

# Solidarity

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# PLENÁRIO DA CONSTRUÇÃO CIVIL

# PORTUGAL

The bulk of this issue is devoted to the Portuguese events of 1974-75. Several features, in our opinion, need stressing:

a) The tremendous upsurge of urban and rural struggle that followed the overthrow of the Caetano regime in April 1974. This was associated with a massive release of pent-up, creative energy manifesting itself in all fields of social life.

b) The decomposition of many of the bases of classical bourgeois power. But the private ownership of industrial enterprises and of the latifundia, and the imperialist commitment, were gradually replaced by state capitalist institutions (over 70% of Portuguese industry is now nationalised) which guarantee the continued domination of Capital in only marginally altered form.

c) The difficulties confronting the working class in its attempts to create genuinely autonomous organs of struggle. These difficulties were partly due to the proliferation of leftist groups, all allegedly speaking 'on behalf of' the working class but in reality seeking to manipulate militancy for their own objectives.

d) The depth of the class struggle in the countryside, particularly in the Alentejo,

e) The persistence of dangerous illusions (largely fostered by the left, and only now slowly being dissipated) concerning an alleged community of interests between the Army and 'the People' (the so-called MFA-Povo alliance).

f) The limitations of even the most radical forms of self-management when applied within an overall capitalist framework.

g) The depth to which (side by side with the explosion of the new) traditional attitudes to the problems of everyday life persist, penetrating the thinking and practice of leaders and led alike, and crippling meaningful action.

We have chosen five texts which illustrate some of these points and raise problems worthy of discussion:

1) The Manifesto of the postal workers of Lisbon in June 1974. This was issued at the time of their major strike against an administration

in which the PCP was strongly entrenched. It represented one of the first important confrontations between a section of the working class and the Communist Party.\*

2) An editorial ('What Workers Councils?') published by the paper 'Combate' (Rua da Atalaia 204/206, Lisbon 2) in July 1975. This describes the artificial creation of 'Workers Councils' by the PRP-BR (Proletarian Revolutionary Party - Revolutionary Brigades), an organisation politically close to I.S., except that it does not urge people to vote for social-democrats. The article describes some working class responses to these attempts at manipulation.

3) An article 'Portugal - North and South' by Phil Meyler which seeks to dispel some of the stereotyped images of the 'reactionary' North versus the 'radical' South, and to explain what made possible the massive attacks last summer on various left-wing headquarters.

4) A diary by Maurice Brinton describing some experiences in Portugal during August 1975.

5) A reply to Tony Cliff's 'Open Letter to the Portuguese Revolution' (published in 'Socialist Worker' on October 11, 1975) in which the relation of Party to Councils is sharply posed.

We hope these articles will initiate a deepgoing discussion on the nature and limitations of the Portuguese Revolution, in which all readers will participate.

The next SOLIDARITY Conference (in January, in Liverpool) will be discussing these matters. Details obtainable from the National Working Group, c/o 15 Charles Street, Oxford.



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\* Other important strikes at this time in which the workers came up against both the Communist Party and the MFA (Armed Forces Movement) were the struggles at the Lisnave shipyards and at TAP (Portuguese Airlines). There is an excellent description of the latter in 'Portugal: l'autre combat' by Avilla, Ferreira, Lory, Orsoni and Reeve (Spartacus, Paris, 1975).

# POSTAL WORKERS' MANIFESTO

( JUNE 1974 )

The CTT (Post Office) workers came out on strike on June 17, 1974. As the dispute hit directly at the new administration it was savagely repressed by the government and virulently denounced by the PCP. For the PCP there could be no strikes 'against the collectivity'. The problem was that the CTT workers did not feel themselves part of the 'collectivity'. After all the belief in the union structure which the 'Pro-Union Committee' (CPS) had fostered, the CTT workers were 'amazed' at being attacked publicly by the so-called political Party of the Working Class. The Committee issuing the manifesto was made up of various union tendencies from before April 25th and a number of worker militants integrated onto the Committee at a later date. Despite illusions as to the role of the PCP and as to the role of unions as organs of struggle, the document raises a number of interesting points.

'A great campaign of lies continues to fall upon us, the workers of CTT. The real meaning of our struggle persistently continues to be misrepresented, so that public opinion has come out against us, trying to raise doubts and confusion among us, and seeking to isolate the pro-union workers' committee.

We daily receive hundreds of telephone calls and telegrams from all over the country in which the CTT workers demonstrate their support, decide to continue united in struggle, and ask that we deny and denounce the untrue allegations made against the Committee and against all the workers of CTT. It is the indignant voices of 35,000 workers, and the right of the public to receive correct information which compel us, yet again, to deny the falsehoods and insinuations made against us. These are made by the leaders of the Lisbon Regional Organisation (DORL) of the so-called Communist Party, an organisation which despite calling itself the party of the workers and the defender of their interests has distinguished itself in this campaign by attacking our struggle. It is

an organisation which is certainly aware of the facts. But they have misrepresented and falsified our struggle in their communiqués, in their meetings, in their press and even in other organs of information, through articles and declarations from their members and sympathisers.

Let us look, for example, at some of the most important points of the DORL communiqué of the so-called Communist Party, which appeared in the newspapers of June 28, 1974 :

1) On the composition of the CPS they say it is made up of elements which appeared after April 25th, replacing the workers who, for nearly 4 years, had struggled hard and honestly for the creation of a union. They try to create the impression that the elements of this Committee never did any work for the workers.

It is evident that a Committee which tried to organise union work in an enterprise numbering 35,000 workers could not function with a small number of people. Because of this the Committee was enlarged to help it cope with the many problems which the workers face. The new members of the Committee were democratically elected by the workers, at a meeting held in the Sports Pavilion on May 5.

2) The PCP claims that the Committee called the strike 'over the heads of the majority of CTT workers'. As we have announced a number of times (and the majority of CTT workers can confirm this) the strike was decided by the workers, in a large meeting of delegates, through telephone contacts with various parts of the country who could not be present, and in Assemblies held in many work-places. The decision to strike was not taken by the CPS. The Committee limited itself to carrying out the instructions of the workers. Moreover, the strike was declared on June 12 and there was still time until June 17 for the government to put forward a negotiable counter-proposal.

The PCP knows this very well. A member of their Central Committee was informed of it when he was at our offices. We don't understand why they continue to lie about us and seek to prevent the public from being accurately informed.

3) As regards the abandoning of the struggle by those who are most impartial, we ask DORL to say who these are.

4) The communiqué reiterates various accusations against individual workers of CTT, saying that they are deeply implicated in Fascism. The CPS would appreciate knowing their names and being provided with proofs, so that we can collate all the facts and speed up the purging processes.

5) The communiqué continues: 'Workers of CTT, it is you and only you who can accept the government proposals. In all stations you should hold meetings and approve motions in support of the government proposals'. We can say that in all stations meetings have taken place and motions

have been proposed. All rejected the government proposals.

Meanwhile the workers have approved a new list of demands, which has already been handed in.

While we have tried to clear up some fundamental points the list of lies is long. The CPS have more important tasks than entering into polemics with political organisations. This was never our intention and we hope we won't be forced to spend our time in such replies. Political organisations who, for whatever reasons, oppose our struggle should do so honestly, and not use lies and falsifications which have an effect on public opinion. They should reply to the facts.

Once again we affirm that we are reacting to the so-called Communist Party because they have been the standard-bearers of the struggle against us, and the principal force which supports the offensive against us.

The principal task of the Committee is to develop the work of the union and the united struggle of the workers in the defense of their interests and needs.

Lisbon, June 29, 1974.

The above document was sent to all the national papers. None of them published it.

## NEW PAMPHLETS

Since our last issue we have published two pamphlets, which are being sent to all subscribers.

WOMEN IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION (10p plus postage) by Liz Willis. As the author points out 'it cannot be assumed that when historians write about "people" or "workers" they mean women to anything like the same extent as men'. The pamphlet highlights some of the aspects, both positive and negative, in this largely ignored area.

SPONTANEITY AND ORGANISATION (10p plus postage) by Murray Bookchin. A reprint of this thought-provoking essay, first published in 'Liberation' and 'Anarchos' magazines in 1972. 'The tragedy of the socialist movement is that it opposes organisation to spontaneity and tries to assimilate the social process to political and organisational instrumentalism'.

