

THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION AND THE PRP (draft)

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE: This is the draft of a document that was mandated several months ago by the International Subcommittee. We apologize for its delay. It is presently only in draft form, as the EC has not been able to discuss it.. In addition, the concluding section (part V) is not yet finalized. However we feel that even in this incomplete form the document will serve to lay out and justify our support for the PRP - its strategy, its tactics, its relation to the working class, and the ~~xxx~~ leadership it provides the working class on the road to state power.

A completed and revised version of this document will be available shortly following the convention and will lay the basis for the further development of our analysis of the Portuguese revolution in the critical months ahead.

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(Part V is not ~~z~~ included here and will be available soon)..

THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION AND THE PRP

I. BUILDING THE PARTY IN THE REVOLUTION.

Among the most difficult tasks revolutionaries can face is to have to build a revolutionary workers' party, from scratch, in the very midst of a revolutionary period.

This is not only an exceptionally difficult problem, it is also extremely dangerous. Yet it is a task revolutionaries have had to face many times in this century. It is precisely this task that faces our comrades, the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat (PRP), in Portugal today.

There was no Bolshevik party in Portugal when the pre-revolutionary period began on April 25, 1974. That has been the main difficulty facing the Portuguese revolutionary process from the very beginning. This is the main reason why the revolutionary process has lasted so long, without yet resulting in workers successfully taking power. Because of the absence of a mass revolutionary party, the Portuguese revolution has not, and could not have, unfolded along precisely the same lines as the Russian Revolution.

If the Portuguese revolution fails, we already know why--the absence of a revolutionary party in April 1974. But defeat is not inevitable. The revolution can still succeed, for so long as the working class is not defeated the party can still be built.

As we have said, Portugal is not the first revolution in which the problem of building a party from scratch has been raised, and unfortunately it is obvious it won't be the last. There is not likely to be a Bolshevik party in Spain the day the fascist monarchy crumbles and the new period of revolution in Spain begins. Not to mention Italy, where the revolutionary left has a very real and promising base among workers but is riddled with problems of Maoism, centrism, confusion over the nature of the unions, etc. In fact, the reality is that in the new period of revolutionary struggle in the weak links of capitalism internationally, this problem will arise over and over again until there is a fundamental revolutionary breakthrough, in some country. Such a development would change the whole balance of forces of the workers' movement and stimulate the much more rapid formation of revolutionary parties in many countries.

There's an important reason why we stress the question of the revolutionary party right at the start. Without the revolutionary party to give leadership, no successful working class revolution is possible. Or, as the PRP program bluntly puts it, "Without a party all struggles of the proletariat end in suicide." Both our theory and our experience prove this. For the working class to seize power requires the conscious, collective mass action of the vast majority of the whole class. This means that mass organs of workers' power, coordination and above all political leadership are absolutely required.

We are totally convinced of this not just from Marxist texts and history, but from the experience of the class struggle. After all, if only revolutionary socialists can provide the organizational backbone and political direction needed to sustain a rank and file contract movement in the Teamsters union or a rank and file campaign for jobs in Britain, leadership of a revolutionary party is obviously a thousand times more essential in winning a socialist revolution.

However, the reality of revolutionary struggle is much more complex than this totally correct but simple generalization. Just because the party doesn't exist at the beginning of the revolution doesn't mean the revolution is foredoomed to defeat. Obviously, there is no way for revolutionaries to "hold up" events till the party exists. Rather, in that instance the role for revolutionaries is to immediately take a full part in the struggles that break out, and within those struggles to build the party.

Of course--we repeat again--it is far better to avoid this problem by building the politics, the cadres and the roots of the party before the revolution. The I.S. in the U.S., Britain and other countries is working to build a party today, long before a revolutionary crisis. The Russian Revolution succeeded precisely because the Bolshevik Party was built ahead of time. At the outbreak of the Revolution in February 1917 it had 24,000 members. Its cadres were working class leaders in the factories. It had already won over the vanguard of the industrial working class. A party with these kinds of roots can provide leadership at every stage of the revolutionary process, overcome the difficulties and survive the mistakes that even the very best revolutionary parties (including the Bolsheviks) will make in the course of the struggle. By the time they took power in October, the Bolsheviks were a mass party of 240,000.

In an unfolding revolutionary crisis any group (revolutionary or otherwise), even a small one, can grow very rapidly if its ideological foundations, political strategy and roots have been laid in advance. At the outbreak of the Spanish revolution in the 1930s, the Spanish Communist Party grew from an insignificant sect to a party of 100,000 in a very brief time. The Portuguese CP, which was the core of the anti-fascist resistance although its estimated membership was 5000, became a party of 100,000 within 8-12 months after April 25.

