

Leitfragen

für die Diskussion

Topical questions for the discussion about

the character and the actuality of the revolution in

Portugal (PREC) 1974 – 75

2014/15

1. Autonomy

Welchen Grad an Autonomie haben die revolutionären Teile des Proletariats wirklich erreicht?

Was war am „apartidarismo / apartidário“ wirklich dran?

*To what degree did the revolutionary (most conscious) parts of the proletariat in Portugal then reach an **autonomy** (considering the success, after all, of social-democratic parliamentarism) ?*

*If the new word **apartidarismo / apartidário** (“nonparty”) “reflects the longing for genuine autonomy in struggle, for an activity that is not manipulated by some cúpula (political clique) or other” - what was really in it ?*

Zur Begründung unserer 1. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[1.) Hinführung zur Autonomiefrage:]

Nach dem Militärputsch gegen das fast ein halbes Jahrhundert lang verknöcherte faschistische Regime in Portugal, d.h. mit der sogenannten „Nelkenrevolution“ vom 25./26. April 1974, gingen die Arbeiter_innen nicht nur sofort zu Hunderttausenden auf die Straße und machten sich an die Beseitigung der faschistischen Staatsapparate und Betriebsleitungen, sondern sie nahmen zugleich die schon 1973 begonnene Streikwelle wieder auf und weiteten diese zu einer riesigen Besetzungsbewegung von Industriebetrieben aus, während auf dem Land die Besetzung von Großgrundbesitz-Latifundien durch die verarmten Landarbeiter_innen in Gang

kam und in Stadt und Land die Besetzung leerstehender Häuser und Gebäude um sich griff. Während in den folgenden 2 Jahren viele Kapital-Eigentümer und -verwalter aus der portugiesischen Wirtschaft flüchteten bzw. zu einem nichterklärten Wirtschaftsboykott übergingen, um die lohnabhängige Bevölkerung durch erweiterte Erwerbslosigkeit, Existenzunsicherheit und Zusammenbruchsängste mürbe zu machen, was der schon wenige Jahre zuvor gegenüber Chile erfolgreich gefahrenen imperialistischen Taktik der „Entstabilisierung“ entsprach, währenddessen organisierte sich die Arbeiter_innenbewegung, indem sie viele der Betriebe übernehmen musste, auch selber völlig neu basisdemokratisch, vor allem durch Arbeiterkommissionen (CT) und mannigfache weitere Selbstverwaltungsorgane von Industriebetrieben, auf dem Land durch Kooperativbetriebe, in Stadtteilen ebenfalls durch Bewohner_innen-Komitees. In der Armee gab es in aufeinanderfolgenden Schüben Auflösungsbewegungen, gegen die Kommandohierarchie formierten sich die „Arbeiter in Uniform“ zunehmend zur Unterstützung der Klassenkämpfe ausserhalb der Kasernen. Sowohl diese Entwicklung von räte-förmigen Machtorganen in allen Bereichen – man sprach im Herbst 1975 sogar schon von „Doppelherrschaft“ – als auch die fortschreitende überbetriebliche Koordinierung der einzelnen Selbstverwaltungsorgane brachten einen hohen Grad von Autonomie der Arbeiter_innenklasse hervor, eine bewusste Selbständigkeit ihres gesellschaftlichen Handelns, was z.B. daran auffiel, wie sie sich 1974 über das Streikgesetz der Militärregierung, über das Verbot von Solidaritätsstreiks, politischen Streiks und Besetzungstreiks einfach hinwegsetzte; oder wie im Februar 1975 eine Arbeiterdemonstration von 80 000, ausgehend von den Werftarbeitern der Lisnave-Werke bei Lissabon, gegen das strikte Verbot einer AntiNATO-Kundgebung genau eine solche Demonstration organisierte – bewusst völlig unabhängig von allen politischen Parteien und Grüppchen –, wobei sie die Unterstützung der Soldaten gewann, die gegen sie aufgestellt worden waren. Oder wie im November 1975 noch die Bauarbeiter direkt das Parlament belagerten und ihm die Annahme ihrer Streikforderungen aufzwingen konnten.

Die Autonomie drückte sich auch bewusst aus: in dem damals neu entstandenen Wort „**apartidário**“ bzw. „**apartidarismo**“: **d.h. soviel wie „unabhängig von jeder politischen Partei, jenseits von irgendwelchen Apparaten oder Grüppchen, nicht manipuliert von irgendeiner cúpula, d.h. einer politischen Clique, die ihre eigenen Machtinteressen durchdrücken will“.**

Wenn nun aber trotz alledem unterm Strich dann auch von vielen Arbeiter_innen die Sozialdemokratie gewählt wurde, als 1 Jahr nach dem Beginn der Revolution die ersten Parlamentswahlen zu einer Konstituierenden Versammlung stattfanden; und wenn es trotz anscheinend entstehender „Doppelherrschaft“ am 25. November 1975 vor diesem Hintergrund der Reaktion anscheinend relativ leicht möglich war, durch den schon lange vorbereiteten militärischen Gegenputsch den ganzen revolutionären Prozess abzuschneiden und rückläufig zu machen – dann stellt sich doch die Frage, wie hoch der Entwicklungsgrad der Arbeiter_innen-Autonomie tatsächlich gewesen ist.