# WHAT WORKERS' COUNCILS ?

(EDITORIAL OF 'COMBATE', No.27, JULY 1975)

## The Labour Movement before and after April 25th.

Until April 25th the working classes in Portugal, in the struggles they had embarked on against capitalism (throughout the fascist period), had had few possibilities of getting to know and of confronting the party and trade union structures which claimed to represent and defend them. This aspect is quite significant. It helps us to understand the wave of radical autonomous strikes unleashed by the working class after April 25th.

It was precisely because there were no structures of party and union type, talking of the 'stability of the national economy' (as the PCP and Intersindical so flagrantly did after April 25th) that the radicalisation of autonomous working class action could reach undreamt of proportions.

The upsurge of demands attempting primarily to mitigate the poverty-stricken situation of the Portuguese workers, soon by-passed this stage of making demands : it became a frontal attack on the basic structures of capitalism. Aims that appeared revolutionary, such as the workers' struggle to reduce wage differentials, were accompanied by forms embodying direct democracy : the General Assemblies of Workers.

As it was of primary importance to Intersindical and to the PCP to deviate this movement into reformist channels, there was a split. A spontaneous, autonomous movement arose. It was at one and the same time the expression of a revolutionary necessity in the face of capitalist exploitation and a movement against the organisations that were preventing the achievement of these aims.

The General Assemblies, being the direct emanation of the needs of all the workers, represented an important step in the direction of workers' emancipation. The Workers' Committees, elected during struggles, reflected the most radical layer of workers. While the workers elected to the Committees were the expression of the requirements of the struggle at the place of work, another movement developed and grew radical, giving rise to the Inter-Factory Committees.

## The Inter-Factory Committees

Because of its perspectives this profoundly anti-capitalist workers' movement was bound to spread. The TAP strike was the highest point of this movement.

When troops occupied the airport the striking workers realised that their revolutionary demands had to be extended and resolved by the entire working class. As at TAP most of the strikes that broke out - Lisnave, EFACEC, Timex, CTT (postal workers), Sogantal - represented a revolutionary necessity that could not be limited to 'defence of the national economy'. The framework of struggle had to shift from a unit of production to a grouping of production units.

The Inter-Factory Committees at first accurately reflected these aspirations. But as soon as they were infiltrated by various leftist groups, manipulations (the habitual practice of these groups) cropped up. This was the beginning of the end for the Inter-Factory Committees. Moreover the collapse of struggles in those factories which had no concrete aims for uniting among themselves, and the demobilisation of the rank and file, made it easier for the leftist groups to gain control. The comrades of the Workers' Committees who, in the factory struggles, had been the radical expression of the needs of the workers, became, on the Inter-Factory Committees, the agents and recruiters serving the needs of the various leftist parties to which they belonged.

Their activity as revolutionary militants, from that time on, was at the service of the sects directing them. It was contrary to the interests of the working masses. It became increasingly bureaucratic and remote, whether by placing itself entirely at the service of party ideologies or, even more dangerously, when the militants themselves became the new bosses through the Workers' Committees which now manage almost all the factories described as being self-managed.

Choosing between parties began to constitute the fundamental life of the Inter-Factory Committees. Because they did not in any way reflect the workers' interests, a situation of frustration and impasse developed.

The PRP took account of this situation. It tried to exploit it to its own advantage with the creation of the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors (CRTSM).

### Deadlock in the Working Class Struggle: The Meaning of the Councils

The frustration created by interparty struggles led large sections of the working masses into a certain stagnation. This was reflected not only in the refusal to adhere to one party or another; the working class now also understood that 'Portuguese-style socialism' only called for sacrifices.

Portuguese capitalism could only emerge from the crisis it is now going through if the workers were ready to pay with their sweat for the reconstruction of the national economy. In populist ideological terms, the MFA and its acolytes call this 'the Battle for Production'.

The MFA, the parties and the unions not only enter the Workers and Tenants Committees to try to recuperate the spontaneous energy which the creation of the Committees was based on, but also encourage the appearance of radical structures in order to recuperate them too, later on.

The example of the CRTSM is significant of what manipulation by a party or by a 'progressive' section of the MFA can amount to. It was no accident that the PRP and the 'progressive' section of the MFA had to assist the structuring of the CRTSM, as a springboard for future manipulation.

On the one hand the PRP cannot exist as a party without recruiting workers. Its aim is to capture the state machine, with a view to later becoming the new managers and exploiters - hence the need to create the CRTSM as a parallel structure to attain these objectives. The 'progressive' section of the MFA uses these same Councils with the aim of emerging from the current crisis capitalism is going through. It believes that the Councils can stimulate the labour force to produce more.

Why is this? This section of the MFA has understood that Inter-sindical and the existing parties no longer have enough pull to mobilise working people for the 'Battle for Production'. That is why they are using these new forms of organisation, which can be more representative and have an impact on workers. But do the CRTSM at present have an influence on the working class?

### Deadlock in the Autonomous Struggles : The Revolutionary Alternative

In the current class struggle in Portugal the workers are faced by contending forces. They must choose the way most in conformity with their revolutionary interests.

On the one hand the workers have already understood that, basically, parties and unions only canalise struggles in terms of party quarrels, and manipulate the autonomous interests of the working class.

The demonstrations of June 17 and July 6 are significant examples. The June 17 demo was entirely stage-managed by the PRP. Of the two demonstrations on July 6, the one called by Siderurgia was stage-managed by the UDP, that called by TAP, TLP, Métro, etc. by the MRPP. Their objectives were the same: to mobilise the workers in the name of objectives described as 'non-party' - but in reality for the furtherance of their own party interests. What must be emphasised is that these parties already need the 'non-party' label to mobilise the workers, and they use this mobilisation only for their own growth.

The PRP is distinguished by the subtlety of the organisational forms it has created. It not only called allegedly non-party demos, but began by creating an allegedly non-party structure: the CRTSM. It was under this name that it subsequently developed its whole political practice.

The CRTSM are not organs generated directly by the practical needs of workers in struggle. They appeared at the very moment when workers began to feel the need to create new forms of organisation that transcend union and party structures and connect up different struggles in a more significant way. In this period there is not only an impasse in the development of the workers' autonomous struggles, saturated as they are by the activity of the parties. The autonomous organisational forms that could develop unity between different struggles have not yet been found by the workers. There is plenty of scope for opportunist intervention.

The need persists for the workers to organise autonomously, without being manipulated by party or union bureaucracies. The rank and file General Assemblies in factories, streets, hospitals, countryside, etc., whether at a local, regional or national level, need to be extended and to develop what the Inter-Factory Committees put forward at the start as the emancipation of all workers. They must be democratically elected and subject to instant recall. They should have the function of carrying through in practice what is required at present, and the future aim of destroying the state machine.

The workers will have to struggle against everything and everyone who embodies the perpetuation of this society. There is a whole world of exploitation to overcome, starting with factories, transport, commerce and hospitals and finishing with the state. That is why the workers can only count on their own strength. They cannot delegate the carrying through of their revolutionary interests to the various deities on the Portuguese scene.



# PORTUGAL: NORTH AND SOUTH

The following text was sent to 'Solidarity' and to 'Liberation' magazine (New York) at the end of August 1975 by Phil Meyler. The author has lived in Portugal for some time and speaks the language fluently. We hope to publish in the spring a substantial book by Phil, dealing in depth with the background and evolution of the Portuguese events to date. The text includes excerpts from many documents (produced by tenants' committees, shanty town collectives, agricultural workers' groups, self-managed factories, etc.) hitherto unavailable in English. The book, which runs to about 90,000 words, will probably cost about £1.00. Advance orders welcome.

April 25, 1974 was welcomed as a liberation by nearly all sections of Portuguese society. But this pluralism hid deeper contradictions which only later became apparent.

The most advanced industrial areas in Portugal are found in the South, in and around Lisbon in particular. In the South are also found the large latifundias and estates, many of which were not worked at all, or were only worked in a semi-feudal manner. In the North the situation is entirely different: capital accumulation has been very slow, many of the companies employ fewer than 6 workers, land is divided up into small holdings and rented out in lots of less than 5 hectares. This is only a general pattern and there are exceptions. North and South differ in their dominant types of production. So too does the working class movement and the type of class struggle engaged in.

In their practice the five successive governments have ignored this fact. The result is that the country is rapidly heading towards a confrontation between North and South.