The Russian Revolution succeeded because the Bolshevik Party existed to lead the working class to power. Yet its very success accelerated the contradiction of the outbreak of revolutionary crises in Europe (and China), for which no revolutionary parties had been prepared in advance. The whole struggle of the early Communist International was the attempt to create those parties, in the very midst of the revolution. The parties built with the assistance of the Comintern played enormously important roles in proportion to their size. Indeed, in Hungary and Bavaria (1919) the CP was put in a position where it was forced to take power, before it was actually organizationally or politically prepared to do so. This kind of situation, where even a small revolutionary party must take power or face the total destruction of itself and the revolution, is not unprecedented--and could, in fact, arise in Portugal.

The most decisively important of the early Communist Parties was the KPD of Germany. At the beginning of the German Revolution of 1918-23, the Spartakusbund (the group which became the Communist Party) was very badly lacking in revolutionary experience, cadres, and understanding how to lead workers through a real revolutionary struggle. It suffered from every conceivable type of ultraleft deviation--including in various places boycotting the soviets (which the Bolsheviks also did early in the 1905 revolution, though they soon learned better), the putschist disaster of March 1921, boycotting elections on principle, and lots more. Yet the German Revolution went on for five years, in which time a mass revolutionary KPD was successfully constructed. At the end of this process, the German Revolution failed. It failed because the degeneration of the Communist International, whose early intervention and assistance had actually made the KPD possible, caused the KPD to miss the chance to launch the struggle for workers' power in 1923, the last crisis in which it had a chance to do so.

The German Revolution failed despite the fact that the party had been created. But the real lesson here for the KPD is that the party can be built, despite mistakes and enormous difficulties. It is in this kind of context that the real question of party-building in the Portuguese revolution must be understood.

In the midst of the revolutionary period that has developed since April 25, 1974, the PRP has had to develop its political views, sink its roots in the factories, and attempt to present itself to the working class as the revolutionary

~~EEEE~~ alternative. The PRP began between 1969-70 inside the Portuguese Communist Party, as a faction which stood for armed struggle to overthrow fascism. In developing its strategy and politics against the CP, the PRP broke with Stalinism. It was thus able, when the revolution broke out, to become the political expression of the goals of a revolutionary layer of workers. In the course of two years it has grown from a small nucleus of 60 people to a party of several thousand.

The PRP is not yet a mass party, but it has already avoided many of the mistakes, sometimes fatal ones, that plagued the early Communist Parties. Unlike the German Communist Party, for example, the PRP has proven in practice that it does not suffer from any disease of ultraleftism. It has never fallen into the trap of putschism, although there were times it would have been easy to do so. Although, on specific tactical grounds, the PRP did not run candidates in the national Parliamentary elections, it has no sectarian "principle" against election campaigns - as the tremendously successful Presidential campaign has shown.

The main danger facing the Portuguese revolution is the same danger that faces any attempt to build the party in the midst of the revolution - the revolution itself may be short-circuited by an effective, unified right-wing thrust and counter-revolution. This may occur at basically any point in the process, it may happen in Portugal. But if the revolution is not short-circuited, and thus far the bourgeoisie still lacks the strength and unity to do this, the PRP may succeed. It has already accomplished the most in creating a revolutionary party of any group in well over a generation.

That is why this document has been written. This document is a defense of the PRP - its policies and its perspectives, in the conditions of an unfolding revolution. In many respects the defense of the PRP is the defense of the perspective for a successful revolution. We do not consider the PRP as "the best of the Portuguese revolutionary left" - rather, the PRP is a vital force in the revolutionary process, the conscious expression of a working class actually fighting for power, and the only serious force that can produce a successful outcome of the Portuguese revolution. For most of the period since last November 25, the rest of what was the Portuguese revolutionary left has been in advanced process of demoralization, political and organizational retreat, and decomposition. The future of the best cadres of the other revolutionary groups lies inside the PRP. So does the future of rank and file Communist Party workers and cadres who are looking for an answer to the betrayals of their leadership. The success of the revolution - if it is not short-circuited - lies with the PRP.

In the course of this discussion we will also deal with the difficulties and weaknesses of the PRP. We will show how these weaknesses arise out of the contradictions of building a party in the midst of the revolution, and even in some cases from the successes the PRP has had in doing this. But no one should read this as an "apology" for the Portuguese revolution or the PRP. The PRP needs no one to apologize for it. Rather, this document is written to understand and assimilate the lessons that must be learned from the role of the PRP in the revolution.

