

October 2, 1975

TO THE COORDINATORS OF THE LENINIST TROTSKYIST FACTION

Dear Comrades,

The Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction met at the end of August. Four points were on the agenda.

1. The draft resolution, "Key Issues in the Portuguese Revolution;"
2. A statement, "The Portuguese Revolution and the New Programs That Face the Fourth International;"
3. Applications for membership in the LTF;
4. Leadership relations and the functioning of the faction.

Enclosed are the two resolutions adopted unanimously by the Steering Committee. Both have been submitted to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin and will be printed shortly.

Comradely,

Ed Shaw

## The Key Issues in the Portuguese Revolution

[The following resolution was passed unanimously by the Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction at a meeting held August 30, 1975.]

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The opening of the Portuguese socialist revolution stands at present at the center of the international class struggle. A working-class victory in Portugal would sound the death knell of European capitalism and deal a staggering blow to the main powerhouse of international capitalism in the United States.

In view of the size and power of the Portuguese working class relative to the bourgeoisie and its reactionary contingents, why hasn't it already established its own government? The answer is that the Portuguese workers, like the workers in other countries, are faced with a "crisis of leadership," to cite Trotsky's words in the Transitional Program.

The crisis in leadership can be overcome only by the construction of a team of cadres capable of providing correct political guidance. The nucleus of such a team is very small in Portugal today. The prime problem is to expand that nucleus. This means constructing a revolutionary-socialist party in the very heat of the revolution.

Achievement of this difficult requisite demands, above all, a precise Marxist analysis of all the contending political forces, and, in particular, the political issues at the heart of the developing class struggle. The greatest possible concreteness is demanded. Instructive as analogies with other revolutions may be, they cannot take the place of analysis of the Portuguese events themselves and determination of their political meaning in the living context of national and international contending forces.

This resolution is intended as a contribution in that task, which is a collective responsibility of the world Trotskyist movement as a whole.

Of course, more than accurate analysis and political prognosis are required. Unless the small nucleus of Trotskyist forces in Portugal succeeds in taking full advantage of the openings provided by the revolution, they will not be able to expand sufficiently and at a swift enough rate to gain leadership of the revolutionary-minded masses.

Fortunately, the pattern of the Portuguese revolution favors their efforts. It is preeminently proletarian.

Among other things, this means that it is centered in the cities where the Trotskyists are also based, giving them extraordinary opportunities to spread their ideas among the radicalizing layers of workers.

In a developing revolution, the proletariat has enormous advantages. These include its economic and social weight, the power of its numbers when they move in unison, the effectiveness of its natural methods of organization and battle in the plants and in the streets, the radicalizing and mobilizing effect of its struggles on its allies in the city and countryside, and above all its inclination to move toward socialism, a trend clearly evident in Portugal today.

In accordance with this pattern, the Portuguese workers in their first upsurge began to organize militant unions and to establish workers control of industry. Action committees appeared in many factories, as did similar forms in the armed forces and in some neighborhoods, giving promise of the rise of soviets or comparable bodies. The direction of movement obviously favors the growth of Trotskyism.

Such phenomena, along with the universal determination among the masses to finish with Salazarism, or anything resembling it, and to establish a new governmental system capable of guaranteeing democracy as they understand it and want it, have provided striking confirmation of the correctness of the Transitional Program, which in 1938 outlined the logic of a rising proletarian revolution like the one in Portugal and noted the concomitant slogans and tasks facing the revolutionary Marxists.

By the same token, those Portuguese Trotskyists who have assimilated the lessons taught by Trotsky, above all in the Transitional Program, stand well prepared to tackle the key problem of resolving the crisis of leadership faced by the Portuguese working class and thereby assuring a victory of colossal importance to the workers on all continents.

### I. Bourgeois Calculations in the April 25 Coup

The April 25, 1974, military coup that toppled the Caetano dictatorship was an outcome of the conclusion drawn by Portuguese finance capital that neither their colonial empire nor the working class in their own country could be dominated any longer primarily by repressive means.

The Portuguese imperialists had at first resisted turning to neocolonial means to save their empire. As

rulers of the weakest of the imperialist powers both economically and politically, they sought to evade the cost of fostering and maintaining a neocolonial bourgeoisie. Moreover, their state apparatus appeared to have a tight grip on society. Thus, the Portuguese imperialists hoped to achieve by determination and ruthlessness what other imperialists with vastly greater resources chose not to attempt, or failed to achieve.

However, after more than a decade of savage war against the peoples in the colonies, the Portuguese imperialists found that the sword was incapable of cutting off the sources of the colonial revolution, which continued to mount. Even terror on the massive scale practiced in northern Angola was not sufficient to destroy the nationalist movements, in particular since they received support, and in some instances bases, from the surrounding Black African states.

Although the Portuguese imperialists managed for a time to contain the nationalist movements in the economically important colonies, this was insufficient to accomplish their objectives. They finally realized that they did not have the resources to sustain a large-scale military occupation of the colonies without undermining the bases of capitalist stability in Portugal itself. Nor could they get the necessary support from stronger imperialist powers to make up for their weakness.

Nonetheless, the sectors of the Portuguese ruling class who came to see the need for a change in policy faced grave difficulties in carrying it out. The regime had rested on corporatist repression for nearly half a century. Not only were substantial repressive forces such as the secret police and the riot police strongly intertwined with the regime but the economic interests of a swollen layer of backward petty capitalists and latifundists were bound up with the maintenance of this special repressive system. Furthermore, the Portuguese imperialists had waited too long to shift to neocolonialism; they faced well-organized mass nationalist movements deeply rooted in the populations of many colonies including Angola, the key piece of the empire. These movements were already substantial. With their long tradition of struggle, they could not be co-opted cheaply. Nor could the colonial masses, after long years of massive struggles and enormous sacrifices and suffering, be easily demobilized by small concessions.

So, Portuguese imperialism, which has always had an extraordinarily weak base, engaged in perhaps the most daring gamble in 500 years of Lusitanian expansionism. It moved to reorganize its forms of political and social control by violent means, by a military uprising against an entrenched layer of the state and political apparatus. A major indication of the line

of thinking of the ruling sector, was their decision to allow Spínola's book Portugal e o Futuro to be published in February 1974. The book became a best seller and helped provide the general with a revolutionary image. Through the subsequent coup, Spínola moved to disarm and neutralize a section of the ruling class itself by purging a considerable number of previously sacrosanct authorities. This not only disabled the police forces for a time, it was a violent shock to the habits of obedience instilled in the masses by almost fifty years of dictatorship modeled on fascist Italy and Spain.

The Portuguese capitalists did not embark on such an adventure without taking into account certain favorable conditions. Although they had failed to stop the rising radicalization among the workers and the youth, a powerful, organized mass movement had not yet formed in Portugal. Likewise, although the imperialist army had failed to crush the nationalist movements in the colonies and had suffered some defeats as well as significant losses, it had not been broken or decisively defeated.

The most favorable condition from the bourgeoisie's point of view was the absence of a mass revolutionary Marxist party in either Portugal or the colonies. The mass movement was dominated by dependable reformist elements. As it turned out, the assessment made by the Portuguese imperialist bourgeoisie of the reliability of the reformist workers parties proved to be accurate.

What Portugal's rulers underestimated was the power and extent of the mass upsurge that would be touched off both in Portugal and the colonies by the fall of Salazarism. They failed to gauge correctly the hopes this would inspire among the masses that they could finally gain their democratic right to think, to discuss, to make their own decisions, and to struggle to change their economic and social conditions and determine their own fate.

In the sweep of this mass radicalization, the bourgeoisie found it impossible to sufficiently reconsolidate its repressive apparatus, and was forced to permit far more widespread purges of rightist police and officials than it intended or than was compatible with the stability of bourgeois class rule. The pressure of the mass upsurge opened wider the cracks in the discipline of the armed forces resulting from growing unwillingness to continue the long and unsuccessful colonial war. As it deepened, this process threatened to shatter the armed forces as an instrument of the bourgeois state.

## 2. The Armed Forces Movement -- a Bourgeois Instrument

The instrument on which the imperialist bourgeoisie relied to remove the Caetano regime and to carry out the needed political reorganization was the Armed Forces Movement (AFM). The AFM began as a movement among professional officers who sought to defend

their privileges as graduates of the military academies against the ordinary university graduates, large numbers of whom were given commissions as part of the expansion of the armed forces required to fight the colonial war.

The AFM, in essence, has functioned as the political arm of the military hierarchy. That is what it has always aspired to be, and what the present leadership intends it to be. Following the March 11, 1975, attempted coup, some of the cleverest military demagogues such as Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho have tried to picture things as if a political difference existed between the top military commanders who associated themselves with the April 25 overturn, Spínola in particular, and the "revolutionary movement" itself. This line was intended to explain away the obvious splits in the AFM represented by the attempted rightist coups on September 28, 1974 and March 11, 1975.

