

# PORTUGAL A BLAZE OF FREEDOM

**BIG FLAME**



**30p**

2nd EDITION  
and SUPPLEMENT

# GLOSSARY

- AOC** Association of Workers and Agricultural Workers. A marxist-leninist organisation with a strong base in some unions. It won the leadership of the chemical workers union from the PCP, which it typifies as 'social-fascist'. This probably helped to get it banned from taking part in the election campaign.
- CDS** Christian Democrats, led by do Amaral, once a deputy in the fascist parliament. Its secretary general, Adelino Amaro, was chief aid to Caetano's education minister, and another member, Valentin Pintado, was secretary of state for commerce under Caetano. It is the most ring wing party and is linked to the Conservative Party. A refuge for fascists and capitalists.
- COPCON** Continental Operations Command: set up in July 74 under the day to day command of Brigadier Otelo de Carvalho, it is the centralised control system for the armed forces in Portugal. For routine security work it can call on units loyal to the MFA.
- FNLA** Angolan National Liberation Front, led by Holden Roberto: the most right wing of the Angolan movements, backed by Mobutu of Zaire and the CIA.
- FRELIMO** Mozambique Liberation Movement.
- FSP** Popular Socialist Front, led by Manuel Serra, is a left split from the PS.
- GNR** National Republican Guard, a para-military national police force with a similar (fascist) reputation as the Guardia Civil in Spain. Once commanded by Spinoia.
- Intersindical** The Portuguese TUC, and heavily controlled by the PCP.
- JSN** Junta of National Salvation, set up on 26 April 74: seven senior officers, including Spinoia, who chose them. It collapsed on March 11 because several members were involved in the coup.
- LCI** International Communist League, a sympathising organisation of the trotskyst 4th International. It won 11,000 votes in April elections.
- LUAR** League of Revolutionary Unity and Action, one of the oldest left organisations, involved in armed struggle before April 74. Is still armed. A main instigator of military action against the attempted coups, and of house and land occupations.
- MDM** Democratic Women's Movement, founded in 1968, is a group of women in the PCP and PS involved in women's struggles, but not feminist.
- MDP** Democratic Movement: stood opposition candidates in elections before 1974. Gained about 6% in April elections. Very close to the PCP.
- MES** Left Socialist Movement. Strong base in some sections of the working class, its politics are the far left of the Labour Party or the French PSU or maybe PDUP in Italy.
- MFA** Movement of the Armed Forces. Its 240-strong General Assembly has delegates elected from officers and non-commissioned ranks of all three services. The vanguard of the armed forces, it contains several political tendencies.
- Military Revolutionary Council** - a group of nearly 30 officers which replaced the MFA's Coordinating Council (its central committee!), the JSN and the Council of State after 11 March.
- MLM** Women's Liberation Movement.
- MPLA** Angolan Popular Liberation Movement, the most left of the three in Angola, 'marxist'.
- MRPP** Movement for the Reorganisation of the Proletarian Party. Founded in 1970 to combat PCP revisionism. It was banned by the Government in March 1975. It is dogmatic in its characterisation of the PCP as social fascist, and supports the PS against them.
- PAIGC** The movement which waged the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau.
- PCP** Portuguese Communist Party, led by Alvaro Cunhal, is Moscow-orientated and is strong in the armed forces, press and tv, local administrations, Alentejo farm workers and sections of industrial workers. Adept at strike busting. Decades old.
- PDC** so-called Christian Democratic Party, banned from taking part in elections, attacked by left and hardly exists now except as an evil idea in the mind of some fascists.
- PIDE** Alias DGS, one of the world's most notorious secret police forces. The only deaths on 25 April 1974 were caused by them in a last ditch stand at their HQ. Most of them are now in the prison they used for their political prisoners, Caxias, outside Lisbon.
- PPD** Popular Democrats - popular that is with the bourgeoisie, the Church, the conservative middle-peasants of the North, who together gave them over 25% of the vote on 25 April. Ministers in every Provisional Government.
- Provisional Government** - a Cabinet of ministers drawn from the MFA, PCP, MDP, PPD and headed now by Vasco Goncalves. It is subordinate in every way to the Military Revolutionary Council.
- PRP-BR** Proletarian Revolutionary Party was born out of the Revolutionary Brigades (BR) which as late as 9 April 1974 added another success to a three-year long campaign of sabotage and armed struggle by sinking a naval vessel about to sail for Guinea-Bissau. The PRP has been instrumental in the formation of the revolutionary workers councils.
- PS** Socialist Party, led by Mario Soares, and a member of the Second (social democrat) International, and therefore linked to the Labour Party.
- PSP** Para-military riot police, like the French CRS.
- PUP** marxist-leninist Popular Unity Party.
- UDP** marxist-leninist Popular Democratic Union.
- UNITA** Reformist Angolan liberation movement.
- URML** marxist-leninist Revolutionary Union
- Marcelo Caetano** - replaced long-time dictator Salazar in 1968 and experimented with timid forms of liberalisation. Exiled to Brazil.
- Otelo de Carvalho** - a major at the time of the 25 April coup, which he commanded, is now military governor of Lisbon and head of COPCON.
- Costa Gomes** - an old time mate of Spinoia, now President.
- Antonio Rosa Coutinho** - prominent member of the MFA, linked to PCP.
- Vasco Goncalves** - Prime Minister, moderate and long time anti-Salazarist.
- Melo Atunes** - MFA man responsible for foreign affairs in Cabinet.
- Palma Carlos** - the first Prime Minister after 25 April, chosen by Spinoia. He was a conservative who tried to turn Spinoia into a De Gaulle in July 1974 and got the push from the MFA for his trouble.
- Salazar** - ran Portugal as a fascist state from 1926 till 1968.
- Mario Soares** - PS leader. Not a revolutionary!
- de Spinoia** - hero figure among wide sections of the armed forces because of his military record in Guinea-Bissau (he turned a potential catastrophe into a disaster) and because he argued publicly for a political solution to the colonies in his book, Portugal & the Future, in it he called for a military withdrawal. He was involved in the attempted coups of September 74 and March 75. He fled to exile in Brazil.

