

News from Portugal. March 7, 1976.

1. The SUV has emerged politically again in the army. SUV nuclei exists in different units in Lisbon, Oporto, Seyubal and elsewhere. There is an underground paper which circulates in the army. While it has not been designated as being the organ of any group, its views are that of the SUV, and it has published communiques of SUV.

2. There is a new Social Democratic group in Portugal - the Social Democratic Movement or MSD. This is the group which split from the PPD when the right wing consolidated control over the PPD. The existence of the MSD may split the right wing vote. It will probably take votes from the SP, votes which would have gone to the PPD or CDS. The SP, which has rejected an electoral alliance with the CP and with the PPD has indicated it is interested in an alliance with the MSD in the elections.

3. The MES held a congress in mid February. The expectation was that the MES would split. The two major tendencies are 1) that it is sympathetic to the line of the PRP, and the other more to the line of the UDP - there doesn't seem to be a coherent MES line, but the impact of the two hard left lines on this centrist group. The expected split did not take place. It was overcome, at least temporarily when the MES Congress made a proposal for unity of the revolutionary left. It listed four groups that could unify: MES, PRP, UDP and FSP. MES further proposed that these four groups together organize a left front for the parliamentary elections. The UDP turned this down. The PRP held discussions with the MES, found there was no real possibility for a united left platform in the elections, that other groups were at best interested in running their own candidates, and in some cases supporting the candidate of the other party in some places where it was running, making coalitions of that character but of running a joint and more powerful left slate. It therefore decided not to take part in the MES proposed coalition and is boycotting the parliamentary elections.

4. The decision to boycott the parliamentary elections was taken at a national committee meeting of the PRP last weekend. The PRP decided to organize broad committees which would oppose the bourgeois character of the elections, while preparing to run a candidate in the presidential elections, which occur in June or this summer. The PRP proposal is for the radical left to support a presidential candidate together, one who would run on the basis of the COPCON program. The candidate is not yet selected, it would be one that presumably the left would support, and would put the CP in a bind, trying to win their base. The CP is for supporting Costa Gomez, but he is not likely to run if he doesn't have the support of the other parties. Melo Antunes in the name of the 9 stated that the MFA was supporting Eanes for president. Eanes is the organizer of the November 25 right wing offensive. He is supported by the 9 as a lesser evil - they were trying to force the hand of the SP and the PPD into supporting Eanes. The PPD would rather support Azevedo who is to the right, ever so slightly of Eanes. Morais e Silva, head of the air force denounced Melo Antunes in a speech to soldiers on March 1. for arrogance in speaking in the name of the MFA, and stating that there was no MFA candidate. The extreme right of the army does not want

Eanes. The CDS may run Galvo de Melo, an extreme right winger - although it may be forced into support of Eanes. Everything is still at the stage of rumor and maneuver. If there was an election with the choice of being support of Eanes (and continued alliance with the 9 and for closer relations with the SP) and support for a left candidate - the CP would be in a bind. If they did not heavily support the candidate of the left, their base would, and they would lose heavily. This is probably what is behind the PRP proposal for a united left front candidate based on the COPCON program for the presidential elections.

5. Until now, PRP agitation on economic issues has not been as successful as its anti-repression activities. This may change in the next weeks, as the wage freezes are lifted. PRP union strength is in construction metal textiles and teachers. Construction and metals have wage contracts coming up.

The construction workers won a 45% wage increase prior to 25 November which were then rolled back and frozen on the 25 November. Their wage struggle included locking Azevedo and the cabinet into the constituent assembly in mid-November. The lifting of the wage freeze may start a new struggle for wages to win back their 45% in construction. Until now, however, PRP proposals for struggles around economic issues have generally not been carried in factory assemblies, but have lost to more conservative proposals.

6. The rightward drift of the PPD has gone so far that the PPD is now denouncing the SP as a tool of the CP. This started to occur when at the last moment the SP made it possible for Costa Gomez to recognize the MPLA. In truth, the SP, due to the pressures of the right and pressures from its ranks has cooperated for limited measures at times with the CP. In response the PPD has launched a propaganda attack on the SP saying that it is not really social democratic, but is coming under CP influence, has no firm principles, and is being manipulated by the CP.

7. There are indications that rank and file CPers and file is quite upset with the CP in attacking the links which have been made between workers and tenants commissions of the towns, with the agrarian cooperatives and peasants. These links are to distribute food in the cities without recourse to middlemen, at much cheaper prices through direct links with peasant cooperatives, collective farms etc. The CP which controls the unions in the shops is against doing away with the middlemen and finds demagogic reasons for attacking this movement which has become quite powerful, and which many rank and file CPers take part in. It has heavy support from the PRP and has helped strengthen the good feeling that many rank and file CPers have for the PRP. The PRP has succeeded in developing a large group of sympathizers, perhaps several thousand within the CP who believe the PRP is politically more or less correct, but stick with the CP because they don't believe the the PRP is a stronger enough party. At a future stage of the revolution this group may split off from the CP and lay the basis for the PRP becoming a larger revolutionary party.

8. There are indications that rank and file workers, and members of left groups, are spontaneously preparing for an underground struggle.

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This comes both out of discouragement with the situation in Portugal the continuing right wing advance, the fear that facism will triumph, coupled with the revolutionary determination to continue even if the right wins this round. We have to remember that people have emerged from underground functioning only two years ago and many are still prepared to return to it. The PRP is against any attempt to give up the struggle, and considers much of this to be defeatism. It stresses that successful socialist revolution is still possible and is against the sentiment which comes out of a setback, that the right will win. The PRP is however, the group which is most prepared for underground conditions. And the contradiction exists that it is trying to build a mass, more open revolutionary party, while its own militants and advanced workers are preparing for underground struggle if necessary. This requires more tighter form of organization. The pressures not to recruit on as open a basis as they should continue to remain, and come out of objective conditions. Nonetheless the necessity for mass recruitment, winning the open character of the party, is important at this stage, so that in the next upsurge it is possible to grow rapidly. Underground work is still carried on by the brigades.

In general, given the slow pace of events, there is no basis for a weekly report. We will try to keep these coming out as we get information, and when events are moving faster, to put them out more frequently.