In any such conspiratorial movement there are bound to be various layers of officers and various degrees of commitment, with the lowest officers, who take the greatest risks, generally being the most radical in speech and the most determined in action. The AFM has thus drawn the support of many radicalized young officers as well as radicalized civilians, and has maintained its control over them. However, the AFM has always striven to make itself as representative of the military command as possible; and since the April 25 overturn it has continued to bring in officers on the basis of the positions they hold in the military hierarchy. In addition, representatives of the lower ranks of the armed forces have been incorporated in the formal organs of the AFM to make these bodies better transmission belts for the directives of the military leadership and better barometers of the political processes at work in the armed forces, as well as to divert demands for real democracy in the armed forces. In accordance with their bonapartist strategy, the military tops also brought some left-wing elements into the AFM assemblies to counterbalance the right and increase their maneuvering room.

As a conspiratorial opposition movement under Caetano, the AFM attracted officers influenced by various political currents hostile to the Salazarist regime. In response to the logic and the pressure of the struggle against the old dictatorship, as well as the pressure of the masses following April 25, there was a tendency toward radicalization, in the lower echelons of the AFM in particular. This tendency was reinforced by the mass mobilizations in response to the attempted right-wing coups on September 28, 1974, and March 11, 1975.

In these cases, the most conservative elements in the armed forces feared that the democratic ferment

and social struggles were getting out of hand and that the process of reform could not contain the masses but would inspire them to further struggle. At the same time, they were unwilling to accept the minimum demands of some nationalist movements in the colonies. If successful, this "restoration of order" would have meant a purge of important sections of the AFM now regarded as "unreliable" by the conservatives. In each instance, the masses mobilized to defend the military regime, which they identified with their new-found freedoms and the perspective of socialism. These coup attempts further compromised the already discredited Portuguese capitalist class and shifted the balance of forces in favor of the working masses. As a result, the process of radicalization accelerated in the ranks of the armed forces and at the lower levels of the officer corps, and after each coup attempt the AFM was obliged to adopt correspondingly more "socialist" and "anti-imperialist" verbiage in order to divert the political process into the channels of the AFM.

However, the AFM has remained the essential political instrument of the Portuguese imperialist bourgeoisie. And its objective has continued to be to modernize and strengthen Portuguese capitalism -- not to overturn it. It simply found itself obliged to rely heavily on demagogy to persuade the Portuguese workers to help out capitalism in its hour of need. It is also using "socialist" phrasemongering to put capitalist needs in a better light as a first step toward restoring the dominance of bourgeois ideology and of bourgeois "law and order" and repression.

One example of the demagogy of the AFM is its use of bourgeois nationalism. Since its successful April 25, 1974 coup, the ruling military group has carried on a campaign designed to restore the hold of Portuguese nationalism, which had been largely discredited through its use by Salazar. In order to accomplish this, it has posed as a national liberation movement borrowing the anti-imperialist themes of the rebel movements in the colonies. In the same way, it has tried to borrow the repressive features of the colonial bonapartist regimes and the Stalinist regimes, which, since they are identified to some extent with revolution and progressive struggles, are not so discredited as the repressive devices of the old regime.

Since the April 25, 1974, overturn, the AFM has served as the real government of capitalist Portugal and the empire, using the various provisional cabinets as a means of presenting a civilian facade and assuring the support of the mass reformist workers parties for its rule. During this time, it has presided over and maintained a capitalist imperialist system, consistently taking the side of the bourgeoisie against the workers in economic conflicts. It has made only such con-

cessions to the mass movement as were inescapable if popular support were to be retained and its position held against both the more conservative bourgeois elements anxious to halt the reforms at any cost and the more combative elements in the workers movement threatening to push them out of control.

At every stage the AFM has striven to maintain as much control over the colonies as possible without endangering the conversion to neocolonialist methods. There have been differences over the amount of concessions that had to be given. An example is the reported dispute between Spínola and the present leaders of the AFM over withdrawal from Mozambique. The Portuguese imperialists have also been forced to make more concessions than they originally intended.

However, the essential continuity in the policy objectives of the imperialist bourgeoisie has been maintained by its present political agent, the AFM. This is shown, among other things, by the maintenance and reinforcement of the Portuguese military intervention in Angola and the attempts by the AFM, including its supposed "radical" wing, to regain political support in Portugal for keeping troops in the economically and strategically more important colonies. The fact that the AFM has used "socialist" and "anti-imperialist" demagoguery in its attempt to persuade the Portuguese masses to accept continued military intervention in the colonies and continued sending of troops there is indicative both of its methods and its objectives.

From April 25, 1974, until August 1975, there have been five "provisional" governments in Portugal. The rapid turnover testifies to the deepening instability of the bases of bourgeois rule in face of the continuing democratic ferment, the growing social struggles, advance of the colonial revolution, and worsening economic situation. Throughout this process, the provisional governments have been paralleled by military bodies that have functioned as the real governmental authority. The pact signed between the AFM and the main bourgeois and reformist parties in April 1975 in fact tried to formalize this situation by setting up a two-tier governmental structure in which all the decisive powers were to be exercised by the AFM bodies.

In political composition, the various provisional governments have all been openly popular frontist; and this actually was their main value to the bourgeoisie. The political tendencies and orientations represented in the military bodies have been more veiled, which again constitutes one of the main political advantages of these bodies to the bourgeoisie.

The steady shift since July 1974 toward more and more reliance on the military formations as the political leadership of the bourgeois state has had as its comple-

ment an accentuation of the bonapartist balancing role of the AFM. Parallel to this trend toward more open military rule, the AFM has escalated its socialistic-sounding demagoguery and in particular resorted to petty-bourgeois radical themes such as the need for "national liberation" in Portugal, "direct democracy", and various populist nostrums.

### 3. The Upsurge of the Masses

Because of the sudden collapse of the repressive regime and the extreme political and organizational weaknesses of both the capitalists and the workers, the fundamental classes in Portugal, the political and social situation has remained very fluid.

The old regime fell completely discredited. To a large extent, the bourgeoisie and bourgeois ideas shared in its disgrace. In vast ferment, the masses began to express themselves for the first time in forty-eight years, to examine forbidden ideas, to take hope in their ability to change their conditions. As the best known opposition group, the Communist party had the most prestige. But all the opposition groups, all the left parties and groups were taken seriously by the masses. All tendencies and groups received substantial press coverage. There was an unprecedented openness to revolutionary ideas on the part of the masses and an attitude of giving equal consideration to the proposals of all tendencies on the left. The ferment of revolutionary ideas spread irresistibly, threatening to dissolve even the discipline of the armed forces, the last prop of capitalist order.

The workers in the factories and the poor masses in the neighborhoods organized spontaneously. Hated bosses and strike-breaking goons were purged. Unused housing was seized. The workers asserted the right to hold meetings and organize assemblies in the plants. The factories became centers of political discussion and activity. Wage gains were made.

Democratic factory committees sprung up in most of the big plants. They were elected by general assemblies involving all the workers. From the craft-union fragmentation imposed by corporatism, the workers went in one leap toward democratically organized industrial unions and opened the perspective of soviet forms of organization.

The splits in the military command that developed as some sections of the bourgeoisie began to fear that the mass movement in Portugal and the colonies was getting out of hand, opened the way for democratic organization in the armed forces, especially in the military police, the navy, and some regiments of the army. This development has posed the most immediate danger to bourgeois rule since the April 1974 overturn, provoking some bourgeois forces to turn to very radical-sounding

demagoguery in an attempt to maintain political control of the process, and other sectors to strike out desperately to crush it before it got further out of hand.

Combined with a sharpening economic crisis and partial paralysis of the bourgeois repressive forces, the ferment in the working class led to a series of factory occupations, the imposition of elements of workers control, and to demands for nationalizations. The workers turned to nationalizations as a way of preventing layoffs and countering claims by the capitalist owners that they could not afford to meet demands for better wages and conditions. They imposed workers control to prevent factory closures and in some key cases, such as the banks, to prevent the capitalists from using their economic power to mount an attack on the workers movement.

In the instance of the banks, the government was obliged to give in to the workers' demand for nationalization partially to defend itself against sections of the bourgeoisie who were now opposed to the reform policy it represented. In other cases, the government resisted demands for nationalizing profitable enterprises. However, because of the economic crisis and the need to reorient the economy in line with the change represented by abandoning the Salazarist regime, the government itself initiated a series of nationalizations to bail out key capitalist interests and strengthen Portuguese capitalism. In the given political context, these nationalizations had contradictory effects: On the one hand, they spread illusions that control of the economy would actually be handed over to the workers; on the other, they encouraged the workers to press for nationalizations going beyond what was acceptable to the capitalist class. This contradiction was expressed most concretely on the political level by the demagoguery of the government and the Communist party, calling on the workers to work harder since they now "controlled" production. This kind of "workers control," tied to increasing production, had the effect of shoring up the capitalist profitability of plants in a period of political crisis when the capitalists could not themselves effectively manage their plants. Under these conditions, the capitalists could accept the loss of direct control over their property, even for a prolonged period.

