

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
September 9, 1975


TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

The national office received a copy of this letter from two former members of the SWP, Murry Weiss and Myra Tanner Weiss.

A copy is enclosed for your information.

Comradely,


Jack Barnes
National Secretary

Members of the Socialist Workers Party
Editors of The Militant and Intercontinental Press

Dear Comrades:

We are deeply alarmed by the position you have taken on the revolution in Portugal. The sixteen months of the revolution involve, after all, nothing less than the unfolding of the first socialist revolution in Western Europe. Moreover, during the last crucial months, Portugal has been gripped by a showdown struggle between revolution and counterrevolution. In this crisis you have placed yourselves on the wrong side. You have, it appears to us, embraced a theoretical view similar to that of Max Shachtman and James Burnham at the beginning of World War II, characterized by us as Stalinophobia. The methodology, analyses, and political conclusions of this error propel you, however unexpectedly or unwillingly, into the camp of American imperialism.

There is unquestionably an all-out effort of American capitalism -- and its world allies -- to crush the unfolding revolution in Portugal. The whole pack of American labor bureaucrats, their social-democratic and academic ideologists, the Socialist Party of Harrington and the "left" captives of the Democratic Party, all join in one shrill chorus to denounce and slander the Communist Party of Portugal. (See The New York Times ad of July 13, 1975.) They hurl charges against the Portuguese revolution of "anti-democratic violence," Communist "aggression," and "plots" to seize minority power in the style of Stalinist East European takeovers.

And you, with clucking tongues, tend to echo the cry about "democracy" and "minorities and majorities" in a situation in which the toiling masses of Portugal are striving to assert their will against a fascist ruling class with its black-robed servants in the Catholic hierarchy.

You mourn the demise of the Constituent Assembly. You plead the cause of "socialists" who are cheek to jowl in league with the hastily formed bourgeois parties. Just at the point when the classes in Portugal are polarizing for an impending civil war, with the SP clearly giving left cover to the fascists and imperialists, you talk of bourgeois electoral processes as if they were related to democracy. Freedom in Portugal cannot be separated from the need to break completely with bourgeois laws and procedures. Freedom is inextricably bound up with the revolution -- defined by Trotsky as the "intervention of the people into the affairs of the state."

On August 1, 1975, The Militant, in an article by Gerry Foley from the Intercontinental Press, said:

"Spearheading a fresh attack by the Portuguese military junta on popular sovereignty and the democratic rights of the masses, the Communist party and its ultraleft allies used force on Friday and Saturday, July 18 and 19, in trying to prevent Socialist party rallies from being held.

"In Oporto on Friday the ganga mobilized by the Stalinist bureaucratic machine, along with ultraleftists, tried to barricade the city against an allegedly impending assault of reactionary putschists led by the SP." (Our emphasis.)

The article continues, quoting approvingly The New York Times correspondent, Henry Giniger:

"... the barricades were quickly demolished," New York Times correspondent Henry Giniger wrote in a July 19 dispatch from Lisbon. "While the Socialists were assembling some 70,000 people in a soccer stadium, the communists could rally only about 4,000 in the central square."

And this same issue of The Militant publishes a photo of the head of the Socialist Party with the following caption:

"Socialist leader Mario Soares ridiculed charges that his party was planning a coup."

These selected and loaded versions of three episodes of the July 18-19 weekend in Lisbon were projected on millions of TV screens for nearly a week. The message in this propaganda barrage was clear: (a) the CP "ganga" were barricading cars into Lisbon; (b) the Socialist Party's "down with communism" rally drew 40,000 (Giniger said 70,000); and (c) the Communist Party could muster only 4,000. The American imperialists were elated. They began to see some hope of saving bourgeois Portugal for themselves.

And why not? They know, if The Militant does not, who Soares and the SP leadership are. The New York Times, Aug. 26, '75, described their aims as follows:

"The main concern of the Socialists and Popular Democrats at the moment is for civil liberties. They also favor a slowdown in the rate of nationalization, help for private business, close links to Western sources of aid and encouragement of Portuguese and foreign investment. The two parties are strongly oriented to the Western democracies, particularly the Social Democratic countries which have given them material and moral support."

From the Winter-Spring, 1975, issue of the British Trotskyist journal, International, we learn something of

the SP's background and current activities:

". . . Formed under the dictatorship as a loosely organized grouping of the more radical section of the democratic opposition, the PSP operated primarily in exile, and had little real roots in the Portuguese working class. . . .

"The height of the PSP's 'leftism' came on 28 September when its members manned the barricades along with militants from the PCP and the revolutionary left. In the period following 28 September, however, the PSP began a steady rightward march. Among the factors shaping this were a growing awareness by the PSP leaders of the incompatibility between the further development of the mass movement and the establishment of stable bourgeois democracy; a realization that they could not compete directly with the PCP for leadership of the mass movement . . . within the Government as the MFA ministers began to look to the PCP as the principal spokesman of the mass movement. . . .