Above all, we have to begin by showing why it was the PRP that emerged as the vehicle for the socialist revolution, from the fantastically complicated and confusing spectrum that was the Portuguese revolutionary left in the first stages of the revolutionary process. That means, in short, understanding how the PRP has built a party. We must begin by assimilating these lessons theoretically if we ever hope to turn them into practice ourselves.

II. POLICIES AND STRATEGY OF THE PRP.

With the opening up of political life on April 25, 1974, dozens of far-left and Maoist groupings suddenly emerged or formed. They represented every conceivable shade of radical and revolutionary ideas. The political fragmentation was incredible. Out of this huge spectrum the PRP was able to emerge as a genuine working class party. It won recognition and respect from revolutionary workers, even those not yet prepared to join it or any other party.

The PRP won the workers' recognition, and built a party, because of its understanding of the consciousness of Portuguese workers and the relationship it established to their struggles. Many of the most advanced workers are "non-party", in fact hostile to parties. But the PRP has never counterposed itself to them; rather the PRP has taken many key initiatives to advance the revolution. This has meant, in dozens of cases, taking advantage of the anti-party sentiments of these workers to defeat the bureaucratic maneuverers of the Socialist and Communist Parties.

By taking initiatives that "swim with the stream" of non-party consciousness, the PRP of course opens itself to many difficulties and has paid a price in certain aspects of party-building. We will discuss some of these problems in a separate section. But the success of the PRP in building a party is based precisely on the initiatives it has taken in the struggle for the past two years. We are convinced that a revolutionary party could not have been built any other way.

i) From the beginning of the revolutionary process, the PRP has been closely associated with the struggle for workers' control. It was the PRP - although not of course by itself, but along with a very broad current among the workers - that gave the "saneamento" (purging of fascists from the state apparatus, the military, and the factories) a more radical character, i.e. of workers' control. The PRP successfully fought for the line that the only successful purging of fascists must be carried out directly by workers in the factories, the media, the press, etc. No other party consistently linked saneamento ~~xxx~~ to workers' control.

ii) The PRP is known as a party that stands for arming the workers. On September 28, 1974, the first attempted Spinoist coup, the PRP-BR participated in the anti-fascist barricades as an ~~xx~~ armed group. The barricades set up to defend Lisbon from Spinoist's right-wing "silent majority" march were organized first by workers; soldiers joined them later ~~xxx~~ on. The role of the PRP was even more important in the mobilization against the second attempted coup on March 11, 1975. The PRP was not the only group with armed detachments on the barricades; however, it demonstrated to all the workers and to sections of the army, including those who weren't yet revolutionary, that the PRP was a serious and reliable party in defending all the gains of the workers.

iii) The PRP fought consistently for linking the struggles of workers through independent organizations, above the control of parties. The PRP was instrumental (in winter 1975) in the formation of the Inter Empresa, the first joint factory committee of 43 factories in the Lisbon area. On February 7, 1975 the Inter Empresa called a demonstration demanding jobs. The government declared the march "banned" because of the presence of NATO ships on maneuvers. The demonstration then turned into a revolutionary demonstration against NATO. For the first time, it openly raised the issue of power. Troops sent to block the march ended up chanting: "Long Live the Working Class!"

iv) The PRP carried forward the movement for mass autonomous organizations, and for working class power, by campaigning for Revolutionary Councils of Workers,

Soldiers and Sailors (CRTSM's, or CRTs for short). The workers' councils represented the form in which workers could unite and begin the struggle to exercise power. The PRP recognized that workers' councils will not necessarily "spontaneously emerge" at the moment they are needed, without political preparation and struggle. By June 1975, the CRTs were able to mobilize a demonstration of 40,000 calling for proletarian dictatorship. This demonstration was one of the most important launching points for the working class offensive of summer-fall 1975, which led to a revolutionary situation and the brink of insurrection.

v) As a section of workers moved toward the struggle for power, it caused the class struggle to sweep through the Armed Forces. The PRP understood the necessity of splitting the MFA (Armed Forces Movement - the umbrella grouping of junior officers who held considerable political power) along the lines of working class power.

The PRP was instrumental in the writing of the "COPCON document." This proposal was the reply to the offensive of the MFA right wing, led at that time by Melo Antunes. The COPCON document called for a revolutionary transitional government, for power in the hands of mass popular assemblies and councils known as "organs of popular power".