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## BIG FLAME

*Big Flame is a revolutionary socialist group. We have printed this pamphlet on Portugal (and one on Chile, Chile St) because it shows what can happen when an opportunity is taken where the creative revolutionary energy of the people is unleashed. We believe that this revolutionary energy exists in all countries, including our own.*

*We see it every time workers force their demands on management, tenants collectively win what they want from councils, women force the State to change its laws on contraception and abortion. This energy is, of course, present in the well-publicised strikes and occupations of car workers and miners. But it is also present in the less well-known struggles of local women fighting for a new nursery, of small factories that are occupied, of hospitals being forced to ban private patients, of residents forcing dangerous factories to close down.*

*In Big Flame, we believe that if the revolutionary process is to be successful these forgotten struggles will have to be included in the collective memory of the class.*

*So, when we talk of "vanguards of the class", we mean all sections of the working class who are in struggle, not just those powerful now at the point of production. We see Big Flame's role as contributing as much as we can to the bringing together of these class vanguards. We believe that this coming together and our victories at the expense of capitalism, are the revolutionary process. We do not think that a revolutionary party can be created by a few left-wing militants deciding to call themselves a party. Rather, we think that a revolutionary party will come about only when the different vanguards of the class are fighting on a unified programme.*

*Unlike other left-wing groups, Big Flame does not have a master figure to refer to for our ideas, theory, historical interpretation. We are not maoists, or Stalinists or trotskyists.*

*We see ourselves as inheriting a revolutionary tradition which includes many revolutionaries, but we see their writings as the collective voice of the particular period of class struggle they were involved in. It's a tradition which also includes the revolutionary actions of working class people throughout history. Most recently, it includes May '68 in France, Autumn '69 in Italy, Chile 1970-73, and Portugal today. It is for this that we have put together this pamphlet. We hope it is of use.*

*Big Flame groups exist in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. We are active in hospitals, car and other factories, among students, housewives and tenants. We also work in the Troops Out movement and Chile Solidarity Campaign. Ireland, Car, Work Place and Womens Commissions exist to coordinate our work nationally.*

*Copies of this pamphlet (and our other publications) can be obtained from Bookshop 632, Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, price 30p. including postage.*

There are Big Flame groups in:

<b>BIRMINGHAM</b>	632 Bristol Road, Selly Oak. 021-472-7019
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# OUR COMMON STRUGGLE

As we finish this pamphlet, it is becoming clear that international capitalism is trying to construct a strategy that will able it to prevent the continuing move to the left of Portugal and its ex-colonies.

In Africa, the strategy of imperialism is clearer;

1. to support the pro-imperialist 'liberation' movements in the Azores, Sao Tome and Principe.
2. to support the pro-imperialist movement (the FLEC) that wants Cabinda, which is where the oil is, to secede from Angola.
3. to support the FLNA and UNITA movements against the left-wing MPLA.



All these plots will be backed by the military might of imperialism in the hope that they can check the victories of the anti-imperialist forces in the African continent. In the meantime, the imperialists are co-ordinating their strategy with South Africa, which with Zaire is the main agent for imperialism on the continent.

As far as a strategy for Iberia goes, the imperialists are divided. The Yankees want Spain in NATO, Portugal out of NATO and preparations for an invasion of Portugal. For this reason they are helping the Portuguese Army of Liberation (the ELP) and the Spanish 'Fighters of Christ the King' who are savagely murdering Basque militants in Spain and France (with the co-operation of the French cops). The U'S' ambassador in Lisbon, Carlucci,

is a specialist in counter-revolutionary subversion. He operated in the Congo at the time of Lumumba's murder (connected with Zaire breaking away) and in Brazil between 1965-69 when thousands of militants were tortured and murdered. The other NATO countries are not keen on too close an alliance with Spain and are still hoping that social-democracy (Soares) will be able to regain control of the situation in Portugal. For this reason the 'Guardian' whines about the 'end of democracy in Portugal' although it did not complain of 50 years of cruel fascism.

This division in the imperialist forces and the fact that the Yankees' arrogance and self-assurance has been smashed for a while by the heroic victories of the



people of Indochina, gives the Portuguese revolutionary process time to strengthen itself. But there can be no doubt that as it becomes clear that Soares is a general without an army, the hawks in NATO will press for an intervention.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

The April edition of *Our Common Struggle*, the bulletin of the Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee, announced the launching of a solidarity campaign with the Portuguese working class. They say, *The Solidarity Campaign provides a base in Britain for mass organisation against the threat of NATO intervention or an economic boycott of Portugal, and to forge closer links between workers in Britain and Portugal.*  
PWCC 18 Fleet Road London NW3

**Take the first step and affiliate to the Campaign now.**

**A defeat of the Portuguese Working Class is a defeat for the whole of the labour movement in Europe.**

- NO ECONOMIC BOYCOTT
- BIG BUSINESS, NATO, CIA — HANDS OFF PORTUGAL!
- PORTUGAL WILL NOT BECOME ANOTHER CHILE
- SUPPORT THE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH THE PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS

# CHRONOLOGY 74/5

Demonstration  
of 7th Feb.

Although our chronology begins in early 1974, we think we should record some of the actions which helped to bring down the fascist regime of Marcello Caetano.

Of the military actions, we should single out—

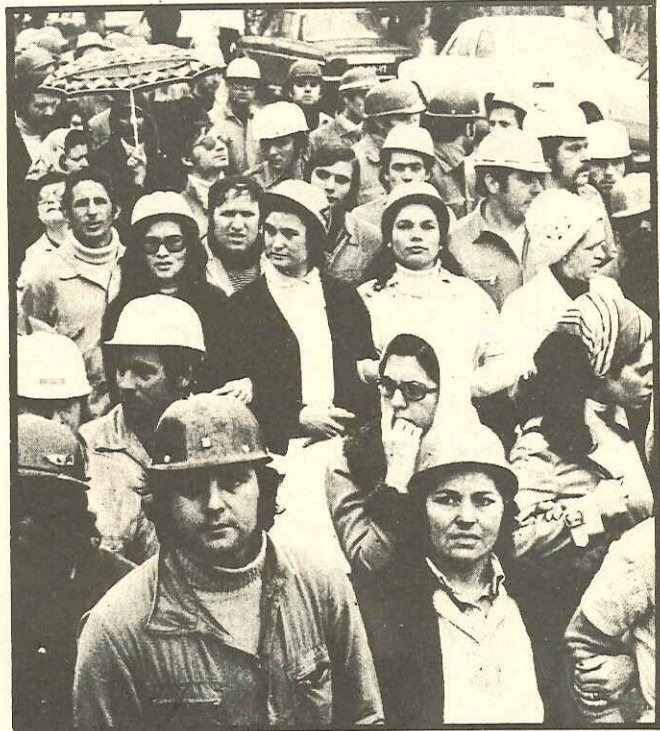
- 1961 the seizure of the liner Santa Maria on the high seas by anti-fascist army officers.
- 1971 the destruction of a secret NATO communications centre outside Lisbon, the first action carried out by units of the Revolutionary Brigades (now part of the revolutionary organisation, PRP, the Proletarian Revolutionary Party).
- 1974 the forerunner of 25 April: the unsuccessful advance on Lisbon by a military column under the command of Spinoist army officers.