As the radicalization deepened, landless peasants began to seize the land of latifundists and agricultural workers began organizing unions and demanding equality with other workers.

The ranks of the armed forces became increasingly reluctant to stay in or embark for the colonies to carry out the Portuguese bourgeoisie's neocolonialist plans.

The fall of the Caetano regime gave great impetus to other social movements. The women's liberation

movement, for example, quickly raised demands that went beyond what the military were prepared to grant. Despite the opposition of the new regime and the forces most closely allied with it, such as the Communist party, the small nucleus of the women's liberation movement aroused the interest of women in the poor neighborhoods, factories and peasant villages, indicating that it has the potential for rapid development as the revolutionary process deepens.

The movement among university and high-school students against authoritarianism in the schools and against restricted access to education assumed powerful momentum, along with actions by students from the colonies. High-school students became its most dynamic sector. They entered into struggle against the new military "saviors" themselves and won victories.

It was essentially the continuation and deepening of the broad social ferment that split the AFM and led the more conservative elements to make desperate attempts to carry out right-wing coups in order to halt these processes. Conversely, when democratic rights and other gains of the revolution appeared to be dangerously threatened the masses have mobilized on a huge scale. The political process in Portugal has centered around issues that became explosive because of the concern of the masses over their democratic right to freely consider all alternative points of view and to assert their will as the majority of the populace.

The fight to defend and extend democratic rights in the factory, in the barracks, in society as a whole is indispensable to advancing toward the establishment of a workers and peasants government. This fight for a workers and peasants government constitutes the decisive axis of struggle in Portugal today. With their deceptive schemas of "direct democracy" subordinated to a military regime, the demagogues seek to divert the working class and the peasantry from seeing this reality and organizing accordingly.

A major obstacle to mobilizing the masses to struggle for democratic rights, popular sovereignty and a workers and peasants government is represented by the leaderships of the mass reformist workers parties and their satellites, since all of them favor subordinating the workers movement to the unelected military regime, the main defender of capitalist order in Portugal today. However, there is a strong sentiment among the working class as a whole, which the mass reformist parties cannot ignore, for united front action in defense of democratic rights, and social gains that have come under attack. Furthermore, they have already been obliged, in different ways, to defend certain democratic rights at certain times for their own specific interests as bureaucratic workers organizations. The fight to defend the social and economic gains of the toilers, democratic rights,

and popular sovereignty, in order to move toward a government of the oppressed and exploited, also brings out the contradictions of the reformist parties most sharply and poses the need for a working-class united front in the strongest way.

#### 4. The Stalinists Support the Bourgeois Order

During the first phase of the new regime, the Communist Party and its petty-bourgeois front, the Movimento Democrático Português (MDP -- Portuguese Democratic Movement) played a crucial political role in upholding the military government. It was the only political force not compromised with the old regime that had an effective apparatus, and this machine became in effect the mass apparatus of the new regime. It was the only current in the working class that acted like a mass party despite its small size -- it took up issues of concern to the masses. This helped it to move to the center of the stage with extraordinary speed while other currents were trying to assess the situation or were preoccupied with sectarian considerations. It was the forces of the Communist party that dominated the giant May 1, 1974 demonstrations and rallies in the wake of the downfall of the Caetano government on April 25 and that turned them into demonstrations of support and adulation for the military. It was this apparatus that enabled General Spínola to build his bonapartist image and thus to move swiftly toward restoring a strong bourgeois authority, which would have crushed the Communist party itself among others.

The political influence of the Communist party hinges on maintaining its working-class base, and, in a situation where the bourgeoisie has been unable to reestablish its political dominance, the Stalinist leaders face great dangers as well as great opportunities for expanding their bureaucratic apparatus. Thus, in both the September 28, 1974 and March 11, 1975 coup attempts, they were obliged to accept mass mobilizations that, although politically and organizationally limited, had revolutionary aspects.

Nonetheless, the fundamental aim of the Communist party goes counter to the revolution. Its objective, as clearly shown in the period after April 25, is to serve as a transmission belt in the workers movement for the bourgeois regime, as the mass organizer for the AFM. The Portuguese CP and its mentors in the Kremlin have also tried to use their influence with the MPLA in Angola to further the neocolonialist plans of the AFM. The Portuguese CP today, which knows it has the support of a minority of the workers, prefers a military government with a populist facade to a parliamentary regime. The Stalinists believe that a government of this type offers better possibilities for carrying out the necessary minimal reforms while maintaining firm control over the masses, politically subordinating them to the bourgeoisie, and pre-

venting them from "going too fast too far" as the Stalinists claim they did in Chile.

In view of the prerevolutionary situation in Portugal and the extreme weakness of the Portuguese bourgeoisie, such a solution recommends itself all the more to the Stalinists. A military regime, moreover, seems to offer greater guarantees to American imperialism that mass mobilizations will be kept within limits that will not endanger the status quo on a world scale. To the Stalinists it thus seems to offer a way of achieving their objectives without provoking intervention by Washington or endangering the detente.

As a result of the Communist party acting as the transmission belt and labor policeman of the military regime in Portugal, its popular support has lagged far behind the gains in bureaucratic influence it has achieved as a result of the strength of its machine and its privileged relationship with the AFM. Thus, the Portuguese Stalinists have become dependent on the current bourgeois forces remaining in power to preserve their posts in the provisional cabinet that serves as a facade for the military, as well as to preserve their positions in the labor movement. This situation has led them to take more and more openly antidemocratic positions and finally to join with the AFM in a drive to curtail freedom of the press and union democracy, and to suppress the left groups that do not subordinate themselves to the military.

Wall Street in particular has taken advantage of these attacks on democratic rights to make publicity gains at the expense of the Portuguese Stalinists and Moscow and to issue warnings about what will happen if the Stalinists go "too far." However, the seemingly aggressive moves of the Portuguese Stalinists have been publicly supported by the Kremlin and the PCP's class collaborationist line represents no departure from the policy of detente toward American imperialism.

Although the Stalinists' objective is to consolidate their position as the indispensable auxiliary of the military and thus to prevent any challenge to their position from political rivals, their course is objectively making them more and more captive of the bourgeois military regime. At the same time, by playing the role of an auxiliary repressive force for a regime that cannot solve the economic and social problems of the Portuguese masses and is determined to make the workers pay the price of the deepening economic crisis, the Communist party is preparing the way for a resurgence of reactionary anti-Communism on a massive scale, not only among the petty-bourgeois strata but in large sections of the working class itself.

Acting on behalf of a bourgeois regime and against the development of the Portuguese revolution, the CP

is helping to pave the way for restoration of one of the fundamental props of bourgeois rule -- the fear among the masses that socialism means an end to their democratic rights and subjugation to a tyrannical machine.

The Communist party grew in the space of a year from a small nucleus to a mass party and has not yet had time to thoroughly consolidate the flood of new recruits. Political differentiations are possible, but as yet no major currents have appeared in opposition to the Stalinist leadership.

The ranks have been rallied behind the leadership through training in a fanatical sectarian spirit. The promise of material advancement for large layers of recruits through the party machine and the alliance with the military rulers also helps to harden this sectarian attitude and to reinforce the position of the leadership. The Portuguese CP is thus thoroughly Stalinist, particularly distinguished among its sister parties in Europe only by its slavish adherence to the directives of Moscow.

#### 5. The Left-Centrist Satellites of the Communist Party

Left-centrist groups have had a certain influence in Portugal, especially among the youth and the intellectuals but also among the military and the workers. The two parties of this type that participated in the April 25, 1975, elections, the MES (Movimento da Esquerda Socialista -- Movement of the Socialist Left) and the FSP (Frente Socialista Popular -- People's Socialist Front) won more than 2 percent of the vote between them, over half the vote of all the parties to the left of the mass reformist organizations.

Of these two groups the MES is the most serious. It had broken from the Stalinist-dominated popular front some time before the April 25, 1974, overturn and has tried to develop a theoretical alternative to Stalinism. The FSP is a crudely opportunistic formation. It began as a faction in the Socialist party that was disgruntled over the number of posts granted it in the leadership. The faction leaders decided in early 1975 to set up shop as peddlers of a more extreme version of the MES line. One of their selling points was radical Catholic connections. This group calls the SP a bourgeois party. The MES implies this but has not made it explicit. The FSP subordinates itself completely to the military, while the MES position is more ambiguous. The FSP signed the pact-program. The MES did not, but said it had nothing in principle against doing so. Both groups identify with the Latin American guerrillaist groups and attract a following at least partially through ultraleftist phrasemongering.

