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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

INTERNAL BULLETIN

FOR I.S. MEMBERS ONLY

This Bulletin Contains....

Summary of Steel Campaign by National Steel Fraction.
IS in the Sadlowski Campaign by National Steel Cttee.
Reprint of Convention Steel Document by the EC.
Majority Document on the PRP by the NC.
Minority Document on the PRP by Barbara (Detroit).
Observations on the Periphery Drive by the LA exec.
Impressions of the ISGB by Celia and Dan (C'land).
On the Role of the PRP by Barbara (NY/UFT).
Notice on Fund Drive by the National Treasurer.

Editor's Note....

There are several very important items in this bulletin that should be studied by all members. There is the last of the documents from the October meeting of the NC. These are the majority document which received 23 votes and the minority document which received 3 votes, both are on the subject of our evaluation of the Portuguese PRP. There are three documents, two of them current and one a reprint from the July I.S. convention on the important work we are now undertaking in the steel union and the political reasoning behind that work. The notice on the Fall fund drive is self explanatory.

Despite several months of trying to solicit articles for this edition of the Internal Bulletin, despite many notices to the membership about the bulletin and two delays in publication. There are unfortunately only three contributions that do not come in some way from the national centre. One of these is from a branch exec and the other two are from individuals. It is extremely important that we have a better response than this if the bulletin is going to be useful. Last year the bulletin ceased to exist because of the poor response and the last convention made it very clear that this should not be allowed to happen again. However the centre cannot continue to provide all the copy for future editions. It is also the responsibility of all leading committees in the organisation, as well as individual members, to ensure that the bulletin becomes a healthy source of internal communication and debate.

Glenn Wolfe,
21st. October, 1976.

THE NEXT BULLETIN WILL BE PUBLISHED IN MID-JANUARY. SEND ARTICLES BY JAN. 1ST.

FALL FUND DRIVE

The EC has decided to have a small external fund drive this Fall. In the Spring we will hold our annual major fund drive with each branch assessed something on the order of \$100 per member. This fall's fund drive will begin October 18 and last until December 18. Each branch will be expected to raise the equivalent of one month's dues and pledges (what the branch collects not what the branch sends to the NO).

The money should be raised outside the organization. Some things that can be tried are rummage sales, movies, plant sales, bake sales, parties and raffles. Most of these have worked for branches in the past. Public fund raisers like these will help build the periphery campaign. Some contacts will be willing to help organize these events. Many others will come and enjoy them. Be sure to have a lit table, a mailing list, and plenty of copies of WP at whatever events you hold.

Any money that isn't raised externally will have to be made up by the branch. Anything over the target will be split 50 - 50 between the NO and the branch. One or two successful fund raisers could help pay off branch debts.

By October 25 all branches should have let me know what they are planning and how much they will raise. Since some branches won't have collected October dues by then, use September dues to set your target. Let me know the results as soon as your fund raiser is over. Other branches may be able to learn from your experience.

We will aim to raise about \$5,500 from this campaign. While we won't have an exact figure until the branches report their targets, this is a very reasonable goal we should be able to meet.

Without this money we may have real difficulty in financing the Gary Tyler work, the South Africa campaign and the other on going work of the organization. The contract campaigns have been a terrible drain on our finances. While they are worth every penny we spent, now we have to start rebuilding our finances. Making this fund a success will be a big step in that direction.

SANDY B.
National Treasurer

THE SADLOWSKI CAMPAIGN

1. The Sadlowski campaign, like the Yablonski-Mfd campaign in the UMW, and the Sombrotto campaign in the NALC, is occurring not primarily because of Sadlowski's personal qualities or ambitions but as an expression within the unions of the growing rank and file rebellion. Ultimately, though often not consciously, the reform movement is responding to the failure of the union to fight the employers in the face of the employers offensive.
2. We support the Steel workers Fight Back slate unconditionally. Its election will be a defeat for the bureaucratic machine in the USW and a victory for the rank and file rebellion.
3. The 1977 election will split the union between those who support the status quo and those who desire change, with those on the fence being pulled in both directions.
4. We will work for the organization of the SFB campaign on as wide a basis as possible. The stronger the campaign organization, the more union members will take a stand for change in the union, and the more that movement will gain self confidence to increase the changes it demands in the union. The more the campaign addresses itself to the class collaboration of the machine, not merely in rhetoric as Sadlowski is now doing but thru action such as local demands, the more people it will organize.
5. Steelworkers Fight Back (SFB) is the official organization of the campaign. We will therefore work to organize SFBs wherever possible on a mill basis. We will argue within the Sadlowski campaign organizations for making it a real rank and file movement. This would include a strategy of calling rallies and mass meetings, of leaflets addressed to the issues by comparing Sadlowskis positions to McBrides, by relating the ability to take on local issues to a victory of the Sadlowski forces, and by trying to bring together in mass ways the forces from different mills. We would argue for a campaign by as many people as possible.
6. Where that is not possible we will still organize on the basis of our mass work principle, to seek to unite a bored class movement, not to seek to maintain more pure groups on narrower programs. We do not make a fetish of the SFB name, where we have convinced the SFB movement at the mill to organize on a basis that prove inconsistent with the use of the SFB name, we will adopt another name, W/O however retreating to the perspective of simply maintaining our groups and "participatin" in the campaign.
7. Our policy of critical support is not a means by which we as Revolutionaries divide ourselves off from the reform movement. We shall not attempt to counterpose ourselves to Sadlowski in a mechanical and propagandistic manner. Rather by fighting for the initiatives we propose we will win the best elements of the Sadlowski camp to collaborating with us on a practical level. Using our shared experiences as the springboard, we will attempt to win the forces to our analysis of the Sadlowski movement (not simply a list of criticisms of Sadlowski), and our strategy for going beyond its initial limitations.

8. If the rank and file movement has any success in the campaign, and if we organize in it properly we will not be returning to our previous groups after the campaign. The struggle to maintain the movement after the election is over will lead to new rank and file organization. It is this new rank and file organization, whether or not it is a continuation of the official SFB organization, that will be the major advance of the Sadlowski movement.

THE IS. IN THE SADLOWSKI CAMPAIGN

1. Our political line of critical support for Sadlowski is already established. The purpose of this paper is to develop a perspective for the implementation of that political line in practice.
2. According to the best information we have at this time, there has been a controversy within the Sadlowski brass on how the campaign should be run, between Rauh's people and Clem Balinoff - and Balinoff has won. It means the campaign will be run under the banner of "Steel Workers Fightback" at least in District 31 and in the Pittsburgh area. How it will or can be run in other areas is not yet at all clear.

The decision to run the campaign through fightback seems to mean a looser campaign structure, less under Sadlowski's direct control. It also seems to be a decision legitimating organizing on more than a narrow electoral basis leaving open the possibility of campaign organizations raising their own issues and participating in their own activities.

In District 31, fightback will be under the control of Clem Balinoff. In the Pittsburgh area, it will be run by Coyne and Temco. Sadlowski's main man in Youngstown will be Weinstock (unclear whether he will be organizing as fightback or not). There is also an operation in Buffalo.

The final shape and direction of the campaign, and particularly of the campaign organizations seem to be not at all determined yet. Major campaign decisions will be made by Sadlowski personally - not by any steering committee or national campaign director. In the various districts and/or geographic regions, franchises are being given out to individuals or small groups to run the campaign there. The franchise holders will probably be given broad latitude on how to run the campaign in their areas. How tight they will be able to hold the reins is not yet at all clear.

Regional franchise holders will be under pressure to run their campaigns in a way that is consistent with the overall national campaign. They will be forced to work in the framework of the national campaign decisions made by Sadlowski. But, for example, if Balinoff allows a wide open movement type campaign in 31, this will make it harder for Coyne to keep tight reins in Pittsburgh, etc. Any initiative from below that succeeds in one area can help open things up in other areas as well.

Inside the Districts or geographic regions, there will be two pressures. One will be from the staff men and local bureaucrats supporting Sadlowski who will insist the campaign be run with the maximum of bureaucratism and the minimum of politics. So long as it seems to the franchise holders that these people have the most realistic potential of delivering votes, their pressure will tend to predominate.

The other pressure will come from rank and file campaign activists and from office holders who feel the need to build up membership enthusiasm for the campaign and mobilize rank and file support. These forces will press for a looser, more open, more movement type campaign. They will have influence to the degree that they can demonstrate that if things are opened up, they will be able to build, in a practical sense, increased support and involvement in the campaign.

3. Inside the Sadlowski campaign, we orient toward the maximizing the importance of mill or Local Union fight back groups - and maximizing their autonomous character and their involvement in issues and activities beyond mere electoral campaigning. Given our small and weak forces in

steel, our influence in shaping the overall direction of the campaign will be only marginal. But the extent to which we can, in fact, influence the campaign and win respect and recognition for ourselves will be the extent that we can show that our methods yield practical results, and that we are people who do, in fact, make a real contribution to the overall campaign. Where we have members, and where no mill of local fightback organization yet exists, we should be prepared to take initiatives in helping set the fightback up and we should move quickly. Where the local initiative is already in the hands of others, we should join the local campaign organization.

Inside the campaign, our first priority is to establish work in our own mills and locals. This is where we can derive the most benefits from our work, and this is the only way we could establish the credibility to have wider influence. In terms of influencing the campaign with our good ideas, Sadlowski and his lieutenants are already surrounded by all kinds of people who claim to have good ideas. Establishing good local work makes it possible to influence people in other locals to follow our lead and to come under our influence.

It is our perspective to work for local fightback groups that are more than merely electoral campaign organizations. We want them to become involved in the day to day issues of their mill and of their locals, and to deal with the broader issues facing the union in a political way. We would like to have mill or local fightback committees publish regular mill newsletters that both campaign for the Sadlowski ticket and give a lead on immediate mill problems. In each mill, it should be our perspective to fold our existing work into the fightback movement. But this must be done with care - both so that we can carry people with us, and so that we can be sure that it won't lead merely to the liquidation of what we already have. Where Sadlowski people were already in control of the local, it may not be possible to carry this approach out.

4. In both Gary and Pittsburgh, our comrades have been able to step into a vacuum created by a large influx of women into the mills. Women face ~~many~~ numerous problems. Neither management nor the union are experienced in passifying and controlling the women. In this area, it has been easiest for revolutionaries to give a lead.

Our comrades should put special attention on organizing for fightback to stand up for women workers and for women workers to see building fightback as a way of increasing their power in dealing with their special problems. In this way we can bring women into fightback and be their leaders within fightback. Our women comrades who succeed in their own mills, will then be able to develop recognition as women leaders in fightback on a district or regional level. This can be used as an opening to other mills and locals, and particularly to women in these other mills.

5. We want our comrades to put very high premium on being openly associated with WP and the IS. We should publish a WP pamphlet directed to steelworkers. This pamphlet should spell out why we support Sadlowski and fightback, and the potential significance of the campaign. It should honestly analyse and criticise Sadlowski and his program in the framework of critical support. But mainly, it should be a program for fightback. It should lay out how we think fightback should be organized and built, and how we think fightback should take up the issues facing steelworkers. Its program is to make fightback a rank and file based, fighting movement.

It should discuss the ENA and the need not only to oppose it, but to smash it. It should deal with ENA not as an isolated issue, but as the highest expression of management/union collaboration on every level - and should project the fight against ENA as part of the fight against this collaboration on every level.

The general line of the pamphlet should be that Sadlowski will be no better than the movement that is built. It is our job, not only to get him elected, but to keep him honest. In fact, the main significance of a Sadlowski campaign and a Sadlowski victory is the opportunity to build a powerful movement of the rank and file in steel.

Central to our involvement in the campaign is to sell the pamphlet and to sell WP. It will require ongoing coverage in WP of the campaign and our line on it. We should also develop and IS steel committee mailing list of steelworkers who like the pamphlet and who read WP, and we should send them regular reports on the campaign that go beyond the WP coverage. To the extent we are able to develop influence in the campaign, we want to make ourselves a trend in fightback, directly in the name of the IS and WP.

7. Our main intervention is not to organize in fightback polemics and disputes over the politics and direction of the overall campaign - or to be the people mainly known for asking the embarrassing questions. We want to fight for our direction mainly through action and example. To do this will often require tactical flexibility and maneuvering. Our influence among fightback activists will be predicated on our establishing a reputation as practical, hard working campaign workers. This in turn will open people to our fuller views.

We want local fightback newsletters to take a better line than Sadlowski. But we should not do it in a way that will force a confrontation that we will lose.

We should use the pamphlet, WP and the mailings to organize the widest possible dialog with other steelworkers on our full views toward the campaign. In our IS literature, we should be totally honest about Sadlowski and the campaign. But we should do it in a way that is still positive and enthusiastic about building the movement.

Our whole organization is inexperienced in this sort of an operation. There is a natural, but mistaken tendency to translate critical support into "embarrassed support", "unenthusiastic support", "hesitant and vacillating support" etc. We will get nowhere if we project these kinds of attitudes. No one will follow us if we appear embarrassed about what we are doing, or hesitant or vacillating. We would be better off opposing Sadlowski, than projecting a program of "on the one hand, but then again, on the other".

We make no secret about our criticisms. We aggressively seek opportunities to sell the pamphlet and WP, and to discuss these criticisms with anyone interested. But we need not automatically attach disclaimers and qualifications to everything we say and do as fightback activists. Though we have criticisms, we want to be active, enthusiastic, proud members of fightback - and its best builders.

8. It is our evaluation that an active campaign, and particularly a winning campaign will build the aggressiveness, self confidence, and militancy of the USW membership; can open up the union to further progressive developments; and can contribute to building an active movement of the rank and file that will go beyond the political limitations of the present leadership. We want our members in steel to establish reputations as important militants in the Sadlowski campaign and we want the IS and WP to be identified as a left current in that campaign. We believe that in the years to come, the most important militants in steel will be veterans of this campaign. We want our members and our organization to share a common experience with those militants. We want

to use this campaign to learn our way around in the union and to establish ourselves as a tendency in it - however small to begin with.

Our perspective is to jump into this effort fully and without reservations. In practice, we may find that the opportunities are more limited than what is here laid out, that things may be tighter more controlled, more bureaucratic, more impossible than we thought. If so, we will be forced to modify our perspectives based on experience. But without jumping in, we will have no way of evaluating the possibilities or developing a next step based on concrete experience. If we wait until everything is clear, and the direction of the campaign is firmly established, we will have waited too long to accomplish anything.

9. Our emphasis at this time, is to overcome the reservations comrades feel about becoming involved in the Sadlowski campaign. We do this only because we believe that there is some possibility (no guarantee) that there will be a movement around the campaign that will develop its own self confidence, tendencies toward individual initiatives etc. Our support for Sadlowski is based precisely on the evaluation that his candidacy - and his electoral victory - has the potentiality of opening things up in the USW and raising the level of rank and file self activity.

If the involvement in the Sadlowski campaign goes poorly, or if the situation fails to open up, there is little danger that false illusions about Sadlowski will develop within our own membership and immediate periphery. But, if things go well, this will become a danger that we will have to be on guard against.

If things open up in the USW and shift left, Sadlowski may try to run left to stay ahead of the membership. He knows how to use left-sounding rhetoric. He may even be willing, if the pressure exists, to take a more militant lead on some issues than is common among trade union bureaucrats today. All this will be to the good. But, it is under these circumstances that comrades will have to clearly ground themselves in an understanding of the limits of trade union reformism. Sadlowski will only capture control of the USW (if he does) in an alliance with a substantial section of the current bureaucracy. In the immediate future, there is no possibility of a mass rank and file movement - independent of the current bureaucracy - sweeping him or anyone to national power in the union. Whatever private opinions Sadlowski may hold (and there is no reason to believe that he at all rejects class collaboration) Sadlowski's behavior as union president will be severely limited by the collaborationist limits and the bureaucratic methods that will be imposed upon him. And in the period to come, these limits and methods cannot cope with the fundamental needs of the union's membership.

This means, that whatever his private view, in the final analysis, we expect Sadlowski to end up being a cop for the boss. A strong rank and file movement can pressure a bureaucrat to respond - especially a left bureaucrat. But as the goals of the movement come into increasingly sharp conflict with the limits of what the boss can afford under capitalism - even the most left bureaucrat draws the line and uses his prestige and influence in the membership to derail the movement.