"This rightward turn of the PSP revealed itself in a variety of ways. The international figures it invited to visit Portugal and boost its political image changed perceptibly in hue as Francois Mitterand and Carlos Altamirano gave way to Willy Brandt and -- Edward Kennedy! Then the PSP became the principal Portuguese promotor of the cold-war, (and CIA) inspired International Confederation of Free Trade Unions."

If nothing previous to, or nothing during, the events in Lisbon in July, then surely everything subsequent to that weekend exposes the "innocent" Soares and the SP leadership as precisely what the Communists labeled them -- a cover for an "impending assault of reactionary putschists." Under the banner of "democracy" and "civil liberties" over 50 Communist headquarters have been sacked and burned in the north.

The Communist response to counterrevolutionary violence was reported by Henry Giniger in the Aug. 16, N. Y. Times:

"Alvaro Cunhal, the Secretary General of the party, called last night for unity among revolutionary forces against what he called a fascist effort to overthrow the revolution.

". . . He had harsh words for the leaders of the Socialist Party, saying that if the Socialist Party was being attacked by counterrevolutionary groups, the Communists would immediately come to the Socialists' aid.

"We Communists have another policy and another morality," said the 61-year-old leader."

The New York Post, August 19, reported:

"The Communist-dominated central trade federation, Intersindical, called a 30-minute general strike today to protest 'escalating fascist reaction' and attacks on the Communist Party across the country. . . .

"The Socialist Party issued a statement urging its members to 'ignore, despise and fight this desperate maneuver to control workers,'"

Why does The Militant rush in to identify itself with the SP and its leadership who are in league with the Portuguese bourgeoisie? What tactical mistake -- read by you from afar -- can the Communist Party be charged with to justify you in siding with the "socialists" against the revolution?

Are you so quick to forget the lessons of the July days of Russia in 1917? The Bolsheviks adopted Lenin's April 4th theses. The party oriented toward a socialist revolution. This meant a separation from the people's front policy of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. The Bolsheviks swiftly gained deep support from the workers and soldiers in the large cities. The struggle, however, swept on to the point of an irresistible, though premature, mass insurrectionary showdown. The Bolshevik party, warning against moving too fast and too far, joined with the masses to organize a timely retreat, a chance for the revolutionary processes in the provinces to catch up. The socialist revolution therefore triumphed in October.

But in July, reaction had seized the moment and it appeared that a counterrevolutionary flood had gained the day. Lenin was in hiding. Trotsky was put in jail. The party apparatus apparently had been shattered. The red-baiting, German-spy slanders against Bolshevism were triumphant -- for the moment. And where were the "democratic socialists," the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries during these July Days?

The Russian "socialists" were thick as thieves with the bourgeois party (Kadets) and the reactionary Czarist military clique preparing for either a restoration of the monarchy or a Kornilovist-fascist dictatorship. And so is the Socialist Party leadership in Portugal -- if one knows anything at all about revolution and counterrevolution.

Dick Roberts, in the August issue of the International Socialist Review, compares the Portuguese Revolution with that of Russia in 1917. And he has everything topsy-turvy. He likens the MFA (Movimento das Forças Armadas), a military force that transformed an imperialist war into a civil war, with the Kerensky government which plotted to continue the war. He compares the MFA which toppled a fascist dictator to Kerensky who plotted, however unsuccessfully to put a dictator (Kornilov) into power. As

Trotsky put it in his History of the Russian Revolution, Vol. II,

"The events, the documents, the testimony of the participants, and finally the confession of Kerensky himself, unanimously bear witness that the Minister-President, without the knowledge of a part of his own government, behind the back of the soviets which had given him the power, in secrecy from the party of which he considered himself a member, had entered into agreement with the highest generals of the army for a radical change in the state regime with the help of the armed forces."

Entranced with bourgeois electoral processes, and blind to the most obvious distinctions, Roberts goes on to say:

"Kerensky was thus an elected leader of a party that claimed to support socialism and to speak for the peasants, not a self-appointed military official like the leaders of the MFA."

Who elected Kerensky? Where? When? And what was the vote? In June of 1917 Kerensky couldn't even get elected to the Central Committee of the Social Revolutionaries.

And who elected the MFA to overthrow a fascist dictatorship? Yes, the MFA appointed itself to overthrow Salazar, as Castro appointed himself to overthrow Batista.

There is an analogy between the Portuguese revolution and that of Russia in 1917. Kerensky and Soares have much in common. Both aligned themselves with the liberal bourgeoisie -- and both opened the door for counterrevolution.

What Is the Character of the MFA?

According to Dick Roberts, in the L.S.R. article cited supra, the MFA is hailed as a revolutionary movement by the CP, the SP, the Maoists -- in fact all the radicals of Portugal. The CP, according to Cunhal, signed a five-year pact with the MFA; the SP as recently as June 23, Roberts tells us, "organized a demonstration hailing the MFA's devotion to freedom." And the Maoist newspaper, the Guardian, says the MFA "has negotiated a daring course to the left,"

But the SWP disagrees. Dick Roberts considers the Constituent Assembly to be the greatest force for freedom:

"But the Constituent Assembly is the only politically representative body chosen by the workers and the masses in Portugal. The combined vote for the CP and SP and their satellite parties -- a solid majority -- was perhaps the highest vote for working-class parties ever registered in an imperialist nation."

