicit work in writing on PRP union policy, (2) the only publication on unions available at the PRP is Pannekoek's "Trade Unions -- Arm of the Counterrevolution" against which Lenin polemicized in "Left Wing Communism". (3) There is, with few exceptions (discussed below), practically no union work being done, and such work is seen, at least

in today's context, as both in conflict with work in the WCs and unnecessary.

The rationale for this is as follows: The PRP argues in a lengthy economic analysis that Portugal is too poor for the bourgeoisie to grant even minor economic gains, so that socialist revolution is the only means whereby workers can protect themselves. Consequently, "it follows" (to PRP cadres) that their immediate agitational task is to carry this assessment to the working class. But this is most readily done within the WCs because (1) the workers are more directly accessible -- on the shop floor and in factory-wide meetings -- and the CP more easily combatted there. (2) The CP controls most of the unions (in industry) and, if the insurrection does not require breaking the CP hold on the unions (at least on a local level, if not nationally), then it must be pointless to put energy into union work. The WCs are not just preferred, therefore, but are also the exclusive focus of activity (even though, at this stage, in the absence of soviets, it is the unions, as multi-plant organizations, which could open the door to class-wide, or industry-wide, actions).

The PRP also concludes, from its economic analysis, that those functions in which unions specialize in Portugal (wages, legal rights of workers, social security, pensions, etc.) are increasingly subordinate, if not irrelevant.

For example, we were repeatedly told by PRP members of WCs that "salary increases are pointless; inflation only kills them; the real question today is POWER." Do they then oppose wage increases? No, but with one exception which is not too clear (below) the PRP does not initiate or take the lead in wage demands. ("That would build illusions.")

Equally crucial is the question of jobs (near 20% unemployed). And especially significant is unemployment among the right-tending or right-moving retornados (from Angola), 15% of the labor force. Both class interest and interest in moving the retornados to identify with the Left would dictate a policy of fighting for jobs. (In fact, apart from May Day, a demo of 500 retornados, for jobs, was the only demo we saw or heard of during our stay). PRP militants response to this was, "Yes, we call for jobs for all. But the only way to get them is through workers' power and insurrection, anything else is reformist." And that, indeed, is what their factory leaflets, which we saw, actually tell the workers, i. e. their call for jobs does not lead to any action, any demo, to mass rallies, etc. That would be pointless and reformist. "The bourgeoisie can not give jobs, so the only action response to be called for is armed insurrection." The response to the question of inflation is similar.

Unfortunately for the Portuguese workers, the most likely mass organs which could, today, organize a real campaign on jobs, inflation are the cross-plant unions. The CP won't encourage that. And the PRP, seeing no revolutionary point to such campaigns, sees no real function to working in unions.

The refusal to raise and fight for immediate demands is one thing. But the additional de facto, general, abstention from unions in the absence of regional, multi-plant or industry-wide WCs (the only one existing now is in the Lisbon area, CP controlled, and defunct in practice) seems to leave the class defenseless, until the insurrection.

It also seems likely (though language difficulties made pursuing the point difficult) that this ultimatistic attitude must also affect the PRP on other issues -- on issues for which WCs (as distinct from the unions) are the operating point, but we could not be sure on this point.

Lastly, the PRP attitude toward unions seems particularly damaging when applied to white collar workers. Most of these workers have only recently been organized into unions for the first time. Mainly by the SP. To these workers, at this stage, the unions could easily seem even more important than WCs (which don't exist in many of their work places). The PRP response to the organization of these workers has been hostile. A Lisnave CRT document, Sept. 11, 1975, published by the PRP, tells the workers that these white collar workers are privileged, and that their salary demands are demands for money which does not exist, and which in any case would come from the needs of others (workers). The fact is, the article continues, workers in the immediate period ahead can not choose between privation and plenty. The future, whether under socialism or fascism, will necessarily be one of privation. But if we organize for power, then at least all will share equally in what exists.

One wonders: in 1917 did Lenin just call for "Bread, Land and Peace" through "soviet power"? Until the power was seized, didn't the Bolsheviks fight for the immediate needs short of the armed insurrection -- 8 hour day, plant safety, fair rations, etc.); i. e. is it not proper to link the two in action rather than counterpose them as the PRP appears to do in practice all too often?

Since life in practice transcends even the best schemas, the PRP, in an uneven and spasmodic way, has at times made precisely such links in actions. One example is their attempt to link the neighborhood committees with the farmers by bringing food into the city directly, by-passing the middlemen. (The UDP protested that this would alienate the petty bourgeoisie who also need to be won to the revolution.)