A long list of important working class and peasant struggles against fascism could begin in

- 1934 general strike in the Northern town of Marinha Grande.
- 1962 100,000 workers and students defy the law banning demonstrations; agriculture workers win an eight hour day.
- 1968 the year Caetano replaces Salazar (42 years as dictator) as well as the year of the transport workers strike in the British-owned firm, Carris; bus and tram conductors refuse to collect any fares (they repeat the tactic in Spring 1974).
- 1969 January: mass strike wave sweeps industrial centres November: 5,000 shipyard workers occupy Lisnave yards, Lisbon.
- 1970 Beginning of the factory and work-place workers councils. Attempting to tie up workers' struggle Caetano allows first free elections for executives of the fascist trade unions. When the result is a left-wing take-over of 18 unions, government quickly invalidates the results. Then, shop bank, textile and engineering workers set up a joint body to fight for free elections, the Intersindical, which reflects the PCP's strength in the industrial working class.

And, finally, shortly after the Middle East war in October 1974, there begins a national strike wave which has hardly subsided before...

- April 21 Mozambique: FRELIMO attack threatens road and rail communications between the capital, Lourenco Marques and the main port, Beira.
- April 25 In a coup organised by the Armed Forces Movement, the Caetano regime comes to a sudden end. The junior officers of the MFA announce a programme of social change to wipe out inequalities and backwardness, and promise free national elections within the year. An ex-colonial governor and army general, de Spinoist, agrees to become President, and a Junta of National Salvation of senior officers is set up.
- April 26 The DGS, alias the PIDE, the secret police, is disbanded. All political prisoners are released.
- April 29 700 naval officers meet and decide to purge 82 admirals, supporters of the old regime.
- May 1 Led by the leaders of the PCP and the PS, lately back from years of exile in Prague and Vienna, 100,000's march through Lisbon in May Day celebrated with red carnations and the chant of 'A People United Will Never be Defeated'.
- May 7 Three women writers, the so-called Three Marias, are acquitted of obscenity charges over their book, *New Portuguese Letters*, which deals with the brutalisation of women in Portugal. The charges were laid before 25 April.
- May 9 Provisional Government set up, including the leaders of the PCP and the PS, Cunhal and Soares.
- May 29 Spinoist warns that the upsurge of political and labour unrest could lead to an authoritarian clamp-down.
- May 30 Intersindical leaders help to stop strikes by shipyard and bank workers, and to break strikes by bakers, bus and tram crews and fishermen; PCP begins to attack 'ultra-



- left provocateurs' who aim to re-establish fascism.
- July 9 The Prime Minister resigns after he fails to win MFA and Junta to need for greater governmental powers and for presidential elections within 3 months to establish Spinoist's authority. He also suggested postponing national elections for a year to allow the right wing parties time to find their feet.
- July 12 Government crisis resolved with selection of Vasco Goncalves, an MFA moderate, as Prime Minister; Spinoist's own candidate is rejected by the MFA. COPCON, a new centralised command system for all the Portuguese forces (some units are placed on standby for use as security force), is set up under the control of Otelo de Carvalho, one of the leaders of 25 April coup.
- July 17 Cyprus: Makarios Government overthrown in a Greek-backed attempt to make the island safer for US imperialism.
- July 20 Cyprus: Turkey invades and rapidly occupies half the island; the puppet regime of Sampson disappears. 2 Officers, MES supporters, arrested for refusing to intervene against postal workers strike.
- July 21 Post Office strike ends with PCP slanders at a high pitch and the Government threatening military occupation.
- July 25 Merchant seamen's oil tanker go-slow ends when the Government threatens to mobilise them into the Navy. Greece: In the aftermath of the Cyprus failure, the 7 year old Colonel's regime is replaced by a civilian caretaker administration under Karamanlis, pledged to holding free elections. (The uncertain situation in Cyprus added to the tension between Greece and Turkey has left the East Mediterranean end of NATO in poor shape — fortunately.)
- July 27 Much against his will, Spinoist is compelled by the MFA to pronounce for immediate independence for all the colonies, following a reshuffle of the Provisional Govt. which strengthens the left of the MFA.
- August 2 Portugal recognises its former colony, Guinea-Bissau, as an independent republic.
- August 5 *Luta Popular*, newspaper of the marxist-leninist group, the MRPP (Movement for the Reorganisation of the Proletarian Party), falls foul of the new press law with its outspoken attacks on the MFA and Spinoist. It is suspended indefinitely, but in fact continues to appear.
- August 8 USA: President Nixon resigns over Watergate affair.



**August 12** Hundreds of PIDE agents detained in Caxias Prison, Lisbon, riot and it look as if they will get free, with the aid of the riot police, the PSP, who charge an anti-PIDE demonstration at the prison gates. But COPCON moves in and the PIDE are locked up again.

**August 15** Government bans a demonstration in solidarity with MPLA and calling for immediate independence for Mozambique. The PSP open fire and one demonstrator dies.

**August 27** Maintenance workers of TAP, the national airline, go on strike demanding the purging of fascists from the management.

**August 29** New strike law outlaws occupations and sets up a 30 day cooling off period before strikes can begin; it is rarely enforced after the next month or so.

**Sept. 6** *Lusaka: Agreement signed in Zambian capital gives independence to Mozambique.*

**Sept. 8** *Lourenco Marques: short-lived white settler revolt against Lusaka agreement put down by Portuguese and FRELIMO forces.*

**Sept. 12** Thousands of Lisnave workers defy the Government, the PCP, the Intersindical and a cordon of troops to march through Lisbon to demand the purging of all fascists.

**Sept. 23** Supported by thousands of other workers, the TAP men demonstrate against military intervention in their strike.

**Sept. 27** 17 days after Spinola called for support for his moderate policies from what he calls the 'silent majority', workers throw up barricades on all main Lisbon approaches to prevent the entrance of arms and fascists who it is later revealed plan to use Spinola's Silent Majority rally the next day as cover for a coup.

**Sept. 28** Under pressure from the working class, and the armed left groups, the MFA acts against the Silent Majority rally, banning it and arresting dozens of plotters.

**Sept. 30** Following the arrest of many close associates, Spinola resigns and is replaced as President by his close buddy, General Costa Gomes.

**Oct. 11** Council workers sit-in at Santarem administrative centre (demands: 40 hours, £25 minimum and purges) broken by COPCON.

**Dec. 11** 400 officer cadets demoted to the ranks for going on hunger strike in support of 8 cadets arrested after attending revolutionary meeting.