([Phil Mailer, p.74:] It is difficult to draw up an overall balance sheet. Despite the number of meetings communication remained difficult. One of the main shortcomings was the lack of any organisation controlled from below. The unions and parties fought for domination of the plenarios. In many cases the Committees didn't represent the majority of the workers, despite the fact that they had been democratically elected by them. Although an editorial in a strike paper said 'It is only ourselves, organised with other workers, who can change society. Our capacity for work, our sense of justice and social conscience will in the end create the kind of society that we workers want', the workers in many cases put the onus of struggle on the Committees and remained passive themselves, expecting the Committees to get on with it, alone. Power was a hot potato.)

Die erste Fassung der 1. Frage war so:

Welchen Grad an Autonomie haben die revolutionären Teile des Proletariats wirklich erreicht – gemessen an ihrem Bewusstseinsstand hinsichtlich der „radikalen Linken“ mit ihren Parteien und ihrer Funktion, das Proletariat zu repräsentieren; und auch hinsichtlich der sich damit anbahnenden Konfrontation?

Was war am „apartidarismo“ bzw. „apartidário“ wirklich dran? War es nur das Selbstverständnis, zwar außerhalb der Parteien zu agieren, aber nicht unbedingt auch direkt *gegen* sie (sie also noch zu dulden), oder tatsächlich Feindschaft gegen die Partei als (Organisations-)Form der bürgerlichen Politik?

2. Backlash

Wie konnte die revolutionäre Bewegung nach 1975 so schnell verschwinden, wo sie doch ab Mitte 1975 noch an Dynamik gewonnen hatte?

How came that the revolutionary movement and upsurge seemed to be gone and over after 1975, having gained an enormous momentum during the “hot summer” 1975 ?

Zur Begründung unserer 2. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[2.) Hinführung zur backlash-Frage:]

Maurice Brinton [in Phil Mailer, p.239]: “In June 1976, a president was elected: Ramalho Eanes, the law-and-order candidate, campaigning against ‘states within the state’, polled over 60% of the vote. (...) The vote also represented a yearning for stability, for a breathing space, for a predictable pattern to everyday life, for the easier option of delegated authority. It was repudiation - hopefully temporary - of the din of discussion, of the pressure to participate, of the stress of responsibility, of the fatigue and frustration of an involvement that seemed to lead nowhere. It was the personal price one paid to escape the demand for permanent self-mobilisation, a demand dictated by the state of permanent stalemate in the political and social arena outside. It is a new path of bourgeois recuperation. Realists will recognise it as a hallmark of the vastness of the task ahead.”

[Phil Mailer, p.193:] The weakness of the state apparatus, and the discredit in which the political parties found themselves, left the task and burden of self-organisation firmly in the hands (and on the shoulders) of the workers. Both the state and the political parties were aware of this reality and attempted to manipulate it by creating supra-party structures. The PCP were most notorious in this respect, the MRPP coming a close second. The PS too, realising its falling support within the working class, were present in Covilha [at the Congress Sept.27, 1975, where over 90 CTs had met for a “Federation” ...]

[p.214:] With so many potential governments lining up in parallel the overall situation was confusing in the extreme. One lived in a half-world, where the enemy came in all shades. People were cruelly forced to make false choices: defend this or condemn that. The choices remained confined to the political sphere, despite the widespread non-party feeling which had come to the fore during recent months. Isolation was thus more abject, despite the fact that many extreme-leftists called this the most ‘revolutionary’ period.

These experiences provide rich lessons in the techniques of manipulation - and in methods of resisting them. But these lessons were not assimilated fast enough. The majority of the workers who wanted to fight capitalism never took the lead themselves. It was during this period that they could most easily have taken the initiative - but they didn't. Some, admittedly, were moving in this direction. Party banners were prohibited on demonstrations (there were workers who forced groups like LCI to take down their banners and shouted 'here there are no parties'). People moved from a situation which ridiculed the claims of particular vanguard parties to a situation where they were openly saying that there were too many vanguards. What was needed was to go a step further - and see that vanguards were superfluous. If the parties could not bring about radical change - and if radical change was what one wanted - one would have to consider alternative means of achieving it. If the dream was to become reality, self-mobilisation on an enormous scale

would have to be undertaken and certain new institutions created. Throughout the whole of the Portuguese revolution this was to remain the biggest problem of all. And it was to remain unsolved.

[p.216:] No organised group criticised Capital per se, its hierarchies, its priorities, its social relations, its essence, on any mass basis. No group systematically and explicitly criticised the left as the midwives of state capitalism.. The various Inter-Empresas lined up behind the various parties which dominated them. They waited, by and large indifferent to the party political power struggle over the type of regime to be brought about.

Die erste Fassung der 2. Frage war so:

Wie konnte die revolutionäre Bewegung nach dem Beginn der offenen Konterrevolution Ende 1975 **so schnell verschwinden, wo sie doch ab Mitte 1975 noch an Fahrt gewonnen hatte?** Oder ist das ein falscher Eindruck, und es gab entschiedene Rückzugsgefechte? Wie ist das Verhältnis von Offensive und Defensive im Klassenkampf gewesen, und wann, wodurch genau schlug die erstere in die letztere um?