We turn now to the 3 "exceptions" to a policy of de facto ignoring the unions. (1) In the Fishermen's union where union and WC are identical (due to the industrial nature of the union?). (2) In one plant in Marinha Grande, where the workers insisted that the PRP comrades must become the union delegates and representatives to Intersindical. (3) In the construction workers unions, which is only partly an "exception". Here the PRP did get involved in the issue of government failure to approve the union contract. But the PRP did not act through any position in the unions. (In construction there are over 50



different unions in each of 5 regions of Portugal). Rather, through forming CLACC, a national rank and file instrument. (Unlike our own TDC, CLACC was part of a policy of abstention from the unions. <sup>4</sup> The effort was momentarily successful but ultimately failed. And the CP used the failure to get the membership to recall several PRP members who held union posts in the Setubal area by virtue of having been elected as CPers prior to their recruitment to the PRP. (Was any fight made to keep these positions?)

The lack of spelled out theory on the role of unions in this period in Portugal has the further, if secondary, consequence that a totally useless argument was offered by a PRP leader in support of their positions: "300,000 are in the construction unions, but only 20,000 voted in the elections." Conclusion? That workers are indifferent to the unions. (Was the fact that only one slate was fielded, by the CP, of consequence for the vote?) The notion that the workers are indifferent to the unions was repeatedly and vigorously denied by non-PRP WC leaders when questioned on this.

There may be some uneasiness within the PRP on the union question. There is general agreement that the past several months have witnessed a rising role for the unions. With inflation and lay-offs promising to become dominant issues, the unions can well go to the front of the battle. Consequently, another PRP leader informed us that the next meeting of their National Committee will re-assess their union work and stance.

But to do so significantly will be very difficult for the PRP, since a change in union work will, to be effective, require a change in other modes of work, and perhaps even in the way in which the armed insurrection has been formulated to date. That is why a qualitative change in union work does not appear likely at this time.

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4. In November the construction workers, through their tremendous mass demonstrations, won a 40% wage increase. This was frozen immediately following Nov. 25. When the freeze ended March 1 and the government failed to implement the contract, the PRP took the initiative through their influence in WCs in construction in the Setubal area to set up a national Committee of Struggle for the Collective Contracts (Portuguese initials: CLACC) to link up all the WCs. The contract demands, under discussion since May '75, include higher wages, but also many other demands including, e. g., nationalization of the land for construction to prevent speculation. CLACC was strong enough to pull some of the unions along to a certain extent, but was not able to prevent the CP-controlled Intersindical suddenly stepping in, negotiating a compromise (raising the pay of the lowest and most numerous grades) and thus at least temporarily demobilizing the struggle which had been on the verge of a potentially explosive national strike.

There are opportunities ahead to break the CP's hold on the unions which must not be missed, and which can, at this time, be best effected from within. For example, in a recent Intersindical document, it is announced that Intersindical is for the use of binding arbitration in settling contracts, as well as for appending salary re-opened clauses to contracts. And a clause for contract settlement with retroactive pay back to the time the negotiations began -- a clause which could easily be used to legitimize protracted negotiations beyond expiration dates, aiming at peaceful settlements instead of struggle.<sup>5</sup>

In the face of the coming battles, it must unfortunately be noted that the leadership role of ALL the far left groups has declined over the past 8 months. MES has lost much of its influence in the textile unions to the CP, while the SP has consolidated its hold upon most white collar unions. This parallels the decline of the revolutionary left in leadership of the WCs as well.

Lastly, there is considerable interest in factories in favor of industrial ("vertical") unions as opposed to the dominant existing craft unions. The CP is ambivalent on this issue. It would make it harder to keep control of the unions. On the other hand, the change would facilitate the weakening, if not elimination of the WCs, with which the CP's top leaders are uncomfortable, despite the fact that in industry most of the WCs are CP-led.

The PRP expressed no interest in this problem when we raised it.

## THE PARTY

From the very beginning of IS collective acquaintance with the PRP, it has been a common criticism that the PRP lacked appreciation of this question, though the degree of emphasis on this among us varied (due to a misconception, below). This weakness involved failure to recruit, publish their newspaper regularly, etc., and was reflected in the PRP's oft-quoted rebuttal to the effect that "Castro had no party, and the Bolsheviks in 1917 had only 3000 members" (actually closer to 60,000 by April 1917).