**Dec. 13** US agrees to supply \$75m. aid for housing, education, health, transport and agriculture.

1975

**Jan. 14** 80,000 demonstrate in Lisbon for a single trade union, federation, Intersindical, as PS and PPD fight for separate political federations.

**Jan. 15** Angolan independence agreed as from 11 November.

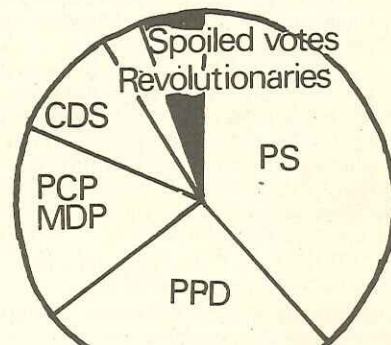
**Jan. 20** Government votes for single union federation.

**Jan. 26** CDS (right wing party) rally in Oporto attacked by left. British Tory delegates escape to tell their tales.

**Feb. 7** As NATO exercise off Portugal ends, 40,000 in march organised by Inter-empresa (committee linking about 40 workers councils in Lisbon area) denounce unemployment and NATO.

**Feb. 9** 30,000 farm workers gather in Southern town of (in Alentejo region, traditional base of the PCP) to demand the confiscation of properties of anybody

- Feb. 18** Government reaches agreement with Vatican on new divorce rights for Church marriages.
- Feb. 21** With elections due on 12 April, MFA postpones start of campaign to lessen chances of disorder.
- March 7** Police kill one demonstrator in clash outside PPD rally in the industrial centre of Setubal, South-West of Lisbon
- March 11** Attempted coup fails after half-hearted air attack on barracks of 1st Light Artillery Regiment (RAL 1, the 'red' regiment), outside Lisbon. Spinola, General Galvao de Melo flee to exile and Sanches Osorio, minister in the first Provisional Government and leader of the PDC (Christian Democratic Party) disappears (de Melo is arrested on the Spanish border).
- March 12** Meeting of the National Junta (less de Melo!), and the MFA's coordinating committee and general assembly decides to disband all three bodies and to set up in their place a Supreme Revolutionary Council. The general assembly will be reformed to give representation to the NCO's and other ranks. Also decided to disarm the GNR of its more lethal weapons.
- March 14** With the banks taken over by the workers, the Government decides to nationalise all banks other foreign-owned and agricultural credit institutions, as well as insurance companies (except foreign-owned).
- March 18** Three parties banned from election campaign - PDC; MRPP and AOC, on the left - and elections put off till 25 April. 4000 MRPP supporters defy ban and demonstrate in Lisbon.
- March 20** *As right-wing US Senator James Buckley calls Portugal the most dangerous communist threat to the West and calls on President Ford to consider ways of keeping her within the Western fold, there are reports of NATO manoeuvres around Portugal, including Green Jackets alert for possible mobilisation for Portugal.*
- March 25** 4th Provisional Government; Soares loses foreign ministry to Major Melo Antunes.
- March 28** MRPP banned for refusing to remove hammer and sickle emblem from banners (PCP says that it causes confusion with theirs). More than 75 MRPP's arrested in March and April.
- April 17** *Khmer Rouge occupies Phnom Penh, ending war in Cambodia.*
- April 19** 2 day Lisbon Congress to set up revolutionary workers councils, organised by PRP.
- April 25** 6 million vote in elections for constituent assembly, although everyone knows that the MFA intends to hang on to effective power for the foreseeable future.



Proportions of the Vote for each Party

- May 1** Mario Soares makes unsuccessful attempt to speak at May Day rally organised by Intersindical and PCP. *Saigon taken by Viet Cong.*
  - May 6** Soares and Cunhal meet to discuss differences.
  - May 20** Communist Party printworkers on the traditionally PS daily, *Republica*, take the paper over, but MFA closes it down and both sides produce pirate editions.
  - May 29** Vasco Goncalves tries to reassure NATO summit about Portugal's good intentions, whilst Neto leader of the MPLA, denounces the MFA's criminal failure to act in Angola against FNLA provocations.
- COPCON raids the offices of MRPP and carries out dozens of arrests.

# TOWARDS THE REVOLUTION



'Thank you, army', says the slogan on the gun. But it's not so simple a year later. The armed forces have become a political battleground: soldiers fighting against officers' privileges; supporters of Cuban-style Committees for the Defence of the Revolution v. supporters of Revolutionary Workers Councils.

## YEAR ONE

### WHY PORTUGAL MATTERS

Now that Portugal has taken a route which may lead to socialism, we no longer hear the drivel about 'our oldest ally' which was current when Caetano, the prime minister of Europe's oldest fascist regime, made his state visit to see the Queen. Of course, it is true that for several hundred years Portugal was almost a British colony, supplying our aristocracy with fine vintage port in return for military support against Napoleonic France. One result of that link is that Britain is one of the main importers of Portuguese goods (Marks and Spencer have their shirts made there), as well as being one of the main sources of investment in Portugal.

The anxiety of the British capitalists for their Portuguese investments has grown steady in the months since the overthrowing of fascism by the military coup of 25 April 1974. Textiles, the port producers and property have all been threatened by the growth of Portuguese working class power. Strikes and occupations have occurred in British-owned factories like Plessey. One result of this may be to have closed Portugal as an escape route for British capitalists who want to transfer production to somewhere where labour is cheaper and more easily disciplined.

There are others. The prospect of a victory for communism in Portugal coming so soon after the setbacks to American imperialism in South East Asia and around the Mediterranean, is already proving to be very unsettling for the British ruling class. Their nerve is already strained and the idea that Portu-

gal could set off a wave of capitalist defeats in Europe is very worrying for them. If they lose their confidence about their future, their demoralisation may aid our victory here.

Finally, Portugal matters to us because we know that the struggle which is developing there cannot only teach us a lot, but act as an encouragement to us in our fight as well.

### THE DOMINO WORKS

There is abundant evidence that what happens in Portugal is a cause for great concern for capitalism and its armed forces. In fact, now that Portuguese capitalism itself is in retreat, we can say that the main military threat to the revolution there is no longer internal. Just before the last attempted coup on 11 March, seven thousand unidentified troops landed at the US Navy base of Rota in southern Spain (the editor of the Spanish newspaper who published this news has been imprisoned); two RAF squadrons were put on alert, together with army units, whilst NATO ships carried out exercises off the Portuguese coast. It seems that the role of the unsuccessful rising was to provide a pretext for NATO forces to enter the country to prevent a threat to their nationals and their property. But the coup was squashed too fast for there to be time for a military intervention. It may not happen like this again.