Oh, but how sad! This great representative body, almost a Congress or a Parliament, is being shunted aside for -- for "people's assemblies," committees of workers, peasants and soldiers on which the MFA intends to rest its power. Roberts scoffs:

"These 'people's assemblies' are obviously designed to be nothing more than supporter groups for the MFA regime, controlled from the top. They are designed to give the MFA a semblance of support in the working class while at the same time enabling the junta to circumvent the Constituent Assembly..."

Yes, the Socialists and Communists got over 50 percent of the vote for the Constituent Assembly in the elections of April 25. And the bourgeois party, the PPD (Popular Democrats) got 26 percent. But a split developed within the Constituent Assembly. The majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants obviously wanted socialism. But the SP and the PPD wanted something else. As Time magazine, Aug. 11, 1975, pointed out:

"Their (the Socialists and other moderates) only hope for curbing the excesses of leftist zeal was the promised elections for the Constituent Assembly..."

"Yet the moderates' victory at the polls was hollow; two weeks before the elections... six parties, including the Communists and Socialists, signed a document agreeing to let the MFA's Revolutionary Council serve as the country's ultimate rulers for three to five years."

Had Roberts understood Lenin's State and Revolution which he quotes so extensively and so erroneously, he would know that a revolution cannot abide political union with bourgeois parties that want to travel in the opposite direction. The real majority in the elections expressed the desire for a socialist transformation in Portugal. And that majority increasingly must be expressed as a dual power to that of the bourgeoisie. The split in the majority that came together temporarily in April has been deepening ever since.

The SWP has labeled the MFA as "bonapartist," "capitalist," "imperialist," a "military dictatorship," everything that is evil in the Marxist dictionary. Yet the first action of the MFA was to transform the imperialist war into a civil war with the overthrow of a 50-year-old fascist dictatorship.

Who led the April 1974 revolution in Portugal? Every Trotskyist knows who led the February revolution of 1917. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (similar to the SP of Portugal) didn't have anything to do with the struggle to overthrow the Czarist monarchy. Even the leadership of the Bolshevik party in Russia didn't lead the February revolution. It lagged behind the events. It was the cadres of factory workers of Vyborg who in five days

of struggle on the streets split the ranks of the old Czarist army, winning over sections to their side. It was the Vyborgsi cadres who were trained and educated by Lenin and who had passed through the 1905 revolution, the counterrevolution, the tests of war and insurrection.

Is there any question that the MFA, a group of lower army officers, born out of the smashup of the top officer corp of the old army, destroyed the Salazar dictatorship? Is there any question that the MFA stopped the imperialist wars that Portuguese imperialism was conducting in its colonial possessions?

Let us look a little deeper into the origin of the MFA and the April revolution -- by citation of the imperialists themselves. In the New York Times Magazine, July 13, 1975, John Paton Davies, now living in Spain, speaks of the origin of the MFA as follows:

"... Why are the three biggest powers so concerned? Because Portugal is going through a revolution, and not a superficial one, either, a change of Colonel Tweedledum or General Tweedledee, but a political-social-economic upheaval that could end up making Portugal the first Communist-ruled nation in Western Europe -- and a Moscow-oriented one at that.

"It began as a military coup engineered by several hundred lieutenants, captains and majors embittered by their colonial war experience in Africa. For years, they and their men had been neglected, cheated and, they felt, exploited by the Government and the capitalists in Lisbon. In their angry resentment, they came to think in terms of social revolution, and were even influenced by the ideology of the very African liberation movements they were fighting. They resolved to throw out the "Fascist dictatorship" at home, stop the war, give Mozambique and Angola to the liberation groups and democratize and develop their own country. This was a considerable undertaking; the authoritarian regime they intended to overthrow had been entrenched in power for almost 50 years.

"Undaunted, the junior officers secretly formed the Armed Forces Movement... The MFA was remarkably democratic in organization and operation, run by committees rather than led by one man. While Marxist in coloration, it was not regimented by a prescribed body of doctrine. Its members were absorbed in achieving their immediate goal, the overthrow of the Salazar-Caetano regime, and in this enterprise they enlisted some key senior officers, including the monocled General Oponio de Spínola. With the success of their coup of April 25, 1974, Spínola was made head of the Junta of National Salvation and, shortly thereafter, President of the Republic. But the general was conservative; with like-minded elements in the armed forces and civilian

life he attempted to check the pace of socialization and decolonization being pushed by radicals within the MFA, with the aggressive collaboration of the Portuguese Communist party.

"In the heightening conflict, the conservatives lost, and Spínola was forced to resign. Then, last March, he was drawn into an unbelievably clumsy rightist plot, culminating in his flight from the country, a further strengthening of the variegated leftists in the armed forces and the institutionalization of the armed forces' governing role."

The MFA apparently started out as an extremely courageous group of young officers and soldiers, won to the revolutionary cause, who enlisted aid in their audacious undertaking from some "senior officers." Certainly the MFA was not, as Roberts described it, a mere "split in the ruling class." And ever since the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship, events have shown a polarizing of forces -- within the MFA, within the government, and in the population as a whole.