But the most significant failure, of which the above are mere manifestations, lay with the failure to place the party at the center of the revolutionary process along with soviets.

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5. The Intersindical program can also be read as very radical, e.g. their formulations on how a cost of living index should be calculated. But there are other formulations -- one of which is that "exceptions (to negotiated pay scales) to avoid the risk of layoffs can be allowed only by decision of the workers" -- clearly aimed at providing maximum opportunities for CP manipulations. In that connection, an ex-CP CLACC leader we met, now close to but not in the PRP, analyzed the construction sell-out as due to the CP's wanting to be able to call out the construction workers if the need arose later, e.g. during the electoral period, as a pressure tactic, according to their sectarian needs of the day.

To recapitulate, the PRP claims emphatically NOT to be "the" party, and that the immediate need is to build a front (like they tried to do with FUR) for joint action up to and including the insurrection. (Despite the failings of FUR, this concept has not changed). "Out of the insurrection will come a party."

Given this conception of the revolutionary process in Portugal, it appears that no fundamental change in the PRP's attitude toward party building is possible without other political changes as well. Their party form derives from their different concept of its function.

Despite the fact that more stress is placed on recruitment and the press since the November events, these are shifts in emphasis, not substance, though they were confused among us with basic changes when they occurred. In doing so we forgot that organizational forms are expressions of political tasks, and the PRP conception of its tasks has no room, and is indeed antithetical to a strong, directive force (keeping in mind the contradictory nature of the so-called Luxemburgist view of the party discussed above).<sup>6</sup>

One by-product of the PRP attitude to the party is their admirable non-sectarianism (FUR, joint May Day rallies, etc.) Actually, however, their non-sectarianism is inevitably overdone. It has a dangerous side as well, for it stems in part and reflects the PRP view that the seizure of power can occur without a powerful coordinating party and that a coalition can substitute for that party.

6. PRPers say that they fight for the PRP line, but when they are elected as representatives/delegates by a workers assembly, then (unlike the UDP) they say they will represent the will of that body (not of the PRP) -- with the aim of "building the independence of the organs of popular power". Similarly, the PRP states categorically that they oppose executive committees of WCs making proposals to general assemblies, arguing that all initiatives must come from the ranks. The PRP thus see the party entirely as an instrument of the class -- as against the Stalinist conception held by both the UDP and CP of a party substituting itself for or manipulating the self-activity of the class (and against our Leninist conception of the party, which they do not mention).

We noted, however, some contradictions in practice to this conception:

- (1) the PRP is very anxious to recruit individual CPers who "have the confidence of the workers", those who have been elected as WC leaders. This seems to be a substitute for a strategy that would split the CP. Thus the PRP during peaks of militancy (recently in Setubal and Oporto in construction) is able to carry the general assemblies and control the WCs. But when things quiet down, the CP mobilizes its rank & file for the next meeting and reverses the situation.
- (2) Post-Nov. 25 the PRP and friendly officers have recognized that rank & file soldiers in the SUV were not prepared to lead, that they were totally dependent on the "left" officers. No self-criticism for not having foreseen such a situation seems to be implied.

## THE PRP AND SOVIETS: THE CRTs AND INTERIMPRESA

In the spring of '75, amidst the plant seizures and rebuffs to the counter-revolution, the most dramatic and encouraging manifestations of dual power began to emerge as embryo soviets. The PRP played an exemplary role in this process through its initiatives in forming two institutions: the CRTSMs and the Interimpresa.

By October '75, both institutions, as well as many neighborhood committees, had disappeared or had seriously dwindled. Unfortunately this disappearance was seldom noted among us, and we could find nothing in writing by the PRP to explain it. (A British comrade is currently making a study of this problem.) And yet, an understanding of this history is crucial to any real grasp of the situation a year ago and today. It may well be that the disappearance of these two institutions, their failure to take hold, played a significant role in the PRP's de facto shift in tactics respecting these autonomous workers organs.

The PRP is, of course, still in favor of soviets. But neither its press nor its activists in the WCs raise the issue of local or regional soviets any longer. Understandably, too. For, as we have noted above, the new post-Goncalves perspective in practice implicitly postponed the immediate task of soviet building to the same time as or immediately following the armed insurrection.

Of course there is much more to it than that, and, hopefully, more light will be cast by the study currently being made by our comrade in Lisbon. Our own hunch is that the CRTs were outflanked by the left turn of the military government in July '75 when it advocated forming popular assemblies (under ultimately military control). The PRP seems to have perceived this as an advance, not an outflanking. This outflanking, of course, had the additional effect of feeding workers' illusions in the MFA, and reduced the "need" for independent regional soviets. It must have been hard for the PRP to fight these illusions, since PRP-supported army officers were MFA leaders at this stage.

