

SPECIAL BULLETIN NUMBER TWO.

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PORTUGAL REPORT

Introduction

We visited Portugal for four days in the first week of November, 1976. We went intending to attend the first National Congress of GDUPs (Dynamization Groups of Popular Unity). The Congress, however, was postponed at the last minute. The FRP gave us these reasons for the postponement: 1) Otelo's imprisonment 2) the Communist Party's decision to hold an important trade union conference that same weekend, and 3) insufficient funds.

Nevertheless, the FRP arranged a meeting between their leadership's representative in charge of international work and ourselves. We were able to hear from him a full report on the present situation in Portugal, including discussion (5 hours altogether). In addition, we spoke with a former member of their international department, a district organizer, and numerous rank and file members. We visited the National headquarters and two district offices. We went to the National Headquarters of the GDUPs, spoke with several rank and file GDUP members, and took part in a local GDUP activity.

Obviously, we cannot, on the basis of such a brief visit give a detailed first hand account of the situation today in Portugal, nor can we give a complete description of the day to day work of the FRP. We can, however, give a political report of our discussions, and a brief evaluation of the perspectives of the FRP at this time.

We will also add a note on the ISGB in respect to Portugal.

Cal W. & Barbara W. November 13, 1976.

The present situation

The situation in Portugal today was described to us by the FRP as follows:

The strength of the right wing reached its peak in Portugal at the time of the two elections (the parliamentary and presidential elections last spring, 1976). The presidential campaign, however, showed that there was still resistance and in fact there was a revival of the popular movement as a result of the Otelo campaign.

The FRP believes, therefore, that the right wing strength had been exaggerated, though there was still steady movement to the right. The SP government was also moving to the right and it would fall in any event. In the military there was a balance of forces - moderate and right. The new NATO battallion, could however, shift the balance in favor of Veloso, the right wing general in the North, and the extreme right.

The the same time, the FRP reported the economic situation was catastrophic and growing worse - increasing unemployment, inflation, an ongoing attack on the living standards of the people, attacks by the right on those who occupied land, occupied housing, and an attack on workers control in the factories. The Soares government was not capable of solving any of these problems. The FRP believes that the bourgeoisie already has a "shadow government," a government of "competents", harder and more conservative.

The FRP also reported that there was always the possibility of a coup d'etat, by the right, but that there might be also a "moderate coup" - a coup of the moderates in the military, those who are against a return to fascism. But a right wing coup was far more likely.

Still, there is resistance - the working class has not lost its capacity to struggle. On Friday, November 5, there was a general strike of textile workers (The textile workers union is the largest in Portugal with 500,000 members) in response to the firing of two union leaders in the midst of this years' contract bargaining.

The FRP also reports that there was discontent in the base of the CP, as the CP was forced farther and farther to the right in its efforts not to upset the political situation - "in favor of the right." The base of the SP was also drifting left. There was a demonstration of 20,000 teachers in Lisbon in October, led by SP union leaders. There had been a left minority at the SP conference. And, Lopes Cardozo, the SP minister of Agriculture, allegedly a leftist had resigned.

Finally, the popular forces had once again been revived in the demonstrations protesting the arrest of Otelo - there were two demonstrations - one of 30,000 and one of something less than 20,000.

The FRP's conclusion we were told, was that there were "tremendous social and military upheavals" to be expected in Portugal in the immediate period. And it was in this context that we went on to discuss the perspectives of the FRP, beginning with the situation on the GDUPS.

The GDUPS

The GDUPS began last July, 1976, in the aftermath of the Otelo campaign, surviving, to the surprise of the FRP, the election period. They were set up as popular power organizations, made up of independants from the Otelo campaign, and members of the main revolutionary organizations, the FRP, the UDP (the Popular Democratic Union a front organization dominated by thr PCP-R, Portuguese Communist Party-Reconstructed) the MES, Movement of the Socialist Left.

GDUPs were formed in many places - factories, offices, neighborhoods etc, but as they set for themselves primarily the task of "raising the level of consciousness of the Portuguese working class" through "ideological struggle" they became more what we might call "information centers" than activist organizations. Consequently, there is little evidence of the GDUPs ever having been involved consistently in struggle.

The FRP told us they had believed that if the GDUPs could be built on a broad non-sectarian basis, with the correct political and organizational program, they would become the basis for a "new revolutionary party," the MUP (Movement of Popular Unity). This new party would include the parties (FRP, UDP, MES etc.), the factory GDUPs, tenants and the progressive military etc. The new party's first test was to have been the municipal elections in December.

The UDP (a far larger organization than the FRP) also had high hopes for the GDUPs. They planned to capture them, and according to the FRP were almost successful. At one point, less than a month ago, the UDP had leaflets printed announcing disbanding the UDP. The PCP-R hoped to replace the UDP with the MUP, with itself, of course, at the center of a new Maoist style front.

There was a bitter faction fight in the GDUPs from the beginning, primarily between the UDP and the FRP, with the MES vacillating between the two. The result of this fight has been a defeat for the FRP's plan to build a new party. According to the FRP, in many places there has been a drastic decline in GDUP's membership. In many others, the GDUPs have become simply fronts for one or another of the parties. The final outcome of the struggle is still undetermined, the Congress having been cancelled. (the real reason, we believe being this faction fight.) The FRP hopes that in the last weeks, the UDP's aggressive sectarianism might have begun to backfire, and there some evidence for this in the Otelo demonstrations.

Still, it is clear that the FRP's strategy has failed, for even if Otelo, once released, can intervene in support of the FRP, there will be little left to win. Consequently, according to the FRP, they must now begin to consider new alternatives (in place of the GDUPs) and new political and organizational strategies.

Perspectives

The FRP spokesperson was openly pessimistic. He told us that while the working class still struggled, the fights took place in isolation - on one issue at a time. The FRP believed there had to be a "unified response" to the crisis, based on a clear socialist alternative. The problems - inflation, unemployment, the rightward advance - had to be met with a total "global" response.

The FRP believed that socialist revolution was the only solution to Portugal's problems, and that the FRP had to be able to clarify the socialist alternative, to convey what kind of society was actually wanted, and to convince the people of this alternative.

The problem was that after the failure of the GDUP strategy, the FRP had no alternative. In addition, the FRP membership was "tired and demoralized" as a result of the months of factional struggle in the GDUPs. There was a tendency toward declining activity.

We asked if the FRP had grown as a result of the activity in the GDUPs and the answer was a clear "no, only marginally." We also asked if the FRP had been able to take advantage of the disillusionment in the ranks of the CP and SP, and we were again answered with a clear "no." Certainly according to his report, there was no "mopping up of the CP on the factory floor."

The FRP still had a strong presence in the army, we were told. The party existed in every unit, and they were the only revolutionaries in the army. Unfortunately, he said, "we are not the alternative in the civilian sector." In conclusion, he told us that the FRP was "incredibly isolated both internally and externally," i.e. in Portugal and internationally. Still he hoped there was time to win a social base. The FRP still believed that socialist revolution was possible in Portugal but that the FRP had to be able to find a way to win the masses "in a very, very short time."

Conclusions

This report was very bleak indeed. To repeat, we were told that Portugal faced a severe crisis, there was the danger of a right wing coup, there would certainly be sharp shifts to the right, but that the FRP had no strategy, nothing to replace the failed GDUP/MUP strategy of building a new mass party. The FRP was "isolated" particularly in the "civilian sector," that is, the working class.

This situation is bad enough in itself, of course. But we believe it is made worse by the fact that our discussions with the FRP convinced us that it is unlikely the FRP can transform itself, even given more time than it is likely to have.

A revolutionary party, in the Leninist sense, is the actual leading section of the working class, the advanced guard. The party cadres are the actual class leaders; there is an organic connection between the party and the class. In Russia in 1917, the Bolshevik Party won control of the factory committees (and then the soviets) both by leading the day to day struggles of the Russian workers, and by pointing to the socialist alternative. They saw no contradiction.