To most workers today, our long term assesment of Sadlowski's limits will be just an abstraction. As we become an established part of the movement, however, we will have the increasing task of finding concrete ways to raise our criticisms and to differentiate ourselves from Sadlowski and his strategy without alienating ourselves from the best militants.

REPRINT OF DOCUMENT FOR CONVENTION STEEL MEETING

CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR SADLOWSKI

Why is there an Ed Sadlowski?

The crisis of capitalism and the employers offensive lay the basis for a rank and file workers movement. The old methods of class collaboration can no longer bring results for the mass of workers. The open cooperation between the big steel companies and USWA leader I.W. Abel brings forth strong resentment from workers whose wages are far behind those of other industrial workers who are losing thousands of jobs every year. We know that under these kinds of circumstances, revolutionaries, armed with class struggle politics, can begin to win workers to a different view of unionism and union politics. But between our consistent class struggle unionism and the equally consistent class collaboration of I.W. Abel exists another view of how to change things. This outlook is trade union reformism.

Trade union reformism is an inconsistent view and practice that is torn between class collaboration and class struggle. It looks back to the "good old days" when unions were more militant and generally more democratic. Its view of what is wrong tends to focus on democracy and other structural problems in the union election procedures, dues, etc. In other words it concentrates on the relationship of the union's leaders to its ranks. Its views on the employers are usually contradictory, although they tend toward more militancy and less open class collaboration. Trade union reformism, like all bourgeois versions of unionism, however, in no way questions the right of the bosses to boss, management to manage, or the capitalists to reap profits. The exploitative wage slave system is as acceptable to them as to the most hard cased, corrupt old bureaucrat.

Trade union reformism springs from many of the same dissatisfactions that give class struggle ideas credibility, but it attempts to pose an alternative to the present union bureaucracy that accepts the same fundamental proposition as the Tony Boyles and I.W. Abels: that the health of the employers is the precondition for the well being of the worker. It is this fact, this link between trade union reformism and capitalism, that precludes reformism from being a genuine solution even within the system for either the short run or long run in the interest of the workers.

Arnold Miller is a case in point. A dedicated trade union reformist, Miller was swept into office on the crest of a genuine rank and file movement. The movement that gave birth to the Miners for Democracy was a mass strike movement lead by rank and file miners. The MFD became the major organizational expression of that movement, though the MFD itself was not massive in numbers. The politics of the leadership of MFD, however, were trade union reformism. Neither Miller nor any of the other major leaders of MFD questioned the bosses right to profit from the labor of the miners, or the idea that a profitable industry was good for the miners. Miller and the other MFD leaders genuinely wanted to win decent safe conditions, a decent pension, and better wages for the miners. But like all union leaders who accept this system, they could not or would not do what was needed to win those things.

The UMWA was greatly democratized, salaries were reduced, trusteeships lifted. Indeed, a program not unlike that of PROD or Sadlowski was put into practice. The relationship between leaders and the ranks was, to a considerable extent, reformed. But the relationship between the union and the bosses was not changed. The bosses pursued the employers offensive in the coal industry. Arnold Miller and the UMWA reform leadership were unable to respond in a way consistent with the interests of the ranks. Under constant pressure from both the ranks and the bosses, the UMWA leadership soon began opposing wildcats and safety walkouts. The

1974 contract fight was less militant than it could have been and the contract far from satisfactory.

Because they could not consistently fight the employers, that is, because they could not change the relationship between the union and the employers (turn the employers offensive into a workers offensive) the relationship between the ranks and the leaders soon degenerated. Today, the UMWA leadership is pathetically weak, and its reform tendencies nearly exhausted or broken. It is now waging a witch hunt for reds and trying to expell those who led the mass strike of last year. Both wings of the UMWA leadership today side with the employers in one strike situation after another.

In short, the crisis produces reformers, just like it produces revolutionaries. In fact, because most workers still believe in or have illusions about this system, reformism is often more attractive than class struggle politics. But reformism cannot solve the problems that produced. It is not simply that it can't solve them in "the long run," but even in the short run. Under conditions of exceptional business prosperity in the coal industry, the bosses did not even bother to give Miller much breathing space.

Ed Sadlowski is the Arnold Miller of the USWA. Years of disgust with the Abel leadership, with ENA, with lagging wages, and shrinking jobs have produced mass sentiment for a change. Sadlowski, and those around him have come forth to offer one kind of change. Like all reformers, his political emphasis is on reforming the structure of the USWA. Though he is certainly vaguer than Miller or the MFD ever was, he is known to stand for election reforms, against excessive dues and salaries for officials, and for the right to vote on the contract. While he projects an air of militancy toward the employers, he has yet to be pinned down on much of anything. Even specific contract demands are generally absent from his literature and public speeches. While Sadlowski makes it clear that he does not like the ENA, he does not have a position for breaking it in 1977. On the contrary he has been quoted as saying that his hands are tied until 1980.

Trade union reformists can spring from splits in the top levels of the union or come up from the ranks, as did Miller. Sadlowski is a mixture of these two extremes. He comes from the ranks. About 13 years ago he was elected president of Local 65 at the US Steel Southworks. A few years ago he became a staff representative for District 31 (Chicago-Gary). As a staffer he worked for his later political opponent, Sam Evett. There is no question that during his 13 years as an official and staffer he has built himself a strong and loyal base in the rank and file. This base is a coalition of white, black and latin workers. This base made him Dist. 31 Director in 1974.

As Director of Dist. 31 Sadlowski has already shown signs of becoming a run of the mill bureaucrat. As Dist. Director he has some influence over the bargaining of some of the smaller contracts. But during a long strike by USWA members at Danly Machine in Cicero, Ill, Sadlowski refused to make any show of support. Danly workers picketed his office. He refused to endorse a demonstration set up by one of his support groups, the Indiana Steel Workers Cause, against Abel and Evett. In the area of International Union politics he has done little except his short lived campaign against the dues increase. His presidential campaign is certainly not politically sharp or even stylistically dazzling.

Sadlowski has faced certain objective problems. Above all has been a consistent campaign by Abel to undermine him and deny him the resources anyone would need to run a 117,000 member district. The recent election victories in a few big locals in Chicago and Gary were an important boost to his authority. But even here, the weaknesses of union reformism show through. While some of the officers who won are people with a militant and even "leftish" history, the leaders of the Sadlowski slate at one

U.S. Steel local were little more than opportunists in search of allies. Sadlowski was apparently quite willing to make such expedient alliances with rotten elements. His willingness to do so in the face of his greatest strength, foreshadows worse things in the elections for president of the international union.

Why, then, should we support Sadlowski at all?

Trade Union Reformists arise from the same conditions that allow class struggle unionists to lead movements. They are an alternative to class struggle politics, as well as to the more blatant collaborationism of the preceding generation of union leaders. In part, they arise because we, the revolutionaries and class struggle unionists, are so weak. Underlying this fact, is the unfortunate, but undeniable truth that the vast majority of workers share more common assumptions with the reformists than with us. If there is a way to make the union fight without all the hassle of taking on the whole system, most workers will choose it. Trade Union Reformism appears to be that alternative.

Secterians could draw the obvious logical conclusions that since these reformists are an alternative to us - a bourgeois alternative to our proletarian strategy and politics - we should have no truck with them. But the balance of real forces and the level of existing consciousness render this approach sterile. The two strategies are alternatives that one day will clash directly. But today, particularly in the USWA, we do not have the troops to mount that fight. It is not just that we would lose.

There is an additional, and decisive, political reason for not simply turning our back on the movements that arise around these reformists. No matter how rapidly they degenerate, or even if they lose electorally, the reformists, partly because they do call the ranks to the aid, cannot help but open up the political situation in the union. The campaign against the bureaucracy and any reforms that are actually implemented allow more freedom of movement for the ranks. Once the bureaucracy appears to be vulnerable, the cynisms and resignation of the mass of workers begins to be undermined. And this, the crumbling of resignation, is a necessary prerequisite to the growth of a real movement for class struggle politics in the union.

The events in Dist 31 show that this is true. Without in the least wishing to create a movement of any sort, Sadlowski has had to take steps that could well lead in that direction. To get rid of Evett, Sadlowski had to agitate the workers and raise their expectations. He had to take at least one small step toward involving them in union affairs - getting a previously passive membership to turn out and dump Evett. Having accomplished that, Sadlowski then felt the need to reorganize his base to some extent. For this he created Steel Workers Fight Back in Chicago. His ever loyal supporters in the Communist Party helped him by turning Sadlowski campaign organizations in to on-going causes; for example, the Indiana Steelworkers Cause. While none of these is as dynamic as the strike movements of the coal miners, they are much better than anything Sadlowski has ever said. Some of these groups have initiated or participated in direct actions. In spite of the fact that they are meant to be campaign organizations for Sadlowski, they help to draw some workers into struggle.

We must be part of the events, actions, and organizations that are motivating and politicizing workers in the USWA. It is not enough to comment favorably on the good and denounce the bad - all from the comfortable and safe side lines. We want to see Sadlowski run and get elected president of the USWA because it will open things up more and will draw more rank and file workers into activity.

Our support is unconditional. That is, we put no conditions on Sadlowski to win our political support. But our support is also critical.

That not only means that we frankly state our criticisms of Sadlowski's actions, lack of program, or whatever, but also that we put forward our class struggle views. In WP and other IS literature we want to make it clear that we do not believe Sadlowski can take on the big steel companies or really turn the USWA into a fighting union because he is still fundamentally a supporter of the capitalist system. We want to put forward class struggle union politics in the rank and file steel workers movement.

Within the various rank and file groups and within the movement generally, we want to give this fundamental difference an agitational focus around one single demand - Break the ENA. This demand points toward what a real class struggle union would do. It also puts a potential political wedge between Sadlowski and his best supporters. This wedge is not designed to cost him votes, since we insist that real fighters vote for Sadlowski. The wedge is a more long range one meant to lay the basis for a rank and file movement more along class struggle lines. It is an agitational demand in the sense that it has real sentiment among thousands of the best people in the Sadlowski camp and among the best shop floor fighters, even when they are unaware of the election campaign.

We want to enter the Sadlowski organizations wherever possible. Where we are in previously existing groups we want to get them to endorse Sadlowski - such as the Cleveland RAFT groups. We will campaign for Sadlowski. However, the thrust of our political work will be around convincing people of the need to break ENA. As in the past we will put forward our positions on other issues, such as the Consent Decree, only now in the Sadlowski milieu. But it is the ENA on which we will focus. That is the demand we will fight to get the various groups we work in to endorse and fight for.

What will happen after the election?

On the basis of our theory and of what we know about Sadlowski, we can be sure that he will not take on the companies. All of the issues that create a base for him now, will become headaches for him once he is in office. Because he will be in a weak position vis a vis his International Executive Board, and because Abel will certainly settle the contract in April or May - unless the ranks force Sadlowski to lead an anti-ENA movement of serious proportions - Sadlowski will have even more difficulty than Miller in carrying out what little program he is committed to.

On the other hand, the pressures on the job are not nearly as great in steel as in the mines. While thousands of jobs are being lost, the employers offensive does not necessarily express itself in sharp speed up. So, the pressure from the ranks will be less than it was in the UMWA. Also, the very fact that Sadlowski will be in a weak position in the leadership will probably make the ranks more tolerant of his failings than the miners were of Miller's. This means that any short term attempt to break people off from Sadlowski in large numbers, say around a contract fight or local bargaining issues, is not likely to go very far. Our strategy must be more long range. It will be our ability to take clear positions on issues like the ENA, local bargaining issues, the Consent Decree, and others, and fight for them consistently, as well as becoming respected shop floor fighters that will lay the basis for leading more massive movements later on. For now, we will be able to win small numbers to our views and to those direct actions, in union affairs or at work, that we can mobilize. Having been active in the Sadlowski campaign and in those rank and file groups that support him, we will have positioned ourselves deeply in the rank and file movement as it really exists.

IN DEFENSE OF THE PRP - A Reply to British I.S.

This is a draft of a pamphlet, for amendment by the NC, to be produced and distributed to our movement internationally, by the end of October.

I. THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION IN PERSPECTIVE

A. The Portuguese revolution has been the first opportunity in decades to fully test revolutionary working class Marxist politics in a real revolutionary crisis. For a quarter century of capitalist and Stalinist counter-revolution, revolutionary socialists were forced to the fringes of most of social upheavals that did take place internationally. In the anti-colonial national liberation struggles of the 1950's and '60's, as well as in the general struggle between capitalist imperialism and stalinism for world domination, the working class movement was generally weak or politically dis-oriented, and failed to produce viable revolutionary perspective.

The late 1960s and early '70s produced the series of upsurges in France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Chile, etc. At least in terms of basic ideas - that it is the working class that occupies the center of the struggle to change the world - our politics became more relevant. Yet, these struggles did not produce anything more than at the very most, the tiniest embryos of potential revolutionary parties capable of leading a successful proletarian revolution. In France 1968, the student-based revolutionary left failed to break through (except momentarily) the stranglehold of the Communist Party over the mass workers' organization; in Chile, the revolutionary left (MIR/MAPU) failed to create either a proletarian organization or a clear perspective for smashing the capitalist state. Because of the absence of revolutionary parties, even small ones, in these crises, of course combined with our own tiny size and miniscule resources, our ability to hook up with these struggles was extremely limited.

The lessons of France and Chile showed that in a general way our politics are back "in the stream" i.e. that the working class is again decisive and that its struggles must lead to socialist revolution or end in defeat or catastrophe. However, in terms of the critical questions - the inner dynamics and class forces of these struggles, how groups of revolutionaries functioned inside the working class or what the real potential of successful revolutions were - we know, in truth, very little. We had no reliable sources of information, no comrades in the struggle with whom we could exchange experiences, and above all, no revolutionary organization whose growth and development we could watch and analyze as a part of a revolutionary process. As a result, in most cases we were unable to go very far beyond the commentary from the outside.

B. The Portuguese revolution presents an opportunity for us to qualitatively strengthen our political understanding of and direct relationship with, the new period of revolution internationally. In Portugal, the struggles of the working class actually demonstrate all the principles of the third camp of socialist revolution we have been pointing towards for decades: the alliance between the working class and anti-imperialist colonial masses (Angola); the workers' movement as the force whose struggle for workers' control and state power challenges the influence of both Washington and Moscow over Portugal, as well as the internal agents of capitalism and Stalinism (the Socialist and Communist Parties) inside the working class.

In addition, the massive thrust by Portuguese workers toward socialism and class political independence has helped to shape a small group of revolutionaries, the PRP, into the organization which is building a genuine revolutionary working class party today, in the midst of an ongoing revolutionary period. Because of its proletarian class character, and the correct relationship, the PRP has established to the mass non-party workers' organizations, the PRP has been able to lead in mobilizing workers independently of the CP and the SP. As the revolutionary left has sifted out, the PRP has moved toward becoming the political pole in Portugal which stands for working class power and the destruction of the capitalist state. It still faces the gigantic task of transforming from a small revolutionary party to a mass organization. However, in what it has already accomplished, the PRP has succeeded where dozens of revolutionary groups in Latin America, and for that matter every Trotskyist group that we know of in the last 30 years failed. It has established a degree of influence and leadership among revolutionary workers which no section of the extreme left in Europe has approached.

C. The PRP's clear view of the struggle for working class power, its strategy for organizing that struggle, and its success in building a party around that strategy, have shown the superiority of revolutionary politics over centrism. Because of the relationship of the IS to the Portuguese revolution and the PRP should be a turning point in our development. The IS, quite correctly, refuses to pose itself today as a New International or to engage in empty posturing that substitutes for real political influence inside the working class. Nonetheless, the Portuguese revolution has presented us with the chance to link up with a real revolution, and to use the issues of the Portuguese revolution to influence and polarize the revolutionary and half-revolutionary groups throughout Europe.