The imperialist "democrats" of England express their view of the Portuguese revolution as a "country falling downstairs." They cite the step by step developments following the coup as the undermining of democracy. It is worthwhile to follow their schedule to see this polarization process. Here is the account of The Economist, July, 1975:

1. July 9, 1974. The centre-right prime minister of Portugal's first provisional government, Senhor Palma Carlos, and four moderate ministers resigned. They disagreed with their Socialist and Communist coalition partners over the economic policy and timetable for elections; they also supported President Spínola's proposal for a pre-independence referendum in the African territories. The radicals then put Colonel Vasco Goncalves, a pro-Communist, in the prime ministership, and made then-Major Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho head of the country's new internal security force, Copcon.

2. In early September 10 percent of the navy's officers lost their posts in Portugal's first major purge of moderates in the armed forces; more purges have taken place, in all three services, since then.

3. September 18th. The Portuguese Nationalist party was banned for alleged "fascist" connections. Three other parties were banned later -- the Progressives, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats -- and the Centre Democrats were left as the only significant right-of-centre party in this April's election.

4. September 28th. President Spínola tried to hold a mass rally of Portugal's non-marxists. When armed

groups of Communists and soldiers said they would prevent the rally taking place, President Spínola first tried to arrest some leading army radicals, and then gave way, cancelled the demonstration and resigned from the presidency. General Costa Gomes, an ambivalent moderate, took over.

5. November 4th. Communist and extreme left-wing demonstrators sacked the Lisbon offices of the Centre Democratic party and began a campaign of intimidation that reached its climax in an all-night siege of the Centre Democrats' congress in January.

6. January 20, 1975. The AFM (the MFA in the American press) gave its approval -- against the wishes of the two non-Communist parties in the government, the Socialists and Popular Democrats -- to a new trade union law which put the Communist-controlled organization in sole control of the country's labour movement.

7. March 11th. A paratroop regiment and two small aircraft attempted a counter-coup so ineffectual that they may have been deliberately provoked into trying it. It was easily suppressed, and President Spínola, accused of being responsible, fled abroad. There followed widespread sackings of moderates in the armed forces; a reorganization of the government giving more power to the Communists; and the creation of a Supreme Revolutionary Council, dominated by radicals, to guide the revolution.

8. April 11th. The democratic parties were made to sign a "pact" with the AFM under threat of being banned. This said that the AFM would continue to take all major decisions until 1978 or 1980. It also laid down the main lines of Portugal's constitution -- even though, on April 25th, an election for the constituent assembly that was supposed to draft the constitution gave the Socialists 38 percent of the vote, the Popular Democrats 26 percent and the Centre Democrats 7 percent. The Communists and their allies got only 18 percent.

9. May 19th. The Socialist newspaper Republica was taken over by Communist printers, then closed down by the army. The Republica dispute, together with the seizure of the Roman Catholics' Radio Renascença, became a test case for the disappearing freedom of the Portuguese press, and the Socialists threatened to leave the government unless they got their paper back.

10. July 7th. The AFM voted to bypass the political parties by setting up a series of "people's committees" controlled from above, and the government gave Republica to the Communist printers. The Socialists thereupon resigned from the government on July 11th.

11. July 17th. The Popular Democrats resigned and the AFM dissolves the government.

One may not know from so far who these revolutionists in the MFA are and what their evolution has been. And one cannot anticipate therefore what they will do next. But one can react to what they have done -- that is, hail their revolutionary acts. One is reminded with what joy we witnessed Castro's victorious fight against Batista, although not one of us could predict that he would go on to throw out the imperialists and socialize Cuba, effecting the first incursion of proletarian revolution in the Western hemisphere. In destroying Batista, Castro had begun a process that necessarily impelled him to socialism -- if he remained a revolutionary. And he did.

Unable to see any revolutionary content in the MFA, insisting on its "bourgeois" character, The Militant closes its eyes to the real separation of the classes -- the MFA, CP and their allies on the one side and the SP and bourgeois parties on the other with the counterrevolutionists filling up the pores -- and calls on the workers to re-unite with the bourgeois parties in the Constituent Assembly, a moment of popular frontism that the dynamics of the revolution have already passed beyond.

In the July 21, 1975, issue of The Militant, Gerry Foley said:

"The most pathetic illusion of those elements on the left drawn into supporting the military and the CP against the SP is that such a scheme will bring 'working-class unity.' In fact, it is founded on a denial of the political rights of a majority of the workers, that is, ganging up on the SP through an alliance of the CP, the left-centrist and ultraleft groups with the bourgeois military caudillos. Its objective is to strip all workers of every political, trade-union, and human right. The peace it will bring in the struggle between the workers parties can only be a peace of the grave."

And later in the article Foley said:

"Moreover, even if the MFA were a revolutionary workers leadership, such control as outlined in the plan would not be justifiable, since it would still be necessary to guarantee complete independence of the workers' economic organizations from the state."