The FRP does not understand this. Instead it gropes for broad formations into which it can submerge itself. It does not attempt to intervene in, and it does not attempt to lead the day to day struggles of the workers. It believes such a method is reformist. Consequently, it made no intervention in the textile workers' strike. Neither did it attempt to intervene in the teachers struggle. Instead the FRP simply commented that it was happy to "see the petit bourgeoisie moving left," that is breaking from SP leadership. Nevermind that the teachers demonstration was the single largest demonstration of any section of workers since November 25.

The FRP also continues to cling to apartyism in the name of opposition to sectarianism. The FRP told us that they do not nominate slates in the GDUPs for the municiple elections. They also told us that they do not push forward their own members for nomination, despite the fact that its competition, the UDP fanatically fights for every position. Another FRP spokesperson, a district organizer, told us that that he thought the FRP had "little support in the GDUPs, independant of Otelo." When we went with GDUP activists to help with a cooperative vegetable market, in a Lisbon shantytown, we were warned by FRP members not to mention the FRP..(Even in the smallest ways, the FRP fails to push itself. A district organizer told us that badges (eg FRP buttons) and banners (on demonstra-
 • tions) were "foolish ways to distinguish yourself.")

Surely, the experience in the GDUPs should have shown that sectarianism cannot be fought simply with calls for unity; sectarianism cannot be decreed out of existence. Neither can the broad organizations be held above parties. On September 16 Revolucao featured a GDUP proposal which stated: "one insurpassable principle is the autonomy of the workers organizations in relation to parties..." and the GDUPs must "...preserve their autonomy in relation to political parties." No wonder the FRP failed in the GDUPs. And no wonder that it was the UDP that has, in the end, been the chief beneficiary of the Otelo campaign.

A revolutionary party proves itself in struggle. It demonstrates that it is the most able to lead, as opposed to the others- CP, SP, UDP whatever. It proves itself openly and in practise as the most capable of leading, not for being simply the most aparty. A revolutionary party is not a broad mass formation in which the various tendencies(i.e. centrist, Maoists etc.) swim. The methodology of the FRP is simply wrong.

The FRP remains the best of the revolutionary left in Portugal.- better than the UDP or MES. This fact, in itself, however, has less and less meaning, in light of the FRP's inability to transform itself, to intervene and lead the struggles of the Portuguese workers or to grow. It is probably pointless to argue whether the FRP has 1,000 members or 2,000. (we believe it is closer to 1000) The point is it is small and isolated, and in its own words with no strategy for the days to come. At the same time, the right daily grows stronger, a fact which the PRP underestimates. After all, while Otelo is still in jail, Spinola, the fascist, walks the streets, a free man.

We can still hope that this situation will change. But we will not spread illusions.

A note on the ISGB

Over 400 members of the ISGB visited Portugal since April '74. This number includes members of their central committee, trade unionists from every section of the organization.

We spoke to at least 20 members who had been to Portugal. Not one person came close to the position of the ISUS. There is no opporition on the Portugal question. The most common criticism of the ISGB Portugal work was only that

Cliff and Harmon had been too optimistic about the FRP to think they could be won to a clear Leninist position.

It should be remembered that it was the ISGB that first met and introduced the FRP to our international tendency. They have raised money and other forms of support for the FRP. In the fall of '75, the ISGB offered to raise 10,000 pounds to buy a printing press for the FRP, plus to send over two of their printers so the FRP could have a daily newspaper. The FRP refused.

ISGB members spoke about the FRP's failures in relating to the issues of the working class. For example, John Deason, who heads up the Right to Work movement, said that when he went to Portugal with a trade union delegation in the summer of '75, they did not meet one workers commission under the influence of the FRP. Other ISGBers more recently returning from Portugal said they could not think of a single factory where the FRP was strong.

The FRP now refuses to speak with the ISGB. They refused an invitation to the ISGB '76 conference (convention) The FRP did, however, send two representatives to a Big Flame, an anarchist, soft Maoist collective in England. The FRP wants nothing to do with critical supporters.

It was no surprise then when the foreign committee member of the FRP told us that they were "isolated internationally" with the exception of the ISUS. This is not the doing of the ISGB. Surely if the FRP had "established a degree of influence and leadership among revolutionary workers which no section of the extreme left in Europe has approached," (October '76NC document p.2) it would not be so isolated. It's success would shine through even a British fog.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PRP?
(A Reply to Cal and Barbara's Report on Portugal)
By Joel Geier

The probable failure of the PRP's strategy for the GDUP's (probable, but not certain, since the struggle is not yet over) has become a new opening to cast doubt on the PRP's understanding of the revolutionary party and party-building.

This setback is also becoming a new vehicle for all the old criticisms of the PRP, associated with the ISGB. We think it is already clear that Portugal is not really the issue here, but a convenient starting point for American questions. The attack on the ISUS position in support of the PRP has been turned from a discussion of Portugal itself, into an opening wedge for factional charges of submerging, substitutionism and dishonest leadership now being raised in the IS.

We cannot prevent anyone from trying to view the Portuguese revolutionary process through the prism of an American Faction fight. But we believe that does violence to the reality of Portuguese politics, and to the true dynamics of the Portuguese process which do not exist to fit the timetables of American faction fights. Nonetheless, these new charges about the PRP's role in the Portuguese revolution must be answered.

Barbara and Cal are telling us that: (i) the GDUP's are a substitute for principled revolutionary politics and strategy in Portugal; (ii) the PRP shows no understanding of building a party; (iii) the British IS has consistently understood these supposed shortcomings in the PRP and attempted in a loyal way ("critical support") to overcome them.

We will take these up in order.

I. THE POLITICS OF THE STRUGGLE FOR THE GDUPS.

During the Otelo campaign the PRP drew a number of conclusions. The first was that there were thousands of revolutionaries (independents as well as members of the SP and CP and the remaining small revolutionary organizations) looking for an effective organization. (The PRP started the GDUPS. The GDUPS were then called Committees in support of Otelo's Campaign-CACOs. The UDP when it joined then suggested the name GDUP, which the PRP accepted. This is somewhat different from the current underground rumor that the UDP started the GDUPS.)

The second was the PRP's recognition that it had moved from being a sect in the pre-25 November period, to being the nucleus of the party. But its growth in membership was not sufficient. Portugal by the end of 1976 or beginning of 77 (i.e. now) would be starting a new phase of economic and political crisis.

The PRP's perspective was, above all, not to be caught again in the position of pre-25 November when no mass revolutionary party existed. To do this it was necessary to grow qualitatively, by the thousands, so that there would be a credible organizational alternative to the CP, capable of splitting the CP in the course of the crisis.

The PRP itself had recruited hundreds of CPers, including important CP cadres and trade union functionaries. There was very good receptivity to PRP politics and to the PRP itself, within the ranks of the CP - a CP whose ranks are full of revolutionary workers.

These workers could be broken from the CP, indeed the Otelo campaign of a united revolutionary left had shown that half the support was breakable at least temporarily. And in the factories, in particular places, on local factory issues, the PRP had shown its ability to beat out the CP.

But of course, in the overwhelming bulk of factories the CP was still hegemonic, if not overwhelming. That was the fundamental problem. The PRP felt, correctly, that CPers forced to choose between the CP and the PRP would still overwhelmingly choose the CP. This was despite the fact that revolutionary CP workers were able to overcome illusions about the CP's supposed revolutionary character. But because the small size of the PRP in the face of its task - the seizure of state power - meant that organizationally it was incapable of achieving this objective.

Thousands of CPers sympathetic to the politics of the PRP would rather stick with the CP, which they hope will at least be a defense against fascism.

Given this situation the PRP decided on a twofold strategy. The first was to politically and organizationally cohere the GDUPs into a party-like formation, winning them to a revolutionary program, as close as possible to that of the PRP, and create in them a sufficient sized alternative to the SP and CP as a party.

The exact form to achieve a revolutionary party - split, merger, fusions, etc. - would emerge in the course of the struggle and the relationship of forces. To achieve this it was necessary to rapidly expel the UDP from the GDUPs. Its reformist, sectarian, and Stalinist politics, made it impossible to build a political party with it.

The other part of PRP strategy was to contend with and split the CP on the factory level, in the workers commissions and unions. But clearly the first part of the strategy, the splitting of the GDUPs and cohering them into a party was the immediate card to be played in party building.