The policies of Agrarian Reform (occupations of unproductive land with a view to making them productive) benefited the southern agricultural workers in a real way. But it had little relevance for the northern part of the country. The policies of nationalisations affected the economic structure of the South while hardly touching the North. In effect the North was all but abandoned. Now that the North wreaks its vengeance onto the streets it is being called 'reactionary', 'fascist', 'counter-revolutionary', etc.

People in the North blame the government. But who is the government? The dominant influence is the PCP and its sister MDP-CDE. Thus the number of political party offices reduced to ruins in the North is not the advance

of a fascist movement but the expression of real worries felt by the majority of the northern working class and small peasant farmers. It is an anti-Communist movement because it was the Communist Party who added to their miseries, who did not respect working class democracy, and finally insulted the workers by saying that they were manipulated by fascist organisations, by ELP, by the CIA. All the left groups follow the chant of the PCP (with the exception of the Maoist MRPP) and then wonder why their own offices are being burnt down. They play games with words, calling the CP reformist or revisionist but in the last analysis rush into its arms as soon as they are invited to do so. The CP is, after all, well installed in the government apparatus, and all of these groups have ambitions of power. A 'United Front' is merely a shortcut to sitting in government.

Two main forces oppose one another throughout the country. In the fifth government there are the forces of state capitalism: Vasco Goncalves and the Vasco wing of the MFA, the PCP, the MDP-CDE. Their 'socialism by decree' has been exposed time and time again. On the other hand there is the Socialist Party, the Melo Antunes wing of the MFA, private capitalism, liberal social-democracy. Both forces fight one another for control of the existing state apparatus. Neither has anything to do with social revolution. Thus:

- The document of Melo Antunes (or Document of the Nine) complained of a 'revolutionary vanguard' operating from Lisbon and the South against the will of the rest of the population. But it also suggested that the only answer was in economic partnership with the EEC and EFTA.

- The line of Vasco Goncalves demagogically called for the continuation of the 'revolutionary process', 'popular power' (Neighbourhood Committees, Factory Committees, Village Councils, etc.). The PCP had originally attacked all of these. It also called for agrarian reform and for nationalisations.

- The document of COPCON which criticises the CP and proposes a more radical type of 'popular power', total orientation of the economy towards agricultural products, abolition of luxury goods, etc., with a view to becoming 'nationally independent'.

Melo Antunes is supported by the Socialist Party and by the PPD. Goncalves is supported by the PCP and MDP. COPCON is supported by most groups (except the Maoists) to the left of the PCP.

Historically the PCP was always stronger in the South. During the 60's there was a series of strikes and labour disputes and the PCP and other groups participated in them. The North, and especially the North-East, was completely 'closed'. It was ruled by local fascists, priests and other such types. It is rich in tradition, ignorant of the outside world, poor, and getting poorer.

Food prices rose by 15% (between July 1974 and July 1975) in the cities (Lisbon and Porto) and in the South. They rose by 40% in the interior and in the North. Housing costs, on the other hand, rose by 6% in Lisbon while in the North, where most people own their houses, there was no significant change.

Measures such as the reduction of the price of fertiliser, etc., were never put into practice in the North because the fascist apparatus remained intact there. Laws coming from Lisbon were just ignored.

## THE ROLE OF THE PCP IN THE NORTH

The PCP was no different from any of the right-wing parties operating in the North. The Communists infiltrated the local apparatus of the state, without destroying it. In general terms nothing changed, except the demagogy of those sitting behind the desks. After April 25 most people accepted this (any change was welcome). But it soon became apparent that it was all power politics and nothing fundamental would alter. Credits and grants were given out to those most loyal to the PCP (just as in the old days they had been granted to those most loyal to the fascists). For the vast majority of people the situation got worse.

The 'dynamisation' programme in the North, organised by the MFA, was designed to explain to people why April 25 was necessary. It made great promises but nothing concrete was done. Very often it was carried out paternalistically. The people of the North were stupid and reactionary and had to be educated in a more revolutionary fashion. The people wanted fertiliser and all they got was songs and posters.

Administrative Committees were appointed from above in certain areas and certain of the larger factories in a very dictatorial fashion. No elections took place and people naturally resented this.

With all these problems the only support which the North received was from the right-wing groups (PPD, CDS, etc.). They blamed the Communist government in the South. Rumours that the Communists would take away their houses, their plots, that the country was heading for collapse and that they would be without work mounted. The right found fertile soil for their operations.

Groups such as ELP and the CIA (who have 180 agents and hundreds of operatives, selected from Portuguese immigrants in the USA) found their work made easier and easier everyday.

Thus in the factory of Manuel Goncalves in Famelicao (near Porto) could be witnessed the unhappy scene of thousands of workers shouting 'Down with the Committee, long live the Boss'. In this chemical factory, employing almost 4000 workers, an Administrative Committee was appointed by the government, and a Union Committee appointed itself. The Union Committee was entirely PCP.

The boss (at present in Spain) was implicated in the March 11 coup and is related to ELP. But what the workers meant was that their new boss (the state) was no better than their old boss. They are afraid for the security of their jobs, for their future. International pressures (raw materials were refused the factory by a Swiss company unless the order was signed by the boss) put their jobs in jeopardy. Similarly, the new Union Committee was engaged in all sorts of manoeuvres and undemocratic practices. The difference between the idea (workers' control) and the practice (control of the workers) has led the workers to reject a Communist solution altogether, and to opt for private capitalism and for support for the old boss. In new elections in the area many of the workers forecast a Socialist Party majority.

## POWER STRUGGLES

The PCP have been joined by most of the groups on the so-called left: FSP, MES, LUAR, PRP-BR, MDP-CDE, ICI, PRT (i.e. all the leninist and trotskyist groups). COPCON has been drawn into the ranks as well. The powerful Fifth Division (responsible for much of the information, etc.) also supports this block.

On the other side there are the 9 signatories of the Melo Antunes document, President Costa Gomes, the Socialist Party and the PPD.

The hunting of Communists has begun in the North; the hunt for 'reactionaries' has begun in the South. No matter which side wins it is doubtful that they can stabilise the economy. There are 400,000 unemployed and another 400,000 emigrants returning from Angola. There is the prospect of economic collapse. Neither state capitalism nor private capitalism (nor various mixtures of the two) could easily contain the crisis. If the sixth government is Socialist Party-dominated it will have easier access to international funds and credits. But even they will soon realise that the Western European model of social-democracy is not enough to put the economy back on its feet. To do this the help of the workers themselves is absolutely essential.

The leninist groups realised this from the beginning. When the workers began occupying factories, farms and houses, the State began to channel this activity into 'cooperatives', as the form best suited to recuperate and control these spontaneous actions. The State, lacking the capital to invest in these companies, invested the one thing there was in plentiful supply: labour. By creating the myth that the companies actually belonged to the workers it was easier to extract more labour power from them. Workers now worked 12 hours instead of 8 - and accepted lower wages. This in essence is the idea behind the PCP's 'Battle for Production'. The cooperative movement is not the form chosen by the revolutionary proletariat but is the form used by the bourgeoisie to recuperate proletarian self-activity.

Social-democracy will be forced to utilise a similar strategy, though the ideology will not be so blatant. It is in this light that the Melo Antunes document rejects 'Western types of socialism'.

It is therefore extremely dangerous to describe the Northern workers as being 'reactionaries' or 'manipulated by reactionaries' (as all the so-called left wing groups do). This idea has been publicised outside Portugal as well: by I.S. in England, by P.L.P. in the US (to name but two). It is dangerous and divisive and, if continued, will lead to a civil war waged on geographical rather than class lines, which will benefit the workers in no way whatever. This is not to underestimate the activities of groups like ELP or the CIA. It is merely to show that the CIA and ELP cannot operate without a real basis of dissatisfaction.

## IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: NORTH AND SOUTH

Apart from differences in the pattern of production and of capital accumulation, it is obvious that different ideological structures pertain North and South. Since state capitalism and its decrees offer nothing to the North they choose the only option which does: liberal capitalism. In the North the state apparatus is weak (a throw-off from Lisbon) and it is the local priests and bosses who wield real power. In the South, where most of the state bureaucracy operates, the opposite is the case. Technicians (in various departments) have been absorbed into the 'revolutionary' process and support the accumulation of power by the State and thus, finally, their own power. Such a centralisation of power offers nothing to the Northern workers and peasant farmers. Nor does it threaten the local power structure.