Needless to say, our relationship with the Portuguese revolution takes on added importance, in view of the fact that the IS political tendency exists at this time only in northern Europe, North America and Australia— not in southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy) where the crisis of Europe is most advanced. The lessons of Portugal will be immediately relevant to Spain, where the far left is just emerging from clandestinity, and in Italy where the main extreme-left groups have real roots among workers but have very unclear politics.

D. As a practical question, it is obvious that the main responsibility for IS international work at this stage rests with the British IS. As Glenn Wolfe in IS Journal #88 states, it is ISGB which must lead in formation of an IS international tendency.

The initial response of ISGB to the revolution in Portugal was impressive and encouraging. Articles by Ian Birchall, (#69), Chris Harman (#73) and Joanna Rollo (#77), among others, showed how a broad working class offensive, largely independent of the wishes of SP and CP leaders, was turning the democratic political revolution in Portugal into a social revolution. As early as March 1975, Socialist Worker clearly indicated that the issue developing in Portugal was one of state power:

"The present balancing act (by the Armed Forces movement) cannot last long... If the workers break through and smash the power of the majority of army officers, they can then solve the economic problems.

"But if workers do not take power, the alternative can be a large scale defeat."

The next week, in an article called Portugal At the Turning Point, the same completely correct warning is repeated:

"The workers have the confidence and strength to establish a socialist order. They need the centralized discipline and organization of a revolutionary socialist party to direct and organize their effort."

"On the other hand, if they heed the insidious advice of Communist and Socialist Party leaders and slacken their hold in the factories and banks, they could go down in a barbarous holocaust."

- Socialist Worker 29 March, 1975

Both these articles clearly point to a situation of emerging dual power. In fact, the 22 March issue featured a whole laying out of historical examples of dual power and their relevance to Portugal. The examples of Germany (1920) and Spain were used to show why the working class must take power under such conditions or ultimately be crushed.

It was SW which called attention to the first joint factory committee of 43 factories in the Lisbon industrial belt. (Socialist Worker, 1 March, 1975) On the level of concrete links, ISGB organized shop stewards' trips to Portugal and made efforts to create links between Portuguese and British workers with common multinational employers.

In addition, it was Cliff's "Portugal at the Crossroads" which, although it contains some incorrect observations on the relations between revolutionary workers and soldiers (discussed below), was the basic textbook which we used to educate our members about the Portuguese revolution. In "Portugal at the Crossroads", Cliff clearly stated that the crisis was one of which class could seize state power:

"The present regime is one of permanent crisis...in a revolutionary period more than at any other time, the masses cannot tolerate a cleavage between words and deeds. The present impasse can be overcome in two ways: either by a victorious proletarian revolution, or by the victory of extreme reaction..."

"A complete collapse of discipline in the factories was a condition and a result of the revolutionary situation. But a situation in which there is neither clear discipline imposed from above by the capitalists, or a discipline imposed by free and conscious collective (organizations) of the proletariat, cannot continue for long. For the capitalists to re-establish their order- with the high aspirations of the awakened, assertive proletariat- a blood bath will be necessary. On the other hand, a consistent struggle for workers to defend their wages and conditions grows naturally into a purge of nasty factory owners and foremen and the forcible keeping open of plants which the owners wish to close. And the struggle for workers' control is inevitably locked in with the struggle for workers' state power."

"Portugal at the Crossroads", p. 40 (emphasis added)

E. However, since last fall and especially since November 25, the position taken by ISGB on Portugal and the PRP has developed in a different, and we believe clearly mistaken, direction. In fact, up to now our opportunity to influence the revolutionary left in Europe over the question of Portugal, to expand the influence of IS politics through the lessons of the Portuguese struggle, has been lost. And we believe that this failure is largely due to the wrong political attitude

adopted by British IS toward the Portuguese revolution in the last year.

Before last November 25, the British IS gave clear political support to the PRP, despite various criticisms. Now it supports the PRP, if at all, only in the most formal and verbal way. It has made no real effort to influence the revolutionary left in Europe over the real lessons of Portugal. Instead, it has launched a series of badly organized literary interventions, aimed at trying to change the PRP, which for good reasons have attracted no positive response whatsoever.

The British IS and Socialist Worker have, in the past nine months, had next to nothing but criticism of every initiative the PRP has taken. These "criticisms" of the PRP, it's true, are partially rooted in some of Cliff's pre-November 25 articles such as the "Open Letter to the Portuguese Revolution". However, these have now been systematized into a whole series of literary, abstract attacks on virtually every PRP policy. Some of these attacks contradict each other, sometimes the line in SW shifts within a few weeks without notice or explanation. However, the common theme is clear— that the PRP is an ultraleft group with little experience of the traditions of workers' struggles, substitutes for insurrectionism, for party-building, and shows little or no regard for the day-to-day economic struggles of the workers or the need for revolutionaries to fight for positions of leadership in the unions and workers' commissions. As a result, for most of this period (until about half-way through the tremendously successful Carvalho presidential campaign), the attitude projected by SW has been pretty much that the revolution is doomed and waiting for the axe of repression to fall.

We believe it is time to set the record straight about the PRP's real role in Portugal.

II. PARTY-BUILDING IN THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

A. Our views on the PRP's strategy and development have been set out in "The Portuguese Revolution and the PRP (In Defense of the PRP)". To summarize briefly, because there was no revolutionary party when the revolution broke out in April 1974, the central problem of the Portuguese revolution has been building a party in the midst of an ongoing revolution.

The PRP has shown, in practice, a clear and definite strategy for the creation of such a party. It is unlikely that this strategy was fully worked out, written down in a document at the beginning of the revolution, etc. The PRP was not born with developed views on the need for workers' councils as the basis for proletarian state power. The PRP as a party in the process of formation has been shaped by the working class in the course of the revolution. But the PRP's strategy for building a party has nonetheless developed, quite clearly at the same time it has struggled to advance the interests of the mass workers' movement.

The role of the PRP in successive phases of this revolution has been to provide leadership to a vanguard of workers, primarily non-party workers, through broad formations, fronts and non-party organizations. It was only these independent initiatives (we have given fairly detailed, but not complete, list of them in the above-mentioned document) that could eventually reach and win over revolutionary CP workers.

The PRP has succeeded at various times (e.g. FUR, the Otelo campaign) in bringing together the revolutionary left, to organize it to act as a cohesive revolutionary force in Portuguese politics. This has made the advancing of the revolution, and the building of a party, possible. The British IS comrades have not understood the importance of this series of successful initiatives to unite the revolutionary left- they simply label it as "accomodating to apartyism".

It has been the PRP which introduced both agitational demands and political ideas to build these initiatives and advance the struggle. That is how it has created a mass audience for its politics, and it is through that audience that it creates the arena and builds the party.

It can be extremely difficult for a small party to throw its resources into these initiatives and simultaneously create a strong, well-oiled and reliable party machine. The weakness of the PRP's paper, for example illustrates this. A strong party is needed for victory. The fact that the PRP's paper Revolucai is not very effective, and often appears irregularly, is a serious political weakness. It has been a mistake for the PRP not to devote the necessary resources and proper attention to it.

The PRP has attempted to partially overcome this weakness through influence inside broader publications, such as the daily Pagine Um which was directed toward the GDUP movement. Initiating this kind of broader forum is also correct, but does not substitute for the press of the party itself.

Yet, no matter how correct all this is, and no matter how many times you repeat it, a criticism of the PRP newspaper does not add up to a meaningful critique of its overall strategy. It is the case that no revolutionary party could have been build in Portugal by any other road than through these necessarily non-party initiatives the PRP has organized in two years of revolution.

To build a party in the midst of a revolutionary period, you need to have two things at once. As we know, you need to build a strong proletarian organizational machine with a worked-out and precise program, a backbone of thoroughly trained cadres, with strong bases in all the mass workers' organizations, with a powerful mass daily newspaper, and so forth. Yet, at the same time, you need to organize around yourself enough forces to be a credible mass force in the actual events of the revolution. You have to do this right from the beginning, because when revolution is going on, forces are measured by the test of whether they represent a potential contender for power. If you do not enter the revolution as a strong party, with significant forces already organized through your program and organization, you must find ways to bring enough forces around you to create a credible physical presence, which means using specific party of your politics to provide real leadership through very broad initiatives.

That is precisely why it is so difficult to create a party in the midst of the revolution. That's why we are for the party being built in advance, through the long process of struggle that shaped the Bolsheviks in Russia. But it is pretty useless to pretend that same process can be repeated in some simple fashion in Portugal where a party has had to be build from the beginning since April 1974.

In non-revolutionary periods it is much less critical to appear as a mass force. Effective propaganda and interventions on the most limited scale, can make us at least partially credible and

create a broader audience for our politics. Yet even for small groups of revolutionaries today, the USA or Britain, our politics become real when we are able to play a central role in building a rank and file Teamster convention of 200 people, or organize a militant lobby of TUC. In Portugal, it is a hundred times more important to organize a mass force. The scale is different and the timetable is different, because the stakes in a revolution are state power. In a revolution you can build a party only by leading forces which represent real power even if that requires emphasizing non-party organizations.

This is made more true in Portugal, not less, because of the fact that the revolutionary left in Portugal is confronted by a powerful Communist Party which is a mass force and has a tremendous organizational apparatus. The CP can never be broken solely by the propaganda and ideas of a tiny group of revolutionaries, no matter how correct they are, but only by the force of masses in motion whom revolutionaries have helped to organize.

It is by playing a mass role that the PRP has become a party. That is, the strategy taken by the PRP has made it the vehicle which revolutionary workers in Portugal have shaped into a party, as the Party had years in which to sink its roots and build its machine. In the last 30 or 40 years, we do not know of any revolutionary group which has made anywhere near the strides of a revolutionary party as the PRP. So far as we are concerned it is the fundamental strategy, emphasis, tactics and political line of the PRP that have made this possible.

3. Clearly, any attempt to evaluate or criticize the PRP must start out from a clear attitude toward whether or not its basic strategy for building a party is correct. Yet, the leadership of ISGB has never clearly stated, to our knowledge, whether it accepts this basic strategy or not. As a result, their criticisms tend to be thoroughly abstract, and to float from one vantage point to another.

For example, let's take the PRP's campaign of spring and early summer 1975 (after March 11), when it threw its efforts into a campaign for CRTs (Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors). Clearly, a campaign of that size had to stretch the resources of such a small organization (at that time, perhaps fewer than a thousand members) to the limit. It's also clear that the councils had to be a clearly revolutionary movement, with a program for working class state power. Yet at the same time to have any reality, they must be broader and have a much greater mass appeal than the PRP could have around its own name. Where possible, they attempted to gain support from workers' and tenants' commissions, and other bodies involved in a range of day-to-day struggles and link them together politically.

Was the CRTs campaign correct or not? The ISGB, in their criticisms of the PRP gave no clear answer about their views. There's no question they were for the CRT's, thought they were a great thing and were for building them - yet at the same time they stated the PRP showed "a certain lack of clarity in the relations between party and class." The closest thing to a clear formulation was put in the "Open Letter to the Portuguese Revolutionary Workers".

"The PRP-BR deserves real credit for urging the formation of Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors. The CRTSM demonstration on 17 June (1975) of some 40,000 people was very fine. But this was only the vanguard - ie workers, soldiers.

and sailors who should be members of a revolutionary party. The real councils must organize far more people with far greater unevenness in their levels of consciousness."

But this is just an abstraction at a time when the same revolutionaries who are in the process of building a party from scratch are also the core of the struggle to create CRTs, the formation of which are instrumental in advancing dual power and opening the question of state power. A tiny party has succeeded in mobilizing 40,000 workers to demand power. Was its policy correct or not?

To make their "criticism" even more confusing, they wrote in the same pamphlet:

"Reading your paper *Revolucão* and talking to members of the PRP, it is absolutely clear that there has not been systematic and consistent work in building the councils. Quite often one finds talk about a proletarian insurrection that does not even mention the need for Councils to support this insurrection.

"One has the impression, again and again, that the PRP did not put the emphasis all the time on the real and crucial nature of the councils".

(It was then explained that in order to win the allegiance of the masses, the councils have to concentrate on the day-to-day economic struggle.)

Then, on the next page, after the lecture on "systematic and consistent work", a formula for "instant councils" appears:

"It took a few days to establish FUR and SUV. It will take hours, not even days, to organize mass meetings in all factories to elect delegates to Councils, which together with the soldiers' delegates around SUV will become the defense of the revolution."

All this, put together, showed only that the British IS did not understand what the struggle to create workers' councils was all about. The point is that the PRP was doing systematic and consistent work, precisely because it is wrong to rely on councils springing up spontaneously "within a few hours" when you need them. In fact, despite all the systematic work that was done to build workers' councils, it turned out to be very difficult to organize them. Eventually, the PRP dropped the campaign for CRTs, when the opportunity arose to create links between popular assemblies as the basis for dual power.

But what about the ISGB's "criticism" of the CRTs strategy? It was nothing but a string of self-contradictory impressions, strung out over a few pages— in short, a muddle. The best thing the PRP could do with this well-intentioned advice was to ignore it. It isn't that the ISGB have ever stated that the PRP should have concentrated on "building the party" by which they mean selling the paper, running for positions in the unions, posing the PRP as the revolutionary organization inside the workers' commissions, etc. — instead of building the CRTs, or later on the SUV, FUR, CLARP etc. At least as far as we know, they have never said any such thing (except recently when IS journal put forward the proposition that if the PRP had run Isobel do Carmo instead of Otelo it would have been "more rooted in the workers' movement") Rather, they have simply "reserved the right to criticize" the PRP for not building a party.

This has meant that instead of a serious arguable political position, we have heard only strings of

anecdotes about this or that workers' commission where the PRP lost, or didn't run, or meetings where they didn't sell their paper, or where PRP comrades somewhere or another stated anti-party positions, etc., etc. It is no wonder that "criticisms" of this type, put forward from no clear strategic vantage point, have created friction in place of clear political discussion- or that the British IS has established no influence and a rather poor reputation in Portugal.

The PRP strategy is even better shown (in the pre-Nov. 25 period) by the SUV and FUR. In building a SUV or FUR, the PRP must show that they are the best fighters for these movements, defending no narrow partisan interests of their own. This is especially important in fighting the sectarian charges and counter-movements launched against them by the CP and UDP. But organizing the SUV or FUR is not somehow counterposed to building a party. They don't interfere with strengthening the PRP. They are the way the PRP advances the movement politically, introduces its program (although not all of it, not at once) for the struggle in the military, the struggle against counterrevolution, for state power etc. They give the PRP an audience for its politics, a much larger audience than it could have any other way.

C. We believe two different strategies for party-building and revolutionary leadership have been tested in Portugal. One road is that taken by the Trotskyist sects and some of the centrist groups. It is the road of propaganda, of trying to create a party by acting as a pressure group, or satellite of the "mass workers' parties", the SP and CP- or other formations such as the left military officers at certain points. Essentially, this policy means finding the "correct" formulation of how to unite workers through the SP and CP, a correct understanding of which wins the vanguard over to the revolutionary banner.

Unfortunately, one of the conceptions circulating around is the idea that the Maoist UDP is the group which "really understands building the party" in Portugal. To prove this, we are told how the UDP raises its banner and fights for positions of leadership everywhere and always. It should be remembered that the UDP (Popular Democratic Union) itself is a front for a small, tightly organized sect called the PCP-R (Reconstructed Communist Party). It is, in fact, true that the UDP emphasizes recruiting, fighting for party positions and presenting itself as the leadership- and that sometimes it has done this where the PRP has not done so. (The fruits of this have included the destruction of the first joint factory council, or Inter Empresa, and turning Republica into a virtual UDP-FEC sect paper).

The UDP is a significant organization which represents the chief opposition for the PRP on the far left. Yet, the UDP has never successfully created a united struggle by the revolutionary left, to advance the interests of the mass movement. If the UDP had never existed nothing would have been fundamentally different, except there would be one less obstacle to a successful revolution and revolutionary party.

The UDP has recruited substantial numbers of workers, but has repelled a much greater number. It creates crippling sectarian divisions, both by counterposing its party interests to the mass movement and by counterposing its call for a "national democratic revolution" to the struggle for socialism. Ultimately, the UDP's "party-building" cannot be separated from its "national democratic revolution" strategy. That is why the UDP cannot and will not create a real revolutionary party, and why it should in no way be held up against the PRP as a model. But that is also why,

every time the working class takes the offensive, the PRP is able to provide leadership while the UDP often counterposes itself or goes into political crisis.