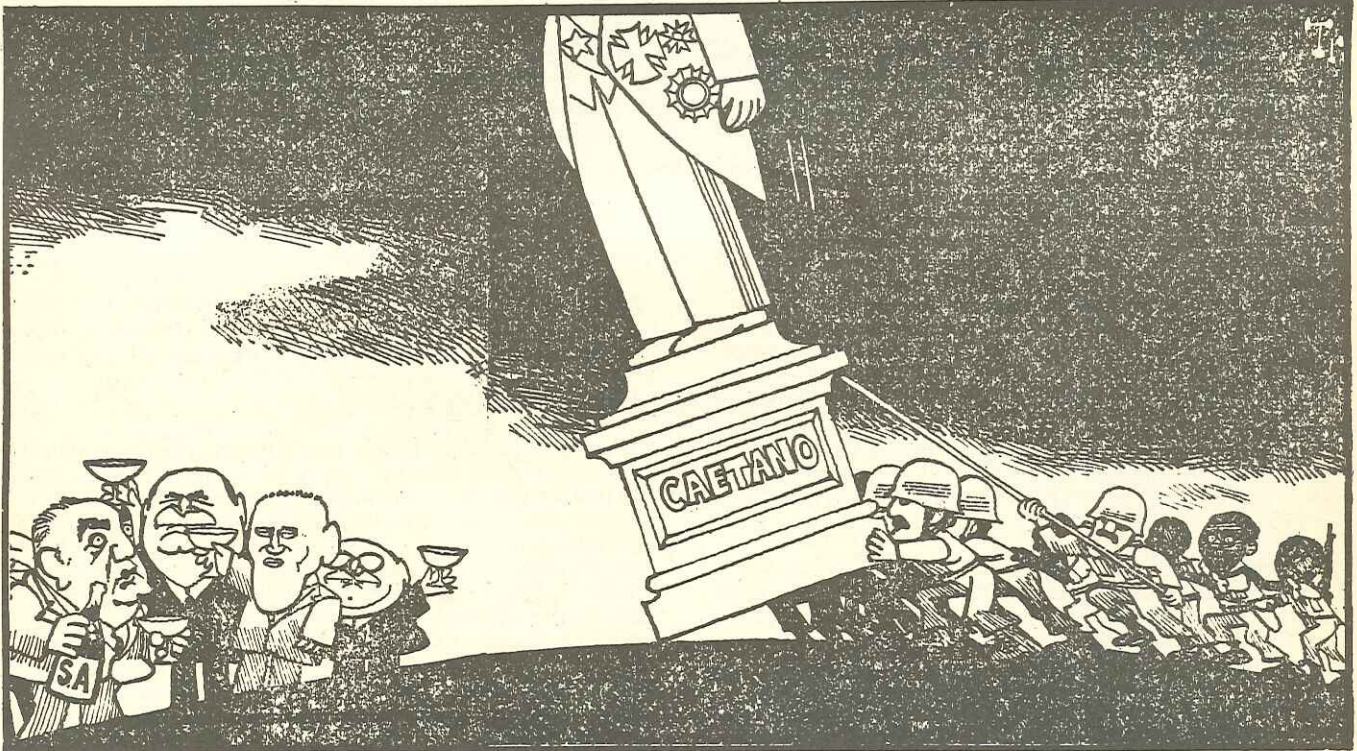
The next attempt is likely to be more carefully prepared because in the weeks which have passed since March, the US has suffered its worst setback since the Cuban revolution, with the victory of communist forces first in Cambodia,

then in rapid succession in Vietnam, Laos, and maybe soon in Thailand. One of the strongest arguments advanced for its involvement in Vietnam by the Pentagon was exactly that if the US pulled out of the war a communist victory could quickly spread throughout South East Asia. This was called the domino theory. And now the whole world knows its true.

It takes little imagination to see that the domino could work in Europe too. In the past year, the imperialist alliance around the Mediterranean has started to crumble. Since the abortive Greek invasion of Cyprus last August, first Cyprus, then Greece and Turkey have loosened the grip of NATO. (Cyprus is no longer a secure military base. Military aid has been cut off from Turkey for its counter-invasion of the island; and the new Greek government has given the US its marching orders from its bases there:)

Two other European members of NATO, other than Portugal, are considered by the US military planners to be at risk to communism because of the weakness of their economies and the strength of their working class – Italy and Britain. In addition, Spain, which the US would like to see in NATO instead of Portugal, could very easily take the same road as Portugal. So, if the domino theory is proved correct in Europe, it could mean the end of not just NATO, but capitalism itself, leaving the US isolated in the world. This is why US and European capitalism cannot allow 'Portuguese to go communist because of their irresponsibility of its people', as Henry Kissinger once remarked about Chile.

It's worth remembering that the immediate cause of the military coup of 25 April 1974 in Portugal was the success of the liberation forces in the colonies against the Portuguese army. One of the first acts of the new Portuguese regime was to grant independence to its former colonies. The consequence of this was to begin another domino effect in Africa. Imperialism has abandoned its fight for Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, but it refuses to give up the oil and mineral wealth of Angola without a struggle. That is why it has backed the phoney liberation movement, the FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, against the left-wing MPLA. If there is a civil war in Angola this year, it will be because of this intervention.



It is clear too that if the MPLA does take power in Angola, South Africa's days as the bastion of white capitalist 'civilisation' in Africa will be numbered. Already, as a result of events in Mozambique, South Africa has been compelled to withdraw its military support for Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) as the price of reaching a temporary truce with black Africa.

One lesson of all this for us in Britain is that we must begin to build here a solidarity movement with the Portuguese working class, and try to prevent our NATO forces from being used to install a right wing regime in Portugal. We have learnt a lot from what happened in Chile to know that imperialism may use other than the most blatant military means for defeating the working class. For the moment, the imperialist forces will step up their economic sabotage of Portugal in the hope that this will create confusion amongst the less conscious sections of the working class, as it did in Chile, and perhaps lead to a strengthening of the pro-capitalist forces: the remaining capitalists, the leaders of the Socialist Party, and the social democratic PPD, as well as among some of the military.

Today, in Portugal, they are using the methods they perfected in Chile: a strike of production and investment – moving capital and plant out of the country, which can lead to shortages, inflation, black marketeering and social unrest. But, as we shall see later, the Portuguese working class has also learnt the lessons of Chile and is taking steps to ensure that these methods of sabotage will not work again.

## THE RESULTS OF 25 APRIL

To understand how we've reached this situation, we should look at developments in Portugal since the overthrowing of fascism last year. The military coup, which took place on 25 April, was organised by a group of young army officers, together with colleagues in the Navy and Air Force. They did it to rid their country of a regime which had led them into a disastrous war in Africa, to which they saw there was only one political solution – independence for the colonies – which had milked the home economy and condemned the majority of the people to low wages and appalling living standards; long years of dangerous military service for the men, or, alternatively, to exile abroad as immigrant workers in scarcely better conditions.