A certain amount of support exists among the Alentejo agricultural workers for the drive towards state capitalism; it opens up a door whereby they can seize land, factories, etc. There is a real difference for them. Thus the technicians of SAAL (Housing) or IRA (Agrarian Reform) are not seen as enemies, despite the distrust they inspire. For the moment there are real benefits: a new house, a farm, etc. Thus the whole idea of 'popular power' finds an echo.

In the North it has nothing to offer. No village Councils or Neighbourhood Committees exist that have any meaning for the local population. In one town near Porto where the PCP seized the local Council, it set up links between the Neighbourhood Committee and the Council. When the PCP were defeated in the elections the Neighbourhood Committee passed to the PPD and CDS too. It is now being used to 'improve' the area - but only those roads in which there are shops, factories, etc. By not smashing the fascist apparatus but merely occupying it the PCP cut their own throats.

Thus the whole ideological apparatus in the South was used for the needs of developing capitalism, needs which momentarily coincided on certain points with the demands of the workers. In the North the ideological apparatus remains intact, extremely authoritarian and reactionary (even when it is controlled by the PCP). Other groups to the left of the CP, but who play the same game are therefore, quite understandably, as liable to be attacked. Thus MES, LCI, FEC(ml) have all had their offices burned in various towns. (I saw a ridiculous article in Socialist Worker which said that the struggles in the North could not be seen as heroic anti-stalinism. The evidence given for this was that even the offices of the maoist FEC(ml) had been destroyed - as though local people did not see the FEC as being just as stalinist as the CP.)

## POSSIBILITIES FOR REVOLUTION

Such a question obviously does not depend on Portugal alone. The success of a revolution here depends on successes elsewhere.

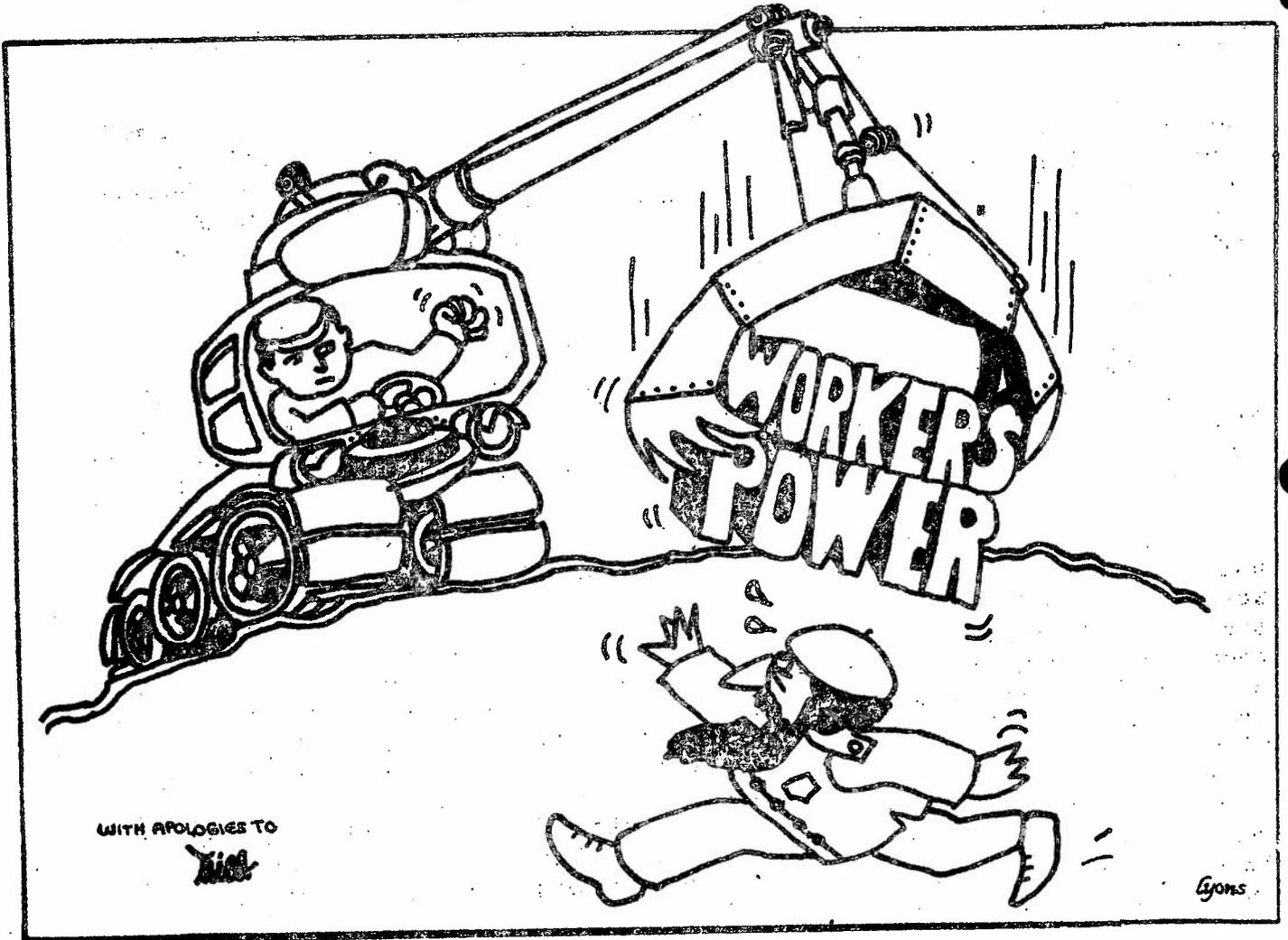
There are autonomous struggles. From May 1975 most of the workers' groups have rejected the elites ('cupulas') of the various political parties. Thus Factory Committees refuse to take party positions. Neighbourhood Committees have had demonstrations which forbade all party banners. Party interventions and attempts at manipulation (under the guise of 'popular power') have met a considerable and firm resistance from the rank and file.

But through Vasco Goncalves (who incidentally owns a Banking company and a civil-construction firm) 'popular power' has become identified with the line of the PCP and all the undemocratic practices which go with it. The PCP were at first doubtful about 'popular power' (calling it 'anarcho-populism') but finally (under duress) came round to accepting it, because they thought they could manipulate it.

Two sections of the ruling class are feuding among themselves and using the name of the workers in their scramble for power. But the workers are not putty in the hands of these factions. They have a practice of their own, and realise it more and more everyday. At the moment, because of the infiltration of these factions into their organisations, and because of the crisis in capitalism which hits them first, the workers are weak. There is little organisation: parties use them, play games with them. But workers are rejecting this too. They are searching for a way out. The COPCON document seemed, superficially, to offer a way out. It was certainly, to start with, a rejection of the PCP, which is why it was supported by some 100,000 workers in a demonstration on August 20. It has since then been integrated into the CP policy; it is now seen that in no way does it provide a way out.

It is essential that the workers' movement by-pass the CP altogether. The so-called left wing groups have not realised this. They too are wedded to the perspective of state capitalism. They have formed a 'United Front' with the PCP, and have started down the road to their own destruction. All the better for the workers, in the long run.

The next issue of Combate will have an interview with some workers of 'Manuel Goncalves' and we are trying to arrange a round table discussion between a self-managed factory (Sousa Abreu) and Manuel Goncalves (both are in the same town). We reject the notion 'reactionary' in the way it is used by the left-wing groups. The struggle in Manuel Goncalves is not yet revolutionary (since they don't see through the ideology of the PSP) but neither is it reactionary. Revolution can only mean a total break with both the PSP and the PCP (and their satellites). It is the only meaningful possibility.



# PORTUGUESE DIARY

## STRUGGLES IN ALENTEJO

Evora is at the heart of the Alentejo, and the Alentejo is the heartland of the agrarian revolution. The latifundia are vast and for decades have been neglected. The soil is dry and hard, and upon it grow olives and cork. Wheat and maize would also grow readily if it were ploughed and watered. But this would interfere with the joys of hunting.

It is here that the class struggle has erupted in one of its most advanced forms. The agricultural labourers have seized many of the large estates. In some the former owners have fled, occasionally leaving 'managers' to defend their interests. In others they have remained, seeking to repossess their property through the courts or through direct action. The balance of power varies from village to village, estate to estate.