The strategy taken by the PRP has meant working to split the MFA and create a base of support for the revolution inside the army, of advancing the decomposition of the state apparatus, of attempting to build workers' councils and mobilize the workers for power. The success of these policies carries its own contradictions, because united fronts (FUR, etc.) cannot substitute for a party in leading a successful revolution. But without those successes, and without the "aparty" consciousness that helped drive them forward, the Portuguese working class would probably have been trapped in the same stranglehold of the SP and CP that the Chilean workers failed to break from and which ultimately led to their slaughter.

The same aparty consciousness that must ultimately be overcome through a real revolutionary party has been a critical force in actually making a mass revolutionary struggle possible. To build a party out of that struggle, you have to show that the revolutionary party can be the vehicle for unifying the working class, instead of dividing it. That's why, not only from the vantage point of the needs of the movement but also from that of party-building, the SUV, FUR and later on the Otelo campaign are essential.

D. Neither the ISGB nor our other comrades who want to "criticize" the PRP, have suggested the PRP should have followed the road of the centrists and propaganda sects. The problem is, they have not accepted what follows from totally and completely breaking with that road. Their "criticisms" almost always fail to come to grips with what the real alternatives have been.

Bailing these criticisms down to their essentials, we are told that:

- (i) the PRP fails to contest for positions or influence in the national unions;
- (ii) the PRP refuses to fight for influence as a party in the workers' commissions;
- (iii) the PRP ignores economic struggles, "partial" demands and the like.

A lot of this is based on impressionism and is factually ridiculous. Somehow or another, the PRP has members in hundreds of workers' commissions all over Portugal. Did they accomplish this by ignoring economic issues and the day-to-day concerns of the workers? No, they did it by doing the exact opposite.

Because the PRP is still a small party, its strength and position inside the factories is extremely uneven. In dozens of major factories- electrical, textiles, and so forth- where there are anywhere up to 12,000 workers, the number of PRP members can be anything from 1 or 2 up to several dozen. The PRP is a significant political force in some of the biggest and most strategic factories, but certainly not in anything close to a majority of them. Given this, relying on scraps of information can be highly misleading.

The PRP is vastly more influential in the workers' commissions than its proportional size (relative to other organizations). But as a whole, the workers' commissions remain CP-dominated. It couldn't possibly be otherwise.

What is the actual relation of workers' commissions to parties in Portugal? As many comrades who have visited Portuguese factories can tell you, behind the publically united face of the workers' commissions there are continual struggles of parties for influence and control. But how does the PRP contest for positions in workers' commission elections?

For the most part, they did not run on party slates - and quite correctly so. If workers' commission elections were fought out on the basis of party affiliation and program, the revolutionary left would have been virtually frozen out. The PRP's appeal is to those workers, sometimes called "aparty" who quite rightly detest both the SP and the CP for their manipulation and who want a voice, or slate of their own. Accordingly, the PRP members may run as individual militants, or on slates along with other militants, or in other ways. Since last winter, there has been in fact some shift toward clearer politically defined slates. Furthermore, the tactics of a particular election are not dictated by the center, but are worked out locally by the comrades in a tactically flexible way. But the point is that the PRP has always contested for positions in the workers' commissions. Where elections are contested on a non-party basis or in alliance with other parties, the purpose of this tactic is to strengthen the PRP's influence in the commissions, not reduce it.

What about the question of the unions? Yes, comrades, throughout most of the revolutionary process, the PRP has devoted most of its energy to the factories and the commissions, which are the center of most actual working class activity and the center of attention for tens and hundreds of thousands of workers, rather than the national union structures dominated by the CP. Were they correct to do this or not? We believe the emphasis is correct, and that any party that oriented to the union structures would have found itself orienting, propagandistically, toward the CP.

But the PRP has always been for working in the unions. During the strike wave this spring when much of the focus shifted to the national unions, especially in construction, it was the PRP which initiated the rank and file movement (CLACC) to struggle around the national construction agreement. This struggle involved the demand for the return of the wage agreement that was cancelled after November 25, as well as raising more advanced demands which included socialization of building sites, under workers' control. The CLACC was exactly the kind of nationally organized rank and file movement, or contract coalition, that IS-US and ISGB attempt to organize. When the CP sold out the struggle, the construction union leaders of the Setubal district led wildcat strikes and went over to the PRP. In the Braga district, the leadership also left the CP and some joined the PRP. Where does this leave the idea that the PRP ignores unions and economic struggle? It is true (and the ISGB does not seem to recognize) that in a revolution, the "partial" demands of an economic struggle often grow rapidly into more advanced general or political demands. Yet the fact is that when it's the national unions that are relevant, the PRP shows a clear strategy for rank and file movement-building. (Nobody had to show them how to "relate to the struggles of the unions", either). Except for the fact that the PRP has often been unable to be everywhere, doing everything, all at once, the idea that it "doesn't fight for influence" collapses.

The PRP not only fights for influence in these economic struggles, it also directly recruits from them. As we know, recruitment strategies are not always fully successful. For example, a year ago (at the same time as the FUR campaign) the PRP attempted a party-building recruitment campaign with large public meetings, etc. It wasn't successful. Even though tens of thousands of workers were prepared to follow the lead of FUR, they were not prepared to join a particular party. That is

part of why FUR, and other united front vehicles like it, have been so important. But they have not stopped the PRP from recruiting- they have made recruiting to the PRP possible.

Another charge laid against the PRP is that when it does take part in economic struggles, all it does is raise state power instead of a "united militant response around partial demands". This is nonsense. What the PRP does is to raise political ideas in the process of economic struggles- which, it's true, often include the idea that it's necessary for workers to have power in order to solve economic problems.

The British IS believes that it's wrong to do this, because it isolates revolutionaries from the main stream of workers who still follow reformist leadership. But in a revolutionary period, it is true that economic struggles raise the issue of power much more directly than in Britain or the US today. Revolutionaries have to use this to their advantage. Building a rank and file movement in Portugal is not the same thing as it is for ISGB or ISUS.

Yes, because the PRP is still small, the fact is that ups and downs in rank and file consciousness, as well as CP manipulations or even accidents or pure chance, can cause wide fluctuations and rapid changes in the actual influence of the PRP in the workers' commissions and the unions. There is tremendous tactical flexibility and local initiative in the PRP's work - one of the hallmarks of a real revolutionary party - and that, too, means there is unevenness based on the level of the cadres and their experience.

Yet we now seem to have reached a stage where some comrades are ready to seize upon any real or rumored setback the PRP may have suffered to "prove" that the PRP doesn't understand the importance of building the party. What would you think of someone who walked in to "prove" that our TDC strategy was an obvious failure, on the basis of the fact that TDC was politically defeated by the bureaucrats in San Jose and didn't get off the ground in Chicago? What is this method of argument supposed to prove, anyway?

III. ARMED INSURRECTION AND THE 25TH OF NOVEMBER

A. As most comrades know, many of the criticisms of the PRP advanced by the ISGB are put forward in the pamphlet "Lessons of the 25th of November". The basic thrust of this pamphlet, in which the term "revolutionary left" is used to mean the PRP, is that the PRP believes in organizing soldiers and calling for insurrection and this can substitute for building a real revolutionary party.

Several weeks earlier, in an article reprinted as "An Open Letter to Portuguese Revolutionaries", Tony Cliff and Chris Harman had written "

"The critical weakness of the revolutionary movement is the unevenness between the soldiers and the workers. The workers' movement lags far behind the soldiers' movement..." In fact, armed forces substituting for the proletariat cannot even do for Lisbon in 1975 what the Blanquists did for Paris in 1839. Then, a small minority of a few thousands could take power because the rest of the population was unorganized. This cannot be repeated in Lisbon. The Communist Party is too well implanted in the class to allow it."

If this had simply been stated once before November 25, it could safely be forgotten. However, Cliff and Harman quoted this same passage in "Lessons of the 25th". In other words, they repeated it even though November 25 had clearly shown that the PRP was not a Blanquist party, that at no time did the PRP think it could take power "with a small minority" (i.e. without the majority of the working class). Cliff and Harman repeated their charge of Blanquism even though they know very well, and clearly stated in the same pamphlet, that November 25 was a trap set by the Communist Party, which opened the way for a right-wing government coup, and that "the leaders of the revolutionary organization (PRP) seem to have been clear that the coup of 25 November could not (our emphasis) have been the insurrection."

Facts compiled by, among others, the ISGB (see Steve DeFries' chronology of events in IS journal #85), have conclusively proven that what occurred on November 25 was neither instigated nor controlled by the revolutionary leaders; that at no time in those events did the revolutionary left call upon workers to engage in what would have been a suicidal armed adventure.

In these circumstances, to repeat a charge of Blanquism, whether or not in veiled form, against the PRP was a disservice. It is particularly serious that this was carried out, in Portugal, at a time when the right wing was trying to whip up a campaign charging the PRP with trying to organize a putsch. In fact, even the liberal bourgeois paper, Expresso, said that accusing the PRP of putschism was ridiculous.

B. What is also stated here, and what ISGB has repeated over and over and over again, is that the problem was "workers lagging behind soldiers". This was not true in Portugal before Nov. 25, or after Nov. 25, or any other time. As we have (tried to) make clear elsewhere, Portuguese soldiers moved into open full-scale rebellion because they could see the working class moving toward insurrection.

Is this just an illusion? Was there no insurrectionary climate in Portugal in October and November 1975? If not, then why does this same pamphlet, that accuses the PRP of Blanquism also state that "the SUV demonstration of the 25th September or the building workers' mass demonstration besieging the government offices on 10 November, for example, were semi-insurrections or quarter insurrections? How can you have "semi-insurrections" and "quarter insurrections" and yet criticize the revolutionaries for arguing, calling and yes, even preparing for the necessity of a real insurrection?

The Cliff-Harman reasoning goes as follows: "Many of the conditions" for a workers' insurrection were present. Therefore, it was quite proper that "the best elements of the revolutionary left had quite rightly made propaganda among advanced layers of workers, stressing that only through an armed insurrection could the class prevent counter-revolution". However, "one crucial thing was missing: a mass party of revolutionaries with members in every workshop, fighting for its politics in every workers' committee, counterpoising its policies to those of the reformist bureaucrats in the unions" and so forth. Therefore, Cliff and Harman conclude, while it was correct for revolutionaries to make propaganda for the insurrection, the mistake was to carry on agitation for it: "the revolutionary organization has to make absolutely clear the distinction between its propaganda for insurrection, its call to prepare the political conditions for insurrection, and its immediate agitational demands." (This (even though Cliff had written only weeks earlier: "The masses cannot tolerate a

If this had simply been stated once before November 25, it could safely be forgotten. However, Cliff and Harman quoted this same passage in "Lessons of the 25th" and in other words, they repeated it even though November 25 had clearly shown that the PRP was not a Blanquist party, that at no time did the PRP think it could take power "with a small minority" (i.e. without the majority of the working class). Cliff and Harman repeated their charge of Blanquism even though they know very well, and clearly stated in the same pamphlet, that November 25 was a trap set by the Communist Party, which opened the way for a right-wing government coup, and that "the leaders of the revolutionary organization (PRP) seem to have been clear that the coup of 25 November could not (our emphasis) have been the insurrection."

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cleavage between words and deeds").

Very, very fine reasoning. Except for one problem. Suppose that the ruling class, trampling "the distinction between propaganda and agitation" in the mud, goes beyond propaganda for the counter-revolution and actually launches a real counter-revolution and a civil war? That was exactly what looked like was happening before November 25. That was what the PRP was preparing for. The only way to mobilize against it was not to "make propaganda among advanced layers of workers", but to mobilize and unify the class around the struggle for power. That was the position that had to be counterposed against the reformists "in every workshop, in the workers' committees", the popular assemblies and every other possible arena. Despite all the difficulties of taking power under such conditions - not without the support of the majority of workers, of course, but without a mass revolutionary party capable of forming its own government - the fact is that necessity might have to be faced, or the result might be fascism.

With the advantage of hindsight, we can see in fact that events in Portugal have in fact unfolded in a rather different way since November 25. Nov. 25 was only the first step toward, or dress rehearsal for, a full-scale counter-revolution. But with or without hindsight, trying to "criticize" revolutionary strategy on the basis of the "distinction between propaganda and agitation" in an insurrectionary situation is worthless. If, as we are told, "To enter upon the road of insurrection and civil war without a mass Party is the most dangerous thing conceivable for revolutionaries" as if it were the PRP that chose the "road of civil war" then to "make propaganda" for insurrection without actually preparing for it would have been a gross betrayal.

C. Undeniably, on the most general level, the "Lessons of 25 November" pamphlet stated the problem correctly: "When it came to the decisive test, the reformists (CP) were shown to have incomparably more weight within the working class than the revolutionaries. . . when it came to the class as a whole, its (revolutionary left's) influence was much weaker than that of the Communist Party".

It is in fact true that the balance of forces swung back to the CP, after it took the gamble of going into opposition to the Sixth Government. In fact, after eight more months of struggle, in organizational terms, the CP is still the critical obstacle to be overcome. The failure of this pamphlet is that after stating the problem, when it comes to how to overcome it, it presents nothing but glib platitudes, formulas and a few schemas which have since proven to be incorrect.

The pamphlet severely lectures the PRP that it must "sharply alter the priority which it gives to party-building". How? By having regular and popular press."

Besides telling revolutionaries they should have a good paper (which is true) and that they shouldn't "agitate" for insurrection or mobilize for power without a mass party (which is ridiculous), the pamphlet states one other main idea: "now, after a period in which political questions have dominated everything, the class will regain its powers through economic struggle."

It is, in fact, true that the class struggle in Portugal revived through economic struggle. But this did not happen in the way the British IS predicted, and the way they told the PRP it should relate

In fact, before the class responded in large numbers to economic issues, it responded to the political question of the demand to free the prisoners arrested by the Government after 25 November. This could not be predicted from any theoretical schema; it had to be discovered in practice. The PRP waged a successful agitational campaign (CLARP) around the prisoners, which helped to restore the confidence of a whole section of the working class. This actually accelerated the revival of the economic struggle which broke out on a much broader scale, and left the PRP excellently positioned to play a role in the pre-election strike wave.

That strike wave included both local struggles for workers' control, as well as national wage strikes. The ISGB insisted these were strictly "defensive" and "partial" economic battles, and that the worst mistake revolutionaries could make would be to "isolate" themselves by trying to fight for more advanced demands. Like other preconceived formulas, this was totally wrong. Many of these strikes did put forward very radical demands, including nationalization and socialist planning. The PRP's role in some of these strikes, in turn, helped to lay the basis for the Otelo campaign and the GDUPs which represent the working class going back on the offensive politically.

The British IS assumed that after November 25, the relations between economic and political struggle, between "partial" and offensive demands, would be the same in Portugal as it is under the conditions of a reformist period (like the US or Britain). They tried to convince the PRP to adopt the British IS strategy for Britain, in Portugal.

The PRP understood the situation much better. Because of its role in the spring strikes and the summer elections, the PRP is a larger and much, much better organized party than it was a year ago, at the height of the revolutionary upsurge. This would have been totally impossible if the schematic formulas of "Lessons of the 25 November" were taken seriously.

Of course the pamphlet wasn't taken seriously. It went over like a lead balloon when comrades from ISGB tried to distribute it in Portugal, to the PRP and other far left groups. It had no readership and no influence. Is it any wonder? It didn't give the revolutionaries a single, sound, clear concrete idea of what they should actually do.

A sharp clear analysis written toward the extreme-left groups in Europe, showing how November 25 destroyed the illusions they held in the centrist groups, and the progressive middle-class officers, and the Communist Party, might have had some real impact. Instead, the ISGB rushed into print with another muddle, thinking that November 25 proved it was right all along.