There are two groups that characterize themselves as armed organizations and that engaged in terroristic actions against the Caetano regime, the Partido Revolucionário do

Proletariado-Brigadas Revolucionárias (PRB-BR -- Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat-Revolutionary Brigades) and the Liga de Unidade e Ação Revolucionária (LUAR - League for Revolutionary Unity and Action).

All of these left-centrist groups constitute new ultra-left editions of old anarchist-like patterns, although this is most pronounced on the part of the groups that have actually developed around guerrillaist actions and not simply around identification with foreign guerrillaist groups. There are various shades of difference. The MES tends to take as models the ultraleft critics of Lenin in the Third International who made a fetish out of the soviet form and who called for soviets under all conditions in an abstract and romanticized way instead of taking up the concrete political task of winning a majority of the workers through leading the workers to break from the bourgeois and reformist parties. This is simply a new form of anarchism masquerading in "Marxist" and "Leninist" clothing. The LUAR comes closest to repeating the formulas of the historic anarchist currents. But these are merely nuances. All of them have essentially the same orientation, and all of them echo the CP line of supporting a military dictatorship with a populist facade.

The MES was in a relatively strong position vis-à-vis the Communist party in the labor movement prior to the April 25, 1974, coup. However, its groups were built in the syndicalist tradition. What they call their "rank-and-filist" orientation did not reveal its weaknesses so clearly under conditions of repression when workers struggles were scattered and the initiatives of small groups of fighters had more impact. However, its ineffectiveness became glaring when the workers movement reached massive proportions and had to face the political problems posed by a bourgeois government using concessions and demagogy rather than outright repression to contain workers struggles. As a result, the MES groups in the union movement suffered severe setbacks.

In particular, because of the emphasis of this group on "rank and filism" and initiatives from below, general political questions, such as the attitude to be taken toward a bourgeois government supported by the mass reformist workers parties and how to project a working-class alternative to it, were obscured. The need to propose a working-class governmental alternative to the AFM was lost in the vague concept of the masses organizing themselves. Concretely, this resulted in the acute contradiction of MES activists participating in strikes that were denounced as "reactionary provocations" by the government while the MES itself gave political support to this same government. Ultimately this line boiled down to the simplistic formula that the AFM had to "fuse with the people's movement."

What this evolution demonstrates is the incapacity of



the renovated anarchist-type notions to solve the real political problems facing the working-class movement, the problems of breaking the political hold of a demagogic bourgeois government and reformist mass parties. In this, the failure of the MES is reminiscent of the failure of the anarchists during the Spanish civil war. The fact that this orientation is covered up with implicit and explicit references to "soviets" does not mean that these groups are moving toward Leninism. To the contrary, following their own petty-bourgeois centrist course, they have been tending to approximate the ultraleft misinterpretation of the experience of the Russian revolution first advanced by such figures as Anton Pannekoek.

As a result of its anarchist-type confusion, including the opportunism this confusion breeds, the MES has failed to see the democratic issues involved in the conflict between the Socialist party and the military government and has in effect adopted only a souped-up version of the CP's antidemocratic campaign. Despite its denunciation of the CP's "reformism" and "conciliationism," it has become an auxiliary of Portuguese Stalinism, and serves as an advance patrol in the Stalinists' campaign against the SP.

The most extreme expression of this anarchist-type confusion is to be found in the Partido Revolucionário do Proletariado -- Brigadas Revolucionárias, which was built on a program of urban guerrilla warfare against the Caetano regime. This group has created a phantom organization of "soviets," the "Committees of Workers, Soldiers, and Sailors," and has called on the military security forces, the COPCON, to abolish the political parties and the Constituent Assembly and turn power over to this nonexistent "people's power." Rarely has ultra-left braggadocio been carried to such aberrant conclusions. This ultraleft group has been used as a tool by a group of military officers seeking to abrogate political democracy, such as it exists in Portugal and consolidate a thoroughgoing military dictatorship.

## 6. The Confusionist Role of the Maoists

Up to now, a sizeable section of the youth and the workers looking for an alternative to the left of the Communist party have been attracted to various Maoist groups, which have tended to coalesce into the following four groups: The União Democrática do Povo (UDP); the Frente Eleitoral dos Comunistas (Marxista-Leninista), or the FEC (ml); the Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado (MRPP); and the Partido Comunista Português (Marxista-Leninista), or the PCP (ml), which sought to run in the elections as the Aliança Operararia Camponesa.

The UDP was the dominant force in the factory council at the Lisnave shipyards in Lisbon from the fall of 1974 until the spring of 1975.

The FEC (ml) has been the organizer of the Grupos de Accao Antifascista (GAAF) in Oporto, which have specialized in attacks on meetings and headquarters of the right-wing bourgeois party, the Centro Democratico Social (CDS).

The PCP (ml) has played a leading role in the chemical workers union and is in very close alliance with the Socialist party.

The MRPP has functioned as a tight cult operating under different initials in its various fronts of work. In every area, this group follows the theatrical tactic of trying to raise the red flag the highest, shout the loudest, and assume the most provocative stances. It has achieved no broad influence but has assembled a dedicated following that is probably larger than that of any of the other Maoist groups.

These Maoist groups differ in many respects, the sharpest dividing line being between the PCP (ml), which acts more like a right-centrist ally of the SP, and the others, which are generally ultraleftist in their poses. However, they all have one salient trait in common -- sectarianism, which is exemplified in their common slogan, "neither fascism, nor social fascism -- people's democracy." The Maoists have proved incapable of understanding the real process of the development of political consciousness among the workers and have arbitrarily counterposed their own schemas to this process.

In the case of the UDP, this was expressed in an attempt to counterpose factory committees to the trade unions. By losing sight of the process of the organization of the working class as a whole, the UDP obstructed both the development of industrial unions and of genuine factory committees. This resulted in important sections of militant workers becoming isolated, in the factory committees becoming seriously weakened, and in the Maoists losing their positions.

In the case of the FEC (ml), it resulted in a small group conducting a private war against the CDS and the repressive forces of the bourgeois state.

In the case of the MRPP, its strident ultraleft posturing aroused the hostility of large sections of the workers and the toiling masses toward the groups to the left of the Communist and Socialist parties.

In the case of the PCP (ml), it resulted in reinforcing sectarian attitudes toward the Communist party among the ranks of the other mass workers party, the Socialist party, thus helping to impede the mass workers organizations from developing united-front actions.

Thus the political program and conduct of the Maoist groups have contributed nothing to developing a revolu-

tionary alternative in Portugal. Without exception, these groups have induced confusion among the militant soldiers and sailors, youth and workers influenced by them and lead them toward isolation from the class. Along with the anarcho-centrists, the Maoists bear a major responsibility for the grip retained by the class collaborationist SP and CP leaderships over the radicalized youth and the working class and thus for the continuation and deepening of the crisis of revolutionary leadership in Portugal.

#### 7. Social Democratic Rivalry for Favored Position with the AFM

The Socialist party has become the main rival of the Communist party for mass influence among the workers and radicalized petty bourgeoisie. The Social Democrats, like the Communist party leaders, have a reformist perspective, which is expressed in subordination to the ruling military group. The SP differs from the CP in its methods of organization and political control. It is not a disciplined or homogeneous party. It seeks to control the working class by political and electoral means rather than by building a disciplined machine. Because of its relatively loose organization and its politically heterogeneous composition, it is much less suited than the Communist party to serve as a transmission belt for the military regime.

The SP requires the forms of parliamentary democracy as a means of developing its influence, competing with the machine of the Communist party, and in fact communicating with its supporters, if not even its members. It is as a result of this need that the SP has come into conflict with the Communist party and the military junta. This conflict has been developing since about a month after the fall of Caetano when the military regime began to move toward cracking down on the radical ferment. Leaders of the SP have repeatedly spoken out in opposition to certain kinds of repressive moves by the military regime and have defended victims of the repression belonging to the groupings standing to the left of the reformist parties. Another reason for this defense of the left groups attacked by the regime, which up till now have generally been Maoists, is to gain a certain left cover by association with non-Social Democratic left forces not allied with Moscow. Nonetheless, the result of this limited opposition by the SP leadership has been to block more severe repression of revolutionary ideas and consolidation of a more stable bourgeois regime.

The Socialist party has more and more become the rallying ground for forces in the workers movement that refuse to bow to the Stalinists. Like the Communist party, the Socialist party expanded in one year from a small nucleus to a mass party. It is a Social Democratic party, that is, a reformist workers party that claims to represent socialism but whose perspectives are tied to the ability of its own monopoly capitalism to grant concessions to

the workers. It does not strive to abolish capitalism and establish a socialist system; and it is not tied to a bureaucratic caste in any country where capitalism has been abolished.

However, the Portuguese Socialist party has developed in a way different from that of the Social Democratic parties in the other imperialist countries of Europe. It is essentially a new formation and is not yet based on a big trade-union bureaucracy.