The demand for "popular power" was not identical to the clear class organizations, the workers, soldiers and sailors' councils for which the PRP had been organizing. However, the PRP understood that any opening in the direction of workers' councils would be seized by the working class which would give "popular power" its own class content.

In short, around the COPCON document two struggles - the united front against the right wing offensive, and the mobilization of workers for power - effectively merged.

vi) When the MFA split was an accomplished fact, the official MFA became the organ of Melo Antunes and the right. The PRP then took the main initiative in organizing the revolutionary soldiers' movement SUV (Soldiers United Will Win). The success of SUV virtually disintegrated the authority of much of the top military command. It was based on the earlier work of PRP militants in the army. It was also based on the PRP's understanding of soldiers as young workers and peasants in uniform, and on their understanding of the relation between workers' and soldiers' struggles. SUV was organized on the platform of proletarian revolution and proletarian demands.

SUV was the most powerful rank and file soldiers' movement since the Russian Revolution in 1917. However, the PRP has never held the erroneous view that the Portuguese revolutionary soldiers were more advanced than the workers, or were the leaders of the working class. The idea that soldiers were leading workers is both a mistake in assessment, and a theoretical error in understanding the forces of the revolution. SUV and the soldiers' rebellions were possible because the soldiers were responding to the revolutionary working class which was seeking to organize itself for power.

vii) The PRP very clearly understands the road to workers' power. As the revolutionary crisis of September, October and November 1975 intensified the PRP worked to link up the workers' commissions, along with allied organizations of tenants, farmers, etc., into organs of dual power (the popular assemblies). Within these organs of dual power the PRP called for

the arming of workers' commissions, and carried on political preparation for armed workers' insurrection. This also meant arguing in every factory that socialist revolution was the only answer to the crisis of capitalist rule, economic collapse and the threat of civil war. Only along the line of fighting for power could the working class be unified.

The PRP recognized that in the crisis of September-November, the workers' commissions were the concrete organs through which the working class could mobilize for power. The workers' commissions were not the soviet formations (CRTs) for which the PRP had been organizing in the spring and summer; however, at the point of the fight for power the struggle had to go through the commissions. At that point, for the PRP to counterpose CRTs against the workers' commissions would have been ridiculous. Rather, the correct strategy was to link the commissions and give them a broader political dimension, to call on the popular assemblies to impose their authority over government bodies, to co-ordinate the arming of the workers through the commissions and assemblies. The PRP quite correctly saw this strategy as the key to the road to power.

viii) The PRP has consistently fought against sectarianism, and proven to the workers that it defends no interests separate from those of the working class itself. This is one of the key lessons of the PRP's role in forming the United Revolutionary Front (FUR).

FUR was formed ~~PRP~~ on the basis of a program of struggle against reaction, for the mobilization of the workers to defend popular power and prepare the struggle for power. The formation of FUR broke through the sectarian divisions of the ten or twelve main groups on the revolutionary left. FUR, in fact, had to carry on the kind of mobilizations which, in a revolutionary situation, should be carried out by a mass revolutionary party - if one existed. Since one didn't, the PRP had to fight for the formation of FUR to prove to the workers that the revolutionary left was serious about a unified struggle.

By doing this, the PRP was able to break through the even greater difficulty of sectarianism in the Portuguese revolution - the sectarianism of the mass parties, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. The divisions imposed on workers by the CP and SP bureaucracies, each defending its own positions in the government and anti-working class aims, have been the crippling obstacle in the path of Portuguese workers ever since April 25, 1974. Through these divisions the CP and SP tried to block every advance of the workers; above all this was true in the revolutionary situation of last summer and fall. The PRP through FUR was able to draw many CP, SP and non-party workers into struggles they could not otherwise be won to.

The contradiction of FUR was that it was faced with the tasks of a party, but lacked the qualities of a party needed to successfully complete those tasks - in particular, the taking of power. Yet in a situation where civil war was close to breaking out, FUR was necessary for the broadest possible section of workers - against the military command, against the counter-revolutionary Socialist Party and the maneuvers of the CP.

This is by no means a complete list of the PRP's political initiatives, even before November 25. And since November 25 the PRP has undertaken a new series of campaigns, such as the anti-repression movement and the

it was carrying out open, mass political preparation of the working class for the insurrection.

In carrying out this work, the PRP acted correctly. While the PRP was not engaged in any kind of adventurist semi-insurrection on November 25, the fact is that in the months before Nov. 25 it was carrying out the struggle to win the working class to the insurrection. It acted as a revolutionary should and must under circumstances where taking power is the only way out.