Then it is possible the MFA is not a bourgeois dictatorship. It might be, as its actions would seem to indicate, a revolutionary workers leadership. Then why should that leadership guarantee independence from itself? The guessing game is also played with the "organs of people's power." Just as we have a bourgeois MFA that may be a revolutionary workers' force, so we have soviets that are "so-called" or may be "real." Again Foley in The Militant of Aug. 8:

"The fundamental rights of suffrage and popular sovereignty have already been undermined in the name of

'organs of people's power' that are far from representing any real alternative power recognized by the workers."

But the "organs of people's power" are the workers -- and the peasants and soldiers. The MFA did what any Bolshevik would do in a country that has lived under fascism for 50 years. It called on the workers, soldiers, and peasants to organize themselves for political power. If the workers respond, surely they will be an "alternative power."

Foley wants to have it "right" whatever takes place, however. He goes on to say:

"Since the days of the Constituent Assembly seem numbered and its end has apparently been brought even closer by the establishment of the all-powerful triumvirate, the 'organs of people's power' used as a pretext by the military rulers may, however, become an important arena of struggle. The fact that the SP and CP are now entering such formations and fostering them has already given them more political reality. If the military proves unable to control the mass mobilizations, even the rigidly controlled structures authorized by the MFA may become the scene of political struggle and thus develop toward real soviets."

This kind of sulking and floundering is impossible to believe. Don't we know that the most important task in Portugal is precisely the organization of soviets? Don't we know that the MFA, in calling on the workers to form committees, in counterposing such organizational forms to the "Constituent Assembly," the bourgeois electoral trap, regardless of any secondary mistakes they might have made, is doing precisely what the Trotskyists should urge be done as the most important guarantee of a successful fulfillment of the revolution?

The MFA is also looked upon with skepticism and distrust by the Trotskyists in Europe. But nowhere, there, have we read that the MFA is to be characterized as a bonapartist, bourgeois, imperialist state. They ask the MFA to show more proof of being truly revolutionary -- they ask for fully developed soviets. This cautious "wait-and-see" analysis is expressed by Comrade Livio Maitan, May 25 issue of Baniera Rossa, fortnightly newspaper of Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari:

"There is no doubt that in many respects the MFA is a new phenomenon and should not be characterized hastily. It is an officers' movement that arose from the experience of a military defeat in a colonial war. In the international and domestic climate that prevailed after 1968, it took a direction different from, if not diametrically opposite to, other movements that have also emerged as a reflection of a defeat. It is clear that since September 28, and still more since March 11, the MFA has experienced a certain radicalization. As a

result of this, it is no longer crystallized around the projected course that seemed to have been adopted after April 24, 1974, that is a coalition government, preparation for a transition to a 'normal' system of bourgeois democracy, 'rationalization' of Portuguese capitalism and its integration into the Common Market, and so on."

In July the direction of the MFA became more explicitly defined by its announcement of a program for the socialist revolution in economic, social and political areas. This is seen in its "guide document," (See the full document in the Intercontinental Press, July 21, 1975.) In the Trotskyist French weekly, Rouge, July 18, Charles Michaloux, also highly critical of the MFA, notes however its leftward development:

"The MFA Assembly meeting July 8 thus faced a crisis that was already under way. The 'guide document' adopted by the delegates formalized an already existing situation so as to better control it. The tone of the document is clearly more firm than that of the plan of June 21. The economic measures it envisages tend toward the extension of the nationalizations, agrarian reform, and workers control. The 'pluralist society' has disappeared, to be replaced by 'committees of workers and neighborhood residents combined with the assemblies of delegates of military units (ADUs) within Local and Regional People's Assemblies, with the perspective of convening a National People's Assembly to establish a regime of the working masses,' in which 'all bodies will be elected and subject to recall by a show of hands,'

"The 'guide document' incorporates and thereby encourages the development of the self-organization of the workers...."

"... The essential thing, however, is that despite all its ambiguities and compromises, in the present situation in Portugal, the 'guide document' appears to the workers as a general expression of their aspirations and therefore as an encouragement to achieving them as quickly as possible.

"The bourgeoisie has not failed to note this. Its parties, the PPD and the CDS, and the bosses' confederation, the CIP, as well as its bishops have denounced the MFA with one voice -- and not only the MFA's guide document.' There is no more bowing and scraping, no more polite civility toward this regime, which has revealed its incapacity to hold the line against the rise of militancy. Now it's war. They are not saying so yet, but in any case it has begun...."

In the light of these developments -- as well as in the inner logic of the development of the revolution -- how can the SWP continue to flounder on a correct class

analysis of the MFA?

Perhaps we can find an answer to this question by taking a look at the position taken by the SWP on the CP of Portugal.

Is the Communist Party of Portugal "Stalinist"?

It is a bit embarrassing to have to ask Trotskyists the question, what is Stalinism? Apparently the SWP has forgotten what Trotsky taught so well, especially in his great work, In Defense of Marxism, Stalinism is not Communist Parties that are organizations of workers with revolutionary aspirations. Stalinism is not even the Soviet bureaucracy which is privileged and satisfied with the status quo if only the imperialists would leave it in peace. Stalinism is the conciliationist theory and practice of that bureaucracy with capitalism.