Wenn es keine entschiedenen Rückzugsgefechte gegeben hat, waren dann die revolutionären Teile des Proletariats noch zu sehr von der radikalen Linken abhängig, so dass sie gleich nach deren Einknicken passiv werden mussten?

(Diese Frage hängt auch mit der nach dem **Charakter des „apartidarismo / apartidário“** zusammen.)

3. Coalition of classes ?

Wenn Portugal damals vor allem in Hinblick auf die landwirtschaftlichen Produktionsverhältnisse ein gespaltenes Land war, haben sich denn die Linksradikele diesem Problem jemals gestellt und versucht, diese Bauern dazu zu bringen, mit der proletarischen Bewegung ein Bündnis einzugehen?

Given the split (separation; slope) within the Portuguese class structure, and in particular the conditions of agrarian production (the North being almost „like a different country“) at that time: so, did the radical left-wing forces ever come forward and face the task to try to get those peasants to become allies of the proletarian movement and of the agrarian labourers in the South ?

Zur Begründung unserer 3. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[3. Hinführung zur Frage der *coalition of classes*:]

Portugal war damals **in Hinblick auf die landwirtschaftlichen Produktionsverhältnisse ein gespaltenes Land**: im Süden existierte ein großes Landproletariat, das wenigen Großgrundbesitzern gegenüberstand und angefangen hat, Ländereien zu besetzen und zu kollektivieren, um sich so als Teil der revolutionären Bewegung zu erweisen; im Unterschied dazu gab es im Norden viele Kleinbauern, die ihre Parzellen bewirtschafteten und unter dem reaktionären Einfluss der "Kaziken" standen.

([Phil Mailer p.87ff:] In the North the situation was very different. It was here that most of the smallholdings existed, and here that political ignorance and old fears died hardest. The ex-ANP estate owners, in the rich, wine-growing districts of the Douro valley, were now members of the CDS or PPD. Workers were still left with their old insecurity. The Church in most cases was anti-communist, 'communism' being depicted in terms of the PCP. Sermons and CDS leaflets spelled all this out in no uncertain terms. The evening papers from Porto or Lisbon rarely reached these regions and, when they did, were likely to be several days old. At least 35% of the people, possibly more, were illiterate. Two forces sprung up to challenge this. The first was the MFA who, since September 1974 had initiated what they called a campaign of 'Cultural Dynamisation'. Groups of MFA supporters would enter a village, play some revolutionary songs and talk to the people about their problems. They would explain what April 25th meant: anyone could speak his mind, now that the PIDE agents had been imprisoned. In general these visits were successful, though often only the 'natural leader' of the village spoke out. In some cases the meeting produced surprising results, at times broadcast over television. In one village, for example, the MFA arrived, sang songs, talked about April 25th, and then asked the villagers to speak. An old man said that there were very few problems in the village. When the MFA insisted that some problems surely existed the old man replied that there were none. 'There were one or two communists but they weren't really a problem'.

Another force in the countryside was the students. Making use of the demand for higher education the government had decreed that before anyone could enter a university, a technical college, or a school of agronomy, he or she had to do a year of field-work. The idea was to send educated young people into the provinces, to teach the others to read, and to impart to them what skills they had. Some 28,000 students were involved. The plan was supported by the UEC, the PCP's student organisation. This Servico Civico was criticised by most students, and from both right and left-wing positions. It was also criticised by the northern workers and farmers as 'insulting'. Right-wing students objected to the scheme because it jeopardised the social privileges of the middle and upper class youth: the only way round the Servico Civico was to give up going to university altogether. Left-wing students criticised the scheme from a variety of positions. A MES teachers' group issued a statement which epitomised such attitudes to the plan (see Appendix 16). What the left-wing students objected to was not the principle of Servico Civico, but its organisation and planning by a capitalist Government. Students of the 'agricultural colleges' at one stage occupied their colleges. They insisted,

a) that they would undertake no work which could be done by the agricultural workers who were being made redundant.
 b) that they should have complete autonomy from the MFA and from party-politicians. They would only implement decisions taken by joint plenarios of agricultural workers and students. Thousands of students nevertheless went to the country-side, teaching and working on the farms. They constituted a mini-army of militants, who 'helped' in organising occupations and planning. Education in agricultural techniques, soil analysis and 'agitation' went hand in hand. Other problems, like distribution of food to the cities, were also discussed. Collectivisation of land remained however the prerequisite to any reorganisation of agriculture. While, theoretically, this might not prove too great a problem in the latifundios of the south, it would be a very different matter in the north.)