We sleep on the floor of a large isolated farmhouse about 3 miles out of town. Some 15 Portuguese comrades have been lodging there every night for several months. The farm has been expropriated by the local Institute for Agrarian Reform (IRA) in which libertarian revolutionaries work in uneasy alliance with the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and members of the local MFA. Their aim is to help the farm workers to solve some of the practical problems which immediately and inevitably crop up in the wake of occupations. The libertarians want to assist, without substituting themselves for those they are seeking to help. It is an almost impossible task.

The farm comprises a large communal living room in which meals are taken at daybreak or sundown. From it passages lead to a number of communicating rooms, stripped of all furniture and fittings, except for mattresses strewn on the floor. There is running water and electricity. There is beer in the fridge and bread and cheese are brought back from the town each day. There are also sten-guns amid the guitars. Dispossessed landlords have threatened to string the young revolutionaries up from the nearest lamp-post at the opportune time, 'when we return to power'. Under such a threat the wine tastes sweeter and life is lived to the full.

On our first evening we drive out in a jeep some 30 miles to Santana do Campo. The villagers have a problem. They want representatives of the IRA there, 'to help them bring pressure on the government'. Several farms were occupied in the morning. The owners have paid no wages for several weeks. Two managers were locked up that very afternoon 'to help the absentee landlord face up to his responsibilities'.

The people are gathered in the local school - 130 agricultural workers with their wives and kids, and quite a number of the old folk. As so often in the countryside, the school is the only public hall. The lights can be seen from a long way off. They illuminate rugged faces, as varied as their owners, and quite unlike the crude stereotyped models of the maoist posters. The whole village has turned up to elect the Council and to decide what to do with the two men incarcerated in the stable. Everyone knows everyone. Anyone over 16 can be nominated and can cast a vote. Little tickets are handed out. Some of the older women decline to take one. Anyone can write anyone else's name on the slip. The eight people securing the highest number of votes will constitute the Council. Speeches are unnecessary. It is in struggle, over the last few months, that credentials were earned. The selected names are read out by four 'tellers', the tickets sorted into little piles. The new Council has been elected.

The main problem is then outlined to the visitors from the Evora IRA. Two opinions emerge: a union representative urges caution. (The Agricultural Workers' Union is affiliated to Intersindical, the PCP-dominated trade union federation. The Minister of Agriculture, who is sympathetic to the Party, must not be embarrassed.) Others suggest a different course of action. 'Give them no food or drink. Let the news out. The Bank will cough up soon enough'. No one discusses the PCP or its politics as such. The two alternatives are mutually exclusive. The radical proposal secures a majority. The cheque materialises within 24 hours.

\* \* \* \*

The following day we set out in the jeep, in the full heat of the early afternoon, to visit a big farm where the workers are reluctant to impose any kind of control on the owner. The farm, built in 1945, is beautifully laid out. The main buildings and barns are painted blue and white. Cows are grazing in the fields and watch us pass impassively. Only the turkeys noisily announce our arrival as the jeep edges its way between them, raising a great cloud of dust.

The farm workers are gathered in a large barn, eight or ten of them, sitting on sacks of grain, talking heatedly. Our party enters: three young agronomists from the Evora Institute of Agrarian Reform (with long hair and determined expressions), a young officer in uniform (with even longer hair) and us two political tourists. An excited argument gets under way and lasts about an hour. The local MFA is keen to ensure that the workers elect a committee which would exercise some 'control' on the owner and prevent him from doing 'economic sabotage' - such as slaughtering cattle, disposing of his tractors or selling the grain (instead of keeping it for sowing). The workers are not convinced. The farm is a 'model farm'. The boss has maintained reasonable relations with his men, often working among them. The paternalism has had its effects. The men lack confidence. An old, edentulous worker fiercely articulates their innermost fears. 'If we elect a committee, the boss

will sack some of us. Work is hard to come by these days. If we make things difficult for him, will he continue to pay our wages? Come on, young man, yes, you with the gun, answer us. Look at all the problems in the other farms in the area!'. It is strange to see his innate conservatism clash with the vision of the young revolutionaries. The visitors depart: mission unfulfilled.

Later that afternoon we go to another big farm, 35 miles away in the opposite direction. On the way we pass through whitewashed Alentejo villages, bespattered with red slogans. These villages are strongholds of the PCP. The agricultural workers are natural, genuine, down-to-earth communists. They want to share and share alike. No one seeks individually to appropriate anything. The Party calls itself communist. The workers vote for it. It's as simple (and as complicated) as that. The inability to read fosters and sustains a fierce radicalism. The workers are not confused by the tortuous ambiguities of the politicians.

The farm, near Oriola, is owned by an absentee Spanish landlord. The last two miles have been very rough track, which only the jeep can cover. The workers have taken the farm over, despite the government's half-hearted undertakings not to allow the expropriation of foreign-owned properties. The men have had no pay for ten weeks. There are big stocks of cork, neatly piled up, to be sold. But the lorry has been stolen. There are problems too with the vegetable produce. To be sold in the cities, refrigeration is needed. People are fed up with eating tomatoes.

The Communist Party's solution to all these problems is simple, eminently 'practicable'. All occupied farms should become state farms. The Ministry of Agriculture will eventually pay the wages. A state trust will be set up to buy the produce, provide the lorries, look after problems of distribution. The workers are tempted, but instinctively suspicious. They want to get together with other workers on other farms to discuss things with them, to create cooperatives, to deal directly with the population in the towns. They distrust the parasitic officials, sitting in their offices in far-away Lisbon. But they are desperately in need of money to buy shoes, shirts, soap, string, nails and agricultural implements. The men who work the farm over the hill have a tractor which isn't being used full-time. Will the Army please instruct them to release it for a while? A joint meeting is arranged to thrash things out. The Institute will try to arrange a bridging loan from the local bank. A lorry will be provided to take the cork into the town. Ad hoc solutions are improvised. The wolf is kept from the door for a short while. The Institute has done a job of first aid. Hope will survive a little longer.

Amid the wasps, an old woman is washing her linen at the fountain. The crickets are chirping. The sky is unbelievably blue.

# THE SECOND CONGRESS OF COUNCILS

The Second Congress of Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors (CRTSM) was held on August 2 and 3, 1975 in Lisbon's Technological Institute, a vast concrete building at the top of a hill. Posters announcing it (in the best 'socialist-realist' style) had broken out like a rash on the city walls several days beforehand. Once the paste had dried they ripped off easily, to the delight of large contingents of revolutionary tourists in search of souvenirs.

We attended the afternoon session on the second day. At the entrance, a vast display of duplicated literature, distributed free. Posters are on sale, their price escalating rapidly as it becomes obvious that demand will exceed supply.

The foyer is packed with young people. Most look like students and a substantial proportion are not from Portugal - one hears almost as much French and German as Portuguese. Young PRP supporters answer questions. Few relate to work, its problems, its tyranny, its organisation, its transcendence. Most are about Cuba, or Chile, or the political allegiances of this or that Army commander. The answers stress Portuguese particularism. The Army will be with the people. Otelo (Saraiva de Carvalho) has made friendly noises about the PRP.

We go up a flight of wide stone steps, with impressive columns on either side. The meeting is due to start in a vast hall which has doubtless harboured many a degree-giving ceremony or governmental function. Row upon row of wooden chairs. About 600 people present. The same mixture as before. Very few workers (quite a number had apparently been there the previous day but had not attended for a second dose). No readily identifiable sailors. Banners on the walls seek nostalgically to recapture the atmosphere - and even the vocabulary - of the Petrograd of 1917: 'Fora com a canalha! Poder a quem trabalha! - Out with the scum! Power to the workers! Long live the Socialist Revolution'. In the haze of cigarette smoke, the leftists dream on: the Technological Institute is Smolny; the Lisnave shipyards, the Putilov plant.

At the far end of the hall an elevated platform, on which a long table has been erected. Seated behind it, perhaps a dozen comrades, most of them bearded, two of them women. In front of the leaders neat stacks of cyclostyled notes. Slightly to one side of the High Table the television crews with their wires, floodlights and other paraphernalia, busy creating images. The 1970s are here, regardless.