The initial nucleus drew together a number of strands of the non-Stalinist left opposition to the Salazarist dictatorship, all of which were deeply antagonized by the sectarianism and dogmatism of the CP led by Alvaro Cunhal. Some of these elements, most notably Mario Soares, sought the support of the Socialist parties in Western Europe and the "democratic" capitalist countries. Some of the, again like Soares, came out of the old bourgeois liberal milieu. Others, again like Soares, served an apprenticeship in the Communist party. A section of the SP leadership comes from the liberal Stalinists who left the Communist party after 1968, most notably the leader of the SP's trade-union work, Marcelo Curto. Another contribution to the initial nucleus was made by youth involved in terrorist actions against the old regime. Many radicalized Catholics were also attracted to the initial nucleus. The original group included young intellectuals and activists influenced by the international youth radicalization who were critical of reformism but without a well-defined or consistent political perspective. These elements who sought a broad arena of activity were repelled by the Stalinism of the Communist party and its satellites and the Maoists.

This heterogeneity has increased during the growth of the Socialist party into a mass organization. The ideological and organizational looseness of the SP made it a gathering place for workers who were radicalizing but who were not ready to commit themselves to the political and organizational conformity demanded by the CP. It attracted in particular workers and intellectuals who feared the totalitarian features of Stalinism, and militant layers of workers who were repelled by the CP's policing the labor movement on behalf of the military regime.

This heterogeneous combination included, as was to be expected, elements bearing reactionary anti-Communist and anti-Leninist prejudices. Moreover, in the conflict with a Communist party seeking to use totalitarian methods in support of military rule, strong currents in such a combination were bound to seek support from the European Socialist parties and the "democratic" capitalist governments.

However, the facts do not support the claim of the CP and its ultraleft satellites that the SP has become the

rallying ground for reaction.

The reality is that the SP has become the gathering place of the broadest range of forces representing the majority of the Portuguese workers and radicalized petty bourgeoisie. The working class is profoundly divided and weakened as a result of the policies of the CP and SP leaderships, and the conditions are being created for the restoration of an openly antiworking-class government in Portugal. Thus, the sectarian campaign the CP unleashed against the SP following the latter's electoral victory can at some stage prove suicidal for the Stalinists themselves. It in fact represents a deadly danger to the working class as a whole. In this campaign the CP is motivated by determination to defend the bureaucratic positions it has gained as a result of its role as mass organizer for the military junta as well as by Moscow's calculation that a regime like the AFM fits in best with its current diplomatic needs in the détente with Washington. This campaign of slander and demagogy against the Social Democracy as the main danger goes counter to the interests of the revolution and must be characterized as reactionary.

The development of anti-communist and anti-Leninist sentiments among the Socialist party rank and file can best be fought by revolutionists showing in practice that they defend the democratic rights of the masses, and are battling to extend them to the barracks, the factories, unions, and any popular committees; that they are fighting to unite the working class and its political organizations around a program that genuinely responds to their needs and aspirations. Among other things, this involves exposing the demagogy of the Stalinists and combating their campaign of slander against the Socialist party. It also includes unflinching criticism of the SP leadership's links to the MFA and popular frontist orientation, which is a fundamental obstacle to the establishment of a workers and peasants government.

#### 8. The Road to Workers Power and the Role of the Constituent Assembly

The revolutionary process has not reached the point where clear forms of workers power have emerged. What has appeared is sporadic and scattered mass initiatives, forms of workers control, and embryonic factory committees. These developments can point the way toward dual power.

Progress along this road hinges on a correct political course. The fundamental task is to bring the workers to break from subordination to the Armed Forces Movement and to assert their right to put a workers and peasants government in power.

This fight at the present time centers on the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly, in which the workers

parties have a substantial absolute majority and which is the only national body thus far elected by the populace. This is counterposed to the sovereignty of the unelected military hierarchy which constitutes the present government. Closely linked to this is the crucial struggle for democratic rights and democratic control in the armed forces. The various "direct democracy" schemas floated by the demagogues of the AFM are intended to divert the workers from insisting on the concrete expression of popular sovereignty through the Constituent Assembly; that is, by establishing a workers and peasants government. The AFM aims to keep the workers captives of the various popular frontist provisional governments in which the CP and the SP vie for portfolios. In the same way, the alleged "democratization" of the AFM, and the setting up of "revolutionary councils" under AFM tutelage are designed to divert the ranks of the army from demanding their democratic right to organize independently of the AFM and to engage in political activity.

The ultraleftist schemas of "revolutionary councils" projected in opposition to the Constituent Assembly play into the hands of the military demagogues. This line of the centrist anarchist-type groups of calling on a bourgeois regime to abolish the only existing nationally elected body with political representation of the working masses in the name of phantom "soviets" and in return for vague promises from demagogic military officers amounts to criminal confusionism if not outright betrayal of the working class.

The capitulation of the anarcho-centrists to bourgeois military "saviors" is also expressed in their demand that the regime use its troops to back groups in the colonies that they consider to be the most "progressive" of those vying for power. This demand is helping the imperialist regime to roll back the sentiment among the masses for bringing all the troops home from the colonies. It thus plays a reactionary role. It also promotes the AFM's policy of restoring the armed forces as an effective instrument of repression.

The factory councils that appeared in the period following the fall of the Caetano dictatorship were a response to the need for an economic organization representing all the workers in an enterprise, a special need created by the fragmentation of the economic organizations of the workers under the Salazarist regime. These bodies have generally remained within the trade-union framework. They have not functioned as soviets. They have not taken political initiatives; they have not assumed control over industrial concentrations; they have not served as arenas of general political debate or as organizing centers of united front action by the working class; they have not drawn into struggle the most oppressed layers of the masses; they are not seen by the workers as a center of power parallel to or competing

with the government. The existing neighborhood committees represent even less a nucleus of workers councils that could lead to workers power.

The most advanced revolutionary-democratic forms of organization that have yet appeared in Portugal are the assemblies and committees of soldiers and sailors that have sprung up in various units at certain times. However, these have not become standing committees on any substantial scale except in the navy, which is not the politically decisive branch of the armed forces.

Parallel with its mounting attack on freedom of the press and on the Constituent Assembly in the name of "direct democracy" and the "revolutionary process," the AFM has become less and less regarded by the masses of workers and peasants as offering hope for a way out of their difficulties. This decline in the prestige of the military is most marked among the peasantry, since only a revolutionary agrarian policy can begin to solve the problems facing the poor peasants in Portugal. The technical level of agriculture needs to be raised, landlordism abolished in the south, and government-subsidized aid projects established for the poor peasants in the north.

In the South, the agricultural proletariat and poor peasants have been able to profit from the paralysis of the bourgeois repressive forces to seize land and greatly improve their living standard. As a result, they have become strong supporters of the new regime. However, this process can soon run up against severe limitations and even be transformed into its opposite under a bourgeois government. State aid is necessary to effectively reorganize the extensive form of agriculture practiced in this area. Unless the land occupations are integrated into an overall socialist policy for agriculture, the actions of this militant but small layer of rural workers can serve to frighten the far larger stratum of smallholders in the north who fear that a "Communist" government would take away their land and livestock as well as subject them to bureaucratic controls and high taxes.

The failure of the AFM government in the countryside provides an index of its conservative nature. On the one hand, the continuing backwardness of agriculture has meant a continual rise in food prices for the urban workers. On the other hand, the failure to offer any hope of improvement in the lot of the peasants has turned this stratum toward reactionary "saviors." The recent "independence" demonstrations in the Azores are a clear example of this.

The deceit in the AFM demagoguery about "direct democracy" is shown perhaps most clearly by the reactionary opposition of the military government

to struggles for democratic rights in the high schools, an opposition reaffirmed in the June 21 policy statement of the Conselho da Revolucao (Council of the Revolution). Massive struggles for democratic rights by high-school students have shown this section of the population to be one of the most militant and most highly politicized in the country, and one of the least influenced by the military and the reformists. The June 21 statement points to a new attack by the military on this mass movement, which is struggling for real direct democracy and not "participation" under the rod of military tutors.

Thus, there are six axes of the revolutionary process in Portugal at the present stage.

(1) The defense of the economic gains of the workers and other layers of the masses, and the fight for the economic aspirations awakened by the fall of the Salazarist regime.

(2) The struggle for immediate withdrawal of all troops from the colonies.

(3) The struggle for democratic rights of soldiers within the armed forces.

(4) The struggle for democratic rights and democratic decision-making in every area of social life.

(5) The struggle for effective workers organizations. The Portuguese workers are still at an early stage of organization. The embryonic factory committees and nuclei of industrial unions that have developed, although they show certain advanced features, are still not adequate on a national scale to effectively defend the elementary interests of the workers. In this situation, propaganda and agitation for industrial unions, a united democratic union structure, and the transformation of the embryonic factory committees into action committees that can mobilize and represent the workers and poor masses in the industrial centers combine closely with other revolutionary tasks and form an essential component of a concrete revolutionary answer to the concerns of the masses of workers.