The situation before November 25 was, indeed rapidly moving toward insurrection. Portugal was in revolutionary situation, a crisis in which no class can rule unless it succeeds in changing the balance of forces and physically imposing its power over the others. It was not only the revolutionary groups who felt the pressure of the total polarization of classes - the whole working class felt it and responded. This is easily forgotten now, because the march toward insurrection was short-circuited by the right-wing Nov. 25 coup itself. But let's remind ourselves of what the events were. The country moved to the verge of the outbreak of civil war. Governmental authority collapsed. The possibility of moving the government from Lisbon to Oporto--the opening act of a civil war--was openly considered. On at least one occasion two weeks before Nov. 25, the government and military command had set in motion plans for troop maneuvers intended to disperse left-wing units and place right-wing commandos in the most revolutionary areas around Lisbon.

The militance of the working class reached the point where the construction workers, going beyond their national union leadership (CP), surrounded the Presidential palace in support of their wage demands. The government found it impossible to use any troops against them. Paratroopers who were duped into blowing up Radio Renascença revolted and vowed they would never again be used against the working class. The situation was absolutely intolerable for the authorities and it was clear they must take drastic action, even at the risk of unleashing a civil war for which they were unprepared and might well destroy them.

The military command, organized by Jaime Neves of the Amadora commandos and Pires Veloso of the northern military region, formed a plan of action to move right-wing commando units to disarm the most important left-wing units. Their attack, which they planned weeks ahead, centered on smashing the RALIS light artillery barracks. This was basically the military operation that was carried out in the right-wing Nov. 25 coup.

Under such circumstances, preparing the struggle for power, preparing for power itself, is required of any serious revolutionary party. The prospect of taking power in itself presents huge difficulties under these conditions. Without a mass revolutionary party, with a large section of the organized workers still following or manipulated by the CP, there could be no "pure Bolshevik" revolutionary government. A successful insurrection would bring to power a provisional revolutionary government which would include representatives of the PRP, other FUR parties, non-party organizations, revolutionary soldiers and left-wing centrist officers of the Carvalho type. Even the CP itself might have to be forced to participate to avoid losing its base. This would be an uneasy coalition facing enormous difficulties, particularly resistance and ever-present danger of betrayal by the CP, etc. Yet attempting to take power, even with all those difficulties, can become unavoidable.

As stated previously, this situation has faced revolutionaries before. If all possibility of stable capitalist class rule is exhausted, if the capitalist state sees no alternative to civil war or fascism, if the danger of civil war is imminent--then the working class must organize an attempt to take power, no matter how great the dangers are. For in

that situation, if the working class fails to take power the likely result is the crushing of the workers and the victory of fascism. This is how fascism took power in Italy in the 1920's--a revolutionary crisis in which workers occupied the factories, the economy collapsed, the ruling class was thrown into a panic, but there was no revolutionary party and no attempt was made by the working class to take power for itself.

To unify the working class in the struggle for power, the PRP launched the slogan "unite, organize and arm--the socialist revolution will succeed!" It also strongly supported the arming of the workers' commissions, and the most rapid possible extension of the organs of dual power. It raised the question of taking power openly in the popular assemblies, at Setubal and elsewhere. Its aim was precisely to explain the necessity of insurrection to the whole organized working class, not just to the most conscious vanguard revolutionary elements. Insurrection cannot succeed with the support of only the most conscious vanguard elements--it must be understood, supported and defended by the majority of workers, including those with more backward consciousness.

There are comrades who believe that by playing this role, the PRP was "confusing propaganda with agitation" and thus tending to "give the impression to many workers that it was an agitational call for immediate insurrection." This view is expressed, for example, in Cliff and Harman's pamphlet "Lessons of the 25th of November." This criticism misses the point. The concrete conditions existed in which the working class could

move forward only along the road of insurrection--the crisis or class relations had reached a point where no partial, sectional or economic struggle had any meaning apart from posing the question of which class held power in the country. It is absurd to imagine that in these circumstances, when you are presenting a resolution in the popular assembly or engaged in surrounding the government palace with your fellow construction workers, you can "raise the question of power propagandistically, but not agitationally" to avoid "confusing" anyone. We have no evidence, in any case, that any workers inside Portugal were confused by it at all.

With a mass revolutionary party, the Portuguese working class could have taken power in November. That is the real lesson to be learned from those events. The role of the PRP in that situation was to work to overcome the enormous difficulties thrown up by the Stalinist CP, which told workers their problems would be solved by more CP ministers in the government. To "criticize" the PRP for playing that role is to fall into dogmatic sectarianism.