Die erste Fassung der 3. Frage war so:

Portugal war damals **in Hinblick auf die landwirtschaftlichen Produktionsverhältnisse ein gespaltenes Land**: im Süden existierte ein großes Landproletariat, das wenigen Großgrundbesitzern gegenüberstand und angefangen hat, Ländereien zu besetzen und zu kollektivieren, um sich so als Teil der revolutionären Bewegung zu erweisen; im Unterschied dazu gab es im Norden viele Kleinbauern, die ihre Parzellen bewirtschafteten und unter dem reaktionären Einfluss der "Kaziken" standen. **Haben „die Linksradikalen“ sich diesem Problem je gestellt und versucht, wie z.B. Marx in seiner Analyse der Pariser Commune, Maßnahmen auszuarbeiten, um diese Bauern dafür zu gewinnen, mit der proletarischen Bewegung ein Bündnis einzugehen?** Wenn die „Linksradikalen“ das nicht gemacht haben, war das dann nicht ein fataler Fehler, der dazu geführt hat, die Bauern im Norden „automatisch“ auf die Seite der Konterrevolution zu bringen?

4. Relevance of ‚leftist‘ groups

Welche Rolle spielten ‚die linksradikalen‘ Organisationen in der Revolution wirklich?

What was the role that all the militant left-wing radical organisations really did play in the autonomous process of revolutionary self-organisation of the working classes ?

Zur Begründung unserer 4. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[4. Hinführung zur Frage der *relevance of the leftist groups*:]

(Phil Mailer, p. 64: "Coping with the political tendencies [within the CTs]: Various political parties were operating within the plenários. Their preoccupations often appeared sectarian to many attending the assemblies. Firstly there were union members, seeking to find a base by getting themselves elected onto the Committees. Then there were the various left groups, using the Committees for purposes of propaganda and recruitment. By raising extraneous issues (talking for instance about 'the traitor Vilar', leader of the PCP-ml, or about 'the traitor Cunhal') they caused all sorts of problems. Factional disputes on the macro-molecular level, which had little to do with the real (and serious) problems at hand, obstructed attempts to see the Company in the general context of the economy. They detracted from the discussion of real issues, wasted working class time and effort, and created mystification. The plenários were often interrupted by heated arguments, only some of which were relevant to the workers' real concerns. (...)

([p.67f:]) "Young workers were the most militant. Occasionally scathing leaflets would be handed out in the plenários, many of them very witty and containing real criticisms of the Committees and of the type of discussion taking place there. A leaflet circulated in an electronics factory in Settibal spoke of how the Committee 'was actually worse than the old management'. Another said: 'we have passed from a situation of hunger to a situation where we can sav we are hungry. Those behind the leaflets were often wrongly called Maoists. Their leaflets tended to be one-off things. The older workers (and in the last analysis the revolution would have to mobilise their support) tended to be more conservative. They had the most to lose. They often warned against 'adventures'. 'Who would pay the wages if the firm was taken over?' they asked again and again. There were often no funds to start with. There was no security. To lose one's job was to jeopardise one's survival. They knew about wage labour. Organisation was paramount, they rightly stressed.)

[p.181:] [September 1975:] The base groups, in many areas, fully appreciated the need to co-ordinate their struggles. Parochialism was not one of their weaknesses. They were also deeply aware of the need for self-defence which, on their own, they would have had difficulty in providing. Soldiers and workers alike attempted to set up contacts at a non-party level. The various leninist groups functioned within these autonomous organisations but had to hide their party colours if they wanted to take part.

([p.96:] MES spoke of the difficulties of organisation: 'The PCP was the only party to emerge from an underground existence with a strong organisation. It is the only party able to mobilise the masses. However the PCp is far from being a vanguard in the Portuguese revolution. What worries us is that the revolutionary vanguards are tiny minorities, "groupuscules", while all proclaiming that the same time the need to create a mass party' .

Here, in essence, was the problem, though posed in ideological terms. Would all the vanguards become mass parties? Or would there be a falling-out of prophets. MES sensed the difficulty first and launched the slogan of 'popular power' in January 1975. But 'popular power' was for MES merely a different route to the same goal: a mass party which they would control. PRP-BR at first held that 'revolutionary unions' would be the base of the party. After fumbling for a while in this particular cul de sac they were eventually to launch their 'revolutionary councils'. But for the time being they were concentrating on building unions. Thus for both MES and the PRP the problem was that of working class or organisation. While both advocated 'self-organisation', they both saw themselves as the hub of that 'self -organisation'. They were blissfully unaware of any contradiction in this.)

([p.97:] LUAR, in existence since 1967 as a direct action group, was different. LUAR militants saw themselves as an army of militants who would help the workers whenever called. Concentrating on local issues they became a 'service group' for occupations of houses or other buildings. They rarely, if ever, sought to manipulate struggles. Both the charisma of Palma Inacio and this type of activity made LUAR popular with the workers. Politically LUAR comprised tendencies from Luxemburgist to council communism. Their man slogan was 'socialism from below'. While MES saw the nationalisation of the key industries as the road to socialism (adding that it s ould be carried out 'under workers'control') LUAR criticised this position: 'Nationalisation of the key sectors of the economy is not enough. It is impossible to decree socialism, and then force people to submit to control and decisions by the state. Above all there must be no demobilisation of the autonomous activity of the base, under the pretext that is demanded by "responsible representatives" of the working class. The only guarantee for the workers is if power is exercised by the workers themselves, where they live and work. (...) then socialism cannot mean a government for the workers led by a party, group, class or caste. It must mean government by the workers, for the workers ... Support for the MFA should therefore be conditional, support for its progressive measures which, paradoxically, lead to a diminution of state power as a power above the workers, allowing them to create the embryos of alternative forms of social organisation.' It will be seen that even those whose vision of socialism was most libertarian still had many residual illusions about the role of the MFA and of the state, while those who had few such illusions (such as the MRPP) had a vision of socialism which made of it a night-mare and alienated all potential support. The MRPP understood power and wanted it for themselves. If they were the wave of the future, no wonder people were seeking dry land.)