IV. THE ELECTIONS AND THE FAILURE OF SECTARIANISM

A. Since the Nov. 25 pamphlet, the method it contains has hardened, with worse results. This became clear when SW criticized the PRP for supposed "abstentionism" because the PRP didn't run in the Parliamentary elections; then objected when the PRP did run in the Presidential election, claiming it was building "illusions" in "military socialism" with the Carvalho campaign.

Finally, at the end, SW reported that the Carvalho campaign was a huge success- but dropped all mention of the PRP's role in it.

The election campaign was virtually the only time the ISGB tried to translate its general schema into concrete tactics. In doing so, they gave advice that was completely

wrong. Anyone who followed it would have wound up in a sectarian dead end.

A parliamentary campaign by the PRP in April would not have been a credible party-building campaign. It would have been a show of weakness (as the sects' campaigns were), and a demonstration to the advanced workers that the revolutionary left was too divided to act together. The PRP's efforts to create a joint revolutionary slate for the Parliamentary elections had already failed. Its own slate could have carried perhaps 2% of the vote. For the PRP this would have been the wrong battle at the wrong time.

You see, for the British IS to run propaganda campaigns in a couple of current by-elections is perfectly correct. It will build their credibility as the only organization that has the politics, the guts and the organization to present a clear alternative to the Labor Party. But the same tactic, a "propagandistic electoral campaign" in the midst of a revolution, where everything you do is immediately measured as your ability to organize mass forces and show real power, would be a disaster. That's why the behavior of our British comrades toward the Parliamentary elections in Portugal (or the German comrades, who asked the PRP to print in Revolucao an "Open Letter" lecturing them that Lenin and Luxemburg were for revolutionaries running in bourgeois elections) is farcical.

The PRP instead fought the right battle at the right time. They organized a revolutionary campaign in the Presidential election that was at least 5 times larger than their "own" party campaign could have been, and had 50 times the political impact. The fantastic success of this campaign, in which massive numbers of SP and CP workers broke their parties' discipline to vote to defend the revolution is now disputed by no one. Yet the British comrades opposed this strategy every step of the way. Even when they were forced by simple reality to recognize the campaign itself as a phenomenal success, they still opposed the way the PRP initiated and built it.

What's important about this is not that ISGB made a mistake - any group makes mistakes - but rather that they repeat and persist in this mistake after being shown wrong. In fact, British IS has become so convinced that the PRP "doesn't understand party-building", that they are forced to view every successful non-party campaign as creating another new obstacle to changing the PRP's politics. They are forcing themselves to take every success and analyze it as a failure. That's why the incredible article in IS Journal #90, written after 800,000 workers were mobilized by this campaign to fight the united front of the capitalist parties, the right wing and the SP could write:

"While the struggle of Portuguese workers has been without doubt the most important and political battle of workers in decades, it has not fought against Social Democracy as the lever of transitional demands were not used...To us, outside Portugal, it is crystal clear that the reason the Portuguese revolution has faltered is precisely because of the illusions in the left military, and in the failure to fight for a political alternative. In our view, if the PRP had backed Isobel do Carmo, for instance, the campaign would have been much more rooted in the workers movement."

What is "crystal clear", in fact, is that this article could only have been written outside Portugal. The British comrades' position now reduces to the demand that the PRP, in the name of "party-building" and avoiding so-called "special relationships" deliberately cut itself off from mass influence, and abstain from organizing successful campaigns. Instead of attacking the system and the mass parties where they are weakest, and where the political consciousness of the workers is most advanced, the PRP should go about building a party through "the lever of transitional demands" Has

any revolutionary party in history ever been built that way?

One would think, at least, that even if the ISGB still thinks the Otelo campaign was wrong, they would at least retract their earlier criticism that the PRP has "an abstentionist position in principle" about contesting elections. But no, this charge too (like the one of "Blanquism") still floats around.

If the British IS strategy had been followed in Portugal since Nov. 25, the most important opportunities for rebuilding an aggressive, confident workers' movement and for building a party, would have been lost. The elections would have been a clear victory for the right. The PRP would have lost the opportunity to create a united revolutionary campaign and launch the GDUP movement. The PRP would have been weaker, not stronger. The domination of the CP over the strike wave would not have been effectively challenged.

So long as the British repeats criticisms that have proven factually wrong, and politically bankrupt, it will be discredited in Portugal, and deservedly so.

B. We are not concerned only with the nature of our support for the Portuguese revolution. We are also concerned with the whole method which we believe could lead ISGB along a false path in the struggle to create a real international tendency. It is in this spirit that we want to sum up the differences that have developed between ISUS and ISGB on Portugal in the last year.

In our view, it is largely because of the PRP and its role in the revolution that we have been well-informed about events in Portugal and the actual inner dynamics of the revolution. Without the information and analysis we are able to get by talking to the PRP and watching it in action, we would be no more than Marxist literary commentators. It is because we took a clear decision, during the revolutionary events of summer 1975, that we had confidence in the PRP and agreed with its strategy for mobilizing workers for power in Portugal, that we have developed a clear understanding of the revolution. That is also why our newspaper has been, in this country, a source of news about Portugal that is unavailable in any other paper here.

This decision was not made arbitrarily. We took it after first learning (mostly through ISGB publications) about the PRP and its role in the movement for workers' councils, and then having opportunities to observe for ourselves and have lengthy discussions with PRP members and leaders. We saw that the PRP's strategy made it a real force in leading workers and that despite huge difficulties it was building a party. Everything that has occurred since then, not least the PRP's ability to analyze, withstand and move forward after the deep setback of 25 November, has confirmed and deepened our confidence in the PRP.

C. The ISGB have adopted a different approach. Instead of analyzing the PRP as a developing revolutionary party, shaped by the Portuguese working class in the process of its struggle, they have used the PRP's ideological origins to find justification for their incorrect criticisms. They label the PRP as a "group trying to evolve away from Guevarism" in order to "prove" the PRP doesn't understand economic struggle and a revolutionary party.

It is because of this extremely distorted way of looking at what the PRP really is, that our ISGB comrades can write in all sincerity that the PRP doesn't understand the importance of economic struggle - flying in the face of the fact that the PRP is involved

more deeply in day-to-day workers' struggles than either ISUS or ISGB.

As a result of this, the ISGB adopted the method of literary intervention as the way of trying to influence the PRP or other groups in Portugal. Pamphlets like "Lessons of 25 November" were not, in fact, even intended to be concrete or precise as to what revolutionaries should actually do next. They were intended to be vehicles for what the ISGB considered to be basic ABCs of revolutionary politics: why you need a party, why you need economic struggle to unite the class, why you have to confront reformism in the unions, and other things which they (falsely) thought the PRP wasn't doing and needed to be lectured about.

The politics of these interventions were not thought through, carefully prepared or responsibly considered. A small number of correct observations - like the fact that the PRP has a weak paper - were lumped to ether with numerous incorrect impressions and abstract, wrong tactical prescriptions.

Not surprisingly, and correctly, the PRP politically rejected the ISGB's advice. Whatever correct points the British IS made, among its numerous mistakes, were also discredited. When the British IS realized the PRP leadership would not accept its criticisms, it turned to a half-thought-out strategy of trying to influence the rank and file of the PRP instead, against the leadership. ISGB comrades attempted to find supporters and distributors for its pamphlets inside the rank and file of the PRP. As we have already mentioned this included accusations of Blanquism against the PRP, at a time when the far right was trying to whip up a campaign to smash the revolutionary left. The British IS without thinking it through, tried to initiate an irresponsible faction fight.

What happened was that the PRP rank and file were quite properly loyal to their organization. Instead of watching while outsiders attacked their organization, they informed the leadership of everything the British comrades did. Naturally, relations between ISGB and the PRP nearly broke down completely. Fortunately, the PRP's members would have none of what the British IS was trying to do.

The ISGB got no response inside the PRP. However, they did find some support for their views inside the centrist group, MES. The British IS found itself orienting time and again toward the MES, only to retreat when they got close enough to see how hopeless the MES (as an organization and political tendency) actually is. While they can talk on paper about the importance of Bolshevik policies in Portugal, in reality they have stranded themselves in between the only real revolutionary pole - the PRP and a centrist swamp.

That is the real dead end of the road the ISGB has followed in Portugal in the last year. They have actually tested a strategy and produced a failure. The sectarianism of the method they have adopted is inseparable from the sectarian politics they have pushed with it.

C. The ISGB position has one advantage: the "safety net" factor. If the revolution fails - and the Portuguese revolution may fail - you can always say, it was a great tragedy but as Marxists we always understood the need for a party and that's why we warned in advance etc. However, we hope that it is not this kind of consideration which lies behind the ISGB's adoption of this position. As they know well, and Trotsky repeated in a hundred different contexts, it is reactionary to prepare for defeat at the expense of struggling for victory. You can always predict defeat, if you want.

It doesn't take the ISGB to convince members of the PRP that there is only a short time

to build a party, that the party may not be built in time, that that would mean the defeat of the revolution with all the consequences that would entail. The PRP already knows this from its own experience.

The truth is that the PRP's members, despite their fantastic (and completely justified) political confidence in their organization, understand the chance of failure. They know that the successful creation of a party depends on them, and with it the chance for successfully taking and holding power. However, they don't allow the possibility of failure to stop them from organizing for victory. It would do no good in Portugal to project the line "without a party, we are lost".

D. In Portugal, there is a party which represents the chance for the success of the proletarian revolution. The criticisms the British IS have made of it have turned out to be wrong. The time to change course is now.

In the last few months, the ISGB line on Portugal has disintegrated to the point where, when SW does report on Portugal, its only political conclusion is that the right still "could" be defeated "if it were met with a united response from workers in the factories". A united response organized by whom? Only organized revolutionaries can mobilize that response. But the comrades now write, in truth, as if there were no parties at all, as if a "united response" could somehow generate itself spontaneously. Since we don't actually believe this, what they are really saying is that defeat is all but inevitable.

For us, that is the worst possible mistake now. It is because the PRP exists as a party in Portugal, that there remains a real chance for this revolution to succeed. It is through the PRP and its initiatives, and only through them that a "united response" to the counter-revolution can be built and sustained. The chance for success is not better, because the PRP is far stronger. That is the real force for victory in Portugal, it is misleading and disingenuous to write as if it weren't there.

We don't expect ISGB to abandon most of the views it has put forward. We will be satisfied if the ISGB's method and approach to the current struggle in Portugal can be changed. We would be glad to put the controversies over November 25 in the archives of "old differences" which don't stand in the way of agreement and collaboration today. What is important today is to give the PRP real solidarity and material support. The need for support in the next period is more pressing than it was last fall when we organized a solidarity campaign. We have been left to carry a ball which is much, much too heavy to attempt to carry ourselves. If we and the ISGB could carry out our international obligation to Portugal and the PRP as successfully as they have carried out their duty inside Portugal, there would be no grounds for complaint at all.

Within a few months, with a new heating up of the situation in Portugal, active solidarity work will be on the immediate agenda again. Now is the time to prepare for it. We want to be sure of the maximum possible support to aid the PRP in its task, of leading a successful socialist revolution in Portugal.

CORRECTIONS TO DOCUMENT

There are a few small typographical errors which change or confuse the meaning of a few sentences. Here is a list of corrections:

p. 3, quote from "Portugal at the Crossroads", fourth line from bottom: should read "workers to defend their wages and conditions grows naturally into a purge of nasty"

p. 5, eighth line from bottom should read "...using specific parts of your politics to"

p. 7, fourth sentence of last full paragraph should read"

"It isn't that the ISGB have ever stated that the PRP should have concentrated on "Building the party" -- by which they mean selling the paper, running for positions in the unions, posing the PRP as the revolutionary organization inside the workers' commissions, etc. -- instead of building the CRT's, or later on the SUV, FUR, CLARP, etc."

p. 8, first full paragraph, seventh line should read:

"...(although not all of it, or all at once)..."

p. 13, second full paragraph, last sentence should read:

"If, as we are told, "To enter upon the road of insurrection and civil war without a mass Party is the most dangerous thing conceivable for revolutionaries" -- as if it were the PRP that chose the "road of civil war" -- then to "make propaganda" for insurrection without actually preparing for it would have been a gross betrayal."

p. 13, last sentence (partially missing) should read:

"But this didn't happen the way the British IS predicted, and the way they told the PRP it should relate to the economic battles turned out once again to be wrong."

p. 16, third full paragraph should begin: "So long as the British IS repeats..."

p. 17, fifth full paragraph, last sentence should read:

"While they can talk on paper about the importance of Bolshevik policies on Portugal, in reality they have stranded themselves in between the only real revolutionary pole -- the PRP -- and a centrist swamp."

p. 18, fourth full paragraph, next to last sentence should read:

"The chance for victory is now greater, because the PRP is far stronger."

THE PRP, THE ISGB AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

By Barbara Winslow
October 1, 1976

I. INTRODUCTION

Since October, 1975, there have developed serious differences between the ISUS and the ISGB in analysing the events of the Portuguese revolution, and in relating to the leading revolutionary group in Portugal, the PRP.

The positions of the ISGB have been put forward in numerous articles in their newspaper, Socialist Worker, in 11 articles in their magazine, International Socialism, and in two pamphlets, Portugal at the Crossroads, and The Lessons of the 25th November.

The purpose of this document is not to recount this material. It is readily available to all IS members. The point instead is to defend several of the positions taken by the ISGB, in light of various charges made against them, including in the EC document, "In Defense of the PRP -- a reply to the British IS."

The main points of the British IS position on Portugal are nearly all to be found in two pamphlets: Portugal at the Crossroads, by Tony Cliff, and also by Tony Cliff and Chris Harmon, An Open Letter to the Portuguese Revolution. These pamphlets deal with all the chief questions of the Portuguese revolution - the army, the relationship to Africa, the political parties and so on. The main purpose of the pamphlets was to argue for building a mass revolutionary workers party.

Cliff clearly identifies the PRP as the best of the Portuguese left, and the group in the best position to build such a party. He also recognizes, however, the dangers facing the Portuguese left, including the weaknesses shared by the PRP. These are a tendency to adapt to the prevailing 'apartyism', that is hostility to political organizations in Portugal. Also, the tendency to rely on and look to the left military, in the absence of a mass workers party.

Cliff argues that above all else the PRP must redouble its efforts to build the party, and that whatever the past benefits of 'apartyism', it has now outlived its usefulness. He argues that the PRP must root itself in the working class, in the factories and workers commissions.

Further, Cliff warns against the dangers of a right wing coup and he argues against agitating for insurrection prematurely, that is, in advance of the construction of a revolutionary workers party and workers soviets. He writes that the immediate task of the PRP is to organize the working class to defend itself in the event of such a coup, and that a successful defense can move the revolution forward, and provide the basis for building a mass revolutionary workers party.

In fact, exactly what Cliff predicted happened, though it took both the PRP and the ISUS by surprise (See Workers Power #137). Nevertheless, the precise meaning of the events of November 25 is now contested. In particular, the ISUS EC argued

that the pamphlet The Lessons of the 25th November is wrong, though now it seems that the EC finds fault in Portugal at the Crossroads as well

Since November 25, new disputes have risen concerning the strategy for building the revolutionary party in Portugal, but we believe the heart of the dispute is still to be found in the analysis of the 25th November. We believe that the lessons of the 25th November is that the PRP showed serious weakness in its strategy for building the party, the very weakness warned of in Portugal at the Crossroads. We believe that the ISUS EC, in failing to face up to these lessons, has adapted to the politics of the PRP, and consequently, has continued to misunderstand the course of the Portuguese revolution.

Since November 25, of course, the situation in Portugal has drastically changed. The portuguese working class, until this point, was on the offensive. The right wing coup put it on the defensive. The ISGB, then, argued that there was still time to build a revolutionary party, that the working class was still strong and undefeated. The PRP, however, would have to drastically change its course. It would have to recognize that, with the class now on the defensive, the struggles for partial, economic demands would take precedence, including fighting in the unions. And, the PRP, if it was to build itself, would have to use its paper, and begin by vastly improving it. It should run candidates in the parliamentary elections. And, it would have to recruit large numbers of workers.

The EC document, "In Defense of the PRP - A Reply to the British IS" argues each of these points. It also makes charges ranging from the ISGB's alleged failure to do its international work properly to attempting to start a faction fight in the PRP. It imagines UDP supporters in the closets. The EC also makes various charges that are only spoken, or reserved for the heat of conventions.