In fact, before Nov. 25 a whole series of maneuvers was set in motion by the Communist Party. Officers under CP discipline had tried to find military allies for their own possible coup; when this failed, officers associated with the CP encouraged the paratroopers at Tancos air base to revolt, implying they would have organized support from the CP. The Communist Party was, in short, exploring various possibilities for a government shakeup that would give it more government ministers and influence.

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The CP laid the basis for these maneuvers weeks before November 25 when, after two months of paralysis, the Communist Party decided to go into open opposition to the Sixth Provisional Government. This was an important turning point. It meant the CP was prepared to call (and then manipulate for its own purposes) mass demonstrations of tens or hundreds of thousands of workers.. This was extremely dangerous for the CP itself; it meant flirting with the insurrectionary mood of the working class, and trying to channel it into a mobilization for a shuffle of cards in the capitalist government.

However, the CP's turn proved ultimately decisive in taking the initiative away from FUR,. The natural desire of workers for unity in a revolutionary crisis flowed away from FUR, toward the CP.. Since the PRP was not a mass revolutionary party, the CP was thus able to derail the workers' march toward taking power.

The crisis of November did not, it is true, end in the victory of Fascism, either. The government and the military command took the first steps toward counter-revolution, surrounding the left-wing units, disarming the revolutionary units and driving the left underground inside the military. The right-wing could not, in November, go the whole way by ~~smashing~~ smashing the working class organizations in the factories. But this could not be predicted in advance. The working class had to be mobilized and on guard against the counter-revolutionary offensive which was in ~~preparation~~ preparation. In an immediate revolutionary crisis, organizing the workers to take power cannot be separated from blocking the road to counter-revolution by the right.

November 25 also showed that armed insurrection is necessary for the victory of the revolution. There are few cases in history in which the power of the capitalist state apparatus had disintegrated as thoroughly as it did in Portugal. Yet even this weakened, virtually isolated state apparatus was able to carry through a sweeping right-wing victory, organize a relative handful of commandos to defeat a mass movement of revolutionary soldiers and restore the authority of the government. For the revolution to succeed, in Portugal or elsewhere, requires that this state machine be smashed. That is why the construction of a mass revolutionary party is ultimately crucial.

IV. AFTER NOVEMBER 25 -- RETREAT AND RECOVERY

The period following November 25 was a difficult one for the Portuguese revolution. It severely tested both the fighting strength of the Portuguese working class, and the political mettle of every organization on the left.

The setback of November 25 was more prolonged, though not as sharp, as that suffered by the Russian working class following the July days (an unplanned, premature semi-insurrection) of 1917. Yet while the retreat of July 1917 was much deeper, some of the consequences were much the same. Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution (Vol. 2, Chapter 11, "The Masses Under Attack"), discusses what some of these were.

"The lowered pressure of the Revolution expressed itself first of all in an extraordinary weakening of the resistance of the masses to the enemy. While the troops brought into Petrgrad were carrying out official punitive activities... semi-volunteer gangs under their protection were attacking with impunity the workers' organizations..."

"The soldiers were far behind the workers politically. This is not contradicted in the least by the fact that the soldiers showed a remarkable readiness to get out their guns. In demonstrations they would play a far more aggressive role than the workers, but under blows they would retreat much further..."

The July weakening of the position of the proletariat gave courage to the industrialists. A conference of the most important business organizations, including the banks, formed a committee for the defence of industry, which took upon itself the leadership of the lockouts... economic defeatism (sabotage) became the chief weapon of the industrialists against the dual power in the factories..."

The parallels that can be drawn between the two situations are, to be sure, limited. In fact, the attack on workers in Russia following the July Days went much further in a short time than the right-wing advance in Portugal.

Nevertheless, the retreat in the level of working class consciousness and struggle was significant. Some features were similar to those of 1917: a deeper retreat by soldiers than by workers; a big increase in right-wing terrorism (although mainly bombings rather than open mobs); and most of all, the organized effort by the bosses to regain control of the factories. The bosses understood in Portugal there can be no full-scale counter-revolution until they have broken the back of workers' control, i.e. the "dual power in the factories."

For months following November 25, efforts by the revolutionary left to present militant resolutions or demands in the workers' commissions failed. In the workers' commissions elections, particularly the well-publicized case of the Setnave workers' commission elections in December and January, the revolutionaries in general and the PRP in particular made poor showings.