The workers of Russia understood this when they died by the millions to preserve what they had won in their revolution. The Yugoslav Communists were next to demonstrate that Stalinist theory and practice could be put aside for a victory against the Nazi invaders and then their own ruling class. The Chinese Communists, despite a Stalinist ideology clung to even today, fought their invaders and led a fourth of the world's population out of capitalist misery. And most recently, the Communists of Vietnam have won their fight. True, the struggle would have been far less costly without Stalinism, with a clear, scientific, and revolutionary theory. But the objective need for world socialism is expressed precisely in the fact that with all the mistakes that were made and will be made the revolution can still triumph.

The Militant condemns some "ultraleft" groups in Portugal for uniting with the Communist Party in action. Gerry Foley, in the Aug. 1 issue, glibly explains their error:

"Some of the ultraleft groups that claim to be anti-Stalinist have been hard put to explain this convergence. In order to get around the difficulty, they have tried to claim that the Portuguese CP is not a typical Stalinist party because of its tradition in the resistance to Salazarism and the swamping of its disciplined cadres by a mass of still un-Stalinized recent recruits.

"There is no basis in fact, however, for such apologetic 'theories.' How can the Portuguese CP be an exception in the Stalinist camp when the Kremlin has backed it to the hilt in its sectarian course, when the Soviet press and the most servile Stalinist parties such as the American CP have echoed its campaign against the Socialist party?"

What do we have here? Guilt by association? Then maybe the "ultralefts" are right and the Communists of Portugal are not Stalinist because the large Communist

Parties of Italy and France, gripped by their own disastrous class collaboration politics with capitalist and "socialist" democrats have attacked the CPP for taking a revolutionary road. Communist Party leader, Alvaro Cunhal, answered these attacks in an interview published in the New York Times Magazine, July 13:

Fallaci:... don't you realize the harm you're doing to the European left and particularly to your Communist comrades in other countries? Just consider the Spanish Communist party....

Cunhal:... Oh! How sorry I am, how afflicted, navre!... I weep for all European Communists, I reproach myself, I curse myself. I suffer on their behalf! Yes, I know their complaints. They're the ones they repeat to me whenever they come here. "Why do you prevent the Christian Democrat party taking part in the election?" and so on and so on and amen. What Christian Democrat party? All there existed was a tiny party that had been formed a bare four weeks earlier, with a fascist at its head. A fascist who should have been prison since Sept. 28, in fact, because he had already betrayed the Armed Forces Movement with Spinoza. A young reactionary party that didn't even have a Catholic base and that had already attempted conspiracy...

Fallaci:... The Italian Communist party was striving for the historical compromise and you....

Cunhal: Oh, how sad to think they've suffered so much because of me! Oh, how mortified I feel! They had that possibility, and I spoiled it for them! You know what I think? If a Communist party can suffer damage by events taking place in another country, if it has to bear the consequences, then it means that....

Fallaci:... but the Italian Communist party, notwithstanding, can summon up seven million votes, whereas you didn't even get 700,000. Have you ever meditated this fact? Have you never considered the advisability of making the choice Togliatti made, of inserting yourself in the so-called bourgeois democracy?

Cunhal: No, no, no, no, no, and no! We've already obtained much more this way. Today there are no more private banks in Portugal and all the fundamental sectors have been nationalized; agricultural reform is on the way, capitalism is destroyed and monopolies are about to be destroyed. And all this is irreversible! So my answer to the Communists in Western countries, to their complaints is: We don't await the results of elections to change things and destroy the past. Our way is a revolution and has nothing in common with your systems.

• • •

Bravo! These are great words. They breathe clarity and revolutionary independence from reformism and people's front Stalinism. If only Comrade Foley could

understand them!

In Time magazine, Aug. 11, we learn something of the history of the Portuguese Communists. It might help to evaluate them -- to understand what kind of revolutionists they are:

"Even today, party members are reluctant to discuss their underground activities. 'After all,' says Party Chief Alvaro Cunhal, 61, 'we may have to go back underground some day.' His deputy, Octavio Pato, claims that good organization has at least partly been the answer: 'There were big cells and small cells, a structure that was relatively centralized. The overwhelming majority of the Central Committee was inside Portugal, and that is one of the reasons the party managed to survive.' Indeed, according to Antonio Dias Lourenco, editor of the Communist weekly Avante, the party emerged from hiding with no fewer than 15,000 paid-up members....

"Party Boss Cunhal spent 13 years behind bars, eight of them in solitary. He became something of a legend, even among non-Communists, for his daring 1960 escape with nine other prisoners from Lisbon's infamous Peniche Prison, which sits on a rocky promontory overlooking the Atlantic....

"The Communist Party's strongest following has traditionally been in the impoverished Alentejo region south of the Tagus River, an area of huge farms owned by absentee landlords. There, tenant sharecroppers and migrant workers barely subsisted producing cork, olives, a few pigs and some wheat. Laborers frequently went hungry in the midst of unworked estates that had been turned into private hunting preserves.