We will try to stick to the main points, however especially those that relate to the question of party and class, building the revolutionary party. These are 1) the question of the insurrection, 2) the PRP's strategy on the party (and its paper), 3) the struggle for economic and partial demands, and 4) the elections.

II. THE ARMED INSURRECTION

The period in Portugal from August through November, 1975, was one of permanent crisis. The Sixth Provisional Government was in full retreat. The masses were increasingly insurrectionary. The army was in disarray; the rank and file soldiers and sailors were on the verge of full scale revolt. Yet, there existed no revolutionary party.

It was against this background that the questions of the party, the insurrection, and Blanquism were raised.

In Portugal at the Crossroads, Cliff wrote:

"of the urgent need to organize workers and soldiers councils. The councils must be widespread, organized across the whole working class and not

only its vanguard. The PRP-BR deserves real credit for urging the formation of Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers, and Sailors (CRTSAs). The CRTSAs demonstration of June 17 of some 40,000 people was very fine. But this was only the vanguard - ie workers, soldiers, and sailors who should be in the revolutionary party. The real councils must organize for more people with far greater unevenness in their levels of consciousness." (p. 44)

Cliff also argued for arming the workers and creating workers militias. He made the case for building a united front to "defend workers organizations from reaction." Most importantly, he repeated the central role of the revolutionary party:

"For the working class to take and hold power a revolutionary party is necessary."

"...many non-party institutions can play a part in the revolutionary process, workers councils in particular can play an almost indispensable part, but without a revolutionary workers party, the working class, cannot rule."

It was in this context that Cliff warned of the dangers of Blanquism, or of substituting a military force for the working class, in the absence of a revolutionary party.

In Lenin's words:

"military conspiracy is Blanquism if it is organized not by a party of a definite class, if the organizers have not analysed the political moment in general and the international situation in particular, and if the party has not on its side the sympathy of the majority of the people, as proved by objective facts..."

Why raise the danger? First, the military was clearly a leading force in Portugal. On numerous occasions sections of the military moved the revolution forward. Second, in the months before November, the rank and file of the army was increasingly insurrectionary. The revolutionary soldiers and sailors had moved far to the left of the advanced workers.

And finally, in the PRP itself, there was confusion on the question of the party, on the role of the military and on other important related questions. The PRP's program read:

"The existence of a large party organization is not a necessary condition for a socialist revolution. Nor is it necessary for the mass organizations of the working class. Historical experience has shown that neither the Soviet revolution nor the Cuban revolution needed large parties in order to organize people and seize power. In the case of Cuba, neither a large nor small party was needed. The Bolshevik party had three thousand members when the October revolution took place." / It had 240,000. BW / (From the Draft Program of the PRP-BR published in Revolucão, September 9, 1975. Translated by the People's Translation Service.)

There was clearly confusion in the PRP-BR, and it was in part in response to this confusion that the ISUS EC itself was forced to write in January, 1976, "Soviets and a revolutionary party (are the) essential ingredients for proletarian rule... without a revolutionary party to lead the insurrection to smash the state, the counter-revolution will triumph." (EC document p. 13)

Of course it was not "ridiculous" at all, and Cliff was quite correct to warn the PRP not to agitate for an armed insurrection when there was no mass revolutionary workers party and where there were no soviets to defend the insurrection. Furthermore, Cliff warned that since soviets did not exist, and since the great mass of the working class had not yet clearly broken from reformism - that is the Communist Party - that the right wing would attempt to provoke a coup to smash the revolution.

"The right wing will do its utmost to provoke a premature rising without workers councils. It would welcome a revolutionary coup based on the actions of the left wing regiments - if the workers did not move to build councils." (Socialist Worker 10/11/75)

And again:

"With the massive power of the SUV and FUR, and with the right doing its best to provoke the proletariat, it may be very tempting to launch a proletarian revolution without the two key weapons for the seizure of power - the Soviet and a mass revolutionary party." (draft of open letter).

Here we should once again refer to what actually happened on November 25. The right wing did in fact provoke several left wing regiments. The CP acted as an accomplice, first moving troops into action, then holding others back, but using all its power and influence to keep the workers from moving. The soldiers that did go out, looked behind them, and they saw no workers, and as predicted (and as might be expected) they returned to the barracks.

The right wing then moved to build and then consolidate a successful coup.

Naturally, this resulted in the complete defeat of the left wing movement in the army, but this too had been predicted. On October 25, Cliff wrote, "The unevenness (between the workers and the soldiers) cannot go on forever. If the workers will not rise to the level of the revolutionary soldiers, there is a great danger that the soldiers level of consciousness will go down to the level of the workers." (10/25/75 SH)

There is another point that should be introduced here. The PRP did not understand the strength of reformism in the Portuguese working class, and consequently vastly underestimated the ability of the CP to hold back the masses of workers and soldiers. In fact, the PRP's position that the CP was weak and incapable of decisively influencing the masses was well known. It was because of this that Cliff, once again, wrote:

"The revolutionary left will find that it is impossible to solve the crisis because the CP, however much it has lost its ability to mobilize is still strong enough to prevent workers from moving in a revolutionary direction." (SH 10/25/75).

The PRP and the ISUS, apparently, disagreed, and still disagree on this. In fact, the EC document states that Cliff's warnings on these subjects were "worthless", and no doubt some EC supporters will think that this whole discussion is worthless. That's certainly their right. But for the Portuguese revolution, these distinctions (including these warnings) were important: the mistakes proved very costly indeed.

Finally, we repeat, all of this is not brought up for nothing. No, the PRP was not Blanquist; it did not attempt a military coup in November. But that is not the point. The problem is that confusion on the role of the party, plus not understanding the distinction between propagandizing for insurrection and agitating for it, prevented the PRP from adopting a strategy that could have any chance of success. That means a strategy based on organizing to defend the revolution in the event of a right wing coup, or warning the workers of the CPs strength and duplicity, and so on.

One last point. The ISUS EC continues to protest that there was, and is, no such confusion. Yet, how can we help but suspect that the Worker's Power headlines (Nov. 28, 1975) "All Power to the Portuguese Workers" not only reflected the confusion of the PRP, but was a clear indication that this confusion had infected the ISUS.

III.. THE PRP, THE UNIONS, AND WORKERS' COMMISSIONS

The EC document argues that the PRP consistently works in the unions, that it contests for power in the workers' commissions, and that it does not ignore economic demands, etc. In addition, it says that any criticism of the PRP in regard to this is "factually ridiculous".

In ISJ #87, "Portugal, the Last Three Months," Cliff writes that the PRP has not shown "any clear radical change or direction towards the industrial struggle towards active participation in trade union affairs, and towards fighting for the leadership of the workers' commissions."

He offered the following as evidence of this:

- 1) In five issues of the PRP paper, Revolucao, out of 72 pages, only 6½ dealt with industrial struggles, covering six strikes in all. This was as opposed to 15 pages devoted to the military.
- 2) Setnave was once strongly influenced by the PRP. On December 16, 1975, voting took place on a program of action for the workers' commission. Proposal A., put forward by the CRTSM (backed by the PRP and others) got only 142 votes. This was against 862 votes for the CP, 240 votes for the PS/MRPP program, 240 votes for the UDP program, and 18 votes for the LCI.
- 3) When a new workers' commission was elected for Setnave on January 7, 1976, the CP gained 32 seats, the PRP 1, FEC-ML 1, and UDP 1. This was a crushing defeat for the PRP. The main cause was simple: the PRP called on the workers to vote for the best militants without paying attention to party affiliation, while the CP, in its plant newsletter put forward an unofficial slate. The PRP did not even present a list of whom it thought the best militants were.

These examples are but a few among many. There are also the reports of the ISUS members, including Joan's account of the November construction workers' strike where "...the PRP stood helplessly by watching the mobilizations, doing little, in an obvious way, to intervene."

There is Diane's report that the PRP's strategy was "to bypass the trade union leadership and structure."

Milt comments on returning for a visit to Portugal in January, 1976:

"The unions which the PRP refuses to work in either because they are supposed to be useless or because they are controlled by other parties, are acting on the issue of the cost of living."

The EC also attempts to denigrate the ISGB's strategy of involvement in economic struggles as unsuited to revolutionary periods: "It is true (and the ISGB does not seem to recognize) that in a revolution, the 'partial' demands of an economic struggle often grow rapidly into more advanced general or political demands."

Yet, in The Lessons of the 25th November, the ISGB position was clearly stated:

"If revolutionaries know how to relate to these economic struggles, it will be easy to push them to the point at which the political issues are raised - the role of the police, the role of the purged army, and the role of the government...the need for class action against it and for corresponding actions of struggle and power."

The EC document says that it is "nonsense" to claim that when the PRP is in fact involved in the economic struggles, all it does is raise state power, rather than calling for united responses around partial demands.

But Diane reports:

"Demands raised in different workplaces. Sorofame (Feb. 24). 'End Capitalist Exploitation.' 'End Neo-Colonialism, Discuss in Order to Unite.'"

And:

Lisnave (in regards to the elections): 'Against Capitalism - Against the Bourgeoisie - Unity of Revolutionaries, Against the Elections - Socialist Revolution, Unite, Organize, and Arm for the Socialist Revolution.'"

And Wendy reports:

"The question of struggle around economic demands is clearly one they have little political conception of but they relate to it in a spontaneous manner. Everyone agreed that it was important to fight the wage freeze, but it does not seem that they have got any national direction."

"The most Political response was 'if we fight around economic demands we

are fighting for a better life for the workers, yet Portugal is a poor country. Would it not be creating illusions among the workers to say that socialist revolution will bring a better life."

Candy:

"Everyone saw economic struggles as critical but more as agreement with me when I would initiate a discussion on it."

The ISGB made the point that the way to recoup the losses of November was for the PRP to "propel /_the fight for wage improvements_/ to unite the strength of the workers around partial economic demands in order to raise the combativity of the working class." (Lessons of the 25th November, pg. 5)

The point is that despite the EC claims to the contrary, there is much evidence, from both the ISGB and in the files of the ISUS, that the PRP did not fully appreciate the importance of the economic struggle. This is especially true in the new circumstances following the defeat in November. And, it certainly did not understand the urgency of turning to those struggles..

In conclusion, it should be repeated that even in a revolution, there is and can be no wall between economic and political struggles. Here are the words of Rosa Luxemburg:

"The movement does not go in one direction, from an economic to a political struggle, but also in the opposite direction. Every important political mass action, after reaching its peak, results in a series of mass strikes. And this rule applies not only to the individual mass strike, but to the revolution as a whole...

In a word, the economic struggle is the factor that advances the movement from one political focal point to another. The political struggle periodically fertilises the group for the economic struggle. Cause and effect interchange every second." (Rosa Luxemburg, Ausegewahlte und Schrifte, as quoted in Portugal at the Crossroads, pg.8)

IV. THE ELECTIONS

Elections can be an important arena for revolutionary socialists. They provide a platform, and a place for revolutionary propaganda. They can be one way of pointing to an alternative to the reformist leadership in the working class. The Bolshevik Party often stood candidates in elections, and Lenin was clear in opposing abstention in elections as a principle.

The ISUS and the ISGB, of course both start from Lenin's position on elections. And it was from this vantage, that the ISGB raised its criticism of the PRP, when last spring it became clear that the PRP intended to advocate abstention in the parliamentary elections.

The PRP, as far as we know, has no principled position on elections. But, according to Workers Power #159, May 10, 1976 and Diane E. (in conversation with PRP

members) said the decision not to run in the parliamentary elections was based on the following reasons: 1) The PRP did not have the resources to launch a campaign; 2) in any event, the elections, with the advances of the right, would be the mechanism for re-establishing fascism; 3) standing candidates would indeed increase sectarianism in the workers movement; 4) the PRP would be banned once it criticised the government; 5) it needed more time to devote to leading economic struggles and 6) since the PRP was small, the electoral intervention would simply have exposed its weakness.

Various other explanations have been advanced as well. Nevertheless, the ISGB chose to criticise the PRP's decision and in "Portugal: the Last Three Months," IS #87, Cliff writes:

Parliaments can be used as a platform without falling into parliamentary illusions. Right now it is vital for revolutionaries to participate actively in the election campaign. Abstentionism is the last thing the workers will fall for. The higher the left vote, the more confident the workers will be in the next battle, beyond their electoral one. If revolutionaries do not put their candidates forward, the reformist CP will have a clear field for the workers' attention."

The PRP stood no candidates and appealed to the workers to boycott the elections. They put out anti-electoral propaganda, including the now famous stickers of the man pissing in the wind.

In the elections, however, some 90% of the working class population turned out to vote, in what was a near record turnout for an election--- outside the 'workers states' anyway. The workers clearly rejected abstentionism, and this should hardly seem surprising. After all, there had little opportunity to vote in any form in the preceding forty years. And unfortunately, the Maoist UDP was the only revolutionary alternative on the ballot, receiving 2% or so of the vote.

It seems impossible to say that the PRP had not severely misjudged the mood of the workers. It also seems difficult to imagine that no resources were available. Diane reports that the PRP was not in fact involved in any economic issues at the time. Anyway, hadn't we been told that the PRP had been "shaped from a small underground revolutionary group to a revolutionary workers party?" (Workers Power, April 26, 1976. Certainly a revolutionary workers party would have the resources.

The Carvalho campaign, it will be said, was altogether different and in most ways it was. In this campaign, the PRP actually took the lead. It began organizing before the other groups were even involved. In fact, the PRP seems to have a special relationship with Carvalho.

This effort was an important shift outward for the PRP, and more importantly, its success provided a great boost for the morale of the Portuguese workers movement. Carvalho got 16% of the total vote, reducing the CP's vote to just under 8%. The right wing victor, Euzes of course, polled 61%.

How then could anyone find fault with this intervention? And how could the ISGB suggest as an alternative a campaign for the PRP leader, Isabel do Carmo?

The answer is simple: it comes down to a matter of perspective, and how building the party fits into that perspective. To begin with, it is widely known that Otelo has his shortcomings, political and otherwise. Yet the PRP had nearly no criticisms of him in their press. And this was despite the fact that he played virtually no role in the key events of November, 1975. Needless to say, it is a hallmark of revolutionaries that no political bonds can be built with uncritical support.

It also must be remembered that in the end, popular support is no substitute for revolutionary organization. Yes, it was important to win large numbers of CP votes. It will be another thing, however, to break those workers from their organization. The truth is that CP members will only change their political allegiances when they can see a credible alternative, that is another party, that fights in the factories and unions.

Therefore, despite the success of the Carvalho campaign it is impossible for revolutionaries not to feel a certain ambivalence. Perhaps it is true that a do Carmo campaign would have gone for nothing. Still the Carvalho campaign seems to be just another example (no matter how successful) of the tendency of the PRP to subordinate itself to the "mass movement".

The election showed that there remains in Portugal something of a mass base for the revolutionary left. And, it has given rise to the GDUPs, a movement which the EC seems to place great hopes. These organizations, however seem at best murky (Joel compares them to the Students for a Democratic Society, SDS), and little is known about their programs and leadership.

The conclusion that must be drawn is that there is no evidence that the Carvalho campaign strengthened the organization of the PRP.

Finally, it should be noted that the EC document claims that a "propagandistic electoral campaign in the midst of a revolution, where everything you do is immediately measured as your ability to organize mass forces and show real power, would be a disaster." (pg.15) This statement would preclude revolutionaries from taking part in elections altogether. For no party of the extreme left could use a campaign to "show real power."

The most important point is that the EC seems to completely misunderstand the situation in Portugal last April, in fact it seems unable to distinguish one situation from the next.

Yes, abstractly, Portugal is still in the midst of a revolution. But the point is that in April, the right wing was firmly in control of events, and growing stronger. The working class was clearly on the defensive. Tactics that might have been commonplace in October, would be unheard of in April. Insurrection, for example, was not on. What then, is the meaning of the EC's use of words "in the midst of a revolution?" Of course, a propagandistic campaign has its place even "in the midst of a revolution". If, it is used to build the party.