The fight for workers control in the present conditions also fits in with these tasks, and the workers have already asserted control in many instances to protect their specific interests, in the face of government assaults, employer sabotage, and mounting unemployment and inflation. Workers control is necessary to obtain the economic information and organization necessary to defend jobs, to prevent the flight of capital, to fight inflation, and to administer a sliding scale of wages and hours. However, workers control cannot serve its purpose unless the workers make clear that they do not accept any responsibility for the functioning of the economy until

they have real political power over it.

Because of the demagoguery of the military regime and the Communist party -- demagoguery that has been reinforced by the anarchist predilections of the left-centrist groups -- the danger is that a facade of "workers control" may be used by the government to induce the workers to accept austerity. If such a tactic is successful, it will result in profound demobilization and demoralization of the working class.

An example of how the government and the reformists have used the theme of "workers control" for demagogic purposes was provided by the closing of the newspaper Republica. In this test case, a brazen attack on freedom of the press and the right of expression of the largest party in the working class was justified by claiming that a small group of Stalinist-influenced printing workers had the right to impose political censorship over a daily paper disliked by the government and the Communist party.

The greatest danger to the organization of the workers on the economic level is the attempt by the military regime and its Stalinist supporters to impose the tutelage of the bourgeois state over the unions. The so-called Trade-Union Unity law, imposing Intersindical as the only legal national federation, was precisely an attempt by the military junta and the Communist party to subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state, to convert the unions into a transmission belt for the policy of the bourgeois government in the working class.

(6) The struggle for a workers and peasants government. On the political level, the workers in their great majority look for leadership from three sources: the Socialist party, the Communist party, and Intersindical, the trade-union federation. The Socialist party has the largest following and is the most attractive at the moment to the majority of the working class. The Communist party and Intersindical are the strongest organizations of the working class and are looked to for leadership in action such as the resistance to the coup attempts in September 1974 and March 1975. At present no alternative to these mass organizations has credibility among large layers of workers. Nor can any alternative develop except as the masses learn in practice the limitations of the leadership offered by these organizations.

The only national politically representative body chosen by the workers and the masses in Portugal is the Constituent Assembly, in which the workers parties hold an absolute majority. The fight for a workers and peasants government cannot be waged without defending popular sovereignty and democracy, and concretely, without defending the Constituent Assembly against attempts by the Communist party, the military junta,

and the SP leaders to undermine its authority and limit or destroy its sovereignty.

The struggle for a workers and peasants government focuses at present on the Constituent Assembly. The sharpest issues are defense of the Constituent Assembly, the demand that the Constituent Assembly represent the interests of the toiling masses who elected it, and repudiation by the workers parties of the pact-program, which codified their capitulation to the military junta. By signing this agreement with the military regime, the leaders of the mass workers parties betrayed their responsibility to represent the workers who support them.

In the Constituent Assembly, the Socialist party stands in the most contradictory position, since it claims to represent the majority of workers as well as to have been mandated by the majority of the population. Moreover, the leaders of the Socialist party came into conflict with the military government ostensibly in defense of popular sovereignty and the democratic rights of the masses. But they continue to abide by the decrees of the military rulers. The Socialist party leaders are also less able to control their following and more dependent on their electoral popularity than their CP counterparts.

Incipient organs of workers power will arise out of united mass struggles of the working class, as they have in every previous revolutionary upsurge. In Portugal, the way cannot be cleared for such struggles without beginning by contesting the self-assumed right of the military government to rule. Acceptance of this pretension is not only the strongest force in maintaining subordination of the workers to a bourgeois leadership and the biggest impediment to their organization; it is also the main obstacle to the mass working-class organizations engaging in the united-front actions.

Concretely, defending the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly against the military government involves calling upon the Communist and Socialist parties, as the representatives of the overwhelming majority of the Portuguese workers and the majority of the Portuguese people, to establish a new government by exercising their majority in the Constituent Assembly and appealing to the masses and rank and file of the armed forces to mobilize in support of it. These are also the main political forces in Intersindical, which should remain independent of any government, even a workers and peasants government, as the direct defender of the economic interests of the workers.

Making this demand on the two mass parties of the working class is an essential part of the process of advancing a socialist governmental alternative to the military regime and exposing the incapacity of these parties to provide such an alternative.

As the disillusionment of the masses with the military regime deepens, and the economic crisis grows worse, the threat of a reactionary coup will become increasingly grave. At the same time, the AFM will lose its capacity and its desire to resist a rightist onslaught. Since its power is based specifically on the bourgeois army, it views arming the masses as a deadly threat. Furthermore, as the regime becomes more and more discredited, the masses will become increasingly reluctant to mobilize under its auspices, since this would continue to subordinate them to a regime over which they have no control, and which seems less and less inclined to respond to their needs and interests.

Thus, propaganda and agitation for mobilizing and arming the masses against the rightist hangmen can only be carried out successfully in combination with the struggle for a workers and peasants government.

#### 9. Tasks of the Portuguese Trotskyists.

Under the conditions of Salazarist repression, the Trotskyists were unable to carry out regular and thorough political discussion involving the entire organization. Likewise, they were unable to participate, except in a very limited way, in the life of the world Trotskyist movement. Among other things, this made it difficult to build a politically homogeneous organization on a national scale and to resolve tactical and incipient political differences without splits. Since April 1974, however, this tendency has been, to some extent at least, reversed.

Nonetheless, two separate Trotskyist groups still exist. The Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI -- Internationalist Communist League) was recognized at the February 1974 World Congress as a sympathizing group of the Fourth International. The existence of the other organization, the Grupo Marxista Revolucionário (GMR -- Revolutionary Marxist Group), now the Partido Revolucionário dos Trabalhadores -- Revolutionary Workers party), became known to the Fourth International only in the summer of 1974. These two groupings, of a similar size, have concentrated their activity in different arenas and are now complementary in certain respects. Their unification on a principled basis would represent a qualitative advance for Portuguese Trotskyism.

Both Trotskyist groups consist primarily of young people recruited in the student milieu. The PRT has many high-school activists. The LCI has a larger proportion of older activists with experience in the universities and in political campaigns. Both groups have begun work in the factories. In this the LCI has more experience. But neither organization yet has a substantial foothold in the workers movement. Under these conditions, the Portuguese Trotskyists face the

following tasks.

1. To engage in common discussion to develop a rounded program for the Portuguese revolution and for building a mass Trotskyist party in Portugal.
2. To integrate themselves into the political life of the Fourth International and participate in its discussions.
3. To regularize and expand their propaganda work, in particular by publishing an attractive regular paper and assuring the translation and publication of Trotsky's works.
4. To demonstrate the practical applicability of Trotskyist ideas and principles in the broad struggles against exploitation and oppression.

The common program of the Portuguese Trotskyists should include the following points:

1. Mobilizing a broad movement to demand immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all Portuguese troops from the colonies.
2. Defense of the right of all members of the armed forces to discuss all political ideas and to organize politically on an equal basis in the barracks and on military installations. Full democracy within the armed forces, including the right to elect officers and discuss all orders that have a political significance. Defense of the right of military personnel to participate fully in the political life of the country without any restrictions. Mobilizing a broad defense for any military personnel victimized for political reasons.
3. Presenting a plan for a radical agrarian reform suited to Portuguese conditions. Since the great majority of the one-third of the Portuguese population engaged in agriculture are smallholders, this requires a program of state support for individual peasants, as well as the promotion of state-assisted cooperatives and state farms in the area of extensive farming. For the area where the rural proletariat predominates, it requires also a program for the farm workers unions. The great unevenness in the conditions of smallholding peasants should also be taken into account.
4. Offering timely immediate economic demands and democratic and transitional slogans to meet the needs of oppressed layers of the population, such as women and youth in particular.
5. Rallying the broadest possible front for the defense and extension of democratic rights. The political rights of most of the workers organizations in Portugal have come under attack at various times since April 25, 1974,

including the rights of each of the mass reformist parties. Yet the principle of solidarity of the entire workers movement against such attacks is far from established. Furthermore, even bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political forces and parties have contradictions on this question that can be exploited to serve the fundamental interests of the workers movement. For example, some elements in the bourgeois PPD protested against the police attack on pro-MPLA demonstrators in August 1974 more strongly than did the CP. While every major political party in Portugal claims to support democracy, only the revolutionists are capable of consistently defending and extending democratic rights.

6. Giving impetus to workers control to defend the interests of the workers against layoffs, the speedup, and attempts by the capitalists to use their economic power to sabotage the economy and block the advance of the proletariat toward taking power. Workers control is an extension of democratic rights to the factory and is necessary in the present stage to defend the democratic rights of the workers in the society as a whole against capitalist reaction. However, it can only play this role if it serves the interests of the working class as a whole and is subordinated to a general perspective of developing workers democracy. Both the attempts by the government and the Communist party to make the workers work harder and the attempts of relatively small ultraleft groups to override the opinions of the majority of workers with minority initiatives and demagogic campaigns do not advance but retard the development of genuine workers control.