Now that this seems to have failed it is questioned whether this is even a possible road to party building, and whether the PRP understands the party. Naturally no alternative perspective is presented as to whether the situation is as the PRPs describes it, whether the GDUPs strategy was a realistic one or how to rapidly build the party through some alternative means. Indeed, as the NC document showed, the ISGB position on Portugal has never come to grips with concrete questions of strategy at all.

While we will discuss the failure of the GDUPs, we are still clear that this was a necessary try, even if it did not succeed. Almost from the very beginning a bitter factional struggle broke out in the GDUPs between the PRP and the UDP, over a host of political questions. The most important was over the future direction of the Portuguese revolution. The PRP maintained that bourgeois democracy could not be stabilized in Portugal given its economic structure, the intense economic crisis and the power of the workers.

The alternatives for Portugal are, in the not very distant future - socialism or fascism. It was thus necessary to propagandize and prepare for a socialist revolution, a mass revolutionary party was necessary for revolution, and the GDUPs had to move towards becoming a party.

The UDP maintained that bourgeois stabilization was possible, that there could be bourgeois democracy in Portugal for a prolonged period. Portugal

was at the stage of a national democratic revolution, not a socialist one. The objective task was not socialist revolution, but for an anti-fascist front. The GDUPs therefore should be the nucleus for a front, not a party. Besides the party already existed - the UDP?/PCP-R.

There were many other questions involved. The UDP initially supported the SP government as anti-fascist, the PRP of course opposed it and got the GDUPs to oppose it. Another question was relationship to rank and file organizations (workers and tenants commissions.) The UDP wanted the GDUPs to replace the workers and tenants commissions, which should be integrated into the GDUPs. The PRP argued against this, that these organizations should be autonomous, include all workers, SP and CPers as well as GDUP supporters, and that the GDUPs should politically function in them to win them to revolutionary program and alliance with the GDUPs.

The UDP opposed working with the CP ranks, claiming they are social fascists. The PRP called for working with the ranks of the SP and CP for the unity of the working class. While rejecting the leadership of the SP and CP, the PRP orients to the ranks of those parties, calls for unity of the workers, and tries to come up with proposals for joint actions with the ranks of those parties.

There were also many fights over other political questions in the GDUPs as well as a long fight over democratic organizational proposals by the PRP as against the UDP top-down, anti-democratic proposals.

It proved impossible to expel the UDP at the beginning. They were too strong, the issues not yet politically clear as the UDP tried to fudge things. The result was a prolonged faction fight. The first casualty was that masses of independents dropped out. They had joined up with the GDUPs as a potential unified revolutionary group, with a new beginning to overcome the sectarianism of the left and move towards a new party. Instead they got a sectarian brawl. Many became inactive, others left.

As things narrowed down to just the hards, the members of the political parties, it increased the relative weight of the cadres of these parties. In this context the UDP and the PRP are fairly equal size organizations. The UDP is the larger in the Lisbon-South Bank key area. The PRP is larger in the industrial north bank of Lisbon, and in the rest of the country (Algarve, Alentejo, center and north). The GDUPs were at an impasse and declined.

Just prior to the Congress the UDP made an alliance with MES and together had enough weight to get a majority on the national committee of the GDUPs. The alliance which was a long time in the making (the MES has been essentially split between pro-UDP and pro-PRP wings for months), It was based on the MES agreement with the UDP and the fundamental question being fought out, though not necessarily on the others.

The MES, a centrist wamp, believes also that bourgeois democracy has a long future in front of it in Portugal, and that socialist revolution is not on now, but an anti-fascist front is. It too in the last analysis swings to reformism.

When the UDP-MES got a majority of the national committee they called a GDUP congress. To buttress their majority this UDP-MES national committee recognized as delegates to the Congress a large number of paper, phony GDUPs with UDP or MES delegates. On the eve of the Congress the PRP denounced the Congress and most GDUPs under its influence refused to attend

the Congress.

The PRP itself, joined by the MSU (a split-off from MES), pulled its representatives out of the national committee and out of the district committees. They continue to be active in local GDUPs, as will become clear soon. They sent a few members, perhaps 75 to 100, to the Congress to walk out.

The PRP pulled out because it refuses to recognize the legitimacy of this GDUP Congress. The basis is the undemocratic stacking of the Congress with delegates from phony GDUPs. Secondly, the Congress was precluded from discussing political programs and directions for the GDUPs. The UDP-MES alliance could only agree to an agenda which would discuss organizational questions and the election of a national committee. The UDP-MES national committee only sent out the political thesis and documents for the Congress two days before it met, making it impossible for local GDUPs to discuss them.

In not recognizing the authority of this Congress, the PRP is still active in the local GDUPs, trying to bring them together into a new national revolutionary structure. That fight is now going on.- a splitting of the GDUPs between the reformist and Stalinist politics of UDP and their MES allies, and the revolutionary program the PRP fought for. It is still unclear whether the PRP will be able to pick up enough GDUPs out of this wreckage to be able to form an alternative revolutionary GDUP organization. But that battle is now going on.

II AGAIN ON BUILDING THE PARTY

" The PRP does not understand this. Instead it gropes for broad formations into which it can submerge itself. It does not attempt to intervene in, and it does not attempt to lead the day to day struggles of the workers. It believes such a method is reformist."

--BW nad CW p.4

This is only the latest statement in what has now become a systematic campaign against the PRP being waged inside the IS. It is time you look not only at what is being said, but why.

The comrades tell us: "It is probably pointless to argue whether the PRP has 1000 members or 2000 (we believe it is much closer to 1000)."

Where do these figures come from? The estimate of 1000 PRP members is based on a figure given to Tony Cliff, in May 1975, by a PRP leader. In other words BW and CW want us to believe on the basis of their "estimate" that the PRP has not grown in that time.

But in May 1975 when that figure was given, the PRP had 22 district committees. As of last summer on the other hand it had 65 district committees. Of these only 37 had headquarters, because it is no longer to occupy buildings for headquarters and also because much of the PRP's growth is in sections of the country where open functioning is more difficult. The PRP grew heavily in Algarve, in the Porto industrial belt, in the North of the country, and on the North Bank industrial suburbs of Lisbon. They have not grown anywhere near as impressive in Lisbon or the key South Bank industrial belt.

Has the PRP grown, then, since 1975? The answer is yes, indeed it has doubled or, even tripled. That much is certain. But we can agree with the comrades, "it is probably pointless to argue" about it. Because the real point

to be made here is that as we explained in discussing the GDUPs a revolutionary party cannot be built in the conditions of Portugal through doubling your membership every year. This above all is what the British IS leadership have consistently refused to recognize and consistently mis-trained their organization about for the past year. They have created a whole critique and attack on the PRP, based on their absolutely fixed idea that the scale and strategy necessary for the growth of a revolutionary party in Portugal is identical to that of Britain.

That is the real content of their critique of the PRP's party-building. The rest is improvisation, anecdotes and impressionism.

To prove this let's see what Tony Cliff wrote in Portugal At the Crossroads (p.19), before this fight existed:

"Because of the emphasis on the autonomous organization of the working class (which BW and CW now attack the PRP for), the PRP was able to give a certain necessary direction to the revolutionary left as a whole. It was influential in pushing for the formation of the Inter Empresa committee which held very successful demonstrations on the 28th of September 1974 and 7 Feb. 1975. Party militants were involved in solidarity campaigns on other factories, with TAP workers, etc..."

Does this sound like a party that "does not attempt to intervene in day to day struggles"? Hardly. Indeed, this supposed deviation was discovered only after the ISGB leadership had embroiled itself in differences with the PRP over the strategy of SUV, FUR and above all the question of mobilizing the workers for power from September till November 25, 1975. It was after the ISGB committed itself to the charge that the PRP was for Blanquist insurrection, and the charge that the PRP totally disregarded the strength of the Communist Party inside the working class - it was only then, more or less, that to justify this charge they invented the idea that the PRP ignored day to day struggles.

BW and CW have returned with fresh new evidence to contribute to this charge. The PRP did not want to push the party at a vegetable market co-op in a Lisbon shanty town (shocking, as we know every Bolshevik worker in Vyborg wore his or her button to the market every day). The PRP does not wear buttons at demonstrations. Neither do other revolutionaries, or even the SP and CP. Portuguese workers object to badges signifying party divisions in demonstrations which are supposed to create unity (No doubt Lenin is turning over in his grave over this concession to apartyism).