The effect on Interimpresa may have been similar. But a different analysis was offered us, by one leading cadre of the PRP, for the demise of Interimpresa. According to him, it died after its second Congress due to UDP "sectarian, party-building tactics". (Unlike the PRP, the UDP does believe in party control of soviets, etc., and acted on that line at Interimpresa. The UDP, for its own Stalinist reasons, makes no concessions to anti-partyism). To say the least, this PRP explanation of the demise of Interimpresa seems superficial.

Another unresolved problem (due to lack of information and conflicting reports) is that of the role of the CRTs. To some extent they seem to have been conceived as substitutes for the party -- direct instruments of working

class unity (the real role of the WCs and soviets). (See document printed in the U.S., "Documents of the Portuguese Revolution").

### ELECTORAL POLICY

Leninists have no principled position against participation in bourgeois elections. Our rule has been: participate when feasible, so long as workers have illusions in bourgeois institutions. On this ground, the Bolsheviks participated in elections in 1917 throughout the period from February to October, when the revolution was at a far more advanced stage than it is in Portugal today -- when organized dual power existed. (Of course our policy does not mandate participating in elections -- see our own problem of resources, and in Britain the existence of the Labour Party.) The PRP insists that it too does not have a principled position against elections, only a tactical one.

Yet it is interesting to note that the PRP was the only Left organization (in agreement with the MFA) to boycott the first election to the Constituent Assembly, in April '75. The PRP line then was "boycott the elections, build the CRTs". Should the two have been counterposed at that stage in Portuguese history? Was armed insurrection then on the agenda? Could the workers' illusions (reformist) that elections (which they had been demanding for 50 years) were a gain for the workers movement be disabused by a policy of abstention? Couldn't the PRP have devised a more Leninist tactic which did not counterpose elections and direct action?

"But the electoral road is a dead end. Only revolution can solve our problems today," says the PRP. Absolutely true, and, absolutely essential to say so. But from that it does not follow that one does not participate in elections. It dictates merely that one must say clearly in the campaign that only revolution will solve the tasks of the day, etc. (as the PRP claims it hopes to do in the current Presidential Election in Portugal).

Participation in elections is not electoralism. The latter is a belief that elections can solve the problems of the working class. Our participation has nothing in common with that, any more than it did in 1917. We would never deny that even bourgeois elections can be useful to the working class, as the Otelo campaign itself shows.

In this year's parliamentary elections, the PRP view was that "only the bourgeoisie can gain from the elections, since they legitimate the rule of the bourgeoisie." (Don't they always?) Besides, armed insurrection is on the order of the day. As for Lenin? Well, every situation is different. True. But to say so is not enough -- at least it cannot be enough for us. We have the obligation to our cadres to explain how the situation is different, etc.

The situation is made even more confusing by two facts: (1) Despite the

predominant ultra-left rationale for opposing the election, the PRP did, in fact, at one point consider participating, but only under the following conditions: The PRP organized several meetings to explore running a united slate of itself, MES, FSP and UDP. The PRP's proposal for a United Front campaign for the parliamentary elections specified (1) that the campaign would be run in the name of the front, not of the participating parties; (2) that candidates would be chosen by worker assemblies on a non-party basis; (3) that the campaign would be one of revolutionary propaganda, with the candidates withdrawing before the vote and calling for abstention. Withdrawal before the vote was necessary because otherwise waging a campaign for votes would mean muting the revolutionary message, a charge the PRP says is born out by the UDP's actual behavior. The PRP's second demand was the key stumbling block to the formation of a united front, the other groups insisting on running "their stars, not workers". (E Agora, p. 40; Revolução, 3/6/76; discussions with PRPers).

The logic of such a position is that when such a front failed to materialize, the PRP should have reacted by saying, "Given the vast proliferation of revolutionary sects and the failure of our united front, it is pointless to add to workers' confusion by adding still another revolutionary slate to this line-up, so we'll sit this one out."

Instead, the PRP reacted with an ultra-left, anti-electoralist campaign. In addition to the previously noted reasons, we were told by a PRP leader (and found confirmed in E Agora) that (1) elections can only distract us from the more important work in the plants and barracks; (2) we refuse to expose the names of 5000 comrades needed to get on the ballot; (3) the multiplicity of left parties confuses workers and is a big obstacle to worker unity; (4) what counts now is who has the arms, not who wins elections; and (5) the elections will only constitute a legal coup for the bourgeois Right. (In fact the parliamentary elections in April were a set-back to bourgeois expectations, contrary to PRP claims. Ironically, it is the current presidential election, which the PRP is not boycotting, which may well be the real victory for the right).