([p.98:] MES, PRP, MRPP and the smaller maoist groups were all active in the factories, usually entering struggles after they had started and seeking to 'help' them. In most cases they played a negative role, creating divisions and bringing with them problems which had not been there before. It was of course impossible for all these vanguard groups to get along with one another since they often clashed in the competition for proletarian clientele. After a while few new people joined such groups. When one party won militants it meant that another had lost them and this probably explained why the various groups attacked on another more fiercely than they ever attacked the right.)

([p.99: All the left groups had access to the press though the non-maoist groups were given more space. Their communiqués and programmes were published and received wide publicity insofar as the papers themselves were distributed (this was much

more common in the South than in the North). Within the newspapers themselves (i.e. as journalists, etc.) they had a firm implantation.

The anarcho-sindicalist CGT had been important in the 1930's. But despite the renewed publication of A Batalha, its 1975 descendants were hardly known at all. A handful of older militants were left. Unable to discard - or even to question - their traditionalist outlook and unwilling to confront new problems they remained trapped in their reminiscences and in their romantic, backward looking ideology. A Bataiha had at one time been the Portuguese political paper with the widest sale; it was now reduced to producing 10,000 copies twice a month. The maoist groups formed in the early '70's could do as well. It was sad, really.])

Phil Mailer's conclusion [p.233f]:

„The Portuguese experience between 1974 and 1976 shows that revolutionary activity does not develop as a result of strategies devised by system analysts or bourgeois planners, masquerading as revolutionary generals like Otelo de Carvalho or Costa Gomes. It emerges in the struggle itself and its most advanced forms are expressed by those for whom it is a necessity to struggle. Hundreds of thousands of workers entered the struggle in Portugal. But the enemy constantly appeared before them in unexpected garb: that of their own organisations. Every time they set up an organisation they found it manipulated by the so-called vanguards or leaders who were not of their own and who understood little about why they were struggling. Even the groups who paid lip-service to a critique of state-capitalism did so because of their weakness. They were forced to support the base organisations for the time being. The revolutionaries – on a massive scale – were found to be part of the problem, not part of the solution. In this the Portuguese experience may prove to be a prefiguration of revolutions to come.”

And Maurice Brinton [p.240]:

“Several lessons can be drawn from the Portuguese experience, lessons which transcend the frontiers of Portugal. The foremost ... is that in future upheavals the traditional revolutionaries will prove part of the problem not part of the solution. (...) Past revolutions faced two main dangers: they could be annihilated by those whose privileges they threatened (...) Or they could be destroyed from within, through bureaucratic degeneration (as happened to the Russian Revolution of 1917). **A third alarming risk now looms on the horizon. It is the risk of genuinely radical upheavals being deviated into state capitalist channels. It is the danger that any new creation (in the realm of ideas, relationships or institutions) will immediately be pounced upon, penetrated, colonised, manipulated, - and ultimately deformed – by hordes of power-hungry 'professional revolutionaries', midwives of state capitalism, and all the more dangerous because draped in the red flag.**”

Für alle Linksradikalen galt: sie vertraten schon vor der „Nelkenrevolution“ eine konsequente Opposition gegen den Kolonialkrieg; sie beteiligten sich an den Massenaktionen, wie den Besetzungen, Streiks und den meisten Demonstrationen der Klasse; sie arbeiteten in den Basisorganisationen gegen den prokapitalistischen und streikbrecherischen Kurs der stalinistischen K. Deshalb ist uns auch heute noch nicht völlig klar, wie hier in der Funktion dieser wohl überwiegend aus den lohnabhängigen Mittelschichten stammenden linksradikalen Aktivist_innen innerhalb der gesellschaftlichen Gesamtarbeiterklasse die Unterscheidungen richtig zu treffen sind – genau wie heutzutage in der Einschätzung und Bewertung des Charakters linker Aktivist_innen, Checker_innen, Vernetzungs-Expert_innen, akademischen Linken und anderer selbsterannter Professionals in den wirklichen Bewegungen. Oder allgemein gefragt: Können an sich hemmende Faktoren zeitweise auch eine progressive Rolle spielen; konnten die Linksradikalen sich in den Klassenkämpfen fürs Proletariat auch nützlich machen?

Die erste Fassung unserer 4. Frage war so:

Welche Rolle spielten die „linksradikalen“ Organisationen in der Revolution wirklich?

War ihr Einfluss auf die Klasse nur ein hemmender oder *auch* ein vorwärtstreibender?

Haben sich Teile der Klasse auch selber diesen Organisationen angeschlossen?

Besteht nicht bei aller notwendigen Kritik des etatistischen „Avantgardismus“ die Gefahr, die neo-leninistischen Gruppen im Nachhinein zum Sündenbock für die **unzureichende Selbstorganisation und unentwickelte Theorie-der-Praxis des Proletariats selbst** zu machen?