In the Textile strike, we do not know exactly what the PRP's intervention was or what its possibilities were (we do know that the latest Revolucao is full of coverage on the textile workers). We do know, however, that what comrades BW and CW are telling us is that the PRP makes a principle out of not building a party. They tell us it has "no strategy". This is a slander and a complete caricature of any serious point of view.

As we have seen, the PRP is at a stage in the Portuguese revolution where it is critically necessary to grow by thousands, not solely by the tens and twenties. To be a credible alternative to the CP and SP you need a party of 10 - 15,000. This is at the heart of the PRP's strategy although BW and CW do not recognize it.

The PRP has tirelessly and patiently explained, both to the Portuguese working class and its own well-meaning foreign friends, that bourgeois-demo-

cratic stabilization is not possible in Portugal, and that the alternatives are socialism or fascism. This means that any strategy for a successful revolution and a revolutionary party in Portugal must still rest on centralizing, unifying and focussing the mass movement and bringing it to consciousness of the need to take power. This is true even though the immediate situation is not insurrectionary (hasn't been for the last year). BW, CW and the ISGB would have the PRP act as though the question of state power did not exist, as if recruiting by ones and twos from isolated struggles, sit-ins and IS-sponsored Right to Work marches were the sum and substance of the strategy for party building in Portugal. The truth is, that is the absolute center of the strategy in Britain today, but in Portugal it isn't and can't be.

This is why BW and CW use the failure of the GDUPs perspective to say "it was the UDP which was the beneficiary of the Otelo campaign". They want us to fall back on the totally discredited ISGB proposition that the PRP should have run Isobel do Carmo instead of Otelo and totally failed to make any attempt to build a broad, non-sectarian revolutionary structure. The whole essence of the faction fight in the GDUPs, comrades, was that the PRP was fighting for the political program and organization of a mass revolutionary party, while the UDP fought against this tooth and nail, in the name of its "patriotic anti-fascist front". The PRP fought precisely for a party, while BW and CW obliviously repeat well-memorized - and in this context conservative and sectarian - slogans about the vanguard.

From the beginning the PRP and we stated the GDUPs were a 50/50 gamble, but a necessary one to build a mass party quickly. In this struggle the PRP did not submerge themselves unlike the MES. The fact that they may not have won that, (the UDP-MES alliance had more people than the PRP and the MES was necessary for the UDP to take a majority) does not prove that either the Otelo campaign was wrong, or that the sectarian, right-wing Stalinists of the UDP know how to build a party better than the PRP.

The failure of the PRP to decisively win that fight, and to do it early on when there were still many independents, in the GDUPs is a serious setback for the revolution. It means that as the crisis emerges, while the revolutionary left has shifted out from dozens of groups to only the poles of the PRP and the UDP, with the PRP as the only consistent group calling for socialist revolution, the PRP is still not an organization that is strong enough to be a credible alternative to the CP or SP.

The opening of this crisis will find events still very spontaneous, without revolutionary program and organization. But it is still possible to build the party in this context.

The PRP will have to build an alternative organizational structure to counter the CP and SP, or contend for leadership itself which is difficult given its size. But such it must do in the reviving mass movement.

The Portuguese revolution is not lost, but the setback does make the situation-which always was difficult-worse. Indeed the chance of fascism is the greater probability given the absence of a mass party. But revolutionaries in Portugal will continue to fight for the Party until the last battle. The PRP understands the importance of building the Party, of defending its perspectives, and of its role in leading workers, every bit as well as its critics do.

It is understandable that PRP militants were set back and disappointed by the failure of the GDUPs which contained the possibility of a qualitative step toward a mass party. It is even more fortunate, however, they are not going to despair on the revolution as some of their "critical supporters" have done.

III. The Policies of the British I.S. In Portugal

Hundreds of ISGB members went to Portugal in the summer of 1975. We are told that none of them have a position close to that of the ISUS, and that there is no opposition in the ISGB on this question. Perhaps this is now true. Perhaps the ISGB has effectively dealt with all opposition on this question. However that was not true prior to October 1975.

In the summer of '75 there was no substantial difference between the position of visitors from the ISUS and the ISGB to Portugal. Until October 1975 even members of the ISGB BC had positions similar to the positions of the ISUS. Members of both organizations in summer 1975 came back with a number of criticisms. None of these are what is now being retrospectively raised as "first hand reports."

Some, but not all ISGB visitors, raised two criticisms which we rejected. The first was that the PRP did not intervene in all strikes, demos etc. the way the ISGB tried to do at home. The PRP answered, and we agreed, that these were daily occurrences in Portugal, and they were too small to be involved in all of them. They had to concentrate their resources and maximize their effectiveness by being involved in the most important struggles and initiatives.

The other criticism which we rejected, made by some but far from all ISGB members, was to the armed character of the PRP. We put this down to vestigial pacifism. When I spoke in Britain that summer, I was sharply questioned by a number of comrades about guns, violence, etc. both in Portugal and the U.S. I defended basic ideas of armed insurrection and revolutionary violence.

The third criticism was one that both groups shared. It is one that Cliff, on the basis of visitors' reports, makes in his pamphlet. It is that there was a certain lack of clarity in the PRP on the question of the party. Both groups understood and stated that this deviation towards spontaneism (not spontaneism, but a deviation toward it) came out of a situation in which civil war was considered imminent. (3 months by some, 6 months by Cliff), in which there was little time to build a party.

Such a deviation was felt by both groups to be stemming from, and having, a healthy content, a correct emphasis on the possibility of a successful road to power despite the absence of a mass party. Indeed the PRP did accept the centrality of the party, but with a certain vagueness, prior to November 1975. After the Nov. 25th coup, this vagueness cleared up. The result of the coup opened up the perspective for a longer period in which to build the party.

The PRP then reorganized on a factory cell-district committee basis, and has since had no lack of clarity on the need for a party, and its central role in building that party.

None of the other criticisms which today abound in the British Is existed at that time. After the visitors returned to Britain they were full of enthusiasm for the PRP. On September 19, when the bulk of these visits were over, a demonstration occurred in London where the CP chanted PCP, and where the ISGB drowned it out with chants of PRP.

We are now told that the PRP failed to "relate to issues of the working class" and are given as evidence that John Deason in summer 1975 did not meet one workers commission under the influence of the PRP. This is preposterous. Cliff himself in his pamphlet after Deason's trip refers to commissions under the influence of the revolutionary left (this included at that time a whole spectrum of far-left groups), as well as those where there was a daily struggle and constant shifting in terms of influence between the revolutionaries and the CP, such as Lisnave, Setnave, etc. (Portugal at the Crossroads, p. 43).

In truth the summer of '75 was the summer of the COPCON document, when hundreds of workers commissions came out in support of that document, sponsored the demonstrations around it, as well as the later demonstrations associated with SUV and FOR.

The "issue of the working class" at the time was the question of power. This criticism of not "relating to issues of the working class" or not taking part in the day to day struggle was not mentioned in Cliff's pamphlet, the Open Letter or SW articles of the time. It comes not out of visitors reports.

It was first mentioned only when the ISGB began its fight with the PRP in late September and early October 1975, and not on these cooked-up questions, but on the question of insurrection. We are not going to repeat the arguments on insurrection. They have been dealt with in other documents. We do feel the necessity at this point to speak to the facts of ISGB intervention in Portugal, which led to the rupture of their relations with the PRP.

The British IS attempted to create a faction fight within the PRP in October 1975. Their opposition to the PRP line on the issue of organizing for power, led them to believe they would be able to create a faction which would be supported by the ranks against the leadership. The PRP rank and file, in this view, would either pressure the leadership or get rid of it.

This attempt was made on the basis of criticisms developed from afar with very peculiar perspectives indeed. The "Open Letter to Portuguese Revolutionaries," distributed in Portugal by the ISGB in October, advanced among others the following ideas:

- * The PRP at this stage lacks the weight in the class to establish real workers' councils, as opposed to making propaganda for them;

- * You can form soviets in a matter of days or hours, when the crisis explodes;

- * Don't agitate or prepare for insurrection in this situation, this is Blanquism because of the absence of a mass party;

- * You pay too much attention to the soldiers, who are ahead of the workers, and you don't really count on the workers, etc.