"The Communists were also able to capitalize on worker dissatisfaction in Lisbon and other big cities. The old regime advertised Portugal to foreign investors as a 'land of cheap labor.' The Communists worked persistently within the framework of the legal labor syndicates. By the time of the revolution, they controlled the Bank Workers Union, the Metallurgical Workers Union, the Shop Workers Union and several other major organizations. Their strength was such that in the months prior to the ouster of the old regime they were able to call out 100,000 workers in wildcat strikes and send thousands of students into the streets -- thus setting the stage for the climactic military coup that ended half a century of right-wing dictatorship. Nonetheless, for all their heroism and staying power, the Communists were able to garner only 12.5 percent of the vote in last April's election -- leaving them still very much a minority party!"

Essentially The Militant charges the Communist Party of Portugal with two crimes: It is sectarian and it

suppresses the democratic rights of the Portuguese people. Let us deal briefly with each.

A sectarian course in Portugal could be described in three areas: 1. A refusal to work in the reactionary trade unions under Salazar, 2. A failure to struggle within the bourgeois parliamentary institutions, and 3. Failing to effect a Leninist tactic of the united front against reaction. Has the CPP followed such a course?

The CPP has toiled for decades in the most reactionary trade union movement under the Salazar dictatorship. It rose to leadership of this movement due to this Leninist struggle in the underground and in the revolution. And it was the mobilization of these trade union masses in Lisbon that defeated the Spinoia coup of September 28.

The CPP fought in the electoral field and won 18 percent of the April vote. When we consider that the Bolshevik Party gained only 25 percent of the vote for the Constituent Assembly in Russia after the October revolution, this achievement of the CPP is hardly a record of sectarianism.

And on the third count, the Communists have proved less sectarian than the SWP. It aligned itself firmly with the revolutionary movement in the army -- the MFA. And, as cited earlier in this paper, it has offered full support to the Socialists should their headquarters be attacked and called on all radicals to unite for the struggle against fascist restoration. The Communist Party of Germany, at the crucial time, failed to make such a plea to the Social Democrats.

No one would claim that the Communists of Portugal are incapable of making mistakes. Everyone is. But the main lines along which they have moved are not of a sectarian nature. There is good reason for the victory against fascism, the nationalizations that have taken place, the formation of soviets -- the mobilization of the revolutionary classes for power. The Communists deserve the major credit for these advances. And we have every reason to hope that, whatever weaknesses exist in their theoretical arsenal, they will continue their course toward socialism.

And now we come to the second charge the SWP has thrown at the Communists; that they have been guilty of brutally suppressing democratic rights in Portugal. Here one is prompted to say -- you must be joking! Every day in recent months the democratic rights of the Communists have been under attack. The more conservative section of Portugal -- the north -- has witnessed the burning of CPP headquarters. Lynch mobs have attacked its members. The full weight of reaction is driving to crush the revolution and the CPP is the main target. And where is your precious SP? We have

already cited its strike-breaking statement against the workers' protest of fascist attacks. The SP leadership, crying over confiscation of its press, is giving the counter-revolution the ideological screen it needs to hide its dirty work.

Yes, the SP's paper Republica was taken over. And so was the radio of the Catholics. Ernest Mandel has explained in some detail that the printing workers, mostly non CPP members, were engaged in an economic struggle with their employers. Workers throughout the country have taken steps to control their jobs as part of the process of nationalization. Factories have been seized. Things like that happen in a revolution. Mandel expressed the thought that the seizure of Republica was an error, that it played into the hands of the reactionaries. Be that as it may, what has this to do with the red-baiting smear that the CPP violently suppresses civil liberties?

The SWP has developed a whole schematic view on the question of democracy. It is most articulately expressed by Joseph Hansen in an article in the Militant of Aug. 15 entitled "Is Democracy Worth Fighting For?"

"The source of their (Portuguese militants) error lies at bottom in believing that socialism simply abolishes bourgeois democracy instead of expanding it qualitatively, that is extending it into the economic structure and thereby liquidating one of the features that distinguishes capitalism -- totalitarian command on the level of production."

The main cry of Russian Menshevism was that the Bolsheviks simply wanted to "abolish" bourgeois democracy instead of expanding it "qualitatively" in stages. That is, the Mensheviks argued, bourgeois democracy would be extended from the political structure into the economic, ending totalitarian command of production by the capitalists. The Mensheviks repeated this cry while the bourgeoisie was busy "extending" the imperialist war, harnessing production for the war, postponing land reform, and mobilizing the counterrevolution. Of course, the Russian bourgeoisie was, in fact, against bourgeois democracy. And there is a parallel in Portugal.

"Good militants" in Portugal aren't faced with the problem of abolishing bourgeois democracy. They are faced with the question of creating it or creating a socialist democracy. Bourgeois democracy in Portugal today exists only because of a proletarian revolution. The bourgeoisie was content to tolerate Salazar for fifty years. It was and is too weak to support a bourgeois democracy. It is ready to sack this amount of freedom if it can only get things back to "normal." The "organs of people's power," the committees of workers, soldiers, and peasants can and, we hope, will consti-

tute themselves as the direct rulers of Portugal.

To put the matter simply -- you can't have bourgeois democracy with the bourgeoisie. And the capitalists must be eliminated if any freedom is to live in Portugal. Bourgeois democratic rights which the workers wrenched from the capitalists with their blood -- the rights to free speech, freedom of assembly, freedom to organize unions and political parties, etc., can be secured only if the capitalist class is abolished.