The main difficulty for the revolutionary left in the period following November 25 until mid-January, or later, was the general retreat of the working class. For a considerable time, workers' confidence was set way back. As a result, militant struggles shaply declined. Even as strong a revolutionary party as the Bolsheviks was seriously -- though only temporarily -- rocked by the July defeat. In the absence of such a strong party, the difficulties in Portugal were magnified. In truth, almost every group, except the PRP and the Maoist UDP (which also operates as a party in its own very different way), responded to this crisis by collapsing politically or fading into deep irrelevance. For example: the MES (Left Socialist Movement), closely allied to the PRP inside the FUR, had a series of splits between its white-collar, technocratic and middle class wing and the more working class elements. What remains is now split between pro-UDP and pro-PRP fractions. The LCI (Fourth International group), which adopted a left-wing line and joined FUR, responded to the defeat by lurching to the right, undertaking a "self-criticism" of its "insurrectionist errors" and solidified around a right-wing call for a CP-SP "united front." The semi-anarchist LUAR, a decentralized group with little political cohesion or discipline, disintegrated with many of its branches in the ~~xxxx~~ south joining the PRP.

The sad lessons of groups like these are worth learning for the sake of our own future. The militants of MES, LUAR and even LCI were often excellent -- indeed, many of the best cadres of these groups have an important political future inside the PRP. What they lacked was a perspective, a firm understanding of the ~~x~~ class forces of the revolution, and above all a proletarian class composition and vantage point. With the best possible intentions, they could not decisively transcend the world of the middle-class group. This was true even though, from April '74 on, any radical group could get a hearing among workers. Dozens of groups arose and disappeared. MES, LUAR, LCI, etc., could claim the support or even membership of hundreds of workers, and a periphery of thousands. Yet, at the end of the day, the weight of these groups as an independent revolutionary force adds up to practically zero.

It should not be hard for us to understand what went wrong for so much of the Portuguese revolutionary left. In truth, these groups were very much like what we sometimes call the "old IS", the past we are moving away from. They acted as intellectual groups without a clearly established and understood perspective. Every setback, every shift in the breeze, ~~x~~ every episodic failure threw them into a new discussion of basic principles. Every new discussion brought with it a new leadership crisis. This was particularly true of LCI with its 3 or 4 ever-shifting factions. They shifted to follow new force that played a leading role at a given moment (this was true above all of MES). They had neither the shared political agreement or right democratic centralist ~~xx~~ structure and leadership able to withstand setbacks as a disciplined, cohesive force. They did not have the roots in the factories to enable them to withstand difficulties to correctly gauge the mood of workers or to adapt their agitation to the actual level of struggle.

But while most of the other groups began regarding counter-revolution as inevitable, and moved in the direction of disintegration, the PRP established a fundamentally different direction. In mid-December, the PRP consciously

adopted the perspective of changing to a mass party, to open ~~facilitations~~ ^{the} November 25 experience proved the importance of a mass party in the struggle for power; at the same time, the receding of the immediate crisis after the 25th meant the PRP had more time in which to take this step. It did so knowing that immediate conditions were unfavorable, that there would be no quick payoffs in a period of retreat.

The PRP Central Committee understood there were problems: that after the betrayals by the CP on November 25, an even deeper distrust of parties would exist; that there would be special difficulties in bringing workers into a party in large numbers at a time when many advanced workers were preparing for possible heavy repression and a return to underground conditions; that there would be inevitable resistance from inside the PRP itself, from members who have not had experience in counterposing the PRP as a party to other political formations.

Yet, this difficult and necessary turn was decided in a brief period of intensive discussion inside the leadership and the membership -- without a faction fight; the danger of a split or overturning the whole central political leadership while the centrist groups were consumed in internal struggle and decline, the PRP moved forward.

In making this turn toward a mass party, the PRP continued to explain the necessity of socialist revolution as the only solution in Portugal. Within a month or so after November 25, the PRP had resumed its role as a leadership organization, a party that took initiatives instead of simply waiting to comment on things.

In December, the PRP projected a whole series of new initiatives. These were inseparable from the turn toward a mass party. They included: mass anti-repression campaign work to free the military prisoners; strengthening party activity inside economic struggles and the workers' commissions; a greater emphasis on the agrarian struggle and links between peasants and workers; and a strengthening of the PRP newspaper. Not all these perspectives were successfully carried out. Some, like transforming the paper, have only partially succeeded. Others, like trying to rebuild workers' councils, could not be accomplished at once. Only quite recently, with the Presidential election campaign around Carvalho, has the PRP been able to find a road to re-opening the issue of "popular power." For every successful attempt at mass organizing, there are three or four failures. This is inevitable. It is true for us, it is true for ISGB, it is true for the PRP. And it always will be.