7. Winning the political independence of the working class from the AFM and any other bonapartist leaderships that may arise. This involves calling on the mass workers

organizations to genuinely represent the interests of the workers and break from all forms of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, including the bourgeois military government in all its aspects, as a way of showing the workers in practice the limitations of their reformist leaderships. This includes calling on the mass workers parties to break the pact-program and establish a workers and peasants government.

8. Advancing the unity in action of the working class by pushing the demand for a united front of all organizations that claim to represent the workers in defense of the gains that have been made and against any offensive by bourgeois forces that threatens the proletariat as a whole. This includes the appropriate measures to arm the proletariat to defend its gains.

9. Advancing the independent organization of the working class so that the proletariat can meet the tasks of the class struggle in this period of crisis and win in a direct confrontation with the bourgeoisie. This involves pushing for broader and broader forms of workers organizations, industrial unions, a united and democratic trade-union structure, action committees and democratic factory committees that can unify and mobilize the broad masses of the workers in the industrial zones and draw in other exploited and oppressed layers, and finally regional and national congresses of workers organizations that can adopt general political policies and lead the working masses in taking decisive initiatives. The line of development is toward establishment of a workers and peasants government and the organization of soviets as the basis of a workers state.

August 30, 1975

# The Portuguese Revolution and the New Problems That Face the Fourth International

## A Statement by the Leninist Trotskyist Faction

[The following statement was adopted unanimously by the Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction at a meeting held August 31, 1975.]

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### The Portuguese Revolution and the Fourth International

The political resolution submitted by the Leninist Trotskyist Faction to the Fourth Congress Since Reunification (Tenth World Congress) called special attention to the changing pattern of the world revolution. Once again, the leading role of the working class is coming to the fore, including in the imperialist centers, providing new opportunities for the Fourth International. The opening of the proletarian revolution in Portugal following the coup against the Salazarist regime in April 1974 has confirmed this trend and deepened it. A prerevolutionary situation of unusual duration has developed in Portugal. It is another indication that the socialist revolution is knocking on the door in Francoist Spain and that we can expect further upsurges of the working class in other countries of Europe in the period ahead.

All the major class forces and political tendencies on a world scale have a stake in the Portuguese events. For the imperialist bourgeoisies Portugal is a test of the relationship of class forces, of relations among themselves and a test of the policy of détente with Moscow. All the currents in the world workers movement, including Moscow, Peking, Havana, and the Social Democracy, on down to the smallest groups, as well as the revolutionary socialists of the world Trotskyist movement, are put to the test by the Portuguese revolution.

At the beginning of the upsurge, neither the Stalinists, the Social Democrats nor a hardened union bureaucracy held the kind of dominant position that they do, for example, in Britain, France or Italy. Even today, these forces have not had time to consolidate themselves to the extent they have in other Western European countries, and a correct course by a nucleus of revolutionary cadres could result in their rapid growth. In this respect it is important that two organized groups of Trotskyists exist in Portugal, who, while they are young and inexperienced, look to the Fourth International for aid and collaboration. Applying the method outlined in the Transitional Program in a timely and audacious way, these forces could quickly make significant progress toward the construction of a

mass Leninist party in Portugal.

### Another Test of the Line of the International Majority Tendency

The events in Portugal have provided a new test of the basic positions advanced in the now seven-year-old debate within the Fourth International, between the currents that have become the Leninist Trotskyist Faction (LTF) and the International Majority Tendency (IMT).

While the polemic on Portugal has barely begun, it is possible to draw an initial balance sheet on the public positions taken in the heat of the rapidly moving events of the past few months by sections and sympathizing groups whose leaderships support the IMT. It is this test of the class struggle, above all in a revolution, that most clearly reveals the meaning of the documents adopted by any tendency.

United Secretariat members who support the LTF held open the possibility that a common position on Portugal could be arrived at, which would have signified a lessening of the differences in the light of the new upsurge of the class struggle. However, at the May 1975 meeting of the United Secretariat it became clear that this was not possible.

Sharp political differences emerged publicly following the takeover of República from its Socialist party editors, Was Tun, Rouge, Red Weekly, La Gauche, and other papers reflecting the views of sections in which the majority of the leadership supports the IMT, portrayed this attack on the democratic rights of the largest workers party in Portugal as an example of the operation of "workers control."

During the upsurge following the March 11 coup attempt, the press reflecting the views of the IMT projected a so-called strategy of building dual power. In effect this was counterposed to a strategy of building a Leninist party by fighting around the key immediate, democratic and transitional demands flowing from the class struggle through which the incipient formations of workers committees could become real struggle organs of the class, uniting wider and wider sections of the oppressed and exploited. The strategy of building dual power was counterposed to defense of the Constituent Assembly against the MFA's attempts to curtail it with the aid of the SP and CP. The Constituent Assembly was seen as the main obstacle to building dual power.



The IMT leaders confused the present stage -- which remains one of winning the masses away from their Social Democratic and Stalinist misleaders and from these reformists' policy of class collaborationism with the bourgeois MFA -- with the stage of taking power. Propagandizing for soviets became a substitute for the struggle for independent working class political action as the only road to building the revolutionary party and the independent power of the class.

The IMT press ridiculed the defense of freedom of the press, under attack from the capitalist government and its Stalinist henchmen, as defense of "bourgeois democracy" against "workers democracy." Thus the IMT leaders took a position contrary to the long-standing Marxist principle concerning the relation between the fight to defend and extend democratic rights under capitalism, and mobilizing the masses to win a socialist revolution.

The democratic tasks of the revolution were downgraded. Leaders of the IMT on the United Secretariat adamantly refused to call for the unconditional removal of Portuguese troops from Angola. The importance of the land question and related problems of the small farmers were underestimated. The large mobilizations the SP leadership was forced to call in defense of their democratic rights were opposed by the IMT press.

Rouge not only opposed defending the Constituent Assembly against the attempts by the MFA and the Stalinists to scuttle it, it labelled as "parliamentary cretinism" the correct position of calling for an SP-CP government based on the majority that these two workers parties received in the vote for the Constituent Assembly. The call for a CP-SP government concretely posed the need for a workers and peasants government as against any form of coalitionism with the bourgeoisie -- either with bourgeois parties or with the bourgeois MFA -- in terms the masses of Socialist and Communist workers could understand. The call was designed to expose the class collaborationism of the SP and CP leaders.

The ultraleft course of the IMT resulted in deeply opportunist as well as sectarian and adventurist positions. The imperialist nature of the MFA-dominated government was obscured, as indicated by the IMT refusal to call for the unconditional withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Africa, and in the interview Alain Krivine held with MFA Admiral Rosa Coutinho. Sections of the IMT leadership obscured the bourgeois nature of the MFA, as for example the adulatory articles about Carvalho and other MFA officers that appeared in Was Tun. The common position held by Rouge, Inprecor, La Gauche, Red Weekly, and Was Tun was that in any case the MFA was so weak that its class character was not a factor.

Then, when the MFA announced its "people's power" plan, this was hailed in the IMT press as MFA backing for the rapid construction of soviets, organs of workers power. After this plan was announced, the IMT press grossly exaggerated the development of the MFA-sponsored "Peoples Assemblies." The main danger, IMT spokespeople explained, was not the MFA, but the suppression of the burgeoning soviets by world imperialism through an SP-PPD government based on the Constituent Assembly.

The IMT reflected the ultraleft positions of the left centrist groups in Portugal and elsewhere and the pressures of the milieus who support them in Europe.

The positions of the left centrist groups in turn echoed those of the Portuguese Stalinists. The IMT saw a "left turn" on the part of the Stalinists when they combined Third Period sectarianism and adventurism with deepening their popular-front line in relation to the bourgeois MFA, and launched their campaign against the SP and the Constituent Assembly.

Objectively, these positions led the IMT press into providing left cover for the popular-front regime and the MFA. During the crucial days in mid-July 1975, the IMT supported and took part in the July 16 demonstration demanding the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and "MFA-People's power," and opposed the mobilizations of the Socialist party workers demanding the return of Republica. In doing so, the IMT, as the Trotskyist component of the ultraleft bloc, acted objectively as a left critic loyal to the MFA regime. IMT supporters acted as if they believed in a course of not only "minority action" but minority revolution led by the Portuguese "new mass vanguard" including a section of the MFA, and imposed on the majority of workers mistakenly following the SP leadership.

#### Origin of the Crisis in the Fourth International

The IMT positions on Portugal deepen the course that began with the turn the majority codified at the Third Congress Since Reunification (Ninth World Congress). The majority at that congress elevated guerrilla warfare from a tactic to a strategy for an entire continent for an extended period of time. This shifted the majority of the Fourth International from the Leninist strategy of party building to a disorienting ultraleft axis. Soon after the congress, sections whose leaderships supported this turn, began to show evidence of ultraleft positions on a number of questions.