These officers, organised as the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), announced a programme to the Portuguese people on 25 April which had two main points: (1) colonial independence and the immediate ending of the African wars, (2) the restoration of democratic freedoms and the creation

of a kind of welfare state with the resources saved from the war.

These officers, who formed a small proportion of the total officer corps, had in mind for Portugal the creation of a more just society, which would allow the one and a half million



Portuguese living abroad to return to live decently, and most of them believed that such a society could be similar to the other capitalist societies in Europe with parliamentary regimes. So they also promised that within the year elections would be held to constitute a democratic civilian government. Few of them imagined that they had begun a process which would quickly lead to posing the question of whether the society they wanted could be a capitalist one.

But the immediate aftermath of the coup was an enormous wave of working class struggles which rapidly forced the first Provisional Government to raise the minimum wage. Another demand of this movement was for the purging of fascist managements and officials. The struggle for higher wages and purges posed the MFA and its government with a dilemma because it threatened both to go far beyond the officers' plans for restoring democracy and to undermine the basis of capitalism itself. After all, it could be said that every manager and official was a fascist supporter and if they were all purged then the capitalist class itself would be purged out of existence. All this was underlined by the widespread demand for workers' control, especially in factories which were subsidiaries of multinational corporations who threatened to move their factories abroad. Wage demands tended to be fantastic and seemed likely to wipe out the attraction of cheap Portuguese labour for foreign capitalists. In short, the workers' movement which had been set in motion by the coup was tending to put in question the existence of capitalism.

The MFA's response to this was twofold. On the one hand, strikes and occupations, especially in essential industries, were increasingly met with by military intervention; striking postal workers were threatened with conscription if they persisted. On the other hand, plans were laid to make the working class struggle more orderly by setting up means for negotiation, and by beginning to establish some form of parliamentary system.

This is not how things have turned out in Portugal for two main reasons. In the first place, the months after 25 April saw the working class flexing its muscles and gaining in confidence and understanding, after nearly fifty years of repression, so that the strongest sections refused to allow themselves to be defeated by the government. In September 1974 military occupation and arrests failed to stop the struggle of the TAP (Portuguese state airline) maintenance workers, and merely brought support from the backbone of the Lisbon industrial workers, the Lisnave shipyard workers, who came together in a demonstration through the city in defiance of the government, the Communist Party, and the troops sent to stop them.

It's important to realise that whilst in the early days of the new regime the MFA had represented in the main the officers, the growth of the working class movement was beginning to have repercussions in the barracks among the NCOs and ordinary soldiers and sailors. A certain reluctance was growing to involvement in military strikebreaking, and none of the soldiers sent to halt the Lisnave workers stood their ground when they heard the chants of 'soldiers - sons of the people' and 'a people united will never be defeated', the exultant slogan of the massive May Day demonstration of 1974.

The second reason is that the speeding up in the momentum of the development of the mass working class movement was seized on by the right wing and the supporters of the deposed Caetano regime to attempt to carry out a counter-coup early in September 1974. The aim of the coup was to check the advance of communism, dismember the left of the MFA, and strengthen the position of the President, Spínola.

The failure of the coup brought about a large shift in the balance of class forces. Spínola, the best hope for the right, resigned; many officers and businessmen implicated in the attempted coup fled abroad or were arrested. The balance inside the MFA also shifted strongly to the left.

The working class was given a boost by the failure of the coup, partly because of the mass mobilisations of civilians

to prevent the entry of right wing forces into Lisbon. On the night of 27 September, armed members of the workers' organisations had thrown up road blocks on all the approach roads to the city.

The fact that the coup had even been attempted meant a setback for those in the working class and the MFA who had envisaged a peaceful transition to a democratic parliamentary form of capitalism after fifty years of capitalism. It had become clear that certain sections of Portuguese capitalism constituted a formidable obstacle to such a prospect. They would fight to the end against any weakening of their economic and political power.

## WORKING CLASS POWER

The unsuccessful coup of 11 March had similar effects to the September revolt, only more so. The difference was that this time Spínola was forced to flee to political asylum in Brazil, where he rejoined the exiled Caetano.

The 11 March produced a backlash against the capitalist order. The bosses of the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies were arrested or escaped abroad and their possessions were nationalised. The two biggest monopolies, CUF and Champalimaud, and the banks and insurance companies were taken over by the workers and then the nationalisation was made official by the government. Hundreds of officers were arrested or retired from service. Even more than in September, members of the left organisations and the workers' movement were prominent in the rapid defeat of the coup and in the arrests which followed: without the rapid initiatives of the workers' organisations, it's possible that things might have gone differently because on both occasions the MFA's response was sluggish.



11 March 1975: armed workers' check-point on northern Lisbon highways.

The aftermath of the coup saw a new wave of strikes and occupations, as the working class went on the offensive against the capitalist class. Unoccupied villas were taken over for use by the people as nurseries, health centres, leisure centres, libraries and places to live. In the countryside, aided by the revolutionary armed brigades - PRP and LUAR - the workers and their families occupied the great estates. Large sections of industry and agriculture were taken out of the control of the capitalists and run by the workers or nationalised under the control of the state and the MFA.

Another vital consequence of 11 March is the acceleration of the revolution inside the armed forces, with the broadening of the MFA's decision-making institutions to include the NCOs and soldiers. Under pressure from the base, profound changes are taking place in the MFA's thinking. The role of the armed forces themselves is being re-thought. Carvalho warns against the danger of NATO



intervention and argues that the army must transform itself into a guerilla force to counter the threat. Many in the MFA now see the job of the armed forces as protecting the development towards communism, and in helping to prepare the people for this. These ideas, together with the experience of the civilian mobilisations after 11 March, which the MFA encouraged, accelerate the growth of joint organisations of civilians and soldiers. The revolutionary organisation of the PRP calls a conference of soldiers, workers, housewives and students which begins to look like the workers and soldiers soviets which were the organisational form of the Russian revolutions of 1905, 1917 and of the failed Hungarian Revolution in 1956. These are definite steps towards ensuring that the armed forces will not be used to defeat the working class, as they were in Chile.

One result of the growth in working class power after 11 March is to prevent the establishment of the political bodies which are the norm in parliamentary capitalist societies like Britain and France. The clearest expression of this comes with the national elections of 25 April.