The afternoon session starts about an hour late. Several speeches from the platform, most of them lasting half an hour or more. 'Various analyses', we are told, 'of the current situation'. No interruptions. No laughter. No protests. No cheers. As platform speaker succeeds platform speaker the texts of their 'contributions', already duplicated, are handed

out by stewards. Only one speaker elicits any enthusiasm - a soldier in civvies. It transpires he is making a 'critical analysis' of a text recently issued by COPCON (the section of the MFA devoted to Internal Security!). Some of the formulations are being challenged in the best tradition of dialectical nit-picking. The legitimacy of that particular fount of revolutionary wisdom is not, however, being questioned.

People quietly drift in and out throughout the proceedings. It is formal, well-behaved, self-disciplined and incredibly dull - an exercise in 'revolutionary' masochism. It has upon it the hallmark of death - or rather of a verbose still-birth. The corridors outside are plastered with slogans. The revolution is suffocating under the written word. In the gents' toilets, amid the usual graffiti, a wit has scrawled PCP = Joaquim Agostinho (Primeiro Cyclista Portugues).

After 3 hours we drift out. Near the exit we pass a large notice board. On it are listed the workplaces 'represented' at the Congress. It looks impressive: factories of all kinds, transport depots, shipyards, telephone exchanges, hospitals, banks, shops, offices, all the areas in modern society where people are exploited and oppressed. On direct enquiry however - and after our refusal to accept evasive answers - it was admitted that although members or supporters of the PRP worked in these various places, very few were attending in a delegate capacity. The whole episode left an unpleasant flavour of manipulation.

I doubt we will hear much more of the CRTSM. When the next upsurge develops, it will find different forms and a different content.

## THE LIMITS OF SELF-MANAGEMENT

Guimaraes is a small industrial town, some 40 miles north of Porto. The Sousabreu textile factory there is typical of many in the region, reflecting many of the problems of Portuguese capitalism.

The factory, which makes towels, was occupied on September 14, 1974, after it had been abandoned by its owner. Earlier in the year the boss, who owned another factory in the town, had begun to move out the more modern dyeing equipment under pretext of repairs. He had also removed the lorry.

Thirty three workers (22 women and 11 men) had taken over the factory to preserve their livelihood, and decided to continue production. They had had to learn everything from scratch. They bought the cotton at local wholesale rates and sold directly to shopkeepers, to visitors, to political sympathisers, and even at the gates of local factories. To start with they had sold part of the stocks to pay their own wages. They had received little help from the local textile and metalworkers sections of Intersindical, which were dominated by the PCP. The Party's support for self-

managed units was highly selective. And Sousabreu was not a unit of which the Party approved.

The workers had elected a Committee of seven which met almost daily. There were also fairly frequent assemblies grouping everyone in the factory. They all worked 48 hours a week. There had been a sustained attempt at equalising earnings. The average wage was 127 escudos (just over £2) a day. The machine minders earned 190 escudos, the newly taken-on apprentice 70 escudos. The main theme discussed at recent general assemblies had been whether to take on more labour.

The factory consisted of a number of large, fairly dilapidated hangars adjoining one another, in one of which the looms were situated. The machines looked at least thirty years old and were noisy and dusty. There were cobwebs everywhere and little light filtered in. The first task of the socialist revolution would be a sustained attack on capitalist technology. But here there were scarcely funds enough for wages, let alone for modernising the plant.

In the adjoining rooms women were checking the towels, folding them, packing them in plastic cases. The room was brighter and they spoke to one another. I approached a woman in her forties who had worked there for 15 years. What was now different? 'For one', she said, 'there are no longer foremen breathing down your neck. There used to be 3 foremen in this room alone. We now decide the pace of our own work, and no longer live in fear of displeasing someone. We run the place ourselves. If I want to go shopping one afternoon, or if one of the children is ill, we can consult together and have a little time off, without loss of earnings. No one takes advantage. We know that our collective livelihood depends on producing a certain number of towels each month'.

Adversity had bred a firm solidarity. When earnings were low, the most needy had been provided for first. Everyone seemed aware of the others' problems. Recently things had not been too bad. This year, for the first time ever, they had enjoyed a fortnight's holiday with pay.

Their main complaints were about the way people deformed the meaning of what they were doing. Their wall posters showed an intense awareness of their own condition. There can be few factories in the world plastered with excerpts from Marx's 'Philosophical Manuscripts'. They knew well enough that they were still wage slaves, that what was being self-managed was their own alienation. They worked harder now than they did before. But they had gained a confidence in themselves that they had not felt previously. They had held 'round table' discussions with representatives of other self-managed factories to establish links and to exchange both experiences and products. They had even bartered shirts for towels, one of them told us with a twinkle in his eye. They had discovered a great deal about the functioning of capitalist society which would be of use to them 'when the real time came'. They had also learned very quickly about the trade unions, which had refused to help them or had only damned them with faint praise. Above all, they had learned a lot about themselves.

# REAPING THE HARVEST

The PCP headquarters in Famalicao, north of Porto, lie shattered. Before April 1974 it was widely believed by those in power that literacy bred subversion. There was only one place in the town where the wealthy could obtain secondary education: an expensive private school, solidly built and set behind a row of tall trees.

With the collapse of the Caetano regime the building had been taken over by the local PCP cell. I couldn't help thinking what an ideal Stalinist redoubt it made, separated by its high walls from the bustle of the multitude, set on higher ground, its impressive drive redolent with respectability. From here the Party had carried out its manipulations of local government, of trade union branches, of cooperatives, of the granting of agricultural credit. The reaction had been handed things on a plate.\*

After an open air meeting, early in August, a crowd protesting against the unrepresentative nature of several local bodies had set siege to the school and tried to burn it down. Party militants had fired from the upper windows, injuring two demonstrators. The MFA had arrived on the scene to 'restore order' (their fire had killed two more demonstrators).

MFA interventions in such episodes had, we were told, been interesting to watch. At times the soldiers would threaten the crowd with their weapons, turning their backs on the besieged stalinists. On other occasions they would turn their backs to the crowd, confronting the Party members with their guns. Attitudes had varied from locality to locality, regiment to regiment, moment to moment. At Famalicao the soldiers had faced the crowd, seeking to restrain it. After a siege of 48 hours the local Party stalwarts had been ordered by Party Headquarters in Lisbon to evacuate the premises. The Army had then left almost immediately. During the whole siege there had been no sign of working class support in the town, not even a token strike. The institutions controlled by the Party apparatus were empty shells. The Party had no roots in real life.

Popular anger had then erupted. The place looked as if it had been hit by a tornado. An overturned car, burnt out, lay grotesquely in the road outside. The drive was littered with charred papers, posters, Party cards. A disconsolate leaflet announced a meeting that was never to take place. In the building itself every window had been broken. Searchlights installed on the upper balcony had been smashed. Not a stick of furniture, not a fitting remained. The place was now unguarded. Visitors were strolling about, looking at the debris. They had to step carefully for the 'victors' had left shit all over the place.

The MRPP (maoists) issued a statement welcoming 'the people's retribution against the social-fascists'. It wasn't however as simple as that. The red flag had been burned. A Portuguese flag now stuck out provocatively from an attic window. Beneath it, a large inscription proclaimed 'Building to be taken over for refugees from Angola'.

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\* The reaction already had an economic and ideological base in the North (based on the structure of land tenure, on the fears of impoverished small farmers of being rendered poorer still, and on systematic propaganda by the Church.

# OPEN LETTER TO THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION: A REPLY

Tony Cliff, a founding member of the 'International Socialists' published an 'Open Letter to the Portuguese Revolution' in 'Socialist Worker' on October 11, 1975. In this letter he advises his Portuguese co-thinkers of the PRP to concentrate on two main objectives:

1) to struggle for the creation of mass councils of workers and soldiers, and for the setting up of a central body representing all the councils in the country. This central council could become the revolutionary authority, entrenching and establishing a new society.

2) to direct their efforts towards the creation of a mass revolutionary party, to function within the workers and soldiers' councils, fighting off the reformist tendencies and guiding the councils on a permanently revolutionary course.