After two abstentions, the PRP has now announced support, and was undoubtedly the main propellant of the Carvalho presidential campaign. (At a branch meeting we attended, the spokesman encountered considerable questioning by workers who had just finished arguing among their shopmates for abstention.)

The Carvalho candidacy is a skillful intervention. It has the serious potential of creating a climate for revolutionary ideas. But a question arises: if participation in parliamentary elections legitimizes the bourgeoisie, how about participation in elections for a post which is far more important to the bourgeoisie than the recent parliamentary elections?

And, if the danger of parliamentary illusions exists, how about the danger of increasing illusions in Carvalho himself? To the PRP, he is "a man who



represents the workers." He is also the man who failed when the chips were down in his own type of scenario, on Nov. 25, and on earlier occasions, too. Otelo is a man whose revolutionary ambivalence and Castrist ambitions are prominent. Despite this, the PRP press gives no indication that its support will be in any sense "critical".

One rationale for supporting Carvalho is that it will unite the working class, and could even force the CP to support him. (This is a step backward. Their previous illusions were of being able to pull the ranks of the CP during an insurrection. Now they have expanded it to moving the CP machine). But if this unlikely event did occur (CP endorsement), what would CP intervention do to PRP hopes of making the candidacy an act of confrontation and polarization, and an act of party building, or even of movement building in opposition to the CP and bourgeoisie? (Otelo undoubtedly will win rank & file CP -- and SP -- votes.)

## II. SOCIALISM OR FASCISM

All of this brings us to a second premise of PRP politics -- Socialism or Fascism in the immediate period ahead. (We will leave aside for the moment the actual content of this slogan, in which several leading PRP comrades made clear that a Soares government under Eanes as President would be a Fascist regime, de facto.)

The formula, Socialism or Fascism, undoubtedly represents the proper start for any analysis of Portugal today. The world economic crisis (the end of the post-war boom), the backwardness of Portugal's agrarian sector as well as its industry; the profoundly revolutionary self-mobilization of the working class during the past year, all point to the likelihood that the bourgeois democratic regime which Portuguese capitalism had hoped to install could be abortive, utopian.

Thus, whatever the form of bourgeois power, the economic situation is such that a gigantic confrontation with the working class seems unavoidable. The potential for social revolution in the course of and as a result of this confrontation is therefore genuine. For despite the setback of Nov. 25, the situation today is characterized by a still undefeated and very militant proletariat.

This is not to say that the situation is as favorable as it was a year ago, at the height of the near-dissolution of the army. Demobilization and administrative repression have eliminated most of the Left in the army. (The revolutionary current is reduced to clandestinity). The trade unions have grown in number and influence, but at the same time the WCs' role has receded relative to the unions, and the danger exists of their integration into the unions (or into the state in the case of the nationalized plants and farms). The CP encourages these tendencies and hopes for increasing strength of their unions relative to

the WCs. The position of the revolutionary left in the unions and WCs has weakened (textile, Lisnave, Setenave, TAP are just the most prominent cases, though there have been lesser gains as well). The PRP's growth has been real but not qualitative. The CP has weakened, though again not qualitatively. The shift of cadres from the CP to Left groups is still a matter of individuals, though many CP ranks openly consult with PRP'ers. An unorganized, diffused revolutionary current exists within the CP. But overall, it is the continued strength of the working class, and its relative independence of the party and union bureaucracies, which has and continues to provide time, breathing space for the revolutionary movement and its perspectives, and permit us to say that the situation in Portugal remains one in which revolution is still on the agenda.

To realize this potential, the revolutionary movement must take the lead in proposing a program, a concrete program to meet the needs, even partial needs, of the working class, on jobs, inflation, wage freeze, etc. The course of fighting for these can today open the door once again to the centralization in struggle of all WCs, unions, other autonomous organs, aiming at a national Congress. This can, in turn, pose the problem of dual power. It is only in this real united front of the entire class that the CP and SP can be defeated and the revolutionary party built within the working class. The SP, through its open counterrevolutionary role, and the CP (and UDP) through their efforts to limit the struggle and betray it in the name of "preventing fascism", can only be destroyed in a process such as this.