5. Male chauvinism and bias

Wenn sich die autonome Kommunikation der Arbeiter_innen und der revolutionäre „Dialog, der sich selbst bewaffnet hat“ (Guy Debord) nicht hinreichend weiter entwickeln konnten – (wie) hing das zusammen mit der Rückständigkeit im Kampf gegen Patriarchat und Sexismus, mit dem Blockieren der aufbrechenden feministischen Bewegung und mit dem Zurückhalten der Hälfte der Bevölkerung in der traditionellen Rolle der Frau ?

If an autonomous communication among the workers, the revolutionary “dialogue arming itself”, was not able further to develop at a certain point – (how) could this be explained in the context of a particular historical-cultural backwardness ? The patriarchal and sexist social structures, conditions and attitudes could not be overcome within the proletarian movement, and were to block the rising feminist movement, trying to “keep the woman in her place”

Zur Begründung unserer 5. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[5. Hinführung zur Frage des male chauvinism and bias:]

[Phil Mailer, p.183:] There can be no meaningful revolutionary upheaval without a change in how people live. If one compares everyday life in 1975 with what it had been in 1973, or even 1974, there was clearly a difference. The external signs were obvious enough. Politicians toured the villages in the South, holding 3 to 5 large meetings per day, in which they would 'turn nice marxist phrases round in their mouths'. The radio stations blared out songs of 'revolt'. But the gestures and cultural habits were also in upheaval and it is here that the most important changes were taking place. It was in the depth of this feeling that the real revolution was seeking to develop. It is much easier to change regimes than to change lives.

[p.186:] Despite all the freedom to demonstrate and go to meetings, everyday attitudes and relations hadn't changed all that much. Men still went to the tascas and women, while they could now go to meetings, usually remained at home. There had been more change in the rural cooperatives than in the cities.

Clearly the mode of living was not altered overnight. The setting up of creches which was taking place all over the country was something positive. It was not an outcome of state planning. It liberated women from child-minding. But the level of unemployment being some 12% it didn't just 'liberate' them in order to drag them into the factories. Creches were on the whole organised by local women, often helped by progressive teachers and other young professionals, through the Neighbourhood Committees. Many parks were also built.

[p.67:] The real problems within the class were considerable. They reflected differences of 'status', of age, of sex, and between employed and unemployed workers. Calls to narrow the range of wage scales produced considerable opposition from the better paid workers. Generally, as in TAP, this was got round by raising the lower scales and freezing the top ones. But in the case of specialised categories (like pilots, who threatened to sell their labour power to another company) these questions were not easily dealt with. There was moreover a definite tendency for the better-paid workers, who were often more articulate, to dominate and sometimes even to manipulate the plenirios to such an extent that other workers walked out.

[p.68:] The committees also had to face up to the machoist attitudes of some workers. In Abel Alves (at Santo Tirso, near Porto) there was a textiles factory employing 600 workers, mainly women. The men earned more than the women, who only got 88 escudos per day. The women wanted to work at night but neither the boss (nor their husbands) would let them.

([Phil Mailer, p.131:] Machoist attitudes die hard. The men often defended their higher wages by claiming that their work was more productive. But when the women pointed out that picking olives was a job the men wouldn't want to do, the argument seemed somewhat shallow. Such questions were never really resolved and machoism persisted.

[p.130:] Some things changed after the coup but it is difficult to imagine army officers being particularly sympathetic to women's problems. A movement to make divorce possible grew and campaigned throughout the country.

MDP-CDE gave it support. The law was finally altered, although abortion continues to be illegal. Contraceptives can still only be obtained on medical prescription. (...)

Housewives were called *do nas de casa* (the mistress of the house). Especially in the North, they were often called 'the boss' by their men. This wasn't only condescension: it was real in a limited way. But because it was limited, it was derogatory. Many

terms insulting to women existed in the language: a girl who slept with men was a puta (prostitute) while a man who had sex with girls was a stud to be admired.

In the period 1969-74 the number of working women increased rapidly because many potential male workers were abroad, fighting. But their wages were lower. Even after April 25th the CTTs (work contracts, established for each trade) were loaded against women. In the PCP-dominated cooperatives (around Beja especially) the women worked from 6 am to 8 am in the house, then went to the fields, picking olives, etc. Between 7 pm and 10 pm they did more housework. Yet they were paid less than the men who worked from 8 am to 7 pm. In other, more independent, cooperatives, near Lisbon or in Setúbal for example, the women received equal pay for their farm work.

[p.132:] The MDM (= PCP-oriented "Democratic Women's Movement"), although involved in women's struggles, was more intent on defending the family than in discussing more basic problems of women. It directed struggles into channels which, while important for families (like crèches, financial assistance for children, parks and so on) were not primarily related to women themselves, or to the roles assigned to them in class societies. ([p.134:] PCP posters for the polls (April 1975) depicted very respectable looking family groups and carried headings like 'Women: in your hands lies the future of your children' - a slogan criticised by the Feminist Movement.)