V. BUILDING THE PARTY

The EC document describes the PRP's strategy for building the revolutionary

party as follows:

"The PRP has shown in practice, a clear and definite strategy for the creation of such a party. It is unlikely that this strategy was fully worked out, written down in a document at the beginning of the revolution, etc. The PRP was not born with developed views on the need for workers' councils as the basis for proletarian state power."

"The PRP as a party in the process of formation has been shaped by the working class in the course of revolution. But the PRP's strategy for building a party has nonetheless developed quite clearly at the same time it has struggled to advance the interests of the mass workers movement."

"The role of the PRP in successive phases of this revolution has been to provide leadership to the vanguard of workers, primarily non-party workers, through broad formations, fronts and non-party formations. It was only these independent initiatives that could eventually reach and win over revolutionary CP workers."

There are really two questions here: First is the PRP strategy to build a genuine mass revolutionary workers party and is this in fact "clear and definite?" And second, is this strategy successful?

It is of course clear that the PRP works to develop broad movements, and there have been many examples of these from the CRTSMs to the Carvalho campaign. It is not clear, however, that in these broad movements the PRP works to build the party, at least not in the sense that we understand the party.

I have shown in the sections dealing with the insurrections, the unions, and the elections that the PRP does not understand either why it is necessary to build a mass revolutionary workers party, nor how to do it. There are many other examples at which I could have looked - the PRP's work in the CRTSMs, which the PRP "dropped" in favor of the MFA/popular power alliance, and in its approach to CLARP.

There is one last point, however, that must be raised. It is the question of the PRP's paper, Revolucao. Of this, of course, the EC document reports agreement with the ISGB criticisms. I do not believe this, however. In fact, the EC document dismisses the issue of the paper as a secondary point.

Therefore to repeat what Cliff wrote first in Portugal at the Crossroads:

"The party and its leadership must keep in continuous touch with the masses. The only real revolutionary politics is the principled open politics that avoids falling for "tricks" that dupe the masses. So the party press must play a central role in the party's work, by giving local committee members of the party and the mass of its supporters a clear idea of the politics of the party. It was so with the Bolsheviks. At the beginning of July, 1917, 41 newspapers and journals were published by the Bolshevik party, 27 in Russian, and the remainder in the languages of the various minorities...The word, including the written word is of such central importance in a revolution. There was no better period in Lenin's life in which he wrote more or better than the months of February-October. (p. 47)

And again, in the Open Letter to Portuguese Revolutionaries:

"Within the class itself, the levels of the reformist ideas have to be fought every day. Within the advanced layer of the workers, the ideas of the half reformist parties (including the half reformist parties within FUR) and of the Maoist sects have to be fought. They cannot be fought without an organization of all those who are willing to fight. They cannot be fought if the reiteration of ideas of the revolutionary party always takes second place to the more "immediate" and "practical" problems. That is why at height of the German revolution of 1918-1919 Rosa Luxemburg devoted herself to the work on the paper Die Rote Fahne. She knew that without a paper there could not be fight against reformism where it really mattered, in the depths of the class."

The revolutionary paper must be central to building a revolutionary party. It is difficult to imagine a revolutionary party which does not have such a paper. This is doubly true of a small party, in particular a small party whose strategy is to build and work in broad formations. Working in broad formations must never be counterposed to building the party. And without a paper, how does a small group recruit as well as influence larger numbers of workers. Also how does a small group go into these broader formations without losing its politics and principles?

The fact that the PRP does not take its paper seriously, is tied to their failure to fully understand the importance of the paper in building the party. And, this too, is an adaption to 'apartyism'. The other parties have their newspapers, especially the CP. How does the PRP expect to win over the best CP militants without using its paper to combat the ideas of the CP?

Apartyism cannot be used as an excuse not to push the party paper in the larger formations and to aggressively push the party program forward. Apartyism cannot be that strong in the Portuguese working class for how does one explain that the CP is growing?

I can only conclude by agreeing with Cliff when he wrote in An Open Letter to the Portuguese Revolution that "building the revolutionary party - not at some indefinite point in the future - but now is a life or death question." I do not believe the EC document in any way proves that this has been, or is being done. We have seen no evidence of serious growth either in terms of size or influence of the PRP..

I do hope that the situation will improve, that the EC will be proved correct in its predictions that the party can be built from the GDUPs, and that this November will be decisive. I am not optimistic. I have heard these promises before.

CONCLUSION

Finally, there are several things which must be added to these points. The EC document says that the PRP "...has established a degree of influence and leadership among revolutionary workers which no section of the extreme left in Europe has approached", in addition to other similarly high blown assertions. To back this up, however, the EC offers no evidence, no membership figures, no lists of the trade union posts held, no positions in the workers commissions. There is nothing on strikes led, factory bulletins produced, nothing on copies of Revolucao sold and sold to whom. Needless to say, there are no comparisons with any actual groups made.

(Another example of this is on page 9 of the EC document which charges that "up to now our opportunity to influence the revolutionary left in Europe on the question in Portugal, to expand the influence of IS politics through the lessons of the Portuguese revolution has been lost. And we believe this failure is largely due to the wrong political attitude adopted by the British IS towards the Portuguese revolution in the last year." Again, the EC offers no proof. However, we do know the Organization of the Communist Left in Spain thought the Lessons of the 25th November was the finest analysis of the events of last November, had it translated into Spanish and distributed.)

This method, unfortunately, runs throughout the entire document, in fact through the ISUS Portugal work as a whole, top to bottom. It serves no purpose to members of the ISUS or to the PRP. The truth is that the PRP remains a small party, indeed a very small party. No amount of empty praise will help the PRP through these difficulties. Neither will it train the members of the ISUS in the real lessons of the Portuguese revolution.

At the same time, the EC document criticizes those who would criticise the PRP. The EC even criticises those who are skeptical about what the EC says about the PRP. In fact, the document uses the word criticise itself in quotation marks. What is the meaning of this? Is the EC operating under some new principle of international solidarity, or fraternal relations? If so, this principle should be elaborated, for we know of no example in the history of the movement, when revolutionaries took up the position of uncritical support of other revolutionaries, whether in the midst of a revolution or not. Certainly Lenin didn't do this. And neither did Luxemburg or Trotsky.

Finally, the EC document boasts that because of its views (as opposed to the ISGB's) "...we have been well informed about the events in Portugal and the actual dynamics of the revolution." Surely, the EC misunderstands the feelings of the membership on this question, and the meaning of the vote at the convention which demanded discussion and debate on Portugal.

The truth is that the ISUS (and in any event the membership) has been poorly informed. Until this NC there has not been one serious document produced by the EC despite its many claims, and its various charges against the ISGB. The ISGB, on the other hand has consistently produced a thorough account of events in Portugal as they have unfolded. They have presented a clear, often detailed analysis of the primary questions. And overwhelmingly they have been correct.

FOCUSING THE PERIPHERY CAMPAIGN

-Submitted by I.A. Exec (Bob B., Craig, Joel Sharon)

(An earlier version of this proposal was presented to the recent NC, in response to the "Building the Political Periphery" document, from which all quotations are taken).

The EC document on the campaign to build the political periphery, along with related analyses, presented to the NC, raise many of the key problems facing the organization: (1) The depoliticization of the cadre and the consequent need for political education and hardening up; (2) The lack of satisfactorily worked out political perspectives in the industrial work, and the consequent need for greater input from the fractions and the branches to the center in order to develop more precise analyses and interventions; (3) The failure to integrate socialist politics into our trade union work, and the consequent need for the organization as a whole to give more specific direction for raising our politics and building the party. However the concrete means proposed for beginning to come to grips with these problems, aside from the V.P. campaign, is a series of public forums on general political topics. This is not only inadequate, because it fails to face up to the problems in building our actual periphery--the contacts and near-contacts of our industrial fractions. It is also possibly dangerous, because it threatens to reinforce the all-too natural tendency in this period to separate our political and trade union work.

We believe that the serious problems raised by the EC are obviously interrelated, and that we can begin to face up to them, at least in part, by starting to integrate our programs and methods for political education with the tasks of developing our political periphery and of developing our industrial perspectives. However, in order to do this, we must first be sure to have a clear focus as to who it is we are going to be dealing with, for it is only on this basis that we can concretely decide how to do it.

Specifying Our Targets

The EC has made an important step forward in recognizing that our previous worker recruitment campaign and subsequent attempts to bring in workers "tended to telescope the relatively long process of developing revolutionary cadres in too short a time." In this period of relatively low level of struggle--despite the continually deepening economic crisis--we cannot win over and keep workers simply by "opening the doors of the party" no matter how wide. We agree with the EC that in order to recruit, in addition to more specific plans for mass work in our industrial priorities, we need "equally rigorous plans for I.S. political interventions in that arena for the same period," in order to increase "our ability to use our politics to explain the world to those who work with us." The EC emphasizes that "The need is actually most acute in our rank and file industrial work." They go on to say that what is therefore required is to relate our socialist politics to the specific problems and experiences of the people we work with--to the state of each industry, to the various bureaucracies to the union reform movements. But if this is so--as we believe it is--we are bound to ask why we are launching an unfocussed program of generalized political forums and films? Let's face it: a program of forums on general political topics probably will not attract many of our contacts or near contacts in industry. Besides given the relatively small number of workers who are anywhere near us it is a great waste of resources to organize forums on questions which could as easily be discussed at branch or fraction meetings. Possibly, a program of forums would be a good way to relate to a different milieu, but if this is the intent, this should be spelled out, and we should be told who we are aiming at. Without this clarification the program could be counterproductive, for it allows us to pass over the key question we face: how to

bring politics to the working class, in this case our small but crucial worker periphery.

This point should be obvious, simply by referring to the field where we've had the greatest success up to now. TBU is our greatest rank and file success. The IBT is the area of greatest IS presence. Yet, as the EC points out, perhaps our most striking problem up to now has been to recruit teamsters. Yet, neither the periphery document nor the additional EC analyses even deal with teamster perspectives, let alone specify the manner in which a periphery campaign should be developed vis a vis our teamster friends, especially in relationship to the process of building TBU. We believe that at least where there is active ongoing teamster work- esp. Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Bay Area, LA, Detroit- -what is required is not the squandering of scarce resources on a generalized periphery campaign, but a focussed and concretized program to bring teamsters around us. To fail to concentrate resources here now would be to risk squandering substantial capital in the one working class arena where we have actually built it up. To fail to at least address the problem directly will inevitably be demoralizing; for it means refusing to concretely test our political perspective of building the party while building the rank and file movement.

Even in places where there is no teamster work, there is every reason still to focus on the specific needs of the contacts in each of our priorities, as well as the Gary Tyler/Red Tide work, where we've had some real success. It would be better indeed, in our opinion, to spend the time proposed for planning forums on developing a better understanding why we have failed to recruit and working out concrete tactics for a real periphery building campaign in every area.

Integrating Our Educational Program

In Los Angeles we have developed a two-pronged educational program in the branch which is designed to deal with the two areas where we are weak: (1) raising socialist politics among trade union contacts; (2) making a contribution to the general process of developing more refined political and industrial perspectives for the organization as a whole. Our teamster fraction educational programs are for ourselves and all of the core leadership of LA TBU. They are designed to place the key problems and experiences of these militants within a revolutionary perspective. So far, the program includes the following educational: (1) the rank and file movement in LA Freight Local 208--its development, its limitations, and the reasons for its ultimate failure; (2) the economics of trucking in relationship to the developing crisis: de-regulation, owner-operators, ... How can we, how has the working class historically, responded to closures, layoffs, etc.; (3) The legal road to reform in the IBT--the state and the unions (taking off from Labotz' V P article); (4) Hoffa and the teamsters--the development of the bureaucracy in the teamsters in relationship to the general process of bureaucratization of the unions, the relationship between bureaucratic consolidation and economic prosperity and between bureaucratic crisis and the economic crisis; (5) Socialists in the unions: the historical role of socialists in the unions from the CIO era, not simply confined to teamsters, but to include the role of the CP and other socialists in the other unions.

At the same time, our branch has designed a series of educational designed to link up directly to the organization's current published (and unpublished) analyses of our work in teamsters, auto, and steel. The aim is to evaluate our current perspectives in each industry, especially as set out in the recent NC documents, in the context of relatively extensive background presentations on economic development and working class activity in each area over a relatively long period (back through the Hoffa era in teamsters, back to CIO era in auto and steel).

Now, obviously the programs layed out here are relatively ambitious -especially if they are to be done reasonably well. Yet, in light of the organization's needs, as layed out by the EC, we feel we have no choice but to begin the process. . .in fact, we feel that something like this should be occurring in every branch. The EC has vaguely urged the organization to bring contacts to its factions and proclaimed the necessity of increased input from the factions and branches into the center's discussions on political-industrial perspectives. It is obviously inefficient for isolated branches like our own to take up these tasks by ourselves; that's the point of an organization. It is up to the EC (and the fraction leaderships) to implement its own directives by providing organization division of labor to support the factions and branches by way of research, pamphlets, development of other materials. It is their job to concretize our political interventions at all levels in each industry, instead of avoiding this difficult task by initiating a vague program of general forums.

A FEW NOTES ON THE BRITISH I.S.

Having just returned from a one-month visit to Great Britain we feel it might be helpful to share some of our observations.

Initially we will say that our observations were for the most part favourable. We had a number of chances that we took full advantage of to get a sense of the rank and file and of the organisation itself. We should also mention that the past period for our British comrades have been somewhat "rocky" as it were. The reasons are fairly simple in their complexity: the class hasn't been moving.

The majority of the British working class put great stock in the return of a Labor government. There were illusions that Labor would save the workers from the increasing attacks by the bosses. Labor was voted in and is now virtually indistinguishable in its attacks on the class from their conservative "opponents" (the Tories). The class has not yet made a large militant response to this sell-out. The strike level in Britain today is the lowest it has been in nearly 30 years. The ISGB reflected this period of relative complacency. It became much more difficult to build in the class. Membership naturally dropped slightly among workers. It is important to note however that recruitment did not reach a standstill. People were recruited wherever they could be found. White collar workers (secretaries, hospital workers, teachers) and students were among the willing to join I.S. during this period.

THE CAMPAIGNS

There were two campaigns begun within the last 6-8 months that marked a significant turn for the organisation. One was the Right to Work Campaign and the other was their anti-Racism/anti-National Front Campaign. Both have been marked with some significant victories during this otherwise slow period.

The Right to Work Campaign is a broadly based campaign aimed primarily at unemployed workers. It was officially christened by a 300 mile march of 70 unemployed workers to advertise and draw support for the campaign. Forty-three of those marchers were arrested and beaten by the cops.

The RTW campaign raises the issues of the 4½% unemployment level in the country, the special oppression of women, blacks, and young workers who are the first to be denied work. It is also aimed at the fairly vicious cuts in the social services sector that Britain's "socialist" govt. has been famous for providing or not providing. It calls for a shorter work week, an end to the cuts in Health, Housing, and Education. Equal rights and jobs for women and blacks and young workers leaving school.

The Right to Work Committee staged the largest demonstration of unemployed workers since the 1930's a few weeks ago. It was a 60 mile march from London to Brighton where the Trade Union Congress was meeting. Over 550 unemployed marched and were met in Brighton by 1,000 others including IS contingents.

The campaign has won the support of over 1,200 trade union locals and steward's committees. It has recruited to the IS over 200 workers and laid the groundwork for a national youth organization similar to our Red Tide.

The Anti-Racism/National Front (Nazis) campaign has brought around the IS about 300 blacks, a large proportion of them young. The credibility and the periphery of the IS has grown considerable in the black communities through this work.

The campaign has also scared the living shit out of the National Front. Before we left there was a demonstration of over 3,500 in Blackburn against the Front's attempts to organize there.

Their Women's work (organized primarily around the newspaper "Women's Voice") is also showing some steady gain. Its role in the TRICO women's strike is most notable. The paid circulation of the paper is up to about 3,500.