In a turn out of over ninety percent, the Socialist Party, led by Mario Soares, gained thirty-eight percent of the votes, and the social democratic PPD a further twenty-six percent. The Communist Party and its sister organisation the MDP won a total of under seventeen percent, and the parties further to the left picked up the rest between them. Of course, for the left to gain a majority and for the revolutionary left to win the votes of hundreds of thousands of people is extraordinary in the normal run of elections, even in Italy where the Communist Party is the second largest party after the Christian Democrats. And yet, it is clear that the election results do not really correspond to the reality of the power of the anti-capitalist working class movement in Portugal.

The election results show us the contrast between two different kinds of power – one expressed through the ballot box, and one through the struggle of the working class. The ballot box result is the one which tends to favour capitalism, always. Why is this?

In the first place it has to be remembered that in a country with no recent experience of free elections, much of the population, especially in the rural areas, have limited political understanding. In the countryside – in the north above all – peasants and farm workers are more open to the influence of the Church and the landowners than to the revolution. Second, the proportion of the population involved in the political developments of the past year has been small. The revolution, until now, has been primarily confined to the industrial centres in a society which is one of the most rural in all Europe.

The industrial working class, that section of the population which has had most to gain from the revolution and most involved in its development, is overall a minority. Its votes were shared between the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the organisations to the left. Many of these voters may very well have been involved in struggle and yet still reluctant to commit themselves to an anti-capitalist alternative. This has always been the nature of working class consciousness in a situation of profound political and social change. When, only weeks after ten million working class people had taken part in a wave of strikes and occupations which shook capitalism to its roots in May 1968, De Gaulle called an election as a vote of confidence in himself, the result was a resounding victory for him and a defeat of the left. In Chile, too, the Socialist President, Salvador Allende, never managed to gain an electoral majority even at a time when the strength of the working class was unprecedented.

The working class always builds its power through struggle, not by delegating that power to others. This is why the capitalists always resort to the ballot box when their power is fundamentally challenged by the working class. It is also why we say that the revolution cannot be won by the ballot box. At best, and this is what we've seen in Portugal, a parliamentary socialist party will gain a majority, as the Labour Party did in Britain in 1945, 1950, 1964, 1966 and 1972. But that party will never be committed to a revolutionary programme. It will even be supported by some sections of

the capitalists themselves as the best way of bringing the working class to order, and to demobilise its struggle.

The Socialist Party emerged from the elections of the 25 April 1975 as the most popular party, but with its support drawn from two quite different class bases – from the capitalists, small businessmen, professional sections and officers, as well as from the working class. Given that its most left wing section, the FSP, had broken away to fight the elections independently on an anti-capitalist platform, the Socialist Party was now confirmed as the party of those sections which favoured the continuation of capitalism in Portugal.

Some other facts of Portuguese life have to be remembered too. In the first place, apart from the PCP, none of the parties has deep roots. Most are one year old. There is a great deal of confusion about politics, especially in the countryside. Many people may have voted socialist simply because this is the word that the MFA uses so frequently to describe its long-term goals.

### THE ARMED FORCES AND SOCIALISM

The situation of the armed forces in Portugal, as the whole situation, presents us with a new experience which doesn't fit too easily into any previous models that we may have taken from history. We have to try to examine this situation without too many blinkering preconceptions.



Workers demonstrate against right-wing parties.

The armed forces has undergone a lightning politicisation in the space of little more than a year. In the beginning, the MFA's programme was written by men who believed that they could relieve their country of its political and social backwardness. It's only recently that they've learnt that their original aims could not be put into effect in a capitalist economy simply because any marked shift of economic and political power away from the capitalists would be bitterly resisted by some sections of the ruling class. So, rapidly they have come to see that the choice lies between a kind of state-managed capitalism, but capitalism nonetheless, and revolutionary socialism – direct workers' control at every level of society.

It would be wrong to say that the whole of the MFA has come to these conclusions, and equally wrong to believe that there is no longer any possibility of the Portuguese armed forces taking part in a Chilean type defeat of the working class. At the same time, it won't do to try to understand them as a kind of Peruvian or Ethiopian or Egyptian military regime.

That this is true should be clear from some of the articles about the armed forces published here. Some sections of the armed forces have obviously gone so far in their commitment to the revolution that it is nonsense to suggest that they could ever save their skins in the event of a foreign-backed right wing coup. This applies particularly to the 1st ('red') Light Artillery Regiment of Lisbon (RAL1), which bore the brunt of the assault of the counter-coup on 11 March. The member of this regiment are involved in a process of politicisation which includes the officers and involves the deepening of links with the revolutionary left: links which were forged at the time of the 11 March. It also applies to officers like Carvalho who have made public their own commitment to the revolution and want to transform the armed forces into a people's militia.

As time has gone on, COPCON, the MFA's security unit, has become less and less willing to take part in interventions against strikes and occupations. Many military units have instead turned themselves into agents in the popular education campaign, which is aimed at bringing the revolution to the darkest corners of rural Portugal, to counteract the effects of half a century of fascism and centuries of almost feudal conditions under the influence of the Church and the landowners. And after some units made their offer on 11 March to arm the people, and the armed brigades have openly liaised with the soldiers, it is no wonder that the slogan of the first May Day has now been altered to 'an armed people will never be defeated'.

### STATE CAPITALISM v. WORKING CLASS POWER

The first edition of the MFA's newspaper, *Movimento*, after the April elections declares: 'In the current phase of the revolutionary process, there has to be set up at all levels structures through which the people can participate directly in the exercise of political power, in the running of the administration and the economy. Popular power has to be developed at local, regional, factory and district levels, in the agricultural areas and in the cities . . . In fact, democratic socialism is not formal voting plus nationalisation, instead it is popular power forged by the action of the masses and the organised working class, exercised through democratic and revolutionary structures that relate to the various bodies of the state.'

This statement is a measure of the distance that the left of the MFA has travelled since 25 April last year. It also expresses sharply the difference between the perspectives offered by the revolutionary wing of the working class and the reformism of the Socialist Party.

Capitalism is close to extinction in Portugal. The momentum of the anti-capitalist movement now threatens to wipe out the whole basis of the class society.

In case Portuguese workers are confused about the real difference between nationalisation and workers' power in a socialist economy, the PCP and the PCP-dominated Inter-sindical (TUC) have been making it crystal clear. Whilst they support strikes and workers' demands in private industry and against the landowners, they are hostile to similar activities in nationalised industries – now about sixty-five to seventy percent of all the economy – and criticise them in the name of the MFA's 'Battle for Production'. They ask the working class to believe that a nationalised industry is somehow their own.