But rather than lecture Comrade Hansen about matters he should be familiar with, we would like to cite the Portuguese Communist leader Cunhal whose view is essentially Marxist-Leninist, and, yes, Trotskyist. We quote from the interview previously cited, published in the New York Times Magazine:

"But we Communists don't accept the rules of the election game! You err in taking this concept as your starting point. No, no, no: I care nothing for elections. Nothing! Ha, ha! If you believe it's all a question of the percentage of votes obtained by one party or the other, you're laboring under a gross delusion: If you think the Socialist party with its 40 percent and the Popular party with its 27 percent constitute the majority, you're the victim of a misunderstanding! They aren't the majority...."

"... If you believe the Constituent Assembly will be transformed into a Parliament, you're making a ridiculous mistake. No, indeed! The Constituent Assembly will certainly not form a legislative organ; it will certainly not become a chamber of deputies. I promise you. It will be a Constituent Assembly and nothing more, with a limited importance, nothing more. It will meet within a well-determined political framework, well-conditioned by the agreement signed with the MFA by the force that is not represented by the MFA. Because it's the MFA that launched the revolution on April 25, not the Socialist party...."

"... We Communists had indeed told the army men that the PPD shouldn't have been included, that the country couldn't be led towards Socialism by means of an extensive democratic coalition. But they insisted on lumping together Socialists, Communists, Social Democrats and the various trends within the Armed Forces Movement... We had warned them the elections constituted a danger, that they were premature, that if no measures were taken we'd lose them, that one can't mix the passive vote with militancy. But we were able to prevent only the regional elections. They insisted on holding the one for the Constituent Assembly..."

"Ah, but at this point I must explain to you what's happening in Portugal, what we have here. There's a revolution happening, you know? There's a revolutionary

process afoot, you know? Even if it is proceeding side by side with a bourgeois democratic process that sometimes coincides with the aims of the revolutionary process and sometimes contradicts them. The solution of our problems lies in the dynamics of revolution, whereas the bourgeois democratic process wants to entrust it to the old electoral concepts, invoking legality, a juridical situation and seeking to protect it with the laws of a previous regime. It refers to laws that must be respected. But in the revolutionary process, laws are made, not respected. Do you see? The revolution doesn't respect old laws; it makes new ones ...

"... To me, democracy means getting rid of capitalism, of trusts. And I'll add: In Portugal, henceforth, there exists no possibility for a democracy such as the kind you have in Western Europe. By 'henceforth' I mean 'no longer.' Of course, if on April 24 we had been told, 'You'll have a political set-up like the one in France or in Italy or in England,' we'd have exclaimed: 'How wonderful, what a relief!' But things went differently; the way events moved opened other prospects to us, and you can't expect a people's wishes to limit themselves or crystallize. In other words: Your Western democracy is no longer enough for us. Your coexistence of democratic freedoms and monopolistic power no longer interests us. We wouldn't attain it even if we could. Because we don't want to. We don't want a democracy like yours. We don't even want a Socialism, or, rather, a dream of Socialism, like yours. Is that clear? ...

"In this country we need thorough, radical transformation at the social and the economic level. There are two choices before us: either a monopoly with a strong reactionary government or the end of monopolies with a strong Communist democracy."

It is ironic that the "Stalinist" Cunhal has a deeper grasp of the theory of permanent revolution than the "Trotskyist" Hansen. But it should not be surprising for Cunhal of the CPP is linked to the working class of Portugal which is experiencing the realization of bourgeois democracy in a relentless struggle with the bourgeoisie through the socialist revolution.

In Conclusion

In the New York Post, columnist Clayton Fritchey, July 11, 1975, said, "Senator Buckley (Conservative Republican from New York) warns that Portugal confronts the U. S. 'with the most profound crisis since the end of World War II.'"

The conservative Senator is quite correct. At the end of World War II actual power was in the hands of the Communists and Socialist parties. Bourgeois parties had actually fled the scene in utter disgrace for their years of collaboration or capitulation to Hitler and Mussolini. What saved capitalism in Western Europe in 1945? It was the Stalinist monolith. In exchange for diplomatic arrangements with Western imperialism, the Kremlin delivered the Communist Parties of France and Italy as left wing partners of bourgeois forces in new people's front formations. Communist workers in both Communist parties still speak bitterly of how they missed the boat.

The problem for the imperialists today is: Can the Communist parties still be controlled by the Kremlin -- or Peking?

In a direct struggle with the revolution, imperialism alone is feeble. The only salvation for capitalism is through its labor bureaucracy, the Social Democracy, and the conservative Soviet bureaucracy. Now, in 1975, thirty years after the Second World War, the issue is posed: Can the workers free themselves from the traitorous supporters of "democratic" imperialism and hurl back the fascist counterrevolution in Western Europe? There is every possibility for this brilliant prospect. And it begins in Portugal. Let us embrace it and fight for it everywhere with all our might.

Fraternally,

/s/ Murry Weiss

/s/ Myra Tanner Weiss

August 30, 1975