After the break-up of the MLM demonstration (Jan.13, 1975) radical women were genuinely frightened of engaging in further political action. A whole area of the struggle for liberation had been successfully gagged.

Die erste Fassung der 5. Frage war so:

ALLGEMEINE RÜCKSTÄNDIGKEIT: INDIKATOR & FAKTOR „TRENNUNG DES GESCHLECHTS“:

Um es maoistisch auszudrücken: Konnte auch deshalb nicht „der Himmel gestürmt“ werden, weil „die Hälfte des Himmels“ – die Frauen – in der Revolution in Portugal noch immer, und immer wieder, zurückgesetzt und in ihrem Aufbruch und ihrer Emanzipation vielfach behindert und abgewiesen worden sind? [Im Dokument einer Frauengruppe zit. von Phil Mailer (p.22) hiess es schon unmittelbar nach dem 25.April 1974: „Since us women constitute over 52% of the population it might be thought that our group would also be given a place. (...) It is known that the de-politisation of women and their tendency to vote right-wing is directly related to the complete absence of movements and organisations acting in their interests. Despite this, the Junta is not considering the Womens' Movement as worthy of attention or interest. Why? Is it, yet again, discrimination against women?“]

Auch gab es in jenen Tagen ein "Manifest der Bewegung revolutionärer Homosexueller / Schwuler", -- wovon man danach niemals wieder je etwas gehört hat (?). Stattdessen schien alles Revolutionäre im Körperbild des Soldaten-mit-dem-Volk als Verschmelzungssehnsucht aufgegangen zu sein. In den Wunschbildern dieser Verschmelzung drückten sich offensichtlich ebenso militaristisch die Frauenfeindlichkeit wie die Homophobie der traditionellen Geschlechtstrennung aus.

Wenn die spektakuläre Dimension dieser Selbstbilder in den revolutionärsten Teilen der handelnden Klassen nicht von der Kritik ignoriert werden soll, wie ist dann ihr totes Gewicht, ihre Auswirkung als „subjektiver Faktor“ in der Autonomie des Proletariats damals und heute richtig einzuschätzen ? Hat sich etwa mit dem Verschwinden der „fordistischen“ Gestalt des Industrieproletariats und der Auflösung der patriarchalen Familienform der Landarmut dieses tiefsitzende Problem von selbst erledigt ??

Oder ist die Überwindung der Trinität „Sexismus / Nationalismus / bürgerliche Gesellschaft“ mit ihrer heutigen Krisenentwicklung in eine bisher noch unvorhersehbare Greifbarkeit gerückt ?

6. „Road to socialism“ or „impossible revolution“ ?

Wäre eine längere Lebensdauer dieses Experiments überhaupt realistischerweise möglich gewesen?

Hätte man sich gegen eine militärische Intervention der NATO verteidigen können, und wenn ja: welchen Preis hätten die langfristig Kämpfenden dafür langfristig zahlen müssen?

Has there ever been a realistic long-term perspective at all for this revolutionary “experiment” to survive ? And, last but not least, would the revolutionary population have been able to defend its territory against a military intervention (by the NATO) and, if so, what would have been the long-term price to pay for this internationalist contribution ?

Zur Begründung unserer 6. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[6. Hinführung zur Frage “socialist” or “impossible revolution”:]

(hier auch die Rolle der Verstaatlichungen aufwerfen!)

([Phil Mailer, p.69f:] It was perhaps the workers in multinationals who were hardest hit by all this. The Workers' Committees were impotent against the might of international capital. (...) The questions of common ownership and of judicial and effective power over the means of production were rarely raised explicitly (though they were always in the background). Many groups called for nationalisation as a means of achieving such control. Only a few could see beyond this reinforcement of state power, could envisage a genuinely communist society. Problems of immediate survival inevitably surged to the forefront. The workers in occupation needed raw materials, machinery, money. In the absence of any other source of help they were forced to call on the government or on the MFA. (...) In many firms under self-management the workers continued to produce the same type of goods (but see p256) in most instances there were major problems of distribution. Many of the bigger firms had so scattered their production units that many of their plants only turned out components of the ultimate product. There was no question of being able to sell or distribute such components within the country without a structured distribution network and without an awareness of overall demand. Moreover many of the components were exported. (...) [A] firm was occupied and the workers continued to work. The problem, as usual, was markets. The Minister of Labour promised help. People began to realise that the real issues went much deeper. Employers were using sackings and closures as a means of disciplining workers. But what was posed in reality was the fundamental question of restructuring the whole economy in terms of communist production, of production for use. The task could only be tinkered with on a local basis.)

[p.189f:] BEYOND LOCAL WORKERS' COMMITTEES?

Many of the 700 cooperatives only survived because of the overtime being worked or as a result of loans granted by the government. The cooperatives faced all the problems confronting private companies ... and more. Boycotted by international enterprises and denied markets they survived by two interrelated methods.

Firstly, through credits. It was estimated by one of the leaders of the Confederation of Portuguese Industry that paper money in circulation during the last 6 months of 1975 had increased from 1.1 to 3.7 billion escudos. Many of the companies in self-management would have gone bust had it not been for the steady growth of bank-lending. Such an increase in paper money meant an inflation rate of between 50% and 100%. The granting of credits to both industrial and agricultural units was a political manipulation of the highest order. PCP cooperatives could be sure of credit from the Fifth Government, while PS cooperatives had to wait for the Sixth.