As we showed in the NC document, this set of formulas was a hurriedly improvised muddle without any concrete strategy. The ISGB leadership actually thought this poor, outside reading of the Portuguese situation,

which isn't taken seriously by revolutionaries in Portugal from any tendency, would take the rank and file of the PRP "by storm." Not one rank and file PRPer could be won to the British perspective. All remained loyal to their organization and its leadership, and considered the British to be meddlers, in a particularly difficult and dangerous time.

They were also struck by what they considered to be the arrogance of people who did not intimately know the concrete situation, telling them what to do --in what they found to be arrogant overlord style, as if they had no knowledge of the ABCs of revolutionary politics, such as the need for soviets and a party, the role of the working class and so forth.

When this plan failed, despite the British IS leadership's illusions that the PRP would go into a crisis and faction fight and quickly come over to the British views, they were forced to take a new track.

Their relations with the PRP were already strained, but not broken. The PRP leaders were somewhat contemptuous, but also felt that politically the British IS had excellent working class politics and had made great contributions to the international movement. They continued to maintain ties albeit strained ones.

The British IS then tried to take their literature around to PRP branches and ~~xxxxxx~~ contacts. This included pamphlets which after Nov. 25 hinted that the PRP was putschist. This was a charge the Sixth government was also making. Even the liberal bourgeois papers Capital and Expresso denied it, saying that the charges of putschism on Nov. 25 against the PRP were absurd since ~~xxxxxx~~ everyone active in Portuguese politics knew that their politics were hostile to putsch and were for a workers insurrection!

This literary intervention led to new difficulties when the PRP felt they were using this literature irresponsibly with contacts the PRP was turning over to them. (Kim, Jane and I for example got sharp questions from members of the workers' commission at Edifer this summer who were not PRPers, but contacts of the PRP, if we were from the British IS. They would refuse to meet with us if we were, because they felt the British had acted irresponsibly to their commission.)

It lead to particularly strained feelings and the threatened rupture of relations when the PRP found out that this organizing against it extended to delicate military contacts ~~xx~~ they had introduced the British IS/^{rep} to. They stated ~~why~~ they would stop meeting with him.

As a result the British IS for a period started to orient once again to relations with the centrist MES, on the idea it was doing better trade union work, ~~xx~~ running by itself in the parliamentary elections, and better understanding the party. This was pure fantasy. This vacillating centrist group (which to be sure has some excellent worker militants) was in decline and ~~xxxxxxx~~ hasn't the foggiest clue at what a serious revolutionary organization is outside of nice resolutions to pass. When a British IS rep was sent to Portugal to set up the ties he immediately recognized how utterly~~xx~~ ridiculous it was and it was all called off.

Even today the PRP does not refuse to talk to or have relations with the British IS. This summer I raised with PRP re-establishing such

relations. They doubted it was possible, but said go ahead. When I conveyed this to the British IS leadership they indicated ~~through~~ their thorough indifference.

This British IS intervention left them thoroughly isolated from any real forces, aside from MAS phantoms, in Portugal. It is critical that they draw the correct lessons from this intervention, not make a method of their mistakes.

Neither Portugal, or any other country is the same as Britain, and what is correct advice for Britain may be nonsense elsewhere. Before you made advice you had better make a concrete ~~xxx~~ analysis of the situation of the particular country, with at least as much seriousness as the people who function there do.

To give fraternal advice, you ~~xx~~ must proceed on a leadership to leadership basis. If you try instead to appeal to the ranks over the ~~xxxx~~ leaders you will get a faction fight, and at a minimum strained relations. Factional interventions are justified only when you are convinced the leadership is completely bankrupt--not just on one question, but in its whole program and policy--and then you must be prepared to accept the consequences. Short of this extreme state of affairs, no organization should try to step into the affairs of another organization and replace the leadership which disagrees with it--even if that leadership is mistaken on some, even important points.

These are the very ABCs for the creation of a serious international tendency. Both we and the British IS must understand them right from the beginning.

CONTINUED.....

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IV. A Footnote For Honesty

A method of Barbara and Cal is to put various things ~~xx~~ supposedly said by IS leaders in quotes, to thereby give the impression of accuracy. They cannot be checked. However in their document on Portugal they do quote one publication, Revolucao, the PRP paper, which can be checked. The quote is designed to show that the PRP does not understand the relation of broad organizations to the party, and that it is "no wonder the PRP failed in the GDUPs." We repeat the context in which they made the quote, as well as the excerpt from Revolucao so that anyone may judge their accuracy, and method.

Page 5 of Barbara and Cal's document states that, "The PRP also continues to cling to apartyism in the ~~xx~~ name of opposition to sectarianism. . . . Surely the experience in the GDUPs should have shown that sectarianism cannot be fought simply with calls for unity; sectarianism cannot be decreed out of existence. Neither can the broad ~~xx~~ organizations be held above the parties. On September 16 Revolucao featured a GDUP proposal which stated "one insurpassable principle is the autonomy of the workers organizations in relation to parties'. . .and the GDUPs must "preserve their autonomy in relation to political parties." No wonder the PRP failed in the GDUPs. And no wonder that it was the UDF that has in the end, been ~~xx~~ the chief beneficiary of the Otelo campaign." The next paragraph concludes that the PRP methodology to broad formations is apartist and wrong.

The following is the proposal from which these quotes to prove Barbara and Cal's case are drawn. It is reprinted in whole so that everyone may see the context. We have underlined the words that they quote. It should be said that while the translation is poor, the main drift is clear. It is also that while from Revolucao, this is not a PRP proposal, but that of the GDUP from Nurtal. No doubt it is a GDUP influenced by the PRP and the PRP agreed with this proposal. But the words of a proposal of a broad formation--say like TDC--are also ~~xx~~ somewhat different from Party proposals.

THE POLICY OF THE GDUPS WITH REGARDS TO THE ACTIVIZATION AND REINFORCEMENT OF POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS OF THE BASE

Rank and file organizations of the base constitute one aspect of the movement for Popular Unity. As an essential ideological component of the movement, the GDUPs reflect over the nature of these R&F organizations and its ~~xx~~ policy is aimed at activating and reinforcing them, defining both policies and priorities, hence aiding them to realize their aims rapidly.

Once the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie is destroyed, the workers both at work and in their homes will be able to organize themselves ending alienating laws of the capitalist the miserable salaries, ensuring better conditions of work; in short ending all capitalist exploitation, demanding 'humanism.'

In the first phase of the revolution, the Commissions of Workers, town dwellers and town commissions were reclaiming (acting ~~xxxxxxx~~ spontaneously in response to urgent needs), and were never, or very rarely, concerned with questions of power. ~~xx~~ however, the workers

soon came to realize that it was not enough to throw out the factory owner, or to purge the bosses, or to occupy houses or land. Although the economic apparatus of the bourgeoisie was severely affected, its ideological apparatus was not ~~xx~~ subverted, and its military apparatus not destroyed.

Without the ideological and the politico/military instruments the workers will never be able to take power alone, and in the end will not be able to conserve their own conquests. It is this conclusion that has given birth to the political character of the rank and file movement.

In is ~~xx~~ in a period of extreme class conflict that the question of power is felt, at the level of the masses. But the consciousness of the masses is disorganized and moreover ineffectual in the practical strategy. The increasing violence has become externalized, infecting the bourgeoisie and its ally the reformist in their efforts of recuperation.

Indeed it was this incapacity for recuperation which led the bourgeoisie to the ~~xxx~~ coup of 25 November. Before this, and the betrayal by the reformist parties, the workers were building the necessary apparatus for the inevitable insurrection.

Revolutionaries ~~xx~~ must be capable of learning and conquering at the cost of their own defeats.

The GDUPs policy of strengthening and activating the r&f organizations presupposes the correction ~~fx~~ of existing sins and not a repetition of committed errors.