But even one hundred per cent nationalisation doesn't equal socialism unless the whole economy is directly controlled by the workers so that goods and services are produced according to the needs expressed by the working class as a whole. This would mean that Portugal would have to cut itself off from normal international capitalist trading relationships – taking over all foreign capital and refusing to honour debts abroad.

It would also involve changes in the organisation of work in the whole economy – abolition of the traditional hierarchy and grading differences in the workplace; equalisation of wages; ending all the social, sexual and racial divisions which capitalism has imposed on the working class for its own benefit.

## FINALLY, THE QUESTION OF POWER

After two attempted right-wing coups, and the everlasting danger of others, what should be obvious is that workers' power cannot be established over the economy unless at the same time it is felt as state power. It would be tragically mistaken to believe that Portuguese capitalism will bow out when the last factory or the last great estate is taken over by the working class.

In there is any state organisation still under its control which can be used against the Portuguese revolution, capitalism will use it. And if there isn't, it won't shrink from armed invasion by NATO. Cuba coped with this eventuality - the Bay of Pigs landing in 1961 - partly because its armed forces were already committed to the new revolutionary order. But that isn't the situation in Portugal today.

The purging of fascists has been far from thoroughgoing, except in the Navy and in press and TV. The MFA militants have been reluctant to allow the purges to go too far for fear of antagonising the moderates in the MFA, and perhaps therefore forcing them into the arms of the right. We can see that the attempted coups have come about when the moderates felt most threatened by the campaign for purges. But we should also see that it is the working class which has been the leader in pushing forward the purges, and in pushing the MFA to the left. After 11 March, the MFA was forced to change its three-year economic plan when workers took over the banks. Suddenly, nationalisation of the banks and insurance, which only weeks before had been defeated in the MFA general assembly, was a matter of fact.

Again, the civilian armed brigades - of the PCP, LUAR UAR and PRP - seized the initiative on 27 September and 11 March when the armed forces wavered before the right-wing threat, and set up road blocks around the capital. It was then, and only then, that some MFA officers talked about arming the masses. Looking back, we can see that it is the mass initiatives - the strike waves, the occupations, the road-blocks, the arrests of fascists - which have pushed the MFA further to the left, as well as uniting the working class at a new level of political consciousness.

It is the old tactical lesson amply proven - that if the left takes the initiative, it can not only defeat its enemies but also unite its own forces.

The consequence is that, where the left is strong, the purge has been most thorough, and vice versa. As a result, some of the strongholds of fascism are still almost intact. To begin at the top, the President of the Republic, Costa Gomes, possesses three impressive reactionary qualifications: he is an old friend of Spínola (with whom he still consorted until the latter fled to exile); he is an ex-junior military minister under Salazar, and he was once commander of the GNR, the right wing National Republican Guard.

It was to the GNR's Lisbon barracks that Caetano fled on 25 April. And it was to the same barracks that one of the leaders of the 11 March coup went to take over command of the GNR. It was the GNR who connived at the break out of PIDE agents from Caxias prison on 12 August. Also relatively untouched by the purges is the PSP - the riot police.

To all these, we must add several thousand officers who didn't belong to the MFA, and the many thousands of NCOs and other ranks who might be prepared to follow them if an opportunity presented itself. And we must take into account the balance of forces within the MFA itself. Apart from the most forceful section, which is already committed to the revolution, there are powerful groups who believe that there are slower routes to the same point. Some of these support the PS, some back the PCP. What the last two groups have in common is their failure to understand that it is the speed of development of working class power which is the key to everything in Portugal today.

What could hold up that development - and the best hope for all those who want to halt the revolutionary process in Portugal - are the parties which won the most votes in the elections; the PS and the PPD. Both are strongly tied to

social democracy. Soares, in particular, has received a lot of support not only from his political allies abroad - Callaghan, Schmidt and other prominent social democrats - but also from right-wing capitalists.

Some of the PS' electoral support has come from working-class people who have been put off by the PCP. Its constant strike-breaking, its attempts to use the intersindical its crude attempts to censor the press have disillusioned and confused many working-class people.

The CP totally over-estimated the electoral support it would gain and now is trying to avoid the consequences of its electoral defeat, but at the same time it has to try and make sure that it is not out flanked on the left by the development of grass-root organs of power.

As the PCP has been trying to decide whether or not it wants to form a popular front with the PS, the marxist-leninists of the MRPP have used the situation to attempt to rupture relations between the PCP and the MFA.

Up till now, the situation has been that the moderates in the MFA have been close to the PCP whilst the left-wing of the MFA (elements in COPCON such as RAL 1) has been close to the revolutionary groups, LUAR and PRP. But as Carvalho makes clear in his interview, they have been able to work constructively together. The MRPP's actions in the last few days (end of May) have forced out into the open the divisions within the MFA in a situation where it is uncertain whether the left will win. What they did was to arrest soldiers and civilians whom they said were fascists. hold them for a while (torture them?) and then hand them over to RAL 1. They also accused some officers of being fascists.

It was obvious that the MFA could not accept this situation and although some of RAL 1 and Copcon supported the initiative of the MRPP, they had to accept the MFA majority decision to arrest MRPP leaders. It is quite clear that by its adventurist tactics and its purely tactical alliance with the SP, the MRPP has provided the PCP and its supporters in the MFA with a golden opportunity.

In the weeks to come, the PCP will be in a hurry to crush whatever opposition it can and to assert its control over the workers movement. In this situation, it is essential that the vanguards of the working-class come together with the vanguards inside the forces. As the wrangling between the PCP, the PS and the MRPP gets worse, there are more and more people in Portugal who are coming to see themselves as 'without party'.

At the general assembly of the MFA of May 26th, two projects were put forward. One by the moderates to create 'Councils for the defense of the Revolution' which would exist in factories and districts side by side with the existing mass organizations (the parties), the other by the left to create 'revolutionary councils of workers' that would be the organs of direct democracy in the factories, barracks, districts: they would control production, local government and also function as a local militia. The unions and the parties would be made redundant by this self-organization of the working class.

The danger of the PCP and the MRPP sectarianism is that it could easily rebound against the other revolutionary left groups. Some sections of the vanguard of the working class might decide, quite wrongly, that they can do without the political leadership these groups have provided and which has been so vital in the revolutionary process.

The job of these groups now is to provide a political alternative to the PCP, PS as well as the dogmatic marxist-leninists inside the mass vanguards of the working class. It is also to ensure that the class struggle within the armed forces doesn't falter and that it produces a strengthening of the left wing of the MFA away from the moderates in some units, and towards the revolutionary vanguards of the working class. These groups have a long way to go - their roots in the struggle are still fairly shallow - but we believe that they can help to maintain the revolutionary momentum which has already carried Portugal so far in little over a year.