THE NEXT STEPS

We were fortunate to be able to attend the Party Council (similar to our NC) just before we left. Of the sessions we attended the most significant discussions were on the formation of a youth organization and the ISGB's plan to become a party. (Unfortunately for our sakes they will be called the Socialist Worker's Party)

The ISGB has gained a reputation of being the only organization of any weight or significance that has consistently put up a fight against racism and unemployment, as well as being involved in ongoing shop floor struggles. The CP has (suprise, suprise) continued to move rightward and are suffering fairly serious losses of credibility and in some cases members as a result. With this as a backdrop the ISGB sees the necessity to reach as wide an audience as possible with our political world view.

Two comrades are presently running for Parliament against right wing or National Front type candidates in the by-elections. There is talk of expanding this to 70 Socialist Worker candidates in the next general election. (Any party that runs 60-70 candidates gets television coverage during the campaign.) The ISGB now appears to be in a position to take advantage of this situation, and will be reaching much broader audiences with our program and our politics. All of this plus the fact that most workers who read the paper (and some who don't) already consider the IS a party has led the organization to take this step.

We felt encouraged by the whole experience and realized that the gains and successes of the ISGB are not entirely our of our reach.

Dan P. & Celia P.
Cleveland

"NONE ARE SO BLIND AS THOSE WHO WILL NOT LOOK"

by Barbara Z., N.Y. Teachers Branch

"...soviets and a revolutionary Party (are the) essential two ingredients for proletarian rule... without a revolutionary Party to lead the insurrection to smash the state, the counter-revolution will triumph. "

"It is in these (coming economic) struggles that the PRP must be able to prove itself as a credible, militant alternative to the CP. The leadership it provides in these struggles is decisive for its growth as a mass revolutionary party. It is this which will be key to the coming stage of the revolution...splitting the CP...unifying the class to take power."

These quotes from the January '76 AC resolution on Portugal pose the problem correctly. The question is whether or not the PRP in practise is headed in the direction of implementing these goals, and thus of implementing its goal of establishing proletarian power in Portugal.

In their draft article, "The Portuguese Revolution and the PRP" subtitled "In Defense of the PRP" JG and DF answer this question in the affirmative. They do this despite the fact that hard evidence against their position has been in NO files files for months --- in the form of lengthy objective reports from I.S. comrades (Joan in Nov. '75, Candy Milt and Candy in Jan. '76) and in the form of material from the PRP itself. (None of which has been circulated to the membership).

These on the scene reports give us first hand evidence on what PRP policy really is and has been. It is time the membership know of them, and that our leadership responded to them. The excerpts quoted below speak for themselves.

I. PRE NOVEMBER 25: THE PRP AND THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

On November 10, the PRP published a pamphlet stating that the armed insurrection was on the immediate agenda, in fact was so immediate that "objective conditions cannot wait for organization." Since the meaning and significance of this statement is questioned by JG, let us see what the relation between this PRP view and the PRP role in the momentous action by 100,000 construction workers of surrounding the constituent assembly on November 14 ---- in some respects a peak of working class mobilization ---- was.

The story we all read in WP was of powerful PRP intervention in, if not leadership of, that struggle; in the face of the CP union leaders' betrayal.

What do our comrades' on-the-scene reports tell us? Do these reports support the view that the PRP had a strategy for organizing workers? for breaking them from the CP? or that the PRP had a concept of the relationship between economic and political demands? Quite the contrary.

Comrade Joan was there. (It should be noted that this report by Joan is from a comrade whose support to the PRP is not only unconditional, but from one who, so far as anyone knew, till reading this report, was also believed to be totally uncritical). Here is her first hand report:

"Setubal Committee of Struggle Nov. 12 ... The PRP is in the leadership, a majority on the committee and were chairing the meeting... Two construction workers came to speak about Azevedo and the construction workers demo. They just told about it, didn't propose anything, didn't ask for anything from the committee. Neither did anyone in the room propose any action. In spite of the fact that the construction workers at that moment had barricaded the town square, and a government building in Setubal as well as were barricading the constituent assembly. It just wasn't discussed."

Also on Nov. 12, Joan reports on the "Construction worker demo":

"This was the third day of the strike. This was the first of many major mobilizations led by the CP before the revolt of Nov. 25. During this time the PRP stood helplessly by watching the mobilizations, doing little, in an obvious way, to intervene.

"There was no mobilization of prp members to go to the demo. The only reports back at the sede ((headquarters)) was how long the demo was.

"The mobilization seems to have been sparked off by demands raised in areas where the prp has some strength. - Sines, ... As well in Amadora. Economic demands were raised there first. The PRP members in Sines had to plead to have someone come down from Lisbon ((i.e. someone from the PRP leadership -- BZ)) because things were starting to happen there. Lisbon hadn't paid any attention to it because they didn't expect to be able to do anything with construction workers. Once the demands picked up, the CP moved in with plans for the mobilization. The PRP in Sines convinced the workers there to come to Lisbon to take part in the demo.

"During the sit in around the constituent assembly, there were no Revolucao sold, nor any prp leaflets put out. There were prpers speaking to the workers during those hours, but no one using the party name. Revolucao came out after the strike was over. The cover was an immediate reaction to the sit in, and the inside stories covered Sines and Amadora and the struggle. It would have been useful if the strike were still on. But this was the first Rev. cover to react to events

"The Setubal prp had members in the construction unions. They came to the office the day of the strike. But the fact of the strike seemed to have no relationship to the activities of the other members, either in the committee of struggle, or anything else that was going on.

"On their not intervening nationally, the prp would answer that the cp can carry out and lead these large mobilizations, but they will not be able to control locally. When they go back to the local areas, the prp expected to defeat the cp which would be giving in on demands."

On Nov. 13 Joan had a long talk with a leading PRP spokesman. He explained, she reports, that the CP had been moving toward an overthrow of the sixth government, using the construction workers to put pressure on the government, but the main aim is a coup -- CP and fellow traveller government. But this would bring civil war -- started by the right, or by the left. (Was this assessment correct? If so that would mean that we've all been misled in believing that the CP's aim, including on Nov. 25, was to win more seats in the existing cabinet, that it was using first the construction workers, then the paratroopers in a pressure tactic.)

Joan continues: "Nov. 16. It was the biggest demo ever. But PRP did not intervene. 60 PRPers put up posters in the Place Comercio the night before. The members were instructed that if their factory was going to the demo they should go along. Many did not go except to look for a while and then they went back to the sete, very disappointed.

"The only presence of prp or fur was paper sales. This was encouraging in that it was the first time the prp had sold at a demo. And they were excited because they were selling out. British ISers also sold their pamphlets. The prp organized no slogans, banners or support or intervention of any kind. You would never have known they were supporting the demo..."

"Nov. 20 General strike initiated by the CP. Again nothing from the prp. At least for many hours. They did try to organize something under the name of FUR, but failed. Again many of their members of the prp stayed in the sete. Even those from factories that took part in the strike. At midnight after the pcp had gained control of the strike and turned into a reform meeting, the prp put out its soldiers statements. People were turned on to it, but most were already on the way home. Revolucao, the old issue, sold by Lisnave workers, non-members."

Can we escape drawing a conclusion from Comrade Joan's reports? When the class was in active motion, able to barricade the government and win agreement to the construction workers' demands for a 40% wage increase (and with even right wing troops refusing to intervene against the workers), the PRP did not even try to intervene in its own name.

Was the PRP concept of agitation for the insurrection, in practice, in conflict with participating in and giving a lead to a real mass movement? The facts speak for themselves.

II. THE PRP AND THE ARMED INSURRECTION

Despite these facts, known to them, JG and DF on page 3 of their article state, "The PRP has proven in practice (original emphasis) that it does not suffer from any disease of ultraleftism. It has never fallen into the trap of putschism." On page 7, citing the fact that Nov. 25 was a successful right-wing coup, they conclude (a non-sequitur if ever there was one) that "November 25 proved there is no element of putschism or adventurism in the PRP's view of revolution."

Let us see what Joan's report has to say on this:

(1) On the basis of her visits to various headquarters and talks with various PRPers, (she gives substantial evidence), Joan concludes that the PRP not only was prepared to "defend themselves against the real or imagined right wing attacks. But, as well, there was a real sense of getting ready to call the insurrection."

(2) Let's return to Joan's report on her attendance at a meeting of the Setubal Committee of Struggle, remembering that that Committee was one of, if not THE brightest spot of working class "popular power" organizations.

"The PRP is in the leadership, a majority on the committee and were chairing the meeting. There were about 100 people there at its highest point... This meeting had about 1/3 the usual number of people. Everyone was upset that the committee was not going well and there were different explanations given. From the Setenave person, it was pointed out that there were only 2 or 3 CTs (Workers Commissions) here. The committee was accused of not taking up problems here, the action is outside, the committee waits for the military, the MFA. But Portuguese people must be active. They can't wait. People have one ideology - led to attack on parties who are keeping things outside the committee. Most CMs (Tenants Commissions) are not here.

"Some people were delegates to this meeting, but anyone could speak or vote. Most people were workers. The PRP was very active - the chairperson, the first speaker, and a woman who kept intervening and trying to put down the attacks on the committee..."

"It was in the midst of the leadership of this committee being denounced that one of the PRPers shocked the British ISers by saying we'll have a surprise for you next month - the insurrection.!"

((Comment: If the working class leaders in probably the most class conscious and best organized working class town in Portugal were going to be surprised by "the insurrection", then is it the working class that the PRP sees as the actual maker of a working class revolution?))

(3) And what did the leading PRP spokesman have to say to Joan on this question on Nov. 13?

"So we must prepare for the insurrection," Joan notes that he reported that in several places the PRP had raised the question of arming the workers, and that they were particularly concerned that the insurrection not take place under the conditions of a CP coup. It would obviously be better if the working class were ready to lead, but there was the problem of time which did not seem to allow for building the areas of popular power and the organization in advance. ((Also see quotes from PRP's Nov. 10 pamphlet in my earlier article, confirming Joan's impressions.)) Joan ended with a "sense of no choice for the PRP but to go to bat."

JG and DF (p. 9) state, "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."

III. POST-NOVEMBER 25: A TURN TO AGITATION?

But did things change after November? Was the PRP later better able to integrate political and economic demands within a coherent strategy? Have they, thus, been more successful in leading the working class in action?

Even JG (in his talk on Portugal at the summer school) admitted that the PRP tried, but was unsuccessful, in January in organizing a campaign against the wage freeze.

What sort of a campaign did the PRP try to organize? A look at the printed PRP leaflet in the N. O. file will tell us:

"Against the rise of the cost of living. Against hunger. Against exploitation. . . " What action does the leaflet propose? "Unite, Organize, Arm so that the Revolution will Triumph."

How did PRP militants respond to similar questions asked by our comrades in January? (Again, this material is from the N. O. files).

(1) Wendy (reporting from Marinha Grande, far and away the PRP's strongest local): "On the question of arms, they said that they have run into a problem where workers are afraid to join the PRP because of the question."

"The question of struggle around economic demands is clearly one they have little political conception of but one they relate to in a spontaneous manner. Everyone agreed it was important to fight the wage freeze, but it does not seem they have gotten any national direction yet on the question..."

"When I raised the question of economic struggle, the automatic response was: did I mean this should be done in place of the political struggle. When I replied 'along with' this sounded good to everyone, but there still does not seem to be much of a conception..."

(2) Candy: "Everyone saw economic struggles as critical, but more as agreement with me when I would initiate the discussion on it... There does not seem to be a clear plan by the leadership of guidance for the economic struggles by shop floor militants. For example, one of their members from Inapa (which is a paper factory of 3-400 workers), who was recently recruited, had already begun to recruit a couple of CP militants from his shop and ran out with 50 the first time he took Revolucao to the factory to sell. But he was telling me that he had to meet seriously with other comrades and the leadership, because it was not enough to go in and sell the paper and say you were a revolutionary. They had to have a concrete plan for economic and political work inside the factory to win people, especially CP revolutionaries.

"Another example is that although they are committed to a struggle around the cost of living, there are no concrete plans for a general campaign yet, and they are awaiting initiatives from the shop-floor levels."

And, still, there is no evidence that the PRP leadership has developed any such "concrete plans".

IV. THE PRP & THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

We are all agreed that the presence of a revolutionary party tried and trusted by the Portuguese working class in April '74 would have made the victory of the Portuguese revolution a near certainty. Its absence was (and still is) a major obstacle to victory -- despite general agreement in the IS that the PRP has taken brilliant initiatives toward raising the level of the class struggle, toward the construction of soviets, and that it has, in the past, used to revolutionary advantage the "a-party" sentiments in the working class.

"So long as the working class is not defeated the party can still be built"; write JG and DF (p. 1) The chief question under debate, therefore, is: "Is the PRP trying to build the revolutionary party"?

The question may seem impertinent, for doesn't the PRP program (Revolucao, 9/9/75, English translation in "Portugal, Key Documents of the Revolutionary Process"; Peoples Translation Service, pp. 26-31) state,

"Without a party all struggles of the proletariat end in suicide"? (cited, p. 1, by JG and DF).

That sounds good, but to understand what the PRP really means by this statement, it is necessary to quote more fully from the FRP program:

"However, the existence of large party organizations is not a necessary condition for a Socialist Revolution. Nor is it necessary for the mass organizations of the working class. Historical experience shows us that neither the Soviet Revolution nor the Cuban Revolution needed large parties in order to organize the people and seize power. In the case of Cuba, neither a large nor a small party was needed. The Bolshevik Party had three thousand members (in a large country with millions of people) when the October Revolution took place."

Perhaps JG and DF (who put the number of Bolsheviks at 240,000 when the October Revolution took place) can explain this contradiction in PRP theory. Perhaps they can also explain the practice of the PRP on the question of armed insurrection, a practice clearly stemming, not from the Bolshevik, but from the Castroist (putschist?) view.

Perhaps JG and DF will also tell us why they ignore the following comrades' reports (based on January '76 visits to Portugal) on this question.

(1) Milt: "The nature of the soviets is a great problem: PRP insists that if parties are elected in soviets, they cease to be class organizations and become organizations of the party that wins."

(2) Wendy, reporting on discussions with PRP comrades in Marinha Grande: "Wasn't a mass party of necessity bureaucratic and Stalinist; wasn't a disciplined party in some way anti-soviet; what was the difference if workers were in the party as long as they supported the PRP's politics, etc...."

(3) Candy: According to PRP militants "A mass party meant two things: size and reformist with purely an electoral strategy."

While the FRP has indeed accelerated its recruitment since Nov. 25, it is clear that neither the leadership nor the membership share our conception of building the FRP into THE revolutionary party, the revolutionary alternative leadership capable of serving as the revolutionary vanguard of the class.

Two late formulations of the PRP position are to be found in:

(1) E Agora ?... (the pamphlet they published May 1, 1976, p. 21)":
"We can say that all the conditions for the insurrection existed (before Nov. 25), but there existed no revolutionary political leader-

ship capable of taking the initiative and leading the process... We can say that the PRP wasn't alone in the leadership of the movement, nor could it be. The PRP never considered itself as 'the unique and true party of the working class' and it has always thought that there must be others in the political leadership of the insurrectional process. This necessity of being present in a united political leadership results in being linked to the backwardness of other organizations and of the revolutionary military itself. (emphasis added)

(2) Revolucao, June 22, 1976, concluding paragraph of editorial:
"It is necessary that Otelo's candidacy be (used as) an organizer. That it serve also to organize the workers for the present and for the future in a great movement of unity..." (Emphasis added: a movement, not the PRP.)

The PRP inspired the campaign for Otelo for president. It is safe to state that without the PRP there would have been no such campaign. Did this experience convince the PRP that it not only can but must become THE revolutionary leadership?

On the contrary. The Otelo campaign flows from the PRP de facto non-party conception. The PRP actually desired that the Otelo movement substitute a mass non-party movement for the PRP. The Otelo movement could win the vote of probably most CP industrial members away from the CP, but only a truly vanguard party can win their permanent organizational loyalty.

... "Defeat is" still "not inevitable". But "Without the revolutionary party to give leadership, no successful working class revolution is possible." (JG and DF, p. 1). Yet the PRP is banking on a spontaneous process -- that somehow soviets and "a party chosen by the class" will arise out of the struggle, somehow erasing the CP and UDF as obstacles. Whatever this PRP view of the party is -- it is certainly not Leninist. Is it ours?

July 18, 1976