One insurpassable principle is the autonomy of the ~~xx~~ workers organizations in relation to parties and the apparatus of the state. ~~xx~~ Not that parties must disregard such R&F organizations. On the contrary, they must, in accordance with their analysis of the world political situations and their revolutionary strategy, approve tactics which serve that strategy. The militants of the revolutionary parties must be in the living ~~xx~~ quarters in the factories and the cooperatives amongst the militants of the class must be at the service of the unity and organizations of that class. They must respect the will of the majority even when it doesn't ~~xxx~~ coincide with their ~~xx~~ own party policies.

In this way it is perfectly legitimate that a party, via corrections of their line and of the example given by its militants may provide leadership for r&f organizations. However, there must be mechanisms which prevent members of a party passing from hegemony to control. Those mechanisms exist--they are assemblies of workers and town dwellers with the ability ~~xx~~ at any moment of revoking elected organs. Those organs must frequently publicize accounts of their work. The assemblies must never neglect their sovereignty.

Besides maneuvering and control, something which has had historically tragic consequences is sectarianism. Perhaps, more than anything else it has contributed to demobilizing the masses from their struggle and their emancipation.

But beside these classical errors ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ there exist errors and faults already within the heart of the young r&f movement for Popular Unity. One, is that of confusing the GDUPs with the movement itself the argument being that the Commissions of workers and town dwellers who accepted the programme for the candidature of Otelo ~~xx~~ must integrate themselves into the GDUPs. (As we know the GDUPs are a united political structure of the r&f...they constitute...the ideologically privileged minority in the factories or the communities and providing perspectives for the local autonomous organizations, but ~~xx~~ must never seek to replace those organizations.

Another error, consequent of the first, consists in drawing members away from these r&f organizations in order to enlarge the GDUPs. The GDUPs were created to strengthen and activate r&f organizations. The ~~xx~~ error referred to constitutes a monstrous misjudgment of the situation.

From the above discussions we ~~xxx~~ arrive at the following points to strengthen and activate the r&f organizations /by which is meant the workers and tenants commission/. These are the most important policies.

1. To preserve their autonomy in relation to political parties.
2. To guard against political party hegemony maneuvers and controls must be passed to ensure the democratic functioning of the conference.
3. To unmask and neutralize the actions of union ~~x~~chiefs and the local government enfeuded to the bourgeois and reformist parties.
4. To fight within the GDUPs against sectarianism and divisionism.
5. To fight within the GDUPs against concepts disturbing the essence of the r&f movement for unity; confusion only creating conditions for shameful maneuvers.

The GDUPs are to play the role of activating and strengthening the r&f movement and thus will make a decisive contribution to the triumph ~~fx~~ of the revolution.

GDUP of Murtal

(Translated by Carole and John Sedgwick)

THE PRP AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

by Steve Z., N. Y. #2

One of our concerns with the Portuguese revolution stems from the effect of these events on our own revolution to come. In turn, one way in which this is expressed is through the I.S. -- the lessons we draw from the PRP's experiences, its successes and failures. That is something which, apart from a few abstractions, has hardly been dealt with.

The successes of the PRP as a revolutionary movement are generally acknowledged among us, particularly its ability to initiate United Front activities to which masses of workers and other revolutionists could relate.

As for its failures, it is necessary to submit a series of major political errors by the PRP, some only recently come to attention, of which the membership of the I.S. is hardly aware.

Speaking of "PRP errors" raises hackles among us. Hardly surprising until one recalls that being a revolutionary organization does not preclude even basic, fundamental errors -- errors of such magnitude that they could prove fatal if not corrected. One has only to recall that our classic model, the Bolsheviks, committed at least two fundamental and near fatal errors on their road to power. One of these was ultra-left in character, and one opportunist.

The ultra-left one was the refusal of the party to participate in the Soviets in 1905. They believed they could by-pass the existing soviets and go directly to armed insurrection.

The second, opportunist, error was the Bolshevik support of the provisional capitalist government after the February revolution in 1917 (against Lenin's violent objections from afar). Such errors did not make the Bolsheviks a non-revolutionary organization, since they had the courage to admit and correct them.

Given this excellent critical side of our tradition, to ignore errors of comparable magnitude by the PRP is a disservice to the Portuguese revolution, and to the I.S. cadre.

Major Errors of the PRP

The PRP's skill in the United Front actions has been central to it and to the revolution. However, before any judgement of these United Fronts can be made, we must begin with the reminder of the revolutionary socialist concept of the nature of the United Front. We have always believed that essential to a United Front is the need of the revolutionary organization to keep its political independence within the united front -- i. e. to retain the right to criticize and differentiate ourselves from the other members of the front. For example: one of our major criticisms of the SWP in the anti-war movement (which often took the form of a United Front in which we participated) was the SWP's refusal to in any way criticize Democratic Party politicians when the latter spoke at anti-war rallies. That was a de facto cover-up for anti-

revolutionary forces. The same would apply if we gave uncritical support to Miller or Sadlowski campaigns, since these, too, can be forms of United Front.

The PRP, it can now be demonstrated, repeatedly violated the revolutionary relationship to the United Front.

The F. U. R.

The FUR was a necessary United Front initiative. But the very founding conference of the FUR came out in support of the program of the capitalist government -- the Fifth, Goncalves government. The FUR document declares that the assembled parties "approve the following points: . . . (3) The document entitled 'Lines of Programmatic Action and Tasks of Transition' ((the CP-Goncalves thesis -- SZ)) constitutes the basic guide document for the activity of the government so long as the necessary conditions have not been met for the formation of a government of revolutionary unity". (see Intercontinental Press, Sept. 15, 1975)

This is the same Goncalves and his CP allies whom the PRP had properly attacked for imposing an austerity program on the Portuguese workers. With the collaboration of the CP, he had even helped break strikes.

When asked about this, the PRP said: (1) Goncalves is to the left of the CP. (2) "We did not wish to see the government toppled from the right". Correct. Revolutionists did not wish to see that happen and were right to try to resist it. But it does not follow that to do that it was necessary to do what Stalin and Kamenev had done in 1917 -- support the government program. It could have done as Lenin advocated, and as he did later in a similar situation during General Kornilov's attempted army coup against the capitalist government of Kerensky. Without ceasing their political attacks on Kerensky and his program, much less give him any political support, the Bolsheviks joined in trying to prevent his overthrow from the right. A similar policy by the PRP would have made it possible for the PRP to work with the CP ranks (a major tactical goal of the United Front), and at the same time clearly oppose the CP politically. If supporting Goncalves was okay, then how could the PRP expect to break the ranks of the CP from their party?

(It should be added, however, that the same FUR document also endorsed the COPCON document as "providing the basis for the elaboration of a revolutionary political program". That is, the CP gained PRP support for the Goncalves program "today" in exchange for the CP "promise" to work for a revolutionary program later. Two days later, the CP quit the FUR in expectation of a new bloc with the SP.)

Is support of a capitalist government a trivial thing? Did the E.C. say anything to the PRP about this? Did the E.C. inform our own members of the error, taking the opportunity to educate our ranks on the dangers of opportunism in a crisis?

The only response one gets from the E.C. is the charge that the critics of the PRP are too abstract -- that they fail to take into account the historically specific unique features of the Portuguese revolution, and therefore try to fit it, mechanically, into the procrustean bed of lessons-of-the-past and old formulae.

Let us bring this E.C. "response" down to earth. Exactly what does it mean? In practice it can only mean that the rule about non-support to capitalist governments may be generally true, but it does not apply to Portugal for unique historical reasons. Very well, let the PRP and E.C. tell us what special circumstances require revolutionary Portuguese to support a capitalist government. The E.C. has not done this. Nor will they. Hence the silence of the E.C. on this question to this day. And hence, too, when forced to face up to the issue, we are told that it was necessary to resist the fall of the Goncalves government to the right. As if that required political support to it as well.

The SUV

The SUV was a second important and necessary intervention by the PRP. But the PRP repeated within the SUV the same error it made in the FUR. Within the SUV, the PRP attitude toward one of the elements around the SUV (in the wings), the left MFA officers, was that these officers were to be trusted -- that they were reliable revolutionaries. Despite the fact that COPCON had criticized the "untimely" formation of the CRTs on the ground that they created disruption in the armed services, the PRP still accepted the left MFA officers' own self-evaluation as a vanguard of the revolution. (see COPCON document, in "Portugal: Key Documents of the Revolutionary Process", Peoples Translation Service). In doing so, the PRP also accepted, de facto, the COPCON view that the election of officers was not necessary.