These two proposals are identical with Lenin's tactics of 1917. The fact that in Russia the councils were formed without the advice of the Bolsheviks is here beside the point. The real question concerns the relation between the councils and the revolutionary party. In Russia Lenin advocated the slogan 'All power to the Councils' as the main weapon for overthrowing the Kerensky government. At the same time the Bolsheviks tried to win over the workers and soldiers represented in the councils. Eventually the Bolsheviks achieved a majority within certain councils and wielded the authority of these councils to carry out the October revolution. However, once the old regime was overthrown the Bolsheviks dropped the policy of 'All power to the Councils', adopting instead a policy which ensured all power to the Bolshevik Party. As early as November 1917 Soviets were dissolved if of the 'wrong' political complexion. Nor was this surprising. Had not Lenin, two months earlier, stressed 'our Party, like every other political party, is striving to secure political domination for itself'. (Selected Works, vol.6, p.209).

Leninists tend to gloss over this fundamental political issue. They refuse to declare openly to the rest of the revolutionary movement that if they had to choose between 'All power to the Councils' and 'All power to the party' they would opt unhesitatingly for the latter. It is one thing to wield influence through being a major groups within the councils, while political authority remains vested in the councils themselves. It is another matter to use the council system merely as a means to achieve a majority, and to destroy it when this aim has been achieved. The Leninist policy towards the council system deliberately evades a discussion of (and commitment to) the council system in post-revolutionary society.

The Leninists specifically refuse to give a clear answer to the following questions:

1) What do they consider the role of the councils to be after a victorious revolution? Are the councils to be the institutions of decision-making in every aspect of social life, including all political decisions? Or are they merely to control the implementation of economic decisions taken by the Central Committee of the revolutionary party?

2) Are the Leninists committed to uphold the council system (in a post-revolutionary society) if they find themselves in a minority within it? What will they do if the councils take decisions with which the Leninist party does not agree?

Lenin never committed himself on these issues. But when conflict between the Councils and the Bolsheviks emerged after the revolution his policies revealed the meaning of his earlier reticence. The slogan of 'All power to the Bolshevik Party' came to imply 'Down with the Councils'. The councils were first reduced to the role of supervisors of decisions taken by the party on matters relating to production. Decisions on issues like war (e.g. with Poland) were not considered to be a matter for the councils. Later, when the councils took decisions which conflicted with those of the party, the Leninists destroyed them.

Cliff knows this history, and this problem, very well. But he has not published a critique of Lenin's attitude to the council system in post-revolution Russia. This implies that he endorses it.

The question which revolutionaries must put, before a revolution, to Leninists who advocate the council system is: 'Are you ready to commit yourself to support the council system and its role of supreme decision-making authority in all social matters after the revolution too? And, if the answer is positive, 'What is your critique of Lenin's policies on this issue?'

A. O.

## NEW ADDRESS

Please note that from now on all correspondence intended for the National Working Group should be sent:  
c/o 15 Charles Street, OXFORD.

The address of SOLIDARITY (London) remains unchanged.

# The Unions: an Objection

We recently published in pamphlet form ('Solidarity' pamphlet No.47) a text by J. Zerzan which we called 'Trade Unionism or Socialism'. The publication produced predictable responses, of which we publish the most articulate below. We hope to carry more material on this issue, in particular a further piece by J.Z. documenting the integration of the German trade union bureaucracy into the Nazi Labour Front, after Hitler's accession to power. The article refutes the thesis, generally accepted by bourgeois and marxist commentators alike, that the unions were the backbone of Weimar democracy and the consistent enemies of Nazism and that they were destroyed after May 2, 1933, when all union offices and resources were seized and union officials imprisoned. J.Z.'s piece 'Unionism and the Labour Front' tells a very different story.

Dear Friends,

I wish to object to John Zerzan's article 'Trade Unionism or Socialism' (Solidarity Pamphlet 47).

(1) Believing that work dissatisfaction is universal, Zerzan makes no attempt to distinguish between assembly line workers on the one hand and tool-and-die men, lathe operators, etc., on the other. Obviously assembly line workers suffer most.

(2) The stress of union bargainers on money rather than on decent working conditions may be due to certain features of democracy rather than to the lack of them. Given the way democracy works, factions form mostly on the basis of issues. No faction can stay in power for long (if the union has any democracy whatever) if it cannot produce substantial wage gains, since workers are very pressed for money. Too often union leaders trade off work conditions for wages because of the press of opposing factions. (It's easier to go to the membership and say 'We've got a 14% raise' than it is to detail how conditions will improve in the operating of hundreds of machines.)

(3) Zerzan trots out one example to show that the government supports unions in strikes - in Schenectady in 1970 where police kept scabs out. But this is the exception, not the rule. There are thousands of examples to show the contrary. Those of us who have been active in unions can testify to the times the police, in order to usher scabs into the plant, have clubbed pickets senseless, then arrested them, charging them with resisting arrest, disorderly conduct, unlawful assembly, etc.

We have been hounded by police dogs, tear gas, armed deputies in helicopters. On this point Zerzan simply lies, for if a half-truth is, in effect, a lie, what is a 1/100,000 truth? (Using similar selectivity, Zerzan stresses those few instances where capitalists encourage strikes rather than the myriads where they oppose them.)

(4) Is Zerzan suggesting that unions had nothing to do with improving workers' conditions since the 12 hour-day, non-union sweatshop conditions of yesteryear?

(5) Of course most American unions (like most American corporations) are shot through with corruption, authoritarianism and bureaucratism - all of which must be fought. But they are a fundamental contradiction in capitalism, even with some of their leaders hogging \$125,000 annual salaries. In Zerzan's opposition to unions, is he suggesting that capitalism progresses without contradictions? If so, then how does it decline? By people wishing it away?

(6) Zerzan writes: 'In 1935 the NRA issued the Henderson Report, which counseled that "unless something is done soon, they (the workers) intend to take things into their own hands". Something was done, the hierarchical, national unions of the CIO finally appeared and stabilised relations'. What logic! The CIO was not the New Deal's way of putting the lid on workers. The New Deal did not form the CIO; that was done by militants who were hounded by capitalists at every turn. Capitalists hired goons, Pinkertons, private armies to smash the growth of the CIO. the New Deal distinguished itself by such activities as smashing the Teamsters' Union by prosecuting and imprisoning its entire leadership. Note the phrase 'hierarchical, national unions' (emphasis mine). I shall take up Zerzan's objection to unions' national character next.

(7) Centralisation of unions is an inevitable trend in monopoly capitalism. As corporations overlap, interlock and merge, so must unions centralise to fight them. Zerzan's likening unions' centralisation to the national labor front of Nazi Germany is both preposterous and viciously unprincipled since he must know that the Nazi Labor Front was completely a creature of the state. Even the National Review's Rusher and Buckley, both of whom also object to big, centralised, national unions, would not make this kind of comparison.

(8) Zerzan cites a requirement that employees of a public agency in the San Francisco Bay area join a union, but he fails to mention whether or not the affected workers voted for this closed shop.

(9) Why does Zerzan mention that the enraged auto worker who killed three supervisors in 1970 was black? Does his race have any relevance to the point Zerzan is making?

(10) In citing Anton Pannekoek's 1920's pronouncement against unions, Zerzan neglects to tell us whether Pannekoek is objecting to

craft unions or to mass industrial unions. Is there no difference?

(11) If not unions, what? Zerzan does not tell us.

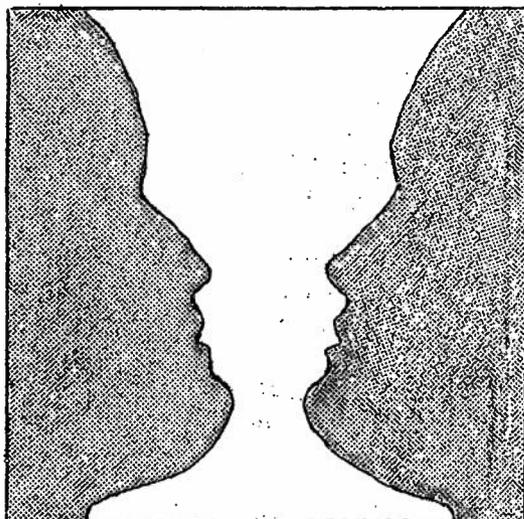
Conclusion

Let us assume that Zerzan's article was not a plant by the capitalists or the CIA. Then it reveals that the workers have yet another foe in their ongoing struggle, one that Marx did not foresee: they must fight not only their exploiters, but also their newleft critics, most of whom do not know what it is to go into a mine or shape up on the docks. The main tool the workers have is their organisation, which Zerzan hopes to destroy.