The second system of support for the cooperatives came from the workers themselves. By 'dealing among themselves' they provided a parallel internal market. The 'Cooperative of April 25th' started building houses for the shanty towns, having won an order for 600 flats. Lisnave shipyard workers gave their order for boiler-suits to companies in self-management. Agricultural cooperatives organised markets through Neighbourhood Committees and sold their products directly to the population. The Setubal Federation of Neighbourhood Committees got their products from the agricultural cooperatives in the region of Azambuja, while Neighbourhood Committees in Lisbon supported the cooperatives of Alcaccer and Evora.

But if the Workers' Committees were to provide a real alternative to capital they would sooner or later have to face up to some political and institutional problems. The most important was how to organise themselves into a larger federation. This was talked about on many occasions, but it was usually the political parties who were behind such moves, not the workers themselves. 'Politics' couldn't be divided. One couldn't help relating, in one way or another, to all that was going on. Workers' Committees made political choices everyday, either meeting in Flenanos or taking initiatives themselves. Thousands of communiqués were published by the papers.

Die erste Fassung der 6. Frage war so:

Angenommen, der revolutionäre Prozess wäre nach dem November 1975 weiter gelaufen, und das Proletariat hätte unter der ihm gemäßen politischen Form, der anti-staatlichen Diktatur des Proletariats, seine ökonomische Emanzipation in Angriff genommen – **wäre eine längere Lebensdauer dieses Experiments überhaupt realistisch möglich gewesen?**

Bestand tatsächlich die Perspektive, mit dem Aufbau einer communistischen Produktion und Verteilung am rückständigen Rande Westeuropas zu beginnen und dabei ökonomisch auch schon „ein auskömmliche(re)s Leben zu führen“ (so Guy Debord in seinem Brief nach Portugal 1975) im Vergleich zu dem, wie es für die Arbeitsemigrant_innen in den reichen kapitalistischen Ländern je möglich war?

Welche nationalen Abteilungen des Weltproletariats wären der portugiesischen zu Hilfe geeilt (Spanien?), um ihm aus seiner Isolation in einer kapitalistischen Welt herauszuhelfen?

Was hätte die (internationale) Konterrevolution der portugiesischen Kommune noch alles entgegengeworfen? **Hätte man sich gegen eine militärische Intervention der NATO verteidigen können, und wenn ja: welchen Preis hätten die langfristig Kämpfenden dafür langfristig zahlen müssen?**

7. Looking back and ahead

Was ist das Moderne und Aktuelle an der Revolution / dem revolutionären Prozess in Portugal gewesen?

Viewing the revolutionary process in Portugal in forty years' perspective, what are the modern features in it and where can we make out its actuality ?

Zur Begründung unserer 7. Frage noch einmal die Basis-Informationen:

[7. Hinführung zur Frage: Modernität & Aktualität ?]

[Phil Mailer, p.233f]: The Portuguese experience is modern in every sense. So is the Portuguese revolutionary movement. It lasted some eighteen months altogether but in that time it went through everything that a modern class society could through at it. It was modern not just in the attitude of the workers and in the nature of their demands but also in the pattern of state-capitalist counterattack which the working-class practices unleashed. It is a movement which has transcended the sterile arguments between the Leninists and the left communists which has raged for over fifty years before it. (...) Council forms were fetishised and put on show even if they have no socialist content. (...) Hundreds of thousands of workers entered the struggle in Portugal. But the enemy constantly appeared before them in unexpected garb: that of their own organisations. Every time they set up an organisation they found it manipulated by so-called vanguards or leaders who were not of their own and who understood little about why they were struggling. (...) The revolutionaries – on a massive scale – were found mto be part of mthe problem, not part of the solution. In this the Portuguese experience may prove to be a prefiguration of revolutions to come. (...) The alternative ist clear. It was put concisely many years ago: 'the liberation of the workers is the task of the working class itself'.

Die erste Fassung der 7. Frage war so:

Was ist das Moderne und Aktuelle an der Revolution / dem revolutionären Prozess in Portugal gewesen?

Auf den ersten Blick scheint dafür wenig infrage zu kommen. Offensichtlich war die portugiesische Gesellschaft im europäischen Maßstab von ökonomisch und politisch rückständigen Verhältnissen geprägt, die heute durch modernere ersetzt worden sind. Auch die Gestalt der damals „fordistischen“ Arbeiter_innenklasse hat sich damit grundlegend verändert. Somit stellen sich für den Klassenkampf ganz neue Probleme.

Die Aktionsformen, vor allem die Besetzungen, wurden in der portugiesischen Revolution nicht erfunden, sondern – man denke an 1968 in Frankreich – nur aufgenommen und extensiv ausgebreitet sowie intensiv vertieft.

Ist das Unabgegoldene und für uns heute Wichtige vielleicht weniger die Revolution selbst als vielmehr die „**samtene Konterrevolution**“ (Noronha), d.h. eine demokratische und linke Art, mit der proletarischen Revolution fertig zu werden?