The fact that on November 25, when the PRP called for action by the masses and the army ranks, these same left officers failed to respond and did nothing -- that fact should hardly surprise us. But since the army ranks had not been warned by the PRP against this -- had not been infused with the spirit of distrust of the left MFA officers -- the soldiers were politically disarmed, and therefore not primed to respond to the PRP appeal. Why follow or join the PRP if the SUV and the left officers are also "revolutionaries"?

The E.C.'s response to all this is to deny that the SUV failed to raise the question of soldiers' election of officers. Unfortunately for the E.C., all the existing available evidence is to the contrary:

(1) The COPCON document (which the PRP wrote) calls for rank & file soldier participation in the ADUs (councils to be set up in each military unit). But in these ADUs, the officer in command was the chairman; enlisted men were a minority.

(2) The establishment of the SUV had as one of its goals the strengthening of the ADUs, as the following from the Sept. '75 "Manifesto of the FUR" documents: "The struggle for complete freedom of the soldiers and sailors to meet and organize is the only way in which the ADUs will be genuinely democratic and revolutionary." ("Portugal: Key Documents...") In short, fight to revolutionize an officer-dominated military organization, not to become independent of officers by electing them.

We have no intention here of denigrating the many splendid aspects of the SUV and PRP role in them. But that does not free us of the duty to recognize an error, especially when that error is part of a repeated pattern.

Once again, the charge can be made of lack of historical specificity. But once again, to make such a charge stick, the E.C. must argue that the special circumstances of Portugal made the left MFA officers reliable revolutionary allies (especially in the absence of an authoritative workers party). The E.C. makes no such claim as far as we know. But unless they do, their case of uniqueness in Portugal in this respect is also groundless.

Is this PRP error a serious one? Is it an error at all? Did the EC tell the I.S. ranks about it? Protest?

The GDUPs

A third major United Front action of the PRP revealed an identical error. This was in both the Otelo campaign and the formation of the GDUPs.

Once again the PRP's misconception of the United Front led them to silence about their "friends" in the United Front. The PRP relation to Otelo is too well known to require elaboration. Not a word about Otelo as one who is anti-party; Otelo the Bonapartist; Otelo the reformist. (One must read his platform to see this. Why has the E.C. not seen fit to print that platform, at least internally?)

As for the GDUPs, it was the UDP, and not the PRP, which quickly became hegemonic inside the new organization. And for good reason. (1) Since the UDP program is reformist, it could all the more easily adjust to and recruit from a predominantly reformist (at best centrist) milieu around Otelo. (The GDUP program is for intervention in the unions and elections, but in a reformist mode). (2) The UDP notoriously emphasises party building. (3) The UDP does not hesitate, for its own reasons, to be critical in their support of Otelo. The resulting increased polarization and disaffection in the GDUPs is so advanced that the PRP is now at a total loss as to its next steps.

The fourth major error of the PRP has received new significance in the light of new facts and a deeper explanation of the error made possible by these facts. I refer to the much discussed PRP attitude toward the insurrection.

The October I.S. Internal Bulletin contains an article by BZ which quotes large excerpts from a report on Portugal by Joan M. on the 100,000 construction workers' demonstration in November 1975. In this action, workers surrounded the parliament and imprisoned the government for several days until they won their wage claim. Here at home the E.C. told us that the PRP had played a major role in the event. But Joan's detailed report demonstrated the opposite -- the total abstention of the PRP from that struggle.

The E.C.'s entire response to this and other factual reports from Portugal has been to assert that they are just ridiculous.....impressions. The Marxist treatment of facts is quite different. One either disproves them or reinterprets them. The E.C. does neither.

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, we have the right to ask why the PRP played no role.

Unfortunately, it is all too easy to answer this question. It was not a case of "limited resources". The strike ended Nov. 20, i.e. five days before the Nov. 25 events. But in those weeks the PRP was concentrating all its forces on agitating for armed insurrection. What would the PRP have said to the construction workers? Armed insurrection against the coup is what counts now? Forget about wages (the issue in the strike), armed insurrection is the only solution to your problem. Clearly intervention along such lines would have been even worse than none. Hence the PRP silence. Committed to agitation for insurrection, they could not see that the construction strike, and similar working class actions, were the best defense against any coup from the right.

The PRP lack of response to the construction strike compels us to take a second look at this question of "insurrection". We all know the "rule" -- that normally one needs a party and or soviets to be able to agitate (as distinct from propoganda) for armed insurrection without being adventurist.

But the E. C. tells us (in their misplaced passion for "concreteness") that there was this "little matter of a threatened coup by the right". Should the PRP, we are asked, have waited under those conditions, bound by some abstract formula, etc. etc. ? The question is improperly posed. Ask a false question and only a false answer can emerge.

First, many comrades have learned of a similar crisis in 1917. Certainly, in July '17, the Bolsheviki were well aware that the capitalists were planning, hoping, and looking for an excuse for a counterrevolutionary coup. But that did not lead the Bolsheviki to agitate for insurrection. (Though it hastened their efforts to arm the masses by the formation of armed bodies in the factories through the workers commissions). The reason for this "conservatism" was that, even with the existence of soviets and a mass party, the situation was not mature enough for insurrection. Even when the soldiers and workers by the hundreds of thousands called for the seizure of power over the Bolsheviki's head, Lenin advised, and organized, against insurrection.

But that was Russia. How about Portugal?

Within one year, the Portuguese revolution had already destroyed two attempts at counterrevolutionary coups. Both failed, not because the PRP had organized insurrection, but because the masses recognized the danger from the right and rose to block it. No one then, properly, agitated for armed insurrection, though the PRP and others did, properly, call for arming the workers, which is not the same thing. Since in Nov. '75 the state of the working class was even more advanced (aided by the rise of the SUV), it seems indeed likely that a right-wing coup would at the very least, once again, meet a response from the workers similar to that of the two previous coup attempts. This would have been especially true if the PRP were not only warning, but were using the danger of the coup to generate mass mobilization against it by integrating that struggle with one for transitional economic and political demands and

for soviets. Such a policy would have mandated intervention, not abstention from the construction workers' strike in November.

That was the best way to meet the danger of a coup under conditions such as those in Portugal at the time -- in the absence of soviets or a mass revolutionary party. Instead, it must be faced, the PRP's strategy contributed, unwittingly of course, to a climate in which a premature action by the paratroopers was possible. A climate which the CP could skillfully use to produce a provocation which opened the door to the counter coup, and gave the right the excuse that it was merely taking action in defense of democracy.

There is good reason for the L.S. inability and refusal to correct the PRP's vast overestimate of the readiness of the Portuguese workers. (The PRP actually believed that the CP workers would come out into the streets in case of an insurrectionary call and abandon their party, the CP.) For the L.S. was itself going through a similar period in the U.S. Here at home, in Nov. 1975, the L.S. was itself in the midst of a campaign whose political basis was a grave overestimate (now admitted) of the objective situation. Like the PRP, we, too, were desperately mobilizing every resource in the face of an unripe objective situation (with the single, partial exception of the IBT). The untimely-out, blind acceptance of the PRP's failure to see the difference between a revolutionary situation and an insurrectionary one, was matched, on a much lower level, by our own miscalculation of worker readiness.

In sum, both the L.S. and the PRP were seized by a serious case of substitutionism. The PRP substituting itself for the absent soviets and party, i.e. for the working class in effect. We in L.S. substituting ourselves for the lack of readiness of the working class as a whole to fight the employers' offensive. As a result, the PRP was driven into a posture of preventive insurrection which, under conditions in Portugal at the time (no soviets or mass party), could only, at best, have resulted in putting a group of military officers into power.

NEW FACTS ABOUT THE PORTUGUESE WORKERS' A-PARTYISM

The PRP failure to understand and act on the need for independence in the United Front is not an isolated error. It is intimately linked and may, indeed, derive from another political error -- its attitude to a-partyism. In the abstract, the PRP will tell us that it, too, wants to build a party. But this abstract belief is fatally marred by a contradictory view which prevents them from doing so. I refer to the PRP's ambivalent attitude toward a-partyism. For if one does not believe that it is possible (or necessary?) to build a party, then reliance on others (in the various United Fronts) is inevitable -- a built-in endemic error.