Marvin Mandell,  
Cuttyhunk, Mass.

P.S. Let me be as selective as Zerzan for a moment: when the West German Krupp empire and the Hoechst Chemical Corporation want to expand and build plants, where do they go? To countries where they can deal with big labor barons? No. According to The Economist of London (April 26, 1975), these corporations have clinched deals with East Germany where labor is cheap, independent unions non-existent. As The Economist noted: 'For the firms these deals ar a shot in the arm - and an opportunity to escape all the environmental, labor, and other problems' of West Germany.

VASE  
OR  
FACES?  
(see



PERCEPTION  
AND  
'REALITY'  
opposite)

# PERCEPTION, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS

We are living in an era of change in Western civilisation comparable only to the Renaissance in the depth of its challenge to all existing values, beliefs, institutions and social relationships. No aspect of life has escaped this critique and no section of our society has been spared the inner doubt, turmoil and conflict resulting from it. Work and leisure, family and school, economics and politics, philosophy and science, Church and police, the Establishment and the revolutionary organisations, the theatre and the concert hall, the writer and the painter are all riddled with loss of confidence concerning the validity of their roles. It is not only property relations or authority relations that are being questioned anew, but the whole issue of what is significant or not, and beyond it even the way in which sensory data are interpreted and endowed with significance.

As in the Renaissance, while the Old founders in confusion, a new way of perceiving things and a new mentality are gradually emerging. This new mentality, the sources of which are partly conscious, partly sub-conscious, can be discerned in the works of many creative artists, musicians, painters and writers.

The following article is an attempt to describe the new attitude to reality expressed by one of the most creative musical groups: the Pink Floyd. The musical creations of this group have, over a period of a decade, profoundly influenced the mode of sensory experience, and hence the attitudes, of millions of young people throughout the world.

There have always been creative artists, and even entire artistic movements in the past whose creations propounded a new way of perceiving the world. But their influence remained limited to small sections of the population. This is no longer the case with certain types of music. What we describe is not the private experience of a handful of individuals but something collectively shared in the new phenomenon of the mass concert.

\* \* \* \* \*

Imagine yourself alone, deep in the night, in a strange city. All around you trains rush from nowhere to nowhere. Not a soul to be seen. You run, run, run, and hear your footsteps echo, echo, echo. As you run you gradually become aware of the sound of panting of a gigantic creature joined by the thumping of an enormous heart. You run faster and faster, but the panting and the heartbeat grow stronger and stronger. As in a

dream you exert all your energy to escape; you do your utmost but fail. And suddenly the panting and the heartbeat are on top of you, all around you. With a shock you realise that they are your own, that the other sounds you've heard are other common daily noises. You become aware of the difference in experiencing these ordinary sounds. You realise that you hear with your mind rather than with your ears. This is the experience which the Pink Floyd create.

It is difficult to explain - or understand - this experience by means of words. You have to undergo the experience to find out what it conveys. It is not music in the traditional sense of the word, and you don't listen to it with your ears (the ear being merely a channel to convey the sound). It is sound and you experience it with your mind. You can carry on conversations while you listen to this music, play chess, eat, study paintings, yet all the time you float in this overwhelming sea of sound, paying attention to every note, every nuance, every intonation. You can't whistle the tune or dance to the rhythm, but you start seeing everything around you in a different light. It is not that you hallucinate and see things which are not there: it is the things which are there that you see (or hear). But you interpret them differently. It is not so much the new mode of experience itself that matters, but the realisation that it is possible to interpret the same sensations differently.

It is essential to listen to this music, at least to start with, on headphones rather than loudspeakers. The sound then seems to travel between the ears and creates the sensation of various events occurring inside your head (airplanes taking off, people coming downstairs, etc.). At first this experience comes as a shock. But once you get over the hump it becomes a new, 'normal' mode of experiencing sound.

The recent Pink Floyd open-air concert at Knebworth (attended by more than a hundred thousand people) started by two Spitfires flying low over the crowd. The drone of their engine (accompanied by the musicians to form a coherent fabric) comments on everything the Spitfire represents in England. It is not a favourable comment. By fusing aircraft engine 'noise' with their own, the Pink Floyd suggest that the way in which sounds from different sources are interpreted depends on the mind as much as on the sources.

Can the sounds of eggs and bacon sizzling in the pan, milk and cornflakes flowing down your throat, cash registers in operation, etc., be woven into a harmonious and meaningful pattern? It can - and the experience is sublime. But sense or no sense (who decides, and according to what?), it matters little. What matters is the sheer realisation that the mode of experiencing sound can be modified, and that the way in which we experienced it hitherto (taking it for granted) is not the only possible way of doing so. If the mode of hearing can be changed, what about seeing, smelling, touching? The answer implied by the Pink Floyd is unambiguous: all modes of experience can be changed.

This kind of music is an innovation comparable with the invention of perspective in painting. Before the Renaissance all painting was in a sense 'symbolic', representing the idea of the thing painted rather than the way the things themselves appeared to the eye (look at any Egyptian, Greek, Roman or early Christian painting). The introduction of perspective into painting (and this was only in the 16th century) was part of a new attitude to nature. People began to relate to the world not as a manifestation of the Divine Will but as it appeared to them from the viewpoint of the eye. Similarly, the Pink Floyd type of sound is part of a new attitude to 'reality'. It makes us aware that it is not what the ear hears but what the mind makes of it that really matters.



\*Le Dessinateur de la Femme couchée

The introduction of perspective in the Renaissance was accompanied by similar 'naturalistic' changes in music, sculpture, philosophy, cosmology, architecture, medicine, political institutions, etc. The changes known by later generations as the Renaissance (rebirth) were to shape the mode of experience of European society for four centuries. This Renaissance was not initiated by the Church, by the nobility or by the peasantry, but by the merchants, bankers and craftsmen in the cities, by the city-zens and bourgeoisie. It became - and still is - the dominant way of experiencing the world and of relating to it.

The era which passed away during the Renaissance was the era dominated by the Church and the Nobility. It was an era in which people's lives were regulated by a belief in God (existing outside of Nature and of History) who controlled everything down to the minutest detail. The Renaissance introduced the era wherein Nature replaced God, and Natural Law replaced Divine Law. The arts and sciences of Europe were to express this conception right up to the present day. The current crisis in the arts and sciences expresses the growing difficulties of this approach.

The emerging new conception - of which the Pink Floyd music forms an element - shifts the emphasis from Nature to the mental processes, from the sensory data themselves to their particular interpretation by the mind. A variety of investigations concerning the mental processes indicate that the interpretation of the sensory data by the brain is not - as the traditional scientific attitude would have us believe - a passive process determined exclusively by physiology (and therefore hardly modifiable). Modern work suggests that the same sensory data can be interpreted differently by the same brain (i.e. same person) in valid, though different ways.

The Pink Floyd demonstrate this in their music. They force us to focus our attention on sounds we hear but tend to ignore as 'irrelevant', or to dismiss as mere 'noise'. By endowing such sounds with musical significance we are made to realise the manner in which we endowed them with insignificance hitherto. As long as only a single set of significances and inter-relations is imparted to the sensory data, it can be argued that 'interpretation' has no role to play. But once it is realised that the same data can be differently interpreted by the same person it becomes impossible to evade the problem of the interpretative faculty, its role and structure.

In philosophical terms this means that the separation of the 'objective' world from the 'subjective' one breaks down. If what 'is' (i.e. exists independently of us) can only be grasped by us as we experience it to be (and not as it exists independently of us), and if moreover the mode of this experience can be modified, then the age-old philosophical controversy about the nature of existence is bound to be superseded by a new controversy about the nature of experience. The problem shifts from that which exists to that which is aware of existence, from that which experiences to that which is aware of experiencing.

This has revolutionary implications.

Marx's 're-interpretation' of history (as determined predominantly by economic forces as distinct from blind chance or Divine Will) was one of the cultural reverberations of the Renaissance and was itself to become an important factor in remoulding society. The emerging new culture (now challenging the fetishism of 'laws of nature' and placing emphasis on the interpretation of processes rather than on the physical essence of the processes themselves) has not yet produced the conceptual tools for a 're-interpretation' of social and historical phenomena, but it is providing the raw materials out of which such tools will eventually be forged.

A. O.