The fight for democratic rights was denigrated. "Exemplary" actions, including "minority violence" by small groups were held up for emulation. An ultraleft view of the Social Democracy became current in Britain, France, Germany and Sweden. A narrow, workerist

view of broad social struggles that raised democratic demands, such as the women's movement, and struggles of oppressed nationalities, led to sectarian errors. Strategy and tactics tended more and more to revolve around the concerns of the "far left," that is, the petty-bourgeois ultraleft, rather than the logic of the class struggle and the needs of the masses.

The turn of the Ninth World Congress represented an adaptation to the ultraleftism of many of the petty-bourgeois currents in the youth radicalization in Europe and to Guevarism in Latin America.

The technique of demonstrations, forms of organization, became more important than winning the majority of the working masses politically by applying the method of the Transitional Program. The party would be built basically outside the working class.

At the Ninth World Congress itself the political adaptation of the majority leaders was reflected in the suppression of the fact that the PRT (Combatiente) group, recognized as the Argentine section of the Fourth International, held positions completely alien to the program of Trotskyism.

The decisive test of the guerrilla warfare strategy came in Bolivia and Argentina. The minority of the IEC submitted a document to the December 1972 IEC meeting that drew the lessons of the failure of the turn of the Ninth World Congress, which, if adopted, would have rectified the error and put the Fourth International back on a correct political axis. The majority, however, failed to correct its course in spite of the test of experience. It was this failure by the majority that necessitated the formation of the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency.

Further, the majority submitted their European perspectives document to that IEC meeting. The IMT European document generalized and codified the turn of the Ninth World Congress as it was being applied to Europe, that is, it extended the basic political errors to Europe. The IMT European document projected orienting towards the concerns of the petty bourgeois ultraleft groupings, called the "new mass vanguard." The working class would be won by spectacular "initiatives in action" by such forces under Trotskyist leadership. The strategic line of march outlined by the Transitional Program to build a Leninist party and win the leadership of the majority of the toiling masses politically was lost sight of and its place was taken by a hollow, maximalist recital of the need for workers control and soviets. The "tactic" of building a mass Leninist party rapidly in the heat of coming revolutionary events was declared inappropriate. Instead the strategy of winning hegemony in the "new mass vanguard" in order to utilize it as an "adequate instrument" to "recompose" the workers movement was projected as the "tactic for the period."

At the Fourth Congress Since Reunification (Tenth World Congress) the line of the European document was generalized to a strategy for the world. In addition, the majority adopted a document on armed struggle that reaffirmed the political line on which the guerrilla turn of the Ninth World Congress rested and revised the Trotskyist program on the question of arming the proletariat, which they considered to be inadequate.

Before and after the Tenth World Congress, sectors of the IMT attempted to end the debate by driving toward a split in the Fourth International. Splits were organized in a number of countries. Faced with this situation, the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency decided to convert itself to a faction to give battle to the splitters and to deepen the political debate.

Following the 1974 World Congress the IMT singled out the Argentine PST for special attack. Attempting to drive the PST out of the international, the majority leaders launched a tendentious public campaign against the Argentine sympathizing organization. The immediate causes of this attack were the failure of the majority's guerrilla warfare line in Latin America, the size and influence of the PST, the splitting and disintegration of any forces in Argentina that looked to the IMT, coupled with the inability of the IMT to correct its line, and the tenuousness of their 50.5 percent majority on the decisive Argentine balance sheet. Thus the IMT attempted to discredit the PST whose political course, based on the positions held in common in the international up until the Ninth World Congress, represented an alternative to the famous "turn."

In the course of the public debate on Argentine Trotskyism initiated by the IMT, the majority went further than ever before in elaborating an ultraleft revision of the Marxist view of the relation between bourgeois democracy and workers democracy, and of the relation between the fight for democratic rights and the socialist revolution.

This was soon to lead to a major political error by the IMT in Portugal.

Before the recent events in Portugal, the application of the turn of the Ninth World Congress to Europe had resulted in sectarian positions, as for example in relation to the Social Democracy, and to movements like women's liberation; ultraleft adventures such as the June 21, 1973, action in Paris; and opportunist adaptations such as the vacillating support the French section gave the Union of the Left. But it remained to be seen how and if the IMT comrades would apply this line under the conditions of a revolutionary upsurge. The initial balance sheet of the IMT position as reflected in the class struggle in Portugal shows that the IMT has gone further along its ultraleft course, leading to serious sectarian, adventurist and op-

portunist errors.

### The Crisis in the Fourth International Deepens

The differences that have emerged in the Fourth International over Portugal threaten the unity of the international. This is because the disagreements are over political questions, questions of what to do next, in a revolution. In the rapidly moving events, political positions were taken in the press of the sections and sympathizing groups of the international that would, if transferred to Portugal, have resulted in supporting different and sometimes conflicting street mobilizations. Such disagreements are different from theoretical or even programmatic ones, which can often be discussed at leisure. They are different from organizational conflicts, which, while they can be sharp, can also be consciously subordinated by a responsible leadership to the task of obtaining political clarity.

The differences over Portugal have inevitably taken a public character. Every political organization had to take positions on the issues as they appeared in the class struggle in Portugal. The press of every party in the world considering itself to be Trotskyist was compelled to state where it stood, which they did to the best of their abilities in light of their previous training and understanding. Thus the differences became expressed in public as alternative lines.

The tensions arising from the political differences over Portugal place special responsibility on leaders of both sides to organize the necessary debate on this question, avoiding secondary questions and polemical excesses, especially in the public debate.

### The Portuguese Events and Building the Fourth International

New events of the magnitude of those in Portugal are bound to cut across old factional lines. Each member of the Fourth International must make up his or her mind on the new questions. All those in the world who consider themselves to be Trotskyists, including forces presently outside the Fourth International, are drawn into the debate. Such events accelerate developments towards regroupments that can help build the international.

The pressures on Healy's rump "International Committee" will be intensified by the impact of these events.

The process that began in May 1973 with the request of the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI) to participate in the discussions within the Fourth International, is being accelerated by the Portuguese events. The OCRFI, having broken with Healy, having failed to build an alternative to the Fourth International, found itself attracted to the discussion

occurring in the Fourth International. In contrast to Healy, who has intensified his irresponsible charges against the Fourth International and its leaders, the OCRFI appears to be rejecting any dead-end factional stance. It wants to discuss its differences with the United Secretariat, including its stand on the Portuguese revolution.

The high political level of the debate in the Fourth International is a powerful attractive force. Our ability to carry out the current discussion on Portugal, even publicly in the pages of our press, with a full hearing for all points of view throughout the international, will provide an example for the entire workers movement and draw new forces to the Fourth International.

### The Course of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction

1. The immediate goal of the LTF is to advance political clarity on the issues raised by the Portuguese revolution. To that end, the LTF adds the document, "Key Issues in the Portuguese Revolution," to the list of documents defining the programmatic basis of the LTF and submits it for international discussion. The Leninist Trotskyist Faction is confident that through a thorough discussion a majority of the cadres of the Fourth International will take a correct position on Portugal.

2. The Leninist Trotskyist Faction seeks to subordinate organizational obstacles to this goal of achieving political clarity. The two factions in the international have existed for a number of years. Regardless of intentions, such a situation tends to breed combinationism and cliques. It tends to confine the discussion of key political questions within each faction rather than opening it to the international as a whole. From the viewpoint of the LTF, if there are guarantees for a full, free and democratic discussion, there is no need for a factional structure; in fact, it tends to impede such discussion. While ideological tendencies are still called for because of the political differences, there would be no objective need to maintain the factions in order to have the necessary discussion. Therefore the Leninist Trotskyist Faction proposes that both of the organized factions dissolve themselves.

3. The LTF is opposed to any dead-end factional stance toward any of the forces that are moving in the direction of the Fourth International, including forces emerging from the breakup of the Healyite "International Committee." Instead, the United Secretariat should act objectively, taking steps to encourage these new forces to move closer toward the Fourth International.

4. The LTF proposes to subordinate the theoretical, programmatic and historical questions in dispute to the task of winning clarity on the political issues of the Portuguese revolution. All of these questions can continue to be discussed in a more leisurely fashion in the internal

bulletin.

5. The LTF reaffirms its agreement with the position adopted by the last world congress that in those countries where two or more groups exist because of splits or other reasons, the united moral authority of the Fourth International should be brought to bear for the earliest possible fusion of the groups on a principled basis.

6. The LTF reiterates, from the August 1973

statement of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction, that "faction discipline does not transcend the discipline of sections or sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International," and that "members of the faction must conduct themselves in a completely loyal way in sections of the Fourth International or sympathizing organizations, maintaining their activities and financial obligations in an exemplary way."

August 31, 1975