No one questions the existence of a-partyism in the minds of many people. All of us agree it is a backward conception which is to be expected and has to be fought. But what is decisive is that the PRP has qualitatively overestimated the existence of this mood in the working class! In doing so, the PRP converts a secondary phenomenon into a central one.

PROOF: (1) If one leaves out the textile workers, who are mainly in the north of

Portugal, then the CP membership includes as much as 10% of the industrial workers of Portugal, (about the same ratio as in Russia in 1917!) If these CP workers are the necessary core of the revolutionary workers in Portugal -- the ones we mainly try to win over -- does it not suggest that a-partyism is no longer a central question for the radical workers of Portugal? Does it not suggest that, in fact, the core of the working class has transcended the middle class, student a-party prejudice?

(2) The SP left wing has as its base the 20,000 worker members of the party. Are these workers, not a few of them anti-Stalinist radicals, whom the PRP must also win over, also bitten by the a-party virus?

Winning these decisive layers of the working class, already organized in parties, is key to all the policies of the PRP (or should be). In many cases, CP and SP workers are clearly critical of their parties, but refuse to leave them because there is no alternative. Will these layers be attracted, or will they be repelled by an organization which adapts to the a-party sentiment these workers have transcended?

It is the PRP's underestimation of the strength of pro-party feeling which was responsible for their blunder (admitted) of expecting CP workers to abandon the CP and join the insurrection, once started.

(3) The UDP, as is well known, is more than twice as large as the sum of all the other revolutionary sects put together. When this fact is linked to their notorious all-out, successful if Stalinist emphasis on party building, what conclusion can one draw about the strength of a-partyism in Portugal?

A-partyism is not a MAJOR force in the working class of Portugal. But it is a major force within the PRP. How else explain the PRP's continued insistence on the "fact" that the Bolsheviks "did it" in 1917 with only 3000 members (they actually had 240,000). How else explain the PRP's continued defense of Castro as a man who "is not a prisoner of formulas", and "did it without a party"? How else explain their uncritical endorsement of Otelo, the arch anti-party figure? And not least, how else explain the fact that the PRP puts so much of its scarce resources into control of a daily newspaper, Pagina Um, an organ of the non-party revolutionary left, at the expense of its own newspaper, Revolucao, which to this day is only a weekly, and not always that? (It is curious that although the lack of emphasis on a press is the only criticism the E.C. has allowed itself to make, the E.C. keeps silent about this evidence that the PRP still has not learned this elementary component of party building. Perhaps it is also not surprising that the E.C. pays no attention to the fact that on two occasions (in the U.S. and in G.B.) proposals to raise money for a daily paper were rebuffed by the PRP.)

The result of this qualitative overestimate of a-partyism is that it has deepened the tendency of the PRP to go soft on its "allies" in the United Front, and has given that tendency a political justification.

MORE TO COME

The PRP's improper attitude toward the United Front and its assessment of

a-partyism are joined by still a third weakness characteristic of new left politics -- the danger of a flip-flop from ultra-left proposals to objectively reformist ones. We are familiar at home with our own new lefters who can be for white skin privilege on Monday and vote for McGovern on Tuesday. The PRP exhibited a similar mode of behavior in its electoral gambits. Details on this can be found in the 1976 Convention document, "The PRP and the Situation in Portugal Today". Here we limit ourselves to calling attention to two contradictory policies. On the one hand, the PRP was advocating no participation in the parliamentary elections on ultra-left grounds ("elections only aid the capitalists by legitimizing their rule", and, the PRP proposal that if a united electoral front were formed, its candidates must withdraw before the election took place). But at the same time, the PRP also advocated support for Otelo without criticism of his reformist program. (In this connection, it should be noted that the EC, which prides itself on its "concreteness", has demonstrated that, in fact, there is at least one aspect of "concrete Portugal" which the E.C. does not understand at all. For, in justification of the PRP abstention from the parliamentary elections, the E.C. argues that the PRP would only have won 2% of the votes. The E.C. seems unaware that a 2% vote would have been an important victory for the PRP in the parliamentary election. It would have established the PRP's hegemony in the revolutionary left, since the presently hegemonic UDP got only 1.5%, while the other groups received mere fractions of this per cent.)

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Without pretending to be definitive or to exhaust the subject, what are some of the lessons of the PRP experience for the U.S. ?

(1) The refusal of the U.S. to face up to PRP errors, our tail-ending justification for them, suggests that in part we are ourselves open to these same errors -- revolutionary impatience; a tendency to substitutionism; a tendency to short cuts.

(2) Here in our own organization we have been and are still going through a crisis. It revolves in part around the fact that in intervening in the mass movement we "forgot" about party building. The E.C. would have been wise to have pointed to the fact that the PRP in Portugal made precisely this same error on a larger scale, and should have used this example to drive home our new appreciation of party building. Instead, our justification of the PRP's a-partyism concessions inevitably weakens our efforts to put party building at the core of our politics.

(3) Here in the U.S., we have also been plagued by an admitted tendency to overestimate the readiness of objective events and our capacity to force the pace of events. We have paid, and will continue to pay a heavy price for this error, which has not been systematically corrected. The PRP has demonstrated precisely the same tendency. Its understandable desperation and consequent search for short cuts harmed it, just as parallel tendencies among us have hurt us severely, via demoralization, failure to grow, etc. Surely this, too, is a lesson of Portugal which the E.C. should be absorbing. Instead, the E.C.'s refusal to see the PRP as it is only made it harder to correct our own tendency to similar wishful evaluations.

(4) On Method: The PRP has, in the name of "historical specificity", refused to

learn from the past of the revolutionary movement. Lessons-from-the-past can not be allowed to degenerate into rigid doctrine. But they are check points for our practice. And when we depart from them, as in life we will and must, due to concrete situations, it is not enough to pull out the slogans of concreteness and historic specificity. It is necessary to demonstrate, prove, how the unique situation facing us at any moment in time requires ignoring the norms of the past. This the PRP has never bothered to do (no time; no traditions, etc.) But that does not excuse our failure to do so. Thus the E.C. feels no need to explain why, in Portugal, it was "necessary" to give uncritical support to an opportunist politician, or why, in Portugal, it was permissible to support a capitalist government. Instead of answering these questions or calling them to the membership's attention, the E.C. uses "historic specificity" as a club to beat its opponents in the name of so-called "concreteness". (Ironically, the E.C. rejects the notion of historic specificity at home as an explanation of the different responses of workers in different industries -- see paragraph 15 of "Campaign to Build a Periphery").

(5) Our blank check endorsement of PRP policies has other consequences for our international politics. Thus, if we can defend the PRP's support to a capitalist government, it is only one step to a greater danger: actual entry into such a government. That this is not far-fetched is evidenced by the fact that our E.C. has been silent about a dangerous development in the Italian revolutionary left -- the fact that the Democrazia Proletaria movement there, actually a United Front, proposed to enter a left government (of the CP and SP).

(6) One of the battle cries of the E.C. in recent months has, correctly, been "repoliticization". Certainly one way of doing it would be to educate our cadres in the lessons of the Portuguese revolution. Despite the directive of the I.S. convention, this has not happened. The fact of the PRP's support of the Goncalves government program was well known to the E.C., but it saw no reason to tell the membership, just as the facts about Pagina Um and the 1975 construction strike, etc. were well known, but not by the membership. In each case, because the E.C. placed the defense of its line above the need of the members to know and judge for themselves, the E.C. has been unable to aid the members make an objective appraisal of the errors of the PRP and the course of the Portuguese revolution.

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On November 29, after this article was written, and just before its relay to the N.O., the November 18 issue of Revolucao arrived. Revolucao reports that the PRP has quit the GDUPs and will not (has not) attend its convention.

The GDUPs are labeled "Stalinist and reformist". So the "victory" of the UDP, which was foreshadowed in the article above, has sadly materialized. What lessons the PRP will draw from this experience remain to be seen.