But one of the initiatives, at least, was enormously successful: the campaign for the prisoners, which after the arrest of Carvalho became a demand for "Free Otelo and All the Other Prisoners." In fact, it was largely CLARP (Committee for the Liberation of Anti-Fascist and Revolutionary Prisoners) which enabled the working class to win a political victory (the first mass post-November demonstrations and the freeing of the prisoners). This accelerated the revival of working class confidence and the possibility of a bid upsurge of economic strikes and resistance.

Revolutionaries wage agitational campaigns inside the working class in order to find the most advanced point of workers' consciousness, and use the workers' willingness to struggle, on whatever level, to mobilize the class and lead it forward. In post-November 25 Portugal, the working class was prepared to move around a political issue, the defense of the prisoners, before it was prepared to resume militant economic struggles. This could not be predicted from any theoretical schema, it had to be discovered and acted upon through the test of practice. Workers responded to a directly political issue even before the day-to-day economic struggle resumed on a large scale.

This does not mean the PRP counterposed political struggle against economic struggle. The truth is the exact opposite. The political mobilization to free the prisoners - combined, of course, with the employers' attack on workers' control - created the essential conditions for a new round of economic strikes and factory occupations.

Portuguese workers were able to resume their economic struggles because Nov. 25 did not break their organization and power inside the factories. The links between the workers' commissions, the basis for their acting as organs of dual power, were dissolved under the advance of reaction. However, the commissions themselves remained strong. At the same time, the bourgeoisie was unprepared to attempt a full-scale counter-revolutionary thrust against the entire organized working class. With the approach of the Parliamentary elections, the government lifted the wage freeze and, in general, tried to postpone strikes with concessions and promises instead of trying to crush them.

When economic struggles resumed, they tended to focus around two kinds of issues. The first was wages, over which there were big national strikes, especially after the lifting of the wage freeze on March 1. There were also a wave of strikes over local issues - especially in defense of workers' control and working conditions, against attempts by bosses to re-enter the factories or re-establish the powers of management. It is very difficult to maintain workers' control in conditions of severe economic crisis; workers are under intense pressure to let the bosses take back the responsibility of running the plant. However, the struggle for workers' control has continued to give workers the confidence that the revolution is still alive.

There is a very widespread misconception that within these economic struggles, the PRP is for working only in workers' commissions and ignores the national unions. The PRP has never counterposed workers' commissions to the unions. The PRP has defended, and been for working within, both. It is in fact influential in sectors of many key unions. However, the PRP has often had to choose where to concentrate its limited resources, and the finite amount of time available to its factory militants. In most cases since April 25, 1974, the workers' commissions have been the locus of struggle and have been the priority; while the unions, particularly on a national level, are more tightly controlled by the CP. Within the workers' commissions, PRP militants have become delegates and leaders, chosen by their fellow workers. This in itself proves that the PRP is deeply involved in the daily struggles and concerns of the masses of workers.

In the wave of national strikes that broke out before the Parliamentary elections, the PRP did not ignore the unions - it seized the opportunity to agitate for militant programs of struggle inside them. This was particularly true in the construction and textile unions, where PRP along with MES and UDP militants were able to carry national union bodies in favor of advanced, radical demands. As a result of the revolutionary left, both the construction and textile unions came out for the socialization of industry and socialist planning as part of their program of strike demands. In several regions of the country, the DP's hold over the construction workers was broken.

When workers' economic struggles resumed after November 25, they took place in a more conservative political context; the revival of openly capitalist parties, the use of troops against workers for the first time since March, 1975, right-wing shifts in every government body. But these struggles were not merely "defensive" in nature; workers also put forward "offensive demands", advanced, aggressive demands for broadening workers' control and for socialist transformation of the economy. Workers felt that the depth of the crisis meant that short-term wage or other gains would do very little good so long as the capitalist economy was threatening to destroy production, close the factories, and bring fascism down on their heads. In the context of the Portuguese economy today, that feeling is correct. There can be no successful mobilization of workers in Portugal around strictly "defensive" or limited demands. Any program to "defend" the workers that fails to tie immediate demands to the struggle for socialism, is an abstraction.

By combining their defensive struggles with a new wave of offensive, militant demands, the Portuguese workers were able to find a new basis for united struggle, and prepare the ground for further mobilizations and upsurges. The PRP recognized that in post-November 25 Portugal, there could be no barrier between political and economic struggles, between fighting for wages and workers' control, between defending previous gains and raising new demands for a socialist transformation. They sought to give leadership on all levels, and they were correct to do so.

(The fifth and concluding section of this draft will be available shortly).