Failing this, the nature of the bourgeois regime in the period ahead can not be determined in the abstract. If the CP/SP succeed through their different means in imposing a defeat upon the working class, then there will be no "need" for fascism, since there are several weighty factors which resist that drift in favor of an alternative mode of governing: (1) The imposition of a fascist regime (in the scientific, not populist, new left sense) is contrary to the wishes and needs of European capitalism, if it can be avoided, if only because of the need to assure a peaceful evolution in Spain. (2) The attempt to impose a fascist regime could very well be counterproductive. For a people just out of 50 years of fascism, an attempt to reintroduce it could create the conditions for a mass revulsion and armed defense of democracy which could easily pass over to social revolution. (3) The post Nov. 25 regime was too weak to attack the working class. The new regime is not yet (May '76) qualitatively different. To defeat the working class the Portuguese capitalists have clearly chosen, for the moment, a third alternative, a strong state able to do the job by social democratic oppression -- a powerful weapon with which we are all too familiar.

The new presidential regime is already close to being such a state. (It has yet to consolidate by winning its repressive spurs). The constitution may be full of socialist rhetoric, but the real power lies with the President -- a general, with power to appoint the premier, dissolve parliament, control the army, declare laws unconstitutional.

The threat of fascism is then a correct strategic concept for the situation in Portugal. But it does not follow that the present tactical perspective mandates a call for the "immediate" seizure of power (which the PRP plainly sought after Nov. 10).

Of course, there are indeed left forces in Portugal who oppose the call for armed insurrection for essentially counterrevolutionary reasons. The Maoist UDP uses the lack of a party as evidence that there is no revolutionary situation in Portugal at all. On the agenda is only the anti-Fascist stage, and therefore proletarian armed insurrection is adventurist. The Maoists reject both armed insurrection and the existence of a revolutionary situation at this stage. The PRP views the two concepts as identical.

Any policy for the seizure of power which is counterposed to, or does not stem from the fight for unity of the class around a program of immediate demands and around the organization of instruments of workers' power is likely to result in a defeat far more profound than that of Nov. 25. <sup>7</sup>

A revolutionary situation, such as exists in Portugal today, is not identical with a situation in which the proletariat is on the verge of seizing power. Russia was in a revolutionary situation from February 1917 on, but the working class was not in a position to seize the power until October, though the Bolsheviks called for arming the workers (but not for immediate armed insurrection) all through that period. In fact, the slogan of the 1917 revolution, because it was based on mass workers institutions, was never "armed insurrection", but "Power to the soviets" -- the arms were to defend the soviets.

Furthermore, just as armed insurrection is distinct from "arm the workers", so is "armed insurrection" also distinct, at times, from the actual seizure of power. For example: in the period immediately before Nov. 25, the seizure of power by the working class was not possible (given the role of the CP and the lack of soviets). But the army Left, and a workers militia led even by minority revolutionary groups could undoubtedly have checked the right-wing military coup. Had this occurred, Nov. 25 would have been analogous to the Kornilov days in 1917, in which a coup by the right was blocked without the workers seizing the power. But that successful blocking effort opened the door to a vast shift in worker allegiances, permitting mobilizations of the class such as have already occurred at least twice in the past year in Portugal. And this in turn led, in 1917, to the seizure of power by the organized workers, led by a mass revolutionary party, in the period immediately following.

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7. Although the words they use are the same, it is not clear that the PRP ranks believe that the necessity for an immediate armed insurrection is as "immediate" as it is for the leadership.

Revolutionary ardor is not enough. To understand the Portuguese revolution, and our own, far more attention must be paid by us to revolutionary theory as manifested in Portugal. For this reason, it is the height of political irresponsibility to refuse, as we have done, to respond to criticism of PRP policies -- especially criticism which originates within our very own movement.

We have barely touched some of the problems which need discussion. In addition to the British comrade's study on the CRTs and Interimpresa, we need more information on the relation of the PRP to the MFA in its various stages; the SUV; PRP tactics and negotiations in the period just prior to Nov. 25; and, not least, the theory which governed its work in the FUR.

In conclusion, we reiterate. Despite its many weaknesses, the PRP remains the most significant revolutionary organization in Portugal. The future of the Portuguese revolution, to the extent that it depends on an existing party, is intimately linked to the future of the PRP. Support it we must and will. But it is also our duty to ourselves as well as to them, to make of Portugal a testing ground for our theories, to further our understanding of the revolutionary process, and to educate our cadres in these theories through the medium of a live example.